



ENSO

[Infographics: El Nino and La Nina](#)

9th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus

For Prelims: ASEAN, cross-border terrorism, Food Security

For Mains: Groupings & Agreements Involving India and/or Affecting India's Interests

Why in News?

Recently, the Defence Minister of India participated in the 9th ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) Plus in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

What are the Key Highlights of the address by India?

- **On Terrorism:**
 - India called for **urgent and resolute global efforts to counter transnational and cross-border terrorism**, terming it as the gravest threat to regional and global security.
- **Other Security Concerns:**
 - India brought to the forum's attention other security concerns arising out of the global [Covid-19 pandemic](#), such as Energy and [Food Security](#).
- **On Maritime Security:**
 - **India advocates a free, open and inclusive [Indo-Pacific region](#)** and calls for peaceful resolution of disputes while respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations.
 - It was also stated that the ongoing ASEAN-China negotiations on the Code of Conduct in the [South China Sea](#) should be fully consistent with international law, in particular [United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea \(UNCLOS\)](#) and should not prejudice the

legitimate rights and interests of nations that are not party to these discussions.

What is ADMM-Plus?

▪ About:

- The 2nd ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) in 2007 at Singapore adopted a resolution to establish the ADMM-Plus.
 - The first ADMM-Plus was convened at Hanoi, Vietnam in 2010.
 - Brunei is the Chair of the ADMM Plus forum for the year 2021.
- It is an **annual meeting of Defence Ministers of 10 ASEAN countries** and eight dialogue partner countries.
 - The [Association of Southeast Asian Nations \(ASEAN\)](#) is a regional organization which was established to promote political and social stability amid rising tensions among the Asia-Pacific's post-colonial states.

▪ Membership:

- The ADMM-Plus countries include **ten ASEAN Member States** (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia) and **eight Plus countries**, namely **Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, and the United States**.

▪ Aim:

- It aims to **promote mutual trust and confidence between defence establishments** through greater dialogue and transparency.

▪ Areas of cooperation:

- Maritime security, counter-terrorism, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, peacekeeping operations and military medicine.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. India is a member of which among the following? (2015)

1. Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
2. Association of South-East Asian Nations
3. East Asia Summit

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 3 only
(c) 1, 2 and 3
(d) India is a member of none of them

Ans: (b)

- Established in 1989, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) cites minimum eligibility that countries must share borders with the Pacific Ocean to be a member. India is not a member and was invited to be an observer for the first time in November 2011. It is a 21 member body. **Hence, 1 is not correct.**
- Established in 1961, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a regional intergovernmental organization comprising ten countries in Southeast Asia, which promotes intergovernmental cooperation and facilitates economic, political, security, military, educational, and socio-cultural integration among its members and other countries in Asia. India is located in South Asia and is not a member of ASEAN. **Hence, 2 is not correct.**
- Established in 2005, the East Asia Summit (EAS) is an 18 member States body for strategic dialogue and cooperation on the key political, security, and economic challenges facing the Indo-Pacific region. It comprises the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member states along with 8 members-Australia, China, Japan, India, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Russia and the United States. **Hence, 3 is correct. Therefore, option (b) is the correct answer.**

Q2. Consider the following countries: (2018)

1. Australia
2. Canada
3. China
4. India
5. Japan
6. USA

Which of the above are among the 'free-trade partners' of ASEAN?

- (a) 1, 2, 4 and 5
(b) 3, 4, 5 and 6
(c) 1, 3, 4 and 5
(d) 2, 3, 4 and 6

Ans: (c)

- Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has free trade agreements with six partners, namely the People's Republic of China, Republic of Korea, Japan, India as well as Australia and New Zealand. **Hence, 1, 3, 4 and 5 are correct.**
- ASEAN was established on 8 August 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand, with the signing of the ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) by the founding fathers of ASEAN, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Brunei Darussalam joined on 7 January 1984, Vietnam on 28 July 1995, Lao PDR and Myanmar on 23 July 1997, and Cambodia on 30 April 1999, making up what is today the ten member states of ASEAN. **Therefore, option (c) is the correct answer.**

[Source: PIB](#)

CITES CoP19

For Prelims: CITES, Shisham, Sea Cucumber, Red Crowned Roofed Turtle, CoP 19, Wildlife Protection Act 1972

For Mains: CITES, Outcomes of CoP19, Conservation Efforts.

Why in News?

The 19th Meeting of the **Conference of the Parties (CoP19)** to the [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora \(CITES\)](#) is being held at Panama City.

- CoP19 is also known as **the World Wildlife Conference.**

What are the Highlights of the Conference?

- **52 proposals** have been put forward that would affect **the regulations on international trade for:** sharks, reptiles, hippos, songbirds, rhinos, 200 tree species, orchids, elephants, turtles and more.

- India's [Shisham \(*Dalbergia sissoo*\)](#) is included in **Appendix II** of the convention, thereby requiring it to follow CITES regulations for the trade of the species.
 - A relief was provided by easing the CITES rules for export of *Dalbergia sissoo* based products. This is expected to **boost Indian handicraft exports**.
- The Conference has accepted a proposal to include [sea cucumbers \(*Thelephora*\)](#) in **Appendix II** of the Convention.
 - An analysis published by the [Wildlife Conservation Society-India \(WCS-India\)](#) this September showed that sea cucumbers were the most frequently trafficked marine species in India from 2015-2021.
 - Tamil Nadu had recorded the highest number of marine wildlife seizures during this period, according to the analysis. The state was followed by Maharashtra, Lakshadweep and Karnataka.
- India's proposal for induction of **fresh water turtle** [Batagur kachuga \(Red Crowned Roofed Turtle\)](#) earned wide support of the parties in CoP 19 of CITES. It was widely appreciated by the **parties and well accepted when introduced**.
 - **Operation Turtshield**, India's efforts to curb wildlife crime was appreciated.
 - India also highlighted that many of the species of turtles and freshwater tortoises which are recognized as critically endangered, endangered, vulnerable or near threatened are already included in [Wildlife Protection Act 1972](#) and given high degree of protection.
- India has decided not to vote against a proposal to re-open the international [trade in ivory](#) at the ongoing conference.

What is CITES?

- CITES is an **international agreement between governments — 184** at present — to ensure that international trade in wild animals and plants does not threaten the survival of the species.
- The convention entered into force **in 1975 and India became the 25th party** — a state that voluntarily agrees to be bound by the Convention — in 1976.
- States that have agreed to be bound by the Convention ('joined' CITES) are known as Parties.
- Although **CITES is legally binding on the Parties** – in other words they have to implement the Convention – it does not take the place of national laws.
- All import, export and re-export of species covered **under CITES must be authorised through a permit system**.
- Every two to three years, the Conference of the Parties meets to review the implementation of the Convention.
- **It has three appendices:**
 - **Appendix I**
 - It lists species that are the most endangered among CITES-listed animals and plants.
 - Examples include gorillas, sea turtles, most lady slipper orchids, and giant pandas. Currently 1082 species are listed.
 - They are **threatened with extinction and CITES prohibits international trade in specimens** of these species except when the purpose of the import is not commercial, for instance for scientific research.
 - **Appendix II**
 - It lists species that are **not necessarily now threatened with extinction** but that may become so unless trade is closely controlled.
 - Most CITES species are listed in this Appendix, including American ginseng, paddlefish, lions, American alligators, mahogany and many corals.
 - It also includes so-called "look-alike species", i.e., species whose specimens in trade look like those of species listed for conservation reasons.
 - **Appendix III**
 - It is a list of species **included at the request of a Party that already regulates trade** in the species and that needs the cooperation of other countries to prevent unsustainable or illegal exploitation.
 - Examples include map turtles, walrus and Cape stag beetles. Currently 211 species are listed.
 - International trade in specimens of species listed in this Appendix is allowed only on presentation of the appropriate permits or certificates.

- Species may be added to or removed from **Appendix I and II**, or moved between them, only by the Conference of the Parties.

[Source: DTE](#)

Rural Daily Wages

For Prelims: Reserve Bank of India, Rural Wages, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushalya Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana

For Mains: Government Policies & Interventions

Why in News?

Recently, the [Reserve Bank of India \(RBI\)](#) released data on daily wage payments in India.

What are the Findings?

▪ Agricultural Workers:

- In Madhya Pradesh (MP), **male agricultural workers in rural areas got a daily wage of just Rs 217.8** while in Gujarat, it worked out to Rs 220.3 in the year ended March 2022.
 - Daily wages in both the states are below the national average of Rs 323.2.
- **Kerala leads in highly paid agricultural workers** with an average wage of Rs 726.8 per worker.
 - The high wages in Kerala have attracted farm workers from other poorly paid states with around 25 lakh migrant workers reportedly living in the state.
- In Jammu & Kashmir, farm workers get an average wage of Rs 524.6, Himachal Pradesh Rs 457.6, and Tamil Nadu Rs 445.6 per person.

▪ Non-agricultural Workers:

- In the case of male non-agricultural workers, the **lowest wage was in MP with an average wage of Rs 230.3** while Gujarat workers got a daily wage of Rs 252.5 and Tripura Rs 250 — all below the national average of Rs 326.6.
- **Kerala again leads in non-agricultural workers' wages** with Rs 681.8 wage per person.
 - Kerala was followed by J&K, Tamil Nadu and Haryana for the year ended March 2022.
- Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh are again below the national average of Rs 373.3 in the case of rural male construction workers.
 - Gujarat rural construction workers got an average wage of Rs 295.9, MP Rs 266.7 and Tripura Rs 250.

▪ Construction Workers:

- Daily wage for rural construction workers was Rs 837.7 in Kerala, Rs 519.8 in J&K, Rs 478.6 in Tamil Nadu and Rs 462.7 in Himachal Pradesh.

What are the Issues associated with Rural Wages?

- Rural jobs are **dependent on agriculture** which in turn is influenced by monsoon and rabi and kharif production.
- Low agricultural prices contribute to lower incomes in rural areas.
- Most new jobs in the rural areas are for unskilled workers, so the wages and nature of the work are unattractive.
- There is a strong gender disparity, where the female worker is paid only 70% of what the male worker earns.
- Productivity increases without wage increases could offset the impact of real wage increases on welfare.

What are the Related Initiatives?

- [Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushalya Yojana](#)
- [Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana](#)
- [Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act](#)
- [National Rural Livelihood Mission](#)
- [Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana](#)

Way Forward

- To tackle the challenge of creating decent jobs for its growing young population, **action will be needed on multiple fronts** including investments in human capital, revival of the productive sectors, and programmes to stimulate small entrepreneurship.
- **There must be incentives provided to rural food processing industries**, and value chains must be efficient in linking processing with transportation.
 - In addition, contract farming and direct farm-factory connections offer considerable potential for rural income security.
- **Digitalisation in rural space and Local e-governance will be critical to making 650,000 villages** and 800 million citizens self-sufficient.
 - Through active collaboration between the public and private sectors, a rural knowledge platform can be built that will bring cutting-edge technology deeper into villages and create jobs.
 - Artificial Intelligence can be used to facilitate smart and precise agriculture.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. Among the following who are eligible to benefit from the “Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act”? (2011)

- (a) Adult members of only the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe households
- (b) Adult members of below poverty line (BPL) households
- (c) Adult members of households of all backward communities
- (d) Adult members of any household

Ans: (d)

Exp:

- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee (MGNREGA), which is the largest work guarantee programme in the world, was enacted in 2005 with the primary objective of guaranteeing 100 days of wage employment per year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.
- It aims at addressing the causes of chronic poverty through the ‘works’ (projects) that are undertaken, and thus ensuring sustainable development. There is also an emphasis on strengthening the process of decentralisation by giving a significant role to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in planning and implementing these works.

- Therefore, option D is the correct answer.

[Source: IE](#)

Concerns over RBI's Orders on Non-Compliance

For Prelims: RBI, Banking Regulation Act, 1949, SEBI, IRDAI, SAT, Appellate Tribunal, Banking Ombudsman.

For Mains: Concerns over RBI's Orders on Non-Compliance.

Why in News?

Since January 2020, the [Reserve Bank of India \(RBI\)](#) has imposed monetary penalties worth Rs 73.06 crore in 48 cases involving banks for violation of provisions of RBI's certain directions.

- RBI penalizes banks on violations of non-Compliance with certain provisions under **Section 35 A of the [Banking Regulation Act, 1949](#)**.

What are the Issues with the RBI Orders?

- **Sparse access to Information:**
 - Customers and investors of banks have only **sparse access to information on non-compliance** of RBI directions by banks.
 - Unlike in the case of other financial regulators, RBI provides details only to the **entity being penalised for violation**.
- **Do not hear the Party:**
 - RBI in its orders don't only give reasons and detailed explanations, but they also **don't hear the party**.
 - Whereas compared to the penalty orders passed by the two other regulators – the [Securities and Exchange Board of India \(SEBI\)](#) and [Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority \(IRDAI\)](#)– for any non-compliance **are more elaborate with details about the violation and the modus operandi**.
 - SEBI hears the concerned party or at least gives **them some opportunity to provide explanations**, before taking action. If not satisfied, the party can also challenge the Sebi's decision in SAT.
- **RBI's Orders cannot be Challenged:**
 - Currently, the RBI is the only regulatory institution **which doesn't have an appellate body**.
 - Since no one can appeal, these (RBI's) orders are not challenged on merit. So, with this kind of arrangement in the regulatory system, **RBI can easily get away with passing only a cursory or main order** without giving reasons and explanation.
 - But the RBI has a system of the [Banking Ombudsman](#) where an aggrieved bank customer can raise disputes or unfair actions and services of a bank.
- **RBI's Arguments:**
 - When RBI passes orders for any irregularity at a bank, they usually make **references to certain clauses or sub-clauses** of the regulation under which the non-compliance has happened. So, there is no need for any further elaboration in the order passed.

- RBI should not make public all the details in their orders. This might create **unnecessary fear in the minds of people and they can lose confidence** in the banks.

What is Banking Regulation Act, 1949?

- It regulates **banking firms** in India. It was **passed as the Banking Companies Act 1949** and was changed to the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 from 1st March 1966.
- This **act empowers the RBI to issue licence to commercial banks**, regulate shareholders' shareholding and voting rights, **supervises the appointment of boards and management**, regulates the operations of banks, giving instructions for audit, control moratorium, merger, and liquidation, issues instructions to the banks in the interests of public welfare & banking policy, **impose a penalty on banks if required**.
- In **2020**, the government passed an ordinance to change the **Banking Regulation Act, 1949**, making all the co-operatives **come under the supervision of the Reserve Bank**, so that the interests of **the depositors can be protected properly**.

Way Forward

- A similar appellate, which SEBI has, kind of arrangement is required to challenge the RBI orders, going forward.
- There is a need to keep stakeholders informed, and an appellate authority may serve the purpose, say governance and policy experts.
- It is very important for a regulator to pass a speaking order so that **any person reading it will know the issue at hand and** will understand what went wrong and how it can be corrected.
- A detailed order from the RBI may **increase the scope for interpretation**, which if not analysed correctly, may shake confidence in the banking system.
- Like **SAT (Securities Appellate Tribunal)**, there is a need for an appellate authority to challenge RBI orders. Once the orders are appealable, **the appellate body will look into the entire merit**.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. With reference to 'Urban Cooperative Banks' in India, consider the following statements: (2021)

1. They are supervised and regulated by local boards set up by the State Governments.
2. They can issue equity shares and preference shares.
3. They were brought under the purview of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 through an Amendment in 1966.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a)** 1 only
- (b)** 2 and 3 only
- (c)** 1 and 3 only
- (d)** 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (b)

- Co-operative banks are financial entities which belong to its members, who are at the same time the owners and the customers of their bank. **They are established by State laws**.
- Co-operative banks in India are registered under the Cooperative Societies Act. They are also regulated by the RBI and governed by Banking Regulations Act, 1949 and Banking Laws (Co-operative Societies) Act, 1955.
- Cooperative banks lend as well as accept deposits. They are established with the aim of funding agriculture and allied activities and financing village and cottage industries. National Bank for

Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) is the apex body of cooperative banks in India.

- Urban Co-operative Banks (UCB) are regulated and supervised by State Registrars of Co-operative Societies (RCS) in case of single-state co-operative banks and Central Registrar of Co-operative Societies (CRCS) in case of multi-state co-operative banks and by the RBI. **Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**
- The banking related functions such as issue of license to start new banks/branches, matters relating to interest rates, loan policies, investments and prudential exposure norms are regulated and supervised by the Reserve Bank under the provisions of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 after an amendment in 1966. Hence, statement 3 is correct.
- The Reserve Bank of India came out with draft guidelines allowing primary UCBs to augment capital through issuance of equity shares, preference shares and debt instruments.
 - The UCBs could raise share capital by issue of equity to persons within their area of operation enrolled as members and also through additional equity shares to the existing members. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- **Therefore, option (b) is the correct answer.**

[Source: IE](#)

Draft Prevention of Cruelty to Animal (Amendment) Bill-2022

For Prelims: Prevention of Cruelty to Animal Act, Wildlife Protection Act, 1972

For Mains: Prevention of Cruelty to Animal (Amendment) Bill-2022 and related issues

Why in News?

Recently, the Government has introduced the **draft Prevention of Cruelty to Animal (Amendment) Bill-2022** to amend the six-decade-old law **Prevention of Cruelty to Animal Act, 1960**.

- The draft has been prepared by the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying.

What are the Proposed Amendments?

- **Bestiality as a Crime:**
 - The draft includes **'bestiality' as a crime under the new category of 'gruesome cruelty'**.
 - "Bestiality" means any kind of sexual activity or **intercourse between human being and animal**.
 - Gruesome cruelty has been defined as **"an act that leads to extreme pain and suffering to the animals** which may cause lifelong disability or death".
- **Punishment for Gruesome Cruelty:**
 - A **minimum fine of Rs 50,000 may be imposed and may be increased to Rs 75,000** by a judicial magistrate in consultation with the jurisdictional veterinarians, or the cost may be determined by the judicial magistrate whichever is more, or a maximum fine of one year that may be extended to three years.
- **Punishment for killing an Animal:**
 - A maximum 5-year imprisonment, along with a fine.
- **Freedoms to Animals:**

- The draft also proposes insertion of a new Section 3A, which provides ‘five freedoms’ to animals.
- It shall be the duty of every person having charge of an animal to ensure that the animal in his care or under his charge has:
 - Freedom from thirst, hunger and malnutrition
 - Freedom from discomfort due to environment
 - Freedom from pain, injury and diseases
 - Freedom to express normal behaviour for the species
 - Freedom from fear and distress
- **Community Animals:**
 - In the case of community animals, the local government shall be responsible for their care.
 - The draft proposals introduce the **community animal as “any animal born in a community for which no ownership has been claimed** excluding wild animals as defined under the [Wildlife Protection Act, 1972](#).

What does the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 say?

- **About:**
 - It discusses **different forms of cruelty, exceptions, and killing of a suffering animal** in case any cruelty has been committed against it, so as to relieve it from further suffering.
 - The legislative intent of the Act is to **“prevent the infliction of unnecessary pain or suffering on animals”**.
 - The **Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI)** was established in 1962 under Section 4 of the Act.
 - This Act provides for **punishment for causing unnecessary cruelty and suffering to animals**. The Act defines animals and different forms of animals.
 - In the case of a first offence, **fine which shall not be less than ten rupees but which may extend to fifty rupees**.
 - In the case of a second or subsequent offence committed within three years of the previous offence, **fine which shall not be less than twenty-five rupees** but which may extend to one hundred rupees or with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three months, or with both.
 - **It provides the guidelines relating to experimentation on animals for scientific purposes**.
 - The Act **enshrines the provisions relating to the exhibition of the performing animals**, and offences committed against the performing animals.
- **Criticism:**
 - The Act has been **criticised for being ‘speciesist’** (put very simply, the assumption that humans are a superior species deserving more rights), for its quantum of punishment being negligible, for not defining ‘cruelty’ adequately, and for slapping a flat punishment without any gradation of crimes.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. Consider the following statements: (2014)

1. Animal Welfare Board of India is established under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
2. National Tiger Conservation Authority is a statutory body.
3. National Ganga River Basin Authority is chaired by the Prime Minister.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 2 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (b)

Exp:

- The **Animal Welfare Board of India** was established in 1962 under **Section 4 of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960**. Hence, **statement 1 is not correct**.
- The National Tiger Conservation Authority is a statutory body under the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change constituted under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. Hence, statement 2 is correct.
- **National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA)** was established in 2009 under the **Environment Protection Act, 1986**, which declared Ganges as the “National River” of India. It is a financing, planning, implementing, monitoring and coordinating authority for the river Ganges. It functions under the erstwhile Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation (now Ministry of Jal Shakti). It is chaired by the Prime Minister of India. Hence, statement 3 is correct.
- **Therefore, option (b) is the correct answer.**

[Source: IE](#)

Assam-Meghalaya Border Dispute

For Prelims: Assam-Meghalaya Border Dispute, Article 263 of the Constitution

For Mains: Interstate-border Disputes and Related Issues

Why in News?

Recently, six people were **killed and several others injured during an alleged clash** between the **Assam Police** and a mob in an area bordering the **West Karbi Anglong district of Assam** and **Mukroh village in Meghalaya’s** West Jaintia Hills.

- The killings come ahead of the **second phase of talks between the two states** to resolve their **boundary dispute**.

What is Assam-Meghalaya Border Dispute?

- **About:**
 - **Assam and Meghalaya** have a longstanding dispute in **12 stretches of their 884-km shared border**.
 - **The Assam-Meghalaya border dispute are the areas of** Upper Tarabari, Gazang reserve forest, Hahim, Langpih, Borduar, Boklapara, Nongwah, Matamur, Khanapara-Pilangkata, Deshdemoreah Block I and Block II, Khanduli and Retacherra.
- **History:**
 - During British rule, undivided Assam included present-day **Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Mizoram**.
 - Meghalaya was **carved out in 1972**, its boundaries demarcated as per the **Assam Reorganisation (Meghalaya) Act of 1969**, but has held a **different interpretation of the border since**.
 - In 2011, the Meghalaya government had identified **12 areas of difference with Assam**, spread over approximately 2,700 sq km.
- **Major Point of Concern:**
 - A major point of contention between Assam and Meghalaya is the **district of Langpih in West Garo Hills** bordering the **Kamrup district of Assam**.
 - Langpih was part of the **Kamrup district during the British colonial period** but post-Independence, it became **part of the Garo Hills and Meghalaya**.
 - Assam considers it to be **part of the Mikir Hills in Assam**.
 - Meghalaya has questioned **Blocks I and II of the Mikir Hills** -now **Karbi Anglong region** - being part of Assam.
 - Meghalaya says **these were parts of erstwhile United Khasi and Jaintia Hills** districts.
- **Attempts to Resolve Dispute:**
 - In 1985, under the Assam chief minister and Meghalaya chief minister, an **official committee was constituted** under the former [Chief Justice of India](#) Y V Chandrachud.
 - However, **a solution was not found**.
 - Both state governments identified **six out of 12 disputed areas for resolution** in the first phase:
 - Three areas contested between **West Khasi Hills district** in Meghalaya and **Kamrup in Assam**, two between **RiBhoi in Meghalaya** and **Kamrup-Metro**, and one between **East Jaintia Hills** in Meghalaya and **Cachar in Assam**.
 - After a series of meetings and visits by teams to the disputed areas, **both sides submitted reports** based on five mutually agreed principles:
 - Historical perspective, ethnicity of local population, contiguity with boundary, peoples' will and administrative convenience.
 - **A final set of recommendations were made jointly:**
 - Out of 36.79 sq km of disputed area taken up for settlement in the first phase, **Assam would get full control of 18.46 sq km** and **Meghalaya of 18.33 sq km**.
 - In March 2022, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed based on these recommendations.
 - The second round of discussions for the remaining six phases is to **commence by the end November 2022**.

What Additional Can be done to Resolve the Dispute?

- Boundary disputes between the states can be settled by using [satellite mapping](#) of the **actual border locations**.
- Reviving the [Inter-state council](#) can be an option for resolution of an Inter-state dispute.
 - Under **Article 263 of the Constitution**, the Inter-state council is **expected to inquire and advise** on disputes, discuss subjects common to all states and make recommendations for better policy coordination.
- Similarly, [Zonal councils](#) need to be revived to discuss the matters of common concern to states in each zone—matters relating to social and economic planning, border disputes, inter-state transport, etc.

- India is the epitome of unity in diversity. However, in order to strengthen this unity furthermore, both the centre and state governments, need to imbibe the ethos of [cooperative federalism](#).

Which Other States of India are Involved in Border Disputes?

- **Belagavi Border Dispute:**
 - The [Belagavi Border Dispute](#) is between the states of **Maharashtra and Karnataka**.
 - Belgaum or Belagavi is **currently part of Karnataka** but is claimed by Maharashtra.
 - In 1957, slighted by the implementation of the **States Reorganisation Act, 1956**, Maharashtra **demanded readjustment of its border with Karnataka**.
- **Odisha's Border Dispute:**
 - [The Odisha Border Dispute](#) is between the states of **Odisha and Andhra Pradesh**.
 - Odisha and Andhra Pradesh have been locked in a territorial dispute over **Kotia gram panchayat since 1960**. Disputes pertain over 21 villages in Kotia gram panchayat.
 - In 2006, Odisha sent a complaint to the Central Government under Section 3 of the [Inter-State River Water Disputes \(ISRWD\) Act, 1956](#) regarding its water disputes with Andhra Pradesh pertaining to [Inter-State River Vamsadhara](#).

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. Constitutional mechanisms to resolve the inter-state water disputes have failed to address and solve the problems. Is the failure due to structural or process inadequacy or both? Discuss. **(2013)**

[Source: IE](#)

India Abstains to Vote Against Reopening Ivory Trade

Why in News?

Recently, India has decided not to vote against a proposal to re-open the international trade in ivory at the ongoing conference of the [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora \(CITES\)](#).

What is the Tussle over Ivory?

- The [ivory trade](#) was globally **banned in 1989 when all [African elephant](#) populations were put in CITES Appendix I**.
- The African elephant of Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe were **transferred to Appendix II** in 1997 and South Africa's in 2000.
- CITES allowed Namibia, along with Zimbabwe, Botswana and South Africa, to **perform one-time sales of ivory** accumulated from natural elephant deaths and poacher seizures in 1999 and 2008.
- Following that, Namibia's proposal to enable a regular form of restricted ivory trade by delisting the elephant populations of the 4 nations from CITES Appendix II was rejected at the CoP17 (2016) and CoP18 (2019).
- Zimbabwe moved the **idea at CoP19**, but it was defeated once more.

- Namibia and other southern African governments say that their elephant populations have recovered and that their stored ivory can produce much-needed revenue for elephant conservation, if sold worldwide.
- Opponents of the trade argue **that every sort of supply increases demand**, and that substantial increases in elephant poaching were observed around the world when the CITES permitted one-time sales in 1999 and 2008.

What is India's Stance?

- India has been a **vocal opponent of the international ivory trade** for over three decades.
- It is the first time **India has not voted against a request to reopen** the ivory trade since joining the CITES in 1976.
 - At the same CoP19, Namibia voted against India's proposal to allow sustainable commercial use of North Indian rosewood - **Dalbergia sissoo**, which was also defeated.
- While the word **"ivory" was not mentioned**, Namibia sought India's backing, for its longstanding proposal to allow trade in ivory.

What are the Indian efforts to Ban Ivory Trade?

- The endangered [Asian elephant](#) was **included in CITES Appendix I in 1975**, which banned the export of ivory from the Asian range countries.
- In 1986, **India amended the [Wild Life \(Protection\) Act, 1972](#)** to ban even domestic sales of ivory. After the ivory trade was globally banned, India again amended the law to ban the import of African ivory in 1991.
- In 1981 when **New Delhi hosted CoP3**, India designed the iconic CITES logo in the form of an elephant. Over the years, India's stand has been unequivocal on the ivory issue.
- **1994 CoP9**: At Lauderdale, US, India opposed the down-listing of the elephant population of South Africa from Appendix I to II.
- **1997 CoP10**: At Harare, Zimbabwe, India opposed the proposal to down-list the southern African elephant and expresses concerns over the repercussions for the Asian elephant, particularly with regard to poaching.
- **2000 CoP11**: At Gigiri, Kenya, India moved a proposal along with the host country to up-list all elephant populations in **Appendix II to I**.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. With reference to the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which of the following statements is/are correct? (2015)

1. IUCN is an organ of the United Nations and CITES is an international agreement between governments.
2. IUCN runs thousands of field projects around the world to better manage natural environments.
3. CITES is legally binding on the States that have joined it, but this Convention does not take the place of national laws.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (b)

MAARG Portal

Why in News?

Recently, **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry** has launched a call for [startup](#) applications for registration on the **Mentorship, Advisory, Assistance, Resilience and Growth (MAARG) portal**.

What is MAARG Portal?

- **About:**

- MAARG portal is the **National Mentorship Platform by [Startup India](#)**.
- It is a **one-stop platform to facilitate mentorship for startups** across diverse sectors, functions, stages, geographies, and backgrounds.

- **Key Features:**

- Mentorship programs for ecosystem enablers
- Mobile-friendly user interface
- Recognition for contributing mentors
- Video and audio call options

- **Phases:** The MAARG Portal is being operationalized in three phases:

- **Phase I: Mentor Onboarding**
 - Successfully launched and executed, 400+ expert mentors are onboarded across sectors.
- **Phase II: Startup Onboarding**
 - DPIIT is launching the onboarding of startups on the MAARG Portal with effect from 14th November 2022.
- **Phase III: MAARG Portal Launch and Mentor Matchmaking**
 - Final launch where the mentors will be matched to the startups DPIIT has initiated

onboarding process of startups under Phase II.

- **Significance:**
 - Startups can now **effectively connect with academicians, industry experts, successful founders, seasoned investors, and other experts** from across the globe, through **Artificial Intelligence (AI) based matchmaking**, to get personalized guidance on growth and strategy.

What is Startup India?

- **It is a flagship initiative of the Government of India**, intended to catalyse startup culture and build a strong and inclusive ecosystem for innovation and entrepreneurship in India.
 - A startup is **an enterprise that is initiated by its founders around an idea or a problem** with a potential for significant business opportunity and impact.
- Since its launch in 2016, **Startup India has rolled out several programs with the objective of supporting entrepreneurs**, and transforming India into a country of job creators instead of job seekers.
- In 2022, **India has become the 3rd largest start-up ecosystem** in the world after the US and China.

[Source: PIB](#)

Garuda Shakti

Why in News?

Indian Army Special Forces and Indonesian Special Forces are participating in the eighth **edition of the bilateral military exercise 'Garuda Shakti'** at Karawang, Indonesia that commenced on 21 November 2022.

What is Garuda Shakti?

- **Aim:**
 - It aims at enhancing **understanding, cooperation and interoperability between the Special Forces of both armies.**
- **Significance:**
 - The joint exercise will **facilitate both armies to know each other better, and share their wide experiences and combat experience** on countering terrorist operations, Regional Security Operations & Peace Keeping Operations in an international environment.
 - The exercise is yet another **significant milestone in ensuring cordial relations between the two countries** and another step forward towards **ensuring regional security.**

What are the Other Bilateral Military Exercises?

- [MAITREE](#) (India and **Thailand**)
- [Ekuverin](#) (India and **Maldives**)
- [Hand-in-Hand](#) (India and **China**)
- [Mitra Shakti](#) (India and **Sri Lanka**)
- [Harimau Shakti](#) (India and **Malaysia**)
- [Kurukshetra](#) (India and **Singapore**)
- [Nomadic Elephant](#) (India and **Mongolia**)
- [Shakti](#) (India and **France**)
- [Surya Kiran](#) (India and **Nepal**)
- [Yudh Abhyas](#) (India and **US**)

[Source: PIB](#)
