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MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY



MK Yadav Sir

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INDIAN EXPRESS

Page 1

PM SHRI SCHEME

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Education)

3 Opp states say no to PM-SHRI, Centre stops school scheme funds

Delhi, Punjab cite state schemes, Bengal objects to name

ABHINAYA HARIGOVIND, DIVYA GOYAL GOPAL & ATRI MITRA
NEW DELHI, LUDHIANA, KOLKATA, JULY 15

THE EDUCATION Ministry has stopped funds under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), the flagship school education programme, to Delhi, Punjab and West Bengal because of their reluctance to participate in the Pradhan Mantri Schools for Rising India (PM-SHRI) scheme, *The Indian Express* has learnt.

The scheme, with a budget of over Rs 27,000 crore for the next five years — the Centre is supposed to shoulder 60% of the financial burden and the states 40% — aims to upgrade at least 14,500 government schools into "exemplar" institutions to showcase the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. States have to confirm their participation by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Education Ministry.

Five states — Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Delhi, Punjab and West Bengal — are yet to sign the MoU. While Tamil Nadu and Kerala have indicated their willingness, Delhi, Punjab and West Bengal have refused, ostensibly prompting the Centre to stop their SSA funds, it is learnt.

The three states have not received the third and fourth installments of SSA funds for the last financial year's October-December and January-March quarters, nor the first installment for the current financial year's April-June quarter. This has prompted them to send several

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Context: The Education Ministry has halted Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan funds to Delhi, Punjab, and West Bengal due to their non-participation in the Pradhan Mantri Schools for Rising India (PM-SHRI) scheme.

Samagra Shiksha Scheme

- **About:** It is an integrated scheme aimed at providing education from pre-primary to senior secondary (up to class 12th) levels.
- **Funding**: It operates as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme.
- **Aim**: To universalize access to school education across India, ensuring no child is left out of the education system.
  - It seeks to promote equity by including disadvantaged groups and weaker sections, ensuring educational opportunities are accessible to all.

PM SHRI Scheme

- **Aim**: To transform existing government schools into model schools that offer high-quality education within an inclusive, equitable, catering to the diverse backgrounds, multilingual needs, and varying academic abilities of children.
- **Duration**: From 2022-23 to 2026-27
- **Funding**: The scheme is structured as a Centrally sponsored program.
- **Objective**: This funding will facilitate the transformation of nearly 14,500 schools nationwide, aligning them with the components outlined in the National Education Policy of 2020.
- **Five States**: Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Delhi, Punjab and West Bengal are yet to sign the MoU.
- These schools will also serve as role models and provide mentorship to neighboring educational institutions.
- **Monitoring Progress**: A 'School Quality Assessment Framework' is currently under development to assess and monitor the progress and performance of these schools.

THE HINDU Page 14

VAN ADHINIYAM 1980

(Syllabus GS Paper 3 – Env and Eco)

Panel reprimands Odisha govt. for building violation in forest land

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

The Forest Advisory Committee (FAC) of the Union Environment Ministry has reprimanded the Odisha government for building walls, without approval, in forest land that will be part of the proposed Shree Jagannath International Airport in Puri. The committee has also asked the State's Wildlife Warden to evaluate the impact of the proposed airport on the breeding of Olive Ridley turtles, which are routinely found in the vicinity of the coast.

The FAC, under provisions of the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiyam, 1980, the legislation that protects forests from wanton razing, is an expert committee that evaluates industrial projects which require forest land for their activities. The committee may or may not approve a project and can give an approval for forest land to be diverted, after imposing certain conditions. In this case, satellite pictures showed that the agency tasked with the project – it is not clear which agency – had already built a wall without waiting for approval by the FAC and the Union Environment Ministry.



The government was pulled up for building walls in forest land that will be part of the proposed airport in Puri. REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE

In its meeting on June 24, the FAC has asked the government to furnish the names of the "erring officers" responsible for allowing or not stopping the unauthorised construction; a detailed violation report indicating the date and time of the commencement of construction; the status of work and efforts made by officers in the State government to stop the work; details of the authority/agency issuing work order for construction of boundary wall; and the entity bearing the expenditure incurred on the said alleged construction.

Following this, the committee said it would take a decision on according forest clearance to the project. The Puri airport is likely to use 27.887 hectares of forest land, and the project will involve the felling of 13,504 trees in the forest.

The Airports Authority of India identified the site in 2021. The Ministry of Civil Aviation issued the site clearance certificate in September 2023. The total projected cost of the airport is ₹2,023 crore, and it is expected to built by a public-private consortium.

Context: The Forest Advisory Committee (FAC) of the Union Environment Ministry has reprimanded the Odisha government for building walls, without approval, in forest land that will be part of the proposed Shree Jagannath International Airport in Puri.

- The FAC assesses projects under the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980, aimed at safeguarding forests from undue destruction.

Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam/Forest Conservation Act - 1980

- **About:** An Act to provide for the conservation of forests and for matters connected therewith or ancillary or incidental thereto.
- **Extent:** It extends to the whole of India.
- **Provisions of the Act:**
  - Land declared or notified as forest under the Indian Forest Act, 1927 or any other law.
  - Land recorded as forest in Government records as of or after 25th October, 1980.
- **Exemptions (Forest Conservation Amendment Act, 2023):**
  - Forest land alongside a rail line or public road maintained by the Government providing access to habitation, up to 0.10 hectare.
  - Trees, tree plantations, or reafforestation on lands not specified in the main provisions.
  - Forest land within 100 kilometers along international borders or other strategic areas used for national security projects.
  - Up to ten hectares used for security-related infrastructure.
  - Land used for defence projects or camps for paramilitary forces in Left Wing Extremism affected areas, up to five hectares.
- **Restrictions on Use**
  - No State Government or other authority shall, without prior approval of the Central Government:
  - Make any reserved forest cease to be reserved.
  - Use forest land for non-forest purposes.
  - Assign forest land by lease or otherwise to any private person or organization..
- **Permitted**: Forest land can be used for specified agricultural purposes and reafforestation efforts.
- **Legal Recourse**: Appeals against State Government decisions under this Act can be made to the National Green Tribunal, as per the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010.
- **Penalties**: Violations of the Act's provisions may lead to simple imprisonment for up to fifteen days.

DTE July 15

INDIAN LEOPARD

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Env and Eco)

Indian leopard suspected to have decreased by 24.5% over last 3 generations: IUCN

Context: The Indian leopard (Panthera pardus fusca) is suspected to have declined 24.5% over the last three generations, according to the latest assessment by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Indian leopard

- **About:** A subspecies of the leopard (P. pardus) that is widely distributed on the Indian subcontinent.
- **Distribution:** Indian leopards are widely distributed throughout the country, inhabiting diverse landscapes such as forests, grasslands, and even human-dominated areas.
- **Habitat:** They are adaptable to a range of habitats, including the Himalayan foothills, Western Ghats, dry deciduous forests, and the northeastern regions of India.
- **Conservation Status:**
  - **IUCN Red List**: Vulnerable
  - **CITES:** Appendix I
  - **Wildlife (Protection) Act,1972**: Schedule I

Global Numbers

- **Population Decline**: Across the majority of range, Leopards have declined substantially (>30%) over the last three generations as determined by extensive population surveys.
- **Range Declines**: Substantial range declines have been seen over the past three generations (22.3 years) in the Middle East, East and South-east Asia, West, parts of Central, and East Africa.
- **Regional Disappearances**: The leopard has completely disappeared from regions of North Africa, according to the latest assessment.
- **Critically Endangered Subspecies**: The Indochinese leopard (Panthera pardus delacouri), Arabian leopard (Panthera pardus nimr), and North China Leopard (Panthera pardus orientalis - though not individually assessed).
- **Endangered Subspecies**: Persian leopard (Panthera pardus tulliana) and Javan leopard (Panthera pardus melas).
- **Vulnerable Subspecies:** The African leopard (Panthera pardus pardus) and Sri Lankan leopard (Panthera pardus kotiya).

BUSINESS STANDARD Page 4

NON-TARIFF BARRIERS (NTBS)

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy)

India flags concern on NTBs with Russia

SHREYA NANDI
New Delhi, 15 July

India has flagged concerns over non-tariff barriers (NTBs) faced by its exporters with the Russian government, commerce secretary Sunil Barthwal said here on Monday.

NTBs faced by Indian exporters are mainly in sectors such as marine products and pharmaceuticals. For instance, India has been finding it difficult to export marine products to Russia as exporters face certification and listing challenges related to exports.

"These issues are being taken up at different forums. We are looking at getting greater market access and addressing these non-tariff barriers in areas such as marine products and pharmaceuticals," Barthwal told reporters, adding that a visit to Moscow is also being planned.

The secretary's statement comes against the backdrop of setting an ambitious target to increase bilateral trade to $100 billion by 2030, up from over $67 billion now. The target was set during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Russia last week.

"We are looking to raise the overall trade volume with Russia... We are looking at various sets of commodities such as electronics, engineering goods and other items, where trade can be enhanced," the commerce secretary said.

The trade between both the countries expanded rapidly over the last two financial years. However, it was mainly driven by a rise in oil imports from Russia, soon after its standoff with Ukraine started in February 2022. Trade deficit with Russia is also the second highest, raising concerns over an "imbalanced trade" between the two countries.

As far as the proposed free trade agreement (FTA) with Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) is concerned, conversations between chief negotiators have been made. Broad contours and terms of reference are being finalised, Barthwal said.

EAEU comprises five member states of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia.

On the other hand, senior officials of India and the 27-nation European Union (EU) are expected to hold the next round of talks for the proposed FTA, which aims at boosting commerce and investments, in September.

Govt sets up panel to resolve non-tariff barrier issue

The government on Monday confirmed that it has set up a panel to resolve the issue of non-tariff barriers faced by Indian exporters.

The government is also working towards launching an online platform so that the trade barriers can be dealt with more 'systematically', commerce secretary Sunil Barthwal said. "To give more focus to this matter, we have constituted a task force within the department of commerce. We are also working on a digital platform, whereby it will become easier for our exporters to tell the system and us which are the non tariff barriers they are facing in different countries," Barthwal told reporters.

SHREYA NANDI



Context: India has flagged concerns over non-tariff barriers (NTBs) faced by its exporters with the Russian government,

Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs)

- **Definition**: NTBs encompass a variety of measures beyond tariffs, such as quotas, licensing requirements, technical regulations, and subsidies.
- **Forms:** NTBs manifest as quotas, embargoes, licensing requirements, product standards, subsidies, and administrative procedures.
- **Objectives**: Implemented to protect domestic industries, ensure product quality and safety, and regulate foreign competition.
- **Impact on International Trade**: NTBs influence trade costs, availability, and competitiveness, alongside tariffs, shaping global market dynamics.
- **How Non-Tariff Barriers Differ from Tariffs**
  - **Nature of Measures**: NTBs are regulatory and non-tax measures, contrasting with tariffs imposed directly on imports.
  - **Effects on Trade Dynamics**: While tariffs increase import costs, NTBs create regulatory obstacles and compliance burdens.

- **Examples of Non-Tariff Barriers**
  - **Quotas**: Limits on imported goods' quantities.
  - **Technical Regulations**: Standards for product quality, safety, or labeling.
  - **Licensing Requirements**: Mandatory permits for certain imports.
  - **Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards (SPS)**: Regulations for food safety and animal/plant health.
  - **Customs Procedures**: Administrative requirements and inspections for imports.
- **Impact on International Trade**
  - Increase costs, cause delays, and restrict market access for foreign goods.
  - Can lead to trade conflicts and complicate efforts to liberalize trade globally.

NITI Aayog Launches 'NITI GearShift Challenge' As Part Of E-FAST India Initiative

Context: NITI Aayog has announced the launch of the 'NITI GearShift Challenge' as part of the e-FAST India initiative.

e-FAST India Initiative

- **Origin:** e-FAST emerged from the need to decarbonize India's road-based freight transport, aligning with the country's 2070 net zero goals.
- **Launched**: September 2022 to catalyze the shift towards cleaner freight transportation solutions.
- **Goals:** Aims to promote and accelerate the adoption of cleaner and greener technologies in the freight sector.
- **Collaborative Platform**: Facilitates national and international collaborations, supports pilot programs, and integrates technology for scalable solutions.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Encourages deliberation and collaboration among stakeholders such as government bodies, OEMs, logistics providers, shippers, and industry experts.
- **Support Network**: Backed by 12 knowledge partners, enhancing its expertise and outreach capabilities.

NITI GearShift Challenge

- **Launched by**: NITI Aayog in partnership with IIM Bangalore, Smart Freight Centre India, CALSTART/Drive to Zero, and WRI India.
- **Objective**: A hackathon aimed at fostering innovative business models for the adoption of zero-emission trucks in India.
- **Target Audience**: Invites students, transport practitioners, academics, and researchers to address financial, technical, and operational challenges in adopting electric trucks.
- **Significance**:
  - It marks a pivotal move towards sustainable freight transportation in India.
  - By tapping into the creativity and expertise of participants, the hackathon aims to generate practical solutions that will accelerate the adoption of zero-emission trucks, thereby benefiting both the economy and the environment.

INDIAN EXPRESS Page 13

FOREIGNERS' TRIBUNALS

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Polity)

In SC verdict on Assam man, humanising of citizenship law



EXPERT EXPLAINS

FAIZAN MUSTAFA

THE SUPREME Court last week declared Assam resident Md Rahim Ali a citizen of India, throwing out the decision of a Foreigners' Tribunal in the state. The historic judgment written by Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah for himself and Justice Vikram Nath also clarified the law in cases of allegations of foreign nationality, and discharge of the burden of proof by the person under scrutiny.

Facts of the case

Ali was born in Dolur village in Barpeta district, and his parents' names appeared in the voters' list of 1965. A document shows his parental residence in Dolur prior to 1965. His own name, along with his siblings', appeared in the voters' list of 1985.

After getting married in 1997, Ali moved to Kashimpur in Nalbari district, and his name was included in the voters' list of that year, along with his new residential address.

In 2004, on the instruction of the superintendent of police of Nalbari, one S-I Bipin Dutta inquired into Ali's nationality. Since Ali could not produce documentary evidence of his nationality within a week, a case was registered against him.

Because of minor discrepancies in spellings and dates in the documents produced by Ali, the Foreigners' Tribunal (FT) passed an *ex parte* order declaring him a foreigner after he failed to appear, subsequent to a first appearance before it, due to ill health.

After the High Court upheld the declaration, the Supreme Court asked the FT to examine the documents. This time, on the apex court's orders, the FT gave Ali a hearing, but again declared him a foreigner, holding that he had entered India illegally on or after the cut-off date of March 25, 1971.

On the burden of proof

Section 9 of The Foreigners Act, 1946, puts the burden of proof on the person who is alleged to be a foreigner. However, as the SC said in its judgment, "the question is that does Section 9...empower the Executive to pick a person at random...tell him/her/they/them 'We suspect you of being a foreigner', and then rest easy basis Section 9?"

The SC noted that there was not "an iota of evidence" against Ali, and no information or material was on record about who had filed the complaint and on what basis, and from where specific information about him being from Mymensingh in Bangladesh had come.

While the burden of proof may be on the accused under the Foreigners Act, this burden is to be discharged only after the state has shared the material on which the allegation is founded, the court said. The supply of this material is an integral part of the classic rule of natural justice, *audi alteram partem*, i.e., no one shall be condemned unheard.

"In the absence of the basic/primary material, it cannot be left to the untrammelled or arbitrary discretion of the authorities to initiate proceedings, which have life-altering and very serious consequences for the person, basis hearsay or bald and vague allegation(s)," the court said in a strongly-worded paragraph of the judgment.

Relying on the five-judge verdict of the SC in *Mukesh Singh vs State* (2020), the court said that even in cases of a reverse burden of proof, the initial burden, which exists on the prosecution, must be satisfied.

As per the judgment in *Noor Aga vs State of Punjab* (2008), some basic facts must first be proved by the prosecution even in cases of reverse burden of proof. It is a settled principle of criminal jurisprudence that the more serious the offence, the stricter is the degree of proof.

Discrepancy in spellings

The judgment will alleviate the anxieties of many people who, following the enactment of The Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, and the proposal to have a nationwide National Register of Citizens (NRC), are worried about minor spelling mistakes in their and their parents' names, or similar discrepancies in dates.

"Variation in name spelling is not a foreign phenomenon in preparation of the Electoral Roll," the SC said. "A casual entry by the enumerators when noting and entering the name(s) and dates of birth(s) as also the address(es)...while making preparatory surveys...cannot visit the appellant with dire consequences. Moreover, in our country, sometimes a title is prefixed or suffixed to a name such that the same person may be known also by one or two aliases," it said. "The Tribunal seems to have been totally oblivious to all this."

Foreigners' Tribunals

Foreigners' Tribunals were established under The Foreigners Act, a colonial legislation that preceded the Constitution of India, and which was meant to deal with foreigners rather than citizens.

They were established in 1964 by an executive order of the Home Ministry, even though under Article 323B of the Constitution, tribunals may be established by "the appropriate legislature" by "law".

Under Section 2(a) of the 1946 Act, "a foreigner means a person who is not a citizen of India". Thus, it will be applicable only to persons against whom there is strong evidence of being a foreigner in the sense that they were caught while entering India, or they were in possession of a passport of another country.

However, about 3 lakh people in Assam were declared Doubtful Voters in 1997 and in subsequent years by low-ranked government officials without any inquiry or notice. They were excluded from the Assam NRC, and they now face the FTs.

Although Paragraph 3(1) of Foreigners' Tribunal Order of 1964 mandates that notices shall mention the "main grounds", notices issued by FTs generally do not mention any ground, and people have to defend themselves without knowing the charges.

Until March 2019, as many as 1.17 lakh people had been declared foreigners, including 63,959 *ex parte* declarations. The judgment by Justices Amanullah and Nath could have an immediate positive bearing on thousands of other cases pending with the FTs.

Prof Faizan Mustafa is Vice Chancellor of Chanakya National Law University, Patna. Views are personal.

Context: Recently, the Supreme Court overturned a Foreigners' Tribunal decision, declaring an Assam resident a citizen of India.

Foreigners' Tribunals

- **About**: These were established under The Foreigners Act, a colonial legislation that preceded the Constitution of India, and which was meant to deal with foreigners rather than citizens.
- **Executive Order of 1964**: They were established in 1964 by an executive order of the Home Ministry, even though under Article 323B of the Constitution, tribunals may be established by "the appropriate legislature" by "law".
- **Definition of Foreigner:** Under Section 2(a) of the 1946 Act, "a foreigner means a person who is not a citizen of India".
    - Thus, it will be applicable only to persons against whom there is strong evidence of being a foreigner in the sense that they were caught while entering India, or they were in possession of a passport of another country.
- **Inadequate Notices**: Although Paragraph 3(1) of Foreigners' Tribunal Order of 1964 mandates that notices shall mention the "main grounds", notices issued by FTs generally do not mention any ground, and people have to defend themselves without knowing the charges.

Supreme Court Rule

- Section 9 of The Foreigners Act, 1946: It places the burden of proof on the person alleged to be a foreigner.
- **Supreme Court's Query**: The SC questioned whether Section 9 allows the Executive to randomly accuse someone of being a foreigner without substantial evidence.
- **Requirement for Material Evidence:** The court emphasized that the accused's burden of proof under the Foreigners Act arises only after the state shares the material supporting the allegation.
- **Arbitrary Discretion of Authorities**: The court criticized the arbitrary initiation of proceedings without primary material evidence, highlighting the serious consequences for the accused.
- **Mukesh Singh vs State (2020):** The SC reiterated that the initial burden of proof rests on the prosecution, even in reverse burden cases.
- **Noor Aga vs State of Punjab (2008):** The court stated that the prosecution must prove basic facts before shifting the burden to the accused.

THE HINDU Page 14

ONE SCIENTIST-ONE PRODUCT' PROGRAMME

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Sci and Tech)

ICAR to release 323 new varieties of 56 crops today

Council to launch 'one scientist, one product' programme for its 5,500 scientists to come up with a product, technology, model or publication every year; plan afoot for 100 seed varieties in 100 days

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



Expanding fruit bowl: A glimpse of the exhibition of the technologies and products developed by ICAR, on the sidelines of its 96th Foundation Day and Technology Day in New Delhi on Monday. ANI

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) will launch its "one scientist, one product" programme on Tuesday to improve research in the field of agriculture and animal husbandry.

The council will formally announce the release of 323 varieties of 56 crops, including cereals, oilseeds, forage crops, and sugar cane, at a function here on Tuesday as part of its 96th foundation day.

These crops include 289 climate-resilient varieties and 27 bio-fortified varieties.

The "one scientist, one product" programme will be inaugurated by Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan.

Five-year plan

Explaining the programme, ICAR Director-General Himanshu Pathak told presspersons here on Monday that the ICAR had given a target to all 5,521 scientists under the institution to come up with a product, technology, model, concept or good publication. At the beginning of every year, the scientist or a group of scientists will have to identify the product, and the ICAR will map the work. "We will monitor it at the institute level every three months and at the headquarters level every six months. This is a long plan," he said. The scheme will work for five years.

"This year, we are prioritising seed hubs for high-yielding oilseeds and pulses varieties," he said.

Dr. Pathak said the ICAR was also working to develop 100 new seed varieties and 100 farm technologies in 100 days as part of the Centre's 100-day action plan. He said the council would request Prime Minister Narendra Modi's time to launch these programmes by mid-September.

Production boost

The ICAR said in a release that with the help of breeder seeds, about 16 million hectares (mha) are under bio-fortified varieties of different crops, including wheat (13 mha), rice (0.5 mha), pearl millet (1.5 mha), lentil (0.5 mha) and mustard (1 mha) during 2023-24. "Deployment of climate-resilient technologies led to enhanced production even during the abnormal years," the ICAR said.

It said that from 2014-15 to 2023-24, a total of 2,593 high-yielding varieties were released.

These include 2,177 climate-resilient (83% of total) varieties with biotic and abiotic stress resistance, and 150 bio-fortified crop varieties.

Context: The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) is set to initiate its 'One Scientist-One Product' program aimed at enhancing agricultural and animal husbandry research.

'One Scientist-One Product' Programme

- **About:** ICAR has launched the "One Scientist One Product" initiative to enhance productivity among its scientists without redundant efforts.
- **Target and Scope**: The initiative targets all 5,521 scientists under ICAR to develop a product, technology, model, concept, or publication within a five-year timeframe.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation**: Progress will be monitored quarterly at the institute level and biannually at the headquarters to ensure alignment with goals and efficient resource utilization.
- **Long-term Strategy**: Spanning five years, the initiative aims for sustained productivity growth and impactful outcomes across the institution.
- **ICAR's Commitment**: To developing 100 new seed varieties and 100 farm technologies within 100 days as part of a focused action plan.
- **Variety Releases**: Over the past decade, ICAR has released a total of 2,593 high-yielding varieties, focusing on climate resilience and biotic/abiotic stress resistance.
- **Bio-fortified Crops**: Among these, 150 varieties are bio-fortified, contributing to improved nutritional content and agricultural sustainability.

PIB July 15

INDIAN NEWSPAPER SOCIETY
(Syllabus: GS Paper 1 – History)

PM inaugurates Indian Newspaper Society (INS) Towers in Mumbai, Maharashtra

Context: Recently, the Prime Minister of India inaugurated INS Towers at the Indian Newspaper Society Secretariat in Bandra Kurla Complex, Mumbai.

Indian Newspaper Society

- **About**: It serves as the apex body representing the interests of the Indian press nationwide.
- **Established in**: 1939
- **Headquarters**: New Delhi, the INS coordinates operations and initiatives from its central hub.
- **Objectives**: Advocates for the rights and freedoms of newspapers to operate without interference.
- Ensures adherence to standards by accrediting advertising agencies.
- **Functions:**
    - Lobbying with governmental and regulatory bodies on behalf of the print media industry.
    - Collects and shares business-relevant information with members.
    - Fosters collaboration among members on common business interests.
    - Acknowledges excellence in journalism and other facets of the newspaper industry through prestigious awards.
    - Conducts training, workshops, seminars, and programs aimed at enhancing skills of journalists and media professionals.
    - Undertakes studies and surveys to analyze readership patterns, advertising trends, and other industry dynamics.

TIMES OF INDIA

July 15

MANJEERA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Env and Eco)

'Hidden gem': Manjeera wildlife sanctuary in Sangareddy might become Telangana's first Ramsar site

Context: The 5,000-acre Manjeera wildlife sanctuary in Sangareddy about 60 km from Hyderabad - could soon become Telangana's first ramsar sites.

Manjeera Wildlife Sanctuary

- **Location**: It is situated in the Medak district of Telangana, serving as both a wildlife sanctuary and a reservoir.
- Originally established for crocodiles, the sanctuary now hosts over 70 species of birds and remains a habitat for the vulnerable mugger crocodile.
- **Geographical Features**: Positioned along the Manjeera River, a tributary of the Godavari, the sanctuary adjoins the Manjeera reservoir, crucial for irrigation and drinking water supply to Hyderabad and Secunderabad.
- **Islands and Bird Sanctuaries**: The reservoir contains nine small islands with marshy fringes, ideal for water bird nesting. Dense tree cover on these islands further supports diverse bird populations.
- **Vegetation**: Dry savannah vegetation alongside submergent and emergent types supported by the freshwater ecosystem.
- **Flora**: Various plant species thrive here, including Typha, Babool, Prosopis, Ipomoea, Acacia, Vallisneria, Eichhornia, and Reeds, enriching the biodiversity of the sanctuary.
- **Fauna**: The sanctuary's riverine environment sustains populations of mugger crocodiles, freshwater turtles, prawns, molluscs, and fish species such as catla, rohu, murrel, eel, karugu, and chidwa.



Other Wildlife Sanctuaries

- Mrugavani National Park
- KBR Park
- Pranahita wildlife sanctuary
- Shivaram wildlife Sanctuary
- Nagarjuna Sagar-Srisailam Tiger Reserve
- Kinnerasani Wildlife Sanctuary
- Shamirpet Deer Park
- Nehru Zoological Park

DTE July 15

UNEP FORESIGHT REPORT
(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Health)

UNEP Foresight Report: New emerging zoonotic diseases may trigger another pandemic in 5-6 years

Context: The United Nations' UNEP Foresight Report warns that new emerging zoonotic diseases could lead to another pandemic by 2030.

Zoonotic Disease

- **About**: It is a disease that has passed into the human population from an animal source directly or through an intermediary species.
- **Zoonotic infections**: It can be bacterial, viral, or parasitic in nature, with animals playing a vital role in maintaining such infections.
- **Examples**: HIV-AIDS, Ebola, Lyme disease, malaria, rabies, West Nile fever, and the current novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) disease.
- **Common zoonotic diseases in India**: Rabies, anthrax, brucellosis, plague, bovine tuberculosis, leptospirosis and salmonellosis.
- **According to the World Health Organisation:** Zoonotic pathogens may be bacterial, viral or parasitic, and can spread to humans through direct contact or through food, water or the environment.

UNEP Foresight Report

- **Published by**: United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
- **Focus**: It is focused on emerging environmental issues and that global problems and challenges faced.
- **Based on:** Nearly 1,200 responses submitted by 790 respondents to a survey conducted in May, 2023. This exercise identified 280 specific signals of change.
- **Foresight Expert Panel:** Comprising 22 distinguished members of the scientific community from developing and industrialised countries – further shortlisted the signals.

Key Findings

- Urbanization accelerates habitat fragmentation, bringing humans into closer contact with wildlife and increasing the likelihood of zoonotic disease transmission.
- Wildlife trafficking disrupts ecosystems and can introduce novel pathogens to human populations, fostering zoonotic disease outbreaks.
- Studies indicate a continual rise in spillover events, with annual rates increasing between 5% and 8%, highlighting the growing threat of zoonotic diseases.
- By 2050, common zoonotic pathogens are projected to cause significantly more human fatalities compared to 2020, underlining the escalating danger posed by these diseases.
- Previous outbreaks like COVID-19, Ebola, H5N1, MERS, Nipah virus, SARS, and influenza A/H1N1 have resulted in substantial human and economic losses, emphasizing the severe consequences of zoonotic disease outbreaks.

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