

NEWS TODAY

Supreme Court directs States/UTs and their High Courts to file status report on Gram Nyayalayas

Gram Nyayalayas aims to provide **access**, affordable and quick **justice to the citizens at their door steps** and **de-clog local courts**.

Key Features of Gram Nyayalayas

- These have statutory backing under the **Gram Nyayalayas Act, 2008**.
 - ⊕ Act exempts States of Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim and to the tribal areas specified in the Act.
- **Seat of gram nyayalayas** is located at the headquarters of the intermediate Panchayat
- **Status:** Gram Nyayalayas are deemed to be a Court of Judicial Magistrate of First Class.
 - ⊕ State government appoints '**Nyayadhikari**' for each Gram Nyayalaya in consultation with the high court.
- **Jurisdiction:** Shall be a mobile court and both civil and criminal jurisdiction to settle petty disputes at the village level.
- **Dispute Process:** Disputes are to be settled with the help of **conciliation** between the parties.
 - ⊕ These are not bound by the rules of evidence provided in the **Indian Evidence Act, 1872** but by **Principles of Natural Justice**.
 - ◆ **Indian Evidence Act, 1872** has been recently replaced by the **Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam**.
- **Appeals:** Appeal in criminal cases lie to the Court of Session and in civil cases lie to the district court, shall be disposed within 6 months from the date of filing an appeal.

Key issues associated with Gram Nyayalayas

- **Poor implementation:** As against a requirement of 6,000-odd gram nyayalayas, **only 481 have been set up, but only 309 among them are functional**.
 - **The Act does not make setting up of Gram Nyayalayas mandatory:** Section 3 of the Act provides that state governments "may" constitute Gram Nyayalayas.
 - **States such as Jharkhand and Bihar resisted the gram nyayalayas in tribal or scheduled areas**, saying local or traditional laws were predominantly followed there.
- Initiative to Support Gram Nyayalayas:** Under **Gram Nyayalayas scheme** (Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS)), Union Government provides financial assistance to States to set up Gram Nyayalayas.

India Joins UN led Conference on Afghanistan in Doha

India is **one of 25 countries participating** in this **third conference**, which aims to find ways to improve the lives of **Afghan people** under **Taliban rule**.

- It will supplement previous efforts such as Delhi Regional Security Dialogue on Afghanistan, **Moscow Format consultations**, etc.

Conference allowed the Taliban to position themselves as the **sole representative of Afghanistan**.

- **Taliban** returned to power in 2021 after waging an insurgency against the U.S.-backed government since 2001.

Peaceful and Stable Afghanistan is significant for Region as well as for India:

- **Regional connectivity:** Afghanistan is considered as a gateway to **Central Asian Region**.
- **Security:** Reduced insurgency and cross-border terrorism can lead to a more secure environment for India's northern and western borders.
 - ⊕ Unstable Afghanistan may become safe shelter for terrorists.
- **Energy and resources:** Stability in Afghanistan could pave the way for the **Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline**.
- **Curbing Drug trafficking:** Stable government in Afghanistan can better tackle drug trafficking.
 - ⊕ Afghanistan is part of the **Death Crescent** along with Pakistan and Iran.
 - ⊕ States like Punjab are highly affected by it.

India - Afghan relations Post-Taliban Take-over

- India has not officially recognized Taliban, however, it is helping Afghans through different means:
 - ⊕ **Humanitarian Aid:** Supplied several shipments of **humanitarian assistance consisting of wheat, medical aid** and earthquake relief aid.
 - ⊕ **Education:** Continued its Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) scholarship scheme for Afghan students.
- **Trade and commerce** between both countries is ongoing, including through the Chabahar port.
- India's technical team in Kabul is monitoring the status and functioning of projects built by it.

CITES launched "CITES Rosewoods: The Global Picture" Report

The report details CITES-listed rosewood species' **characteristics, ecosystem roles, regeneration rates, and threats.**

- Such information will help CITES parties make **informed non-detriment findings (NDFs).**
 - NDF is a **mandatory scientific analysis** under CITES to ensure **that exporting a specified quantity** of specimens of **Appendix I and II -listed species will not affect their long-term survival in the wild.**

Rosewood

- About:** 'Rosewood' also called as "palisander" encompasses a wide range of **tropical hardwoods** in the Fabaceae (Leguminosae) family. Rosewood in **Appendix II of CITES include:**
 - Dalbergia latifolia** (Malabar rosewood) and **Dalbergia Sissoo** (Shisham) are found in **India** and are listed as Vulnerable and Least Concern (respectively) on IUCN red list.
 - African rosewood**, native to West African countries, is listed as **endangered** on IUCN red list.
- Utility:** Crafting **furniture and musical instruments.**
- Role in Ecosystem:**
 - Soil Improvement:** Dalbergia species can improve degraded soil through fast decomposing leaf litter, rich in nitrogen, phosphorus, and carbon.
 - Nitrogen Fixation:** Some species form symbiotic associations with soil bacteria to fix atmospheric nitrogen.

CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora)

- About:** An **international legally binding** agreement between governments to ensure that **international trade in** specimens of wild animals and plants **does not threaten the survival of the species.**
- Genesis:** Drafted in 1963 following an IUCN resolution, it came into force in 1975.
- Parties:** **184** (including India)
- CITES Appendices:** Contains lists of species afforded **different levels or types of protection** from over-exploitation.

CITES Appendices

Appendix I: Species are **threatened with extinction.** International **commercial trade is prohibited**

Appendix II: Species are **not currently threatened** but may become so without controlled trade. Trade requires an **export permit or re-export certificate;** no import permit is generally needed

Appendix III: Species are **listed at a Party's request** to prevent unsustainable or illegal exploitation. Trade requires **appropriate permits or certificates.**

Union Home Minister reviewed the implementation of the Vibrant Village Programme

VVP was approved in 2023 to ensure **comprehensive development of selected villages** along the northern border in the States of Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand and Ladakh.

Key Features of VVP

- Type:** Centrally Sponsored Scheme
- Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Home Affairs
- Areas of intervention:** Skill development, livelihood generation, tourism, development of co-operatives, financial inclusion etc.
- Potential Benefit:** Programme will help in improving the border security of nation as it may promote community participation in the border management.

Significance of Community Participation in the Border Management

- Familiarity with the local terrain, crossing points, and regular patterns of movement enables them to act as additional eyes and ears for border guarding forces.
 - Enhances **situational awareness** and aid in **intelligence gathering** along the border.
 - Provide information about suspicious activities, smuggling attempts, or potential security threats.
- Tackling **workforce shortage** due to unavailability of sufficient workers in harsh conditions.
 - E.g. Residents of Chushul village (Ladakh) in 2020 helped Army to secure supplies for harsh winter season.

Challenges in Ensuring Community Participation in the border management

- Distrust (also alienation) between Armed forces and local population disrupts cooperation.
- Lack of economic progress**, due to **neglect by Government.**

Other key Initiative for Improving life of People living along International Borders

- Border Area Development Programme (BADP)**
 - It was launched to meet special development needs of border population with focus on people living within 50 kilometers of the International Border.
- Improvement in connectivity through projects of **Border Roads Organisation (BRO)**

Maharashtra Special Public Security Bill, 2024 proposed to curb 'Urban Naxalism'

Key Provisions

- Targets a wide range of actions by suspects including **encouraging or preaching disobedience of the law**.
- Allows declaring **organisations unlawful** and gives power to **District Magistrate or police commissioners** to grant permission for prosecution.
 - ⊖ An organisation can also be declared as unlawful under the **Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, 1967 (UAPA)**.
 - ⊖ However, **prosecution** under UAPA requires **Central or State approval**.

Urban Naxalism

- Naxalism refers to **Left-wing extremism or Maoism** which seeks to **overthrow the State through violent means**.
 - ⊖ In India, it **originated from the 1967 uprising** in Naxalbari (West Bengal).
- There is **no standard definition of urban Naxalism**. It generally refers to efforts to **enlarge the presence of naxalism in urban areas**.
 - ⊖ Unlike rural Naxalism, urban Naxalism is **not centred around the use of violence against the State**.
 - ◆ Urban naxals may also **act as recruiters, propagandists, sources of funds for naxals and can provide logistics and safe refuge to armed Naxal cadres**.
 - ⊖ Also, **public support for urban Naxalism** is insignificant as compared to rural naxalism.
 - ◆ This is primarily because **urban areas have better education, infrastructure and State's reach**.

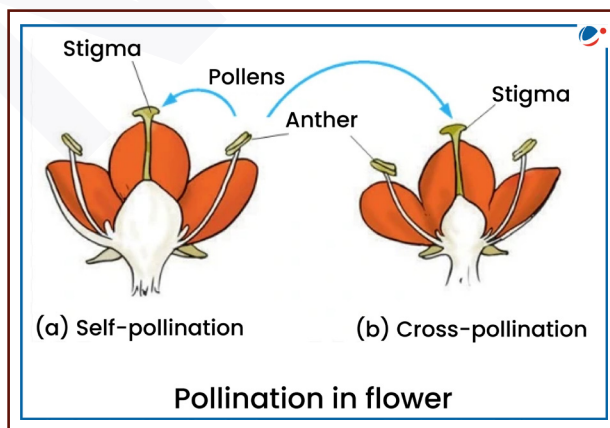


Air pollution harms pollinators more than pests, study finds

A recent study published in Nature Communications reveals that **air pollution disproportionately harms pollinators** like bees and butterflies while crop-destroying pests remain largely unaffected.

Key Findings

- **Scent-based communication disruption:** Air pollutants alter scent trail (airborne chemical signals), disrupting bees' and wasps' ability to locate flowers, mates, or prey.
 - **Biological impact:** Among the biological behaviours including feeding, growth, survival, and reproduction, the **ability to locate food was most severely impaired**.
 - **Ozone is most harmful pollutant:** Ozone reduced beneficial insects' ability to thrive by around 34%. **Nitrogen oxides** also had substantial negative effects.
 - **Damage at low pollution levels:** Changes in insect performance occur even at low levels of air pollution.
- ### About Pollination and pollinators
- **Pollination**, an essential part of **plant reproduction**, refers to transferring pollen grains **from the male anther of a flower to the female stigma**. It is of two types:
 - ⊖ **Self-pollination:** Transfer of pollen grains **within same flower or another flower of the same plant**.
 - ⊖ **Cross-pollination:** Transfer of pollen grains to flower of a **different plant of the same kind**.
 - **Pollinators** refer to **agents** (or facilitators) of **pollination**. It could be:
 - ⊖ **Abiotic:** Wind and water
 - ⊖ **Biotic:** **Insects** (bees, wasps, beetles, etc.), **birds, and bats** among others



Also in News



Pradhan Mantri Colleges of Excellence

Union Home Minister inaugurated **PM Colleges of Excellence** in **Madhya Pradesh (MP)**.

- MP is the **first state to implement** the National Education Policy (**NEP**), 2020.

About PM Colleges of Excellence

- These colleges are **upgraded** according to the **parameters** fixed in line with **NEP**.
- **Flexibility** in subject selection based on one's **interests in multiple disciplines** without barriers of streams, this approach is referred as **No compartmental education**.
- Focus on **diverse subjects** like Biotechnology, Computer Science, Arts and Data Analytics etc.



Indian Newspaper Society (INS)

Prime Minister inaugurates INS Towers in Mumbai.

About INS

- **Genesis:** Its origin can be traced back to **1927**. **INS** is established as Indian & Eastern Newspaper Society (IENS) in 1939.
 - ⊖ Mr. Arthur Moore of the Statesman was the first president of INS.
- **Key objective:** To act as a **central organization of the Press of India and of any other country in Asia**, which desires to associate itself with the Society.
- **Members:** Owners, proprietors and publishers of print media
- **Key role:**
 - ⊖ An independent body **authenticating circulation figures of newspapers** and periodicals in India.
 - ⊖ Protecting and promoting the **freedom of press in India**



Central Information Commission (CIC)

Supreme Court has asserted that the Central Information Commission has powers to constitute benches & frame regulations.

About CIC

- **Genesis:** Statutory body under **Right to Information Act, 2005** to ensure **greater access to information to Indian citizens.**
- **Functions:** To receive and **inquire into complaints from any citizen regarding RTI act, etc.**
- **Members:** Commission consists of **one chief Information commissioner(CIC) and Information Commissioners(IC) (Not exceeding 10)**
- **Appointment:** CICs And ICs are **appointed by President on recommendation of a committee consisting of**
 - ⊖ **PM** (Chairperson of committee)
 - ⊖ **Leader of Opposition** in Lok Sabha
 - ⊖ **Union Cabinet Minister** nominated by PM.
- **Tenure:** CICs and ICs shall hold office for a period of three years.

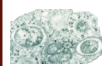


Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India Ltd (DFCCIL)

Centre has **exempted** the Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India Ltd (DFCCIL) from the **18% GST.**

About DFCCIL

- DFCCIL is a **special purpose vehicle** of Indian Railways.
- It was **incorporated in 2006** under **Indian Companies Act 1956.**
- **Its key role:**
 - ⊖ To undertake **planning & development, mobilization of financial resources and construction, maintenance and operation of the Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFCs).**
 - ⊖ It is also expected to **decongest road network & promote shifting of freight transport** to more efficient rail transport



Wolbachia Bacteria

Recently, study has highlighted that Wolbachia bacteria had manipulated the wasp *Encarsia formosa* to entirely get rid of its males.

- *E. formosa* wasps helps in controlling population of whiteflies, a major agricultural pest.

About Wolbachia bacteria

- Commonly found in nematodes and arthropods, especially insects
- In insects, these are **present in eggs** but they are **absent in the sperm.** Due to this, females can transmit them to their offspring whereas males can't.
 - ⊖ As a result, Wolbachia have evolved ways to manipulate their insect hosts to produce more female than male progeny.
 - ⊖ **Tra gene** of Wolbachia play key role in showing this feature.
- **Potential Application:**
 - ⊖ Mosquitoes with Wolbachia can be used to reduce numbers of target mosquito species, for example, *Ae. Aegypti* mosquitoes.



Makhana or Lotus seeds

Recently, Bihar government demanded Minimum Support Price for makhana, the popped kernel of foxnut or gorgon nut.

About Makhana:

- **Tropical and subtropical aquatic crop:** Grown in **stagnant perennial water bodies** like ponds, land depressions, oxbow lakes, etc. Its seed is also called as **Black Diamond.**
- **Climatic Conditions:**
 - ⊖ **Temperature:** 20 - 35 degree Celsius,
 - ⊖ **Relative humidity** 50% to 90%
 - ⊖ **Annual rainfall** 100 cm - 250 cm.
- **Region:** Native of South-East Asia and China & distributed to almost every part of world.
- **India is largest producer in the world** (largest producing state is Bihar)
- **Nutritional Benefits:** Low fat content, high contents of carbohydrates, protein (15 - 20%) and minerals.



Kashmir Willow

Over the last few years, bats made of Kashmiri willow have been attracting global attention.

About Kashmir Willow (*Salix Alba*)

- **Tree Type:** Deciduous tree which can grow up to 30 meters.
- **Distribution:** Mainly found in the Kashmir region of India
- In Kashmir, willow trees were **planted on a large scale by the British.**
- **Key Features**
 - ⊖ Willows exhibit higher productivity due to their highest capacity to convert solar radiation into chemical energy
 - ⊖ Willows have **extensive fibrous root system**
 - ⊖ Formation of symbiotic **associations with mycorrhizal fungi**
- **Uses:** Cricket bat industry, package case industry, ply board industry, paper and pulp industry, etc.



Monoclonal Antibodies

Nipah monoclonal antibody trials may begin in India in 2025.

About Monoclonal Antibodies:

- Monoclonal antibodies (moAbs or mAbs) are **lab-made proteins mimicking natural antibodies.**
 - ⊖ Antibodies are **parts of body's immune system** which **seeks out antigens** (foreign materials) and destroy them.
- **Applications:**
 - ⊖ **Diagnostics** (e.g., ELISA),
 - ⊖ **Treating diseases** (cancer, infections, autoimmune disorders, etc.)
 - ⊖ **Analyzing cell types** in blood/tissue (with the use of fluorescent tags).

Places in News



Argentina (Capital: Buenos Aires)

Argentina designates Hamas a terrorist group in show of support for Israel.

Political Features

- Country in **South America.**
- **Neighboring Countries:** **Chile** (south and west), **Bolivia and Paraguay** (north), and **Brazil, Uruguay** (east).
- Bounded to the east by **Atlantic Ocean.**

Geographical Features

- Geographically divide into **four major regions: Andes, North, Pampas, and Patagonia.**
 - ⊖ **Pampas** is fertile grassland.
- **Major rivers:** Parana, Paraguay, Uruguay, etc.
- **Highest peak:** Cerro Aconcagua.



AHMEDABAD



BENGALURU



BHOPAL



CHANDIGARH



DELHI



GUWAHATI



HYDERABAD



JAIPUR



JODHPUR



LUCKNOW



PRAYAGRAJ



PUNE



RANCHI