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GODZILLA' EL NINO: IMPACT ON INDIA AND THE WORLD

Context

- The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has indicated that the developing El Niño event could intensify towards the end of 2026, with its effects potentially extending into 2027.

About El Niño

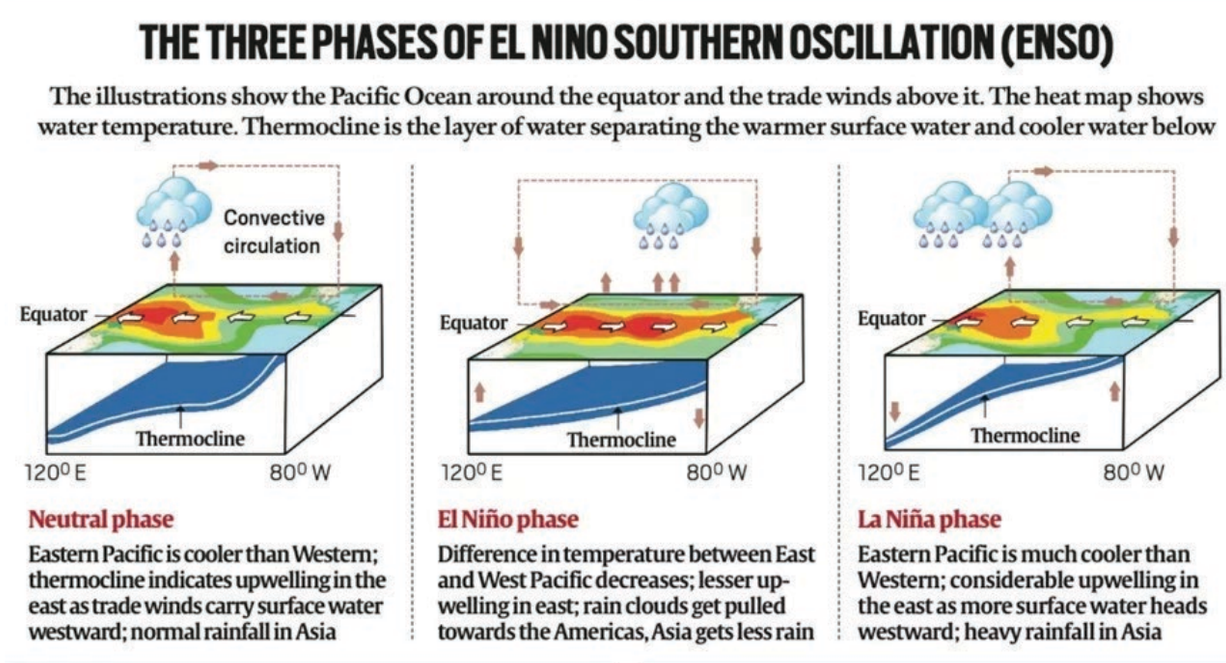
- El Niño is the **warming of seawater** in the central-east Equatorial Pacific that occurs every few years.
- During El Niño, surface temperatures in the **equatorial Pacific rise,** and trade winds, east-west winds that blow near the Equator, weaken.
- It is one of the three phases of a large ocean-atmosphere interaction over the Pacific region that influences weather patterns worldwide.
    - This interaction is known as the **El Niño Southern Oscillation, or ENSO.** Its three phases are: **warm (El Niño), neutral, and cool (La Niña).**
- **Godzilla El Niño** is a term used to describe an exceptionally strong El Niño event associated with unusually high Pacific Ocean temperatures.

How do scientists measure the strength of El Niño?

- **Sea-surface temperature anomalies:** Scientists monitor sea-surface temperatures in specific regions of the equatorial Pacific, particularly the Niño 3.4 region, and compare them with long-term averages.
- **Relative Oceanic Niño Index (RONI):** It measures the temperature anomaly in the Niño 3.4 region relative to average tropical ocean warming.
    - If the average RONI over a three-month period exceeds a value of **0.5 degrees Celsius**, an El Niño is declared. An average RONI value **less than -0.5 degrees Celsius** leads to the declaration of La Niña.
- **Duration and atmospheric conditions:** Scientists also assess whether the temperature anomalies persist over time and are accompanied by characteristic changes in atmospheric circulation.
    - The greater the positive temperature anomaly, the **stronger the El Niño signal.**

Impact on India

- **Weakening of the monsoon:** El Niño can weaken the southwest monsoon, which contributes around **70%** of India's annual rainfall.
    - According to the supplied report, the **2026 monsoon ended at 87%** of the **Long Period Average (LPA).**
- **Agricultural losses:** Low rainfall and increased temperature reduce yields from crops, increase irrigation needs and impact agricultural production.
- **Water distress:** Less rain and more evaporation deplete reservoirs and groundwater, reducing water for drinking and farming.
- **Food inflation:** Lower crop output increases food prices, disproportionately affecting low-income households.



- **Warmer winter:** Above-normal winter temperatures affect rabi crops, particularly wheat, by disrupting temperature-sensitive growth stages.

Global Impact

- **In the northern hemisphere**, above-normal temperatures are likely over parts of southern Europe and Africa, the Arabian peninsula, the Indian subcontinent and eastern Asia.
  - **Above-normal rainfall** will likely affect the Arabian peninsula, central and east Asia, coastal Southeast Asia and North America.
- **In the southern hemisphere**, higher-than-normal temperatures are likely to sweep Africa, particularly the equatorial regions and the Greater Horn of Africa, along with South America and Australia.
  - Many parts of the southern hemisphere are **expected to see weak rainfall,** particularly over southern Africa, southern Central America and the Caribbean.

Way Ahead

- India should strengthen **climate forecasting** along with **early warning systems.**
- **Promote climate-resilient agriculture** with water conservation techniques.
- **Incorporate green infrastructure** and heat mitigation techniques into urban planning.
- **Public awareness** of heat stress and disaster preparedness needs to be increased.

Concluding remarks

- An exceptionally strong El Niño could intensify existing climate and economic vulnerabilities, particularly in countries dependent on rainfall-based agriculture.
- Strengthening climate-resilient farming, water management, early-warning systems and international cooperation will be essential to reduce its potential impact.

Source: IE

CABINET SECRETARIAT

In News

- The **Cabinet Secretariat** declined to act on complaints by two Election Commissioners against an IAS officer, citing the **ECI's constitutional independence.**

What is the Cabinet Secretariat?

- The Cabinet Secretariat is the office that helps the Union Cabinet work. It does the paperwork, sets the agenda, records decisions and follows up on them.
- It works directly **under the Prime Minister.** Its **administrative head is the Cabinet Secretary.**
- It is **not mentioned in the Constitution**. It runs on the Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, 1961, where it appears in the First Schedule as a department of the Government.

Origin & Evolution

- Before the portfolio system, the business of government was performed collectively by the **Governor-General in Council.**
- In pre-Independence, traces roots to the Executive Council of the Governor-General following the Indian Councils Act, 1861, where **Lord Willingdon** institutionalised secretarial attendance in meetings.
- In September 1946, the **Secretariat was renamed Cabinet Secretariat** after the creation of the Interim Government.
- After Independence, it became an important forum for **inter-ministerial cooperation and collaborative decision-making.**
- It was formally created in independent India in 1950 with **N. R. Pillai as its first Cabinet Secretary.**
- A **separate Intelligence Wing** was added in 1965. R&AW was set up in **1968 as a wing of the Cabinet Secretariat.**

Structure

The Secretariat has three wings:

- **Civil Wing:** It is the main wing and assists the Cabinet and its committees and looks after the business rules.
- **Military Wing:** Helps coordinate defence matters and gives secretarial support to defence-related bodies.
- **Intelligence Wing:** Deals with the Joint Intelligence Committee. The JIC's role was later merged with the National Security Council (set up in 1999).

Functions of Cabinet Secretariat

- **Secretarial help to the Cabinet:** Convening meetings on the PM's orders, preparing and circulating the agenda and papers, recording

discussions, and circulating the record after the PM approves it. It is also the custodian of Cabinet papers.

- **Monitoring:** Tracking whether Cabinet decisions are actually implemented.
- **Administering the business rules**: Making sure ministries follow the AoB and ToB Rules.
- **Inter-ministerial coordination:** Differences between ministries are sorted out through Committees of Secretaries (CoS), chaired by the Cabinet Secretary. Their decisions are unanimous.
- **Crisis management:** Coordinating ministries during major crises. The Cabinet Secretary chairs the National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC).

The Cabinet Secretary

- The Cabinet Secretary is the **administrative head of the Cabinet Secretariat.**
- They are also the **senior-most officer of the Indian Administrative Service**—the highest position an IAS officer can hold while in service.
- They are ranked **11th in the order of precedence and function under the Prime Minister.**
- His Tenure is **fixed at two years**. Under the All India Services (Death-cum-Retirement Benefits) Rules, 1958, extensions are allowed up to a total of four years. A 2019 amendment added a **possible three more months in public interest.**
- The Cabinet Secretary also **chairs the Conference of Chief Secretaries of States.**
- He is also the **ex-officio Chairman** of the Civil Services Board.
- They monitor major Cabinet decisions and provide an administrative link to key departments under the Prime Minister's portfolio, including administrative reforms and parliamentary affairs.

Issues and criticism

- **Neutrality and tenure:** Repeated extensions to the Cabinet Secretary, including by relaxing rules, can raise doubts about the independence of the post.
- **Overlap of roles:** The Cabinet Secretariat, the PMO and the NSCS often work on similar questions, which can blur responsibility.
- **Concentration of power:** A strong coordinating office near the PM can pull decisions away from line ministries.

Source: IE

WHY DOES INDIA NEED A SENTENCING COUNCIL?

Context

- In India, two people convicted of the same crime can be awarded different sentences, thus raising the **need for uniform principles in sentencing.**

Sentencing

- **Sentencing** is the process where the **State translates prescriptive ranges,** for instance, 'up to ten years' imprisonment, into a specific prison term, fines, probation or community sanctions for the convict(s).
- In India, this decision is left almost entirely to an **individual judge's or Bench's discretion.**
- Statutes set out the **maximum, and sometimes the minimum sentences.**
- **There is no checklist** of what should count as a serious aggravating factor, what counts as genuine mitigation, or how prior conduct and remorse should be weighed.

Need for a National Sentencing Policy

- **Disparity in punishments:** A differential judicial assessment could lead to different sentences for the similar offences committed by the individuals.
- **Constitutional concerns:** Articles 14 and 21 guarantees equality before the law and fair, just and reasonable procedures to every individual. Arbitrary sentencing undermines these constitutional guarantees.
- **Limited guidance for judges:** There is a lack of a comprehensive national framework to specify the impact of factors such as seriousness of the offence, previous criminal conduct, remorse and prospects of rehabilitation on the punishment.
- **Neglect of alternatives:** In the absence of clear guidelines, probation or other legally permissible alternatives to imprisonment might not be considered enough in the judicial system.

Supreme Court's Observations

- **In Soman v. State of Kerala (2012),** the Supreme Court recognised the competing principles involved in sentencing and highlighted weaknesses in sentencing practices within the criminal justice system.
- **In Sunita Devi v. State of Bihar (2024),** the Supreme Court observed that sentencing should not be a mere lottery and directed the Centre to examine the feasibility of a comprehensive national sentencing policy, potentially through a Sentencing Commission.

The English Model: Sentencing Council

- England and Wales had established t**he Sentencing Council** under the Coroners and Justice Act, 2009, under which:
  - Courts assess the offender's culpability and the harm caused by the offence.
  - Guidelines prescribe a starting sentence and a category range for different combinations of culpability and harm.
  - Courts adjust the sentence for aggravating and mitigating factors, guilty pleas and multiple offences.
  - Guidelines structure judicial decision-making without requiring identical punishments in every superficially similar case.

Way Ahead

- **Develop offence-specific guidelines:** There is a need to establish a structured framework for evaluating culpability, harm, aggravating factors and mitigating circumstances.
- **Create a national sentencing database:** The National Judicial Data Grid's infrastructure can be analysed to collect sentencing data and identify disparities across courts.
- **Policy based on evidence:** Study existing sentencing practices, prison capacity, rehabilitation outcomes, deterrence and public safety before finalising the framework.

Conclusion:

- A national sentencing policy can help ensure that similar cases are treated as per the **uniform principles, at the same time it allows justified differences in individual cases.**
- The objective should be to make **sentencing fair, transparent, proportionate and accountable,** so that the punishment does not depend merely on the discretion of the judge hearing the case.

Source: IE

11 CRORE DIGITAL IDENTITY CARDS CREATED UNDER THE DIGITAL AGRICULTURE MISSION

Context

- The Union Agriculture Ministry had created **11 crore unique digital identity cards** for farmers, five months ahead of a deadline set for March 31, 2027.
  - The milestone has been achieved under the **Digital Agriculture Mission** implemented by the **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare.**

A Farmer ID (Kisan Pehchaan Patra)

- It is a unique digital identity of farmers **based on Aadhaar**, linked dynamically to the State's land records system.
- **The Farmer ID** gets automatically updated with the changes in the land record details of an individual farmer.
- The database created through the Farmer IDs is known as **Farmers' Registry.**
  - It serves as **one of the three core registries** under the Agri-Stack component of the Union Government's Digital Agriculture Mission.
- The Farmer ID, is intended to provide the **following farmer-centric benefits:**
  - Simplified and seamless access to Government schemes,
  - Streamlined paperless and contactless crop loans and credit that can be processed within an hour,
  - Personalised agricultural extension services tailored to the farmer's needs.

Digital Agriculture Mission

- It was approved with an outlay of Rs. 2817 Crore, including the central share of Rs. 1940 Crore in 2024.
- It is conceived as an **umbrella scheme to support digital agriculture initiatives, such as:**
  - creating digital public infrastructure, implementing the Digital General Crop Estimation Survey (DGCES), and taking up other IT initiatives by the Central Government, State Governments, and Academic and Research Institutions.
- The funds are released to the **States based on their proposals.**
- The **Mission seeks to** enable a robust digital agriculture ecosystem for driving innovative farmer-centric digital solutions and making timely and reliable crop-related information available to all the farmers in the country.

Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) for Agriculture

- DPI for Agriculture aims to provide **comprehensive and useful data** on farmers consisting of authenticated demographic details, land holdings and crops sown.

- It includes cultivators & tenant farmers, as per the policy of the State Government.
- It is a transformative approach to digital governance, underpinned by the following principles:
  - **Interoperability:** Seamless integration with central and state government platforms.
  - **Open Standards:** Ensuring widespread adoption and accessibility.
  - **Scalability:** Designed to serve farmers across the country.
  - **Robust Governance:** Data security and privacy frameworks ensure trust and transparency.

Three Pillars of DPIs

- **Agristack:** The farmer's digital toolbox. It's a federated structure, collaboratively built by various agencies of both central and state governments. Agristack houses three foundational registries:
  - **Farmers' Registry:** A virtual farmer directory.
  - **Geo-referenced Village Maps:** For every village, with crop details overlaid.
  - **Crop Sown Registry:** A digital ledger of what's sprouting where.
- **Krishi Decision Support System:** It provides timely and reliable information to farmers, helping them make informed decisions.
  - It aims to create a comprehensive geospatial system to unify remote sensing-based information on crops, Soil, Weather, water resources, etc.
- **Soil Profile Mapping:** It maps soil properties, moisture levels, and nutrient content, empowering precision agriculture.

Challenges

- **Digital Divide:** Farmers in remote areas face difficulties due to limited internet access and digital literacy.
- **Data Privacy:** Robust safeguards are needed to protect sensitive farmer data.
- **Inter-State Coordination:** Uniform implementation across states requires cooperation and resource-sharing mechanisms.

Way Ahead

- Strengthen digital infrastructure in rural areas.
- Launch capacity-building programs to improve digital literacy among farmers.
- Implement strong governance frameworks to ensure data security and privacy.
- By leveraging advanced technologies and farmer-centric approaches, DPI will enhance agricultural productivity, improve farmers' incomes, and ensure food security.

Source: TH

CROSS-BORDER DRUG TRAFFICKING IN INDIA

Context

- The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), in coordination with state police and central agencies, conducted **Operation Trident** to dismantle a transnational drug-trafficking cartel operating across **India, Myanmar and Bangladesh.**

Why is India Targeted by Drug Trafficking?

- **Geographical location:** India lies close to the **Golden Crescent and Golden Triangle**, major global drug-producing regions.
  - Easy cross-border smuggling in states like Punjab, Manipur, and Assam enables drug inflow.
- **Extensive Land and Maritime Borders:** India shares over 15,000 km of land borders and a coastline of over 11,000 Km.
  - Porous borders with **Myanmar, Nepal, and Bangladesh** facilitate cross-border smuggling through difficult terrain and informal routes.
- **Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Base:** India is one of the world's largest producers of pharmaceuticals and precursor chemicals.
  - Diversion of precursor chemicals can aid the illegal manufacture of synthetic drugs if regulatory oversight is weak.
- **Narco-Terrorism:** Drug trafficking finances terrorist organisations and insurgent groups. Proceeds from narcotics have been used to fund anti-India activities, especially along the western border.

Golden Triangle

- It includes the regions of **Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand.**
- It is Southeast Asia's main opium-producing region and one of the oldest narcotics supply routes to Europe and North America.

Golden Crescent

- It includes Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan.
- It is a principal global site for opium production and distribution.

Impact of Drug Abuse

- **Economic Impact:** Drug abuse lowers productivity, increases healthcare costs, and weakens human capital.
- **Health Impact:** It causes mental disorders and leads to physical deterioration.
- **Social Impact:** It disrupts families, fuels domestic violence, and results in social isolation and stigma.
- **National Security Impact:** Drug trade fosters narco-terrorism, organised crime, and youth involvement weakens national integrity.

Government Initiatives in India

- **Three Year Roadmap:** The Union Home Minister outlined a **three-year roadmap** to make India **drug-free by 2029. The road map is based on four pillars.**
  - **First** is intelligence and operation-based enforcement; **second**—precursor and synthetic drugs control; **third**—demand and harm reduction; and **fourth**—capacity building and coordination.
  - **BSF, CISF, Indian Coast Guard, Customs and DRI** will carry out risk-based profiling and install scanners at land borders, ports, airports and cargo for sharper surveillance.
  - **The CBI, Ministry of External Affairs and Interpol** will bring back the fugitives.
  - **The Enforcement Directorate, Financial Intelligence Unit and the banking system** will catch the money trail.
- **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (NDPS Act):** It prohibits the production, possession, sale, and consumption of illicit drugs and prescribes penalties for violations.
- **Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan:** Launched in 2020, this campaign aims to create awareness about the ill effects of drug abuse and promote a drug-free India.
- **Kashi Declaration: It is a five-year roadmap** for drug-free India, signed during the Youth Spiritual Summit in **Varanasi.**
  - **India** has set a national goal of achieving a **Drug-Free India by 2047.**
- **India has signed Bilateral Agreements with 27 countries,** Memorandum of Understanding with 16 countries and Agreements on Security Cooperation with 02 countries for combating illicit trafficking of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) and Chemical Precursors as well as related offences.
- **DarkNet Monitoring Cell** under **Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB)** tracks online drug sales.

Global Initiatives

- **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC):** The UNODC is at the forefront of the global fight against illicit drugs. The UNODC-led campaign aims to raise awareness about the dangers of drug abuse.
- **International Narcotics Control Board (INCB):** The INCB monitors the global drug situation and assesses countries' compliance with international drug control treaties.

Way Ahead

- **Strengthening Global Governance:** Countries need harmonised anti-drug laws and stronger extradition treaties. International institutions should develop common protocols for narcotics enforcement.
- **Expanding Intelligence Cooperation:** Establishment of integrated databases and real-time intelligence platforms can improve interdiction efforts.
- **Enforcement with Rehabilitation:** Alongside strict enforcement, governments should focus on:
  - Rehabilitation,
  - Awareness campaigns,
  - Mental health support, and
  - Youth engagement programmes.

Concluding remarks

- Cross-border drug trafficking is not merely a law-and-order challenge but a multidimensional threat to public health, social stability and national security.
- A combination of intelligence-led enforcement, regional cooperation, preventive interventions and accessible rehabilitation services is essential to achieve the vision of a Nasha Mukt Bharat.

Source: IE

NEWS IN BRIEF

VICTORIA MODE (VM) PHENOMENON

Context

- A recent study by the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has linked changes in India's climate zones to the Pacific Ocean phenomenon known as the Victoria Mode (VM).

What is Victoria Mode?

- Victoria Mode (VM) is a recurring pattern of **warm and cool sea-surface temperature variations** in the North Pacific Ocean.
- It influences atmospheric circulation and the movement of moisture, affecting rainfall patterns over distant regions, including India.
- The study associates the **negative phase of Victoria Mode with reduced moisture transport towards northern India**, contributing to declining rainfall and the expansion of drier climate zones.

Key Findings of the Study

- **Northwest India:** The area under the hot, semi-arid steppe climate increased from **25.7%** in 1951–80 to **33.1%** in 1991–2020. The temperate zone declined from **25.8% to 18.7%**.
  - The steppe zone's eastern edge moved from west Uttar Pradesh to the eastern part of the state.
- **Northeast India:** The tropical savannah zone contracted from **18.4% to 11.8%**, while the temperate zone expanded from **74.8% to 82.5%**.
- **Gangetic plains:** The study observed a shift from savannah to temperate conditions in parts of Gangetic West Bengal, alongside drying trends across the northern plains.
- **Peninsular India:** The hot semi-arid steppe zone fell from **30.3%** of the region's area in 1951-80 to **16.4%** in 1991-2020. Tropical savannah rose from 61.6% to 75.7%.
  - Konkan and Goa, coastal Karnataka, and Kerala and Mahe saw their tropical monsoon zones expand.
- **Western India:** Parts of Saurashtra and Kutch shifted from arid to semi-arid conditions, while West Vidarbha and Marathwada shifted towards a semi-arid steppe climate.

Source: TH

THE GLOBAL SOUTH FACES A '4F CRISIS'

Context

- External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said the 4F crises of finance, fuel, food and fertilisers facing the Global South owing to wars in Ukraine and West Asia need increased accountability from the Global North.

About 4F Crisis

- **Fuel:** Conflicts and disruptions to maritime chokepoints such as the **Strait of Hormuz, the Red Sea,** etc. restrict oil and gas supplies, increasing transportation costs and fuel inflation.
- **Fertilisers:** Natural gas shortages and shipping disruptions raise nitrogen fertiliser production costs, increasing farmers' expenses and threatening crop yields and food security.
- **Food:** Higher energy, fertilizer and freight costs raise food-production and distribution expenses.
  - **The World Bank** reported in September 2026 that global cereal prices had risen since June, with wheat prices up **22%** and maize prices up **26%.**
- **Finance:** Developing countries are facing high borrowing costs, debt-servicing pressures and constrained access to development finance.



Source: HT

INTEGRATED ATMOSPHERIC CHEMISTRY AND AEROSOL TOXICITY ANALYSIS LABORATORY

In News

- Recently, the Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology and Earth Sciences inaugurated the **world's first- of -its-kind 'Air Pollution Analysis' facility for Delhi NCR.**

Integrated Atmospheric Chemistry and Aerosol Toxicity Analysis Laboratory

- It is the world's first- of -its-kind 'Air Pollution Analysis' facility
- It is known as **'Integrated Atmospheric Chemistry and Aerosol Toxicity Analysis Laboratory ' (AATAL).**
- It has been established **under 'Mission Mausam'** to strengthen scientific understanding of atmospheric pollution and provide actionable evidence for air-quality management in Delhi-NCR.

Features

- It brings together **advanced atmospheric measurement instruments**, detailed chemical analysis, pollution-source identification, and decision-support capabilities within an integrated framework.
- It is **equipped with advanced instruments** for analysing the chemical composition of atmospheric gases and aerosols, including fine particulate matter (PM2.5), metals, toxic elements, and other components.
- It would take **air-quality assessment** beyond simply reporting pollution levels to identifying the composition of pollutants, their sources, their relative contributions, and their potential health implications

Importance

- It will help understand the composition of pollution as well as the contribution of different sources, which is important for addressing the concerns of the people of Delhi and ensuring that action is based on scientific evidence
- It will help scientists distinguish between different sources of air pollution, including vehicular emissions, industrial activity, biomass and crop-residue burning, construction and road dust, and pollutants transported from surrounding regions.

Source: PIB

IAF MARKS 94TH ANNIVERSARY

Context

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi witnessed the Indian Air Force's Wings Over Ganges aerial display in Varanasi as part of celebrations marking the IAF's 94th anniversary.

About the Indian Air Force (IAF)

- **Establishment:** The IAF was officially established on 8 October 1932.
- **First operational flight:** 1 April 1933, with four Westland Wapiti aircraft.
- **Royal prefix:** The IAF received the prefix "Royal" in 1945 in recognition of its contribution during the Second World War.
- **Post-independence:** The prefix was dropped in 1950 when India became a republic.
- **Role:** Protecting Indian airspace, conducting air operations and supporting humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.
- **Motto:** Nabhah Sparsham Diptam, commonly translated as **"Touch the Sky with Glory"**, is derived from the 11th chapter of the **Bhagavad Gita**. It reflects the IAF's association with the ideals of courage, service and excellence.

Source: IE

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