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MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY



MK Yadav Sir

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INDIAN EXPRESS

Explained

ARCTIC: CLIMATE IMPACT

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 - Env and Eco)

WILDFIRES, FISH SIZE: HOW HOTTEST ARCTIC SUMMER IMPACTED REGION

ALIND CHAUHAN
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 15

THE 2023 summer was the warmest on record in the Arctic, which has warmed nearly four times faster than the Earth as a whole since 1979. The past year (October 2022 to September 2023) was the sixth-warmest full year in the Arctic since reliable record-keeping began in 1900.

These are some of the key findings of the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) annual Arctic Report Card released on Wednesday. The peer-reviewed analysis was done by 82 scientists from 13 countries.

Sub-sea permafrost thawing

Subsea permafrost is the frozen soil under the seabed that contains organic matter. While it has been gradually thawing for thousands of years, (now) warmer ocean temperatures are accelerating this process.

"Just as with permafrost on land, when sub-sea permafrost thaws, the organic matter it contains decays and releases methane and carbon dioxide — greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming and worsen ocean acidification," three of the authors involved in the NOAA study wrote in an article published by *The Conversation*.

Impact on fisheries

Due to the impact of climate change on freshwater bodies and marine ecosystems, Western Alaska recorded extremely low numbers of chinook and chum salmon the past year — 81% and 92% below the 30-year mean respectively. The size of adult salmon has also decreased, the study said.

This has led to "fishery closures, worsened user conflicts, and...profound cultural and food security impacts in indigenous communities that have been tied to salmon for millennia," it added.

Wildfires in Arctic regions



The Arctic ice sheet is melting at an alarming rate. *Wikimedia Commons*

Canada, 40% of whose land mass is considered Arctic and Northern, was among the worst affected by wildfires. The country witnessed its worst wildfire season on record, with more than 10 million acres burnt in the Northwest Territories, *The New York Times* reported. High temperatures, dried-up vegetation and soil, and below-average rainfall created the perfect conditions for wildfires.

Flooding, melting of ice

Over the past 20 years, rising temperatures have led to a dramatic thinning of the Mendenhall Glacier in Alaska, the NOAA report said. Meltaway water has caused annual floods in the region. In August 2023, "a glacial lake on a tributary of the Mendenhall Glacier burst through its ice dam and caused unprecedented flooding and severe property damage" in Alaska's Juneau, the study said.

It also noted that the highest point on Greenland's ice sheet experienced melting for only the fifth time in the 34-year record. The ice sheet continued to lose mass despite above-average winter snow accumulation — between August 2022 and September 2023, it lost roughly 350 trillion pounds of mass.

Context: The 2023 summer was the **warmest on record in the Arctic**, which, due to climate change, has warmed nearly four times faster than the globe since 1979.

- Overall, the past year was the **sixth-warmest year the Arctic had experienced** since reliable record-keeping began in 1900.

Thawing Of Subsea Permafrost

- **About**: Subsea permafrost refers to frozen soil beneath the seabed containing organic matter.
- **Historical Thawing**: While experiencing a gradual thaw over thousands of years, recent warmer ocean temperatures have accelerated this process.
- **Environmental Impact**: Thawing **subsea permafrost releases methane and carbon dioxide**, contributing to global warming and exacerbating ocean acidification.

Food Insecurity

- **Chinook and Chum Salmon:** Western Alaska experienced a consecutive year of significantly low Chinook and chum salmon numbers, **plummeting to 81% and 92% below the 30-year mean,** respectively.
- **Reduced Size of Adult Salmon**: The report highlights a concerning trend of diminishing adult salmon sizes, exacerbating the challenges faced by Alaskan fisheries.

Wildfires in Arctic Regions

- **Arctic Ice Sheet**: The Arctic ice sheet is experiencing a concerning rate of melting.
- **Canadian Wildfire Crisis:** Canada, **with 40% of its landmass classified as Arctic and Northern**, faced severe consequences as it grappled with one of its worst wildfire seasons on record.
- **Record-breaking Wildfires**: The country **endured an unprecedented wildfire season**, surpassing 10 million acres burned in the Northwest Territories, according to The New York Times.
- **Contributing Factors**: High temperatures, desiccated vegetation and soil, coupled with below-average rainfall, created optimal conditions for the widespread wildfires.

THE HINDU

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HYDROGRAPHIC SURVEY

Syllabus GS Paper 2 - IR)

Maldives will not renew agreement for joint hydrographic survey with India: top official

Meera Srinivasan
COLOMBO

Hot on the heels of the Maldives' demand that Indian troops be removed from the island nation, the Cabinet has decided against renewing a 2019 MoU with India for hydrographic surveying, a top official in Malé told *The Hindu*.

According to Mohamed Shahyb, Chief Spokesperson at President Mohamed Muizzu's office, the Cabinet recently decided that the MoU, which is due to expire in 2023, will not be renewed. "It's a decision by the Cabinet," Mr. Shahyb told *The Hindu* on Friday, when asked to comment on the reason behind the move.

Following the 2019 agreement, the Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF) and the Indian Navy have carried out three joint hydrographic surveys in February and March 2021, April and May 2022, and in January and February 2023, according to a statement issued by the High Commission of India in Maldives earlier this year, following the latest survey. The surveys "will generate updated Navigational Charts/ Electronic Navigational Charts" that would "enhance the navigational safety of ships and enhance the Blue Economy of Maldives," the statement said.

Some government critics – mainly those part of the 'India Out' campaign led by former President Abdulla Yameen – have been opposed to the initiative. They contend it is an infringement on Maldivian sovereignty. Neither the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, nor the Indian High Commission in Malé has commented on the recent Cabinet decision.

Troops presence

Meanwhile, asked if there was any update on President Muizzu's announcement that India had "agreed" to his demand that Indian troops be withdrawn from the Island nation, Mr. Shahyb said: "it is progressing". The Maldivian President made the announcement two days after meeting PM Narendra Modi on the sidelines of the COP-28 summit in the UAE on December 2. While the MEA did not comment on his statement, sources told *The Hindu* the leaders "briefly discussed" the issue.

Context: The **Maldives government has decided to not renew an agreement** with India that allowed India to conduct hydrographic surveys in Maldivian waters.

Hydrographic Survey Agreement

- **Agreement**: The collaboration to survey Maldivian territorial waters was formalized through an agreement signed on June 8, 2019.
- **Signatories**: Prime Minister of **India and then-President of Maldives were the signatories** of the agreement.
- **Scope of Agreement:** The agreement granted India permission to conduct hydrographic surveys in Maldivian waters, encompassing the study and mapping of reefs, lagoons, coastlines, ocean currents, and tide levels.
- **Termination Terms**: According to the agreement's terms, **either party wishing to terminate it must notify the other six months prior** to the expiration date. Additionally, the agreement automatically renews for an additional five years.
- **India's Historical Involvement**: Historically, **India had undertaken the majority of hydrographic surveys** in the Maldives.
- **Third Hydrographic Survey**: The Indian Navy and MNDF conducted the third Joint Hydrographic Survey using Indian Naval Ship Investigator, covering Northern Maldives, including Ihavandhippolhu and Thiladhanmatee atolls and Gallandhu Kandu.

PIB Dec 15

CBAM
(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Env and Eco)

Ministry of Steel organises Chintan Shivir on the themes of Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, & Use of Artificial Intelligence in the Steel Sector

Context: The **Ministry of Steel recently organized a Chintan Shivir focusing** on the themes of Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism and the utilization of Artificial Intelligence in the Steel Sector.

Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)

- **About**: It is a tariff on imports that is calculated based on the carbon emissions associated with the production of the imported product.
- CBAM is a **component of the "Fit for 55 in 2030 package,**" which is the European Union's initiative to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by a minimum of 55% by 2030 in comparison to 1990 levels.
- **Dual Purpose**: it serves as a **financial disincentive for carbon emissions and influences** production and export activities.
- The **CBAM is scheduled to commence its transitional phase** on 1 October 2023, with the permanent system set to become effective on 1 January 2026.

Benefits of CBAM

- **Reduction in Carbon Leakage:** CBAM **aims to prevent the relocation of industries to countries** with weaker climate policies, thus reducing carbon leakage and maintaining global emission reduction efforts.
- **Encouraging Global Climate Action**: By **imposing carbon pricing on imported goods**.
- **Revenue Generation**: CBAM has the potential to generate revenue for the implementing country, which can be used for climate financing, **supporting domestic industries, or investing in clean technologies**.

LIVEMINT

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G7 BAN ON RUSSIAN DIAMONDS

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy)

Indian exports shielded from G7 ban on Russian diamonds

Rhik Kundu & Dhirendra Kumar

NEW DELHI

A decision by the Group of Seven (G7) nations to ban imports of polished diamonds made from Russian rough stones from early next year will not hurt Indian diamantaires, a senior government official said on Friday.

The local industry has been worried that the ban—a part of international measures against Russia for its invasion of Ukraine—could have major repercussions for exports of the stones, with the US being India's biggest market.

India, which cuts 14 out of 15 of the world's rough diamonds, according to government data, does not import the stones directly from Russia but sources them from hubs like Antwerp and Dubai.

"There should be control over rough diamonds coming from Russia, but as long as diamonds are processed in India, there should not be further checks (or double checks) as we can maintain tracking of rough diamonds," the official said, requesting anonymity.



India does not directly import Russian diamonds. BLOOMBERG

"Rough Russian diamonds coming from Antwerp and other places like Dubai can be used for our exports. This shouldn't disturb the sanctions on Russian diamonds, and we should be able to export our processed diamonds," the official added.

A commerce ministry spokesperson didn't immediately respond to emailed queries.

The G7 has announced a direct ban on Russian diamonds starting 1 January, which is to be followed by phased-in restrictions on indirect imports of Russian diamonds, or those processed by third countries, from March.

In effect, the impact on India's diamond industry will kick in from March. But Indian diamantaires were left guessing on which sizes of diamond polished in India would be impacted.

As per the G7 decision, all Russian diamonds of 1 carat or higher coming into G7 territories will not be accepted. From September, this limit will be reduced to 0.5 carat, along with the launch of a

TURN TO PAGE 13

Context: Recently, the **Group of Seven (G7) nations made a decision to ban imports of polished diamonds** made from Russian rough stones starting early next year, but this move is not expected to hurt Indian diamantaires.

- India, which cuts 14 out of 15 of the world's rough diamonds, according to government data, does not import the stones directly from Russia but sources them from hubs like Antwerp and Dubai.

G-7

- **About**: It is **an intergovernmental organization**. The bloc meets annually to discuss issues of common interest like global economic governance, international security, and energy policy.
- **Formation**: 1975.
- **G7 countries**: UK, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the US.
  - India is not a part of the G7.
- **Membership**: Apart from the 7 member countries, the European Union (EU) has also participated fully in the G7 since 1981 as a "non-enumerated" member.
- **Presidency**: It rotates annually among the member countries, with each country hosting the summit and setting the agenda for the year.
- **Meetings**: The G7 holds annual meetings.

Polished Diamond

- **About**: It is a general term for diamonds that have undergone processing, without any connection to their size, shape or any other feature.
- **India is the world's largest polishing center**, while China, which has made giant steps in this area in the last two decades, is the second largest diamond polishing center.

BUSINESS STANDARD

Page 2

CERT - IN

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Governance)

Govt issues warning for Samsung phones

Flags multiple vulnerabilities, emphasises need for urgent updates

ASHUTOSH MISHRA
New Delhi, 15 December

The Centre's nodal agency for cyber security, Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (Cert-In), has issued a high-risk warning for Samsung smartphones, flagging multiple vulnerabilities and emphasising the need for urgent updates of their operating systems.

The alert highlights security concerns and asserts that the phones are prone to vulnerabilities that can allow an attacker to snoop and access data on the device without the user's knowledge.

"Multiple vulnerabilities have been reported in Samsung products which could allow an attacker to bypass implemented security restrictions, access sensitive information and execute arbitrary code on the targeted system," read the Cert-In advisory issued this week. It highlighted that these vulnerability issues might affect Samsung phones running on Android versions 11 and above.

"These vulnerabilities exist due to improper access control flaw in Knox Custom Manager Service and Smart Manager CN component, integer overflow vulnerability in face preprocessing library; improper authorisation verification vulnerability in AR emoji, improper exception management vulnerability in Knox Guard, various out of bounds write vulnerabilities in bootloader, HDCP in HAL, libIfaaCa and libsavsac.so components, improper size check vulnerability in softsimd, improper input validation vulnerability in Smart-Clip and implicit intent hijacking vulnerability in contacts," read the detailed statement.

The exploitation of these vulnerabilities may allow an attacker to trigger heap overflow and stack-based buffer overflow, access device SIM PIN, send broadcast with elevated privilege, read sandbox data of AR Emoji, bypass Knox Guard lock via changing system time, access arbitrary files, gain access to sensitive information, execute arbitrary code and compromise the targeted system, the agency said.

Cert-In has advised users to apply appropriate security patches released by Samsung to prevent their devices from risk. Meanwhile, Samsung Mobile has announced the rollout of a maintenance release as part of its December 2023 security update.

"Samsung Mobile is releasing a maintenance release for major flagship models as part of the monthly Security Maintenance Release (SMR) process. This SMR package includes patches from Google and Samsung," said the South Korean smartphone major on its website.

Cert-In, the national nodal agency under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, is tasked with responding to computer security incidents as and when they occur. The agency has been flagging security threats and risks associated with the cyber-security domain and had recently issued a high-severity rated warning cautioning against "multiple vulnerabilities" in the web browser Google Chrome, which could allow a remote attacker to execute arbitrary code and cause denial of service conditions on targeted systems.



Context: Recently, the **Indian government's nodal agency for cyber security, the Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In),** issued a warning regarding multiple vulnerabilities in certain Samsung mobile phones.

Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In)

- **About**: CERT-In is the national nodal agency for responding to computer security incidents as and when they occur.
- **Formed**: 19 January 2004
- **Headquarters**: New Delhi, India
- **Motto**: Handling Cyber Security Incidents
- **Objective:** Securing Indian cyberspace.

Functions

- **Collection, analysis and dissemination** of information on cyber incidents.
- **Forecast and alerts** of cyber security incidents
- Emergency measures for handling cyber security incidents
- **Coordination of cyber incident** response activities.
- Issue guidelines, advisories, vulnerability notes and whitepapers relating to information security practices, procedures, prevention, response and reporting of cyber incidents.
- Such other functions **relating to cyber security** as may be prescribed.

DECCAN HERALD

Dec 15

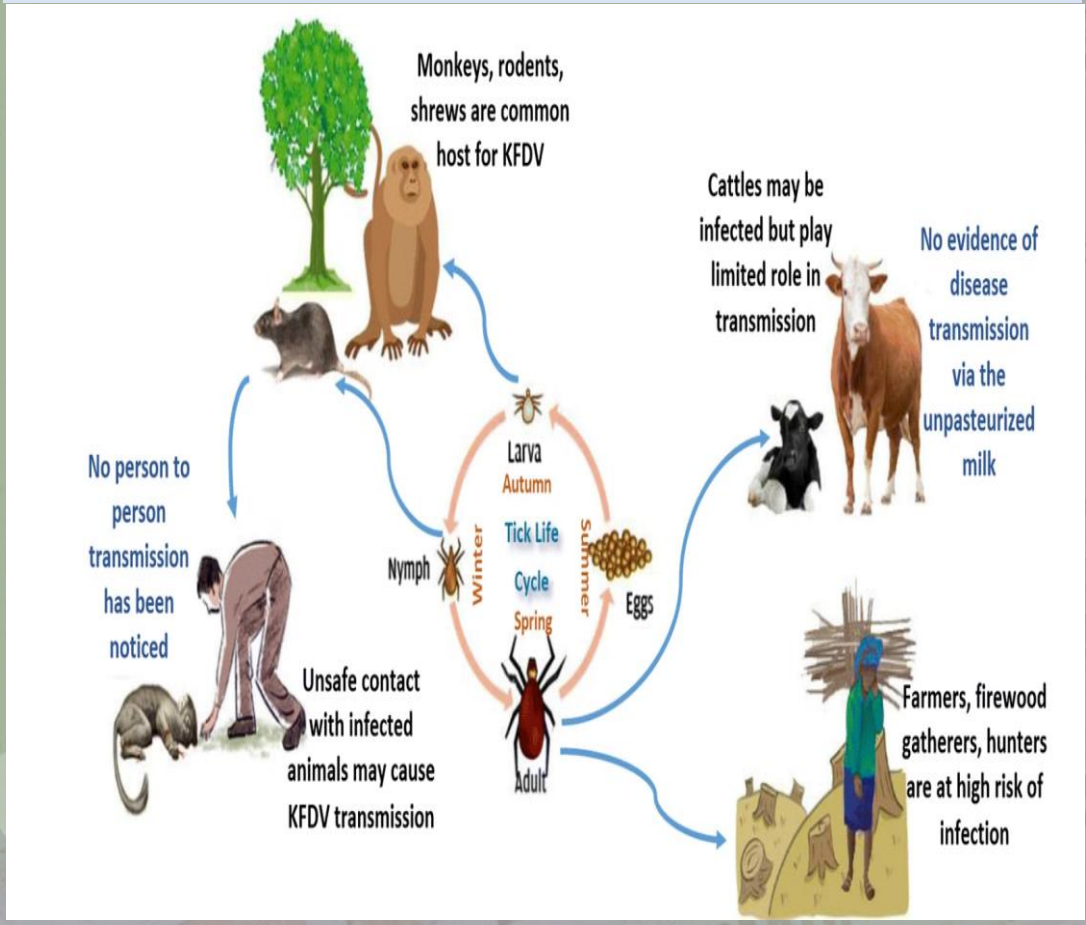
KYASANUR FOREST DISEASE
(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Env and Eco)

Carcass of over 28 monkeys found in Karnataka's Sullia, samples sent for testing KFD, poison

Context: Recently, the discovery of dead monkeys prompted the forest department to collect samples for **testing in order to rule out Kyasanur forest disease (KFD)**, a highly contagious illness causing febrile hemorrhagic symptoms in both humans and monkeys, particularly in forested areas.

Kyasanur Forest Disease (KFD)

- **About**: It is caused by Kyasanur Forest disease virus (KFDV), a member of the virus family Flaviviridae.
- **First Identified**: KFDV was identified in 1957 when it was isolated from a sick monkey from the Kyasanur Forest in Karnataka (formerly Mysore) State, India.
- **Transmission**: Humans may occur after a tick bite or contact **with an infected animal, most importantly a sick or recently dead monkey**. No person-to-person transmission has been described.
- **Signs and Symptoms**: Severe muscle pain with vomiting, gastrointestinal symptoms and bleeding problems may occur 3-4 days after initial symptom onset.
- **Treatment**: There is no specific treatment for KFD,
- **Endemic Regions of KFD**: Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala



IBBI
(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy)

IBBI FLOATS FOUR DISCUSSION PAPERS

Tweaks in IBC after 2024 Lok Sabha polls

PRIYANSH VERMA
New Delhi, December 15

THE INSOLVENCY AND Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) is expected to introduce key changes in regulations post general elections in 2024, as the changes would require amendments in the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) to be done simultaneously, an official aware of the matter told *FE*.

In October and November, the IBBI had floated four discussion papers dealing with enhancing the effectiveness of Insolvency Professional Entities, strengthening the liquidation process, expediting the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process, and real-estate insolvency.

"The changes mentioned in the discussion papers can be introduced in totality only when key amendments in the IBC are made via Parliament," the government official said.

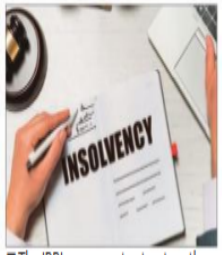
"In the case of real-estate insolvency, in particular, the regulations can't be made effective until the law is amended."

The IBBI has proposed to allow the Committee of Creditors (CoC) to invite separate resolution plans for each real-estate project, which experts say would lead to faster resolution through heightened interest in the assets among potential bidders and help arrest value erosion. Home-buyers too are likely to benefit from the proposed changes, as under the norms, even after the start of the resolution process, units will continue to be allotted to them on an 'as is where is' basis or on making the balance payment required to complete the construction.

The boars's recommendations are generally seen as pragmatic, given the peculiar nature of the sector, where a large pool of home-buyers with limited options are major stakeholders and hold the status of financial creditors.

DECISIONS DELAYED

- The changes recommended would require amendments in IBC
- Discussion papers floated by IBBI include expediting the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process



- The IBBI proposes to structure the resolution plan in two parts
- The papers also propose CoC to invite separate resolution plans for each real-estate project

Context: Recently, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) has signaled its intention to implement significant regulatory changes following the general elections in 2024.

Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI)

- **Establishment**: On 1st October 2016 under the provisions of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016.
- **Implementation**: It plays a pivotal role in the implementation of the IBC, amending and consolidating laws related to insolvency resolution across individuals, partnership firms, and corporate entities in a time-bound manner.
- **Functions**: The **IBBI regulates professionals and processes** associated with insolvency.
- It exercises regulatory oversight over insolvency professional agencies, insolvency professional entities, insolvency professionals, and information utilities.
- **Enforcement and Rulemaking**: The board enforces rules governing corporate insolvency resolution, individual insolvency resolution, corporate liquidation, and individual bankruptcy under the IBC.
- **Records and Information Dissemination**: The IBBI collects and maintains records related to insolvency and bankruptcy cases. It also plays a role in disseminating information concerning such cases.
- **Constitution and Membership**: The board's constitution involves members appointed by the Central Government, including a Chairperson, three members from among officers of the Central Government representing the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Corporate Affairs, and Ministry of Law (ex-officio),
    - **one member nominated by the RBI (Reserve Bank of India) (ex-officio), and five other members nominated by the Central Government, with at least three being whole-time members.**
- **Term of Office**: The office for the Chairperson and members (excluding ex-officio members) is five years or until they reach the age of sixty-five, whichever is earlier, and they are eligible for reappointment.

PIB Dec 15

E-SEVA KENDRA
(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Govt Schemes)

E-Seva Kendras established to bridge the digital divide and extend assistance to lawyers and litigants

Context: Recently, under the eCourts Mission Mode Project Phase II, eSewa Kendras have been established in High Courts and District Courts across the country.

- A total of 875 eSewa Kendras have been established for District Courts nationwide,

e-Seva Kendra

- **About**: e-Seva Kendras have been **established in High Courts and one District Court** in each State on a trial basis.
- **Designed to**: These Kendras are **designed to function as a single-point destination** for providing legal help and support to regular people involved in lawsuits and to lawyers.
- **Objectives**: They **allow individuals to get updates on the status of their cases** and acquire official copies of court decisions and directives.
  - These centers also offer **guidance for electronically submitting legal cases**.
- These Kendras mark an important advancement in ensuring that everyday people have the **ability to access the legal system** and their right to justice.

India's first e-Resource Center

- This is the **first e-resource center** of its kind in India.
- It's **designed to make filing cases electronically** in the Supreme Court, High Courts, and District Courts all over India easier.
- The **goal is to reduce inequalities** by linking to the Supreme Court, High Courts, and Taluka Courts.
- It's expected to save time, effort, and money by eliminating the need to travel long distances or expend energy.
- **India's primary e-Resource Center**, called **"Nyay Kaushal,"** took place in Nagpur, Maharashtra.

TRIBUNE Dec 15

INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION
(Syllabus: GS Paper 1 – History)

What led to end of Indus Valley civilisation? Kerala University study will throw light on it

Context: A group of geologists from Kerala University claim to have made a significant scientific discovery that may offer a clearer understanding of the events leading to the end of the Indus Valley civilization.

- **They have claimed that the crater in Luna, Kutch in Gujarat**, was caused by a meteor impact, potentially marking the only major one since human beings appeared on earth.

Indus Valley Civilization

- **About**: The civilization is **named Harappan because Dayaram Sahni first excavated** its site in 1921.
- Harappan civilization **surpassed the sizes of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia** civilizations.
- **Bordered by**:
  - The northernmost site of the civilization is **Manda (Jammu-Kashmir).**
  - The southernmost site is **Daimabad (Maharashtra).**
  - The easternmost site is **Alamgirpur (Uttar Pradesh).**
  - The westernmost site is **Sutkagendor (Pakistan-Iran border).**
- **Main Crops**: Two **types of Wheat and Barley**. Evidence of cultivation of rice in Lothal and Rangpur (Gujarat) only.
- **Other Crops**: Dates, mustard, sesamum, cotton, rai, peas etc.
  - First to produce cotton in the world so Greeks called them Sindon.

Features

- **Town Planning**: Indus cities were well planned. The excavations at **Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro have shown a lot of evidence of this.** The city had two parts, i.e., the citadel and the outer city.
- **Citadel**: The citadel was built on an elevated area. **While certain major cities, such Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Kalibangan, Banawali, Rakhigarhi, Lothal, and Dholavira**, had a citadel and lower town, this was not the case in the majority of them.
  - The outer city was at a lower level.
- **Roads**: The roads were wide and straight cutting each other at right angles.
- **Great Bath**: The Great Bath is one of the most remarkable structures discovered at the archaeological site of Mohenjo-Daro.

ALL INDIA RADIO

Dec 15

VIJAY DIWAS

(Syllabus: GS Paper 1 – History)

PM Narendra Modi pays tribute to all brave hearts who dutifully served India in 1971 on Vijay Diwas

Context: Recently, the Prime Minister of India paid tribute to the brave hearts who served the nation in 1971 on Vijay Diwas.

Vijay Diwas

- **Date of Observance**: Vijay Diwas is annually observed on the 16th of December to commemorate India's triumph over Pakistan in the 1971 war.
- **Government Decision**: On the 3rd of December 1971, the Government of India made the crucial decision to **engage in war with Pakistan, driven by the objective of protecting Bengali Muslims and Hindus.**
- **Duration of the War:** The conflict ensued for a period of 13 days, marking a significant chapter in the history of the Indo-Pak war.

1971 Bangladesh Liberation War

- **Commencement of Conflict**: The war for **independence in East Pakistan commenced on December 3, 1971**, concluding 13 days later on December 16, marking India's triumph.
- **Human Toll**: Pakistan faced significant losses during the conflict, with approximately 8,000 fatalities and 25,000 wounded. In contrast, India recorded 3,000 soldiers lost and 12,000 injured.
- **Surrender of Pakistani Forces**: On December 16, 1971, **General Amir Abdullah Khan Niazi, along with 93,000 troops, surrendered unconditionally to the joint forces** of Bangladesh's Mukti Bahini and the Indian Army. Led by Lieutenant General Jagjit Singh Aurora, this event in Dhaka marked the largest military surrender since World War II.
- **Origin of Bangladesh:** The conclusion of the war led to the origin of Bangladesh, formerly East Pakistan. **Bangladesh celebrates this historic day as 'Bijoy Dibos**,' signifying the nation's formal independence from Pakistan.

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