

International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) Rankings

❖ Context

- Recently, the government said that **India is among the top 50 countries** with best aviation safety in the latest **ICAO rankings** and the major break through will help domestic airlines in international expansion.

Key Highlights

- In the rankings by the **International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO)**, India is now at the **48th position**, a "quantum leap" from the **102nd rank** it had in **2018**.
- ICAO has given the **Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA)** the highest Effective Implementation (EI) score of **85.49 per cent**.
- The rankings are for **187 countries** and assessments were done at different points of time.
- Under its Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP) Continuous Monitoring Approach, an ICAO Coordinated Validation Mission (ICVM) was undertaken from November 9 to 16.
- With a score of 85.49 per cent each, **India and Georgia are at the 48th position**.
- Neighbouring Pakistan is at the 100th spot with a score of 70.39 per cent.
- The rankings are **topped by Singapore with a score of 99.69 per cent**.
- It is followed by the **UAE at the second position** with a score of 98.8 per cent and the **Republic of Korea is at the third place (98.24 per cent)**.

ICAO

• About

- The constitution of ICAO is the **Convention on International Civil Aviation**, drawn up by a conference in **Chicago** in November and **December 1944**, and to which each ICAO Contracting State is a party.
- The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) is a **specialized agency of the United Nations**.

• Functions

- It coordinates the principles and techniques of international air navigation.
- It fosters the planning and development of international air transport to ensure safe and orderly growth.
- It sets standards and regulations necessary for aviation safety, security and facilitation, efficiency, economic development of air transport as well as to improve the environmental performance of aviation.
- The Organization serves as the forum for cooperation in all fields of civil aviation among its 193 Member States.

• Headquarters

- ICAO headquarters are located in the Quartier International of **Montreal, Quebec, Canada**.

• Membership

- 193 ICAO members = 192 UN Members + Cook Island.

• ICAO Council

- The Council of ICAO is elected by the Assembly every 3 years and consists of 36 members elected in 3 groups.
- The present Council was elected in October 2022.

Kaziranga Project

❖ Context

- Investments and activities under the Kaziranga Project are bearing fruit in the national park.

Key highlights

- There was just one case of poaching this year, one in 2021 and two cases in 2020.
- According to the officials, the AFD programme has been most effective in the skilling of communities in the area, particularly forest-dwelling communities.
- Community members no longer engage in illegal tree felling by middlemen and would also not give shelter to poachers.
- The **illegal timber trade** is one of the main reasons for the degradation of forests around the reserve.
- The Assam government has now begun a massive reforestation drive with the help of the AFD.

Initiatives under the project

- **Artificial highlands** where animals can escape during floods.
- More than 200 anti-poaching camps.
- Alternate livelihood training for local communities.
- Infrared-based early warning systems, triggered by elephant footfall, to either scare off herds from human habitat or to warn villagers.

Indo-Pacific Parks Partnership (I3P)

- France and India had launched the initiative in February - 2022.
- Both are members of the **High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People**.
- The initiative aims to promote a sustainable approach in the Indo-Pacific region through the development of protected areas and natural parks.



About the project

- The Kaziranga project is a part of a larger **Assam Project on Forest and Biodiversity Conservation (APFBC)**.
- **Agence Française de Développement (AFD)** has committed funding of €80.2 million for a 10-year period, between **2014-2024** for APFBC.
- APFFBC conceptualised the **reforestation of 33,500 hectares of land** and the training of 10,000 community members in alternate livelihoods by 2024.
- However, Kaziranga National Park remains the heart of the programme.
- The measures, taken under the project, will form the cornerstone of the I3P.

- The **key components** of the I3P would revolve around the following themes:
 - Biodiversity conservation.
 - Sustainable tourism development and reinforcement of local economic activities.
 - Governance reinforcement.
- The Partnership will be implemented in two phases -
 - The **first phase** will be the pilot phase which will focus on terrestrial biodiversity. For this, France has committed a grant to the Forest Department of the State of Assam.
 - The **second phase**, enlarged to include marine biodiversity, involves interested parks in the Indo-Pacific region, based on the concrete results of the first phase. This second phase will be designed by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC), India and the French Development Agency (AFD), France.

News in Between the Lines

Exit Polls



❖ Context

- As voting for Gujarat elections ended recently, exit polls have been going live.

❖ Exit Polls

- An exit poll **asks voters which political party they are supporting** after they have cast their votes in an election.
- In this, it **differs from an opinion poll**, which is held before the elections.
- An exit poll is supposed to give an indication of which way the winds are blowing in an election, along with the issues, personalities, and loyalties that have influenced voters.
- Today, exit polls in India are conducted by a number of organisations, often in tie-ups with media organisations.
- The surveys can be conducted face to face or online.
- In India, results of exit polls for a particular election are not allowed to be published till the last vote has been cast.
- **Section 126A of the Representation of the People's Act, 1951**, puts a ban on exit polls from the period between the commencements of the poll until half an hour after the closing of the final phase of the poll.
- However, there are no similar restrictions placed on opinion polls under RPA.

Cheetah



❖ Context

- Recently, The National Zoological Park, New Delhi (Delhi Zoo) celebrated "International Cheetah Day" and "Wildlife Conservation Day" on 4 December, in collaboration with **Central Zoo Authority**.

❖ Key Highlights

➤ Objective

- To **spread awareness** among the present generation about **Wildlife Conservation**.
- To **create the curiosity** among these young minds to understand the importance of Wildlife Conservation, Keystone species and role of Cheetah in grassland ecosystem.



❖ Cheetah

- The Asiatic cheetah is the only **large carnivore to have gone extinct** in India in the 1950s due to hunting and loss of habitat.
- With help from the Wildlife Institute of India and the Wildlife Trust of India, the ministry will be translocating cheetahs from South Africa, Namibia and Botswana.
- In September 2022, Eight cheetahs - five females and three males were transferred to Kuno National Park (KNP), situated in Madhya Pradesh (India) from Namibia, Africa.
- **Asiatic Cheetahs** around 40-50 found only in Iran.
- **Protection Status of Asiatic Cheetah**
 - **IUCN- Critically Endangered (African Cheetah is Vulnerable Category)**
 - **CITES- Appendix 1 (Same as African Cheetah)**

❖ Context

- Recently, The **world's first 'Token of Appreciation'**, the Soulbound Token was issued by Dr K Jayanth Murali IPS, Director General of Police, Idol Wing CID, **Tamil Nadu** to outstanding members of his team.

❖ About Soundbound Token

- Soulbound tokens (SBTs) are **non-transferable tokens representing a person's identity using blockchain technology**.
- This could include medical records, work history, and any type of information that makes up a person or entity.
- The wallets that hold or issue these records are called **"Souls."**
- People could have **multiple wallets (or Souls)** representing different parts of their lives.
 - For example, someone could have a "Credentials Soul" for their work history and a "Medical Soul" for their health records.
- Souls and SBTs would **allow people to build a verifiable, digital Web3 reputation** based on their past actions and experiences.
- On the other hand, Souls can represent an entity that allocates SBTs.
 - For example, companies can be Souls, issuing SBTs to each employee.
 - A digital country club could issue SBTs to verify membership status.
- The logic behind soulbound originates from the **popular online game World of Warcraft**.
- **Application in the NFT Sector**
 - SBTs aim to turn the NFT concept into something beyond money and bragging rights, a token that is both one-of-a-kind and non-transferable.
 - While NFTs represent assets and property, an SBT represents a person or entity's reputation.
 - And **unlike an NFT, SBTs hold zero monetary value** and cannot be traded once issued to someone's wallet.

Soulbound Token



India Inequality Report 2022: Digital Divide

❖ Context

- Oxfam India has released the report.

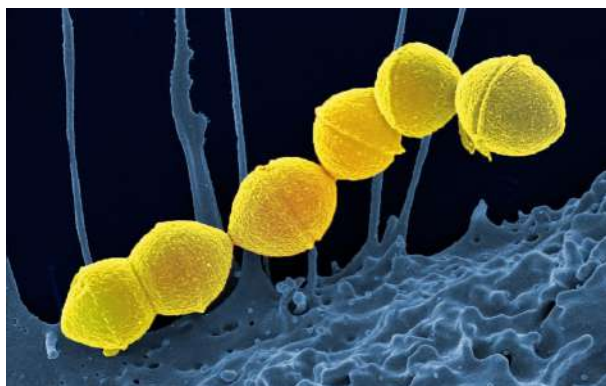
❖ Key highlights

- **Women constitute only one third of internet users in India.**
- In Asia-Pacific, **India fares the worst** with the widest gender gap of 40.4 per cent.



- **Only 31 per cent of the rural population uses the Internet** compared to 67 percent of the urban population.
- **Maharashtra has the highest internet penetration**, followed by Goa and Kerala.
- **Bihar has the lowest**, followed by Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand.
- As per the NSS (2017-18), **only about 9 per cent of the students who were enrolled in any course had access to a computer with internet.**
- 25 percent of enrolled students had access to the internet through any kind of device.
- **In rural India, the tendency to use formal financial services is lowest for ST households**, followed by SC households and OBC households.
- According to **UN's e-participation index (2022)**, which is a composite measure of three important dimensions of e-government, namely provision of online services, telecommunication connectivity and human capacity, **India ranks 105 out of 193 nations.**
- **Sikhs have the highest likelihood of having a computer** followed by Christians, Hindus and lastly Muslims.

Strep A



❖ Context

- Six children have died of Strep A, in the United Kingdom.

❖ Key highlights

- It is a **common bacterial infection**. Its symptoms include fever, skin rashes and a sore easily treated with antibiotics.
- However, the infection can get severe when the bacteria enter the bloodstream.
- This is called **invasive Group A Strep (iGAS)**. It usually manifests as high fever, severe muscle aches, pain in an area of the body and unexplained vomiting or diarrhoea.
- Bacteria called group **A Streptococcus (group A strep)** can cause many different infections.
- These infections range from minor illnesses to very serious and deadly diseases like Strep Throat, Scarlet Fever, Impetigo, Necrotising Fasciitis, Cellulitis, Rheumatic Fever, Streptococcal Toxic Shock Syndrome and Post-Streptococcal Glomerulonephritis.

World Soil Day



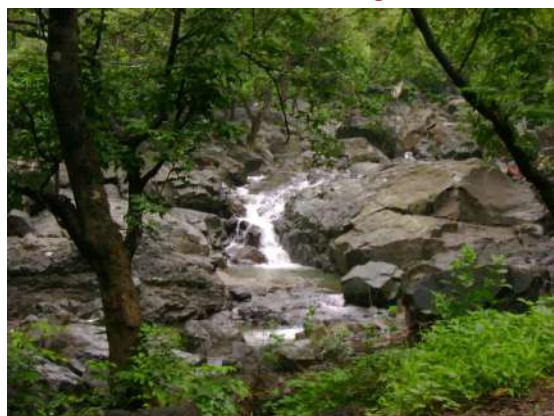
❖ Context

- The day is celebrated on **05 December every year** to draw people's attention to the importance of healthy soil for the environment and for life.

❖ Key highlights

- It was declared in **2014 by the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)**.
- The day was chosen as it coincides with the **birthday of Thailand's king, HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej**, who led the programme.
- According to the **ISRO Atlas** published in 2021, a third of the world's soils are degraded and **in India, around 29.7 percent of land is degraded.**
- Degraded soils are prone to erosion. Soil erosion and land degradation pose a major threat to global food security.
- It is estimated that **95 percent of the world's food is directly or indirectly produced on soils**. Healthy soils also store carbon and other greenhouse gases in soil organic matter (SOM).

Tungareshwar Wildlife Sanctuary



➤ **Intensive agriculture**, which promotes monocropping, regular and over-tillage as well as use of chemicals, is one of the major activities causing soil degradation.

❖ Context

➤ The Supreme Court (SC) recently exempted Tungareshwar Wildlife Sanctuary (TWS) from its **June 3 order** mandating the **creation of a one-kilometre eco-sensitive zone (ESZ)** around all Protected Areas in India.

❖ Key highlights

- It also stated that practical difficulties and ground realities will have to be taken into account before having a uniform order for creating ESZs as mandated by the June 3 order.
- Tungareshwar wildlife sanctuary also known as Tungareshwar National Park is located on a plateau in **Palghar district, north of Mumbai, in Maharashtra**.
- It forms a corridor between Sanjay Gandhi National Park and Tansa Wildlife Sanctuary.

Cryptovaranoides microlanius



❖ Context

➤ According to a study, modern lizards could have descended from a ‘beast’ roaming in the late Triassic Period spanning 252-201 million years ago.

❖ Key highlights

- Previous estimates suggested that modern lizards originated 35 million years later in the Middle Jurassic Period.
- The species name means ‘**small butcher**’ owing to the presence of sharp-edged slicing teeth.
- The study also noted a related clade **Rhynchocephalia** also originated in the late-Triassic Period. Currently, **Tuatara**, found in New Zealand, is the only survivor of this group.
- The Triassic Period followed the End-Permian Extinction, popularly called the ‘**Great Dying**’, where more than **90 per cent of the planet’s species perished**.

The US Inflation Reduction Act



❖ Context

➤ The European Union (EU) said that it will adapt its state aid rules to prevent an exodus of investment triggered by a new U.S. green energy subsidy package.

❖ Key highlights

- The act, passed in 2022, aimed at promoting investments in the US’ social safety net, lowering the cost of prescription drugs, raising taxes on corporations & promoting investments in tackling climate change.
- It **makes the largest investment in combating climate change in U.S. history** - \$430 billion, including tax credits for households to offset energy costs, investments in clean energy production and tax credits aimed at reducing carbon emissions.
- The 27 EU countries are worried their companies will be cut off from U.S. tax credits for components used in renewable energy technologies like electric cars, offered under the new law on condition they are made in North America.

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