

# DAILY PT POINTERS

27 January, 2025



## The Hindu-GS2(Welfare Schemes)Page 1

### No extra allocation for MGNREGS; wages delayed

Sobhana K. Nair

NEW DELHI

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), the Union government's flagship scheme to provide guaranteed employment of 100 days for rural workers, has not received an additional budgetary allocation in 2024-25 despite a deficit, resulting in delay in disbursement of wages to workers.

Sources said the Rural Development Ministry was short of ₹4,315 crore for the wages for which a fund transfer order had been generated. Section 3 (3) of the MGNREG Act says "the disbursement of daily wage



**Uncertain times:** MGNREGS workers at a reconstruction site on the outskirts of Amritsar. FILE PHOTO

later than a fortnight after the date on which such work was done".

The Centre has a liability of ₹5,715 crore against its share for material components. The Centre bears 60% of the cost of the ma-

When there is a continued delay in material component payout, the local vendors who supply the raw material become reluctant to supply, breaking the work cycle.

In February 2024, in the

term, ₹86,000 crore was allotted for the scheme. Despite the deficit and repeated requests, no additional funds were given.

#### Past trend

This is breaking from the past trend of allocating additional funds. To criticism on low allocation for the programme, the Centre has maintained that it is a demand-driven scheme and additional allocation is made whenever needed.

For example, in 2020-21, when the pandemic drove reverse migration to the villages and the demand for work soared, the Centre revised the original allocation of ₹61,500 crore to ₹111,500 crores, one of

closely monitoring the programme say the low budgetary allocation leads to artificial suppression of demand. This problem was also flagged by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Rural Development in its report tabled in February 2024.

"The pruning of funds at Budget Estimate stage itself does have a cascading effect on various important aspects such as timely release of wages, release of material share etc. which have a telling impact on the progress of the Scheme. The Committee feels that for smooth implementation of MGNREGA at ground level, shortage of funds is a big

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- The mandate of the MGNREGA is to provide at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.



## The Hindu-GS2(Governance)Page8

### Should Governors head State universities?

The Governor's role as Chancellor of State universities has become politicized, undermining university autonomy and raising a governance issue, especially in States with Opposition-led governments. Various reform models have been proposed to reduce political interference and improve university administration

EDITORIAL

By Ashish Tandon, Editor

The role of the Governor as Chancellor of State universities is a subject of intense debate. It is often misconstrued as a mere independence measure to safeguard universities against political interference. This role has not been assigned to the Governor by the Constitution of India but by State university laws, inherited from British colonial rule. It has, therefore, never enjoyed the same legitimacy as other constitutional provisions.

In 1957, the British established the first State universities in Calcutta, Madras, and Mysore, appointing Governors of the respective provinces as their Chancellors. The intention was to maintain direct control. As Chancellors, the Governors exercised the role of the university and also granted honours such as degrees.

Over time, the role of the Governor as Chancellor has become increasingly politicized. In many States, the Governor is appointed by the ruling party, leading to accusations of bias. This has led to a loss of trust in the Governor's role as Chancellor. The role of the Governor as Chancellor was adopted by the States in 1957, but it has since become a source of controversy.

**Politicized office** In India, the Governor is appointed by the President on the advice of the Council of Ministers. This has led to the Governor being perceived as a partisan figure, especially in States with Opposition-led governments.

**Loss of trust** The politicization of the Governor's role as Chancellor has led to a loss of trust in the Governor's ability to act impartially. This has led to a demand for reform.

**Reform models** Various reform models have been proposed to address these issues. These include the appointment of the Governor by a bipartisan committee, the appointment of the Governor by the State Legislature, and the appointment of the Governor by the State Government.

**Conclusion** The role of the Governor as Chancellor of State universities is a complex issue. It requires a balance between the need for independence and the need for accountability. Reform is essential to ensure the integrity of the office.



The Supreme Court has upheld the Governor's role as Chancellor of State universities. This has led to a demand for reform. The Governor's role as Chancellor is a source of controversy. It is often misconstrued as a mere independence measure to safeguard universities against political interference.

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**global best practices, attributes the** Chancellor as an eminent public figure who provides conceptual leadership, provides overall coordination, acts as a national ambassador, and ensures executive authority. Universities in the U.S., have all seen the Governor as the concept of Chancellor, excepting that model. There are several ways to ensure that university laws to implement this model. There are several ways to ensure that university laws to implement this model.

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- The role of the Governor as Chancellor of State universities, inherited from British colonial rule, has been a source of controversy in India. Originally designed to centralize control, it has often been politicized, especially after 1967 when Governors, often appointed for political loyalty, began asserting authority over universities. This has led to conflicts, delays in university appointments, and reduced autonomy.
- Various commissions have recommended reforms, advocating for the Chancellor's role to be ceremonial and for university autonomy to be protected.
- Some states have passed laws to replace the Governor with a State-appointed or university-elected Chancellor, but approval for these reforms is often delayed. Reforming the Chancellor system is seen as essential for ensuring accountability, reducing political interference, and promoting academic freedom.

The Hindu-GS3(Environment)Page4

## Sundarbans Bird Festival records over 150 species

Shiv Sahay Singh  
KOLKATA

About 154 species of birds were spotted during the third Sundarbans Bird Festival. Aimed at the promotion of avifauna, the estimation exercise was held from January 22 to January 26, during which birders recorded 51 species of migratory birds and 103 species of resident birds.

Forty birders across six teams spotted 31,926 birds during the exercise. About 100 bird species were recorded in the core area of

- About 154 species of birds were spotted during the third Sundarbans Bird Festival. Aimed at the promotion of avifauna, the estimation exercise was held from January 22 to January 26, during which birders recorded 51 species of migratory birds and 103 species of resident birds.
- Sundarban is the largest deltaic region of the world and encompasses over hundreds of islands (105), with a maze of innumerable rivers, rivulets, and creeks. The name 'Sundarban' means "beautiful forest" and it is believed to be derived from a mangrove tree species 'Sundari' (*Heritiera fomes*). The Indian Sundarban is the southernmost part of the estuarine delta formed by the River Ganges and Brahmaputra, bordering the Bay of Bengal. It is located little south of the Tropic of Cancer between the latitudes 21'51' and 22'31'N, and longitudes 88'10' and 89'51'E, mainly in the coastal districts of West Bengal, i.e. South 24-Parganas and North 24-Parganas (Arbesi Block only)

## Indian Express-GS2(Governance)Page 6

### Hunting fields of England to Parliament: Origins of whip system

VIKAS PATHAK  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26

VICE PRESIDENT Jagdeep Dhankhar's recent statement that party whips curtail an MP's freedom of expression by enforcing a party line has sparked a debate. "Why should there be a whip? Whip means you are curtailing expression, curtailing freedom, and subjecting your representative to servility. You do not allow such a person to use his or her mind," Dhankhar had told a group of students at his residence on January 23.

In popular perception, a party whip is sacrosanct, especially when it comes to being present in Parliament when a matter important for the party is up for voting and casting their vote as per the party's wishes. There are consequences, including expulsion, for defiance of a whip.

#### Where does the term whip come from?

It originates from the hunting fields of England, where a whipper-in was a member of the hunting party whose job was to bring straying hounds back into the pack. In a political sense, the

Anglo-Irish politician and philosopher Edmund Burke. As per Courtenay Ilbert's book *Parliament, Its History, Constitution and Practice*, Burke, during a speech in the House of Commons, is said to have talked about how the King's ministers "had made great efforts to get their followers together" and "had sent for their friends to the north and to Paris, whipping them in".

#### What is the history of the whip system in India?

In India, the whip system is as old as its parliamentary history, according to former Lok Sabha secretary-general P D T Achary. The system is important for parliamentary functioning as parties see voting on some matters as crucial to how their politics is perceived. Hence, MPs are expected to be present at the time of voting on matters critical to the party and follow the organisation's line. Absence or voting against the party line can be a huge embarrassment to the party.

For the ruling party or parties of the ruling coalition, full attendance and compliance during division — where each MP's vote on a motion is counted — on a crucial matter is also a matter of

the real strength of the party or alliance and is seen as symbolic of whether they are indeed in a majority. Failure to demonstrate majority in the Lower House in such a context can also lead to a no-confidence motion.

Given that parties require their MPs to be present and vote as per their party line during division (voting) on an important matter, the party chief whip in a House is required to inform all members about what the party leadership thinks of an important matter. The whip also has to ensure their attendance when the vote takes place. Essentially, the whip is the bridge between the party leadership and the MPs and also has a sense of which members ought to speak on different issues in Parliament.

#### What are the different kinds of whips?

There are three kinds. A one-line whip just informs members about a vote but permits them to abstain. A two-line whip asks them to be present but does not tell them how to vote. The three-line whip, largely the norm these days, directs members to be present and vote as per the party line.

EXPLAINED

A three-line whip to party members by a party's chief whip carries the heading "Three-Line Whip". Under each sentence, there are three thick horizontal lines. Largely the norm these days, this kind of whip directs members to be present and vote as per the party line.

Achary said if a member violates a three-line whip, which is the strictest of directions by a party, the leader of the party can recommend his or her disqualification to the Presiding Officer of the House. "As per the Anti-Defection Law, disqualification can happen for violation of a three-line whip. There were always members who thought that this curtailed their freedom, but even the Supreme Court has said that the whip system is necessary for the preservation of political parties," Achary said. He said the party system was at the root of Indian parliamentary democracy and that violation of a whip can have serious consequences in the context of the Anti-Defection Law that came into force in 1985.

#### Who enforces the whip system?

The most important role in the whip system is that of the chief whip of a political party, said Achary. There are also additional whips, apart from the chief whip. The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs is the government's chief whip in the Lok Sabha and can request leaders of all parties of the ruling alliance to issue a three-line whip to their members to be present and vote in a certain manner. "If a member of a party in the ruling alliance violates a whip by its chief whip, the leader of the party can recommend the member's disqualification," Achary said. In the Rajya Sabha, the Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs is the government's chief whip, but what matters for members of parties most are the directions issued by their whips.

#### Why is the whip system important?

In Practice and Procedure of Parliament, former parliament secretary M N Kaul and former Chief Election Commissioner S L Shakti write: "In a legislative body, not only the fate of a particular measure under consideration but the very life of the Council of Ministers itself may depend upon the result of a single decision."

Former Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan told The Indian Express that the whip system was important for the functioning of Parliamentary democracy. "If you are an Independent MP, you are free and can choose how to vote on a matter. However, if you are elected on a party ticket, you have been elected because of a party vote. Being a member of a party also means that you agree with its ideology and policies. So, discipline is necessary. You can express disagreement with, say, a Bill in an internal party forum. Once the party has made a decision, you should either comply or leave the party," she said.

Given that the whip system is crucial for all political parties, an All-India Whips conference has been held since 1952, when the first Lok Sabha was constituted. The first such event was held in Indore on September 13, 1952. Organised by the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, the conference provides a forum "to the whips of various political parties — ruling as well as Opposition, at the centre as well as in the states — to sit together and exchange their views," says the Handbook on the Working of the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs.

- Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar's recent statement that party whips curtail an MP's freedom of expression by enforcing a party line has sparked a debate.
- In parliamentary terms, a "whip" refers to both a written order directing party members to follow a specific action and the party official responsible for issuing such directions. The term originates from the British practice of "whipping in" lawmakers to align with the party line. A whip can instruct members to be present for important votes or vote in a particular manner. In India, each party appoints a chief whip to issue these directives, with additional whips assisting in the process.



Indian Express-GS2(Health)Page 6

## Guillain-Barré Syndrome cases in Pune reach 101

ANURADHA  
MASCARENHAS  
PUNE, JANUARY 26

THE NUMBER of cases of Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS), a rare neurological disorder, crossed the 100 mark in Pune on Sunday. One suspected GBS death was also reported from Solapur. Initial unconfirmed reports hinted at the possibility of the victim having contracted the infection in Pune and later travelled to Solapur.

Besides the Solapur case, the Maharashtra health department also identified another 18 persons suspected of GBS in Pune, Pimpri Chinchwad, Pune rural and a few from neighbouring districts. Of the 101 patients undergoing treatment at various hospitals, 16 are on ventilator support. While 68 patients are male, 33 are women.

A central team of health officials is expected to visit Pune on Monday to monitor the situation.

An analysis by the state health department since the beginning shows that of the 101 patients, 19 are below 9 years, 15

are in the 10-19 age group, 20 in the 20-29 age group, 13 in the 30-39 age group, 12 in the 40-49 age group, 13 in the 50-59 age group, 8 in the 60-69 age group, and one in the 70-80 age group.

As many as 81 patients are from areas coming under the Pune Municipal Corporation, 14 from areas under the Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation, and the remaining 6 from other districts.

Cases came to light when hospitals began reporting GBS patients mainly from Sinhagad Road, Khadakwasla, Dhayari, Kirkatwadi, and surrounding areas.

Suspecting contamination, water samples from different parts of Pune have been sent for chemical and biological analysis. In the initial days of the outbreak, 23 blood samples were also collected and sent to the ICMR-National Institute of Virology. These blood samples tested negative for dengue, zika, and chikungunya. However, of the 11 stool samples of the GBS patients, nine tested positive for the norovirus infection. 3 of these samples also tested positive for *Campylobacter* Jejuni bacterial infection.

- The number of cases of Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS), a rare neurological disorder, crossed the 100 mark in Pune .
- Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) is a rare condition where the immune system attacks the peripheral nervous system, causing muscle weakness, loss of sensation, and, in severe cases, paralysis, breathing difficulties, and problems with swallowing or speaking

### Why J&K is issuing 'Aadhaar' to each chinar tree

**BASHAARAT MASOOD**  
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 26

THE JAMMU & KASHMIR government has launched an initiative for the conservation of the region's chinar trees, which have been dwindling in number over the years. The initiative involves conducting a census of chinar trees and assigning each one of them a "Tree Aadhaar" number.



Chinar trees in Srinagar. The tree's leaves turn red-gold in autumn. *Shoaib Masoodi*

#### What is a chinar tree?

Chinar, also known as Oriental plane tree (*platanus orientalis*), is a maple-like tree with a huge canopy. It is found in cool climate regions with sufficient water. It takes 30 to 50 years for a chinar tree to mature and 150 years for it to reach its full size. The tree can grow up to a height of 30 metres while its girth ranges between 10 and 15 metres.

#### How did the tree get its name?

The name 'chinar' was given to the tree by Mughals – some suggest it was Mughal emperor Jahangir who coined the name. It is said that the term 'chinar' came into use after

#### Why is the chinar significant?

Chinar trees, called *Buen* or *Booyin* in Kashmiri, are a major tourist attraction in the Kashmir valley during the autumn season,

someone witnessed crimson red chinari tree leaves from a distance during the autumn season, and shouted "*Che naar ast*" – a Persian phrase meaning "what flame is that?"

when their green leaves slowly change into crimson red and gold. They also find a special place in the art, literature and craft of Kashmir – local papier mache and embroidery work, hand-woven carpets, and walnut wood carvings often feature chinari motifs.

#### What is the chinari conservation project?

To cut a chinari tree, the government's nod

is needed, even if the tree is on someone's private property. However, often, the trees are cut anyway. The new project aims to make sure the government can track the status of each tree.

Thus, the new initiative involves conducting a census of chinari trees across the Kashmir valley and the Chenab region. As part of the process, the government has not only enumerated chinari trees but also given a unique identity – called Tree Aadhaar – to each chinari tree. The census has been done district-wise. Each tree has been geo-tagged.

According to Dr Syed Tariq, the coordinator of the project, 28,560 chinari trees have been enumerated and GI-tagged so far. "We think the total number of chinari trees in Jammu and Kashmir is somewhere between 32,000 to 33,000. Out of these, we have tagged 28,560 trees, which are accessible," he told *The Indian Express*.

Tariq also said the authorities have started putting a metallic QR code on chinari trees. The code when scanned will provide information about the particular tree on 25 parameters. These include the longitude and latitude, age, height, girth, health, etc.

The Jammu & Kashmir government launched the "Tree Aadhaar" mission to conserve chinari trees, which are declining in number. The initiative involves a census and unique identification for each tree, including geo-tagging and QR codes with details like age, height, health, and environmental threats. The project has tagged 28,560 chinari trees, with a total goal of 32,000-33,000 trees. Chinari trees are culturally significant and are the state tree of Jammu & Kashmir.

#### Do you know?

Chinar, also known as Oriental plane tree (*platanus orientalis var cashmeriana*), is a maple-like tree with a huge canopy and is found in cool climate regions with sufficient water. The tree is a characteristic of the Eastern Himalayas.

## Indian Express-GS2(Health)Page 12

### PARAQUAT

A 24-year-old woman in Kerala has been sentenced to death for poisoning her boyfriend with paraquat

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26

A SESSIONS court in Kerala's Thiruvananthapuram district last week awarded the death sentence to 24-year-old Greeshma for murdering Sharon Raj, with whom she was in a relationship, in 2022. Greeshma poisoned Sharon with a chemical herbicide called paraquat.

#### What is paraquat?

Paraquat, also known as paraquat dichloride or methyl viologen, is one of the most commonly used herbicides in the world. It is primarily used to control the growth of weeds and desiccate crops like cotton before harvest. Paraquat's sale is banned or regulated in many countries as it is extremely toxic for humans.

#### How does paraquat poisoning occur?

While most poisonings occur via oral ingestion, the chemical may also be toxic upon prolonged skin contact or inhalation. According to the US Centers for Disease Control, paraquat causes direct damage when it comes into contact with the lining of the mouth, stomach, or intestines. It spreads rapidly through the body, and causes adverse reactions in the lungs, liver, and kidneys. Consuming just 1 teaspoon

of paraquat can cause immediate symptoms after consumption.

#### Are there treatments for paraquat poisoning?

While there are no known antidotes for paraquat poisoning, an article published in the *National Medical Journal of India* (NMJI) in 2021 suggests the use of immunosuppression or charcoal haemoperfusion as experimental treatments.

The CDC suggests immediately swallowing activated charcoal or Fuller's earth (*multani mitti*), to which the chemical would stick and thus not be absorbed by the body. Hospitalisation is a must.

#### What are some restrictions on the use of paraquat?

In India, paraquat's use is governed by the Central Insecticides Board and Registration Committee (CIBRC), under the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare. A 2021 notification by the Agriculture Ministry restricts its use to the following crops: wheat, rice, tea, coffee, potato, grapes, maize, rubber and apple. Paraquat may also be sprayed in certain water bodies to combat bulrush (*Typha latifolia*), waterthymes (*Hydrilla verticillata*) and water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*).

However, various studies and news reports have found that these regulations are not strictly followed, and farmers use

- A 24-year old woman was **awarded the death sentence** by a Thiruvananthapuram court which found her guilty of poisoning her boyfriend in 2022 with a chemical herbicide called paraquat. Paraquat, also known as paraquat dichloride or methyl viologen, is one of the world's most-used herbicides. A toxic chemical, paraquat is primarily used to control the growth of weeds and desiccate crops like cotton before harvest.
- The WHO classifies paraquat as Category 2 (moderately hazardous and moderately irritating) chemical. Its sale is banned in over 70 countries, including China and the European Union, due to its potent toxicity. However, it is widely used in the US and in India.



## Indian Express-GS1(Geography)Page 12

# Why Trump wants Greenland

Trump has said Denmark would be committing a 'very unfriendly act' if it did not allow the US to take over Greenland. What's behind the US President's increasingly aggressive bid for a snow-covered island?

AMITABH SINHA & YASHEE  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26

IN HIS first remarks on Greenland after taking office, US President Donald Trump Saturday said he was sure America was "going to have it". He also said Denmark would be committing a "very unfriendly act" if it decided to not let that happen. Trump said he wanted Greenland "for the protection of the free world".

Greenland was once a Danish colony and is now an autonomous province of Denmark.

It has also emerged that Trump's conversation with Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen on this issue earlier in January turned very cold.

Frederiksen's office had then said she reiterated to Trump that Greenland was not for sale, and that it was up to the Greenlanders to decide their future. However, several European media organisations had reported that Trump had used threats during that conversation, including imposing tariffs on Danish goods coming into the US. On Saturday, the *Financial Times*, quoting sources, said Trump was aggressive and confrontational during that 45-minute conversation.

Greenland is the world's largest but

### RED FLAG OVER GREENLAND

Trump has had a tense call with Denmark's PM



Donald Trump Mette Frederiksen

- Critical Raw Material (CRM) deposit
- Non-Critical Raw Material (CRM) deposit
- Important Occurrence



Source: Geological Survey of Denmark and Greenland, Government of Greenland. CRM as defined by EC2023.

months, the Covid-19 pandemic had pushed everything else to the backburner.

to be based on Greenland for the first time. At that time, German forces had already taken

— but also built a nuclear reactor and a facility to dispose of nuclear waste.

The competition with the Soviet Union and its successor state Russia, is no longer that keen. The renewed attempt to acquire Greenland under Trump is now being seen as prompted by the desire to counter the rising influence of China in the region.

Greenland is mineral-rich, having large deposits of traditional resources like gold, nickel and cobalt, but also some of the biggest reserves of rare earth minerals like dysprosium, praseodymium, neodymium and terbium. Of the 34 classified rare earth minerals, Greenland has about 23. It is these that have brought the island a lot of attention, along with several prospecting mining companies.

The rare earth minerals have suddenly gained prominence because of their use in critical emerging technologies in the renewable energy sector, new military applications and consumer electronics.

Outside of Greenland, these critical minerals are heavily concentrated in China, which controls the bulk of the global production and supply.

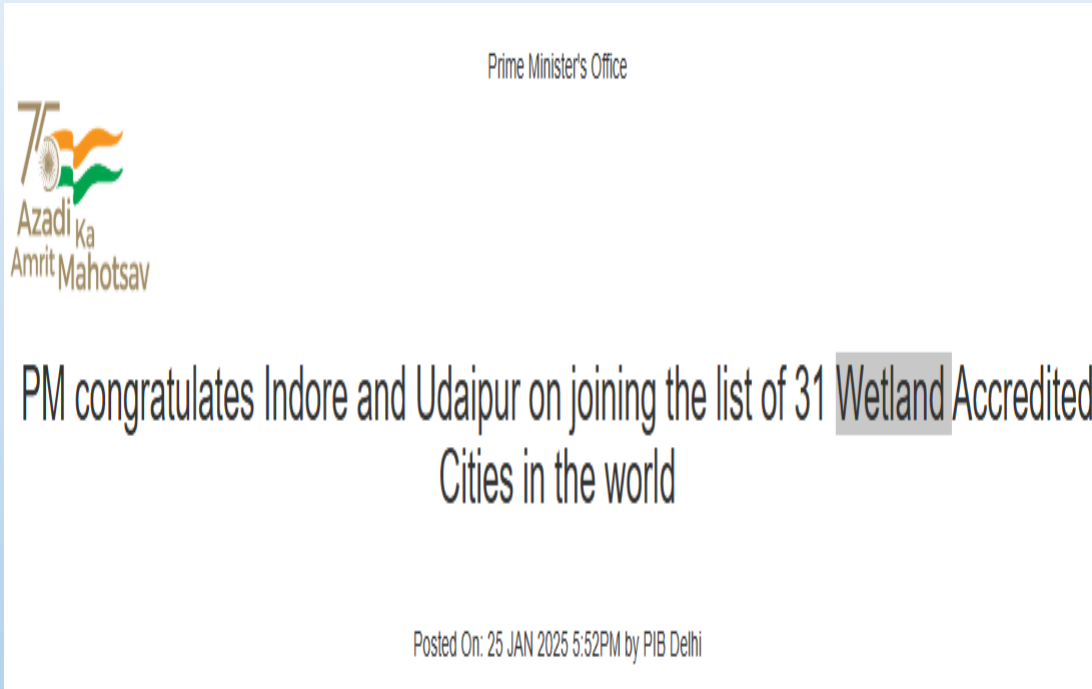
Crucially, China too has entered Greenland in a big way. Chinese companies are very actively involved in prospecting, mining and

US President Donald Trump reiterated his controversial interest in acquiring Greenland, an autonomous territory under Danish control.

- **Greenland**, the world's largest island, lying in the North Atlantic Ocean. Greenland (Kalaallit Nunaat) is noted for its vast tundra and immense glaciers.

# HEADLINES OF THE DAY

## PIB –GS3(Environment)



- PM congratulates Indore and Udaipur on joining the list of 31 Wetland Accredited Cities in the world
- The Wetland City Accreditation scheme, introduced by the Convention on Wetlands, encourages cities to conserve and sustainably manage urban wetlands. This scheme promotes public awareness, municipal planning, and the socio-economic benefits of preserving wetlands.