



## News Analysis (04 Sep, 2021)

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### 6th Eastern Economic Forum

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#### Why in News

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Recently, the Prime Minister of India (PM) addressed the plenary session of the 6<sup>th</sup> **Eastern Economic Forum (EEF)** via video-conferencing.

The PM highlighted the importance of India-Russia relations and potential areas of cooperation in line with the '**Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership**'.

#### Key Points

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- **Highlights of PM's Address:**
  - Applauded Russia's vision for the development of the **Russian Far East region** and **reiterated India's commitment** (as part of its "**Act East Policy**") of being a **reliable partner** of Russia in this regard.
  - Highlighted the **significance of health and pharma sectors** as important areas of cooperation that have emerged during the pandemic.
  - Referred to **other potential areas of economic cooperation** including diamond, coking coal, steel, timber etc.

- **About Eastern Economic Forum:**

- EEF was **established by the decree of the President of the Russian Federation in the year 2015.**
- **It takes place each year in Vladivostok,** a city in Russia.
- It serves as a platform for the **discussion of key issues** in the world economy, regional integration, and the development of new industrial and technological sectors, as well as of the **global challenges facing Russia and other nations.**
- The Forum's **business programme** includes a number of business dialogues with leading partner countries in the Asia-Pacific region, and with **ASEAN**, a key integration organization of dynamically developing nations in Southeast Asia.
- Over the years, it has **emerged as an international platform** for discussing the strategy for developing political, economic and cultural ties between Russia and Asia Pacific.



## Importance of India-Russia Relations:

- **Balancing China:** The **Chinese aggression in the border areas** of eastern Ladakh, brought India-China relations to an inflection point, but also demonstrated that Russia is capable of contributing to defusing tensions with China.
  - Russia organized a **trilateral meeting** among the foreign ministers of Russia, India, and China following deadly clashes in the Galwan Valley in the disputed territory of Ladakh.
- **Emerging New Sectors of Economic Engagement:** Apart from traditional areas of cooperation such as weapons, hydrocarbons, nuclear energy (Kudankulam), space (**Gaganyaan**) and diamonds, new sectors of economic engagement are likely to emerge — mining, agro-industrial, and high technology, including robotics, nanotech, and biotech.
  - India's footprint in the Russian Far East and in the **Arctic** is set to expand. Connectivity projects may get a boost too.
- **Reviving Eurasian Economic Union:** Russia seeks to leverage India's soft power to gain legitimacy in the success of the Eurasian Economic Union, and re-establishing its hegemony, as it existed during the cold war era.
- **Combating Terrorism:** India and Russia are working to close the gap on Afghanistan and are calling for early finalization of the **Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism**.
- **Support at Multilateral Forums:** Additionally, Russia supports India's candidacy for permanent membership of a reformed **United Nations Security Council** and of the **Nuclear Suppliers Group**.
- **Diplomacy:** Russia has been a long-time friend of India; it not only provided India arms to maintain a formidable military profile but also gave invaluable diplomatic support on a variety of regional issues.
- **Defence Cooperation:** Although India has consciously diversified its new defence purchases from other countries, the bulk of its defence equipment (60 to 70%) is still from Russia.
  - **BrahMos Missile System** as well as the licensed production in India of **SU-30 aircraft and T-90 tanks**, are examples.
  - **Indra Exercises** - Joint Tri-**Services (Army, Navy, Air Force) Exercises**.

**Source: PIB**

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## India-US Trade Issues: Free Trade Agreement

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### Why in News

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Recently, the **new (Joe Biden) US administration** has indicated that it is **no longer interested in securing a bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with India**. The **US is India's largest trading partner**, and one with whom it **has a significant trade surplus**.

This **calling off of the US-India mini-trade deal** provides **an opportunity for India to holistically review its stance on global trade**.

## Key Points

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- **Free Trade Agreement (FTA):**
  - **About:**
    - It is a **pact between two or more nations to reduce barriers to imports and exports** among them. Under a free trade policy, goods and services can be bought and sold across international borders with **little or no government tariffs, quotas, subsidies, or prohibitions** to inhibit their exchange.
    - The concept of free trade is the **opposite of trade protectionism or economic isolationism**.
  - **India and FTAs:**
    - After **India opted out of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)** in November 2019, the 15-member FTA grouping that includes Japan, China and Australia, FTAs went into cold storage for India.
    - But in May 2021 came the announcement that **India-EU** talks, which had stalled in 2013, would be resumed. This was followed by the news that **FTAs with other countries like the UAE, Australia and Britain**, too, are in various stages of discussion.
- **About US-India Mini-Trade Deal:**
  - **India's Demands:**
    - Resumption of export benefits to certain domestic products under the **Generalised System of Preferences (GSP)**.
    - **Greater market access** for its products from sectors like agriculture, automobile, auto components and engineering.
  - **US' Demands:**
    - **Greater market access** for its farm and manufacturing products, dairy items and medical devices.
    - The office of the **US Trade Representative (USTR)** has underlined India's measures to restrict companies from sending personal data of its citizens outside the country as a **"key" barrier to digital trade**.
    - USTR report also highlights that India's move to impose **data equalisation levy** on foreign e-commerce firms discriminates against American companies.
    - The US has also raised concerns over the **high trade deficit** with India.

- **Other Major India-US Trade Issues:**

- **Tariffs: India** has been referred to by the US as “**tariff king**” that imposes “tremendously high” import duties.
  - In **June 2019**, the **Trump administration decided to terminate India’s benefits** under the GSP scheme.
  - Removal from the GSP list amidst rising trade tensions **prompted India to finally impose retaliatory tariffs on several American imports**. This made the US approach the **WTO (World Trade Organisation)** against India.
- **Intellectual Property (IP):** The two sides differ on how to balance **IP** protection to incentivize innovation and support other policy goals, such as access to medicines.

India remains on the “**Special 301**” **Priority Watch List for 2021**, based on such concerns as its treatment of patents, infringement rates, and protection of trade secrets.
- **Services:** India also continues to seek a “**totalization agreement**” to coordinate social security protection for workers who split their careers between the two countries.

- **Issues in India’s Foreign Trade Policy:**

- **Poor Manufacturing Sector:** In the recent period, manufacturing holds a **share of 14% in India’s GDP**.
  - For advanced and developed nations like Germany, the US, South Korea and Japan, the comparable figures are 19%, 11%, 25% and 21%, respectively.
  - For emerging and developing countries like China, Turkey, Indonesia, Russia, Brazil, the corresponding figures are 27%, 19%, 20%, 13%, 9%, respectively, and for low income countries the share is 8%.
- **Unfavorable FTA’s:** In the past decade, India signed FTAs with the **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)**, the Republic of Korea, Japan, and Malaysia.

However, it is largely believed that India’s trade partners have gained more from these agreements than India.
- **Protectionism:** The **Atmanirbhar Bharat campaign** has exacerbated the view that India is increasingly becoming a protectionist closed market economy.

## Way Forward

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- **Switching to Multilateralism:** Given that India is not party to any mega-trade deals, this would be an important part of a positive trade policy agenda.

Having walked out of RCEP, India needs to demonstrate to its potential FTA partners, including the EU and the UK, that it is **a viable alternative to China in a post-Covid world**.

- **Economic Reforms:** India's trade policy framework must be supported by economic reforms that result in an open, competitive, and technologically innovative Indian economy.
- **Improving Manufacturing:** The share of manufacturing in the GDP needs to rise through efficient implementation of schemes such as the **Make in India** initiative. Further, Implementation of India's major schemes—**the Smart City Project, Skill India Program**, and **Digital India**—will require **foreign direct investment** and a comprehensive rebooting and rejuvenation of India's manufacturing sector.
- **Need For Innovation:** If innovation needs to be promoted, perhaps India should have unveiled an innovation incentivization policy, as intellectual property rights are the flip side of the innovation coin.

**Source: TH**

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## **Virtual Courts**

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### **Why in News**

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Recently, **Chief Justice of India (CJI) N.V. Ramana** has expressed his dissatisfaction towards the newly put open court software in the **Supreme Court** for **virtual hearings**.

The dissatisfaction emanates from the problem of disconnections, resonance of voices during virtual hearings.

### **Key Points**

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#### **About:**

- **Virtual Courts or e-Courts** is a concept aimed at **eliminating the presence of litigants or lawyers in the court and adjudication of the case online**. It requires an Online environment and an Information and Communication Technology (ICT) enabled infrastructure.
- In the wake of the **Coronavirus Pandemic in 2020**, the Supreme Court (SC) exercising its **plenary power under Article 142** passed directions for all courts across the country to **extensively use video-conferencing for judicial proceedings**.
- Earlier, an **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** based portal '**SUPACE**' was launched by the CJI in the judicial system aimed at assisting judges with legal research.
- Also, the SC has released the **Draft Model Rules for Live-Streaming and Recording of Court Proceedings**.

### **e-Courts Project**

- It was conceptualized on the basis of the “National Policy and Action Plan for Implementation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the Indian Judiciary-2005” submitted by e-Committee, Supreme Court of India with a vision to transform the Indian Judiciary by ICT enablement of Courts.
- The e-Courts Mission Mode Project, is a pan-India Project, monitored and funded by the Department of Justice, Ministry of Law and Justice, for the District Courts across the country.
- **Advantages:**
  - **Affordable Justice:** The expansion of e-Courts will ensure easy access to justice at affordable courts to all sections of society.
  - **Faster Delivery of Justice:** The proliferation of e-Courts will make litigation faster, given that required logistics are provided.
  - **Transparency:** e-Courts can overcome the challenges and make the service delivery mechanism transparent and cost-efficient.  
Litigants can view the status of their case online through various channels created for service delivery.
  - **Integration of Judiciary:** Data sharing between different courts and various departments will also be made easy as everything would be available online under the integrated system.  
This would be beneficial for both improving the court processes and rendering citizen-centric services.
- **Challenges:**
  - **Operational Difficulties:** Virtual Courts witness technical interruptions during hearings owing to poor connectivity, echoes and other disruptions.  
Other issues might involve the litigant’s lack of confidence in the process due to lack of proximity.
  - **Hacking and Cybersecurity:** On the top of technology, cybersecurity will be a huge concern too.
  - **Infrastructure:** Challenges can erupt due to insufficient infrastructure and non-availability of electricity and internet connectivity in most of the Talukas/villages.
  - **Maintaining e-Courts record:** The paralegal staff is not well equipped and trained to effectively handle document or record evidence, and make them readily accessible to the litigant, to the council as well as to the court.

## Way Forward

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- There is a need to address data privacy and data security concerns while developing a new platform for India’s judicial system.
- Infrastructure needs to be updated with sufficient machinery and data connectivity to provide virtual proceeding.

- A user-friendly e-courts mechanism can be developed, which is simple and easily accessible by the common public, which will encourage litigants to use such facilities in India.
- Creating awareness around e-courts through talks and seminars can help bring to light the facilities and the ease that e-courts can facilitate.

**Source: TH**

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## **Land Sink & Emissions**

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### **Why in News**

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Despite caution from scientists, policymakers and corporations still assume that **natural carbon sinks like land and oceans will mop up their fossil fuel emissions.**

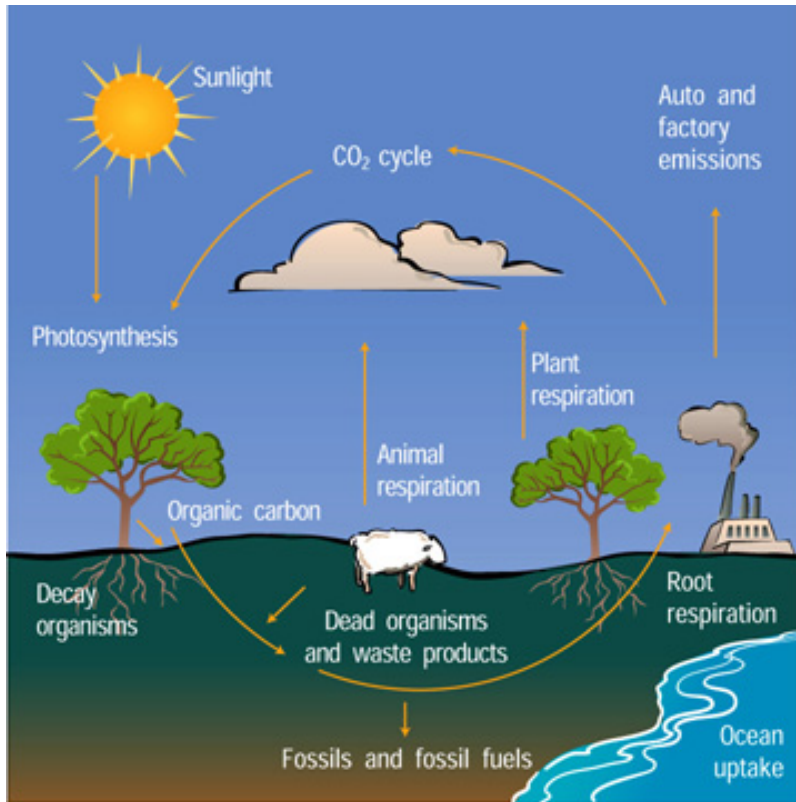
### **Key Points**

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#### **Land Sink:**

- Land is a **critical component of the climate system**, actively **engaged in the flows of carbon, nitrogen, water, and oxygen** - essential building blocks for life.
- **Greenhouse Gases** (GHGs such as carbon dioxide) follow a natural cycle - they are constantly released into the atmosphere and are removed from it via natural 'sinks' such as the land and oceans.
- Plants and healthy ecosystems have an **unparalleled capacity to absorb carbon through photosynthesis** and store it in living biomass.
  - About 56% of the carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emitted by humans is absorbed by the oceans and land.
  - About 30% by land and the rest by oceans.





- **Recognition of Role of Land:**

- The role of land (forests and agricultural land) as a mitigation pathway to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions was **recognised by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** in 1992.
- The **Kyoto Protocol** in 1997 **endorsed** the notion that not only should governments employ policies to enhance the land carbon sink capacities of their territories but also that such **mitigation could be set against requirements for reductions in emissions** from fossil fuel consumption.

- **Related Data:**

- Land use accounted for 13% of anthropogenic CO<sub>2</sub> emissions during 2007-2016, according to a report by The **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)** in 2019.  
But it also **provided a net sink of around 11.2 gigatonnes** of carbon dioxide per year, equivalent to 29% of the total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the same period.
- This means, **29-30% human-driven CO<sub>2</sub> emissions have been soaked up by the world's land sinks** during the past three decades.

- **Concerns:**
  - **Rising Heat Levels:**
    - Increased heat levels are adding to the **moisture stress in forests and leading to widespread burning.**
    - So, on the one hand, forests are being **cut for different economic activities, reducing their role as sinks** for the CO<sub>2</sub> released from fossil fuel burning.
    - On the other hand, as temperatures increase, the forests will shrink further.
  - **Anthropogenic and Natural Factors:**

Human-induced factors such as **deforestation and natural factors** such as climate variability in sunshine, temperature and rainfall can cause a variation in the strength of the land carbon sink.
  - **Rising CO<sub>2</sub> Concentration:**

Climate Change 2021 Report: IPCC states that **CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are the highest in at least two million years.** Humans have emitted 2,400 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> since the late 1800s.
- **Suggestions:**
  - **Growing Trees:**
    - The world is not on track to reduce GHG emissions at the scale needed to avert a temperature rise of 1.5°C over pre-industrial levels.
    - The solution, then, is to **find ways in which emissions can be removed** from the atmosphere and growing trees becomes part of this package.
  - **Get off Fossil Fuels:**

There is a **need to use land especially in this interim of moving from fossil fuels to Renewables**; but in the end fossil fuels must be gotten rid of.
  - **Artificial Carbon Sequestration:**
    - The artificial carbon trapping technologies efficiently **capture carbon in large amounts**, convert it and also store it for thousands of years.
      - The technique is based on passing air through a stack of charged electrochemical plates.
    - The technology aims to **make coal a viable, technical, environmental and economic case** for the future.

- **Related Initiatives:**

- **Bonn Challenge:**

- Bonn Challenge** is a global effort to bring **150 million hectares of the world's deforested and degraded land into restoration by 2020**, and 350 million hectares by 2030.

- **UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration:**

- In March 2019, the **United Nation General Assembly** declared 2021-2030 as the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration to “**prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems worldwide**”.

- **LEAF Coalition:**

- It is **an effort** led by the US, the UK and Norway to mobilise at least **USD 1 billion for financing countries** committed to protecting their tropical forests.

**Source: DTE**

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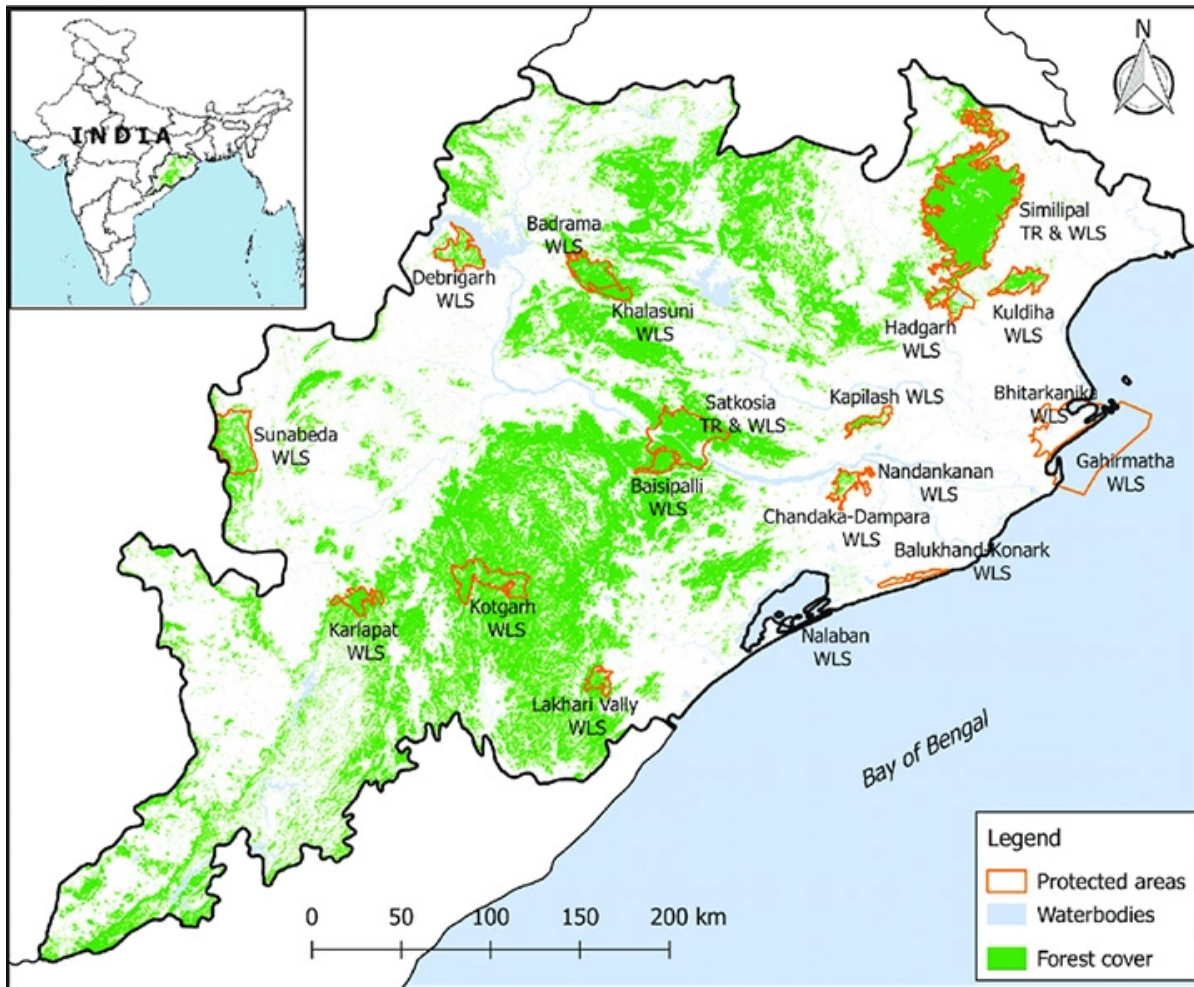
## **Threat to Bhitarkanika National Park: Odisha**

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### **Why in News**

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Recently, some environmental activists pointed out that Odisha's **Bhitarkanika National Park**, is **under severe threat** due to planned diversion of freshwater from the **Brahmani river basin**.



## Key Points

- **Concerns:**
  - Excess water allocation for industries, which is likely to **reduce fresh water discharge to the sea.**
  - The **lack of normal flow of fresh water would increase saline ingression** upstream, it would **affect the local flora and fauna** as well as the livelihoods of the farmers and fishermen dependent upon the Brahmani and the Kharasrota (tributary of the Brahmani).
  - There could be a quantum increase in the **man–crocodile conflict** since the estuarine crocodiles would leave the core sanctuary area and migrate upstream once salinity increases.
  - The reduction in water discharge will **reduce the mangroves** and without the mangroves, the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary will become a marine desert. Nutrients from Bhitarkanika are flushed out to the **Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary**, which attracts the world’s largest population of **Olive Ridley sea turtles** for congregation and nesting.

- **Bhitarkanika National Park:**

- **About:**

- It has the **second-largest mangrove forest in India and is a Ramsar site**. It was declared as a Bhitarkanika National Park **in the year of 1988**.
    - Bhitarkanika is **located in the estuary of Brahmani, Baitarani, Dhamra, and Mahanadi river** systems. It is located in **Kendrapara district of Odisha**.
    - It is **one of Odisha's finest biodiversity hotspots** and is famous for its mangroves, migratory birds, turtles, estuarine crocodiles, and countless creeks.
    - It is said to house **70% of the country's estuarine or saltwater crocodiles**, conservation of which was started way back in 1975.

- **Protected Areas:** The Bhitarkanika is represented by **3 Protected Areas** which are:

- Bhitarkanika National Park.
    - Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary.
    - Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary.

- **River Brahmani:**

- It is a river in **northeastern Odisha state**, eastern India. Formed by the **confluence of the Sankh and South Koel rivers** in southern Bihar state, the Brahmani flows for 300 miles.
  - It winds generally south-southeast past Bonaigarh and Talcher and then turns east to **join northern branches of the Mahanadi River**, which then **empties into the Bay of Bengal at Palmyras Point**.
  - It is **one of the few rivers that cut across the Eastern Ghats**, and it has formed a **minor gorge at Rengali**, where a dam has been built.



Source: TH

## Behler Turtle Conservation Award

### Why in News

Recently, Indian biologist **Shailendra Singh** has been awarded the **Behler Turtle Conservation Award** for bringing **three critically endangered turtle conservation species** back from the brink of extinction.

There are **29 species of freshwater turtles and tortoises** in the country.

### Key Points

- **About Behler Turtle Conservation Award:**
  - **Established in 2006**, it is a **major annual international award** honoring excellence in the field of **tortoise and freshwater turtle conservation** and biology, and **leadership in the chelonian conservation** and biology community.
  - Also referred to as the **“Nobel Prize” of Turtle Conservation**.
  - **Co-presented** by Turtle Survival Alliance (TSA), **IUCN** Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group, Turtle Conservancy, and Turtle Conservation Fund.
  - In the present context, the **three critically endangered turtles** are being conserved as a part of TSA India’s research, conservation breeding and education programme in different parts of the country.
    - The **Northern River Terrapin** (Batagur baska) is being conserved at the **Sunderbans**;
    - The **Red-crowned Roofed Turtle** (Batagur kachuga) at **Chambal**;
    - The **Black Softshell Turtle** (Nilssononia nigricans) at different temples in Assam.
- **Northern River Terrapin:**
  - **Habitat:**

The **Sundarbans eco-region** is their natural habitat.
  - **Protection Status:**
    - **IUCN Red List:** Critically Endangered
    - **CITES:** Appendix I
    - **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:** Schedule I
  - **Threats:**

Exploited for local subsistence and ritualistic consumption as well as some regional trade, including supply to the Calcutta markets in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- **Red-crowned Roofed Turtle:**
  - **Habitat:**
    - Historically, the species was widespread in the Ganga River, both in India and Bangladesh. It also occurs in the Brahmaputra basin.
    - Currently in India, the **National Chambal River Gharial Sanctuary** is the only area with a substantial population of the species.
  - **Protection Status:**
    - **IUCN Red List:** Critically Endangered
    - **CITES:** Appendix II
    - **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:** Schedule I
  - **Threats:**

Loss or degradation of habitat due to pollution and large scale development activities like water extraction for human consumption and irrigation and irregular flow from the upstream dams and reservoirs.

- **Black Softshell Turtle:**
  - **Habitat:**
    - They are found in ponds of temples in northeastern India and Bangladesh.
    - Its distribution range also includes the Brahmaputra River and its tributaries.
  - **Protection Status:**
    - **IUCN Red List:** Critically Endangered
    - **CITES:** Appendix I
    - **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:** No legal protection
  - **Threats:**
    - Consumption of turtle meat and eggs, silt mining, encroachment of wetlands and change in flooding pattern.

## Sea Turtles of Indian Waters

- Sea turtles are **larger in size compared to terrapins (freshwater turtles) and tortoises.**
  - There are **five species** in Indian waters i.e. **Olive Ridley**, Green turtle, Loggerhead, Hawksbill, Leatherback.
  - The **Olive Ridley, Leatherback and Loggerhead** are listed as '**Vulnerable**' on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.
  - The **Hawksbill turtle** is listed as '**Critically Endangered**' and the **Green Turtle** is listed as '**Endangered**'.
- They are protected in **Indian Wildlife Protection Act of 1972**, under **Schedule I**.

**Source: TH**

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## Blue Straggler Stars

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### Why in News

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Recently, in the **first-ever comprehensive analysis of blue stragglers**, Indian researchers have proposed a **hypothesis for evolution of blue straggler stars**.

Blue stragglers is a class of stars on open or globular clusters that **stand out as they are bigger and bluer than the rest of the stars**.

### Key Points

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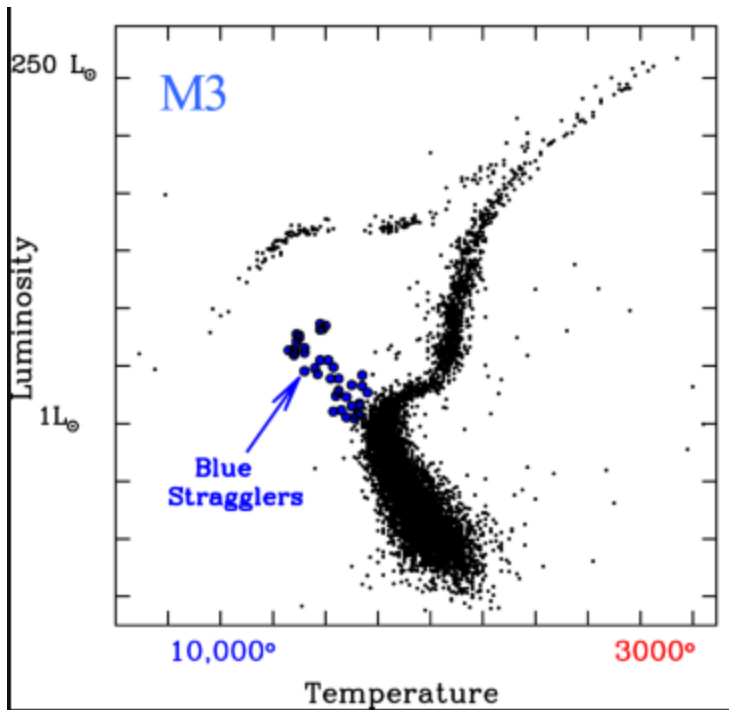


- **About Blue Straggler Stars:**

- These are **unusually hot and bright stars found** in the cores of ancient star clusters known as **globulars**.
- A clue to their origin is that they are only found in dense stellar systems, where distances between stars are extremely small (a fraction of a light year).
- **Allan Sandage** (an astronomer with Carnegie Observatories in Pasadena, California) **discovered blue stragglers** in the **globular cluster M3** in 1952-53.
- Most are located at least several thousand light-years away from the sun, and most are around 12 billion years old or more.
- The **Milky Way's largest and brightest globular** is **Omega Centauri**.

- **Peculiarity about Blue Stragglers:**

- Blue straggler stars **appear to violate standard theories of stellar evolution**.
  - A bunch of stars born at the same time from the same cloud form a star cluster. Star formation happens in interstellar molecular clouds: opaque clumps of very cold gas and dust.
  - Under standard stellar evolution, as time passes, **each star evolves differently depending on its mass**, in which **all stars born at the same time should lie on a clearly defined curve in the Hertzsprung-Russell diagram**.
  - Hertzsprung-Russell diagram **plots the temperature of stars against their luminosity** or the colour of stars against their absolute magnitude. It **shows a group of stars in various stages of their evolution**.
    - By far the **most prominent feature is the main sequence**, which runs from the upper left (hot, luminous stars) to the bottom right (cool, faint stars) of the diagram.
- In **case of blue straggler**, they evolve and move off the main sequence creating a bend in their track, **known as the turnoff**.
  - Since blue stragglers often lie well off this curve, they **may undergo abnormal stellar evolution**.
  - They **appear to be lagging behind most of the other stars in the cluster in its evolution toward a cooler, reddish state**.



### About the Hypothesis:

- Indian researchers have found that:
  - Half of the blue stragglers are formed through mass transfer from a close binary companion star.
  - One third are likely formed through collisions of two stars.
  - Remains are formed through interactions of more than two stars.
- For this Hypothesis, the researchers utilised the **Gaia telescope of the European Space Agency.**
- For further study, Ultraviolet Imaging Telescope on **AstroSat**, India's first dedicated space observatory, as well as the **3.6 m Devasthal Optical Telescope in Nainital** will be used.
- The study **will help improve understanding of these stellar systems** to uncover exciting results in studies of large stellar populations, including galaxies.

**Source: PIB**

## Dementia

### Why in News

Recently, the **WHO (World Health Organisation)** released a report '**Global status report on the public health response to dementia**'.

It takes stock of progress made to date towards the 2025 global targets for dementia laid out in the WHO's '**Global Dementia Action Plan**' published in 2017.

## Key Points

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- **About:**

- It is a **syndrome** – usually of a chronic or progressive nature – that leads to **deterioration in cognitive function** (i.e. the ability to process thought) beyond what might be expected from the **usual consequences of biological ageing**.
- It **affects** memory, thinking, orientation, comprehension, calculation, learning capacity, language, and judgement.  
However, the **consciousness is not affected**.
- 65% of total deaths **due to dementia are women**, and disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) due to dementia are roughly 60% higher in women than in men.

- **Symptoms:**

- **Memory loss, Difficulties with thinking**, Visual perception, Self-management, Problem solving or language and the ability to focus and pay attention.
- **Personality changes**, like depression, agitation, paranoia, and mood swings.

- **Causes:**

When **brain cells are damaged** then dementia may occur. It can be **caused by a head injury, a stroke, a brain tumour** or due to **HIV infection**.

- **Treatment:**

There is **currently no treatment available to cure dementia**, though numerous new treatments are being investigated in various stages of clinical trials.

- **Global Scenario:**

- Dementia is currently the **seventh leading cause of death** among all diseases and one of the **major causes of disability** and dependency among older people worldwide.
- More than **55 million people** (8.1% of women and 5.4% of men over 65 years) are **living with dementia**.
- This number is estimated to rise to 78 million by 2030 and to 139 million by 2050.
- WHO's **Western Pacific Region has the highest number of people with dementia** (20.1 million), followed by the European Region (14.1 million).

- **WHO's Efforts:**
  - **Global Action Plan on the Public Health Response to Dementia 2017-2025:**  
It provides a comprehensive blueprint for addressing dementia.
  - **Global Dementia Observatory:**  
It is an international surveillance platform to **facilitate monitoring and sharing of information** on dementia policies, service delivery, epidemiology and research.
  - **Guidelines on Risk Reduction of Cognitive Decline and Dementia:**  
It **provides evidence- based recommendations** on interventions for reducing modifiable risk factors for dementia.
  - **Mental Health Gap Action Programme:**  
It is a resource for **generalists, particularly in low- and middle-income countries**, to help them provide first-line care for mental, neurological and substance use disorders.
- **Indian Initiatives:**
  - **Alzheimer's and Related Disorders Society of India:**  
It **calls for the government to have its plan or policy on dementia** which must be implemented in all states and funded and monitored by the health ministry.
  - **National Health Mission:**  
It envisages achievement of universal access to equitable, affordable & quality health care services that are accountable and responsive to people's needs.

**Source: IE**

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## **Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC) Meeting**

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### **Why in News**

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Recently, the Finance Minister chaired the **24<sup>th</sup> meeting** of the **Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC)**.

The council **discussed** issues relating to management of **stressed assets**, strengthening institutional mechanisms for financial stability analysis, issues related to **IBC (Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code)**, data sharing mechanisms of government authorities, internationalisation of the Indian rupee and pension sector related issues.

### **Key Points**

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- **Establishment:**
  - A **non-statutory apex council under the Ministry of Finance** constituted by the Executive Order in 2010.
  - The **Raghuram Rajan committee (2008)** on financial sector reforms first proposed the creation of FSDC.
- **Composition:**
  - It is chaired by the Finance Minister and its **members include** the heads of all Financial Sector Regulators (**RBI, SEBI, PFRDA & IRDA**), Finance Secretary, Secretary of Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), Secretary of Department of Financial Services (DFS), and Chief Economic Adviser.
    - In 2018, the government reconstituted FSDC to include the Minister of State responsible for the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), Secretary of Department of Electronics and Information Technology, Chairperson of the **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI)** and the Revenue Secretary.
  - **FSDC sub-committee** is headed by the **Governor of RBI**.
  - The Council can **invite experts to its meeting if required**.
- **Functions:**
  - To **strengthen and institutionalize the mechanism** for maintaining financial stability, enhancing inter-regulatory coordination and promoting financial sector development.
  - **To monitor macro-prudential supervision of the economy**. It assesses the functioning of the large financial conglomerates.

**Source: TH**

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## **International Fund for Agricultural Development**

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### **Why in News**

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Recently, **IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development)** has committed to **focus 30% of its climate finance to support nature-based solutions** in rural small-scale agriculture by 2030.

- Ahead of the **IUCN** (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) **World Conservation Congress (WCC)**, it calls for more investment to protect **biodiversity**.
- The IUCN convenes WCC **every four years**. The Congress brings together its various members, who vote on recommendations and **set the agenda for the global conservation efforts**.

### **Key Points**

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- **About:**
  - IFAD is **an international financial institution** and **specialized United Nations agency** working in the field of poverty eradication in the rural areas of developing countries providing grants and loans with low interest for allied projects.
  - It **works with marginalized and vulnerable groups** such as farmers with small holdings, foresters, **Pastoralists**, **Fishermen** and small scale entrepreneurs by giving them disaster preparedness, access to weather information, technology transfer and social learning.
- **Formation:**

It was created in 1977, which is the outcome of the World Food Conference of 1974.
- **Headquarters:**

Rome, Italy
- **Members:**

It has 177 member countries.  
India is also a member country.
- **Objectives:**
  - To increase the productive capacity of poor people.
  - To increase benefits for them from market participation.
  - To strengthen the environmental sustainability & climate resilience of their economic activities.
- **Reports:**

It brings out the **Rural Development Report** every year.

**Source: DTE**

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