



22 May, 2024

Accreditation to Indian NHRC

Context: For the second year, a UN-affiliated organization has delayed accreditation for India's National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).

➤ NHRC Accreditation Delayed

- **Accreditation Postponed:** For the second consecutive year, a UN-affiliated organization has deferred accreditation for India's National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).
- **Impact of Delay:** Without accreditation from the Geneva-based Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI), the NHRC cannot represent India or vote at the UN Human Rights Council.
- **Concerns Raised:** The delay raises questions about the NHRC's independence, competence, and fairness.

➤ Accrediting Agency: GANHRI

- **Role of GANHRI:** GANHRI, representing around 120 national human rights institutions, reviews and accredits these institutions every five years in compliance with the Paris Principles.
- **Subcommittee on Accreditation (SCA):** GANHRI acts through the SCA, categorising NHRIs into 'A' and 'B' groups.
- **Current Accreditations:** As of November 29, 2023, 120 NHRIs were accredited by GANHRI—88 with 'A' status (full compliance) and 32 with 'B' status (partial compliance).

➤ Paris Principles

- **Adoption:** The Paris Principles were adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 20, 1993.
- **Criteria:** The principles set out six criteria for effective functioning NHRIs:
 1. Broad mandate based on universal human rights norms.
 2. Autonomy from the government.
 3. Independence guaranteed by statute or Constitution.
 4. Pluralism in membership.
 5. Adequate resources.
 6. Adequate powers of investigation.
- **Functionality:** NHRIs should be able to receive complaints from individuals, third parties, NGOs, trade unions, or other representative organizations.

➤ Consequences of Losing Accreditation

- **'A' Status:** Allows full participation in the UN Human Rights Council, its subsidiary bodies, and some UNGA bodies. Also grants full membership of GANHRI with voting rights.

- **'B' Status:** Allows participation in GANHRI meetings without voting or governance rights.
- **Current Situation:** Without accreditation, the NHRC cannot represent India at the UN Human Rights Council or vote.

➤ India's Accreditation History

- **Initial Accreditation:** NHRC was first accredited in 1999.
- **'A' Rank:** Achieved 'A' status in 2006 and retained it in 2011.
- **2016 Deferral:** Accreditation was deferred due to political appointments and lack of gender balance and pluralism but was ultimately granted 'A' status in 2017.
- **Recent Deferrals:** Accreditation withheld last year for reasons including governmental interference and dominance of ruling party affiliates in NHRC.

Flight Turbulence

Context: One person died and several were injured after Singapore Airlines flight SQ321 from London to Singapore encountered severe turbulence on May 20.

- **Definition:** Turbulence is the disruption of airflow over an airplane's wings, causing irregular vertical motion.

➤ Types of Turbulence

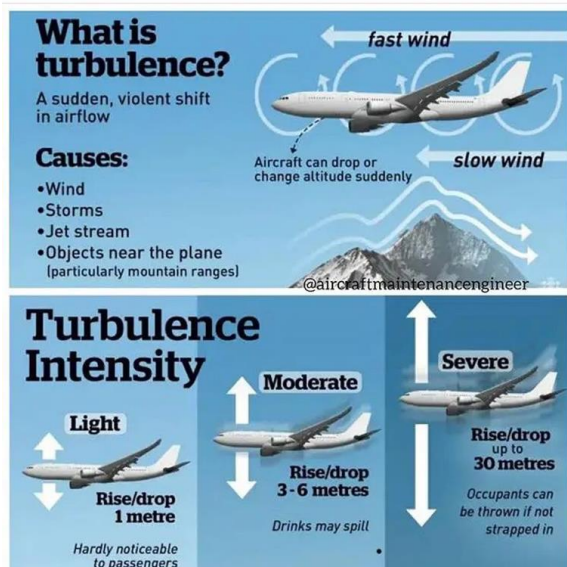
- **Wind Shear:** Sudden changes in wind direction or speed, typically near thunderstorms or jet streams.
- **Frontal:** Occurs in the frontal zone with warm air lifting and friction between air masses; often near thunderstorms.
- **Convective:** Caused by rising hot air pockets from the ground, affecting the rate of descent during approach.
- **Wake:** Forms behind aircraft, especially large ones, creating vortices that can impact following smaller planes.
- **Mechanical:** Occurs when airflow is disrupted by tall structures like mountains or buildings.
- **Clear Air:** Happens when crossing between different air masses, often near jet streams.

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- **Mountain Wave:** Severe oscillations on the downwind side of mountains due to strong perpendicular winds.



➤ Safety Measures

- Keep seat belts buckled at all times.
- Follow flight attendant instructions.
- Pay attention to safety briefings.
- Use approved child safety seats for children under two.
- Adhere to carry-on restrictions.

➤ FAA Recommendations:

- Improve dispatch procedures with full-time communication.
- Include turbulence in weather briefings.
- Promote real-time information sharing between pilots and dispatchers.
- Reinforce turbulence avoidance policies through training.
- Consider rerouting with atmospheric modelling and data displays.
- Use operating procedures and training to prevent injuries.
- Emphasise flight attendant safety, communication, and coordination.
- Gather data and review the airline's history of turbulence encounters and injuries.

46th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM)

Context: A newly established task force has been convened to develop a tourism framework specifically tailored for Antarctica, addressing mounting apprehensions regarding its burgeoning expansion.

- **Organisers:** National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), Goa, under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, and the Antarctic Treaty Secretariat.
- **Participants:** Over 350 participants from nearly 40 nations.

➤ Meeting Significance

- **Purpose:** High-level global annual meetings conducted under the Antarctic Treaty.
- **Focus Areas:** Science, policy, governance, management, preservation, and protection of Antarctica.
- **CEP Role:** Advises ATCM on environmental protection and conservation in Antarctica, established under the Madrid Protocol in 1991.

➤ Antarctic Treaty

- The Antarctic Treaty was signed in 1959 and entered into force in 1961.
- It established Antarctica as a region dedicated to peaceful purposes, scientific cooperation, and environmental protection.
- Over the years, the Treaty has garnered widespread support, with 56 countries currently party to it.

➤ Provisions of the Antarctic Treaty

- Antarctica shall be used for peaceful purposes only.
- Freedom of scientific investigation in Antarctica and cooperation toward that end shall continue.
- Scientific observations and results from Antarctica shall be exchanged and made freely available.

➤ India's Involvement

- India has been a Consultative Party to the Antarctic Treaty since 1983.
- India participates in the decision-making process along with the other 28 Consultative Parties to the Antarctic Treaty.
- India's first Antarctic research station, Dakshin Gangotri, was established in 1983.
- India currently operates two year-round research stations: Maitri (established in 1989) and Bharati (established in 2012).
- The permanent research stations facilitate Indian Scientific Expeditions to Antarctica, which have been ongoing annually since 1981.
- In 2022, India enacted the Antarctic Act, reaffirming its commitment to the Antarctic Treaty.

➤ Antarctic Treaty Secretariat (ATS)

- The Antarctic Treaty Secretariat (ATS) serves as the administrative hub for the Antarctic Treaty System.
- Established in 2004, the ATS coordinates the ATCM and CEP meetings.
- The ATS republishes and disseminates information.
- The ATS facilitates diplomatic communication, exchanges, and negotiations related to Antarctic governance and management.

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NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

Rangeland



Recently, a United Nations report highlighted that up to 50% of the world's rangelands are degraded, a figure nearly double the previous estimates of 20-35%.

About Rangeland:

- Rangeland refers to vast expanses of **land primarily used for grazing livestock**, where natural vegetation such as **grasses, shrubs and herbs** serve as the main source of forage.
- These landscapes are typically characterized by open spaces, **minimal tree cover** and are **unsuitable for intensive agriculture**.
- They cover 80 million square kilometers, **constituting over 54% of terrestrial surface**.
- They support extensive livestock production systems, **covering 45% of global land surface**.
- Approximately 40% of India's total land surface** is used for grazing, including grasslands (17%) and forests (23%).
- Pastoralism is one of the oldest and most sustainable food systems, supporting up to 500 million people worldwide.
- The United Nations **declared 2026 as the International Year of Rangelands** and Pastoralists to advocate for healthy rangelands and sustainable pastoralism.
- Union Ministry for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, and Dairying** initiates the first census to estimate the number of pastoralists, animals and the pastoral economy in India.
- Approximately **20 million pastoralists currently graze India's forests and grasslands**.

Koundinya Wildlife Sanctuary

Recently, researchers from the Zoological Survey of India and the Andhra Pradesh Biodiversity Board rediscovered the Sri Lankan golden-backed frog (*Hylarana gracilis*) after two centuries in Koundinya Wildlife Sanctuary.

About Koundinya Wildlife Sanctuary:

- The Koundinya Wildlife Sanctuary is an **elephant reserve and wildlife sanctuary** in the Chittoor district of **Andhra Pradesh**.
- It's located on the **banks of the Koundinya river**, in the Palamner-Kuppam forest ranges and is part of the Government of **India's Project Elephant**, a nationwide elephant conservation project.
- The Kaigal and the Kaundinya rivers** which are the tributaries of the **Palar river**, flow through this sanctuary.
- The sanctuary is home to about 78 Asian elephants,
- Flora:** The forest, a Southern tropical dry deciduous type, features diverse flora including **Albizia amara, Ficus glomerata** and **Zizyphus xylocarpus**.
- Fauna:** The sanctuary is home to insects, **reptiles, birds** and mammals, including painted **grasshoppers**, common cobras, **partridges**, and **Indian elephants**.



Blue Sheep



Recently, wildlife authorities in Himachal Pradesh's Lahaul & Spiti district began surveys to census the populations of blue sheep (bharal) and Himalayan ibex.

About the Blue Sheep:

- The blue sheep, **also known as the bharal** (*Pseudois nayaur*), is a **goat-antelope** native to the Himalayas.
- It is a **medium-sized mammal** that lives in mountainous regions of **India, Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet** and **Pakistan**.
- The blue sheep is **45–65 inches long**, with a **tail of 3.9–7.9 inches** and **stands 27–36 inches high** at the shoulder.
- It has a **stocky body, stout legs, a broad chest** and **robust shoulders**.
- It inhabits treeless slopes, **alpine meadows**, shrub zones, gentle hillsides, areas near cliffs and rocky retreats.
- Blue sheep is **herbivorous** and is **preyed upon by snow leopards**.

About the Himalayan Ibex:

- The Himalayan Ibex (*Capra sibirica hemalayanus*) is a **wild goat subspecies of the Siberian Ibex** (*Capra sibirica*).

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	- It is also known as the Central Asian Ibex, the Gobi Ibex, the Mongolian Ibex and the Tian Shan Ibex. - The Himalayan Ibex can be found in the trans-Himalayan hills of Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh, mainly at heights of 3,800 meters and above. - The Himalayan Ibex is a herbivore that feeds on mountain grasses and plants. - Both blue sheep and Himalayan ibex are classified as Least Concern on the IUCN Red List.
Place in News Iran	Yesterday, on 21st May 2024, the national flag flew at half-mast nationwide as a one-day state mourning was observed following the demise of Iranian President Dr. Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, who tragically perished in a helicopter crash. Iran (Capital: Tehran) Location: Iran also known as Persia and officially the Islamic Republic of Iran, is a country situated in Western Asia. Boundaries: Iran shares its borders with Pakistan and Afghanistan (East), Turkey and Iraq (West), Azerbaijan, Armenia, Turkmenistan and the Caspian Sea (North) and The Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman (South). Physical Features: Karun River is the most significant river of Iran, flowing through the Zagros Mountains and supporting agricultural activities. Mount Damavand is an active volcano, considered a stratovolcano, situated in the Alborz mountain range. - Iran holds substantial reserves of oil and natural gas, influencing its economy and global geopolitics. 

POINTS TO PONDER

- In which city of Karnataka was the first evidence of rock art recently discovered? – **Mangaluru**
- What is the theme of World Bee Day 2024? – **Bee Engaged with Youth**
- Ebrahim Raisi, who recently passed away in a helicopter crash, was the President of which country? – **Iran**
- Nikhat Zareen, who recently won a gold medal at the Elorda Cup 2024, belongs to which sport? – **Boxing**
- William Lai Ching-Te has recently become the new President of which country? – **Taiwan**

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