KERALA STATE CIVIL SERVICE ACADEMY

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WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

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Monthly Current Affairs Magazine

SALWA JUDUM

A group of 18 retired judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts have penned a joint statement against Home Minister Amit Shah's remarks on the Supreme Court's Salwa Judum judgment, saying that such "prejudicial misinterpretation" will have a "chilling effect on the judges of the Supreme Court, shaking the independence of the judiciary".

About Salwa Judum:

- Meaning "Peace March" or "Purification Hunt" in the language of the Gonds, the Salwa Judum was a militia specifically mobilised with the intention of countering the Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) or naxalism in the Chhattisgarh region.
- It consisted of local tribal youth mobilized for resistance against outlawed armed naxalites. The group was reportedly backed by government machinery in Chhattisgarh.
- There were reports that Salwa Judum forcibly recruited minor boys for its armed forces. According to a survey by the Forum for Fact-finding Documentation and Advocacy (FFDA), over 12,000 minors were being used by the Salwa Judum in the southern district of Dantewada.
- The Salwa Judum displaced large numbers of villagers. They even killed those that refused to leave, accusing them of being naxalite collaborators.
- Following a number of petitions, the Supreme Court ordered the state government in 2008 to refrain from allegedly supporting and encouraging the Salwa Judum.
- In 2011, the Supreme Court of India in a case filed by Nandini Sundar and others declared the militia to be illegal and unconstitutional, and ordered its disbanding. However, despite the order, the Salwa Judum remains a part of the auxiliary force of the state police.

- **Other government initiatives to control Left-Wing Extremism (LWE):**

  - SAMADHAN doctrine is the one-stop solution for the LWE problem. It encompasses the entire strategy of government from short-term policy to long-term policy formulated at different levels. SAMADHAN stands for-
    - S- Smart Leadership
    - A- Aggressive Strategy
    - M- Motivation and Training
    - A- Actionable Intelligence
    - D- Dashboard Based KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) and KRAs (Key Result Areas)
    - H- Harnessing Technology
    - A- Action plan for each Theatre
    - N- No access to Financing.

  - The national strategy to counter LWE was formed in 2015 as a multipronged approach to combat LWE. Its main aim was to ensure participatory governance and protection of the rights of local tribals, inter alia.
  - Operation Green Hunt was started in 2009-10 and massive deployment of security forces was done in the naxal-affected areas.

INVASIVE SPECIES

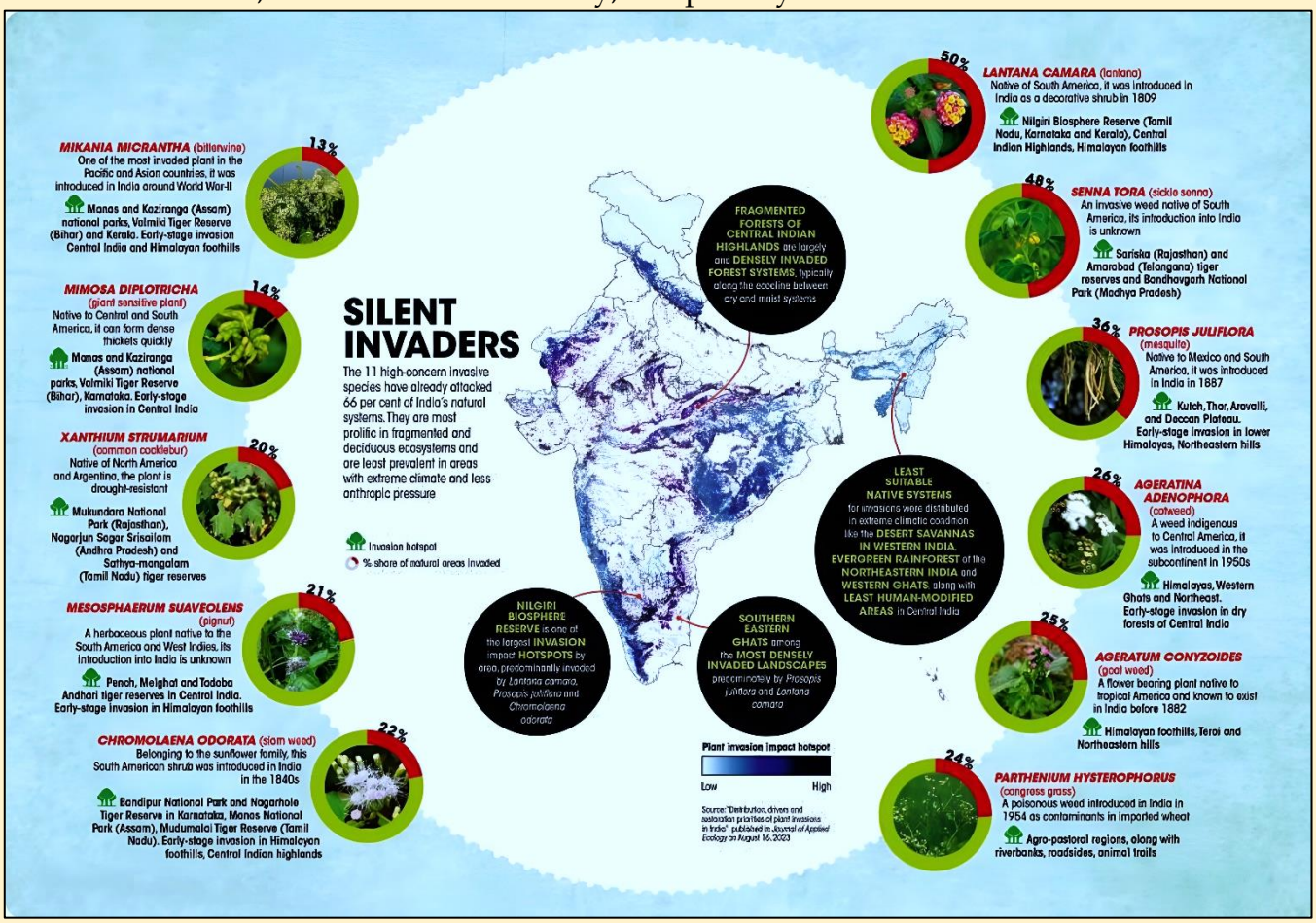
A new international study shows that invasive plants and animals have caused over $2.6 trillion in global damage since 1960, with costs in India severely underreported.

Key Points

- Global Impact: Plants, arthropods, and mammals are the most damaging groups, affecting agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and infrastructure.
- India's Blind Spot: Management costs are underreported by over 1,100%, reflecting weak documentation and funding.
- Drivers of Costs: Losses stem from both economic damage and expenses for detection, control, and eradication.
- Gaps: India lacks robust data, funding, and coordinated strategies, worsening ecological and financial risks.
- Way Forward: Experts urge stronger policies, better data systems, and global cooperation for prevention and management.

Invasive Species of India

Invasive Alien Species (IAS) are non-native plants, animals, or microbes introduced—intentionally or accidentally—that spread rapidly, harm native biodiversity, disrupt ecosystems, and cause economic loss. India, with its rich biodiversity, is especially vulnerable.



Examples of Major Invasive Species in India

Plants

- Lantana camara – A hardy shrub from Central/South America; invades forests, suppresses native plants.
- Parthenium hysterophorus (Congress Grass) – From tropical America; affects agriculture, causes skin allergies and respiratory issues.

- Eichhornia crassipes (Water Hyacinth) – Aquatic weed from the Amazon; clogs water bodies, reduces oxygen, harms fisheries.
- Prosopis juliflora (Vilayati Babool) – From South America; dominates drylands, displaces native grasses.

Animals

- Common Carp & Tilapia – Non-native fishes that outcompete local species, affecting inland fisheries.
- African Catfish (Clarias gariepinus) – Aggressive predator, threatens native fish diversity.
- Apple Snail (Pomacea canaliculata) – Damages paddy fields and aquatic vegetation.

Insects / Others

- Papaya Mealybug (Paracoccus marginatus) – Destroys papaya and other crops.
- Fall Armyworm (Spodoptera frugiperda) – Major pest in maize, spreading rapidly in India.

Impacts

- Ecological: Displacement of native flora and fauna, habitat degradation.
- Economic: Heavy losses in agriculture, forestry, and fisheries.
- Health: Allergies, poisoning, and diseases linked to some species.

Management in India

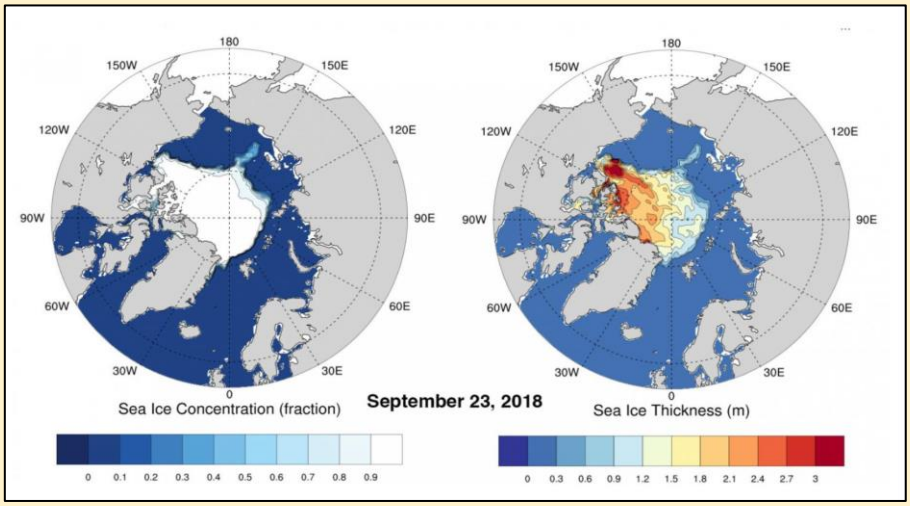
- National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) and Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) monitor IAS.
- Biological control: Example – *Mexican beetle* introduced to control Parthenium.
- Awareness & Policy: Need for stronger prevention, early detection, and coordinated eradication strategies.

Arctic Sea ice melting

A new study finds that Arctic Sea ice melting has slowed over the past 20 years, but the change is temporary and not a sign of recovery.

Key Points

- Cause of Slowdown: Natural climate cycles like the Pacific Decadal Oscillation and Atlantic Multidecadal Variability bring colder waters, briefly reducing ice loss.
- Main Driver: Greenhouse gas emissions remain the dominant cause of long-term decline.
- Not Good News: The slowdown may last up to a decade, but models predict faster melting afterward—about 0.6 million sq. km lost per decade.
- Message: The pause is due to natural variability, not reversal of climate change, and urgent action on mitigation remains essential.



Arctic Sea and Its Associated Seas

Arctic Ocean:

- The smallest and shallowest ocean in the world, surrounding the North Pole.
- Covered by sea ice for most of the year, though shrinking due to global warming.
- Bordered by North America, Europe, and Asia.

Associated Seas of the Arctic Ocean:

- Barents Sea – located north of Norway and Russia; important for fisheries and oil & gas.
- Kara Sea – north of Siberia; receives major Russian rivers (Ob, Yenisei).
- Laptev Sea – east of the Kara Sea; source region of drifting Arctic ice.
- East Siberian Sea – shallowest sea of the Arctic Ocean; remote and icy.
- Chukchi Sea – between Alaska and Russia; gateway to the Bering Strait.
- Beaufort Sea – north of Alaska and Canada; known for oil reserves and polar bears.
- Lincoln Sea – north of Greenland; among the coldest seas.
- Greenland Sea – between Greenland and Svalbard; key to North Atlantic water circulation.

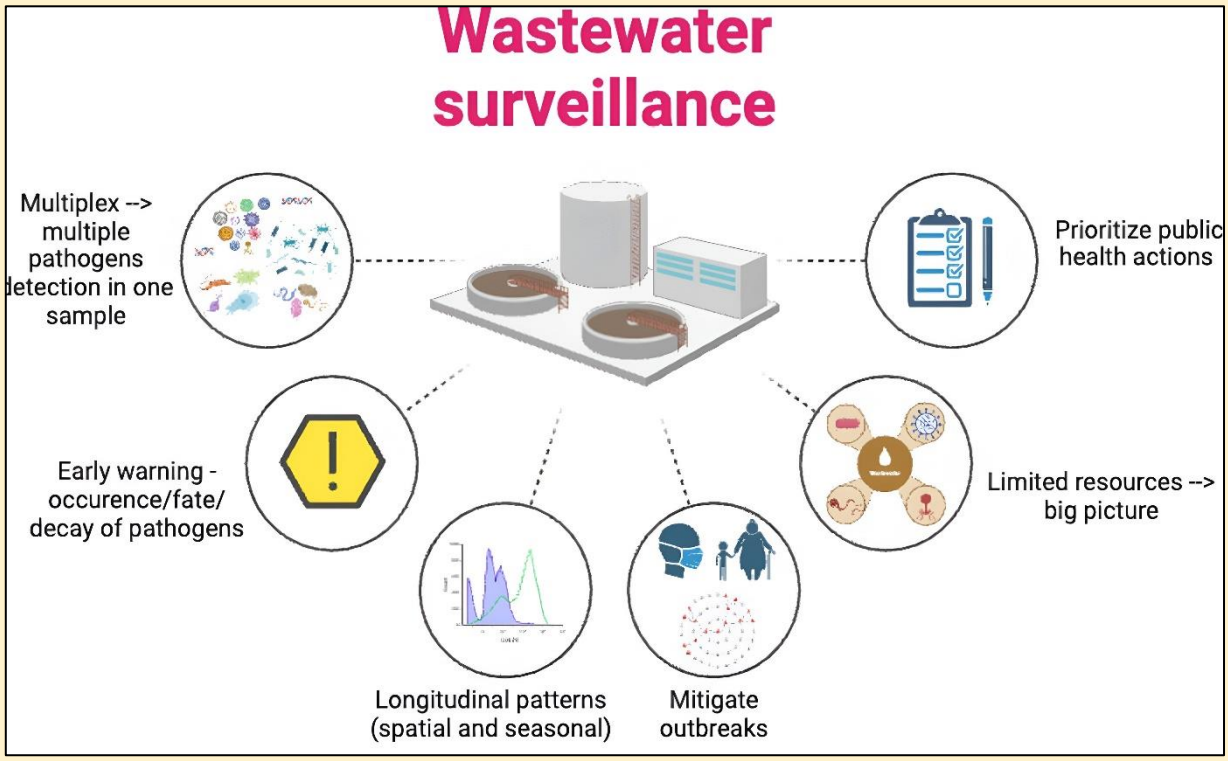
Significance:

- Rich in oil, gas, and mineral resources.
- Crucial for global climate regulation (sea ice reflects sunlight).
- Strategic shipping routes (e.g., Northern Sea Route) opening due to melting ice.
- Habitat for unique species like polar bears, walrus, seals, and Arctic fox.

WASTE WATER SURVEILLANCE

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has launched a major initiative to expand **wastewater surveillance** across **50 Indian cities**, covering **10 viruses** over the next six months. Currently, five cities are under monitoring.

This move aims to build an **early-warning system** for outbreaks of infectious diseases like COVID-19, polio, influenza, and other viral threats.



What is Wastewater?

- Wastewater is used water that has been affected by domestic, industrial and commercial use.
- The composition of wastewater is 99.9% water and the remaining 0.1% contains organic matter, microorganisms and inorganic compounds.
- Wastewater effluents are released to a variety of environments, such as lakes, ponds, streams, rivers, estuaries and oceans.
- Wastewater also includes storm runoff, as harmful substances wash off roads, parking lots and rooftops.

Types of waste water

- **Blackwater:** Wastewater from toilets containing faeces and urine; highly contaminated with pathogens.
- **Greywater:** Wastewater from showers, sinks, laundry, and kitchens; less polluted than blackwater.
- **Yellow Water:** Source-separated urine; nutrient-rich and useful as fertilizer after treatment.
- **Brown Water:** Faeces mixed with flush water but without urine; organic and pathogen-heavy.

Why Wastewater Treatment Matters?

Untreated wastewater is one of the biggest threats to both **public health** and the **natural environment**. Proper treatment is therefore crucial to prevent widespread harm and ensure safe water management.

Environmental Consequences

- **Water Pollution:** Harmful contaminants degrade water quality, making it unsafe for drinking, bathing, irrigation, and fishing.
- **Ecosystem Damage:** Excess nutrients can cause algal blooms that deplete oxygen, killing fish and other aquatic life. Toxic substances can also build up in the food chain, endangering animals and humans alike.
- **Groundwater Risks:** Wastewater that seeps into the soil may reach underground aquifers, polluting vital drinking water sources and requiring expensive clean-up measures.

Public Health Risks

- **Waterborne Infections:** Diseases like cholera, typhoid, hepatitis, and dysentery are linked to contaminated drinking water.
- **Recreational Exposure:** People coming into contact with polluted water through swimming or wading risk skin problems, stomach infections, and other illnesses.

Hence, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) will initiate wastewater surveillance to identifying any increase in virus growth trend at the earliest,

What is Wastewater Surveillance?

- It involves collecting and testing sewage samples to detect viruses, bacteria, and other pathogens.
- Wastewater-Based Epidemiology (WBE) helps track disease spread in a community by analyzing biological traces (like viral RNA) in human waste.
- It is a non-invasive, cost-effective, and population-wide monitoring tool that provides insights even from asymptomatic carriers.

How ICMR will conduct surveillance?

- The initiative will track **10 different viruses**, including:

- **COVID-19 –** still a public health concern due to mutations.
- **Polio virus –** essential for India's polio-free status monitoring.
- **Avian Influenza Virus (AIV) –** linked with seasonal outbreaks and zoonotic transmission.
- Other **pathogens causing fever, diarrhoea, acute encephalitis**, and respiratory distress.
- The focus is on establishing a **nationwide early-warning system** by monitoring both wastewater and surface water in outbreak-prone areas.
- Process:
- Wastewater operators collect samples before treatment.
- Samples are sent to labs for testing viral/bacterial load.
- Results available within 5–7 days.
- Public health officials use wastewater data to better understand disease trends in communities and make decisions, such as providing guidance on how to prevent infections or increasing testing or vaccination options.

Other surveillance systems

India has robust surveillance for other illness also:

- **Influenza-Like Illness (ILI) monitoring** helps track seasonal flu patterns, detect unusual outbreaks, and monitor viral mutations.
- **Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI) surveillance** helps identify severe respiratory disease outbreaks, including COVID-19 and influenza.
- The **Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP),** which collect, analyze, and respond to disease outbreak data. Covers both communicable and some non-communicable diseases for timely interventions.
- **Wastewater and Environmental Surveillance (WES)** involves testing sewage and water bodies affected by human waste for pathogens.

Advantages of Wastewater Surveillance

- Unlike individual medical testing, which requires time and resources, wastewater testing provides a **population-wide snapshot** of infections in one go.
- Many infected individuals may not show symptoms or may avoid testing, but they still shed pathogens in urine or faeces. Wastewater-Based Epidemiology (WBE) captures this "hidden data," allowing early detection of disease spread that might otherwise remain unnoticed.
- By testing samples from specific locations or neighborhoods, authorities can **pinpoint areas with higher infection loads**.
- Wastewater data provides actionable insights to policymakers. This makes public health interventions **proactive rather than reactive**.
- Collecting and testing wastewater is far cheaper than conducting mass individual testing. It reduces the burden on health systems and allows **continuous surveillance** without large-scale disruptions.
- It also provides useful data to maintain ecosystem services and protect freshwater and marine ecosystems.

Way Forward

- Expand coverage to **rural and peri-urban areas**.
- Integrate wastewater data with **digital health platforms** for real-time tracking.
- Build **laboratory and human resource capacity** at district levels.
- Encourage **global data-sharing mechanisms** for early warning of cross-border health threats.
- Link with **climate change and pollution monitoring frameworks** for holistic action.

Wastewater surveillance represents a **transformative approach in public health management**. By turning sewage into a source of information, India can detect hidden infections, anticipate outbreaks, and safeguard both health and environment.

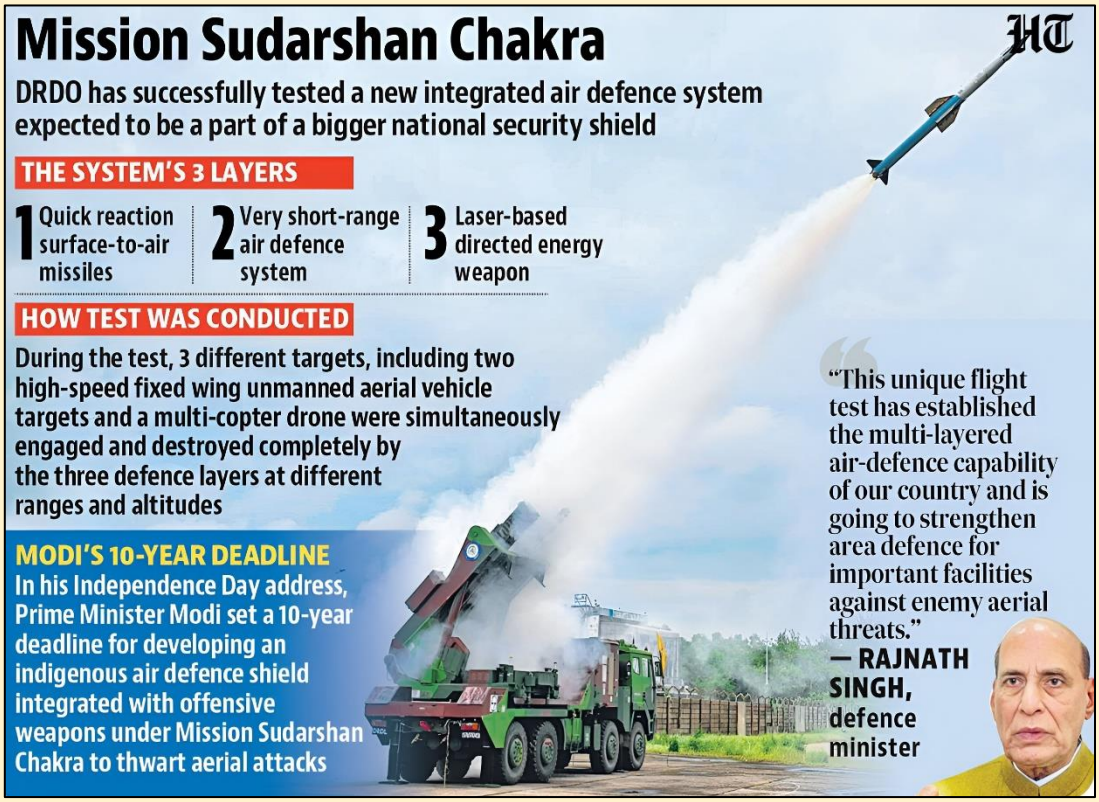
The scaling up of this programme by ICMR is a timely step towards **pandemic preparedness and sustainable disease surveillance**.

INTEGRATED AIR DEFENCE WEAPON SYSTEM (IADWS)

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has successfully conducted the first flight tests of the Indigenous Integrated Air Defence Weapon System (IADWS) off the coast of Odisha.

Key Points

- Purpose: Enhances India's multi-layered air defense against aerial threats and protects strategic facilities.
- Components: Includes Quick Reaction Surface-to-Air Missiles (QRSAM), Very Short-Range Air Defense System (VSHORADS), and a high-power laser-based Directed Energy Weapon, all managed via a central command system.
- Testing: Successfully destroyed three aerial targets—two high-speed UAVs and a drone—using QRSAM, VSHORADS, and the laser weapon.
- Performance: All elements including radars, missiles, communication, and command systems functioned flawlessly.



India's Multi-Layered Air Defence System

India has developed a multi-tiered air defence shield to neutralize threats from long-range ballistic missiles to low-flying drones. The system integrates indigenous and imported platforms under centralized command and control.

1. **Long-Range / Outer Layer**
   - S-400 Triumf (Russia) – Range up to 400 km, counters stealth aircraft, cruise and ballistic missiles.
   - Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) Program – Includes Prithvi Air Defence (PAD) and Advanced Air Defence (AAD) interceptors for high and low-altitude ballistic missile interception.
2. **Medium-Range Layer**
   - MR-SAM (Medium Range Surface-to-Air Missile) – Jointly by DRDO & Israel; ~70 km range; used by Air Force, Army, and Navy.
   - Akash & Akash-NG – Indigenous, ~25–70 km; protects air bases and strategic assets.
3. **Short-Range / Tactical Layer**
   - QRSAM (Quick Reaction SAM) – 25–30 km range, mobile and radar-guided.
   - SPYDER (Israel) – 15–35 km range, counters aircraft, UAVs, and precision-guided munitions.
4. **Very Short Range / Point Defence**
   - Igla (Russia) and Indigenous VSHORADS – Man-portable missiles for last-mile defence against low-flying targets.
   - Anti-Drone Systems – DRDO and private-sector developed, deployed at borders and sensitive installations.
5. **Directed Energy Weapons (Emerging Layer)**
   - High-Power Laser Systems (DEW) under DRDO's Integrated Air Defence Weapon System (IADWS) – tested for drone and UAV neutralization.
6. **Integrated Command & Control**
   - Integrated Air Command and Control System (IACCS) – Nationwide radar and sensor network linking all layers for real-time surveillance, detection, and interception.

DAL LAKE IN SRINAGAR HOSTED THE FIRST-EVER KHELO INDIA WATER SPORTS FESTIVAL (KIWSF)

Over 400 athletes from across India competed for 24 gold medals in Olympic-class events like rowing, canoeing, and kayaking. Demonstration sports such as water skiing, dragon boat racing, and shikara sprints showcased both modern and local traditions.

The event, featuring Olympians like Arjun Lal Jat, aimed at talent identification for future Olympics and strengthening India's water sports ecosystem. Organized by the Sports Authority of India and the Jammu & Kashmir Sports Council, it also promoted tourism by positioning J&K as a hub for winter and water sports.

With nearly equal male and female participation and strong representation from states like Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Odisha, and Kerala, the festival set a new benchmark for India's aquatic sports ambitions.

Dal Lake is a famous urban lake located in Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir, often called the "Jewel of Srinagar." It is the second-largest lake in the Union Territory and is renowned for its houseboats, shikaras (traditional boats), and floating gardens.

- Geography: Spread over nearly 22 sq. km, the lake is fed by several mountain streams and is connected to other water bodies through canals.
- Tourism: It is one of India's most iconic tourist attractions, offering houseboat stays, shikara rides, and views of the surrounding Himalayas.
- Economy: Supports livelihoods through fishing, tourism, and horticulture (floating vegetable gardens).
- Culture: Has deep cultural and historical significance, often featured in Kashmiri art, poetry, and films.
- Sports & Events: Recently transformed into a venue for water sports, including the Khelo India Water Sports Festival 2025, boosting its profile as a sports and adventure destination.

SUSTAINABLE POWER 1404

Conducted by Iran's regular navy, the exercise showcased its strength after the 12-day conflict with Israel that damaged much of its air defence and missile infrastructure.

The drill featured frigates IRIS Sabalan and IRIS Ganaveh firing *Nasir* and *Qadir* cruise missiles, supported by coastal batteries, drones, electronic warfare units, and subsurface forces. Unlike other branches, Iran's navy had escaped major losses during the war.

The exercise, following recent Iran-Russia naval drills, was aimed at signaling resilience, reassuring domestic audiences, and warning adversaries like the US and Israel of Iran's readiness for retaliation, especially amid tensions over its suspended nuclear cooperation and the threat of renewed UN sanctions.

PIPRAHWA GEMS

Context: Uttar Pradesh, are set to return to their original site after a high-profile repatriation from Hong Kong in July 2025.

The Piprahwa gems, sacred relics linked to Lord Buddha and discovered in 1898 at the Piprahwa stupa in Uttar Pradesh, were repatriated from Hong Kong to India in July 2025. These treasures include bone fragments, gem-inlaid reliquaries, gold ornaments, and ritual offerings enshrined by the Buddha's Sakya clan.

Once held by the Peppé family after colonial excavations, around 300 gem-encrusted artefacts resurfaced for auction in Hong Kong with an estimated value of $13 million before the Government of India intervened to secure their permanent return.

The relics were ceremonially welcomed back, with plans to place them on public display at Piprahwa, Siddharthnagar.

This repatriation is seen as a landmark in heritage diplomacy, marking the restitution of one of India's most precious Buddhist treasures once thought lost to private collections.

Piprahwa Gems are sacred Buddhist relics discovered in 1898 at the Piprahwa stupa in Siddharthnagar, Uttar Pradesh. They include bone fragments, gem-studded reliquaries, gold ornaments, and ritual offerings, believed to have been enshrined by the Sakya clan of Lord Buddha.

- Discovery: Unearthed by British civil officer W.C. Peppé during colonial-era excavations.
- Significance: Considered among the earliest archaeological evidence directly linked to Lord Buddha and his relics.
- Heritage Journey: While most relics were deposited in the Indian Museum, Kolkata in 1899, some gems remained with the Peppé family and later surfaced in international auctions.

Important Buddhist Relics in India

- Vaishali (Bihar):
  - Excavations uncovered a relic casket of Buddha from a stupa, associated with the *second Buddhist Council*.
- Rajgir (Bihar):
  - Relics related to *King Bimbisara and* association with Buddha's preaching.
- Sarnath (Uttar Pradesh):

- Famous Dhamek Stupa and Ashokan pillar, with relic caskets in surrounding stupas.
- Kapilvastu & Kushinagar (U.P.):
  - Kushinagar – Buddha's Mahaparinirvana site; stupas here yielded relic caskets of Buddha's ashes.
  - Piprahwa linked to distribution of relics among Shakyas.
- Sanchi (Madhya Pradesh):
  - Stupas housed relics of Buddha's chief disciples, Sariputta and Mahamoggallana.
  - These relics were taken to England during colonial times, but later returned to India.
- Bodh Gaya (Bihar):
  - No physical relics of Buddha's body but the Mahabodhi Temple is central as the site of Enlightenment.

ASIA-PACIFIC INSTITUTE FOR BROADCASTING DEVELOPMENT (AIBD)

India has been elected as the Chairman of the Executive Board of the Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD).

India secured the highest votes, regaining the position last held in 2016, and currently also holds the Presidency of the AIBD General Conference until August 2025.

The chairmanship enhances India's role in shaping global media cooperation, digital adoption, public service broadcasting, and cross-border collaboration. Shri Gaurav Dwivedi, CEO of Prasar Bharati and President of the AIBD General Conference, emphasized India's commitment to the theme "Media for People, Peace & Prosperity."

Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD)

- Establishment: 1977 under the auspices of UNESCO.
- Headquarters: Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- Membership: 92 members from 45 countries spanning Asia-Pacific, Europe, Africa, Arab States, and North America.
- Nature: An intergovernmental organization focusing on broadcasting, media development, and capacity building.
- Objectives:
  - Promote regional cooperation in broadcasting and media.
  - Enhance public service broadcasting and digital adoption.
  - Provide training, workshops, and policy support for media professionals.
  - Facilitate cross-border cooperation to promote peace, development, and prosperity.
- India's Role:
  - Founding member of AIBD.
  - Held Chairmanship of the Executive Board in 2016 and 2025.
  - Currently (2025) also holds the Presidency of the General Conference.

BHARAT 6G VISION

- Launched in March 2023.
- Goal: Position India as a global leader in 6G by 2030.
- Principles: Affordability, sustainability, ubiquity.
- Builds on India's strong 5G foundation.

Phased Implementation

Phase	Timeline	Focus Areas
Phase 1	2023–2025	Explorative R&D, proof-of-concept tests, use-case identification
Phase 2	2025–2030	IP creation, testbeds, commercialization, field trials

An apex council oversees spectrum, standards, ecosystem creation, and R&D funding.

Key Initiatives

- **Bharat 6G Alliance:** Collaboration among academia, startups, industry, and government.
- **100 5G Labs:** Training and capacity building for 6G skills.
- **R&D Support:** 100+ projects funded under government schemes.

International Partnerships

- Collaborations with Japan, Finland, South Korea, Germany, US, Brazil, and UK for research and standard-setting.

Global Alignment

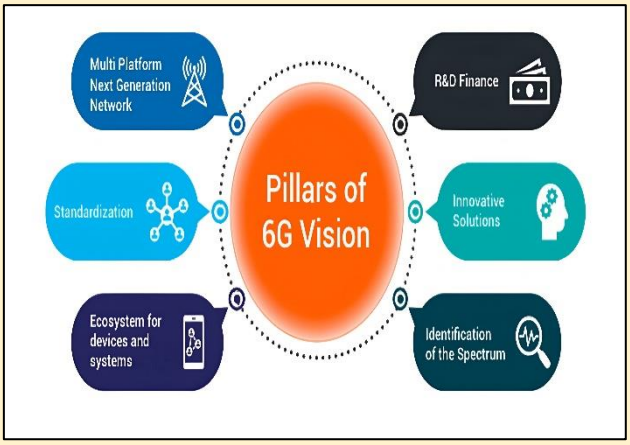
- Aligned with ITU's IMT-2030 framework.
- Target: At least 10% of global 6G intellectual property.

Key Features of 6G

- Ultra-high data speeds, very low latency.
- Communication + sensing integration.
- Terrestrial and non-terrestrial seamless coverage.
- AI-native, energy-efficient networks.

Upcoming Milestones

- WRC 2027: Final spectrum decisions.
- Commercial launch target: 2030, with domestic trials and global contributions in 2025–2030.

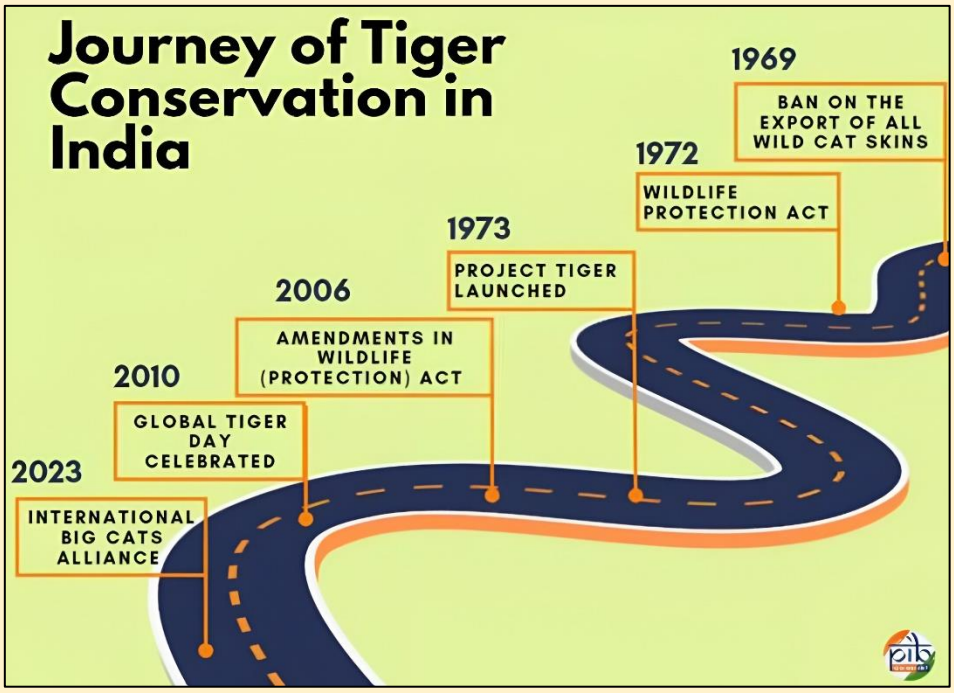


- New Features:
  - Joint Communication & Sensing (JCAS): Networks can sense environment while transmitting data (useful for autonomous mobility, disaster management).
  - Holographic Beamforming: Advanced antenna technologies for high-directional, energy-efficient transmission.
  - Quantum Communication & Security: Quantum key distribution for ultra-secure links.

- Energy Efficiency: Designed to be 100x more energy-efficient than 5G, using intelligent sleep modes and green hardware.
- Applications: Holographic telepresence, immersive XR (extended reality), autonomous transport, precision healthcare, smart industries.

NTCA LIMITS TIGER CORRIDORS TO 2014 "LEAST COST" PATHWAYS

- The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has restricted the recognized tiger corridors mainly to the 32 "least cost pathways" mapped in 2014.
- This move narrows statutory protection, making approvals for mining, infrastructure, and other development projects in tiger habitats easier.
- Earlier, NTCA had assured that all scientific data—such as telemetry studies, tiger conservation plans, and wildlife movement models—would be considered, but the new stance reduces scope.
- Conservationists warn this undermines landscape connectivity vital for tiger movement, gene flow, and survival.
- NTCA's own earlier reports had stressed that least-cost routes were only the bare minimum, while broader corridors also required attention.
- The change benefits several pending projects but raises concerns about long-term tiger conservation and habitat security.



National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)

- Establishment: 2005, under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, following the recommendations of the Tiger Task Force.
- Status: A statutory body under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).

Composition

- Headed by the Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (Chairperson).
- Includes experts, NGOs, and representatives from states with tiger reserves.

Functions

- Implement the Project Tiger scheme across India.
- Approve tiger conservation plans prepared by states.
- Lay down standards for tiger reserve management including tourism, infrastructure, and anti-poaching.
- Provide funding and technical support to tiger reserves.
- Ensure tiger corridors and habitat connectivity are maintained for long-term survival.
- Conduct monitoring using technologies like M-STrIPES (Monitoring System for Tigers – Intensive Protection and Ecological Status).

Importance

- Central authority for India's tiger conservation strategy.
- Plays a key role in balancing conservation with developmental pressures in tiger landscapes.

PROMOTION AND REGULATION OF ONLINE GAMING BILL, 2025

The Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill, 2025, passed by the Parliament to shield citizens from the menace of online money games while promoting and regulating other kinds of online games.

This legislation is designed to curb addiction, financial ruin and social distress caused by predatory gaming platforms that thrive on misleading promises of quick wealth.

Understanding the Online Gaming Sector

Online gaming sector can be divided into three categories:

- **E-Sports –** Competitive digital tournaments requiring strategy, coordination, and decision-making.
- **Online Social Games –** Casual, skill-based games focused on entertainment, learning, and interaction; generally considered safe.
- **Online Money Games –** Games involving financial stakes (chance, skill, or both). These platforms have raised serious concerns due to reports of addiction, financial losses, money laundering, and even cases of suicide linked to heavy monetary losses.

Why the Bill was needed?

- The World Health Organization classifies gaming disorder as a health condition in its International Classification of Diseases, describing it as a pattern of play marked by loss of control, neglect of other daily activities, and persistence despite harmful consequences.
- Online money games encourage compulsive playing. Many players lose their entire savings chasing the illusion of quick profits. Families have been pushed into debt and distress.
- The stress of heavy financial loss has led to cases of depression and even suicide. The Bill seeks to prevent such tragedies by banning these exploitative platforms.
- Several platforms have been misused for illegal activities. Money laundering, which means moving illegal earnings through legal channels to hide their source, has been a major concern.
- Investigations have shown that some gaming platforms were being used for terror financing and illegal messaging, which compromise the country's security.
- According to the government data, 45 crore people are negatively affected by online money games and faced a loss of more than Rs. 20,000 crores because of it.

Provisions of the Bill

1. **Applicability**
   - The Bill applies to **all of India**, covering both physical territory and the digital domain.
   - Many gaming platforms operate from offshore jurisdictions. Hence bill also applies to **online gaming platforms operated outside India** but **offering services to Indian users**, addressing challenges posed by offshore operators.
2. **Promotion & Recognition of E-Sports**
   - E-sports are organised competitive video games where individuals or teams compete professionally, often with tournaments, rankings, and prizes.
   - The Bill recognises e-sports as a legitimate sport in India.
   - The Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports will issue guidelines for tournaments, ensuring standardisation, safety, and fair play.
   - Training academies, research centres, and technology platforms will be established to develop talent and innovation.
   - Incentive schemes and awareness drives will integrate e-sports into India's sporting ecosystem, encouraging youth participation and career opportunities.
3. **Promotion of Social & Educational Games**
   - Social and educational games are digital games focused on learning, culture, skill development, or social interaction, generally safe and age-appropriate.
   - Central Government empowered to recognise and register safe social games.
   - Encourages healthy digital engagement, reduces exposure to harmful games, and nurtures creativity and learning among youth.
4. **Prohibition of Online Money Games**
   - Online money games are digital games where players wager real money or stakes on outcomes of chance, skill, or both, often involving gambling elements.
   - Complete ban on all money-based games (chance, skill, or mixed).
   - Advertising, promotion, and financial transactions linked to these games are prohibited.
   - Platforms can be blocked under the IT Act, 2000.
   - Protects citizens from financial losses, addiction, fraud, and social distress caused by money games.
5. **Establishment of an Online Gaming Authority**
   - A national-level authority will categorise and register online games.
   - Powers include:
   - Issuing guidelines and codes of practice.
   - Deciding whether a game qualifies as a money game.

- Addressing public grievances.
- Ensuring compliance with the Bill.
- Provides a centralised, expert body to manage the gaming ecosystem, ensuring accountability and transparency.

6. **Offences & Penalties**
   - Strict punishments have been introduced.
   - Offering or facilitating online money games can lead to imprisonment of up to three years and a fine of up to one crore rupees.
   - Financial transactions linked to these games are also punishable with similar penalties.
   - Advertising such games can attract a jail term of up to two years and a fine of up to fifty lakh rupees.
   - Repeat offenders face harsher punishments, including imprisonment of up to five years and fines of up to two crore rupees.
7. **Corporate Liability**
   - Companies and their officers will be held accountable for offences.
   - However, independent directors and non-executive directors, who are not involved in day-to-day decisions, will not be punished if they can show that they acted with due diligence.
8. **Investigation & Enforcement**
   - The Central Government may authorise officers to investigate, search and seize both digital and physical property linked to offences.
   - In certain cases, officers will have the power to enter premises and make arrests without a warrant.
   - Investigations will follow the provisions of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, which governs criminal procedure in India.
9. **Rule-Making Powers**
   - Central Government empowered to frame rules for:
   - Promotion of e-sports and social games.
   - Registration and recognition of online games.
   - Functioning of the Online Gaming Authority.

Benefits of the Bill

- **Boost to Creative Economy –**Strengthens India's position as a global gaming hub, generating jobs and exports.
- **Youth Empowerment –** Encourages teamwork, discipline, and digital careers through e-sports.
- **Safer Digital Space –** Shields families from predatory money games and misleading promises.
- **Global Leadership –** Positions India as a model for responsible digital policy.

The Online Gaming Bill, 2025 balances innovation with responsibility. By banning exploitative money games while encouraging e-sports and safe online gaming, it:

- Protects citizens and families from financial ruin.
- Provides youth with constructive digital opportunities.
- Strengthens India's digital economy and global leadership.
-

Ultimately, it ensures that technology serves society rather than harms it, setting the foundation for a safe, creative, and future-ready digital ecosystem.

NATIONAL POLICY TO PROMOTE GIAHS.

Union government is planning to formulate National Policy to Promote GIAHS.

India has three Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) recognized by FAO:

- Koraput region (Odisha)
- Kuttanad below-sea-level farming system (Kerala)
- Saffron Heritage of Kashmir

These sites preserve unique farming traditions that integrate biodiversity, community participation, and eco-friendly practices for food security and cultural heritage.

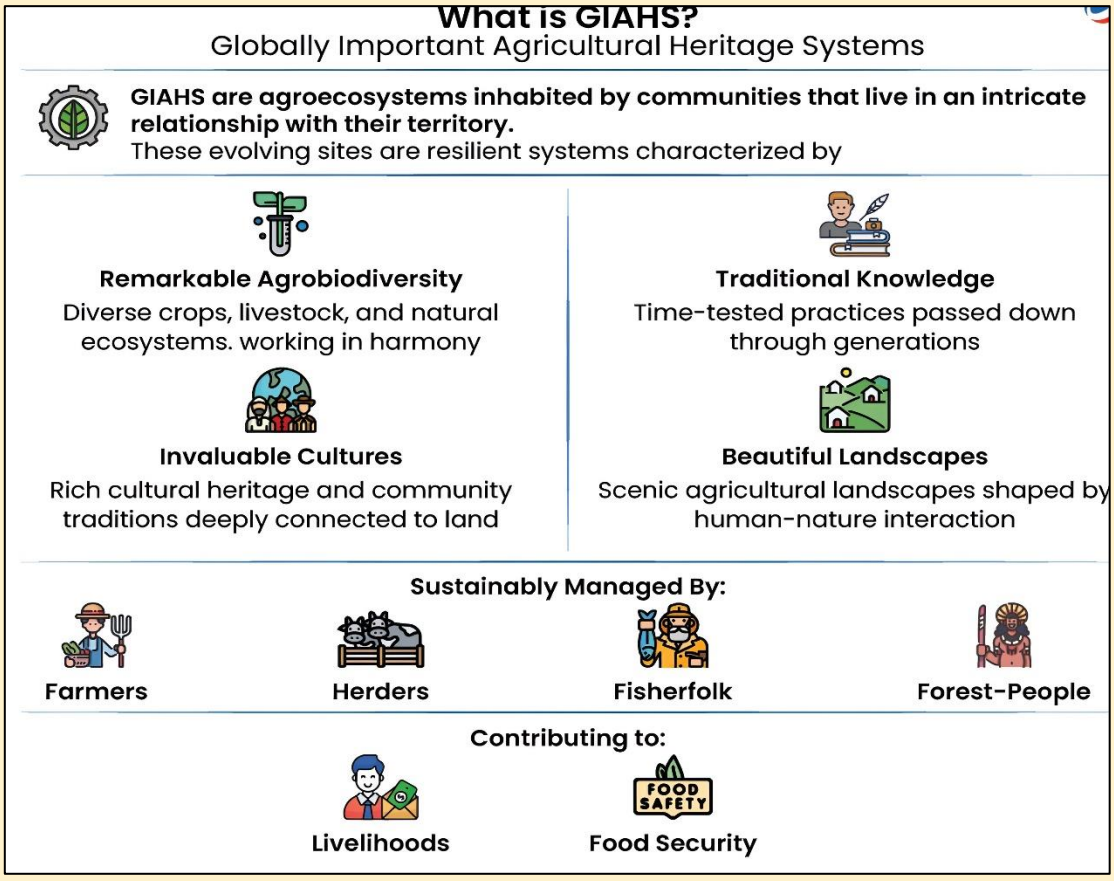
Key Policy Measures

- **Government Support:** Funding through schemes like Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) and Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH).

- **Biodiversity Conservation:**Community seed banks, organic farming, landrace preservation, and branding of local products.

- **Infrastructure & Research:** Paddy infrastructure in Kuttanad, conservation of rice diversity in Koraput, and ecological research initiatives.

- **Legal & Institutional Framework:**Support from agencies like the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority and the National Biodiversity Authority.
- **Local Empowerment:** Training, capacity building, and community-led management of resources.



Strategic Focus

- Mainstreaming GIAHS into national policies and sectoral plans.
- Developing biodiversity databases, documenting traditional knowledge, and promoting agro-eco tourism.
- Enhancing climate resilience through landrace identification and biotechnology.
- Strengthening community participation with tribal knowledge, local seed banks, and farmer-led innovations.

Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS)

- **Concept:** An FAO initiative (2002) to recognize and safeguard traditional agricultural systems that combine biodiversity conservation, resilient ecosystems, and cultural heritage.
- **Features:**
  - Conservation of unique crop varieties and indigenous knowledge.
  - Community participation in sustainable farming.
  - Integration of food security, ecology, and culture.
- **Significance:**
  - Preserves traditional knowledge and agrobiodiversity.
  - Strengthens climate resilience and rural livelihoods.
  - Promotes eco-tourism and market access for local produce.

U.S. SANCTIONS ON ICC OFFICIALS

The United States, under President Donald Trump, imposed sanctions on two judges and two prosecutors of the International Criminal Court (ICC) for pursuing investigations against Israeli leaders and U.S. officials over alleged war crimes. Secretary of State Marco Rubio called the ICC a national security threat, accusing it of politicization and overreach.

The sanctioned officials from France, Fiji, Senegal, and Canada were involved in cases linked to Israel and the U.S. Washington argued the move was necessary to protect sovereignty, though it may hinder ICC's work on war crimes cases.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu welcomed the sanctions, terming them a defense against false allegations. The ICC condemned the decision as an attack on its independence and a setback for global justice.

The court had recently issued arrest warrants against Netanyahu and others for alleged crimes in Gaza. Since 2021, its investigations have shifted focus from U.S.-related cases to crimes committed by Afghan officials.

International Criminal Court (ICC)

- **Establishment**: Created under the Rome Statute (1998); came into force in 2002. Headquartered at The Hague, Netherlands.
- **Mandate:** Prosecutes individuals (not states) for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and crime of aggression.
- **Membership:** 124 countries are parties; notable non-members include the U.S., China, Russia, and India.
- **Jurisdiction:** Acts only when national courts are unwilling or unable to prosecute. Can investigate crimes committed:

  1. In the territory of a member state, or
  2. By nationals of a member state, or
  3. Through UN Security Council referral.

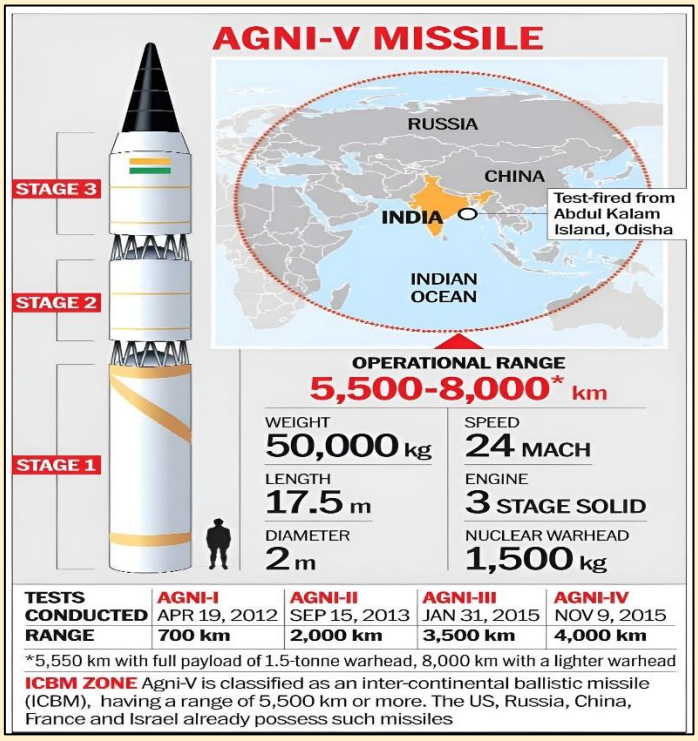
- **Structure:** Composed of the Presidency, Judicial Divisions, Office of the Prosecutor, and Registry.
- **Significance:** Provides a permanent global mechanism for accountability in cases of mass atrocities; strengthens international justice.
- **Criticism:** Accused of political bias, selective justice (focus on African nations), lack of enforcement power, and non-universal acceptance.

AGNI-5 MISSILE

India successfully test-fired its Agni-5 missile from the Integrated Test Range at Chandipur, Odisha

The Defence Ministry confirmed that the launch validated all operational and technical parameters. Developed by DRDO, Agni-5 is classified as an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) with a range of around 5,000 km, designed to meet India's strategic security requirements.

Earlier, on March 11, 2024, India had tested a MIRV-equipped variant of Agni-5, capable of striking multiple targets with independently guided warheads.



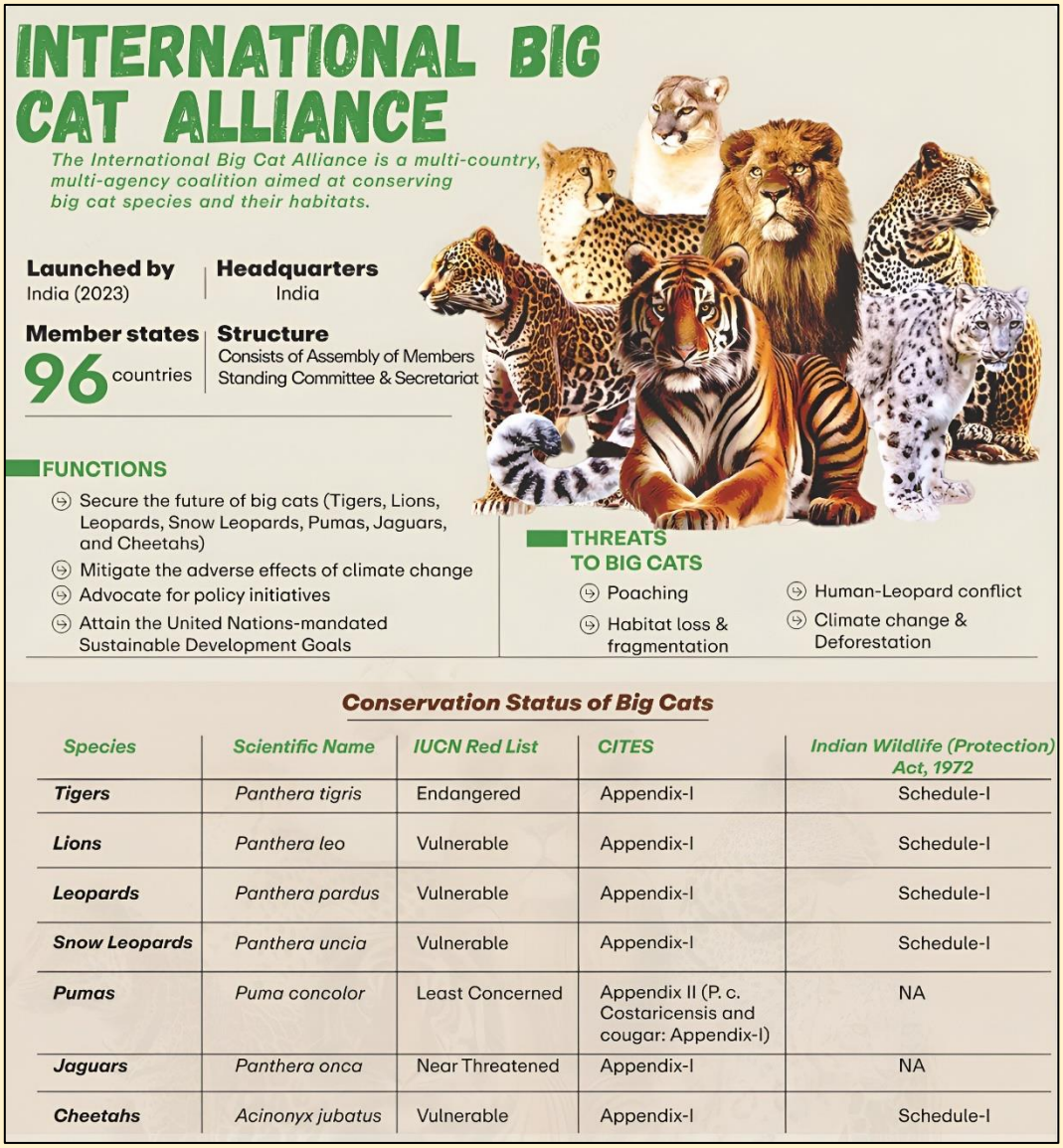
Agni-5 Missile

- **Type:** Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) developed by DRDO.
- **Range:** Around 5,000 km (can cover entire Asia and parts of Europe & Africa).
- **Stages:** Three-stage, solid-fueled missile with road and rail mobility (canisterized for quick launch).
- **Warhead Capability:** Nuclear-capable; latest variant tested with MIRV (Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicle) technology (March 2024) for striking multiple targets.
- **Significance:**
  - Strengthens India's credible minimum deterrence and No First Use (NFU) doctrine.
  - Enhances second-strike capability under India's nuclear triad.
  - Boosts strategic security vis-à-vis China and beyond South Asia.

INTERNATIONAL BIG CAT ALLIANCE (IBCA)

Nepal officially joined the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) in August 2025. This India-led global initiative focuses on the conservation of seven big cat species.

Nepal's diverse wildlife includes the snow leopard, tiger and common leopard. Its membership strengthens international cooperation to protect these iconic animals.



Conservation Status of Big Cats

Species	Scientific Name	IUCN Red List	CITES	Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972
Tigers	*Panthera tigris*	Endangered	Appendix-I	Schedule-I
Lions	*Panthera leo*	Vulnerable	Appendix-I	Schedule-I
Leopards	*Panthera pardus*	Vulnerable	Appendix-I	Schedule-I
Snow Leopards	*Panthera uncia*	Vulnerable	Appendix-I	Schedule-I
Pumas	*Puma concolor*	Least Concerned	Appendix II (P. c. Costaricensis and cougar: Appendix-I)	NA
Jaguars	*Panthera onca*	Near Threatened	Appendix-I	NA
Cheetahs	*Acinonyx jubatus*	Vulnerable	Appendix-I	Schedule-I

Background

The IBCA was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 9 April 2023 in Mysuru. It aims to conserve seven big cat species – tiger, lion, leopard, snow leopard, cheetah, jaguar and puma.

The alliance includes over 90 countries, both range and non-range nations, united by a shared goal of big cat conservation. The Union Cabinet approved the IBCA's establishment in February 2024 with headquarters in India.

Objectives and Functions of IBCA

IBCA seeks to create synergy among member countries and stakeholders. It consolidates conservation expertise and shares best practices globally. The alliance provides a common repository of technical knowledge and financial resources. It also strengthens existing intergovernmental platforms and networks focused on species-specific conservation. The alliance supports ecological security and climate change mitigation through big cat protection.

Significance of Nepal's Membership

Nepal is home to three big cat species, making it a vital partner. Its joining enhances global collaboration and resource sharing. Nepal's forests and mountains serve as key habitats for snow leopards and tigers.

The alliance congratulated Nepal for its commitment to ecological security. This step aids in reversing population declines and securing habitats for future generations.

India's Role in IBCA

India has decades of experience in big cat conservation, especially with Project Tiger. It also leads conservation efforts for lions, snow leopards and leopards.

Through the National Tiger Conservation Authority and Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, India coordinates the IBCA. India's conservation models serve as examples for other member countries.

Global Impact

The IBCA encourages a unified approach to big cat conservation worldwide. It encourages international cooperation beyond borders. By mobilising resources and expertise, it aims to halt the decline of big cats.

The alliance also addresses threats from habitat loss and climate change. Its success depends on active participation from member countries.

The International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) officially signed an agreement with India to set up headquarters and main office within the country. This happened more than two months after IBCA became a full international organisation based on a treaty between countries.

The agreement allows India to host the IBCA's main office and gives it the support needed for its efficient functioning. The agreement also includes details about visas, special rights and protections for IBCA staff and offices, how the agreement will begin, and other related matters.

Background and Formation

The IBCA was proposed by Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi in 2019. It was officially launched in April 2023 during the 50th anniversary of Project Tiger. The alliance became a legal entity after five countries ratified its framework agreement in September 2023. These countries include India, Liberia, Eswatini, Somalia, and Nicaragua.

Objectives of IBCA

The primary objectives of the IBCA are to combat illegal wildlife trade, conserve natural habitats, and mobilise resources for conservation efforts.

The alliance also aims to address the impacts of climate change on big cats. It promotes policies that align biodiversity conservation with local community needs.

Focus Species

The IBCA focuses on the conservation of seven big cat species. These include the tiger, lion, leopard, snow leopard, puma, jaguar, and cheetah.

Among these seven, five of them (tiger, lion, leopard, snow leopard, and cheetah) are found in India. The puma and jaguar, while important, are not native to the Indian subcontinent.

Member Countries and Governance

Currently, the IBCA has four member countries. These are India, Nicaragua, Eswatini, and Somalia. The governance structure includes an Assembly of Members, a Standing Committee, and a Secretariat based in India.

The framework is similar to that of the International Solar Alliance (ISA). A Director-General is appointed by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) to oversee operations.

Financial Support

The Government of India has allocated a budget of Rs 150 crore for the IBCA. This funding is intended to support infrastructure development and ongoing operational costs for five years, from 2023-24 to 2028-29. This financial backing is crucial for achieving the IBCA's conservation goals.

Importance of Big Cats

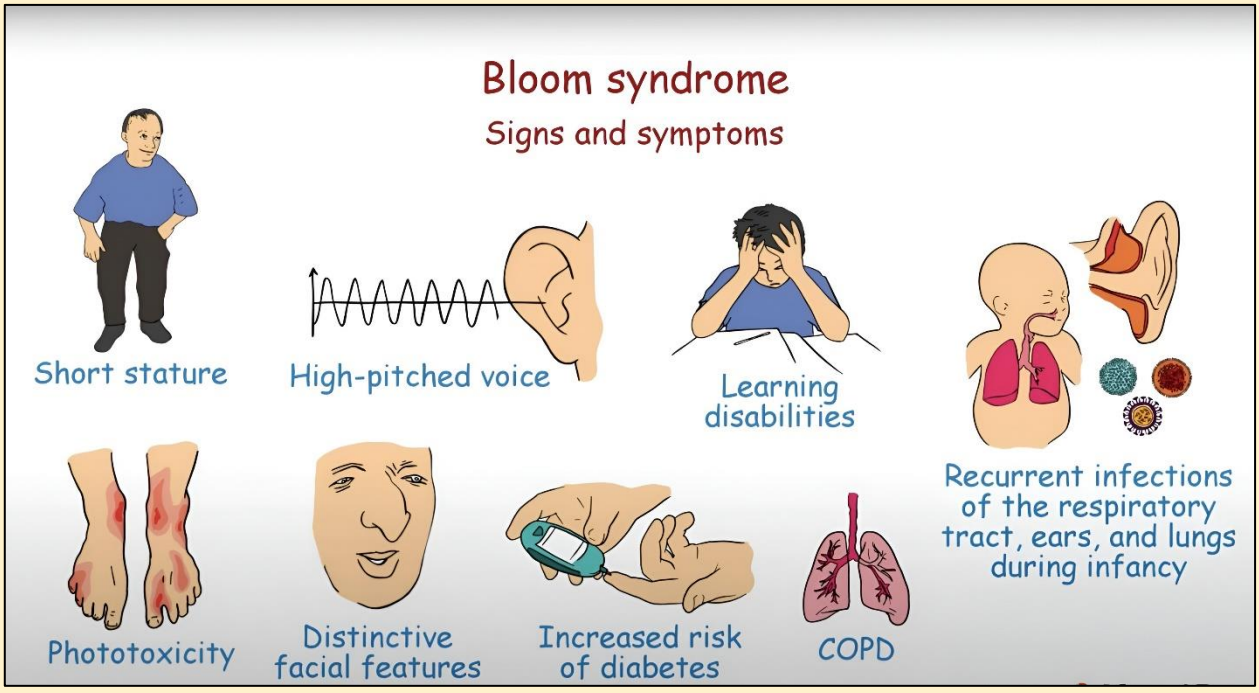
Big cats play a vital role in ecosystems. They are considered keystone species, meaning their presence is critical to maintaining the health of their habitats.

However, these species face numerous threats, including poaching, habitat loss, and illegal wildlife trade. The Indian subcontinent has been home to several big cat species, but conservation efforts are essential to ensure their survival.

BLOOM SYNDROME

Bloom Syndrome is a rare genetic disorder with fewer than 300 cases reported worldwide. Recently, a 12-year-old girl in Chennai underwent a bone marrow transplant using stem cells from her younger brother, marking medical intervention in India.

This disorder affects DNA repair mechanisms, leading to multiple health challenges and a high risk of cancer.



Genetic Basis and Inheritance

Bloom Syndrome is caused by mutations in the BLM gene. This gene produces a protein essential for maintaining DNA structure during replication and repair.

When mutated, cells lose the ability to fix damaged DNA, causing abnormal cell growth. The condition is inherited in an autosomal recessive pattern.

Both parents must carry the mutation for a child to be affected. It is most common among the Ashkenazi Jewish population but occurs worldwide.

Signs and Symptoms

Symptoms vary widely but often include poor growth before and after birth. Affected individuals typically have below-average height and head size, with distinct facial features such as a narrow face, prominent ears, and a high-pitched voice.

Skin sensitivity to sunlight causes red rashes and abnormal pigmentation. Insulin resistance can lead to diabetes. Immune deficiencies increase vulnerability to infections like ear and lung infections and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

Other issues include hypothyroidism, developmental delays, and fertility problems in adults. Intellectual abilities are usually normal but learning disabilities may occur.

Health Complications

People with Bloom Syndrome face a markedly increased risk of cancer, often developing it early in life. By age 40, over 80% develop cancers such as leukaemia, lymphoma, gastrointestinal cancers, skin cancer, Wilms tumour, and osteosarcoma.

The risk of cancer is 150 to 300 times higher than in the general population. These cancers appear more frequently and at younger ages.

Diagnosis and Management

Diagnosis is confirmed through cytogenetic analysis, which detects chromosome abnormalities. There is no cure for Bloom Syndrome. Treatment focuses on managing symptoms and preventing complications.

This includes careful fluid management in infants, antibiotics for infections, immune globulin therapy for immune deficiencies, and regular monitoring for diabetes and thyroid problems. Patients are advised to avoid sun exposure and have frequent dermatological check-ups. Cancer screening is essential due to the high risk.

Bloom Syndrome in India

Though rare, cases have been reported in India. Medical literature documents a few instances, including children and adults with respiratory complications and other symptoms. The recent bone marrow transplant in Chennai marks advances in treatment options available in the country.

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