1. **Sukhna Wildlife Sanctuary:** Recenly, the Punjab government submitted an affidavit before the Supreme Court (SC) stating that the Eco Sensitive Zone (ESZ) around the Sukhna Wildlife Sanctuary will remain at 100 meters for the Nayagaon municipal committee, instead of 1 to 3 km.
   - **About Sukhna Wildlife Sanctuary:** It is a protected area in Chandigarh, near Sukhna Lake, at the foothills of the Shivalik range.
   - **History:** The Lake was constructed by Le Corbusier in 1958 by diverting the Sukhna Choe, a seasonal stream from the Shivalik hills.
     - The sanctuary was developed through afforestation for soil conservation around the lake, established in 1998, it covers an area of 2600 hectares.
   - **Geography:** Unstable terrain, prone to soil erosion due to surface runoff during rains, contains sandy soil of the Shivalik with clay pockets in some areas.
   - Apart from Sukhna Lake, the sanctuary has around 150 water bodies forming its catchment area.



   - **Vegetation:** Mix of forests, grasslands, and wetlands, with Sukhna Lake as a crucial part of the ecosystem.
   - **Flora:** Includes species like Khair, Phulai, Kikar, Shisham, Moonj, Amaltas, Jhingan, Amla, Rati, and Vasaka.
   - **Fauna: Mammals (**Squirrel, Common Mongoose, Indian Hare, Porcupine, Jungle Cat, Jackal, and Wild Boar) & **Birds (**Peacock, Hill Myna, Jungle Crow, Black Drongo, Parrots, and Doves. Also attracts migratory birds).
2. **Lapis lazuli:** It is, known for its vibrant blue colour, has been mined for over 6,000 years, with Afghanistan's Badakhshan province producing the highest quality.
   - **About Lapis Lazuli:** It is vividly blue rock, sometimes with streaks of gold, used as a semi-precious gemstone.



- **Colour Source:** Gets its colour from **lazurite** (25–40%).
  - Blueness depends on the amount and structure of **sulphur** in lazurite.
  - **Calcite** reduces blueness, while the golden sparkle comes from **pyrites**.
- **Occurrence:** Found in Afghanistan, Chile, Russia, and the US.
  - Afghanistan's Badakhshan province produces the highest quality, mined for over 6,000 years.
- **Historical Significance:** Traded to India as early as 1000 BC → found in Mohenjo-daro and Harappa sites of the Indus civilisation → Used by ancient Egyptians for jewellery and as powdered eye shadow → In the Renaissance period, ground into ultramarine pigment for paintings
- **About Lazurite:** It is a member of the **sodalite group**, first described in **1890** from **Sar-e-Sang District, Badakhshan, Afghanistan**.
  - Occurs almost exclusively in **massive form** without visible crystals.
  - **Optical Properties:** Form (Granular, disseminated, or massive; rarely as dodecahedral or cube crystals), Colour (Deep blue), Relief (Low), Interference Colours (Isotropic, sometimes anomalously anisotropic)

3. **Mount Lewotobi Laki Laki:** The Mount Lewotobi Laki Laki volcano in south-central Indonesia erupted three times recently, sending an ash column 8,000 metres (26,200 feet) high, prompting authorities to expand the danger zone.



- **About Mount Lewotobi Laki Laki:** It is located on flores Island in East Nusa Tenggara province, Indonesia.
- **Twin Volcano System:** It comprises Lewotobi Laki Laki (male) and Lewotobi Perempuan (female).
- **Type:** Classified as a **stratovolcano** — the most common type, formed by repeated layers of **lava** oozing out of the **crater**.
- **Ring of Fire:** Indonesia lies along the Pacific Ring of Fire, an area marked by active volcanoes and tectonic activity.
- The collision of tectonic plates causes earthquakes and tsunamis.

- **What are Stratovolcanoes?**
  - **Shape:** Tall, steep, cone-shaped volcanoes, unlike flat shield volcanoes.
  - **Formation:** Found above subduction zones and are part of volcanically active regions like the Ring of Fire.
  - **Composition:** Comprise about 60% of Earth's volcanoes, erupt andesite and dacite lavas, which are cooler and more viscous than basalt.
- **About Subduction Zones:** It occur where **two tectonic plates collide** and one plate **subducts** (dives) beneath the other. Result from differences between the **continental** and **oceanic lithospheres** that make up tectonic plates.

4. **Exercise Varuna 2025**: This was the 23rd edition of the India-France bilateral naval exercise, was conducted in the Arabian Sea from March 19–22, 2025.
   - **About Exercise Varuna:** It is a bilateral Naval Exercise between India and France, first initiated in 1993.
     - Officially named 'Varuna' in 2001; a key pillar of Indo-French strategic cooperation.
     - The 2025 edition featured high-intensity drills across sub-surface, surface, and aerial domains.
   - **Key Objectives:** Enhancing combat readiness → strengthening joint tactical coordination → deepening maritime security cooperation.
   - **Key Highlights of Exercise Varuna 2025:**
   - **Aircraft Carrier Operations:** INS Vikrant (India) and Charles de Gaulle (France) participated in joint carrier battle group operations.
     - The Indian Navy closely observed the Rafale-M fighter jets, which India is set to acquire soon.
   - **Air Combat Drills:** Advanced **air defence** and **mock air-to-air combat scenarios** conducted between French Rafale-M fighter jets & Indian MiG-29K fighter jets.
   - **Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) Exercises:** Indian Scorpene-class submarines acted as the aggressor & French and Indian frigates safeguarded high-value assets like the French oiler Jacques Chevallier.
     - Tested **underwater domain awareness** and **ASW tactics**.

- **Surface Warfare Operations:** Naval fleets performed synchronized engagements and manoeuvres, and maritime patrol aircraft enhanced situational awareness.
- **Logistical Cooperation:** Replenishment-at-sea exercises improved supply chain interoperability.
- **Other India-France Military Exercises: FRINJEX (**Army Joint Exercise) & **GARUDA** Air Force Exercise)

5. **Derivatives:** Recently, IndusInd Bank reported derivative losses of ₹2,100 crore on March 10, 2025, leading to a 23% decline in its share price.
   - **About Derivatives:** It is a financial contracts whose value depends on an underlying asset, index, or rate.
   - **Purpose:** Used for hedging risks, speculation, and portfolio diversification.
   - **Common Underlying Assets:** Stocks, bonds, commodities, currencies, interest rates, and market indexes.
   - **Types of Derivatives:**
     - **Futures:** It contract to **buy/sell an asset at a fixed price** on a future date.
       - ✓ **For example: Commodity traders** hedging against price fluctuations.
     - **Options:** It gives the **right (but not obligation)** to buy (**call**) or sell (**put**) an asset at a set price before a deadline.
       - ✓ **For example: Stock options** in equity markets.
     - **Swaps:** It is an agreements to **exchange cash flows** based on financial metrics.
       - ✓ **For example: Interest rate swaps** to reduce borrowing costs.
     - **Forwards:** It is private agreements (**OTC**) to **buy/sell assets** at a future date.
       - ✓ **For example: Currency forward contracts** for importers/exporters.
   - **About Exchange-Traded Currency Derivatives (ETCDs):** It is a standardized contracts that allow investors to speculate on future currency exchange rate movements.
     - **Feature:** Traded on stock exchanges, unlike Over-the-Counter (OTC) derivatives, which are private.
6. **Farakka Barrage:** It was commissioned in 1975, and its 50th anniversary is being observed in 2025.

- **About Farakka Barrage:** Situated on the Ganga River in Murshidabad district, West Bengal, about 18 km from the Bangladesh border.
  - **Commissioning:** Began operations on **April 21, 1975**, after **12 years** of construction.
  - **Purpose:** Diverts 40,000 cusecs of water into the Farakka Feeder Canal to flush out silt from the Bhagirathi-Hooghly River, ensures smooth navigation for Kolkata Port.
  - **India-Bangladesh Agreements:** Multiple agreements over Ganga water sharing, including Farakka Agreement (1977) & Ganga Water Treaty (1996)
- **Hooghly River & Its Significance:** It is also known as Bhagirathi-Hooghly or Kati-Ganga River.
  - Length: About 260 km long; a distributary of the Ganges.
  - **Formation:** The Ganga River splits in Murshidabad - one branch forms the Padma River, flowing into Bangladesh. The other becomes the Hooghly River, flowing through West Bengal.

7. India's Remittances: Insights from RBI's Sixth Round of India's Remittances Survey (2023-24) show that the US, UK, Singapore, Canada, and Australia together accounted for more than half of remittances into India.

- **About India's Remittances:** These are funds sent by migrants to their home countries, often to support families, and play a significant role in the global economy, particularly in developing nations.
  - **Global Leader:** India has consistently received the highest remittances globally.
  - Remittances have **doubled** from **$55.6 billion (2010-11)** to **$118.7 billion (2023-24)**.
- **Major Source Countries:**
  - **United States:** Largest contributor, accounting for **27.7%** of total remittances.
  - **UAE:** Second largest source, with its share rising from **18% (2020-21)** to **19.2% (2023-24)**.
  - **Advanced Economies:** Share from countries like the US and UK has increased, surpassing Gulf economies in 2023-24.
  - **US & UK Combined:** Contributed nearly **40%** of total remittances in **FY24**.
  - **GCC Countries:** UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, and Bahrain collectively contributed **38%**.
- **State-wise Inflows: Maharashtra (20.5%) Kerala, Tamil Nadu (10.4%)**, **Telangana (8.1%)** & **Karnataka (7.7%)**