Daily Current Affairs

Exam-first • Bilingual • Concept + Current Linkage + MCQs

2

The Hindu

0

PIB, PRS & Other newspaper

0

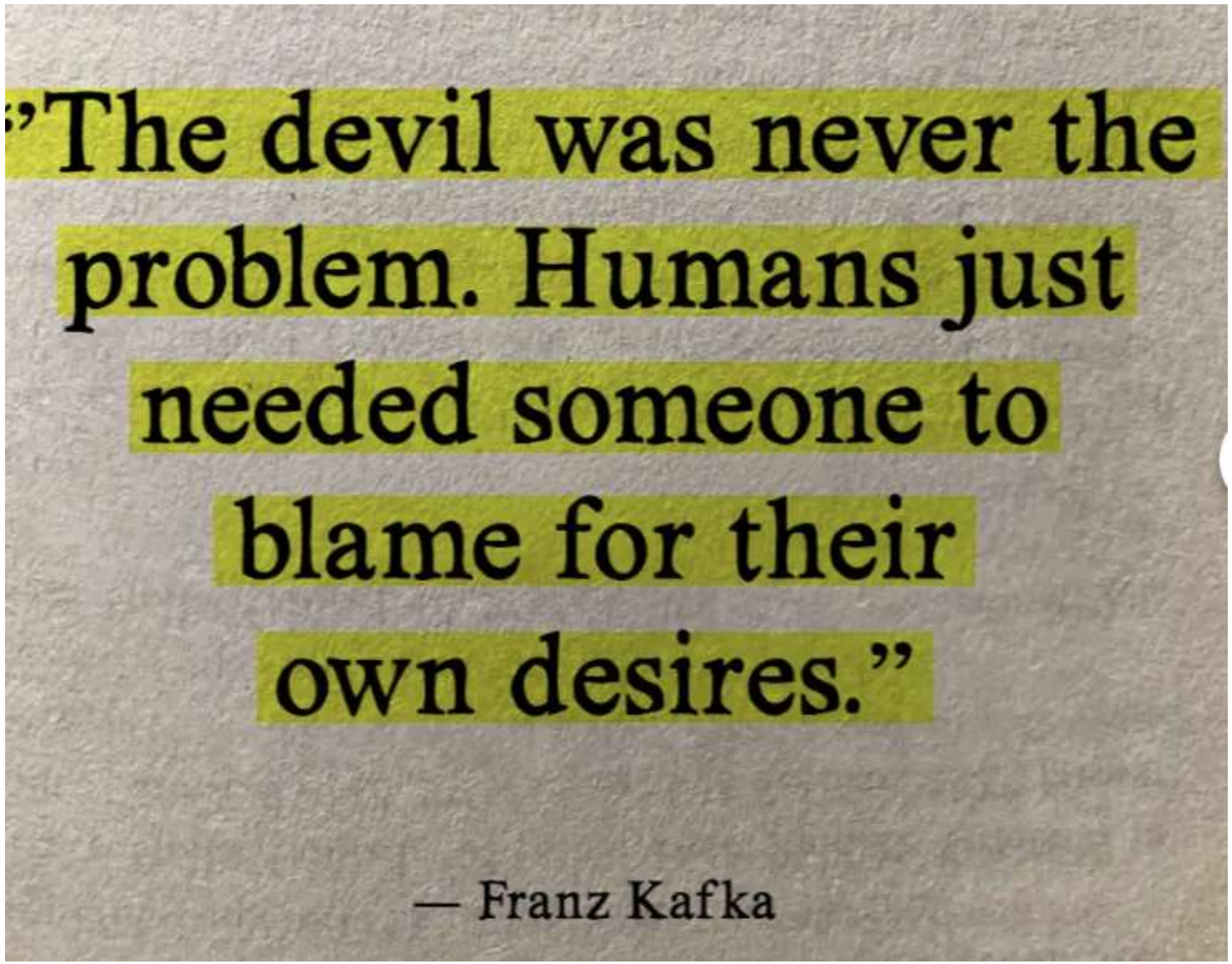
The Indian Express

1

Financial Express

0

Jansatta


"The devil was never the
problem. Humans just
needed someone to
blame for their
own desires."
— Franz Kafka

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INSIDE

RBI's swap rakes in over $136 bn of foreign exchange

MUMBAI
Foreign exchange inflows via foreign currency non-resident (Bank) (FCNR(B)) deposits, overseas foreign currency borrowings and external commercial borrowings under the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) swap facility have crossed $136 billion. » PAGE 12

Attempted drone attack on airport is 'state terrorism'

BRUSSELS
The European Union's foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said on Wednesday that an attempted attack on a German airport blamed on Russia appears to be "state-sponsored terrorism". However, Russian President Vladimir Putin dismissed Berlin's allegations. » PAGE 14

Plea challenging Rahul citizenship dismissed by HC

NEW DELHI
The Allahabad High Court recently dismissed a petition challenging the citizenship and parliamentary membership of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi after the petitioner failed to produce evidence to back claims of his British nationality. » PAGE 5

'Maternity leave should not affect role or career'

NEW DELHI
The Delhi High Court has ruled that a woman returning from maternity leave at a private company is ordinarily entitled to her previous position and cannot be placed at a professional disadvantage by curtailing her responsibilities or career prospects. » PAGE 4

SC orders oversight of Bar Council decisions

- Advocate Manan Mishra is only pro tem chief of lawyers' body, the Supreme Court emphasises
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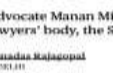
Under scrutiny | The BCI chief, **Manan Kumar Mishra**, recently earned public ire with an attempt to ban the enrolment of NALSAR graduates

Allegations raised by petitioners in SC:

- Extension of the tenure of the BCI chairperson and vice-chairperson to five years
- Formation of the BCI Pearl First Trust in which Mr. Mishra and other BCI office-bearers are 'permanent managing trustees'
- A tie-up between the Trust and the Goa government to set up a university on 50 acres of land in the State
- 'Jolting' expenditures on felicitations running into crores'



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JUSTICE JOYMALYA BAGCHI

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"The current term as chairperson of BCI started from April 17, 2025, in view of the mandate of Rule 12 (2), Chapter I, Part II of the Bar Council of India Rules, the maximum period of tenure of Chairperson of BCI is two years, but a gazette notification of April 21, 2025 notified the tenure of chairperson and vice-chairperson till April 16, 2030," she submitted.

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A helping hand

Wire crossing: Residents pull the steel wire of a newly installed zipline to help people commute across the Trishuli river in the aftermath of flooding at Bidur in Nepal, on Wednesday. At least 1,114 people are dead and nearly 4,000 unaccounted for so far. AP PHOTO/NIRAJ JAL

UN sets pathway to tackle 'inevitable breach' of the 1.5°C global warming limit

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

Warning that a possible breach of the 1.5 degrees Celsius global warming limit will bring irreversible ecological losses that no adaptation initiatives could undo, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on Wednesday, for the first time, set out a detailed "overshoot, peak, and decline" pathway.

The pathway projects a trajectory where the world overshoots the 2015 Paris Agreement's central goal of limiting the rise in average global temperatures to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels — which a UNEP report said was now unavoidable. The pathway seeks to hold peak temperatures after the overshoot as low as possible and then bring it back down below the limit by 2100.

The report, *Limiting Overshoot*, said global warming would cross 1.5 degrees Celsius "in the next few years". Even a scenario in which every country delivers on its national climate plan and net-zero target puts peak warming at 1.8 degrees Celsius, it said. According to the report, current policies point to a rise of about 2.6 degrees Celsius by 2100 with a range of 1.9-3.6 degrees Celsius.

"Overshoot, peak, and decline", the report said, "is by no means an acceptable or preferred pathway; it is simply the best remaining option". "This summer's scorching heat, raging wildfires, and deadly floods are a warning of what lies ahead. We must make the overshoot as small and short as possible," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in a statement.

Climate concerns

The UN report proposes a pathway to hold peak global temperature as low as possible in the coming years and bring it back within the accepted limit by 2100

- The report says global warming will cross **1.5°C** in the next few years' and that this is **no longer avoidable**
- A scenario in which every country delivers on its national climate plan and its net-zero target still puts peak global warming at **1.8°C**
- Current policies point to about **2.6°C** global warming by 2100, with a range of 1.9to 3.6°C
- 'Overshoot, peak, ... and decline' is simply **'the best remaining option'**, the report says

The diplomatic grounds for that framing were laid at the 30th UN Climate Change Conference, COP30, held in 2025 in Brazil's Belém, where the consensus "Global Mutirão (collective effort)" decision became the first COP text to concede that a temporary overshoot of the 1.5 degrees Celsius limit was likely, given how fast the remaining carbon budget was being spent.

Compounding costs

Given that cuts alone will no longer suffice, a deep scaling up of nature-based removals such as large reforestation programmes was needed, COP30 CEO Ana Toni said.

The UNEP report suggested that any time spent above 1.5 degrees Celsius carries compounding costs such as faster sea-level rise, coral reef collapse, glacier loss exceeding a quarter of global mass by 2100, declines of up to 14% in global food production by 2050 without effective adaptation, and rising odds of irreversible tipping points in the West Antarctic and Greenland ice sheets, the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation and the Amazon.

Moreover, it gets harder to roll back the effects of a tonne of emitted carbon. The report said every five years of continued high emissions adds roughly 0.1°C to peak warming. Reversing that same 0.1°C afterwards means pulling about 220 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide back out of the atmosphere over and above whatever is still being emitted.

The report, in a first for the UN, placed significant stress on methane, which contributes about 0.5°C of warming. Cutting it is described as the most effective way to slow warming in the near term.

Iran fires on its Gulf neighbours after U.S. strikes

Associated Press
DUBAI

Iran fired on U.S. allies in the Gulf early on Wednesday following a night of American bombardment that Iranian state media says included a deadly strike on a wedding party.

The latest violence came after a month-long lull in fighting. It has escalated since the American military hit Iranian rocket launchers on an island in the Strait of Hormuz over the weekend, saying Iran was planning to use them to lay mines.

Iran retaliated by firing missiles at American bases in Jordan and Bahrain and intercepted U.S. Gulf allies Kuwait and Bahrain said they had also come under attack, without reporting any casualties.

"You will soon see that Iran's new strategy on the battlefield, in diplomacy, and in confronting the economic blockade will shatter your foundations," the recently appointed head of Iran's powerful Supreme National Security Council, Mohsen Rezaei, said on X.

In Iraq, where Iranian-backed forces are active, Kurdish authorities said they had intercepted 10 drones in the latest wave. Iranian television reported that American bases in Irbil had been targeted.

The aftermath of a U.S. strike on a wedding ceremony in southern Sirik county in Hormozgan province in Iran on Wednesday. AFP

The U.S. Central Command said Tuesday's strikes focused on Iranian military targets, including air defence sites, radar systems and maritime assets.

One U.S. strike hit a home hosting a wedding in Kuhestak, a small coastal town overlooking the Strait of Hormuz, according to Iranian state media. Four people were killed — two women and two children — and at least 68 were wounded, the state news agency IRNA and state TV said on Wednesday.

Several heavy explosions shook Kuhestak, with fireballs that lit up the night sky, according to security camera footage carried by the semi-official Fars news agency.

Images from Iran's semi-official Tasnim news agency showed several hospitalised children being treated for injuries at a hospital in the nearby town of Minab, where a U.S. missile strike on the opening day of the war hit a primary school, killing more than 100 children.

'Prepared to respond'

Meanwhile, Israel's Defence Minister Israel Katz on Wednesday said his country was prepared to respond "with great force" if attacked by Iran.

If Iran attacks, Israel would "respond with great force, independently of anyone else", Mr. Katz said, adding that "our planes are ready to take off".

(With AFP inputs)

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Key Parameter	Details
Institution involved	Bar Council of India (BCI)
Court	Supreme Court of India
Bench headed by	CJI Surya Kant
Present BCI Chairperson	Manan Kumar Mishra — pro tem till elections
Major interim safeguard	BCI to consult/involve Attorney-General (AG) and Solicitor-General (SG) before major policy decisions
Why AG & SG?	They are ex-officio members of BCI
State Bar Councils	SC ordered completion of co-option of two women members within a fortnight
Next step	Time-bound elections to Central and State-level Bar bodies

- **What is the Bar Council of India?**

★ ★ ★

- The **Bar Council of India is a statutory body** created under the:
- **Advocates Act, 1961**
- **भारतीय विधिज्ञ परिषद (BCI) एक वैधानिक निकाय है, जिसका गठन Advocates Act, 1961 के तहत किया गया है।**
- ⚠ **Most important exam trap**
- **BCI is NOT a Constitutional Body.**

Body	Type
Election Commission	Constitutional
UPSC	Constitutional
Finance Commission	Constitutional
Bar Council of India	**Statutory**
State Bar Councils	**Statutory**

Bar Council of India	State Bar Councils
Apex regulatory body	State-level bodies
National level	State level
Advocates Act, 1961	Advocates Act, 1961
Sets professional standards	Primarily handles State rolls/enrolment functions
Recognises law qualifications/universities for enrolment purposes under the Act/rules	Enrolment of advocates
Exercises disciplinary/appellate functions under the statutory framework	Disciplinary functions at State level

- **Composition of BCI — Very Important**
- Under **Section 4 of the Advocates Act, 1961**, the BCI broadly consists of:
  - **Attorney-General of India — ex-officio**
  - **Solicitor-General of India — ex-officio**
  - **One member elected by each State Bar Council from amongst its members**
- The BCI elects its:
- **Chairman + Vice-Chairman**
- from amongst its members.

Parameter	Attorney-General
Constitutional Article	Article 76
Appointed by	President of India
Qualification	Qualified to be appointed a Supreme Court judge
Role	Chief legal adviser to Government of India
Right of audience	All courts in India
Parliament	Can participate in proceedings
Vote in Parliament	No

Parameter	Attorney-General	Solicitor-General
Constitutional office?	Yes	No
Article	76	No specific constitutional Article
Position	Highest law officer	Assists Government's legal representation
BCI	Ex-officio member	Ex-officio member

- **. Why did Supreme Court intervene?**
- The report identifies concerns relating to:
- **Concentration of power + prolonged tenure + institutional credibility + financial expenditure + governance of a BCI-linked trust + controversial policy decisions.**
- Petitioners reportedly questioned whether long continuation of the same office-bearers was consistent with proper institutional governance.
- **Court's broad objective**
- **Institutional integrity + credible elections + accountable decision-making**

9. Tenure Controversy

The report refers to **Rule 12(2), Chapter I, Part II of the Bar Council of India Rules**, under which the maximum period of tenure of the Chairperson was stated as **two years**.

It also notes a **2025 Gazette notification** concerning the tenure of the chairperson and vice-chairperson.

The Supreme Court's position in the reported case was that the present continuation is:

co-terminus with elections

rather than an unrestricted new tenure.

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10. Women's Representation — Important ⭐⭐⭐

The Court reportedly directed Chief Justices of High Courts to complete the **co-option of two women members to State Bar Councils within a fortnight**.

After reconstitution, State Bar Councils are to elect:

Chairperson + Vice-Chairperson + other office-bearers + BCI representative

within the stipulated period.

12. BCI's Major Functions

Under the Advocates Act framework, important BCI functions include:

Function	Explanation
Professional conduct	Lays down standards for advocates
Legal education	Promotes legal education and sets/coordinates standards under the statutory framework
Recognition	Recognises qualifying law degrees/universities for enrolment purposes
Discipline	Statutory disciplinary/appellate role
Safeguarding advocates	Protects rights, privileges and interests of advocates
Legal reform	Promotes/supports law reform
Legal aid	Organises legal aid within statutory framework

Consider the following statements:

1. The Bar Council of India is a constitutional body established under Article 76.
2. The Attorney-General and Solicitor-General of India are ex-officio members of the Bar Council of India.
3. The Attorney-General of India is a constitutional office, whereas the Solicitor-General is not a constitutional office.
4. State Bar Councils are constituted under the Advocates Act, 1961.

Which statements are correct?

A. 1 and 2 only

B. 2, 3 and 4 only

C. 1, 3 and 4 only

D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

UN sets pathway to tackle 'inevitable breach' of the 1.5°C global warming limit

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

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The pathway projects a trajectory where the world overshoots the 2015 Paris Agreement's central goal of limiting the rise in average global temperatures to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels – which a UNEP report said was now unavoidable. The pathway seeks to hold peak temperatures after the overshoot as low as possible and then bring it back down below the limit by 2100.

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Compounding costs

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The UNEP report suggested that time spent above 1.5 degrees Celsius carries compounding costs such as faster sea-level rise, coral reef collapse, glacier loss exceeding a quarter of global mass by 2100, declines of up to 14% in global food production by 2050 without effective adaptation, and rising odds of irreversible tipping points in the West Antarctic and Greenland ice sheets, the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation and the Amazon.

Moreover, it gets harder to roll back the effects of a tonne of emitted carbon. The report said every five years of continued high emissions adds roughly 0.1°C to peak warming. Reversing that same 0.1°C afterwards means pulling about 220 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide back out of the atmosphere over and above whatever is still being emitted.

The report, in a first for the UN, placed significant stress on methane, which contributes about 0.5°C of warming. Cutting it is described as the most effective way to slow warming in the near term.

Key fact	Article's figure
Paris Agreement temperature benchmark	1.5°C above pre-industrial level
Expected crossing	Next few years
If all countries meet climate plans + net-zero targets	Peak warming about 1.8°C
Under current policies	Around 2.6°C by 2100
Current-policy range	1.9–3.6°C
Approach	Overshoot → Peak → Decline
Ultimate objective	Bring warming back below 1.5°C by 2100
Key short-term pollutant highlighted	Methane

Risk	Impact
Sea-level rise	Accelerates
Coral reefs	Risk of collapse
Glaciers	Accelerated loss
Food production	Decline
Heatwaves	Greater intensity/frequency
Wildfires	Higher risk
Extreme rainfall/floods	Intensification
Tipping points	Probability rises

- **. Food Security Impact**
- The article states that warming above 1.5°C could contribute to:
- **up to 14% decline in global food production by 2050 without effective adaptation.**
- Potential pathways:
- **Heat stress → crop productivity ↓**
- **Rainfall variability → agricultural uncertainty ↑**
- **Drought → yields ↓**
- **Floods → crop losses ↑**
- **Ocean warming → fisheries affected**

14. Why Methane is Extremely Important ⭐⭐⭐

The article says the UN placed significant emphasis on **methane**, which it says contributes roughly:

0.5°C of warming

Methane reduction is highlighted as one of the most effective ways of slowing warming in the **near term**.

Why?

Methane is:

powerful greenhouse gas + relatively short-lived compared with CO_2

Therefore, rapid methane reductions can produce comparatively fast climate benefits.

---

15. Major Anthropogenic Sources of Methane

Sector	Examples
Agriculture	Livestock, rice cultivation
Fossil fuels	Oil and gas leaks, coal mining
Waste	Landfills
Wastewater	Organic decomposition

CO_2	CH_4
Carbon dioxide	Methane
Major driver of long-term anthropogenic warming	Powerful short-term warming influence
Long-lived cumulative problem	Shorter atmospheric lifetime
Fossil-fuel combustion major source	Agriculture, fossil fuels, waste
Net-zero CO_2 critical	Rapid CH_4 cuts can slow near-term warming

- **COP30 Connection**
- According to the article:
- **COP30 → Belém, Brazil → 2025**
- It refers to the **“Global Mutirão”** or collective-effort framing in discussions over responding to the possibility of a temporary 1.5°C overshoot.
- **Geography Connection**
- **Belém → Brazil → near the Amazon region**
- Hence COP30 has particularly strong symbolism for:
- **Amazon rainforest + biodiversity + climate change**
-

21. UNEP vs UNFCCC vs IPCC

Very important distinction:

Organisation	Primary role
UNEP	UN environmental programme
UNFCCC	International climate-negotiation framework
IPCC	Scientific assessment of climate change
COP	Decision-making conferences of Parties to climate convention/agreement

Easy memory

IPCC → Science

UNFCCC → Negotiations

UNEP → Environment

India's climate policy can be linked to its updated NDCs and long-term net-zero announcement.

Important targets frequently tested include:

Target	India
Net-zero target	**2070**
Reduction in emissions intensity of GDP by 2030	**45% from 2005 level**
Installed electric-power capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2030	**About 50% cumulative installed capacity**

Remember

India → Net Zero 2070

China → 2060

EU → 2050

- **Panchamrit — India**
- Announced at **COP26, Glasgow (2021)**.
- The original Panchamrit package included:
- **500 GW non-fossil energy capacity by 2030**
- **50% energy requirements from renewable energy by 2030**
- **Reduce projected carbon emissions by 1 billion tonnes by 2030**
- **Reduce carbon intensity by more than 45%**
- **Net zero by 2070**

Year	Event
1972	Stockholm Conference
1988	IPCC established
1992	UNFCCC adopted at Rio Earth Summit
1997	Kyoto Protocol adopted
2005	Kyoto Protocol entered into force
2015	Paris Agreement adopted
2016	Paris Agreement entered into force
2021	COP26 Glasgow
2023	COP28 Dubai
2024	COP29 Baku
2025	COP30 Belém

- **Consider the following statements:**
  - The 1.5°C target refers to limiting global average temperature increase relative to **pre-industrial levels**.
  - Under the Paris Agreement, countries communicate climate actions through **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)**.
  - The headquarters of UNEP is located in Geneva.
  - Rapid reductions in methane emissions can help slow warming in the near term.
- Which of the statements given above are correct?
- **A. 1 and 2 only**
- **B. 1, 2 and 4 only**
- **C. 2, 3 and 4 only**
- **D. 1, 2, 3 and 4**

Formulate rules for fishing vessel transit to EEZ, SC directs T.N.

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

Seeking cooperative federalism between the Centre and the State to regulate purse seine fishing, the Supreme Court on Wednesday directed Tamil Nadu to frame rules to create a "specified channel" or official navigation corridor under the Marine Fishing Regulation Rules, 2020 for transit of vessels from its territorial waters to Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) for fishing using such nets.

Tamil Nadu had banned purse seine fishing within its territorial waters in 2020.

Wednesday's direction by a Division Bench headed by Justices P.S. Narasimha and Alok Aradhe was part of a judgment that considered applications concerning the rights of fishermen using purse seine nets to access the EEZ beyond the territorial waters of Tamil Nadu.

The State had expressed concern that fishermen could use such nets within its territorial waters under the guise of fishing in the EEZ. It would be difficult for the State to regulate it.

On the other hand, the fishing community had argued that Tamil Nadu was invoking the 2020 Rules, notified to enforce the State's ban, to prevent them from even carrying these purse seine nets to the EEZ for fishing beyond 12 nautical miles, which is outside the State's remit.

But the court said fishing within and outside the territorial waters of the State was covered by Tamil Nadu Marine Fishing Regulation Rules, 2020, and the Central law of Sustainable Harnessing of Fisheries in the Exclusive Economic Zone Rules (EEZ Rules), 2025. The 2020 Rules regulate fishing within Tamil Nadu's territorial waters and the use of gear.

The EEZ Rules contemplates the issuance of 'access pass' to fishing vessels permitted in the EEZ. Upholding both the 2020 and 2025 Rules, the court directed that the "rights and liabilities of the parties will now be governed as per the relevant laws, EEZ Rules, 2025 and the Tamil Nadu Marine Fishing Regulation Rules, 2020".

"We now have the entire legal regime through which purse seine fishing can be regulated in the EEZ, while addressing the concerns of the State... There is no conflict between the EEZ Rules of the Union and the Marine Fishery Regulation Rules, 2020 of the State of Tamil Nadu," the court observed.

Agniveer involvement ruled out in military weapon theft

Military Intelligence has joined the investigation into the missing service weapons from 20 Madras Regiment premises in Secunderabad; probe being conducted from an undisclosed location

Naveen Kumar
HYDERABAD

The Malkajgiri Police have reportedly ruled out the involvement of Agniveers in the theft of service weapons and ammunition from the 20 Madras Regiment premises in Bollaram, Secunderabad Cantonment, even as the investigation continues under heightened secrecy inside the defence area.

Military Intelligence has also joined the investigation into the theft, with the probe being conducted from within the defence area at an undisclosed location to maintain confidentiality. Sources said even the staff at the Bollaram Police Station were not aware of the status of the investigation or the details of the probe.

The restrictions on sharing information come amid heightened security following the theft of four AK-203 assault rifles, an INSAS 1B1 rifle, six 9 mm Auto 1A pistols and a civilian 6.35-bore pistol from the Army premises. A passive night vision binocular and more than 1,900 rounds of ammunition were also reported missing.

Missing gear: The stolen service weapons include four AK-203 assault rifles and six 9mm pistols. ISSUE FOR REPRESENTATION

The discrepancy was detected around 7.50 a.m. on Monday when the Kote and Battalion Magazine was opened and the locks were found broken. The weapons and ammunition were last physically accounted for around 6 p.m. on August 30.

The Army subsequently reverified its weapon and ammunition holdings and accounting records, searched authorised storage areas and adjoining premises and checked issue and receipt registers.

Katchatheevu row resurfaces in Tamil Nadu Assembly

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The issue of India handing over Katchatheevu to Sri Lanka in 1974 rocked the Assembly on Wednesday, with Ministers from the ruling TVK accusing the then DMK government led by M. Karunanidhi of "failing to stop" the Centre from handing over the islet to the neighbouring country.

During the discussion on the demands for grants for the Fisheries and Fishermen Welfare Department, Ramanathapuram MLA Katharisaicha Muthuramalingam of the DMK highlighted the ordeals faced by fishermen from Tamil Nadu at the hands of the Sri Lankan Navy midsea, particularly after the enactment of a law in Sri Lanka that provided for the confiscation of fishing vessels in addition to the arrest of fishermen.

Minister N. Anand assured the then DMK government of taking to prevent the handover of the islet to Sri Lanka in 1974.

Minister for Water Resources N. Anand intervened and said it was the DMK that gave away Katchatheevu to Sri Lanka. DMK members objected to his remark.

DMK whip E.V. Velu said Katchatheevu was handed over to Sri Lanka based on a decision taken by then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. The then Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Karunanidhi twice, he said. "Kalaignar (Karunanidhi) himself told mediapersons about Kewal Singh discussing the matter with him. Only with the consent of Kalaignar was Katchatheevu given to Sri Lanka, he said.

Minister for Energy Resources and Law C.T.R. Nirmal Kumar questioned what the Tamil Nadu government at the time had done even if the Union government had decided to hand over Katchatheevu to Sri Lanka.

He referred to a similar attempt by the Union government in the 1950s to transfer Berubari Union to what was then East Pakistan.

He said then West Bengal Chief Minister B.C. Roy had approached the Supreme Court and won a case against the transfer of the Indian territory in 1960. When the Centre decided to hand over Katchatheevu to Sri Lanka in the 1970s, Foreign Secretary Kewal Singh had discussed the matter with Karunanidhi twice, he said. "Kalaignar (Karunanidhi) himself told mediapersons about Kewal Singh discussing the matter with him. Only with the consent of Kalaignar was Katchatheevu given to Sri Lanka, he said.

Sunni leader's observations on women unsuitable for modern Keralam, says CM

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Rejecting Sunni leader Jifriyathuram A.P. Abdubacker Musliar's recent controversial opinions against the participation of women in public platforms, Chief Minister V.D. Satheesan said his comments are unsuitable for modern and progressive Keralam.

Addressing a press conference in Thiruvananthapuram on Wednesday after the Cabinet meeting, Mr. Satheesan said that neither the Congress nor the State government can agree with such a stand that belongs to the 19th century.

"Even Islamic history and its scriptures say that women have a place in public spaces. Such comments are a result of misinterpretation of Islam. Khadija, the first wife of the Prophet, was a businesswoman, while Ayesha, another wife, had led an army in a war. Women's voices were respected in the court of Khalifa Umar," Mr. Satheesan said.

V.D. Satheesan

Meanwhile, the Kerala Muslim Jamaat condemned Mr. Satheesan's remarks that Mr. Aboobacker Musliar had misinterpreted Islam. It demanded that the Chief Minister withdraw the statement and apologise to the Muslim community.

The Muslim Jamaat said Mr. Satheesan had misunderstood Islamic history and commented on them without properly considering their context. Such remarks, it said, were unbecoming of the office of the Chief Minister.

INBRIEF

Aero India 2027 to be held in Bengaluru from February 8

Aero India, Asia's largest air show and among the world's premier aerospace and defence exhibitions, will return for its 16th edition at Air Force Station, Yelahanka, in Bengaluru from February 8 to 12, 2027. Exhibitor registrations are scheduled to begin on September 3, 2026. A major attraction of the event will be aerial displays by the Indian Air Force and participating international flying teams. Aero India 2027 is being organised by the Department of Defence Production under the Ministry of Defence.

Keralam seeks technical study of Mullaperiyar Dam

Keralam has demanded a rigorous, long-term technical evaluation of the Mullaperiyar Dam before the five-member comprehensive safety panel. The State submitted an eight-page written document detailing its safety concerns. Both Keralam and Tamil Nadu presented their arguments during the meeting, officials said. The demand comes as the panel began inspection of the main dam, baby dam, earthen dam, and spillway on Tuesday. The panel's chairman, former NHPC CMD Balraj Joshi, said that the committee will submit its report in two weeks.

Karnataka all for NITI Aayog's 'second Bengaluru' proposal

The NITI Aayog has suggested that the Karnataka consider building a "second Bengaluru" in the State to reduce the pressure on the capital. The suggestion came from NITI Aayog Vice-Chairman Ashok Kumar Lahiri during a meeting with Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar in Bengaluru on Wednesday. "I am proud of Karnataka's development. To reduce pressure on Bengaluru, there is a need to seriously consider building a second Bengaluru in Karnataka," said Mr. Lahiri. The Chief Minister said a proper plan would be prepared as per NITI Aayog's expectations.

Godavari reaches north A.P. through Polavaram canal

Haresh P
PAYAKARAOPET

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday laid out a road map for augmenting water supply to the Uttarandhra region through various projects and interlinking of rivers.

Releasing the Godavari water to the north Andhra region through the Polavaram Left Main Canal at Pattiseema Puram village in Anakapalli district on Wednesday, he said "I had promised to bring the Godavari water to Uttarandhra and fulfilled it," he said. He thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the merger of seven mandals in Telangana with Andhra Pradesh, without which Polavaram project would have remained a dream.

The project, executed at a cost of ₹4,192 crore, will ensure water for irrigating four lakh acres, drinking water to 9.23 lakh people, and will meet the industrial needs of East Godavari, Kakinada, Konaseema, Anakapalli, and Visakhapatnam districts. He said 72% of Polavaram project work had been completed by 2019, but the previous government had neglected the project.

N. Chandrababu Naidu joins the prayers before opening the gates of Polavaram Left Main Canal in Anakapalli on Wednesday.

"With the blessings of Annavaram Satyanarayana Swamy, we have brought the Godavari river water to Anakapalli. By next year, water will reach near Simhadri Appanna (Simhachalam in Visakhapatnam) and Satyanarayana Swamy at Arasavalli in future, realising the goal of interlinking of the Godavari with the Vamsadhara river. We will offer 'Jala Harathi' to every acre of land by interlinking the Godavari with the Krishna," he said.

BJP urges Karnataka CM to sack Ministers over graft allegation

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A recent letter to Karnataka Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar by Congress MLA Ashok Kumar Rai, accusing two engineers of Karnataka Rural Infrastructure Development Limited (KRIDL) of collecting extra charges from contractors stating that it has to be given to the Dakshina Kannada district in-charge Minister and the department Minister, has now taken a serious turn with the BJP urging the Chief Minister to sack these two Ministers.

Addressing a press conference in Bengaluru on Wednesday, Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly R. Ashoka urged the government to immediately dismiss the two Ministers who are allegedly taking bribes and also hand over the investigation to CBI.

In the letter, Mr. Rai has stated that an extra 7% of money is being collected from contractors by KRIDL. Ashok Kumar Rai, accusing two engineers of Karnataka Rural Infrastructure Development Limited (KRIDL) of collecting extra charges from contractors stating that it has to be given to the Dakshina Kannada district in-charge Minister and the department Minister, has now taken a serious turn with the BJP urging the Chief Minister to sack these two Ministers.

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'Commission raj'

Mr. Ashok alleged that after the Congress came to power, officials were acting in an unruly manner and the government was running a "commission raj."

"If ₹100 is released, only ₹30 worth of work is done. The remaining 70% goes as commission. When we made the allegation, they asked for documents. Now a Congress MLA himself has spoken about the commission," he said.

Siddaramaiah backs drive to nurture OBC leadership

Nagesh Prabhu
BENGALURU

Former Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah is backing the formation of Shudra Seva Sanghas in universities and colleges across the State to draw young people from Other Backward Classes (OBCs) into public life and help develop a new generation of political leaders. The initiative assumes significance against the backdrop of the growing visibility of Gen Z-led protests in the country.

Mr. Siddaramaiah recently inaugurated a Shudra Seva Sangha in Bengaluru, and attended the sangha meetings with the objective of involving students belonging to OBCs in social and political activities and nurturing leadership qualities among them.

Pichavaram mangroves valued at ₹2,485 crore: study

K.C. Deepika
BENGALURU

How valuable are mangroves? A recent study of the Pichavaram mangrove ecosystem in Tamil Nadu estimated its total economic value (TEV) at ₹2,485.30 crore, with a per-hectare value of ₹48.83 crore, reflecting the ecological, economic, and social benefits it provides.

The Pichavaram Mangrove Forest is deemed one of the most ecologically significant coastal wetland ecosystems in India and plays a vital role in supporting biodiversity conservation, fisheries productivity, coastal protection, climate regulation, blue carbon sequestration, and livelihood security for coastal communities.

"Mangrove ecosystems provide a wide range of provisioning, regulating, supporting, and cultural ecosystem services that contribute significantly to ecological sustainability and human well-being. Despite their importance, many ecosystem services remain undervalued in conventional development planning because several ecological benefits are non-market in nature and are not reflected in market transactions," says the study.

"Economic valuation and blue carbon assessment of ecosystem services (ESV) in the Pichavaram Mangrove Forest".

Green gold: Pichavaram Mangrove Forest is a highly significant coastal wetland ecosystem in India. FILE PHOTO

The study, by M. Balamuthramanian, Associate Professor, Centre for Ecological Economics and Natural Resources, Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bengaluru, was funded by the Deputy Conservator of Forests, Forest Genetics Division, Coimbatore. It was based on primary and secondary data; primary information was collected from 302 households across five mangrove-dependent villages: MGR Thittu, Kalaignar Nagar, Chinnavaikal, Patrudi, and Mudasalodai.

Carbon sink

"The blue carbon assessment highlights the critical role of the Pichavaram mangroves as a significant natural carbon sink and a valuable climate regulation asset," says the study.

The analysis further revealed that mangrove sediments constitute an even more substantial carbon reservoir. The average soil organic carbon stock of 251.14 tonnes of carbon per hectare was estimated to generate an economic value of ₹90.24 lakh per hectare, resulting in a total soil organic carbon value of ₹1,224.63 crore. When vegetation and soil carbon pools are combined, the total blue carbon asset value of the Pichavaram Mangrove Ecosystem is estimated at ₹1,612.40 crore.

"The study recommends the integration of ecosystem service valuation into coastal development planning and environmental decision-making, the recognition of mangroves as key nature-based solutions for climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction, and the development of blue carbon financing mechanisms, carbon credit programmes, and Payment for Ecosystem Services schemes.

Pichavaram mangroves valued at ₹2,485 crore: study

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Parameter	Details
Ecosystem	Pichavaram Mangrove Forest
State	Tamil Nadu
Total Economic Value	₹2,485.38 crore
Per-hectare value	₹1.83 crore
Major ecosystem services	Biodiversity, fisheries, coastal protection, climate regulation, blue carbon, livelihoods
Households covered in study	302
Villages covered	5 mangrove-dependent villages
Average soil organic carbon stock	251.14 tonnes carbon/hectare
Economic value of soil carbon	₹90.24 lakh/hectare
Total soil organic carbon value	₹1,224.63 crore
Vegetation + soil blue-carbon asset	₹1,612.40 crore

What is Total Economic Value (TEV)? ⭐⭐⭐

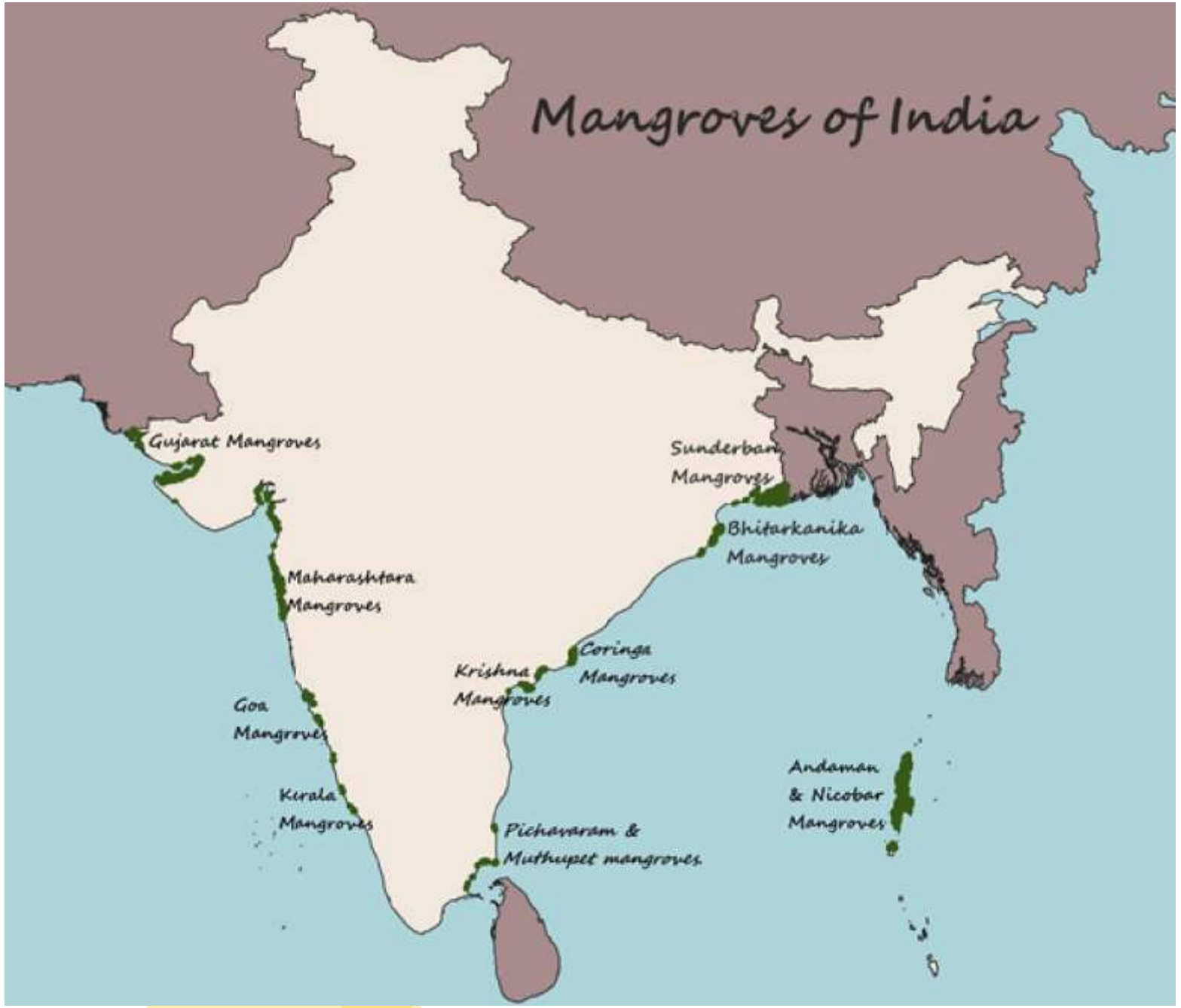
TEV attempts to measure the **complete economic contribution of an ecosystem**, including benefits that are not normally bought or sold in markets.

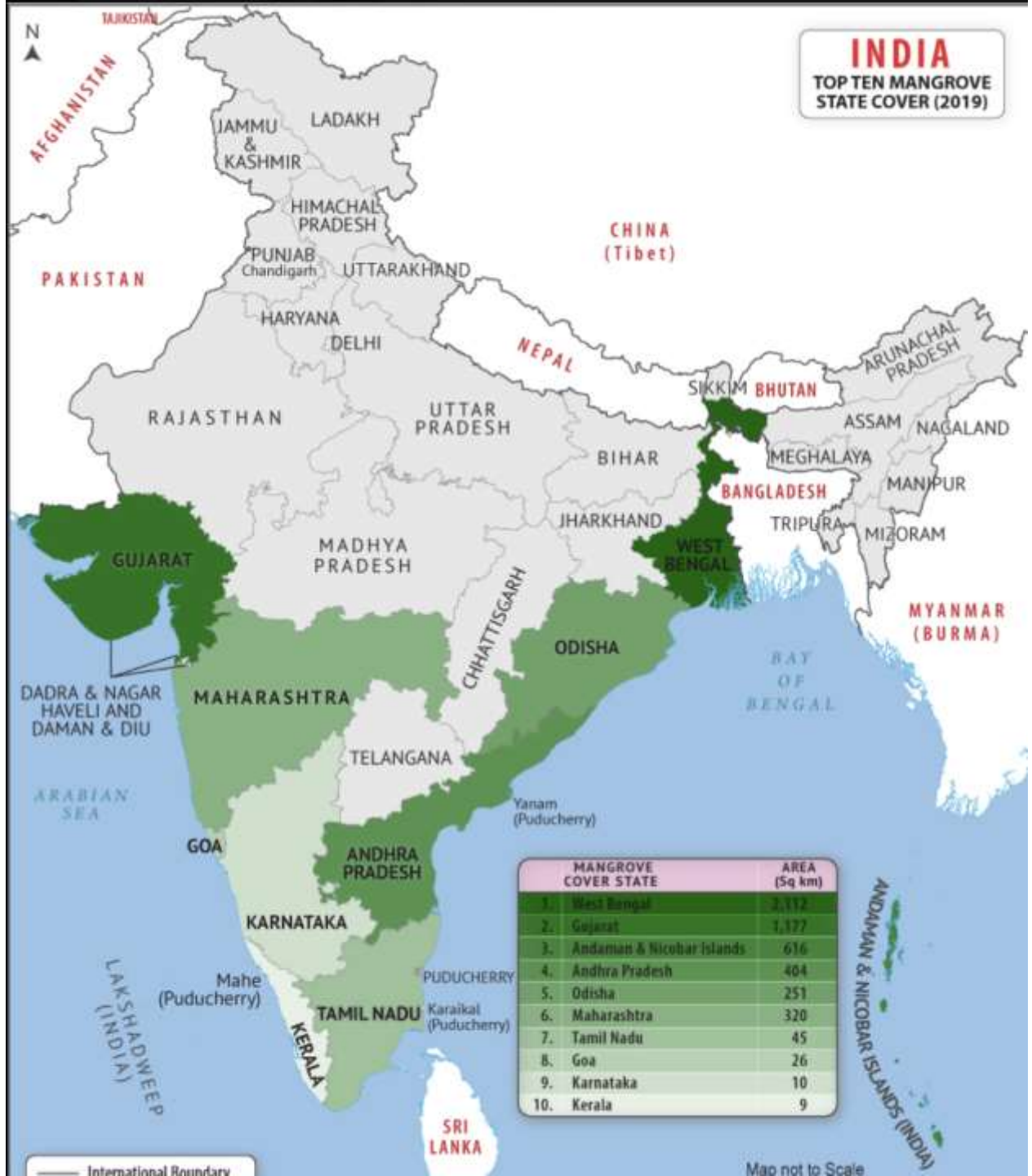
Ecosystem-service category	Mangrove example
Provisioning	Fish, fuelwood and other biological resources
Regulating	Carbon sequestration, flood/storm protection
Supporting	Nutrient cycling, nursery habitat
Cultural	Tourism, recreation, cultural significance

Exam concept

GDP may undervalue nature because many ecosystem services have no explicit market price.

This is why concepts such as **Natural Capital Accounting** and **Ecosystem Service Valuation** are important.


Mangroves of India
Gujarat Mangroves
Sunderban Mangroves
Bhitarkanika Mangroves
Maharashtara Mangroves
Coringa Mangroves
Krishna Mangroves
Goa Mangroves
Kerala Mangroves
Andaman & Nicobar Mangroves
Pichavaram & Muthupet mangroves



MANGROVE COVER STATE	AREA (Sq km)
1. West Bengal	2,112
2. Gujarat	1,177
3. Andaman & Nicobar Islands	616
4. Andhra Pradesh	404
5. Odisha	251
6. Maharashtra	320
7. Tamil Nadu	45
8. Goa	26
9. Karnataka	10
10. Kerala	9

MANGROVES IN INDIA

FACTS

- UNESCO observes July 26 as the International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystem.
- As per ISFR 2021, the mangrove cover in India is 4,992 sq km, which is 0.15% of the country's total geographical area.
- West Bengal>Gujarat>A&N Islands>Andhra Pradesh>Maharashtra, have the largest Mangrove cover in India (ISFR 2021).
- In India, mangroves are protected by the Environmental (Protection) Act 1986 and Coastal Zone Regulations.
- Sunderbans, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is the world's largest single patch of Mangrove Forests.
- Sundarbans is the first Mangrove forest in the world, which was brought under scientific management, as early as in 1892.

Carbon Sink	Carbon Source
Absorbs more carbon than it releases	Releases more than it absorbs
Mangroves	Fossil-fuel combustion
Forests	Deforestation
Healthy soils	Forest fires in many circumstances
Oceans	Industrial emissions

Mangrove	State/UT
Sundarbans	West Bengal
Bhitarkanika	Odisha
Pichavaram	Tamil Nadu
Godavari-Krishna mangroves	Andhra Pradesh
Gulf of Kachchh	Gujarat
Andaman & Nicobar mangroves	A&N Islands

- Consider the following statements:
  - Pichavaram Mangroves are located in Tamil Nadu.
  - Mangroves can function as both climate-change mitigation and adaptation tools.
  - Blue carbon is associated only with carbon stored in open-ocean waters.
  - Mangrove sediments can constitute an important carbon reservoir.
- Which are correct?
- **A. 1 and 2 only**

B. 1, 2 and 4 only
C. 2, 3 and 4 only
D. All four

CBI should probe 'cash for transfer scam' in Punjab: BJP

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Gaurav Bhatia

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Wednesday demanded the resignation of Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into the "cash for transfer" charges in the State.

There were serious allegations of institutional corruption in Punjab, BJP spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia said. Citing the purported findings of a probe by the Enforcement Directorate (ED), he alleged that money was being taken for the transfers and postings of senior bureaucrats and police officers.

Confidential government documents had reached middlemen, but despite seven letters from the ED, no FIR had been registered, the BJP leader said. He demanded the immediate resignation of Mr. Mann and a fair investigation by the CBI.

Claiming that Aam Aadmi Party chief Arvind Kejriwal and Mr. Mann "have today become symbols of corruption", Mr. Bhatia alleged that senior Punjab officials were involved in the "scam". "Their transfers and postings are carried out according to a rate card... This rate card fixes the price for who will get which charge and in which department they will be posted," he said.

The facts presented by the ED before the Punjab and Haryana High Court in its affidavit revealed that confidential documents, draft lists of postings and transfers, and draft lists of government policies to be implemented in the future were found on WhatsApp on the mobile phones of alleged middlemen and touts, Mr. Bhatia said.

"The concerning aspect is that... the ED told the Punjab Police that this was a cognisable offence and that an FIR should be registered. However, despite seven letters being written to the Punjab Police, no FIR was registered," he said.

Air Force veteran appointed first Ram Temple Trust CEO

Air Vice-Marshal Jitendra Mishra (retd) served in IAF for 31 years; Mahesh Bhagchandka, Madan Mohan Pandey, Nirmala Yadav named trustees; move comes amid allegation of donation theft

Ishita Mishra
NEW DELHI

Air Vice-Marshal Jitendra Mishra (retd) was awarded the Sarvottam Yudh Seva Medal and was also a part of Operation Sindoor. PTI

The Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust on Wednesday appointed Air Vice-Marshal Jitendra Mishra (retd) as its first chief executive officer.

The appointment came at a time when the the Trust is strengthening its administrative structure amid allegations of theft of donations at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya.

The appointment was announced after a meeting of the Trustees at Mangi Das Chawani in Ayodhya, where the trustees also filled three vacant positions on the Board.

The vacancies arose following the resignations of senior Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) leader and general secretary Champat Rai, and trustee Anil Mishra. They quit in July after the embezzlement allegations surfaced.

The third vacancy arose after the death of trustee Vimlendra Pratap Mishra, a member of Ayodhya's erstwhile royal family.

According to a communique issued by the Trust, Air Vice-Marshal Mishra was appointed following the recommendations of a committee constituted to select the CEO.

The process involved scrutinising about 8,888 applications, and interviewing hundreds of candidates over a period of nearly two months.

Air Vice-Marshal Mishra served in the Indian Air Force for 31 years, holding positions across different departments and gaining extensive leadership experience, the Trust said.

It added that the new CEO was also awarded the Sarvottam Yudh Seva Medal, one of the highest military decorations for distinguished service in the wartime. He was also part of Operation Sindoor.

'Unaware of selection'

He had not been aware of his selection prior to the announcement made to the media on Wednesday, Air Vice-Marshal Mishra told *The Hindu*.

"I also got to know about my selection through television. I am elated," he said.

The trustees also appointed three new members — Mahesh Bhagchandka, Madan Mohan Pandey, and Nirmala Yadav — to fill the vacant positions. Mr. Bhagchandka is associated with Ashok Singhal Foundation, while Mr. Pandey is an advocate.

Ms. Yadav will be the first woman to hold a trusteeship in the Trust.

Swami Govind Dev Giri will continue as the Trust's general secretary, while Mr. Bhagchandka will take charge as treasurer. The Trust's annual accounts for 2025-26 have also been approved.

Financial details

The Trust recorded a total income of about ₹237 crore, and expenditure of about ₹89 crore during the financial year. It also incurred about ₹428 crore in capital expenditure on construction and related works. As of March 31, the Trust had total funds of about ₹1,882 crore.

The VHP hailed the appointment of the CEO. VHP president Alok Kumar described Air Vice-Marshal Mishra as a senior and respected personality, adding that his extensive experience would help the Trust function more effectively and transparently.

Cong. cites Garg's analysis to question GDP growth figures

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Wednesday stepped up its attack on the Union government over the latest GDP figures, citing reported remarks by former Finance Secretary Subhash Chandra Garg to argue that the Centre was using statistical revisions to present an inflated picture of economic growth.

Congress general secretary (communications) Jairam Ramesh shared a video clip of Mr. Garg, who said that revisions to the previous year's GDP had affected comparisons with the current year's figures.

According to Mr. Garg, without the revision, growth at current prices in the April-June quarter would have been around 2.6%, instead of the higher figure being projected.

Mr. Ramesh said the government's claims of robust economic growth, amplified through what he described as "statistical "jugglery", were at odds with conditions on the ground.

"Former Finance Secretary Subhash Garg has now burst the bubble on this claim. His assessment is that the real GDP growth is around 2.6%, not 7.8%," Mr. Ramesh said in a post on social media platform X. "The Modi government must understand: PR can polish the picture of GDP, but not the economy itself," he said.

Actual state

The Congress leader said the government needed to acknowledge the actual state of the economy and undertake reforms to generate employment, strengthen MSMEs and private investment, raise demand and incomes, reduce inequality and ensure fair competition instead of promoting "crony capitalists". Mr. Ramesh said it was significant that questions were being raised over the GDP figures by a former Finance Secretary who had served in the Modi government.

Congress media and publicity department chairman Pawan Khera said Mr. Garg's assessment appeared closer to the "lived reality" of ordinary Indians, marked by rising prices, weakening purchasing power, shrinking disposable incomes and savings, stagnant employment opportunities and increasing household debt.

Provide security to rural communities before a crisis strikes, says Cong. chief

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Big honour: Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge with Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy in New Delhi on Wednesday. PTI

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Wednesday said rural communities should not be remembered only during droughts, floods, crop failures or elections, and called for a development model that provides them security before a crisis strikes.

He was speaking at an event organised by the Dr. Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy Foundation and the Dr. KVP Foundation, where the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) was conferred the Dr. Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy Award, 2026.

Mr. Kharge said governments must ensure that farmers have fair markets, rural families have decent livelihoods, and women have economic independence, while tribal communities and villages need access to technology, opportunities and basic infrastructure. "The government has an important role in creating this security, so that the communities become partners in India's development," he said.

The Congress president also took a swipe at the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. Without naming anyone, he said he had heard an RSS leader claim that India had witnessed many reforms. Mr. Kharge said it was the Congress that had carried out the reforms being referred to.

Linking the award to the legacies of Rajasekhara Reddy and agricultural scientist M.S. Swaminathan, Mr. Kharge said both believed that development must ultimately serve the dignity of ordinary people.

Rajasekhara Reddy, he said, had worked for the poor and marginalised, while Swaminathan had sought to combine scientific advancement with social equity and environmental sustainability.

Paying tribute to Swaminathan, Mr. Kharge recalled his contribution to the Green Revolution and recalled how the late scientist had described Indira Gandhi as the "most successful warrior against hunger".

In a video message, Soumya Swaminathan, chair of the MSSRF and daughter of M.S. Swaminathan thanked the organisers for conferring the award on the foundation.

Rahul asks Congress office-bearers in Maharashtra to stand by party ideology

Vinaya Deshpande Pandit
MUMBAI

Warm welcome: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi being welcomed on his arrival at the Nashik Airport in Maharashtra. PTI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday sought a detailed assessment of key political issues in Maharashtra, including the deletion of names from the electoral rolls, Maratha and OBC reservation issues and tribal protests.

He is in Nashik for the party's *Sanghatan Srijan Abhiyan*. This was his second visit to the State in a fortnight, coming days after his *'Chhatrapati ki Disha'* address in Pune. Mr. Gandhi spent the day in Nashik at the concluding session of a 10-day residential training camp for newly appointed Congress district presidents.

"He came in the morning and first held a closed-door meeting with the top State leaders. There were around 20 of us. He asked us about key issues in the State, including the deletion of names in the SIR, the ongoing Maratha agitation, the OBC reservation issue, the tribal protests, the opposition to the multi-crore Shaktipeeth super expressway and alleged corruption in the Kumbh Mela, which is slated to be held in Nashik," a senior leader told *The Hindu* after the meeting.

Later, Mr. Gandhi interacted with the families of the district Congress committee presidents before addressing the concluding session of the training camp. He urged the district presidents to expand the organisation and take the Congress's ideology to people across the State.

He also gave the district presidents a demonstration and introduction to the martial art of Jiu-Jitsu. He then interacted with protesting tribal students from Nashik, Pune, Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar and Nagpur. "He heard their concerns and assured them that the Congress party would stand with them in their struggle," a party leader said.

When asked about the highlights of the visit, Congress leader Naseem Khan said Mr. Gandhi urged the district presidents to fight strongly for the party's ideals and to fight for justice and fairness for the people.

Another leader said the visit signified the growing focus on Maharashtra for Mr. Gandhi.

Kapil Sibal seeks SC intervention over 'bulk SIR deletions'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha member Kapil Sibal on Wednesday urged the Supreme Court to stop the "bulk deletions" taking place under the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

Mr. Sibal alleged that the ongoing SIR was aimed at helping the BJP win elections. In a post on X, he termed it "politics of exclusion", and alleged that "BJP agents" were looking to "target Muslims, seek bulk deletions". He added, "Supreme Court needs to stop this!"

Addressing a press conference here, Mr. Sibal cited a report from Jharkhand, alleging that the form to request the deletion of names from the voters' list was being filed in bulk by BJP workers.

"You can file bulk forms — you can take 45 of them, or 100 of them, or even 400 of them. You can file the forms, and you can say that his name should be deleted. You don't have to give any reason for it, and if it is found to be false, it doesn't matter," he said.

Earlier, *The Hindu* had reported that cases of Form 7 being submitted in bulk had surfaced in States like Rajasthan, Gujarat and Assam.

'Serious issue'

Mr. Sibal alleged that many people whose names were sought to be deleted were Muslims and had been living in their area for years.

"Therefore, this is a very serious issue, and if courts don't take care of this issue, if courts just believe that the SIR exercise is by a neutral EC, then I think we are in very trouble. This democracy will be in deep trouble," the Rajya Sabha member said.

Jharkhand BJP demands investigation by the CBI into 'scam' in examinations

Amit Bhelari
PATNA

Jharkhand Leader of Opposition Babulal Marandi

A Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) delegation on Wednesday met Chief Secretary Avinash Kumar at Project Bhavan in Ranchi and submitted a memorandum demanding a CBI inquiry into alleged irregularities in several examinations conducted by the Jharkhand Public Service Commission (JPSC) and Jharkhand Staff Selection Commission (JSSC).

The delegation, led by Jharkhand BJP president Aditya Sahu and Leader of the Opposition Babulal Marandi, also demanded the immediate withdrawal of cases filed against students across the State in connection with protests over the alleged irregularities.

The Opposition party issued a 48-hour ultimatum to the State government, warning it would launch protests alongside students if the cases are not withdrawn.

'Denied justice'

Addressing the media after the meeting, Mr. Sahu said the BJP would "hit the streets" in support of students if justice is not delivered within 48 hours. He told the Chief Secretary that students worked hard for years to prepare for these examinations, but were denied justice because of alleged irregularities within the JPSC and the JSSC, where jobs were "sold" and question papers leaked.

Police action

Mr. Sahu also alleged that the instructions of Chief Minister Hemant Soren, police resorted to baton charges when students were protesting peacefully and constitutionally against the exam "irregularities".

He further alleged that Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) workers acted as "goons" and attacked the students, while FIRs were registered against more than 1,000 students in an attempt to suppress their voices.

"JMM workers engaged in hooliganism against students in the districts of Ranchi, Giridih, Chatra, Hazaribagh, and Ramgarh, brandishing lathis and party flags. In Ramgarh, a JMM leader threatened to thrash students. Such terror is unprecedented," Mr. Sahu said. He said no case has been registered against the JMM leaders who allegedly attacked students.

Citing the Supreme Court's directive on withdrawal of cases against students involved in protests, the letter urged the CS to withdraw all cases registered against Jharkhand students during their "peaceful agitation".

The delegation also demanded the immediate arrest of members of the commissions and senior officials under whose supervision junior staff members were allegedly arrested on charges of irregularities. The delegations included BJP national secretary Pradeep Verma, former State president Deepak Prakash, State general secretary Amar Kumar Bauri, MP B.D. Ram, and MLA Naveen Jaiswal.

Former AIMIM leader joins Congress ahead of 2027 U.P. election

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Syed Asim Waqar

Syed Asim Waqar, former spokesperson of the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM), joined the Congress on Wednesday, alleging that the Asaduddin Owaisi-led party paid lip service to the objective of defeating the Bharatiya Janata Party while fighting the Opposition parties on the ground.

Mr. Waqar joined the Congress at the party headquarters here in the presence of All India Congress Committee (AICC) In-charge for Uttar Pradesh Rajendra Pal Gautam, State Congress president Ajay Rai and AICC Minority Department chairman Imran Pratapgarhi.

Explaining his decision, Mr. Waqar said his years in the AIMIM had convinced him that a party seeking to remove the BJP from power could not simultaneously weaken those fighting the ruling party. "If we keep fighting the Opposition and do not allow it to grow, then we are helping the BJP," Mr. Waqar said.

Mr. Rai said Mr. Waqar's induction would strengthen the party in Uttar Pradesh ahead of the 2027 Assembly election. A key AIMIM voice in Uttar Pradesh and considered close to Mr. Owaisi, Mr. Waqar's exit comes as the AIMIM seeks to expand its political footprint in the State.

Air Force veteran appointed first Ram Temple Trust CEO

Air Vice-Marshal Jitendra Mishra (retd) served in IAF for 31 years; Mahesh Bhagchandka, Madan Mohan Pandey, Nirmala Yadav named trustees; move comes amid allegation of donation theft

Ishita Mishra
NEW DELHI

The Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust on Wednesday appointed Air Vice-Marshal Jitendra Mishra (retd) as its first chief executive officer.

The appointment came at a time when the the Trust is strengthening its administrative structure amid allegations of theft of donations at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya.

The appointment was announced after a meeting of the Trust at the Maniram Das Chawani in Ayodhya, where the trustees also filled three vacant positions on the Board.

The vacancies arose following the resignations of senior Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) leader and general secretary Champat Rai, and trustee Anil Mishra. They quit in July after the embezzlement allegations surfaced.

The third vacancy arose after the death of trustee Vimlendra Pratap Mishra, a member of Ayodhya's erstwhile royal family.

Air Vice-Marshal Jitendra Mishra (retd) was awarded the Sarvottam Yudh Seva Medal and was also a part of Operation Sindoor. PTI

According to a commu-nique issued by the Trust, Air Vice-Marshal Mishra was appointed following the recommendations of a committee constituted to select the CEO.

The process involved scrutinising about 5,585 applications, and interviewing hundreds of candidates over a period of nearly two months.

Air Vice-Marshal Mishra served in the Indian Air Force for 31 years, holding positions across different departments and gaining extensive leadership experience, the Trust said.

It added that the new CEO was also awarded the Sarvottam Yudh Seva Medal, one of the highest military decorations for distinguished service in wartime. He was also part of Operation Sindoor.

'Unaware of selection'

He had not been aware of his selection prior to the announcement made to the media on Wednesday, Air Vice-Marshal Mishra told *The Hindu*.

"I also got to know about my selection through television. I am elated," he said.

The trustees also appointed three new members – Mahesh Bhagchandka, Madan Mohan Pandey, and Nirmala Yadav – to fill the vacant positions. Mr. Bhagchandka is associated with Ashok Singhla Foundation, while Mr. Pandey is an advocate.

Ms. Yadav will be the first woman to hold a trusteeship in the Trust.

Swami Govind Dev Giri will continue as the Trust's general secretary, while Mr. Bhagchandka will take charge as treasurer. The Trust's annual accounts for 2025-26 have also been approved.

Financial details

The Trust recorded a total income of about ₹237 crore, and expenditure of about ₹99 crore during the financial year. It also incurred about ₹425 crore in capital expenditure on construction and related works. As of March 31, the Trust had total funds of about ₹1,882 crore.

The VHP hailed the appointment of the CEO. VHP president Alok Kumar described Air Vice-Marshal Mishra as a senior and respected personality, adding that his extensive experience would help the Trust function more effectively and transparently.

Parameter	Details
Organisation	**Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust**
Location	**Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh**
New CEO	**Air Vice-Marshal Jitendra Mishra (Retd.)**
Significance	**First CEO of the Trust**
IAF service	**31 years**
Military decoration	**Sarvottam Yudh Seva Medal**
Article states he was part of	**Operation Sindoor**
Selection process	Around **5,585 applications** scrutinised; hundreds interviewed
Other new trustees	Mahesh Bhagchandka, Madan Mohan Pandey, Nirmala Yadav
Woman representation	**Nirmala Yadav — first woman trustee**
General Secretary	Swami Govind Dev Giri
Treasurer	Mahesh Bhagchandka

Financial parameter	Amount
Annual income	About ₹237 crore
Annual expenditure	About ₹99 crore
Capital expenditure incurred	About ₹425 crore
Total funds as of March 31	About ₹1,882 crore

- A large institution handling:
- **₹1,000+ crore funds + construction + donations + procurement + administration + visitors + public scrutiny**
- requires professional systems for:
- **Financial control + transparency + procurement + auditing + project management + risk management + institutional accountability**
- The selection process mentioned in the article—**5,585 applications and hundreds of interviews**—also indicates an attempt at structured professional recruitment.

Parameter	Fact
City	**Ayodhya**
State	Uttar Pradesh
River	**Sarayu**
Cultural association	Lord Rama
Ancient region	Kosala
Religious significance	Major Hindu pilgrimage centre

- Consider the following statements:
  - Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust was established following the Supreme Court's 2019 Ayodhya judgment.
  - Air Vice Marshal is equivalent to Rear Admiral in the Indian Navy.
  - Article 26 of the Constitution deals with freedom to manage religious affairs.
  - Ayodhya is situated on the banks of the Yamuna River.
- Which statements are correct?
- **A. 1 and 2 only**

B. 1, 2 and 3 only
C. 2, 3 and 4 only
D. All four

River-linking is not the solution

T. Ramakrishnan

The Union Minister for Home Affairs Amit Shah's speech at the Southern Zonal Council's meeting last month in Mamallapuram has provided a few takeaways on the contentious issue of water sharing. His emphasis on the need for an early resolution of water-related issues in the southern region appears well meaning but it is easier said than done. He had also talked about linking major rivers from the Brahmaputra to the Godavari and the Cauvery, an option that, according to Mr. Shah, can ensure that India has no water shortage for 100 years.

However, water issues are not that easy to solve. This is evident from the Centre's response to Tamil Nadu's demand for the constitution of a tribunal to adjudicate the Pennaiyar river water dispute. Aggrieved over the "violation" of the 1892 inter-State agreement by Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, in November 2019, requested the Centre to establish a tribunal. It had also moved the Supreme Court with the same demand. Since then, two negotiation committees have been formed and 11 meetings held. Eventually, the top court, this February, directed the Centre to form the tribunal within a month and, later, extended the deadline by six months.

Still, the adjudicatory body is yet to be put in place. Meanwhile, the Centre asked the court whether the Pennaiyar dispute could be referred to the Mahadayi Water Dispute Tribunal instead of constituting a new tribunal. This suggestion defies logic as there is nothing in common between the two disputes. Moreover, the Interstate River Water Disputes Act, 1956 does not permit it. This suggestion in the Pennaiyar case gives the impression that the Centre is not keen on expeditiously implementing a judicial verdict in an inter-State river dispute. To cite one more example, the Central government has not yet replied to Tamil Nadu's demand, in March this year, to constitute a tribunal on the Mekedatu dam project proposed by Karnataka.

A complex problem

Given this background, one need not delve much into the complications that would entail by the inter-linking of rivers. Proponents of river linking, including Tamil Nadu, have been saying that the idea is not to disturb the natural flow of any river but to divert a portion of the surplus water. Many experts are not convinced about this argument as they are worried that once inter-linking is allowed, regions that benefit may become vociferous in demanding water even in times of distress, eventually depriving original beneficiaries of their quota. This is apart from the concerns over the possible adverse consequences on ecology. In fact, Kerala has been stoutly opposing the Pamba-Achankovil-Vaippar link proposal, which, if implemented, the State says, will affect the Vembanad wetland system, where the Pamba and Achankovil rivers drain. However, the National Water Development Agency says that it has accounted for improving the flow of rivers in lean periods.

In the last 130-odd years, the country has seen only a handful of inter-basin transfer projects, most of which are in south India. The Mullaperiyar dam, the Parambikulam-Aliyar project, the Krishna Water Supply Project, and the Indira Gandhi Canal Project are regarded as successful examples of inter-basin transfer of river waters.

After the Bharatiya Janata Party's return to power in 2014, the Union government formed a Special Committee for interlinking of Rivers, which has held over two dozen meetings since then. Needless to say, there has not been much headway.

However, in 2024, Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for the ₹44,000 crore Ken-Betwa Link Project. This has now led to agitations by the tribal populations in Chhatarpur.

What the governments, both at the Centre and in States, and civil society should focus on is demand side management, instead of perpetually looking for supply side interventions. With land becoming scarcely available and resistance growing among people when it comes to land acquisition, the days of implementing mega irrigation projects are almost over. The priority has to be towards conserving what is available and using it judiciously. A massive programme of sensitising and incentivising farmers on the optimal use of water has to be launched. Indiscriminate extraction of groundwater, facilitated by schemes of free electricity for agriculture in many States, is paving the way for ecological disaster and has to be curbed immediately. Unless water conservation becomes the mantra of all the stakeholders and is practised genuinely, disputes will be the norm.

In the last 130-odd years, the country has seen only a handful of inter-basin transfer projects, most of which are in south India

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Mental health must anchor public health

Indu Bhushan
Founding CEO of India's National Health Authority and Ayushman Bharat

Anisha Padukone
CEO of The Live Love Laugh Foundation

India stands at a defining moment in its journey towards the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. Under the Healthcare for All pillar, the government has rightly prioritised strengthening Ayushman Bharat, expanding primary healthcare, reducing out-of-pocket expenditure, and promoting preventive care. Yet there is one element that cuts across all these ambitions and determines their success: mental health.

Mental health is not a niche concern. It influences educational attainment, workforce participation, social cohesion, and physical health outcomes. A healthier and more productive India cannot be built without placing mental well-being at the centre of public health.

Major implications

The scale of the challenge is substantial. Mental illness affects one in seven Indians, with nearly 200 million people living with a diagnosable mental health condition. The contribution of mental disorders to India's total disease burden has doubled over the past three decades. Yet the national treatment gap remains 84.5%, meaning that more than four out of five people who need care do not receive it. The reasons are well known. India has only 0.3 psychiatrists per 1,00,000 population, alongside significant shortages in clinical psychologists, psychiatric social workers, and psychiatric nurses. These shortages are the result of decades during which mental health received insufficient attention, both in India and globally.

Mental disorders significantly increase the risk of chronic diseases, while chronic diseases in turn increase the risk of mental illness. More than 60% of people attending primary care facilities have a diagnosable mental disorder. Rates of anxiety and depression are substantially higher among people living with diabetes, hypertension, tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDS. Ignoring mental health, therefore, undermines efforts to control non-communicable diseases and reduce healthcare expenditure.

The economic implications are equally compelling. A 2025 modelling study by researchers from PGIMER and NIMHANS estimated that integrating universal depression screening into India's primary healthcare system could generate net savings of ₹291 billion to ₹482 billion annually, equivalent to as much as 0.32% of GDP. Mental health is not a social welfare issue alone — it is also a human capital investment and an economic growth strategy.

The encouraging news is that India has already built many of the foundations required for transformation. More than 1.73 lakh sub-centres and primary health centres have been converted into Ayushman Bharat Arogya Mandirs, with mental healthcare included among the essential service packages. The District Mental Health Programme now covers more than 90% of districts. Tele-MANAS, launched in 2022, has expanded across all States and Union Territories.

Three main priorities

The task now is not to start from scratch. It is to build on this foundation at scale.

First, one must empower frontline health workers to become the backbone of community mental healthcare. India's one million ASHA workers represent the world's largest community health workforce. Evidence from Madhya Pradesh and other States demonstrates that, with appropriate training and supervision, ASHAs can successfully identify, support, and refer individuals with common mental disorders. Expanding this model through validated screening tools, digital learning platforms, and performance-linked incentives could expand access to care.

Second, India must invest more systematically in community-based care. Models such as Zimbabwe's Friendship Bench, Atmiyata in India, and programmes implemented by The Live Love Laugh Foundation demonstrate that trained community workers can bridge the gap between awareness and treatment, particularly in rural and underserved populations. These approaches improve access and reduce costs, and deserve wider adoption and funding. Third, the country must fully realise the promise of financial protection. Extending outpatient mental health benefits under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana and strengthening the implementation of insurance parity as per the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017, would make mental healthcare affordable for millions who currently go without care.

If India is to become a truly developed nation by 2047, mental health must move from the margins of public policy to its centre

Decoding Russia's reliance on Indian petroleum products

Ukraine's recent relentless attacks on Russia's oil refineries has led the country to rely on India for petroleum imports

DATA POINT

Nitika Francis

Recent Ukrainian attacks on Russia's oil refineries has resulted in the latter importing refined petroleum products from India in significant quantities for the first time, at least since the Russia-Ukraine war started in February 2022.

As per multiple media reports, including one by the *Press Trust of India*, Indian refiners sent about one million barrels over the last two months, alongside Turkey and Morocco. Russia's import of petroleum products from India has remained negligible in the past, accounting for less than one per cent of India's petroleum exports. The bulk of exports went to countries like the Netherlands, Australia and the UAE **(Chart 1)**.

Though the Indian government's export and import-related data for the last two months is yet to be released, reports have confirmed that the country's export of refined petroleum products to Russia has sharply increased in the last two months. This has tilted the huge imbalance that existed between the two countries in oil trade, albeit marginally. India continues to remain hugely dependent on Russia for crude.

One-fourth of India's petroleum imports since January 2022 were from Russia and this number remained high before U.S. President Donald Trump imposed additional tariffs on India in October 2025 for buying crude from Russia.

Though this resulted in India sharply cutting down its crude import from Russia, the imports returned in full swing soon after. In fact, after the U.S. and Israel launched a war with Iran in February this year, the former did a U-turn in its stance and tacitly encouraged Russian crude supplies into the market to negate the impact of Iran's blockade in the Strait of Hormuz.

Chart 2 shows how Russia accounted for nearly one-third (31.6%) of India's crude imports as of June 2026. India imported $31 million worth of crude from Russia in June 2026, which is roughly double that of its import from the country in January 2022, a month before Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Amid Ukraine's continued targeting of Russia's oil refining infrastructure, the Russian Federation's Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said in July that the country would begin importing oil products to help stabilise the domestic market.

Consistent attacks

According to the International Strategic Action Network for Security, there were at least 17 attacks on 16 different oil refineries in Russia. Eight attacks were targeted at oil depots and oil pumping stations in July **(Chart 3)**. Though reliable data on similar attacks in August are not available yet, they seem to have continued at the same rate, resulting in petrol and diesel shortages.

Data from the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) show that Russia's refinery crude throughput went from about 5.18 million barrels per day in Q12026 (January to March) in the beginning of the year, to about 3.88 million barrels per day in Q32026. The attacks also seem to have contributed to a surge in crude exports from Russia, as unplanned refinery outages diverted higher volumes of crude to the export market. India, which ranks fourth in oil-refining capacity in the world, has utilised Russia's sudden demand to export refined petroleum products, mainly from private refineries **(Chart 4)**. Considering the time it would take for Russia to bring its refining capacity back to its earlier capacity, the surge in exports could continue, which will help India in easing its pressure on foreign exchange in the coming months.

CHART 1: Russia's share in India's petroleum exports has traditionally been less than 1% (not visible in the chart)

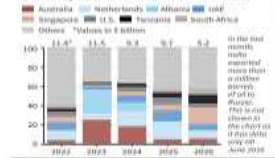


CHART 2: Russia accounted for more than one-fourth of India's total crude imports since January 2022

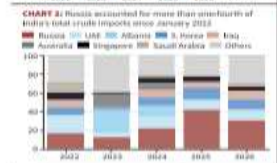


CHART 3: A total of 17 attacks were recorded against 16 different oil refineries in Russia in July

CHART 4: The seven countries with the highest oil refining capacity in the world. Values in million barrels per day

FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO SEPTEMBER 3, 1976

Tip-off leads to underground vault

Madras, September 2: Sixteen exquisite bronze idols and 17 puja utensils all valued at Rs. one crore have been recovered from an underground vault in the ancient Kalyanasundarar Temple in Sulur, Papanasam taluk in Thanjavur district. The temple is under the control of the Tiruvaduthurai Adheenam.

Officials of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department and State Directorate of Archaeology, led by Dr. R. Nagaswami, Director of Archaeology, acting on a hint thrown by the temple executive searched and found the vault. A representative of the Tiruvaduthurai Adheenam was present during the search. The Math's records indicate that these valuable images and jewels had been deposited in the safe vault in 1942.

These rare pieces of art were retrieved earlier this week after securing an order from the State Government to rummage the underground cell in the temple premises.

Apart from the discovery of the valuable pieces from the subterranean chamber, this probe has given a clue to the traditional method of safeguarding precious idols and ornaments of a temple and the care bestowed on preservation of art forms.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO SEPTEMBER 3, 1926

Slavery in Burma frontier

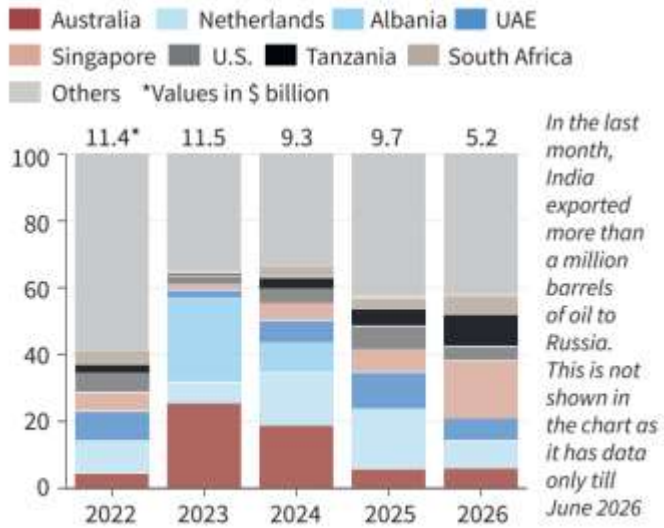
Rangoon, September 2: *The Rangoon Gazette* says that the successful emancipation of slaves in Hukawng valley last season will, it is said, be followed this cold season by an expedition to that part of unadministered territory between Mallkha and Nmaikha rivers, north of their junction to the Irrawaddy river and locally known as the triangle where the same system of slavery as existed in Hukawng valley still prevails. The triangle though not as extensive a territory as Hukawng valley, is more densely populated and the number of slaves to be liberated will be more numerous. It is expected that Mr. J.T.O. Barnard, Deputy Commissioner, Burma, Frontier Service, who was principally responsible for the arrangements for the emancipation of the slaves in the Hukawng valley will be placed on this duty and in charge of the expedition. *The Gazette's* statement is yet unconfirmed.

A refining relationship

The data were sourced from India's Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the International Strategic Action Network for Security, the Statistical Review of World Energy BP, and the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries.

With inputs from Gandla Sneha, who is interning with The Hindu'Data Team

CHART 1: Russia's share in India's petroleum exports has traditionally been less than 1% (not visible in the chart)



In the last month, India exported more than a million barrels of oil to Russia. This is not shown in the chart as it has data only till June 2026

CHART 3: A total of 17 attacks were recorded against 16 different oil refineries in Russia in July

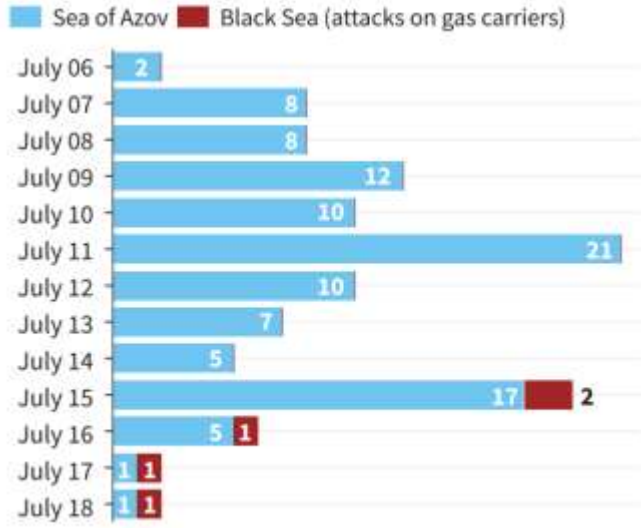
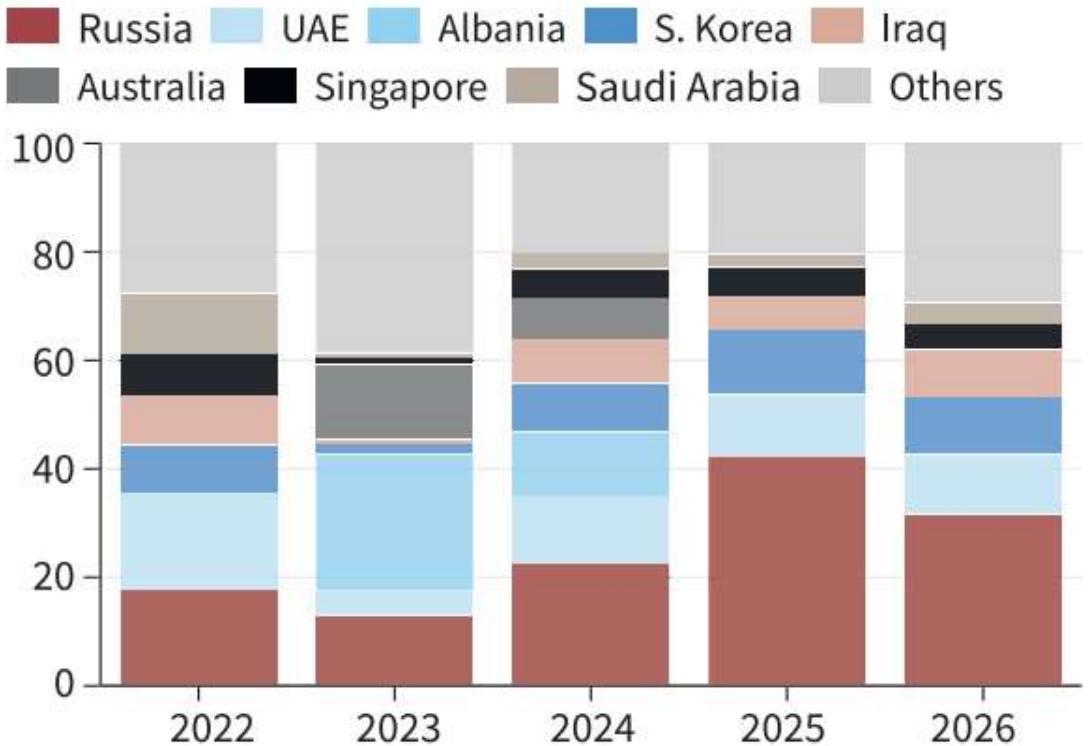


CHART 2: Russia accounted for more than one-fourth of India's total crude imports since January 2022



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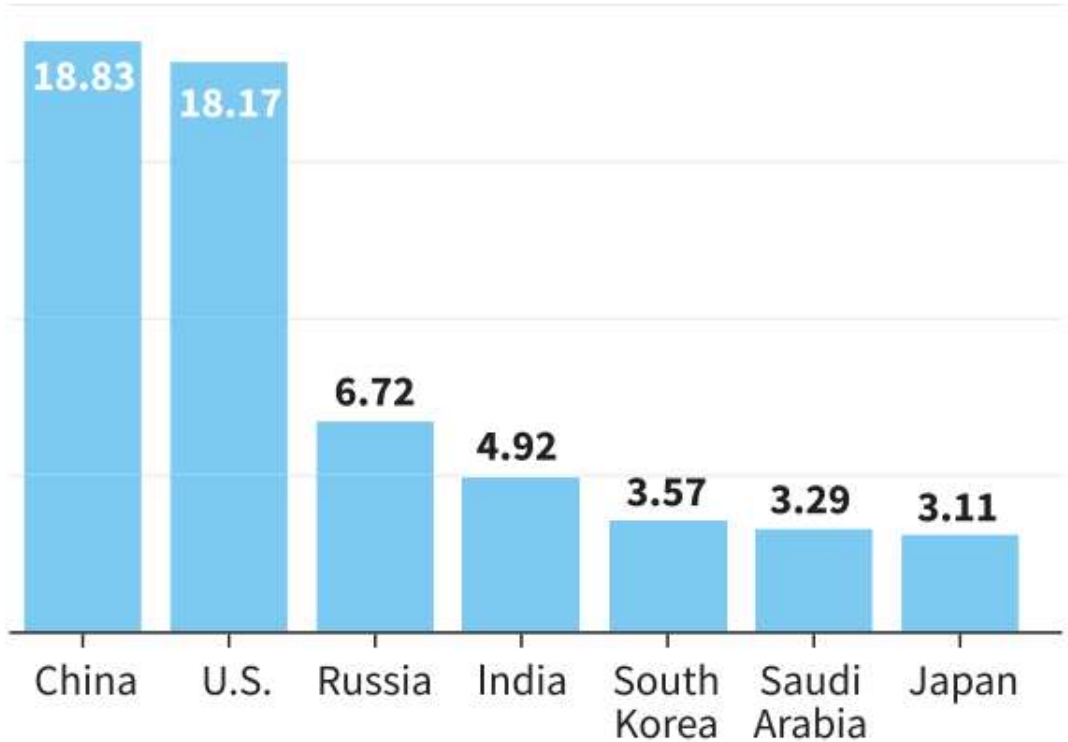


Parameter	Key fact
Immediate trigger	Ukrainian attacks on Russian refineries
India's exports to Russia	Around 1 million barrels of refined petroleum over roughly two months, according to reports cited
Russia's traditional share in India's petroleum-product exports	Less than 1%
Russia's share in India's crude imports, June 2026	31.6%
Value of Russian crude imported, June 2026	$531 million, as stated in the article
Russia's refinery crude throughput, Q1 2026	~5.18 million barrels/day
Russia's refinery throughput, Q3 2026	~3.88 million barrels/day
Attacks cited for July	17 attacks on 16 Russian refineries
India's global refining-capacity rank in article	4th
India's refining capacity shown	4.92 million barrels/day
Main Indian private refiners highlighted	Reliance Industries and Nayara Energy

Stage	What happens
1. Russia produces crude oil	Russia is a major global petroleum producer/exporter
↓	
2. India imports Russian crude	Russian crude became a major component of India's crude imports after 2022
↓	
3. Indian refineries process crude	Crude is converted into petrol, diesel, ATF and other products
↓	
4. Russian refining capacity gets disrupted	Ukrainian attacks affect refinery operations
↓	
5. Russia requires refined products	Domestic petrol/diesel availability comes under pressure
↓	
6. India exports refined petroleum to Russia	India uses its large refining capacity to meet some of this demand

Rank shown	Country	Refining capacity shown (million barrels/day)
1	China	18.83
2	United States	18.17
3	Russia	6.72
4	India IN	4.92
5	South Korea	3.57
6	Saudi Arabia	3.29
7	Japan	3.11

Refinery/complex	Location	Important point
Jamnagar	Gujarat	Reliance; among world's largest refining complexes
Vadinar	Gujarat	Nayara Energy
Panipat	Haryana	Indian Oil
Paradip	Odisha	Indian Oil
Kochi	Kerala	BPCL
Mumbai	Maharashtra	BPCL/HPCL facilities
Visakhapatnam	Andhra Pradesh	HPCL
Mathura	Uttar Pradesh	Indian Oil

Benefit	Explanation
Refining margins	Refineries earn by converting crude into higher-value products
Export earnings	Petroleum products contribute to merchandise exports
Capacity utilisation	Large refineries can operate at high utilisation
Strategic importance	India becomes part of international fuel supply chains
Value addition	Crude is processed domestically before product export

Water body	Important geographical fact
Black Sea	Between Eastern Europe and West Asia
Sea of Azov	Connected with Black Sea through Kerch Strait
Kerch Strait	Separates/links the Crimea–Taman region and connects the two seas
Bosporus	Connects Black Sea with Sea of Marmara
Dardanelles	Connects Sea of Marmara with Aegean/Mediterranean system

Question area	Remember
India's global refining position in article	**4th**
Capacity shown	**4.92 million barrels/day**
Russia's share of Indian crude imports in June 2026	**31.6%**
Major private refiner	Reliance Industries
Jamnagar refinery	Gujarat
Vadinar refinery	Gujarat
Russia	OPEC+ participant, **not OPEC member**
OPEC HQ	Vienna, Austria
Sea of Azov–Black Sea connection	Kerch Strait
India's SPRs	Visakhapatnam, Mangaluru, Padur

- Consider the following statements:
  - India can simultaneously be a net importer of crude oil and an exporter of refined petroleum products.
  - Russia is a founding member of OPEC.
  - The Sea of Azov is connected with the Black Sea through the Kerch Strait.
  - India's large refining capacity allows imported crude oil to be processed and subsequently exported as petroleum products.
- Which of the statements given above are correct?
- **A. 1 and 2 only**

B. 1, 3 and 4 only
C. 2, 3 and 4 only
D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

100%
MONEY BACK
STOCK
MARKET
COURSE
BATCH B2
NEW BATCH STARTS
14 SEPT
FILL THE GOOGLE FORM
FOR REGISTRATION

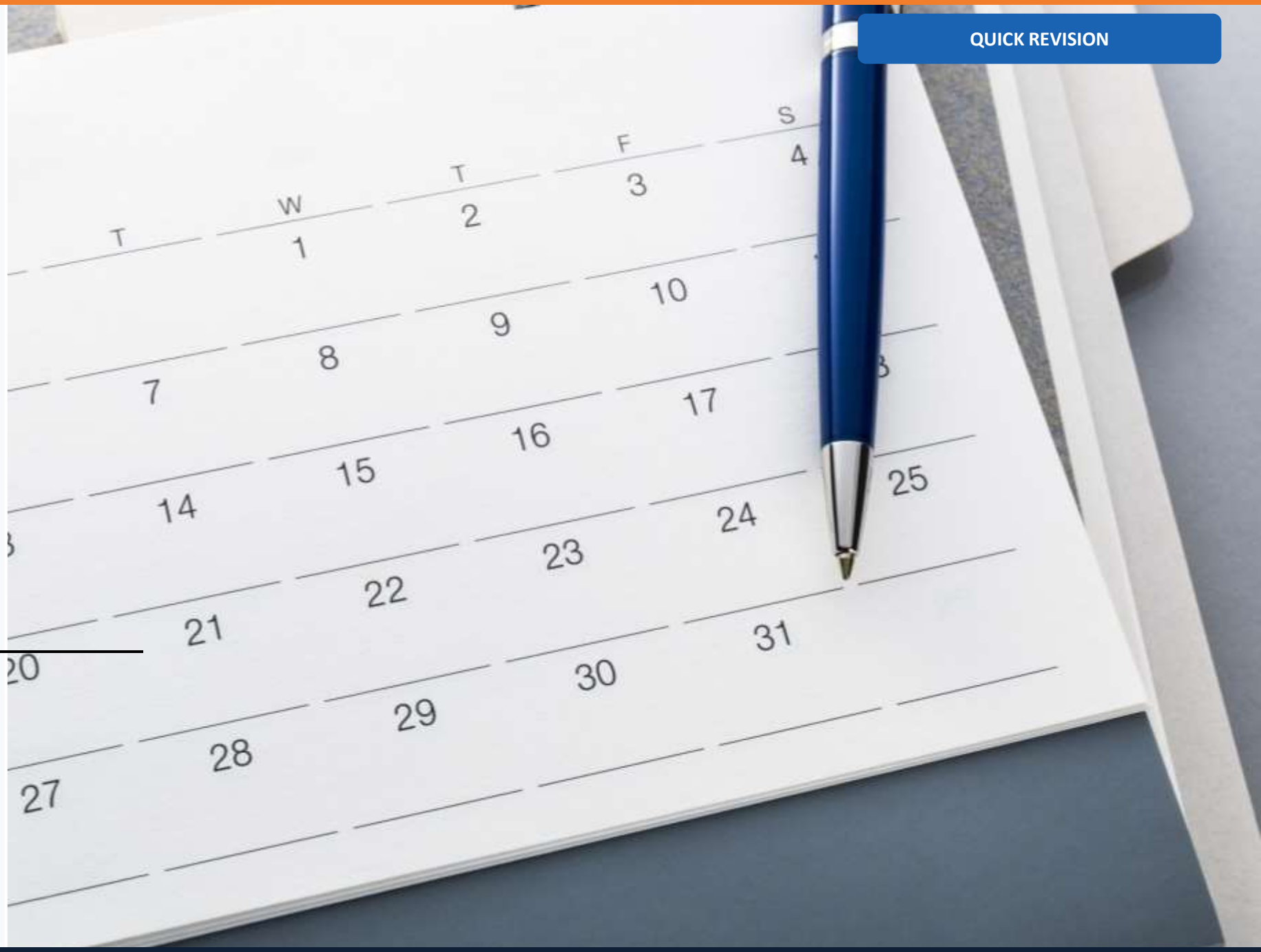
Word of the day

Excoriate:
express strong disapproval of

Synonyms: condemn, reprobate, decry

Usage: *The activists excoriated the violence against minority communities.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/excoriate

International Phonetic Alphabet: /ɪkˈskɔɹ.iˌeɪt/

Thank you