June 28 to July 04, 2025

WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

MAGAZINE

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NATO SUMMIT 2025

At the NATO summit in The Hague on **June 25, 2025**, member states agreed to raise defence and security spending to **5% of GDP** by **2035**, marking the alliance's largest military commitment since the Cold War.

Key Highlights

- **New Spending Target**:
  - **Total**: 5% of GDP
  - **Core Defence (troops, weapons, etc.)**: 3.5%
  - **Broader Security (infrastructure, innovation, civil preparedness)**: 1.5%

- **Annual Progress Review**: Countries must submit yearly plans; a formal review will take place in **2029**.
- **Collective Defence Reaffirmed**: Emphasizes NATO's solidarity amid rising threats from **Russia**, **terrorism**, and **cyber warfare**.
- **U.S. Influence**: The decision follows long-standing U.S. pressure for greater burden-sharing among European allies.
- **Divergence in Support**: While most members back the plan, some like **Spain**, **Belgium**, and **Slovakia** have expressed difficulty in meeting the 5% target due to budgetary constraints.

Strategic Context

This move supports NATO's **largest rearmament drive** in decades and reflects the need for stronger **deterrence**, enhanced **readiness**, and adaptability to modern threats, including the war in Ukraine and cyberattacks.

NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization)

The **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)** is a political and military alliance formed in **1949** to ensure collective defence and security for its member nations.

Founding and Purpose

- **Established**: April 4, 1949, by the **North Atlantic Treaty (Washington Treaty)**
- **Headquarters**: Brussels, Belgium
- **Motto**: *"Animus in consulendo liber"* (A mind unfettered in deliberation)
- **Primary Objective**: Safeguard the freedom and security of member countries through political and military means.

Key Features

- **Collective Defence**: Under **Article 5**, an attack on one member is considered an attack on all.
  - Invoked only once: After the **9/11 attacks** in 2001.
- **Members**: 32 countries (as of 2025), including the U.S., Canada, most European nations, and new entrants like Finland and Sweden.
- **Decision-Making**: Based on **consensus** among all member states.

Functions

1. **Military Cooperation**: Joint defense, training, and strategic planning
2. **Crisis Management**: Peacekeeping and conflict resolution missions
3. **Cyber & Hybrid Threats**: Addressing modern security challenges beyond traditional warfare
4. **Partnership Programs**: Works with non-member countries to promote global stability

CAS9 CRISPR TECHNOLOGY

In agriculture, it is revolutionizing how crops respond to **biotic** (diseases) and **abiotic** (heat, drought) stresses

How It Works

- Uses **Cas9 enzyme** guided by custom RNA to target specific genes.
- Enables **knockout** of genes that cause disease susceptibility or **enhancement** of genes that promote resistance.
- Offers faster, more accurate improvements than traditional breeding.

Applications in Crops

- **Disease Resistance**: Disabling genes like *BoBPM6* and *BoDMR6* in cabbage boosts resistance to multiple diseases like Fusarium wilt and black rot.
- **Heat & Drought Tolerance**: Editing genes such as *SiEPF2* in foxtail millet helps regulate water use and stomatal density, improving stress tolerance.
- **Stronger Immunity**: Enhances plant immune responses to evolving pathogens.

Benefits

- **Reduces pesticide use**, supporting eco-friendly farming.
- **Accelerates breeding cycles**, allowing rapid response to threats.
- **Stabilizes yields** under climate-induced stress conditions.

CRISPR Technology

CRISPR (Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats) is a **revolutionary gene-editing technology** that allows scientists to modify DNA with high precision, efficiency, and speed.

Origin

- Discovered as a **natural defence mechanism in bacteria**, where it helps fight viruses.
- Adapted for gene editing using the **CRISPR-Cas9 system**, developed in the early 2010s.

How It Works

- The **Cas9 enzyme** acts like molecular scissors that cut DNA at targeted locations.
- A **guide RNA (gRNA)** directs Cas9 to a specific DNA sequence.
- Scientists can then delete, insert, or modify genes at that site.

Applications

1. **Medicine**: Correcting genetic disorders like sickle cell anaemia, cancer therapies, and HIV treatment.
2. **Agriculture**: Developing disease-resistant, heat- and drought-tolerant crops.
3. **Research**: Studying gene functions in various organisms.
4. **Veterinary Science**: Improving animal health and productivity.

Advantages

- **High precision** with minimal off-target effects
- **Faster and cheaper** than older gene-editing tools (e.g., TALENs, ZFNs)
- Applicable to a **wide range of organisms**

Concerns

- **Ethical issues** around editing human embryos
- Potential for **unintended genetic consequences**
- Calls for global regulation and oversight

BONNET MACAQUE

Kerala is planning to launch a **birth control programme** for **bonnet macaques to** address rising human–monkey conflicts, especially in forest fringe areas where crop damage and property loss are significant.

Objective:

To reduce conflict without harming wildlife, ensuring protection for both **human livelihoods** and **biodiversity conservation**.

Key Features:

- **Target Species:** Bonnet macaque (*Macaca radiata*), listed as **'vulnerable'** on the IUCN Red List.
- **Proposed Methods:**
    - **Surgical sterilisation**
    - **Intramuscular contraceptive injections**
    - **Oral contraceptives** (exploratory phase)
- **Approach:**
    - Ethical and **sustainable wildlife population control**
    - Based on **international models**
    - To be implemented with **central government approval**
- **Additional Measures:**
    - Creation of **monkey shelters** in deep forest areas
    - **Habitat enrichment** to localise populations and reduce human intrusion.

Bonnet Macaque (Macaca radiata)

The **bonnet macaque** is a species of Old-World monkey native to southern India. It is named for the cap-like whorl of hair on its head that resembles a bonnet.

Scientific Name: *Macaca radiata*

Conservation Status:

- Listed as **"Vulnerable"** on the **IUCN Red List** due to habitat loss and increasing human-wildlife conflict.

Habitat:

- Found in **southern India**, especially in **forests, temples, urban areas**, and near agricultural fields.
- Highly **adaptable** to human-dominated landscapes.

Behaviour and Ecology:

- **Diurnal** and **social**, living in troops with complex hierarchies.
- Omnivorous—feeds on fruits, seeds, insects, and often human food waste.
- Exhibits **strong adaptability**, often leading to conflict in urban and rural settings.

Threats:

- **Habitat fragmentation**
- **Urbanisation and deforestation**
- **Crop raiding**, leading to conflict with humans
- **Illegal captivity** and mistreatment in religious or tourist areas

Conservation Measures:

- Ethical **population management** (e.g., sterilisation initiatives)
- **Habitat enrichment** in forests
- **Public awareness** and scientific interventions to reduce human-monkey conflict

RWANDA AND THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC) SIGNED PEACE AGREEMENT

Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) signed peace agreement, brokered by the United States. This agreement aims to end years of conflict that have resulted in thousands of deaths and widespread displacement. The deal is important step towards stability in the region, which is rich in valuable minerals.

Background

The conflict between Rwanda and the DRC has deep historical roots, dating back to the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Following the genocide, tensions escalated, leading to multiple violent confrontations. The M23rebel group has been player in this ongoing conflict, seizing control of key areas in eastern Congo.

Details of the Peace Agreement

The peace agreement was signed in Washington, D.C., with the presence of U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio. Key provisions include the withdrawal of Rwandan troops from eastern Congo within 90 days and the establishment of a joint security coordination mechanism. The agreement also outlines a framework for regional economic integration.

International Involvement

The U.S. played a very important role in facilitating the agreement. President Donald Trump brought into light the importance of the deal, emphasising its potential to attract Western investment in the mineral-rich region. The U.S. aims to secure mineral rights as part of the agreement, which could benefit its economy.

Implementation Timeline

The agreement stipulates that both nations will initiate the economic integration framework within 90 days. Additionally, a separate agreement concerning mineral supply chains will be signed. The implementation of these provisions is crucial for ensuring lasting peace and stability.

Challenges Ahead

Despite the optimism surrounding the agreement, challenges remain. Both countries must adhere to the terms of the deal for it to be successful. Ongoing negotiations in Doha, which involve the Congolese government and M23, are also critical. Analysts express cautious optimism, noting that previous peace efforts have faced difficulties.

Regional Implications

The peace agreement has broader implications for the Great Lakes region. Stability in the DRC could lead to improved economic conditions and security in neighbouring countries. However, the involvement of external powers and the historical complexities of the conflict may complicate the peace process.

C-FLOOD

C-FLOOD will act as a unified system integrating flood modelling outputs from national and regional agencies, offering a comprehensive decision-support tool for disaster management authorities.
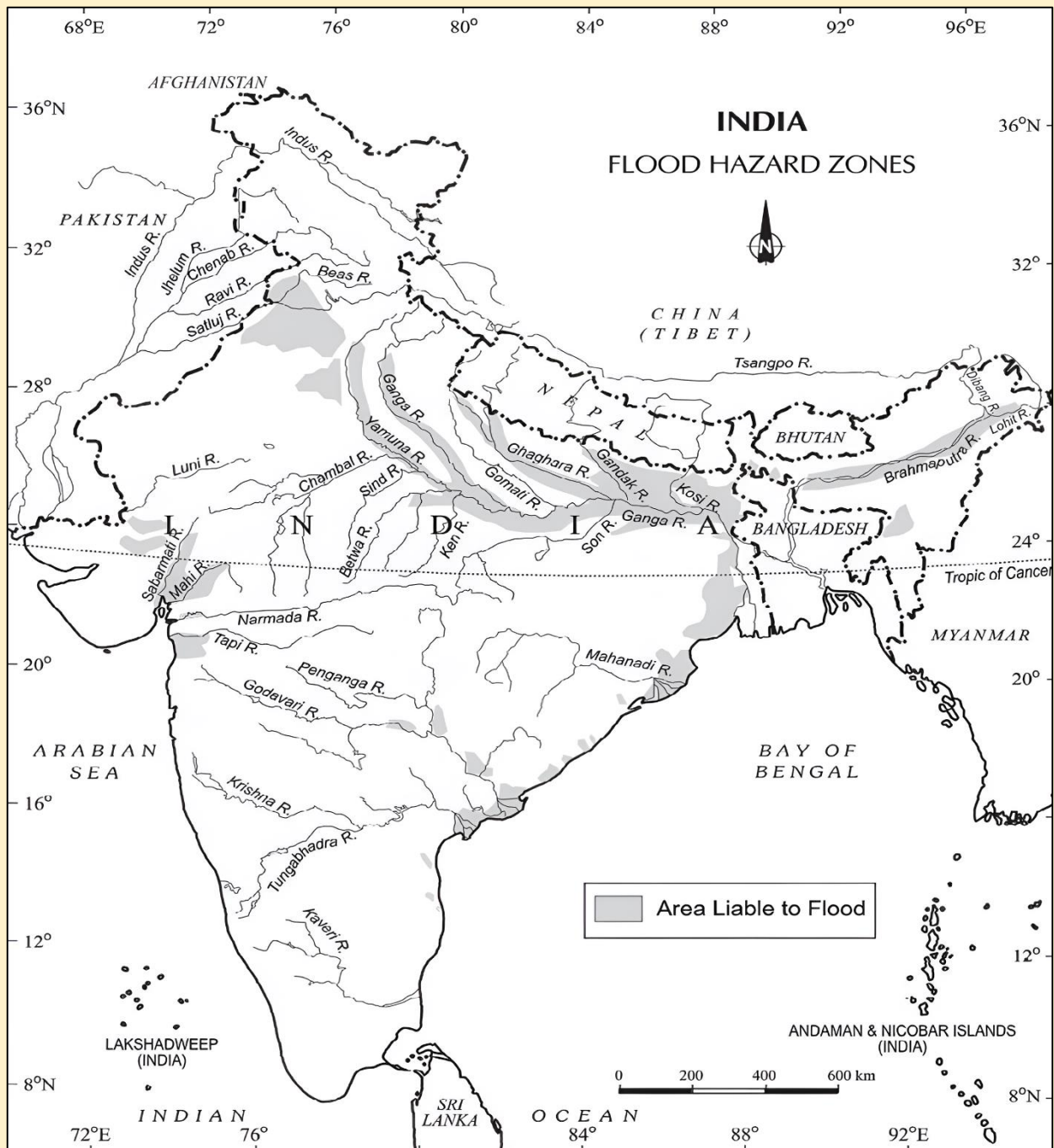Over 40 million hectares (mha) (~12% of total area) out of 329 mha is flood prone in India.
About C-FLOOD
It is a web-based platform providing 2-day advance flood inundation
forecasts up to village-level.
It uses advanced 2-D hydrodynamic modelling to simulate flood scenarios.
It offers flood inundation maps and water level predictions to aid disaster preparedness.

INDIA
FLOOD HAZARD ZONES

Area Liable to Flood

Jointly developed by:
Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC), Pune.
Central Water Commission (CWC), nodal organisation entrusted with the task of flood forecasting & early flood warnings in the country.

Nodal Agency : Department of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation, Ministry of Jal Shakti.
National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC) has also collaborated in its development.

Present Coverage: Mahanadi, Godavari, and Tapi river basins. Planned to expand to cover all river basins across India.

Forecasts to be integrated with the National Disaster Management Emergency Response Portal (NDEM).
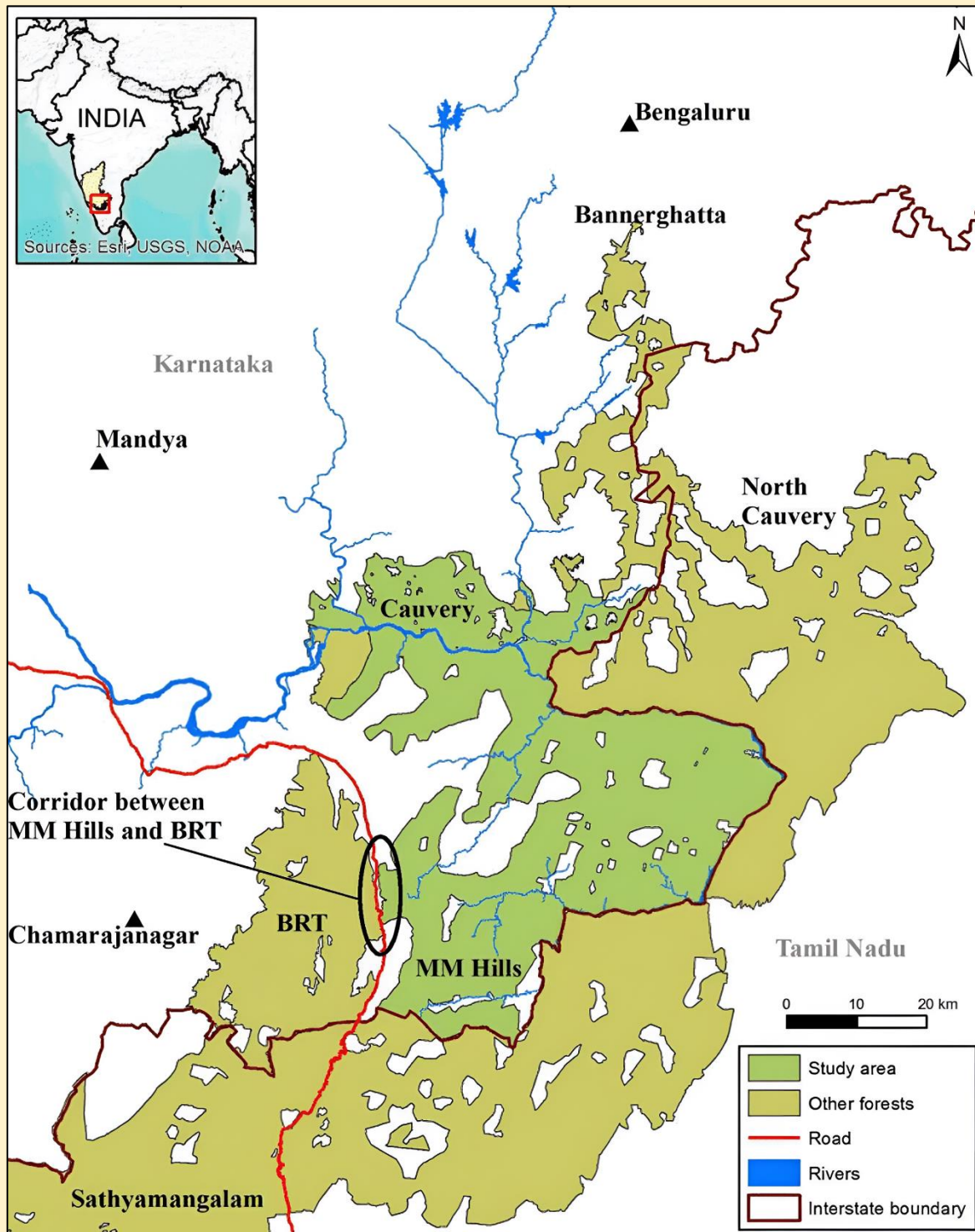
MALE MAHADESHWARA (MM) HILLS WILDLIFE SANCTUARY.

Five tigers found dead in Male Mahadeshwara (MM) Hills Wildlife sanctuary.
About MM Hills Wildlife Sanctuary
Located in Southeast Karnataka.
It forms connecting corridor between Biligiri Ranganatha Swamy Temple (BRT) Wildlife Sanctuary and the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary.

Dominated by dry deciduous forests and Patches of Semi- evergreen, Shola forests at higher altitudes and scrub forests in fringe zones. Soligas and Lingayats are the dominant communities in the MM Hills. Species include Tiger, Elephant, Leopard, Wild dog (dhole), Sloth bear, etc. Important corridor in the Eastern Ghats–Western Ghats landscape.

OPERATION MED MAX

It was an operation conducted by Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) for cracking down on illegal pharmaceutical drug trade.

Under it, NCB dismantled a transnational drug trafficking syndicate that smuggled controlled medicines across four continents.

The syndicate used encrypted digital platforms, drop shipping models, and cryptocurrency to smuggle the controlled substances. The network showcases the growing convergence of digital platforms, cryptocurrency, and transnational logistics in modern illicit trade.

TERBIUM

Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Scientists have developed a glowing paper sensor to help detect liver cancer. It uses the green glow of Terbium to sense the presence of an enzyme called β-glucuronidase, a critical biomarker for liver cancer.

About Terbium
It is a rare-earth metal of the lanthanide series of the periodic table. Appearance: Soft, silvery metal.

Occurrence: Can be recovered from minerals, monazite and bastnaesite. Also obtained from euxenite, a complex oxide containing 1% or more of terbium. Applications: Solid-state devices, low-energy lightbulbs and mercury lamps, safety of medical x-rays, laser devices etc.

NATIONAL SPORTS POLICY (NSP) 2025

The **Union Cabinet has approved the National Sports Policy (NSP) 2025**, aiming to transform India into a **global sporting powerhouse**, with a strategic focus on success at events like the **2036 Olympic Games**

Key Features:

- **Replaces 2001 Policy:** Marks a major shift in India's sports strategy after more than two decades.
- **Extensive Consultation:** Developed in collaboration with Central Ministries, State Governments, NITI Aayog, sports federations, athletes, and the public.

Five Pillars of NSP 2025:

Pillar	Focus Areas
Excellence on the Global Stage	Talent scouting, elite pathways, leagues, coaching, infrastructure, and athlete support.
Sports for Economic Development	Promotes sports tourism, local manufacturing, international events, start-ups, and private investment.
Sports for Social Development	Encourages inclusion of women, weaker sections, PwDs, and revival of traditional games.
Sports as a People's Movement	Drives mass participation, volunteerism, and diaspora engagement.
Integration with Education	Embeds sports into the school curriculum as per NEP 2020, enabling dual-career paths.

Strategic Vision:

- Improve governance in sports bodies.
- Expand infrastructure in rural and urban areas.
- Train coaches, referees, and officials.
- Foster entrepreneurship and job creation through sports.

National & Global Ambitions:

- Targets enhanced performance in global competitions, especially the **2036 Olympics**.
- Positions India as a **host for major international sporting events**.
- Promotes health, social inclusion, and economic growth through sports.

Learning Corner:

Major Government Schemes Related to Sports

Khelo India Scheme

- **Objective:** Revive sports culture at the grassroots level and build a strong framework for talent identification and development.

- **Key Features:**
  - Annual **Khelo India Youth Games (KIYG)** and **University Games**
  - **Scholarships** for talented athletes (₹5 lakh/year for 8 years)
  - Creation of **Khelo India Centres** and **State Centres of Excellence**
- **Target Group:** School and college-level athletes

Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS)

- **Objective:** Identify and support **elite athletes** who can win medals at the Olympics and other international events.
- **Key Features:**
  - Financial support for training, coaching, equipment, international exposure
  - Covers both **senior and junior athletes**
- **Administered by:** Sports Authority of India (SAI)

Fit India Movement

- **Launched:** 2019 by the Prime Minister
- **Objective:** Encourage citizens to adopt **fitness as a lifestyle**
- **Key Activities:** Fitness challenges, school certifications, and awareness campaigns

National Sports Development Fund (NSDF)

- **Objective:** Mobilize private and public sector contributions for sports development.
- **Focus:** Infrastructure, training, equipment, and welfare of sportspersons

Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay National Welfare Fund for Sportspersons

- **Purpose:** Financial assistance for **injured or retired sportspersons**, or those facing financial hardship

Special Area Games (SAG) Scheme

- **Objective:** Nurture talent from **tribal, coastal, hilly, and remote regions** with natural sporting abilities
- **Implemented by:** Sports Authority of India

National Physical Fitness Programme (NPFP)

- **Focus:** Introduced under **NEP 2020**, this aims to integrate fitness and physical education across schools

Urban Sports Infrastructure Scheme (USIS)

- **Objective:** Develop sports infrastructure like synthetic tracks, turf fields, and stadiums in urban areas

'QUAD-AT-SEA SHIP OBSERVER MISSION'

Quad nations—India, Japan, the United States, and Australia—launched their **first-ever 'Quad-at-Sea Ship Observer Mission'** to enhance maritime cooperation in the **Indo-Pacific**.

The initiative was formalized under the **Wilmington Declaration** during the Quad Leaders' Summit in Delaware.

Key Highlights:

- **Participants:** Two officers (including women) from each country's **coast guard** have joined the **USCGC Stratton**, currently en route to Guam.
- **Objective:** To improve **interoperability, maritime security**, and **operational coordination**, supporting a **free, open, and rules-based Indo-Pacific**.
- **Nature:** A **cross-embarkation mission** where officers from all four nations observe and operate jointly at sea—**a first for Quad maritime forces**.
- **Strategic Alignment:**
  - Supports India's **SAGAR** (Security and Growth for All in the Region) initiative.
  - Complements the **Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI)**.
- **Significance:**
  - Marks a milestone in **multilateral coast guard collaboration**.
  - Builds **trust and readiness** through real-time maritime cooperation.
  - Expected to be an **annual initiative**, expanding strategic depth in Indo-Pacific partnerships.

QUAD (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue)

The **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD)** is a strategic forum comprising **India, the United States, Japan, and Australia**, aimed at promoting a **free, open, inclusive, and rules-based Indo-Pacific** region.

Origins and Evolution:

- **Initiated in 2007** by Japanese PM **Shinzo Abe**, with support from India, the US, and Australia.
- Revived in **2017**, amidst growing concerns over **China's assertiveness** in the Indo-Pacific.
- Elevated to the **leader-level summit format in 2021**, highlighting its growing importance.

Objectives:

- Ensure **maritime security and freedom of navigation**.
- Promote **rules-based international order**.
- Address regional challenges like **terrorism, cyber security, climate change, critical technologies**, and **supply chain resilience**.
- Support **capacity building and infrastructure development** in Indo-Pacific nations.

Key Initiatives:
- Quad Vaccine Partnership
- Critical and Emerging Technologies Working Group
- Quad Climate Working Group
- Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA)
- Quad-at-Sea Observer Mission (2024) – boosting coast guard cooperation.

Significance:
- Seen as a balancing force in the Indo-Pacific amidst China's rising influence.
- Promotes multilateral cooperation among like-minded democracies.
- Enhances strategic and security partnerships in the region without forming a formal military alliance.

GLOBAL GENDER GAP INDEX

India's position in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index has declined .

Recently, India ranked 131st out of 148 countries. This fall is attributed to a worsening situation in political empowerment. While economic participation, educational attainment, and health have shown improvements, political representation remains a pressing issue.

Current Gender Gap Context

India's gender gap has narrowed in several areas. However, political empowerment has deteriorated. The percentage of women in Parliament decreased from 14.7% to 13.79%.

Women in ministerial positions also fell from 6.45% to 5.56%. These statistics show the ongoing challenges in achieving gender equality in leadership roles.

Women's Reservation Legislation

In 2023, India passed a law mandating 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State legislatures. This law will take effect in 2029, following a new Census and delimitation. The reservation is valid for 15 years, raising concerns about the sustainability of women's political gains.

Historical Context of Women's Representation

Women's representation in the Lok Sabha has fluctuated from 3.4% in 1977 to 14% in 2019. As of 2023, women made up only 9% of MLAs in State Assemblies.

Chhattisgarh had the highest representation at 18%, while some states had no women MLAs at all. The impending reservation aims to increase these figures substantially.

Impact of Women Voters

The number of women voters has increased dramatically since the first general election in 1952. Women have overtaken men as voters in recent elections.
Political parties are now targeting women as a key demographic, introducing welfare schemes aimed at them. This shift in voting patterns has not yet translated into increased representation.

Challenges in Candidate Selection

Despite the rise in women voters, political parties continue to offer limited representation to women candidates. Many women are fielded in reserved seats for Scheduled Castes or Tribes.

This practice undermines their chances in more competitive constituencies. Although women candidates have a higher winning percentage, they often struggle to make it onto candidate lists.

Future Prospects for Political Empowerment

The upcoming reservation law could alter the landscape of women's political empowerment. However, the effectiveness of this policy will depend on the willingness of political parties to support women in ministerial roles. There is a need for a clear pathway to elevate local leaders to higher political offices.
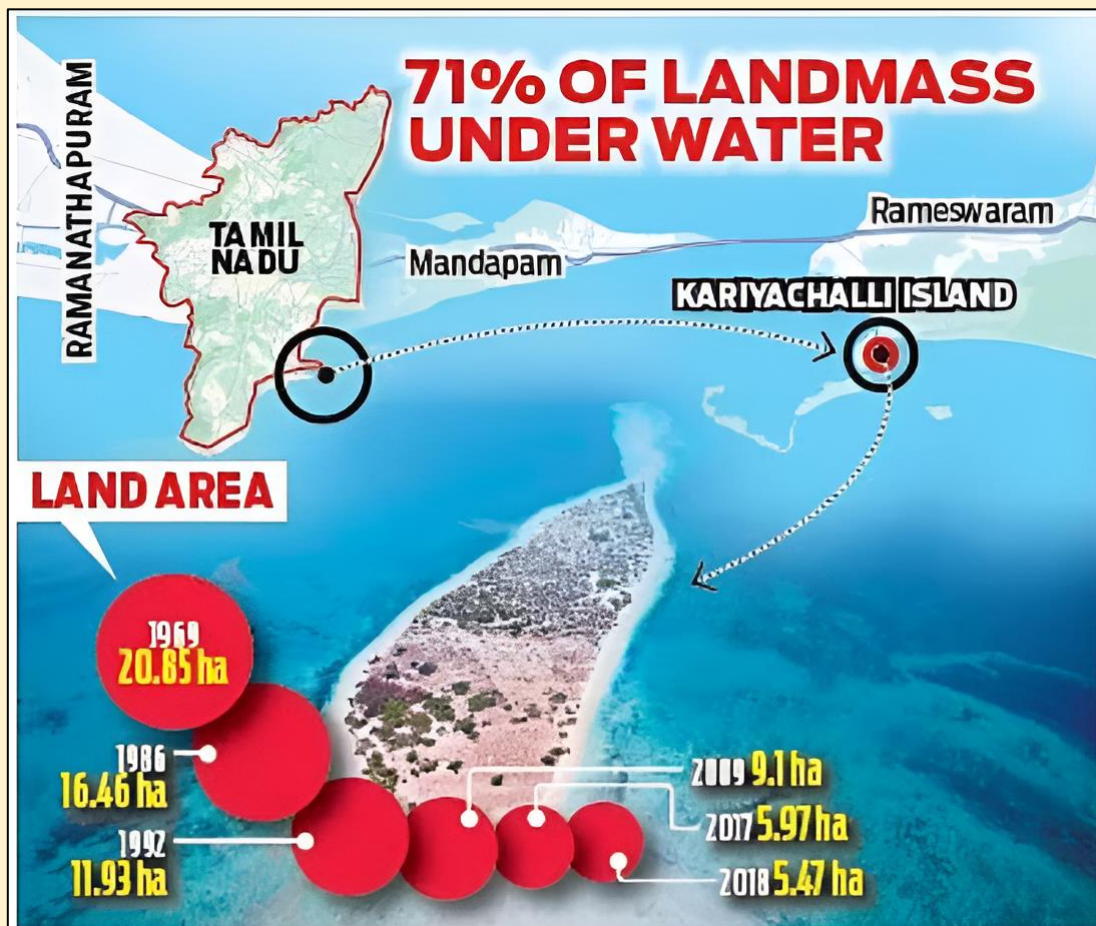
KARIYACHALLI ISLAND

The Tamil Nadu government has initiated the restoration of Kariyachalli Island, part of the Gulf of Mannar Marine National Park. This effort follows the successful restoration of Vaan Island and is part of the Tamil Nadu Sustainably Harnessing Ocean Resource (TNSHORE) initiative.

Funded by the state government and the World Bank, the project has a budget of ₹50 crore. The Tamil Nadu Forest Department, in collaboration with IIT-Madras and the Suganthi Devadason Marine Research Institute, is leading this ambitious project.

Background of Kariyachalli Island

Kariyachalli Island is located in the Gulf of Mannar, which is known for its rich biodiversity and coral reefs. The island has experienced shrinkage over the years. Historical records indicate that its area was 20.85 hectares in 1969. By 2017, it had reduced to just 5.97 hectares.

Recent measurements show an alarming decline to 3.14 hectares during high tide and 4.12 hectares during low tide. This shrinkage is primarily due to coastal erosion and the impacts of climate change.

Importance of Coral Reefs

Coral reefs play important role in protecting coastlines from erosion and supporting marine biodiversity. They act as natural barriers that mitigate the effects of extreme weather.

The Gulf of Mannar, home to one of India's four major coral reef systems, has suffered from extensive coral mining, which halted in 2005. The mining primarily targeted vital reef-building species, leading to habitat degradation.

Restoration Efforts

The restoration project includes the deployment of 8,500 artificial reef modules designed to protect the island and restore its biodiversity.

These modules aim to enhance marine life by providing habitats for fish and other organisms. Additionally, the project focuses on restoring degraded coral reefs and seagrass beds, which are essential for the health of marine ecosystems.

Community Involvement

The project will engage over 300 local community members, ensuring that the restoration efforts are inclusive and beneficial to those who rely on the marine resources for their livelihoods. This community involvement is vital for the long-term success of the restoration initiative.

Scientific Studies and Assessments

Before commencing the restoration, environmental and social impact assessments were conducted. Investigations into wave dynamics and bathymetry were also carried out by IIT-Madras to inform the restoration strategy. These studies help to understand the island's unique challenges and formulate effective solutions.

Future Prospects

The restoration of Kariyachalli Island is expected to be a gradual process. Experts note that the recovery of the ecosystem may take time due to the extent of degradation. However, the initiative aims to enhance biodiversity, protect the island from further erosion, and sustain the livelihoods of local fisherfolk.

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