

26 December 2024

Pangolin Poaching

Context: In the last two months, Telangana has seen a sharp increase in pangolin poaching, with three of the seven registered cases over the past four years occurring during this period. This uptick has raised alarms about the reactivation of illicit pangolin trafficking networks, particularly as these networks exploit vulnerable tribal youth. The resurgence of smuggling activities, which had previously subsided, is now concerning forest authorities in Telangana and neighboring Andhra Pradesh.

About Pangolins and why are they targeted by Poachers:

- Pangolins are nocturnal mammals with armored scales, making them highly vulnerable to poaching. They are sought after for their scales used in exotic fashion items and traditional medicines, particularly in Southeast Asia and China, and their meat is considered a delicacy, driving illegal trade.



Status of Pangolins in India:

- The Indian pangolin (*Manis crassicaudata*) is listed as a vulnerable species by the IUCN and is fully protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972. Its international trade is banned under CITES Appendix I.

Challenges in Combating Pangolin Trafficking:

- Lack of Intelligence Networks:** There is a shortage of effective intelligence systems to track and dismantle trafficking operations. Investigations often stall after arresting local poachers, as identifying international buyers is difficult.
- Difficulty Tracing Buyers:** Pangolin trafficking involves poachers, middlemen, and international

buyers. Once local poachers are caught, finding the buyers overseas complicates enforcement.

- Vulnerability of Tribal Communities:** Tribal communities are often unaware of the environmental harm caused by poaching and are lured by traffickers offering quick financial rewards.
- Limited Awareness:** The lack of awareness about the severity of pangolin poaching among local populations makes it easier for traffickers to exploit vulnerable individuals.

Steps taken to address the issue

- Raising Awareness:** Authorities are educating local communities on the environmental impact of poaching to encourage conservation efforts.
- Promoting Sustainable Livelihoods:** Tribal communities are engaged in ecotourism, with 250 Chenchu tribals trained as naturalists and guides in Amrabad.
- Providing Alternative Income:** Skill development programs, like making jute bags, offer alternative livelihoods to reduce reliance on poaching.
- Strengthening Law Enforcement:** Increased vigilance and coordination with neighboring states aim to make it harder for poachers and traffickers to operate undetected.
- Improving Intelligence Networks:** Authorities are focused on building better intelligence networks to track and disrupt trafficking operations.

Decline in Domestic Migration in India

Context: Recently, a report published by Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) indicates that the number of domestic migrants in India has decreased by approximately 12% between 2011 and 2023. The number of migrants is estimated to be 40.21 crore in 2023, compared to 45.58 crore in 2011. This decline suggests a slowing trend in migration across the country.

Factors contributing to the decline in domestic migration:

- The decline in domestic migration is attributed to several factors, including improved economic opportunities and

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enhanced services in regions that traditionally serve as sources of migration. Key improvements include better access to education, healthcare, infrastructure, and connectivity in rural and semi-urban areas. This has reduced the need for people to migrate to larger cities in search of opportunities.

States in which percentage share of migrants decreased:

- According to the report, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh have seen a reduction in their share of total domestic migrants. The percentage of people migrating to these states has decreased, likely due to the availability of better opportunities in other regions and the improvements in local economic conditions.

About migration patterns at the district level:

- At the district level, the report identifies key origin and destination districts for migration. Cities like Mumbai, Bengaluru, Delhi, Hyderabad, and Chennai are major destinations for migrants, while Valsad, Chittoor, Paschim Bardhaman, and Agra are some of the top origin districts. Migration tends to occur over short distances, with urban agglomerations attracting the largest numbers of migrants.

States attracting the most migrants changed:

- The report reveals that West Bengal, Rajasthan, and Karnataka have seen significant growth in their share of incoming migrants, while Andhra Pradesh and Bihar have seen a decline in their ranking. This shift reflects changing migration trends and economic development in these regions, leading to new patterns of migration across the country.

About EAC-PM:

- The Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) is an independent body that provides advice to the Government of India, specifically to the Prime Minister, on economic and related issues.
- Its role is advisory in nature and helps guide policy formulation with expert economic insights. Key functions of the EAC-PM:
 - Analyzing economic and related issues referred by the Prime Minister.
 - Offering advice on macroeconomic matters, whether it is requested by the Prime Minister or on the council's own initiative.
 - Addressing any other tasks that the Prime Minister

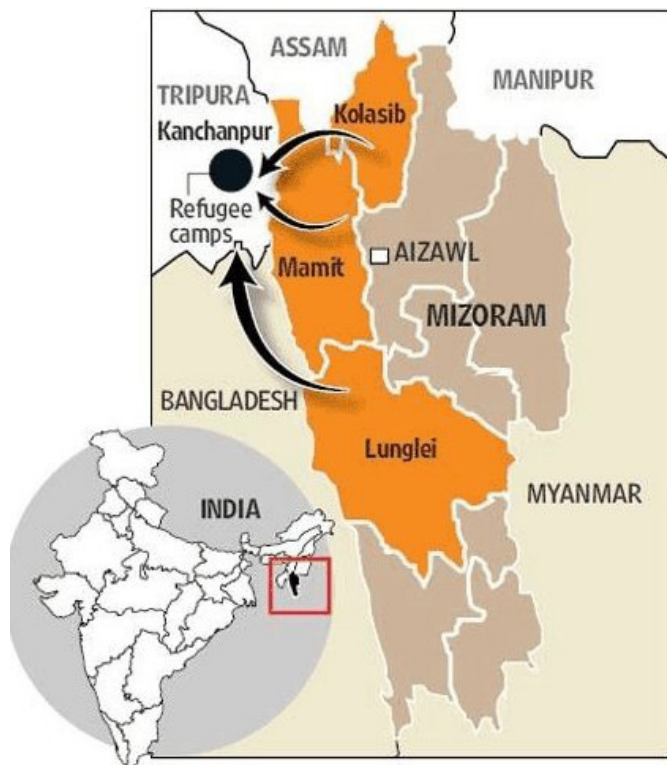
may assign from time to time. The EAC-PM's role is advisory, meaning its recommendations are not binding on the government.

Composition of EAC-PM:

- The EAC-PM is headed by a chairperson and consists of eminent economists as its members. The council is supported by a team of officials and administrators.
- The exact number of members and staff can vary as the council is often reconstituted with different members, depending on the priorities and economic expertise required at any given time.

Bru Resettlement

Context: The Union government's recent announcement to spend Rs. 900 crore to settle the Bru community in 11 villages marks a significant step towards rehabilitating the displaced community. The Bru resettlement initiative aims to provide permanent homes and improve living conditions for the Bru (Reang) community, who faced ethnic clashes in Mizoram over 27 years ago



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Financial Investment and Project Scope:

- The resettlement plan involves the establishment of 11 new Bru migrant villages across Tripura, benefiting approximately 40,000 people. A significant Rs 900 crore has been allocated for the resettlement program, ensuring that the Bru community receives the support needed to rebuild their lives.

Key Support and Facilities for the Bru Community

- As part of the resettlement, essential facilities such as clean drinking water, solar street lights, healthcare centers, and schools have been provided. Additionally, cooperative societies have been set up to offer income opportunities. Each family received financial assistance for housing and a monthly stipend to ensure long-term stability.

Financial Assistance Provided to Families:

- To support the resettlement process, each Bru family was given Rs 1.5 lakh for house construction and Rs 4 lakh as a financial deposit. Moreover, a monthly stipend of Rs 5,000 will be provided for 24 months to ensure that the families have a sustainable source of income during the transition.

Maharashtra Prisons and Correctional Services Act, 2024

Context: The Maharashtra Assembly passed the Maharashtra Prisons and Correctional Services Act, 2024 on December 20, 2024, signaling a significant step toward reforming the state's prison system. Based on the Model Prisons Bill, 2023 provided by the Centre, the new Act introduces key changes in prison management, prisoner welfare, and staff conditions.

Key Provisions of the Act

- The Maharashtra Prisons and Correctional Services Act, 2024 includes a range of provisions aimed at modernizing the state's prison system. Notable provisions include:
 - » The establishment of high-security prisons and detention centres in Mumbai and Pune.
 - » The creation of specialized prisons, including open prisons for women and temporary prisons.
 - » Provisions for the creation of a prison and

correctional prison force to manage these reforms.

- » Welfare funds for both prisoners and prison staff to improve their living and working conditions.

Significance of Open Prisons and Open Colonies:

- One of the Act's key features is the creation of open prisons and open colonies. These facilities are less restrictive than traditional prisons, offering a rehabilitative environment aimed at helping former prisoners reintegrate into society.
- The open prisons provide inmates with a chance to engage in productive work and develop life skills, reducing the chances of recidivism after release.

Welfare Funds for Prisoners and Staff:

- The Act introduces welfare funds for both prisoners and prison staff. For prisoners, the fund will assist with rehabilitation and reintegration efforts post-release. For staff, it aims to improve their working conditions and provide support for their personal and professional growth. This dual approach highlights the importance of welfare for both the incarcerated individuals and those responsible for their care.

Addressing the Bail Issue and Overcrowding:

- The issue of overcrowding, particularly the situation where over 1,600 accused individuals remain in prison despite being granted bail, is another focal point of the Act. These individuals are often unable to pay the required bail bond.
- The Act seeks to address this by streamlining the bail process and enhancing access to justice. Additionally, with new high-security facilities and a two-storey prison in Pune, the Act aims to alleviate the issue of overcrowding, improving conditions for both prisoners and staff.



Aligning with National Standards:

- The Maharashtra Prisons and Correctional Services Act, 2024 aligns with the Centre's Model Prisons Bill, 2023, ensuring that the state's prison reforms adhere to national standards. This alignment focuses on improving the welfare of prisoners, reducing overcrowding, and enhancing rehabilitation efforts, contributing to a more humane and effective prison system in Maharashtra.

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Power Packed News

India to host ISSF Junior World Cup for the first time

- India will host the ISSF Junior World Cup in the second half of 2025. The event is the world's top junior shooting competition for rifle, pistol and shotgun.
- The National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) has been given the hosting rights for the event. This will be the ninth top-level shooting championship to be held in India.
- Earlier, India has hosted six ISSF competitions and continental championships. The Senior World Cup held in Bhopal in 2023 was also one of the successful events of India.
- This event strengthens the global confidence towards Indian shooting sports.



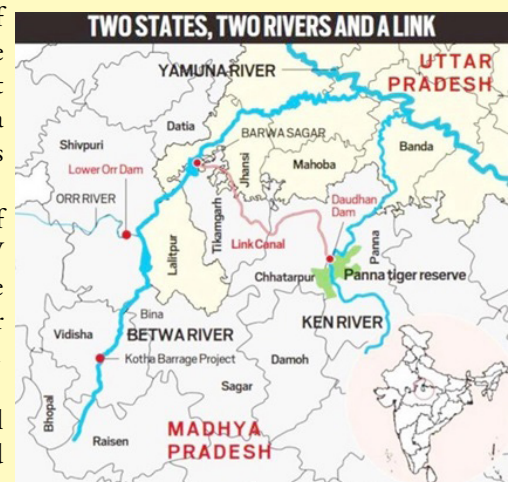
Nissan and Honda merger

- Japanese auto companies Nissan and Honda have announced their merger by August 2026. The partnership aims to co-develop future products and create a strong global presence in the mobility sector. Both companies will operate under a joint holding company.
- This combined company aims to achieve sales of more than 30 trillion yen and an operating profit of 3 trillion yen. Due to declining sales in China and the US, Nissan has taken steps to cut costs.
- All the formalities of this partnership will be completed by June 2025. This collaboration is a big step towards reviving the Japanese auto industry.



Foundation stone of Ken-Betwa river linking project laid

- Recently on 25 December, Prime Minister Modi laid the foundation stone of Ken-Betwa river linking project in Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh. This is the first initiative under the National River Linking Policy. The aim of the project is to provide drinking water to about 65 lakh people in 10 districts of Madhya Pradesh and 21 districts of Uttar Pradesh. The estimated cost on this is Rs 44,605 crore.
- This project will provide irrigation facilities to 7.18 lakh farmer families of about 2,000 villages and will produce 103 MW hydroelectricity and 27 MW solar power. A 77 meter high and 2.13 kilometer long Daudhan dam will be built in Panna Tiger Reserve on Ken River. 2,853 million cubic meters of water will be collected from the dam and transferred to Betwa River through a 221 kilometer long link canal.
- This project is a unique example of cooperation between the Central Government, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. Through this, irrigation and drinking water problems will be solved in both the states.



Loan agreement signed between Government of India and Asian Development Bank (ADB)

- Government of India and Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed a \$500 million loan agreement on 20 December 2024. This loan has been provided to support green and sustainable infrastructure projects under India's climate commitments.

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Current affairs summary for prelims

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- This amount will be given to India Infrastructure Finance Company Limited (IIFCL).
- On behalf of the Government of India, Juhi Mukherjee, Joint Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance and ADB Country Director Mio Oka signed the agreement.
- The project will strengthen the institutional capacity of IIFCL to incorporate green and sustainable practices in infrastructure projects.
- Under the project, a sustainability unit, environmental sustainability framework and scoring system will be developed to evaluate the environmental sustainability of projects.
- This loan is an important step towards ensuring sustainable development from an environmental perspective and promoting the development of green infrastructure in India.



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