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MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY



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THE HINDU Page 1

INTERNATIONAL SEABED AUTHORITY

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – IR)

Sensing threat from China, India joins the race to mine sea patch

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

Earlier this month, India applied to the International Seabed Authority (ISBA), Jamaica, for rights to explore two vast tracts in the Indian Ocean seabed that are not part of its jurisdiction. The application to explore one of these regions, a cobalt-rich crust long known as the Afanasy Nikitin Seamount (AN Seamount), is a gambit by India.



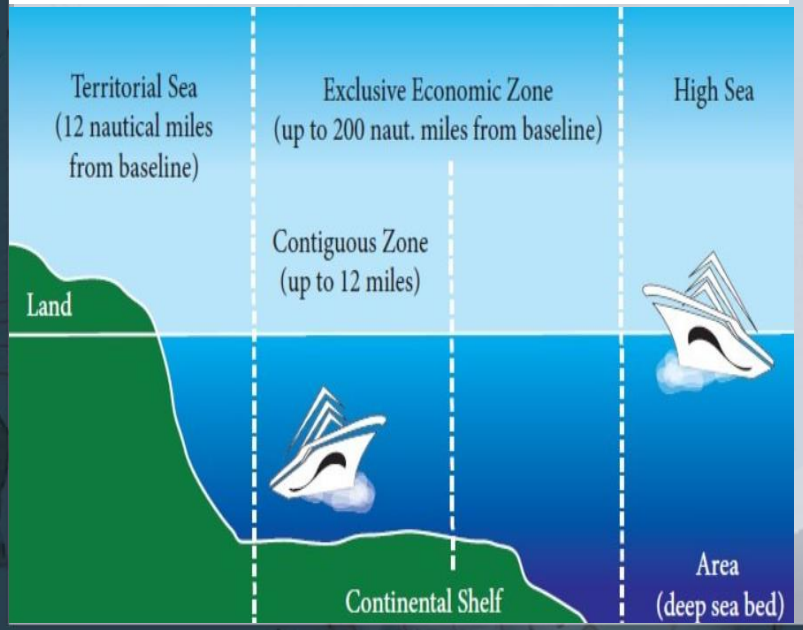
Matsya 6000, a deep-sea exploration vehicle. R. RAVINDRAN

Rights to the region have already been claimed by Sri Lanka under a separate set of laws, *The Hindu* has learnt, but India's application is part-motivated by reports of Chinese vessels undertaking reconnaissance in the same region, a highly placed official, who declined to be identified, confirmed to *The Hindu*.

The AN Seamount is a structural feature (400 km-long and 150 km-wide) in the Central Indian Basin, located about 3,000 km off India's coast.

From an oceanic depth of about 4,800 km, it rises to about 1,200 metres and is rich in deposits of cobalt, nickel, manganese, and copper.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 10



Context: India recently applied to the International Seabed Authority (ISBA) in Jamaica for rights to explore two extensive tracts in the Indian Ocean seabed that fall outside its jurisdiction.

International Seabed Authority

- **About:** It is an autonomous international organization established under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the 1994 Agreement
- **Control of Mineral Resources**: ISA serves as the organization through which States Parties to UNCLOS organize and control all mineral-resources-related activities in the Area for the benefit of humankind as a whole.
- **Environmental Protection Mandate**: ISA is mandated to ensure the effective protection of the marine environment from harmful effects that may arise from deep-seabed-related activities.
- **Establishment:** On 16 November 1994, ISA became fully operational as an autonomous international organization in June 1996.
- **Headquarters**: Kingston, Jamaica.
- **Membership**169 Members, including 168 Member States and the European Union.
- **Common Heritage of Humankind**: The Area and its resources, covering approximately 54% of the world's oceans, are considered the common heritage of humankind.

Exclusive Rights

- **Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ)**: Countries are granted exclusive rights to resources up to 200 nautical miles from their borders.
- **Continental Shelf Extension**: Some coastal states may extend their jurisdiction beyond the 200-mile limit, encompassing the underlying seabed known as the continental shelf.
- **ISBA Approval Process:** The ISBA, an appointed scientific commission, evaluates claims for extended jurisdiction based on provided evidence.

MONUMENTS OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE

(Syllabus GS Paper 1 – Art and Culture)

ASI will 'delist' some 'lost' monuments. What's happening, and why?

DIVYA A
NEW DELHI, MARCH 26

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL Survey of India (ASI) has decided to delist 18 "centrally protected monuments" that it has assessed are not of national importance. The 18 are part of an earlier list of monuments the ASI had said were "untraceable".

These include a medieval highway milestone recorded as Kos Minar No.13 at Mujessar village in Haryana, Barakhamba Cemetery in Delhi, Gunner Burkill's tomb in Jhansi district, a cemetery at Gaughat in Lucknow, and the Telia Nala Buddhist ruins in Varanasi. The precise location of these monuments, or their current physical state, is not known.

What does 'delisting' mean?

The ASI, which works under the Union Ministry of Culture, is responsible for protecting and maintaining certain monuments and archaeological sites that have been declared of national importance under The Ancient Monuments Preservation Act, 1904 and The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 (AMASR Act).

Delisting a monument effectively means it will no longer be conserved and protected by the ASI. Under the AMASR Act, any kind of construction-related activity is not allowed around a protected site. Once the monument is delisted, activities related to construction and urbanisation in the area can be carried out in a regular manner.

ASI currently has 3,693 monuments under its purview, which will fall to 3,675 once the delisting exercise is completed in the next few weeks. This is the first such large-scale delisting exercise in several decades.

The gazette notification for the 18 monuments in question was issued on March 8. There is a two-month window for the public to send in "objections or suggestions".

What does it mean for a monument to be 'untraceable'?

The AMASR Act protects monuments and sites that are more than 100 years old, including temples, cemeteries, inscriptions, tombs, forts, palaces, step-wells, rock-cut caves, and even objects like cannons and mile pillars (kos minars) that may be of historical significance. These sites are scattered across the country and, over the decades, some have been lost to activities such as urbanisation, encroachments, the construction of dams and reservoirs, or sheer neglect.



A Mughal-era Kos Minar in the Delhi zoo. A similar milestone in Haryana faces delisting. *Wikimedia Commons*

EXPLAINED CULTURE

Under the AMASR Act, the ASI should regularly inspect protected monuments. In cases of encroachment, the ASI can file a police complaint, issue a show-cause notice for the removal of the encroachment, and communicate to the local administration the need for demolition of encroachments.

This, however, has not happened with uniform effectiveness. The ASI was founded in 1861. The bulk of the currently protected monuments were taken under the ASI's wings from the 1920s to the 1950s, but in the decades after Independence, the government spent its meagre resources more on health, education and infrastructure, than protecting heritage, officials said. The ASI also concentrated more on uncovering new monuments and sites instead of protecting existing ones.

How many historical monuments have been lost in this way?

In December 2022, the Ministry of Culture submitted to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture that 50 of India's 3,693 centrally protected monuments were missing. Fourteen of these had been lost to rapid urbanisation, 12 were submerged by reservoirs/dams, and the remaining 24 were untraceable, the Ministry told the Committee.

The Committee was informed that security guards were posted at only 248 of the 3,693 protected monuments. In its report on 'Issues relating to Untraceable Monuments and Protection of Monuments in India', the Committee "noted with dismay that out of the total requirement of 7,000 personnel for the protection of monuments, the government could provide only 2,578 security personnel at 248 locations due to budgetary constraints".

Was 2022 the first time that the disappearance of these monuments was noticed?

ASI officials had told *The Indian Express* then that no comprehensive physical survey of all monuments had ever been conducted after Independence. However, in 2013, a report by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India had said that at least 92 centrally protected monuments across the country had gone missing.

The CAG report said that the ASI did not have reliable information on the exact number of monuments under its protection. It recommended that periodic inspection of each protected monument be carried out. The Culture ministry accepted the proposal.

The Parliamentary panel noted that "out of the 92 monuments declared as missing by the CAG, 42 have been identified due to efforts made by the ASI". Of the remaining 50, 26 were accounted for, as mentioned earlier, while the other 24 remained untraceable. Eleven of these monuments are in Uttar Pradesh, two each in Delhi and Haryana, and others in states like Assam, West Bengal, Arunachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand.

Context: The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has decided to delist 18 "centrally protected monuments" because it has assessed that they do not have **national importance.**

Monument of National Importance

- **About:** A "Monument of National Importance" is designated by the **Archaeological Survey of India** and includes the following
  - The remains of an ancient monument
  - The site of an ancient monument
  - The land on which there are fences or protective covering structures for preserving the monument.
  - Land by means of which people can freely access the monument

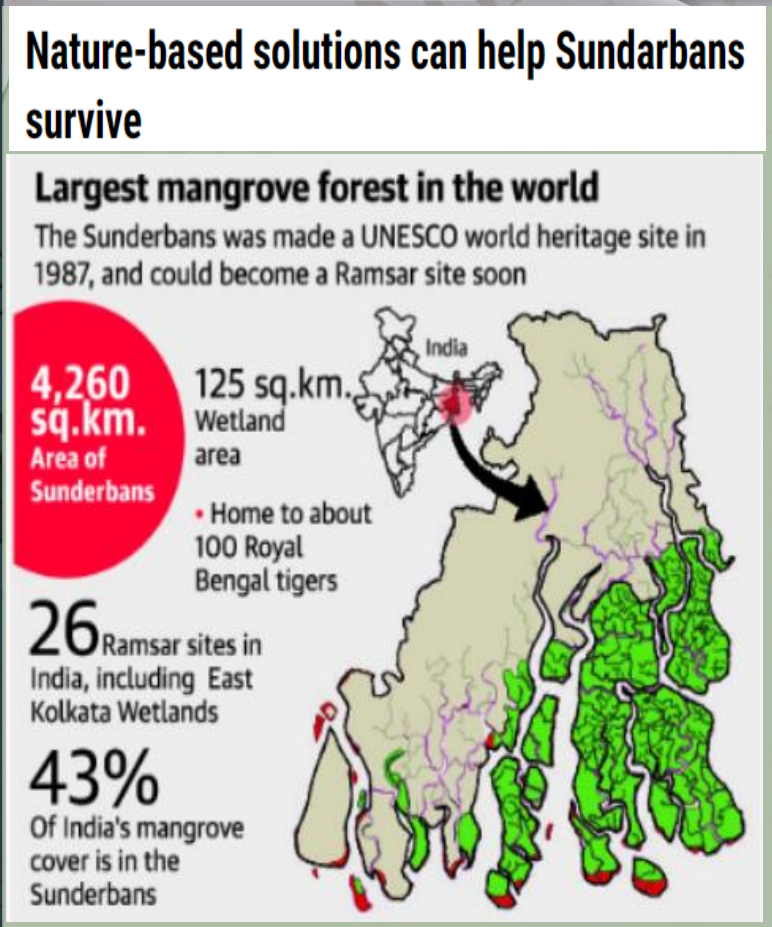
Preserving the Monuments

- **Mandate of ASI**: Under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958, the ASI is mandated to preserve monuments that have cultural and historical significance.
- **Ban on Construction Activities**: Construction activities are banned within 100 meters around the sites where the monuments are located.
- **Regulation of Repairs and Modifications**: Prior permission is required for any repairs or modifications within 200 meters of the monuments.
- **Power to Delist Monuments**: The ASI has the power to delist monuments deemed to "have ceased to be of national importance" under Section 35 of the Act.
- **End of ASI Responsibility upon Delisting**: Once a monument is delisted, the ASI is no longer responsible for protecting it.
- **Monument Tracing by ASI**: The ASI considers a monument "untraceable" when its location cannot be determined or it has been lost.
- **Earlier recommendations: Economic Advisory Council's Recommendation** (EAC-PM) proposed updating the list of national monuments in January 2023, suggesting the delisting of "missing" and minor monuments.
  - **Comptroller and Auditor General's Findings**: The CAG identified 92 monuments as "missing" in a performance audit conducted around 2013.
  - **Archaeological Survey of India's Identification**: The ASI located 42 of the "missing" monuments and advised categorizing them based on their national significance and architectural value.

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SUNDARBANS

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Env and Eco)



Context: According to the environmental study report, four million tonnes of microplastics are released into the Bay of Bengal and the Sundarbans each year from various rivers in Bangladesh and India.

Sundarbans

- **About:** It is a vast contiguous mangrove forest ecosystem situated in the coastal region of the Bay of Bengal, spanning across India and Bangladesh.
- **Located**: Delta of the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna rivers, which is the world's largest.
- **World's Largest Mangrove Forests:** Sundarbans contains the world's largest mangrove forests, making it an ecological marvel of global significance.
- **Conservation Efforts**: Sundarbans were intensified with the establishment of the Sundarbans Tiger Reserve in 1973, marking it as a crucial area for wildlife preservation.
- **UNESCO World Heritage Site**: The Sundarbans National Park, established in 1984, forms the core of the tiger reserve and was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1987.
  - It is the 27th Ramsar Site in India.
- **Biosphere Reserve:** Designated as a Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO in 2001.
- **Biodiversity**: Known for its diverse fauna, including rare and globally threatened species such as the Estuarine Crocodile, Royal Bengal Tiger, and Gangetic Dolphin.

Nature-based Solutions

- **About:** Nature-based solutions are actions to protect, sustainably manage, or restore natural ecosystems, that address societal challenges such as climate change, human health, food and water security, and disaster risk reduction effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits.
  - **Examples**: Planting trees that thrive in coastal areas – known as mangroves -- reduces the impact of storms on coastal erosion, human lives and economic assets, and provides a habitat for fish, birds and other plants supporting biodiversity.
  - **Other examples**: Climate-smart farming, environmentally sustainable forest management, restoration of wetlands and degraded forests.

HINDUSTAN TIMES
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CHIPKO ANDOLAN
(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Env & Eco)

How Chipko resonated beyond the Himalayas

The Chipko Andolan lost its ground at home, but its legacy lies in people's ecological movements that emerged elsewhere in the country

Given my interest in people's ecological movements, I was greatly fascinated by the Chipko Andolan in Garhwal. Chandi Prasad Bhatt was a key actor in this movement, and I quickly contacted him. He and his colleagues in the Sarvodaya movement began organising a series of eco-development camps in the Alaknanda valley as a follow-up to Chipko. I was delighted to join one of these in the Bemru village in 1981. Bemru was way up the steep slope from the Alaknanda valley; these slopes had a fragile cover formed from ocean sediment. Over time, they had been covered by oak and rhododendron trees that held the soil and water firmly together, preventing erosion or landslides. It was dotted by tiny villages settled on the plateaus. It was the dream of Mahatma Gandhi that India would come to be constituted as a Republic of such self-reliant villages, a vision that inspired Chandi Prasad.

All of us in the camp worked without any distinction of class or caste, and in the evenings, we sat down to discuss what was happening in the Alaknanda valley and what our response should be. There was free discussion in simple language led by a physics professor from Gopeshwar College, but stonemasons who fabricated the water mills also provided their inputs. Unfortunately, the government had a monopoly on water resources, and its only interest was to construct giant projects like Tehri to supply power to the national Capital.

A major source of strength of Garhwal villages was the *van panchayats* under their control. The powers that be were bent upon suppressing movements like Chipko lest their influence spread and challenged the ruling class's development model of favouring the rich at the cost of people and nature. They now had in hand the 1972 Wildlife Protection Act extending the power of the forest department over the entire country. This was used to render *van panchayats* dysfunctional and to harass the Chipko activists. This was brought home to me in 1995 when I accompanied Chandi Prasad on a visit to Lata, the village of Gaura Devi, who led the hugging of trees to prevent their being cut. We were stunned when a group of villagers stopped us on the boundary shouting: "Chandi Prasad, *wapas jao*" (Chandi Prasad, go back). When the atmosphere cooled, we entered the village to understand what had been happening. They told us that the level of harassment of the villagers by the forest department had increased after the village women's participation in the Chipko Movement. Taking advantage of the fact that Lata lay in the buffer zone of Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve, they cut off the villagers' access to all forest resources, leaving them worse off than they had been before Chipko. The foresters' action was a complete perversion of the biosphere reserve concept developed by UNESCO, which visualises the government machinery and local communities working together for conservation — compatible development.



Madhav Gadgil

While the protest from the Himalayas was snuffed out, it stimulated a different kind of people's movement, this time by the Marxist Kerala Sushtra Sahithya Parishad (KSSP). Inspired by Chipko, KSSP embraced the slogan "Science for social revolution" in the 1970s. One of its earliest interventions was a documentation of the environmental and social impacts of the Grasim Rayon factory at Mavoor on the Chaliyar river. The factory received bamboo at ₹1 per tonne while the market rate was ₹1,400. Despite this great advantage, the management refused to adopt pollution control measures, citing profitability concerns, and recklessly releasing poisonous effluents into the air and the river. This caused serious health problems and the destruction of livelihoods dependent on shellfisheries, lime kilns, and banana plantations. The pollution control board took no notice, and none of the government laboratories agreed to analyse water samples. Fortunately, the Indian Institute of Science's labs came forward to analyse the samples and showed that the water had mercury, lead, nickel, cobalt, iron, chromium zinc, and copper levels above the permissible limit. This helped strengthen local resistance, which forced the factory to close after a long struggle.



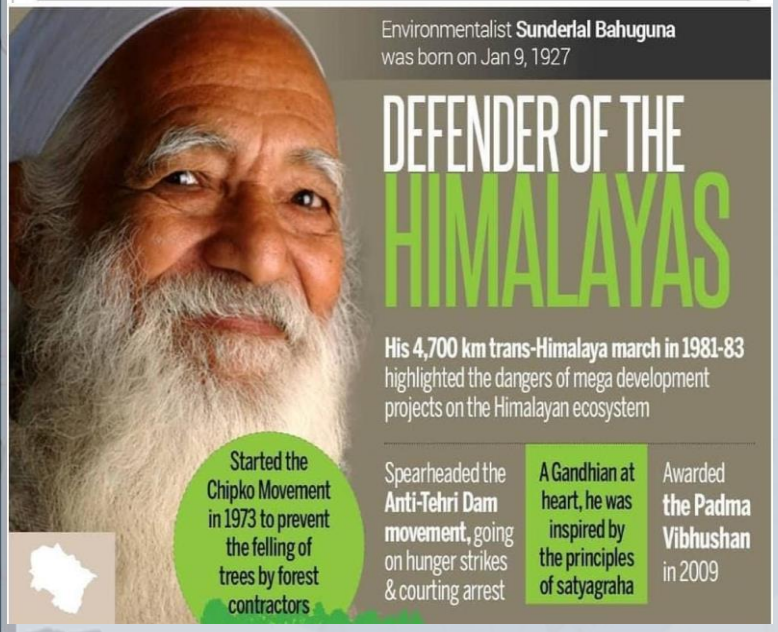
A delegation of the Himalaya Seva Sangh discussing ecological problems with former home minister Hirubhai M Patel in New Delhi in 1979 HT ARCHIVE

KSSP's most effective intervention was in Silent Valley, a unique natural ecosystem. Its interdisciplinary study showed that energy conservation would be more cost-effective in making available the amount of energy that the project might generate. Its public science parliament in 1980 attracted a huge crowd that engaged in a lively discussion. This, in part, made Silent Valley a celebrated environmental cause and eventually persuaded the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, to drop the project.

KSSP vigorously participated in the literacy mission launched in 1986 and followed this up with the *panchayat*-level resource mapping programme for neo-literates. This was followed by the People's Planning Campaign of 1995-96 in which every *panchayat* of Kerala mapped its natural, social and financial resources and developed a locally appropriate management programme. This became the model for the Biological Diversity Act provision of Biodiversity Management Committees in all local bodies in the country. This was used by the Kadanad *panchayat* in Kottayam, which demonstrated that rock quarries would damage local biodiversity. This documentation was accepted by the Kerala high court, which recommended in 2012 that rock quarries be banned. Regrettably, vested interests forced the *panchayat* to withdraw its objection; but, an important step had been taken.

Given the smartphone and social media penetration in the country today, a WhatsApp group of *panchayats* of Kerala serves to promote the preparation of people's biodiversity registers as a device for local communities to decide on management options for their own local ecosystems. The spark that Chipko Andolan lit 50 years ago is thus promising to ignite fires far and wide.

Madhav Gadgil is an ecologist, and founded the Centre for Ecological Studies at the Indian Institute of Science. The views expressed are personal



Context: The Chipko Andolan lost its ground at home, but its legacy lies in people's ecological movements that emerged elsewhere in the country.

Chipko Andolan

- **About:** It is also known as the Chipko Andolan, emerged as a protest against logging in the Himalayan region of Uttarakhand, India, gaining momentum in the early 1970s.
- **Origin:** The term "Chipko" derives from the act of hugging trees, as locals, particularly women, embraced trees to deter loggers, symbolizing the unity of humanity and nature.
- **Inspired by**: Bishnoi community in Rajasthan
- **Causes of the Movement:**, The Chipko Movement arose amid rampant deforestation in the 1970s, which was identified as a leading cause of devastating floods that claimed over 200 lives in the region.
- **Scope of the Movement**: The non-violent agitation began in Uttar Pradesh's Chamoli district (now Uttarakhand) in 1973, with villagers encircling and hugging trees to prevent their destruction, leading to a change in societal attitudes, particularly regarding women's roles.
- **Achievements of the Movement:** The Chipko Movement's notable achievements include raising awareness of forest rights, influencing policy-making on ecological matters, and securing a ban on commercial tree felling above certain altitudes and slopes in 1981.
- **Leadership**: Chandi Prasad Bhatt, Sundarlal Bahuguna, and Gaura Devi, whose leadership and advocacy played pivotal roles in organizing communities and spearheading resistance efforts.
- **Impact and Legacy**: The Chipko Movement's impact transcended regional boundaries, inspiring similar movements across India and globally, shaping environmental policy, and empowering indigenous communities in their fight against deforestation and environmental degradation.

DIGITAL MARKETS ACT (DMA)
(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy)

European Union investigating Apple for non-compliance with the Digital Markets Act

Context: The European Union has opened a non-compliance investigation into Apple and other major tech companies under the Digital Markets Act (DMA).

Digital Markets Act (DMA)

- **About**: The DMA is EU legislation designed to ensure fairness and competition in the digital sector, aiming for a safer internet, citizen empowerment, consumer protections, and improved digital services.
- **Identification of Gatekeepers:** It establishes clear criteria to identify "gatekeepers," which are large digital platforms offering core services like search engines, app stores, and messaging services.
- **Obligations and Prohibitions**: Gatekeepers must adhere to a set of obligations (do's) and prohibitions (don'ts) specified within the DMA.
- **Key Measures of DMA**:
  - **Data Usage Restrictions**: Stricter rules govern how gatekeepers can utilize user data, requiring explicit consent for tracking activities related to advertising.
  - **Interoperability of Messaging Services**: DMA allows messaging platforms to collaborate, enabling users of one platform to communicate with users on other services.
  - **Uninstallation of Preloaded Applications**: Users are given the option to uninstall preloaded applications from their devices, enhancing consumer choice.
  - **Fair Search Ranking**: Gatekeepers are prohibited from favoring their products or services over others in online search rankings, ensuring a level playing field.
  - **Complementary Nature to EU Competition Rules**: DMA works alongside existing EU competition regulations without altering them, ensuring consistent application.

ALL INDIA RADIO

Mar 26

ATAL PENSION YOJANA (APY)

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Govt Schemes)

Atal Pension Yojana Design Based On Best Practice Choice Architecture: FM Sitharaman

Context: The Finance Minister of India recently stated that the Atal Pension Yojana is built on the best practice choice architecture, ensuring automatic continuation of premium payments unless the subscriber opts out.

Atal Pension Yojana (APY)

- **Launched:** 2015
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Finance
- **Administered By:** Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority.
- **Eligibility:** Any Indian citizen in the age group of 18-40 years having savings bank account/ post office savings bank account.
- **Aim:** To provide social security for the people working in an unorganised sector as people working in such sectors mainly belong to a low-income group.
- **Coverage:** The Scheme has been implemented comprehensively across the country covering all states and Union Territories.
- **Guaranteed Pension**: 1000 to 5000 per month from the age of 60 years.
- **Benefits of APY**
  - **Fixed Pension Assurance:** Subscribers aged between 18 and 40 can secure a fixed pension ranging from Rs. 1000 to Rs. 5000 by joining and contributing to APY.
  - **Variable Contribution Levels**: Contribution levels adjust according to the age of the subscriber, starting low for early joiners and increasing for late joiners.
  - **Spousal Pension Continuity:** The same pension is guaranteed to the spouse in the event of the subscriber's death, ensuring financial stability for the family.

START 2024

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Sci and Tech)

ISRO to hold training sessions in educational institutions

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will conduct the Space Science and Technology Awareness Training (START) 2024 programme during April and May.

In this connection, ISRO solicits Expression of Interest (EoI) to host START-2024 in educational institutes, universities, colleges within India who are offering UG and PG courses in physical sciences and technology.

The main objective of the training programme is to attract the youngsters to the fields of space science and technology.

The training modules will comprise introductory level topics on various verticals of space science and technology. In addition to these, there will be sessions on Indian space exploration programmes and research opportunities.

Post-graduate students and final year undergraduate students of physical sciences (physics and chemistry) and technology (e.g. electronics, computer science, mechanical, applied physics, radiophysics, optics & opto-electronics, instrumentation and other associated subjects) studying in educational institutes, universities and colleges within India are eligible to be considered for the training.

Last date for online registration of EoI through https://jigyasa.iirs.gov.in/START by institutes, colleges, universities is April 2.

Student registration opens on April 8 and ends on April 12.

Context: The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will conduct the Space science and Technology Awareness Training (START) 2024 programme during April and May.

Space science and Technology Awareness Training (START) 2024

- **About:** ISRO has initiated the Space Science and Technology Awareness Training (START) programme targeting post-graduate and final-year undergraduate students in physical sciences and technology.
- **Launched**: 2023
- **Coverage**: The START programme encompasses various domains of space science, including Astronomy & Astrophysics, Heliophysics & Sun-Earth interaction, Instrumentation, and Aeronomy.
- **Objective**: To provide introductory-level training in space science and technology to enable students to explore career opportunities in the field.
- **Facilitation by ISRO Scientists**: The programme will be conducted by scientists from Indian academia and ISRO centers, ensuring quality content delivery and insights from experts in the field.
- **Expanding Horizons**: START is part of ISRO's broader efforts to expand India's capabilities in space science and technology, fostering the development of future professionals in the domain.
- **Building Human Capacity**: By imparting foundational knowledge and emphasizing the cross-disciplinary nature of space science, START aims to build a skilled workforce that will drive space science research in the future.
- **Enhancing Research Opportunities:** The programme also aims to familiarize students with the Indian space science exploration program and provide insights into research opportunities available in the field.
- **Benefitting the Student Community**: Students will gain a comprehensive overview of space science and technology, exposure to ongoing research, and guidance on aligning their aptitudes with career paths in the field.

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PHILIPPINES
(Syllabus: GS Paper 1 – Geography)

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MIN VISITS INDIAN COAST GUARD SHIP IN PHILIPPINES

India Supports Philippines in Upholding Sovereignty: Jaishankar

Our Political Bureau

New Delhi: External affairs minister S Jaishankar on Tuesday said India firmly supports the Philippines in upholding its national sovereignty and wants to explore new areas of cooperation, including in defence and security, amid the growing maritime dispute between the Philippines and China in the South China Sea.

Jaishankar's remarks came after his meeting with his counterpart Enrique Manalo in Manila.

Addressing a joint press conference with Manalo, Jaishankar said, "I take this opportunity to firmly reiterate India's support to the Philippines for upholding its national sovereignty. As the world changes, it is essential that India and the Philippines cooperate more closely to shape the emerging world."


AFP

Every country has the right to uphold and enforce its national sovereignty, he said in response to a question.

There has been a perceptible growth in bilateral ties between India and the Philippines recently, he said.

Jaishankar also visited Indian Coast Guard ship Samudra Paheredar, which is in Manila Bay.

CHINA ASKS INDIA TO RESPECT ITS CLAIM OVER SOUTH CHINA SEA

China on Tuesday urged India to respect its sovereignty claims over the disputed South China Sea where it is currently locked in a bitter row with the Philippines, saying that no "third party" will be in a position to interfere in maritime disputes between the two countries.

"Maritime disputes are issues between countries concerned and any third party is not in a position to interfere," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said in response to a question.



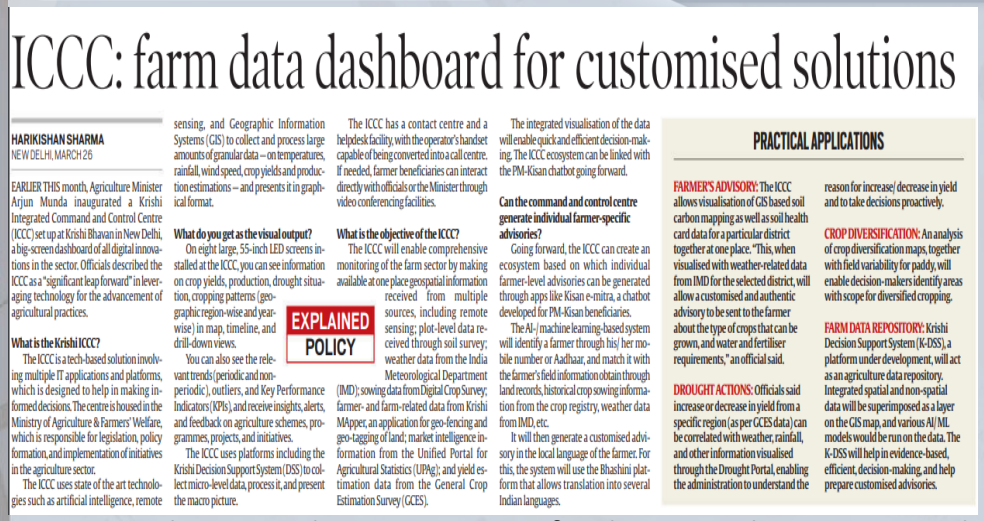
Context: India has pledged its support to the Philippines as tensions escalate in the South China Sea.

Philippines

- **About**: The Philippines is an archipelagic country situated in Southeast Asia.
- **Island Composition**: Comprising approximately 7,640 islands, it forms a vast and diverse geographical landscape.
- **Geographical Divisions**: The islands are categorized into three main geographical divisions from north to south: Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.
- **Capital**: Manila
- **Bordered by:** Philippine Sea to the east, the South China Sea to the west, and the Celebes Sea to the south, the Philippines sits amidst a network of seas.
- **Nearby Territories**: Adjacent to Borneo, Taiwan, and Sulawesi, the Philippines is strategically located in the Pacific Ocean region.
- **Highest Peak**: Mount Apo stands as the highest peak, while the Cagayan River is the longest river, showcasing the country's diverse topography.
- **UNESCO World Heritage Site**: Puerto Princesa Subterranean River.
- **Volcanic Activity**: Situated along the Pacific Ring of Fire, the Philippines experiences frequent seismic and volcanic occurrences, featuring active volcanoes like Mayon, Pinatubo, and Taal.
- **Energy Production**: As the world's second-largest geothermal energy producer, the Philippines harnesses its natural resources for sustainable power generation.
- **Biodiversity and Climate**: With a tropical maritime climate characterized by heat and humidity, the Philippines boasts significant biodiversity, making it a megadiverse country.

INDIAN EXPRESS Page 12

KRISHI ICCC
(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Agriculture)



ICCC: farm data dashboard for customised solutions

HARIKISHAN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, MARCH 26

EARLIER THIS month, Agriculture Minister Arjun Munda inaugurated a Krishi Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC) set up at Krishi Bhavan in New Delhi, a big-screen dashboard of all digital innovations in the sector. Officials described the ICCC as a "significant leap forward" in leveraging technology for the advancement of agricultural practices.

What is the Krishi ICCC?

The ICCC is a tech-based solution involving multiple IT applications and platforms, which is designed to help in making informed decisions. The centre is housed in the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare, which is responsible for legislation, policy formation, and implementation of initiatives in the agriculture sector.

The ICCC uses state of the art technologies such as artificial intelligence, remote sensing, and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to collect and process large amounts of granular data – on temperatures, rainfall, wind speed, crop yields and production estimations – and presents it in graphical format.

What do you get as the visual output?

On eight large, 55-inch LED screens installed at the ICCC, you can see information on crop yields, production, drought situation, cropping patterns (geographic region-wise and year-wise) in map, timeline, and drill-down views.

EXPLAINED POLICY

You can also see the relevant trends (periodic and non-periodic), outliers, and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and receive insights, alerts, and feedback on agriculture schemes, programmes, projects, and initiatives.

The ICCC uses platforms including the Krishi Decision Support System (DSS) to collect micro-level data, process it, and present the macro picture.

The ICCC has a contact centre and a helpdesk facility, with the operator's handset capable of being converted into a call centre. If needed, farmer beneficiaries can interact directly with officials or the Minister through video conferencing facilities.

What is the objective of the ICCC?

The ICCC will enable comprehensive monitoring of the farm sector by making available at one place geospatial information received from multiple sources, including remote sensing; plot-level data received through soil survey; weather data from the India Meteorological Department (IMD); sowing data from Digital Crop Survey; farmer- and farm-related data from Krishi MApper, an application for geo-fencing and geo-tagging of land; market intelligence information from the Unified Portal for Agricultural Statistics (UPAg); and yield estimation data from the General Crop Estimation Survey (GCES).

The integrated visualisation of the data will enable quick and efficient decision-making. The ICCC ecosystem can be linked with the PM-Kisan chatbot going forward.

Can the command and control centre generate individual farmer-specific advisories?

Going forward, the ICCC can create an ecosystem based on which individual farmer-level advisories can be generated through apps like Kisan e-mitra, a chatbot developed for PM-Kisan beneficiaries.

The AI-/machine learning-based system will identify a farmer through his/ her mobile number or Aadhaar, and match it with the farmer's field information obtain through land records, historical crop sowing information from the crop registry, weather data from IMD, etc.

It will then generate a customised advisory in the local language of the farmer. For this, the system will use the Bhashini platform that allows translation into several Indian languages.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

FARMER'S ADVISORY: The ICCC allows visualisation of GIS based soil carbon mapping as well as soil health card data for a particular district together at one place. "This, when visualised with weather-related data from IMD for the selected district, will allow a customised and authentic advisory to be sent to the farmer about the type of crops that can be grown, and water and fertiliser requirements," an official said.

DROUGHT ACTIONS: Officials said increase or decrease in yield from a specific region (as per GCES data) can be correlated with weather, rainfall, and other information visualised through the Drought Portal, enabling the administration to understand the reason for increase/ decrease in yield and to take decisions proactively.

CROP DIVERSIFICATION: An analysis of crop diversification maps, together with field variability for paddy, will enable decision-makers identify areas with scope for diversified cropping.

FARM DATA REPOSITORY: Krishi Decision Support System (K-DSS), a platform under development, will act as an agriculture data repository. Integrated spatial and non-spatial data will be superimposed as a layer on the GIS map, and various AI/ML models would be run on the data. The K-DSS will help in evidence-based, efficient, decision-making, and help prepare customised advisories.

Context: The Agriculture Minister of India recently inaugurated a Krishi Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC) established at Krishi Bhavan in New Delhi.

Applications of ICCC

- Visualize GIS-based soil carbon mapping with soil health card data for tailored farming advice.
- Correlate yield changes with weather data to proactively address drought impacts.
- Analyze crop diversification maps to suggest alternate crops for regions.
- K-DSS repository integrates spatial and AI data for informed decision-making.
- Compare Krishi MApper and GCES yield data for accuracy validation.

Krishi Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC)

- **About:** It is a tech-based solution housed within the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare, aimed at aiding informed decision-making in the agricultural sector.
- **Data Collection**: The ICCC utilizes cutting-edge technologies like artificial intelligence, remote sensing, and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to gather and analyze vast amounts of data on various agricultural parameters.
- **Visual Output:** 8 large LED screens at the ICCC present graphical representations of data on crop yields, production, drought situations, cropping patterns, and more, in map, timeline, and drill-down views.
- **Decision Support**: The Krishi Decision Support System (DSS) aggregates micro-level data to provide a macroscopic view, aiding in informed decision-making for agricultural planning and management.
- **Objective of the ICCC**
  - **Monitoring**: The ICCC facilitates comprehensive monitoring of the farm sector by consolidating geospatial information from various sources.
  - **Data Sources Integration**: Geospatial data is collected from remote sensing, plot-level data from soil surveys, weather data from the IMD, sowing data from Digital Crop Survey, and farmer-related data from Krishi MApper.
  - **Visualisation for Decision-Making**: Integrated visualization of this data allows for quick and efficient decision-making in agricultural management.
  - **ICCC and PM-Kisan Chatbot Integration:** The ICCC ecosystem has the potential to be linked with the PM-Kisan chatbot for enhanced functionality in the future.

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SANGEETHA KALANIDHI AWARD

(Syllabus: GS Paper 1 – Art and Culture)

Krishna award debate: Missing caste for music

Social and other media have been agog with news of the diatribe against TM Krishna by musicians who have found it offensive that he should be conferred the "prestigious" Sangeetha Kalanidhi award by The Music Academy, Chennai. These critics have grandly announced that they will not perform on the Academy stage in the forthcoming music season. While the matter of the award itself is not of significance to anyone except those who follow Carnatic music, and who view The Music Academy with awe and respect, the issue needs to be unpacked for what it tells us about the enduring bigotry of the entitled Tamil Brahmin community — and how, for well over a century and more, it has continued to read any and every criticism of its mores and ways as an attack on Hindu cultural and religious values.

A few individuals and institutions created by them might consider themselves progressive, being supporters of liberal-Left politics, and, at times, the Dravidian movement. But Tamil Brahmins, as a community, have been remarkably un-reflexive besides being prone to projecting themselves as wronged and misunderstood. To affirm their "victim" status, they have created a narrative whose details comprise the following: Their caste is attacked because they are successful and meritorious, and so criticisms are nothing but jealousy; their caste has been vilified and tormented for decades, thanks to the anti-Brahmin movement led by Periyar EV Ramasamy, who had called for their annihilation; those who seek to criticise them are unwilling to take note of reformers and change-makers in the community, be it about music or social customs; and finally, it is not so much the Brahmins who practise discrimination against Dalits, but the non-Brahmin castes.



V Geetha

The letters written by musicians Ranjani and Gayatri, Chitravina N Ravikiran, and the Trichur Brothers, protesting the award given to Krishna, feature one or more of these themes. Periyar is vilified, Krishna is seen as a divisive influence, with no regard for the diversity of talents in any culture (in this view, Brahmins stand in for diversity), and as being careless and dismissive of all things that constitute "our" spiritual and cultural traditions. But there are other questions we need to ask here. The caste bigotry on display in this instance appears to be locked in battle with a certain unmarked liberalism, and which has become associated with the award as such.

But what is this award, granted by a resolutely patrician institution, one viewed as a bastion of the twice-born? Admittedly, for a musician, even one like Krishna who has looked to break many boundaries which Carnatic musicians have drawn around their universe, the world of music *sabhas*, their patrons and the constituency that supports this music cannot be put away entirely. The music he practises is situated within this universe and besides, there are likely affective and pedagogic relationships that he has experienced here, and which matter to him. On the other hand, this is a closely guarded class-caste world and, expectedly, it has been pointed out that if he was not of the Brahmin caste, his transgressions would not have been overlooked by the award committee.

This manner of accommodating what could potentially be subversive makes it difficult to view the situation with equanimity. Consider how the president of the Academy has defended the latter's choice of Krishna as an awardee. He has noted that awards are based on the "sole criterion" of "musical excellence demonstrated over a significant and sustained career", and are made with no "extraneous factors influencing" the Academy's choice. This is intriguing, for it is clear from Krishna's various musical experiments that he views music as a means to address caste-based inequality and discrimination and has been vocal both about his art and its shaping contexts. What is this liberalism that can be adopted by critics of the award with aplomb, but yet not engage with the extraneous social contexts that produce "excellence" and its many measures in any cultural field? In other words, why did the president of the Academy remain content with characterising the protesters as giving into personal dislike and malingering, and not take note of their founded social hatred, so evident in the language used by all protesters?

It is as if bigotry might be spoken of, but not the caste universe that sustains it. As far as Carnatic music is concerned, this would require a critical soiling of its spiritual sources, a profaning of its aesthetics in and through the invocation of its gendered and caste contexts. Equally, it would require engaging with anti-caste traditions and their thought worlds. Krishna has done both, but to award him for his music and not engage with the issues the musician has raised is somewhat disingenuous, and an instance of what Periyar characterised as the self-validating universe of Brahmanism. In order to explain this, Periyar noted: "Rajaji will eat at a 'panchama's' house; Shankaracharya will bathe on seeing a 'panchama'; some will bathe if a 'panchama's' shadow falls on them, others if a 'panchama' touches them. Yet others will marry a 'panchama' man or woman — but all of them will still remain *brahmanas*" (*Viduthalai*, March 4, 1969).

Periyar would go on to observe that this winning flexibility enabled the Brahmin to rework the terms of any debate to his advantage while foregoing an engagement with what cannot be accommodated. The problem then is not only the bigotry of the Hindu Right group in the Carnatic music universe, but also the limits set to critique and debate through these modalities of accommodation and recognition.



It is clear from TM Krishna's musical experiments that he views music as a means

V Geetha is a Chennai-based social historian and

Context: Recently, social and other media platforms have been buzzing with news of the diatribe against TM Krishna by musicians who find it offensive that he was recently conferred the "prestigious" Sangeetha Kalanidhi award by The Music Academy, Chennai.

Sangeetha Kalanidhi Award

- **About:** Sangita Kalanidhi is revered as the pinnacle of achievement in the realm of Carnatic music, symbolizing unparalleled mastery and contribution to the art form.
- **Inception in 1942:** The prestigious title of Sangita Kalanidhi was established in the year 1942, marking a significant milestone in the recognition of excellence within Carnatic music.
- **Evolution from Tradition**: Prior to its formal establishment, the tradition involved inviting a distinguished senior musician or expert to preside over the annual conference of the Music Academy.
- **Recognition**: In 1942, the decision was made to formalize this recognition by conferring the title of Sangita Kalanidhi upon the musician presiding over the Music Academy's conference, accompanied by a gold medal and a birudu patra (citation).
- **Honor:** Since 2005, the honor of Sangita Kalanidhi has been supplemented with the MS Subbulakshmi Award, presented by The Hindu, further elevating its significance and prestige.
- **2023 awardees**: Bombay Jayashri (Vocalist)

Carnatic Music

- **About:** It is primarily associated with southern India, spanning states such as Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu. It also finds practice in Sri Lanka.
- **Ancient Roots and Tradition**: Rooted in ancient Hindu traditions, Carnatic music has a rich heritage that dates back centuries.
- **Distinct Genre within Indian Classical Music**: It stands as one of the two primary genres of Indian classical music, the other being Hindustani music.
- **Differences from Hindustani Music**: While Hindustani music evolved with influences from Persian and Islamic traditions in northern India, Carnatic music retains its unique character shaped by the cultural milieu of southern India.

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