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# WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

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Monthly Current Affairs Magazine

## UNDERSTANDING LPG AND LNG

India is facing a significant energy crisis as the West Asia war has disrupted 54% of its LPG and 30% of its LNG supplies through the Strait of Hormuz.



### About Understanding LPG and LNG:

#### What is LPG?

- **Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG)** is a flammable mixture of hydrocarbon gases, primarily **propane and butane**. It is produced as a byproduct of crude oil refining and natural gas processing. It turns into a liquid under moderate pressure, making it highly portable in cylinders.

#### What is LNG?

- **Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG)** is primarily **methane** that has been cooled to extremely low temperatures (below  $-160^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) through a cryogenic process. It is liquefied mainly for long-distance transport across oceans where pipelines are not feasible, as its liquid volume is 600 times smaller than its gaseous form.

#### Difference Between LPG and LNG:

Feature	LPG (Liquefied Petroleum Gas)	LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas)
<b>Composition</b>	Primarily Propane and Butane.	Primarily Methane.
<b>Production</b>	Derived from oil refining & gas stripping.	Purified natural gas cooled cryogenically.
<b>Storage</b>	Stored in pressurized cylinders at room temp.	Stored in specialized <b>cryogenic tanks</b> .
<b>Density</b>	<b>Heavier than air</b> (sinks to the ground).	<b>Lighter than air</b> (disperses quickly).
<b>Transport</b>	Mostly by road/trucks in cylinders/tankers.	Mostly by specialized cryogenic ships.
<b>Safety</b>	Higher risk of fire if leaked (accumulates).	Generally safer (evaporates into the air).

## Applications of LPG

- **Domestic:** Used extensively as cooking fuel in households (cylinders).
- **Heating:** Used for space heating and water heating in areas without gas grids.
- **Industrial:** Used for high-heat processes like metal cutting, welding, and food processing.
- **Autogas:** Used as a cleaner alternative to petrol/diesel in specially converted vehicles.

## Applications of LNG:

- **Energy Transport:** The primary bridge to move natural gas from producing countries to consuming countries.
- **Power Generation:** Once regasified, it fuels gas-based power plants.
- **Industrial Feedstock:** Used in manufacturing fertilizers, petrochemicals, and steel.
- **Heavy Transport:** Emerging as a fuel for long-haul trucks, ships (as bunker fuel), and locomotives.
- **City Gas:** Converted back to gas for PNG (households) and CNG (transport).

## INDIA'S STRATEGIC PETROLEUM RESERVES (SPRS)

The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas informed the Rajya Sabha that India's Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPRs) are currently at only 64% capacity.



## About Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPRs):

### What it is?

- Strategic Petroleum Reserves are massive stockpiles of crude oil stored in **underground rock caverns**. They serve as a specialized insurance policy to protect the nation against unplanned supply disruptions caused by geopolitical wars, natural disasters, or global price shocks.

### Established In:

- The concept was mooted after the **1973 oil crisis**.
- **Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserve Limited (ISPRL)**, the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) managing them, was created in **2004** under the Oil Industry Development Board (OIDB).

### Initiative is Part of:

- India's broader **Energy Security Strategy** and its commitment as an **Associate Member of the International Energy Agency (IEA)**, which recommends maintaining a 90-day reserve of net oil imports.

### Located In (Phase-I):

1. Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh.
2. Mangaluru, Karnataka.
3. Padur, Karnataka.

**Phase-II expansion** is planned for Chandikhol, Odisha, and further expansion in Padur.

### Aim:

- To ensure **energy sovereignty** by providing a short-term buffer (currently covering approximately 9.5 days of India's requirement) during emergencies, effectively shielding the domestic economy from volatile global oil markets.

### Key Features:

- **Underground Storage:** Oil is stored in unlined underground rock caverns, which is safer and more cost-effective than above-ground tanks.
- **Hydrostatic Containment:** These caverns use the pressure of surrounding groundwater to keep the oil trapped inside, preventing leaks.
- **Strategic-cum-Commercial Model:** The government allows foreign National Oil Companies (like ADNOC of UAE) to lease space, reducing the government's storage costs while ensuring the oil remains in India for emergencies.
- **Dynamic Stocking:** ISPRL manages the inventory by buying crude when international prices are low (downcycle) to save on the exchequer's bill.
- **Refiner Integration:** The SPRs are strategically located near the coast and existing refineries to ensure quick mobilization of crude during a crisis.

### Significance:

- Protects India – the world's third-largest oil consumer – which imports over **88%** of its crude requirement.
- Prevents sudden spikes in petrol and diesel prices at the pump, which can trigger inflation across the entire supply chain.

## CONSTITUTION (SCHEDULED CASTES) ORDER, 1950


The Supreme Court reaffirmed that Scheduled Caste (SC) status is strictly limited to individuals professing Hinduism, Sikhism, or Buddhism.

- The court ruled that conversion to any other religion, such as Christianity or Islam, results in the immediate and complete loss of SC benefits and legal protections.

### Identity question

The top court said that a person professing a religion other than those mentioned in Clause 3 cannot be part of a scheduled caste

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Clause 3 of the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950, mandates that 'no person who professes a religion different from Hinduism shall be deemed to be a member of a Scheduled Caste'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The Sikh religion was added to the ambit of Clause 3 in 1956</li> <li>■ The provision was further amended in 1990 to include persons professing Buddhism</li> <li>■ The top court observed that the bar in Clause 3 is 'categorical and absolute'</li> </ul>
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### About The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950:

#### What it is?

- The **Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950** is a Presidential Order issued under **Article 341(1)** of the Indian Constitution. It specifies which castes, races, or tribes are deemed Scheduled Castes for the purpose of various constitutional and statutory benefits.

**Aim:** The primary objective of the Order is to identify specific communities that have historically suffered from the social evil of **untouchability** and extreme social backwardness within the Hindu fold, ensuring they receive affirmative action (reservations) and legal protection.

#### Key Features:

- **Article 341 Authority:** The Order was promulgated by the President of India after consultation with State Governors to provide a definitive list of Scheduled Castes.
- **Religious Limitation (Paragraph 3):** Originally, the Order stated that only those professing **Hinduism** could be deemed members of a Scheduled Caste.
- **Historical Amendments:**
  - **1956:** The Order was amended to include followers of the **Sikh** religion.
  - **1990:** It was further amended to include followers of **Buddhism** (Neo-Buddhists).
- **Geographic Specificity:** Communities are recognized as Scheduled Castes only in relation to specific States or Union Territories where they are resident and identified in the Schedule.
- **The Profess Clause:** The legal status is tied to the outward manifestation and public practice of the religion, not just private belief.

## Recent Supreme Court Judgment Summary:

- **Immediate Loss of Status:** Conversion to a religion other than Hinduism, Sikhism, or Buddhism (such as Christianity or Islam) leads to an absolute and immediate loss of SC status.
- **Loss of Statutory Protection:** A convert cannot claim protection under the **SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989**, as the court held that the theological foundations of religions like Christianity do not recognize the institution of caste.
- **Strict Re-conversion Criteria:** To regain SC status through re-conversion, an individual must conclusively prove:
  - Their original caste identity.
  - *Bona fide* re-conversion to the original religion.
  - **Social Acceptance:** Proof that the original caste community has accepted and assimilated the individual back into their fold.

## INDIA'S CARBON CREDIT PLAN

Union Budget 2026 announced a ₹20,000 crore carbon credit program based on the DST's CCUS roadmap.

- This has created confusion between its focus on industrial decarbonisation and the parallel narrative of farmer income through soil-based carbon credits.



## About Blur Over India's Carbon Credit Plan: CCUS vs Carbon Farming Debate: What CCUS Targets?

- The Carbon Capture, Utilization, and Storage (CCUS) initiative specifically targets **hard-to-abate industries** where emissions are concentrated and technically difficult to eliminate through renewable energy. The primary sectors identified for the large-scale deployment of these technologies include:
  - Power and Refineries.
  - Steel and Cement.
  - Chemicals.

## Why Agriculture is Not Included in CCUS?

- **Diffuse Emission Sources:** Unlike industrial point-source emissions from factory flues, agricultural emissions are spread across vast landscapes.
- **Biological Mediation:** Emissions in agriculture (primarily methane and nitrous oxide) are biologically mediated, making them unsuitable for mechanical capture technology.
- **Technological Mismatch:** CCUS is defined by capturing CO<sub>2</sub> from concentrated gas streams, whereas agricultural solutions focus on drawing down existing atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>.
- **Strategic Distinction:** The DST roadmap draws a clear line between **preventing new industrial emissions** (CCUS) and **Carbon Dioxide Removal**(CDR) through nature-based solutions like soil sequestration.

## Key Opportunities:

- **Industrial Decarbonization:** CCUS provides a critical pillar for cleaning up sectors responsible for a quarter of India's emissions.

**Example:** The ₹20,000 crore investment aims to capture CO<sub>2</sub> from factories and either use it industrially or store it underground.

- **New Rural Income Streams:** Creating a trusted domestic carbon market for agriculture could unlock significant economic benefits for farmers.

**Example:** Farmers can earn credits by adopting regenerative practices that turn farms into climate solutions.

- **Enhanced Soil Carbon Sequestration:** India's vast agricultural lands hold immense potential to act as a carbon sink.

**Example:** Practices such as agroforestry and biochar application can effectively draw down atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>.

- **Growth of Voluntary Carbon Markets:** There is a rising global and domestic demand for nature-based carbon credits.

**Example:** Private sector initiatives are already piloting models that compensate farmers for enhancing soil organic carbon.

- **Climate Resilient Farming:** Transitioning to carbon-friendly practices aligns with long-term goals for soil health.

**Example:** The Agriculture Ministry has been exploring climate-resilient farming as a logical next step to traditional soil management.

## Challenges Associated:

- **Communication Gaps:** The use of the familiar term carbon credit in the Budget has blurred the lines between distinct industrial and agricultural concepts.

**Example:** Conflicting reports have led the public to expect a funded farmer scheme from an outlay actually earmarked for heavy industry.

- **High Implementation Costs:** CCUS is a tech-heavy and expensive initiative that requires massive capital investment.

**Example:** The government has bet ₹20,000 crore over five years just to begin large-scale industrial deployment.

- **Monitoring and Verification:** Agricultural emissions are difficult to measure accurately compared to concentrated industrial sources.

**Example:** The soil narrative requires a robust institutional framework to be credible, which is currently distinct from the industrial roadmap.

- **Policy Conflation:** Existing frameworks do not clearly demarcate between preventing new emissions and removing existing atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>.

**Example:** Critics argue that a structured carbon farming program would need entirely separate funding and policy from the CCUS initiative.

- **Managing Stakeholder Expectations:** There is a risk of public disappointment if farmers realize the current Budget outlay does not directly fund their carbon projects.

**Example:** The government must now work to clarify that the ₹20,000 crore is a bet on industrial decarbonization specifically.

**Way Ahead:**

- **Clear Policy Demarcation:** The government must explicitly separate smokestack (industrial) and soil (agricultural) initiatives to manage public and investor expectations.
- **Dedicated Carbon Farming Framework:** Develop a separate, well-funded policy and institutional framework specifically for agricultural carbon sequestration.
- **Strengthen Communication:** Close the communication gap by using precise terminology that distinguishes between CCUS technologies and voluntary carbon markets.
- **Scale Industrial Deployment:** Ensure the successful execution of the DST roadmap for hard-to-abate sectors to meet national net-zero goals.
- **Promote Multi-Sectoral Ambition:** Advance both industrial and agricultural fronts with equal vigor to forge a comprehensive and sustainable climate strategy.

India's climate strategy currently stands at a crossroads, balancing a heavy financial bet on industrial CCUS with a growing demand for nature-based carbon markets. While the ₹20,000 crore Budget outlay is strictly industrial, the intense interest in carbon farming signals a massive opportunity for a parallel agricultural policy.

## ABORTION LAW IN INDIA

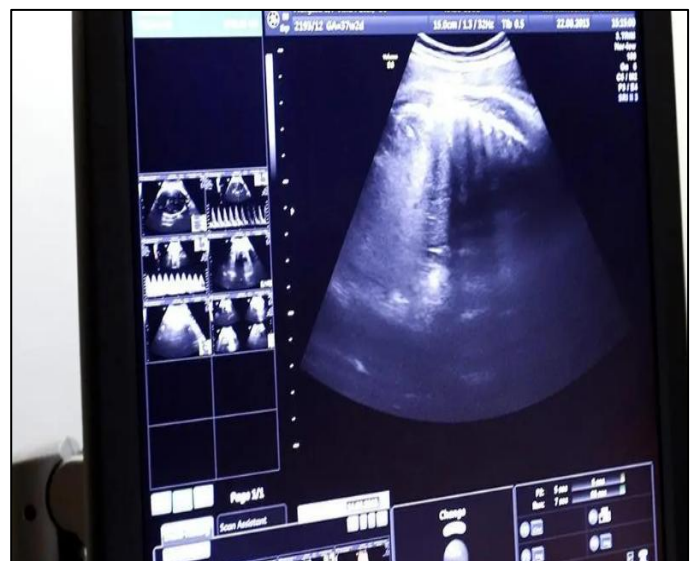
The Supreme Court of India delivered a landmark judgment permitting a woman to terminate her **30-week pregnancy**, prioritizing **reproductive autonomy** over fetal viability.

- The ruling, led by Justice B.V. Nagarathna, sets a significant precedent by allowing termination well beyond the 24-week statutory limit for a woman who was a minor at the time of conception.

**About Abortion Law in India:**

**What it is?**

- Abortion in India is not an absolute right but a qualified legal right governed by the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 1971, and its subsequent amendments. It was enacted to provide a legal exception to the Indian Penal Code (IPC), which otherwise criminalizes voluntary termination of pregnancy.



## Key Data & Facts

- **MTP Amendment Act 2021:** This major update increased the upper gestation limit from 20 to **24 weeks** for special categories of women.
- **Maternal Mortality:** Unsafe abortions remain a leading cause of maternal deaths in India; the MTP Act was originally designed as a public health measure to provide safe, regulated services.
- **Judicial Overreach:** Since 2021, over **1,100 cases** have reached High Courts and the Supreme Court as women seek permission for abortions beyond the statutory limits.
- **30-Week Milestone:** The 2026 judgment is one of the highest gestational ages (30 weeks) ever permitted for termination by the Indian apex court.
- **Marital Status:** In 2022 (*X v. Principal Secretary, Delhi*), the SC ruled that **unmarried women** are equally eligible for abortions up to 24 weeks, ending a long-standing legal discrimination.

## Features of Abortion Law in India:

- **Tiered Gestational Limits:** Up to **20 weeks**: Requires the opinion of one Registered Medical Practitioner (RMP).
  - **20–24 weeks:** Requires the opinion of two RMPs for specific categories (rape survivors, minors, disabled women, etc.).
- **No Limit for Abnormalities:** The 24-week ceiling does not apply if a state-level **Medical Board** diagnoses substantial fetal abnormalities.
- **Ground of Mental Health:** The law uniquely recognizes that a pregnancy causing grave injury to mental health (including contraceptive failure) is a valid ground for termination.
- **Confidentiality:** The Act mandates that the identity and details of the woman must remain strictly confidential, with penalties for disclosure.
- **Consent Framework:** For adults (18+), **only the woman's consent** is required. Spousal or parental consent is not legally necessary for adult women.

## Challenges Associated with Current Law:

- **Fetal Viability vs. Autonomy:** The 2023 *X v. Union of India* case highlighted the conflict where courts refuse termination at 26 weeks if the fetus is viable, even if the mother's mental health is at risk.
- **Third-Party Gatekeeping:** Despite the law requiring only the woman's consent, many hospitals still insist on **husband/partner consent**, as seen in various 2024 rural healthcare audits.
- **Access for Minors:** Under POCSO, doctors must report sexual activity of minors to police, which often deters young girls from seeking safe abortions for fear of legal proceedings.
- **Medical Board Delays:** The requirement for a Medical Board for late-term cases often leads to **bureaucratic delays**; for instance, in the 2026 case, the woman's pregnancy progressed by several weeks while waiting for court/board decisions.

- **Inconsistent Jurisprudence:** Different benches of the Supreme Court have issued **conflicting orders** (the Doctrinal Puzzle between 2023 and 2024/2026), leaving lower courts confused about whether fetal life or maternal autonomy takes precedence.

#### Way Ahead:

- **Standardizing Viability Guidelines:** The Supreme Court or Ministry of Health should issue clear protocols on how to handle born-alive risks in late-term terminations.
- **Decentralizing Medical Boards:** Establishing boards at the district level, rather than just state capitals, to reduce travel time and procedural delays for vulnerable women.
- **Sensitizing Healthcare Providers:** Massive training for RMPs to ensure they do not demand extra-legal requirements like spouse consent or police FIRs for adult women.
- **Rights-Based Approach:** Moving the law from a medical necessity framework to a rights-based framework where a woman's choice is the primary decider.
- **Expanding Provider Base:** Training mid-level healthcare providers (like auxiliary nurses) to perform early-term medical abortions to reduce the burden on specialists.

#### Conclusion:

The 2026 Supreme Court judgment marks a definitive shift toward recognizing **reproductive autonomy as a fundamental right** under Article 21. While the MTP Act has evolved significantly since 1971, the tension between statutory limits and constitutional rights remains a challenge for the judiciary. Ultimately, the law must ensure that a woman's body is not treated as a vessel of the state, ensuring dignity and choice at every stage of pregnancy.

### IRAN-PAKISTAN-INDIA (IPI) & TURKMENISTAN-AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN-INDIA (TAPI)

The ongoing **West Asia crisis** has disrupted energy supplies, exposing India's heavy dependence on imported gas.

- This has revived discussion on past pipeline projects like the **Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI)** and **Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI)**



#### About The Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) Pipeline:

##### What it is?

- A proposed **2,775 km** natural gas pipeline designed to transport gas from Iran's South Pars field to Pakistan and India. Often referred to as the **Peace Pipeline**, this project was intended to link the energy-rich Persian Gulf with the energy-starved South Asian economies.

**Established In:** Conceptually originated in the **1990s**; gained significant diplomatic momentum between 2004 and 2005.

**Aim:** To provide a cost-effective, land-based alternative to expensive Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) imports for India and Pakistan's industrial and power sectors.

**Key Features:**

- **Capacity:** Designed to supply **60 mmscmd** (million standard cubic meters per day) each to India and Pakistan.
- **Economic Impact:** Offered lower transit costs compared to maritime shipments.
- **Strategic Leverage:** Aimed to foster regional cooperation and peace through economic interdependence.

**Current Status: Dormant/Recast.** India effectively exited negotiations in 2007 due to U.S. sanctions (CAATSA pressure), pricing disagreements, and security fears regarding the pipeline passing through Balochistan.

**About The Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) Pipeline:**

**What it is?**

- An **1,814 km** trans-regional pipeline project supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to bring gas from Central Asia to South Asia. Following the stalling of IPI, India shifted its focus to this **Central Asian** alternative, which enjoyed broader international and institutional backing.

**Established In:** India officially signed the intergovernmental agreement in **2010**, though the idea dates back to the mid-90s.

**Aim:** To diversify India's energy basket away from West Asian volatility by tapping into the world's second-largest gas field.

**Key Features:**

- **Source:** Originates from the **Galkynysh gas field** in Turkmenistan.
- **Capacity:** Projected to transport **33 billion cubic meters (bcm)** of natural gas annually.
- **Diplomatic Support:** Unlike IPI, TAPI was promoted by the U.S. as part of the New Silk Road strategy to stabilize Afghanistan's economy through transit fees.

**Current Status:** Partially Active/Stalled.

- While the Turkmen-Afghan section was inaugurated in **October 2025** (linking Serhetabat to Herat), the extension to Pakistan and India remains stalled.

## TRANSGENDER PERSONS (PROTECTION OF RIGHTS) AMENDMENT BILL, 2026

The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026, aims to fix gaps in the 2019 law but has drawn criticism for conflating diverse identities, restricting the definition of transgender persons, and replacing self-identification with medical certification.

By overlooking key concerns like civil rights, internal exploitation, and non-consensual intersex surgeries, it risks reinforcing structural inequalities while raising concerns about dignity, privacy, and equality.

### Constitutional & Legal Framework

Provision	Relevance
<b>Article 14</b>	Right to equality – non-discrimination on grounds of gender identity
<b>Article 15</b>	Prohibition of discrimination – extends to gender identity (NAZ Foundation v. Govt. of NCT, 2009)
<b>Article 21</b>	Right to life and personal dignity – includes right to self-perceived gender identity (NALSA v. Union of India, 2014)
<b>Transgender Persons Act, 2019</b>	Original framework recognizing transgender identity; faced implementation gaps
<b>Amendment Bill, 2026</b>	Seeks to fix vagueness but introduces new contradictions

The Supreme Court in **NALSA (2014)** recognized transgender persons as a third gender and affirmed the right to self-identification without medical intervention – a principle the 2026 Bill explicitly undermines.

### Key Changes Introduced by the Amendment Bill

Provision	2019 Act	2026 Amendment
<b>Definition</b>	Inclusive, based on self-perceived gender identity	Narrowed to specific identities (kinner, hijra, aravani, intersex variations)
<b>Self-Identification</b>	Right to self-perceived gender identity	Removed; replaced with medical board certification
<b>Certifying Authority</b>	District Magistrate	Medical board headed by Chief Medical Officer
<b>Intersex Inclusion</b>	Included under transgender umbrella	Retained conflation; no separate recognition
<b>Exploitation Penalties</b>	General provisions	Rigorous imprisonment (5–14 years) for forced begging/servitude
<b>Civil Rights</b>	Not addressed	Still absent (marriage, adoption, inheritance, divorce)

### Structural Flaws: Conflation of Distinct Identities

Identity	Nature	Distinct Needs
<b>Transgender</b>	Psychological and social construct; gender identity distinct from sex assigned at birth	Self-identification, gender-affirming care, anti-discrimination
<b>Intersex</b>	Biological spectrum of sex characteristics (1-2% globally)	Ban on non-consensual surgeries, medical ethics, separate recognition

**Critical Issue:** The Bill continues to lump intersex persons under “transgender,” erasing intersex-specific needs. Intersex infants face non-consensual “normalizing” surgeries causing lifelong trauma – yet the Bill contains no ban on such procedures, violating Article 21 (bodily integrity) and privacy.

#### International Standards Violated:

- UN and WHO define intersex as distinct from transgender
- Forcing intersex persons into transgender category undermines human rights frameworks India has committed to uphold

#### Erosion of Self-Identification & Medicalization of Identity

**NALSA (2014) affirmed:** “Self-identified gender is a fundamental right.”

#### The Bill replaces this with:

- Medical board certification
- Mandatory hospital reporting of transgender surgeries
- Exclusion of non-heteronormative gender fluid identities

This medicalization recreates the very barriers the 2019 Act sought to dismantle and contradicts global best practices moving toward self-declaration models (as seen in countries like Argentina, Ireland, and Norway).

#### Entrenchment of Exploitative Structures

Issue	Analysis
<b>Hijra Jamath-Gharana System</b>	Colonial-era structure where chief nayaks control chelas’ earnings from begging and prostitution; traps gender-nonconforming children in bonded labour
<b>Amendment’s Effect</b>	Penalizes external perpetrators but leaves internal hierarchies untouched; effectively legitimizes and codifies exploitative structures
<b>Children’s Vulnerability</b>	Gender-nonconforming children abandoned by families are thrust into these systems; police often refuse to register missing complaints; no rehabilitation framework

**Historical Context:** Earlier Indic frameworks were more inclusive and affirming of diverse identities, free from colonial distortions – a heritage the Bill ignores.

## Omissions: Civil Rights & Intersectionality

### Absent Provisions:

- No civil rights: marriage, adoption, inheritance, divorce, succession
- No intersectional lens: caste, disability, poverty, religion – transgender persons from SC/ST or disabled backgrounds face compounded discrimination without targeted remedies
- No mandate for genetic counselling, India-specific longitudinal studies on affirming surgeries
- Inadequate privacy safeguards for medical data

**Impact:** Transgender and intersex persons remain excluded from the very institutions – family, marriage, inheritance – that define citizenship and dignity in Indian society.

### Critical Analysis: Strengths & Weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
Increased penalties for forced exploitation	Undermines NALSA’s self-identification principle
Acknowledges implementation gaps of 2019 Act	Conflates distinct identities; erases intersex-specific needs
	Medicalizes identity; violates privacy and bodily autonomy
	Leaves hijra exploitative structures intact
	No civil rights; no intersectionality

### Way Forward

- **Separate Sex & Gender Identity:** Official documents must distinguish between sex identity (male/female/intersex) and gender identity – addressing root causes of data invisibility
- **Separate Intersex Legislation:** Ban non-consensual “normalizing” surgeries on intersex infants; mandate genetic counselling; align with UN CRPD recommendations
- **Restore Self-Identification:** Reverse medicalization; reinstate right to self-perceived gender identity as affirmed in NALSA
- **Dismantle Exploitative Structures:** Reform hijra jamath-gharana system; create rehabilitation framework for gender-nonconforming children; ensure police accountability
- **Civil Rights Framework:** Extend marriage, adoption, inheritance, and succession rights to transgender persons
- **Rebrand Institutions:** Rename National Council for Transgender Persons as GIESC (Gender Identity/Expression and Sex Characteristics) Welfare Council to reflect inclusive, scientifically accurate framework
- **Intersectionality:** Targeted remedies for transgender persons from SC/ST, disabled, and economically vulnerable backgrounds

The Transgender Persons Amendment Bill, 2026, seeks reform but deepens flaws by narrowing definitions, medicalizing identity, and ignoring civil rights. It undermines the constitutional vision of dignity, equality, and privacy in *NALSA*, highlighting the need for an inclusive, rights-based framework.

## HYPERCAPNIC HYPOXIA

A recent scientific study has highlighted a growing environmental concern in coastal ecosystems, revealing that a majority of mangrove sites worldwide are already experiencing mild to severe hypercapnic hypoxia.

This condition, driven by rising atmospheric carbon dioxide levels and warming temperatures, is pushing estuarine environments into a chemically stressful state, with significant ecological and economic implications.



### Understanding Hypercapnic Hypoxia

Hypercapnic hypoxia refers to a condition characterised by elevated carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) levels and reduced dissolved oxygen in water. This dual stressor creates a hostile environment for aquatic life.

It is particularly prevalent in mangrove ecosystems during low tide, especially in low-salinity zones and tropical regions where higher temperatures intensify biological and chemical processes.

### Causes and Environmental Triggers

The primary drivers of hypercapnic hypoxia are climate change-induced increases in atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> and rising global temperatures.

Warmer waters hold less oxygen, while increased CO<sub>2</sub> dissolves into water bodies, altering their chemistry. Additionally, reduced water circulation during low tide exacerbates oxygen depletion, making mangrove estuaries more vulnerable to such conditions.

### Impacts on Biodiversity and Livelihoods

Hypercapnic hypoxia poses a serious threat to biodiversity within mangrove ecosystems. Fish nurseries, which rely on oxygen-rich waters, are particularly at risk.

The condition reduces habitat quality, leading to a decline in fish populations and shifts in species composition, often favouring smaller or more tolerant species over larger, reef-associated ones. This ecological imbalance directly affects fisheries, endangering the livelihoods of millions of people dependent on coastal resources.

### Important Facts for Exams

- Hypercapnic hypoxia involves both high CO<sub>2</sub> levels and low dissolved oxygen in aquatic systems.
- Mangroves are highly productive ecosystems found in tropical and subtropical intertidal zones.
- Low tide and high temperature conditions intensify hypoxic stress in estuaries.
- Mangroves act as critical fish nurseries and coastal buffers against erosion.

### Significance of Mangroves in Coastal Ecology

Mangroves are salt-tolerant trees and shrubs that thrive in coastal intertidal zones with saline or brackish water. These ecosystems are adapted to extreme conditions such as fluctuating tides, high salinity, and low oxygen soils.

They serve as vital buffers between land and sea, protecting coastlines from erosion and storms. Moreover, mangroves support rich biodiversity by providing breeding and nursery grounds for numerous marine and terrestrial species, making their preservation essential in the face of emerging climatic threats.

## india -vietnam cultural diplomacy

India and Vietnam have strengthened bilateral cooperation in tribal and ethnic development following a high-level ministerial meeting held in New Delhi on 20 March 2026.

The meeting marked an important step in elevating engagement between the two countries, building on earlier official-level discussions and reinforcing their Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

### High-Level Ministerial Engagement

The meeting was co-chaired by Union Minister for Tribal Affairs Jual Oram and Vietnam's Minister of Ethnic and Religious Affairs Dao Ngoc Dung.

It followed earlier deliberations between senior officials from both sides, where policy frameworks, development strategies, and best practices concerning tribal and ethnic communities were discussed. The ministerial dialogue aimed to institutionalise cooperation and expand collaboration at the leadership level.



### Focus on Cultural and Strategic Ties

India highlighted Vietnam as a key partner under its Act East Policy and Indo-Pacific vision. The discussions emphasised deep-rooted historical and cultural linkages between the two nations, shaped by shared civilisational values and Buddhist traditions.

The recent exposition of the Sacred Relics of Lord Buddha from Sarnath in Vietnam, which witnessed large public participation, was cited as a symbol of strong people-to-people connect.

### Key Areas of Collaboration

Both sides explored cooperation in livelihood promotion, sustainable agriculture, value addition to forest-based products, skill development, research partnerships, and cultural preservation.

Vietnam reiterated its commitment to inclusive development of its 54 ethnic groups through targeted interventions in infrastructure, education, healthcare, and livelihoods. India and Vietnam agreed to share best practices and leverage socio-cultural similarities to enhance development outcomes.

**Important Facts :**

- India and Vietnam share a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, marking 10 years in 2026.
- Vietnam has 54 recognised ethnic groups targeted under inclusive development policies.
- Act East Policy guides India’s engagement with Southeast Asia.
- DGTR deals with trade remedies, while the Ministry of Tribal Affairs focuses on tribal welfare.

**Towards Institutionalised Cooperation**

The two sides reviewed a draft Memorandum of Cooperation aimed at formalising collaboration between the ministries. Vietnam confirmed approval of the draft and invited the Indian Minister to visit for its formal signing.

Both countries reaffirmed that sustained high-level engagement and mutual trust remain central to advancing cooperation, with a shared commitment to inclusive and sustainable development of tribal and ethnic communities.

**KALINJAR FORT**

The hill region surrounding Kalinjar Fort in Banda district, Uttar Pradesh, has been officially designated as a National Geo-Heritage Site by the Geological Survey of India (GSI). This recognition highlights the area’s exceptional geological significance along with its rich historical and cultural legacy.



The site lies within the Vindhya mountain range and is expected to emerge as a key attraction in a proposed tourism circuit connecting Kalinjar, Khajuraho and Chitrakoot.

**Unique geological significance of the region**

The Kalinjar region showcases a rare geological feature known as the Eparchaeon Unconformity. This phenomenon occurs when rock layers from vastly different geological periods come into contact. At Kalinjar, nearly 2.5-billion-year-old Bundelkhand granite is overlain by around 1.2-billion-year-old Kaimur sandstone.

This formation provides crucial insights into Earth’s ancient geological history and makes the site valuable for scientific study and geo-tourism.

**Geology and strategic importance of the fort**

The geological structure of the region played a vital role in the fort’s defensive strength. The elevated rocky terrain provided natural protection, while locally available stones were used to construct the fort’s massive walls.

This close relationship between natural landscape and human construction reflects a strong geo-cultural link, where geology directly influenced architecture and military strategy.

### Historical and mythological importance

Kalinjar Fort holds immense historical and religious value. It is known for ancient temples, including the renowned Neelkanth Mahadev temple, associated with the legend of Lord Shiva consuming poison during the Samudra Manthan.

The site finds mention in Buddhist literature and was once ruled by the Chedi dynasty during the time of Gautama Buddha. It later became part of the Mauryan Empire and evolved through several historical phases, including the Gupta period.

### Important Facts for Exams

- Kalinjar Fort is located in Banda district of Uttar Pradesh within the Vindhya range.
- The site exhibits the Eparchaean Unconformity, a rare geological contact.
- Bundelkhand granite (2.5 billion years old) is overlain by Kaimur sandstone (1.2 billion years old).
- Neelkanth Mahadev temple at Kalinjar is linked to the Samudra Manthan legend.

### Implications for conservation and tourism

The geo-heritage status is expected to strengthen conservation efforts and promote awareness of the site's importance. The GSI has installed informational signage explaining its geological and historical relevance. Authorities anticipate increased tourism, which may boost local livelihoods and integrate Kalinjar into a broader heritage tourism network in the Bundelkhand region.

## OPERATION URJA SURAKSHA

India has launched **Operation Urja Suraksha** amid escalating tensions in West Asia to safeguard energy supply routes through the Strait of Hormuz.

### About Operation Urja Suraksha:

#### What it is?

- **Operation Urja Suraksha** is a strategic maritime security mission launched by the Indian Navy to ensure the safe transit of India-bound energy cargo vessels from the Persian Gulf region.
- It focuses on protecting shipping routes in and beyond the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most critical energy chokepoints.

#### Aim:

- To ensure uninterrupted energy supply to India by safeguarding oil and gas shipments.
- To provide secure maritime navigation and escort services in conflict-prone waters.

#### Key Features:

- **Naval Escort Mechanism:** Indian warships escort vessels after they exit Hormuz, ensuring safe passage through the Gulf of Oman into the Arabian Sea
- **Layered Maritime Security:** Deployment of destroyers and frigates with coordinated monitoring and communication systems
- **Safe Route Navigation:** Identification of secure maritime corridors to avoid threats like sea mines and electronic disruptions

#### Significance:

- **Energy Security Assurance:** Protects India's critical imports (crude oil, LNG, LPG), reducing vulnerability to supply shocks
- **Strategic Maritime Presence:** Enhances India's role as a **net security provider** in the Indian Ocean Region.



## REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY SCHEME - MODIFIED UDAN

The Union Cabinet has approved the Regional Connectivity Scheme - Modified UDAN with an outlay of ₹28,840 crore for 2026-2036.

### About Regional Connectivity Scheme - Modified UDAN:

#### What it is?

- **Modified UDAN** (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik) is the evolved second phase of India's flagship regional airport development program, designed to make air travel sustainable and accessible for the next decade.



#### Launched In:

- While the original scheme began in 2016, the **Modified UDAN** was approved by the Union Cabinet on **March 25, 2026**, for implementation starting from **FY 2026-27**.

#### Aim:

- The scheme seeks to transform India into a globally competitive aviation ecosystem by connecting underserved regions, reducing travel costs for the common citizen, and supporting the vision of **Viksit Bharat 2047**.

#### Key Features:

- **Infrastructure Expansion (CAPEX):** An outlay of **₹12,159 crore** to develop **100 airports** from existing unserved airstrips over the next eight years.
- **Modern Helipad Network:** Development of **200 modern helipads** at a cost of ₹15 crore each to solve connectivity challenges in hilly, island, and remote areas.
- **Viability Gap Funding (VGF):** A dedicated fund of **₹10,043 crore** to provide financial support to airline operators, ensuring routes remain profitable while keeping fares low for passengers.
- **O&M Support:** To ensure sustainability, the government will provide Operation & Maintenance support for three years (capped at **₹3.06 crore/year per airport**) for around 441 aerodromes.
- **Atmanirbhar Aircraft Acquisition:** Focused on indigenous manufacturing by procuring **HAL Dhruv helicopters** and **HAL Dornier aircraft** for state-run carriers like Pawan Hans and Alliance Air.

#### Significance:

- Boosts trade, tourism, and local commerce in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities by integrating them into the national mainstream.
- Improved helipad infrastructure enables faster medical evacuations and disaster response in difficult terrains.
- Democratizes air travel, allowing common citizens to fly at affordable rates through subsidized seats.

## CORPORATE LAWS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2026

The Union Cabinet has moved the **Corporate Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026**, in the Lok Sabha, subsequently referring it to a 31-member Joint Parliamentary Committee(JPC) for detailed scrutiny.



### About Corporate Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026:

#### What it is?

The Corporate Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026, is a strategic legislative update designed to modernize the regulatory framework governing Indian businesses by amending the Companies Act, 2013, and the Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) Act, 2008.

#### Aim:

- The primary objective is to foster a more business-friendly environment in India by reducing the compliance burden and fear of imprisonment for minor mistakes. It seeks to align corporate governance with the current economic landscape and the vision of a Viksit Bharat.

#### Key Features:

- **Decriminalization of Offences:** Shifts 21 minor/technical offences from a criminal court-based system to an electronic **e-adjudication platform** where only monetary penalties are levied, removing the risk of imprisonment.
- **CSR Threshold Revision:** Increases the net profit threshold for mandatory Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) from **₹5 crore to ₹10 crore**, exempting many small companies from the 2% spending requirement.
- **Hybrid Meetings:** Enables companies to hold Annual General Meetings (AGM) and Extraordinary General Meetings (EGM) via **video conferencing**, with a mandatory physical meeting required only once every three years.
- **Extended Timelines:** Increases the time allowed to transfer unspent CSR funds for ongoing projects to a designated bank account from 30 days to **90 days**.
- **Self-Declaration Framework:** Replaces several traditional affidavits required under the Acts with simple **self-declarations**, reducing paperwork and notarization costs.
- **LLP Conversion:** Introduces a new framework allowing specified trusts (registered under SEBI or IFSC) to convert into Limited Liability Partnerships (LLPs).

#### Significance:

- By removing criminal penalties for procedural errors, the Bill encourages entrepreneurship and reduces the inspector raj or discretionary power of officials.
- The relaxations provided to companies make it easier for smaller, unorganized businesses to register as formal corporate entities.
- The push for digital meetings and e-adjudication aligns Indian corporate law with global standards, increasing shareholder participation and transparency.

## Trade Marks Act, 1999

The Delhi High Court is hearing a trademark dispute where Novo Nordisk alleged infringement of its brand **Ozempic** by Dr. Reddy's Laboratories through the similar name **Olymviq**.



### About Trade Marks Act, 1999:

#### What it is?

- The Trade Marks Act, 1999 is India's principal legislation governing the registration, protection, and enforcement of trademarks.
- It replaced the 1958 Act to align with the TRIPS Agreement and modern intellectual property standards.

#### Aim:

- To protect brand identity and commercial interests of businesses
- To prevent consumer confusion and deception, especially critical in pharmaceuticals where errors can be life-threatening

**Organisation Involved:** Administered by the Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks.

#### Key Features:

- **Deceptive Similarity Test:** Prohibits marks that are identical or likely to confuse consumers, even if differences exist in spelling or design.
- **Phonetic & Visual Assessment:** Courts assess both how a trademark sounds and appears, since similarity in pronunciation alone can mislead users.
- **Higher Threshold for Medicines:** As per *Cadila Healthcare Ltd v Cadila Pharmaceuticals Ltd*, even minor similarity is barred due to potential health risks.
- **Non-Proprietary Names (INN) Protection (Section 13):** Prevents exclusive rights over generic drug names, ensuring essential medicines remain universally identifiable.
- **Well-Known Trademark Protection:** Famous brands receive extended protection across sectors to prevent dilution or unfair advantage by imitators.

#### Infringement vs Passing Off:

1. **Statutory Remedy:** Available for registered trademarks with defined legal protection.
2. **Common Law Remedy:** Protects unregistered marks based on reputation and goodwill.

#### Significance:

- **Consumer Safety:** Reduces risk of wrong drug dispensing, especially in India's multilingual and low-awareness settings.
- **Encourages Innovation:** Secures brand reputation and returns on R&D investment, promoting continued pharmaceutical innovation.

## PADMA RIVER

A tragic accident at the Dauladia terminal in Bangladesh resulted in at least 16 deaths after a passenger bus plunged into the Padma River while boarding a ferry.



### About The Padma River:

#### What it is?

- The Padma is the main channel of the **Ganges (Ganga)** river in Bangladesh. It flows southeast for approximately 120 kilometers until it joins the Meghna River near the Bay of Bengal. It is known for its massive width, shifting channels, and high discharge rates.

#### Origin:

- The river enters Bangladesh from India near Chapai Nawabganj. It originates where the main branch of the Ganges bifurcates (splits) at the **Farakka Barrage** in the Murshidabad district of West Bengal, India.

**Tributaries (Feeding into the Padma):** The **Mahananda** River is a major tributary that joins the Padma in northwestern Bangladesh.

**Distributaries:** Several important rivers branch off from the Padma, including the **Ariyal Khan**, **Madhumati**, and the **Bhairab**.

**Major Confluence:** The Padma is a major tributary of the **Meghna River** system; the two join at Chandpur before flowing into the sea.

**Key Geological Features:**

- **Braided Character:** The Padma is a classic **braided river**, characterized by multiple shifting channels and chars (temporary sandy islands) created by high sediment loads.
- **High Erosion Rate:** It is notorious for its bank erosion, which frequently displaces coastal communities and alters the geography of the surrounding districts.
- **Massive Discharge:** During the monsoon season, the Padma carries a staggering volume of water, often exceeding **75,000 cubic meters per second**.
- **The Padma Bridge:** A feat of modern engineering, the 6.15 km multipurpose bridge spans the river, connecting the southwest of the country to the capital, Dhaka.

**Significance:**

- It supports the livelihoods of millions through fishing and providing water for the irrigation of the fertile deltaic plains.
- Despite the new bridge, ferry terminals like **Dauladia and Paturia** remain critical for the movement of heavy vehicles and goods between the capital and the southwestern districts.

**USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT**

The Government of India highlighted the expanding use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in disaster management following the enactment of the Disaster Management (Amendment) Act, 2025.

**About Use Of AI In Disaster Management:**

**What it is?**

- The application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) across the disaster management cycle – preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery – to enhance prediction, decision-making, and coordination.



**Various AI Applications in Disaster Management:**

- **Weather Forecasting & Early Warning:**
  - India Meteorological Department uses AI/ML for 7-day advance weather predictions.
  - Cyclone tracking and intensity prediction under Mission Mausam.
- **Flood Forecasting & Hydrological Modelling:**
  - Central Water Commission uses AI for short-range flood forecasting.
  - Real-time flood advisory via digital portals using rainfall-based modelling .

- **Risk Mapping & Decision Support Systems:**
  - National Disaster Management Authority developed Web-DCRA & DSS tools.
  - Dynamic risk atlases help in cyclone preparedness and evacuation planning.
- **Remote Sensing & Hazard Mapping:**
  - National Remote Sensing Centre developed Flood Hazard Atlases .
  - Satellite data + AI used for mapping vulnerable regions.
- **Avalanche Forecasting & Geo-Intelligence:**
  - Defence Research and Development Organisation uses AI for:
    - Avalanche prediction
    - Remote sensing-based detection
    - Autonomous forecasting systems

## VARIABLE RATE REPO (VRR) AUCTIONS

The RBI injected ₹55,837 crore into the banking system via a 3-day VRR auction to address tightening liquidity.

### About Variable Rate Repo (VRR) Auctions:

#### What is Variable Rate Repo (VRR) Auctions?

- A **Variable Rate Repo (VRR)** is a monetary policy tool used by the RBI to inject liquidity into the banking system when cash becomes scarce. Unlike the fixed-rate repo, the interest rate in a VRR is determined through a competitive bidding



#### How it Works?

1. **Announcement:** The RBI notifies banks of its intent to lend a specific amount (e.g., ₹1 lakh crore) for a set duration (e.g., 3 days).
2. **Bidding:** Commercial banks submit bids stating the amount they want to borrow and the interest rate they are willing to pay.
3. **Allotment:** The RBI accepts bids starting from the highest rate offered down to a **cut-off rate**, which is the lowest rate at which funds are disbursed.
4. **Collateral:** Banks provide government securities to the RBI as collateral, which they repurchase (Repo) at the end of the term.

### Aim of VRR:

- The primary objective is **liquidity management**. By infusing cash, the RBI ensures that banks have enough funds to meet daily requirements, preventing the Call Money Rate (the rate at which banks lend to each other) from spiking far above the policy Repo rate.

### Key Features of Short-Term VRR:

- **Flexibility:** It targets immediate, temporary deficits (usually 1 to 14 days) caused by seasonal factors like tax payments or festivals.
- **Market-Driven:** The Variable Rate allows the market to determine the cost of funds based on actual demand.
- **Short Duration:** These are tactical tools, unlike Open Market Operations (OMO), which provide long-term durable liquidity.
- **Collateralized:** Like all repo transactions, these are backed by high-quality government bonds.

### Implications:

- By filling the liquidity gap, it prevents volatility in the short-term money market.
- Ensures that banks don't tighten lending to businesses and consumers just because they are temporarily low on cash.
- High demand for VRR funds usually indicates that the banking system is in a deficit mode rather than a surplus mode.

## CHOKRAMUDI HILLS

The **Chokramudi hills** in Kerala, previously a hub for illegal encroachment and construction, have been reclaimed by the government and transformed into a thriving natural habitat.

- This restoration has led to the return of the endangered **Nilgiri tahr** and the revival of the rare **Neelakurinji**

### About Chokramudi Hills:

#### What it is?

- Chokramudi is one of the highest and most ecologically fragile peaks in the Munnar region. It is characterized by high-altitude **shola-grassland** ecosystems that are vital for the hydrology and biodiversity of the Western Ghats.



**Located In:** Bison Valley Panchayat, near Munnar in the Idukki district of Kerala.

### Key Features:

- **Strategic Elevation:** Being one of the tallest peaks in the area, it offers a distinct microclimate suitable for high-altitude flora and fauna.
- **Neelakurinji Habitat:** The hills are a major site for the mass flowering of *Strobilanthes kunthiana* (Neelakurinji), which blooms once every 12 years.
- **Eravikulam Link:** Its proximity to the Eravikulam National Park makes it a natural corridor for the movement of mountain ungulates.
- **Grassland Ecosystem:** The peak is covered with Montane Grasslands, which act as a sponge for rainwater, feeding downstream areas like Bison Valley.

**About Nilgiri Tahr:** (*Nilgiritragus hylocrius*)

### What it is?

- The Nilgiri tahr is a sturdy, mountain goat-like ungulate. It is the **State Animal of Tamil Nadu** and is the only species of caprine (goat-antelope) found in tropical India.

### Habitat:

- **Open Montane Grasslands:** They prefer high-altitude grasslands interspersed with shola forests (stunted tropical montane forests).
- **Cliffs and Crag:** They are exceptionally agile and live on steep, rocky cliffs which they use as escape terrain to flee from predators like leopards and tigers.
- **Geographic Range:** Endemic to the **Western Ghats**, primarily restricted to a narrow stretch between the Nilgiri Hills and the Kanyakumari hills.

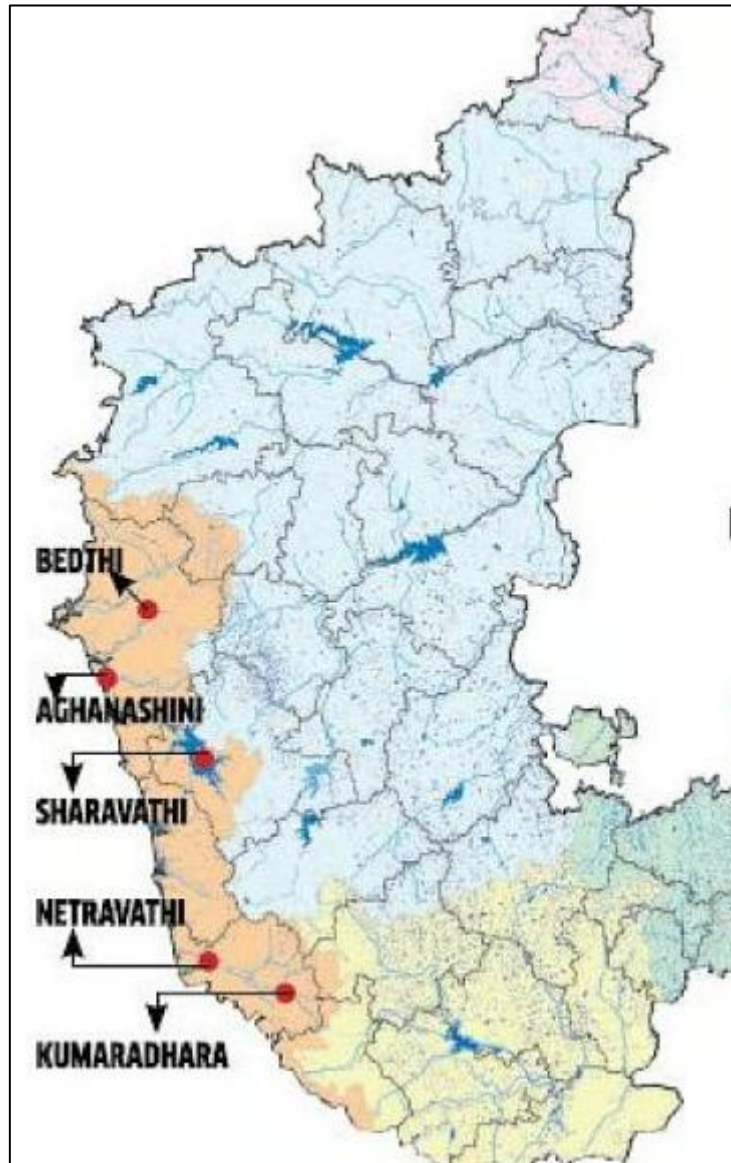
**IUCN Status:** Endangered (EN).

### Key Characters:

- **Sexual Dimorphism:** Males are larger and darker than females. Adult males develop a distinct light-colored patch on their backs, earning them the name **Saddlebacks**.
- **Curved Horns:** Both sexes possess backward-curved horns, though they are larger and more robust in males.
- **Social Structure:** They live in social groups called droves, typically consisting of several females and their young, led by a dominant male.
- **Bristly Mane:** Adult males feature a short, dark, bristly mane along the back of the neck and shoulders.

## AGHANASHINI-VEDAVATHI RIVER-LINKING PROJECT

**Context:** UNESCO has advised the Government of India to strictly adhere to World Heritage Conservation norms regarding the proposed Aghanashini-Vedavathi river-linking project.



**About Aghanashini-Vedavathi River-Linking Project:**

**About Aghanashini River:**

- **What it is?**
  - The Aghanashini is one of the most pristine, free-flowing rivers in India. Unlike most major rivers in the country, it remains largely **undammed** and lacks significant industrial pollution, making it an ecological rarity in the West Coast river system.
- **Origin:**
  - It originates at **Sirsi** (specifically in the 'Shankara Tirtha' of the Heggarne forest range) in the Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka.

- **State Flow Through:**

- It flows entirely through the state of **Karnataka** before emptying into the Arabian Sea.
- The Aghanashini is **not a tributary**; it is an independent, west-flowing river that drains directly into the **Arabian Sea** at Tadri in the Kumta taluk.

### About Vedavati River:

- **What it is?**

- The Vedavati is a significant **east-flowing river** in South India. Unlike the Aghanashini, which is a short, west-flowing mountain river, the Vedavati is a long, plateau river that eventually joins the Bay of Bengal system. It is a lifeline for the semi-arid regions of central Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

- **Origin:**

- The river is formed by the confluence of two streams, the **Veda** and the **Avati**, which originate in the **Bababudangiri** mountain range of the Western Ghats (Chikkamagaluru district, Karnataka).
- The two streams flow east and unite at **Pura** to form the Vedavati.

- **Vedavati is a Tributary of:**

- The Vedavati is a major right-bank tributary of the **Tungabhadra River**.
- The Tungabhadra itself is the largest tributary of the **Krishna River**. Therefore, the Vedavati is part of the larger **Krishna River Basin**.

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