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GOVERNMENT AIMS TO RAISE SHARE OF TOURISM IN ECONOMY TO 10%

Context

- The Union Minister of Culture and Tourism has said that the government is committed to raising the contribution of tourism in the country's economy **to 10% by 2047**.

India's Tourism Sector: Key Highlights

- India's tourism sector, rich in heritage, culture, and diversity, is emerging as a global favorite and a key driver of economic growth.
- India's economy is **\$4 trillion** today, expected to **reach \$32 trillion by 2047**.
- Tourism contributes **5–6% to India's economy currently**.
- The aim is for tourism to contribute **10% of the economy by 2047** — aligning with global benchmarks.
- India received **1.8% of world tourism receipts** and attained a **rank of 14th** worldwide in world tourism receipts during **2023**.
- Projected Growth:** Tourism sector expected to grow at a Compounded Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 24%.
- Spiritual tourism:** Every Indian state offers diverse and unique cultural experiences.
- Sustainability Focus:** Emphasis on sustainable tourism development alongside growth.

Types of Tourism offered in India

- Bounded by the **Himalayan ranges in the north** and edged by a **coastline** surrounded by **three seas**, India has historical sites and royal cities, golden beaches, mountain retreats, rich cultures and festivities.
- Adventure tourism:** This involves exploration of remote areas and exotic locales and engaging in various activities.
 - For adventure tourism in India, tourists prefer to go trekking to places like Ladakh, Sikkim, and Himalayas.
- Spiritual Tourism:** The diversity of religions, cultures, and languages of India is unique and unparalleled supporting spirituality.
- Beach Tourism:** India's vast coastline and islands provides ample opportunities for tourism.
 - Kerala, Goa, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep islands attract tourists in large numbers all around the year.

- Cultural tourism:** India is known for its rich cultural heritage and an element of mysticism, which is why tourists come to India to experience it for themselves.
- The various fairs and festivals that tourists can visit in India are the Pushkar fair (Rajasthan), Taj Mahotsav (Uttar Pradesh), and Suraj Kund mela (Haryana).
- Wildlife tourism:** India has a rich forest cover which has exotic species of wildlife – some of which are even endangered and very rare. This has boosted wildlife tourism in India.
- Medical tourism:** Tourists from all over the world come to India to avail themselves of cost-effective but superior quality healthcare in terms of surgical procedures and general medical attention.

Challenges

- Infrastructure Deficiencies:** Many tourist destinations in India suffer from inadequate infrastructure, including poor road conditions, insufficient public transportation, and inadequate facilities in popular tourist areas.
- Environmental Degradation:** Increased tourism lead to environmental problems such as pollution, overuse of natural resources, and damage to wildlife and ecosystems.
- Lack of Standardization:** There is a lack of standardized quality control across various services in the tourism sector, from hotels and restaurants to tour operators. This inconsistency affect the overall tourist experience.
- Seasonality:** Many tourist destinations face seasonal fluctuations, with high tourist numbers during peak seasons and low numbers during off-seasons.
- Marketing and Promotion Challenges:** Effective marketing strategies are often lacking, and there is a need for better promotion of lesser-known destinations.
- Cultural Sensitivity and Management:** Managing cultural heritage responsibly while balancing tourism needs is challenging.

Government Initiatives

- Enhancing Connectivity and Investment:** In the 2025 budget, the Finance Minister announced a landmark initiative to develop **50 top tourist destinations** in partnership with states through a challenge mode.
 - This initiative aims to elevate tourism infrastructure, improve ease of travel, and strengthen connectivity to key sites.

- **Swadesh Darshan Scheme:** This scheme was launched to develop theme-based tourist circuits across the country.
 - ♦ It focuses on creating world-class infrastructure, including roads, amenities, and signage, to improve the tourist experience.
- **Revitalizing Spiritual Tourism:** Recognizing the deep cultural and spiritual significance of religious tourism, the government will prioritize the development of sites associated with pilgrimage and heritage.
 - ♦ **The Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive (PRASHAD)** will continue to play a crucial role in enhancing infrastructure at major pilgrimage sites and heritage cities.
- **Medical Tourism:** Medical tourism and the “Heal in India” initiative will be promoted in partnership with the private sector, enhancing India’s position as a premier global healthcare destination.
- **Atithi Devo Bhava Campaign:** This initiative promotes hospitality and the cultural ethos of treating guests with utmost respect and care.
 - ♦ It includes training programs for service providers in the tourism sector.
- **Visa Reforms:** The introduction of e-visa facilities for citizens of many countries has simplified the process for obtaining a visa to visit India. This move aims to attract more international tourists.
- **Support for Sustainable Tourism:** The government is promoting eco-friendly and sustainable tourism practices through various schemes and guidelines, including the promotion of responsible tourism.
- **Measures to Facilitate Employment-Led Growth in the 2025-26 Budget:**
 - ♦ Providing MUDRA loans for homestays;
 - ♦ Providing performance-linked incentives to states for effective destination management including tourist amenities, cleanliness, and marketing efforts and;
 - ♦ introducing streamlined e-visa facilities along with visa-fee waivers for certain tourist groups.

Conclusion

- The Government of India is committed to positioning the country as a global leader in tourism by **enhancing infrastructure, boosting employment, and promoting diverse tourism segments**.
- The “Heal in India” initiative and Medical Value Travel sector underscore India’s **growing**

prominence as a premier healthcare destination.

- With a strong emphasis on ‘Seva’ and ‘Atithi Devo Bhava,’ India is set to redefine its tourism landscape and establish itself as a **world-class destination**.

Source: IE

GLOBAL WETLAND OUTLOOK FOR 2025.

Context

- **Ramsar Convention on Wetlands** has released the **Global Wetland Outlook for 2025**.

About Global Wetland Outlook for 2025

- It offers the **most current global evaluation** of the condition, trends, value and policy responses concerning wetlands.
- **Produced by:** The Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) of the Convention on Wetlands.
- **Eleven broad wetland types are evaluated encompassing:** Seagrass, Kelp Forests, Coral Reefs, Estuarine Waters, Salt Marshes, Mangroves, Tidal Flats, Lakes, Rivers and Streams, Inland Marshes and Swamps, and Peatlands (Mires).

Major Findings

- **Wetland loss continues:** Since 1970, an estimated **411 million hectares** of wetlands have been lost worldwide, representing a **22% decline** in global extent.
 - ♦ The average rate of wetland loss was **-0.52%** per annum (ranging from -1.80% to -0.01%, depending on wetland type).
- **Wetland degradation is widespread:** Recently, wetland declines are notable in **Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa**, however, the extent of degradation also increased in Europe, North America, and Oceania.
- **Reasons for Degradation:** **Urbanisation, industrial and infrastructure development** are the **three** most important drivers of wetland degradation and loss across Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.
 - ♦ In North America and Oceania, **invasive species** were a larger concern, and in Europe **drought** was the main cause.
- **High Value Resource:** The 1,425 million ha of remaining wetlands give an estimated \$7.98 trillion to \$39.01 trillion benefits to people, every year.

- ♦ If all remaining wetlands are effectively managed until 2050, they will provide a net present value (NPV) greater than \$205.25 trillion over this time period.
- **Conservation of healthy and functioning wetlands is cheaper than restoration:** Average costs for restoring wetlands can range from \$1,000 per hectare (per annum, Int\$) to over \$70,000 per hectare.
- **The global financing gap for wetlands:** Current estimates show that biodiversity conservation funding accounts for just 0.25% of global GDP, highlighting the significant underinvestment in nature, including wetlands.

Recommendations:

- **Financing:** Wetlands must be incorporated into financing mechanisms like those under the KM-GBF, which aims to mobilise billions annually.
 - ♦ Unlock a private and public mix of financing to invest in wetlands as nature-based solutions.
- The Global Wetland Outlook 2025 calls for **immediate action from policymakers, businesses, and society.**
 - ♦ Achieving this requires strong political will, public support, and will require significant resource mobilization. There is an urgent need to boost funding for nature.

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)

- GBF was adopted by the **COP15** to the **Convention on Biological Diversity in 2022.**
- It has been promoted as a “**Paris Agreement for Nature**”.
- The GBF contains **4 global goals and 23 targets.**
 - ♦ **Among the twenty-three targets** to be achieved by **2030** include halving the introduction of invasive species, and \$500 billion/year reduction in harmful subsidies.
 - ♦ “**Target 3**” is especially referred to as the “**30X30**” target.
- ‘**30X30**’ target
 - ♦ Under it, delegates committed to protecting **30% of land and 30% of coastal and marine areas by 2030**, known as 30-by-30.
 - ♦ It also aspires to **restore 30% of degraded lands and waters** throughout the decade, up from an earlier aim of **20%.**

- ♦ Also, the world will strive to prevent destroying intact landscapes and areas with a lot of species, bringing those losses “**close to zero by 2030**”.

What is a Wetland?

- A wetland is an ecosystem in which the land is covered by **water—salt, fresh, or somewhere in between—either seasonally or permanently.** It functions as its **own distinct ecosystem.**
- **It includes water bodies** such as lakes, rivers, underground aquifers, swamps, wet grasslands, peatlands, deltas, tidal flats, mangroves, coral reefs, and other coastal areas as well.
- These wetlands can be classified into three segments such as **inland wetlands, coastal wetlands, and human-made wetlands.**

Wetlands in India

- India includes high-altitude wetlands of the Himalayas, floodplains of rivers such as Ganges and Brahmaputra, lagoons and mangrove marshes on the coastline, and reefs in marine environments.
- India has around **4.6%** of its land as wetlands, **91 Wetlands of India** covering are under the **List of Wetlands of International Importance.**
- Presently, India stands **first in South Asia** and **third in Asia** in terms of number of designated sites.

Importance of Wetlands

- **Biodiversity Hotspots:** Wetlands are among the most biologically diverse ecosystems on Earth, supporting a wide variety of plant and animal species.
- **Water Filtration and Purification:** They act as natural filters, trapping and removing pollutants and sediments from water.
- **Flood Control and Water Regulation:** Function as natural buffers against floods by absorbing and slowing down excess water during heavy rainfall or storm events.
- **Carbon Sequestration:** The waterlogged conditions in wetlands slow down the decomposition of organic matter, leading to the accumulation of carbon in the soil.
- **Economic Benefits:** Wetlands support various economic activities, including fisheries, agriculture, and tourism. They provide valuable resources for local communities and contribute to the overall economy.

Ramsar Convention

- It is an international treaty aimed at conserving wetlands around the world. It was adopted in **Ramsar, Iran, in 1971** and entered into force in **1975**.
- Countries that are parties to the convention commit to designating wetlands of international importance within their territories. These sites are referred to as **Ramsar Sites**.
- **Criteria:**
 - ♦ supporting vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered species or
 - ♦ threatened ecological communities or,
 - ♦ if it regularly supports 20,000 or more waterbirds or,
 - ♦ it is an important source of food for fishes, spawning grounds, and nursery.
- **India** has been a party to the Convention since **1982**.

Source: DTE

INDIA AND UAE: NUCLEAR ENERGY & ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY COOPERATION

Context

- **India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)** are rapidly expanding their strategic partnership, marking a significant evolution from traditional trade ties to future-focused **cooperation in energy, innovation, and sustainability**.

About India-UAE Strategic Partnership

- **Economic Milestones and Trade Integration:**
 - ♦ **Bilateral Trade:** More Than \$100 billion (five years ahead of target); India's **third-largest trade partner after China and US.**; Largely attributed to the **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)**, including the **Virtual Trade Corridor**, a key pillar of the **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEEC)**.
 - ♦ **Investment Momentum:** UAE investments in India have reached **\$23 billion**, with **\$4.5 billion** committed in 2024 alone.
 - ♦ The **Bilateral Investment Treaty**, finalized in 2023, has provided a stable legal framework for this surge in capital flows.
 - ♦ **Jaywan Card:** UAE's national payment card is built on India's rupee card stack.

- ♦ **UPI-Aani Integration:** It aims to enable cross-border digital payments and CBDC interoperability (Scheduled for November 2025).
- **Technology and Defense Cooperation**
 - ♦ **Nuclear Energy as a Growth Sector:** The UAE currently generates **25% of its electricity from nuclear energy (5.6 GW)** and aims to **double its capacity by 2030**.
 - The **Partnership for Accelerating Clean Energy (PACE)**—involving the **US, UAE, and India**—alongside French collaborations, is turning nuclear energy into a cornerstone of clean energy cooperation.
 - **India's participation** in the **Barakah Nuclear Power Plant** — the first multi-unit nuclear facility in the Arab world — underscores the UAE's confidence in India's nuclear expertise.
 - ♦ **Defense Engagements:** Defense cooperation has risen to the **secretary level**, including joint military exercises like **Desert Cyclone, Desert Flag**, and the **India-France-UAE Trilateral Exercise**.
 - Indian companies are increasingly active in major defense expos such as **IDEX** and the **Dubai Airshow**, contributing to projects including **Tejas fighter components** and **drone systems**.
- **Education, Space, and Critical Minerals**
 - ♦ **Educational Collaborations:** These strengthened with the launch of **IIT Abu Dhabi's PhD program**, **IIM Ahmedabad's Dubai campus**, and **IIFT Dubai**, further integrating human capital development into bilateral goals.
 - ♦ **Space:** Collaborative efforts are underway in precision medicine and space exploration, leveraging India's human capital and the UAE's infrastructure.
 - ♦ **Critical Minerals:** MoU in 2024 to secure global supply chains for lithium, cobalt, and rare earths.
 - ♦ **Green Hydrogen:** Building a transnational value chain, with production targets of **5 MMT (India) and 1.4 MMT (UAE) by 2030**.
- **Connectivity and Clean Energy Corridors**
 - ♦ **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEEC) Initiative:** It envisions

a seamless flow of **containers, data, and energy** through interconnected grids and subsea cables.

- ♦ **I2U2 (India, Israel, UAE, US) Initiative:** Plans are advancing for **food parks** in Gujarat and **renewable energy** projects targeting **60 GW** in Gujarat and Rajasthan.
- **Geopolitical Positioning and Africa Outreach**
 - ♦ **Leveraging UAE's Global CEPA Network:** To tap into the **UAE's 25 other CEPAs**, enhancing market access and manufacturing potential—especially for **energy-intensive sectors**.
 - ♦ **Africa as the Next Frontier:** The **UAE's entry into BRICS** and initiatives like **Bharat Africa Setu** offer India a strategic route to expand into African markets, with the UAE serving as a vital **gateway**.
- **Cultural Symbolism:** The BAPS Hindu temple in Abu Dhabi stands as a powerful symbol of religious tolerance and shared values, reinforcing the cultural depth of the India-UAE relationship.

Concerns & Challenges Need To Address

- **Geopolitical Sensitivities:** India's balancing act amid Israel-Gaza tensions and UAE's evolving stance in West Asia presents diplomatic challenges.
- **Trade & Economic Concerns:** Despite CEPA's success, trade remains concentrated in a few sectors like gems and petroleum. Diversifying exports into tech, pharma, and renewables is still a work in progress.
- **Regulatory Loopholes & Irregularities:** A loophole in the **India-UAE Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)** allowed traders to **import gold disguised as platinum alloy**, causing **1,700 crore** in revenue loss.
 - ♦ Silver imports from UAE jumped 647x in one year, raising concerns about value-add compliance and **misuse of GIFT City's relaxed regulations**.
- **Labor Rights & Humanitarian Issues:** Migrant Indian workers in the UAE face challenges under the **Kafala sponsorship system**, including passport confiscation, wage delays, and poor living conditions.
- **Strategic & Security Challenges:** **UAE's growing ties with China**, including defense deals, may complicate India's strategic calculus in the region.

- ♦ UAE's financial support to Pakistan raises concerns about funds being diverted to anti-India activities.
- **Diplomatic & Institutional Gaps:** **India and UAE lack a dedicated strategic dialogue platform like 2+2 Dialogue** to address defense and political issues holistically.
 - ♦ Indian exporters face hurdles like mandatory Halal certification, affecting processed food exports.

Conclusion

- The evolving **India-UAE strategic partnership** exemplifies how two complementary economies can build **resilient supply chains**, drive **sustainable development**, and pioneer cooperation in **nuclear and advanced technologies**. With shared visions and coordinated policies, both countries are positioning themselves as **global innovation and trade hubs** in a rapidly changing world.

Source: DD News

INDIA REITERATES CALL FOR ACCOUNTABILITY FOR CRIMES AGAINST UN PEACEKEEPERS

In News

Recently, India co-chaired a high-level meeting of the **Group of Friends for Accountability for Crimes Against Peacekeepers**.

Do you know ?

- The Group of Friends for Accountability for Crimes Against Peacekeepers was launched in December 2022 during India's presidency of the UN Security Council, building on Resolution 2589.

History of UN Peacekeeping

- UN Peacekeeping began in **1948** with the establishment of the **United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO)** in the Middle East to monitor ceasefires.
 - ♦ It initially focused on unarmed observation and mediation.
- During the Cold War, operations were limited due to global political tensions.
- However, after the Cold War, peacekeeping expanded significantly, with multidimensional missions addressing **civil conflicts, governance support, human rights protection, and humanitarian efforts**.

- Modern missions now emphasize civilian protection, gender inclusion, and partnerships with regional organizations.

What is UN Peacekeeping?

- UN Peacekeeping is a key mechanism used by the United Nations to maintain global peace and security.
 - ♦ The UN Peacekeepers, known as Blue Helmets, get their name from the light blue of the United Nations flag. In 1947, the UN decided on this colour because blue symbolizes peace, while red is often linked to war. This light blue shade has since become a symbol of the UN.
- It operates alongside other UN efforts, including conflict prevention, peacemaking, peace enforcement, and peacebuilding.



India's Contribution to UN Peacekeeping

- India has a long and distinguished history of serving in UN peacekeeping, dating back to its participation in the **UN operation in Korea in 1953**.
- India's commitment to non-violence, enshrined in its philosophy and championed by Mahatma Gandhi, aligns with the UN's approach to promoting global peace.
 - ♦ This commitment stems from India's ancient principle of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" (the whole world is my family), which emphasizes the interconnectedness of humanity and the importance of peaceful coexistence.

- Since the 1950s, India has sent over 290,000 peacekeepers to more than 50 missions worldwide, making it the largest contributor to UN peacekeeping efforts.
- Today, over 5,000 Indian troops serve in nine of the eleven active missions, often in dangerous and hostile regions, dedicated to upholding global peace and security.
- **In 2023**, India received the UN's highest peacekeeping honour, the Dag Hammarskjöld Medal, posthumously awarded to Indian peacekeepers Shishupal Singh and Sanwala Ram Vishnoi and civilian UN worker Shaber Taher Ali for their sacrifice in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Do you know ?

- Women still make up **less than 10% of the UN's 70,000 uniformed peacekeepers**—including military personnel, police officers, and observers.
- The UN has set ambitious targets under its Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy, aiming for **15% women in military contingents and 25% in police units by 2028**.
- In **2007**, India deployed the **first-ever all-female Formed Police Unit (FPU) to Liberia**.
- As of February 2025, India continues this legacy with over 150 women peacekeepers serving across six critical missions, including those in the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Lebanon, Golan Heights, Western Sahara, and Abyei.

Issues and Concerns

- UN peacekeepers are facing violence and peacekeepers face serious threats while serving in dangerous areas, yet most crimes against them go unpunished.
 - ♦ This lack of accountability undermines international peace efforts.
- According to UN data, more than 1,000 peacekeepers have been killed in hostile acts since 1948.
 - ♦ India, one of the largest contributors to UN missions, has deployed over 300,000 peacekeepers, with 182 having died in service.

Way Ahead

- India's role in UN peacekeeping highlights its strong commitment to global peace, security, and multilateralism.

- Recently, India has strongly reiterated its commitment to ensuring justice for crimes committed against UN peacekeepers, calling accountability a strategic necessity for the success of global peacekeeping missions.
 - ♦ Member states agreed that ensuring accountability is vital to the safety and credibility of peace operations.

Source :BS

KERALA: AS INDIA'S TOP BIODIVERSITY DISCOVERY HOTSPOT

Context

- Kerala has claimed the top spot as the country's leading state for new faunal discoveries, in a record-breaking year for India's biodiversity documentation.

Key Findings

- According to the '**Animal Discoveries: New Species and New Records 2024 Report**' by the **Zoological Survey of India (ZSI)**, 683 species and subspecies were discovered across India in 2024 (641 in 2023).
 - It is the **highest ever** in a single year since formal documentation began in 2008.
 - ♦ Of these, **459 are globally new**, while **224 are new records for India**.
- **Kerala accounted for 101 species** — including 80 new to science and 21 newly recorded in India, followed by **Karnataka (82), Arunachal Pradesh (72), and Tamil Nadu (63)**.
- **Arunachal Pradesh** documented 72 discoveries, **Meghalaya** followed with 42, while **West Bengal** registered 56.
- The **Andaman and Nicobar Islands**, long regarded as a cradle of endemic wildlife, contributed 43 new faunal entries to the national register, including 14 new species and 29 new records.

Other Notable Discoveries

- A **Snake Species** from **Himachal Pradesh** named **Anguiculus Dicaprio**, honoring actor and environmentalist Leonardo DiCaprio for his advocacy on climate and biodiversity issues.
- Other **Herpetological highlights** include two new genera; 37 reptilian species; and Five amphibians, including one representing a new genus.

Botanical (Flora)

- The **Botanical Survey of India (BSI)** reported 433 new plant taxa, with **Kerala again leading** the count at 58 discoveries. These include 154 angiosperms; 63 lichens; 156 fungi; 32 algae; and 9 microbial species.
- India's total documented plant species now stands at 56,177, reinforcing its status as a global biodiversity treasure trove.

Why Does Kerala Stand Out?

- Kerala's rich ecosystems — ranging from the Western Ghats to coastal wetlands and tropical rainforests — make it a prime location for biodiversity research. The state's success is attributed to:
 - ♦ Targeted field surveys;
 - ♦ Advanced molecular techniques like DNA barcoding;
 - ♦ Systematic taxonomy efforts by ZSI scientists

Biodiversity Hotspots in India

- India, one of the world's 17 megadiverse countries, is home to **four globally recognized biodiversity hotspots**, each teeming with **endemic species** and facing **significant ecological threats**.
- This concept, introduced by **Norman Myers** and refined by **Conservation International**, identifies areas of high conservation priority due to their rich biodiversity and vulnerability. These require a region to have:
 - ♦ At least 1,500 endemic vascular plant species;
 - ♦ Lost 70% or more of its original natural vegetation;

Four Biodiversity Hotspots in India

- **Himalayas:** Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam
 - ♦ Snow leopard, red panda, Himalayan tahr, rhododendron forests
- **Indo-Burma:** Northeast India (excluding Sikkim), Andaman Islands
 - ♦ Hoolock gibbon, golden langur, clouded leopard, orchids
- **Western Ghats:** Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra, Gujarat
 - ♦ Lion-tailed macaque, Nilgiri tahr, Malabar civet
- **Sundaland:** Nicobar Islands
 - ♦ Nicobar megapode, saltwater crocodile, coral reefs

Why Do These Hotspots Matter?

- **High Endemism:** These regions host species found nowhere else on Earth.
- **Ecological Services:** They regulate water cycles, prevent soil erosion, and buffer climate extremes.
- **Cultural Significance:** Indigenous communities rely on these ecosystems for livelihood and heritage.
- **Global Conservation Priority:** Despite covering just 2.3% of Earth's land, hotspots support over 50% of endemic plant species.

Threats to India's Biodiversity Hotspots

- Deforestation & Habitat Fragmentation;
- Climate Change & Glacial Retreat;
- Poaching & Illegal Wildlife Trade;
- Infrastructure Development & Mining;
- Invasive Species & Agricultural Expansion

Conservation Efforts

- **Protected Areas:** National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries, and Biosphere Reserves
- **Legislation:** Wildlife Protection Act (1972), Biological Diversity Act (2002)
- **Community-Based Conservation:** Sacred Groves, Joint Forest Management
- **Global Commitments:** Convention on Biological Diversity, SDG 15 (Life on Land)

Source: DTE

NEWS IN SHORT**INS NISTAR : FIRST INDIGENOUS DIVING SUPPORT VESSEL****In News**

INS Nistar was commissioned into the Indian Navy in the presence of Raksha Rajya Mantri Shri Sanjay Seth in Visakhapatnam on July 18, 2025.

INS Nistar

- The original **INS Nistar was a submarine rescue vessel** acquired by the Indian Navy from the erstwhile Soviet Union in 1969, and commissioned in 1971.
- It remained in service till 1989, during which time it was the centrepiece of the Navy's diving and submarine rescue operations.

- The new INS Nistar has over **80% indigenous content and contributions from around 120 MSMEs**
- It is the **first indigenously designed and constructed Diving Support Vessel**.
- The ship, which is the first of the two Diving Support Vessels being built by **Hindustan Shipyard Limited**.

HOW DEEP-SEA RESCUE OPS WORK

IMAGINE THIS. A submarine malfunctions in the deep. Oxygen is fast running out. Hydrostatic pressure keeps the hatch closed, but even if it were to be opened, no human could survive at those depths. All that the trapped crew can do is wait for help.

INS NISTAR – 'salvation' in Sanskrit – is meant for exactly such a situation. It can undertake diving and salvage operations upto 300 m depth, with its DSRV capable of operating 1,000 m under the surface. Here's how deep sea rescues work.

■ The first task is to locate the submarine in distress, something easier said than done in the deep-sea gloom. *Nistar* will use ROVs, its advanced sonar system, and DSRV.



■ Once the submarine is located, rescuers in the mothership will decide the course of action. If the sub is simply trapped in some underwater debris, ROVs and



(Clockwise from top) *Nistar* at Visakhapatnam port; DSRV being lowered; inside DSRV. Indian Navy

DSRV equipped with robotic arms and other equipment can try to free it.

■ But the rescue window is small, and the priority is to save personnel stuck underwater. This is where the DSRV comes in. It can attach to the disabled sub's hatch, allowing the crew to be evacuated. India's DSRVs can rescue 14 trapped personnel at a time.

■ *Nistar* is also a dive-support ship, with air diving capabilities for shallower depths, and more complex saturation diving capabilities for greater depths. *Nistar* can support prolonged saturation dives up to 100 metres.

- It is designed to undertake complex deep sea saturation diving and rescue operations – a capability select Navies possess across the globe.
- It is installed with state-of-the-art Diving Equipment such as Remotely Operated Vehicles, Self-Propelled Hyperbaric Life Boat, Diving Compression Chambers.
- It can **undertake diving** and salvage operations **upto 300m depth**.
- It would also serve as the '**Mother Ship**' for deep submergence rescue vessels to rescue and evacuate personnel, from a dived submarine in distress well below the surface.

- It is a 118m ship with over 10,000 tons displacement .
- It features a 15-tonne subsea crane, supports helicopter operations, and includes medical facilities such as an operation theatre, ICU, and an eight-bed hospital with hyperbaric capabilities, enabling it to fulfill its specialized operational roles.

Importance

- The commissioning of INS Nistar firmly reinforces the role of the Indian Navy as the 'First Responder' and 'Preferred Security Partner' in the region.
- The indigenous shipbuilding Industry has been one of the pillars of the Government's 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' campaign.
 - ♦ At present, all of the 57 new warships in the pipeline are being constructed indigenously.

Source :IE

HINDU KUSH HIMALAYAS

In News

According to the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) The Hindu Kush Himalayas are witnessing an unprecedented rise in glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs), driven by climate change and rising temperatures.

Do you know ?

- A glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF) occurs when water is suddenly released from a lake fed by a melting glacier.
 - ♦ Glacial-floods are driven by temperature.
- These floods are increasingly linked to newly formed, dynamic supraglacial lakes.
 - ♦ The supraglacial lakes form on the surface of glaciers, particularly in debris-covered areas. They begin as small meltwater ponds before gradually expanding and sometimes merging to form larger supraglacial lakes, making them highly dynamic.
 - ♦ Supraglacial lakes are difficult to detect.

The Hindu Kush Himalaya region

- It covers 3,500 kilometres across Asia, spanning eight countries — Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan.
- It is the source of **ten large Asian river systems** – the Amu Darya, Indus, Ganges, Brahmaputra (Yarlungtsanpo), Irrawaddy, Salween (Nu), Mekong (Lancang), Yangtse (Jinsha), Yellow River (Huanghe), and Tarim (Dayan) .
- Up to two billion people are dependent on the region for food, water and energy security.
- It is also home to many irreplaceable species.

Do you know ?

- The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) is an intergovernmental knowledge and learning centre working on behalf of the people of the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH).
 - ♦ It is based in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Regional member countries



Source :DTE

LION-TAILED MACAQUE

In News

The Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) has granted in-principle approval for diverting 142.76 hectares of forest land in the Sharavathi Valley Lion-Tailed Macaque Wildlife Sanctuary for the Sharavathi Pumped Storage Project (2,000 MW).

Sharavathi Valley Lion-Tailed Macaque Wildlife Sanctuary

- It is located in the Western Ghats in Karnataka.
- It is home to approximately 700 lion-tailed macaques — the highest population of the endangered species in any protected area.

Lion-Tailed Macaque(Macaca silenus)

- It is a recognisable monkey with a silver-white mane from the Western Ghats of South India
 - ♦ It is endemic to the Western Ghats hill ranges
- **Population** : According to the IUCN, only around 2,500 individuals remain in the wild and the population continues to decline.
- **Habitat and Distribution**: It is primarily arboreal and it prefers the upper canopy of tropical evergreen rainforests (Sholas) but can also inhabit monsoon forests and disturbed areas.
 - ♦ It may persist in regions with human-planted fruit trees like jackfruit and guava, though populations vary with fruit availability.
- **Threats** : Its population faces threats from habitat loss, fragmentation, and human encroachment.
- **Protection status** : It is listed as **Endangered** species on the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red(IUCN) List .
 - ♦ It is protected under Appendix I of CITES. I

Source :DTE

SIMBEX EXERCISE**In News**

The Indian Navy is going to participate in the 32nd edition of the Singapore-India Maritime Bilateral Exercise(SIMBEX).

SIMBEX Exercise

- It began as '**Exercise Lion King**' in 1994 and It is one of the longest uninterrupted maritime exercises for India.
- It is conducted annually by the Indian Navy and the Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN).

Importance

- It has since evolved into one of the most significant bilateral maritime collaborations between the Indian Navy and the Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN).
- The exercise supports **India's Vision SAGAR** and **Act East policy**, focused on regional cooperation and maritime security.

Source :Air

SENEGAL HAS BEEN DECLARED FREE OF TRACHOMA BY WHO**Context**

- **Senegal** has been declared **free of trachoma** by **WHO**, marking a significant public health achievement.

Do you know?

- Senegal is located at the westernmost point of Africa in the Atlantic Ocean, surrounded by the Continent of Africa, Europe and America .
- It is bordered by Mauritania in the North, Mali in the East, Guinea and Guinea Bissau in the South and by a 550 km coastline of the Atlantic Ocean in the West.
- Dakar, its capital, is a peninsula located at the extreme West.

About

- **Trachoma was the second neglected tropical disease (NTD)** to be eliminated in Senegal after **Guinea-worm disease** (dracunculiasis) in 2004.
- Senegal became the **25th country** worldwide and the **9th in Africa** to eliminate trachoma as a public health problem.
- **The 24 other countries include India**, Nepal, Pakistan and China as well.

Trachoma

- Trachoma is a **highly contagious bacterial infection** of the **eye**, caused by the **bacterium Chlamydia trachomatis**.
- It has been a major cause of **preventable blindness worldwide**.
- Blindness from trachoma is **difficult to reverse**.
- Trachoma remains **hyper-endemic** in some of the world's poorest and most rural regions across Africa, Asia, Central and South America, Australia and the Middle East.

Source: DTE

FEEDING STRAY DOGS**Context**

- The Supreme Court observed that citizens who wished to **feed stray dogs should consider doing so inside their own homes**.

Animal Birth Control (Dog) Rules

- The government has notified the **Animal Birth Control Rules, 2023** under **Prevention of Cruelty to Animal Act, 1960** and after superseding the Animal Birth Control (Dog) Rules, 2001.
- **Aim**: To control stray dog populations through sterilisation, and to curb the spread of rabies by vaccinating them.
- **Key Provisions**:
 - ♦ **Use the expression "community animals" instead of "stray dogs"** — recognising that

these dogs are not ownerless intruders but **territorial beings**.

- ♦ **Animal Birth Control programmes** for the sterilization and immunization of the stray dogs are to be carried out by the respective local bodies/municipalities/Municipal Corporations and Panchayats.
- ♦ **The Municipal Corporations** need to implement the **ABC and Anti Rabies Program** jointly.
- ♦ Provides the **guidelines on how to deal with the human and stray dog conflicts** without relocating the dogs in an area.
- ♦ Lay down protocols to ensure that the **feeding of dogs respects both animal welfare and public safety**.

Constitutional Provisions

- **The Supreme Court** has interpreted the **constitutionally guaranteed right to life and liberty as extending to animals as well**.
 - ♦ **In its verdict in the 2014 Jallikattu case**, it held that animal life falls within the meaning of **Article 21** of the Constitution (Animal Welfare Board of India vs A. Nagaraja).
- **Also, Article 51A(g)** places a fundamental duty on citizens "to have compassion for living creatures".

Rules for Feeding Dogs

- It shall be the responsibility of the **Resident Welfare Association or Apartment Owner Association or Local Body's representative** to make **necessary arrangements** for feeding of community animals.
- **Feeding locations** must be away from high-footfall areas like staircases, building entrances, and children's play areas.
- The designated spaces must be **kept clean and litter-free**, and community dogs should be fed at an appointed time.
- The Rules try to **strike a balance between compassion and public order**.

Source: IE

STATUS OF YOUTH IN AGRIFOOD SYSTEMS REPORT: FAO

Context

- Recently, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), in its report titled **'The Status of Youth in Agrifood Systems'** revealed that agriculture

holds the potential to employ millions of young people and boost global GDP by 1.4%, adding \$1.5 trillion in value.

Key Findings of Report

- **Youth Unemployment:** Over 20% of the world's 1.3 billion youth (aged 15–24) are **Not in Employment, Education, or Training (NEET)**.
 - ♦ Young women are twice as likely to fall into the NEET category.
- **Economic Potential of Agrifood Systems:** 45% of the projected GDP boost would come directly from increased youth participation in agrifood systems.
 - ♦ Agriculture offers employment not only on farms but across the value chain—processing, logistics, retail, and innovation.
 - ♦ In crisis-affected regions, up to 82% of working youth rely on agrifood systems.
- **Climate & Demographic Pressures:** 395 million rural youth live in areas projected to suffer declines in agricultural productivity.
 - ♦ Food insecurity among youth rose from **16.7% to 24.4%** between 2014–16 and 2021–23, especially in Africa.
 - ♦ **Youth engagement** in agrifood systems dropped from **54% in 2005 to 44% in 2021**.

FAO's Three-Pronged Strategy

- **Inquire More:** To bridge data gaps and build evidence for youth-inclusive policies
- **Include More:** To amplify youth voices in decision-making and governance
- **Invest More:** To create decent jobs, improve access to land, credit, training, and technology

Recommendations for Action

- **Modernize Agrifood Systems:** Invest in infrastructure and innovation to make agriculture appealing.
- **Support Migration Pathways:** Enable safe, youth-responsive migration to address labor shortages.
- **Expand Digital Access:** Equip young farmers with tools to connect with markets and modern practices.
- **Enhance Social Protection:** Address financing gaps and provide safety nets for vulnerable youth.

Source: DTE

'TRADE CONNECT' EPLATFORM

Context

- 'Trade Connect' e-Platform was showcased at the India International Garment Fair (IIGF) and Toy Biz International Expo.

About Trade Connect ePlatform

- Trade Connect ePlatform is an initiative by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) under the **Ministry of Commerce & Industry**.
- It serves as a comprehensive hub for information and services related to international trade for all stakeholders.
- It provides up-to-date information on **tariffs, certifications, trade events**, e-commerce, and buyers in a simplified format for MSMEs. Interactive courses to introduce MSMEs to exports & related procedures across **multiple languages** are also provided.
- It also serves as a **single point** for the issuance and validation of **preferential and non-preferential certificates** of origin through a secure, electronic, and paperless process, with all authorised issuing agencies integrated into the platform.

Source: PIB

CHRONIC VENOUS INSUFFICIENCY

Context

- US President Donald Trump (age 79) has been diagnosed with chronic venous insufficiency — a condition commonly seen in individuals over the age of 70.

What is Chronic Venous Insufficiency (CVI)?

- It is a circulatory disorder in which leg veins fail to efficiently return blood to the heart, resulting in blood pooling in the lower limbs.
- It often begins in one leg and may spread to both, with increased venous pressure leading to pain, swelling, leg cramps, skin discoloration or thickening, and, in advanced stages, venous ulcers.
- Patients may present with symptoms or remain asymptomatic in early stages.
- People with CVI are about 60 per cent more likely to have severe cardiovascular disease at the same time than people of the same age and gender without it.

What are the causes for this condition?

- Chronic Venous Insufficiency can be triggered by various factors, including:
 - ♦ **Obesity, pregnancy**, or a **family history** of vein problems
 - ♦ **High blood pressure, smoking**, or **lack of exercise**
 - ♦ **Prolonged sedentary lifestyle**, especially in old age

Precaution/treatment?

- Patients should avoid prolonged sitting or standing and stay physically active.
- In severe cases, minimally invasive procedures like **laser ablation** or **vein glue** may be used to close damaged veins and restore proper blood flow.
- These offer quicker recovery compared to traditional surgeries like vein ligation.

Source: IE

SOCOTRA ISLAND

Context

- Field teams from the United Arab Emirates and the World Health Organization have successfully completed the first phase of a comprehensive health assessment on Socotra Island in Yemen.

About the Socotra Island

- Socotra Island is a remote **Yemeni archipelago** located in the **Indian Ocean** approximately 380 kilometers south of the Arabian Peninsula.
 - ♦ It lies in the northwest Indian Ocean near the Gulf of Aden, stretching 250 km, and consists of four islands and two rocky islets that appear as an extension of the Horn of Africa.
- The largest island covers about 3,600 square kilometers and is home to approximately 60,000 inhabitants.
- Socotra is renowned for its extraordinary biodiversity, with up to a third of its plant species being endemic and found nowhere else on the planet.
 - ♦ Despite its natural significance, Socotra faces ongoing challenges from Yemen's civil war.
- The island was recognized as a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** in 2008.



Source: DDNews