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PLACES IN NEWS

Assam-Meghalaya border dispute partially resolved

Context

With the signing of a "historic agreement", Assam and Meghalaya have partially resolved a 50-year-old border dispute in six of the 12 sectors along their 885-km boundary.

About the Dispute

- Meghalaya was carved out of Assam as a separate state in 1972 but the new state had challenged the Assam Reorganisation Act, 1971, leading to dispute in 12 locations in the border areas.
- These include the areas of Upper Tarabari, Gazang reserve forest, Hahim, Langpih, Borduar, Boklapara, Nongwah, Matamur, Khanapara-Pilangkata, Deshdemoreah Block I and Block II, Khanduli and Retacherra.
- A major point of contention between Assam and Meghalaya is the district of Langpih in West Garo Hills bordering the Kamrup district of Assam.
 - ▶ Langpih was part of the Kamrup district of Assam during the British colonial period but after India's Independence in 1947; it became part of the Garo Hills and Meghalaya.
- Another point of contention is the Mikir Hills, which Assam considers to be its part.
- Meghalaya has questioned Blocks I and II of the Mikir Hills, now Karbi Anglong region, being part of Assam.

- Meghalaya says these were parts of erstwhile **United Khasi and Jaintia Hills districts**.



What is in the agreement?

- The “historic” agreement provides for a closure in six disputed sectors that were taken up for resolution in the first phase.
- The agreement was based on a draft resolution signed between the two States on January 29.
- The six disputed sectors are **Tarabari, Gizang, Hahim, Boklapara, Khanapara-Pillangkata and Ratacherra** under the **Kamrup, Kamrup (Metro) and Cachar** districts of **Assam** and the **West Khasi Hills, Ri-Bhoi and East Jaintia Hills** districts of
- While Assam will get 18.51 sq. km of the disputed areas, Meghalaya will get the remaining 18.28 sq.km.

Seagrass protection project underway along AP coast

Context

- The Centre has initiated a project across the states of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Odisha on enhancing climate resilience of India’s coastal communities by protecting and restoring India’s natural ecosystems such as **mangroves and seagrasses**.

About the Programme

- The project had been undertaken at a total cost of US \$130.269 million (around Rs 1,000 crore) which includes a grant of US \$43.419 million by Global Climate Fund (GCF) covering 24 ecosystems in these selected states.
- It aims to strengthen the climate resilience of coastal communities by protecting and restoring India’s natural ecosystems such as mangroves and seagrasses.
- Under the programme, study of seagrasses along the coastlines is prominent.
- Andhra Pradesh coast is an area of major study in the programme.

What are Seagrasses?

- Seagrasses are flowering plants that are found in our sea beds and ocean floors.
- Distribution of Seagrasses: The major seagrass beds exist along our coastline of
 - ▶ Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay regions on the east coast,
 - ▶ Gulf of Kachchh region on the west coast,
 - ▶ the lagoons of islands in Lakshadweep in the Arabian Sea,
 - ▶ Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal.
- Seagrass ecosystems are recognized globally for their ability to sequester carbon, nurture fish communities and support marine mammals such as sea cows or dugongs.

Some of the important seagrasses-

- ▶ Sea Cow Grass (*Cymodocea serrulata*)
- ▶ Thready Seagrass (*Cymodocea rotundata*)
- ▶ Needle Seagrass (*Syringodium isoetifolium*)
- ▶ Flat-tipped Seagrass (*Halodule uninervis*), etc.

Puri Heritage Corridor Project

Context

- The Odisha Government is expected to soon lay the foundation stone of the much-awaited **Puri heritage corridor**, which is being developed at a cost of Rs 800 crore.

About Puri heritage corridor

- Conceived in 2016, the Puri Heritage Corridor Project was unveiled in December 2019 to transform the holy town of Puri into an international place of heritage.
- The project includes redeveloping major portions of the holy town and in the vicinity of the Jagannath temple for visitors and tourists.
- The project will include
 - ▶ **Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA)** building redevelopment
 - ▶ a 600-capacity Srimandir reception centre
 - ▶ Jagannath cultural centre including Raghunandan library, integrated command, and control centre, Badadanda heritage streetscape, Srimandir amenities improvement, Sri Setu, Jagannath Ballav pilgrim centre, multilevel car parking, municipal market development, Swargadwar development, Pramod Udyan, Gurukulam, Mahodadhi market, beachfront development, Puri lake, Musa river revival plan, Atharnala and housing for sevayats.
- The project is a part of the **Augmentation of Basic Amenities and Development of Heritage and Architecture (ABADHA) scheme** for developing Puri as a world-class heritage city.

About Lord Jagannath Temple

- The Jagannath Temple of Puri is an important Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Jagannath, a form of Vishnu located on the eastern coast of India, in the state of Odisha.
- It is believed to have been constructed in the **12th century by King Anantavarman Chodaganga Deva** of the **Eastern Ganga Dynasty**.
- **Anantavarman Chodagangadeva** is also known for building the Sun temple of Konark and Puri is considered as the cultural capital of Odisha.
- Jagannath Puri temple is called '**Yamanika Tirtha**' where, according to the Hindu beliefs, the power of '**Yama**', the **god of death**, has been nullified due to the presence of **Lord Jagannath**.
- This temple was called the "**White Pagoda**" and is a part of **Char Dham pilgrimages (Badrinath, Dwaraka, Puri, Rameswaram)**.
- There are four gates to the temple- Eastern '**Singhdwara**' which is the main gate with **two crouching lions**, Southern '**Ashwadwara**', Western '**Vyaghra Dwara**' and Northern '**Hastidwara**'. There is a carving of each form at each gate.
- In front of the entrance stands the **Aruna stambha or sun pillar**, which was originally at the **Sun Temple in Konark**.
- The temple is famous for its **annual Rath Yatra, or chariot festival**.
- Images of all the three deities **Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Lordess Subhadra** are ceremoniously brought out of the inner sanctum (Garbhagriha) from the chief temple in Jagannath Puri. They are placed in a chariot which is then pulled by volunteers from Jagannath puri temple to Gundicha Temple.
- For this festival, special chariots are built each year.

Konark Sun Temple

Context

- Konark is going to be the first model town in Odisha to shift from grid dependency to green energy. The Odisha government has planned to run the Sun Temple completely on solar energy.

About Konark Sun Temple

- The Sun Temple built in the thirteenth century was conceived as a gigantic chariot of Sun God, with twelve pairs of exquisitely ornamented wheels pulled by seven pairs of horses at Konark on the coastline of Odisha, India.
- "Konarka", the place bears a name composed of two World elements: Kona meaning corner and ARKA meaning the Sun.
- The Sun god worshiped in **Ark Kshetra is also called Konark**.
- The temple is attributed to king **Narasimhadeva I** of the Eastern Ganga Dynasty about 1250 CE.
- It is dedicated to the **Hindu Sun God Surya**.
- This temple was called the "**Black Pagoda**" in European sailor accounts.
- It forms part of the **golden triangle of Odisha, along with Puri and Bhubaneswar**, and attracts tourists, pilgrims, and history and art lovers.

- It was **declared a UNESCO world heritage** site in 1984.
- The alignment of the Sun Temple is in the **east-west direction**.
- Large number of devotees gather here every year for the **Chandrabhaga Mela** around the month of February.
- The Sun Temple, Konârak is protected under the National Framework of India by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act (1958) and its Rules (1959).
- Other relevant protective legislation includes the Forest Act, Konârak Development Act and notified Council Area Act.

India's 1st E-waste Park

Context

- The **Delhi government will build India's first electronic waste eco-park** in the national capital.

About E-waste Park

- The e-waste park is being planned in Narela industrial area and will be spread across 20 acres.
- Across the 12 zones, collection centers will be set up, in order to channelise e-waste.
- The e-waste eco-park will consist of an authorized refurbishing market as a secondary product sale market for batteries, electronic goods, laptops, chargers, mobiles and PCs.
- This facility will consist of dismantling, refurbishing, segregation, plastic recycling, material wise storage, and testing, and precious metal extraction facilities, from Printed Circuit Boards (PCBs) through high-end technologies.
- The activities in the park will be targeted towards small and medium scale enterprises clusters, which are involved in e-waste recycling.
- The e-waste eco-park will provide infrastructure, training and tools to the operators from the informal sector, in a bid to groom them as formal recyclers.
- The e-waste eco-park shall engage informal operators involved in this work for a long time and with a sufficient knowledge base in the collection network.
- There will **be end-to-end processing** of e-waste and **zero landfill** will be ensured.
- It will provide integrated and **environmentally-safe disposal of e-waste**, using innovative technologies.
- This will help in **reducing the pollution** and adverse impact on the environment.
- The activities in the park will be targeted towards small and medium scale enterprises clusters, which are involved in e-waste recycling.

Dugong reserve in Palk Bay

Context

- Marine biologists have welcomed the Tamil Nadu government's recent decision to go ahead with the establishment of a conservation reserve for the elusive dugong (Dugong dugon).

About the species

- Dugong (*Dugong dugon*) is a sirenian species native to parts of the Indian littoral.
- Dugongs are cousins of manatees and share a similar plump appearance, but have a dolphin fluke-like tail.
- And unlike manatees, which use freshwater areas, the dugong is strictly a marine mammal.
- Commonly known as "sea cows," dugongs graze peacefully on sea grasses in shallow coastal waters of the Indian and western Pacific Oceans.
- Dugongs as a Schedule I animal under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- Declining population: The dugongs are on the verge of extinction.
- In the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, their population is less than 100.
- There are very few left in the Gulf of Mannar.
- In the Gulf of Kutch, there are very few sporadic records.
- They were present in Lakshadweep but now are locally extinct.

The plan

- The plan included to set up a dugong conservation reserve in the Gulf of Mannar, Palk Bay between India and Sri Lanka, for the conservation of the animals.

Razzaza Lake, Iraq's second largest lake drying up

Context

- Iraq's Razzaza Lake was once a tourist attraction known for its beautiful scenery and an abundance of fish that locals depended on. Now, dead fish litter its shores and the once-fertile lands around it have turned into a barren desert.

About the lake

- Razzaza Lake, also known as Lake Milh, Arabic for Salt Lake, is located between Iraq's governorates of Anbar and Karbala.
- It's the second largest lake in Iraq and is part of a wide valley that includes the lakes of Habbaniyah, Tharthar and Bahr al-Najaf.
- The lake was constructed as a measure to control floods in the Euphrates and to be used as huge reservoir for irrigation purposes. Iraqis and tourists frequented the lake as a recreational spot to cool down during Iraq's hot summers.
- Razzaza Lake is the latest victim of a water crisis in Iraq, known as the "Land Between the Two Rivers", the Tigris and the Euphrates.
- Upstream dams in Turkey, Syria and Iran have shrunk the rivers and their tributaries, seasonal rainfall has dropped and infrastructure has fallen into disrepair.

The Crisis in Ukraine's Donbass Region

Context

- President Vladimir Putin recently told his Security Council that Russia should consider recognising the independence of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic in Donbass as independent.

About Donbass region:

- **Location:**
- The Donetsk and Luhansk regions collectively known as the Donbas are in eastern Ukraine, near the border with Russia.
- The region comprises both Kyiv-controlled parts as well as separatist-controlled areas.
- Its main industries are coal mining and steel production.
- The geographical location of the Donbas facilitated industrial growth:
 - ▶ it lies only 120–150 km from the **Sea of Azov**,
 - ▶ 350–450 km from the **Kryvyi Rih Iron-ore Basin**,
 - ▶ 300–350 km from the **Kerch Iron-ore Basin**,
 - ▶ 300–350 km from the **Nikopol Manganese Basin**,
- Close to the largest consumers of its coal—the metallurgical, energy, and other industrial centers.



Population:

- Most of the 3.6 million people living in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions speak Russian, a result of a migration of Russian workers to the regions after World War II, during the Soviet era.

About the crisis:

- The Donbass region, comprising the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts of Ukraine, has been at the centre of the conflict since March 2014 when Moscow invaded and annexed the Crimean Peninsula.
- In April 2014, pro-Russia rebels began seizing territory (with Russia supporting them through hybrid warfare) in Eastern Ukraine and in May 2014, the rebels in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions held a referendum to declare independence from Ukraine.
- Since then, these predominantly Russian speaking regions (more than 70% speak Russian) within Ukraine have been witnessing shelling and skirmishes between the rebels and Ukrainian forces.

Chamba district of Himachal Pradesh becomes 100th 'Har Ghar Jal' District

Context

- Jal Jeevan Mission has achieved the significant milestone of providing tap water to every home of 100 districts across the country.

About Jal Jeevan Missions Achievements

- Chamba, in Himachal Pradesh, has become the 100th 'Har Ghar Jal' district, the fifth aspirational district to be covered under the initiative.
- The other four Har Ghar Jal Aspirational districts are Bhadradri Kothgudem, Jayashankar Bhupalpalli, Komram Bheem Asifabad (all in Telangana) and Mewat in Haryana.
- In the past two and a half years, Jal Jeevan Mission has provided tap water supply to more than 5.78 crore rural households.
- Under the Mission, the Center aims to provide tap water supply to every rural household by 2024.
- As of 15 August, 2019, when the mission was announced, out of 19.27 crore households, only 3.23 crore (17%) households in India had tap water connections.
- In Goa, Haryana, Telangana, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Puducherry, Dadar & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu, every rural household has tap water supply, the data showed.
- Punjab (99%), Himachal Pradesh (92.4%), Gujarat (92%) and Bihar (90%) are on the verge of achieving the feat in 2022.
- The 'Har Ghar Har Jal' scheme was provided ₹60,000 crore in the Union Budget 2022-23.

About Jal Jeevan Mission

- Jal Jeevan Mission is a central government initiative under the Ministry of Jal Shakti.
- It aims to ensure access to piped water for every household in India.
- The mission's goal is to provide to all households in rural India safe and adequate water through individual household tap connections by 2024.

India to set up its first IIT outside the country in UAE

Context

- The Indian Institute of Technology will establish its first branch outside India in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as part of the India-UAE trade deal signed.

About the Agreement

- The Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) signed between the UAE and India will usher in a new phase of joint strategic cooperation in all sectors.
- The two nations will also set up an India-UAE cultural council to facilitate and promote cultural projects, cross-cultural exchanges and exhibitions.
- The agreement was signed after a virtual summit held with an agenda to boost trade and investments between both countries and usher in a new era of economic progress.
- Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi have participated in the summit.
- Realising the need to establish world-class institutions that encourage and support innovation and technological progress, the leaders agreed to establish an Indian Institute of Technology in the United Arab Emirates.
- At the meeting, it was decided that as part of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, a technology institute would be set up by India in the UEA.

Himachal Pradesh gets 1st Biodiversity Park at Mandi

◦ Context

- **Recently, Himachal Pradesh got the first biodiversity park** to make its contribution towards the **conservation of endangered Himalayan herbs.**

About the Park

- This park is set to come up at **Mandi's Bhulah valley.**
- The biodiversity park is set up under the **National Mission on Himalayan Studies (NMHS)** by HP's forest department.
- The aim of the park is to **link tourism activities along with extending new opportunities for researchers to conduct in-depth exploration of various medicinal herbs** found in the Himalayas that are on the verge of extinction.
- A herbal nursery to conserve herbs that are about to be extinct in the mountains has also been set up in the park, which has **Trillidium Govanianum (Nagchhatri), Dhoop, Picrorhiza kurroa (Kadu), Sarpagandha, Swerlia Chiryita (Chirayita), Barbari, Angelica glauca (Chaura), Coleus gromalicus (Pathanbel), Pathar chata, Selinum vaginatum (Bhutkesi), Nyar, Valeriana Wallichii (Mushkwala), Thymus Linearis (Van Ajwain), Kuth, Acorus Calamus (Barre), Asparagus (Sansarpali), Potentilla Nepalensis (Dori Ghass), Ratan Jot, Aconitum heterophyllum (Atish Patish), Padophyllumhexandrum (Van Kakdi), Dioscorea delloidea (Shingli Mingli), Jangli**

Lahsun, *Adiantum lunulatum* (Dungtuli) and many similar herbs and shrubs on display.

- Two log huts, a water harvesting structure, an internal tank, a 5KW power generation project, bird nests, and a sales center have also been set up at the park.
- In this herbal nursery, about **1,200 plants of different species are available**.
- **Amphitheatres have been built in the park** for the convenience of researchers and tourists.

What are Biodiversity parks?

- Biodiversity is the variety of **plant and animal life in the world or in a particular habitat**.
- Biodiversity is measured by **two major components: species richness, and species evenness**.
- Biological diversity is a precious resource intended for the continued existence of mankind, and hence, conserving biodiversity is concerned **with restoring the equilibrium between humans & the atmosphere**.

Important role of Biodiversity Parks include-

- A nature reserve for the conservation of the natural heritage of the city.
- Enhancing the quality of the urban environment.
- Serving as a hub for education, cultural and conservation activities.
- Connecting biodiversity to the city and people.
- Promoting eco-tourism.
- Creating livelihood for local communities.
- Preserving the rare endemic and threatened plant and animal species of the area.

India's first Biomass-based hydrogen plant in Madhya Pradesh

Context

- **India's first commercial-scale biomass-based hydrogen plant** will be constructed in **Khandwa district of Madhya Pradesh**.

Key-highlights of the Plan

- Every day this plant will produce **one tonne of hydrogen, from 30 tonnes of biomass feedstock**.
- The plant is being put up by a **joint venture of Watomo Energies Ltd and Biezel Green Energy with an investment of Rs 24 crore**.
- **Bezel Green will own 50 percent** in the yet-to-be-named joint venture; the **other 50 per cent will come from interested farmers**.
- It will also **produce biochar and methane**.
- **"Thermally accelerated anaerobic digestion (TAD) reactor"** is a technology that can produce **hydrogen, methane and biochar from biomass**.

What is Biomass?

- **Biomass** can be described as **all material that was or is a part of a living organism**.
- For renewable energy applications, however, the definition of biomass is usually limited to **include only materials that are plant-derived such as agricultural residues**.
- **Biomass is a renewable organic resource**.
- It includes **agriculture crop residues (like wheat straw or corn stover), special crops grown for energy use (like switchgrass or willow trees) forest residues, animal waste and organic municipal solid waste**.
- This renewable resource can be used for **producing hydrogen, and by-products**.

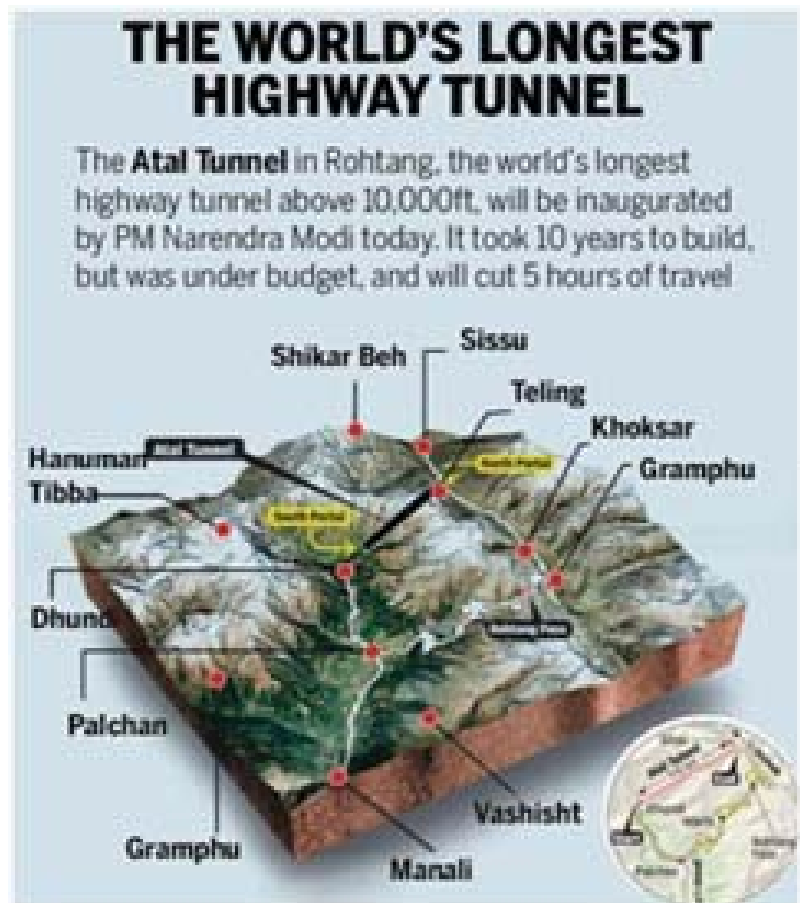
Atal Tunnel makes it to World Book of Records

Context

- Recently, Atal Tunnel has officially been certified by the World Book of Records as the 'World's Longest Highway Tunnel above 10,000 Feet', during a landmark ceremony in New Delhi.

About Atal tunnel

- Length: 9.02 km
- Connecting: Manali to Lahaul-Spiti valley
- Constructed by: Border Roads Organisation (BRO).
- It is a 9.02 Km long tunnel which connects Manali to Lahaul-Spiti valley throughout the year.
- Earlier the valley was cut off for about 6 months each year owing to heavy snowfall.
- It is at an altitude of 3000 Mtrs (10,000 Feet) from the Mean Sea Level (MSL).
- The tunnel reduces the road distance by 46 Kms between Manali and Leh and the time by about 4 to 5 hours.
- The South Portal (SP) of Atal Tunnel is located at a distance of 25 Km from Manali at an altitude of 3060 Mtrs.
- The North Portal (NP) of the tunnel



3071 Mtrs.

About Border Roads Organisation (BRO)

- BRO is a modern and transnational construction organisation that is committed to meeting the strategic requirements of the Indian armed forces.
- The organisation plays a vital role in upscaling infrastructural development.
- Initially, BRO was functional under the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.
- But since 2015, it is being managed and is functional under the Ministry of Defence.
- BRO is operational in 21 Indian states and 1 union territory.
- But also, functional in our friendly countries like neighboring countries such as Afghanistan, Bhutan, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka
- The Organisation was formed on May 7, 1960, to maintain and develop the Indian remote areas of north and northeast situated near the borders.
- The BRO Raising Day is celebrated on May 7, every year.
- The composition of this organization comprises Officers and troops who are selected from the Indian Army's Corps of Engineers, Army Service Corps, Military Police, and other personnel.

Chauri Chaura Incident

Context

- Recently, 100 years have passed since the Chauri Chaura incident which took place on February 4, 1922 at Chauri Chaura in the Gorakhpur district of British India.

About 'Chauri Chaura' Incident

- The incident took place on 4 February 1922 at Chauri Chaura in the Gorakhpur district of the United Province.
- A large group of protesters participating in the Non-Cooperation Movement clashed with police who opened fire.
- In retaliation the demonstrators attacked and set fire to a police station, killing all of its occupants.
- The incident led to the death of three civilians and 22 policemen.
- Mahatma Gandhi, who was strictly against violence, halted the non-co-operation movement on the national level on 12 February 1922, as a direct result of this incident.

Sanctuaries in Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh listed as Ramsar sites

Context

- On the occasion of World Wetlands Day, Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary in Gujarat and Bakhira Wildlife Sanctuary in Uttar Pradesh have been included as Ramsar Site from India. With this, the total number of Ramsar sites in India goes up to 49.

About Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary

- Khijadiya sanctuary (Ramsar site No. 2464) is located in Gujarat. It is a freshwater wetland located near the coast of the Gulf of Kutch.
- Khijadiya has become the fourth wetland of Gujarat to get the Ramsar tag. Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary, Thol Wildlife Sanctuary and Wadhvana wetland are the other Ramsar sites in the state.
- It was formed following the creation of a bund (dike) in 1920 by the then ruler of the erstwhile princely state of Nawanganar to protect farmlands from saltwater ingress.
- The sanctuary is now part of Marine National Park, Jamnagar, the first marine national park in the country.
- The sanctuary is also part of the Central Asian Flyway.
- The site provides habitat to endangered Pallas's fish-eagle (*Haliaeetus leucoryphus*) and Indian skimmer (*Rynchops albicollis*), and the vulnerable common pochard (*Aythya ferina*).
- The site also regularly supports more than 1% of the south and south-west Asian population of Dalmatian pelicans, more than 2% of greylag goose and more than 20% of common crane.

About Bakhira Wildlife Sanctuary

- Bakhira Wildlife Sanctuary (site no. 2465), a freshwater marsh in the Sant Kabir Nagar district, is the largest natural floodplain wetland of eastern Uttar Pradesh.
- A freshwater marsh is a non-tidal, non-forested marsh wetland that contains fresh water and is continuously or frequently flooded.
- The Sanctuary was established in 1980 and is protected under the Wildlife Protection Act (1972). It is declared as an "eco-sensitive zone" which extends up to a kilometer around its boundary.
- The sanctuary serves as a natural habitat for the state bird, Sarus. It also provides a wintering ground for over 25 species that migrate on the Central Asian Flyway, some of which are endangered Egyptian vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*), the vulnerable greater spotted eagle (*Aquila clanga*) among others.
- The sanctuary also supports 45 species of fish such as vulnerable European carp (*Cyprinus carpio*) and the catfish *Wallago attu*, and the near-threatened Gangetic ailia (*Ailia coila*) and silver carp (*Hypophthalmichthys molitrix*).

Hoysala Temples in Karnataka

Context

- India has finalised the Hoysala Temples in Karnataka as its nominations for consideration in the World Heritage Sites List for 2022-23. The Hoysala temples in Belur and Halebeedu in Hassan district and Somanathapura in Mysuru district have been nominated. They were finalised by the Union Ministry of Culture and Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).

About Hoysala Temples

- The Hoysalas temples of Belur, Halebid and Somnathapur were reportedly built in the 12th-13th centuries.
- The masterpieces represent and attest to the creativity and skill of the Hoysala artists and architects. Hoysala architecture is the building style that was developed by architects under the rule of the Hoysala Empire between the 11th and 14th centuries.

- The Hoysala influence was at its peak in the 13th century and several large and small temples built during the era remain today as examples of the Hoysala architectural style.
- The Hoysala temples include Chennakesava Temple at Belur, the Hoysaleswara Temple at Halebidu and the Kesava Temple at Somanathapura.
- There are several other examples of Hoysala craftsmanship such as the temples at Hosaholalu, Belavadi, Amruthapura, Basaralu, Mosale, Arasikere, Nuggehalli and Kikkeri.
- The Hoysala architectural style reveals a negligible Indo-Aryan influence and a more distinct impact of Southern Indian style.
- The Hoysala temples are protected monuments under the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). Their conservation and maintenance is done by ASI but the Karnataka state government will ensure the conservation of state-protected monuments around these three monuments.

Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)

- The ASI is the premier organisation for the archaeological research and protection of the cultural heritage of the country.
- The prime objection of ASI is to maintain the archaeological sites, ancient monuments and remains of national importance.
- The ASI Headquarters is in New Delhi.
- It was established in 1861 by Alexander Cunningham.
- It regulates all archaeological activities as per the provisions of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958.
- It functions under the aegis of the Union Ministry of Culture.
- It also regulates the Antiquities and Art Treasure Act, 1972.

India's First Geo Park in Jabalpur district of Madhya Pradesh

Context

- The Geological Survey of India (GSI) has approved the setting up of the country's first geo park at Lamheta village on the banks of the Narmada river in Jabalpur district of Madhya Pradesh.

Key-Points

- This First geopark approval was given by the Geological Survey of India, under the ministry of mining.
- This Park will be constructed with an investment of Rs 35 crores, over five-acre land.
- The geological park will be built in Lamheta, because this place is among significant places in the world, from a geological point of view.
- In 1928, William Henry Sleeman had discovered Dinosaur fossils from this area.
- UNESCO has also recognised Lamheta as a geo heritage site.

What is geopark?

- Geopark is a unified area, which advances the protection and use of geological heritage in a sustainable manner.
- It also promotes the economic well-being of the people living there.

Geological Survey of India (GSI)

- The Geological Survey of India (GSI) is a scientific agency of India.
- The GSI is a government organisation in India, attached to the Ministry of Mines for conducting geological surveys and studies.
- It is one of the premier organisations of earth science survey and research in the world.
- The GSI was established in 1851 and is one of the oldest of such organisations in the world and the second oldest survey institution in the country.
- It is the prime provider of basic earth science information to the government, industry and the general public, as well as the official participant in steel, coal, metals, cement, power industries and international geoscientific forums.
- Its main function is related to creation and update of national geoscientific information and mineral resource assessment.
- It is headquartered in Kolkata and has six regional offices located at Lucknow, Jaipur, Nagpur, Hyderabad, Shillong and Kolkata. Every state has a state unit.

Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve bags TX2 award

Context

- Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve (Erode district, Tamil Nadu) has been given the prestigious TX2 **award after its tiger numbers doubled to 80 since 2010.**

About STR

- Sathyamangalam Wildlife Sanctuary and Tiger Reserve is a protected area and tiger reserve along the Western Ghats in the Erode District of Tamil Nadu.
- First declared as a wildlife sanctuary in 2008 and enlarged in 2011, it covers a forest area of 1,411.6 km² (545.0 sq mi) and is the largest wildlife sanctuary in Tamil Nadu.
- In 2013, it became the fourth tiger reserve as a part of Project Tiger in the state of Tamil Nadu.

About the TX2 award

- The award acknowledges the efforts by the State governments and the local communities which have played one of the most important roles to turn a relatively new tiger reserve into one of the source populations of tigers in India.
- The awards are presented by the Conservation Assured Tiger Standards (CA|TS), Fauna and Flora International (FFI), Global Tiger Forum (GTF), IUCN's Integrated Tiger Habitat Conservation Programme (ITHCP), Panthera, UNDP, The Lion's Share, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and WWF.

Sundarbans is cyclone capital of India: IMD

Context

- West Bengal's South 24 Parganas district, within which the larger share of the Sundarbans is located, is impacted by cyclones the most frequently among Indian districts, found a recent study.

About Sundarbans

- The Sunderbans forest sprawls over 10,000 sq km covering India and neighbouring Bangladesh, of which 40% lies in India.
- It is located in the south-west of Bangladesh between the river Baleswar in the East and the Harinbanga in the West, adjoining to the Bay of Bengal.
- In India, it is confined to the southern tip of West Bengal and spreads over two districts – South 24 Parganas and North 24 Parganas.
- The Sundarban Delta has 102 islands, of which 54 are inhabited. The rest constitute the world's largest mangrove forest.
- Sundarbans has got the world's largest coastal mangrove forest (an area of about 10,000 km², shared between India (4,000 km²) and Bangladesh (6,000 km²).
- The Sundarbans is a UNESCO world heritage site and a critical wetland.
- The State of Forest Report 2021 revealed that the very dense mangrove cover in the Sunderbans shrank by two square kilometres – from 996 sq km to 994 sq km - between 2019 and 2021.
- The delta had a dense mangrove cover of 999 sq km in 2017, which declined by 3 sq km in 2019.
- The southern Bengal delta was hit by two very severe cyclones – Amphan in May 2020 and Yaas in May 2021 – which took a toll on the vegetation. Nearly one-third of the delta was severely damaged during Amphan.

Ramgarh Wildlife Sanctuary set to be notified as Rajasthan's 4th tiger reserve

Context

- Ramgarh Vishdhari Wildlife Sanctuary, which is among the proposed five sites in the country, is expected to be formally notified as tiger reserve (TR).

About Ramgarh Vishdhari wildlife sanctuary

- Ramgarh Vishdhari wildlife sanctuary is located in Bundi district of Rajasthan.
- It was notified as a wildlife sanctuary in 1982.
- The area comprising two forest blocks of Bhilwara and territorial forest blocks of Bundi and Indargarh has been identified as a Tiger Reserve.
- Ramgarh sanctuary falls under the buffer zone of Ranthambore Tiger Reserve (RTR).
- The core area of the Ramgarh Vishdhari wildlife sanctuary has eight villages.
- It consists of Dhok, Khair, Salar, Khirni trees with some Mango and Ber trees.
- It consists of birds and animals like Leopard, Sambhar, Wild boar, Chinkara, Sloth bear, Indian Wolf, Hyena, Jackal, Fox, deer and Crocodile.



Other Tiger Reserves in Rajasthan

Currently, Rajasthan has three tiger reserves namely-

- Ranthambore Tiger Reserve(RTR) in Sawai Madhopur
- Sariska Tiger Reserve(STR) in Alwar
- Mukundra Hills Tiger Reserve(MHTR) in Kota

UNESCO tag sought for living root bridges of Meghalaya

Context

- The Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) has underlined some green rules for the living root bridges of Meghalaya to get the UNESCO World Heritage Site tag.

About the living root bridge

- A living root bridge is like a suspension bridge formed by guiding the pliable roots of the rubber fig tree (*Ficus elastica*) across a stream or river and allowing the roots to grow and strengthen over time.
- It highlights the symbiotic relationship between people and nature.
- Locally referred as Jingkieng Jri, the 'Living Root Bridges' are conserved by the communities of Meghalaya through their sacred customary practice of preserving the groves known as 'Law Kyntang'.
- What is a world heritage site?
- A World Heritage Site is a landmark or area with legal protection by an international convention administered by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
- Designated by UNESCO, the tag is given for having any cultural, historical, scientific, or other forms of significance.
- Agra Fort, Ajanta Caves, Ellora Caves, Taj Mahal are some of the many sites from India that have been inscribed on the List of World Heritage sites.

Decrease in eastern swamp deer population at Kaziranga National Park

Context

- The Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve released the Wetland Bird Estimation Report for 2021-2022. And the Eastern Swamp Deer census has revealed a slight decrease in their numbers due to two high floods in 2019 and 2020.

Key-highlights of the Report

- A total of 66,776 birds of 126 species were enumerated using the Point Count method.
- Out of this, 42,205 birds were counted in the Kaziranga National Park area while 24,571 birds were counted in Laokhowa and Burachapori Wildlife Sanctuaries.
- As per the report, the ten most populous species include:
 - Bar-headed Goose (16,552)
 - Northern Pintail (9,493)
 - Common Teal (5,631)
 - Little Cormorant (3,462)
 - Greylag Goose (3,453)
 - Lesser Whistling Duck (3,401)
 - Gadwall (2,430)
 - Ferruginous Duck (2,236)
 - Eurasian Coot (2133)
 - Eurasian Wigeon (1,731)
- This is also the first time that Eastern Swamp Deer was estimated in the whole of the region.
- Prior to this, it was only estimated in the Kaziranga National Park.
- **Eastern Swamp Deer Estimation, 2022:** In 2022, a total of 868 Eastern Swamp Deer have been recorded

(including 173 male, 557 female, and 138 yearlings) compared to 907 in 2018.

- A decline has been estimated in their population due to the two high floods in 2019 and 2020.

About Eastern swamp deer



- Eastern swamp deer (*Rucervus duvaucelii ranjitsinhii*), locally known as 'Dal horina' is the rarest recognised subspecies of swamp deer in India and Nepal.
- The subspecies' scientific name *Rucervus duvaucelii ranjitsinhii* is named after MK Ranjitsinh, one of India's leading voices on conservation in India contribution towards the identification of it as a separate subspecies of swamp deer.
- The stronghold of the Eastern Swamp Deer is in Kaziranga, with a population of less than 1,000.
- The species is one of the three subspecies of swamp deer, commonly known as the barasingha.
- The other two subspecies are:
 - Wetland swamp deer (*R.d. duvaucelii*) found in Gangetic plains
 - Hardground swamp deer (*R.d. branderi*) found in central India
- **Conservation Status**
 - ▶ **IUCN Red List:** Vulnerable
 - ▶ **CITES:** Appendix I
 - ▶ **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Schedule I

Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve

- Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, one of India's seven UNESCO world heritage sites.
- It is home to one-horned rhinos, Royal Bengal Tigers, and Asian Elephants in addition to thousands of birds of over 125 species.
- Kaziranga lies in the floodplains of the Brahmaputra, a gargantuan river that crosses the international borders of Tibet, cuts through the mighty Himalayas, enters India through Arunachal Pradesh, and then turns south to reach Bangladesh.
- Central Government recognized it as a national park in 1974.
- Kaziranga National Park got the status of a tiger reserve in 2006
- Kaziranga National Park is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- Kaziranga National Park in Assam, home to the largest-population of the one-horned rhinoceros in the world, is releasing more carbon than it is absorbing.

Why Kaziranga National Park releases more carbon?

- **Less rainfall:** Decreasing rainfall in the region
- **Unique soil of the deciduous forest:** The soil is home to a large population of bacteria that release carbon dioxide as they breathe, which adds to the carbon dioxide being emanated by other organisms, including trees.

Indonesia names new capital Nusantara

Context

- Indonesia has decided to relocate the nation's capital from Jakarta to a jungled area on Borneo island. It's new capital will be called Nusantara, meaning "archipelago" in Javanese.

The new Capital

- Kalimantan is a jungle-covered area on the east of Borneo island.
- The site of the new capital, some 2,000km (1,250 miles) northeast of Jakarta, will straddle the regencies of North Penjam Paser and Kutai Kartanegara in Kalimantan Province on Borneo, which are home to 900,000 people.
- It is situated in the centre of Indonesia, in one of the areas least prone to the natural disasters that regularly hit the vast archipelago of 17,000 islands.
- The new capital has a central function and is a symbol of the identity of the nation, as well as a new centre of economic gravity.
- Reason behind the decision
- Jakarta has become crowded, polluted and is sinking at an alarming rate due to the over-extraction of groundwater.
- Home to more than 10 million people, it sits on swampy land on the large island of Java.

India-Nepal Boundary Row

Context

- In its first reaction after the announcement of construction of a road in Lipulekh led to an outrage among the polity in Nepal, the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu said the position of the Government of India on the India-Nepal boundary is known and has been conveyed to the Nepali Government.

About Lipulekh Pass

- Lipulekh lies at the **tri-junction** between India's northern Uttarakhand state, China and Nepal.
- The Lipulekh pass is a far western point near Kalapani, a border area between Nepal and India.
- Both India and Nepal claim Kalapani as an integral part of their territory — India as part of Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district and Nepal as part of Dharchula district.

Reason behind the contention

- The bilateral ties came under strain under then prime minister K P Sharma Oli after India opened an 80-km-long strategically crucial road connecting the Lipulekh pass with Dharchula in Uttarakhand on May 8, 2020.
- Nepal first protested the inauguration of the road claiming that it passed through its territory, and days later, it came out with a new map showing Lipulekh, Kalapani and Limpiyadhura as its territories.
- India reacted sharply to the move.

Adi Shankaracharya's birthplace to become A National Monument

Context

- The birthplace of Adi Shankaracharya in the state is likely to be declared as a monument of national importance.

About Adi Shankaracharya

- Adi Shankaracharya was born in Kalady in Kerala in 788 C.E and disappeared in the year 820 C.E at the young age of 32.
- He was an exceptional child as Adi Shankara had become fluent in Sanskrit by the age of two. By four, he was comfortably reciting scriptures including Vedas.
- The burning quest for attaining superior knowledge from an early age pushed Adi Shankara to leave his home and set on the search for a guru.
- His quest ended with Govind Bhagvatpad at Omkareshwar (Madhya Pradesh) on the bank of Narmada river.
- Adi Shankaracharya championed the Advait branch of philosophy that declared that god and humans were not two. He then set out to spread the message of his guru.

- From the age of 16 to 32, Adi Shankaracharya travelled across the length and breadth of India with the message of Vedas.

How a monument is declared as a monument of national importance?

- The Archeological Survey of India (ASI) designates any monument of national importance and authorises the Central government to 'maintain, protect and promote' the site.
- If mandated by the Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958, the monument could be considered of significant historical importance.
- Currently, the ASI protects 3,600 monuments of national importance.
- Last year, the NMA also surveyed important Hindu-Buddhist monuments of the Kashmir Valley.
- The valley reportedly has numerous Hindu sites from the 6th to 8th century and Buddhist temples from the 3rd and 4th centuries.

Increasing size of Orang National Park

Context

- The Assam government has issued a preliminary notification to make Orang National Park more than thrice its existing size for conserving Gharials. The notification says for adding 200.32 sq. km to the 78.82 sq. km Orang National Park.

Orang National Park

- The Orang National Park also known as Rajiv Gandhi Orang National Park is located on the north bank of the Brahmaputra River in the Darrang and Sonitpur districts of Assam and covers an area of 78.81 square kilometers.
- It was established as a wildlife sanctuary in 1985 but was declared as a National Park in 1999.
- It is also the 49th Tiger Reserve of the country, being notified in 2016.
- It is also known as the mini Kaziranga National Park since the two parks have a similar landscape made up of marshes, streams, and grasslands.

What are Gharials?

- Gharials are a type of Asian crocodylian distinguished by their long, thin snouts.
- Crocodylians are a group of reptiles that includes crocodiles, alligators, caimans, and more.

Quick facts

- **State:** Assam
- **Established In:** 1985 as a sanctuary, and in 1999 as a national park
- **Total Area Covered:** 78.81 sq. kms
- **Major Wildlife Attractions:** One-Horned Rhinoceros, Tiger, Maljuria Elephants, Hog Deer, Wild Pig, Civet Cat, Porcupine, Rock Python, Gangetic Dolphin, and 222 species of Birds

Himachal becomes country's first LPG-enabled and smoke-free state

Context

- **Himachal Pradesh** has become the **first LPG enabled and smoke free-state** in the country due to **Ujjwala scheme** of the Central Government and housewives welfare scheme of the State Government.

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)

- **PMUY** is a programme launched by the **government on May 1, 2016**.
- The implementation of the scheme is under the **Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas through its Oil Marketing Companies**.
- The primary purpose of the scheme is to **distribute LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) connections to the women of low households in India**.
- The programme was initially launched with a **budget of Rs. 80 billion**.
- **Initially, five crores BPL (below poverty line)** households were targeted through PMUY; the target was achieved by March 31, 2019.
- An additional allocation of Rs 4,800 crore was done, and the **target was expanded to benefit 80 million low-income families through the scheme**.
- Under this scheme, towards an initiative for the loss by **Covid-19 outbreak**, the Finance Minister of India, announced to provide cylinders free of cost to the BPL families from March 26, 2020, for three months.

Liquefied petroleum gas (LPG)

- Liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) is a fuel used in many household appliances for cooking, heating, and hot water.
- It is called liquefied gas because it is easily transformed into a liquid.
- LPG composition is primarily **propane, butane, isobutane, butylenes, propylene** and mixtures of these gases.
- LPG is composed of liquid or gas (vapor), depending on pressure and LPG gas temperature.
- LPG needs only low pressure or refrigeration to change it into liquid from its gaseous state.

BRO breaks record at Zoji La

Context

- **The Border Roads Organisation (BRO)** has raised its benchmark of excellence yet again by extending access to the formidable **Zojila at an altitude of 11,649 ft**, which links the Union Territory of Ladakh with the rest of the country.
- For the first time, the Zojila pass remained open beyond 31st December. The pass was opened on May

18, last year.



Zojila Pass

- It is the **arterial road connecting Lahaul and Spiti district of Himachal Pradesh from the rest of the country.**
- Zoji La is a high mountain pass in the Himalayas in the Indian union territory of Ladakh.

China constructing bridge to connect Pangong Tso (lake)

Context

- China is constructing a bridge in eastern Ladakh connecting the north and south banks of Pangong Tso (lake), which will significantly bring down the time for the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to move troops and equipment between the two sectors.

Important facts about the Bridge

- The bridge is located in China's territory.
- Construction of the bridge is taking place on the Chinese side. However, it is 25-30 km away from India's claim of Line of Actual Control (LAC).
- The new bridge is between the closest points on two banks,
 - ▶ North Bank: On the north bank, there is a PLA garrison at Kurnak fort.
 - Historically a part of India, Khurnak Fort has been under Chinese control since 1958.
 - ▶ South Bank: On the south bank at Moldo, and the distance between the two is around 200 km.

■ How is it a significant development for China?

- ▶ Reduction in distance: The new bridge, which is around 500 m, will bring down the movement time between the two sectors from around 12 hours to three or four hours.

- ▶ Quick access to the Chinese army: The bridge still connects the north and south banks of the Pangong Lake, allowing the Chinese army quick access to both sides.

About the lake

- Pangong Tso or Pangong Lake is an endorheic lake spanning eastern Ladakh and West Tibet.
- It is divided into five sublakes, called
 - ▶ Pangong Tso
 - ▶ Tso Nyak
 - ▶ Rum Tso (twin lakes)
 - ▶ Nyak Tso
- Approximately 50% of the length of the overall lake lies within Tibet China, 40% in Ladakh India and the rest is disputed and is a de-facto buffer zone between India and China.
- During winter the lake freezes completely, despite being saline water.
- It has a land-locked basin separated from the Indus River basin by a small elevated ridge, but is believed to have been part of the latter in prehistoric times.

‘Sankalp Smarak’ dedicated to the nation by CINCAN

Context

- Recently, **Commander-in-Chief Andaman and Nicobar Command (CINCAN)** has inaugurated **Sankalp Smarak** at Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

What is Sankalp Smarak?

- **Sankalp Smarak** is a monument dedicated to **Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose**.
- It is a tribute not only to the **resolve of the soldiers of the Indian National Army and their innumerable sacrifices** but also **reminds us of the values enshrined by Netaji himself**.

Subhash Chandra Bose

- **Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose (23rd January 1897 – 18th August 1945)** is one of the most celebrated freedom fighters of India.
- **In 1942**, he earned the title **‘Netaji’**, in Germany by the Indian soldiers of the **Azad Hind Fauj**.
- Bose is credited with the **very famous slogan, “Give me blood, and I shall give you freedom!” as well as “Jai Hind”**.
- He is also credited to be the **first man to call Mahatma Gandhi “Father of the Nation”**, in his address from **Singapore**.

- **Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose & Andaman and Nicobar Islands**

- **During World War II (1942–45), Japan** had conquered the **Andaman and Nicobar Islands** from the British and handed it over to **Netaji and his army, the Azad Hind Fauj**.
- Netaji then arrived at Andaman and Nicobar Island on **29th December 1943** and declared the island free from British rule, **much before India got its Independence in 1947**.
- On the next day, **Netaji hoisted the national flag for the first time on Indian soil**, at **Port Blair**.
- During his visit, he also visited the **Cellular Jail and met the freedom fighters lodged there**.
- Before his departure, **he renamed Andaman as Shaheed (“Martyrs”) Island, and Nicobar as Swaraj (“Freedom”) Island**.

GI tag for Arunachal Apatani textile product

Context

- An application seeking a **Geographical Indication (GI) tag** for the **Arunachal Pradesh Apatani textile product** has been filed by a firm.

About Apatani textile

- The **Apatani weave** comes from the **Apatani tribe of Arunachal Pradesh living at Ziro**, the headquarters of **lower Subansiri district**.
- The woven fabric of this tribe is **known for its geometric and zigzag patterns** and also for its angular designs.
- The community weaves its **own textiles for various occasions, including rituals and cultural festivals**.
- The tribe predominantly weaves shawls known as **jig-jiro and jilan or jackets called supuntarii**.
- **The traditional handloom of this tribe is a type of loin loom, which is called Chichin**, and is similar to the **traditional handloom of the Nyishi tribe**.

What makes it special?

- The people here use different leaves and plant resources for organic dyeing the cotton yarns in their traditional ways.
- Only women folk are engaged in weaving.

About Geographical Indication

- The registration of a geographical indication is **valid for a period of 10 years**.
- It can be renewed from time to time for a further period of 10 years each.
- In India, Geographical Indications registration is administered by the **Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999** which came into force with effect from September 2003.
- **The first product in India** to be accorded with **GI tag was Darjeeling tea in the year 2004-05**.

Israel Approves Mammoth Golan Heights Plan

Context

- The Israeli government approved a one-billion-shekel (\$317 million) plan for the development of the Golan Heights, in a bid to double the population of the territory occupied by Israel in the 1967 Six-Day War.

About Golan Heights

- The Golan Heights, a rocky plateau in south-western Syria, has a political and strategic significance which belies its size.
- The heights give Israel an excellent vantage point for monitoring Syrian movements. The topography provides a natural buffer against any military thrust from Syria.
- The area is also a key source of water for an arid region. Rainwater from the Golan's catchment feeds into the Jordan River.
- The land is fertile, and the volcanic soil is used to cultivate vineyards and orchards and raise cattle. The Golan is also home to Israel's only ski resort.
- Israel occupied the Golan Heights in the 1967 Mideast war and later annexed the territory, promoting settlement and agriculture there as well as creating a thriving local tourism industry.

Key-highlights of the Plan

- The plan aims to build 7,300 settler homes in the region over a five-year period.
- It calls for 1 billion Israeli shekels to be spent on housing, infrastructure and other projects with the goal of attracting roughly 23,000 new Jewish settlers to the area, seized during the 1967 Six Day War.
- The US was the first country to recognise Israel's sovereignty over the Golan, which the rest of the international community regards as Israeli-occupied.

Rare black rock art depictions found in Andhra Pradesh

Context

- In a recent finding, rare black stick-like drawings of human beings have been discovered in two caves at Paibogula village in Kurnool district close to the Kundu River in Andhra Pradesh.

Key-highlights of the Finding

- These drawings are supposed to be dating back to the Megalithic Period (1500 to 500 BC) and early Historical period (500 BC to 600 AD).
- These newly explored rock art sites in the Kundu river valley in Gadivemula Mandal are 40 km from Kurnool city.
- These caves are locally known as Yedoorlagayi; Siddhulagayi, and Gurralapadah.
- These sites have rock art in black, red, and white pigments, along with cupules or cup marks of varying sizes, which need to be studied further for the exact dating, he added.

- These cupules were made on gneissic granite, a very hard and erosion-resistant rock type.
- The largest of these measures 10 cm in diameter and 5 cm in depth.

Rock Art

- These rock art, drawing, painting, or similar work on or of stone, usually belonged from the ancient or prehistoric era.
- Rock art includes pictographs (drawings or paintings), petroglyphs (carvings or inscriptions), engravings (incised motifs), petroforms (rocks laid out in patterns), and geoglyphs (ground drawings).
- The ancient animals, tools, and human activities depicted often help shed light on daily life in the distant past, though the images are frequently symbolic rather than representative.

Indian Desert Cat spotted in Panna Tiger Reserve

Context

- An Indian Desert Cat has been spotted for the first time in Madhya Pradesh's **Panna Tiger Reserve (PTR)**.

About the species

- The Indian Desert Cat (*Felis silvestris ornata*) is also known as the Asiatic Wildcat or the Asian Steppe Wildcat.
- The Indian Desert Cat is said to rest in the daytime and hunt in the night when it roams nearly five to six kilometres in search of prey that include smaller animals and birds.
- Not much is known about the animal as there is not enough in-depth study done on it.

Conservation Status:

- **IUCN Red List:** Least Concern
- **CITES:** Appendix-II
- **Wildlife Protection Act:** Schedule-I

Quick facts about Panna Tiger Reserve (PTR)

- Panna Tiger Reserve is spread over 1,598 sq km of Madhya Pradesh's Panna and Chhatarpur districts.
- Its core zone (critical tiger habitat) comprises 576 sq km while the rest is the buffer zone of the reserve.
- It is located at the edge of the **Vindhychal mountain range**, just before it opens into the **Gangetic plains**.

- PTR is predominantly a miscellaneous **dry deciduous forest**.
- Ken river flows through PTR. Ken-Betwa river interlinking project is also going to be located within this reserve.

Royal Bengal Tiger sighted at Buxa Reserve

Context

- A camera trap set up at **Buxa Tiger Reserve (BTR)** in **Alipurduar district of West Bengal** has captured a sight of **Royal Bengal Tiger**, that the region had **not witnessed in more than two decades**.
- The sighting of the Bengal Tiger is significant because no tiger had been photographed for **more than 23 years, in the Buxa Reserve**. The last known tiger was **photographed in 1998**.

About Royal Bengal Tiger

- The Royal Bengal Tiger belongs to a **specific population of the Panthera Tigris subspecies**, which is native to the **Indian subcontinent**.
- The species is threatened by **poaching and fragmentation of habitat**.
- **India's tiger population** was **2,603–3,346 individuals in 2018**.
- **300–500 tigers** are found in **Bangladesh**
- **220–274** in **Nepal**.
- **103 tigers** in **Bhutan**.
- **IUCN red list**: Endangered

Buxa Tiger Reserve

- Buxa Tiger Reserve is located in **northern West Bengal**.
- It covers an area of **760 km²**.
- It ranges from **60 m in Gangetic Plains to 1,750 m bordering Himalayas in the north**.
- It was created in **1983 as the 15th tiger reserve in India**.
- Its northern boundary runs along the **international border with Bhutan**.
- The fragile "**Terai Ecosystem**" constitutes a part of this reserve.
- **Rajabhatkhawa Vulture Breeding Centre** at **Buxa Tiger Reserve** for the **breeding and conservation of endangered Indian vultures** was established as the **second such centre** with the help of **Bombay Natural History Society and British charity Royal Society for the Protection of Birds**.
- The reserve is home to **around 284 bird species**. It is also home to mammals like **Asian elephant, gaur, clouded leopard, Sambar deer and Indian leopard**.

Askot wildlife sanctuary declared eco-sensitive zone (ESZ)

Context

- **Askot Wildlife Sanctuary in Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh** has been finally declared as an **Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ)**.

About Askot Wildlife Sanctuary

- **The Askot Musk Deer Sanctuary, established in 1986**, was established to protect the **endangered Musk Deer and its habitat**.
- The sanctuary area is known as '**Green Paradise on the Earth**'.
- It is **located in Askot, a small hamlet in Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district**.
- In the sanctuary there are **2600 plants, 250 birds and 37 mammal species** like **snow leopard, Himalayan black bear, Himalayan tahr, blue sheep, serow besides musk deer**.
- Among the fauna are species like loong, monal, kalij pheasant and cheer pheasant.
- The sanctuary also has **rare varieties of 2,600 Himalayan herbs and 250 varieties of birds and 37 varieties of reptiles**.

What Are Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZ)?

- **Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ)** is a buffer or transition zone around **highly-protected areas** such as **National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries**.
- The purpose of declaring ESZs is to create some kind of "**shock absorbers**" to the protected areas by **regulating and managing the activities around such areas**.

PM inaugurates first phase of Kashi Vishwanath Corridor

Context

- Prime Minister inaugurated **Phase 1 of the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor Project in Uttar Pradesh's ancient city Varanasi**.

About the project

- This project aims to create an **easily accessible pathway between Kashi Vishwanath Temple and banks of Ganga River**.
- **Foundation stone** for the project was laid on **March 8, 2019**.
- The project is spread across **5 lakh square feet area**, comprising **more than 40 ancient temples restored and beautified**.

- **Phase 1** of the project is to be constructed at a cost of **around Rs 339 crore**.
- **A total 23 buildings** will be inaugurated, including a **Tourist Facilitation Centre, Mumukshu Bhavan, Bhogshala, City Museum, Viewing Gallery and Food Court**.
- It will help **boost tourism by providing the pilgrims and travellers with amenities** such as **wider and cleaner roads and lanes**, better lighting with bright street lights, and clean drinking water.

About Kashi Vishwanath Temple

- **Kashi Vishwanath Temple** is one of the most famous Hindu temples **dedicated to Lord Shiva**.
- It is located in **Vishwanath Gali of Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh in India**.
- The Temple stands on the **western bank of the holy river Ganga**, and is one of the **twelve Jyotirlingas, the holiest of Shiva Temples**.
- The temple that encapsulates the vision of the **Holkar queen of Indore, Ahalya Bai Holkar**, who created a series of temples and vistas leading up to the Ganga ghat.

Srinagar is now a part of UNESCO ‘Creative Cities Network’

Context

- Recently, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) designated Srinagar as a part of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN).

About the designation

- The Srinagar city has been designated the creative city in the field of **Crafts and Folk Arts** - the only second city in India in this category after
- It will not only provide international recognition for the city of Srinagar but also help it with international funding, networking and vocational universities and pitching arts as a product.
- With this, **Srinagar** (the capital city of **Jammu and Kashmir**) has entered the club of **295 creative cities network** across the world.
- Every year, UNESCO seeks applications for various cities across the globe for putting them under its UCCN project.
- In India, the applications are routed through the **Ministry of Culture**.

Indian Cities on UCCN

- **Srinagar** - Crafts and Folk Arts (2021)
- **Mumbai** – Film (2019)
- **Hyderabad** – Gastronomy (2019)
- **Chennai**- Creative city of Music (2017)
- **Jaipur**- Crafts and Folk Arts (2015)
- **Varanasi**- Creative city of Music (2015)

UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN)

- **UCCN was created in 2004.**
 - ▶ It aims to “promote cooperation among cities which recognize creativity as a strategic factor in their urban development”.
 - **Sustainable Development Goal 11** aims for **Sustainable Cities and Communities**.
 - ▶ The network covers **seven creative fields**:
 - Crafts and folk arts
 - Media arts
 - Film
 - Design
 - Gastronomy
 - Literature
 - Music

Glasgow Glacier: Antarctica

Context

- Recently, the 100-km long body of ice in Antarctica, which has been experiencing rapid melting, was formally named Glasgow after the **Glasgow climate summit**.
- The 26th session of the **Conference of the Parties (COP 26)** to the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** is being held in **Glasgow, UK**.

Key-Points

- **Research:** Scientists at the University of Leeds in England have studied a series of glaciers in the Getz area of Antarctica.
- The 14 glaciers in the Getz Basin of West Antarctica are shrinking at an average rate of 25% between 1994 and 2018 due to climate change. 315 gigatonnes of ice have been lost in the region over the past 25 years and have contributed to rising sea levels worldwide.
- The Getz basin is part of Antarctica’s largest glacier. The shelf is subject to the increasing pressure of the ocean - a process in which relatively warm seawater melts glaciers below - than other Antarctic shelves.

Other Glaciers Named

The eight newly named glaciers are based on-

- **Stockholm Conference (1972):** One of the major outcomes of the Stockholm conference was the creation of the **United Nations Environment Program (UNEP)**.
- **World Climate Conference, Geneva (1979):** The World Climate Conference, now commonly called the First World Climate Conference, was held in Geneva.

- **Rio Summit (1992):** Recommended a list of development processes called **Agenda 21**. It provided a concept of sustainable development to integrate economic growth and ecological responsibility.
- **COP1 (Berlin, Germany, 1995):** The first UN General Assembly in the UN Framework Convention on **Climate Change (COP-1)** was held in Berlin in 1995.
- **Kyoto Protocol (1997):** In Kyoto, developed countries agree on a common goal of reducing emissions by 5.2% below 1990 levels between 2008 and 2012.
- **COP13 (Bali, Indonesia, 2007):** The parties agree on the Bali Road Map and the Bali action plan, which paved the way for the post-2012 outcome.
- **COP21 (Paris, 2015):** Keeping the earth's temperature below 2.0C above pre-industrial times and trying to limit it to even more than 1.5C.
- It requires rich nations to maintain USD 100bn a year funding pledge beyond the year 2020.
- **Incheon: The Green Climate Fund (GCF)** is based in Incheon, South Korea.

Water Level in Mullaperiyar Dam

Context

- Recently, the Supreme Court has directed the Supervisory Committee to take an immediate and firm decision on the maximum water level that can be maintained at Mullaperiyar dam amidst torrential rains in Kerala.

Key-Points

- **Centre of a Decades-old Dispute**
- In Kerala, where it is located, the dam poses a threat to millions living downstream.
- In Tamilnadu, which controls the dam, the water it supplies is the lifeline of the people in five districts.
- **Reasons for Recent Revival of the Dispute**
- Recently, heavy rains have increased the flow of water in the Mullaperiyar dam. Most of the water from Mullaperiyar can flow to the downstream Idukki reservoir, which can lead to floods.
- The SC in 2018 had agreed that the water level in the Mullaperiyar reservoir should be maintained at two or three feet below the permissible limit of 142 feet as a precautionary measure to monitor floods or other disasters.

Mullaperiyar Dam

- It is located at the confluence of the Mullayar and Periyar rivers in the Idukki district in Kerala.
- The reservoir is within the **Periyar Tiger Reserve**.
- It is operated and maintained by **Tamil Nadu** to meet the needs of drinking water and irrigation needs of its **five southern districts**.
- According to a **999-year lease agreement** made during British rule, operational rights were granted to Tamil Nadu.

- The water diverted from the reservoir was first used to generate electricity in the lower Periyar (by Tamil Nadu) before flowing into Suruliyar, a tributary of the Vaigai River, and irrigating about 2.08 hectares of lakh in Theni and four other districts farther away.

Periyar River

- The Periyar River is the longest river in the state of Kerala with a length of **244 km**.
- It is also known as the '**Lifeline of Kerala**' as it is one of the few perennial rivers in the state.
- The Periyar River flows from the **Sivagiri hills of the Western Ghats**, in Tamil Nadu and flows into the **Periyar National Park**.
- The main tributaries of Periyar are **Muthirapuzha, Mullayar, Cheruthoni, Perinjankutti**.

Idukki Dam

- Located in Kerala (168.91 m). The dam lies between two mountains - **Kuravanmala (839 m) and Kurathimala (925 m)**.
- It is one of the highest arch dams in Asia and the third longest arch dam.
- It is located on the Periyar River, ravine between the Kuravan and the Kurathi Hills in Kerala.

New Tiger Reserve: Chhattisgarh

Context

- Recently, the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) designated the combined areas of Guru Ghasidas National Park and Tamor Pingla Wildlife Sanctuary as Tiger Reserve.

About the new Reserve

- The new Reserve is located in the northern part of the country, across Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand.
- This will be the fourth Tiger Reserve in Chhattisgarh, after:
 - Udanti-Sitanadi
 - Achanakmar
 - Indravati
- Approval was granted under **Section 38V (1) of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**.

National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)

- NTCA is a statutory body under the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, established in 2005 for strengthening tiger conservation.

About Guru Ghasidas National Park

- Named after the Satnami reformist hero of the place, Guru Ghasidas, is the result of the carving of Chhattisgarh from Madhya Pradesh in the year of 2000.

- Guru Ghasidas National Park was the last known Asian cheetah in the country.
- It is located in the Koriya state of Chhattisgarh.
- It connects Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh and provides a corridor for tigers to move between the Bandhavgarh(Madhya Pradesh) and Palamau Tiger Reserves (Jharkhand).
- The park has a constant topography and falls under a tropical climate zone.

About Tamor Pingla Wildlife Sanctuary

- It is located in the Surajpur district of Chhattisgarh on the border of Uttar Pradesh.
- It is named after the hill of Tamor and Pingla Nalla.
- Tamor hill and Pingla Nalla are considered to be the oldest and most prominent features of the sanctuary.

Rajaji Tiger Reserve, Uttarakhand

Context

- A Supreme Court-appointed committee has questioned relaxations given for upgrade of a 4.7-km road in the buffer zone of Rajaji Tiger Reserve and sought replies from the Centre and Uttarakhand government.

About Rajaji tiger reserve

- Rajaji tiger reserve is located at the Himalayan foothills, near Haridwar, Rishikesh and Dehradun, with Ganga and Song rivers flowing through it.
- At present, Rajaji Tiger Reserve has around 37 tigers with only two tigresses in its western part, which is spread over 570 sq km.
- The total area of Rajaji tiger reserve spread over 820 km² (320 sq mi).
- Rajaji National Park was established in the year 1983 after amalgamating three sanctuaries in the Uttarakhand i.e. Rajaji, Motichur and Chila.
- It was named after the famous freedom fighter C. Rajgopalachari; popularly known as "Rajaji".
- It was declared a Tiger Reserve in 2015 as the 48th tiger reserve of the country.

Core and Buffer Area of a Tiger Reserve

- According to the **Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Act of 2006**, a tiger reserve must have a core or critical habitat and a buffer zone peripheral to it.
- The critical habitat is supposed to be kept inviolate for conservation.
- A buffer zone is needed to ensure the integrity of the habitat with adequate space for dispersal of tigers.
- It is aimed at promoting coexistence between wildlife and human activity.

Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple

Context

- Recently, the Supreme Court (SC) has declined a plea filed by **Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple Trust** seeking to exempt it from the audit of 25 years as ordered by the court last year (2020).

About Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple

- The temple dates back to the 8th century but the present structure was built in the 18th century by the then **Travancore Maharaja Marthanda Varma**.
- Sree Padmanabhaswamy temple is a Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Vishnu.
- Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple is one of 108 Divya Desams (holy abodes of Vishnu) - principal centres of worship of the deity in Vaishnavism.
- The temple gave its name to Kerala's capital Thiruvananthapuram.
- Padmanabhaswamy Temple, one of the richest shrines in the world, has 6 underground vaults called Vault A, Vault B, Vault C, Vault D, Vault E and Vault F.
- These vaults are also called **chambers**, which are full of royal treasure worth in billions.
- Padmanabha Swamy Temple has chambers that consist of royal treasure.

39th World Heritage Site of India declared

Context

- Rudreswara Temple, (also known as the Ramappa Temple), Telangana has been inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage list. It was the only nomination for the UNESCO World Heritage site tag for the year 2019.

About

- A brief description of Rudreswara (Ramappa) Temple**
- The Rudreswara temple was constructed in 1213 AD.
- It is also known as 'Thousand Pillar Temple'.
- It was constructed under the reign of the Kakatiya Empire by Recharla Rudra, a general of Kakatiya king Ganapati Deva.
- The Ramappa temple is named after its architect, Ramappa who executed the work in the temple for 40 years.
- The presiding deity here is Ramalingeswara Swamy.
- The triple shrine (Trikutalayam) is dedicated to Vishnu, Shiva, and Surya.
- The temple stands on a 6 feet high star-shaped platform.
- The walls, pillars, and ceilings adorned with intricate carvings attest to the unique skill of the Kakatiyan sculptors.
- The temple was called the "brightest star in the galaxy of medieval temples of the Deccan" by European travelers.



- The building features are decorated beams and pillars of carved granite and dolerite with a distinctive and pyramidal Vimana (horizontally stepped tower).
- Walls are made of lightweight porous bricks, so-called 'floating bricks', which reduced the weight of the roof structures.
- The temple's sculptures are of high artistic quality which illustrates regional dance customs and Kakatiyan culture.
- It is located at the foothills of the forested area amidst agricultural fields, close to the shores of the RamappaCheruvu, a Kakatiya-built water reservoir.

Kakatiya Dynasty

- Kakatiyas is an Andhra dynasty that flourished in the 12th century CE.
- The Kakatiya dynasty ruled from Warangal (Telangana) from CE 1083-1323.
- They are known for the construction of a network of tanks for irrigation and drinking water that is under restoration by the Telangana government under 'Mission Kakatiya'.
- Hundreds of Hindu temples were built under the patronage of Kakatiya kings such as Ganapati Deva, Rudrama Devi, and Prataparudra of the Kakatiya dynasty.
- Golconda Fort in Hyderabad was also constructed by Kakatiya rulers.

TOP 100
ALL INDIA RANKING
CSE 2020

8	9	12	13	14	16	17	19	20		
24	26	28	30	31	36	38	41	45	50	
51	52	55	56	58	59	67	68	70	71	73
74	76	78	83	84	85	86	89	93	98	100

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TOP 100
ALL INDIA RANKING
CSE 2019

3	6	10	11	16	17	21	22	28			
30	33	38	39	42	44	46	53	54	59	66	69
70	72	77	78	80	82	84	86	87	94	97	98

TOP 100
ALL INDIA RANKING
CSE 2018

2	3	5	7	27	36	37	40	44	49		
51	52	56	58	62	74	81	89	92	94	98	100

TOP 100
ALL INDIA RANKING
CSE 2017

3	10	19	31	33	35	40	41	44	45	48		
54	57	63	64	68	71	75	77	80	83	93	97	100