

United Nation Forum on Forests (UNFF) Country-Led Initiative (CLI) hosted by Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, India

- ▶ India hosted a CLI to contribute to discussions at UNFF19, scheduled at New York in 2024.
 - ⊕ CLI will focus on **two thematic areas** namely **forest fires/wildfires** and **Forest Certification (FC) & Sustainable Forest Management (SFM)**.
 - ⊕ UNFF discussion is regarding **implementation of SFM and UN Strategic Plan for Forests (UNSPF)**.
 - ⊕ **UNSPF 2017-2030** (adopted by **UNGA**) has **six Global Forest Goals** and **26 associated targets** which are voluntary and universal.
- ▶ SFM ensures that **forests supply goods and services** meeting both present and future needs.
 - ⊕ UN Forest Instrument **encourages SFM through voluntary certification systems** or other appropriate mechanisms in a transparent manner.
- ▶ Forest certification is a mechanism for forest **monitoring, tracing and labeling forest products**, where the **quality of forest management** is **judged against a series of agreed standards**.
 - ⊕ Between 2010- 2021, **area of forest land under certification schemes increased by 35%**.
- ▶ **Need for FC**
 - ⊕ **Ensure SFM** and prevent forest degradation or deforestation.
 - ⊕ **Increases value of forests** by building consumer trust.
 - ⊕ **Prerequisite for doing business**.
- ▶ **Challenges with FC:** Excessive costs of certification, audit and compliance issues, inaccessibility to forest owners in remote regions, etc.



United Nation Forum on Forests (UNFF)

- Genesis:** Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) in 2000 established UNFF as a subsidiary body.
- About:** It promotes the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests and to strengthen long-term political commitment to this end.
- Members:** All Member States of United Nations (including India) and specialized agencies.

Scientists claim that the Sun's Activity Cycle is reaching its peak earlier than expected

- ▶ Sun follows a **cycle of 11 years** during which **solar activities fluctuate between solar maxima** (highest number of sunspots) or **solar minima** (lowest number of sunspots).
 - ⊕ **Solar flares, coronal mass ejections (CME), high-speed solar wind, etc.** are forms of **solar activity**.
- ▶ Sunspots are **small and dark**, yet cooler areas formed on the solar surface with strong magnetic forces.
- ▶ **Sunspots vary** as the **amount of magnetic flux that rises up to Sun's surface varies** with time in a cycle called the solar cycle, also called **sunspot cycle**, usually lasting for **11 years**.
 - ⊕ **Every 11 years** or so, the **Sun's magnetic field completely flips**. This means that the Sun's north and south poles switch places.
- ▶ So far, astronomers have documented **24 such cycles**, the last one ended in the year 2019.
- ▶ **Recent observations** point to signs that the **25th cycle is reaching its peak** which was early forecasted to reach in **July 2025**.
- ▶ **Impact of solar activities on Earth;**
 - ⊕ **Solar storms or flares** can typically affect space-dependent operations like **GPS, radio, and satellite communications**.
 - ⊕ **Hampering flight operations, power grids, and space exploration programs**.
 - ⊕ **CMEs** are common during solar peaks and create **disturbances in Earth's magnetosphere**, the protective shield surrounding the planet.

Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) imposes Minimum Export Price (MEP) of \$800 per tonne on Onions till December 2023

- It aims to keep onion prices affordable by ensuring adequate domestic supply, as stock from the Rabi Season Onion crop is decreasing.
 - ⊕ MEP is set for a particular product below which it cannot be exported,
 - ◆ It is declared under the Foreign Trade (Development & Regulation) Act, 1992.
 - ⊕ DGFT is an attached office of Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- **Reasons for rise in onion price:**
 - ⊕ **Seasonality:** It results in a cycle of high and low prices as onion is consumed all year round but is not harvested around year.
 - ◆ Rabi crop (harvested in March-May) accounts for 65-70% of onion output with Kharif and late kharif crop (harvested in October-March) contributing the rest.
 - ◆ No onion harvesting takes place between June and September, when supply is met through stored rabi onion and harvested Kharif onion.
 - ◆ Now, stored Rabi onion is getting exhausted and there is a delay in arrival of Kharif onion, resulting in low onion supply, and an increase in its price.
 - ⊕ **Weather:** Delay in the sowing of Kharif onion due to weather conditions resulted in less crop coverage.
- **Other possible reasons:**
 - ⊕ **Cobweb phenomenon** in agriculture is when farmers base their planting decisions on last year's prices. This delayed response can cause a cycle of crop overproduction or underproduction, leading to fluctuating prices.
 - ⊕ **High transportation cost** (rising oil price, poor road connectivity), lack of cold storage facilities, high storage cost, etc.

Government steps to stabilise the price:

- The scheme for development of Tomato, Onion and Potato (TOP) value chain (2018) under Operation Green Scheme.
- Price stabilization fund (PSF) to cool onion prices.
- Irradiation of onion: In collaboration with Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) with the objective of minimizing storage loss.

Global Preparedness Monitoring Board (GPMB) released "A Fragile State of Preparedness: 2023 Report on the State of the World's Preparedness" Report

- GPMB Monitoring Framework for Preparedness (published in May 2023) provides a robust, evidence-based methodology to assess global pandemic preparedness.
 - ⊕ GPMB has chosen to focus on 30 indicators related to monitoring and accountability, financing, global governance, R&D and access to medical countermeasures, inclusivity and community empowerment, adoption of One Health approaches, and multi-sectoral coordination.
- **Key findings of report**
 - ⊕ **World's capacity** to deal with a potential new pandemic threat remains inadequate.
 - ⊕ **Declining trend** observed in preparedness areas including global coordination of R&D efforts to address misinformation, community engagement, participation of low- and middle income countries in decision-making, independent monitoring, etc.
 - ⊕ **Improving trend** observed in areas like R&D capacity-building, involvement of civil society and private sector, funding socioeconomic response etc.
- **Recommendations**
 - ⊕ **Strengthen evidence-based monitoring** to increase effectiveness, ensure accountability, and build trust.
 - ⊕ **Reform global financing system** for PPPR (pandemic prevention, preparedness and response).
 - ◆ PPPR is a global good that ensures that all countries are better equipped to detect and respond to pandemics.
 - ⊕ **Strengthen regional capacities for R&D**, and supply to address inequities in global access to medical countermeasures.
 - ⊕ Enhance multi-sectoral, multi stakeholder engagement.



Global Preparedness Monitoring Board (GPMB)

- Genesis:** Established in 2018 by World Bank and WHO in the wake of 2014- 2016 Ebola epidemic.
- About:** Independent monitoring and accountability body to ensure preparedness for global health crises.
- Functions:** Responsible for producing a Monitoring Framework that provides a single, authoritative, and actionable roadmap for global preparedness.
- Members:** 15 - member Board is made up of political leaders, heads of agencies, and experts.

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) announced 2023 Champions of the Earth Award

- ▶ Champions of the Earth award honour individuals, groups, and organizations whose actions have transformative impact on environment.
 - ⊖ Awarded annually since its inception in 2005, it is UN's highest environmental honour which recognizes outstanding leaders from government, civil society and private sector.
- ▶ To eliminate plastic pollution, 2023 award recognized in four categories.
 - ⊖ **Policy leadership category:** Mayor Josefin Belmonte of Quezon City (Philippines) to ban single-use plastics, a trade-in programme for plastic pollution etc.
 - ⊖ **Inspiration and Action category:** Ellen MacArthur Foundation (United Kingdom) in mainstreaming lifecycle approach, including for plastics.
 - ⊖ **Entrepreneurial Vision category:**
 - ◆ **Blue Circle (China)** uses blockchain technology and internet of things to track and monitor full lifecycle of plastic pollution.
 - ◆ **José Manuel Moller (Chile)** is founder social enterprise (Algramo) dedicated to providing refill services that reduce plastic pollution and lower everyday essentials costs.
 - ⊖ **Science and Innovation category:** Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (South Africa) uses cutting-edge technology and multidisciplinary research to develop innovations to tackle plastic pollution.
- ▶ Every year, up to 23 million tonnes of plastic waste goes into aquatic ecosystems, thus polluting lakes, rivers and seas.

India's initiatives to tackle plastic pollution

- ▶ Ban on identified Single Use Plastic (SUP) Items from 1st July 2022.
- ▶ Guidelines for Extended Producer Responsibility through Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2021.
- ▶ India Plastics Pact launched in 2021.
- ▶ Project REPLAN (REducing PLAstic from Nature).

Supreme Court Directs Maharashtra Assembly Speaker to decide on cases of Defection within 3 months

- ▶ Taking the reference from **Keisham Meghachandra Singh Vs Manipur Speaker 2020**, SC observed that the Speaker, in acting as a Tribunal under the Tenth Schedule, is bound to decide disqualification petitions within a reasonable period.
 - ⊖ Case for the anti-defection should be decided within a maximum of 3 months unless exceptional circumstances exist.
- ▶ The Tenth schedule (introduced by the 52nd Amendment Act, 1985) deals with situations of defection in Parliament or state legislatures by members of a political party, independent members, and nominated members.
- ▶ **Grounds of defection**
 - ⊖ If a member voluntarily gives up the membership of a political party.
 - ⊖ Joins any other political party after the election, votes or abstains from voting contrary to the party directive.
 - ⊖ A nominated member joins any political party after 6 months.
 - ⊖ If an Independent elected member joins any political party.
- ▶ However, if two-thirds of the members agree to a merger with another party, they will not be disqualified.
- ▶ Presently, the Law does not provide a time limit within which the Speaker/Presiding officers have to decide on the anti-defection case.

Also in News



Light Combat Helicopter (LCH) Prachand

- ▶ Army successfully test-fires rocket and turret guns of indigenous LCH Prachand (means fierce).
 - ⊖ It was inducted into Indian Air Force in 2022.
- ▶ LCH Prachand is a multi-role combat helicopter, designed and developed by Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd.
 - ⊖ Only attack helicopter in the world that can land and take off at an altitude of 5,000 metres.
 - ⊖ Capable of firing air-to-ground and air-to-air missiles.
 - ⊖ Fitted with 5.8-tonne twin-engine named Shakti engine, primarily designed for deployment in high-altitude areas (like Siachen glacier).
 - ⊖ It has best stealth features, armored-shield systems, and dark-mode attack capability.



Limited Liability Partnership (LLP)

- ▶ New Limited Liability Partnership (Third Amendment) Rules, 2023 notified by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs came into force.
- ▶ **About LLP**
 - ⊖ **Nature:** LLP is a hybrid between a company and a partnership.
 - ◆ LLP gives the benefits of limited liability of a company and the flexibility of a partnership.
 - ⊖ Governed by the Limited Liability Partnership Act, 2008.
 - ⊖ **Structure:** LLP is a body corporate and a legal entity separate from its partners.
 - ⊖ **Members:** A minimum of 2 partners will be required for the formation of an LLP (no limit on the maximum number of partners).



WTO's Dispute Settlement Body (DSB)

- India calls for initiating formal talks on **WTO's dispute settlement body reforms**.
- **About DSB**
 - ⊕ **General Council of WTO** convenes as the **DSB** to deal with **disputes between WTO members**.
 - ⊕ **3 main stages of dispute settlement process:**
 - ◆ **Consultations between the parties;**
 - ◆ **Adjudication by panels** and, if applicable, by the Appellate Body;
 - ◆ **Implementation of the ruling**, which includes the possibility of **countermeasures** in the event of **failure by the losing party to implement the ruling**.



Prisoner's dilemma

- Defence Minister referred to the concept of **"Prisoner's Dilemma"** in his address to Goa Maritime Conclave.
- **About Prisoner's Dilemma:**
 - ⊕ Prisoner's Dilemma refers to **one of the most popular "games" in Game Theory**.
 - ⊕ It is a **paradox in decision analysis** in which **two individuals acting in their own self-interests do not produce the optimal outcome**.
 - ⊕ **The best outcome lies in cooperation**.
- **Game theory:** It is the **science of strategy** and attempts to determine **mathematically and logically** the actions that **"players" should take** to secure the **best outcomes for themselves**.



US-issued directives for AI

- **AI directives issued by the White House include:**
 - ⊕ **Companies developing AI models** that pose a threat to national security, economic security or health and safety must **share their safety test results with the government**.
 - ⊕ **Government will set guidelines** for so-called **red-team testing**, where assessors **emulate rogue actors** in their test procedures.
 - ⊕ Official guidance on **watermarking AI-made content** will be issued to address risk of harm from **fraud and deepfakes**.



Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary

- It is reported that Maoists opened fire at forest watchers in **Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary**.
- **About Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary**
 - ⊕ Established in 1984, located at **northern most protected area of Kerala (Kannur district)**.
 - ⊕ **Forest Types:** West Coast tropical evergreen forest, West coast semi-evergreen forests, South Indian moist deciduous forest, Southern hilltop evergreen forest and plantations.
 - ⊕ **Fauna:** Nilgiri Wood-Pigeon *Columba elphinstonii*, Lion-tailed Macaque, etc.
 - ⊕ **Forms watershed area** of Cheenkannipuzha and Urittipuzha rivers, tributaries of River Valapattanam.



KAZIND-2023

- It is an annual India-Kazakhstan Joint Military Exercise.



Tripling Renewable Power and Doubling Energy Efficiency by 2030

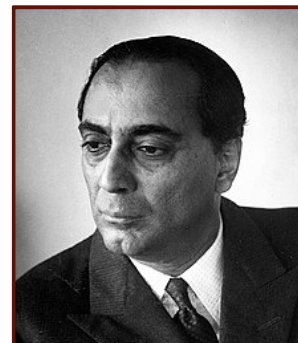
- Report was jointly launched by **COP28 Presidency, International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), and Global Renewables Alliance** on sidelines of Pre-COP event in Abu Dhabi.
- Report **outlines key enablers to triple global Renewable Power Capacity to 11,000 GW and double average annual energy efficiency improvements by 2030**.
 - ⊕ **5 key enablers include:** Infrastructure and System Operation, Policy and Regulation, Supply chains, Skills and Capacities, Finance, and International collaboration.
 - ⊕ There is **need to cut 22 gigatonnes (GW) of greenhouse gases by 2030** to keep 1.5°C within reach.

Personality in News



Homi Jehangir Bhabha (1909-1966)

- India remembers **Homi Jehangir Bhabha on his birth anniversary**.
- **About Homi Jehangir Bhabha**
 - ⊕ Born in **Bombay in a Parsi family**.
 - ⊕ An **Indian physicist** often considered as **Father of Indian Nuclear Program**.
 - ⊕ **Founding director** of Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) and **Trombay Atomic Energy Establishment** (renamed as **Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC)**).
 - ⊕ **Associated with Bhabha scattering** (relativistic exchange scattering of electrons) and **Bhabha-Heitler theory** (production of electron and positron showers in cosmic rays).
 - ⊕ Conferred with **Padma Bhushan award (1954)**.
 - ⊕ Elected as **president of first international conference on Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy** (at Geneva) in 1955.
- **Ethical Values:** Scientific Rigour, Courage, Pursuit of excellence, etc.



Homi Jehangir Bhabha
(1909-1966)

