KERALA STATE CIVIL SERVICE ACADEMY

Established under Centre for Continuing Education Kerala (CCEK)

October 25 to October 31, 2025

WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

MAGAZINE

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Monthly Current Affairs Magazine

NATIONAL DISASTER RESPONSE FORCE

Ahead of Cyclone Montha's landfall on Tuesday night, the National Disaster Response Force deployed 25 teams across Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Puducherry, and Tamil Nadu, while another 20 teams were on standby.

About National Disaster Response Force (NDRF):

- Establishment: NDRF was established under section 44 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005.
- Role: It is a multi-skilled and highly specialist force capable of dealing with all types of natural and man-made disasters like Floods, Cyclone, Earthquakes, Landslides, Building-collapse, Trains and road accidents etc.
- Objective: It is aimed at specialized response to natural and man-made disasters.
- Nodal ministry: It functions under the purview of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and is headed by a Director General.
- Expansion: Initially established in 2006 with 8 Battalions, the NDRF has now expanded to 16 Battalions, drawn from the CAPF, viz Border Security Force, Central Reserve Police Force, Central Industrial Security Force, Indo-Tibetan Border Police, Sashastra Seema Bal and Assam Rifles.
- Importance: The strategic deployment of NDRF resources, characterized by "proactive availability" and "pre-positioning" during imminent disaster situations, has proven instrumental in mitigating damages caused by natural calamities across the country.
- It has also been very active in responding to natural disaster under multi-lateral and bi-lateral agreement at international level.
- Notable works: The NDRF teams responded during triple disaster (Earthquake, Tsunami and Radiation Leakage) of Fukushima, Japan in 2011 and during Earthquake in Nepal in 2015.

MAHA MEDTECH MISSION

The Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), in collaboration with the ICMR and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, has launched the Maha MedTech Mission to boost India's medical technology ecosystem.

About Maha MedTech Mission:

- Nature: The Mission for Advancement in High-Impact Areas (MAHA)–MedTech is a national initiative to accelerate innovation, manufacturing, and commercialization of cutting-edge medical technologies in India, enhancing access and affordability in healthcare.

- Launch: It is jointly launched by the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

- Objective: It aims to reduce India's dependence on high-cost medical imports, strengthen domestic capacity, and ensure equitable access to affordable and high-quality medical devices and diagnostics aligned with national health priorities such as tuberculosis, cancer, and neonatal care.

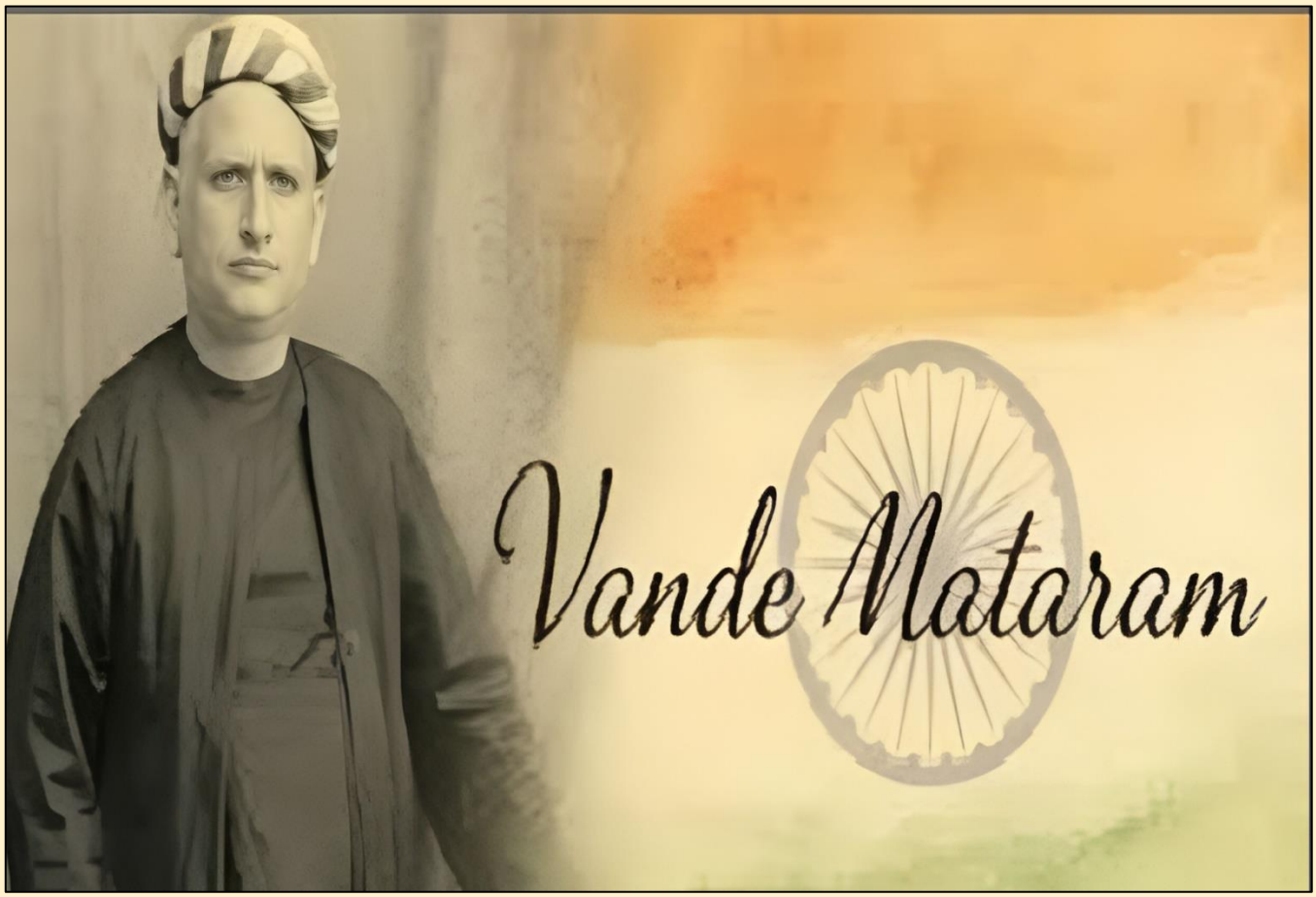
- Funding: It provides Rs. 5–25 crore per project (up to ₹50 crore for exceptional cases) for startups, MSMEs, academic, hospital, and industry collaborations.

- Coverage: It covers devices, diagnostics, implants, AI/ML-based tools, robotics, and assistive technologies.

- Enabling Frameworks: It includes Patent Mitra for IP protection, MedTech Mitra for regulatory clearances, and a Clinical Trial Network for validation.

VANDE MATARAM @150 YEARS

PM Modi acknowledged 150 years of 'Vande Mataram' in Mann ki Baat episode



About Vande Mataram:

- Meaning: Vande Mataram (meaning "I bow to thee, Mother") is India's national song, symbolizing reverence to the motherland and evoking patriotism and unity among citizens.
- Composition: It was composed in Sanskritised Bengali by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay in the 1870s and it was first published in his novel Anandamath (1882).
- First public rendition: The song's first public rendition was by Rabindranath Tagore at the 1896 Congress Session. It became the anthem of India's freedom struggle, sung in protests and revolutionary gatherings despite being banned by the British.
- Adoption as national song: The Indian National Congress in 1937 adopted its first two stanzas as the National Song, balancing inclusivity and secular appeal.
- Comparison to national anthem: On January 24, 1950, the Constituent Assembly accorded Vande Mataram equal honour to the National Anthem "Jana Gana Mana."
- Current Status: It is recognized by the Government of India as equal in stature to the National Anthem and its instrumental version is played at the closing of every Parliament session.

MISTHI SCHEME

While 19,220 hectares of land under MISTHI scheme has been taken up in Gujarat, only 10 hectares of mangrove plantation has been taken up in West Bengal which accounts for about 42% of mangrove cover in country.

About MISHTI Scheme:

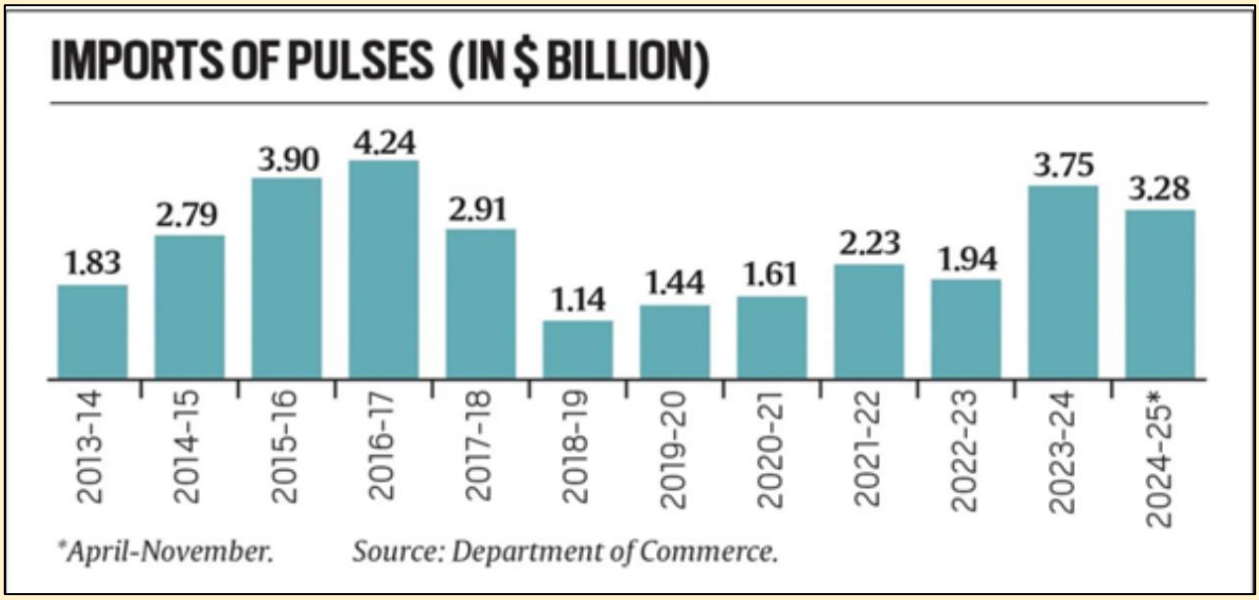
- Nature: The Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats & Tangible Incomes (MISHTI) scheme is a government-led initiative aimed at increasing the mangrove cover along the coastline and on salt pan lands.
- Launch: It was launched after India joined the 'Mangrove Alliance for Climate' launched during the 27th Conference of Parties (COP27) to the UNFCCC held in November 2022.
- Objective: It aims to restore mangrove forests by undertaking mangrove reforestation/afforestation measures along the coast of India across various states.
- Nodal Ministry: It comes under the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change.
- Focus areas: It is primarily focused on the Sundarbans delta, Hooghly Estuary in West Bengal and other bay parts of the country, but also includes other wetlands in the country.
- Financial assistance: Under this scheme the government is providing financial assistance to local communities to undertake mangrove plantation activities.
- Leverage of other schemes: It leverages the strengths and provisions of different government schemes and initiatives such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) Fund and other relevant sources.
- Participatory mechanism: The plantation activities are carried out in a participatory manner, involving local communities and NGOs, to ensure sustainability and community ownership of the initiative.

MISSION FOR AATMANIRBHARTA IN PULSES

India, the **world's largest producer and consumer of pulses,** faces a persistent demand–supply gap due to low yields and climatic risks. The **Mission for Aatmanirbharta in Pulses (2025–31)** aims to enhance productivity, reduce imports, and ensure farmer profitability.

Main Objectives and Features of the Mission

- **Launched in 2025** with a **financial outlay of ₹11,440 crore**, the mission targets **self-reliance in pulses** by 2030–31.
- **Production goal:** Increase pulses output by **45%**, from 242 lakh MT (2023–24) to **350 lakh MT** (2030–31).
- **Area expansion:** From **275 to 310 lakh ha** (+13%); **yield increase** from **881 to 1130 kg/ha** (+28%).
- **Focus crops: Tur (Arhar), Urad, and Masoor**, covering 34% of total pulses area.
- **Key interventions:**
  - **Climate-resilient seed varieties** and improved genetics.
  - **Protein enhancement** and yield improvement through R&D.
  - **Post-harvest management and storage upgrades** to reduce losses.
  - **Remunerative pricing** via assured procurement under **PM-AASHA**.
  - **Cluster-based approach:** Each cluster (≥10 ha) to serve as a model value-chain node.



Current Status and Challenges in Pulses Sector

- **Production pattern:** Rabi pulses dominate (60% of production).
  - **Top states:** Madhya Pradesh (59.74 LMT), Maharashtra (40 LMT), Rajasthan (33 LMT), Uttar Pradesh (31 LMT).
  - **Major crops:** Gram, Moong, Tur, Urad, Masoor.
- **Low productivity:** India's yield (881 kg/ha) is far below **Canada (2200 kg/ha)** and **China (1815 kg/ha)** due to rainfed cultivation, fragmented holdings, and poor technology adoption.
- **Import dependence:** Despite being the largest producer, India **imports 2–3 million tonnes annually** from Myanmar, Tanzania, Mozambique, Australia, and Canada to meet consumption needs.

- **Rising demand:** NITI Aayog projects demand at **268 LMT by 2030** and **293 LMT by 2047**, highlighting the need for sustained domestic growth.

Significance of the Mission

- **Nutritional Security:** Pulses are a **key protein source** for India's largely vegetarian population.
- **Economic Security:** Reduces import bills and improves farm incomes via assured procurement.
- **Climate Resilience:** Encourages **crop diversification** and optimises use of **rice fallow lands** in states like Bihar, West Bengal, and Chhattisgarh.
- **Regional Balance:** Focus on **aspirational, LWE, border, and NE districts**promotes inclusive agricultural growth.
- **Value Chain Development:** Integration of production, storage, and market linkages fosters agri-entrepreneurship and reduces post-harvest losses.

Criticisms and Challenges

- **Implementation hurdles:** Cluster-based approach requires strong institutional coordination across states.
- **Procurement inefficiencies:** Past experiences with **PM-AASHA** show delays and coverage gaps.
- **Market volatility:** Dependence on MSP procurement may distort prices if not matched by demand.
- **Technology adoption:** Small farmers may find it difficult to access high-yield seeds and mechanisation.
- **Climate variability:** Pulses are sensitive to erratic monsoons, drought, and pest attacks.

Reforms and Way Forward

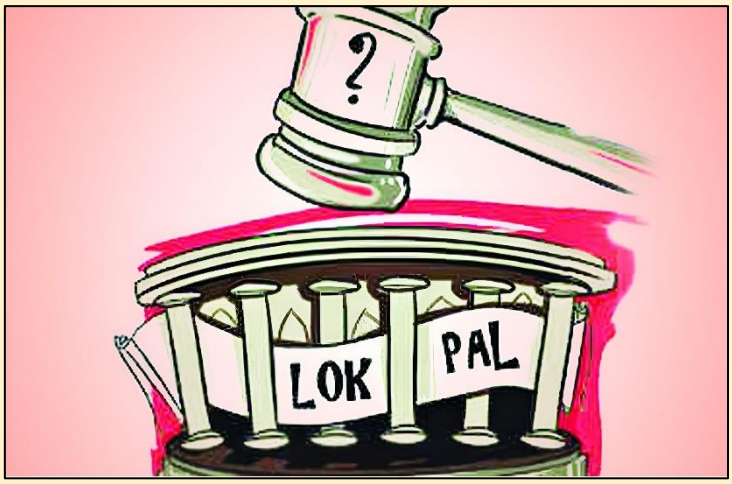
- **R&D investment:** Strengthen ICAR and IIPR-led research for high-yield, drought-tolerant, and pest-resistant varieties.
- **Digital integration:** Use **Aadhaar-enabled procurement** and **geo-tagged clusters**for transparency.
- **Private participation:** Incentivise agritech startups, FPOs, and cooperatives for storage, processing, and marketing.
- **Crop insurance and irrigation:** Expand PMFBY and micro-irrigation coverage in pulses regions.
- **Nutrition-sensitive agriculture:** Link pulses production with **Mid-Day Meal and ICDS programmes** to stabilise demand and ensure nutritional impact.

The **Mission for Aatmanirbharta in Pulses** marks a strategic step toward food and nutritional sovereignty. Its success hinges on **bridging the yield gap**, ensuring **market assurance**, and promoting **technology-driven inclusivity**.

A resilient pulses ecosystem would not only achieve self-reliance but also strengthen India's rural economy and environmental sustainability.

LOKPAL

The number of complaints, Lokpal has received since it began functioning in 2019-20 has dropped from a peak of 2,469 in 2022-23 to just 233 this year till September.

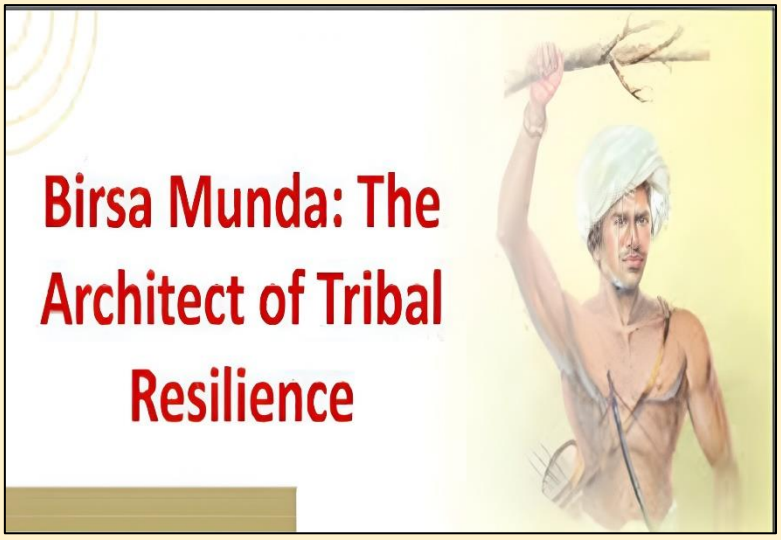


About Lokpal:

- Nature: The Lokpal and Lokayukta Act, 2013 provided for the establishment of Lokpal for the Union. It is a statutory body without any constitutional status.
- Work: They perform the function of an "ombudsman" and inquire into allegations of corruption against certain public functionaries and for related matters.
- Composition: Lokpal is a multi-member body, that consists of one chairperson and a maximum of 8 members. Out of the maximum eight members, half will be judicial members and minimum 50% of the Members will be from SC/ ST/ OBC/ Minorities and women.
- Eligibility: Chairperson of the Lokpal should be either the former Chief Justice of India or the former Judge of Supreme Court having special knowledge and expertise of minimum 25 years in the matters relating to anti-corruption policy, public administration, vigilance, etc. The judicial member of the Lokpal either a former Judge of the Supreme Court or a former Chief Justice of a High Court.
- Term: The term of office for Lokpal Chairman and Members is 5 years or till the age of 70 years.
- Appointment: The members are appointed by the president on the recommendation of a Selection Committee.
- Selection panel: The selection committee is composed of the Prime Minister who is the Chairperson, Speaker of Lok Sabha, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, Chief Justice of India or a Judge nominated by him/her and One eminent jurist.
- Powers: Lokpal has powers of confiscation of assets, proceeds, receipts and benefits arisen or procured by means of corruption in special circumstances.
- It has the power to recommend transfer or suspension of public servant connected with allegation of corruption. It also has the power to give directions to prevent the destruction of records during the preliminary inquiry.
- Jurisdiction: The jurisdiction of Lokpal includes Prime Minister, Ministers, members of Parliament, Groups A, B, C and D officers and officials of Central Government.
- However, it does not have jurisdiction over Ministers and MPs in the matter of anything said in Parliament or a vote given there.
- Exception: The Lokpal does not have jurisdiction over Ministers and MPs in the matter of anything said in Parliament or a vote given there.

BIRSA MUNDA

In the run-up to the fifth Janjatiya Gaurav Divas on November 15, which will mark the end of tribal icon Birsa Munda's 150th birth anniversary, the Union government has written to the States, saying they "must organise" commemorative events at the State and district levels from November 1 to 15.

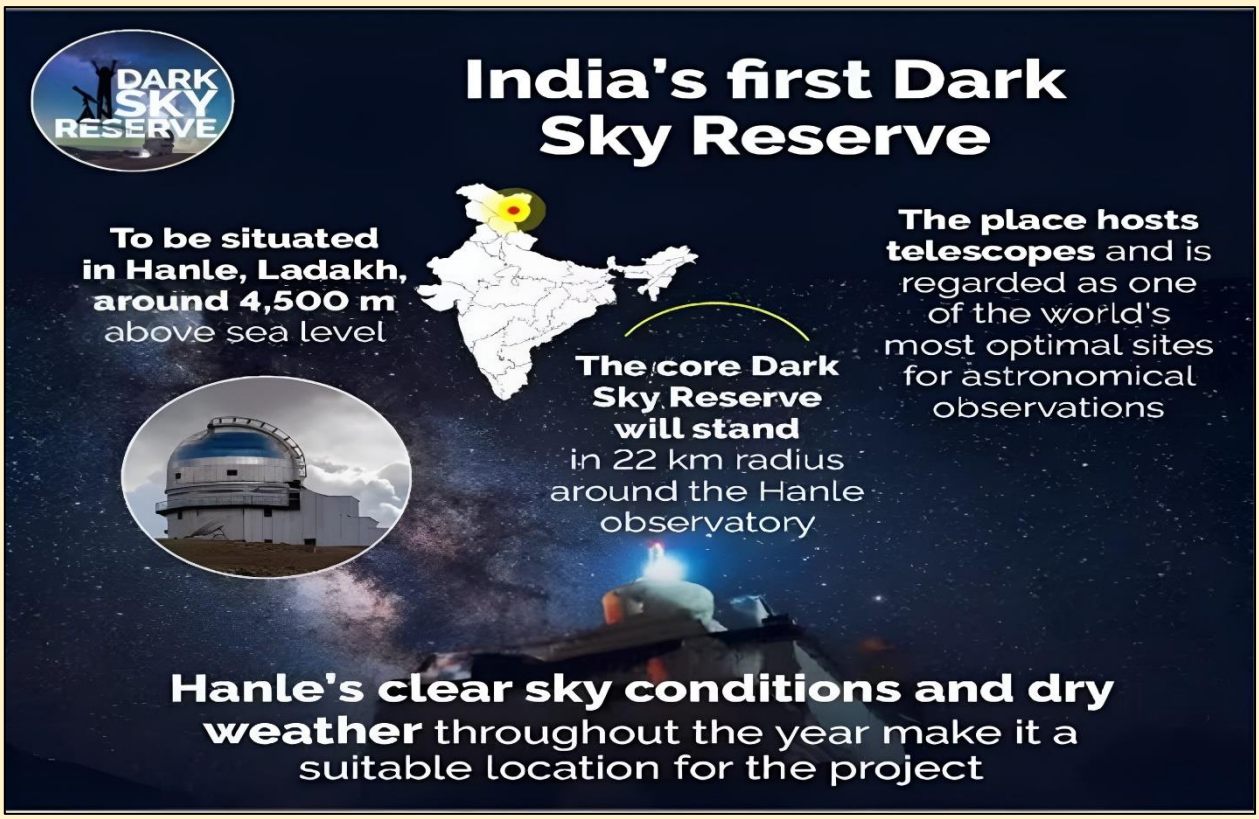


About Birsa Munda:

- Birth: He was born in Ulihatu on 15th November 1875, now in Jharkhand's Khunti district, to a poor sharecropper (sajhadar) family. He belonged to the Munda tribe, a major Adivasi community of the Chotanagpur plateau.
- Education: He attended local schools under the guidance of Jaipal Nag. He then studied at a missionary school and later at BEL school in Chaibasa for four years. He was also influenced by Christianity but later rejected it due to cultural and religious differences.
- Foundation of separate sect: He was influenced by Vaishnavism and Anand Panre (a munshi), leading him to form his own spiritual sect. He became known as Bhagwan (God) by his followers and founded the Birsait sect. He is lovingly called "Dharti Aaba" (Father of the Earth) by his followers.
- Teachings: He promoted monotheism through the worship of Singhbonga, a tribal deity. He campaigned against alcoholism, belief in black magic and superstitions, and forced labour (beth begari). He encouraged clean living, hygiene, and spiritual unity. He also taught pride in tribal culture and community land ownership.
- Fight against British exploitation: British land policies destroyed the Khuntkatti land system, where land was communally owned. Birsa Munda educated his people about these injustices and urged them to reclaim their rights.
- Launch of Ulugan: He gave the call for Ulgulan (rebellion) and urged tribals to stop paying rent. He also gave the slogan of resistance: "Abua raj ete jana, maharani raj tundu jana" (Let the queen's rule end, and our rule begin).
- Course of revolt: The revolt began in 1895 as a response to land encroachment and forced labour policies imposed by the British Raj. In 1895, Birsa Munda was arrested on charges of rioting and jailed for two years. After his release in 1897, he resumed his efforts, moving village to village to gather support and promote the vision of a tribal-led kingdom.
- Death: Birsa Munda died of cholera in 1900, marking the end of the active phase of the revolt.
- Legacy: Since 2021, 15 November is celebrated as Janjatiya Gaurav Divas (Tribal Pride Day). Further, the only tribal leader honoured by the Parliament of India through the installation of his portrait in its museum is Birsa Munda.

HANLE DARK SKY RESERVE

With the motto 'come for the mountains, stay for the stars,' the Hanle Dark Sky Reserve is showing how the Himalayan skies are being preserved today and will be carried forward for future generations.

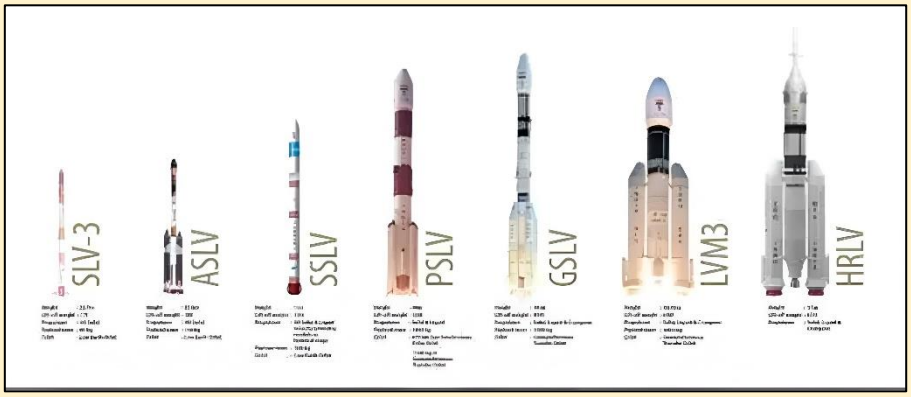


About Hanle Dark Sky Reserve:

- First of its kind: Located in Ladakh, Hanle is now protected as India's first dark sky reserve.
- Management: It is managed as part of a memorandum of understanding between the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) in Bengaluru, the Union Territory of Ladakh, and the Ladakh Hill Development Council in Leh.
- Located within wildlife sanctuary: The Hanle Dark Sky Reserve, a unique government-funded and science-driven sustainable development initiative, is located within the Changthang Wildlife Sanctuary, surrounding the Indian Astronomical Observatory, a research facility operated by IIA.
- Telescopes used: It has two optical telescopes, the Himalayan Chandra Telescope and the GROWTH India Telescope (with IIT Bombay), and two Cherenkov telescopes — the High Altitude Gamma-Ray Telescope Array (with the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research) and the Major Atmospheric Cherenkov Experiment (with the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre).
- Use of astro-tourism: In support of astrotourism, IIA scientists have trained 25 local youth, 18 of whom are women, as "Astronomy Ambassadors." These ambassadors are equipped with telescopes and taught basic astronomy concepts. The night-sky tours they lead for visitors help them with a part-time income.

GSAT 7R

ISRO will launch military communications satellite CMS-03 on November 2 from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota. The CMS-03 communication satellite, also known as GSAT-7R, will be launched by the Launch Vehicle Mark 3 (LVM3).



About GSAT-7R:

- Nature: It is an upcoming Indian military communication satellite for the Indian Navy, designed to replace the GSAT-7 (Rukmini) satellite.
- Launch: Originally slated for a 2024 launch, the launch is now scheduled for November 2, 2025, using the LVM-3 rocket.
- Objective: It will provide secure, multi-band communication services for naval assets like ships, submarines, and aircraft, enhancing secure, multi-band communication for the Navy's blue-water operations.
- Multi-band satellite: It is a multi-band communication satellite that will provide services over a wide oceanic region including the Indian landmass.
- Heaviest communication satellite: It weighs about 4400 kg and it will be the heaviest communication satellite to be launched to Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO) from Indian soil.

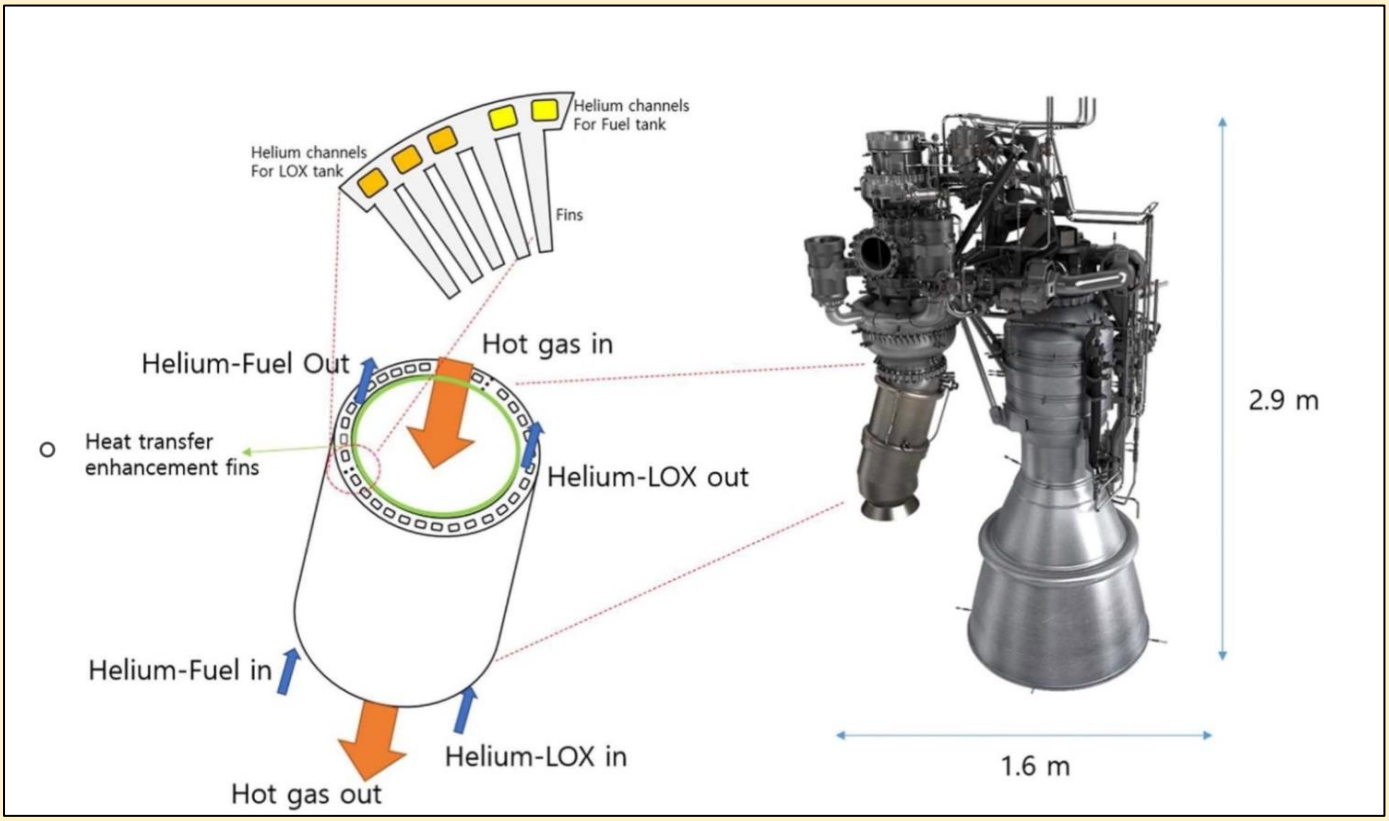
About LVM-3 Rocket:

- Nature: It is India's most powerful launcher built entirely with domestic technology.
- Stages:
    - The first (or bottom most stage) is in the form of 2 S200 boosters straps to the sides of the rocket body. They combust a solid fuel called hydroxyl-terminated polybutadiene,
    - The second stage is powered by Vikas Engines, which combust a liquid fuel, either nitrogen tetroxide or unsymmetrical dimethylhydrazine.
    - The Uppermost final stage is Powered by a cryogenic engine. It combusts liquified hydrogen with liquified oxygen.

- Payload capacity: It can lift up to 8 tonnes in low earth orbit.
- Evolution: Since its first flight in 2014, it has enabled India to pursue heavy-lift geosynchronous missions with complete strategic autonomy. Future variants of LVM3 now under development are aimed at reducing costs and improving performance through new technologies like electric propulsion and recoverable first stages.
- Major missions launched:
    - Chandrayaan-2 Mission
    - GSAT-29 Mission
    - GSAT-19 Mission
    - CARE Mission

HELIUM

When cooled to just a few degrees above absolute zero, helium becomes a superfluid and can move freely without getting stuck, something impossible for any normal fluid.



- Nature: It is an inert gas and does not react with other substances or combust.
- Atomic number: Its atomic number is 2, making it the second lightest element after hydrogen.
- Uniqueness: Helium has a very low boiling point (-268.9° C), allowing it to remain a gas even in super-cold environments.
- Non-toxic: The gas is non-toxic, but cannot be breathed on its own, because it displaces the oxygen humans need for respiration.
- Space technology: Helium is used to pressurize fuel tanks, ensuring fuel flows to the rocket's engines without interruption; and for cooling systems. As fuel and oxidiser are burned in the rocket's engines, helium fills the resulting empty space in the tanks, maintaining the overall pressure inside.
- Easy detection of leaks: Its small atomic size and low molecular weight mean its atoms can escape through small gaps or seals in storage tanks and fuel systems. But because there is very little helium in the Earth's atmosphere, leaks can be easily detected – making the gas important for spotting potential faults in a rocket or spacecraft's fuel systems.

SJ-100

The Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Russia's United Aircraft Corporation (UAC) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding for production of civil commuter aircraft SJ-100.

- Nature: It is a new generation short-haul jet aircraft of Russian origin. It is a twin-engine, narrow-body aircraft.
- Design: Earlier called the Sukhoi Superjet 100, it originally was designed by the now-merged Russian aircraft company Sukhoi Civil Aircraft.
- Operation: The aircrafts are being operated by more than 16 airlines across the world, nine of them being from Russia.
- Uses: The aircraft is primarily used for commercial purposes. It can operate at extreme weather conditions, from -55 degrees Celsius to +45 degrees Celsius.
- Seating capacity: It is capable of accommodating 103 seats and has a flight range of 3,530 kilometres. The aircraft has been touted as having low operating costs for airlines.
- Significance for India: The SJ-100 can be a game changer for short-haul connectivity under the UDAN Scheme and marks a major stride towards achieving 'Aatmanirbharta' in civil aviation.

MEGREAP

Rooted in its natural wealth and community-driven governance, Meghalaya has launched an ambitious initiative — the Regenerative Economies through Accelerated & Inclusive Enterprises in Meghalaya (MegREAP) — as part of its vision to build a $10 billion green economy by 2028.

- MegREAP stands for Regenerative Economies through Accelerated & Inclusive Enterprises in Meghalaya.
- The initiative was launched in August 2025 under the Meghalaya Basin Development Authority (MBDA).
- Meghalaya aims to become a $10 billion green economy by 2028.
- Over 78% of Meghalaya's area is under forest cover, among the highest in India.

The MegREAP cell, notified in August 2025 under the Meghalaya Basin Development Authority (MBDA), aims to accelerate inclusive, climate-resilient growth through coordinated efforts across sectors.

Integrating Climate, Livelihoods and Markets

MegREAP functions as a collaborative platform bringing together departments, missions and partners to work at the intersection of climate, livelihood, finance and markets. It seeks to foster a regenerative model of development that values natural and cultural capital while improving livelihoods.

Development Commissioner and MBDA CEO Sampath Kumar said that the initiative would "cultivate a mindset shift" among citizens, empowering communities to build resilient, self-sustaining economies aligned with the State's environmental priorities.

Building on Meghalaya's Green Legacy

Meghalaya's environmental initiatives already include India's first statewide Payment for Ecosystem Services programme and the formulation of forest management plans for over one lakh hectares of forests.

The State has also established a Climate Change Council chaired by the Chief Minister to coordinate and oversee developmental and climate-related programmes. MegREAP builds upon these efforts to align local development with global climate and biodiversity goals.

Harnessing Community Ownership and Natural Capital

With 78 per cent of its area under forest cover, Meghalaya is among India's greenest States.

The MegREAP initiative seeks to transform this natural abundance into sustainable economic value by strengthening community ownership and linking local resources to broader markets. Wankit Swer, General Manager at MBDA, noted that MegREAP would leverage sectors such as eco-tourism, clean energy, forest-based enterprises, and sustainable agriculture to advance inclusive growth.

Bamboo Villages: A Sustainable Enterprise Model

As part of MegREAP, MBDA is partnering with Common Ground — comprising Vrutti, Living Landscapes, and the Bamboo Village Trust — to develop Bamboo Villages across the State.

The initiative aims to transform bamboo into a sustainable economic driver, supporting livelihoods while maintaining ecological balance. By integrating innovation with traditional practices, Meghalaya envisions a regenerative economy that ensures prosperity without compromising its ecological integrity.

AMAZONFACE PROJECT

Scientists in Brazil have launched the AmazonFACE "climate time machine" experiment near Manaus to study how the Amazon rainforest will respond to future levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide.

- AmazonFACE (Free-Air CO_2 Enrichment) is a **large-scale climate simulation project**designed to assess how **tropical rainforests**—especially the Amazon—will react to elevated CO_2 levels expected by **2050–2060**. It is the **first experiment of its kind in tropical forests**.

How It Works?

- Six **steels tower rings** are installed around groups of **50–70 mature trees**.
- In three rings, trees are **fumigated with CO_2** concentrations matching **future climate forecasts**, while the remaining serve as control plots.
- Continuous sensors record data on **photosynthesis, oxygen release, and water vapor exchange** every 10 minutes.
- The goal is to recreate the **"atmosphere of the future"** and observe ecosystem-level responses.

Key Features:

- **Location:** Conducted near Manaus, Brazil, supported by INPA (National Institute for Amazon Research) and Universidade Estadual de Campinas, with collaboration from the UK government.
- **Scientific Innovation:** First large-scale FACE experiment in a **natural tropical forest**, extending earlier FACE trials in temperate regions like the U.S.
- **Continuous Monitoring:** Real-time environmental data tracking rain, storms, CO_2 absorption, and respiration.
- **Climate Modelling Application:** Helps predict changes in forest carbon storage, biodiversity, and resilience under future atmospheric conditions.
- **Policy Linkage:** Provides crucial input for climate policy deliberations at COP30, especially regarding rainforest conservation and carbon budgeting.

Significance:

- **Climate Adaptation Insight:** Helps predict how the Amazon rainforest will respond to rising CO_2 levels, guiding global climate adaptation strategies.
- **Scientific Breakthrough:** Marks the world's first large-scale CO_2 enrichment experiment in a tropical rainforest ecosystem, expanding the scope of climate modeling.
- **Policy Relevance:** Provides critical data for COP30 negotiations and strengthens Brazil's leadership in global climate science and carbon sequestration research.

REHABILITATION COUNCIL OF INDIA (RCI)

- In a decisive move, the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) has announced a sweeping set of reforms designed to bring transparency, efficiency and inclusivity to the rehabilitation ecosystem across the country.

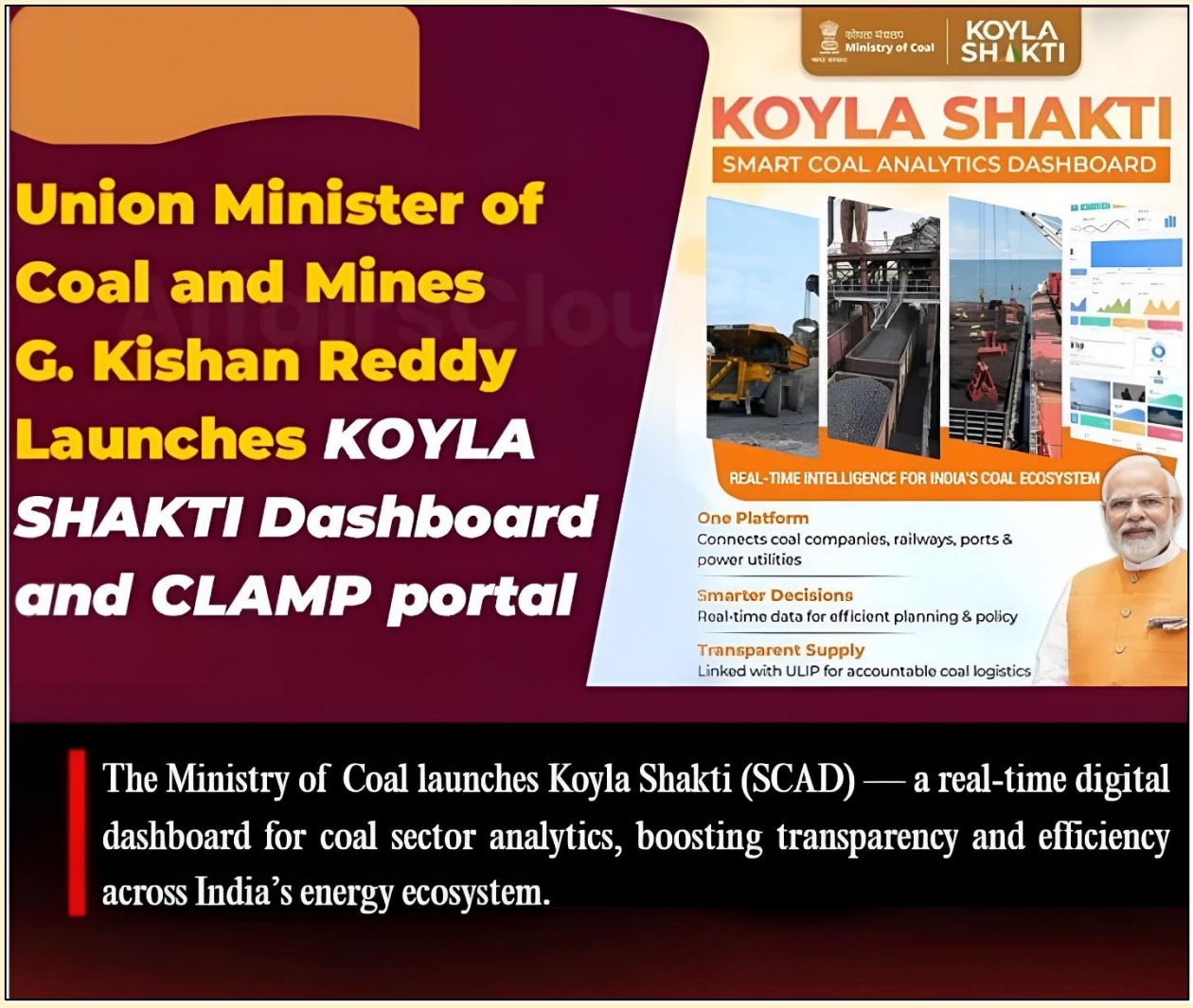
About Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI):

- Nature: It is a statutory body established by an Act of Parliament.
- Establishment: It was set up as a registered society in 1986. In 1992 the RCI Act was enacted by Parliament and it became a Statutory Body in 1993. The Act was amended by Parliament in 2000 to make it more broad-based.
- Objective: It aims to regulate and monitor services given to persons with disabilities, to standardise syllabi and to maintain a Central Rehabilitation Register of all qualified professionals and personnel working in the field of Rehabilitation and Special Education.

- Nodal Ministry: It comes under the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment.
- Functions: It regulates the training policies and programmes in the field of rehabilitation of persons with disabilities. It brings about standardization of training courses for professionals dealing with persons with disabilities.
- Recognition to associated institutions: It recognizes the national institutes and apex institutions on disability as manpower development centres. The Council also prescribes minimum standards of education and training for 16 categories of professionals and personnel allocated to RCI.
- Important laws in India to deal with disabilities:
    - Indian Lunacy Act, 1912
    - Mental Health Act, 1987
    - Rehabilitation Council of India Act, 1992
    - Persons With Disability Act, 1995
    - National Trust Act, 1999
    - Right To Education Act, 2010

KOYLA SHAKTI AND CLAMP PORTAL

The Union Minister of Coal and Mines, launched two major digital platforms – the KOYLA SHAKTI Dashboard and the Coal Land Acquisition, Management, and Payment (CLAMP) Portal.



What it is?

- A Smart Coal Analytics Dashboard (SCAD) developed by the Ministry of Coal as a unified digital platform integrating the entire coal value chain — from mine to market.

Organisation: Developed and maintained by the Ministry of Coal.

Aim: To act as the digital backbone of India's coal ecosystem by enabling real-time monitoring, data integration, and evidence-based policy formulation for improved operational efficiency.
Key Features:

- Unified Visibility: Integrates data from coal production, logistics, and consumption into a single interface.
- Real-Time Monitoring: Tracks coal movement through rail, road, and multimodal systems with live analytics.
- Data-Driven Governance: Enables predictive analytics for demand forecasting and resource allocation.
- Incident Response System: Provides alerts for operational disruptions and supports rapid redressal.
- Transparency & Accountability: Displays KPIs for all stakeholders to ensure open and fair monitoring.

About CLAMP Portal:

What it is?

- The Coal Land Acquisition, Management, and Payment (CLAMP) Portal is a centralized digital solution for managing land acquisition, compensation, and R&R processes in coal-bearing areas.

Aim: To ensure time-bound, transparent, and equitable land management by digitizing records, payments, and inter-agency coordination.

Key Features:

- End-to-End Digital Workflow: From uploading land records to final compensation payment.
- Central Repository: Maintains updated land ownership and compensation details.
- Transparency & Accountability: Reduces human discretion and procedural delays.
- Integration Across PSUs: Links coal PSUs, State departments, and district authorities.
- Citizen-Centric Governance: Ensures fair and prompt rehabilitation and resettlement.

CHANGTHANG AND KARAKORAM WILDLIFE SANCTUARIES

A comprehensive proposal to redefine the boundaries of the Changthang and Karakoram wildlife sanctuaries in Ladakh has been submitted for final approval by the Central government. The move aims to reconcile ecological protection with strategic, developmental, and local livelihood priorities in one of India's most sensitive border regions.

Revised Boundaries and Expanded Coverage

The Ladakh State Wildlife Board, in its meeting on September 19, proposed revising the Karakoram Wildlife Sanctuary to 16,550 sq km and the Changthang Wildlife Sanctuary to 9,695 sq km. These figures represent a significant increase from the 1987 notifications, which recorded the sanctuaries at about 5,000 sq km and 4,000 sq km respectively.

However, the rationalisation also includes the exclusion of 1,742 sq km from the Karakoram (Nubra–Shyok) area and 164 sq km from the Changthang region to better align with actual human habitation patterns.

Need for Rationalisation and Accurate Mapping

Officials noted that the original 1987 notifications lacked clear demarcation and boundary accuracy, with actual protected areas estimated to be nearly three to four times larger than notified. To address this, the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) undertook a detailed study and consultation with local stakeholders, identifying High Conservation Value Areas (HCVAs) requiring the highest level of protection.

Ten HCVAs were marked within Karakoram and seventeen within Changthang, along with identified wildlife corridors to ensure ecological connectivity.

Balancing Conservation with Local Livelihoods

The redefined sanctuaries seek to balance conservation with the needs of residents living within these high-altitude regions. Around 67 villages in the Karakoram and 45 in the Changthang sanctuary are proposed to be excluded, allowing limited development and tourism-related activities. Local authorities emphasised that the intention is not to enable large-scale commercial ventures but to support sustainable livelihoods through eco-tourism and small-scale infrastructure like homestays and guest houses.

- Karakoram and Changthang sanctuaries were originally notified in 1987.
- Revised areas: Karakoram – 16,550 sq km; Changthang – 9,695 sq km.
- Study conducted by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) identified 27 High Conservation Value Areas (HCVAs) in total.
- 67 villages in Karakoram and 45 in Changthang proposed for exclusion to enable livelihood activities.

The sanctuaries lie in zones of immense ecological and geopolitical value near India's international borders. Officials, including Chief Executive Councillor Tashi Gyalson, stressed that sustaining habitation in these remote areas is essential for national security and border vigilance.

The proposal thus seeks to integrate conservation goals with defence imperatives and the socio-economic stability of local communities, marking a pivotal step in Ladakh's environmental and strategic planning framework.

INDI LIME

India has achieved a new milestone in its agricultural export journey with the first-ever air shipment of GI-tagged Indi Lime from Karnataka and Puliyankudi Lime from Tamil Nadu to the United Kingdom.

The initiative, facilitated by the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority(APEDA), marks a significant step in promoting region-specific produce in international markets.

Milestone in Indian Agri Exports

The export of these Geographical Indication (GI) certified limes highlights India's expanding agricultural footprint. The Indi Lime from Karnataka and the Puliyankudi Lime from Tamil Nadu are known for their unique aroma, high juice content, and superior quality.

The export aligns with the government's ongoing efforts to showcase India's distinct agri products globally and enhance rural income through value-added trade.

More About Indi Lime from Karnataka

The Indi Lime, native to Vijayapura district in Karnataka, is known for its rich aroma, thin rind, and high juice yield, making it one of India's most sought-after citrus varieties.

Its distinct tangy-sweet flavour and superior oil content set it apart from ordinary lemons. Traditionally cultivated using organic and region-specific practices, Indi Lime thrives in the semi-arid climate and black cotton soils of northern Karnataka.

The lime's high citric acid concentration and longer shelf life make it ideal for both fresh consumption and industrial processing in beverages, pickles, and essential oils. Its GI certification not only safeguards its regional identity but also boosts farmers' market value and recognition worldwide.

More About Puliyankudi Lime from Tamil Nadu

Puliyankudi Lime, grown in the fertile tracts of Tenkasi district in Tamil Nadu, is prized for its intense fragrance, smooth green peel, and balanced acidity. Locally known as "Puliyankudi Elumichai," this lime has long been a household staple in southern India, valued for its medicinal, culinary, and preservative properties.

The region's red loamy soil and tropical climate contribute to its vibrant flavour and high nutritional quality. Farmers in Puliyankudi have preserved traditional cultivation methods that maintain the fruit's purity and consistency, leading to its GI-tag recognition. With international exports now underway, the Puliyankudi Lime stands poised to become a global ambassador of Tamil Nadu's agricultural heritage.

Role of GI Tag and Farmer Empowerment

A GI tag links a product to its region of origin, guaranteeing authenticity and quality. This recognition helps farmers gain better prices and protects traditional cultivation practices.

The Swadeshi Indi Lime, previously exported to the United Arab Emirates earlier this year, has already established a strong presence in international markets. These initiatives reflect India's commitment to promoting traceable and sustainable agricultural trade.

Expanding India's Global Market Reach

Beyond lime exports, India has widened its agri export base with Gharwali apples and apricots from Kargil entering new markets in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Qatar. Such achievements not only showcase the diversity of Indian produce but also strengthen trade relations with partner nations. The expansion of India's agri exports forms part of a larger strategy to integrate farmers into global value chains and elevate the country's agricultural brand internationally.

- APEDA facilitated the first export of GI-tagged Indi Lime and Puliyankudi Lime to the United Kingdom.
- Geographical Indication (GI) tags certify authenticity linked to a product's place of origin.
- Swadeshi Indi Lime from Karnataka was earlier exported to the UAE.
- India is also expanding exports of apples and apricots from Kargil to Gulf countries.

Trade Diplomacy and Future Outlook

The export milestone coincides with India's ongoing discussions on the India-EU Free Trade Agreement. The talks, held between Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and EU Commissioner Maros Sefcovic in Brussels, aim to strengthen bilateral trade and open new agricultural opportunities. With initiatives like the export of GI-tagged produce, India continues to position itself as a key player in sustainable global agriculture, blending traditional excellence with modern trade practices.

SARANDA SANCTUARY

- The Supreme Court reserved its verdict on the Jharkhand government's plea to reduce the expanse of to be notified Saranda sanctuary from its earlier 310 sq km to 250 sq km to exclude 60 sq km of forest inhabited by tribals to protect their forest rights.

About Saranda Sanctuary:

- Location: It is a proposed wildlife sanctuary in West Singhbhum district of Jharkhand, located within the Saranda Forest Division, known as one of Asia's largest Sal (Shorea robusta) forests and a key biodiversity hotspot at the Jharkhand–Odisha border.
- Nomenclature: Situated in southern Jharkhand, the Saranda region—means "land of seven hundred hills."
- Area: It covers about 856 sq km, of which 816 sq km is reserved forest.
- Ecological corridor between several states: It lies within the Singhbhum Elephant Reserve, forming a vital ecological corridor between Jharkhand, Odisha, and Chhattisgarh.
- Evolution: It was declared a game reserve in 1968 under the Bihar Forest Act. The National Green Tribunal (2022) directed Jharkhand to notify it as a sanctuary under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.
- Flora: Dense cover of Sal, Kusum, Mahua, and rare orchids are found here.
- Fauna: It forms an important habitat for Asian elephants, four-horned antelope, sloth bears, flying lizards, and migratory birds.
- Important Communities: It is home to Ho, Munda, Oraon, and several PVTGs, reliant on forest produce like mahua and resin.
- Mineral resources: It contains nearly 26% of India's iron ore reserves, making it a major mining zone for SAIL and private operators.

ETHICS IN JOURNALISM

The devastating **North Bengal floods (2025)**, which claimed over **30 lives** and caused **110 major landslides**, highlight not only the tragedy of natural disasters but also the **ethical dilemmas and moral responsibilities** faced by journalists covering human suffering in crisis situations.

Core Ethical Principles in Disaster Journalism

- **Empathy Over Exploitation:** Reporting on trauma demands **sensitivity**. Journalists must avoid **intrusive questioning** or **emotional exploitation** of survivors for "scoops." The **dignity of victims** should remain central, ensuring that storytelling does not become voyeuristic.

- **Humanity and Compassion:** Despite losing everything, many survivors displayed **kindness and solidarity**. Ethical journalism reciprocates that humanity — acknowledging resilience rather than only amplifying grief.

- **Informed Consent:** Victims are not obligated to share their pain. Ethical conduct requires seeking **informed consent** before interviews or photographs, especially when individuals are in **psychological distress**.

- **Sensitivity to Visual Representation:** Ethical journalists must be cautious with **graphic imagery** — ensuring that visuals evoke empathy and awareness, not **sensationalism**. Visuals should preserve **privacy, cultural values, and emotional limits** of affected communities.

- **Objectivity with Compassion:**
  Balancing **truth-telling** with **emotional restraint** is vital. Facts must be accurate, but the tone should remain **compassionate**, avoiding **blame narratives** or **politicization** during humanitarian crises.

- **Cultural and Contextual Respect:** Disaster zones often overlap with **tribal, border, or minority communities**. Ethical reporting means understanding **local sensitivities**, avoiding **stereotypes**, and ensuring representation of **marginalized voices**.

- **Avoiding Harm and Re-traumatization:** Journalists must recognize **psychological limits** — identifying **visual cues and body language** to know when to stop questioning. Ethical restraint protects both **reporter and survivor** from further trauma.

Ethical Challenges in the Field

- **Access and Safety vs. Duty to Inform:** Reporters often risk personal safety in unstable terrain to bring stories from **remote, high-risk zones**. Balancing **public interest** with **personal responsibility** is a recurring ethical dilemma.

- **Media Absence in Marginal Areas:** Many **border or high-altitude communities go** unreported due to **bureaucratic hurdles or fear of reprisal**. This reflects a failure in **media justice**, where certain lives remain **invisible** in national narratives.

- **Economic and Institutional Pressures:** The demand for "impactful stories" may tempt sensationalism. Ethical journalism must resist **commercial pressure** and focus on **truthful, human-centered reporting**.

- **Reporter's Emotional Trauma:** Covering destruction and death leads to **vicarious trauma**. Ethical frameworks should extend to **journalist well-being**, promoting **mental health support** and **peer debriefing mechanisms** post coverage.

Reforms and Best Practices

- **Adopt Ethical Codes:** Implement the **Press Council of India's Guidelines** on **Disaster Coverage**, emphasizing accuracy, restraint, and empathy.
- **Capacity Building:** Train journalists in **psychological first aid**, **trauma-informed reporting**, and **ethical interviewing techniques**.
- **Community-Centric Reporting:** Shift focus from **event-driven** to **people-centric journalism** — highlighting **resilience, recovery, and lessons learned**.
- **Collaborative Reporting:** Encourage partnerships with **local reporters, NGOs, and disaster authorities** to ensure **authentic, safe, and holistic coverage**.
- **Institutional Support Systems:** Establish **media ethics cells** within news organizations for **ethical review** of sensitive reports and visuals.
- **Ethical Tech Use:** Use **AI verification tools** to combat **misinformation**, but ensure **data privacy** and **contextual accuracy** in disaster-related visuals or stories.

Ethical disaster journalism is not just about **telling stories of pain**, but about **restoring dignity to those who suffer**. By upholding **empathy, truth, and responsibility**, journalists transform from mere observers to **agents of human solidarity and accountability**. Amid ruins, it is not just infrastructure that needs rebuilding — it is **trust and humanity**.

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