

India avoids maritime dispute with Pakistan by making a new continental shelf claim

Recently, India has increased its **claim in the Central Arabian Sea**, as part of its '**extended continental shelf**' by nearly 10,000 square km but also **modified an earlier claim to avoid a long-standing dispute with Pakistan**.

Dispute over the maritime boundary

- **Exclusive Economic Zone:** Coastal countries have an "**exclusive economic zone**," (EEZ) which gives exclusive mining and fishing rights, upto **200 nautical miles from their coastlines**.
 - ⊕ This area **extends unbroken from their landmass all the way till the sea bed**.
 - ⊕ All of this oceanic area is considered part of a **country's extended continental shelf**.
- India made its first claim in **2009 in vast stretches of sea** to a UN body, called the **Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS)**.
- **Pakistan in 2021 objected** claiming that the area was under 'dispute', specifically, **Sir Creek**.
- In March 2023, **CLCS rejected the entirety of India's claim in the Arabian Sea region**. However, the Commission allowed countries to submit 'modified claims.'

About Sir Creek

- It is a **96-km-long disputed tidal estuary**.
- It **extends into the Arabian Sea** and roughly **divides the Sindh province of Pakistan from the Kutch region of Gujarat**.
- In 1947, India wanted it to be settled according to international principles of maritime law, called the **Thalweg Principle** (boundary can be fixed only in the middle of the navigable channel) in 1947.
 - ⊕ **Pakistan**, however, **claimed that Sir Creek was not navigable**, so the dispute could not be settled according to the Thalweg principle.

About Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS)

- CLCS meets at the **UN Headquarters in New York**.
- **Objective:** To facilitate implementation of the **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea** in respect of the establishment of the outer limits of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles beyond baseline.
- **Nature of Recommendations:** Final and binding on coastal states.

Odisha Government notified Similipal Tiger Reserve as a National Park

Out of the 2,750 sq km of the Reserve, **845.70 sq km has been notified as National Park**, making it **largest in Odisha**, leaving behind Bhitarkanika.

- It is the **107th National Park** and the second in the eastern state, after the Bhitarkanika.

About Simlipal Forest

- **Location:** **Mayurbhanj District** of Odisha in **Chottanagpur region**.
- **Major Rivers:** Burhabalanga, Palpala Bandan, Salandi, Kahairi, and Deo.
- Simlipal is also protected as a **Wildlife Sanctuary**, a **Tiger Reserve** (under Project Tiger), a **Biosphere Reserve** (under UNESCO's **Man and the Biosphere Programme**, since 2009), and forms part of **Mayurbhanj Elephant Reserve**.

What is a National Park?

- **About:** It is an area, whether within a sanctuary or not, **given the highest protection** to conserve its wildlife and environment by reason of its **ecological, faunal, floral, geomorphological, or zoological importance**.
 - ⊕ **No human activity is permitted** inside the national park, **except for the ones permitted by the Chief Wildlife Warden of the state**.
 - ⊕ Also, under the **Forest Right Act of 2006**, **certain tribal groups are permitted** to live inside the National Parks.
- **Notification:** By the **State Governments** under the **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**.
 - ⊕ However, once notified, **no alteration of the boundaries** can be done by the State Government, **except on a recommendation of the National Board for Wildlife**.

Similipal Biodiversity



Vegetation

Moist mixed deciduous and tropical semi-evergreen forests. Dry deciduous forests (e.g. Sal Tree), and grassland are also present.



Animals

Similipal is home to tigers, including melanistic tigers. Other animals include fishing cat, barking deer and mouse deer.

BRICS Labour & Employment Minister's Meeting 2025 adopts Declaration

The declaration addresses two pivotal themes: **"Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Future of Work"** and **"The Impacts of Climate Change on the World of Work and a Just Transition"**.

- The meeting, held under **Brazil's Presidency in Brasília**, was convened under the theme **"Strengthening the Cooperation of the Global South for More Inclusive and Sustainable Governance"**.

Key Highlights of the Declaration

- **Supported by:** ILO for advancing labour rights.
- The declaration commits **BRICS nations to:**
 - ⊕ **Promote inclusive AI policies** that balance innovation with worker protection.
 - ⊕ **Advance social dialogue** to ensure fair climate transitions.
 - ⊕ **Strengthen South-South cooperation** on labour governance, digital inclusion, and green job creation.

Significance of declaration for workers

- **Harnessing AI for Decent Work:** Equitable access to AI means ensuring that workers have a voice, through meaningful social dialogue.
 - ⊕ BRICS countries are uniquely placed to shape the transformations needed regarding the **rights-based use of AI at work through South-South cooperation.** (ILO)
- **Just Transition - Green Jobs, Inclusive Policies:** 1.2 billion livelihoods are under threat from ecosystem collapse; 2.4 billion workers endure dangerous heat levels.
- **Universal Social Protection:** Protection gap is increasingly widening, including for platform workers with no safety net and the 83 per cent of people even lack basic coverage.
- **Impetus to Social Justice:** ILO commits to support BRICS through Global Coalition for Social Justice, offering normative guidance, research, and technical cooperation.



Listed firms recorded a rise in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) spending

According to a report, there has been a **rise of 16% CSR funding** to ₹17,967 crore in 2023-24, in comparison to ₹15,524 crore spent in 2022-23 due to **increased profits**.

- HDFC Bank topped the list with a **CSR spend of Rs 945.31 crore**, followed by **Reliance Industries** and **Tata Consultancy Services (TCS)**.

About CSR

- CSR integrates **social and environmental considerations** into **business operations**.
- **Framework of CSR in India**
 - ⊕ The CSR framework is established by **Section 135** of the **Companies Act, 2013**.
 - ◆ **India** is the **first nation to enact the legislation** mandating the implementation of CSR activities.
 - ⊕ **Criteria for CSR Eligibility** (refer to infographic)
 - ⊕ **Fund Allocation:** The companies are obligated to allocate at least **2% of their average net profit from the previous three years to CSR** activities such as Protection of national heritage, etc.
 - ⊕ **Penalty for Non-Compliance:** If the company fails to spend the amount and does not transfer it to a specified fund, penalties are imposed.
 - ⊕ **It is mandatory** for a company intending to undertake a CSR activity **to register themselves with the Registrar of Companies**.

Criteria for CSR Eligibility



Net worth of the company to be Rs 500 crore or more



The company turnover is Rs 1000 crore or more



Net profit of the company to be Rs 5 crore or more

Scientists find the hidden forces behind the rise of stable parts of continents

Scientists have analysed **how and why stable parts of continents (called cratons)** gradually rise to form some of the planet's greatest topographic features like **escarpments** and **plateaus**.

➤ Cratons remain one of the **least understood aspects of Plate Tectonics**.

What are the findings?

➤ When **tectonic plates break apart**, powerful waves are triggered deep within the Earth that can **cause continental surfaces to rise by over a kilometre**, even far from plate boundaries.

➤ **Mechanism: Continental rifting** (e.g., in African Rift Valley) stretches the crust, setting about a **'deep mantle wave'** that travels along the continent's base at about **15-20 kilometres per million years**.

⊕ These waves **remove layers of rocks from the continental roots**, causing **uplift**.

⊕ **Erosion triggered by these waves** further removes rock, amplifying uplift and **forming plateaus**.

About Plate Tectonic Theory

➤ Also referred to as **Geology's Theory of Everything**.

➤ It explains **how major landforms** (e.g. **volcanoes and earthquakes**) are created as a result of Earth's subterranean movements.

➤ **Mechanism: Earth's outermost layer (lithosphere), made up of the crust and upper mantle, are broken into large rocky plates**.

⊕ These plates **float on top of a partially molten layer of rock called the asthenosphere**.

Tectonic Plates



Major Plates

E.g., Pacific Plate, Eurasian Plate, African Plate, etc.



Minor Plates

E.g., Juan de Fuca Plate, Cocos Plate, Nazca Plate, Caribbean Plate, etc.

Union Government brings I4C under Anti-money Laundering Law

Recently, **Department of Revenue** under the **Union Ministry of Finance** issued notification to include **Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)** under the **Section 66 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002**.

➤ This would help I4C to share and receive information from the **Enforcement Directorate and other law enforcement agencies**, so as to strengthen the country's fight against **cyber-enabled financial crimes**.

Section 66(Disclosure of information) of PMLA Act, 2002

➤ **Enables the Director (Directorate of Enforcement) or any other authority specified by him to share the information with the concerned agency for necessary action.**

⊕ Sharing of information shall be on the basis of **information or material in his possession**, that the **provisions of any other law for the time being in force are contravened**.

About Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)

➤ Officially inaugurated in **2020**, it is an initiative of the **Union Ministry of Home Affairs**, envisaged to **act as the nodal point to curb Cybercrime** in the country.

⊕ In **July 2024**, it was made an **attached office** on the **Union Ministry of Home Affairs**.

➤ **Objective:** To provide a **framework and eco-system for Law Enforcement Agencies for dealing with Cybercrime in a coordinated and comprehensive manner**.

➤ **Verticals of I4C:** National Cybercrime Reporting Portal (NCRP), National Cybercrime Threat Analytics Unit (NCTAU), National Cybercrime Ecosystem Management Unit (NCEMU), Joint Cyber Crime Coordination Team (JCCT), etc.



Also In News



AIM4NatuRe Initiative

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) on Earth Day (22nd April) launched **Accelerating Innovative Monitoring for Nature Restoration (AIM4NatuRe)**.

About AIM4NatuRe Initiative

➤ **Aim:** To improve monitoring and reporting of global ecosystem restoration efforts.

⊕ Initiative leverage cutting-edge technology, standardized data frameworks, and capacity development to restore at least 30% of degraded ecosystems by 2030, as outlined in **Target 2 of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)**.

➤ It is **part of FAO's AIM4Forests Programme**, expanding the scope beyond forests to provide a holistic approach to nature restoration monitoring.



Agentic AI

India is grappling with a **critical shortage of Agentic AI professionals** as demand surges, driven by the shift towards sophisticated AI agents capable of autonomous decision-making.

About Agentic AI

➤ It refers to **AI systems that can autonomously make decisions, take actions and adapt to changing environments**.

➤ It **ingests vast amounts of data from multiple data sources** and third-party applications to **independently analyze challenges, develop strategies, and execute tasks**.

➤ **Uses 4-step process for problem-solving:** **Perceive** (extracting meaningful features, recognizing objects, etc.), **Reason** (understands tasks and generates solutions), **Act** (execute tasks based on formulated plans), and **Learn** (adapt through a feedback loop).

➤ It can enable companies to **deliver higher value** through a **'service-as-a-software'** shift from **'software-as-a-service'**.



Red-Crowned Roofed Turtle

At least 20 red-crowned roofed turtles were re-introduced in the river Ganga in Uttar Pradesh.

About Red-Crowned Roofed Turtle (Bengal roof turtle)

- **Distribution:** It is native to India, Bangladesh and Nepal.
 - ⊕ Currently in India, the **National Chambal River Gharial Sanctuary** is the only area with a substantial population of the species.
- **Key Characteristic:** It is a freshwater turtle species, and found in deep flowing rivers with terrestrial nesting sites.
- **Conservation Status:**
 - ⊕ IUCN : Critically Endangered.
 - ⊕ CITES : Appendix I.
- **Major threats:** Habitat loss, Drowning in illegal fishing nets, Poaching, etc.

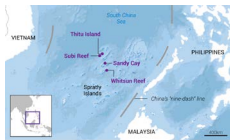


Tiexian Reef

China seizes disputed **Tiexian Reef** near a key Philippine military outpost of **Thitu Island**, also known as **Pag-asa Island** in the South China Sea.

About Tiexian Reef

- **Alternate name:** Sandy Cay is part of **Spratly Islands**.
- **Significance:** China claims Sandy Cay is a natural feature and not man-made entitling it to a 12-nautical-mile (22-km) territorial sea under international law that would overlap with Thitu Island.
 - ⊕ A territorial sea claim around Sandy Cay would provide a boost for nearby **Subi Reef**, one of China's reclaimed and militarized deep-water ports.
- The incident also coincided with the ongoing **"Balikatan"** joint military drills between the Philippines and the US.



Ancient Muziris Port

Historian MGS Narayan, a key force behind **Muziris Heritage Project (MHP)**, was remembered in the Kerala State Assembly.

About Ancient Muziris Port

- It was a **major trading hub** located on the **Malabar Coast** of present-day Kerala, primarily active from around the **1st century BCE** through the **early medieval period**.
- It was **renowned for its spice trade**, especially **black pepper**, often called black gold.
- Other items of export included semi-precious stones, ivory, pearls, etc.
- The port connected South India with **Persia, the Middle East, North Africa, and the Mediterranean world**, including Greek and Roman traders.
- It was also mentioned in **Pliny the Elder's writings** and the author of **Periplus of the Erythraean Sea**.



Satellite Bus as a service Platform

Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (IN-SPACe) has invited applications under a new initiative called the **Satellite Bus as a Service (SBaaS)**.

About Satellite Bus as a Service

- **Aims:** To provide a pathway for Indian private space players to design and develop **small satellite bus** platforms for hosted payload applications.
 - ⊕ A **satellite bus** is the main body and structural component of a satellite in which scientific instruments are held.
- **Significance:** Democratising accesses for India's Space Sector and reduce reliance on imports.



Mahuadanr Wolf Sanctuary

India's wolf sanctuary **Mahuadanr** in Jharkhand was in news due to a unique practice of tribals from the 'Sarna faith' to avoid the Sal forest during the winter months.

- Coincidentally, this period aligns perfectly with the **breeding and denning season** of the **Indian grey wolf**.

About Mahuadanr Wolf Sanctuary

- **Established in 1976**, it is India's **first and only dedicated wolf sanctuary**, located within the **Palamau Tiger Reserve** in Jharkhand.
- **Burha River** flow through the Sanctuary.

About Indian grey wolf

- The Indian grey wolf is a **subspecies of the grey wolf** that ranges from Southwest Asia to the Indian subcontinent, including countries like India, Pakistan, etc.
- It inhabits **dry and semi-arid environments** such as **scrublands, grasslands, thorn forests**, etc.
- It is also listed under **Schedule I of India's Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**.



Bandar Abbas Port

Recently, a explosion took place in a shipment of **"sodium perchlorate rocket fuel"** (used in missiles) at Iran's **Shahid Rajaei port**, a part of Bandar Abbas Port Complex.

- **Shahid Rajaei port** is Iran's largest and most advanced terminal.

About Bandar Abbas Port

- **Location:** On **Strait of Hormuz**, lying west of Chabahar port in **southern Iran**.
 - ⊕ **20 percent of the world's oil trade** passes through here.
- It is an important port between the **Persian Gulf** and **Gulf of Oman**.



Semicryogenic Engine

ISRO has successfully conducted the second short hot test of the semi-cryogenic engine that **will power the Semicryogenic booster stage** of the **Launch Vehicle Mark-3 (LVM3)**.

What is a semi-cryogenic engine?

- Semi-cryogenic engines **combine the benefits of cryogenic and conventional engines**, employing a **cryogenic oxidizer** (e.g., Liquid Oxygen), along with a **hydrocarbon-based fuel** (e.g., kerosene).
 - ⊕ A cryogenic engine utilizes **liquid hydrogen as fuel and liquid oxygen as an oxidizer** giving **100% efficiency** without any **greenhouse emissions or pollution**.
- **Objective:** To achieve a **balance between performance and operational simplicity** by blending cryogenic and non-cryogenic propellants.



'bank.in' Domain

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has **decided to operationalise the exclusive internet domain 'bank.in'** for banks by October 2025.

About 'bank.in' Domain

- To **combat the increased instances of fraud in digital payments** the 'bank.in' exclusive Internet Domain has been introduced.
- This initiative is aimed at **strengthening the cybersecurity framework and enhancing public confidence in digital banking and payment systems**.
- **Institute for Development and Research in Banking Technology (IDRBT)**, has been authorised by National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI), to serve as the **exclusive registrar for this domain**.
 - ⊕ **NIXI (registered in 2003)** is a not for profit Organization under **section 8 of the Companies Act 2013**.



AHMEDABAD



BENGALURU



BHOPAL



CHANDIGARH



DELHI



GUWAHATI



HYDERABAD



JAIPUR



JODHPUR



LUCKNOW



PRAYAGRAJ



PUNE



RANCHI