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LEGISLATIVE COUNCILS IN INDIA

Context

- **Elections to 28 seats** across the **Legislative Councils of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra and Karnataka were held.**

Legislative Councils

- The Indian Union has a **bicameral legislature,** comprising the **Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha,** some states have **a Legislative Assembly and a Legislative Council.**
- **Currently Six states have a Legislative Assembly and a Legislative Council -** Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.
- **History: Montagu-Chelmsford reforms** led to the formation of the Council of State at the national level in **1919.**
  - Then the **Government of India Act of 1935** set up bicameral legislatures in Indian provinces.
  - It was under this law that **a Legislative Council first started functioning in Bengal in 1937.**

Constitutional Basis

- **Creation of Legislative Council: Article 169** of the Constitution concerns the Legislative Council, Parliament can pass a law to create or abolish a Legislative Council.
  - The Legislative Assembly of the State passes a resolution by a majority of the total membership of the Assembly and by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members of the Assembly present and voting.
- **Composition:** Article 171 lays out its composition, the total number of MLCs cannot be more than one-third of the total number of MLAs in a state, and cannot be less than 40.
- **Elections:** The polls are held through proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote. Electors choose from a list of candidates by listing an order of preference.
- **Eligibility for MLCs:** A person must be an Indian citizen and at least 30 years of age to become a member of a State Legislative Council.
  - The Chairman and Deputy Chairman preside over its proceedings.
- **Tenure:** Approximately one-third of its members retire every two years. Each member normally serves a six-year term.
- **Not every state in India has a Legislative Council** because the Constitution makes it optional, not compulsory.
  - Each state can decide whether a second legislative chamber is necessary, considering its needs, costs and administrative priorities.

Functions of Legislative Councils

- **Legislative function:** It examines Bills passed by the Legislative Assembly and may suggest amendments, helping improve the quality of legislation.
- **Deliberative function:** It provides a forum for discussing public issues, government policies and matters affecting the state.
- **Representation of special interests:** It provides representation to graduates, teachers, local authorities and people with expertise in fields such as science, art and social service.
- **Financial function:** It can discuss financial matters and make recommendations on Money Bills, but it cannot introduce a Money Bill or prevent its passage.
- **Executive oversight:** It can question ministers, debate government policies and scrutinise the functioning of the government. However, it cannot remove the government through a no-confidence motion.
- **Continuity:** As a permanent house, it preserves legislative experience because it is not dissolved and approximately one-third of its members retire every two years.

Difference between Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council

Basis	Legislative Assembly (Vidhan Sabha)	Legislative Council (Vidhan Parishad)
Nature of representation	It directly represents the people.	It represents specific sections of the state's population and local institutions.
Election	Members are directly elected by voters.	Members are indirectly elected or nominated.
Minimum age	25 years	30 years
Tenure	5 years	Permanent body; members serve 6-year terms.
Ordinary Bills	It has the final say if disagreement persists.	It can delay a Bill, but cannot permanently block it.

Money Bills	Can introduce and pass Money Bills.	It can only recommend changes within 14 days.

Source: IE

INDIA-AZERBAIJAN SEEK DIPLOMATIC RESET

Context

- The External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's visit to Azerbaijan marks an effort to restore India–Azerbaijan relations following differences over Operation Sindoor.

Background

- **Operation Sindoor Fallout:** Azerbaijan, along with Turkey, expressed support for Pakistan, following the military operation of India, citing the **"Three Brothers" bloc alliance.**
- **Kashmir issue:** Azerbaijan has consistently advocated for the resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir conflict according to international law and relevant UN Security Council resolutions.
- **Geopolitical Alignments:** Azerbaijan shares close strategic ties with Pakistan, as the latter supports Azerbaijan in the **Nagorno-Karabakh conflict**.
  - India, in contrast, has deepened its ties with Armenia notably in the area of defence cooperation.
  - **Azerbaijan accused India** of **supporting Armenia** militarily.

Recent Diplomatic Engagement

- **Trade and investment:** Both sides identified opportunities to expand trade and energy cooperation, recognising the potential for greater economic engagement.
- **Energy cooperation:** The discussions focused on strengthening cooperation in the oil and energy sectors along with exploring additional areas of economic partnership.
- **Connectivity:** Both the countries agreed to coordinate more closely on the International **North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC).**
- **Capacity building:** India proposed increasing the participation of Azerbaijani professionals in the **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC)** programme.

Brief on India-Azerbaijan Relations

- **Diplomatic Relations:** India recognised Azerbaijan as an independent country in December **1991**, soon after it declared independence from the Soviet Union.
  - Diplomatic relations were formally established in **February 1992.**
- **Economic Relations:** Bilateral trade between both nations increased from around **US$ 50 million in 2005** to a peak of **US$ 1.882 billion** in **2022**, reflecting strong economic engagement.
  - The trade declined in subsequent years, **falling to US$ 401 million in 2025,** mainly due to a reduction in India's crude oil imports.
  - India exports diversified goods such as **pharmaceuticals, rice, machinery, electronics, and construction materials** to Azerbaijan.
- **Energy cooperation: ONGC Videsh** maintains investments in oil and gas fields as well as pipeline projects in Azerbaijan.
  - The company has acquired stakes in the **Azeri-Chirag-Gunashli oil field** and the **Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline.**
  - It contributes to India's efforts to diversify its energy sources and enhances its engagement in the strategically important **Caspian region.**
- **Cultural Relations:** Historical ties are highlighted by the 18th-century **"Ateshgah"** fire temple in Baku, which holds inscriptions in **Devanagiri and Gurmukhi,** reflecting historical trade links.
- **Humanitarian cooperation:** Azerbaijan facilitated the evacuation of more than 200 Indian nationals during the **U.S.-Israel strikes on Iran.**
- **The Indian community in Azerbaijan** comprises nearly 1,000 individuals engaged in diverse professional sectors.

Significance of Azerbaijan for India

- **Location:** Azerbaijan is located at the crossroads of **Europe, Russia, and Central Asia** and the **Caspian region.**
- **Connectivity:** It is important for the International North-South Transport Corridor, which opens up an alternate path for India to reach Russia, Central Asia and the European market.
- **Energy Security:** Azerbaijan is a major energy producer in the Caspian region and has the potential to broaden India's energy partnerships.

Challenges in Bilateral Relations

- **The disagreements over the Kashmir issue** continue to remain a major source of contention.
- Azerbaijan's close **strategic relationship with Pakistan** poses challenges to trust-building.

Way Ahead

- India's engagement with Azerbaijan shows a pragmatic and multi-aligned foreign policy approach aimed at balancing diverse regional interests.
- The normalisation of relations underscores the importance of d**ialogue and mutual accommodation** in resolving diplomatic tensions.
- Both countries are expected to **prioritise long-term strategic and economic interests** over past disagreements to build a stable and forward-looking partnership.

Source: TH, IE

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO DRIVING LICENCE RULES

Context

- The Union government has proposed changes to driving licence rules to tighten the requirements for obtaining a learner's licence as part of a wider overhaul of the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989.

Proposed Changes in the Rules

- **Stricter learner's test:** It proposes raising the pass mark for the preliminary learners' test from **60% to 75%.**
  - Applicants will get **15 days**, instead of seven, to complete the learner's licence process and will have to take a safe-driving tutorial of at least 30 minutes.
- **Documentation:** Applicants will have to submit **separate proof of address, age and identity.**
  - The list of acceptable documents will include **Aadhaar, voter ID, passport, e-ration card, PAN a**nd certain government-issued identity documents.
  - **Electricity and household gas bills** issued within the past three months can also be used as address proof.
  - Foreign applicants should show that they are legally present in India.
- **Simplified licence services:** A new **Form 2A** is proposed to bring together applications for licence renewal, duplicate licences, changes to names or addresses, updates to personal details and the addition of vehicle categories.
  - The draft proposes **no fee for changing a licence holder's name, address or other recorded details.**
- **Medical disclosures:** Applicants will have to provide more medical information, including whether they have **epilepsy or other seizure disorders, hearing impairment, night blindness, medicine allergies or medical and surgical implants.**
  - People who report epilepsy or a seizure disorder, along with a seizure in the previous **three years,** or who are on **anti-epileptic medication at present** or are on a tapering course of that medication**,** will **not be eligible for a driving licence.**
  - The details about medicine allergies, implants and certain other medical information will be **used only if the person is hospitalised after a road accident.**
  - The draft also proposes collecting information such as **blood group and emergency contact details** in licence applications.
- **Standardised licence format:** Laminated or **polyvinyl chloride (PVC) cards** are proposed as the prescribed format for driving licences, with different background colour schemes and nationality included among the licence details.

Significance of the Draft Amendment

- **Improved road safety:** A higher assessment threshold will encourage better understanding of traffic rules and safe-driving practices.
- **Ease of living:** Fee waivers, online applications and simplified documentation will reduce compliance costs and repeated visits to licensing offices.
- **Administrative transparency:** Prescribed decision timelines and recorded reasons for rejection will improve accountability.
- **Better emergency response:** Collecting blood group and emergency-contact details will help make relevant information available during emergencies, subject to appropriate safeguards.

Way Ahead

- **Assessment quality:** The assessment should meaningfully test traffic-rule awareness, hazard perception and the protection of vulnerable road users.

- **Rigorous practical tests:** Practical driving tests should be standardised, objective and resistant to manipulation or undue discretion.
- **Digital accessibility:** Online services should be supported by accessible assistance for applicants facing digital or authentication barriers.
- **Data protection:** Additional personal and medical information should be collected and used only for defined purposes, with appropriate safeguards.

Source: TH

UNDERSTANDING THE ECONOMICS OF SOCIAL UNREST

Context

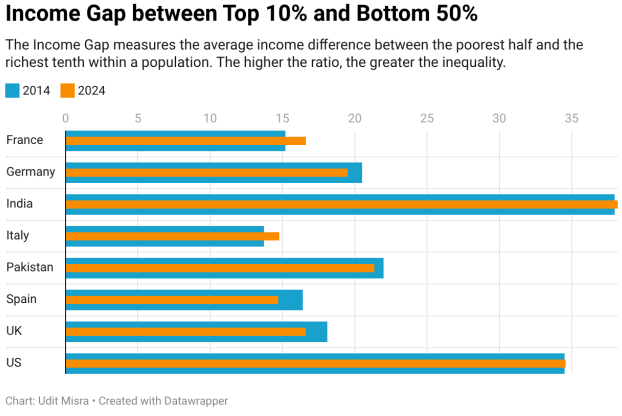
- People across **European countries** are protesting, drawing attention towards **the economics of social unrest.**

About

- **France, Albania, Belgium, Italy, and Portugal** are witnessing an outpouring of discontent on the streets.
  - It is often argued that **growing economic inequalities** in an economy lead to such social unrest.
- **Rising fuel costs, discontent with the state of schools, declining public services and a housing crisis** are major reasons for the protests.

The Income Gap

- **The income gap is a ratio** and it **measures the average income difference** between the poorest half and the richest tenth within a population. The **higher the ratio, the greater the inequality.**
  - **The World Inequality Report of 2026** mentions that the **top 10% to bottom 50% average income gap** is the **ratio between the income share of the top 10% and the bottom 50%.**



- **For France**, the income gap has increased between 2014 and 2024, and in Italy as well. But in the UK, Germany and Spain, it has fallen as well.
- While the income gap has increased in France, by itself **it is among the lowest among peers such as Germany.**
- In India, **the income gap is 38 and in South Africa it is 118.**

Economic Consequences of Social Unrest

- **As per the IMF economist,** on an average, major unrest events are followed by a **one percentage point reduction in GDP,** six quarters after the event.
  - Unrest motivated by socioeconomic factors is associated with sharper GDP contractions than unrest associated with political motives.
- **Disruption of Economic Activities:** Protests, strikes and road blockades disrupt production, transportation, trade and supply chains, resulting in economic losses.
- **Decline in Investment:** Political and social instability creates uncertainty for businesses, discouraging domestic and foreign investment and delaying new projects.
- **Rise in Inflation:** Disruptions in the supply of essential commodities can cause shortages and increase prices, particularly affecting low-income households.
- **Decline in Tourism and Trade:** Social unrest can damage a region's reputation as a safe destination, reducing tourist arrivals, local business revenues and trade opportunities.
- **Pressure on Government Finances:** Governments may incur additional expenditure on law enforcement, compensation, reconstruction and rehabilitation, diverting resources from developmental activities.

Conclusion

- Social unrest **can impose significant economic costs,** but it may also draw attention to g**enuine grievances** and structural inequalities.
- Sustainable economic stability requires **addressing the underlying causes of unrest** through inclusive growth, responsive governance and peaceful conflict resolution.

Source: IE

NEWS IN BRIEF

VUMMIDI ETHIRAJ

Context

- Veteran Chennai-based jeweller Vummidi Ethiraj, who played a key role in crafting the **Sengol presented to Jawaharlal Nehru** in 1947, passed away.

About Vummidi Ethiraj

- Born on November 25, 1926, he was a prominent figure in South India's jewellery industry.
- He helped craft the Sengol, bringing his family's traditional craftsmanship into the national spotlight, particularly after its installation in the new Parliament building in 2023.

What is Sengol?

- **Features:** A five-foot-long, gold-plated silver sceptre topped with a figure of Nandi, commissioned by the Thiruvavaduthurai Adheenam in Tamil Nadu.
- **Historical Significance:** Presented to Jawaharlal Nehru on the eve of Independence in 1947 by representatives of the Adheenam, symbolising the transfer of power.
- **Cultural Significance:** The term is associated with the Tamil word semmai, meaning righteousness. The Sengol symbolises just and fair governance and is associated with Tamil kingship traditions.



Source: IE

LINE OF ACTUAL CONTROL (LAC)

Context

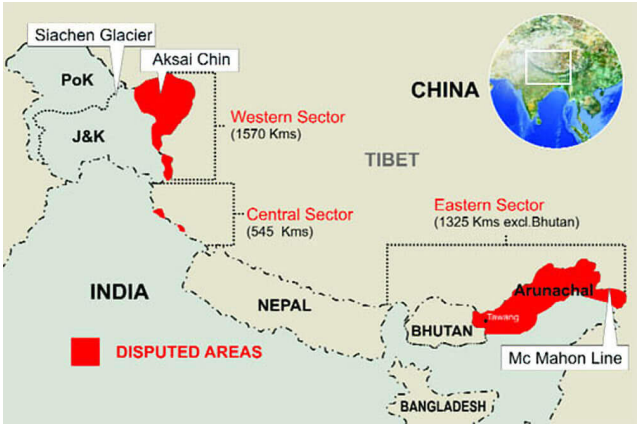
- The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said that Line of Actual Control (LAC) has been disturbed by the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) patrolling behaviour.

Line of Actual Control (LAC)

- The LAC is the demarcation that separates Indian-controlled territory from Chinese-controlled territory.
- India considers the **LAC to be 3,488 km** long, while China considers it to be only around **2,000 km.**
- **It is divided into three sectors:**
  - The eastern sector, which spans **Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim,**
  - The middle sector in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, and
  - The western sector in Ladakh.

What is the McMahon Line?

- The McMahon Line serves as the de facto boundary between China and India in the Eastern Sector. It specifically represents the boundary between Arunachal Pradesh and Tibet, from Bhutan in the west to Myanmar in the east.
- China has historically disputed the boundary and claims the state of Arunachal Pradesh as part of the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR).
- The McMahon Line was drawn during the Shimla Convention of 1914, officially described as the Convention Between Great Britain, China, and Tibet.
- China rejects the McMahon Line and claims Arunachal Pradesh, referring to it as Zangnan or "South Tibet". India maintains that Arunachal Pradesh is an integral part of India.



How is the LAC different from the Line of Control with Pakistan?

- The LoC emerged from the **1948 ceasefire** line negotiated by the UN after the Kashmir War.
- It was **designated as the LoC in 1972,** following the **Shimla Agreement** between the two countries. It is delineated on a map signed by the Director General of Military Operations (DGMOs)

of both armies and has the international sanctity of a legal agreement.

- The LAC is only a concept, and it is not agreed upon by the two countries, neither delineated on a map or demarcated on the ground.

Source: TH

AGRI-VOLTAICS

In News

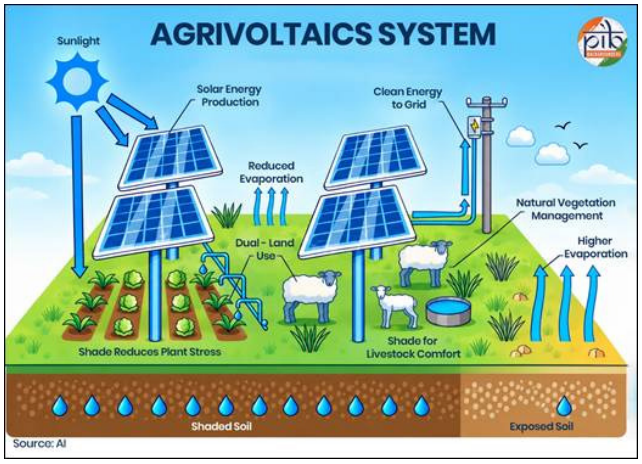
- The **7th AgriVoltaics World Conference** held in New Delhi under the theme **"Powering the Global South."**

Agrivoltaics

- It is also known as agrisolar or dual-use solar, maximises land-use efficiency.
- It provides shade for crops and creates additional benefits for farmers.
- It integrates agricultural infrastructure with solar installations, adapted to local farming conditions.

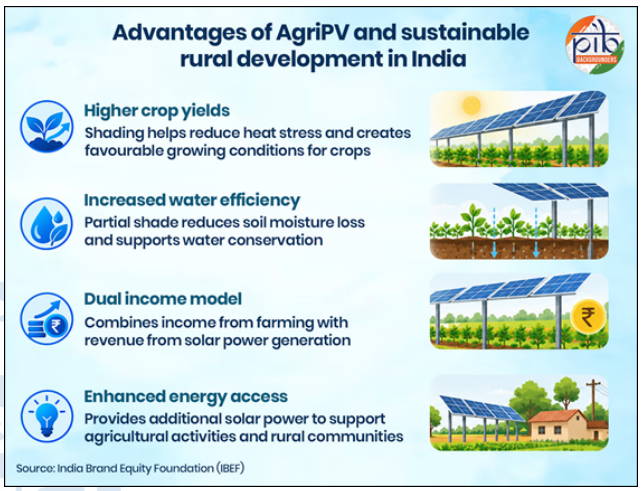
Elements

- **Elevated Solar Structures:** Instead of placing solar panels directly on the ground, they are mounted on structures high enough to let sunlight and rain reach the crops below.
  - These elevated solar panels for agriculture also allow farmers to move their equipment underneath without any trouble.
- **Partial shading:** The panels provide shade, which helps protect crops from extreme heat and reduces water evaporation from the soil.
  - This creates a cooler, more stable environment for plants to grow, especially in hot or dry regions.
- **Dual Land Productivity:** Agrivoltaics optimises land use by integrating crop cultivation or livestock rearing with solar power generation, supplying electricity for farm activities and creating an additional revenue stream through surplus power sales to the grid.



Agrivoltaics Development in India

- As of August 2025, India had 36 operational agrivoltaics projects with an installed capacity of 37.54 megawatts, alongside 10 pilot projects under development.
- **State-wise data**: Maharashtra's Mukhyamantri Saur Krushi Vahini Yojana 2.0 is promoting 16,000 MW of solar projects to provide power to farmers.
  - Gujarat's Kisan Suryoday Yojana provides electricity during the day for the farmer's task.
  - Karnataka's Surya Raitha Scheme encourages solar irrigation pumps and provides farmers an opportunity to earn from surplus electricity, cutting down fuel consumption.



India's Agrivoltaic Potential

- India holds significant potential for agrivoltaics.
  - Estimates place the country's agrivoltaic potential between 3,000 GW and nearly 14,000 GW, highlighting the scale of opportunity at the intersection of agriculture and renewable energy.
  - Agrivoltaic systems can also create profits diversification for farmers.
  - In some cases, annual earnings could rise from around 60,000 per acre to over 1 lakh per acre.
- **High-potential states** include Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh, which collectively account for nearly 50 per cent of India's estimated AgriPV power generation potential, driven by favourable combination of cropland availability, solar resource, and agro-climatic conditions.
  - Moderate potential is observed in Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Telangana, Bihar, and West Bengal.

- The southern, western, and central regions exhibit the most favourable combination of solar irradiance, land availability, and horticultural intensity for large-scale deployment.

Government Initiatives in Agrivoltaics Development

- **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan (PM KUSUM):** Launched in February 2019, the scheme encourages solar energy adoption in agriculture, reduces dependence on diesel and creates opportunities for farmers to diversify their earnings.
  - It also enables decentralised solar power generation and solarisation of agricultural pumps, creating avenues of development for solar energy integration with farming.
- **Centre of Excellence on Agrivoltaics:** The National Institute of Solar Energy, in collaboration with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research's Indian Agricultural Research Institute, has established a CoE for agrivoltaics research, demonstration and capacity building.
- **The India Agrivoltaics Alliance (IAA)** : Launched in 2023 and It is anchored by the National Solar Energy Federation of India (NSEFI).
  - It is a multi-stakeholder platform advancing the dual use of land for solar energy generation and agriculture.

Source :PIB

UNITED NATIONS CLIMATE CONVENTION'S LOSS AND DAMAGE FUND

Context

- The United Nations Climate Convention's Loss and Damage Fund has set aside $21.6 million for Nepal towards addressing the damage from the **Bhotekoshi floods.**

About

- In August 2026, an ice-and-rock avalanche, linked to climate change from human-accelerated global warming, set off flooding along the **Bhotekoshi–Trishuli–Narayani river system.**
  - Nepal estimates economic losses of at least $2.69 billion and recovery needs of at least $4.71 billion.
- It is the **first time** the Fund has earmarked money for a specific country.

About Loss and Damage Fund

- The fund operates under the financial mechanism of the **UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**.
  - Governments agreed to create it at **COP27 in 2022**, and its Governing Instrument was adopted at **COP28 in 2023.**
- It **was set up** to help developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to climate change respond to economic and non-economic losses, including from extreme weather and slow-onset events.
- **Beneficiaries:** Developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, with particular attention to those facing significant capacity constraints.

Source: TH

CIVIL DEFENCE NETWORK

In News

- The Union Home Ministry decided to launch a **first-of-its-kind pilot initiative** to strengthen civil defence preparedness by providing specialised training to **Civil Defence Master Trainers through the Indian Army.**

Civil Defence

- Civil Defence was firstly established in India in 1941.
- It was enacted by Parliament in May 1968 as Civil Defence Act 27 of 1968.
- It is intended to preserve lives, minimise damage to property, sustain key services and production and promote public morale in emergencies.
  - Originally, the focus was on security from enemy attack, but its scope was enlarged after Chinese aggression in 1962 and Indo-Pak conflict in 1965.
- The Civil Defence Act, 1968 revised in 2009 authorised the establishment of the Civil Defence Corps and expanded its responsibility in disaster management before, during and after natural and man-made disasters. Civil Defence also covers dangers from nuclear, biological and chemical attacks.

Source: PIB

PENGUIN DROPPINGS MAY ACCELERATE SNOWMELT IN ANTARCTICA

Context

- As per a recent study **penguin droppings may accelerate snowmelt in Antarctica.**

About

- **Fertilisation of Algae:** Penguins feed on fish and other small marine animals, nutrients from this food pass through their bodies and are deposited on land and snow in their droppings.
  - By doing so, penguins **inadvertently fertilise the algae** that grow on the snow.
- **Green Algae:** When the conditions are favourable, green pigments such as chlorophyll remain active. The algae use photosynthesis to produce food and grow rapidly.
- **Red Algae:** When nutrients become scarce or conditions deteriorate, the algae may produce red pigments as a form of protection. These pigments help shield their cells from intense sunlight.
- **Reduced snow reflectivity:** The spread of coloured algae makes snow less reflective, allowing it to absorb more solar energy and **potentially accelerate local melting.**

Penguins

- Penguins are a family of 17 to 19 species of birds that live primarily in the Southern Hemisphere, especially Antarctica.
- They are flightless, aquatic birds and excellent swimmers.
- They mainly feed on fish, krill and squid.
- Different penguin species inhabit different regions; for example, Emperor and Adélie penguins are found in Antarctica, while Galápagos penguins are the only penguins to be found north of the equator.
- Both the emperor penguin and the Galápagos penguin are officially classified as Endangered on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

Source: DTE

OSKAR KLEIN MEDAL

Context

- Renowned Indian theoretical physicist Professor Ashoke Sen has been awarded the prestigious Oskar Klein Medal for 2026, becoming the first Indian physicist to receive the international honour.

About

- Sen was recognised for his pioneering contributions to **string theory** which seeks to explain the fundamental nature of the universe, black hole entropy and string field theory, which have significantly shaped modern theoretical physics.
- An alumnus of Presidency College, Kolkata, and the University of Calcutta, he has also received the **Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan, Dirac Medal, Boltzmann Medal and Breakthrough Prize in Fundamental Physics**.

Oskar Klein Medal

- Established in **1988**, the medal recognises distinguished contributions to physics and is named after Swedish theoretical physicist **Oskar Klein**.
- It is awarded annually by **Stockholm University** and the Nobel Committee for Physics of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in Sweden.
- Previous recipients include **Nobel laureates** Stephen Hawking, Peter Higgs, Chen-Ning Yang, Steven Weinberg and Hans Bethe, underlining the award's international standing.

Source: AIR

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