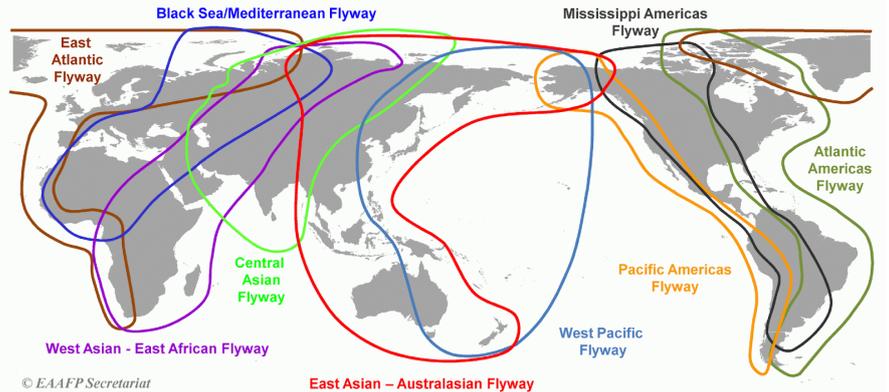


NEWS TODAY

MEETING OF RANGE COUNTRIES TO STRENGTHEN CONSERVATION EFFORTS FOR MIGRATORY BIRDS AND THEIR HABITATS IN CENTRAL ASIAN FLYWAY (CAF) HELD

- **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change** in collaboration with United Nations Environment Programme, **organized the meeting.**
- **CAF is one among the nine flyways** (refer image) identified under **Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)**, also known as Bonn Convention.
 - Flyways are **areas used by groups of birds during their annual cycle** which includes breeding areas, stop-over areas and wintering areas.
- CAF encompasses overlapping **migration routes over 30 countries for different waterbirds** linking



their northern most **breeding grounds in Russia (Siberia) to southernmost non-breeding** (wintering) **grounds** in West and South Asia, Maldives and British Indian Ocean Territory.

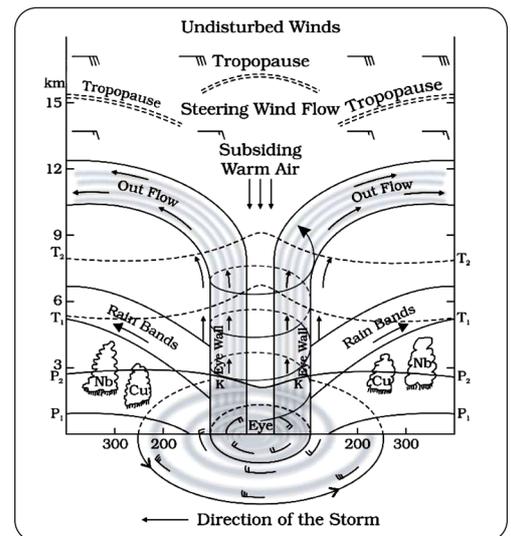
➤ India provides **critical stopover sites to over 90% of the bird species** known to use this migratory route.

- Also, India developed a **National Action Plan for Conservation of Migratory Birds and their Habitat (2018 - 2023).**

- **Importance of Migratory Birds:** Act as **pest control agents**, in dispersal of seeds, increase in **species richness**, support local communities by boosting eco-tourism, important **indicator for flagging state of environment.**

CYCLONE MOCHA TO MAKE LANDFALL IN WEST BENGAL AND ODISHA THIS WEEK: INDIA METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT (IMD)

- **Cyclone Mocha, a tropical cyclone**, has been developed **due to storm in southeast Bay of Bengal (BoB).**
- Tropical cyclones are **violent storms that originate over warm ocean waters near the equator. Favourable conditions** for their formation are:
 - Large sea surface with **temperature higher than 27° C.**
 - Presence of **the Coriolis force.**
 - **Small variations** in the **vertical wind speed.**
 - A **pre-existing weak low-pressure area** or low-level-cyclonic circulation.
 - **Upper divergence** above the sea level system.
- Cyclones are **named by the regional specialised meteorological centres (RSMCs)** and Tropical Cyclone Warning Centres (TCWCs).
 - **There are six RSMCs in the world, including IMD,** and several TCWCs.



- As an RSMC, **IMD names the cyclones developing over north Indian Ocean**, including Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea.
 - **Name** (with a maximum of eight letters) is **taken from a list** which contains suggestions **categorised alphabetically and country-wise** and are **neutral gender wise.**
 - IMD is also **mandated to issue advisories to 12 other countries** in the region.
- **Mocha (Mokha) name was suggested by Yemen** after Red Sea port city, which is known to have introduced coffee to the world over 500 years ago.

ETAC SUBMITS REPORT ON THE GREEN SHIFT: THE LOW CARBON TRANSITION OF INDIA'S OIL & GAS SECTOR'

- Energy Transition Advisory Committee (ETAC) was **formed, under Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas (MoP&NG), to draw an energy transition pathway** for Oil & Gas Public Sector Undertakings in the country.
- **Key highlights of the report**
 - **Need for Transition**
 - India has **3rd highest total CO2 emissions globally** and Emissions are expected to grow by 5x to ~13.6 Gton per year.
 - **Monopoly of some countries over the production and supply** of energy, particularly oil and gas, and the **dependence on imports** to meet energy requirements.
 - **India ranked 7th in world's most affected countries by climate change** in the year 2019.
 - **Recommendations for the energy transition**
 - **Share of grid power in energy use** must rise to 40 % from the current 18 % by 2035.
 - **Promote research on new feedstocks** to ensure a steady supply of biofuel.
 - **Ban diesel-powered four-wheelers** in all cities with a million-plus population by 2027.
 - **Blending alternatives in LPG needs** to be researched.
 - In 15 years, **share of railways** should rise to 50 % in national freight from 23%.
 - From 2024, **all new registrations from city delivery** vehicles to be only electric.

5 BIG METROS ACCOUNT FOR 90% OF ELECTORAL BONDS (EBs) SOLD SO FAR

- **Pointing to a concentration of political funding** Mumbai, Kolkata, Hyderabad, New Delhi, and Chennai (descending order) accounted for **nearly 90% of all EBs sold so far**.
- **EBs**, introduced in 2017-18, as **interest-free bearer instruments to cleanse the system of political funding in the country**.
 - **Rationale was to:** limit use of cash in political funding, Eliminate fraudulent political parties, Protecting donor from political victimization, curb black money etc.
- EBs are valid for 15 days from the date of issue and can be purchased by **a citizen of India or entities incorporated or established in India**.
 - **Sold in multiples** of Rs 1,000, Rs 10,000, Rs 1 lakh, Rs 10 lakh, and Rs 1 crore.
 - **SBI is the only bank authorised** to sell them.
- **Eligibility:** Registered political parties that secured **at least one percent of votes polled** in the most recent General or Assembly elections.
 - **Buyers of bonds submit full KYC details** at the time of buying. But **beneficiary political party is not required** to reveal the identity of the entity that has given it the bond(s).

CONCERNS RAISED AGAINST ELECTORAL BONDS

- Anonymous donation may **compromise with the principle of free and fair election**.
- **Allowed possibility of corporate misuse** as it removes limits and disclosure requirements on Company donations to Political Parties.
- **Lack of level playing field in terms of political funding** as it restricts the benefits of electoral bonds only to a few political parties.

STATE FOREST DEPARTMENT SUBMITS REPORT ON FOREST FIRES IN GOA DURING MARCH

- Earlier a **central government's submission** to Parliament stated that a **prolonged dry spell, unprecedented high temperatures, and low humidity caused sporadic fire** incidents in the state.
- As per India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2021 **more than 36% of the country's forest cover is prone to frequent forest fires**, 6% is 'very highly' fire-prone, and almost 4% is 'extremely' prone.
 - Forest fire season **normally extends from November to June**.
- **Causes of Forest Fires**
 - **Natural causes:** Climatic conditions such as high atmospheric temperatures and dryness (low humidity), Lightning; Friction of rolling stone; Rubbing of dry bamboo clumps; Volcanic explosion etc.
 - **Anthropogenic factors** like spark from a cigarette butt, or a carelessly discarded lit matchstick, intentional fire etc.
- **Initiatives taken**
 - **National Action Plan on Forest Fires (NAPFF)**, 2018
 - Centrally Sponsored **Forest Fire Prevention and Management Scheme**
 - **Initiatives by Forest Survey of India (FSI)**
 - **Near Real-Time Forest Fire Monitoring and issuing alert** to State Forest Departments
 - Large Forest **Fire Monitoring using SNPP-VIIRS sensor**
 - **Early Warning** Alert based on **Forest Fire Danger Rating System**
 - **FSI Van Agni Geo-portal**

FARM EXPORTS SURGE TO ALL-TIME-HIGH

- Department of Commerce (DoC) data shows **total farm exports at \$53.1 billion during 2022-23**, surpassing the previous year's records of \$50.2 billion.
 - **India's agri exports have**, in recent times, **been powered by: Marine products, rice and sugar.**
 - However, **imports also reached to all time high** of \$35.69 billion during 2022-23.
- **Key factors driving Agricultural trade**
 - **Domestic production:** Lower production leads to higher import.
 - **Domestic policy:** Price support, liberalisation of export/import, etc.
 - **Global factors:** Fluctuation in global food prices, demand of agricultural commodities, etc.
- **Initiatives taken to promote Agri exports**
 - **Agriculture Export Policy 2018 (AEP)** to diversify export basket and destinations, and to boost high value-added agricultural exports.
 - **District as Export Hub (DEH) initiative** to achieve AEP objectives by **identifying products with export potential** in over 700 districts across the country.
 - **APEDA initiatives:** Implements 'Agriculture & Processed Food Products Export Promotion Scheme', Collaborating with Indian Missions abroad, promotion of GI products , Export Promotion Forums (EPFs) for individual products etc.
 - **Preparation of State specific Action Plans** and formation of **State Level Monitoring Committees, Nodal Agencies** for agricultural exports and **Cluster Level Committees** in various states.

ALSO IN NEWS



Arab league

- Arab league **members have readmitted Syria** whose membership was suspended in 2011.
- It is an **intergovernmental pan-Arab organisation** of Arab states in Middle East and North Africa.
 - It was **established in Cairo in 1945**, following adoption of Alexandria Protocol in 1944.
 - **Currently it has 22 Arab countries** as members including **founding members Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Jordan, and Yemen.**
- It was established **in response to** concerns about **post-war colonial divisions of territory** and also **strong opposition to emergence of a Jewish state on Palestinian territory.**



Shuttle Diplomacy

- Dubbed as "shuttle diplomacy", **Japan and South Korea agreed to take forward ties.**
 - The **nations share a complicated history, tied to atrocities committed when Japan colonised Korea.**
- Shuttle diplomacy is the **movement of diplomats between countries whose leaders refuse to talk directly to each other**, to settle the argument between them.
- Both the countries are **trying to collaborate more closely** with each other and the US to **counter the looming geopolitical threats of China and North Korea.**



China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

- **Taliban agreed with China and Pakistan to extend CPEC**, a part of Belt and Road initiative (BRI), **into Afghanistan.**
 - BRI **seeks to connect Asia with Africa and Europe** via land and maritime networks.
- CPEC is **over 3,000-km long route of infrastructure projects connecting China's northwest Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and Gwadar Port** in the western Pakistan province of Balochistan.
- **India has objected to CPEC** as it is being laid through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).



National Centre for Good Governance(NCGG)

- **NCGG is expanding its capacity** to train more civil servants from different countries.
- **About NCGG**
 - Set up in 2014 **under Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances, and Pensions.**
 - **Mandated to work in areas of public policy, governance, reforms, and capacity building of civil servants of the country** as well as those of **other developing nations.**
 - It is governed by a **Governing Body**, under the **Chairmanship of the Cabinet Secretary.**



Commission for Scientific and Technical Terminology (CSTT)

- CSTT to **create technical and scientific terminology in 10 Indian languages underrepresented in the learning landscape.**
 - Languages include **Bodo, Santhali, Dogri, Kashmiri, Konkani, Nepali, Manipuri, Sindhi, Maithili, and Sanskrit.**
- CSTT, **under Ministry of Education**, was established in 1961 with the objective **to evolve technical terminology in all Indian Languages.**
- **Main function** of the Commission is **to evolve standard terminology, propagate its use** and distribute it widely.



Kali Tiger Reserve (KTR)

- National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has asked for a status report on an illegal resort in KTR.
- **Location:** in the central portion of the Uttara Kannada (North Canara) district of Karnataka.
- It was **earlier known as Dandeli-Anshi Tiger Reserve.**
- KTR **comprises of Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary and Anshi National Park** (located in Western Ghats).
- **River kali** flows through it.
- **Flora:** bintangur, Calophyllum wightianum, Malabar tamarind, Garcinia morella, etc.
- **Fauna:** tigers, black panthers, elephants, Indian bison, sloth bear, Indian wild boar, bonnet macaque, northern plains gray langur etc.



Space Science and Technology Awareness Training (START)

- ISRO has **launched a new introductory-level online training programme called START.**
- START is **aimed at post-graduate and final-year undergraduate students** of physical sciences and technology.
- It will **cover various domains** of Space Science, **including Astronomy and Astrophysics, Heliophysics and Sun-Earth interaction, Instrumentation, and Aeronomy.**
- It will be **delivered by scientists from Indian academia and ISRO centers.**



Ozone pollution

- Recently, **ozone was identified as a prominent air pollutant** in Delhi.
- Ozone **occurs both in Earth's upper atmosphere** (stratospheric or good ozone) **and at ground level.**
- **Ozone pollution** refers to **tropospheric or "ground-level" ozone.**
 - It is formed when **oxides of nitrogen (NOX) and Volatile Organic Compounds react in the presence of sunlight.**
 - NOX is released by combustion of fossil fuels from vehicles and industries.
- Ozone **can also be transported long distances** by wind.
- **Exposure** to excessive ozone **can cause breathing problems, trigger asthma, reduce lung function, etc.**



Places in News

Democratic Republic of Congo (Capital : Kinshasa)

- More than 170 people have died due to heavy rains and flooding.
- **Political Boundaries**
 - It is the **second largest country of Africa** after Algeria.
 - **Bordered by** Central African Republic, South Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, Zambia, Angola.
- **Geographical Features**
 - Most of the country is **composed of central Congo basin**, a vast rolling plain.
 - **North-south Western Rift Valley**, the western arm of the East African Rift System, forms the country's eastern border.
 - **Highest Mountain:** Mt. Stanley of Ruwenzori Range.
 - **Important Rivers:** Congo (crosses the equator twice), M'pozo river.
 - **Important Lakes:** Lakes Albert, Edward, Kivu, Tanganyika, and Mweru.

