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MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY



MK Yadav Sir

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# Myanmar Pins Hope on India-built Sittwe Port to Boost Arakan Economy

DipanjRoy.Chaudhury  
@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Myanmar is hoping its India-built Sittwe Port will be a game changer in regional connectivity and boost its trade with India.

The port, which is part of Kaladan multi-modal transit transport project, was opened on May 9.

The project seeks to provide an alternative route for connectivity from India's eastern coast to the north-eastern states through the Sittwe Port. The port links to Paletwa in Myanmar via an inland waterway and from Paletwa to Zorinpui in Mizoram via a road segment. Locals hope that direct trade with India will bring economic prosperity for Arakan state. Agree-

**OPENED ON MAY 9**



The port, which is part of Kaladan multi-modal transit transport project, was opened on May 9

ments are in the pipeline between the two countries for launching direct trade. Myanmar and India are yet to sign a coastal shipping pact to launch trade between Sittwe and Kolkata.

The two governments have to decide how many times cargo will be shipped

between Kolkata and Sittwe. For example, they can choose to operate one ship a week or two ships a month. Shipping lines will not get much profit during the initial operation. The port has been opened, but it will be operational only after a shipping line that will run regularly between Kolkata and Sittwe is launched.

U Tin Aung Oo, chairman, Rakhine State Chamber of Commerce and Industry, is optimistic about the port. "Currently, Bangladesh is the only country Arakan state trades with, and it is the cross-border trade. Through Sittwe Port, we will be able to trade directly with India's Kolkata Port. This means there will be more choices for traders. There will also be more job opportunities. I assume that the trade will improve," U Tin told local media. "Request has been made through our organisation to allow using coastal ships owned by Myanmar business owners in the trade. We are still negotiating about that."

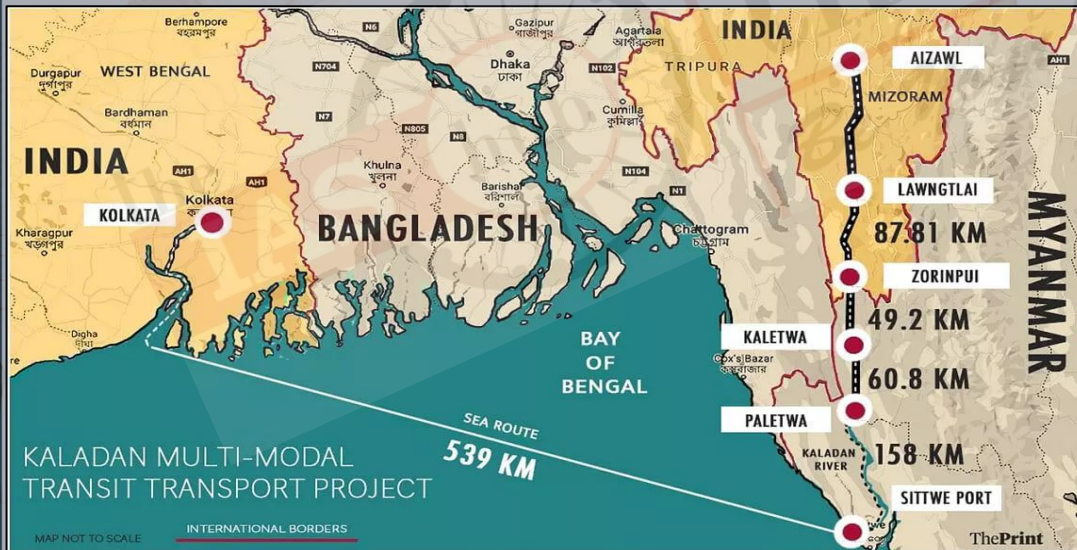
U Tha Tun Hla, chairman of Arakan National Party, told local media that Sittwe Port will create some benefits for Arakanese people if products from Arakan state are allowed to be traded through it.

**Context:** Myanmar is hoping its India-built Sittwe Port will be a game changer in regional connectivity and boost its trade with India.

- The port, which is part of Kaladan multi-modal transit transport project, was opened on May 9.

### Key Point

- The Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project is a bilateral agreement between India and Myanmar.
- It involves the connecting of Aizawl in Mizoram with the deep-water Sittwe Port in Myanmar.
- The project was launched under the 'Look East Policy', which dates back to 1991, and is being pursued by the present government under 'Act East Policy', its remodeled version of the policy.
- The port links to Paletwa in Myanmar via an inland waterway and from Paletwa to Zorinpui in Mizoram via a road segment.
- KMTTP connects Kolkata to Sittwe port, which is further linked to Paletwa in Myanmar through a waterway route along the river Kaladan
- From Paletwa, a 110 km road is being built to connect to Zorinpui at Mizoram on the Indo-Myanmar border.
- Zorinpui is further connected to Lawngtlai through a 100 km road.
- From Lawngtlai, an existing highway connects it to Aizawl, which in turn is linked to other northeastern cities including Guwahati.



# Centre bans export of non-basmati white rice to control price rise in India

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Union government banned the export of non-basmati white rice on Thursday. The Directorate General of Foreign Trade under the Union Commerce Ministry announced in a notification that the ban would come into effect immediately and exemptions would be given only if the loading of non-basmati rice on the ship had commenced before the notification or the shipping bill was filed and vessels had already berthed or arrived and anchored in Indian ports.

The Union Food Ministry, in a statement, said the step was taken to ensure adequate availability of non-basmati white rice in the domestic market and to curb the price rise. Non-basmati rice was exported under the category 'Free



**Need of the hour:** Export duty of 20% was imposed last year to lower the price and ensure availability in the country. FILE PHOTO

with export duty of 20%. "The retail prices have increased by 11.5% over a year and 3% over the past month," it added.

Export duty of 20% on non-basmati white rice was imposed last year to lower the price and to ensure availability in the domestic market. "However, the export of this variety increased from 33.66 lakh tonnes (September-March 2021-22) to 42.12 lt (September-March 2022-23)

even after imposition of 20% export duty," the Centre said, adding that in 2023-24, about 15.54 lt of this variety was exported against only 11.55 lt during 2022-23. "This sharp increase in exports can be ascribed to high international prices due to geopolitical scenario, El Nino sentiments and extreme climatic conditions in other rice-producing countries, etc," the Ministry said.

**Context:** The Directorate General of Foreign Trade under the Union Commerce Ministry **banned the export of non-basmati white rice.**

## Key Points

- The step was taken to **ensure adequate availability** of non-basmati white rice in the domestic market and to curb the price rise.
- Non-basmati white rice **constitutes about 25% of the total rice exported** from the country.
- The **prohibition on export** of non-basmati white rice will lead to lowering of prices for the consumers in the country.
- Non basmati rice was exported under the **category Free with export duty of 20%.**
- Export duty of 20% on non-basmati white rice was **imposed last year to lower the price** and to ensure availability in the domestic market.

# Pending cases have now crossed 5cr, House told

**Record 4.4Cr Backlog At Lower Courts**

Pradeep.Thakur  
@timesgroup.com

**New Delhi:** The justice delivery system in the country remains choked with the backlog of cases in courts crossing the five crore mark on July 14. All three tiers of the judiciary—subordinate/district courts, high courts and the Supreme Court—are falling far below expectations in disposal of cases.

**TIMES VIEW:** The statistics shows that the overwhelming bulk of pendency lies with lower courts who handle the majority of cases. Attempts to reduce pendency are unlikely to succeed if they suffer from shortage of judges and lack adequate infrastructure. These facts are well-known, and should be paid attention to by those who are in a position to change the situation. Let us not forget that the slow pace of justice hurts the vulnerable and the disadvantaged more than anyone else.

The total pendency in lower and district courts are at an all-time high of 4.4 crore, as on July 14. The scenario is no different in the 25 high courts in the country and the Supreme Court which have pendency of cases of 60.6 lakh and 69,766 respectively.

There is no prescribed timeline for disposal of cases as courts continue to indulge absence of counsels and repeated adjournments. The

## JUSTICE DELAYED

Year	District/subordinate courts	High courts	Supreme Court
July 2023	4.4 crore	60.6 lakh	69,766
April 2021	3.8 crore	56.6 lakh	67,279
March 2020	3.2 crore	46.4 lakh	60,603
Dec 2018	2.9 crore	49.8 lakh	56,994



> Note: The figures above are total pending cases in courts on given dates  
> Source: Law ministry/National Judicial Data Grid

## Don't call govt officials at 'drop of a hat': SC to HCs

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court has cautioned high courts not to summon government officials 'at the drop of a hat', saying they should spend their "precious time" in discharging their duty towards citizens instead of appearing in courts.

A bench of Justices B R Gavai and J B Pardiwala took exception to the Patna HC for issuing a bailable warrant to the additional chief secretary of the educational department of Bihar and stayed the order. The court passed the order on an appeal by the state government.

Senior advocate A N S

Centre, while responding to a question in Parliament on the burden on judiciary, on Thursday attributed several factors behind these increasing pendency, including the lack of a timeframe for courts to decide disposal of cases, lack of physical infrastructure and vacancies of judges. Over 5,388 posts of judicial officers are vacant in lower courts and over 330 in HCs.

Other reasons attributed

Nadkarni and lawyer Rishi K Awasthi, appearing for the state, placed on record the order(s) passed by HC consisting of one of the judges in 143 matters wherein officers of the state government were directed to appear in person.

Observing that government officials are bound to implement the court's order and they can be summoned for disobedience, the bench, however, said summoning orders should not be passed unnecessarily. "Their presence in the court wastes precious time which could be otherwise utilised for rendering service to the citizens. Issuing such directions at the drop of a hat undermines it," it said.

by the government include "complexity of facts involved, nature of evidence, cooperation of stakeholders viz. bar, investigation agencies, witnesses, litigants and proper application of rules".

To help maintain a timeline for disposal of cases were left only for commercial courts which have shown progress. The same, however, is yet to be initiated in regular courts or higher judiciary.

**Context:** The justice delivery system in the country remains choked with the **backlog of cases in courts crossing the 5 crore mark** on July 14.

- All three tiers of the judiciary - subordinate/ district courts, high courts and the Supreme Court - are falling far below expectations in disposal of cases.

### Key Points

- The total pendency in lower and district courts are at an **all-time high of 4.4 crore, as on July 14.**
- The scenario is **no different in the 25 high courts** in the country and the Supreme Court which have pendency of cases of 60.6 lakh and 69,766 respectively.
- There is **no prescribed timeline for disposal of cases** as courts continue to indulge absence of counsels and repeated adjournments.
- The Centre attributed **several factors behind these increasing pendency**, including the lack of a timeframe for courts to decide disposal of cases, lack of physical infrastructure and vacancies of judges.
- Over **5,388 posts of judicial officers are vacant** in lower courts and over 330 in HCs.
- Other reasons attributed by the government include **"complexity of facts involved, nature of evidence, cooperation of stakeholders viz. bar, investigation agencies, witnesses, litigants and proper application of rules"**.

## Chairman, Rajya Sabha brings gender parity, nominates fifty percent women members to the panel of Vice- Chairpersons

**Context:** In a historic move, Chairman, Rajya Sabha has nominated four **women Parliamentarians to the panel of Vice-Chairpersons.**

- All women members nominated to the panel are first term Parliamentarians and **Smt. S. Phangnon Konyak is the first ever woman from Nagaland** to be elected as a member of the Rajya Sabha.
- In another notable development, the **Rajya Sabha Chair has become fully digital.**

### Panel of Vice-Chairpersons of Rajya Sabha

- Under the Rules of Rajya Sabha, the **Chairman nominates** from amongst the members a panel of vice-chairpersons.
- **Any one of them can preside** over the House in the absence of the Chairman or the Deputy Chairman.
- He has the **same powers as the Chairman** when so presiding.
- He **holds office until a new panel of vice-chairpersons** is nominated.
- When a member of the panel of vice chairpersons is also not present, **any other person as determined by the House acts as the Chairman.**
- It must be emphasised here that a member of the panel of vice chairpersons **cannot preside over the House, when the office of the Chairman or the Deputy Chairman is vacant.**
- During such time, the Chairman's duties are to be performed by such member of the House as the president may appoint for the purpose.
- The elections are held, as soon as possible, to fill the vacant posts.

## SICKLE CELL ANAEMIA

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 - Health)

# Govt plans sickle cell anaemia vax with pvt cos

Priyanka Sharma

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NEW DELHI

The Central government and pharma companies are discussing the possibility of developing a vaccine against sickle cell anaemia. The matter was discussed in a recent meeting of the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunization.

As part of the government's National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi earlier this month, the government is also upgrading the healthcare facilities to providing tertiary care to sickle cell patients. The target is to eliminate the disease by 2047.

Under the current plan, blood banks are being established for patients, and arrangements for bone marrow transplants and screening of such patients are also being revamped.

**Context:** The Central government and pharma companies are discussing the possibility of developing a vaccine against sickle cell anaemia.

- The matter was discussed in a recent meeting of the **National Technical Advisory Group on Immunization**.

### Key Points

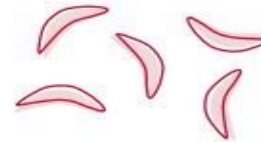
- As part of the government's **National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission** launched by Prime Minister, the government is also upgrading the healthcare facilities to providing tertiary care to sickle cell patients.
- The target is to **eliminate the disease by 2047**.
- Under the current plan, **blood banks are being established for patients**, and arrangements for bone marrow transplants and screening of such patients are also being revamped.
- Sickle cell anaemia is a **hereditary blood disorder**, with women and children more vulnerable to the disease.
- Nearly 20% of tribal children affected die** before reaching the age of two, and 30% children die before reaching adulthood.
- Ayushman Bharat- Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY)** provides full treatment for Sickle Cell Disease, free of cost to its beneficiaries.

## What is Sickle Cell Disease?



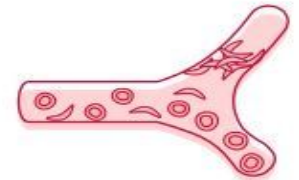
### SCD is a blood disorder

Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) is an **inherited blood disorder** that affects red blood cells. Normal red blood cells are round and flexible, which lets them travel through small blood vessels to deliver oxygen to all parts of the body.



### Causing misshapen blood cells

SCD causes red blood cells to **form into a crescent shape**, like a sickle.



### Creating painful complications

The sickle-shaped red blood cells break apart easily, clump together, and stick to the walls of blood vessels, **blocking the flow of blood**, which can cause a range of serious health issues.

# 22 nations seek to join BRICS

**BLOOMBERG**

20 July

Twenty two nations have formally applied to become members of the BRICS economic bloc, a South African diplomat said.

An equal number have also informally sought to join the organisation that groups Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, Anil Sooklal, the bloc's ambassador from South Africa, said on Thursday. Sooklal has previously said that countries including Saudi Arabia and Iran have formally asked to become BRICS members, while countries that expressed an interest in joining include Argentina, the United Arab Emirates, Algeria, Egypt, Bahrain and Indonesia.

**Context:** Twenty two nations have formally applied to become members of the BRICS economic bloc, a South African diplomat said.

- An equal number have also informally sought to join the organisation that groups **Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa**.
- Countries including Saudi Arabia and Iran have formally asked to become BRICS members, while countries that expressed an interest in joining include **Argentina, the United Arab Emirates, Algeria, Egypt, Bahrain and Indonesia**.

## **BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa)**

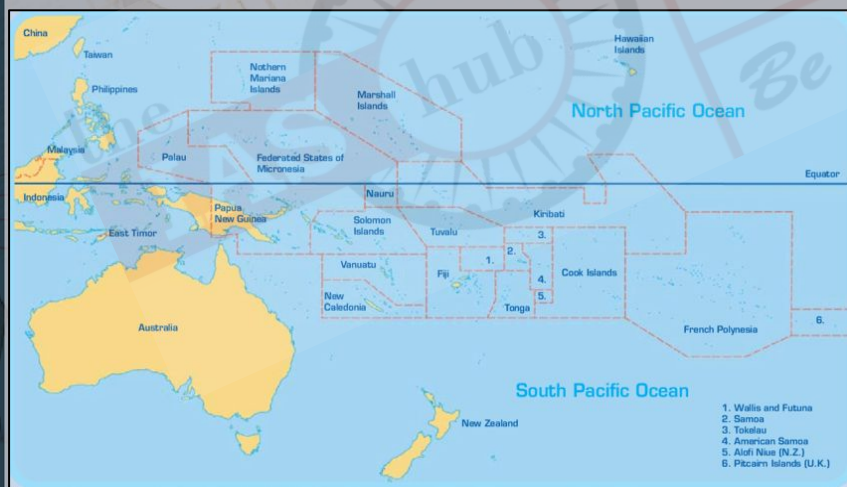
- In 2001, the **British Economist Jim O'Neill coined the term BRIC** to describe the four emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India, and China.
- The grouping was formalised during the first meeting of **BRIC Foreign Ministers' in 2006**.
- **South Africa was invited to join BRIC** in December 2010, after which the group adopted the acronym BRICS.
- The BRICS brings together five of the largest developing countries of the world, representing **41% of the global population, 24% of the global GDP and 16% of the global trade**.
- The chairmanship of the forum is **rotated annually among the members**, in accordance with the acronym B-R-I-C-S.
- **India is the chair for 2021**.

## U.S. plans second summit with Pacific island leaders in September



REUTERS

U.S. President Joe Biden will host a second summit with leaders of Pacific island nations in September, Joseph Yun, the U.S. official responsible for negotiations with three key Pacific island states said on Thursday. He said the summit is expected to take place around the time of U.N. General Assembly meetings in New York. REUTERS



**Context:** U.S. President will host a **second summit with leaders of Pacific island nations in September.**

- In 2022, the **US President hosted the first-ever U.S.- Pacific Island Country Summit** in Washington, D.C, and announced USD 810 million in funding for Pacific Islands.

### Pacific Island Countries

- **About:** The Pacific Island Countries are a **cluster of 14 states** which are located largely in the tropical zone of the Pacific Ocean between Asia, Australia and the Americas.
  - They include **Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Republic of Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.**
- **Significance:** Despite their small land area, the islands are spread out over a wide swath of the Pacific Ocean. Kiribati and FSM, have **Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs)** larger than that of India.
  - Large EEZs have a **great deal of economic potential** since they can be used to exploit the wealth of fisheries, energy, minerals, and other marine resources present there.
  - The 14 PICs, bound **together by shared economic and security concerns**, account for as many votes in the United Nations, and act as a potential vote bank for major powers to mobilise international opinion.

# Conference of India and ASEAN on Traditional Medicines held in New Delhi today

**Context:** The Ministry of Ayush, in association with **Ministry of External Affairs and Indian Mission to ASEAN** organized a conference of India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on traditional medicines.

## Conference of India and ASEAN

- The Conference, held again after almost a decade, promised to consolidate sustainable and resilient healthcare systems to achieve **Sustainable Development Goals and Universal Health Coverage**.
- The **Indian Mission to ASEAN** is actively supporting the conference, further emphasizing the government's focus on bilateral partnerships and regional cooperation. By engaging with ASEAN nations, India aims to create a platform for sharing knowledge and enhancing collaboration in traditional medicine.
- During the **12th ASEAN India Summit** in Myanmar, Prime Minister enunciated the "Act East Policy."
- This policy initiative aims to strengthen India's strategic partnership with ASEAN nations, emphasizing the shared cultural, historical, and civilizational links between them.
- The **Conference on Traditional Medicines** aligns with this policy by fostering cooperation and mutual growth.

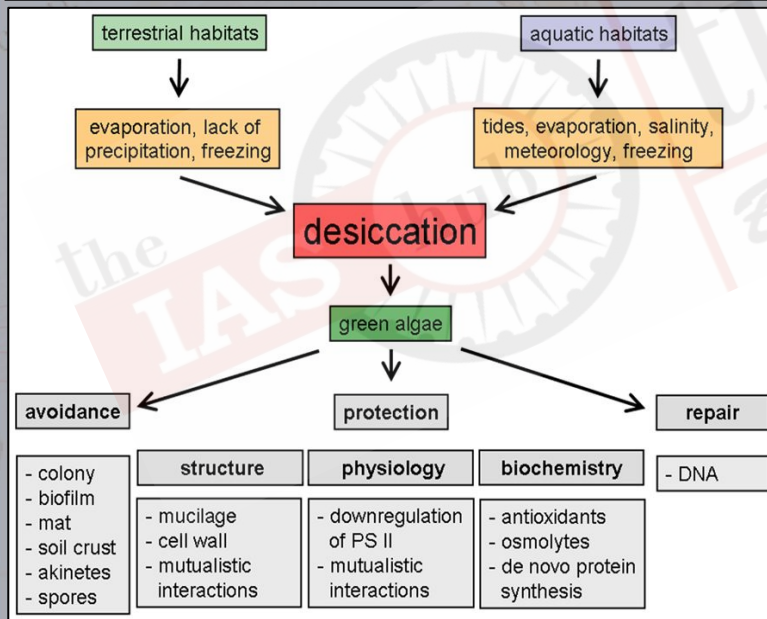
## Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

- **About:** a regional organization which was established to promote political and social stability amid rising tensions among the Asia-Pacific's post-colonial states.
- **Origin:** ASEAN international organization **established by the governments of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand in 1967** to accelerate economic growth, social progress, and cultural development and to promote peace and security in Southeast Asia.
- **Motto of ASEAN:** "One Vision, One Identity, One Community".
- **ASEAN Day:** 8th August
- **ASEAN Secretariat:** Indonesia, Jakarta.
- **Current Member Nations:** Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.
  - **Two observer States:** Papua New Guinea and Timor Leste (East Timor).
- **Official Languages:** Burmese, Filipino, Indonesian, Khmer, Lao, Malay, Mandarin, Tamil, Thai and Vietnamese
- **Working Language:** English
- **ASEAN-led Forums:**
  - **ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF):** It was launched in 1993. It is a **twenty-seven-member multilateral grouping** that was developed to facilitate cooperation on political and security issues to contribute to regional confidence-building and preventive diplomacy.
  - **ASEAN Plus Three:** The consultative group initiated in **1997 brings together ASEAN's ten members, China, Japan, and South Korea**.
  - **East Asia Summit (EAS):** First held in 2005, the summit seeks to promote security and prosperity in the region and is usually attended by the heads of state from ASEAN, Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Russia, South Korea, and the United States.

**Over 60 species of plants that can survive extreme dehydration found in Western Ghats**

Genes of these desiccation-tolerant vascular plants can be used to create high temperature tolerant variety of crops to improve climate resilience

By Himanshu Nitnaware  
Published: Wednesday 19 July 2023



**Context:** In the biodiversity hotspot Western Ghats, researchers have found 62 species of plants that can withstand harsh environments .

- The discovery of the species, called **desiccation-tolerant (DT) vascular plants**, has potential applications in agriculture, particularly in areas where water is scarce.

**Key Points**

- DT plants can withstand **extreme dehydration**, losing up to 95 per cent of their water content.
- They are usually **found in rocky outcrops in the tropics** and can recover quickly when water supplies are restored.
- Some species were found to survive **at increasing temperatures**, which is crucial for the warming planet.
- Some plant species - ranging from algae to **angiosperms** - thrive in harsh environments and are termed as **extremophytes**..
- Organisms living in such habitats face consistent droughts, but some **experience cycles of desiccation**.
- To adapt to **extreme conditions**, these plant species develop adaptive strategies to survive through **morphological and physiological traits**.
- Out of the **62 species identified**, 16 are endemic to India while 12 are exclusive to Western Ghats outcrop.
- **Hydration** is a condition where plant tissues can tolerate more than 30 percent of water content.
  - But in **desiccation**, plants undergo longer dry days during which the moisture content of the leaves is the same as in the air.
- India now has nine new generic records for the global list. They are identified as **Pyrrosia, Aleuritopteris, Corallodiscus, Arundinella, Bhidea, Bothriochloa, Danthonidium, Dimeria and Glyphochloa**.
- **Colour changes and morphological characteristics** were also observed in the species.

## GHORAMARA ISLAND

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 - Env & Eco)

### **Barges carrying fly ash from India to Bangladesh eroding Sundarbans: Bengal minister**

Ghoramara Island erosion cited as proof by a scientist; central agencies deny allegation



**Context:** Barges going to the neighbouring Bangladesh through the **vulnerable Sundarban islands** are triggering erosion in the river banks, claimed West Bengal Disaster Management Minister.

- Sunderbans expert gave the example of **Ghoramara Island** in the western Sunderbans, which is one of the region's sinking islands.
- The claims have been refuted by representatives of the **Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI)**, the central government agency responsible for the transboundary movement of vessels on waterways.

#### **Key Points**

- About 40 barges regularly traverse adjacent to the Indian Sundarbans, taking fly ash from Indian thermal power plants to Bangladesh where it is used as **raw material for cement production**.
- Nearly **100 Bangladeshi barges** - each weighing 600-800 tonnes - regularly traverse through Indian waters, about 100 kilometres adjacent to the Indian Sundarbans, taking fly ash from Indian thermal power plants to Bangladesh where the ash is used as raw materials for cement production.
- The Sundarbans is **made up of around 100 islands** that are almost evenly divided between human habitats and wild islands.
- These have been identified as a **climate impact hotspot**.
- The islands are already being eroded due to the **rapid rise in sea level and tidal fluctuations**.

#### **Location of Ghoramara Island**

- It is located 92 km south of Kolkata in the **Sundarbans Delta complex of the Bay of Bengal**.
- Every year, with **houses and acres of land being swallowed by the sea**, the topography of the island alters.
- The **rapid erosion of the island**, has grabbed the attention of those attempting to understand how rising sea levels and climate change are impacting lives and migration patterns..

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