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MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY



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THE HINDU Mar 25

CAPTIVE ELEPHANT RULES, 2024

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Env and Eco)



What are the new rules for elephant transfers?

What were the provisions regarding the ownership and transfer of elephants earlier? Why do experts and activists say that the law with respect to protecting elephants from trafficking has become lax?

Jacob Koshy

The story so far:

The Centre has notified a set of rules called the Captive Elephant (Transfer or Transport) Rules, 2024 that liberalises the conditions under which elephants may be transferred within or between States.

What are the rules around the transfer and transport of elephants?

Elephants are, according to the provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act, a Schedule I species and therefore, be it wild or captive, cannot be captured or traded under any circumstances. Section 12 of the Act allows Schedule I animals to be translocated for 'special purposes' such as education and scientific research. They can also be translocated for population management of wildlife without harming any wild animal and collection of specimens for recognised zoos/museums. Captive elephants because of their historical role in forest management, timber transport, presence in estates of erstwhile royal families and in temple precincts for religious purpose can be owned and therefore come under a special category. However, strict rules guide the transfer of such elephants. Section 40 (2) of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 prohibits the acquisition, possession and transfer of a captive elephant without the written permission of the Chief Wildlife Warden of the State. Until 2021, however, these laws explicitly said that such transactions ought not to be of a 'commercial nature'. The Environment Ministry in 2021 brought in an amendment that allowed the transfer of elephants for 'religious or any other purposes'. Such a broad interpretation, activists and researchers said, could accelerate trafficking and illegal commercial transactions. A standing committee, led by former Environment Minister, Jairam Ramesh, opposed this section but it was passed into law.

What do the updated rules say?

These rules provide new relaxations under which captive elephants can change owners or be transferred. These include, for instance, situations when an owner is no longer in a position to maintain the elephant or when a state's Chief Wildlife Warden "deems it fit and proper" to transfer the elephant in circumstances which call for better upkeep of the elephant. Before a transfer within the State, an elephant's health has to be ratified by a veterinarian, and the Deputy Conservator of Forests has to establish that the animal's current habitat and prospective habitats are suitable. The Chief Wildlife Warden on receipt of such documents may choose to reject or approve the transfer.

If the transfer involves moving the

Context: The Centre has notified a set of rules called the Captive Elephant (Transfer or Transport) Rules, 2024 that liberalises the conditions under which elephants may be transferred within or between States.

Captive Elephant (Transfer or Transport) Rules, 2024

- **Aim:** To ease the regulations for transferring elephants within or between states.
- **Conditions for Captive Elephant Transfer:**
  - **Owner's Inability to Maintain Elephant:** Transfer permitted if the owner is unable to adequately care for the elephant.
  - **Likelihood of Better Upkeep:** Transfer allowed if it is expected to result in better maintenance of the elephant.
  - **Approval by Chief Wildlife Warden:** Chief Wildlife Warden may approve transfer if deemed fit and proper for the elephant's better upkeep.
- **Transfer Procedure Within the State:** Veterinarian must ratify the elephant's health before transfer.
  - **Habitat Suitability:** Deputy Conservator of Forests ensures suitability of current and prospective habitats.
  - **Approval Process:** Chief Wildlife Warden decides on transfer approval based on provided documents.
- **Inter-State Transfer Requirements:**
  - **Similar conditions apply**: If the transfer involves moving the elephant outside of a state, similar conditions apply.
  - **Genetic profile:** Before a transfer is effected, the "genetic profile" of the elephant has to be registered with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
- **Elephant Exemption:** Accompanied by Mahout and Assistant, Health Certificate, Mandatory Quarantine Period, Proper Feeding and Watering, Provision during Transport, Use of Tranquilizers/Sedatives.
- **Amendments to Wildlife Protection Act:**
  - **Prohibited wildlife trade:** Until August 2022, Wildlife Protection Act prohibited wildlife trade, including captive elephants.
  - **Exemption:** Amendments introduced an exemption allowing transfer of captive elephants.

INDIAN EXPRESS

Mar 25

TOTAL FERTILITY RATE

(Syllabus GS Paper 2 – Health)

1.29 by 2050: impact of India's falling fertility rate

ANURADHA MASCARENHAS
PUNE, MARCH 24

INDIA'S TOTAL fertility rate (TFR), or the average number of children born per woman, will fall to 1.29 by 2050, a new study published in *The Lancet* has found. This is far lower than the replacement rate — the level of fertility at which a population exactly replaces itself from one generation to the next — of 2.1, meaning India will see a rapidly depleting working age population, with one in five Indians a senior citizen by 2050. India's TFR has steadily declined since Independence. It was 6.18 in 1950, 4.60 in 1980, and 1.91 in 2021.

Behind falling fertility rate

Prof Anjali Radkar, head of the Centre for the Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy at Pune's Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, said this scenario was expected given India's post-Independence population-control push.

Another reason has been the rise of female literacy and women's workforce participation. This has led to women having fewer children, at a later age. In urban areas, many have chosen not to have children at all.

There is also an economic dimension. "Parents now do not receive much benefit from their children the way they used to. This has influenced their decision to not have an additional child, which would involve a substantial cost of bringing them up," Prof Radkar said.

Long-term consequences

The consequences of fertility decline will be that the share of the elderly in the population will increase sharply.

Poonam Muttreja, Executive Director of Population Foundation of India, foresees challenges like labour force shortages and potential social imbalances due to gender preferences. Pointing to the way Scandinavian countries such as Sweden and Denmark have dealt with these challenges, she added: "They are providing affordable childcare, investing in healthcare, and taking on large-scale male-engagement initiatives to build gender equity… Economic policies that stimulate growth and job creation, alongside social security and pension reforms, will also be essential in mitigating the impacts of declining fertility rates."

A worldwide decline

Researchers estimate that by 2050, 155 of 204 countries (76% of the world) will be below the replacement level of fertility. This number is predicted to rise to 198 (97%) by 2100. "This means that populations will shrink unless low fertility can be offset by ethical and effective immigration," Prof Stein Emil Vollset from the Institute For Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), US, said.

Context: A new study recently published in The Lancet reveals that India's total fertility rate (TFR), which denotes the average number of children born per woman, is projected to decline to 1.29 by 2050.

Total Fertility Rate

- **About**: It represents the average number of children a hypothetical cohort of women would have by the end of their reproductive years, assuming constant fertility rates and no mortality.
- **Method of Measurement**: TFR is calculated by summing age-specific fertility rates, typically for women aged 15 to 49 years. These rates are obtained by dividing annual births by the population of women within specific age groups, often using data from the United Nations.
- **Replacement Level Fertility Rate**: The Replacement Level Fertility Rate is set slightly above 2, at 2.1, to factor in childhood mortality and the possibility of some women not bearing children, ensuring population replacement across generations.
- **UN Population Projections**: The United Nations employs TFR and other metrics to forecast future population trends, anticipating growth in nations with high TFRs and stabilization or decline in those with decreasing rates.
- **Key Indicators for India in NFHS-5**: India's National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) furnishes essential data on fertility rates, preferences, contraceptive usage, and maternal health, offering valuable insights into demographic trends and health outcomes.

Global Trends in Total Fertility Rate (TFR)

- **Significant Global Decline:** According to the Global Burden of Disease, Injuries and Risk Factors Study (GBD)-2021, the worldwide Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has decreased by more than half over the last 70 years, from approximately five children per woman in 1950 to 2.2 children in 2021.
- **TFR Reduction in India**: In India, the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) was 6.18 in 1950, which decreased to 4.60 in 1980 and further dropped to 1.91 in 2021, indicating a substantial decline over the decades.
- **Demographic Challenges in China**: China is grappling with the demographic challenge of an aging population, a consequence of its declining Total Fertility Rate (TFR), which has implications for its workforce and social systems.
- **India's Direction**: India appears to be moving towards a similar demographic trajectory as China, with its declining TFR suggesting a future of demographic aging, potentially posing challenges for its economy and social structure.
- **Combined Impact of India and China**: Together, India and China represent more than a third of the world's population, highlighting the significant global implications of their demographic shifts and aging populations.

DTE Mar 25

HEPATITIS B

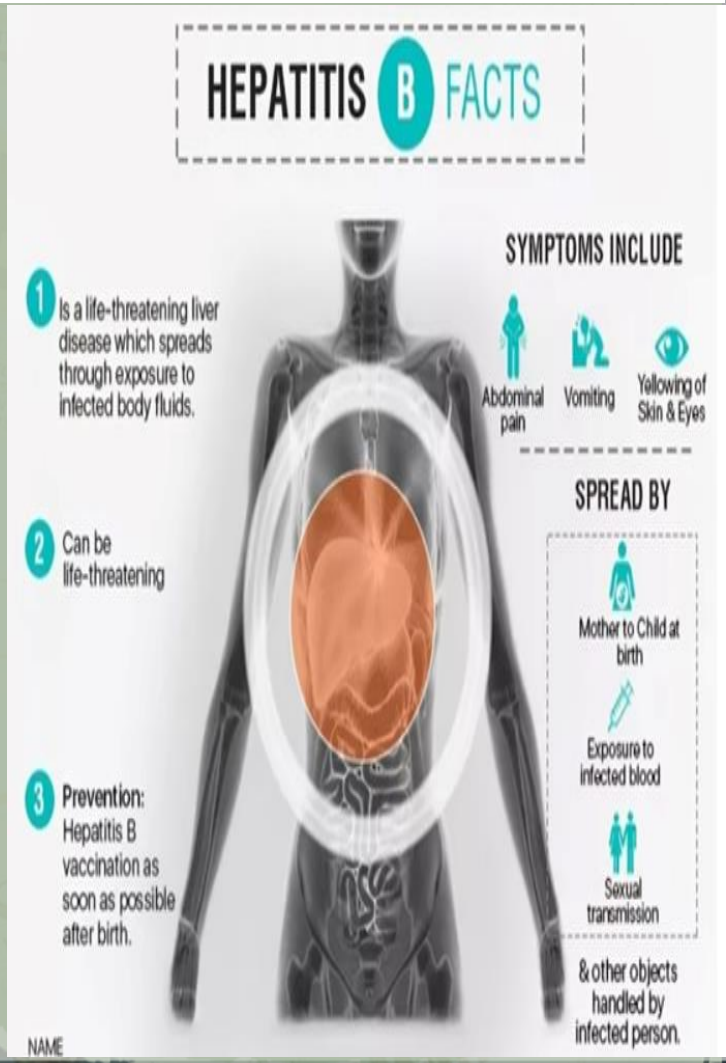
(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Sci and Tech -Dieseases)

Hepatitis B is a public health concern in India; but very few know about its transmission, effects & vaccination

Context: According to a recent study conducted by Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, public knowledge and awareness about Hepatitis B, a deadly disease that can lead to end-stage liver cirrhosis and liver cancer, is dismal in India.

Hepatitis:

- **About:** Hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver.
  - **Hepatitis B:** Some people with hepatitis B are sick for only a few weeks (known as "acute" infection), but for others, the disease progresses to a serious, lifelong illness known as chronic hepatitis B.
- **Causes of Hepatitis**: **Hepatitis viruses** are the most common cause of hepatitis in the world but other infections, toxic substances (e.g. alcohol, certain drugs), and autoimmune diseases can also cause hepatitis.
- **Types of Hepatitis**:
  - **Viral Hepatitis**: Includes Hepatitis A, B, C, D, and E.
  - **Non-viral Hepatitis**: Encompasses autoimmune hepatitis, alcoholic hepatitis, and drug-induced hepatitis.
- **Transmission:** It is spread when blood, semen, or other body fluids – even in microscopic amounts from a person infected with the hepatitis B virus enters the body of someone who is not infected-.
- **Symptoms**: Include jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes), dark urine, extreme fatigue, nausea and vomiting, abdominal pain, etc.
- **Prevention:** **Vaccines** are available to prevent hepatitis A, B and E. However, no vaccine for hepatitis C.
- **Treatment**: There's no specific treatment for acute hepatitis B, while chronic infection can be managed with oral medications like tenofovir or entecavir.



HINDUSTAN TIMES Mar 25

WESTERN DISTURBANCE

(Syllabus: GS Paper 1 – Geogrpahy)

Western disturbance cools Capital, maximum mercury dips below 30°C

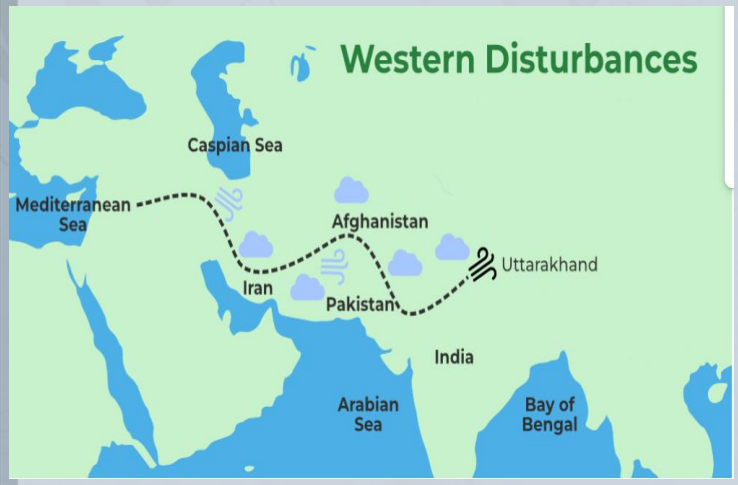
NEW DELHI: Parts of the Capital experienced a drizzle on Sunday evening owing to a western disturbance influencing northwest India, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), which added that winds of up to 40km/hour swept through some areas on a gusty day and pushed temperatures down.

Delhi's maximum temperature dropped to 29.8°C, two degrees below normal for this time of the year and a sharp dip from 34.1°C on Saturday.

To be sure, though IMD had on Friday forecast that strong surface winds of 25-30km/hour would bluster through the city over the weekend, the weather agency has also predicted a steady rise in daytime temperatures over the last week and predicted that the maximum would touch 35°C by Monday. However, the department on Sunday said a cloud cover will persist in the region till Tuesday and that the maximum will now hover around 32-33°C.

"Most parts of NCR saw overcast skies and winds of up to 40km/hour during the day. This was due to a western disturbance across northwest India...," said Kuldeep Srivastava, scientist at IMD, adding that no rain was likely on Monday.

Meanwhile, the minimum temperature was 16.9°C, around normal for this time of year. →P3



Context: Recently, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) announced that after crossing 30 degrees Celsius (°C) for the first time this year, mercury is expected to hover around 31-32°C before decreasing again, as a western disturbance begins to impact the region.

Western Disturbance

- **About**: It is an extratropical storm that originates in the Mediterranean region.
- **Formation**: Originating in the middle and upper latitudes, it is an extratropical storm system.
- **Non-Monsoonal Precipitation**: The precipitation pattern affecting northern India is non-monsoonal and stems from the Mediterranean region, resulting in both rainfall and snowfall.
- **Impact on Surrounding Nations**: Beginning as non-monsoonal precipitation in the Mediterranean, the weather system moves eastward, influencing various regions in Pakistan, India, and neighboring countries.
- **Impact on the Indian Subcontinent**: It brings sudden winter rain to the northwestern parts of the Indian subcontinent.
- **Causes**: When the Himalayas and western parts of central Asia intersect with the jet stream in the upper atmosphere, creating a low-pressure area and subsequent disturbance.
- **Outcome**: In the northern regions of India, this weather phenomenon results in rainfall in plains and snowfall in mountainous areas.
- **Declining Intensity Trend**: Over recent years, there has been a declining trend in the intensity of Western disturbances, with Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh experiencing 47% and 40% less rain than usual from October to December in 2023.
- **Contributing Factor**: Climate change, primarily driven by human activities such as fossil fuel combustion, is causing a long-term shift in weather patterns.
- **Impact of Climate Change**: Diminishing intensity and frequency of western disturbances, leading to reduced post-monsoon season rainfall and snowfall. This, in turn, affects agriculture and water availability in mountainous regions.
- **Decline in Apple Production**: Prolonged drought and insufficient snowfall contribute to a decline in apple production.

TIMES OF INDIA Mar 25

CHANDRAYAAN-3

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Sci and Tech)

Isro gets US aviation award for Chandrayaan-3 mission

Surendra.Singh@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Isro has received US's Aviation Week Laureates Award for its achievements in the Chandrayaan-3 mission, which made India the first country to land on Moon's south pole on Aug 23 last year. In another accolade for the space agency, International Astronomical Union (IAU) working group for planetary system nomenclature has approved the name 'Station Shiv Shakti' for the landing site of Chandrayaan-3's lander. The approval was given on March 19.

Deputy ambassador at the Indian embassy in the US, Sripriya Ranganathan accepted the award on Isro's behalf. The Indian embassy later posted on X: "...The award noted Chandrayaan-3's landing at the lunar South Pole, its confirmation of the presence of water there, as well as the presence of sulfur nearby — all at a cost of $75 million!" The gazetteer of planetary nomenclature, on IAU's recognition of the name 'Station Shiv Shakti', stated, "Compound word from Indian mythology that depicts the masculine ('Shiva') and feminine ('Shakti') duality of nature; Landing site of Chandrayaan-3's Vikram lander."

Soon after Chandrayaan-3's Vikram lander landed on the Moon's south pole on Aug 23 last year, PM Modi had on Aug 26, 2023 named the landing site 'Shiv Shakti'.

According to Gazetteer, planetary nomenclature, like terrestrial nomenclature, is used to uniquely identify a feature on the surface of a planet or satellite so it can be easily located, described, and discussed.



AP

The Chandrayaan-3 mission made India the first country to land on Moon's south pole

Context: ISRO has received US's **Aviation Week Laureates Award** for its achievements in the Chandrayaan-3 mission, which made India the first country to land on Moon's south pole last year.

- In another achievement, International Astronomical Union (IAU) has approved the name 'Station Shiv Shakti', the landing site, for planetary system nomenclature.

Chandrayaan-3

- **About**: It is **India's 3rd mission** to the moon. It comes after Chandrayaan-2, which took place in 2019.
- **Objectives:**
  - To demonstrate Safe and Soft Landing on Lunar Surface
  - To demonstrate Rover roving on the moon and
  - To conduct in-situ scientific experiments.
- **Components of Chandrayaan-3**
  - **Propulsion module (PM):** The propulsion module will carry the lander and rover from injection orbit to till 100 km lunar orbit.
  - **Lander:** The Lander will have the capability to soft land at a specified lunar site and deploy the Rover
  - **Rover**: To carry out in-situ chemical analysis of the lunar surface during the course of its mobility.
- **Launched by**: Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle Mark III (LVM3 –M4).
- **Significance**: India became the first nation to soft-land on the surface of the Lunar south pole and overall the fourth to do a soft landing on moon.
- **Reason for Landing on South Pole:**
  - The sides of some craters never receive any sunlight and can be as cold as just 40 degrees C above absolute zero.
  - Interest in the lunar south pole as a landing site is mainly driven by the fact that scientists know the region hosts water in the form of ice.
  - It can act as a coolant for equipment and even provide rocket fuel. The latter could be especially useful for a staging mission to Mars launched from the moon someday.
  - **Name of landing Site**: Shiv Shakti Point.

BUSINESS STANDARD

Mar 25

TB CLINICAL TRIALS

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Sci and Tech)

Clinical trials of new TB vaccine begin

ANJALI SINGH
Mumbai, 24 March

The clinical trials of the novel tuberculosis vaccine MTBVAC began in India on Sunday, marking a "giant step" forward in the fight against one of the world's deadliest infectious diseases that kills over 1.6 million people annually.

Developed by Biofabri in collaboration with the Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech, MTBVAC is derived from a human strain of the Mycobacterium tuberculosis bacteria.

It holds promise as a more effective and long-lasting alternative to the BCG vaccine, the only tuberculosis (TB) vaccine currently available. The over-a-century-old BCG offers limited protection against pulmonary TB, the most common and transmissible form of the disease.

MTBVAC holds promise as a more effective and long-lasting alternative to the BCG vaccine

These clinical trials aim to assess the safety, immunogenicity, and efficacy of MTBVAC. TB claims over 1.6 million lives annually and infects more than 10 million worldwide each year.

India, with the world's highest TB burden, is a crucial testing ground for MTBVAC.

The trials will assess the vaccine's safety, immune response, and efficacy in preventing TB in adults and adolescents. MTBVAC has been developed after over three decades of research.

The vaccine entered Phase 3 clinical trials in newborns in 2023, comparing its efficacy with the traditional BCG vaccine. Simultaneously, trials in HIV-uninfected and HIV-infected adults have been initiated to assess safety and immunogenicity, with plans for further efficacy studies in adolescents and adults in Sub-Saharan Africa.

"After more than three decades of research, it is a giant step to test in adults and adolescents in the country where 28 per cent of the world's TB cases accumulate and concludes that more effort and funding is needed to combat TB, which remains one of the world's leading infectious causes of death, especially in India," said Esteban Rodriguez, CEO of Biofabri.

Krishna Ella, Executive Chairman, Bharat Biotech stated, "Our quest for a more effective vaccine against Tuberculosis received a big boost today, with clinical trials in India. Our goal to develop TB vaccines to prevent disease in adults and adolescents has taken a big step today. We are honoured to partner with BioFabri."

Context: Recently, the clinical trials of the novel tuberculosis vaccine **MTBVAC commenced in India**, representing a "giant step" forward in combatting one of the world's deadliest infectious diseases, which claims the lives of over 1.6 million people annually.

TB Clinical Trials

- **Developed by**: Biofabri in collaboration with the Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech.
- **Potential Advantages Over BCG**: MTBVAC holds promise as a more effective and long-lasting alternative to the BCG vaccine, the only tuberculosis (TB) vaccine currently available.
- **Limitations of BCG**: The over-a-century-old BCG offers limited protection against pulmonary TB, the most common and transmissible form of the disease.
- **Importance of Clinical Trials**: Clinical trials aim to assess the safety, immunogenicity, and efficacy of MTBVAC, addressing a critical need in tuberculosis prevention.
- **Global TB Burden**: TB claims over 1.6 million lives annually and infects more than 10 million worldwide each year, emphasizing the urgency for effective vaccines.
- **India's Role in Testing**: India, with the world's highest TB burden, is a crucial testing ground for MTBVAC, reflecting the significance of its clinical trials.
- **Scope of Trials:** The trials will assess the vaccine's safety, immune response, and efficacy in preventing TB in adults and adolescents, catering to diverse age groups.
- **Progress in Clinical Trials:** The vaccine entered Phase 3 clinical trials in newborns in 2023, indicating significant advancement towards its potential deployment.
- **Diversified Trial Populations**: Trials in HIV-uninfected and HIV-infected adults have been initiated to assess safety and immunogenicity, with further efficacy studies planned for adolescents and adults in Sub-Saharan Africa.

INDIA TODAY Mar 25

ISLAMIC STATE KHORASAN (ISIS-K)

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – IR)

Why Islamic State targeted Russia and attacked Moscow concert hall

Context: Recently, the Islamic State Khorasan (ISIS-K) attacked Moscow's famous Crocus City Hall, killing at least 143 people, and injuring hundreds more.

Islamic State Khorasan (ISIS-K)

- **About**: ISIS-K emerged in late 2014 in eastern Afghanistan, becoming one of the most active ISIS-affiliates.
  - **Origins**: 'Khorasan' refers to an ancient caliphate in the region, spanning parts of Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, and Turkmenistan.
- **Composition**: Comprising former Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP) fighters and others pledging allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, ISIS-K gained notoriety for extreme brutality.
- **Financial Support and Training**: Labeled one of the top four deadliest terrorist organizations in 2018, ISIS-K received $100 million in funds and training from ISIS central leadership in Iraq and Syria.
- **Expansion Beyond Afghanistan**: ISIS-K has expanded operations outside Afghanistan, recruiting foreign fighters from South Asia, the Middle East, and parts of Europe.
- **Reasons for Targeting**: Russia's growing ties with the Taliban have made it a target for ISIS-K, given the bitter enmity between ISIS-K and the Taliban due to sectarian differences.
- **Afghanistan as Strategic Importance**: Afghanistan provides Russia with access to new trade routes amid Western sanctions, while the Taliban seeks international recognition and support, refraining from criticizing Russia on the Ukraine conflict.
- **Why attack Russia?** Russian President Vladimir Putin's fifth term in office and the group openly oppose Putin due to his alleged mistreatment of Muslims in Russia, for years.

ECONOMIC TIMES Mar 25

MINIMUM WAGES & LIVING WAGES

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy)



Minimum Wage to Living Wage: India Plans Shift

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

LIVING WAGE Takes into account basic expenses such as housing, food, clothing, education and healthcare, and standard of living

MINIMUM WAGE Based on labour productivity and skillsets

Living wages higher than minimum wages

WAGE FLOOR

₹176 a day

Current national wage floor, not revised since 2017

Not binding, so it's even less than that in a few states

₹375 a day

Wage floor proposed by Anoop Satpathy panel in 2019

Was put on backburner with outbreak of pandemic

New panel firming up report to set wage floor

Yogima.Sharma
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New Delhi: India is preparing to replace the minimum wage with living wage by 2025 and has sought technical assistance from the International Labour Organization (ILO) to create a framework for estimating and operationalising these, **ET** has learnt.

Living wages – a minimum income necessary for a worker to meet their basic needs, factoring in key social expenditure by an individual such as housing, food, healthcare, education and clothing – were endorsed by the ILO earlier this month. These would be higher than basic minimum wages.

"We could go beyond minimum wages in a year," a senior government official told **ET**.

The ILO had agreed on the reform at its 350th governing body meeting in Geneva that concluded on March 14.

There are over 500 million workers in India and 90% of them are in the unorganised sector where many draw a daily minimum wage of ₹176 or more, depending on the state where they work. However, this national wage floor — not revised since 2017 — is not binding on states and hence it's even less than ₹176 in a few states.

The Code on Wages, passed in 2019 but yet to be implemented, proposes a wage floor which will be binding on all states once the Code is implemented.

Sustainable Development Goals ▸▸ 10

Context: India is preparing to **replace the minimum wage with living wage** by 2025 and has sought technical assistance from the International Labour Organization (ILO) to create a framework for estimating and operationalising these.

Living Wage

- **About:** The living wage concept entails an income level adequate for sustenance, covering basic needs like shelter and food.
- **Preventing Poverty**: Its primary aim is to shield individuals and families from impoverishment, offering them a chance at a decent livelihood.
- **Economic Comparison**: Economists propose that a living wage should cap housing expenses at 30% of the total income, ensuring affordability.
- **Above Minimum**: In practice, living wages typically exceed legal minimum wage standards, reflecting the higher cost of living.

Minimum Wages

- **About:** These are the lowest amount of compensation an employer must pay to workers for their labor, legally safeguarded against reduction through collective agreements or individual contracts.
- **Methods of Setting**: Minimum wages can be established through various means such as statutory laws, decisions by competent authorities, wage boards, councils, or industrial and labor courts.
- **Purpose**: Minimum wages are intended to protect workers from receiving unreasonably low pay, ensuring fairness and distributing the benefits of progress equitably.
- **Role in Poverty Alleviation and Inequality Reduction**: Minimum wages serve as a component of policies aimed at combating poverty and decreasing inequality.
    - They contribute to promoting equal remuneration for work of equal value, thus addressing disparities, including those based on gender.

Code on Wages

- **About:** To amend and consolidate the laws relating to wages and bonus and matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.
- **Coverage**: The Code will apply to all employees. The central government will make wage-related decisions for employments such as railways, mines, and oil fields, among others. State governments will make decisions for all other employments.

NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

Mar 25

GULF OF MANNAR

(Syllabus: GS Paper 1 – Geography)

Live Coral cover in Gulf of Mannar down to 27%

Context: A recent study concluded that coral cover in the Gulf of Mannar region had declined from 37% in 2005 to 27.3% in 2021.

Gulf of Mannar

- **About:** The Gulf of Mannar, situated along the southeast coast of India, is a part of the Laccadive Sea and comprises 21 islands.
- **Geographical Boundaries**: Spanning between the northwest coast of Sri Lanka and the southeast coast of India, it is bordered to the northeast by **Rameswaram, Adam's Bridge, and Mannar Island.**
- **Hydrological Features**: It receives water from various rivers, including the Tambraparni from India and the Aruvi from Sri Lanka, with the port of Tuticorin located on the Indian coast.
- **Natural Resources**: Notable for its pearl banks and sacred chank, a gastropod mollusk, the Gulf of Mannar boasts unique marine biodiversity.
- **Gulf of Mannar Marine National Park**: Recognized as one of the biologically richest coastal regions in India, the Gulf of Mannar is the first Marine Biosphere Reserve in South and Southeast Asia.
- **Ecological Significance**: It is one of the four major coral reef areas in India, along with the Gulf of Kutch, Lakhsadweep, and Andaman and Nicobar Islands, holding significant importance for biodiversity conservation.
- **Protected Area Status**: Designated as a Biosphere Reserve, it encompasses 21 islands (including 2 submerged ones) and adjoining coral reefs, spanning Ramanathapuram and Tuticorin districts.



HINDUSTAN TIMES

Mar 25

WORLD TUBERCULOSIS (TB) DAY

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Sci and Tech)

World Tuberculosis (TB) Day 2024: Date, history, theme and significance

Context: World Tuberculosis (TB) Day is celebrated annually to raise awareness about the deadly disease, with recent efforts focusing on its prevention and treatment.

World Tuberculosis (TB) Day

- **Background**: March 24, 1882, marks the pivotal discovery by Dr. Robert Koch of the bacteria responsible for tuberculosis, a milestone in the fight against the disease.
- **Significance of World TB Day**: It is celebrated annually on March 24th to commemorate Dr. Koch's discovery and to raise awareness about tuberculosis globally.
- **Initiation of World TB Day**: The International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (IUATLD) proposed the observance of March 24 as World TB Day in 1982, coinciding with the centenary of Dr. Koch's groundbreaking finding.
- **2024 Theme:** "Yes! We can end TB,".

Tuberculosis (TB)

- **About:** It is an infectious disease that most often affects the lungs and is **caused by a type of bacteria**.
- **Transmission**: It **spreads through the air** when infected people cough, sneeze or spit.
  - Tuberculosis is preventable and curable.
- **Symptoms:** prolonged cough (sometimes with blood), chest pain, weakness, fatigue, weight loss, fever, and night sweats.
- **TB status:**
  - A total of 1.3 million people died from TB in 2022 (including 167 000 people with HIV).
  - Worldwide, TB is the second leading infectious killer after COVID-19 (above HIV and AIDS).
  - In 2022, an estimated 10.6 million people fell ill with tuberculosis (TB) worldwide, including 5.8 million men, 3.5 million women and 1.3 million children.
  - TB is present in all countries and age groups. TB is curable and preventable.
  - **India** accounted for the highest number of TB cases in the world in 2022, with 2.8 million TB cases, representing **27% of the global burden.**

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