



Gwalior, Kozhikode joined the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN)

- They are among the **55 cities** that joined UCCN on World Cities Day (31st of October).
- New cities were acknowledged for their strong commitment to harnessing culture and creativity as part of their development strategies.
- **Kozhikode ('City of Literature')**
 - ⊕ It has a robust literary foundation with **over 500 libraries and more than 70 publishers**; It also boasts a high level of literary education.
 - ⊕ It is also a **permanent venue for the annual Kerala Literature Festival** and numerous book festivals.
- **Gwalior ('City of Music')**
 - ⊕ It has a rich musical history **encompassing legends like Mian Tansen (Ramtanu Pandey) and Baliti Bawra**.
 - ⊕ It is also considered the **birthplace of Gwalior Gharana** (the oldest Hindustani musical Gharana).
- **Other Indian cities on UCCN:** Mumbai (Film), Chennai (Music), Hyderabad (Gastronomy), Varanasi (Music), Jaipur (Crafts and Folk art) and Srinagar (Crafts and Folk art).
- **About UCCN**
 - ⊕ It was **created in 2004**.
 - ⊕ The **UCCN tag** gives **global recognition and boosts tourism**.
 - ⊕ It has **350 creative cities in more than 100 countries, spanning seven creative fields**:
 - ◆ Crafts and Folk Art, Design, Film, Gastronomy, Literature, Media Arts, and Music.



United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

HQ
Paris, France

- Genesis:** Established in 1945.
- Objectives:** To contribute to the building of a culture of peace, the eradication of poverty, sustainable development, and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication, and information.
- Members:** 194 Members and 12 Associate Members. 
- Other:** The Universal Copyright Convention (1952); Man and the Biosphere program (1971); World Heritage Convention (1972); Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003).

Prime Ministers of India and Bangladesh jointly inaugurate three development projects in Bangladesh

- **Indian-assisted development projects are**
 - ⊕ **Khulna-Mongla Port Rail Line:** Connects **Mongla Port** (Bangladesh's 2nd largest port) and Khulna rail network through **broad-gauge rail route**.
 - ◆ This connection also **extends to India** through **Petrapole cross-border rail link**.
 - ⊕ **Unit II of Maitree Super Thermal Power:** Situated in Khulna, it enhances Bangladesh's energy security (currently imports power from India).
 - ◆ It has been **implemented by Bangladesh-India Friendship Power Company (Private) Limited (BIFPCL)**.
 - ◆ **BIFPCL is a Joint Venture** between India's **NTPC Ltd** and **Bangladesh Power Development Board**.
 - ⊕ **Akhaura-Agartala cross-border rail link:** Connects **Bangladesh to Tripura**.
 - ◆ **New cross-border link cuts travel time from Kolkata to Tripura to 10 hours** (currently 38 hours), improving goods transport to India's northeast states.
- **Other Key areas of cooperation**
 - ⊕ **Economic:** Bilateral Trade stood at **\$14.2 billion in FY 2021-22**.
 - ◆ **Bangladesh is India's biggest trade partner in South Asia** and India is the second biggest trade partner of Bangladesh in Asia.
 - ⊕ **Defence:** Annual Defence Dialogue, Military exercises such as **Sampriti and Milan, etc.**
 - ⊕ **People-to-people contact:** Border Haat, Suborno Jayanti Scholarships to students of Bangladesh, etc.



RBI to regulate entities facilitating cross-border payment transactions

- Previously, RBI only regulated Payment Aggregators (PAs) that processed **domestic online transactions**.
 - ⊖ PAs enable **e-commerce sites and merchants to accept various payment methods** from customers, eliminating the need for merchants to create their own payment integration systems ex: Paytm.
- The directive is issued under **Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007, and Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999**.
 - ⊖ Entities will be treated as **Payment Aggregator-Cross Border (PA-CB)**.
 - ⊖ **The maximum value per unit** of goods/services sold or purchased in import and export transactions processed by PA-CBs shall be Rs 25,00,000
- **Cross-border payments:** Financial transactions where the payer and the recipient are based in separate countries.
 - ⊖ They cover both wholesale and retail payments, including **remittances**.
- **Significance of cross-border payments**
 - ⊖ **Huge potential:** It is estimated to be \$190 trillion in 2023 and expected to reach \$290 trillion by 2030.
 - ⊖ **Ease of Doing Business:** like Manufacturers expanding their supply chains across borders.
 - ⊖ **Ease of Transaction:** Migrants sending money via international remittances.
 - ⊖ **Globalization:** Promote international trade and e-commerce.
- **Challenges:** lack of standardization of financial data, security risk (money laundering, terror financing), differing government regulations, etc.

Steps Taken by Government to facilitate cross border payment

- **Payments Vision 2025:** Leverages India's efforts and builds on the focus of G-20 to enhance cross-border payments.
- **UPI system:** Advancing bilateral links with other countries, including Singapore and United Arab Emirates for cross-border payment.
- **NIPL (NPCI International Payments Limited),** has undertaken various initiatives across nations to enable cross-border acceptance of BHIM UPI QR at merchant establishments.

Hydroclimate Extremes to Intensify in near-future over the Indian River Basins (IRBs): Indian Scientists

- Scientists used **Earth system models (ESMs)** and high-resolution **simulated precipitation** from **Coupled Model Intercomparison Project-6 (CMIP6)** experiments.
 - ⊖ CMIP is a project of **World Climate Research Programme** which is sponsored by **International Science Council, World Meteorological Organization,** and Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of **UNESCO**.
 - ⊖ ESMs are a **complex integration of environmental variables** (atmosphere, ocean, land, ice, and biosphere) used for understanding our planet.
- **Key findings**
 - ⊖ **Hydroclimatic extreme events** (like intensive rainfall, draughts, etc.) may have a **considerable impact on agriculture, health, etc.**
 - ⊖ During near and mid future **frequency** of precipitation **extremes** over **west-flowing river** basins and **western Ghats** is going to **increase**.
 - ⊖ Due to **intensification** of extreme rainfall, **western ghats, Indus, West, and central IRBs** will be **highly vulnerable**.
 - ⊖ **Lower Ganga basin** will experience **agricultural drought in near future**.
 - ⊖ Major cities like **Mumbai and Pune**, situated in the west-flowing IRBs would have a **high potential for urban flooding**.
- **Recommendations**
 - ⊖ **Identify** major **hotspots** for **urban flooding** to design appropriate **basin-wise climate adaptation and mitigation strategies**.
 - ⊖ Devise **strategies** to cope with **water surplus or scarcity**.
- Study is supported under **Climate Change Program of the Department of Science & Technology (DST)**.

Climate change programme under DST

- DST coordinates National Mission for **Sustaining Himalayan Ecosystem** and **National Mission on Strategic Knowledge for Climate Change**.
 - ⊖ These missions focuses on **strengthening India's science and technology capabilities in the field of climate change**.
- These missions are part of the 8 missions under the **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)**.
 - ⊖ **NAPCC** outlines a **national strategy** to enable the country to **adapt to climate change** and enhance the **ecological sustainability** of India's development path
 - ⊖ The remaining 6 missions under NAPCC include missions for **enhanced energy efficiency, sustainable habitat, green initiatives, agriculture, solar, and water**.

Centre to appoint National-Level Monitors (NLMs) to oversee livestock schemes

- The NLMs will be **third-party independent monitors** – individuals and institutions deployed by the government.
- **Need for NLMs:** to remove technical backstopping faced by implementing agencies in the implementation of the schemes.
- **NLMs will determine** if incentives to paravets/ technicians/ farmers have been distributed as envisaged under the scheme and whether data generated has been uploaded.
- **Coverage of NLMs:**
 - ⊕ **National Livestock Mission (NLM):** focuses on entrepreneurship development and breed improvement in poultry, sheep, goat, and piggery including feed and fodder development.
 - ⊕ **Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM):** for the development and conservation of indigenous bovine breeds.
 - ⊕ **National Programme for Dairy Development:** to enhance the quality of milk and milk products and increase the share of organized milk procurement.
 - ⊕ **Livestock Health & Disease Control program (LH&DCP):** to improve the animal health sector by prophylactic vaccination programs, capacity building, etc.
- **Significance of the livestock sector**
 - ⊕ Its contribution to agriculture has **increased from 24.32% (2014-2015) to 30.87% (2020-21)**.
 - ⊕ It is witnessing an annual growth rate of **7.93 percent (at constant prices) from 2014-15 to 2020-21**
 - ⊕ It has contributed **6.32% of total GVA in 2020-21**.

"Bletchley Declaration", world's first agreement on Artificial Intelligence (AI) signed at UK AI Safety Summit

- Declaration is named after **Bletchley Park** which is the venue of the summit and is known for being **Britain's code-breaking centre during World War II**.
- It was signed by **the European Union and 28 other countries including India, US, UK, China, France, Saudi Arabia, and UAE**.
 - ⊕ **South Korea** will co-host a **mini virtual AI summit** in next six months.
- **Key highlights of the declaration**
 - ⊕ Recognises AI's **potential** to enhance **human well-being** as well as **risks** posed by AI including **frontier AI**.
 - ◆ Frontier AI refers to **highly capable foundation generative AI models** that could possess dangerous capabilities that can **pose severe risks to public safety**.
 - ⊕ Substantial risks may arise from **potential intentional misuse or unintended issues of control** relating to alignment with human intent.
 - ◆ These issues are in part because those **capabilities are not fully understood** and are therefore **hard to predict**.
 - ⊕ Since such **risks are inherently international** in nature there is a need for **international cooperation to address them**.
 - ◆ All actors including **companies, civil society and academia** will need to work together.
 - ⊕ **Agenda for mitigating risks** will focus on building a **shared scientific understanding and risk-based policies** across countries.
- **Criticism:** Lack of **firm commitments and concrete measures**.

Also in News



Electoral Bonds Scheme

- A 5-judge Constitution Bench remarked that the Electoral Bonds Scheme suffers from **"selective anonymity" leading to an "information hole"**.
- Donors, instead of investing a **big sum to purchase the bond**, may aggregate bonds for smaller amounts from different buyers.
- **It is easier for the party in power** to get that information about donations of opposition parties.
- **Electoral Bond Scheme:**
 - ⊕ Electoral bonds are **interest-free bearer instruments** announced in the 2017 Union Budget.
 - ⊕ **State Bank of India** is the only bank authorized to sell them.



Scheme to provide financial assistance to poor prisoners

- The Home Ministry tells States to **finalize beneficiaries under the Central scheme for underprivileged prisoners**.
- **About the scheme**
 - ⊕ It aims at enabling poor prisoners to get out of prison.
 - ⊕ It requires **states/UTs to identify eligible prisoners** for benefit under the scheme
 - ⊕ The Centre would reimburse fines of up to ₹40,000 for each undertrial and ₹25,000 each for **convicts languishing in jail due to financial hardship**.
 - ⊕ It is not available for persons accused under the **Prevention of Corruption Act, UAPA, NDPS, and other serious offenses**.



Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO)

- EPFO celebrated its 71st Foundation Day.
- About EPFO**
 - It is a statutory body that came into existence under the **Employees' Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, of 1952**
 - It is under the administrative control of the **Ministry of Labour and Employment**.
 - It **administers** the mandatory provident fund, a basic pension scheme, and a disability/death insurance scheme.
 - It is one of the **world's largest Social Security organizations** in terms of clientele and the volume of financial transactions undertaken by it.



Sustainability Bond

- India Exim Bank has listed its **10-year \$1 billion sustainability bond** on Sustainable Bond Market platform at London Stock Exchange.
 - India Exim Bank **finances and facilitates India's international trade**,
 - In January, it had raised **\$1 billion issuing 10-year Sustainability Bond** under its **Environmental Social Governance Framework**.
- Sustainability Bonds** are specifically designed to raise money for **environmentally- and socially responsible initiatives**.
 - Sustainability Bonds combines the features of **Green- and Social Bonds**.
 - Till June 2022, the Sustainable bond market had reached **\$2.9 trillion**.



Mhadei wildlife sanctuary (MWS)

- A contempt petition is filed against Goa government for not notifying a **tiger reserve in MWS** as directed by Bombay high court.
- MWS is an **International Bird Area** and is part of Mhadei river basin.
 - Mahadei river has catchment area spread over **Goa, Karnataka and Maharashtra**.
- Forest types range from **Moist Deciduous, Semi-evergreen and Secondary Scrub**.
 - Sacred grove **Nirankarachi** is dominated by a unique plant species **Myristica malabarica, which is endangered and endemic to the site**.
- Fauna:** Ruby-throated Yellow Bulbul (State Bird of Goa), Atlas Moth, tigers, etc.



Global Conference on Cooperation in Enforcement Matters (GCCEM)

- The **inaugural GCCEM** organized by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) recently concluded in New Delhi.
 - The **session focused on narcotics**, the linkage between money laundering and cross-border smuggling of contrabands including precious metals and gems, etc.
 - The session reinforces the cooperation among the **Customs administrations, International organizations, and Law Enforcement Agencies** in the fight against **cross-border crimes**.
- DRI** is the apex **anti-smuggling agency** of India, working under the Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs, Ministry of Finance.



Electronic-negotiable warehouse receipt (e-NWR)

- The NWR system was launched in 2011 allowing the **transfer of ownership** of a commodity stored in a warehouse without having to deliver it physically.
 - These receipts are issued in **negotiable form, making them eligible as collateral**.
- About e-NWR:**
 - it is a **digital warehousing receipt** issued by registered warehouses.
 - It's regulated by the **Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority** (a statutory body).
- Benefits:** centralized online real-time recordkeeping; encourages easy transfer; ensures that the commodities stored in the warehouses are tracked and secure.



Dhole

- Dholes** have made a rare appearance in **Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary** in Odisha.
- Dhole is a **wild Asian carnivore** of the dog family and play an **important role as apex predators** in forest ecosystems.
 - Distribution:** Most populations found in **India, Nepal, Bhutan, and Thailand**
 - Threat:** Depletion of wild prey, habitat loss, disease, and free-ranging domestic dogs.
 - IUCN status:** Endangered
 - Protection:** Protected under **Schedule II of the Wildlife Protection Act 1972**.
 - Conservation initiative in India:** Dhole conservation breeding program.

Places in News



Bolivia (Capital: La Paz, Sucre)

- Bolivia severs diplomatic ties with Israel over disproportionate attack on Gaza.
- Political Boundaries:**
 - It is a landlocked country in South America.
 - Bounded by **Brazil, Paraguay, Argentina, Chile and Peru**.
- Geographical features:**
 - One-third of its territory lies in the **Andes mountains**.
 - Highest point:** Mount Sajama
 - Rivers:** Madeira, Paraguay and Mamoré
 - Lake:** **Lake titicaca is the largest freshwater lake in South America and the highest of the world's large lakes**.

