

Factly Weekly

Compilation

2026

**For UPSC CSE Prelims
Exam**

**2nd Week
April 2026**

INDEX

RBI Revises Banking Correspondent Classification	2
Credit Default Swaps (CDS)	2
Tar-balls Management Rules, 2026.....	3
Production Linked Incentive Scheme for Food Processing Industry (PLISFPI)	5
King Fahd Causeway	6
Lohit River	7
Exercise Cyclone-IV.....	8
Gourami Fossils	8
Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) and Protected Planet Report, 2024	9
International Conference on Spacecraft Mission Operations, SMOPS-2026.....	11
Trade Receivables Discounting System (TReDS).....	12
Caribou	13
Emperor Penguin (Aptenodytes forsteri)	13
'Watan Ko Jano' Programme	14
Operation Dhahabu Blitz	15
Punatsangchhu-II Hydroelectric Project (PHEP-II).....	16
Morchella Mushrooms.....	17
Manikya Dhara Falls	18
Southern Elephant Seal (Mirounga leonina)	18
Antarctic Fur Seal (Arctocephalus Gazella)	19
About Project Glasswing	21
About Kangsabati River	21
Key Facts About Hungary.....	22
Keytruda.....	23
Indus River Dolphin	24
Hib Disease	25
Environment Audit Designated Agency (EADA)	26
Flaxseeds Cultivation in India.....	28
Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC)	29
Exercise DUSTLIK - VII 2026.....	30
Right to Vote in India	31
Startup India Fund of Funds 2.0	31
Raimona National Park	32
Veli-Akkulam Estuary.....	34
Balikatan Combat Exercise.....	35

RBI Revises Banking Correspondent Classification

News: The Reserve Bank of India proposed restructuring of Business Correspondent framework with new classification, governance norms, and remuneration standards, inviting comments.

About RBI Revises Banking Correspondent Classification

- It introduces a structured framework with defined delivery points, governance norms, and remuneration standards to improve efficiency and oversight.
- **Business Correspondents (BCs):** Business Correspondents are individuals or entities engaged by banks to provide basic banking services in areas where bank branches are not present.
- **Effective Date:** The framework will come into force from July 1, 2026, with transition timelines up to September 30, 2026 for classification and migration.
- **Key Features:**
 - **Types of Delivery Points:** The draft defines three delivery points—Branch, Business Correspondent- Banking Outlet (BC-BO) and Business Correspondent- Banking Touchpoint (BC-BT) for service delivery.
 - **Transition of Business Facilitators:** The draft removes the separate category of Business Facilitators, and existing entities must transition into BC-BO or BC-BT by September 30, 2026.
 - **Functioning of BCs:** BC-BOs will operate as fixed service units for at least four hours daily and five days a week, while BC-BTs will provide limited services such as small-value transactions and remittances with flexible hours.
 - **Recognition:** BC-BOs will be treated as banking outlets for regulatory purposes within the framework.
 - **Coverage:** The presence of BC-BOs will be considered for classification of centres as banked, including unbanked rural centres.
 - **Governance:** Banks must adopt Board-approved policies and review BC operations at least once every six months.
 - **Accountability:** Banks will remain fully responsible for the acts of BCs and their sub-agents.
 - **Remuneration:** BC-BOs will receive a combination of fixed and variable pay, while BC-BTs will receive only variable pay.
 - **Operations:** All transactions must be conducted online and integrated with core banking systems, along with customer protection safeguards.
 - **Training and Certification:** Individuals operating BC-BOs must obtain advanced certification, while those operating BC-BTs must complete basic training or certification within prescribed timelines.

Credit Default Swaps (CDS)

News: RBI kept FPI investment limits unchanged and fixed CDS sale limit at 5% of outstanding corporate bonds for 2026-27.

About Credit Default Swaps (CDS)



Source - Investopedia

- Credit Default Swaps (CDS) is a financial derivative that allows investors to transfer or offset credit risk of a debt instrument.
- Key Components of a CDS:
 - **Parties:** CDS involves a protection buyer and protection seller, where risk transfer takes place between them.
 - **Premium Payment:** The buyer pays regular premiums similar to insurance payments to the seller.
 - **Compensation Mechanism:** The seller agrees to pay the value and interest if a credit event like default or bankruptcy occurs.
 - **Underlying Reference:** It is linked to a specific credit entity or credit instrument on which the risk of default is based.
- Uses of Credit Default Swaps:
 - **Risk Hedging:** It is used to protect against default risk of a credit instrument.
 - **Speculation:** It allows investors to bet on the creditworthiness of an entity.
 - **Arbitrage:** It helps in exploiting price differences in credit markets.
- Risks:
 - **Counterparty Risk:** The CDS seller may itself default, causing loss of protection.
 - **Premium Loss:** The buyer may lose premiums paid if the seller fails.

Tar-balls Management Rules, 2026

News: The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change issued draft Tar-balls Management Rules, 2026 to address marine pollution from toxic oil residues.

About Tar-balls Management Rules, 2026



Source – IE

- These are dedicated rules for managing tar balls pollution across coastal areas.
- Released by: The rules were issued by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).
- Framed under: They are framed under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
- Aim: The rules aim to ensure environmentally sound management of tar balls and reduce risks to marine ecosystems, public health, and coastal economy.
- Key Provisions of the Draft Rules (2026):
 - Lifecycle Management: The rules cover generation, collection, storage, transport, treatment, disposal, and repurposing of tar balls.
 - Polluter Pays Principle: Oil facility owners must pay environmental compensation if mismanagement causes oil spills and public health damage.
 - State Disaster Provision: States must declare tar ball pollution as a “state disaster” and act under the Disaster Management Act.
 - Institutional Responsibilities: Multiple ministries and authorities are assigned roles for coordinated and environmentally sound management.
 - Steering Committee: A committee with members from seven ministries and pollution control boards will guide implementation.
 - Industrial Use: Tar balls with calorific value above 1,500 kcal can be used as fuel in cement industries after authorisation.

About Tar Balls

- Nature: Tar balls are sticky, weathered residues of oil formed from spills, leaks, and marine accidents.
- Formation Process: They form when lighter oil evaporates and heavier hydrocarbons mix with sand and debris.
- Impact: They contain toxic contaminants like heavy metals and persistent pollutants, posing risks to marine life, human health, and tourism, especially along the western coast.

Production Linked Incentive Scheme for Food Processing Industry (PLISFPI)

News: The Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Food Processing Industry (PLISFPI) was launched recently to strengthen India's food processing sector.

About Production Linked Incentive Scheme for Food Processing Industry (PLISFPI)

PLIS for developing Global Champions in Food Sector

The Central Sector Scheme - Production Linked Incentive Scheme for Food Processing Industry (PLISFPI) of MoFPI

- ◆ Has an outlay of **Rs. 10900 crore**.
- ◆ Will create employment opportunities for nearly **2.5 lakh** people by the year 2026-27.
- ◆ Food Product Segments covered in the scheme via
 - **Ready to Cook/Ready to Eat (RTC/RTE)** food including Millet based Products
 - Processed Fruits & Vegetables
 - Marine Products
 - Mozzarella Cheese
 - **Innovative/Organic products** of SMEs including Free Range Eggs, Poultry Meat, Egg Products



Source: Ministry of Food Processing Industries

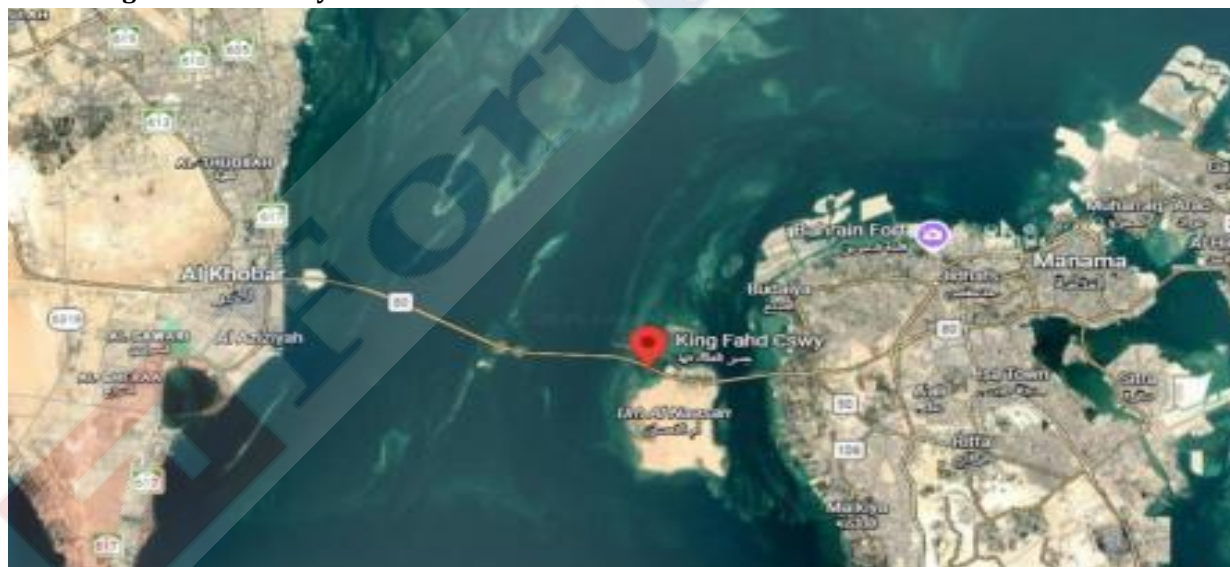
- It is a government scheme to **modernize and enhance competitiveness of the food processing industry**.
- **Nodal Ministry:** It has been launched by the **Ministry of Food Processing Industries**.
- **Type:** Central Sector Scheme
- **Aim:** It aims to **strengthen India's food processing sector, promote Indian brands globally, and create global food manufacturing champions**.
- **Duration:** It will be implemented for over six years from 2021-22 to 2026-27.
- **Budget:** The total financial outlay of the scheme is ₹10,900 crore.
- **Objectives of the Scheme**
 - The scheme seeks to **enhance value addition in the food processing sector**.
 - It focuses on **expanding processing capacity across the country**.
 - It intends to **generate employment opportunities, particularly in rural and non-farm sectors**.
 - It also focuses on **promoting Indian food brands in global markets**.
- **Key Components of the Scheme:**
 - **First Component:** The scheme **incentivizes the manufacturing of major food product segments** such as Ready-to-Cook/Ready-to-Eat foods, processed fruits and vegetables, marine products, and mozzarella cheese.
 - It also covers **innovative/ Organic products of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), including free range - Eggs, Poultry Meat, and Egg Products in these segments under the above component**.
 - **Second Component:** It relates to **production of Innovative / Organic products of SMEs**.
 - **Third Component:** It also provides **support for branding and marketing abroad, including in-store branding and shelf space renting**.
 - It encourages the **use of millets in food products and promotes value addition under the millet-based PLI component**.

- **Eligibility:** Applicants shall be: Proprietary Firm or Partnership Firm or Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) or a Company registered in India; Co-operatives and Small & Medium enterprises.
- **Coverage:** A total of 128 companies have been approved under the scheme, covering 274 units across the country.
 - The scheme includes strong MSME participation with 68 MSME applicants. It also supports 40 contract manufacturing units.
- **Achievements:**
 - **Growth in Sales and Exports:** Sales of PLI-supported products have increased at a CAGR of 10.58%. Export sales of these products have grown at a CAGR of 7.41%.
 - **Promotion of Millet-Based Products:** Sales of millet-based products increased from ₹345.73 crore in FY 2022-23 to ₹1845.25 crore in FY 2024-25.
 - Procurement of millets increased from 1103.18 metric tonnes to 17089.16 metric tonnes. This reflects nearly a 15-fold increase in millet procurement.
 - **Impact on Value Addition and Supply Chain:** The scheme ensures that complete value addition of products takes place within India. It strengthens the farm-to-fork value chain and reduces post-harvest losses.

King Fahd Causeway

News: The King Fahd Causeway was recently closed following threats of Iranian attacks targeting Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province.

About King Fahd Causeway



Source: Turkiye Today

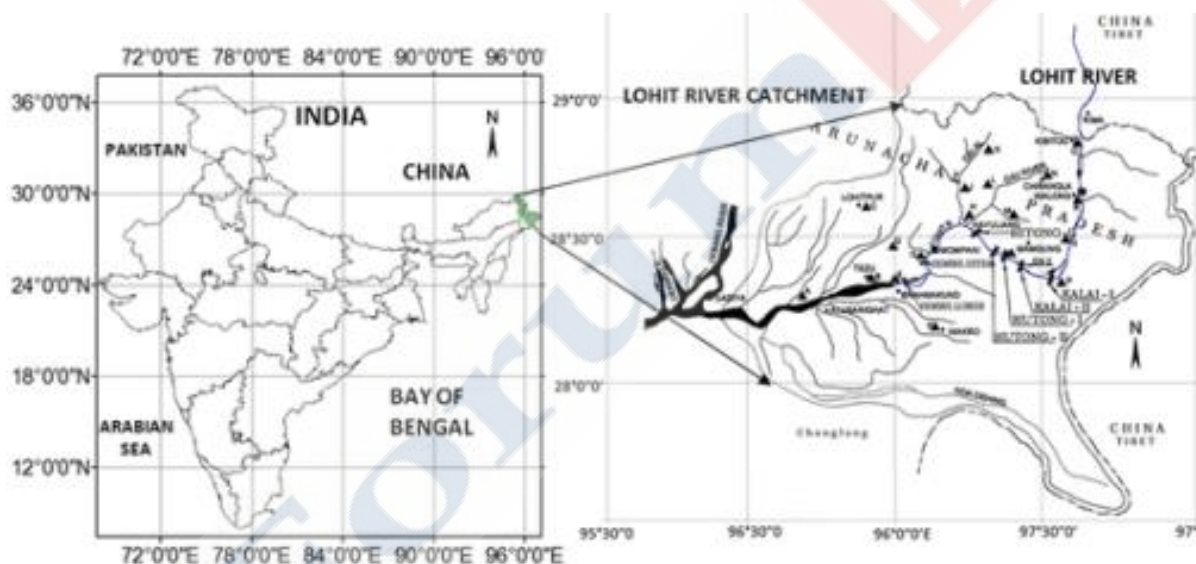
- **Location:** It is a series of bridges connecting the island nation of Bahrain to Saudi Arabia, spanning the Gulf of Bahrain.
- **Inaugurated:** It was started in 1986.
- **Managed and operated by:** It is managed by the King Fahd Causeway Authority.
- **Length:** It is 25 km long and 23.3 m wide.
- It starts in Saudi Arabia in a place known as Al-Aziziyah and ends at Al-Jasra in Bahrain.

- It has **two sections** –
 - **The longer section of the bridge starts from Khobar to Nasan Island in Bahrain**
 - **The shorter section starts from Nasan Island to the main island of Bahrain.**
- It plays an important role in **boosting trade and commercial exchange between the two countries and other GCC countries through Saudi Arabia.**
- **Strategic significance:** It is Bahrain's only road connection to the Arabian Peninsula and holds **strategic importance, particularly as Bahrain hosts the United States Fifth Fleet.**
 - It also serves as a strategic alternative route during disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz, ensuring the flow of people, essential supplies, and limited commercial transport.

Lohit River

News: Recently, the cabinet approved the investment Proposal for the construction of the 1200 MW Kalai-II Hydro Electric Project in Anjaw District of Arunachal Pradesh.

About Lohit River



Source: Researchgate

- **About:** It is a **perennial river** which flows through **Arunachal Pradesh and Assam.**
- **Origin:** It originates in the **Zayal Chu range in eastern Tibet.**
- **Course of river:** It flows through Arunachal Pradesh, passing across the Mishmi Hills.
- It finally enters Assam, where it joins the Brahmaputra River near Sadiya.
- Its main source is **snowmelt from the Himalayan glaciers and other small streams.**
- **Tributaries:** Rivers **Dau, Dalai and Tidding** are its major tributaries on the **right bank** and the river **Lang** is the major tributary on the **left bank.**
- **Catchment area:** The catchment area of the river, including the Tibet region, is **29,487 sq km.**
 - The catchment area experiences **mostly a tropical wet season and supports dense mixed forest.**
- **Hydel Project on river:** [Kalai-II Hydro Electric Project](#) has been developed on the Lohit River in Anjaw district, Arunachal Pradesh.

Exercise Cyclone-IV

News: The Indian Army contingent departed for Egypt to participate in Exercise Cyclone-IV scheduled at Anshas from 09 to 17 April 2026.

About Exercise Cyclone-IV



Figure 1. Source – DD News

cooperation, mutual trust, and military ties between India and Egypt.

- It is a joint special forces exercise conducted between India and Egypt.
- **Aim:** It aims to enhance joint mission planning capabilities and improve interoperability through the exchange of best practices in special operations.
- **Frequency:** It is an annual exercise conducted alternatively in India and Egypt.
- **2026 Edition:** It is the fourth edition of the Exercise Cyclone series.
- **Location:** The exercise is being conducted at Anshas in Egypt.
- **First Edition:** The first edition was held at Jaisalmer in Rajasthan in January 2023.
- **Key Features**
 - **Participating Forces:** The Indian contingent comprises 25 personnel from Special Forces units, who train alongside Egyptian counterparts in a realistic operational environment.
 - **Operational Training:** The participating troops undertake training in special operational tactics, techniques, and procedures in desert and semi-desert terrain.
 - **Professional Exchange:** The exercise facilitates mutual exchange of professional expertise and strengthens camaraderie and understanding of military traditions and cultures.

- **Significance:** It strengthens defence

Gourami Fossils

News: Scientists discovered freshwater fish fossils in Saharanpur, including first gourami fossil in India and second globally, indicating a Pliocene ecosystem.

About Gourami Fossils



Source – News Point

- **The Gourami fossils are freshwater fish remains identified through otolith structures from ancient ecosystems.**
- **Discovered by:** The fossils were discovered by scientists led by Dr. Ningthoujam Premjit Singh of the Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology.
- **Location:** The fossils were found in the Siwalik foothills at Mohand in Saharanpur district of Uttar Pradesh.
- **Geological Era:** The fossils belong to the Pliocene Epoch, dated about 4.8 million years ago.
- **Rarity:** This is the first record of a Gourami fossil in India and only the second globally (the first was in Sumatra).
- **The Fossil Type:** The fossils are otoliths, which are calcium carbonate structures used for hearing and balance in fishes.
- **Key Findings**
 - **Structured Food Chain:** The presence of snakeheads, gouramis, and gobies shows a clear food chain, where smaller fish acted as prey and snakeheads acted as predators.
 - **Freshwater Ecosystem:** The fossils indicate a calm and stable freshwater body surrounded by dense vegetation during the Pliocene period.

Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) and Protected Planet Report, 2024

News: The recent UNEP reports state that the world still needs to protect an area almost the size of the Indian Ocean by 2030 to reach the 30% target under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF).

About Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF)



Kunming-Montreal

GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

Source: CBD

- It was adopted during the **15th** meeting of the Conference of the Parties (**COP 15**) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (**CBD**).
- **Aim:** It aims to address **biodiversity loss, restore ecosystems and protect indigenous rights**.
- The framework consists of **4 global 2050 goals and 23 global 2030 targets**.
- **Key goals of the GBF:** The 4 key goals are:
 - Biodiversity conservation and restoration
 - Nature's contribution to people's
 - Access and benefit sharing and tools
 - Solutions for mainstreaming and implementation.
- **Signatories:** It was adopted by **196 countries**.
 - **India is also a signatory** to it.
- **Binding:** It is **not an international treaty** and is **not legally binding** to the parties.
 - All Parties to the framework are **committed to setting national targets for its implementation**.

About Protected Planet Report, 2024

- It is the **first report to assess the global status of Protected and Conserved Areas (PCA)** in the context of **Target 3 of the KMGBF**.
- **It also tracks progress on Aichi Target 11.**
- **Launched by:** It was launched by the United Nations Environment Programme (**UNEP**) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (**IUCN**).
- **First Published:** It was first released globally in **2012**.
- **Key highlights of the report**
 - The **Report recorded 8.6% of ocean and coastal areas** within documented **protected and conserved areas globally**.
 - **Around 10% of the global ocean** is now **within protected and conserved areas**.
 - The world still needs to **protect an area almost the size of the Indian Ocean by 2030** to reach the **30% target** under the KMGBF.
 - Over the **past two years**, nearly **5 million km² of ocean** have been newly protected.
 - Only **1.3% of the ocean** is covered by protected areas where **management effectiveness has been assessed and reported**. This shows gaps in monitoring.
 - New areas were added to the **World Database on Protected and Conserved Areas (WDCPA)**, which tracks global progress toward KMGBF targets.
 - Since **2024, 175 marine or coastal sites** have been designated, including **protected areas and Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs)**.
 - New sites span **Asia, Oceania, Africa, Europe, North America, and South America**.

Factly Compilation [Second Week] April 2026

- **Tainui Atea** (French Polynesia, 2025) became the **largest marine protected area** at **4.5 million km²**.
- The expansion of the **Heard Island and McDonald Islands Commonwealth Marine Reserve (Australia)** added about **309,700 km²** in 2024. In 2025, both island reserves were **expanded by 400%**.
- About **95% of Earth's habitat by volume** lies in the **high seas**, yet only **1.66%** of these areas are protected, highlighting a major protection gap.

International Conference on Spacecraft Mission Operations, SMOPS-2026

News: The second edition of SMOPS-2026 conference is being held from 8–10 April 2026 in Bengaluru, India.

About International Conference on Spacecraft Mission Operations, SMOPS-2026



Source – ISRO

- It is a global conference focused on spacecraft mission operations and future space mission management.
- **Organized by:** It is jointly organized by ISRO, Astronautical Society of India (ASI), and International Academy of Astronautics (IAA).
- **Edition:** It is the second edition of the conference.
- **Theme:** The theme is “Innovative Operations for Smart and Sustainable Space Mission Management – Next Generation.”
- **Held at:** It is being held in Bengaluru, India, from 8–10 April 2026.
- **Aim:** It aims to cover a wide range of topics such as mission operations management, advanced design, automation, AI, robotics, cybersecurity, and interplanetary exploration.
- **Key features**

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.

- **Wide Participation:** The conference includes 120 oral and 88 poster presentations with global experts from agencies like NASA, ESA, and JAXA.
- **Focus Areas:** It discusses mission operations strategy, AI-driven automation, large constellations, and space domain awareness.
- **Emerging Challenges:** It addresses issues like increasing space traffic, complex mission systems, and human space missions.
- **Collaboration Platform:** It brings together space agencies, startups, academia, and industry for sharing knowledge and innovation.
- **Student Engagement:** It includes a workshop for students and young professionals to encourage future space scientists.
- **Significance:** It acts as a platform for global collaboration and development of smart, sustainable, and efficient space mission operations.

Trade Receivables Discounting System (TReDS)

News: Recently, Reserve Bank of India proposed removing due diligence for MSMEs onboarding on TReDS to promote ease of doing business.

About Trade Receivables Discounting System (TReDS)

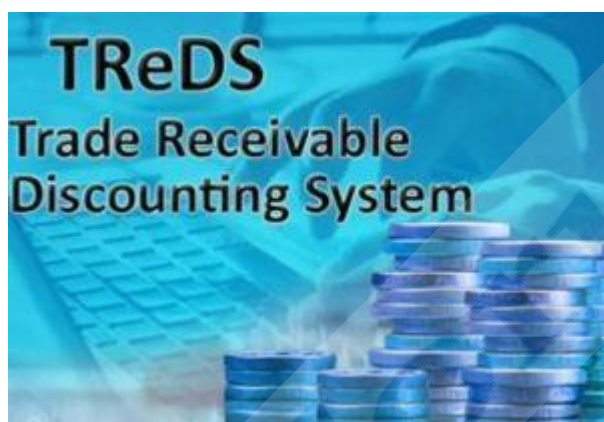


Figure 2. Source – BlueCrest

- It is an electronic platform that facilitates financing or discounting of MSME trade receivables through multiple financiers.
- **Launched by:** It was launched by the Reserve Bank of India.
- **Launched in:** It was introduced in 2014 and later strengthened in 2018.
- **Aim:** It aims to allow MSMEs to discount invoices raised against buyers and receive faster payments to meet their working capital needs.
- **Participants:**
 - **Sellers:** Only MSMEs can participate as sellers.
 - **Buyers:** Corporates, Government Departments, and PSUs can participate.
- **Financiers:** Banks, NBFC-Factors, and other permitted financial institutions.
- **Insurers:** They are allowed to insure receivables or invoices.
- **Mechanism:** MSMEs upload invoices on the platform, and financiers discount them based on buyer creditworthiness, providing funds without collateral.
- **TReDS platforms:** RXIL (Receivables Exchange of India), M1xchange (Mynd Solutions) and Invoicemart are the main platforms operating in India.
- **Key features:**
 - **Collateral-free financing:** MSMEs receive funds without providing security, which improves credit access.
 - **Digital and fast process:** It ensures quicker payments and reduces delays in receivables realization.
- **Significance:** It enhances credit access, liquidity, and ease of doing business for MSMEs, supporting their participation and economic contribution.

Caribou

News: A recent study highlights that declining lichen and increasing snow depth can significantly reduce winter survival of caribou populations in the Arctic.

About Caribou



Figure 3. Source – Wildlife Nomads

lichen availability and snow conditions, which highlights that changes in Arctic vegetation and climate directly affect species survival and ecosystem stability.

- **Threats**
 - Human-caused habitat destruction
 - Fragmentation
 - Climate change
- **Conservation Status**
 - IUCN: Vulnerable

- Caribou are large herbivorous ungulates adapted to Arctic and sub-Arctic environments.

- They are also called 'Reindeer' in Eurasia.

- **Scientific Name:** Rangifer tarandus

- **Habitat:** Caribou thrive in polar and Arctic regions.

- **Distribution:** Caribou are found across Arctic tundra and boreal forests of North America (Canada, Alaska, Greenland) and Eurasia (Scandinavia, Russia).

- **Key features**

- **Adaptation to cold:** Caribou have thick fur and specially adapted noses that warm cold air before it reaches their lungs.

- **Feeding behavior:** They are among the few animals that can digest lichen, which becomes their main winter food.

- **Movement pattern:** They are highly migratory, covering long distances each year.

- **Physical traits:** Both males and females grow antlers, though males have much larger antlers.

- **Unique vision:** Caribou are the only mammals capable of seeing ultraviolet light, helping them detect predators.

- **Ecological Significance:** Caribou hold ecological importance as their survival is closely linked to

Emperor Penguin (*Aptenodytes forsteri*)

News: Emperor penguin and Antarctic fur seal have been uplisted to Endangered category in International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List due to climate change impacts.



Figure 4. Source – Mongabay

About Emperor Penguin (*Aptenodytes forsteri*)

- Emperor penguin is the largest penguin species that survives and breeds in extreme Antarctic winter conditions.
- Scientific name: *Aptenodytes forsteri*.
- Habitat: They depend on fastened ice near the Antarctic coast, which is sea ice attached to land or icebergs, for breeding, moulting, and raising chicks.
- Distribution: Emperor penguins are found across the Antarctic continent.
- Key features
 - Weight: Adults can weigh up to 40 kg at the start of the breeding season.
- Breeding: They are the only animals that breed during the Antarctic winter, and males take responsibility for incubation.
- Adaptation: They have several layers of scale-like feathers and body fat for insulation.
- Heat conservation: Their body structure and blood circulation help in recycling heat efficiently.
- Social behaviour: They huddle together to reduce heat loss and survive extreme cold conditions.
- Diving ability: They can dive up to 565 m and stay underwater for up to 22 minutes.
- Population Trend / Projection: The population is projected to show a sharp decline, with a possible halving by the 2080s due to changing sea-ice conditions.
- Threats
 - Climate change and sea ice loss
 - Reduced food availability
 - Commercial fishing/competition
 - Disease
- Conservation Status: Emperor penguins were earlier listed as Near Threatened, but are now uplisted to Endangered due to climate change, sea-ice loss.

'Watan Ko Jano' Programme

News: A 250-member youth delegation from Jammu and Kashmir called on Vice President at Uprashtrapati Bhavan under 'Watan Ko Jano' programme.

About 'Watan Ko Jano' Programme



Source – VP's Office

- 'Watan Ko Jano' Programme is an exposure and cultural integration programme for youth from Jammu & Kashmir.
- **Implementing Agencies:** Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and Government of Jammu and Kashmir
- **Aim:** The program aims to introduce the youth and children of Jammu and Kashmir to the nation's dynamic progress, rich social fabric, and cultural diversity, fostering a strong sense of social, cultural, and emotional connection.
- **Objective**
 - Promote national integration
 - Provide youth with exposure to different parts of India
 - Familiarize them with cultural diversity, development initiatives, and institutions
- **Key Features**
 - Youth are taken on educational tours across India
 - Visits include historical sites, educational institutions, and industrial units
 - Interaction with officials, security forces, and students

Operation Dhahabu Blitz

News: DRI Mumbai busts gold smuggling syndicate in Op Dhahabu Blitz; seizing approx. 30 kg gold worth ₹38 crore.

About Operation Dhahabu Blitz



Figure 5. Source – PIB

- It is an enforcement operation carried out to crack down on gold smuggling networks into India.
- Naming: Gold is called 'Dhahabu' in Swahili language.
- Organized by: Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI)
- Aim: It targets the organized syndicates involved in illegal import of precious metals.
- Key Features
 - Conducted as a pan-India coordinated operation
 - Involves intelligence gathering, surveillance, and simultaneous raids
 - Aims to curb economic offences and customs evasion
- Recoveries: DRI received a tip-off about women coming from Nairobi in Kenya with hidden gold.
 - Following this, 24 foreign nationals, who had landed at Mumbai Airport from Nairobi, were stopped.
 - From their bags and clothes, 25.1 kg of gold bars and 4.27 kg of gold jewellery were recovered.

Punatsangchhu-II Hydroelectric Project (PHEP-II)

News: India and Bhutan strengthened hydropower cooperation during the visit, with signing of tariff protocol of Punatsangchhu-II Hydroelectric Project (1020 MW).

About Punatsangchhu-II Hydroelectric Project (PHEP-II)



Source – ResearchGate

- It is a 1020 MW run-of-the-river hydroelectric power project in Bhutan.

- **Developed by:** It is developed by the Punatsangchhu II Hydroelectric Project Authority under an Inter-Government Agreement between Bhutan and India.
- **Location:** It is located in Wangdue Phodrang district (Bhutan) on the right bank of the Punatsangchhu River.
- **Funding:** It is funded by the Government of India with 30% grant and 70% loan at 10% interest, repayable in 30 installments.
- **Key Features:**
 - **Infrastructure Details:** The project includes a 91 m-high dam and diversion tunnel of 1118 cubic mt per second.
 - It has an underground powerhouse 15 km downstream at Kamechu with six 170 MW turbines, increasing capacity by 40% to over 3500 MW.
 - **Institutional Mechanism:** The PHPA-II is an autonomous body established by Bhutan and India for project implementation.
 - **Technical Coordination:** A Technical Coordination Committee (TCC) ensures coordination among management, consultants, and experts for timely technical decisions.

About Punatsangchhu-I Hydroelectric Project

- **Developers & Partners:** It is developed under a bilateral agreement between the Government of India and the Royal Government of Bhutan.
- **Capacity & Type:** It is a 1.2 GW run-of-the-river hydroelectric project.
- **Location:** It is located in Wangdue Phodrang district on the left bank of Punatsangchhu River.
- **Funding Pattern:** It is funded by India with 40% grant and 60% loan at 10% interest, repayable in 30 installments.
- **Infrastructure Details:** It includes a 130 m-high and 239 m-long concrete gravity dam, two diversion tunnels, and an underground powerhouse with six 200 MW turbines.

Morchella Mushrooms

News: Recently, the Sheri Kashmir University of Agriculture and Sciences has successfully cultivated Morchella mushroom for the first time in controlled conditions.

About Morchella Mushrooms



Figure 6. Source – Britannica

- Morchella (commonly known as common morel, morel, yellow morel, true morel, morel mushroom, and sponge morel) is an edible mushroom.
- It is locally known as Kangaech or Guochi.
- **Scientific name and family:** The scientific name is *Morchella esculenta*, and it belongs to the Morchellaceae family under Ascomycota.
- **Natural Habitat:** These mushrooms grow naturally in high elevation forest ecosystems during a narrow rainy season, usually on decaying wood, leaves, or humus soil.

- **Distribution:** Morchella mushrooms grow in conifer forests across temperate regions, especially in the foothills of Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal, and Jammu and Kashmir.
- **Climatic conditions:** It requires daytime temperatures of 15–20°C and night temperatures of 5–9°C for proper growth.
- **Growth pattern:** It grows in clusters on decaying wood, leaves, or humus soil, and may not grow in the same place every season.
- **Appearance:** It has a pale yellow colour with pits and ridges on the cap and a large white stem.
- **Economic value:** It is one of the most expensive mushrooms, costing Rs. 15,000 to Rs 40,000 per kg, making it highly valuable.
- **Nutritional and medicinal value:** It is rich in carbohydrates, proteins, fibre, vitamins, and minerals, and has antioxidant, antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, and antitumor properties.
- **Agricultural importance:** Controlled cultivation is a game-changing breakthrough, as it reduces dependence on uncertain wild collection and creates new opportunities for farmers, youth, and entrepreneurs.

Manikya Dhara Falls

News: A 15-year-old girl from Kerala, missing near Manikyadhara Falls, was found dead 500 m below the watchtower after a drone search.

About Manikya Dhara Falls



Figure 7. Source – Trawell

- **Location:** It is situated in the dense forest of Baba Budangiri hills in Chikkamagaluru district of Karnataka.
- **Other names:** It is locally called Nellikayi Theertha, while Manikyadhara means “stream of pearls,” describing water droplets shining like pearls in sunlight.
- **Perennial nature:** The waterfall does not get drained during summer, which makes it unique and important.
- **Height:** The waterfall has a height of about 30 feet.
- **Eco-Region:** It lies in the Western Ghats region, known for its dense forests and rich natural beauty.
- **Religious significance:** It is considered a holy site by Hindus with strong local beliefs and rituals associated with it.
- **Healing belief:** People believe that bathing here can cure ailments, and herbal medicines are sold nearby.
- **Natural beauty:** The site offers mist-covered hills, cool breeze, and scenic surroundings, enhancing its attraction.

Southern Elephant Seal (*Mirounga leonina*)

News: The International Union for Conservation of Nature has reclassified the southern elephant seal from Least Concern to Vulnerable on its Red List.

About Southern Elephant Seal (*Mirounga leonina*)



Figure 8. Source: Researchgate

The southern elephant seal is one of two species of elephant seals.

- Scientific name: Their scientific name is *Mirounga leonina* and they belong to the Phocidae family or true seals.
- They are the largest seals on the planet and also the biggest mammals on Earth after whales.
- They are the deepest diving seals on earth.
- Habitat: They exhibit an almost circumpolar distribution in the cold, nutrient-rich waters of the Southern Ocean.
 - They live on land only when molting, breeding, and giving birth.
- Distribution: They inhabit large portions of the southern hemisphere.
 - This includes lands in Antarctica and islands in the southern part of Africa, South America, and Australia.
- Characteristics
 - Appearance: They have a thick layer of blubber covered with a yellowish or silvery grey-brown coat.
 - Every year, they undergo molt, shedding their fur along with a layer of skin, then regrowing it within about a month.
 - A distinctive feature of mature males is their large, trunk-like snout (proboscis), which is used to amplify their vocalisations.
 - They show sexual dimorphism where adult males are much larger and heavier than females.
 - They often bunch together in muddy pits called wallows, using their small flippers to cover themselves with wet sand, which helps keep them cool.
 - Diet: They are carnivores and feed upon cephalopods, pelagic and demersal fish species, and crustaceans, including krill.
 - They commonly dive to depths of 980-2600 feet (300-800 meters) while feeding and remain submerged for 30 minutes at a time.
- Threat:
 - Anthropogenic activities
 - Climate change and spread of diseases
- Conservation status
 - IUCN Red List: It is classified as Vulnerable (earlier Least Concern).

Antarctic Fur Seal (*Arctocephalus Gazella*)

News: The International Union for Conservation of Nature has reclassified the Antarctic fur seal from Least Concern to Endangered due to a sharp population decline.

About Antarctic Fur Seal (*Arctocephalus gazella*)



Source: Antarctica gov

- They are one of eight seals in the genus *Arctocephalus*.
- They are the smallest of the Antarctic seals.
- **Scientific name:** Their scientific name is *Arctocephalus gazella*.
- **Habitat:** They spend much of their time in the ocean, hunting for food. On land, they prefer rocky areas and sometimes rest on beaches or in vegetated zones.
- **Distribution:** They are found mainly on sub-Antarctic islands south of the Antarctic convergence.
 - Antarctic fur seals are rarely found in Antarctica.
- **Characteristics**
 - **Appearance:** Antarctic fur seals have a slender, pointed muzzle, long external ears, and long vibrissae (whiskers).
 - Adult males are usually darker in colour than females, while females can appear quite pale, sometimes even blonde or silvery-grey.
 - There is strong sexual dimorphism in this species, with adult males being much larger and heavier than females.
 - Their fur consists of two layers –
 - a dense, water-resistant underfur that provides insulation
 - coarse guard hairs that protect the underfur from water and damage.
 - Unlike most other Antarctic seals, they can lift their bodies using strong front flippers and move on land on all four flippers.
 - They are capable of moving quickly, reaching speeds of up to 20 kmh on land and even faster in water.
 - **Behaviour:** They are solitary animals, except when breeding and molting. They use vocalisations to communicate.
 - **Diet:** They are carnivores (piscivores). They mainly eat fish, krill, crustaceans, and cephalopods like squid and octopuses.
- **Population:** Its current population is only 944,000 (as of 2025).

- Threat
 - Climate change
 - Reducing food availability and lowering pup survival rates
 - Hunted by sharks, killer whales, and leopard seals
- Conservation status
 - IUCN Red List: It is classified as Endangered (earlier Least Concern).

About Project Glasswing

News: Indian IT industry and government are assessing implications of Claude Mythos under Project Glasswing due to its advanced cybersecurity capabilities.

About Project Glasswing



Figure 9. Source – Analytics Vidya

- It is a collaborative cybersecurity initiative led by Anthropic to strengthen global software security using advanced AI.
 - Aim: The project aims at securing critical global software infrastructure using advanced AI models like Claude Mythos Preview.
 - Working mechanism: It works by using an unreleased AI model that can autonomously discover zero-day vulnerabilities and generate code to fix them, even in complex systems.
 - Zero-day vulnerabilities: These are hard-to-detect critical software flaws that remain undiscovered until exploited, such as in the WannaCry attack (2017).
- Key Aspects:
 - Advanced AI capability: It uses a powerful AI model with strong coding and reasoning abilities to analyse complex systems.
 - Large-scale vulnerability detection: It can identify high-risk vulnerabilities across widely used software and systems.
 - Controlled access: The model is restricted to a closed group to prevent misuse.
 - Dual-use risk awareness: It recognises that AI can be used for both defence and cyberattacks.
 - Collaboration with major firms: It brings together firms like Amazon Web Services, Apple, Google and Microsoft along with critical infrastructure organisations.
 - Significant: Project Glasswing is important because it promotes a proactive cybersecurity approach, addresses AI-driven cyber threats, and supports security in open-source systems through funding and collaboration.

About Kangsabati River

News: Despite adequate reservoir water, irrigation was denied for Boro cultivation, leaving farmers in multiple districts without work and facing economic hardship.

About Kangsabati River

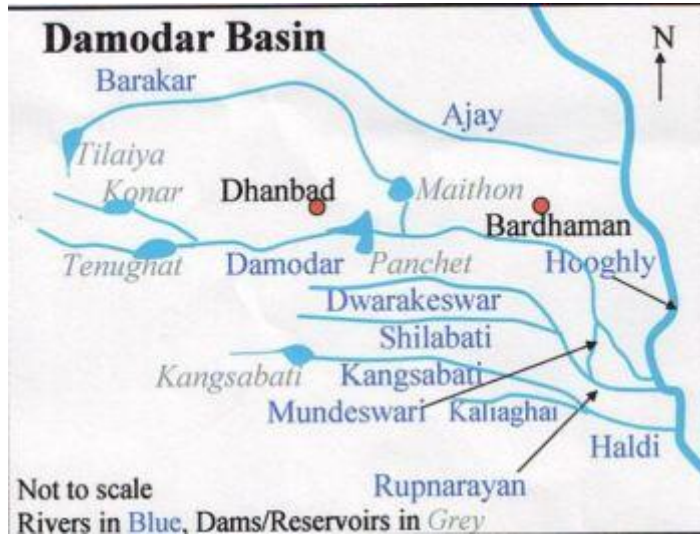


Figure 10. Source – Wikipedia

- **Origin:** The Kangsabati River rises from the Chota Nagpur Plateau in Purulia district near Jhalda (West Bengal), where Saharjhor and Girgiri rivers join together.

- **Course:**

- The river flows through Purulia, Bankura, Jhargram, Paschim Medinipur and Purba Medinipur districts.

- At Keshpur, it splits into two branches, showing an important river feature.

- **Tributaries:** The Bhairabanki is an important tributary that joins the river at Binpur.

- **Drains into:** The river meets Keleghai to form Haldi River, which drains into the Bay of Bengal at Haldia.

- **Major Project:**

- The Kangsabati Irrigation Project was launched in 1956 to provide irrigation to Bankura, Hooghly and Midnapore districts.
- Mukutmanipur Dam, an earthen gravity dam, was constructed with 1.04 cubic km storage capacity, irrigating about 3,500 sq km area, showing its regional importance.

Key Facts About Hungary

News: Nationalist leader Viktor Orban, who ruled for 16 years, conceded defeat to Peter Magyar in Hungary's parliamentary elections, with a record 77.8% turnout and clear majority results.

Key Facts About Hungary



Figure 11. Source – Britannica

- **Location:** Hungary is a landlocked country in Central Europe.

- **Bordering Countries:** Hungary shares borders with Slovakia (north), Ukraine (northeast), Romania (east), Serbia and Croatia (south), Slovenia (southwest), and Austria (west).

- **Capital:** The capital city of Hungary is Budapest.

- **Climate:** Hungary has a moderately dry continental climate, with average temperature of 10°C and variable rainfall between 500–800 mm annually.

- **Relief:** It is dominated by lowland expanses, including the Great Alfold and Little Alfold, along with a central mountain system.

- **Highest Peak:** The Mátra Mountains contain Mount Kékes (1,014 m), which is the highest peak.

- **Major Rivers:** The Danube (longest river),

Tisza, Rába, and Dráva rivers are significant, with frequent flood events.

- **Soil Type:** The country has chernozem (rich black soil), gray-brown podzolic, brown forest soils, and sandy soils.
- **Flora:** Natural vegetation is largely modified, with beech forests at high elevations and oak woodlands in uplands, while much land is cultivated.
- **Fauna:** Forests support deer and wild pigs, while lowlands have hares, rodents, partridge, and pheasant, along with diverse freshwater fish species.
- **Hortobágy National Park:** It is established in 1973 as Hungary's first and largest protected area, is a UNESCO World Heritage site known as "the Puszta."

Keytruda

News: Keytruda is now being used worldwide to treat lung, cervical, renal cell, and aggressive breast cancers, among others.

About Keytruda

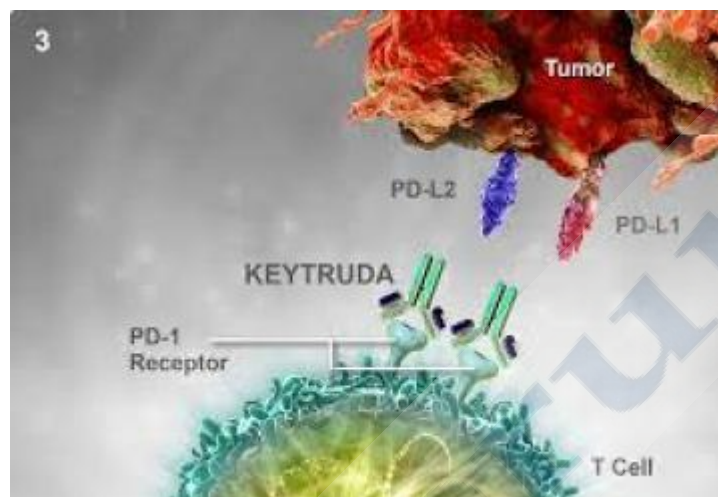


Figure 12. Source: Keytruda official

- Keytruda is the **brand name of pembrolizumab**, which is an immunotherapy drug used to treat several cancers.
- **Manufactured by:** It is manufactured by Merck & Co (MSD), a US-based pharmaceutical company.
- It belongs to a **class of drugs called checkpoint inhibitors**, which help the immune system fight cancer.
 - These drugs **remove the "brakes" that prevent T cells** from attacking cancer cells.
- It belongs to the category of **monoclonal antibodies**.
 - **Monoclonal antibodies** are laboratory-made molecules designed to **bind to specific targets**.
 - They help the **immune system identify and destroy cancer cells**.
- **How it works:**
 - **Pembrolizumab works by attaching to PD-1 receptors on T cells**. This prevents the interaction between PD-1 receptors on T cells and PD-L1 receptors on cancer cells.
 - As a result, **T cells are able to recognize and attack cancer cells**. In this way, Keytruda uses the body's own immune system to fight cancer.
- **Cost and Dosage:** The recommended dosage of Keytruda is **200 mg every three weeks**.
 - Each 100 mg vial costs **more than ₹1.5 lakh**.
- **Availability in India:** Keytruda and other monoclonal antibodies are available in tertiary care hospitals across India.
 - **Note:** India's **first** indigenous CAR-T therapy, called **NexCar19**, has been developed by **ImmunoAct**.
- **Use:** It is being used globally to **treat several cancers, including lung cancer, cervical cancer, renal cell cancer, and aggressive breast cancer**.

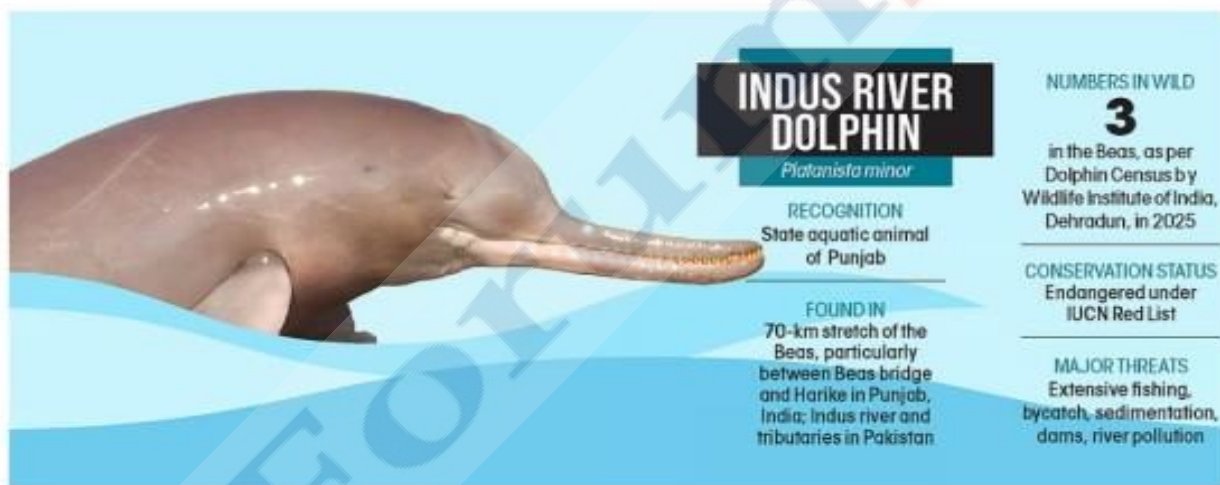
About Immunotherapy

- Immunotherapy is a type of treatment that **trains the immune system to fight diseases, especially cancer.**
- It is **often used along with other treatments** such as chemotherapy, radiotherapy, and surgery.
- **Immunotherapy vs Chemotherapy:**
 - Chemotherapy and radiotherapy work by directly killing cancer cells, but they also damage healthy cells.
 - In contrast, **immunotherapy** helps the immune system identify and **destroy cancer cells while sparing healthy cells.**

Indus River Dolphin

News: Conservation efforts, including legal protection, scientific research, and community participation through “Dolphin Mitras,” have helped revive Indus river dolphin population and provide it a fighting chance for survival.

About Indus River Dolphin



Source: DTE

- They are **one of the world's rarest mammals** and the **second most endangered freshwater river dolphin.**
- **Scientific name:** Their scientific name is **Platanista minor.**
 - They are part of the **Platanistidae** family.
- They are also known as the **“bhulan.”**
- **Habitat:** They are only found in **freshwater.**
 - They **usually prefer shallow, murky waters** but are sometimes found in the main channels of rivers and tributaries during the flood season.
- **Distribution:** Today, their range is **limited to the lower and middle areas of the Indus River in south-central Pakistan.** A small population also exists in the **Beas River in India.**
 - Historically, their range extended from the **Indus River delta to the foothills of the Himalayas.**

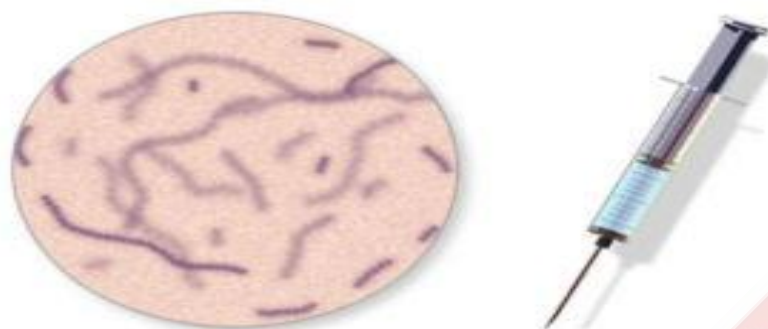
- They were also found in the tributaries of the Indus River.
- **Characteristics**
 - **Appearance:** Body colour is generally grey, with a pale white or pinkish underside.
 - Females are usually slightly larger than males.
 - They have a rounded, robust body with a small triangular dorsal fin positioned far back.
 - A distinctive “melon” (rounded forehead) helps in receiving environmental sounds.
 - Their eyes are small, underdeveloped and functionally blind.
 - Their length ranges between 7- 8.5 feet, and their weight is approximately 150 to 200 pounds.
 - **Behaviour:** They produce sound almost constantly to navigate, communicate, and find food.
 - They are usually found individually or in pairs but have also been seen in groups of up to 10.
 - They often swim on their side. They dive for 30 to 90 seconds and are able to hold their breath for several minutes.
 - **Diet:** They consume clams, fish, and shrimp.
 - They use their long beaks to search for prey along the riverbed. Their sharp, fang-like teeth help in capturing and eating prey.
 - **Lifespan:** They can live for about 30 years.
- **Threats**
 - Entanglement
 - Habitat degradation
 - Noise
 - Chemical contaminants
 - Vessel strikes
- **Conservation status:**
 - **IUCN:** It is classified as Endangered.
 - **Wildlife Protection Act 1972:** It is classified as Schedule I.

Hib Disease

News: Hib, a once-controlled childhood illness, is re-emerging in the United States due to declining childhood Hib vaccination rates, weakening community protection.

About Hib Disease

Hib vaccine protects against the illnesses caused by Haemophilus influenzae type b bacteria



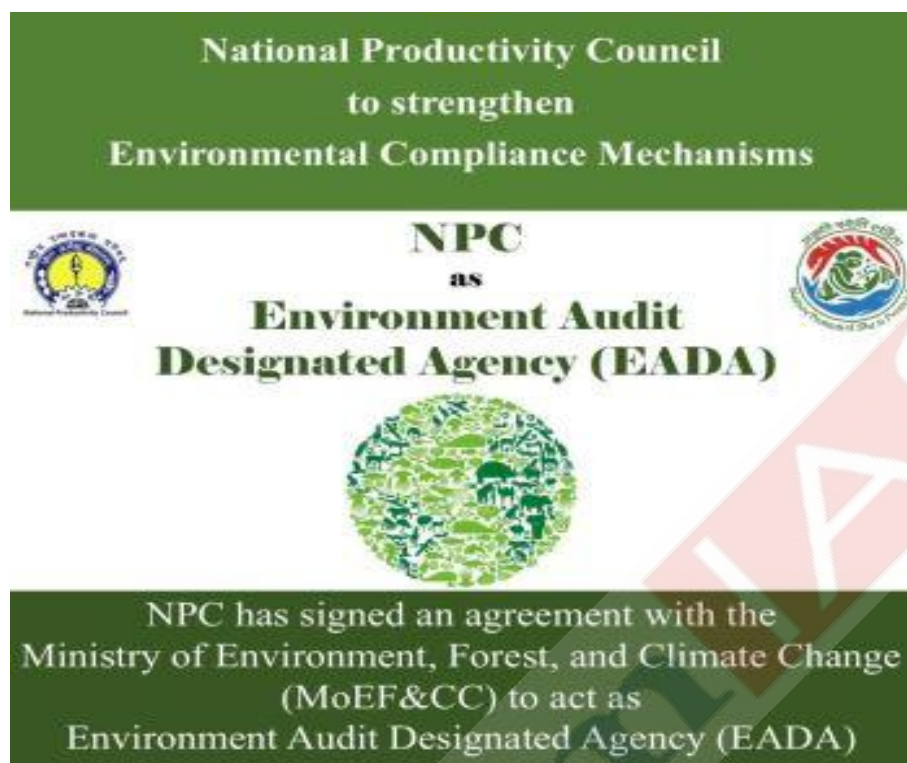
Source – ResearchGate

- **Hib stands for Haemophilus influenzae type b, and it is a deadly bacterial infection that previously caused widespread illness and death among young children.**
- **Caused by:** The disease is caused by Haemophilus influenzae type b bacteria.
- **Target Group:** The disease mainly affects children under 5 years of age, who are the most vulnerable group.
- **Transmission:** It spreads person-to-person through respiratory droplets (coughing, sneezing) and prolonged close contact.
- **Symptoms:**
 - It can lead to life-threatening conditions such as meningitis, pneumonia, epiglottitis, and sepsis.
 - Common symptoms include high fever, stiff neck, difficulty breathing, sensitivity to light, and confusion.
 - The disease can become fatal within hours if not treated promptly.
- **Prevention:** Effective Hib vaccine is available, and maintaining routine immunization is essential to prevent the disease.
- **Treatment:** The disease is treated with antibiotics, including third-generation cephalosporins like ceftriaxone, although antibiotic resistance is a growing concern.
- **India's Universal Immunization Programme (UIP):** Hib is included as part of the Pentavalent Vaccine, which protects against five diseases: Diphtheria, Pertussis, Tetanus, Hepatitis B, and Hib.

Environment Audit Designated Agency (EADA)

News: The National Productivity Council signed an agreement with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change to act as EADA under Environment Audit Rules, 2025.

About Environment Audit Designated Agency (EADA)



Source – NPC

- It is a designated body responsible for managing and implementing the environmental audit framework in India.
- **Notified by:** It is notified by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change under the Environment Audit Rules, 2025.
- **Designated Agency:** The National Productivity Council (NPC) is appointed as the Environment Audit Designated Agency.
- **Objective:** The main objective is to strengthen environmental compliance, enhance transparency, and institutionalize standardized environmental auditing practices across the country.
- **Key Functions:**
 - **Certification and Registration:** It certifies and registers Certified Environmental Auditors and Registered Environmental Auditors with clear eligibility criteria.
 - **Monitoring and Regulation:** It monitors auditor performance and can issue directions, including suspension or cancellation when required.
 - **Capacity Building:** It conducts training programmes, workshops, seminars, and awareness initiatives to improve implementation.
 - **Digital and Governance Role:** It develops digital systems and maintains a publicly accessible register of auditors.

About National Productivity Council (NPC)

- It is an autonomous, multipartite, non-profit organisation promoting productivity culture in India.
- **Ministry:** It works under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

- **Established :** It was established in 1958.
- **Objective:** It aims to improve economic competitiveness through consultancy and training services.
- **Headquarter:** Its headquarters is in New Delhi.
- **Function:**
 - **Consultancy and Training:** It provides consultancy and capacity building services to government and other organisations.
 - **Policy Support:** It acts as a think tank and supports project monitoring and implementation.

Flaxseeds Cultivation in India

News: Flaxseeds are highlighted for their benefits in reducing joint pain, improving body warmth, and enhancing health during harsh winter conditions.

About Flaxseeds Cultivation in India



Figure 13. Source – Tol

- Flaxseeds are also known as Linseed, Alsi, or Tisi.
- **Season:** In India, Flaxseeds are primarily grown as a Rabi (winter) crop.
- **Scientific Name:** The scientific name of flaxseed is *Linum usitatissimum* L., belonging to family Linaceae and genus *Linum*.
- **Geographical & Climatic Requirements:**
 - **Climate:** Flaxseed requires a temperate and cool climate for proper growth.
- **Temperature:** Minimum temperature is 10°C and maximum is 38°C, with 25–30°C needed for germination and 15–20°C for seed formation.
- **Rainfall:** An annual rainfall of 700–750 mm is optimal, while 450–500 mm is also sufficient if well distributed.
- **Soil:** It grows best in well-drained, fertile soils such as silty loam, clay loam, and silty clays.
- **Cultivation Practices:**
 - **Sowing Time:** The crop is sown during October to November as a rabi season crop depending on soil moisture.
 - **Harvesting:** The crop matures in 120–140 days depending on the variety.
 - **Key Varieties:** Important varieties include K-2, T-397, No.55, NP (RR) 9, S-4, Jawahar-17, Hira, Mukta, and Neelum.
- **Major Producing States:** Major producing states include Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Maharashtra, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, and Assam.
- **Importance**

- **Nutritional:** It is rich in Omega-3 fatty acids, especially alpha-linolenic acid, which supports heart health and reduces inflammation.
- **Economic:** It provides dual benefits of oil and fibre, offering additional income and supporting sustainable agriculture.
- **Significant:** Flaxseed plays an important role in crop rotation, soil health improvement, and provides a low-input, environmentally sustainable farming option.

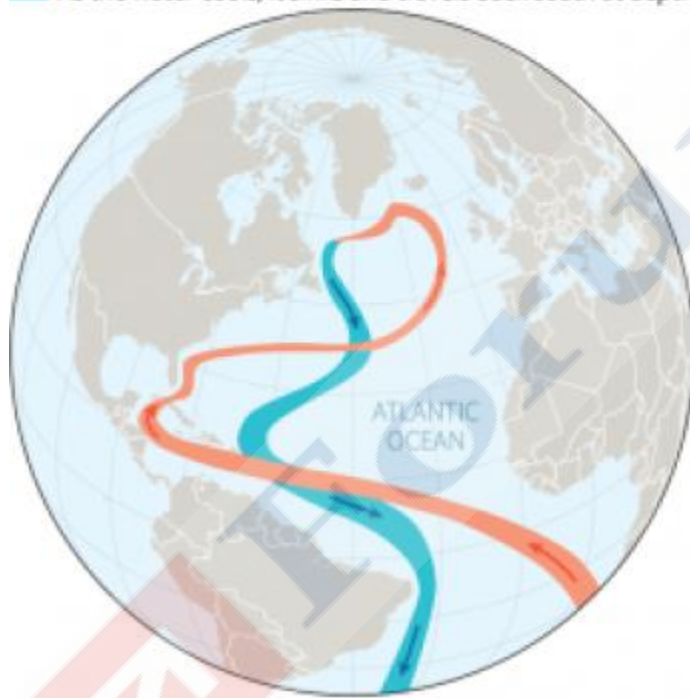
Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC)

News: As per a new study, the complete collapse of the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC) could lead to the release of large amounts of carbon into the atmosphere, turning it from a carbon sink into a source.

About Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC)

Atlantic meridional overturning circulation

- Warm water travels northwards close to the surface
- As the water cools, it sinks and travels back south at depth



- The AMOC is a system of ocean currents that circulates water within the Atlantic Ocean, bringing warm water north and cold water south.
- **Mechanism:** The circulation process begins as warm water near the surface moves toward the poles (such as the Gulf Stream in the North Atlantic), where it cools and forms sea ice.
 - As this ice forms, salt is left behind in the ocean water. Due to the large amount of salt in the water, it becomes denser, sinks down, and is carried southwards in the depths below.
 - Eventually, the water gets pulled back up towards the surface and warms up in a process called upwelling, completing the cycle.
- **Importance of AMOC**
 - AMOC aids in distributing heat and energy around the earth (heat budget).
 - Western Europe's climate is less harsh even in winters because of AMOC (Gulf Stream, North Atlantic Drift).
- It acts as a carbon sink by absorbing and storing atmospheric carbon.
- **Weakening of AMOC**
 - It takes an estimated 1,000 years for a parcel (any given cubic meter) of water to complete its journey along the belt.
 - However, climate models suggest that the AMOC will weaken over the 21st Century as greenhouse gases increase.
 - This is because as the atmosphere warms, the surface ocean beneath it retains more of its heat.
 - Meanwhile increases in rainfall and ice melt mean it gets fresher too.

- All these changes make the ocean water lighter and so reduce the sinking in the 'conveyor belt', leading to a weaker AMOC.
- Consequences of a weakened AMOC
 - A decrease in marine productivity in the North Atlantic (less sinking will lead to less mixing of water)
 - More storms in Northern Europe
 - Less Sahelian summer rainfall and South Asian summer rainfall
 - A reduced number of tropical cyclones in the Atlantic
 - An increase in regional sea level along the northeast coast of North America

Exercise DUSTLIK – VII 2026

News: The Indian Army contingent departed to Namangam, Uzbekistan for the 7th edition of India-Uzbekistan joint military Exercise DUSTLIK.

About Exercise DUSTLIK – VII 2026



Figure 14. Source – PIB

- It is an annual joint military exercise conducted alternatively in India and Uzbekistan.
- 2026 edition: The Exercise is scheduled to be conducted at Gurumsaray Field Training Area, Namangam, Uzbekistan from 12 to 25 April 2026.
- Last edition: The last edition (2025) was conducted at Foreign Training Node, Aundh (Pune) in April 2025.
- Contingents involved: The Indian Armed Forces contingent comprising 60 personnel is being represented by 45 personnel from the Indian Army, majorly from a Battalion of the MAHAR Regiment and 15 personnel from the Indian Air Force.
- The Uzbekistan contingent also comprises of approximately 60 personnel, from Uzbekistan Army and Air Force.
- Aim: The aim of exercise is to foster military cooperation and enhance combined capabilities to execute joint operations in semi-mountainous terrain.
 - It would focus on high degree of physical fitness, joint planning, joint tactical drills and basics of special arms skills.
 - The Exercise will also establish a unified operational algorithm between the command-and-control structures of both the contingents for planning and execution of joint operations.
- Key operational aspects: land navigation, strike missions on enemy bases and seizure of enemy-held areas

- **Significance:** It will enable the two sides to share their best practices in Tactics, Techniques and Procedures of conducting joint operations and will further strengthen interoperability, operational synergy and joint command and control coordination between the contingents.
 - The Exercise will facilitate developing bonhomie and camaraderie between soldiers of both the countries.
 - This will also enhance the level of defence cooperation, further fostering bilateral relations between the two friendly nations.

Right to Vote in India

News : The Supreme Court highlighted the constitutional and sentimental value of voting while hearing appeals of lakhs of excluded voters in West Bengal.

About Right to Vote in India



- The right to vote in India is a statutory right created and regulated by law, not a fundamental right.
- **Constitutional and Legal Provisions on Voting:**
 - **Article 326:** It provides the basis of elections through universal adult suffrage for citizens aged 18 or above, subject to legal disqualifications.
 - **Representation of the People Act, 1950:** It disqualifies non-citizens and requires voters to be ordinary residents and at least 18 years old.
 - **Representation of the People Act, 1951:** It allows enrolled individuals to vote unless disqualified or imprisoned.
 - Thus, the right to vote is subject to legal conditions and is not absolute.
- **Major Supreme Court views:**
 - **N.P. Ponnuswami (1952):** The Court held that the right to vote is purely statutory.
 - **Jyoti Basu (1982):** It reaffirmed that voting is neither a fundamental nor common law right.
 - **PUCL v. Union of India (2003):** It clarified that voting is statutory, but the right to know candidates' details is fundamental under Article 19(1)(a).
 - **Kuldip Nayar (2006):** It again confirmed that the right to vote remains statutory in nature.
- **Significant:** The Supreme Court emphasised that voting carries both constitutional importance and strong sentimental value for citizens.

Startup India Fund of Funds 2.0

News: The government has notified Startup India Fund of Funds 2.0 with ₹10,000 crore corpus to mobilise capital and strengthen the startup ecosystem.



Figure 15. Source – PIB

About Startup India Fund of Funds 2.0

- It is a government-backed fund with ₹10,000 crore corpus to mobilize venture and growth capital for startups.
- Ministry: It is under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- Implementation Agency: The Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) will operationalize the scheme, along with another domestic agency.
- Aim: It aims to mobilise long-term domestic capital, strengthen the venture capital ecosystem, and support innovation-led entrepreneurship.
- Funding Mechanism: The fund will invest in SEBI-registered Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs), which will further invest in startups through equity and equity-linked instruments.
- Eligibility: Eligible entities are SEBI-registered Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs) that receive support under the scheme.

- Duration: Investments under the scheme will be made over the 16th and 17th Finance Commission cycles.
- Key Features of FoF 2.0:
 - Segmented Funding Approach: It focuses on deep tech, early-stage startups, and innovative manufacturing sectors.
 - Structured Governance: Selection of AIFs will be done by Venture Capital Investment Committee (VCIC) with monitoring by Empowered Committee (EC).
 - National Reach: It promotes investment beyond major cities to ensure wider innovation.
 - Addressing Capital Gaps: It directs funds towards high-risk and capital-intensive sectors.
- Significant: It will strengthen economic resilience, generate high-quality jobs, and position India as a global innovation hub.

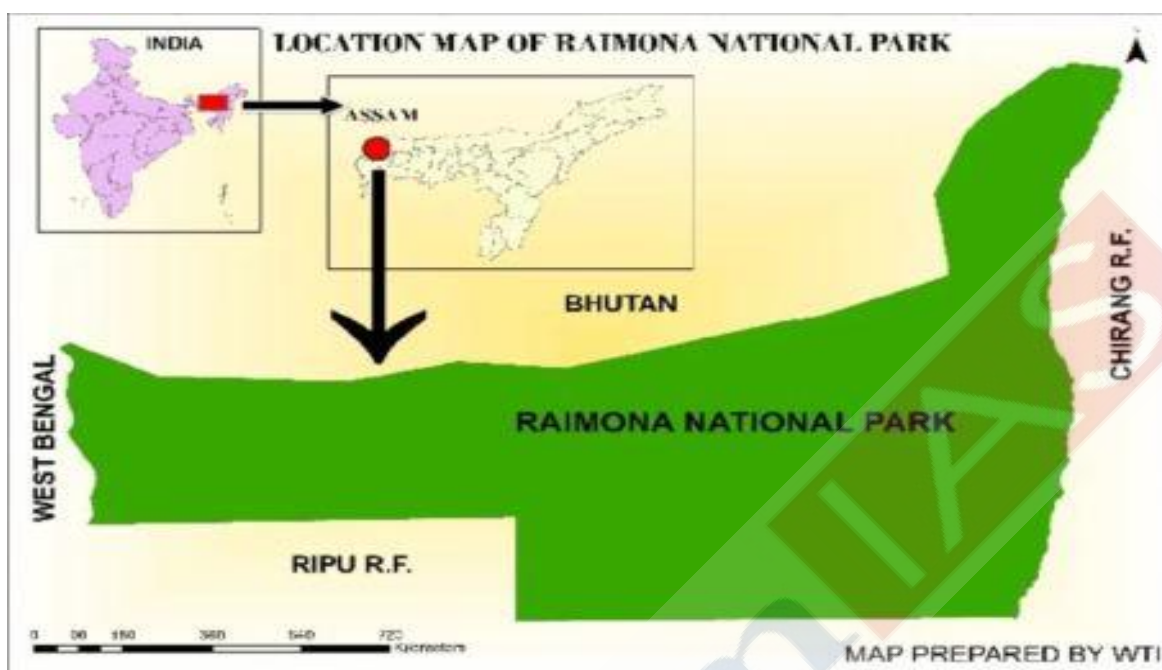
About Startup India Fund of Funds 1.0

- Launch and Purpose: It was launched in 2016 under Startup India Action Plan to address funding gaps.
- Corpus Utilisation: ₹10,000 crore was allocated under the scheme.
- Ecosystem Role: It helped nurture first-time founders and strengthen the domestic venture capital ecosystem.

Raimona National Park

News: A new gecko species *Cyrtodactylus raimonaensis* was discovered near Raimona National Park, highlighting its rich biodiversity and research potential.

About Raimona National Park



Source – ResearchGate

- Raimona National Park is a critical conservation area and part of the Eastern Himalayan foothills biodiversity hotspot.
- Location: The park is located in the Gossaigaon subdivision of Kokrajhar district in the Bodoland Territorial Region, Assam, near the India-Bhutan border.
- Transboundary Conservation: It forms a transboundary landscape with Bhutan's Phibsoo Wildlife Sanctuary and Jigme Singye Wangchuck National Park and West Bengal's Buxa Tiger Reserve, covering more than 2,400 sq. km.
- Topography: The park lies in the Eastern Himalayan foothills with altitude ranging from 85 m to 1042 m.
- Major Rivers: The Sankosh River forms the western boundary, the Saralbhanga River the eastern boundary, and the Pekua River the southern boundary.
- Vegetation: It has about 380 plant species, including tropical forests, orchids, riverine grasslands, and multiple forest types like moist deciduous and evergreen forests.
- Flora: The park features tree species such as Sal, Teak (*Tectona grandis*), Banyan, Assam Rosewood, and bamboo species like *Bambusa balcooa*, along with orchids including *Cymbidium* and *Dendrobium*.
- Fauna: It is home to Golden Langur (endemic species), Asian elephant, Royal Bengal tiger, clouded leopard, wild water buffalo, and 170 bird species and 150 butterfly species.
- Significant: The park is important for Golden Langur conservation and as an elephant corridor connecting Assam plains with Bhutan hills.

National Parks in Assam

- Assam has eight national parks that protect diverse ecosystems, rich biodiversity, and important wildlife habitats across floodplains, forests, and Himalayan foothill regions.

- **Kaziranga National Park:** It is located across Nagaon, Golaghat, and Sonitpur districts along Brahmaputra floodplains, and it is important for supporting over 70% of world one-horned rhinoceros population.
- **Manas National Park:** It is located in western Assam along the Bhutan border, and it is important for high biodiversity and holds status as Tiger Reserve, Biosphere Reserve, and World Heritage Site.
- **Dibru-Saikhowa National Park:** It is located in Assam's riverine region, and it is important as a biosphere reserve and supporting Gangetic dolphins and migratory birds
- **Nameri National Park:** It is located in Sonitpur district adjoining Arunachal Pradesh, and it is important as the core of Nameri Tiger Reserve supporting diverse mammals and riverine ecosystems.
- **Orang National Park:** It is located on the northern bank of Brahmaputra, and it is important as the oldest game reserve supporting rhinoceros and Bengal florican habitat.
- **Dehing Patkai National Park:** It is located in Dibrugarh and Tinsukia districts, and it is important for protecting wet evergreen forests and forms part of Dehing-Patkai Elephant Reserve.
- **Raimona National Park:** It is located along Indo-Bhutan boundary in Bodoland, and it is important as a transboundary ecological corridor supporting golden langur and maintaining forest ecosystems.
- **Sikhna Jwhlao National Park:** It is located in the Bodoland Territorial Region of Assam and it is important as Assam's eighth national park designated in March 2025 strengthening conservation network.

Veli-Akkulam Estuary

News: The Veli-Akkulam estuary is gradually degrading as invasive species, pollution, urban runoff, and encroachment are disrupting its food web and reducing native biodiversity.

About Veli-Akkulam estuary

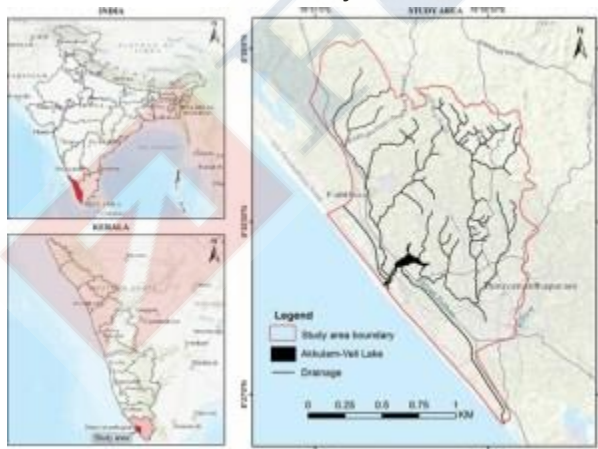


Figure 16. Source: Tandfonline

- **Location:** The Veli-Akkulam Estuary is located on the Thiruvananthapuram coast, Kerala.
- It is a **small, shallow, and bar-built estuary** that forms part of the Kerala backwater system, adjoining the Lakshadweep Sea.
- **Structure:** The estuary is **divided by a man-made bund into two separate sections:**
 - the western Veli Estuary
 - the northeastern Akkulam Estuary
- Its connection to the sea is **not permanent** and occurs **intermittently** during the **monsoon season** through the **natural breaching of a coastal sandbar**.
- **Reasons for degradation:**
 - **Proliferation of invasive species:** The estuary is

now being largely dominated by invasive species.

- Native fish like the **prized karimeen (*Etroplus suratensis*)**, **barbs**, and **indigenous catfish** have declined. Meanwhile, invasive species such as **Mozambique tilapia (*Oreochromis mossambicus*)** and **Nile tilapia (*Oreochromis niloticus*)** have increased rapidly, **outcompeting native fish for food and habitat**.
- **Trajectory of ecological decline:** The estuary is gradually moving toward “**a clear path of ecological decline**”, shifting from a balanced ecosystem to one that is **simpler and less stable**. This is known as **trophic simplification**.
 - It means the food web is becoming shorter, less diverse, and less interconnected.
- **Drivers of degradation:** As a temporarily closed system, the estuary frequently **experiences limited water exchange and low oxygen levels**, further promoting excessive algal growth and organic buildup.
 - In addition to these natural constraints, it is **increasingly affected by human-induced activities such as encroachment into catchment areas and discharge of pollutants into the body and other streams connected to it**.
 - Water quality has also **declined due to rising nutrient loads, organic pollution, and contamination from heavy metals** originating from both point and diffuse sources.

Balikatan Combat Exercise

News: Japan will deploy combat units to participate in the Balikatan exercises for the first time, marking a historic shift in its security engagement with Southeast Asia.

About Balikatan Combat Exercise



Source: The Diplomat

- It is the **largest bilateral military exercise** conducted between the **Armed Forces of the Philippines and the U.S.A.**
- It is also known as “**shoulder-to-shoulder**,” an exercise reflecting the **spirit** of the exercise and symbolizing the **strong alliance between the Philippines and the United States**.
- **Frequency:** It is held **annually**.

Factly Compilation [Second Week] April 2026

- **Aim:** It is **designed to strengthen regional security** through combined operations.
- **First Edition:** The first Balikatan Exercises took place in **2001**.
- The **2026 edition is the 41st iteration of the exercise**.
- **Duration:** It will start from **20th April to 8th May 2026**.
- **Participating nations:** More than **17,000 soldiers** from **seven** participating nations will be taking part in the exercise.
 - The troops will come from the **Philippines, U.S.A, Australia, Japan, Canada, France, and New Zealand**.
 - This would be the **first time since World War II** that **Japanese combat troops will be on Philippine soil**.
 - Also for the **first time**, **Japan will fire a Type 88 ground-to-surface missile during the drills**.
- **Activities conducted:**
 - **The drills will cover land, sea, air and cyberspace domains**.
 - The drills typically involve a wide range of activities, including maritime security, amphibious operations, humanitarian assistance, and disaster response.