

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

Time: 45 Min

Date: 07-02-2024

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ATMOSPHERIC RIVERS

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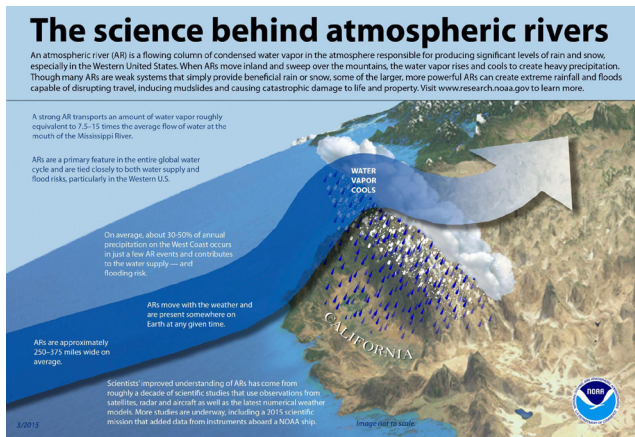
- Recently, the **Atmospheric Rivers** have brought massive rainfall to California (U.S.).

Atmospheric Rivers

- They are **large, narrow sections of the Earth's atmosphere** that carry moisture from the Earth's tropics near the equator to the poles.
- When they reach land, atmospheric rivers release this moisture, producing heavy snow and rain.
- A well-known example of a strong atmospheric river is the "**Pineapple Express**" that is a common feature for the west coast of the US and Canada.
- Atmospheric rivers are **commonly observed in the extratropical North Pacific/Atlantic, the southeastern Pacific, and the South Atlantic oceans**, frequently making landfall along the western coasts of North and South America.

Formation of Atmospheric Rivers

- The atmospheric rivers commence with the **evaporation of ocean water due to elevated temperatures**.
- Robust winds facilitate the transport of water vapor through the atmosphere. Upon reaching land, atmospheric rivers prompt further rise of water vapor into the atmosphere, where it undergoes cooling and condensation into water droplets, ultimately resulting in precipitation.



Impacts

- Atmospheric rivers are responsible for 90 percent of the movement of moisture from the tropics toward the poles.
- They have a significant influence on air temperatures, sea ice, and other components of the climate.

Concerns

- Strong atmospheric river events can lead to severe flooding and landslides. They can cause billions of dollars of damage.
- Excessive rain promotes growth of grasses and bushes that will become fuel for future fires.

Source: *TH*

UTTARAKHAND'S UNIFORM CIVIL CODE (UCC) BILL

Context:

- The **Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill** was recently introduced in the **Uttarakhand** Assembly.

About UCC

- Article 44** in Constitution of India mentions about the **Uniform civil code for the citizens**, "The State shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India."

Historical background

- The UCC can be traced back to the debates during the framing of the Indian Constitution. Some members of the Constituent Assembly, including **Dr BR Ambedkar** believed that a **UCC was necessary** to promote gender equality, secularism, and national integration.
- Post independence, the demand to implement the UCC has come up many times, notably, in 1985, during the hearing of the **Shah Bano case**. This also led to a backlash since this was against Muslim personal laws.

Position of states

- States like **Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Assam** have expressed their willingness to follow the UCC, none have officially adopted it.
- However, **a version of the UCC is in place in Goa**.
 - It follows the **Portuguese Civil Code of 1867**, which means that people of all religions in Goa are subject to the same laws on marriage, divorce, and succession.
 - The Goa Daman and Diu Administration Act of 1962**, which was passed after Goa joined the union as a territory in 1961, gave Goa permission to apply the Civil Code.

Key Features of Uttarakhand Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill

- **Uniform Marriage Age:** Sets a common marriage age of 18 years for both men and women across all religions.
- **Prohibition of Polygamy and child marriage:** Bans the practice of having multiple spouses simultaneously.
- **Simplified Adoption Process:** Aims to streamline adoption procedures for all individuals and couples, regardless of religion.
- **Registration of Live-in Relationships:** Mandates registration of live-in relationships within the state, although it doesn't grant them legal status equivalent to marriage.
 - ♦ **Prescribes jail term of up to six months** for not producing a "certificate" of the relationship.
 - ♦ Essentially, the Bill **seeks to equate heterosexual live-in relationships to the status of a marriage.**
- **Inheritance Rights:** Ensures equal inheritance rights for sons and daughters, irrespective of their religion.
- **Grounds for Divorce:** Specifies uniform grounds for divorce applicable to all communities.
 - ♦ Also provides for **maintenance to the woman** when "deserted" by her partner.
- **Exclusion:** Doesn't apply to tribal communities governed by their customary laws.

Concerns Raised Regarding the Bill

- **Religious Freedom:** Critics argue it infringes upon the right to practice and follow religious personal laws, particularly related to marriage and inheritance.
- **Privacy concern:** The compulsory registration **takes away the freedom to choose not to be married**, infringing upon the **privacy of individuals, protected under Article 21** of the constitution and held in **K S Puttaswamy judgement in 2017.**
- **Parochial approach:** The idea of compulsory registration may have been to protect women, but women may not want that protection from the state. It is a parochial approach to deal with free adults in a free country, experts said.
 - ♦ In **Velusamy v Patchaiammal case 2010**, dealing with the Domestic Violence Act, the

court said that spending weekends together or a one-night stand would not make it a "domestic relationship".

- **Impact on Minorities:** Some minority communities express concerns about losing their unique cultural and legal traditions.
- **Lack of Consultation:** Critics allege insufficient consultation with stakeholders, including religious communities and experts, before drafting the bill.
- **Potential for Misuse:** Apprehensions exist that the bill might be misused to target specific communities.
- **Unclear Definition of 'Live-in Relationships':** The lack of clarity regarding the rights and obligations associated with registered live-in relationships generates uncertainty.
 - ♦ The Delhi High Court in the **Naz Foundation ruling in 2009**, which struck down **Section 377 of the IPC**, had said: "...The sphere of privacy allows persons to develop human relations without interference from the outside community or from the State.

Way ahead

- A uniform code **should be adopted without offending any religion**, and fear among sections of the minorities need to be taken care of.
- Also, various **concerns related to live-in relationship couples and privacy** need a thorough discussion before implementing the code.

Source: *IE*

IMPORTANCE OF FISCAL CONSOLIDATION

Context

- The Union Finance Minister announced that the Centre would reduce its fiscal deficit to 5.1% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2024-25.

What is the fiscal deficit?

- Fiscal Deficit is defined as excess of total budget expenditure (revenue and capital) over total budget receipts (revenue and capital) excluding borrowings during a fiscal year.
- Fiscal Deficit = Total Expenditure – (Revenue Receipts + Non-Debt Creating Capital Receipts).

National Debt

- The fiscal deficit is different from the national debt.
- The national debt is the total amount of money that the government of a country owes its lenders at a particular point in time.
- It is usually the amount of debt that a government has accumulated over many years of running fiscal deficits and borrowing to bridge the deficits.

How does the government fund its fiscal deficit?

- **Bond market:** To fund its fiscal deficit, the government mainly borrows money from the bond market where lenders compete to lend to the government by purchasing bonds issued by the government.
- **Foreign borrowing and aid:** Governments borrow from foreign sources such as other governments, international organizations like the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund (IMF), or through bilateral loans.
 - ♦ It also receives foreign aid in the form of grants or concessional loans.
- **Seigniorage:** This refers to the profit a government makes by issuing currency. When a government prints money, it effectively borrows from the public without paying interest. However, excessive money creation can lead to inflation.

Implications of fiscal deficit

- **Inflationary Pressure:** When a country's government runs a persistently high fiscal deficit, this can eventually lead to **higher inflation** as the government will be forced to use fresh money issued by the central bank to fund its fiscal deficit.
- **Crowding Out effect:** When the government borrows a large portion of available funds from financial markets to finance its deficit, it can crowd out private investment with reduced access to credit for businesses and individuals. This can hinder economic growth and productivity.
- **Reduced Fiscal Space:** A high fiscal deficit limits the government's ability to respond to economic shocks or crises. With limited fiscal space, the government may be unable to implement countercyclical fiscal policies such as increased spending or tax cuts to stimulate economic growth during downturns.
- **Difficulty in borrowing:** As a government's finances worsen, demand for the government's

bonds begins to drop, forcing the government to offer to pay a higher interest rate to lenders. On the other hand a lower fiscal deficit may help the government to more easily sell its bonds overseas and access cheaper credit.

Way Ahead

- A lower fiscal deficit may thus help improve the ratings assigned to the Indian government's bonds.
- When the government is able to fund more of its spending through tax revenues and borrow less, this gives more confidence to lenders and drives down the government's borrowing cost.
- Therefore, it's crucial for governments to pursue prudent fiscal policies that balance the need for public investment with the imperative of fiscal sustainability.

Source: TH

INDIA TO INCREASE COAL-FIRED CAPACITY IN 2024

Context

- Recently, the Union Power Ministry said that India needs to increase its **coal-fired capacity in 2024** by the most in at least 6 years.

Thermal Power Plants

- Coal is the main source of energy in India. Today, more than 50% of total electricity generation capacity is coal based, and more than 70% of energy generation comes from coal based thermal power plants.
- India is the **second-largest coal importer** despite having the **world's fourth-largest reserves**, and coal powers nearly three-fourths of the country's electricity demand.
- Coal currently accounts for over 50% of India's installed capacity of 428.3 GW.
- As of May 31, 2023, the total installed capacity of thermal power plants in India was 417,668 MW, and it is expected to reach 260 GW by 2030.
 - ♦ India has the 5th highest installed thermal power capacity globally.
- Power generation in 2023 increased by 11.3%, the fastest in the last five years.

Coal production in India

Major Gondwana Coal Mining Centres:

Damodar Valley: Daktonganj, Bokaro, Jharia, Dhanbad, Raniganj, Durgapur

Son Valley: Associated with North Koel river, Singrauli

Mahanadi Valley: Associated with rivers like Hasdeo, Ib, South Koel etc Korba, Jhilmil, Talcher

Godavari and Wardha Valley: Singreni, Kotagundam (Telangana), Kamptee Valley (Nagpur, Maharashtra)

- **Gondwana coals** (about **98% of total coal** in India is based on Gondwana time): These coal are majorly found in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh etc. Examples: Damodar, Son, Mahanadi Valleys.
- **Tertiary coals** (remaining about **02% of total coal** belongs to this category): These are majorly found in the states of **Assam, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan**. Examples: Mokom (Upper Brahmaputra, Assam), Neyveli and Mannargudi (Tamil Nadu) famous for Lignite, Palana (Bikaner, Rajasthan).
- **Anthracite coal in India:** Kalakot, Nichahom in Jammu and Kashmir region of India.

Importance of Coal Based Power Plants

- **Energy Production:** Coal-fired thermal power plants (TPPs) generated 74.3% of India's electricity during FY 2022-2023.
 - ♦ The generation by TPPs continues to grow to meet the increasing demand.
- **Energy Security:** Electricity security is achieved only by having a reliable and stable supply of electricity that can always match the demand at an affordable price.
- **Infrastructure and Employment:** The coal sector is vital for infrastructure development and industries like power, steel, cement, and aluminium, employing millions of people.
- **Sustainable Development:** While the argument for switching to renewable energy is compelling, the reality is that the world is highly dependent on fossil fuels, which produce 80% of the total energy supplied.
 - ♦ In 2022, oil, coal, and gas accounted for 30%, 27%, and 23% of the world's total energy,

while solar and wind energy sources together contributed only 2.4%.

Coal and India's Energy Mix

- As of May 2023, the total installed capacity was 417,668 MW.
- **Fossil Fuels (56.8% of total): Coal (49.1%), Lignite (1.6%), Gas (6.0%), Diesel (0.1%)¹.**
- **Non-Fossil Fuels (43.0% of total): RES (including Hydro) (41.4%), Nuclear (1.6%)¹.**
 - ♦ The RES category includes Hydro (11.2%), Wind (10.3%), Solar (16.1%), Biomass Power/Cogeneration (2.5%), Waste to Energy (0.1%), and Small Hydro Power (1.2%).

What are the challenges?

- **Coal Shortage:** More than 100 thermal power plants in India have coal stocks below 25% of the required stock.
 - ♦ The biggest reason for this shortage is the increasing power demand.
- **High cost of fuel:** coal extraction from state-run Coal India has been hindered by delays in environmental clearances, land acquisition issues, and inadequate investment in advanced technologies.
- **Coal Quality:** Coal deposits in India generally contain high levels of ash (35-50%) compared to those mined in other major coal-mining countries, like Australia, China, and the U.S.
 - ♦ Burning coal with more ash leads to the erosion and eventual failure of boiler tubes and other components, affecting the plant's availability, efficiency, and performance.
- **Increasing Power Demand:** In 2021, demand increased to 124.2 Billion Units per month from 106.6 Billion Units per month in 2019.
 - ♦ In 2022, the demand has further increased to 132 Billion Units.
- **Weather Conditions:** Heavy rains in coal mining areas like Gujarat, Punjab, Rajasthan, Delhi, and Tamil Nadu have resulted in lesser coal production.
- **Inadequate Stock Build-up:** Prior to the monsoon season, there was inadequate coal stock build-up in most thermal plants, pushing them below critical levels.

- **Reduction in Power Generation from Imported Coal:** There was a 43.6% reduction in power generation from imported coal, which led to extra demand of 17.4 MT of domestic coal, further depleting coal reserves.
- **Rise in Global Demand:** There has been a sharp increase in the price of imported coal owing to a rise in global demand.
- **Dependency on Imported Coals:** Power companies often have to rely on costly coal imports despite having abundant coal reserves.
- **Aged Power Plants:** Many power plants in India are old and inefficient leading to inefficiencies.

Emissions from burning coal

- **Sulphur dioxide (SO₂),** which contributes to acid rain and respiratory illnesses;
- **Nitrogen oxides (NO_x),** which contribute to smog and respiratory illnesses;
- **Particulates matters (PM 2.5 and PM 10)** which contribute to smog, haze, and respiratory illnesses and lung disease;
- **Carbon dioxide (CO₂),** which is the primary greenhouse gas produced from burning fossil fuels (coal, oil, and natural gas);
- **Mercury and other heavy metals,** which have been linked to both neurological and developmental damage in humans and other animals;
- **Fly ash and bottom ash,** which are residues created when power plants burn coal.

Related Government Initiatives

- The **Ministry of Coal** administers **three Central Sector Schemes:** Exploration of Coal and Lignite, Research & Development, and Conservation, Safety and Infrastructural Development in Coal Mines.
- **Coal Gasification:** The government has set a target to gasify 100 Million Tonnes (MT) of coal by FY 2030.
 - ♦ The Union Cabinet recently approved a ₹8,500 crore incentive scheme for coal gasification projects.
- The government has removed the **monopoly in coal mining** and is bringing commercial mining based on a **revenue-sharing mechanism.**
- **'Mission Coking Coal'** has been launched to come up with a roadmap that would suggest ways to augment the production and utilisation of domestic coking coal in India by 2030.

Way Forward

- Against the backdrop of several challenges, there is a need to focus on increasing the efficiency of its thermal power plants to reduce emissions while ramping up nuclear energy and enhancing pumped storage to integrate more solar and wind energy into the grid.

Source: *Reuters*

INDIGENOUS CAR-T CELL THERAPY

In Context

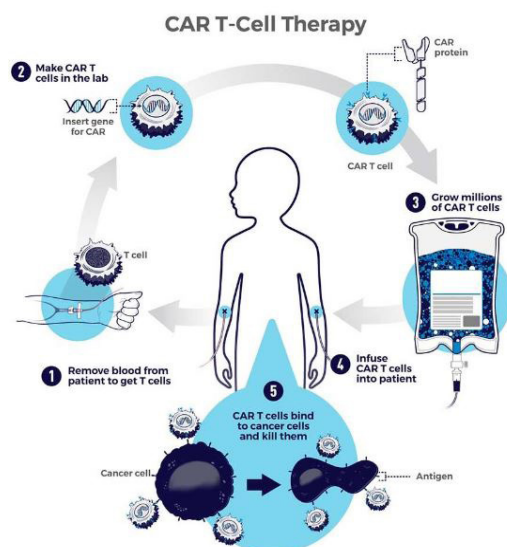
- **Indigenous CAR-T cell therapy (NexCAR19)** is now available for commercial use.

About

- **NexCAR19** is the indigenously developed therapy for B-cell cancers (types of cancers that form in the immune system's cells) such as **leukemia and lymphoma.**
- It has been developed collaboratively by **ImmunoACT**, a company incubated at the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IITB), and **Tata Memorial Hospital.**
- The commercial use of this therapy was approved by the **Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO).**

CAR-T Cell Therapy

- CAR-T cell therapy, short for **chimeric antigen receptor T-cell therapy**, is an innovative form of immunotherapy used to treat certain types of cancer.
- It involves **genetically modifying a patient's own T cells** (a type of immune cell) to **recognize and attack cancer cells.**



What are B and T-Cells?

- **B-cells and T-cells** are a specific type of white blood cell called **lymphocytes**.
- They **help the immune system** to fight germs and protect from disease.
- **Types of T cells:**
 - ♦ **Cytotoxic T-cells:** They kill cells infected with viruses and bacteria, and they also destroy tumor cells.
 - ♦ **Helper T-cells:** They send signals that direct other immune cells to fight infection.
 - ♦ **Regulatory T-cells (Tregs):** These cells suppress excessive immune responses to prevent autoimmune reactions and maintain immune tolerance. They play a crucial role in preventing the immune system from attacking the body's own cells and tissues.
- T-cells start in bone marrow, mature in thymus and eventually relocate to lymph tissue or bloodstream.
- **B-cells** make antibodies in response to antigens (antibody generators).
 - ♦ **There are two main types of B-cells:** plasma cells and memory cells. Both types help to protect from infection and disease.

Significance

- Now patients in India and countries with limited resources will have access to this life-saving drug at an **affordable cost**.
 - ♦ Abroad, the CAR-T cell therapy costs around ₹3-4 crore per patient. The NexCAR19 will be ₹30-40 lakh per patient, which is 1/10th of the cost abroad.
- In terms of technical achievement, it puts India on the elite list of selected countries that have access to CAR-T therapy.

Cancer and Its Types

- Cancer is a large group of different diseases that can start in almost any organ or tissue of the body when abnormal cells grow uncontrollably.
- Cancers are further categorized **based on their behavior**, such as whether they are **benign (non-cancerous) or malignant (cancerous)**, and their stage of progression.
- **Some of the most common types of cancer include:**

- ♦ **Carcinomas:** These cancers originate in the skin or tissues that line the internal organs. The most common carcinomas include breast, lung, prostate, and colon cancer.
- ♦ **Sarcomas:** Sarcomas develop in the connective tissues such as bone, cartilage, fat, muscle, or other supportive tissues.
- ♦ **Leukemias:** Leukemias are cancers that begin in the bone marrow, where blood is produced. They often involve abnormal production of white blood cells.
- ♦ **Lymphomas:** Lymphomas affect the lymphatic system, which is part of the body's immune system. They typically begin in lymph nodes and lymphoid tissues.
- ♦ **Central nervous system cancers:** These cancers affect the brain and spinal cord. Gliomas, for example, arise from the glial cells in the brain.

Source: *IE*

HINDU KUSH HIMALAYA

Context:

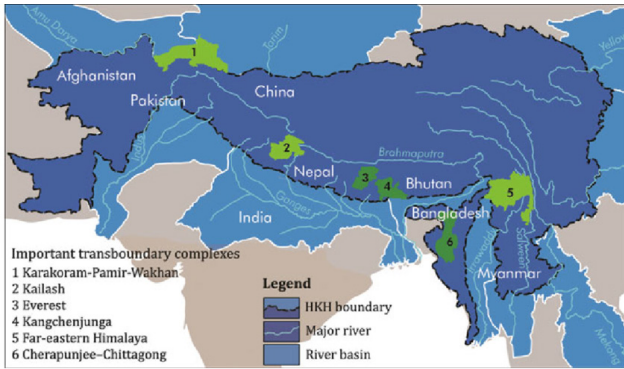
- Recently, the **International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)** sought for 'bold action' and 'urgent finance' to prevent the collapse of nature in **Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region**.

Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) Region and Its Importance

- It stretches 3,500 kilometres and spans eight countries – **Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan**.
- The region holds the **largest volume of ice on Earth outside the polar regions** and is vital for the food, water, and power security of up to two billion people.
 - ♦ The region is often referred to as the '**Third Pole**' (after the North and South Poles) due to its significant implications for climate.

The People in the region:

- Around 241 million people live in the HKH region, of whom 31% are food insecure. Half of the population faces some form of malnutrition.
- These communities remain dependent on this biodiversity for food, water, flood control, and cultural identity.



Ecological Significance:

- The HKH region is home to four of the world's 36 global biodiversity hotspots, 12 of the global 200 ecoregions, 575 Protected Areas, and 335 important bird areas.
- The region's biodiversity is critical for the survival of countless irreplaceable species.

HKH Region: Water Tower of Asia

- **The HKH region** provides essential ecosystem services such as clean water for a third of the world's population. It is estimated to be warming at nearly two times the average rate of warming in the Northern Hemisphere. It includes:
 - ♦ Syr Darya and Amu Darya towards the now-dead Aral Sea;
 - ♦ The Tarim toward the Taklamakan;
 - ♦ The Indus, Ganga and Brahmaputra towards the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal;
 - ♦ The Yellow river towards the Gulf of Bohai;
 - ♦ The Yangtze towards the East China Sea;
 - ♦ The Mekong towards the South China Sea;
 - ♦ The Chindwin, Salween and Irrawaddy towards the Andaman Sea;

Socio-Economic Significance:

- An estimated 210 million people live within these mountain systems, and some 1.3 billion people who live downstream of the HKH rely on freshwater obtained directly or indirectly from rivers and tributaries of the region.
- The region's resources are vital for food, water, flood control, and cultural identity.

About ICIMOD

- It is a regional intergovernmental organisation established in 1983.
- It is working to make the HKH region greener, more inclusive, and climate resilient.

- ICIMOD is **based in Kathmandu, Nepal** and works in and for its eight regional member countries.
- It works to improve the lives and livelihoods of men, women, and children of the HKH and protect mountain environments and cultures.
- It has officially launched its new **Strategy 2030** and is excited to begin implementation in January 2023.
 - ♦ In line with this strategy, their fifth **Medium-Term Action Plan – or MTAP V** – details how they will deliver on their commitments.

The Crisis

- **Biodiversity Loss:** It is estimated that 70% of the original biodiversity has been lost over the last century.
 - ♦ The declines in nature across this region are so advanced and accelerating so fast they now pose a threat to the lives of not just animal and plant life, but also human societies.
- **Impact of Climate Change:** According to ICIMOD, the HKH region is affected by global warming and climate change that are 'unprecedented and largely irreversible' impacting the glaciers, snow, and permafrost.
 - ♦ The average temperature in the region has increased by 0.28°C per decade between 1951 and 2020.
- **Food and Water Security:** Around 241 million people live in the HKH region, of whom 31% are food insecure.
 - ♦ The region is a **major source of water for 12 rivers** that flow through 16 countries in Asia. The loss of glaciers and snow could disrupt water supply, affecting millions of people.
- **Anthropogenic Impact:** Human activities, including pollution and deforestation, are exacerbating these challenges.
 - ♦ The region's per capita fossil fuel CO₂ emissions already account for one-sixth of the global average.

Steps taken so far

- **Sustainable Mountain Development:** There are efforts towards sustainable mountain development in the region.
 - ♦ The Building Adaptation and Resilience in the **Hindu Kush Himalayas Initiative was launched at COP 28**.

- **National Mission on Sustaining Himalayan Ecosystem (NMSHE):** India has undertaken the NMSHE, which is **one of the eight missions under the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)**.
 - ♦ The mandate is to evolve measures to sustain and safeguard the Himalayan glaciers, mountain ecosystems, biodiversity, and wildlife conservation & protection.

Way Forward

- **Bold Action and Urgent Finance:** Experts from ICIMOD have called for bold action and urgent finance to prevent the collapse of nature in the HKH region that must be urgently prioritised for investment to fund the fight to reverse nature loss and species extinction.
- **Local and National Cooperation:** Another potential pathway for the HKH is bottom-up investment with local and national cooperation.
 - ♦ Both paths critically presuppose cooperation and coordination.
- **Ecosystem Restoration:** There's a growing recognition of the role that nature plays in human survival.
 - ♦ Worldwide, we're seeing a huge uptick in investments in ecosystem restoration.
- **Food and Water Security, Health, Biodiversity, and Climate Change:** The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) nexus assessment examines the linkages between these areas.
 - ♦ The goal is to identify options for improved policies and foster collaboration across related sectors.

Source: **DTE**

NEWS IN SHORTS

RS PASSED BILLS MODIFYING LISTS OF SC AND ST COMMUNITIES

Context

- Rajya Sabha passed the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order Amendment Bill, 2024 and Constitution (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) Order Amendment Bill, 2024.

About

- The Bill seeks to add several new communities to the Scheduled Tribes list of Odisha and the inclusion of synonyms and phonetic variations of existing tribes in the ST lists of both Andhra Pradesh and Odisha.
- **In Odisha**, the PVTG communities added are;
 - ♦ **Pauri Bhuyan and Paudi Bhuyan** as synonyms of the Bhuyan tribe;
 - ♦ **Chuktia Bhunjia** as a synonym of the Bhunjia tribe;
 - ♦ **Bondo** as a sub-tribe of the Bondo Poraja tribe;
 - ♦ **Mankidia**, a synonym for the Mankirdia tribe.
- **In Andhra Pradesh**, the PVTG communities included
 - ♦ **Bondo Porja and Khond Porja** as synonyms of the Porja tribe and
 - ♦ **Konda Savaras** as a synonym for the Savaras tribe.

Other additions and changes

- The Bill to amend Odisha's ST list also shifted two entries — **Tamadia and Tamudia** — from the Scheduled Castes list to the Scheduled Tribes list.
- Odisha's ST list was expanded by adding two communities to it as new entries. These are the **Muka Dora** community and the **Konda Reddy** (and synonyms) community.

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)

- These are a more vulnerable group among tribal groups in India. These groups have primitive traits, geographical isolation, low literacy, zero to negative population growth rate and backwardness.
- There are **75 PVTGs** in India, spread over 18 States and the Union Territory of Andaman & Nicobar Islands.
 - ♦ **Odisha** has the largest population of PVTGs followed by **Madhya Pradesh**.
- **Examples:** Great Andamanese (Andaman and Nicobar Islands), Bondo Poraja (Odisha), Paniyas (Kerala), Kattunayakan (Tamil Nadu and Kerala), Bonda (Odisha).

Recognition to PVTGs

- In **1973**, the **Dhebar Commission** created Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) as a separate category.

- In **1975**, the Indian government initiated the identification of the most vulnerable tribal groups, designating them as PVTGs, with an initial declaration of 52 such groups.
- An additional **23 groups** were included in this category in **1993**.
- In 2006, this category was renamed Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).

Source: **TH**

MOTION OF THANKS

Context

- Recently the 'Motion of Thanks' was moved in each House after the President's address.

About the Motion of Thanks

- **Articles 86 and 87 of the Constitution of India** deal with the Address by the President of India.
 - ♦ **Article 86** confers a right on the President to address either the House of Parliament or both Houses assembled together, and for that purpose requires the attendance of members.
 - ♦ Article 87 deals with Special Address by the President and provides that the President shall address both Houses of Parliament assembled together at the commencement of the first session after each general election.
- The President's address provides a broad framework of the government's agenda and direction.
- **After the President's address**, each House of Parliament discusses the Motion of Thanks, and the Prime Minister responds.
- In the motion of thanks, MPs may move amendments to the motion, which are put to vote.
 - ♦ An amendment to the address in Lok Sabha is treated as a vote of no confidence against the government.

Source: **LM**

OBC QUOTA IN J&K LOCAL BODIES

In News

- The Lok Sabha passed the Jammu and Kashmir Local Bodies (Amendment) Bill, 2024 to provide reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBC) in panchayats and municipal bodies in the Union Territory.

About the Bill

- The Bill seeks to amend certain provisions of the '**Jammu and Kashmir Panchayati Raj Act, 1989**', the '**Jammu and Kashmir Municipal Act, 2000**' and the '**Jammu and Kashmir Municipal Corporation Act, 2000**'.
- The legislation is intended to provide reservation to the **Other Backward Classes (OBCs)** in the **Panchayats and the Municipalities** in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and to bring consistency in the local body laws of the Union Territory with the provisions of the Constitution.
- **Purpose:** There is no current provision for seats to be reserved for OBCs in panchayats and municipalities in J&K.
 - ♦ The Bill is aimed at providing justice to the citizens of Other Backward Classes of Jammu and Kashmir for the first time after 75 years of independence.

Do you know ?

- J&K's special status under Article 370 of the Constitution was revoked by Parliament on August 5, 2019 and the former State was then split into the two **Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh**.
- J&K has not had a functioning Assembly since June 2018, when the erstwhile State went under central rule.
- In December 2023, the Supreme Court directed the Election Commission to hold Assembly polls in J&K by September 2024.

Source: **TH**

ANUSANDHAN RESEARCH FOUNDATION

In Context

- The provisions of the **Anusandhan Research Foundation (ANRF) Act** have been brought into force.

About

- The act **establishes the ANRF**, which will seed, grow and promote Research and Development (R&D) throughout India's universities, colleges, research institutions, and R&D laboratories.
- **Aim:** ANRF is **operationalized by the Department Of Science & Technology (DST)** to provide a high-level strategic direction for research, innovation, and entrepreneurship in the fields of natural sciences.

- The Government has appointed Secretary, Department of Science and Technology (DST) as the **interim Chief Executive Officer of ANRF**.
- **Significance:** It will boost **R&D funding** from various sources including industry, **encouraging private sector** involvement.
 - ♦ It will also promote interdisciplinary research, with the goal of propelling India into the league of developed nations and making the country a global science and research player.

Source: **PIB**

TAX-TO-GDP RATIO

In News

- India's tax-to-GDP ratio is expected to **hit a record high of 11.7% of GDP** in **2024-25**, led by an uptick in the more 'equitable' direct taxes.

About Tax-to-GDP Ratio

- The tax-to-GDP ratio measures a **nation's tax revenue relative to the size of its economy**.
- Developed nations typically have **higher tax-to-GDP ratios** than developing nations.
- A higher ratio denotes a **wider fiscal net and reduced dependence on borrowings**.
 - ♦ Higher tax revenues mean a country can spend more on improving infrastructure, health, and education—keys to the long-term prospects for a country's economy and people

Source: **TH**

NAGOYA PROTOCOL

Context:

- Recently, **Cameroon** adopted the **Nagoya Protocol** to benefit from its rich biodiversity.

About Nagoya Protocol

- The Nagoya Protocol on **Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable** Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilisation is a supplementary agreement to the **UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**.
- It is **an offshoot of the CBD** that addresses fair and equitable benefit sharing in the context of biodiversity access.
 - ♦ **Cameroon in central Africa** is home to vast biological resources, which have long been exploited by foreign firms, without fair and equitable benefits to the communities that own them.

- It provides a **transparent legal framework** for the effective implementation of objectives of the CBD, that is the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources.
- The Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing was adopted on 29 October 2010 in **Nagoya, Japan** and entered into force in 2014, 90 days after the deposit of the fiftieth instrument of ratification.

UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

- It is the most comprehensive **binding international agreement** in the field of nature conservation and the sustainable use of natural resources.
- It was opened for signing at the UN Conference on Environment and Development in **Rio de Janeiro in 1992**.
- It has **three overarching objectives**:
 - ♦ The conservation of biological diversity (genetic diversity, species diversity, and habitat diversity).
 - ♦ The sustainable use of biological diversity.
 - ♦ The fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources.
- It **covers biodiversity at all levels**: ecosystems, species, and genetic resources.
- The Conference of the Parties (COP) is the **highest political decision-making body of the Convention**.
- Secretariat: Montreal, Canada

India and Nagoya Protocol

- India has been a victim of misappropriation or biopiracy of its genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, which have been patented in other countries.
- India **ratified the Nagoya Protocol** on Access and Benefit Sharing on 12th October 2014.
- The Nagoya Protocol is **vital to India's interests**, given that the mega-diverse country has seven to **8% of the world's recorded species** and a vast repertoire of traditional knowledge.
- India has taken initiatives in implementing the Nagoya Protocol through various legal, administrative, policy and institutional measures.
 - ♦ However, considerable efforts at the ground level with the support of different ABS stakeholders are required.

Source: **DTE**

