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## News Analysis (31 Oct, 2020)

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### Translocation of Corals in Mumbai

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#### Why in News

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The **National Institute of Oceanography** will carry out the translocation of 18 coral colonies from the coast of Mumbai for the Mumbai Coastal Road Project.

#### Key Points

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- **Corals:**

- **Corals exhibit characteristics of plants, but are marine animals** that are related to jellyfish and anemones.
- They are made up of **genetically identical organisms called polyps**, which are tiny, soft-bodied organisms.
  - At their base is a hard, protective limestone skeleton called a **calicle, which forms the structure of coral reefs.**
- These **polyps have microscopic algae called zooxanthellae** living within their tissues. The **corals and algae have a mutualistic (symbiotic) relationship.** i.e.
  - The coral provides the zooxanthellae with the compounds necessary for photosynthesis.
  - In return, the zooxanthellae supply the coral with organic products of photosynthesis, like carbohydrates, which are utilized by the coral polyps for synthesis of their calcium carbonate skeletons.
  - Zooxanthellae are also responsible for the unique and **beautiful colors of corals.**
- There are 2 types of corals:
  - **Stony**, shallow-water corals—the kind that build reefs.
  - **Soft corals** and deep water corals that live in dark cold waters.

- **Coral Reefs:**
  - **Reefs begin** when a **polyp attaches** itself to a **rock on the seafloor, then divides, or buds, into thousands of clones**. The polyp calicles connect to one another, **creating a colony** that acts as a single organism.
  - As colonies grow over hundreds and thousands of years, they join with other **colonies, and become reefs**.
  - Coral reefs cover less than 1% of the ocean floor but they are among the most productive and diverse ecosystems on Earth. They are referred to as **the rainforests of the sea** for their biodiversity.
  - **Benefits:** Coral reefs are like underwater cities that **support marine life**.
    - According to the **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**, they provide at least half a billion people around the world with food security and livelihoods.
    - Coral reefs also act as **‘wave breaks’** between the sea and the coastline and minimise the impact of sea erosion.
    - According to a **recent study of University of Queensland (UQ), Australia, more life can be supported by dead coral remains than live corals**.
  - **Protection:** In India, they are under **Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act (WPA), 1972**.
  - **Threats:** Climate change remains one of the biggest threats to corals. Around the world, this threat has been visible in the **“bleaching” of corals**.
- **Coral Bleaching:** It is a process during which corals, under stress from warm weather, expel the algae that give corals their brilliant colours and live in their tissues and produce their food.
  - The **Great Barrier Reef off the coast of Australia** has suffered six mass bleaching events due to warmer than normal ocean temperatures in 1998, 2002, 2006, 2016, 2017, and now 2020.
  - The Great Barrier Reef is a **UNESCO World Heritage site** and **home to one of the largest collections of coral reefs** on the planet.
- **Biorock Technology:** It is a method **to restore coral reefs** using biorock or mineral accretion.
  - Under this low voltage electrical currents through seawater is applied, causing **dissolved minerals to crystallize on structures**, growing into a white limestone (CaCO<sub>3</sub>) similar to that which naturally makes up coral reefs and tropical white sand beaches.
  - **Biorock**, also known as Seacrete or Seament, refers to the substance formed by electro-accumulation of minerals dissolved in seawater.

- **Coral Translocation:**

- The translocation of corals is at a **nascent stage along the Indian coastline**. It is difficult and has **not been very successful in India**. Pilot projects at various sites including, Lakshadweep islands and Andaman islands have been undertaken to study the survival rate, method and site of translocation, and creation of high heat-resistant coral colonies, etc.
- Transplanted corals are **more susceptible to storm surges and bleaching from warming ocean waters**.
- Experts are of the view that **for a high survival rate, it is important to translocate corals in a place with similar environmental characteristics** such as depth, current flow, amount of light, and pressure.

## 11 SPECIES OF CORALS IN MUMBAI

➤ Corals are invertebrate animals belonging to a group called Cnidaria, that can be found in rocky intertidal regions or on the ocean floor



➤ Corals are usually classified as 'hard' and 'soft' corals. Hard corals are reef-building ones. Soft corals, which include seas fans, don't have the rock-like calcareous skeleton; instead they grow wood-like cores for support and fleshy rinds for protection. Soft corals live in colonies that often resemble brightly coloured plants or trees




➤ The city has 11 species of corals, according to a survey by Marine Life of Mumbai, nine of which are hard corals. The National Institute of Oceanography identified 18 colonies at Haji Ali and Worli, comprising six species

➤ Coral restoration and translocation has been tried in many parts of the world with varied success. In India, there have been projects in Lakshwadeep, Gujarat, Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Sindhudurg



**Source: IE**

## Sexual Harassment and the Code on Wages

### Why in News

According to a provision in the **Code on Wages 2019**, ‘**conviction for sexual harassment**’ can be a **ground for denying bonus payouts** to employees.

The Central government published the **Draft Code on Wages (Central) Rules, 2020** in July 2020 and placed it in the public domain inviting objections and suggestions.

## Key Points

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- The Code lays down norms for annual bonus dues that accrue to employees, replacing the **Payment of Bonus Act, 1965**, which bars bonus dues only in case of fraud, violent conduct and theft or sabotage.
  - **Payment of Bonus Act, 1965:**

The **minimum bonus** payable is **8.33% of the salary or wage** earned by the employee during the accounting year subject to a **maximum of 20%** of such salary or wage and is **applicable to all employees earning a salary of up to Rs. 21,000 a month.**
  - **Section 29 of the Code** states that “Notwithstanding anything contained in this Code, an employee shall be disqualified from receiving bonus under this Code, if he is dismissed from service for fraud or riotous or violent behaviour while on the premises of the establishment or theft, misappropriation or sabotage of any property of the establishment or conviction for sexual harassment.”

The **salary and bonus payment limits are yet to be notified** under the Code on Wages.
- Other **disqualification triggers are explicitly restricted to actions on an employer's premises**, the trigger referring to conviction under sexual harassment does not include such a condition about the location of the incident.

As of now, **it is not clear if sexual harassment incidents or related crimes against women outside the workplace could lead to dismissal** of employees with loss of bonus payments but it should come under the purview irrespective of where it is done.
- **Significance of the Move:**
  - This is a huge step to **get people to be on their best behaviour** in the workplace as the prospect of losing one’s benefits may make employees more careful of their conduct.
  - This is also a step forward **towards creating seriousness about instances of sexual harassment** at the workplace and in general.
  - This move will serve as an additional deterrent apart from the **Prevention Of Sexual Harassment (POSH) law of 2013.**

## Code on Wages Act, 2019

- The **new wage code** removes the **multiplicity of wage definitions**, which can significantly reduce litigation as well as compliance cost for employers.
- It links minimum wage across the country to the **skills of the employee** and the **place of employment**.
- It seeks to **universalise the provisions** of minimum wages and their timely payment to all employees irrespective of the sector and wage ceiling.
- It seeks to ensure **Right to Sustenance for every worker** and **intends to increase the legislative protection** of minimum wage.
- A **National Floor Level Minimum Wage** will be set by the Centre and will be **revised every five years**, while states will fix minimum wages for their regions, which cannot be lower than the floor wage.
- It **subsumes the following four labour laws**:
  - Payment of Wages Act, 1936
  - Minimum Wages Act, 1948
  - Payment of Bonus Act, 1965
  - Equal Remuneration Act, 1976

### **Prevention Of Sexual Harassment Law 2013**

- Under it, sexual harassment includes **any one or more of the following unwelcome acts or behaviour** (whether directly or by implication):
  - Physical contact and advances.
  - Demand or request for sexual favours.
  - Making sexually coloured remarks.
  - Showing pornography.
  - Any other unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of sexual nature.
- As per the POSH law guidelines, firms are required to form an **Internal Complaints Committee (ICC)** to **inquire into complaints of sexual harassment** at the workplace.
- ICC is required to **make recommendations** to employers on the action required pursuant to its inquiry in such complaints.
- If the ICC upholds a complaint, it **could be interpreted as a conviction** and ICC has the **powers to decide if someone is guilty and report it further to the police**, though not all sexual harassment cases translate into a police case.

**Source: TH**

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### **Merger of Schools in Odisha: SATH Project**

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#### **Why in News**

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The Odisha government has **identified around 8,000 schools** in 15 districts which

**will be merged with other schools** due to **low enrollment** (less than 20 students).

The merger is **being carried out under the NITI Aayog's Sustainable Action for Transforming Human Capital in Education (SATH-E) project**, and has been termed **Consolidation and Rationalisation of schools**.

## Key Points

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- **SATH-E Project:**
  - **Sustainable Action for Transforming Human Capital (SATH)** focusses on **two main sectors - Education and Health** and to build **three 'Role Model' States**.
  - **SATH-E** aspires to be a 'saathi', to the educational system with the student and the teacher at its centre".
    - In **2017, Odisha** was among three states, along with **Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh**, to be **selected by NITI Aayog** for the project.
  - The initiative aims to transform elementary and secondary school education through goal driven exercise and create role model states for education. The initiative **culminates at the end of the 2020 academic year**.
  - **Critical interventions** including **school mergers, remediation program, training, monitoring teacher recruitment/rationalization, institutional reorganization** at district and state level and proper utilization of **Management Information System (MIS)** are in execution mode since January, 2018.
    - **Merger of schools** is advocated to help **consolidate resources** such as teachers, libraries, laboratories and play equipment.
    - **MIS** can assist the school manager in determining the aims of the school, formulating strategic plans, distributing resources, and evaluating staff performance as well as organizational success.
  - Progress of the project is **being monitored** through a National Steering Group (NSG) and Central Project Monitoring Unit (CPMU) at national level and State Project Monitoring Unit (SPMU) at State level.

- **Concerns with Merger of Schools:**
  - Activists have argued that closure or merger of schools is **in violation of section 3 and 8 of the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009**.
    - **Section 3** provides to **every child of the age of six to fourteen years** the right to free and compulsory education in a **neighbourhood school** till the completion of elementary education.
    - **Section 8** assigns **duties to the appropriate Government** to ensure that it provides free and compulsory elementary education to every child, in a neighbourhood school.
  - Majority of these schools are **from tribal belts on hilly terrains**. Closure of schools in a village will only **increase the dropout rate** as it won't be feasible for students to travel far to attend school.
  - Parents are also concerned that if their children fail to attend school, they will also be **deprived of the midday meals**.
- **State Government's Response:**
  - Students who will have to travel to a distant school will be **provided with a daily allowance of Rs. 20** and **students from schools facing closure** will also be provided **a one-time facilitation allowance of Rs 3,000**.  
If the **distance to school is more than 1 km**, students will be provided **travel allowance as per Right To Education (RTE) norms**.
  - Further, the **district collectors have been authorised to cancel the merger** if genuine concerns arise.

## Way Forward

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- The merger would make schools aspirational for students and result in **improvement of Pupil-Teacher Ratio**. There would be **better infrastructure facilities**, better academic environment with additional e-Learning and co-curricular facilities. However, **geographical constraints and other hurdles** should be considered before closing/merging down schools.
- The entire process must be enabled through clear channels of communication, a rigorous **grievance redressal system** and thorough **counseling**.

**Source: IE**

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## National Unity Day 2020

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### Why in News

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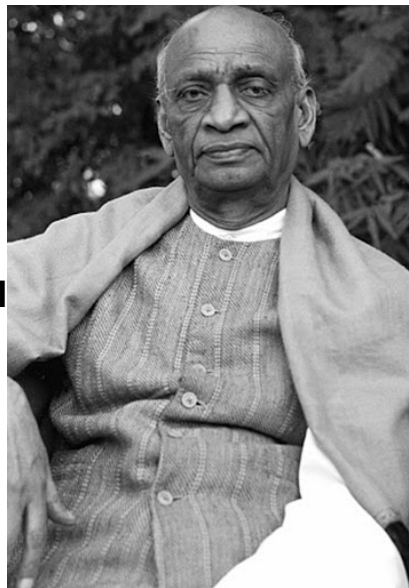
Every year, the **National Unity Day** (Rashtriya Ekta Diwas) is celebrated on **31<sup>st</sup> October** to commemorate the birth anniversary of **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel**.

The Prime Minister launched the **seaplane service** from Ahmedabad to the **Statue of Unity**, Kevadia.

## Key Points

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- The day was **celebrated for the first time in 2014**, when the Government of India decided to celebrate Patel's birthday as the National Unity Day to recognise his monumental contribution and service to the nation.
- On this day, several events like Run For Unity, a nationwide marathon to increase awareness about Patel's contributions, National Unity pledge, Ekta Parade, etc. are organised.
- In **2018**, the Government unveiled the **Statue of Unity** in Gujarat in Patel's honour.
  - It is the **tallest statue** (182-meter) **in the world**.
  - In January 2020, it was added in the '**Eight Wonders**' of the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation** (SCO).



**Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel**

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- **Born:** 31<sup>st</sup> October 1875 in Nadiad, Gujarat.



- **Achievements:**
  - First Home Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of India.
  - **Headed various Committees of the Constituent Assembly of India**, namely:
    - Advisory Committee on Fundamental Rights.
    - Committee on Minorities and Tribal and Excluded Areas.
    - Provincial Constitution Committee.
  - Integrated the farmer's cause in Kheda Satyagraha (1918) and Bardoli Satyagraha (1928) with the national freedom movement.
    - **Women of Bardoli bestowed the title 'Sardar'** on Vallabhbhai Patel, which means 'a Chief or a Leader'.
  - Known as the **"Iron Man of India"** for playing an important role in unification and **integration of Indian princely states** into the Indian federation and for convincing princely states to align with the Indian Union.
  - Requested the people of India to **live together by uniting (*Ek Bharat*)** in order **to create a foremost India (*Shresth Bharat*)**.
    - This ideology still reflects in the **Atmanirbhar Bharat** initiative which seeks to make India self-reliant.
  - Remembered as the **'Patron Saint of India's Civil Servants'** as he **established the modern all-India services system.**
- **Death:** 15<sup>th</sup> December 1950 in Bombay.

**Source: IE**

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## **Shivalik Elephant Reserve: Uttarakhand**

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### **Why in News**

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The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has asked the Uttarakhand government to consider avoiding sensitive areas of the Shivalik Elephant Reserve while exploring land suitable to use for the expansion of Dehradun's Jolly Grant Airport.

### **Key Points**

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- **Background:** The **area proposed for the expansion**, is a **part of the Shivalik Elephant Reserve** and it falls **within a 10-km radius of Rajaji National Park.**
- **Protests:** Children and social activists have tied protective strings around the trees marked to be cut, similar to the **Chipko movement** of the 1970s, when villagers in Chamoli hugged trees to stop contractors from felling them.

- **Concerns:** The expansion will threaten hundreds of species of fauna in Thano (near Rajaji National Park) and the elephant corridor nearby.
  - The State **also falls in seismic Zone IV and V**, as per the Earthquake Zoning Map, and uprooting Thano will lead to **soil erosion**, a factor that exacerbated the **2013 Kedarnath floods**, endangering countless lives.
  - Earlier, social activists had **criticised Chardham Pariyojana** on environmental grounds.
    - It is a programme taken up by the **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways** for connectivity improvement for Chardham (Kedarnath, Badrinath, Yamunotri and Gangotri) in Uttrakhand.
  - Recently, the **Supreme Court** upheld the 2011 order of the Madras High Court (HC) on the Nilgiris elephant corridor, affirming the **right of passage of the animals** and the closure of resorts in the area.
- **Shivalik Elephant Reserve:**
  - It was **notified in 2002** under the **'Project Elephant'**.
    - Project Elephant was launched by the Government of India in the year 1992 as a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** with following objectives:
      - To protect elephants, their habitat & corridors.
      - To address issues of man-animal conflict.
      - Welfare of captive elephants.
  - The **Kansora-Barkot Elephant Corridor** is located near to it.
  - It is considered to have **one of the highest densities of elephants** found in India.
  - The **Indian elephant (Elephas maximus)** occurs in the central and southern Western Ghats, North-east India, eastern India and northern India and in some parts of southern peninsular India. As per the Elephant Census, 2017, **Karnataka has the highest population** of Indian elephants.
    - It is included in **Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972** and in **Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES)**.
    - It is **'Endangered'** as per the **IUCN Red List**.

- **Rajaji National Park:**

- **Location:** Haridwar, along the foothills of the Shivalik range, spans 820 square kilometres.
- **Background:** Three sanctuaries in the Uttarakhand i.e. Rajaji, Motichur and Chila were amalgamated into a large protected area and named Rajaji National Park in the year 1983 **after the famous freedom fighter C. Rajgopalachari; popularly known as “Rajaji”**.
- **Features:**
  - This area is the **North Western Limit of habitat of Asian elephants**.
  - Forest types include sal forests, riverine forests, broad-leaved mixed forests, scrubland and grassy.
  - It possesses as many as 23 species of mammals and 315 bird species such as elephants, tigers, leopards, deers and ghorals, etc.
  - It was declared a **Tiger Reserve** in 2015.
  - It is **home to the Van Gujjars in the winters**. Van Gujjars are one of the few **forest-dwelling nomadic** communities in the country.

- **Other Protected Areas in Uttarakhand:**

- Jim Corbett National Park (first National Park of India).
- Valley of Flowers National Park and Nanda Devi National Park which together are a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**.
- Govind Pashu Vihar National Park and Sanctuary.
- **Gangotri National Park**.
- Nandhaur Wildlife Sanctuary.

## Way Forward

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- Though the expansion project is of strategic importance, the government needs to remember that the Shivalik Elephant Reserve is a biodiversity hub of Uttarakhand, home to elephants, leopards and endless other avian and mammals species.
- Government before passing laws should consider that India is on board global climate agreements like the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol**, implying that it has some international commitments.

## Source: IE

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## Habitat Loss of Himalayan Brown Bear

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## Why in News

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Recently, a study conducted by scientists of the **Zoological Survey of India** on the

**Himalayan brown bear** (*Ursus arctos isabellinus*) has predicted a **significant reduction in suitable habitat and biological corridors** of the Himalayan brown bear **due to climate change**.

## Key Points

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- The study titled ‘**Adaptive spatial planning of protected area networks for conserving the Himalayan brown bear**’ was carried out in the **western Himalayas**. It has predicted a **decline of about 73%** of the bear’s habitat by the year 2050.
- The total habitat loss can make 8 out of 13 PA completely uninhabitable by 2050.
- The **western Himalaya** where significant **brown bear population is distributed** is most **vulnerable to global warming** as this elevation belt is **getting warmer** faster than other elevation zones of Himalayas.
- To keep a check on this, scientists have recommended preemptive **spatial planning of PAs in the Himalayan region** for the long-term viability of the species.
  - The spatial planning of PAs is **aimed at minimising the risks and uncertainty of climate change**.
  - **Spatial Planning** is an activity centered on making decisions relating to the location and distribution of land use activities. It allows monitoring of changes, both in climate and socio-economic situations.

## Himalayan Brown Bear

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- **Range:** North-western and central Himalaya, including India, Pakistan, Nepal, the Tibetan Autonomous Region of China and Bhutan.
- **Habitat:** High altitude open valleys and pastures.
- **Status:** **IUCN Red List- Critically endangered.**
- **Food:** Omnivorous.
- **Threat:** Human-animal conflict, rapid habitat loss, poaching for fur, claws and organs and, in some rare cases, bear baiting.



**Source:TH**

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## **International Press Institute**

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### **Why in News**

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Recently, the **International Press Institute (IPI)** has highlighted that the impunity with which crimes against journalists are committed continued to rise as governments had failed to probe the cases.

This move comes ahead of the **International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists** which is celebrated on **2<sup>nd</sup> November every year**.

- The **United Nations General Assembly** proclaimed the day in the General Assembly Resolution of **December 2013**.
- It urged the Member States **to implement definite measures countering the culture of impunity**.
- The date was chosen in **commemoration of the assassination of two French journalists in Mali on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2013**.

### **Key Points**

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- IPI is a **Vienna-based global network of editors, media executives and leading journalists** who share a common dedication to quality, independent journalism.

- **Formation:**

- In 1950, to promote and protect press freedom and to improve the practices of journalism, 34 editors from 15 countries gathered at **Columbia University** and formed the global organisation.

The year **2020** marks its **70<sup>th</sup> anniversary**.

- The **original Secretariat was set up in 1951 in Zürich** (Switzerland), which was shifted to **London in 1976** and then to **Vienna in 1992**.

- **Objectives:**

- To promote conditions that **allow journalism to fulfil its public function**, the most important of which is the media's **ability to operate free from interference and without fear of retaliation**.
  - To **defend media freedom and the free flow of news** wherever they are threatened.
-