

Factly Weekly

Compilation

2025

**For UPSC CSE Prelims
Exam**

3rd Week

March 2025

INDEX

Heatwave.....	2
Equinox & Solstices	3
Phansad Wildlife Sanctuary	4
Sillahalla Power Project.....	5
PM-YUVA 3.0.....	6
Phansad Wildlife Sanctuary	7
Kanger Valley National Park.....	8
Anthurium Flowers	9
National Wildlife Health Policy	9
Sagareshwar Wildlife Sanctuary	11
World Happiness Report 2025	11
Exercise AIKEYME.....	12
Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park	14
Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park	15
Farakka Barrage	16
Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA)	17
Black Sea	17
BAANKNET Portal	18
BHIM 3.0	19
Exercise Bongosagar 2025	21
Exercise Varuna 2025.....	21
Balochistan	22
Third Battle of Panipat (1761).....	23

Heatwave

News: According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), there is a high likelihood of heatwave conditions in isolated areas of Odisha from March 13-17, Jharkhand from March 14-17, and Gangetic West Bengal from March 15-17. Heatwave



About Heatwave

- A heatwave is a period of unusually high temperatures over a region.
- The threshold for declaring a heatwave depends on the normal temperature in that area at a specific time of the year.
- Heatwaves mainly occur from March to June and sometimes extend into July.
- Regions affected:
 - Interior Odisha, Jharkhand, Gangetic West Bengal, South Rajasthan, North Gujarat.
 - Coastal regions also experience heat waves under specific conditions.
- Parameters measured:
 - Maximum temperature
 - Relative humidity
 - Wind speed & direction
 - Atmospheric pressure
- Climatology of maximum temperatures (1991-2020 data) is used to determine normal temperature trends. Heatwaves are then declared based on daily maximum temperature data.
- A heatwave is declared by the India Meteorological Department (IMD) when:
 - Plains: Maximum temperature reaches 40°C or more.
 - Hilly regions: Maximum temperature reaches 30°C or more.
 - Coastal areas: Temperature departure is 4.5°C or more from normal, and the actual maximum temperature is 37°C or more.

Heatwave vs. Severe Heatwave

- Based on departure from the normal temperature
 - Heatwave: When temperature departure is 4.5°C to 6.4°C from normal.
 - Severe heatwave: When departure is more than 6.4°C from normal.

- Based on actual maximum temperature:
 - Heatwave: Above 45°C.
 - Severe heatwave: Above 47°C.
- A heatwave is declared if the above conditions persist for at least two consecutive days in two or more stations of a meteorological sub-division.

Equinox & Solstices

News- March 20, 2025, marks the vernal or spring equinox in the Northern Hemisphere.

About Equinox



Source- National Weather Service

- Equinoxes are astronomical events occurring twice a year when the *Sun appears directly above the Equator at noon*. It results in nearly *equal day and night* durations across the globe.
- They take place in March and September and are the only times when both the North and South Poles receive sunlight simultaneously.
 - **Vernal or Spring Equinox**: Occurs between March 19 and 21, marking the beginning of spring in the Northern Hemisphere and autumn in the Southern Hemisphere.
 - **Autumnal Equinox**: Occurs between September 21 and 24, signaling autumn in the Northern Hemisphere and spring in the Southern Hemisphere.
- **Earth's position during an Equinox**– On equinox days, the *Earth's axial tilt aligns in such a way that both hemispheres receive an equal amount of sunlight*. On all other days, the tilt of the Earth results in uneven distribution of sunlight, affecting seasonal changes.

About Solstices

- Solstices occur when the Earth's axial tilt is at its maximum inclination toward or away from the Sun, leading to significant differences in daylight hours.
 - **Summer Solstice (Northern Hemisphere)**: It falls between June 20 and 22, marking the *longest day and shortest night of the year* as the Northern Hemisphere is tilted toward the Sun.
 - **Winter Solstice (Northern Hemisphere)**: It falls between December 20 and 23, marking the *shortest day and longest night of the year* as the Northern Hemisphere is tilted away from the sun.
- In the Southern Hemisphere, the solstices are reversed, meaning December experiences the summer solstice while June marks the winter solstice.

Phansad Wildlife Sanctuary

News: The first honey harvest at Maharashtra's Phansad Wildlife Sanctuary marks a significant milestone. It aimed at empowering the local tribal community by promoting sustainable beekeeping practices. **Phansad Wildlife Sanctuary.**



About Phansad Wildlife Sanctuary

- Phansad Wildlife Sanctuary is situated in the **Murud and Roha talukas of Raigad district, Maharashtra.**
- It was established **to protect a portion of the coastal woodland ecosystem of the Western Ghats**, encompassing 17,250 acres of forest, grasslands, and wetlands.
- Previously, this area was part of the hunting reserves of the **princely state of Murud-Janjira.**
- **Pockets of open grassland**, known as “**mals**” are scattered in the sanctuary.
- **Vegetation:** The hilltop forests of Phansad Wildlife Sanctuary are predominantly evergreen, featuring species such as **Anjan** (*Memecylon umbellatum*) and **Phansada** (*Garcinia talbotii*).
- **Flora:** The slopes are covered with dry deciduous forests, comprising **Ain, Kinjal, Teak, Hirda, Jamba, Mango**, and various species of **Ficus**.
- The sanctuary is home to a rich diversity of plant life, with a total of 710 species, including 179 tree species, 66 shrubs, and 141 herbs.
- **Fauna:** Phansad Wildlife Sanctuary is home to a rich variety of wildlife.
- The leopard is the major carnivore found in the sanctuary. Other animals include hyena, jungle cat, palm civet, sambar, barking deer, bonnet macaque, wild boar, and the Malabar giant squirrel.
- The sanctuary also hosts **148 species of birds**, including the Pied Hornbill, Three-toed Kingfisher, Malkoha, and Pitta. There are 90 species of butterflies, such as the Common Map, Black Prince, Nawab, and Blue Mormon.
- Additionally, several species of poisonous and non-poisonous snakes are found here.

Sillahalla Power Project

News– The Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) recently canceled the public hearing for the Silahalla Power Project in the Nilgiris due to strong public opposition and environmental concerns. Sillahalla Power Project.



About Sillahalla Power Project

- Type: Pumped storage hydroelectric project by Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation Limited (TANGEDCO).
- Location: Kundah Taluk, Nilgiris district, Tamil Nadu.
- Objective: To generate 1,000 MW electricity to meet peak power demand.
- Associated Rivers: Silahalla stream (tributary of the Kundah River), which ultimately feeds into the Bhavani River (a tributary of the Cauvery River).

Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve – Key Facts

- Geographical Location:
 - Situated in: The Nilgiri Hills of the Western Ghats.
 - Spread across: Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka.
- Major Protected Areas within the reserve:
 - Tamil Nadu: Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary, Mukurthi National Park.
 - Kerala: Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary, Silent Valley National Park.
 - Karnataka: Bandipur National Park, Nagarhole National Park.
- Vegetation– *Tropical evergreen forests, montane sholas, grasslands, moist deciduous forests, and thorn forests.*
- Flora– It is home to 132 endemic plant species, including rare species like Adenoon, Calacanthus, and Frerea.

- Fauna: It hosts the largest population of *Nilgiri Tahr* and *Lion-tailed macaque*, along with elephants, tigers, gaurs, sambars, and chitals.
- Significance– It is the first *UNESCO-designated Biosphere Reserve in India (1986)* under the Man and Biosphere Programme.

PM-YUVA 3.0

News: The Ministry of Education's Department of Higher Education has introduced PM-YUVA 3.0, the Prime Minister's Scheme for Mentoring Young Authors. PM-YUVA 3.0



About PM-YUVA 3.0

- Launched by: Ministry of Education, Department of Higher Education to nurture young literary talent in India.
- Aim: To train budding authors under the age of 30 to promote a strong reading, writing, and book culture across the country.
- PM-YUVA 3.0 aims to highlight the perspectives of young writers on the following themes:
 - Contribution of Indian Diaspora in Nation Building;
 - Indian Knowledge System; and
 - Makers of Modern India (1950-2025)

PM-YUVA 3.0 Features

- Contestants must submit a 10,000-word book proposal, including a 2,000-3,000-word synopsis, chapter plan, 7,000-8,000 words of sample chapters, bibliography, and references.
- 50 authors will be selected by a committee constituted by the National Book Trust (NBT).
- Applicants from PM-YUVA 1.0 and 2.0 are ineligible for PM-YUVA 3.0.
- Selected young authors will interact with renowned writers, participate in literary festivals, and contribute to literature reflecting India's heritage and progress.

- The National Book Trust (NBT), India, will publish the selected books and translate them into other Indian languages, promoting 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat'.
- Authors will receive a scholarship of ₹50,000 per month for six months (₹3 lakh in total) under the Mentorship Scheme.
- A 10% royalty will be provided on successful publication.
- Authors will be given a platform to promote their books and encourage a reading and writing culture nationwide.

Phansad Wildlife Sanctuary

News: The first honey harvest at Maharashtra's Phansad Wildlife Sanctuary marks a significant milestone. It aimed at empowering the local tribal community by promoting sustainable beekeeping practices. Phansad Wildlife Sanctuary.



About Phansad Wildlife Sanctuary

- Phansad Wildlife Sanctuary is situated in the Murud and Roha talukas of Raigad district, Maharashtra.
- It was established to protect a portion of the coastal woodland ecosystem of the Western Ghats, encompassing 17,250 acres of forest, grasslands, and wetlands.
- Previously, this area was part of the hunting reserves of the princely state of Murud-Janjira.
- Pockets of open grassland, known as "mals" are scattered in the sanctuary.
- Vegetation: The hilltop forests of Phansad Wildlife Sanctuary are predominantly evergreen, featuring species such as Anjan (*Memecylon umbellatum*) and Phansada (*Garcinia talbotii*).
- Flora: The slopes are covered with dry deciduous forests, comprising Ain, Kinjal, Teak, Hirda, Jamba, Mango, and various species of Ficus.
- The sanctuary is home to a rich diversity of plant life, with a total of 710 species, including 179 tree species, 66 shrubs, and 141 herbs.
- Fauna: Phansad Wildlife Sanctuary is home to a rich variety of wildlife.
- The leopard is the major carnivore found in the sanctuary. Other animals include hyena, jungle cat, palm civet, sambar, barking deer, bonnet macaque, wild boar, and the Malabar giant squirrel.

- The sanctuary also hosts 148 species of birds, including the Pied Hornbill, Three-toed Kingfisher, Malkoha, and Pitta. There are 90 species of butterflies, such as the Common Map, Black Prince, Nawab, and Blue Mormon.
- Additionally, several species of poisonous and non-poisonous snakes are found here.

Kanger Valley National Park

News– Kanger Valley National Park has been included in the tentative list of UNESCO world heritage sites under the 'Natural' category. **Kanger Valley National Park**



About Kanger Valley National Park

- **Location**– It is located in Jagdalpur within the *Bastar District of Chhattisgarh*.
- The National Park derives its name from the *Kanger River*, which flows centrally from the Northwest to the Southeast direction.
 - Kanger River is a tributary of the *Kolab River*, which ultimately joins the *Godavari River*.
- **Topography**– It features *low flatlands, gentle slopes, steep inclines, plateaus, deep gorges, valleys, and winding stream courses*.
- *Tirathgarh Falls*, which originates from the Kanger River, presents an enchanting view falling from a height of 150 feet.
- **Caves**– The national park has more than 15 limestone caves, including the famous *Kotumsar, Kailash, and Dandak caves*.
- **Flora**– Mixed *moist deciduous forests*, with a predominance of *Sal, teak, and bamboo* trees
- **Fauna**:
 - Panther, Wildcat, Cheetal (Spotted Deer), Sambhar, Barking Deer, Wild Pig, Jackal, Langur, Rhesus Macaque, Sloth Bear, Python, Hyena, Rabbit, Crocodile and Civet.
 - Rare animals live in this park — *otter, mouse deer, giant squirrel* and *Lethis softshell* turtle.
 - State Bird of Chhattisgarh- *Bastar Hill Myna*, also found.

Anthurium Flowers

News– India successfully exported Anthurium flowers from Mizoram to Singapore for the first time.



Source- Business Insider

About Anthurium

- It is a *tropical flowering plant* valued for its ornamental appeal and air-purifying properties.
- Grown mostly indoors, it *helps remove toxins like formaldehyde, ammonia, toluene, xylene, and allergens* from the air.
- It is included in *NASA's list of air-purifying plants* due to its ability to improve indoor air quality.
- Geographical distribution:
 - Native Region: Americas – From northern Mexico to northern Argentina and parts of the Caribbean.
 - In India: Widely cultivated in Mizoram and other North-Eastern states.
- Economic & Cultural significance
 - It is a significant contributor to India's floriculture exports: *USD 86.62 million (FY 2023–24)*.
 - '*Anthurium Festival*' is an annual cultural and tourism event celebrated in Mizoram. It showcases the beauty and commercial potential of Anthurium flowers grown in the region.

'Floriculture hubs in India:- Tamil Nadu (21%), Karnataka (16%), Madhya Pradesh (14%), West Bengal (12%).

Major Importers from India: USA, Netherlands, UAE, UK, Canada.

National Wildlife Health Policy

News– The Government of India is drafting a National Wildlife Health Policy (NWHP) to strengthen wildlife disease surveillance, research, and diagnostics. **National Wildlife Health Policy.**



About National Wildlife Health Policy

- The *Central Zoo Authority (CZA)* launched the National Wildlife Health Policy (NWHP) to improve wildlife health management and address zoonotic diseases.
- This initiative is an integral part of the *National Wildlife Action Plan (2017-31)* and follows the *One Health approach*, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of human, animal, and environmental health.

Key Institutions & Initiatives under NWHP

National Referral Centre for Wildlife (NRC-W)

- Recently inaugurated in *Junagadh, Gujarat*, NRC-W serves as a *central hub for wildlife health management*.
- It is *India's first dedicated wildlife disease diagnostic and research centre*.
- The centre investigates wildlife mortalities, disease outbreaks, and provides treatment solutions.

National Wildlife Health Information System

- A proposed initiative under NWHP to streamline disease reporting and surveillance across different regions.
- It will collaborate with the *National Animal Disease Referral Expert System* and the *National Animal Disease Reporting System* to forecast and mitigate potential disease outbreaks.

Central Zoo Authority (CZA)

- It is a *statutory body* established under the *Wildlife Protection Act, 1972*.
- It was formed in 1992 under the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEF&CC).
- It works to enhance wildlife conservation efforts and maintain the health of animals in zoological parks.

Alignment with India's Wildlife Conservation Framework

National Wildlife Action Plan (2017-31)

- It comprises 103 conservation actions and 250 projects.
- It *introduces standard protocols for disease surveillance in tiger reserves and protected areas*.

Wildlife Protection Act, 1972

- It provides a legal framework for monitoring and controlling wildlife diseases to safeguard biodiversity.

Sagareshwar Wildlife Sanctuary

News- According to a recent study, Sagareshwar Wildlife Sanctuary has a high deer population, with 536 sambars and 295 cheetals (spotted deer), making it one of the most densely populated man-made wildlife sanctuaries. **Sagareshwar Wildlife Sanctuary.**



About Sagareshwar Wildlife Sanctuary

- **Location-** It is located in the *Sangli district of Maharashtra.*
- It holds the distinction of being *India's first man-made wildlife sanctuary.*
- It is an artificially cultivated forest without a perennial water source, and most of its wildlife species have been artificially introduced.
- **Vegetation-** *Southern dry mixed deciduous and southern thorn forests.*
- **Flora-** *Tamarind, Neem, Eucalyptus, Acacia, Agave, and Khair trees.*
- **Fauna:** The Sanctuary is home to a variety of wildlife, including large herbivores such as *Sambar Deer, Blackbucks, Muntjac, Chital, Wild Boar,* and Peacocks. It also supports small carnivores like *hyenas, foxes,* and porcupines.

World Happiness Report 2025

News- The World Happiness Report 2025 was recently released, ranking countries based on the happiness and well-being of their citizens. **World Happiness Report 2025.**



About World Happiness Report 2025

- It is an *annual global assessment* that ranks countries based on life satisfaction and happiness levels.
- It considers both statistical data and public perception to evaluate overall well-being.
- **Published by**– *Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford* in partnership with Gallup, the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network and an independent editorial board.
- **Criteria for Ranking**– The ranking is based on six key indicators- *social support, GDP per capita, health life expectancy, freedom, generosity and perception of corruption.*

Key Findings of the Report

Global happiness trends

- Western and Nordic countries continue to dominate the rankings.
- *Costa Rica (6th)* and *Mexico (10th)* entered the top 10 for the first time.
- The U.S. (24th) and the U.K. (23rd) dropped in rankings due to rising loneliness and dissatisfaction.

Top & Bottom ranked nations

- **Top 3 countries:** Finland (1st), Denmark (2nd), Iceland (3rd)
- **Bottom 3 countries:** Afghanistan (147th), Sierra Leone, Lebanon.

India's ranking

- India ranked *118th out of 147 countries.*
- It ranked below Pakistan (109th) and Nepal (92nd).

Exercise AIKEYME

News– India is set to enhance its military and maritime cooperation with African nations through two key initiatives—Exercise AIKEYME (Africa-India Key Maritime Engagement) and IOS Sagar (Indian Ocean Ship Sagar). Exercise AIKEYME.



About Exercise AIKEYME

- Aikeyme marks *India's first-ever multilateral naval exercise with 10 African nations*. It focuses on strengthening maritime collaboration, bolstering maritime security, and tackling regional challenges.
- It is scheduled to take place off the coast of *Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania*, from April 13 to 18, 2025.
- Participating nations– Tanzania (co-host), Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, and South Africa.
- Aim– To *improve interoperability* between the Indian Navy and African navies, emphasizing joint efforts against piracy and drug trafficking.
- Key Activities: *Visit, Board, Search, and Seizure (VBSS) drills*, arms firing exercises, helicopter operations, search and rescue missions, and *table-top and command post exercises on anti-piracy operations* and information-sharing.

About IOS Sagar

- The IOS Sagar initiative is designed to deepen India's maritime collaboration with Indian Ocean Region (IOR) countries.
- It involves the deployment of the *Indian Navy's INS Sunayna*, crewed by Indian sailors alongside 44 personnel from nine African nations.
- The initiative will take place from April 5 to May 8, 2025.
- Key Participating Countries: Sri Lanka, Maldives, Mauritius, Comoros, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Seychelles, and South Africa.
- Key Activities:
 - The ship will make *port calls* at *Dar-es-Salaam, Nacala, Port Louis, Port Victoria, and Male*.
 - It will conduct joint surveillance of the *Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs)* of *Tanzania, Mozambique, Mauritius, and Seychelles*.
 - The Personnel will undergo *two-week training sessions in Kochi*, covering sea training, watchkeeping, and other professional naval activities.

Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park

News- Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park has become India's first zoo to preserve DNA samples of wildlife. Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park.



About Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park

- Location– It is situated in Darjeeling, in the Indian state of West Bengal.
- Features:
 - It is the *largest high altitude zoo in India*.
 - It specializes in breeding animals adapted to *alpine conditions*.
 - It has successful captive breeding programs for the *snow leopard, the endangered Himalayan wolf and the red panda*.
 - The zoo serves as the *central hub for Central Zoo Authority of India's red panda program*.
 - It is a member of the *World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA)*.

About the Project

- Project Name: Popularly known as India's first Frozen Zoo or DNA Cryogenic Conservation Project.
- Objective:
 - To preserve the genetic material of endangered Himalayan species for future research and conservation.
 - To support assisted reproduction methods and protect biodiversity from the risk of extinction.
- Implemented By: Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park, in collaboration with the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad.

Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park

News- Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park has become India's first zoo to preserve DNA samples of wildlife. Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park.



About Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park

- Location– It is situated in Darjeeling, in the Indian state of West Bengal.
- Features:
 - It is the *largest high altitude zoo in India*.
 - It specializes in breeding animals adapted to *alpine conditions*.
 - It has successful captive breeding programs for the *snow leopard, the endangered Himalayan wolf and the red panda*.
 - The zoo serves as the *central hub for Central Zoo Authority of India's red panda program*.
 - It is a member of the *World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA)*.

About the Project

- Project Name: Popularly known as India's first Frozen Zoo or DNA Cryogenic Conservation Project.
- Objective:
 - To preserve the genetic material of endangered Himalayan species for future research and conservation.
 - To support assisted reproduction methods and protect biodiversity from the risk of extinction.
- Implemented By: Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park, in collaboration with the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad.

Farakka Barrage

News- Farakka Barrage began operations in 1975, marking its 50th anniversary in 2025.



About Farakka Barrage

- Location: Built on the Ganga River in Murshidabad district, West Bengal, about 18 km from the Bangladesh border.
- Commissioning: The project construction commenced in 1961 and it became operational on April 21, 1975.
- Purpose: It diverts 40,000 cusecs of water into the Farakka Feeder Canal to remove silt from the Bhagirathi-Hooghly River, ensuring the navigability of Kolkata Port.
- Water sharing agreements: India and Bangladesh have signed multiple agreements over Ganga water sharing, including the 1977 Farakka Agreement and the 1996 Ganga Water Treaty.

Key facts about Hooghly River

- About- The Hooghly River, also called the Bhagirathi-Hoogly and Kati-Ganga River, is a major river in West Bengal.
- Length & Formation- A 260 km-long distributary of the Ganges, formed when the river splits in Murshidabad—one branch becomes the Padma (flowing into Bangladesh), while the other forms the Hooghly.
- Rivers drain into Hooghly- Ajay, Falgu, Jalangi and Churni to the north and Rupnarayan, Mayurakshi, Damodar and Haldi to the south.
- Important cities along its course- Jiaganj, Azimganj, Murshidabad, and Baharampur

Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA)

News- The 20th meeting of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA-20) is presently taking place in Rome. Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA).



About Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

- It is the only permanent *intergovernmental* body that addresses the components of biological diversity for food and agriculture.
- It operates under the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations.
- It was established in 1983 as the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.
- Aim- To reach international consensus on policies for the *sustainable use and conservation of genetic resources* for food and agriculture and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits derived from their use.
- Members- 179 countries (*Including India*) and the European Union.
- Meetings- The Commission's regular sessions are held *once every two years*.

Black Sea

News- US and Russian officials are in Saudi Arabia and holding talks on Ukraine War and Black Sea Ceasefire. The Black Sea ceasefire agreement aims to restore free navigation for shipping.



Source- nautilusshipping

About Black Sea

- **Location**– It is a marginal sea of the Atlantic Ocean lying between Europe and Asia.
- **Bordering region:**
 - West: The Balkan Peninsula in Southeastern Europe.
 - East: The Caucasus Mountains.
 - North: The East European Plains, including Russia and Ukraine.
 - South: Anatolia in Turkey, part of Western Asia.
- **Bordering countries:**
 - North: Russia and Ukraine.
 - South: Turkey.
 - West: Bulgaria.
 - East: Georgia.
 - Romania also has access to the Black Sea.

Other Geographical features:

- The Black Sea connects to the *Aegean Sea* (Mediterranean) through the *Bosporus Strait*, *Sea of Marmara*, and *Dardanelles Strait*.
- The *Kerch Strait* links it to the *Sea of Azov*.
- Russia has the longest coastline (2,300 km), followed by Turkey (1,329 km) and Ukraine (1,282 km).
- The Crimean Peninsula extends into the Black Sea from the north.
- Major rivers flowing into it include the *Danube*, *Dnieper*, *Southern Bug*, *Rioni*, and *Dniester*.

BAANKNET Portal

News- The government launched the upgraded BAANKNET portal to improve transparency, efficiency, and value realization in PSU banks' e-auctions of non-performing assets.



About BAANKNET portal

- It is an advanced *e-auction portal designed for Public Sector Banks (PSBs) and financial institutions to auction properties for recovering Non-Performing Asset (NPA) loans.*
- **Nodal Ministry:** Launched under the Ministry of Finance, Department of Financial Services.
- **Key Features:**
 - Automated KYC & Secure Payments: Integrated KYC verification and secure payment gateways for safe transactions.
 - Nationwide Property Listings: A centralized database for easy property search and sale across India.
 - Smart Auctions and Fair Pricing: Facilitates intelligent auction mechanisms, ensuring fair pricing and maximum value for all listed properties.
 - Bank Verified Titles: Ensures that all property titles are verified by banks, providing authenticity and reliability in the auction process.
 - Widespread Use: Adopted by all 12 PSBs and the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI).

BHIM 3.0

News- NPCI BHIM Services Ltd. (NBSL), a subsidiary of the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), introduced BHIM 3.0.



About BHIM (Bharat Interface for Money)

- It is *Unified Payments Interface(UPI)* based payment interface application that allows real time fund transfer.
- It was launched in 2016.
- Developer: National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)
- Purpose: To promote cashless transactions and digital payments
- Bank Connectivity: Works with 170+ member banks via IMPS infrastructure
- Key Features:
 - Direct bank-to-bank transfers (unlike mobile wallets)
 - Available 24/7, including holidays
 - Supports Aadhaar-based authentication
 - Available in 20+ Indian languages
 - Works in areas with low or unstable internet connectivity
 - Ensures security with *three-factor authentication (3FA)*
 - Transaction Limit:
 - Maximum ₹40,000 per transaction (subject to change)
 - Daily limit of ₹1,00,000

Key features of BHIM 3.0

- **Split Expenses:** Users can now easily divide bills for shared costs such as rent, dining, and group purchases, enabling instant settlement.
- **Family Mode:** This feature *allows users to add family members, monitor shared expenses,* and assign specific payments for improved financial management.
- **Spends Analytics:** A newly introduced dashboard provides a detailed analysis of monthly expenses, automatically categorizing them to simplify budgeting.
- **Action Needed Alerts:** BHIM 3.0 offers *timely reminders for pending bills, UPI Lite activation, and low balance alerts,* ensuring users stay informed.
- **BHIM Vega:** Merchants can now accept in-app payments directly within the BHIM app, *eliminating the need for third-party applications* and enhancing transaction efficiency.

Exercise Bongosagar 2025

News- The India-Bangladesh naval exercise 'Bongosagar 2025' and a 'Coordinated Patrol (CORPAT)' took place in the Bay of Bengal recently. **Exercise Bongosagar 2025.**



About Exercise Bongosagar 2025

- It is a *bilateral naval exercise* between India and Bangladesh
- It aimed at enhancing interoperability and operational expertise through a diverse range of maritime operations.
- Initiated in 2019, the 2025 represents the *fifth edition of this exercise*.
- During 2025 (fifth Edition), the Indian Navy was represented by *INS Ranvir*, while the Bangladesh Navy participated with BNS Abu Ubaidah.
- The Exercise featured an array of complex operations, including surface firing, tactical maneuvers, underway replenishment, Visit-Board-Search-Seizure (VBSS) cross-boarding, communication drills, quizzes for the operations team and junior officers on professional topics, and a steam past.

INS Ranvir

- It is a *Rajput-class guided missile destroyer* that has been upgraded with state-of-the-art weapons and sensors, most of which are indigenously developed.
- It is the *fourth of the five Rajput-class destroyers* built for the Indian Navy and was commissioned on October 28, 1986.

Exercise Varuna 2025

News- The Indian and French Navies are preparing for the 23rd edition of their bilateral naval **exercise, VARUNA 2025.**

About Exercise Varuna

- It is a bilateral naval exercise between India and France.
- **Started in:** 1993. The exercise was named 'VARUNA' in 2001.

- **Varuna 2025 key highlights**

- It is the *23rd edition* of the exercise and will take place in the *Arabian Sea*.
- The exercise will focus on joint operations across sub-surface, surface, and aerial domains, reinforcing interoperability between the two navies.
- **Aircraft carriers in action:** The Indian Navy's *INS Vikrant* and the French Navy's *Charles de Gaulle* will participate. They will be joined by fighter aircraft, destroyers, frigates, and an Indian Scorpene-class submarine, showcasing the operational strength of both forces.
- **Advanced air defence drills:** The exercise will feature mock air-to-air combat scenarios, pitting *French Rafale-M fighters* against *Indian MiG-29K jets*, enhancing tactical coordination and combat readiness.

Other Exercises between India and France

- **Exercise Garuda:** It is a *bilateral exercise* between the Indian and French Air Force. The first edition of the exercise was held in 2003.
- **Exercise SHAKTI:** It is a *biennial military exercise* conducted between India and France. It was first conducted in the year 2011.
- **Exercise La Pérouse:** It is a *multilateral maritime exercise* led by the French Navy. The Indian Navy participated in this exercise for the first time in 2021.

Balochistan

News: The Balochistan train hijacking on March 11, 2025, has drawn global attention as a deadly escalation in Pakistan's longest-running insurgency.

About Balochistan



- Balochistan is the largest and most sparsely populated province of Pakistan.
- It lies in the southwestern region of the country.
- It is bordered by **Iran** to the west, **Afghanistan** to the northwest, **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab** to the northeast, **Sindh** to the southeast, and the **Arabian Sea** to the south.

- **Capital:** Quetta

- **History and Ethnic Composition:**

- The region has a rich history dating back to the **Stone and Bronze**

Ages, with civilizations like **Mehrgarh (7000 BCE)** flourishing in ancient times.

- Although it was part of **Alexander the Great's empire**, the **Baloch people** themselves migrated to the region around the **14th century CE**.
- Today, the province is home to two major ethnic groups—**Baloch and Pashtuns (Pathans)**—along with a **mixed population of Sindhi origin**. The major languages spoken include **Balochi, Brahui, Pashto, and Sindhi**.
- Balochistan was officially recognized as a separate province in **1970**.
- **Geography and Climate**
 - Balochistan is characterized by **rugged mountain ranges, arid deserts, and coastal plains**.

- The province is divided into four major physical regions:
 - **Upper Highlands** – Includes the **Sulaiman Range** in the east and the **Toba Kakar Range** in the northwest.
 - **Lower Highlands** – Covers the **Makran, Kharan, and Chagai ranges** in the west and **Pab and Kirthar ranges** in the southeast.
 - **Plains** – Found along the coastal region and extending northward into the mountains.
 - **Deserts** – The **Chagai, Kharan, and Makran deserts**, along with the **Lora and Mashkel swamps**.
- Balochistan experiences an **arid climate, with hot summers and cold winters**. Most of the region remains dry due to its limited exposure to the Asian monsoon system.
- **Rivers & Water Bodies:**
 - **Hingol River:** Largest River in Balochistan, draining into the Arabian Sea.
 - **Dasht River:** Major River in southwestern Balochistan.

Third Battle of Panipat (1761)

News- The Chief Minister of Maharashtra described the Third Battle of Panipat as a symbol of Maratha valor during a discussion in the State Assembly. **Third Battle of Panipat (1761).**



About Third Battle of Panipat (1761)

- The Third Battle of Panipat, fought on *14 January 1761*, was one of the largest and bloodiest battles of the 18th century.
- **Location:** Panipat, Haryana – approximately 95 km north of Delhi.
- **Fought between:**
 - **Marathas:** Led by Sadashivrao Bhau and Vishwasrao (son of Nana Saheb).
 - **Afghan Coalition:** Led by Ahmad Shah Abdali, supported by: Rohilla Afghans (Doab region) and Shuja-ud-Daula (Nawab of Oudh).

Background

- After the 27-year *Mughal–Maratha war (1680–1707)*, the Mughal Empire declined rapidly.
- *Peshwa Baji Rao* expanded Maratha influence into Gujarat and Malwa.
- His son, *Balaji Baji Rao (Nana Saheb)*, went further and captured Punjab in 1758, bringing the Marathas into conflict with the Durrani Empire.
- In 1759, *Ahmad Shah Abdali* returned to India with a large force and allied with Indian Muslim powers, forming a broad anti-Maratha coalition.

Key Events Leading to the Battle:

- **August 1760:** Marathas captured Delhi.
- **Battle of Kunjpura:** Marathas defeated an Afghan garrison.
- **October 1760:** Abdali crossed the Yamuna, cutting off Maratha supplies.
- **Prolonged Siege:** Food scarcity and starvation weakened the Maratha camp.
- **13 Jan 1761:** Maratha commanders, facing starvation, chose to fight.
- **14 Jan 1761:** The full-scale battle took place and lasted till evening.

Outcome & Aftermath:

- **Decisive Afghan Victory:** Abdali's forces broke the Maratha lines and claimed a clear win.
- **Massacre of Prisoners:** Around 40,000 Maratha prisoners were executed the day after the battle.
- **Heavy Losses:** Estimated 60,000–70,000 killed; total fatalities including civilians could have reached 100,000.
- **Impact:**
 - Halted Maratha expansion into North India.
 - Led to political instability in Maratha-controlled regions.

Maratha Revival:

- Under *Peshwa Madhavrao*, the Marathas gradually regained strength.
- In 1771, they launched a northern expedition to re-establish dominance and punish powers who had allied with Abdali.