



News Analysis (04 Oct, 2021)

 drishtiias.com/current-affairs-news-analysis-editorials/news-analysis/04-10-2021/print

Public Interest Litigation

Why in News

The **Supreme Court** (SC) scolded a petitioner for filing a **Public Interest Litigation** (PIL) without adequate research.

Key Points

- **About:**

- Public Interest Litigation (PIL) is the **use of the law to advance human rights and equality**, or raise issues of broad public concern.
- The concept of “Public Interest Litigation” has been **borrowed from the American Jurisprudence**.
- In Indian law, PIL means **litigation for the protection of Public Interest**. It is Litigation introduced in a court of Law, not by the aggrieved party but **by the court itself or by any other private party**.
 - It is the power given to the public by courts **through Judicial activism**.
- It can be filed **only in the Supreme Court or the High Court**.
- It is **different from Writ Petition**, which is filed by individuals or institutions for their own benefit, whereas PIL is filed for the benefit of the general public.
- The concept of PIL is **suited to the Principles enshrined in Article 39 A of the Constitution of India** to protect and deliver prompt Social Justice with the help of Law.
- **Areas where PIL can be filed:** Pollution, Terrorism, Road safety, Constructional hazards etc.

- **Significance:**
 - PIL is an **important instrument of social change** and for maintaining the Rule of law and accelerating the balance between law and justice.
 - The original purpose of PILs have been to **make justice accessible to the poor and the marginalised**. It democratises the **access of justice to all**.
 - It helps in **judicial monitoring of state institutions** like prisons, asylums, protective homes, etc.
 - It is an important tool **for implementing the concept of judicial review**.
- **Issues:**
 - **Misuse:**
 - The number of cases pending in courts is already high, and the misuse of PILs is increasing.
 - In 2010, the SC had expressed considerable displeasure over PILs involving personal or irrelevant cases and issued certain guidelines to the courts for accepting PILs.
 - **Conundrum of Competing Rights:**
 - PIL actions may sometimes give rise to the problem of competing rights.
 - For instance, when a court orders the closure of a polluting industry, the interests of the workmen and their families who are deprived of their livelihood may not be taken into account by the court.
 - **Procrastination:**
 - PIL matters concerning the exploited and disadvantaged groups are pending for many years.
 - Inordinate delays in the disposal of PIL cases may render many leading judgments merely of academic value.
 - **Judicial Overreach:**
 - Cases of Judicial Overreach by the Judiciary in the process of solving socio-economic or environmental problems can take place through the PILs.

Way Forward

Former Attorney General Soli Sorabji opinions 3 basic rules for regulating abuse of PIL:

- Reject dubious PIL at the threshold and in appropriate cases with exemplary costs.
- In cases where important project or socio economic regulations are challenged after gross delay, such petitions should be thrown out the very threshold on the ground of laches. Just because a petition is termed as PIL does not mean that ordinary principles applicable to litigation will not apply.
- PIL petitioners should be in strict terms such as providing indemnity or giving an adequate undertaking to the court to make good the damage, if PIL is ultimately dismissed.

Election Symbols

Why in News

Recently, the **Election Commission of India (ECI)** has decided to freeze the election symbol of a Political Party.

The **Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968** empowers the Election Commission to recognise political parties and allot symbols.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - An electoral or election symbol is a **standardized symbol** allocated to a political party.
 - They are **used by the parties during their campaigning** and are shown on **Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs)**, where the voter chooses the symbol and votes for the associated party.
 - They were **introduced to facilitate voting by illiterate people**, who can't read the name of the party while casting their votes.
 - In the 1960s, it was proposed that the **regulation, reservation and allotment of electoral symbols** should be done through a law of Parliament, i.e. Symbol Order.
 - In a response to this proposal, the ECI stated that the recognition of political parties is supervised by the provisions of **Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968** and so will the allotment of symbols.
 - The Election Commission registers political parties for the purpose of elections and grants them recognition as national or state parties on the basis of their poll performance. The other parties are simply declared as registered-unrecognised parties.
 - The **recognition determines their right to certain privileges** like allocation of the party symbols, provision of time for political broadcasts on television and radio stations and access to electoral rolls.
 - **Every national party and every state party is allotted a symbol exclusively reserved** for its use throughout the country and the states respectively.

- **Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968:**
 - Under **Paragraph 15 of the Order**, **EC can decide disputes** among rival groups or sections of a recognised political party staking claim to its name and symbol. The **EC is the only authority to decide issues** on a dispute or a merger under the order. The **Supreme Court (SC)** upheld its validity in **Sadiq Ali and another vs. ECI in 1971**.
 - This applies to **disputes in recognised national and state parties**.
 - For **splits in registered but unrecognised parties**, the EC usually advises the warring factions to resolve their differences internally or to approach the court.
 - In almost all disputes decided by the EC so far, a **clear majority of party delegates/office bearers, MPs and MLAs** have supported one of the factions.
 - Before 1968, the EC issued notifications and executive orders under the **Conduct of Election Rules, 1961**.
 - The **splinter group of the party** - other than the group that got the party symbol - **had to register itself as a separate party**. They could lay claim to national or state party status only on the basis of its performance in state or central elections after registration.

Source: IE

Landslide and Flood Early Warning System

Why in News

The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research -National Geophysical Research Institute (CSIR-NGRI) has launched an 'Environmental Seismology' group to develop a 'Landslide and Flood Early Warning System' for the Himalayan region.

The scientists at the NGRI in collaboration with German scientists at GFZ, Potsdam have launched this system.

Key Points

- **About the Early Warning System:**
 - It will be **based on real-time monitoring with dense seismological networks**, coupled with satellite data, numerical modelling and geomorphic analysis.
 - The greatest strength of the broadband seismic network is that it **enables a complete spatiotemporal tracking of the entire disaster sequence** using polarization and back-tracing approaches.
 - Early warning systems **help to reduce economic losses and mitigate the number of injuries or deaths from a disaster**, by providing information that allows individuals and communities to protect their lives and property.

- **Landslide:**

- **About:** It is defined as the **movement of a mass of rock, debris, or earth down a slope**.
 - They are a **type of mass wasting**, which denotes any downward movement of soil and rock under the direct influence of gravity.
 - The term landslide encompasses **five modes of slope movement**: falls, topples, slides, spreads, and flows.
- **Cause:** Slope movement **occurs when forces acting downward** (mainly due to gravity) **exceed the strength of the earth materials** that compose the slope. Landslides are caused due to **three major factors**: geology, morphology, and human activity.
- **Landslide-Prone Areas:** The entire Himalayan tract, hills/mountains in sub-Himalayan terrains of North-east India, Western Ghats, the Nilgiris in Tamil Nadu Konkan areas are landslide-prone.
- **Steps Taken:** **Geological Survey of India (GSI)** has launched and undertook a **national programme on landslide susceptibility mapping** - Macro scale (1:50,000) with an aim to cover the 0.42 million sq. km landslide prone areas of the country.

- **Floods:**

- **About:** These are the most frequent type of natural disaster and **occur when an overflow of water submerges land that is usually dry.**
It is often caused by heavy rainfall, rapid snowmelt or a storm surge from a tropical cyclone or tsunami in coastal areas.
- **Types:** There are 3 common types of floods:
 - **Flash floods** are caused by rapid and excessive rainfall that raises water heights quickly, and rivers, streams, channels or roads may be overtaken.
These are highly localised events of short duration with a very high peak and usually have less than six hours between the occurrence of the rainfall and peak flood.
 - **River floods** are caused when consistent rain or snow melt forces a river to exceed capacity.
 - **Coastal floods** are caused by storm surges associated with tropical cyclones and tsunamis.
- **Vulnerability:** The major flood prone regions in India are Punjab, Haryana, most of the Gangetic plains, including Uttar Pradesh, North Bihar and West Bengal, the Brahmaputra valley, coastal Andhra Pradesh and Orissa, and southern Gujarat.
Now-a-days Kerala and Tamil Nadu also feel the fury of the floods.
- **Steps Taken:**
 - **Flood-plain zoning** was initiated in India which provided for taking up surveys and demarcation of flood zones or plains. It prevents indiscriminate development and human settlement in such areas.
 - The **National Water Policy** highlights the provisions for project planning, surface- and groundwater development, irrigation and flood control.
 - The work of **flood forecasting and warning in India is entrusted with the Central Water Commission (CWC).**

Way Forward

- Since climate change is a major player in accelerating ice loss through glacier melt and flash floods caused by glacier retreat, major efforts are needed to maintain the fragile ecosystem in the multi-hazard prone Himalayan region.
- This also had important implications for the planning of infrastructural development of dams, power plants and other projects by governments, which is of great strategic and societal importance to the country.

Source: TH

Antimalarial Drug Resistance

Why in News

In recent years there is increasing evidence of the **Antimalarial Drugs Resistance (AMR) against Malaria**.

It has been noticed while treating with the Drugs (Artemisinin or Chloroquine), either alone or with partner drugs.

Key Points

- **Drug Resistance:**

- It is simply defined as the ability of disease-causing germs (e.g., bacteria or viruses) to **continue multiplying despite the presence of drugs** that usually kill them.
- Drug resistance is the **reduction in effectiveness of a medication** to cure a disease or condition.

For example: With **HIV (Human immunodeficiency virus)**, drug resistance is caused by **mutations** in the virus's genetic structure. These mutations lead to changes in certain HIV proteins and enzymes (e.g., protease enzyme) which helps HIV to replicate.

- **Factors Causing AMR:**

- **Mutations:**

- The **mutations in the malarial parasite** have been responsible for artemisinin partial resistance.
- As many as 1,044 studies conducted globally from 2010-2019 confirmed the Pfk13 mutation.

- **Inadequate Coverage:**

- Imperfect coverage of antimalarial drugs, **improper diagnosis, misuse of drugs** and not-so-good mosquito control programmes were cited by the report as major contributory factors causing resistance against these drugs.
- These failures lead to increased **exposure of the malaria parasites to drugs**, increasing the risk of drug resistance

- **Concern:**

- **Chloroquine (CQ)** is the most commonly prescribed drug for P Vivax parasite. A **World Health Organisation (WHO)** report said P vivax resistance to chloroquine had been reported from all WHO regions.

Twenty-eight countries, including **India**, showed the **CQ resistance**.

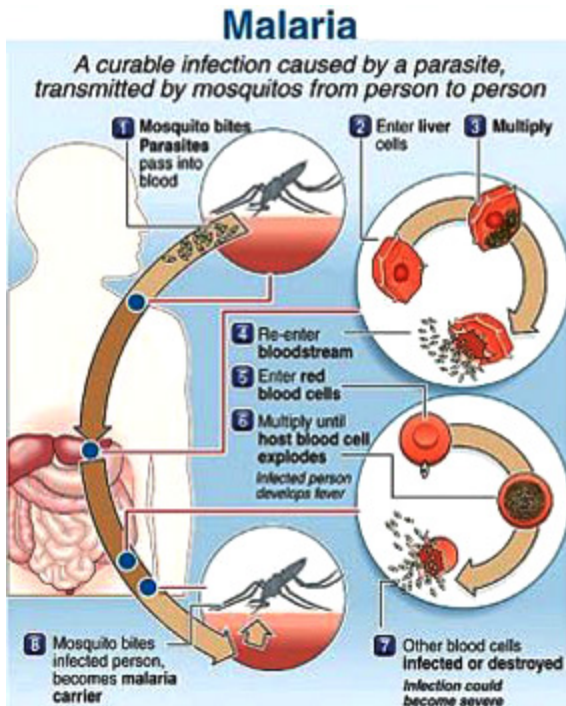
- A widespread resistance scenario could result in a yearly **excess of 22 million treatment failures, 116,000 deaths** and costs including an estimated **USD 130 million** to change treatment policy.

Malaria

About:

It is a life threatening **mosquito borne blood disease** caused by **plasmodium parasites**, predominantly found in the tropical and subtropical areas of **Africa, South America as well as Asia**.

- The parasites **spread through the bites of infected female Anopheles mosquitoes**.
- When an infected mosquito bites a person, the **parasite is released into the bloodstream**, it then travels to the liver where it matures.



- **Symptoms:**

Sweating, headache, nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain etc are cited as the symptoms.

- **Types:**

Four types of Parasites can infect humans: Plasmodium Vivax, P. ovale, P. malariae and P. falciparum.

- **Indian Scenario:**

- India carries **2% of the global malaria** case burden and **2% of global malaria deaths**.

India also bears **85.2%** of the malaria burden in **South East Asia**.

- India carries **47% of the global P. vivax malaria burden**, making the country strategically important for **global malaria elimination**, particularly in the South-East Asian region, on the other hand **India** is the only high endemic country which has **reported a decline of 17.6% in 2019 as compared to 2018**.

- **Related Initiatives:**

- **National Strategic Plan for Malaria Elimination (2017-22)**.
- **National Framework for Malaria Elimination**.

Way Forward

- Malaria killed 405,000 people in 2018 and affected 218 million people. However, the **fight against this killer is becoming difficult** due to the growing resistance against malarial drugs.
- Up-to-date, **quality data are needed on the efficacy** of the recommended treatments, to ensure that patients receive efficacious treatment.
- The time has come to carry out **Molecular Malaria Surveillance to find out the drug-resistant variants** so that corrective measures can be undertaken in time to avert any consequences.

Source: IE

Gandhi Jayanti

Why in News

2nd October, 2021 marked the **152nd birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi**.

India also pays tribute to **Lal Bahadur Shastri** on the same day every year.

Key Points

- **Birth:** 2nd October 1869 in Porbandar (Gujarat)



- **Brief Profile:** Lawyer, politician, social activist, and writer who became the leader of the nationalist movement against the British rule of India.
- **Satyagrah:** In South Africa (1893-1915), he had successfully fought the racist regime with a novel method of mass agitation, which he called satyagraha.
 - The idea of satyagraha emphasised the power of truth and the need to search for truth with non-violence.
 - The **International Day of Non-Violence is observed on 2nd October**, the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi.
 - **Gandhi Peace Prize** is given for social, economic and political transformation through non-violence and other **Gandhian methods**.

- **Return to India:** He returned to India from South Africa on 9th January 1915.
 - **Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD)** is celebrated on 9th January every year to mark the contribution of the Overseas Indian community in the development of India.
- **Satyagraha Movements in India:** Mahatma Gandhi believed that the dharma of non-violence could unite all Indians.
 - **In 1917**, he travelled to Champaran in Bihar to inspire the peasants to struggle against the oppressive plantation system.
 - **In 1917**, he organised a satyagraha to support the peasants of the Kheda district of Gujarat. Affected by crop failure and a plague epidemic, the peasants of Kheda could not pay the revenue, and were demanding that **revenue collection be relaxed**.
 - **In 1918**, he went to Ahmedabad to organise a satyagraha movement **amongst cotton mill workers**.
 - **In 1919**, he decided to launch a nationwide satyagraha against the proposed **Rowlatt Act (1919)**.
 - The Act gave the government enormous powers to repress political activities, and allowed detention of political prisoners without trial for two years.
 - On 13th April, 1919 the infamous **Jallianwalla Bagh incident** took place. Seeing violence spread, Mahatma Gandhi called off the movement (18th April, 1919).
- **Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-22):** At the Calcutta session of the Congress in September 1920, he convinced other leaders of the need to start a non-cooperation movement in support of Khilafat as well as for swaraj.
 - At the **Congress session at Nagpur in December 1920**, the Non-Cooperation programme was adopted.
 - In February 1922, Mahatma Gandhi decided to withdraw the Non-Cooperation Movement after the **Chauri-Chaura incident**.
- **The Salt March:** In 1930, Gandhiji declared that he would lead a march to break the salt law.
 - He marched from Gandhi's ashram in Sabarmati to the Gujarati coastal town of Dandi, where they broke the government law by gathering natural salt found on the seashore, and boiling sea water to produce salt.
 - This marked the beginning of the Civil Disobedience Movement.
- **Civil Disobedience Movement:**
 - In 1931, Gandhi accepted a truce (the **Gandhi-Irwin Pact**), called off civil disobedience, and agreed to attend the Second Round Table Conference in London as the sole representative of the Indian National Congress.
 - After returning from London, Mahatma Gandhi relaunched the Civil Disobedience Movement. For over a year, the movement continued, but by 1934 it lost its momentum.

- **Quit India Movement:**

- With the outbreak of **World War II (1939-45)**, the nationalist struggle in India entered its last crucial phase.
- The failure of the mission of Stafford Cripps, a British cabinet minister who went to India in March 1942 with an offer that Gandhi found unacceptable, the British equivocation on the transfer of power to Indian hands, and the encouragement given by high British officials to conservative and communal forces promoting discord between Muslims and Hindus impelled Gandhi to demand in the summer of 1942 an immediate British withdrawal from India—what became known as the Quit India Movement.

- **Social Work:**

- He worked for the upliftment of untouchables and gave them a new name 'Harijan' meaning the children of God.

In September 1932, B.R. Ambedkar negotiated the **Poona Pact** with Mahatma Gandhi.

- His symbol of **self-reliance - the spinning wheel** - became a popular symbol of the Indian Independence Movement.

- He **played a key role in pacifying people and averting the Hindu-Muslim riots** as tensions rose before and during the partition of the country.

He founded the **Hindustani Prachar Sabha in 1942** at Wardha in Maharashtra. The aim of the organisation was to promote Hindustani, a link language between Hindi and Urdu.

- **Books Written:** Hind Swaraj, My Experiments with Truth (Autobiography)

- **Death:** He was shot dead by Nathuram Godse on 30th January, 1948.

30th January is observed as **Martyrs' Day**.

Source: IE

Jal Jeevan Mission App

Why in News

Recently, the **Prime Minister launched the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) mobile application on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti (2nd October)**.

The PM also released the **progress report of the JJM** and a **manual** for the utilisation of the **15th Finance Commission** grant for rural local bodies.

Key Points

- **About:**

- The mobile application will provide details of water infrastructure, an **Aadhaar**-verified data set of beneficiaries, and water quality and contamination-related information for each village.
- The application **aims** to improve awareness among stakeholders and for greater transparency and accountability of schemes under the Jal Jeevan mission.
- The **Jal Shakti ministry has been maintaining a JJM dashboard** to show the coverage of tap water connections across states.

The **water quality management information system** provides details of water samples received and tested across labs and states. The **mobile app will bring all this data under one umbrella.**

- **Jal Jeevan Mission:**

- **About:**

- **Launched in 2019, it envisages supply of 55 litres of water per person per day to every rural household** through Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTC) **by 2024.**
- JJM looks to create a jan andolan for water, thereby making it everyone's priority.
- It comes **under Jal Shakti Ministry.**

- **Aims:**

- The mission ensures **functionality of existing water supply systems** and water connections; **water quality** monitoring and testing as well as **sustainable agriculture.**
- It **also ensures conjunctive use** of conserved water; drinking water source augmentation, drinking water supply system, **grey water** treatment and its reuse.

- **Features:**

- JJM **focuses on integrated demand and supply-side management of water** at the local level.
- **Creation of local infrastructure** for source sustainability measures as mandatory elements, like rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge and management of household wastewater for reuse, is undertaken in convergence with other government programmes/schemes.
- The Mission is **based on a community approach** to water and includes extensive Information, Education and Communication as a key component of the mission.

- **Implementation:**

- **Paani Samitis** plan, implement, manage, operate and maintain village water supply systems.

These consist of 10-15 members, with at least 50% women members and other members from **Self-Help Groups, Accredited Social and Health Workers, Anganwadi** teachers, etc.

- The committees prepare a one-time village action plan, merging all available village resources. The plan is approved in a **Gram Sabha** before implementation.

- **Funding Pattern:**

The fund sharing pattern between the Centre and states is 90:10 for Himalayan and North-Eastern States, 50:50 for other states, and 100% for Union Territories.

- **Progress So Far:**

- When the mission was launched, only 17% (32.3 million) of the country's rural households had a tap water supply.
- Today, **7.80 Crore (41.14%) households** have tap water supply. **Goa, Telangana, Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry** have achieved 100% household connection in rural areas and have become '**Har Ghar Jal**'.

To complement the Jal Jeevan Mission (Rural), **Jal Jeevan Mission (Urban)** was announced in the Budget 2021-22.

Source: DTE

Most Promising Astronomical Site: Hanle

Why in News

According to a recent study, the **Indian Astronomical Observatory (IAO)** located at Hanle near Leh in Ladakh is becoming one of the promising observatory sites globally.

The **Indian Astronomical Observatory** has one of the **world's highest sites for optical**, infrared and gamma-ray telescopes.

Key Points

- **About:**

- Hanle site is **as dry as the Atacama Desert** in Chile and much drier than Devasthal (Uttarakhand) and has around **270 clear nights in a year** and is also one of the **emerging sites for infrared and sub-mm optical astronomy**.

This is **because water vapour absorbs electromagnetic signals** and reduces their strength.

- It has advantages of more **clear nights, minimal light pollution, background aerosol concentration, extremely dry atmospheric conditions, and uninterrupted monsoon**.
- Such conditions are considered **crucial for astronomers to build huge telescopes and plan for future observatories** and predict how they will vary with time.

- **Other Promising Sites:**

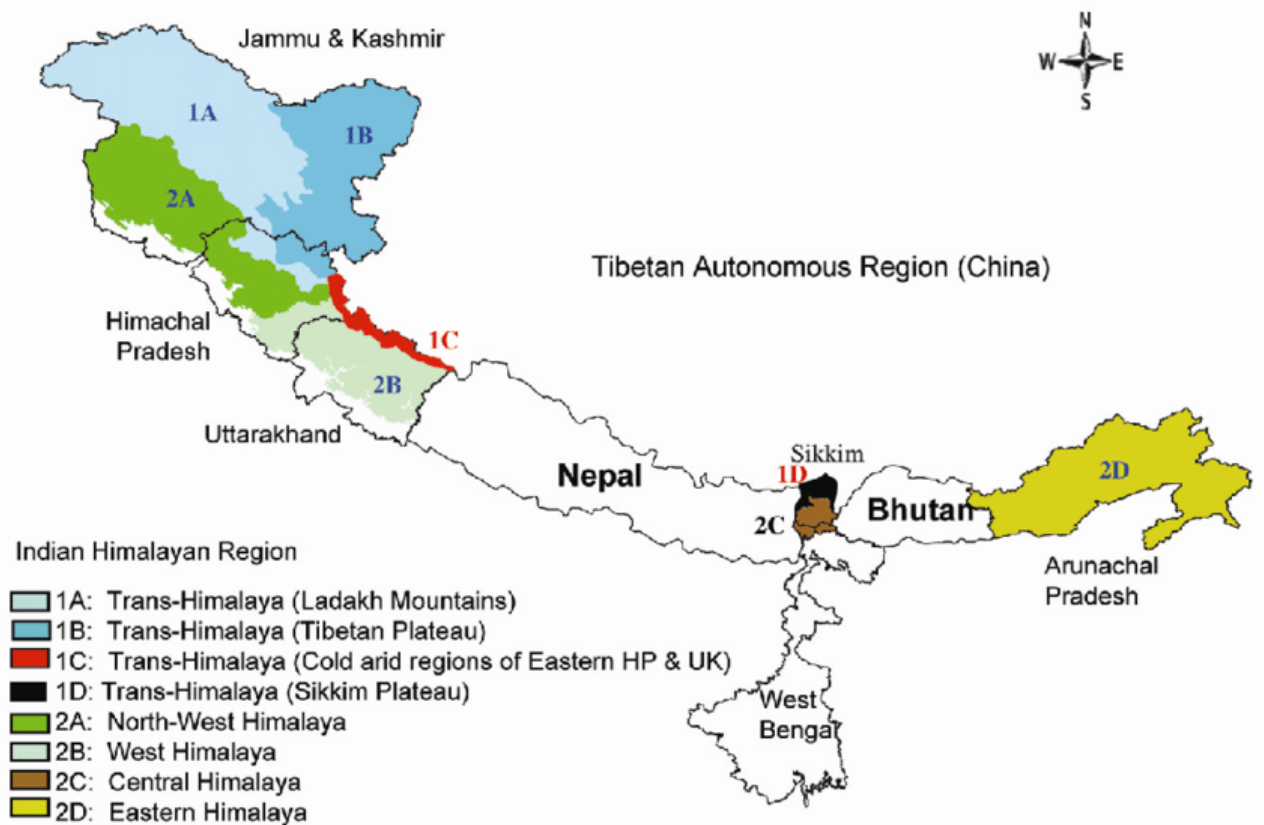
- **Merak observatories** in Ladakh.
- **Devasthal** in Nainital, Ali Observatory in the **Tibet Autonomous Region** in China.
- **South African Large Telescope** in South Africa.
- **University of Tokyo Atacama Observatory** and Paranal in Chile.
- **Mexico's National** Astronomical Observatory.

- **Trans- Himalayan Region:**

- The **Trans-Himalayas Mountain Region** or **Tibet Himalayan Region** is located to the north of the Great Himalayas which consists of **Karakoram, Ladakh, Zaskar** and **Kailash** mountain ranges.

It is also called the **Tibet Himalayan Region** because most of the part of these ranges lies in Tibet.

- They are the eastward continuation of the most northerly ranges of the **Himalayas**.
- It consists of an **ill-defined mountain area** about 600 miles long and 140 miles wide in the centre, narrowing to a 20-mile width at the eastern and western ends.
- It is mainly composed of **granites** and **volcanic rocks** of the Neogene and Paleogene age.



Source: PIB

Hara Bhara: Aerial Seeding Campaign

Why in News

Recently, **Hara Bhara, India's first aerial seeding campaign** in **Telangana** using the **Seedcopter drone** was launched.

Earlier, in August 2015, **Andhra Pradesh government had launched the aerial seeding** programme using **Indian Navy helicopters**.

Key Points

- **Hara Bhara Campaign:**
 - The idea of the campaign is to **accelerate the mission of reforestation** by planting one billion trees using drones by **2030 in the country**.
 - The project **uses drones to disperse seed balls** over thin, barren, and empty forest lands to turn them into lush green abodes of trees.
 - The ‘seedcopter’ which is a **drone** developed by **Marut Drones** is an aerial seeding solution for **rapid and scalable reforestation**.
- **Aerial Seeding:**
 - It is a **plantation technique** wherein seed balls — seeds covered with a mixture of clay, compost, char and other components — are **sprayed using aerial devices**, including planes, helicopters or drones.
 - The **plant species which are native** to the area and hardy, with seeds that are of an appropriate size for preparing seedballs are usually used for aerial seeding, with a higher survival percentage.
 - Seeds balls/pellets are **dispersed in a targeted area** by low-flying drones, with the coating providing the required weight for seeds to airdrop on a predetermined location rather than getting deterred by the wind.
 - These pellets **sprout when there is enough rain**, with nutrients present within them helping in initial growth.
- **Advantages of Aerial Seeding:**
 - **Access to Inaccessible Areas:**

Areas that are **inaccessible**, having steep slopes or no forest routes, can be targeted using this method.
 - **No Extra Attention Requires:**

The **process of the seed’s germination and growth is such that it requires no attention** after it is dispersed and thus seed pellets are known as the “fire and forget” way of planting.
 - **Eliminate Need of Ploughing:**
 - They **eliminate any need for ploughing and do not need to be planted** since they are already surrounded by soil, nutrients, and microorganisms.
 - The clay shell also protects them from birds, ants and rats.
 - **Prevents Soil Runoff:**

Aerial application **does not cause soil compaction**, hence prevents soil runoff.

This type of seeding technique will be most **useful for tropical forests because they absorb carbon much faster** than other forest types and also support much higher biodiversity.

- **Challenge:**

- Drones may reduce costs, but one cannot rule out the **possibility of seeds falling on the wrong spot.**
- Even when they reach the ground **many variables can hinder the emergence of seedlings**, such as soil composition, animal predation and weed competition.

Source: TH
