

Ramsar Sites and Wetlands

❖ Context

- The Principal Bench of the **National Green Tribunal in New Delhi** has slapped a penalty of ₹10 crore on the Kerala government for its failure to check the indiscriminate pollution of the **Vembanad and Ashtamudi lakes**, listed as Ramsar sites.

❖ Key Highlights:

- **Vembanad Lake** : Vembanad is the **longest lake in India, as well as the largest lake in the state of Kerala**.
 - The lake has its source in four rivers, **Meenachil, Achankovil, Pampa and Manimala**.
 - It is separated from the Arabian Sea by a narrow barrier island and is a popular backwater stretch in Kerala.
 - It is the **second-largest Ramsar site in India** only after the Sundarbans in West Bengal.
- **Ashtamudi Lake** : Ashtamudi Lake is a **large freshwater lake** located in the Kollam district of Kerala, India.
 - The lake is also called the gateway to the backwaters of Kerala and is well known for its houseboat and backwater resorts.

❖ About Wetlands:

- Wetlands are **ecosystems saturated with water, either seasonally or permanently**.
- They include mangroves, marshes, rivers, lakes, deltas, floodplains and flooded forests, rice-fields, coral reefs, marine areas **no deeper than 6 meters** at low tide, as well as human-made wetlands such as waste-water treatment ponds and reservoirs.
- **Importance of Wetlands** :
 - 40% of the world's species **live or breed** in wetlands.
 - Wetlands are "**nurseries of life**" – 40% of animals breed in wetlands.
 - Wetlands are "**kidneys of the earth**" – they clean the environment of pollutants.
 - Wetlands "**matter for climate change**" – they store 30% of land based carbon.
 - Wetlands "**minimize disaster risks**" – they absorb storm surge.

❖ About Ramsar Convention:

- The Ramsar Convention is the intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.
- The Convention was **adopted in the Iranian city of Ramsar in 1971** and came into force in 1975.
- Since then, almost 90% of UN member states have become "**Contracting Parties**" and committed to the Convention's three pillars :
 - Work towards the wise use of all their wetlands.
 - Designate suitable wetlands for the list of Wetlands International Importance and ensure their effective management.
 - Cooperate internationally on transboundary wetlands, shared wetland systems and shared species.
- The convention **entered into force in India on 1 February 1982**.
- **Montreux Record** :
 - It is maintained as part of the Ramsar List.
 - Two wetlands of India are in Montreux Record- **Keoladeo National Park (Rajasthan) and Loktak Lake (Manipur)**.
 - **Chilka lake (Odisha)** was placed in the record but was later removed from it.
- **Side Note** : India has so far declared **75 wetlands** as **Ramsar sites** covering 23 states and Union Territories.
 - **Mission Sahbhagita** : The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) launched it in 2022.
 - Its objective is to healthy and effectively manage the network of 75 wetlands of national and international significance.

World Food Programme (WFP)

❖ Context

- According to a new **World Food Programme (WFP)** report the reach of school meals in low-income countries remains four percent below pre-pandemic levels, despite a recovery overall.



❖ Key Highlights:

- About : Founded in **1961**.
 - It is the **food-assistance branch of the United Nations**.
 - It is the **world's largest humanitarian organization** focused on hunger and food security, & the largest provider of school meals.
 - It is a **member of the United Nations Development Group** and part of its Executive Committee. It is **headquartered in Rome** and has offices in 80 countries.
 - As of 2020, it served 115.5 million people in 80-plus countries, the largest since 2012.
- **Goals** : **Eradicate hunger & malnutrition, attain food security and augment nutrition by 2030 (Zero Hunger)**.

• Functioning :

- WFP's operations are **entirely funded through the generous voluntary contributions** of donor governments, institutions, corporations & individuals.
- It is **governed by an Executive Board** which consists of representatives from member states (36 Members).
- It works in close tandem with the Food and Agriculture Organization (**FAO**) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (**IFAD**).
- **Key Reports** : **Global Report on Food Crisis**

Face to Face Centres

Parole

❖ Context:

- In a significant direction, the Supreme Court recently directed that all prisoners, who were released on emergency parole by the **High Powered Committee** during the COVID-19 period based on the orders of the Supreme Court, surrender within 15 days.



❖ About Parole:

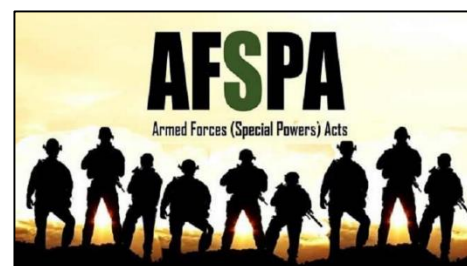
- Parole is a type of conditional release from prison that allows a person to serve the remainder of their **sentence in the community**, under the supervision of a parole officer, rather than behind bars.
- It is typically granted to individuals who have demonstrated good behavior while in prison and who have completed a portion of their sentence.
- Parole conditions may include things **like regular check-ins with a parole officer**, drug and alcohol testing, community service, and employment or education requirements.

- Violating these conditions can result in a return to prison to serve out the remainder of the sentence.
- The goal of parole is to provide individuals with the opportunity to **transition back into society** in a supervised & supportive environment while still holding them accountable for their actions.
- It also helps to **reduce overcrowding** in prisons and save taxpayer money by avoiding the need to **incarcerate individuals** who may be able to safely live in the community.

Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA)

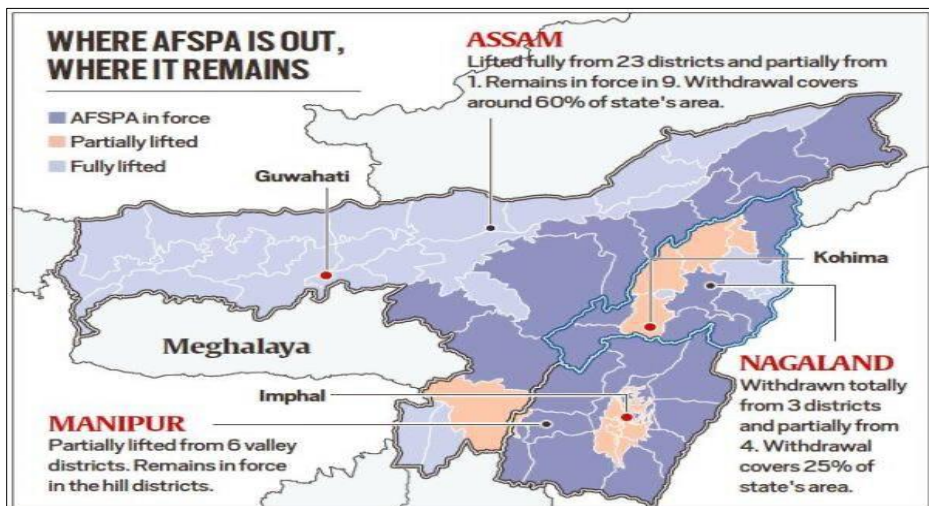
❖ Context

- Citing improved security in the Northeast, Home Minister said that the Centre has decided to **further reduce the jurisdiction of 'disturbed areas' under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA)** in Assam, Nagaland and Manipur.



❖ Key Highlights:

- The Centre from April, 2022, had reduced disturbed areas under AFSPA in Nagaland, Assam and Manipur as follows-
 - Of all the 33 districts of Assam, AFSPA has been **completely removed from 23 districts and partially from one district** of the state.
 - After the recent changes in the state, **9 districts and one district partially will continue to be under the ambit of AFSPA.**
 - AFSPA has been **reduced partially from seven districts in Nagaland, six districts in Manipur.**
- It was **completely repealed in Meghalaya in 2018, Tripura in 2015, and Mizoram in the 1980s.**
- AFSPA remains in force in parts of these three states as well as in **parts of Arunachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir.**
- With the latest decision, starting April 1, the Disturbed Areas notification will be lifted from **one more district in Assam, four more police stations in Manipur** and three more police stations in Nagaland.



❖ Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA)

• Background :

- The Act in its original form was promulgated by the British in response to the Quit India movement in 1942.
- After Independence, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru decided to retain the Act, which was first brought in as an **ordinance and then notified as an Act in 1958.**
- AFSPA has been **imposed on the Northeast states, Jammu & Kashmir, and Punjab during the militancy years.**

• About the Act :

- AFSPA **provides for special powers for the armed forces** that can be imposed by the Center or the Governor of a state, on the state or parts of it, after it is declared "disturbed" under Section 3.
- The Act defines these as areas that are "**disturbed or dangerous conditions where the use of armed forces in aid of the civil power is necessary**".
- AFSPA has been used in areas where militancy has been prevalent.

• Powers Given to Armed Forces :

- It gives sweeping powers to the armed forces.
- It allows them to **open fire, even causing death, against any person** in contravention to the law or carrying arms and ammunition.
- It gives them powers to arrest individuals without warrants, on the basis of "reasonable suspicion", and also search premises without warrants.
- The Act further **provides blanket impunity to security personnel** involved in such operations
 - There can be **no prosecution or legal proceedings against them** without the prior approval of the Centre.

Face to Face Centres



27 March 2023

LVM 3 -M3 Rocket

❖ Context:

- ISRO has successfully launched the LVM 3 -M3 rocket from Sriharikota, carrying 36 satellites, including the **One Web India - 2 mission**.



❖ Key Highlights:

- The launch took place from the second launch pad of the **Sathish Dhawan Space Centre**, and the rocket successfully completed the three stages, including the ignition of the cryogenic engine, within the prescribed time limit.
- The ground stations at Thiruvananthapuram, Lucknow, Bangalore, and the ship station at Antarctica are tracking the data from the launch.
- The first **16 satellites of the One Web India - 2 series** were placed in the right orbit, and the remaining 20 satellites will also be positioned soon.
- The use of the cryogenic Mark 3 engine has proved successful & the extremely **challenging manoeuvres of the satellites were done remarkably**.

❖ About One Web:

- The 'OneWeb' in its name refers to the UK-based OneWeb Group Company, with which the space agency had **signed a commercial agreement to launch seventy-two satellites to low-earth orbits**.
- The agreement was signed between **OneWeb and NewSpace India Limited (NSIL)**, the latter being ISRO's commercial arm.
- The first set of **thirty-six satellites was launched on October 23, 2022**.
- The satellites were lifted-off onboard India's largest Launch Vehicle Mark-III (LVM-3) rocket.
- After five consecutive successful missions (including Chandrayaan-2), this was LVM-3's sixth.
- Like the first set, the second one, too, will be placed into a 450 km circular orbit with an inclination of 87.4 degrees.
- Together, the satellites weigh around 5,805 kg, according to ISRO.

News in Between the Lines

Earth Hour



❖ Context

- Earth Hour, **celebrated every year on March 26**, is the largest global grassroots movement for the environment.

❖ Key Highlights:

- This year being the **17th edition**, with **residents switched off their electrical appliances and non-essential lighting fixtures for one hour starting at 8.30 p.m. (local time)** to show their concern for the environment.
- The Earth Hour has grown rapidly to become the world's most significant grassroots environmental movement. It has inspired the world to save electricity.
- Earth Day (April 22) celebrates our natural environment by inspiring people to plant trees, recycle regularly and keep the planet tidy.

❖ About Earth Hour:

- Earth Hour is an annual event **organized by the World Wildlife Fund since 2007**.
- It was famously **started as a lights-off event in Sydney, Australia in 2007**.
- Every year, it brings together millions of people, businesses, and leaders worldwide to shine a spotlight on the urgent need to address nature loss and climate change.
- This initiative is more about creating awareness among people and stopping the wastage of energy.

Marburg Virus



❖ Context

- Tanzania has recently confirmed its first-ever outbreak of the Marburg virus.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The Marburg virus is a highly contagious and deadly virus that causes viral **hemorrhagic fever**. It is similar to the Ebola virus and can cause disease with a high **case-fatality ratio of up to 88%**. Human infection with the virus typically results from prolonged exposure to mines or caves inhabited by Rousettus bat colonies.
- The virus spreads through **human-to-human transmission via direct contact** with the blood, secretions, organs or other bodily fluids of infected people, as well as surfaces and materials contaminated with these fluids.
- **Symptoms** of Marburg virus disease include high fever, severe headache, severe malaise, muscle aches and pains, severe watery diarrhoea, abdominal pain and cramping, nausea, vomiting, and severe hemorrhagic manifestations.

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National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management



❖ Context

- Recently, the first General Body Meeting of NCSCM was held to review its progress and plan for the future.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management (NCSCM) is an Indian government research & development institution **focused on coastal zone management**.
- It was established in 2010 under the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, and is headquartered in Chennai, Tamil Nadu**.
- NCSCM's primary objective is to provide **scientific and technical support** to the government and other stakeholders in order to promote the sustainable development of coastal areas.
- The Centre conducts research, develops tools and technologies, and provides capacity-building and training programs related to coastal zone management.
- It also serves as a knowledge hub for coastal and marine ecosystems, and supports the implementation of various government policies and programs related to coastal management.

Nowruz



❖ Context

- The Parsi community in India, which follows Zoroastrianism, celebrated Nowruz on March 21, marking the beginning of the New Year.

❖ About Navroz:

- Nowruz or Navroz, the **Iranian New Year that marks the beginning of the spring season**.
- It is **celebrated** with great fervor and enthusiasm **among various Parsi communities across the world including India**.
- The word 'now' means new and 'ruz' means day, which translates to 'a new day'.
- Nowruz marks the **beginning of Farvardin, the first month of the Solar Hijri calendar** and is usually **celebrated on March 20 or 21 globally**.
- **In India, the festival is observed around August 16-17 by the Parsi community** following the Shahenshahi calendar which **does not account for leap years**, which means the holiday has now moved by 200 days from its original day.
- Nowruz is celebrated in many countries having significant Persian cultural influence like Iran, Iraq, India, Afghanistan and parts of Central Asia, America, Europe.
- The **United Nations General Assembly** proclaimed the International Day of Nowruz in 2010.
- The festival had also been listed as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2016.

Lake Natron



MCQ Quiz

[Daily Current Affairs](#)

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❖ Context

- The lake has become a centre of attraction for experts and analysts due to its unique features and mysterious history.

❖ Key Highlights:

- Lake Natron is a salt or alkaline lake located in north Ngorongoro District of the Arusha Region **in Tanzania**.
- Its alkaline and hostile conditions make it difficult for most animals to survive, yet it supports a **thriving ecosystem of salt marshes, freshwater wetlands, and flamingos**.
- It has been reported that the lake turns animals that touch it into **"stone"**.
- This sounds like folklore or a horror movie script, but it can be true to some extent because of the presence of salt in it.
- The lake contains salt, soda, and magnesite deposits.
- Ol Doinyo Lengai, also known as the Mountain of God, contributes to the lake's hostile conditions.
- It is the only active volcano to emit **natrocarbonatites - a rare carbonatite lava**.
- Sodium carbonate and other minerals that enter the lake from the surrounding hills make the **water alkaline**.

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