

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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CLOUDBURSTS IN INDIA

In News

- Cloudbursts have become more common in the Himalayan states leading to flash floods, landslides and heavy loss of lives and property.

What is a Cloudburst?

- India Meteorological Department (IMD) defines a **cloudburst is a sudden release of downpour** — an extreme weather event of rainfall over a small area (20-30 sq. km.); a rainfall of 100 mm or more in one hour recorded in a station.
- It is a severe weather event in which there is **very heavy rain in a short period of time over a small area**.
- These cloudburst events are mostly associated with westward-moving cyclonic circulations in the middle troposphere (implying a cold-core in the lower troposphere).
 - ♦ The troposphere is the **lower atmosphere**, where almost **all weather phenomena occur** — stretching from the Earth's surface to 18-20 kilometres high at the equator, only six km high at the poles.
- The **orographic forcing and strong convection** leading to the formation of deep **cumulonimbus clouds** as high as 15 km are responsible for most of the cloudburst events

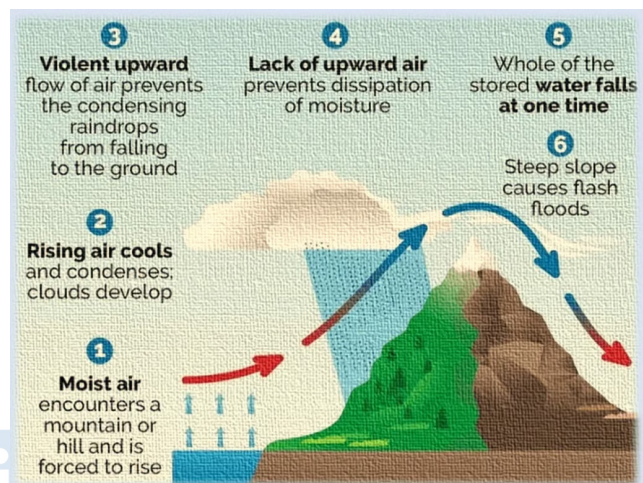
Cloudbursts in India

- Cloudbursts are infrequent, but climate change is increasing their frequency as a warmer atmosphere can hold more moisture.
- The cloudbursts are mostly confined to the **remote Himalayan and Western Ghats regions** where there are few weather stations and rain gauges leading to under-reporting.
- There have been a spurt of cloudburst-like incidents in Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir, especially during the July-August monsoon months.
- The India Meteorological Department (IMD) said that nearly 30 cloudbursts were officially recorded between 1970 and 2016, but experts say the real figure is far higher.

Why Do Mountain Regions Experience More Cloudbursts?

- Cloudbursts are more common in **mountainous regions** due to **orographic lift**, where warm, moisture-laden air is forced to rise along mountain slopes, cools, and condenses.

- Mountains create **conditions of low pressure**, leading to strong build-up of clouds and collisions of air that make rain heavier.
- Sometimes powerful upward drafts of air hold the rain away, and the raindrops grow larger and larger until they are too heavy to stay aloft.
 - ♦ Then suddenly they fall in a short time, and there is a great cloudburst.
- Cloudbursts can also take place in plains but conditions are not so favourable as in hilly areas.



Orographic Rain and its Mechanism

Effects of Cloudbursts

- Cloudbursts are the most intense end of the rainfall spectrum and cause **flash floods**
- Heavy rains destabilise mountain slopes causing **landslides**, mudflows and rockslides.
- Sediment and debris clog up river channels, increasing the **risk of flooding downstream**.
- Rapid floods do not leave enough time for evacuation, resulting in **loss of life and displacement**.
- Roads, bridges, power lines, communication networks and homes are **badly damaged or washed away**.
- Crops, fertile topsoil and **farmlands are destroyed** due to floods and erosion and the livelihood of farmers is affected.

Challenges to forecast cloudbursts

- **Localised**: Cloudbursts happen in very small areas, smaller than the grid size used in most weather models, so it is hard to get the prediction right.
- **Fast development** – Cloudbursts develop and intensify very quickly, giving very little lead time for forecasting.

- **Mountain challenges:** Doppler radar signals are blocked by hilly terrain and there are fewer automatic weather stations so data are missing.
- **Computational limits:** Accurate forecasting needs high-resolution weather models and vast amounts of computing power.

Why forecasting cloudbursts is a challenge

Efforts to monitor and forecast cloudbursts are still at a nascent stage

1 As per the IMD definition, over **100 mm of rainfall in one hour** is called a cloudburst. It usually occurs over a small geographical region (20-30 sq. km)

2 Rainfall of 100 mm per hour translates to **100 litres for every square metre** where a cloudburst occurs. For a small region of 20 sq. km, it is about **two billion litres of water** in an hour

3 Tall cumulonimbus clouds causing cloudbursts can develop quickly (in about **30 minutes**) as the moisture

updraft happens rapidly – 60-120 km/hr

4 Cloudbursts occur mostly over the rugged terrains over the **Himalayas, Western Ghats**, and northeastern hill States of India

5 In India, cloudbursts often occur during the monsoon season, when the **SW monsoon winds bring in** copious amounts of moisture inland

6 Satellites fail to detect cloudburst systems as the **resolution of the**

precipitation radars are much smaller than the area of individual cloudburst events

7 Multiple doppler weather radars can **monitor moving cloud droplets** and help to provide forecast for the next three hours. But **radars are expensive** and installing them widely may not be feasible

8 The change in monsoon extremes and cloudbursts are in response to the **1-degree Celsius rise** in global surface temperature

Do you know?

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) is enhancing nowcasting (short-term weather alerts), and Mission Mausam aims to expand the radar network and leverage AI for better hyperlocal forecasts.

Measures for Cloudburst Risk Mitigation

- **Strengthen Early Warning Systems:** Deploy more Automatic Weather Stations (AWS), Doppler radars and satellite based monitoring especially in the Himalayas to provide timely forecasts and evacuation warnings.
- **Use Nature-based Solutions :** “Restore wetlands, forests, mangroves and natural floodplains to absorb floodwaters, reduce runoff, prevent landslides and stabilise slopes.
- **Climate-resilient Planning:** Incorporate climate adaptation into urban and rural planning through risk assessments, resilient infrastructure development and dedicated climate finance.
- **Community based Disaster Management:** Integrate traditional knowledge and scientific early warning systems to better prepare and respond by involving local communities.
- **Research and Regional Cooperation:** Build resilience to disaster by investing in climate research, innovative resilience technologies and regional collaboration with neighbouring Himalayan countries.

Conclusion

- Cloudbursts are natural meteorological phenomena driven by the mountain topography and dynamics of the atmosphere.

- But their destructive capacity is much amplified by human actions such as unplanned urban development, destabilisation of slopes and climate change.
- Although cloudbursts cannot be prevented, better real-time forecasting, respect for ecological boundaries in vulnerable mountain areas and empowerment of local communities will help to ensure that these extreme weather events do not become human tragedies.

Source :TH

CRIMINALISATION OF POLITICS

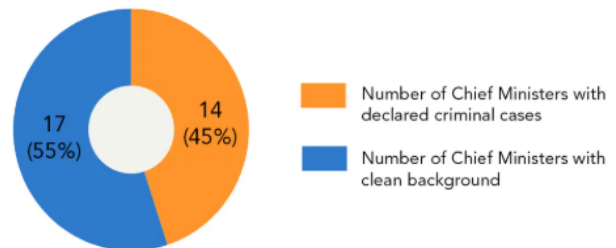
Context

- A report by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) and National Election Watch looks at the **self-sworn election affidavits of all sitting CMs of 28 states and three Union territories.**

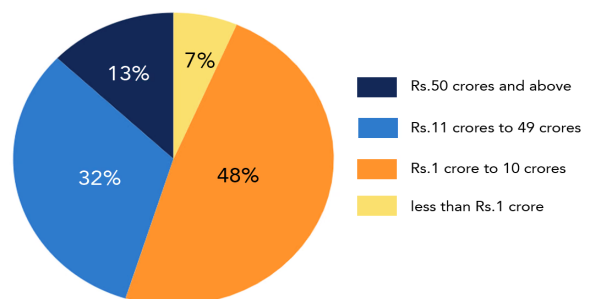
Major Highlights

- **45% (14)** of India's current Chief Ministers **have criminal cases lodged against them.**

CMs & CRIMINAL CASES



SHARE OF WEALTH AMONG CMs



Source : Association for Democratic Reforms

ThePrint

- **Women Representation:** Of the 31, only one, Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta is a woman.
 - ♦ In total, India has **390 female MLAs (9%)** of the total **4123 representatives across state and UT assemblies.**

- **Educational Qualification:** Nine (29%) are post-graduates, the largest single group followed by seven graduates (23%) and six graduate professionals (19%).
 - ♦ Three CMs hold doctorates, while two have studied only up to Class 10.

Reasons of Criminalisation of Politics

- **Weak Disqualification Laws:** As per the Representation of the **People Act, 1951 (RPA)** disqualification of the candidates occurs only after conviction. Since trials take years, candidates contest multiple elections before any judgment.
- **Money and Muscle Power:** Candidates with financial resources and local influence are seen as “winnable” candidates.
- **Low Voter Awareness:** Affidavits disclose candidate details, but many voters remain unaware or vote on caste/religious lines.
- **Party Complicity:** Parties at times justify the candidature on the basis of popularity and electoral chances.
- **Judicial Delays:** Due to the frequent adjournments and long duration of judicial processes criminals escape conviction.

Impact of Criminalisation of Politics

- **Erosion of Democratic Values:** It undermines the principle of free and fair elections and voters are left with restricted choices, weakening the spirit of representative democracy.
- **Corruption:** The presence of criminal elements escalates **electoral malpractices** such as voter intimidation, booth capturing, and the use of **black money** in campaigns.
- **Decline of Public Trust:** Repeated election of tainted representatives, lead to **declining voter turnout** and weakening people's faith in democratic institutions.
- **Distortion of Policy-Making:** Elected representatives use political power to protect personal and criminal networks and divert policy-making away from public interest.

Key Committee Recommendations

- **Indrajit Gupta Committee (1998) & 2nd ARC (2007)** recommended partial state funding of elections to curb the use of black money and reduce corruption.
- **The National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution** in its **2002** report recommended measures to enhance the

accountability of political parties, including the statutory audit of party expenses and the disclosure of candidates' assets and liabilities.

- **The Law Commission's 244th Report (2014)** recommended disqualifying politicians from contesting elections as soon as charges are framed against them for offenses that carry a maximum punishment of **five years or more**.
 - ♦ The report specifically recommended **expediting trials for sitting MPs and MLAs** by establishing fast-track courts.

Supreme Court Interventions

- **In Lily Thomas v. Union of India (2013)**, the Court ruled that any sitting MP, MLA, or MLC would be **immediately disqualified** upon conviction for a crime with a sentence of **two years or more**.
- In **Public Interest Foundation v. Union of India (2018)**, the Court directed political parties to publicize the criminal records of candidates, detailing the nature of offences and charges.
- **In 2020, the Supreme Court of India** ordered political parties to publish details of candidates with pending criminal cases on their websites, social media, and in newspapers, along with the reasons for their selection, **within 48 hours** of candidate selection.

130th Constitution Amendment Bill

- **Background:** The bill was introduced in 2025 and was subsequently referred to a **Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC)** following intense opposition protests.
- **Major Features:** The Bill provides for the removal of a minister if he/she is accused of an offence **punishable with five or more years of imprisonment**, and has been **arrested and detained for 30 consecutive days**.
 - ♦ If the **Prime Minister or a Chief Minister remains in custody for 30 consecutive days**, they must resign; otherwise, they would automatically cease to hold office on the 31st day.
 - ♦ **The removal can be directed by the President or Governor** upon the advice of the Prime Minister or the Chief Minister, respectively, or automatically on the 31st day of detention.
- **At present**, ministers leave office through **resignation, dismissal by the Prime Minister or Chief Minister, or disqualification** following conviction under existing laws.

Conclusion

- The criminal background of the elected representatives **undermines democratic governance, weakens the rule of law, and erodes public trust in institutions.**
- The issue needs to be addressed with the **electoral reforms, speedy trials of the cases, transparency in political funding and informed voter participation.**

Source: TH

ILO CONVENTION NO. 193

Context

- The International Labour Conference adopted Convention No. 193, '**Decent Work in the Platform Economy**'.
 - ♦ **406 voted in favour** (which included nations such as China, Brazil, Germany, France, South Africa, and Japan), 8 against, and 36 abstentions **including India.**

Note: The ILO runs on a tripartite structure. Every member state doesn't send one delegate, it sends four.

About Convention

- It is the **first legally binding international labour standard** dedicated specifically to the platform economy.
 - ♦ **It establishes a global framework** to help ensure that technological innovation and new business models go hand in hand with workers' rights, fair competition and sustainable economic growth.
- **The Convention applies to digital labour platforms and digital platform workers**, whether they are in an employment relationship or not, including self-employed workers. It covers both **location-based and online platform work.**
- **The Convention addresses a broad range of issues, including:**
 - ♦ Fundamental principles and rights at work;
 - ♦ Occupational safety and health;
 - ♦ Violence and harassment;
 - ♦ Promotion of decent work opportunities;
 - ♦ Remuneration or payment;
 - ♦ Social security;
 - ♦ Impact of the use of automated systems based on algorithms on workers;
 - ♦ Data protection and privacy;

- ♦ Suspension, deactivation and termination;
- ♦ Protection of migrants and refugees;
- ♦ Access to justice.
- **On Automated Systems:** The Convention contains provisions on the impact of the use of automated systems based on algorithms, including automated decision-making systems.
 - ♦ It establishes principles relating to **their transparent use and access to review mechanisms** when automated systems based on algorithms affect workers.
- **Once ratified, it must be implemented through national laws, regulations, policies, collective agreements** in accordance with each country's legal system and national practice.

International Labour Organisation

- It is an United Nations Agency established in **1919** as part of the Treaty of Versailles that ended World War I, and it became the **first specialized agency of the UN in 1946.**
- India became a founding member of the ILO in **1919**, even before gaining independence.
- It has **187 Member states.**
- It **sets labour standards, develops policies** and devises programmes promoting decent work for all women and men.
- It is the **only tripartite U.N. agency** that brings together governments, employers and workers.
- It is headquartered in **Geneva, Switzerland.**

Who are Gig Workers?

- Non-standard or gig work consists of **income-earning activities outside of standard, long-term employer-employee relationships.**
- It relies **heavily on temporary and part-time positions** filled by **independent contractors and freelancers** rather than full-time permanent employees.
- The term is borrowed from the music world, where performers book "**gigs**" that are **single or short-term engagements** at various venues.
- The gig economy uses **digital platforms** to connect freelancers with customers to provide **short-term services or asset-sharing.**
 - ♦ Examples include **ride-hailing apps, food delivery apps, and holiday rental apps.**

India and Gig Economy (As per NITI Aayog)

- In 2020, **7.7 million workers** were engaged in the gig economy.

- The gig workforce is expected to **expand to 23.5 million workers or 4.1% of total workforce by 2029-30.**
- **About 39% of gig workers earn ₹10,000-₹25,000** a month and **34% earn ₹25,000-₹40,000**, with wages stretched across 12-hour shifts; fuel paid for by the worker himself; and no overtime.
- **Only about 15% have any social security.**
- At present about **47% of the gig work** is in medium skilled jobs, about 22% in high skilled, and about 31% in low skilled jobs.
- Its contribution to India's gross domestic product (GDP) is estimated to be substantial, with the potential to **add 1.25% to GDP by 2030**, and **create 90 million jobs in the long term.**

Reasons for a rise in Gig Workers

- **Post Pandemic:** The trend accelerated during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, as gig workers delivered necessities to **home-bound consumers**, and those whose **jobs had been eliminated turned to part-time and contract work for income.**
- **Freedom to work from anywhere:** These types of positions facilitate independent contracting work, with many of them not requiring a freelancer to come into an office.
- **Rise of Technology and Internet:** Rise of fast internet and smartphones have made it easier to work from anywhere easily.
- **Convenient for Small Organisations:** Employers who cannot afford to hire full-time employees to do all the work will often hire part-time or temporary employees to take care of busier times or specific projects.
- **Benefits Employers:** Employers do not need to provide related benefits, such as medical insurance, Provident Fund, and year-end bonuses which make it a better option for them to pay only for work on a unit basis.

Challenges

- **Work-life balance:** For some workers, the flexibility of working gigs can actually disrupt the work-life balance, sleep patterns, and activities of daily life.
- **Can replace Full time employees:** The number of full-time employees required by the company can be reduced as freelance workers take over the work.
- **No regular job benefits:** Many employers save money by avoiding paying benefits such as health coverage and paid vacation time.

- There is no formal employment relationship with the platform company and there are usually no employee benefits in short-term contracts.

Steps Taken by Government of India for Gig Workers

- **Code of Social Security, 2020:** The Government has formulated the Code on Social Security, 2020 which envisages framing of **suitable social security schemes for gig workers and platform workers** on matters relating to life and disability cover, accident insurance, health and maternity benefits, old age protection, etc.
 - ♦ It directs aggregators to pay 1%-2% of their annual turnover, capped at 5% of worker payouts, into a social security fund.
 - ♦ However, these provisions under the Code have not come into force.
- **e-Shram Portal:** The Government has also launched e-Shram portal in 2021 for registration and creation of a **Comprehensive National Database of Unorganized Workers including gig workers and platform workers.**
 - ♦ It allows a person to register himself or herself on the portal on a self-declaration basis, which is spread across around 400 occupations.

Conclusion

- Not having the health coverage enjoyed by many people who are in traditional full-time employment, gig workers are particularly vulnerable to medical expenses. These costs can sometimes be catastrophic.
- As they often lack job security and associated benefits of full-time employment, government-backed coverage could provide a crucial safety net.

Source: TH

ISRO'S NAVIC SYSTEM CAN NO LONGER PROVIDE NAVIGATION DATA INDEPENDENTLY: GOVT

Context

- **Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC)** has **lost its ability to deliver standalone navigation services** after dropping below the critical threshold of operational spacecraft.

About

- The system currently has **only three operational satellites** providing Positioning, Navigation and Timing (PNT) services.

- Its **last atomic clock on the IRNSS-1F satellite** failed in March 2026.
 - ♦ Since **at least four satellites are needed to independently calculate a user's location**, NavIC can no longer independently calculate a user's location.
- The development has raised **fresh concerns over the resilience of India's indigenous navigation network**, which was built to reduce dependence on foreign systems for civilian and strategic applications.
- For most smartphone users, however, **there will be no immediate disruption** because devices typically rely on multiple global navigation systems, including GPS.

NavIC

- **NavIC** officially operationalised as the **IRNSS (Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System)**, is India's **indigenous satellite navigation system** developed by the **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)**.
- It is designed to provide **accurate position, velocity, and timing (PNT) services** to users in India and the surrounding region extending up to 1,500 km beyond the nation's borders.
- **Core specifications & Capabilities:**
 - ♦ **Coverage Area:** Entire Indian landmass and an area extending up to 1,500 km around the Indian boundary.
 - ♦ **Accuracy:** Better than 10 meters for civilian users across the primary coverage area. Better than 5 meters within the core Indian landmass.
- **Service Types:**
 - ♦ **Standard Positioning Service (SPS):** Open to all civilian users (integrated into modern consumer smartphones and vehicle tracking systems).
 - ♦ **Restricted Service (RS):** An encrypted signal reserved exclusively for authorized strategic users, such as the Indian Armed Forces and security agencies.
- NavIC SPS signals are **interoperable** with the other global navigation satellite system (GNSS) signals namely GPS, Glonass, Galileo and BeiDou.
- **NavIC was originally designed as a constellation of seven satellites:** three placed in geostationary orbit and four in inclined geosynchronous orbit, to ensure continuous coverage over India and nearby regions.

- ♦ ISRO has launched **11 satellites under the programme over the years, including replacements.**

Significance of NavIC

- NavIC was developed to give India an **independent navigation capability** rather than relying entirely on foreign systems such as the US' GPS, Russia's GLONASS, Europe's Galileo or China's BeiDou.
 - ♦ The need for an indigenous system became evident **after the 1999 Kargil conflict**, when access to GPS data in the region was restricted, **highlighting the strategic risks of depending on foreign navigation services.**
- NavIC is designed to support a **wide range of civilian applications**, including vehicle tracking, road, rail and maritime navigation, disaster management, surveying, mapping, location-based services and precise timing.

Way Ahead

- Despite the operational shortfall, the **government clarified that users face no security or operational vulnerabilities.**
- The Indian Armed Forces also utilize this **hybrid GNSS framework** to maintain **operational capabilities without interruption.**
- ISRO is now moving to **rebuild the constellation and restore full independent service across India** and regions extending roughly 1,500 kilometers beyond its borders.
 - ♦ The NVS-03 satellite is fully prepared for launch, while NVS-04 and NVS-05 are currently in advanced stages of realisation.

Source: BS

INDIA & ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE INDEX (EPI) 2026

Context

- **Yale University** released the **Environmental Performance Index (EPI) 2026**, ranking **India 176th** out of 177 countries. The report highlighted India's ongoing environmental challenges and ignited a renewed discussion about its methodology and policy implications.

Environmental Performance Index (EPI)

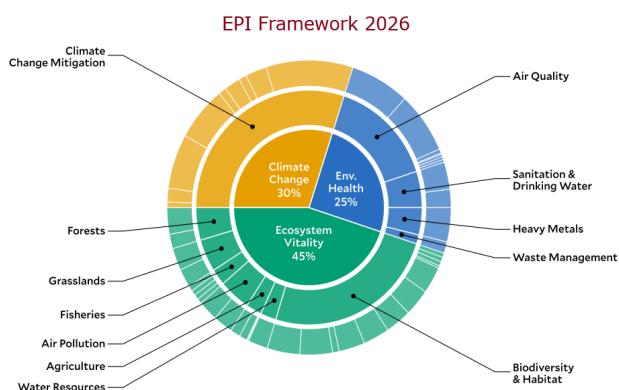
- It is a **biennial global index** developed by the **Yale Center for Environmental Law & Policy** in collaboration with the **Center for International Earth Science Information Network, Columbia University.**

Objective:

- It measures how effectively countries protect **environmental health** and **ecosystem vitality**.
- It offers a data-driven assessment of environmental consequences and policy effectiveness.
- It helps governments to identify priority areas for strengthening environmental governance.

Key Findings (EPI 2026)

- Estonia is the top ranked** country with 74.79 while **Laos is the lowest ranked**.
- Many industrialised economies fared better due to more robust environmental legislation and institutional capabilities.
- Air pollution, loss of biodiversity and climate mitigation are still key worldwide concerns.
- Environmental quality is evaluated in areas such as air quality, climate change, biodiversity, water resources, agriculture, fisheries, waste management and sanitation.



Findings Related to India (2026)

- India is 176th out of 177 countries** with a score of 22.46.
 - Earlier, India ranked 141st in 2016, 177th in 2018, 168th in 2020, 180th in 2022 and 176th in 2024.
- Key Observations:**
 - India has been among the **five worst-performing countries since 2022**.
 - India faces the challenge of reconciling **economic development with energy access and environmental sustainability**, the research said.
 - Air quality, biodiversity and greenhouse gas emissions continue to be pressured by growing urbanisation and industrialisation.

Areas Showing Improvement

- Climate Change (130th place):** It has improved by 13.98 points over the last decade.
 - It shows progress on expanding renewable energy, improving energy efficiency and implementing regulations on climate change.
- Waste Management (Rank 141st):** Progress in municipal trash management programmes and Swachh Bharat Mission.
- Sanitation (Rank 141st):** Expansion of sanitation infrastructure and improved access to toilets contributed positively.

Major Areas of Concern

- Air Quality (Rank 174th):** The air quality score has slipped a bit in the last decade despite the **National Clean Air Programme (NCAP)**.
 - Major sources include emissions from vehicles, coal-based power generation, industrial pollutants, construction-related dust and biomass burning.
- Biodiversity (Rank 174):** Major issues continue with habitat destruction, deforestation, infrastructural growth and ecosystem fragmentation.
- Tree Cover:** Performance declining in the decade due to diversion of forest and land-use changes.
- Fisheries:** Sustainability indicators are going down because of overexploitation and degradation of aquatic habitats.
- Pesticide Pollution:** The continued dependency on chemical-intensive agriculture has led to poor environmental performance.
- Urban Environmental Management:** In many towns the treatment of waste water and the control of pollution are still inadequate.

Related Efforts in India

- Constitutional Provisions:**
 - Article 48A:** Protection and improvement of the environment.
 - Article 51A(g):** Duty to protect the natural environment.
- Government Initiatives:**
 - National Clean Air Programme (NCAP)
 - National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)
 - Swachh Bharat Mission
 - Namami Gange Programme
 - Green India Mission
 - National Biodiversity Action Plan

- ♦ CAMPA Fund
- ♦ Jal Jeevan Mission
- ♦ The Plastic Waste Management Rules – Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)
- ♦ Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment)

Related Global Efforts

- Paris Agreement (2015)
- UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with special emphasis on SDGs 6, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15
- Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
- Global Biodiversity Framework Kunming–Montreal (2022)
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands
- The Montreal Protocol and the Kigali Amendment
- UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030)

Way Forward

- Enhance monitoring and enforcement to improve the enforcement of environmental regulations.
- Speed up the shift to clean energy and decrease dependence on fossil fuels.
- Cleaner transport, regulation of industrial emissions and dust management to improve urban air quality
- Enhance wastewater treatment and integrated urban waste management.
- Promote sustainable agriculture . Reduce the excessive use of pesticides and promote natural farming practices .
- Expand ecosystem restoration, afforestation and biodiversity conservation activities.
- Enhanced environmental data quality, transparency and outcome-based monitoring.
- Integrate environmental sustainability into development planning to guarantee balanced and inclusive growth.

Source: DTE

project unless it is consistent with the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (2007) award and the Supreme Court's 2018 judgment on Cauvery water sharing.

About Cauvery River

- The **Cauvery** is an **inter-State river** in southern India and one of the major **east-flowing peninsular rivers** that drains into the **Bay of Bengal**.
- It originates at **Talakaveri** in the **Brahmagiri Hills** of the Western Ghats in Kodagu (Coorg) district, Karnataka.
- The **Cauvery basin** extends across **Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala**, and the **Union Territory of Puducherry**, covering an area of about **81,155 sq. km**.
- The river has a **total length of about 800 km**.
- **Major Tributaries**
 - ♦ **Left-bank tributaries:** Harangi, Hemavati, Shimsha and Arkavati.
 - ♦ **Right-bank tributaries:** Lakshmantirtha, Kabbani, Suvarnavati, Bhavani, Noyil and Amaravati.



Source: TH

PM CARES FUND

In News

- The PM CARES Fund has not made public any audited financial statements since its last disclosure for Financial Year 2022-23.

PM CARES Fund

- The Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations (PM CARES) Fund is a **public charitable trust**.
- It was established in March 2020 to support **relief efforts during public health emergencies and other disasters**

NEWS IN SHORT

CAUVERY RIVER

Context

- Tamil Nadu Chief Minister has urged PM to ensure that no statutory or administrative approval is granted to Karnataka's proposed Mekedatu

- ♦ It is funded entirely through voluntary contributions, and it is audited by an independent auditor.
- The **Prime Minister is the ex-officio Chairman of the PM CARES Fund**, and the Minister of Defence, Minister of Home Affairs and Minister of Finance, Government of India are ex-officio Trustees of the Fund.
- Donations to the PM CARES Fund qualify for **100% deduction under Section 80G of the Income Tax Act, 1961** and are also eligible to be counted as **CSR expenditure under the Companies Act, 2013**.
- The Fund has also been granted **exemption under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA)**, enabling it to receive donations from individuals and organisations based overseas through a designated foreign contribution account.

Objectives

- It aims to provide relief and assistance in public health emergencies, disasters and calamities;
- It aims to support research and other vital infrastructure, pharmaceutical facilities and healthcare infrastructure.
- It aims to provide financial aid and grants to affected individuals and communities.

Do you know?

- The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) has refused to disclose details on the creation and operation of the PM CARES Fund, telling a Right to Information applicant that the fund is **"not a public authority" under the ambit of the RTI Act, 2005**.
- At present, PM CARES remains outside the ambit of the RTI Act, parliamentary scrutiny, and audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Source: TH

PARLIAMENTARY PANEL RECOMMENDS POLAR AMBASSADOR, ARCTIC COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

Context

- The Parliamentary Committee on External Affairs, in its report, has recommended that India should appoint a Polar Ambassador and seek full-fledged membership of the Arctic Council to strengthen its engagement in Arctic affairs.

About

- India is currently **one of the 13 observer countries of the Arctic Council**, which comprises of 8 nations that have landmass in the region.
- The observer countries do not have decision making powers. They also can't make financial contributions or undertake research in the arctic directly.

Arctic Council

- It is an **intergovernmental forum** established to promote environmental protection, sustainable development, and scientific cooperation in the Arctic.
- It comprises eight Arctic States: **Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the United States**.
- It was established in **1996** through the **Ottawa Declaration**.

India's Role in Arctic Research

- India, despite being a **non-Arctic nation**, plays an active role in Arctic research.
- **National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR)**: India conducts scientific studies on climate patterns, marine biodiversity, and glacial dynamics.
- **India's Arctic Policy**, titled India and the Arctic: Building a Partnership for Sustainable Development, was released by the Ministry of Earth Sciences in 2022.
- India established **Himadri (in 2008)**, its research station in **Svalbard, Norway**, to study Arctic climate systems and their global impact.

Source: IE

PROTECTION AND INDEMNITY COVER UNDER BHARAT MARITIME INSURANCE POOL (BMIP)

In News

- The Department of Financial Services (DFS) has launched India's first sovereign-backed Protection and Indemnity insurance product under Bharat Maritime Insurance Pool (BMIP).

India's first sovereign-backed Protection and Indemnity insurance product

- It is designed by the New India Assurance Company
- It provides financial protection against third-party liabilities, including Crew & Cargo liability,

pollution liability, wreck removal, 24x7 port correspondent network with an indemnity limit up to \$1.5 billion, through the combined capacity of the pool

Bharat Maritime Insurance Pool (BMIP)

- In April 2026, the Union Cabinet approved the setting up of the Bharat Maritime Insurance Pool (BMIP) with a sovereign guarantee of 12,980 crore to provide uninterrupted maritime insurance cover.
- It aims to provide cost-effective insurance to Indian-flagged/controlled vessels and ships carrying cargo to and from India, even in high-risk geopolitical areas.
- It deals with India's dependence on foreign International Group of Protection & Indemnity (IGP&I) Clubs for third-party liability insurance.

Coverage

- It covers all major maritime risks including:
 - ♦ Hull & Machinery
 - ♦ Cargo Protection and Indemnity (P & I)
 - ♦ War Risk
 - ♦ The member insurers shall underwrite policies of a total underwriting capacity of Rs 950 crore.

Objectives

- BMIP mechanism ensures the continuity of maritime war risk insurance coverage
- It fosters the development of domestic underwriting capacity, and enhances confidence among India's shipping and trade stakeholders.
- Extending the pool to include Protection and Indemnity coverage would further strengthen India's maritime risk management framework and improve the resilience of its maritime insurance ecosystem.

Source: Air

LAVENDER CULTIVATION

Context

- **Lavender cultivation** is expanding in **Jammu and Kashmir** as farmers look for crops better suited to **warmer winters, erratic rainfall and shrinking irrigation sources**.

About

- In 1970, **scientist Akhtar Hussain** introduced lavender **from Bulgaria to Jammu and Kashmir**.

- Lavender is a **perennial shrub** that **grows well on sloping land**, needing only **one or two irrigations** during the growing season.
 - ♦ It is naturally resistant to **many pests and can continue flowering for nearly two decades after planting**.



- **CSIR developed** an elite variety of lavender suitable for cultivation in temperate regions of J&K and provided free saplings and end-to-end agro-technologies to farmers.
 - ♦ It also installed distillation units **for essential oil extraction in several regions of J&K**.
 - ♦ The **success of Lavender cultivation in J&K** earned it the sobriquet, '**Purple Revolution**'.
- **Significance:** The crop is creating new income streams through **essential oil, dried flowers, lavender honey**.
 - ♦ Lavender has also created **opportunities for women in rural Jammu and Kashmir**.
 - ♦ The crop has also created a **seasonal tourism economy**, every summer, blooming lavender fields in Baderwah attract visitors, photographers and researchers.

Source: DTE

AI PALLETISING TECHNOLOGY

In News

- **AI-powered palletising** is gaining traction as warehouses automate repetitive lifting and sorting. Future Market Insights projects the market to **reach \$9 billion by 2036**.

About

- AI palletising and depalletising refers to the **use of AI, computer vision, machine learning and robotic arms** to automate the stacking of goods

onto pallets and the unloading of goods from pallets.

- Traditional robotic palletisers have been widely **used in manufacturing for decades**. However, these systems generally follow fixed programming and work best when handling products of uniform size and shape. They struggle when warehouses process mixed cartons, irregular packaging or damaged boxes.
- AI-powered palletising systems are designed to **address these limitations**. They combine robotic arms with computer vision, AI software and machine learning algorithms to recognise different products, calculate gripping points and determine the safest stacking pattern without requiring manual reprogramming for every change in package configuration.



Source: BS

INDIA'S FIRST TELECOM MANUFACTURING ZONE (TMZ)

In News

- Recently, the Department of Telecommunications and the Madhya Pradesh government signed an agreement to set up **India's first dedicated Telecom Manufacturing Zone (TMZ)** in Gwalior.

About

- It is a 350-acre industrial campus where a company doesn't just assemble telecom equipment, it can design the product, test it in an on-site lab, get it certified, and manufacture it, all without leaving the zone.
- It is the "plug-and-play" idea behind the TMZ. A Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) would be established with **Madhya Pradesh holding 51% and the DoT holding 49%**.

- The zone is meant to cover the entire telecom value chain like handsets, optical fibre cables, antennas, routers, satellite communication equipment, and even semiconductor chips.
- The project is expected to attract investments worth around Rs 3,500 crore while creating significant employment opportunities in the state.

Source: AIR

HOUBARA BUSTARDS

In News

- Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and the UAE are coordinating to release 672 captive-bred birds into the **Aral Sea region in Karakalpakstan**.

About Houbara Bustards

- Asian Houbara (*Chlamydotis macqueenii*), sometimes called **MacQueen's Bustard**.
- It belongs to the **bustard family** — the same family as India's Great Indian Bustard, though the two are quite different in terms of how threatened they are.
- They thrive in **arid and semi-arid habitats**, including sandy and rocky deserts, gravel plains, dry steppes, and open shrublands across Central Asia, the Middle East, North Africa, and parts of South Asia, particularly the Thar Desert and the Rann of Kutch.
- Its **camouflage is so good** like sandy-brown mottled feathers on top, pale underneath that it disappears against desert soil.
- Strong legs let it cover rough desert **terrain at speed**, and it only takes to the air when there's no other option.
- **Conservation Status:**
 - ♦ **IUCN Red List:** Vulnerable
 - ♦ **CITES:** Appendix I (Strictly prohibiting international commercial trade)
 - ♦ **Convention on Migratory Species (CMS):** Appendix I (Requires strict protection across migratory corridors).

Source: DTE

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