

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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CHILD MARRIAGE

In Context

- The Lancet study highlighted that **Bihar, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, and Maharashtra** accounted for more than half of the total headcount burden of child marriages in girls.

Child Marriage in India

- According to National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5) 2019-21, women in the age group of 20-24 years who were married before they turned 18, are **14.7%** in urban and **27% in rural areas**.
- Women aged 15-19 years who were already mothers or pregnant at the time of the survey were **3.8% (urban) and 7.9% (rural)**.
- The largest absolute increase in headcount was observed in **West Bengal**.

Impact of Child Marriage

- **Physical Health:** Child brides often face complications during pregnancy and childbirth due to their immature bodies. This increases the risk of maternal and infant mortality.
- **Education:** Once married, girls are less likely to continue their formal education, limiting their opportunities for personal and economic development.
- **Gender Inequality:** Child marriage is often rooted in gender inequality, reinforcing traditional gender roles and norms.
 - ♦ Boys can also be affected, as they may face pressure to assume adult responsibilities at an early age, impacting their own personal development and well-being.
- **Violence and Abuse:** Lack of legal protection and social support may leave child brides trapped in abusive situations without recourse.
- **Reproductive Rights:** Child brides may have limited control over their reproductive rights, including family planning and the number and spacing of their children.
- **Cycle of Poverty:** Child marriage is often linked to poverty, creating a cycle where poverty leads to child marriage, and child marriage perpetuates poverty by limiting education and economic opportunities.

Measures Taken by Government of India to Eliminate Child Marriage

- **Legal Framework: The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006,** is a dedicated legal framework aimed at preventing and prohibiting child marriages in India.
 - ♦ It sets the legal age of marriage as 18 years for girls and 21 years for boys.
- **The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)** undertakes various activities and programmes from time to time with concerned stakeholders/ organizations such as representatives of Child Welfare Committees (CWC), Police, Women and Child Development Department on the issue of child marriages and related matters.
- **Support Services and Helplines:** Government of India has introduced **CHILDLINE 1098**, a 24X7 telephone emergency outreach service for children in crisis, which responds with suitable interventions to calls for any form of assistance which a child requires, including for prevention of child marriages
- **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Scheme: Launched in 2015,** this national initiative focuses on improving the status of girls and addressing issues such as female foeticide, child marriage, and gender-based discrimination.
 - ♦ It emphasizes the importance of education and encourages the protection and empowerment of girls.
- **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS):** The ICDS program, among other objectives, aims to improve the nutritional and health status of children, including those at risk of child marriage.
 - ♦ It provides a range of services, including health check-ups, immunization, and nutrition support, to address the overall well-being of children.
- **National Plan of Action for Children 2016:** The National Plan of Action for Children outlines the government's commitment to child welfare and includes strategies to prevent child marriages.
- **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA):** SSA is an ongoing program aimed at providing universal access to quality elementary education.
 - ♦ By promoting education for all children, including girls, the government aims to address one of the root causes of child marriage – lack of education.

- **Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (SABLA):** SABLA targets adolescent girls (11-18 years) and aims to empower them through education, life skills training, and nutrition support.
 - ♦ By focusing on the holistic development of adolescent girls, the scheme aims to prevent early marriage.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** The government, along with non-governmental organizations, conducts awareness campaigns to educate communities about the harmful effects of child marriage.

Conclusion

- Child marriage had declined nationally, prevalence of girl child marriage decreased from 49 percent in 1993 to 22 percent in 2021.
 - ♦ Prevalence of boy child marriage came down from 7 percent in 2006 to 2 percent in 2021.
- Continuous efforts are required to address deep-rooted social norms, improve access to education, and enhance the economic opportunities for girls to eliminate the practice of child marriage in India.

Source: *TH*

REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN INDIAN JUDICIARY

In Context

- Supreme Court judge Justice B.V. Nagarathna said that **more women judges are needed in the judiciary**.

Representation of Women in Judiciary

- **Justice Beevi** became the first Muslim woman judge of the Supreme Court, as well as the **first woman Supreme Court Justice in Asia in 1989**.
- Since 1989, only **10 women** have made it to the Supreme Court. Currently, there are **only three female judges** of the 33 Supreme Court judges.
- **Only 4.1%** of all Supreme Court judges have been women, while the **remaining 96% are men**.
- There are **more women judges at the district court level** than at the High Court level.
- **Justice Nagarathna** is in line to become the **first-ever female Chief Justice of India** in 2027.
- The appointment of Justices Kohli, Nagarathna, and Trivedi to the top court in 2021 created history, as this marked the **first time that so many females were appointed to the SC** in one go.

- ♦ Additionally, this was significant as for the first time India had four female judges in the SC at once, the highest number so far.

Reasons for the Lack of Representation of Women

- **Historical Reasons:** Historically, legal and judicial systems worldwide have been male-dominated, and India is no exception. The legal profession has traditionally been perceived as a male domain, and this mindset has persisted over the years.
- **Societal Expectations and Stereotypes:** Societal expectations often dictate traditional gender roles, and there may be stereotypes that cast women in roles that are seen as less compatible with the demands of a judicial career.
- **Educational Barriers:** Limited educational opportunities for women can result in fewer female candidates entering law schools and subsequently pursuing a career in the judiciary.
- **Family and Cultural Expectations:** Cultural norms and expectations regarding women's responsibilities within the family may dissuade them from pursuing demanding and time-consuming careers, such as a judicial career.
- **Gender Bias and Discrimination:** Stereotypes about women's capabilities may lead to their exclusion from consideration for higher judicial positions.
- **Networking and Mentorship Opportunities:** Male-dominated networks and mentorship structures within the legal profession may make it challenging for women to access the same opportunities for career advancement.
- **Appointment Procedure:** The lower judiciary has a better representation of women than the High Court and Supreme Court.
 - ♦ That's perhaps because entry to the lower judiciary is through an examination, while the High Court and Supreme Court are decided by the collegium.

Importance of Representation of Women in Judiciary

- **Gender Equality:** A diverse judiciary ensures a more inclusive and representative legal system.
- **Fairness and Impartiality:** Having a judiciary that reflects the diversity of the population helps in dispelling biases and promoting impartial decision-making.

- **Inspiration and Role Modeling:** Women judges can act as role models, encouraging more women to pursue careers in law.
- **Access to Justice for Women:** Women may feel more comfortable and understood when their cases are heard by judges who share similar life experiences and perspectives.
- **Legal Interpretation and Legislation:** Women judges can provide unique insights into legal interpretation and the development of legislation, particularly in areas related to gender-based issues, family law, and women's rights.
 - ♦ Their presence can influence legal discourse and contribute to the evolution of more gender-sensitive laws.
- **Global Norms and Commitments:** Internationally, there is a growing recognition of the importance of gender diversity in all sectors, including the judiciary.

Conclusion

- The lack of representation of women in the judiciary, combined with the traditional exclusionary attitude towards women, has led to a lack of diversity within the judicial system.
- Therefore, it is essential that efforts to increase diversity in the judiciary are made to ensure a more equitable court system.
- There is a requirement to enhance transparency in the judicial system. This will create more opportunities for women to prove their mettle and create a level playing field.

Source: **TOI**

OTT SECTOR

Context

- **India's OTT market, sized at \$2.5 billion**, went through a major disruption in 2023.

About

- This **disruption was due to Jio Cinema** offering the most premium content-IPL, **free to users**.
- This **negatively impacted subscription revenue growth** for peers and the industry at large and led to **Disney Plus offering cricket World Cup free for mobile customers**.

What are OTT Services?

- **OTT (Over-the-Top)** refers to **content providers that deliver media directly over the internet to users** without the need for traditional cable or satellite TV services.
- Essentially, **OTT platforms utilize streaming technology** (transmit data [audio, video, etc.] in real time over the internet) to deliver their content to users.

Indian OTT Sector

- **Market Size and Growth:** The OTT market in India is currently at **₹10,500 crore**, including subscription revenues. This is expected to touch ₹12,000 crore by FY 2024 and **₹30,000 crore in FY 2030 with a 20 per cent growth** on year-on-year basis, according to CII.
 - ♦ There are currently over **45 million OTT subscribers** in India.
- **Key Players:**
 - ♦ **Global giants:** Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+ Hotstar.
 - ♦ **Domestic players:** ZEE5, SonyLIV, Voot, MX Player, ALTBalaji.
 - ♦ **Regional players:** Aha (Telugu), Hoichoi (Bengali), Voot Select (Tamil).

Benefits

- **Original content:** Rising focus on creating original Indian shows and movies, catering to diverse regional and linguistic preferences.
- **Genre diversification:** Expansion beyond traditional genres like drama and comedy, with thrillers, documentaries, and reality shows gaining popularity.
- **Language focus:** Increased focus on regional languages, with platforms launching original content in Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, and other regional languages.
- **Short-form content:** Growing popularity of bite-sized content like web series and short videos.

Challenges

- **Competition:** Intense competition among both global and domestic players requires robust content strategies and competitive pricing.
 - **Data costs and affordability:** High data costs remain a barrier for some users, particularly in rural areas.

- **Piracy and copyright infringement:** Protecting content from piracy remains a challenge.
- **Regulation and censorship:** Balancing creative freedom with government regulations and cultural sensitivities requires careful navigation.

Laws Regulating OTT Platforms

- In 2022, the Central Government issued the **Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules 2021** to establish regulations for Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms.
- Recently, the Union government has introduced a **new bill** that will consolidate the regulatory framework for various broadcasting services, including over-the-top (OTT) content.
- The bill, once passed, will set up content evaluation committees for regulation and watchdog.

Opportunities

- **Rural market expansion:** Strategies to address data affordability and cater to regional content preferences can unlock rural market potential.
- **Technological advancements:** Integration of Augmented - Virtual Reality and personalized recommendations can enhance viewer experience.
- **Consolidation and partnerships:** Potential for mergers and acquisitions or strategic partnerships to optimize resources and compete effectively.
- **Global content export:** Indian OTT platforms have the potential to export original content to international markets.

Way Ahead

- The Indian OTT sector is poised for **continued growth, driven by rising disposable incomes, increasing internet penetration**, and a growing appetite for diverse and engaging content.
- **Overcoming challenges like affordability and piracy** while capitalizing on **opportunities in rural markets** and technological advancements will be crucial for sustained success.

Source: **BL**

RED SEA TROUBLE

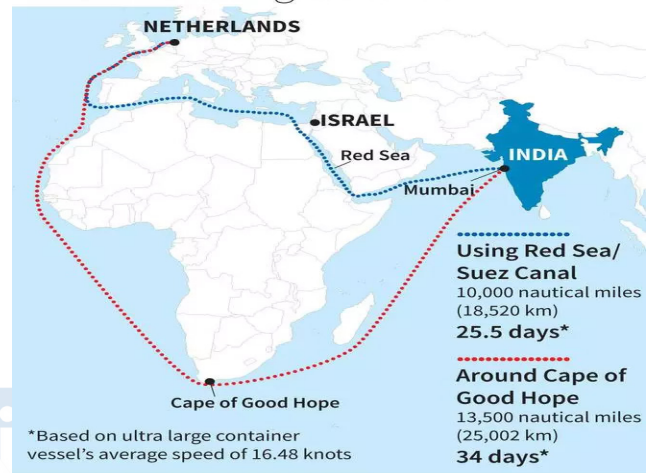
Context:

- A spate of attacks on cargo ships in the Red Sea since November by the **Houthi militia of Yemen** has turned the **quickest marine route linking Asia with Europe through the Suez Canal unsafe**.

About

- The attack has forced freighters **to take a longer transit around the Cape of Good Hope in Africa's southern tip**, making shipments both dearer and longer to deliver.
- It has **compounded the woes of global trade** as it emerges from the aftermath of the **pandemic, feels the heat of the Russia-Ukraine war and grapples with a global economic slowdown**.

Alternative shipping route avoiding Red Sea



Importance of Red Sea Trade Route

- The Red Sea, stretching from **Egypt's Suez Canal to the narrow Bab el-Mandeb Strait** separating the Arabian Peninsula from Africa, remains a key trade route for global shipping and energy supplies.
 - ♦ Opened in 1869, the Suez Canal is one of the busiest canals in the world, carrying around **12% of global trade**. In 2022, 23,583 ships used this route.
- **Linking East and West:** The Red Sea serves as a bridge between the East and West, providing a shorter and more direct route for maritime trade between Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.
- **Strategic Importance:** The Suez Canal, which connects the Red Sea to the Mediterranean, is one of the world's most important artificial waterways, facilitating global trade and reducing shipping times and costs.
- **Trade in Goods and Resources:** The region is a significant source of oil and natural gas, and the Red Sea remains an important route for the transportation of energy resources.

- **Economic Impact:** The trade routes through the Red Sea support the economies of countries along its shores by providing employment, stimulating economic activity, and fostering international relations.
- **Political Significance:** The control of key chokepoints, such as the Bab el Mandeb and the Suez Canal, has implications for global trade and security.
 - ♦ Political stability and cooperation among the countries bordering the Red Sea are crucial for ensuring the smooth flow of goods.

Impact on Indian trade

- After the attacks, major cargo shipping lines decided they would **not operate on this route**. Even small feeder vessels have of late **stopped plying** in these waters.
 - ♦ **Commodities are the worst affected whether it be chemicals, plastic, petrochemicals**, because margins are not there to absorb the hike in freight.
- **Almost 90% of western hemisphere cargo**, both inbound or shipped from India, that used to go through the Red Sea is **now getting re-routed through the Cape of Good Hope**.
 - ♦ The remaining 10% of Indian import or export cargo is either not moving or using a transit facility.
- **Elongation of Both import and export cycles:** Container Corporation of India is saying about **25% of its containers are being held back by Indian exporters**.
 - ♦ Besides the extra time taken on account of the longer route, the developments could make **imports costlier and call for better inventory management**.
- **Increase in freight cost:** While all consignments are likely to be impacted by the **increase in freight cost** — by up to **six-fold** in some cases — and the **longer voyage time**, the pinch would be felt most by **low-value, high-volume cargo as well as perishables**.
- **Final products:** Also, the crisis could result in final products turning expensive.
 - ♦ For instance, the Red Sea crisis could come in the way of any plans to reduce pump prices of petrol and diesel.
- **Energy security:** Gross imports of crude oil and petroleum products as a share of India's gross imports in value terms was **25.8% in 2022-23**.

- ♦ In fact, **India's import dependence** (based on consumption) in the April-September 2023 period was **87.6%**, according to the government's Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell.

Related International Conventions:

- **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS):** It was adopted in **1982**. It defines the rights and responsibilities of nations concerning the use of the seas.
 - ♦ It specifically addresses the issue of piracy, providing a definition of piracy and outlining the rights and obligations of states in suppressing piracy.
- **United Nations Security Council Resolutions:** A number of United Nations Security Council resolutions have been adopted over the years to facilitate international cooperation in dealing with acts of piracy in that area.
- **Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Maritime Navigation (SUA Convention):** Adopted in **1988**, it criminalizes specific offenses related to the safety of maritime navigation and establishes a framework for cooperation among states in investigating and prosecuting these offenses.
- **International Maritime Organization (IMO) Conventions and Guidelines:** It includes measures to prevent and respond to acts of piracy and armed robbery against ships.
- **The International Convention Against the Taking of Hostages, 1979:** It aims to develop international cooperation between States in devising and adopting effective measures for the prevention, prosecution and punishment of all acts of taking hostages as manifestations of international terrorism.
- **The United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime, 2000:** The main purpose is to promote cooperation to prevent and combat transnational organized crime more effectively.

What has been the response?

- The UN has said **"no cause or grievance"** could justify Houthi attacks against freedom of navigation in the Red Sea.
- The **U.S. wants more support for the multinational 'Operation Prosperity Guardian'** it is spearheading to keep the sea lanes open and free of threats.

Do you know?

- Operation Prosperity Guardian is a **US-led, multinational military operation** established in December 2023 to **respond to Houthi-led attacks on shipping in the Red Sea.**
- **Objectives:**
 - ♦ To ensure the safety of maritime traffic in the **Red Sea, Bab al-Mandeb, and Gulf of Aden.**
 - ♦ To **counter threats by Houthi forces** against international maritime commerce.
 - ♦ To **de-escalate tensions** in the region and promote stability.
- **India is closely watching the situation,** and the Commerce Secretary is said to have held discussions with officials and trade bodies.

Source: TH

VOICE CLONING

Context

- **Voice cloning through Artificial Intelligence (AI)** has created fears around the AI software as **AI voice cloning-related scams burgeoned.**

About

- A report by Market US has revealed that **the global market for these voice cloning applications stands at \$1.2 billion in 2022** and is estimated to touch almost **\$5 billion in 2032 with a CAGR above 15-40%.**

How are voice clones done?

- Once a scammer finds an audio clip of an individual, all it takes is to **upload their voice clip to the online program that is able to replicate the voice accurately** barring some intonations.
- There's a **host of these applications** online with popular ones like **Murf, Resemble and Speechify.**
 - ♦ Recently, **former Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan's political party used an AI-generated speech** from the now imprisoned leader in an attempt to rally for votes.

Applications

- **Preserving legacy:** Can keep the voices of loved ones alive for future generations.

- ♦ **Apple** introduced a **voice cloning feature** in iOS 17 intended to **help people who may be in danger of losing their voice to a degenerative disease.**
- **Personalized experiences:** Custom virtual assistants, interactive storytelling, and more immersive digital interactions.
- **Gaming:** Prominent tech companies also have a hand in the **AI voice game.** Recently, **Meta** launched **SeamlessM4T**, which can understand nearly 100 languages from speech or text and generate translations in real-time.
- **Accessibility:** Can offer voice to those who have lost it or will lose it due to illness or disability.
- **Song creations: YouTube** took a similar route and announced **Dream Track** that allows them to create song clips featuring AI vocals with permission from pop stars like Demi Lovato, Sia and John Legend.
- **Creative applications:** Enhancing storytelling, audio games, and immersive experiences.

Issues

- **Scams:** In April 2023, a family living in Arizona, U.S. was threatened to **pay ransom for a fake kidnapping pulled off by an AI cloned voice.**
- **Reporting issues: Several cases went unreported and** only some came to light.
- **Fake news:** Easy access to AI voice clones also **spawned disinformation.**
 - ♦ **Harry Potter actress Emma Watson** allegedly read out a portion of the Mein Kampf.
- **Privacy and consent:** Concerns about unauthorized recording and use of voices without consent need to be addressed.
- **Ethical considerations:** Potential for exploitation, manipulation, and emotional harm through impersonation and misuse.
- **Social implications:** Impact on identity, trust, and communication dynamics in the digital age.
- **Hate speech:** Recently, users started flocking to free AI voice cloning tools **to generate celebrity hate speech.**
 - ♦ **Conservative political pundit Ben Shapiro** allegedly made racist comments against Democrat politician Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez.

India: a major target for AI voice clone scams

- A report titled ‘**The Artificial Imposter**’ published in May last year revealed that **47% of surveyed Indians have either been a victim or knew someone who had fallen prey** to an AI generated voice scam.
- The **numbers are almost twice the global average of 25%**. In fact, **India topped the list with the maximum number of victims** to AI voice scams.
 - ♦ In December, a **Lucknow resident** fell prey to a cyberattack that used AI to **impersonate the voice of the victim’s relative**, requesting the person to transfer a substantial amount through UPI.
- Indians have been found to be **particularly vulnerable** to scams of this nature.
 - ♦ According to McAfee, **66% of Indian participants admitted that they would respond to a voice call** or a phone call that appeared to be from a friend or family member in urgent need of money.
 - ♦ The report also shared that **86% Indians were prone to sharing their voice data online** or via voice notes at least once a week which has made these tools potent.

Measures

- **Regulatory frameworks:** Robust legal and ethical guidelines are crucial to prevent misuse and protect privacy.
 - ♦ The **U.S. Federal Trade Commission is considering** the adoption of a recently-proposed **Impersonation Rule that will help deter deceptive voice cloning**.
- **Technological safeguards:** Watermarking and other authentication mechanisms can help identify and verify cloned voices.
- **Public awareness and education:** Educating the public about voice cloning technology and its potential risks is vital.
 - ♦ The **US Federal Trade Commission** has also launched a **Voice Cloning Challenge** which asked the public to send in their **ideas to detect, evaluate and monitor cloned devices**.
- **Responsible development and application:** Promoting ethical and transparent use of voice cloning for positive societal impact.

Way Ahead

- The future of voice cloning hinges on **responsible development and utilization, balancing its potential benefits** with ethical considerations and safeguards to avoid its misuse.

Source: *TH*

HIGH RESOLUTION LANDSLIDE RISK MAP FOR INDIA

Context:

- **IIT-Delhi** made the **first** high resolution landslide risk map for India.

About the Map

- The ‘**Indian Landslide Susceptibility Map**’ is the **first of its kind** by virtue of being on a **national scale**, leaving out no locations in the country.
- It was developed **with the help of the Geological Survey of India (GSI)**’s extensive collection of landslide data **with ‘latest techniques’**.
- It is **available and accessible publicly through the internet**, and one doesn’t need technical knowledge to interact with the data.

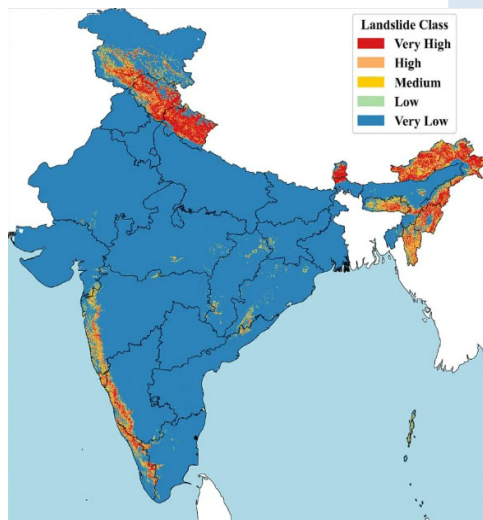
Significance

- **Mitigation:** A national landslide susceptibility map can help the **policymakers to assess vulnerability** and take appropriate measures for mitigation.
 - ♦ It can help identify the most dangerous areas and **helps in allocating resources for mitigation strategies** better, given the high fatalities due to landslides in India.
- **Early Warning System:** The map acknowledged **some well-known regions of high landslide susceptibility**, like parts of the foothills of the Himalaya, the Assam-Meghalaya region, and the Western Ghats.
 - ♦ It revealed some previously unknown places with high risk, such as some areas of the Eastern Ghats, just north of Andhra Pradesh and Odisha.
- **Supporting other organisations:** It is expected to be useful for organisations involved in **investigating and mitigating landslides**, like the GSI, the Ministry of Mines, and the National Disaster Management Authority.

- It can help in building an **infrastructure vulnerability map to depict the stretches of roads, railways, and buildings** that are particularly vulnerable to landslides.

About Landslides

- Landslides are a type of **mass wasting**, which denotes **any downward movement of soil and rock** under the direct **influence of gravity**.
 - These are defined as the movement of a mass of rock, debris, or earth down a slope, and primarily occur in clay-rich soil.
- Landslides and avalanches** are among the major **hydro-geological hazards** that affect large parts of India besides the Himalayas, the Northeastern hill ranges, the Western Ghats, the Nilgiris, the Eastern Ghats and the Vindhyans, in that order, covering about **15% of the landmass**.
- Some of the **recent landslides** in India are **Varnavat** in Uttarkashi, **Malpha** in Pithoragarh, **Okhimath** in Chamoli, UK and **Paglajhora** in Darjeeling as well as Sikkim, Aizawl Sports Complex in Mizoram.



Reasons for the Landslides

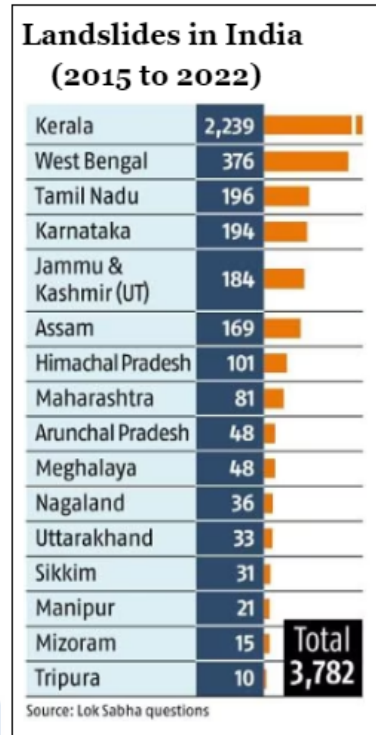
- India has the **highest mountain chain on earth, the Himalayas**, which are formed **due to collision of Indian and Eurasian plate**, the northward movement of the Indian plate towards China causes **continuous stress** on the rocks rendering them friable, weak and **prone to landslides and earthquakes**.

Effects of Landslides

- Loss of Life and Property:** Landslides can bury houses, roads, and other infrastructure, causing fatalities and injuries.

- In some cases, landslides can completely destroy entire communities.

- Environmental Damage:** Landslides can alter



natural watercourses, leading to flooding and erosion and can also **damage ecosystems** by destroying vegetation and wildlife habitats.

- Economic Impacts:** Landslides can disrupt transportation systems, causing delays and increased transportation costs and can damage buildings and infrastructure, leading to costly repairs.
- Social Impacts:** Landslides can displace communities, leading to social disruption and psychological stress and can disrupt access to healthcare and education, leading to long-term social consequences.

Mitigation

- It includes methodologies like slope stabilisation, drainage and vegetation management, land-use planning, monitoring and early warning systems, erosion control measures, and education and awareness.

Government Initiatives to deal with landslides

- National Landslide Risk Management Strategy:** It covers all aspects of landslide disaster risk reduction and management, such as hazard mapping, monitoring, and early warning systems.

- ♦ It includes awareness campaigns, capacity building, training, regulations, and policies, as well as landslide stabilisation and mitigation.
- **National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) Guidelines on Landslide Hazard Management:** It outlines the steps that should be taken to reduce the risk of landslides.
 - ♦ It also identifies regions that are prone to landslides
 - ♦ Encourages the use of effective landslide rehabilitation and mitigation techniques.
- **National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM):** It was set up to provide capacity building and support to various national and state-level authorities in the area of disaster management and disaster risk reduction

Source: *TH*

Do you know ?

- The Eighth Schedule to the Constitution consists of the following 22 Languages:- Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu Bodo, Santhali, Maithili and Dogri.
 - ♦ Of these languages, 14 were initially included in the Constitution. Sindhi language was added in 1967.
 - ♦ Thereafter three more languages viz Konkani, Manipuri and Nepali were included in 1992. Subsequently Bodo, Dogri, Maithili and Santhali were added in 2004.

Source: *TH*

CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACT MONTANE BIRDS BIRD SPECIES :STUDY

In News

- Researchers at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc.) in Bengaluru have found that **logging and climate change pose** a threat to montane birds.

About the study

- The team collected data from the **Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary, Arunachal Pradesh**, situated in the **biodiversity hotspot of Eastern Himalayas** and home to over **500 bird species**.
- They studied the effects of forest logging and climate change on bird communities in **tropical mountains**, by examining over 10 years of data.

Findings of the study

- **Forest loss and climate change** are major threats to tropical mountains.
- Much of the **flora and fauna** are extremely temperature sensitive, and are responding to global heating rapidly.
- **Many bird species** have **started shifting to higher elevations** due to rising temperatures.
- **Logged forests** have higher average temperatures and lower humidity than primary forests, thus hastening the transition.
 - ♦ logging can lead to **the loss of large-bodied**, old, growth-dependent species, and decrease the overall biodiversity.

FACTS IN NEWS

KASHMIRI LANGUAGE

In News

- Microsoft India's MS Translator software has now included the Kashmiri language.

About Kashmiri

- It is spoken in the Vale of Kashmir and the surrounding hills.
- The Kashmiri vocabulary is mixed, containing Dardic, Sanskrit, Punjabi, and Persian elements.
- In 2020, the Union government passed the Jammu and Kashmir Official Languages Bill, including Kashmiri in the list of official languages of the Union Territory (UT).

Scenario in J&K

- **Urdu** was introduced as an **official language** during the **Dogra monarchy** in Kashmir prior to Independence.
- Kashmiri was introduced as a subject up to the **primary level after 1947**, only to be withdrawn in **1955**
- It was again introduced in primary level schools in **Kashmir in 2001**.
- Later, Kashmiri was introduced as an **optional subject** at the **undergraduate level in 2008**.

- ◆ Logged forests also have lower densities of foliage dwelling insects, reducing the resource availability for the birds.
- **Suggestion** : The study highlights the need to safeguard primary forests in order to mitigate the effects of climate change

Do you know ?

- Tropical montane forests are unique ecosystems that can start at about 150-200 metre elevation, and reach up to 3,500 metre high up on mountains around the world.
 - ◆ They are critical centres of biodiversity.
- In tropical mountains, each species has a particular niche where it is found.
 - ◆ This restriction creates much more diversity in a small space,

Source: **TH**

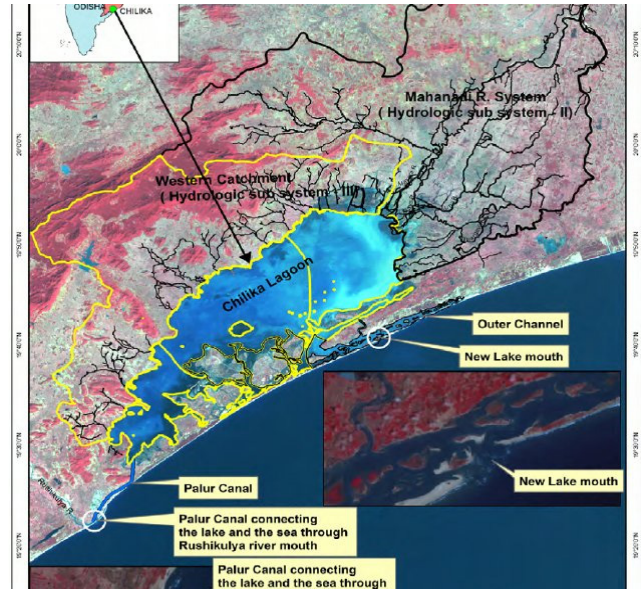
CHILIKA LAKE

In Context

- The Ministry of Tourism conducts training in Chilika Lake under the Amrit Dharohar Capacity Building Scheme.
 - ◆ The Amrit Dharohar Capacity Initiative helps in enhancing livelihood opportunities for local communities through harnessing the nature-tourism potential of the Ramsar Sites across the country.

About Chilika Lake

- **Chilika Lake** is a brackish water lagoon situated along the eastern coast of Odisha.
- It is the largest coastal lagoon in India and the second largest in the world after The New Caledonian barrier reef.
 - ◆ **A lagoon** is a shallow body of water separated from a larger body of water by a narrow landform, such as reefs, barrier islands, barrier peninsulas, or isthmuses.
- It has been listed as **Ramsar Site** as well as a tentative UNESCO World Heritage site.
 - ◆ **In 1981, Chilika Lake was designated the first Indian wetland** of international importance under the **Ramsar Convention**.



Source: **PIB**

INDIA-SAUDI ARABIA HAJJ AGREEMENT

Context

- India and Saudi Arabia signed a bilateral agreement under which India has been allocated a quota of 1,75,025 pilgrims for the annual Hajj pilgrimage in 2024.

About

- Out of 1,75,025 pilgrims from India **1,40,020 seats** being reserved for pilgrims to proceed through Hajj Committee whereas **35,005 pilgrims** would be permitted to proceed through private operators.

The Hajj pilgrimage

- The Hajj is an annual Islamic pilgrimage to **Mecca, Saudi Arabia**, the holiest city for Muslims.
- It is considered to be a mandatory religious duty for all adult Muslims physically and financially capable of doing so.
- The rites of pilgrimage are performed over five to six days, in **Dhu al-Hijjah**, the last month of the Islamic calendar.

Steps to promote the Hajj pilgrimage

- **Hajj Committee of India (HCoI)**: The HCI is a statutory body constituted by the government to oversee Hajj operations. It works on organizing various aspects of the pilgrimage, including transportation, accommodation, and other logistical arrangements.

- **Lady without Mehram (LWM) category:** It was introduced in Haj 2018 by the Government of India. In 2023, a historical high of more than 4000 women successfully applied under the LWM category.

Source: *TH*

INLAND WATERWAYS DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Context

- The Inland Waterways Authority of India, is set to host the inaugural 'Inland Waterways Development Council' meeting in Kolkata.

Inland Waterways Development Council

- **The Inland Waterways Development Council** was established in **2023** by the Government of India.
- **Objective:** Comprehensive development of inland waterways and the associated Inland Water Transport (IWT) ecosystem for improved cargo efficiency, passenger movement, and river cruise tourism, with active participation from States and Union Territories.

Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI)

- **IWAI**, is an autonomous organization constituted in 1986 under the Inland Waterways Authority of India Act, 1985.
- IWAI is primarily responsible for development, maintenance and regulation of those waterways which have been declared as National Waterways under **National Waterways Act, 2016**.

- The head office of IWAI is located at **Noida**.

Source: *PIB*

SVAMITVA SCHEME WINS BEST INNOVATION AWARD FOR INNOVATION SANDBOX PRESENTATION

In Context

- SVAMITVA Scheme wins Best Innovation Award for Innovation Sandbox presentation during Public Policy Dialogues–2024 at Indian School of Business, Hyderabad

About

- SVAMITVA Scheme of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj is a **Central Sector Scheme (fully funded by the central government)** that has significantly contributed to the empowerment of rural communities in India.
- The scheme ensures accurate demarcation of land parcels, thereby mitigating disputes and providing individuals with property records of rights i.e. SVAMITVA Property Cards
- It facilitates monetization of properties, enabling bank loans and comprehensive village-level planning.
- This integration of technology not only streamlines the documentation process but also marks a significant step towards a more transparent and efficient land administration system, fostering socio-economic progress in rural areas.

Source: *PIB*