

Rare duck species sighted after 94 years

❖ Context

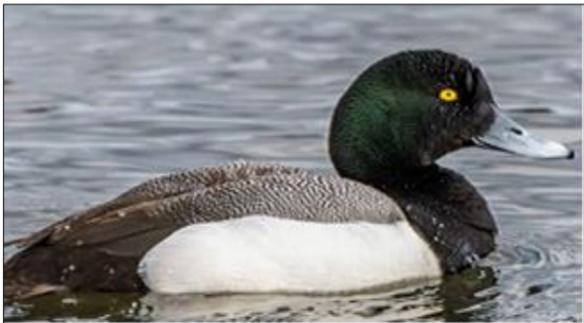
- A rare species of duck, **Greater Scaup**, locally known as Sadangman, was recently sighted in Loktak Lake in Manipur's Bishnupur district.

Key Highlights:

- It has been reported that the duck species was sighted by ornithologist Kumam Jugeswor and members of Wildlife Explorers Manipur.
- Ornithologists said that this is the first record of a sighting of the duck in **Loktak Lake after 94 years**.

About Greater Scaup:

- The **Greater Scaup** is a medium-sized diving duck species that belongs to the family of Anatidae.
- The **only circumpolar diving duck**, the Greater Scaup breeds across the tundra regions in North America and Europe.
- They congregate by the hundreds and thousands along the **Pacific and Atlantic coasts** during winter.
- They look remarkably similar to the Lesser Scaup, with only slight differences in head shape: **the Greater Scaup has a rounded head**, the Lesser Scaup a peaked head.



- These underwater divers eat aquatic invertebrates and plants at the bottom of lakes and bays.
- **Conservation Status:** IUCN Red List- Least concern.

The IUCN Red List Categories:

- The IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria are intended to be an easily and widely understood system **for classifying species at high risk of global extinction**.
- **It divides species into nine categories:** Not Evaluated, Data Deficient, Least Concern, Near Threatened, Vulnerable, Endangered, Critically Endangered, Extinct in the Wild and Extinct.

About Loktak Lake:

- It is the **largest freshwater** lake in North Eastern India.
- Loktak Lake is also called **the only Floating lake in the world due to the floating phumdis** which is a heterogeneous mass of soil, vegetation and organic matter that takes place at various stages of decomposition.
- There is a national park on the lake which is **Keibul Lamjao National Park**. It is the **only floating national park** in the world.
- The lake is designated as a wetland of **international importance under the Ramsar Convention**.
- Loktak Lake is **an important source of drinking water**, irrigation, and hydropower for the surrounding area.
- The lake is also a popular spot for fishing and boating and is home to a variety of aquatic life, **including the endangered sangai deer**.

National Green Tribunal (NGT)

❖ Context

- The **National Green Tribunal (NGT)** has set a **four-month deadline** for remedial actions and recovering damages from the Kulda coal mine and Tamnar thermal plant for transporting coal through villages in violation of environmental clearance (EC) conditions.

Key Highlights:

- Kulda coal mine is being run by Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL) in Odisha and the Tamnar thermal plant operated by Jindal Power Limited (JPL) in Chhattisgarh.
- **Kulda-Tamnar Coal Link**
 - Open cast mine in Kulda is barely 40 km away from Tamnar in Chhattisgarh.
 - Caught between the two are 14 villages on a cratered road on which coal-laden trucks run round the clock.
 - It is choking lives and livelihoods under a layer of black dust.
- **Intervention by the NGT**
 - The NGT set a four-month deadline to.
 - Reconstruct the road to check dust pollution and recover the cost, if necessary, from MCL and JPL.
 - Recover compensation for past violations from MCL and JPL.
 - Provide a timeline for setting up a conveyor system or rail link to transport coal from Kulda to Tamnar.

About NGT

- It was established in 2010 under the National Green Tribunal Act 2010.
- **Status-** Statutory Body.
- **Objectives-**
 - Established for effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to.
 - Environmental protection.
 - Conservation of forests and.
 - Other natural resources including enforcement of any legal right relating to environment and.
 - It gives relief and compensation for damages to persons and property and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.
- NGT is mandated to make disposal of applications or appeals finally within **6 months** of the filing of the same.
- **New Delhi** is the Principal Place of Sitting of the Tribunal & Bhopal, Pune, Kolkata and Chennai shall be the other four places of sitting of the Tribunal.

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- It is not bound by the procedure laid down under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, but shall be guided by principles of natural justice.
- Composition-** 40 members (20 expert members and 20 judicial members).

Annual Status of Education Report (ASER 2022)

❖ Context

- Recently, **Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2022** was released.

Key Highlights of the Report:

- Enrolment**
 - India has recorded a **95% enrolment for the last 15 years** in the 6-14 age group.
 - Despite the pandemic forced school closure, the figure rose from 97.2% in 2018 to 98.4% in 2022.
 - Only 1.6% children are now not enrolled.**
 - There is a clear increase in government school (6-14) enrolment across states — it rose from 65.6% in 2018 to 72.9% in 2022.
- Private Tutition**
 - The proportion of students from classes 1 to 8 opting for paid private tuitions **increased by over four percentage points in 2022**, in comparison to pre-Covid-19 levels.
- Learning Loss**
 - The report says that children's basic reading ability has dropped to 'pre2012 levels.
- Arithmetic**
 - Students in Class III and Class V who are able to at least do subtraction and division respectively have fallen in 2022.
- English Check**
 - ASER recorded English abilities last in 2016 and the trend stays similar till date.
- Attendance**
 - Average **teacher attendance increased** from 85.4% in 2018 to 87.1% in 2022.
 - Average **student attendance persists** at 72% as before.
- School Infrastructure**
 - Fraction of schools with useable girls' toilets increased from 66.4% in 2018 to 68.4% in 2022.
 - In 2022, 68.9% schools had a playground, up slightly from 66.5% in 2018.

About ASER Survey

- ASER is a nationwide household survey that **provides a snapshot of children's schooling and learning in rural India.**
- It facilitated by **Pratham Education Foundation.**
- It is the **oldest survey** of its kind in the country.
- It **uses Census 2011** as the sampling frame.
- It is an important national source of information about children's foundational skills across the country.
- Since 2005, ASERs survey children in the age group of 6 to 14 to record trends in school enrollment, attendance, and reading and arithmetic abilities.
- This year the survey covered 699,597 children in the age group 3 to 16 from 19,060 villages across 616 districts.

News in Between the Lines

MeitY launches Technology



❖ Context

- MeitY has launched Technology** for the detection of Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals in aquatic ecosystems and Technology for the Air Quality Monitoring System.

❖ Key Highlights:

- It is developed by (C-DAC), Kolkata in collaboration with ICAR-CIFRI, Baraackpore under the **'National programme on Electronics and ICT applications in Agriculture and Environment (AgriEnlcs).**
- It is used for qualitative and quantitative analysis of **Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals (EDC)** content in water bodies.
- The Bio sensing based EDC detection system** was also transferred for further commercialization.
- The Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC), Kolkata in collaboration with TeXMIN, ISM, Dhanbad under the 'National programme on Electronics and ICT applications in Agriculture and Environment (AgriEnlcs)' **has developed an outdoor air quality monitoring station.**
- It monitors environmental pollutants which include parameters like PM 1.0, PM 2.5, PM 10.0, SO₂, NO₂, CO, O₂, ambient temperature, relative humidity etc., **for continuous air quality analysis of the environment.**
- The Air Quality Monitoring System (AI-AQMS v1.0), was also transferred **for further commercialization of the same technology for deployment at different mine and cement industries.**

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International Monetary Fund (IMF)



❖ Context

- Recently, India sent financing assurances to the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** and become the first of Sri Lanka's creditors to officially back the crisis hit island nation's debt restructuring programme.

❖ Key Highlights:

- **China, Japan, and India** are Sri Lanka's three **largest bilateral lenders**.
- With India getting on board, Sri Lanka's chances of swiftly tapping IMF assistance now depend on similar assurances from Japan and China.
- Sri Lanka is facing its worst economic crisis since independence.

❖ International Monetary Fund (IMF)

- **About**
 - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is an **international financial institution**.
 - It was **set up along with the World Bank** at the Bretton Woods Conference in 1944.
 - **Headquarter** - Washington, D.C.
 - It works to foster **global monetary cooperation**, secure financial stability and facilitate **international trade**.
- **Areas Of Involvement**
 - Exchange rate, currency, liquid asset, Special Drawing Right
 - Plays a **central role in the management of balance of payments difficulties** and international financial crises.
- **Publications**
 - Global Financial Stability Report ,World Economic Outlook, Regional Economic Outlook , Managing Director's Global Policy Agenda

RBI's Report on State Govt Budgets



❖ Context

- Recently, the Reserve Bank of India released its report on state government budgets for 2022-23.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The RBI report shows that **states are recovering from the severe economic stress in 2020-21** caused by Covid19 pandemic.
- However, there are several areas of concern.
- **Debt-to-GDP**
 - As per the report, the **debt-to-GDP ratio has fallen** from 31.1 per cent in 2020-21 – a year when states had struggled to manage the economic fallout of the pandemic — to 29.5 per cent in 2022-23.
 - **The Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management review committee**, had recommended a debt-to-GDP ratio of 20 per cent for states.
 - A high debt-deficit burden leaves little room for states to manoeuvre when faced with the next economic shock.
- **Contingent Liabilities**
 - Contingent liabilities here refers to the **obligations of a state government to repay the principal and interest payments** in case a state-owned entity defaults on a loan.
 - The guarantees issued by state governments have risen from Rs 3.12 lakh crore or 2 per cent of GDP in 2017 to Rs 7.4 lakh crore or 3.7 per cent of GDP.
- **Old Pension Scheme**
 - New risks have emerged with some states now opting to return to the old pension scheme.
 - Shifting back to the old pension scheme will only end up increasing pension liabilities, leaving even less room for more productive spending.

Start-up Conclave

❖ Context

- Union Minister reviewed **the preparedness of IISF to be held from 21st to 24th January, 2023** at the joint meeting of six Science Ministries and departments in New Delhi.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The Start-up conclave in Bhopal **will have exhibits by enablers offering incubation services** and shared infrastructure and guidance on forming start-ups.

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- It will showcase **300 Deep-Tech success stories** with tech innovative products and technologies in the areas of Health, Agriculture, Industrial Technology, IT, Mobility and Education.
- **Young Scientist Conference** will also be organised from 22nd January to 24th January.
- India is also **home to 107 Unicorns (companies that reach a valuation of \$1 billion without being listed on the stock market)** and 23 of them emerged in 2022.
- **US leads the start-up industry globally** with 704 unicorns, followed by China, which had 243 unicorns.

First Global Tourism Summit



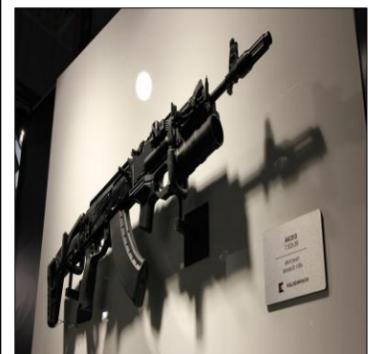
- ❖ **Context**
 - The Central government will organize **the country's first Global Tourism Summit in New Delhi in April 2023** as part of the G-20 presidency.
- ❖ **Key Highlights:**
 - It will be organized by the **Union Ministry of Tourism**, in association with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) as the Industry Partner.
 - **It aims to bring together global** businesses, thought leaders, and policymakers to understand and explore Tourism Business opportunities in India.
 - **The summit will showcase** 'major tourist destinations' of the country with various **state governments as stakeholders**.
 - **All G-20 member countries will be present** at the Global Tourism Investors' summit.

Composition Fee For Export Obligation Extension



- ❖ **Context**
 - Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) **simplifies Composition Fee for Export Obligation Extension** under Advance Authorization Scheme
- ❖ **Key Highlights:**
 - It aims at **simplifying the process of levying composition fee** on exporters to help achieve their export commitments.
 - **The fee is levied if the exporter is** unable to timely export the product for which duty free import of inputs is made, called advance authorisation.
 - The previous formula for Composition Fee **was convoluted and difficult to understand**, which made the process more tedious and strenuous for exporters.
 - The simplification of calculations for Composition Fee **helps in automation and faster service delivery** by making the process more efficient and easier to understand.
 - This will help **automate the entire Export Obligation extension** process with minimal human intervention, further eliminating the risk of errors and misconceptions.
 - The process of automation is being taken up **under the IT-revamp project of DGFT**.
 - Simplification of calculations **also helps in the "Ease of Doing Business"**.

AK203 Kalashnikov Assault Rifles



- ❖ **Context**
 - The joint venture between India and Russia, Indo-Russian Rifles Private Limited (IRRPL), has **started producing AK-203 Kalashnikov assault rifles** at Korwa in Uttar Pradesh.
- ❖ **Key Highlights:**
 - The **IRRPL** was set up in 2019 jointly between erstwhile OFB [now Advanced Weapons and Equipment India Limited (AWEIL) and Munitions India Limited (MIL)] of India and Rosoboronexport and Kalashnikov of Russia.
 - The joint venture plans to ensure 100% localisation of the production of AK-203 rifles in India.
- ❖ **About AK-203**
 - The AK-203 is a Russian gas-operated, magazine-fed, select-fire assault rifle with a **7.62mm ammunition chamber**.
 - It is one of the most recent models of Mikhail Kalashnikov's AK family of assault rifles.
 - The Kalashnikov Concern in **Russia created the AK-203 in the 2010s**.
 - Before being renamed to AK-203 in 2019, the weapon was known as the **AK-103M**.
 - It is considered to be the latest and most advanced version of the AK-47 rifle.

