

## DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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## WHERE DOES INDIA STAND ON CHILD MARRIAGE?

### In News

- Despite a strong legal framework and multiple schemes tackling Child marriage in India, India is still off-track to fully eliminate child marriage by the 2030 SDG deadline.

### Concept, Trend and Legal Framework

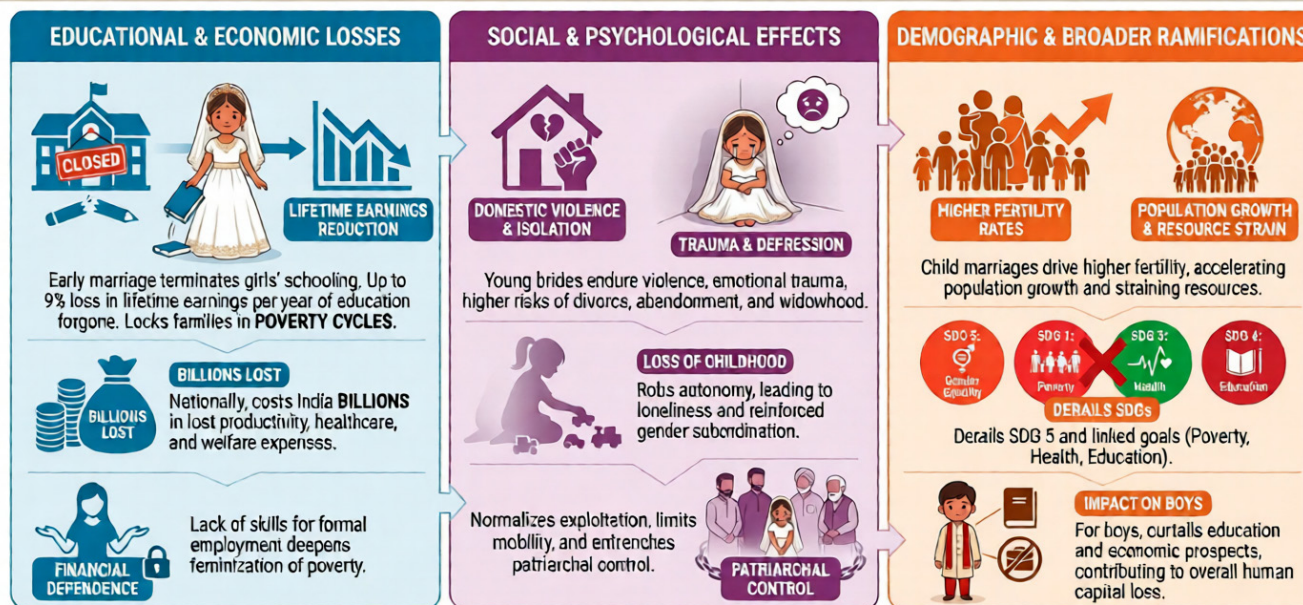
- Definition:** Child marriage refers to any marriage in which at least one party is below 18 years of age; globally, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as any human below 18 years.
- NFHS data:** The proportion of women aged 20–24 years married before 18 declined from about 47.4% (2005–06, NFHS-3) to 26.8% (2015–16, NFHS-4) and further to 23.3% (2019–21, NFHS-5).
- State variation:** Eight states are above the national average; West Bengal, Bihar and Tripura have over 40% of women 20–24 years married before 18, making them among the worst performers.

- Indian law:** The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006 defines a “child” as a male below 21 years and a female below 18 years, and a “child marriage” as a marriage where either party is a child.
- Child Marriage Prohibition Officer:** Under Section 16, states appoint these officers to prevent child marriages, collect evidence for prosecution, create awareness and maintain statistics.

### Major Factors

- Poverty and economic insecurity:** Poor households often see early marriage as a way to reduce economic burden and “secure” a girl’s future.
- Patriarchy and gender norms:** Girls’ education and autonomy are devalued; they are pushed into unpaid domestic labour and early marriage to uphold family “honour”.
- Socio-cultural and religious practices:** In some communities, marrying girls before or soon after puberty is considered auspicious.

## IMPACTS OF CHILD MARRIAGE: A MULTIDIMENSIONAL CRISIS



Addressing Child Marriage is Critical for a Sustainable and Equitable Future.

### Initiatives

- The **Prevention of Child Marriage Act** was passed in 2006, and national child marriage rates have halved since then.
- The **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012** has also helped prevent child marriage.
- Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP)** aims to improve the child sex ratio and promote girls' education.
- District-level models** (e.g., Panchayats declaring themselves “child marriage-free”) use community monitoring, school-based vigilance and local campaigns to deter such marriages.



- States cash transfers and scholarship schemes to encourage girls schooling.
- India is party to the UN Convention on the **Rights of the Child and has endorsed the 2030 Agenda**, including SDG Target 5.3 to eliminate child, early and forced marriage.

Source: TH

## FUTURE OF INDIA-BANGLADESH RELATIONSHIP: PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE ON MEA

### Context

- According to a recent report by the **Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs**, India is facing its **most formidable strategic challenge** in Bangladesh **since the 1971 Liberation War**.

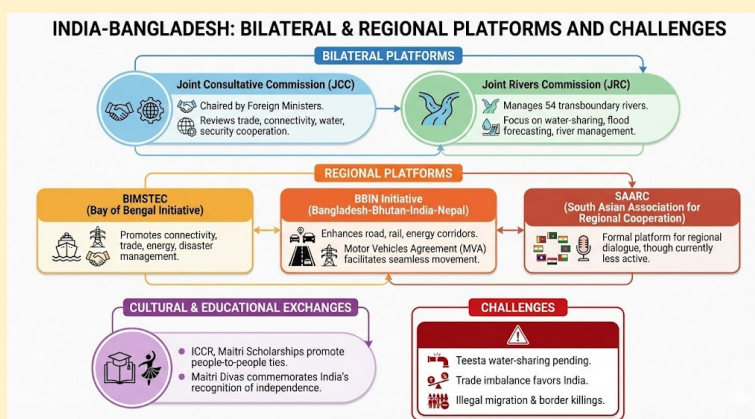
### Key Highlights of Report

- **Strategic Challenge Post-2024 Regime Change:** India faces its 'greatest strategic challenge' in Bangladesh since the 1971 Liberation War.
  - ♦ The **ousting of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina** in 2024 disrupted a decade-long strategic alignment between the two nations.
  - ♦ The issue gained further complexity after **Hasina was sentenced to death** in November, 2025, with Bangladesh's interim authorities accusing her and her associates of **inciting unrest** in parts of the country.
- **Rising Influence of External Powers:** The report warns of **increasing Chinese and Turkish influence** in Bangladesh, particularly in infrastructure and defense sectors, which could undermine India's traditional strategic foothold.
- **Emergence of a New Political Order in Dhaka:** The interim government has **banned all Awami League political activities**, and the party is **barred from contesting the February 2026 elections**.
- The **National Citizen Party (NCP)** has emerged, led by **student activists** who spearheaded the movement against Hasina. It has opened avenues for **greater Chinese and Pakistani influence** in Bangladesh's political and economic affairs.
- **Diminishing Strategic Space for India:** The new regime in Bangladesh has adopted a **more nationalistic and less India-friendly stance**, leading to a visible cooling of bilateral ties.
  - ♦ **Anti-India sentiments** have gained traction, with public protests targeting Indian diplomatic missions, including a significant demonstration at the Indian High Commission in Dhaka in December 2025.
- **Connectivity and Economic Cooperation at Risk:** India, in 2024, emphasized the importance of multi-modal connectivity, energy cooperation, and trade integration as pillars of the relationship.
  - ♦ Projects like the **India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline** and **cross-border rail links** were seen as symbols of deepening ties, now **potentially at risk due to political shifts**.
- **Regional and Security Implications:** Bangladesh remains vital to **India's 'Neighbourhood First' and 'Act East' policies**, as well as its **Indo-Pacific vision**.
  - ♦ The **4,096-km shared border** makes cooperation on border management, counterterrorism, and migration critical to regional stability.
- **Ganga Water Treaty and Bilateral Engagement:** The panel discussed the **Ganga Water Treaty**, which is **due for renewal in December 2026**.
  - ♦ **No formal discussions** have been initiated with Bangladesh, while India has begun consultations with state governments.
  - ♦ The committee has **recommended early bilateral engagement** to prevent any **post-2026 vacuum** in water-sharing arrangements, emphasizing that maintaining open communication channels is vital for long-term stability.

### India-Bangladesh Relationship: An Overview

- **Historical Context:** India was the **first country to recognize Bangladesh** after its independence in 1971.
  - ♦ The **Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Peace (1972)** and further evolution into a **comprehensive partnership** encompassing political, security, economic, and cultural dimensions.

- **Defence & Security Cooperation:** Robust military exchanges between armed forces of both nations, like **Sampriti & Bongo Sagar joint exercises**.
  - ♦ **Muktijoddha (freedom fighters) programmes** renewed: scholarships and medical schemes extended through 2027.
  - ♦ Cooperation on **police, anti-corruption, drug trafficking, fake currency, and human trafficking** issues.
  - ♦ Regular **DG-level talks** between Border Guards and anti-narcotics agencies.
- **Connectivity Cooperation:**
  - ♦ **Railway Connectivity:** Rehabilitation of **6 pre-1965 cross-border rail links**, and three passenger trains **Maitri, Bandhan, and Mitali Express** in operation.
  - ♦ **Road and Inland Waterways:** **Five bus routes** connect Indian cities (Kolkata, Agartala, Guwahati) to Dhaka and Khulna.
  - ♦ **Port Connectivity:** **Chittagong and Mongla Ports** opened for Indian transit use (2023), reducing logistics costs and transport time.
    - Expansion of the **BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA)**, improving logistics in Northeast India and Bangladesh.
    - Plans for a **Dhaka–Kolkata express cargo corridor**.
- **Economic and Commercial Relations:** Bangladesh is India's largest trade partner in South Asia; India is Bangladesh's 2nd largest in Asia.
  - ♦ FY 2023–24 trade volume: **USD 14.01 billion**, with **Bangladesh exports to India at USD 1.97 billion**.
- **Power and Energy Cooperation:** Bangladesh imports **1,160 MW of electricity** from India.
  - ♦ **Joint Working Group/Steering Committee on Power** manages cross-border electricity trade.
  - ♦ **Maitree Super Thermal Power Plant** operational.
  - ♦ **India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline (2023)** transports high-speed diesel.
    - Indian firms **ONGC Videsh Ltd, Oil India, and IOCL** are involved in energy collaboration.
- **Development Partnership:** Bangladesh is **India's largest development partner** with **USD 8 billion in Lines of Credit**.
  - ♦ Projects include **roads, railways, ports, and shipping infrastructure**.
  - ♦ 77 completed and 16 ongoing **High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDPs)** worth **USD 50 million**.
  - ♦ Human resource development via **ITEC training**, scholarships, and capacity-building programs for civil servants, police, and professionals.
  - ♦ **1,000 'Suborno Jayanti Scholarships'** and dedicated portal for Bangladeshi students to study in India.



Source: TH

## RBI BOARD APPROVES RISK-BASED DEPOSIT INSURANCE FRAMEWORK FOR BANKS

### Context

- The Central Board of Directors of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) approved a risk-based deposit insurance framework for banks at its 620th meeting, held in Hyderabad.

### What is the Deposit Insurance Framework?

- Deposit insurance is a mechanism to **protect bank depositors against the risk** of bank failure.
- In India, deposit insurance is administered by the **Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC)**, a wholly owned subsidiary of the RBI.
  - Currently, deposits up to **₹5 lakh** per depositor per bank are insured.
- Banks pay an insurance premium to DICGC, which funds payouts to depositors if a bank fails.
- Existing System:** DICGC has been operating the flat rate premium-based deposit insurance scheme since **1962**.
  - Under the scheme, the banks are now charged a premium of **12 paise per ₹100 of assessable deposits**.

### Risk-based Premium Structure

- Under the risk-based framework, premiums are expected to vary based on parameters such as **asset quality, capital adequacy, and overall risk exposure**.
- Such models are used in several banking systems globally to align **insurance costs with underlying risk** and reduce cross-subsidisation between banks.

### Significance of the New Framework

- Promotes Financial Discipline:** Banks are incentivised to improve asset quality and capital buffers to reduce premium burden. It encourages prudent lending and better risk management practices.
- Reduces Cross-Subsidisation:** Under the flat-rate system, well-managed banks indirectly subsidise weaker banks. Risk-based pricing ensures that each bank bears the cost of its own risk.
- Aligns with Global Best Practices:** Several countries, including the **US and EU** members,

already follow risk-based deposit insurance models.

- More Efficient System:** Sound banks benefit from lower insurance costs, improving profitability and competitiveness.

### Implementing Challenges

- Impact on Weak Banks:** Higher premiums may strain already stressed banks, particularly smaller or regional banks, reducing their lending capacity and worsening financial stress.
- Complexity in Assessment:** Risk evaluation requires robust data, transparent methodology, and continuous monitoring. Misclassification or opacity may raise concerns among banks.
- Procyclicality Risk:** During economic downturns, banks' risk profiles may deteriorate, leading to higher premiums when they can least afford them.
- Possibility of Regulatory Arbitrage:** Banks may attempt to temporarily improve metrics to reduce premiums without addressing structural weaknesses.

### Way Ahead

- A gradual and calibrated rollout** of the risk-based framework is essential.
- RBI and DICGC must ensure **transparent criteria**, periodic review, and safeguards against procyclicality.
- Special consideration may be required for **small banks and cooperative banks** during the transition.
- Combined with strong supervision, the framework can enhance depositor protection and systemic stability.

Source: **AIR**

## DATA EXCLUSIVITY IN INDIA

### Context

- The Indian government is considering implementing **"data exclusivity" in the pharmaceutical drugs sector**.
- The government's approach appears to be driven by the expectation that the provision could help bring in additional investment in the country.

### Patent in Pharmaceutical Industry

- In the pharmaceutical industry, patents are broadly classified based on **what aspect of a drug or process is being protected**.

- ♦ **Pharma patents protect** drug molecules, processes, formulations, uses, and delivery systems.
- **Types of Patents in India are:** Product Patent, Process Patent, Improvement Patent and Biotechnology Patent.
- **Criteria:** An invention must satisfy:
  - ♦ Novelty i.e. it is new worldwide.
  - ♦ **Inventive Step:** An invention must not be an obvious modification or simple combination of existing knowledge.
  - ♦ **Industrial Applicability:** It is capable of being made or used in industry.
- **Term of Patent: 20 years** from date of filing which is compliant to **TRIPS**.
- **Compulsory Licensing (CL):** Compulsory licensing is when a government allows someone else to produce a patented product or process **without the consent of the patent owner**. It is allowed under **Section 84 of Patents Act, 1970** when:
  - ♦ Reasonable public requirements not met.
  - ♦ Drugs are not affordable.
  - ♦ The patented invention isn't worked (manufactured/exploited) in India.
- There is an international filing system known as **Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) system**.
  - ♦ When a PCT application is filed, an inventor of a member country of PCT can simultaneously obtain priority for his/her invention in all the PCT member countries.
  - ♦ **India joined PCT in 1998.**
  - ♦ All activities related to PCT are coordinated by the **World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) situated in Geneva.**

#### Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS)

- TRIPS is a **binding** WTO agreement that sets **minimum global standards** for the protection and enforcement of Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs).
- It has been in force since **1995**.
- It is binding on all WTO members, including India.

#### World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)

- It is a **self-funding agency of the United Nations**, that serves the world's innovators and creators, ensuring that their ideas travel safely to the market and improve lives everywhere.
- **History:** WIPO was established in **1967** by the **WIPO Convention**.
- **Members:** The organization has **194** member states including both developing and developed nations like India, Italy, Israel, Austria, Bhutan, Brazil, China, Cuba, Egypt, Pakistan, the U.S. and the U.K.
- India joined WIPO in **1975**.
- **Headquarters:** Geneva, Switzerland.

#### Data Exclusivity

- **In the Absence of Data Exclusivity:** When a company develops a new drug, it must **submit clinical trial data** demonstrating the safety and efficacy of its product **to regulators**.
  - ♦ The regulator may use this data to approve **another company's generic version** on the basis of much less resource-intensive bio-equivalence studies.
  - ♦ **The generic manufacturer** can then start marketing its **generic drugs on the date the original company's patent ends**.
  - ♦ Data exclusivity is not implemented in India's regulatory system **to prioritize affordable medicine access over originator data protection**.
- ♦ India's approach has enabled the country to develop the world's largest generic pharmaceutical sector.
- **Data Exclusivity:** This provision grants **innovator pharmaceutical companies exclusive rights** over the **clinical trial data**, meaning a regulator cannot use it to grant approvals to generic versions.
  - ♦ So, generic drug companies have to either wait until the exclusivity expires or carry out expensive clinical trials themselves to prove safety and efficacy.

#### Significance of Data Exclusivity

- **Incentive for Innovation:** Data exclusivity in India can protect the costly and risky clinical trial



investments which eventually encourages new drug discovery and R&D.

- **Attracts Foreign Investment:** By providing predictable regulatory protection, India might be seen as an IP-secure destination and will attract a large amount of FDI in the Pharma sector.
- **Boost to Original Research:** It encourages Indian firms to move from reverse engineering to innovative drug development.
- **Alignment with Global Practices:** Countries and groupings like USA, EU, Japan provide data exclusivity, India can also become a part of the nations protecting rights of the original innovator.

#### Concerns with Data Exclusivity

- **Delay in Generic Drug Entry:** It will block approval of generics creating a de facto monopoly beyond patent term.
- **Harms Domestic Generic Industry:** If India were to agree to data exclusivity provisions, its generics-focused pharmaceutical industry may lose its edge in international markets.
  - ♦ Almost 90% of Indian pharmaceutical companies manufacture generic drugs, they do not invest in developing new ones.
- **Increases Cost of Medicines:** This will also delay access to cheaper medicines to the people of the country.
- **Ethical Issues in Clinical Trials:** It can lead to Pharma companies conducting questionable, unnecessary clinical trials to get incentives.
- **Impact on Healthcare System:** It will lead to the lower availability of affordable medicines which will increase burden on public health systems in India.
- **Impact on Global Health:** India is the pharmacy of the world, exporting cheap generic drugs all over the world. Data Exclusivity will impact the supply of affordable drugs to Africa, Asia, Latin America.

#### Way Ahead

- While data exclusivity can incentivise innovation and investment, in India it risks delaying generic competition, raising drug prices, and undermining public health.
- India's cautious rejection of data exclusivity reflects a conscious choice to prioritise affordable access to medicines while using TRIPS flexibilities wisely.

Source: IE

## COUNTING ELECTRONS REVEALS THORIUM'S NUCLEAR TICK IN SOLID CLOCK

#### Context

- Scientists have found a way to **detect thorium-229's nuclear 'tick'** in a solid, opening a path to **miniaturised nuclear clocks**.

#### About

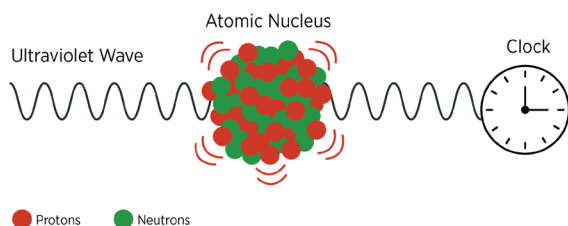
- **Conventional atomic clocks** count **electron transitions**, which are sensitive to external disturbances (electric/magnetic fields).
  - ♦ **Nuclear energy levels** are far more shielded, promising more stable timekeeping.
- **Why Thorium-229 ( $^{229}\text{Th}$ )?**
- It has a **uniquely low-energy nuclear excited state** which can be directly excited using vacuum-ultraviolet (VUV) lasers—a rare and crucial property.
- **Main experimental challenge:** In solid materials, the excited nucleus usually relaxes via internal conversion (energy transferred to an electron) instead of emitting a detectable photon, making direct detection difficult.
- **New breakthrough approach:** Instead of avoiding internal conversion, researchers used it as the signal by embedding  $^{229}\text{Th}$  in thorium dioxide ( $\text{ThO}_2$ ), exciting nuclei with VUV laser pulses and detecting the delayed electrons emitted during nuclear decay.
- **Key Results:**
  - ♦ Clear nuclear resonance detected at 2,020,407.5 GHz.
  - ♦ Internal conversion lifetime measured at 12.3  $\mu\text{s}$ .
  - ♦ Implies a nuclear clock accuracy of 1 second error in ~15.8 billion years.
- **Significance:**
  - ♦ Opens **new materials and designs** for nuclear clocks.
  - ♦ **Enables miniaturisation**, since time can be read via electron current rather than complex optics.
  - ♦ Potential applications in fundamental physics, precision sensing, and tests of physical constants.

#### Nuclear Clock

- A nuclear clock works by using **ultraviolet light** to excite the **nucleus of a special atom, like thorium-229**.

- When the light hits the nucleus at just the right frequency, it causes the **nucleus to change its energy state, like flipping a tiny switch.**
- By precisely measuring and counting these energy flips, **scientists can create an extremely accurate timekeeping device.**

## How a Nuclear Clock Works



### Difference Between Atomic Clock and Nuclear Clock

Aspect	Atomic Clocks	Nuclear Clocks
<b>Reference System</b>	Electron orbital transitions.	Nuclear energy transitions.
<b>Oscillation Frequency</b>	Microwave to optical (MHz-THz range).	Higher frequencies (ultraviolet).
<b>Precision &amp; stability</b>	Very high (defines 1 second).	Potentially much higher than atomic clocks.
<b>Applications</b>	GPS, telecom, internet, satellites.	Future deep-space navigation, fundamental physics.
<b>Current status</b>	Fully operational, widely used.	Experimental / research stage.

### Key Advantages of Nuclear Clock over Atomic Clock

- Much greater accuracy and stability.
- Better for testing fundamental constants.
- Less environmental interference.
- Higher sensitivity to gravitational time dilation.

Source: TH

## HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT

### Context

- The National Tiger Conservation Authority appraised the expansion of Project Cheetah and

reviewed measures to address human-wildlife conflict.

### What is human-wildlife conflict (HWC)?

- HWC refers to the **negative interaction between humans and wild animals**, leading to adverse impacts such as **injury or loss of human lives, crop, livestock and other properties**, and equally **negative impacts on wild animals** and or their habitats.
- In India, conflicts are most frequently associated with **elephants, tigers, leopards, bears and wild boars**, particularly in forest fringe and corridor regions.

### Reasons for increase in human-wildlife conflict

- **Degraded Habitats:** Deforestation, developmental activities, and agricultural expansion have shrunk and fragmented wildlife habitats.
- **Rise in Certain Animal Populations:** Explosion in the population of wild pigs and monkeys, especially bonnet macaques, has worsened the conflict.
- **Human Activities:** Grazing of cattle in forest areas and changes in cropping patterns attract wild animals.
- **Ecological Imbalances:** Decline in top predator species due to historical hunting policies has led to an unnatural increase in herbivorous species.

### Steps Taken by Government

- **The National Wildlife Action Plan of India (2017–2035):** It serves as India's long-term strategic roadmap for wildlife conservation. It emphasises on;
  - ♦ Landscape-level conservation.
  - ♦ Mitigation of human–wildlife conflict.
  - ♦ Community participation and livelihood integration.
  - ♦ Strengthening wildlife crime control and scientific monitoring.
- **Wildlife Protection Act 1972:** It lays down the rules and regulations for the conservation and protection of Animals in India.
- **Protected Areas and reserves:** There are 107 National Parks, 573 Wildlife Sanctuaries, 115 Conservation Reserves.
- **Plan Bee:** It is adopted by the **Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR)** which is a unique method to keep elephants away from railway tracks and plans are afoot to implement it all over the country to save the lives of elephants.



- **Operation Thunderbird:** Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB), Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, coordinated Operation in India to **fight against wildlife crime**.
- **Species-Specific Conservation Programmes:** Project Tiger, Project Elephant, etc. are national initiatives focusing on iconic species, involving habitat protection and anti-poaching.
- **Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE):** It was established by the **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)** at the tenth Conference of the Parties in 1997.
- **Rapid Response Teams:** In **Kerala** the areas which see the highest incidence of human-animal conflict, Rapid Response Teams have been established, both, permanent and temporary.

#### Way Ahead

- **Mainstream human–wildlife conflict mitigation** into development planning, rather than treating it as a post-facto response.
- **Strengthen awareness and communication mechanisms** by improving regular interaction between forest departments and local communities, sensitising people about animal behaviour and early-warning signals.
- **Protect and restore wildlife corridors** to enable safe movement of animals between habitat patches without crossing human-made barriers, thereby reducing accidental encounters, roadkills and crop depredation.

Source: TH

## NEWS IN SHORT

### CHILLAI-KALAN

#### In News

- Kashmir is currently under the grip of ‘Chillai-Kalan’.

#### ‘Chilai Kalan’

- It is the coldest phase of winter in Kashmir, starts on December 21 and ends on January 31.
- The 40-day ‘Chilai Kalan’ is followed by a 20-day-long ‘Chillai-Khurd’ (small cold) and a 10-day-long ‘Chillai-Bachha’ (baby cold).

#### Relevance

- Heavy snowfall during Chillai Kalan replenishes water reservoirs in the higher reaches, sustaining

rivers, streams and lakes during the summer months.

- A poor snow season can lead to water stress later in the year.

Source :HT

### NAAT TESTING

#### Context

- As the National Blood Transfusion Bill, 2025 gets introduced in Parliament, patients recount **how unsafe screening changed their lives** and why **screening donor blood should be mandatory**.

#### About

- It is mandatory by law for all blood banks to test for **five key transfusion transmissible infections:** HIV, hepatitis B, hepatitis C, syphilis and malaria.
  - ◆ However it is that most blood banks across the country use **ELISA-tests and not NAAT tests for screening**.

#### NAAT (A Nucleic Acid Amplification Tests)

- A NAAT test is a molecular diagnostic test that **detects the genetic material (DNA or RNA) of a pathogen**.
- **Uses:** COVID-19 diagnosis, Tuberculosis (CBNAAT/TrueNat) HIV, Hepatitis B & C, STIs (Chlamydia, Gonorrhoea) diagnosis.
- **Advantages:** It detects infection early, has been a gold standard for many diseases and is highly reliable for confirmation.
- **Disadvantages:** Requires lab infrastructure, costlier than rapid antigen tests.
- At present, the law **does not mandate NAAT testing**.
  - ◆ However, a 2023 guidance document by the Union Health Ministry said that while **the NAAT test is not mandatory, it is recommended**.

Source: IE

### OPERATION HAWKEYE STRIKE

#### Context

- The US forces commenced ‘**Operation Hawkeye Strike**’ in Syria to eliminate **Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)** fighters, infrastructure, and weapons sites.

#### About

- The operation comes days after a suspected Islamic State attacker struck a convoy of US and Syrian forces in the central Syrian town of Palmyra.

- The US personnel who were targeted were supporting Operation Inherent Resolve, the international effort to combat IS, which seized swaths of Syrian and Iraqi territory in 2014.



#### Do you know?

- The terrorist organisation, ISIS, is banned in India under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.

Source: HT

## SUPERKILONOVA

#### In News

- Researchers observed a bright cosmic event 1.3 billion light-years away that may be a **superkilonova**.

#### Superkilonova

- It is a rare kind of **cosmic explosion** and it is a more energetic version of a **kilonova**.
  - Kilonovae occur when two neutron stars merge**, ejecting heavy elements like gold and platinum, whose radioactive decay produces light.
- A **superkilonova** can be brighter and bluer than a regular kilonova because some ejected matter falls back onto the merged object, heats up, and warms the surrounding material, possibly extending the event's brightness.

Source :TH

## SUPREME COURT'S UNIFORM DEFINITION OF ARAVALLI HILLS

#### Context

- The Supreme Court of India has accepted a uniform definition of the **Aravalli hills**, as recommended by a Central Government-appointed expert committee, and issued additional directions to strengthen conservation.

#### Supreme Court's Key Observations

- Conservation must be ecological and geological, not revenue-record based.

- The Aravalli should be protected as a single landscape system for hydrology, biodiversity, and climate resilience.
- Directed preparation of a comprehensive Management Plan for Sustainable Mining (MPSM) for the entire Aravalli landscape by the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE).
- Piecemeal protection undermines long-term sustainability.

#### Expert Committee Recommendations

- Operational Definitions:
  - Aravalli Hills:** Any landform in notified Aravalli districts with local relief (elevation) of  $\geq 100$  metres.
  - Aravalli Range:** Two or more Aravalli Hills located within 500 metres of each other.
- Core / Inviolate Zones Safeguards:
  - Absolute prohibition of mining in protected Areas & Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZs), tiger Reserves, wetlands & CAMPA plantation sites.

#### Significance of the Aravalli Range

- The Aravalli Range, stretching over approximately **692 kilometres** in a northeastern direction, traverses the Indian states of **Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Haryana** before culminating in **Delhi**, is the oldest mountain range in India.
  - Rajasthan** accounts for nearly **two-thirds** of the mountain range.
  - It acts as a **critical ecological barrier** preventing the eastward expansion of the **Thar Desert** into Haryana, Rajasthan, and western Uttar Pradesh.
  - The Aravallis support water-recharge systems and are the source of rivers such as the **Sabarmati and Luni**.
  - The region is **rich in minerals** including sandstone, limestone, marble, granite, lead, zinc, copper, gold, and tungsten.

#### Initiatives for Protection

- Matri Van Initiative:** Development of a 750-acre urban forest in Aravalli hills. Linked to 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' campaign.
- Aravalli Green Wall Project:** Creation of a 5 km green buffer around Aravalli across four states.
  - Aims to combat desertification and land degradation.

Source: TH

## GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD

### In News

- The Supreme Court of India has tightened safeguards for the protection of the **Great Indian Bustard (GIB)** by revising and rationalising conservation areas in relation to **Green Energy Corridor (GEC)** transmission projects in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

### About Great Indian Bustard (GIB)

- **About:**
  - ♦ **One of the heaviest flying birds endemic to the Indian subcontinent** mainly Rajasthan and Gujarat. It is also a State Bird of Rajasthan
  - ♦ It is an omnivorous bird.

- **Habitat:**
  - ♦ Untamed, Arid grasslands.
  - ♦ A maximum number of GIBs were found in Jaisalmer and the Indian Army-controlled field firing range near Pokhran, Rajasthan.
  - ♦ **Other areas:** Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.
- **Protection Status:**
  - ♦ **IUCN Status:** Critically Endangered.
  - ♦ Listed in **Wildlife Protection Act's Schedule 1**.
- **Threats to the Bird:**
  - ♦ Hunting, Intensification of agriculture, Power lines.

**Source:** TH

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