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## DEEPAVALI ADDED TO UNESCO INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE LIST

### Context

- Deepavali has been inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity during the 20th Session of the Intergovernmental Committee, held in New Delhi.

### About Deepavali

- Deepavali, also known as Diwali, is celebrated on **Kartik Amaavasya**, which typically falls in October or November.
  - Residences, thoroughfares, and temples are **illuminated with numerous oil lamps**.
- The festival opens with **Dhanteras**, when families purchase metalware or essentials as symbols of prosperity.
  - It is followed by **Naraka Chaturdashi**.
  - The third day** is the highlight of Deepavali—the **sacred Lakshmi-Ganesha Puja**.

### Popular Legends of Deepavali

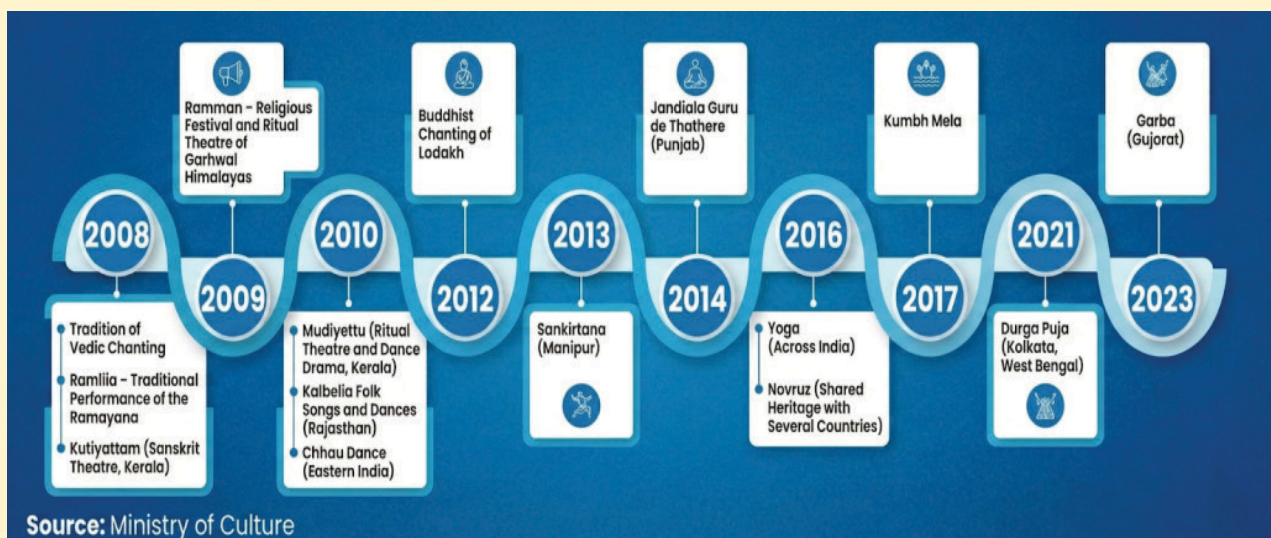
- In the Ramayana**, it signifies the return of Lord Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana to Ayodhya after 14 years of exile and their victory over Ravana, celebrated with lamps lighting their path.
- In the Mahabharata**, it marks the **return of the Pandavas** after their exile.
- Naraka Chaturdashi** recalls Lord Krishna's victory over Narakasura, symbolising the end of evil.
- Lord Mahavira**, the 24th Tirthankar, **attained Nirvana** on Deepavali at Pavapuri. Jain devotees celebrate this festival with enthusiasm as Nirvana Day.
- King Bali's Return**: In Maharashtra, Deepavali marks the visit of King Bali, symbolising justice and generosity.
- Kali Puja**: In Bengal, Odisha and Assam, Deepavali coincides with the worship of Goddess Kali for protection and inner strength.

### About the Intangible cultural heritage

- Intangible cultural heritage**, includes the practices, knowledge, expressions, objects, and spaces that communities see as part of their cultural identity.
  - Passed down over generations, this heritage evolves, strengthening cultural identity and appreciation of diversity.
- Historical Background**: For the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, UNESCO adopted the **2003 Convention** during its 32nd General Conference in Paris.
  - India ratified the convention in **2005**.

### Other India's Intangible Cultural Heritage Inscribed by UNESCO

- To date, **16 Indian elements** have been inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List (including Deepavali) and the country has served on the **UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for three terms**.





## WORLD INEQUALITY REPORT 2026 RELEASED

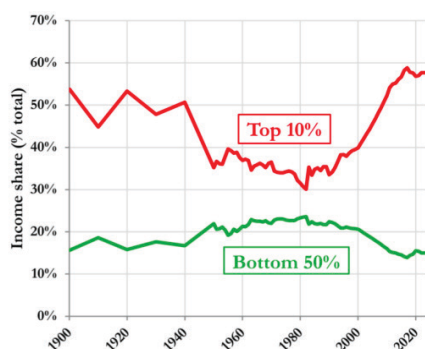
### Context

- The **3rd edition of the World Inequality Report** highlights widening gaps in wealth, income, climate responsibility, and global financial flows, with India showing high levels of concentration at the top.

### Key Findings of Report

- Global Inequality Trends:** The **top 10% globally own three-quarters of all wealth**;
  - The **bottom 50% hold just 2%**;
  - The **top 1% control 37% of global wealth, 18 times more than the bottom half** of the world combined.
- Gender Inequality:** **Women earn only 61% of men's income per working hour** (excluding unpaid work).
  - It **falls to 32%** if it includes unpaid labor.
  - Globally, **women capture just 26% of total labor income**, a figure nearly unchanged since 1990.
- Regionwise Inequality:** **Middle East & North Africa (16%); South & Southeast Asia (20%); Sub-Saharan Africa (28%); East Asia (34%); Europe/North America/Oceania (around 40%);**
- Climate Inequality:** The report links economic inequality with environmental injustice:
  - The **poorest 50%** of the global population account for only **3% of carbon emissions** tied to private capital.
  - The **top 10%** are responsible for **77%**, and the **top 1%** alone account for **41%**, nearly double that of the bottom 90% combined.
- Income Inequality in India:** The top 10% in India earn 58% of the national income, while bottom 50% receive only 15%.
  - Women earn just 18% of total labor income in India, below the global average of 34%.

Figure 1: Top 10% and bottom 50% income shares in India, 1900-2024



Interpretation: The Top 10% income share is equal to 58% in 2024. Income is measured after the operation of pensions and unemployment insurance systems and before income tax.

Sources and series: wir2026.wid.world/methodology.

- Wealth Concentration in India:** Wealth inequality in India exceeds income inequality:
  - The **richest 10% own 65% of total wealth**;
  - The **top 1% hold 40%**;
  - The **bottom 50% own less than 6%**.

### Reasons Highlighted For Inequality

- Changing Global Economic Geography (1980 to 2025):** In 1980, the global elite was concentrated in **North America, Europe, and Oceania**, while **India, China, and Sub-Saharan Africa** were largely confined to the bottom 50%.
  - By **2025, China's population has moved upward** into the middle and upper-middle global income brackets.
  - India has lost relative ground**, with much of its population now concentrated in the bottom half of the global distribution.
- Policy Failures:** The report highlights **taxation failures at the very top**, where the ultra-rich often pay lower effective tax rates than middle-income households.
  - The **regressive tax structure** undermines state capacity to invest in public goods like education, healthcare, and climate action.

### Key Suggestions in Report

- Progressive taxation** to ensure those with greater means contribute fairly.
- Public investment** in universal education, healthcare, childcare, and nutrition programs.
- Redistributive measures**, including cash transfers, pensions, and unemployment benefits to directly reduce inequality.

Source: IE

## ADITYA-L1 JOINS GLOBAL EFFORT TO STUDY THE SOLAR STORM

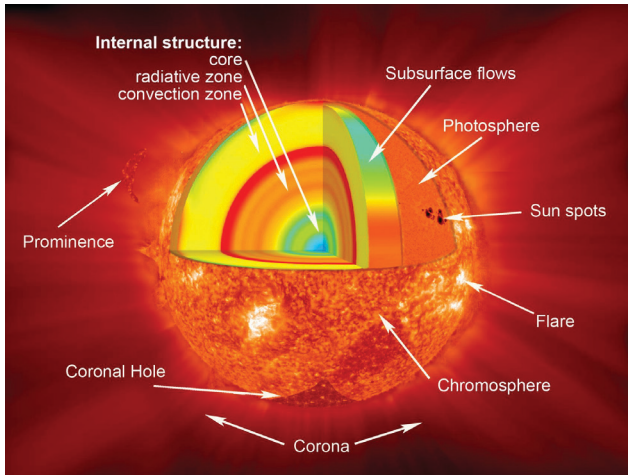
### Context

- India's solar observatory Aditya-L1** along with six U.S. satellites, has revealed unusual behaviour of the May 2024 solar storm called "**Gannon's storm**" triggered by a series of giant explosions on the **Sun known as Coronal Mass Ejections (CMEs)**.

### What is a Solar Storm?

- The solar storm is composed of a series of **giant explosions** on the Sun, known as **coronal mass ejections (CMEs)**.
  - A CME is like a massive bubble of hot gas and magnetic energy thrown out from the Sun into space.

- When these bubbles hit Earth, they can shake earth's magnetic shield and cause serious trouble for satellites, communication systems, GPS, and even power grids.

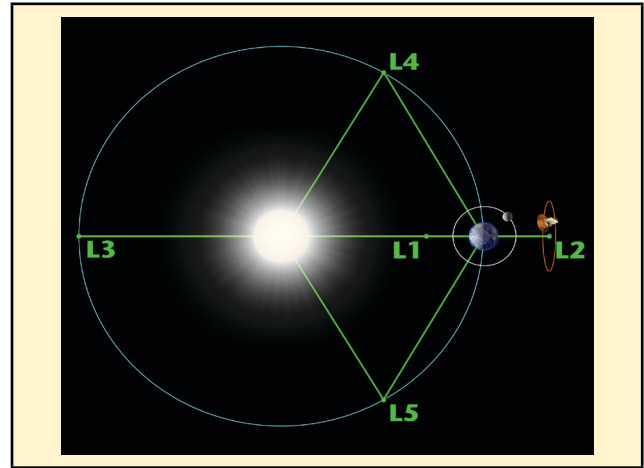


#### About Aditya-L1

- Aditya-L1** is the first space-based Indian observatory to study the Sun.
- It was launched on September 2, 2023 by the **PSLV-C57**, and was inserted in its **targeted halo orbit on January 6, 2024**.
- The solar observatory is placed at Lagrangian point **L1** for "Observing and understanding the chromospheric and coronal dynamics of the Sun" in a continuous manner.
- It is equipped with seven payloads** (instruments) on board with four of them carrying out remote sensing of the Sun and three of them carrying in-situ observation.

#### Do you Know?

- Lagrange points** are positions in space where objects sent there tend to stay put. At Lagrange points, the gravitational pull of two large masses precisely equals the centripetal force required for a small object to move with them.
- There are **five Lagrange points**, **three are unstable and two are stable**. The unstable Lagrange points are labeled **L1, L2 and L3**. The stable Lagrange points are labeled **L4 and L5**.
- The L1 point** of the Earth-Sun system affords an uninterrupted view of the sun and is currently home to the Solar and Heliospheric Observatory Satellite SOHO.
- These points in space can be used by spacecraft to reduce fuel consumption needed to remain in position.



Source: TH

## MAKE IN INDIA IN DEFENCE SECTOR

#### Context

- Despite high expectations, the defence announcements during the Russian President's visit did not materialise as India is **more focused towards self-reliance in defence manufacturing**.

#### India's Shift in Defence Sector

- Defence Budget:** The defence budget has seen a steady rise, growing from **₹2.53 lakh crore in 2013-14 to ₹6.81 lakh crore in 2025-26**.
- Production:** India, once heavily dependent on arms imports, now has a **defence production value of ₹1.51 lakh crore**, up from 46,000 crore in 2014.
  - 65% of defence equipment** is now manufactured **domestically**, a significant shift from the **earlier 65-70% import dependency**.
- Export:** India's defence exports have surged from **₹686 crore in 2013-14 to ₹23,622 crore in 2024-25**, a **34-fold rise**.
  - India's diverse export portfolio includes** bulletproof jackets, Dornier (Do-228) aircraft, Chetak helicopters, fast interceptor boats, and lightweight torpedoes.
  - The top three destinations** were the **USA, France, and Armenia**.
  - Notably, **'Made in Bihar' boots** are now part of the Russian Army's gear, highlighting India's high manufacturing standards.
- Defence industrial base** includes 16 DPSUs, over 430 licensed companies, and approximately 16,000 MSMEs, strengthening indigenous production capabilities.
- India targets ₹3 lakh crore in defence production by 2029**, reinforcing its position as a global defence manufacturing hub.

### Need for Defence Acquisition & Indigenisation Reforms

- **Strategic Autonomy & National Security:** Reduces dependence on foreign suppliers, especially during crises and geopolitical tensions.
- **Addressing Capability Gaps:** India faces complex security challenges across borders and in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). Modernisation is required to replace ageing platforms in the Army, Navy, and Air Force.
- **Reducing Import Bill & Promoting Economic Efficiency:** India is among the world's largest arms importers, indigenous production lowers costs in the long run, reduces foreign exchange outflow, and strengthens the domestic defence economy.
- **Boosting Domestic Defence Industrial Base:** Indigenisation stimulates innovation and growth of DPSUs, MSMEs, and private industry.
- **Faster Procurement & Operational Readiness:** Domestic manufacturing shortens procurement cycles and ensures timely delivery.
- **Improved Customisation & Adaptability:** Indigenous platforms can be tailored to Indian terrain (Himalayan high-altitudes, deserts, maritime zones) which allows continuous upgrades to meet evolving threat environments.
- **Technology Sovereignty:** Developing indigenous technologies ensures freedom in design, production, and future upgrades. It also prevents vulnerability due to sanctions, supply chain disruptions, or technology denials.

### Defence Acquisition & Indigenisation Reforms

- **DAP 2020 with Focus on Indian-IDDM:** It gives the highest priority to the 'Buy (Indian-Indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured)' category to ensure that major defence purchases are made from Indian sources.
- **Simplified 'Make' Procedure:** Encourages Indian industry to design, develop, and manufacture defence products, reducing import dependence.
  - ♦ **Under Make-I,** the government funds up to 70% of development costs and reserves certain projects for MSMEs.
  - ♦ **The Make-II category** (industry-funded) offers relaxed eligibility, minimal paperwork, and accepts proposals from industry or individuals.
  - ♦ **So far, 62 projects** for the Army, Navy, and Air Force have received 'Approval in Principle'.
- **Liberalised FDI in Defence:** Foreign Direct Investment limit raised to **74%** via automatic route for new defence industrial licences, and up to **100% by government approval** in cases involving access to advanced technology.

- **Defence Testing Infrastructure Scheme (DTIS):** DTIS aims to boost indigenisation by providing financial assistance for setting up **eight Greenfield testing and certification facilities** in the aerospace and defence sector.
  - ♦ **Seven test facilities** are already approved in areas like unmanned aerial systems, electronic warfare, electro-optics, and communications.
- **Boosting Innovation: iDEX & TDF Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX), launched in 2018,** supports startups, MSMEs, academia, and innovators with grants and funding to develop technologies for defence and aerospace.
  - ♦ **Technology Development Fund (TDF) Scheme** also funds industries, especially Start-ups and MSMEs upto an amount of Rs. 10 Crore, for innovation, research and development of defence technologies.
- **Strategic Partnership (SP) Model:** Introduced in 2017 to create long-term partnerships between Indian companies and global Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs).
  - ♦ These partnerships focus on technology transfer and setting up manufacturing infrastructure in India.
- **International Defence Cooperation:** In 2019, India signed an Inter-Governmental Agreement with Russia to jointly manufacture spares and components for Russian-origin defence equipment in India.
- **Indigenisation Portals: SRIJAN Portal** (launched 2020) lists defence items previously imported, inviting industry to develop them locally. So far, 46798 items have been listed.
- **Ease of Doing Business in Defence:** Defence products requiring industrial licences have been rationalised, and most parts/components no longer need a licence.
  - ♦ Industrial licence validity has been extended from 3 years to 15 years, with a possible 3-year extension, making investment planning easier.

### Conclusion

- The combination of strategic policy interventions, increased domestic participation, and a focus on indigenous innovation has significantly strengthened the country's defence capabilities.
- With ambitious targets set for 2029, the nation is poised to further expand its global footprint, reinforcing its position as a dependable partner in the international defence market while enhancing national security.

Source: TH

## PROTECTED MARINE AREAS NOT PART OF OFFSHORE BLOCKS

### In News

- The Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) informed Parliament that **offshore mining blocks** were identified only after excluding all **Marine Protected Areas and key biodiversity zones**.

### Background

- The Centre's plan to **auction 13 offshore mining blocks** — including sand off Kerala, lime mud off Gujarat, and polymetallic nodules near Great Nicobar — sparked protests in Kerala, where fishing communities and the state assembly opposed the move, citing **threats to marine life and livelihoods**.
- The government stated that mining can proceed only with **detailed environmental management plans**.

#### What is Offshore mining?

- It is the process of **retrieving mineral deposits from the deep seabed**, at a depth of more than 200 metres.
- In the process, poly-metallic nodules, including precipitated iron oxy-hydroxides and manganese oxides, onto which metals such as nickel, cobalt, copper, titanium and rare earth elements gather, are sorted, and unwanted sediments are flushed back into the sea.

#### What are Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)?

- They are designated ocean regions managed for **long-term conservation of marine resources**, ecosystem services, and cultural heritage. They restrict or prohibit certain activities to achieve goals like habitat protection, biodiversity preservation, and sustainable fisheries management, though many allow regulated fishing, research, or tourism.

### Offshore Mining in India

- It is aimed at harnessing ocean resources for energy and minerals.
- It focuses on tapping mineral deposits, hydrocarbons, and sand from beneath the seabed to meet industrial and energy needs.
- It is seen as a driver of **India's Blue Economy**, contributing to energy security, infrastructure, and technological advancement.
- With rising demand for rare earths and metals, offshore mining strengthens India's self-reliance in critical sectors.

### Issues and Challenges

- Mining activities can **disrupt marine ecosystems**, biodiversity, and coastal stability.
- Fishing communities worry about reduced livelihoods and displacement due to mining operations.
- Balancing industrial needs with conservation laws and marine protected areas remains complex.

### Government Initiatives

- Deep Ocean Mission aims to explore and sustainably harness ocean wealth.
  - It includes the **Samudrayaan Project** with India's first manned **submersible 'MATSYA 6000'**.
- Policy safeguards: Rule 5(2) of the Offshore Areas Operating Right Rules, 2024:** Prior consultation with stakeholder Ministries/Departments is mandatory before notifying any offshore area for the grant of operating rights.
  - Rule 10(5) and Rule 18(3) of the Offshore Areas Mineral (Auction) Rules, 2024**, mandate that the Successful/Preferred Bidder obtain all consents, approvals, permits, and no-objections required under applicable laws before commencement of production or exploration operations, including those relating to environmental protection.
- Section 16A of the Offshore Areas Mineral (Development and Regulation) Act, 2002** provides for the establishment of the Offshore Areas Mineral Trust as a non-profit autonomous body.
  - The coastal States have been made members of the Governing Body and Executive Committee of the Trust.

### Conclusion and Way Forward

- Offshore mining represents both opportunity and risk. While it can boost India's energy security and industrial growth, unchecked exploitation may harm fragile marine ecosystems and coastal communities.
- There is a need to balance development with sustainability, ensuring that initiatives like the Deep Ocean Mission prioritize ecological safeguards alongside economic gains.

Source: TH

## GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT OUTLOOK

### Context

- The **Global Environment Outlook, Seventh Edition: A Future We Choose (GEO-7)**, was released during the **seventh session of the United Nations Environment Assembly in Nairobi**.

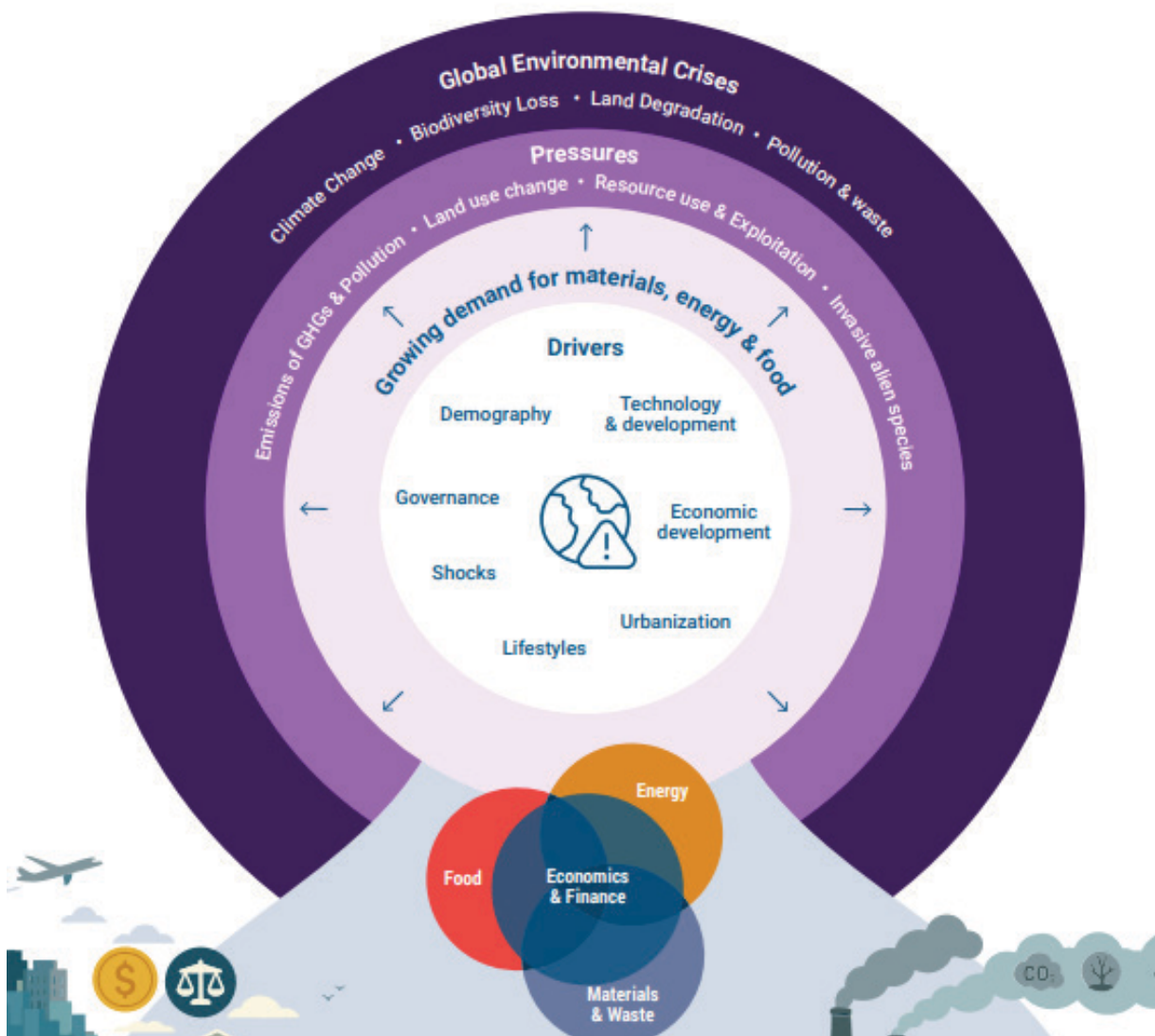


### About

- GEO-7 is UNEP's **flagship assessment** published for the first time in **1997**.
- It is a **major scientific report** that reviews the planet's environmental health, policy effectiveness, and future trends, providing crucial, participatory, science-based data to guide global environmental action and policy.

### Major Highlights of the Report

- **Tipping Points:** Several tipping points could occur in the next few years to decades:
  - ♦ shifts in intensity and timing of monsoons,
  - ♦ loss of Arctic sea ice which is likely to alter the jet stream,
  - ♦ change the frequency and magnitude of extreme weather events;
  - ♦ abrupt thaw of permafrost likely to result in a substantial release of methane within a few years;
- ♦ the coral die-off is already underway and a collapse of the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC) could lead to rapid shifts in the climate in Europe and Africa.
- **The report highlights several alarming trends:** Global warming is worsening and exceeding previous estimates.
  - ♦ 1 million species face extinction.
  - ♦ 20–40% of land is degraded.
  - ♦ Solid waste already exceeds 2 billion tonnes annually and will rise further.
  - ♦ Plastic production may triple by 2060 without policy shifts.
  - ♦ 9 million people die annually from pollution.
  - ♦ Climate change would cut 4% off annual global GDP by 2050 and 20% by the end of the century.
- **Global Warming:** The world has warmed 1.3°C, with projections showing potential warming between 2.4°C to 3.9°C by 2100, potentially faster than IPCC models estimate.



- **Interconnected Drivers:** Drivers like population growth, urbanization, resource-intensive lifestyles, and governance failures intensify environmental pressures.
- **Failures of Current Policies:** The current policies are insufficient — without transformation, none of the environmental SDGs will be achieved, and internationally agreed environmental goals (including the Paris Agreement, Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and Aichi Targets) will not be met.
- **India Specific:** Shifts in monsoon systems can affect South Asia including India which further impacts water, agriculture, and food systems.
  - ♦ Changes in monsoon circulation could exacerbate droughts, floods, and water scarcity across India.
  - ♦ India faces land degradation affecting approximately 33% of its geographical area (115-120 million hectares), with major impacts on agricultural productivity and food security.
  - ♦ Assessments indicate India's current targets are "Highly insufficient" for a 1.5°C pathway, requiring strengthened ambition and international support.

#### Policy Recommendations

- The report outlines **target-seeking scenarios** showing how the world could reach environmental goals if transformative efforts occur across sectors.
- **Transformation requires:**
  - ♦ Ambitious policies.
  - ♦ Inclusive governance.
  - ♦ Systematic integration of environmental goals in decision-making.
  - ♦ Wide participation from governments, civil society, businesses, and Indigenous Peoples.
- The report identifies **four major systems** where transformation is critical:
  - ♦ **Economic & Financial Systems:** Reform to internalize environmental costs and align finance with sustainability goals.
  - ♦ **Materials & Waste System:** Shift to a circular economy that minimizes waste and maximizes reuse and recycling.
  - ♦ **Energy System:** Accelerate renewable energy deployment and phase out fossil fuels, while ensuring energy access.
  - ♦ **Food System:** Promote sustainable diets, reduce food loss/waste, and enhance resilient food production.

- Urgent transformation **will deliver societal, economic, and environmental benefits** worth far more than the cost of inaction — potentially generating trillions in economic gains.

Source: IE

## NEWS IN SHORT

### SWAHID DIWAS

#### In News

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi honoured the courage of those who participated in the historic Assam Movement on Swahid Diwas.

#### Swahid Diwas

- It is observed annually on December 10 to honour those who sacrificed their lives during the **Assam Movement** – a mass agitation launched in **1979 by the Assam Students' Union (ASU)** and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) against large-scale infiltration from Bangladesh.
- The movement culminated in **1985 with the signing of the historic Assam Accord**, ensuring detection and deportation of illegal foreigners and guaranteeing constitutional, legislative, and administrative safeguards to protect Assamese identity, culture, and heritage.

Source :Air

### ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (ADB)

#### In News

- The **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** has raised India's growth forecast for **FY26 to 7.2%, from 6.5%.**

#### About ADB

- ADB was **established in 1966** as a regional development bank to promote social and economic development in Asia and the Pacific.
- Its **headquarters is in Mandaluyong, Manila, Philippines.**
- Its membership includes both **regional (Asia-Pacific) and non-regional countries**, with around **two-thirds of UNESCAP members** plus developed donor countries participating.
  - ♦ India joined **ADB in 1966 as a founding member.**
- **Major shareholders** include Japan and the United States (15.6% each), followed by China (6.4%), India (6.3%) and Australia (5.8%), reflecting both regional and non-regional stake.

Source: AIR



## GLOWCAS9

### In News

- **GlowCas9** is a newly engineered variant of the **CRISPR Cas9 enzyme** that emits light while editing DNA.

### About

- **GlowCas9 is a bioluminescent Cas9** created at the Bose Institute, Kolkata, by fusing Cas9 with a split **nano-luciferase enzyme** derived from deep-sea shrimp proteins.
- CRISPR uses a guide RNA to direct the Cas9 enzyme to a specific DNA sequence.
  - ♦ Cas9 makes a precise cut, enabling gene correction.
- **Bioluminescent Cas9** opens a new direction for “theratracking” – simultaneously performing therapy and tracking it at the molecular level.

Source: AIR

## CITES CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES (COP20)

### Context

- The 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP20) to the **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES)** has concluded in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, marking the **50th anniversary of the Convention**.

### About CITES

- **Overview:** CITES (the **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora**) is an international agreement between governments.
- **Aim:** To ensure that **international trade** in specimens of wild animals and plants **does not threaten the survival of the species**.
- **History:** CITES was drafted as a result of a resolution adopted in 1963 at a meeting of members of IUCN (The World Conservation Union).
  - ♦ The text of the Convention was agreed in 1973, and came into force in **1975**.
- **CITES lists species in three appendices based on the level of protection required:**
  - ♦ **Appendix I:** Species threatened with extinction and Commercial trade is strictly prohibited.
  - ♦ **Appendix II:** Species are not necessarily threatened with extinction but may become

so if trade is not regulated. Trade is allowed but controlled through permits.

- ♦ **Appendix III:** Species protected in at least one country which has asked other CITES Parties for assistance in controlling trade.
- CITES is **legally binding** on the Parties – in other words members have to implement the convention, however it does not take the place of national laws.
- **The CITES Secretariat** is administered by the **United Nations Environment Programme** and is located at **Geneva, Switzerland**.

Source: DTE

## GREAT BARRIER REEF

### In News

- A combination of extreme heat stress and a rare coral disease has wiped out 75 per cent of Goniopora colonies at a site on the **Great Barrier Reef**.

### About Coral Reef

- It is an **underwater ecosystem** characterized by reef-building corals.
- Reefs are formed of **colonies of coral polyps** held together by **calcium carbonate**.
- The coral polyps live in an **endosymbiotic relationship** with algae.
- **Temperature: 20°C- 35°C; Salinity: Between 27% to 40%.**
- **Shallow Water:** Coral reefs grow better in shallow water; less than 50 m.
- **Great Barrier Reef:** Located in the **Coral Sea, Australia (World Heritage Site)**.
- **Coral reefs in India:** Gulf of Kutch, Gulf of Mannar, Andaman & Nicobar, Lakshadweep Island and Malvan.

Source: DTE

## WESTERN TRAGOPAN

### In News

- Recent studies show that suitable habitats of **western tragopan** exist in Jammu & Kashmir but human disturbance and fragmentation still threaten the bird's survival.

### Western Tragopan

- It is one of **India's rarest pheasants** and **Himachal Pradesh's state bird**.

- It now survives only in small fragmented pockets across the western Himalayas.



- The IUCN estimates only 3,000–9,500 mature individuals remain, all in a single subpopulation, with about a quarter found in the western Himalayas and northern Pakistan.
- **Threats:** It faces threats due to habitat loss, hunting, and other anthropogenic factors.
- **Protection status:** IUCN Red List of Threatened species classified it as **Vulnerable**.
- **Other steps:** The Sarahan pheasantry in Shimla has over the years seen successful captive breeding of western tragopan.

Source :TH

