



# Target4IAS

Together We Can

Weekly Current Affairs

Sources: The Hindu+IndianExpress+PIB

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## China Starts Carbon Trading Scheme

### In news

China recently introduced its long-awaited emissions trading system-> would create the world's largest carbon market and double the share of global emissions covered under such programs.

### About Carbon trading scheme

- The carbon market will **help the country lower greenhouse-gas emissions and to achieve its goal of reaching peak emissions before 2030 and carbon neutrality, or net zero emissions, by 2060.**
- The program will initially involve such 2,225 companies in the power sector which are responsible for a seventh of global carbon emissions from fossil-fuel combustion
- Under the trading program, emitters such as power plants and factories are given a fixed amount of carbon they are allowed to release a year.
- Over the next three to five years, the market is set to expand to seven additional high-emissions industries: petrochemicals, chemicals, building materials, iron and steel, nonferrous metals, paper, and domestic aviation.
- Rather than be subject to the absolute caps on emissions in other trading programs, Chinese companies will start off with allowances that use benchmarks based on previous years' performances which can be traded by negotiation or auction.

Source:- [TheHindu](#)

### Kisan Sarathi

### In news

Kisan Sarathi, a digital platform, is recently launched to facilitate farmers to get 'right information at right time' in their desired language.

### About Kisan Sarathi

- Launched by: **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare and Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology**
- The farmers can interact and avail personalised advisories on agriculture and allied areas directly from the respective scientists of Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVKs).
- It will be highly valuable not only in addressing the location specific information needs of the farmers but also in Agricultural Extension, Education and Research activities of ICAR.

### About The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)

- It is an **autonomous organisation under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare**, Government of India.
- The Council is the apex body for coordinating, guiding and managing research and education in agriculture including horticulture, fisheries and animal sciences in the entire country.

Source:PIB

## UNESCO Delists Liverpool of Its World Heritage Status

### In news

Recently, the city of Liverpool, England has been removed from UNESCO's list of world heritage sites.

### Key takeaways

- It was named a **World Heritage Site in 2004**.
- Liverpool has been removed from UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites **because of developments in the city center and on its historic River Mersey water front**. These developments have caused **irreversible damage to Liverpool's authenticity**.
- Now Liverpool will not be eligible for World Heritage Site label which gives historic sites access to UN conservation funding, as well as featuring in tourist guidebooks across the world.
- Liverpool city is **only the third place to be removed from the UNESCO World Heritage list**. Other two is:
  - **Wildlife sanctuary in Oman** in 2007 due to poaching and habitat loss.
  - **Dresden Elbe valley in Germany** in 2009 because of four-lane motorway bridge was built over the river.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

## Rare Arctic lightning storms

### In news

The National Weather Service of the USA has said that three successive thunderstorms have taken place across the Arctic region, producing between 100 and 200 lightning strikes.

### Key takeaways

- According to a study, episodes of summer lightning within the Arctic Circle have tripled since 2010.
- Lightning in this region is **historically rare**, as it usually isn't warm enough to generate the right thunderstorm conditions during which lightning occurs. But due to climate change and increasing loss of sea ice in the far north, the Arctic region is warming faster than any other region on Earth.
- Consequently, this has **created more favorable conditions for intense summer thunderstorms** that produce lightning.
- The Arctic residents in northern Russia, Canada, Europe, and Alaska need to prepare for the danger of more frequent lightning strikes.
- Moreover, the **shipping vessels throughout the Arctic could be more vulnerable to these strikes**.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

## UMANG App

### In news

MeitY has enabled map services in **UMANG (Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance)** App through an MOU with MapmyIndia.

### About UMANG app:

- It is a Government of India single, unified, secure, multi-channel, multi-platform, multi-lingual, multi-service mobile app, launched in 2017.
- It brings major government services ranging from Central to Local Government bodies on a single mobile app.
- Developed by: the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) and National e-Governance Division (NeGD)** to drive Mobile Governance in India.
- It has already started to provide map functionality through MapmyIndia in the following services. Such as,
  - **Mera Ration** – To identify and navigate to the Nearest Fair Price Shops).
  - **eNAM** – To identify and navigate to the nearby mandis pointed.
  - **Damini** – ‘Damini Lightning Alerts’ service.

Source: [PIB](#)

## Twitter Transparency Report

### In news

Twitter has released the biannual Twitter Transparency Report. The report shares details on the number of government and legal requests, removal requests and data around accounts actioned for various violations.

### Key takeaways:

- **Government’s Request for Account Information:**
  - Globally, Twitter received 14,561 government requests for account information in the six-month period from June to December 2020. Among these requests, 3,615 requests were from India-> an increase of about 38% for India from the first half of the year.
  - Governments and law enforcement agencies submitted approximately 15% more information requests compared to the previous reporting period.
  - **India was the single largest source of government requests for account information** that Twitter received during this period. It accounted for 25% of the global volume. The second highest volume of information requests originated from the US.
- **Legal Demands to Remove Content:**
  - For India, the number of legal requests stood at 6,971, an increase of 151% from 2,772 such requests in the first six months of 2020.
  - Twitter withheld 60 accounts and 598 tweets. In addition, 1,310 accounts were either suspended or some content was removed.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

## NBDriver tool

### In news

Researchers at IIT Madras have developed an AI tool called **NBDriver (neighborhood driver)**.

### About NBDriver tool

- It is an **Artificial Intelligence (AI) tool developed to analyse cancer-causing mutations in cells.**
- It works by looking at the neighbourhood or context of a mutation in the genome. By looking at this, it can detect harmful “driver” mutations and distinguish them from neutral “passenger” mutations.
- Mutations that provide a selective growth advantage and thus promote cancer development are termed driver mutations and those that do not are termed passenger mutations.
- The technique of the NBDriver tool to look at the genomic neighbourhood to make the differentiation between Driver and Passenger Mutation is a novel and largely unexplored one.

**Note:** A mutation means a change in the genetic sequence of the Cell.

**Source:** [The Hindu](#)

## Pegasus

### In news

According to a report, Pegasus spyware may have been used to conduct surveillance on about 300 Indians including two Cabinet ministers, three opposition leaders, a Constitutional authority, government officials, scientists and about 40 journalists.

### About Pegasus

- It is a **spyware created by NSO Group, an Israeli cybersecurity firm** founded in 2010.
- Pegasus spyware can hack any iOS or Android device and steal a variety of data from the infected device.
- It works by sending an exploit link and if the target user clicks on the link, the malware or the code that allows the surveillance is installed on the user’s phone.
- Once Pegasus is installed, the attacker has complete access to the target user’s phone.
- One of the worrying aspects of the Pegasus spyware is how it has evolved from its earlier spear-phishing methods using text links or messages to ‘zero-click attacks’.

**Source:** [The Hindu](#)

 EXPRESS  
**explained.**

### HOW DOES IT WORK?

● Pegasus, in the very basic form, can infect devices that are connected to the internet. Some updated versions, experts claim, can also infect phones even without the victim clicking on any links or messages

● Most spyware and stalkerware apps disguise themselves as anti-theft applications that can be used to track stolen or lost devices. While viruses and malware can be detected by anti-virus software, spyware and stalkerware apps disguise themselves as useful and send out stolen data to central servers without the knowledge of the users



#QUIXPLAINED

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## Monkey B virus

### In news

China has reported the first human infection case with Monkey B virus (BV).

### About Monkey B virus (BV)

- It is an **alphaherpesvirus enzootic (endemic) found in macaque monkeys**.
- Alphaherpesviruses are pathogens that invade the nervous systems of their mammalian hosts.
- **First identified in 1932 and the only identified old-world-monkey herpesvirus** that displays severe pathogenicity in humans.
- The virus can **be transmitted via direct contact and the exchange of bodily secretions** of monkeys. It has a fatality rate of 70% to 80%.
- Initial symptoms of the virus include — fever, chills, muscle aches, fatigue, and rash-itchy wounds, among others. These initial symptoms usually develop around 1-3 weeks after exposure to the virus.
- In the later stage, the virus can lead to the loss of muscle coordination and neurological damage.
- Till date, only one case has been documented of an infected person spreading B virus to another person.
- The virus might pose a potential threat to laboratory workers, veterinarians, and others who may be exposed to monkeys or their specimens.
- Currently, there are **no vaccines that can protect against Monkey B virus infection**.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

## SMILE Scheme

### In news

The **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment** has formulated a scheme “**SMILE – Support for Marginalized Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise**”.

### About SMILE

- Two Central Sector Schemes namely **Comprehensive Rehabilitation of persons engaged in the Act of begging and Comprehensive Rehabilitation for Welfare of Transgender Persons have been merged** in a single scheme named SMILE.
- The scheme would be implemented with the support of State/UT Governments/Local Urban Bodies, Voluntary Organizations, Community Based Organizations (CBOs), institutions and others.

### Key Features of the scheme

- Use of the existing shelter homes available with the State/UT Governments and Urban local bodies for rehabilitation of the persons engaged in the act of Begging.
- Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has also initiated pilot projects on Comprehensive Rehabilitation of Persons engaged in the act of Begging in ten cities namely Delhi, Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad, Indore, Lucknow, Mumbai, Nagpur, Patna

and Ahmadabad. These pilots are being implemented in these cities by State Governments/UTs/Local Urban Bodies and Voluntary Organizations.

Source: [PIB](#)

## Space Rice

### In news

China has harvested its first batch of 'Space Rice' at the space breeding research centre of the South China Agricultural University in Guangdong province.

### Key takeaways

- Space Rice is the **rice harvested from seeds that went on a 23-day moon mission with China's Chang'e-5 in November 2020.**
- After being **exposed to cosmic radiation and zero gravity**, these seeds weighing around 40 grams returned and were harvested.
- China has been taking seeds of rice and other crops to Space since 1987.
- It is believed that once the seeds are exposed to the environment in Space. They may mutate and produce higher yields once planted on Earth.
- Hence, the move is basically aimed at boosting China's grain harvest and thereby safeguarding the country's food security.

Source: [Hindustan Times](#)

## AMLEX

### In news

IITRopar has developed a first-of-its-kind Oxygen Rationing Device called AMLEX.

### About AMLEX Device:

- It is an **Oxygen Rationing Device that increases the life of medical oxygen cylinders threefold.**
- It can be easily connected between the oxygen supply line and the mask worn by the patient.
- It uses a sensor that senses and successfully supplies a required volume of oxygen to the patients (while inhaling) and trips when the patient is exhaling CO<sub>2</sub>.
- This process would **help save oxygen**, which gets unnecessarily wasted otherwise.

### Significance

- Generally during exhalation, the oxygen in the cylinder or pipe is pushed out along with the exhaled Co<sub>2</sub> by the patient. This results in a large amount of oxygen wastage in the long run. The device would save oxygen which gets unnecessarily wasted.

Source: [PIB](#)

## Akash-NG

### In news

DRDO has successfully flight-tested the **New Generation Akash Missile (Akash-NG).**

#### **About Akash-NG:**

- It is a New Generation Surface-to-Air Missile, **developed by Defence Research & Development Laboratory (DRDL), Hyderabad** in collaboration with other DRDO laboratories.
- The Missile is capable of **intercepting high manoeuvring low radar cross-section aerial targets**.
- Akash-NG uses a **two-pulse solid rocket motor that replaces the old ramjet** on the legacy Akash missile.
- The new motor not just reaches out to 30 km, but also generates a high terminal velocity to strike even the fastest and most agile enemy fighters.
- The weight of the rocket has been brought down from 700 kg to 350 kg.
- It has a new seeker head. The seeker locks onto the enemy aircraft and continuously guides the missile to impact the target.
- It **detects enemy fighters at ranges out to 80 km** and initiates the launch sequence.

Source: [PIB](#)

#### **Stand Up India Scheme**

##### **In news**

The Ministry of Finance has informed Lok Sabha that the Stand Up India Scheme has been **extended up to the year 2025**.

##### **About Stand Up India Scheme:**

- **Launched in 2016 by the Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance.**
- Aim: **facilitates bank loans** for setting up a new enterprise in manufacturing, services, agri-allied activities, or the trading sector **by SC/ST/Women entrepreneurs**.
- It provides bank loans between **Rs 10 lakh and up to 1 crore**.
- The government does not allocate funds for loans under the Scheme. They are extended by Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs).
- **Repayable of Loan:** The loan is repayable in **7 years**, with a maximum moratorium period of 18 months.
- Beneficiaries should be SC/ST and/or woman entrepreneurs above 18 years of age.
- Loans under the scheme are available **only for greenfield projects**.
- In the case of non-individual enterprises, 51% of the shareholding and controlling stake should be held by either SC/ST and/or Women Entrepreneur.
- Borrowers should not be in default to any bank/financial institution.

##### **Recent changes:**

- Margin money requirement for loans under the Scheme has been reduced from 'upto 25%' to 'upto 15%'.
- Activities allied to agriculture have been included in the Scheme.

Source: [PIB](#)



## Drug menace

### In news

MHA has informed the Lok Sabha about the steps taken by the Government to combat illicit trafficking of narcotics, drugs, and psychotropic substances.

### Key takeaways

- India has signed 26 bilateral pacts, 15 MoUs, and two agreements on security cooperation with different countries for combating illicit trafficking of narcotic.
- The **Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB)** has coordinated with various international organisations for sharing information and intelligence to combat transnational drug trafficking.
- For coordination among various Central and State agencies, the **Narco Coordination Centre (NCORD) mechanism** was set up by the MHA in 2016 for effective drug law enforcement.
- This NCORD system has been restructured into a four-tier scheme up to district level in 2019 for better coordination.
- Government of India has launched an **e-portal called 'SIMS' (Seizure Information Management System) in 2019** for digitisation of pan-India drug seizure data.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

## Microplastics in Ganga

### In news

A Study titled '**Quantitative analysis of Microplastics along River Ganga**' has been released by a Delhi-based environment NGO, Toxics Link.

### Key takeaways:

- The study was carried out in collaboration with the **National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) in Goa**.
- Ganga is heavily polluted with microplastics at Varanasi, Haridwar, and Kanpur.
- Among the three cities, the water samples at Varanasi showed the maximum load of microplastics as compared to the other two cities.

### About Microplastics

- Microplastics are **defined as synthetic solid particles sized ranging from 1 micrometre to 5 millimetre (mm)** which are insoluble in water.
- **Sources of microplastics in Ganga river:**
  - Untreated sewage from many cities along the river's course.
  - Industrial waste and religious offerings wrapped in non-degradable plastics pile pollutants enter into the river.
  - The plastic products and waste materials released or dumped in the river break down and are eventually broken down into microparticles.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

## H5N1 avian influenza

### In news

An 11-year-old boy in Delhi died of H5N1 avian influenza. This is the first recorded death due to the bird flu in India in 2021.

### About Bird Flu:

- Bird flu or avian influenza is a **disease caused by avian influenza Type A viruses** found naturally in wild birds worldwide.
- The virus can infect domestic poultry and there have been reports of H5N1 infection among pigs, cats, and even tigers in Thailand zoos.
- **Symptoms of avian influenza include** – Fever, cough, sore throat, muscle aches, nausea, abdominal pain, diarrhea, vomiting, severe respiratory illness, and Neurologic changes.
- There have been reports of avian and swine influenza infections in humans including A(H1N1), A(H1N2), A(H5N1), A(H7N9) among others.
- The **first report of human H5N1 infection was in 1997**. Moreover, the infection is deadly as it has a high mortality rate of about 60%.
- The **most common route of transmission is direct contact with infected birds, either dead or alive**. Humans can also be affected if they come in contact with contaminated surfaces or air near the infected poultry.
- There is no sufficient evidence suggesting the spread of the virus through properly cooked meat.
- Moreover, the cases of human-to-human transmission of the H5N1 virus are very rare.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

## PASSEX

### In news

The Indian Navy took part in a **bilateral Passage Exercise (PASSEX) with the UK Royal Navy Carrier Strike Group(CSG)-21** in the Bay of Bengal.

### About PASSEX

- It will take place between the two navies to ensure that the navies are able to communicate and cooperate in times of war or humanitarian relief.
- The Indian Navy had conducted similar passing exercises with the Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force, French Navy, and US Navy among others.
- This is the **maiden PASSEX exercise between the Indian Navy and the UK Royal Navy**. The exercise was designed to hone the two navies' ability to operate together in the maritime domain.

### Other Exercises between India and UK:

- **Exercise Indradhanush**: It is a joint **bilateral air exercise** between India and the UK started in 2006.
- **Exercise Konkan**: It is an annual **maritime bilateral exercise** between the Indian Navy and the Royal Navy of Britain.

- **Exercise Ajeya Warrior:** It is a **joint military exercise between** India and the UK. It was held for the first time in 2013.

Source: [PIB](#)

## Adarsh Smarak Scheme

### In news

Recently, the **fort at Gandikota** was identified for development under the **‘Adopt a Heritage’ programme**. Further, 3 monuments – **NagarjunaKonda** in Guntur district, **the Buddhist remains at Salihundam** in Srikakulam district and the **Veerabhadra temple at Lepakshi** in Anantapur district have been identified for development under ‘AdarshSmarak’ scheme.

### About Adarsh Smarak scheme

- Implemented by: **Ministry of Culture**
- Launched in 2014 for providing improved visitor amenities, especially for the physically challenged, besides cleanliness, drinking water, interpretation centres etc.
- **Objectives:** make the monument accessible to differently-abled, visitor friendly and to provide safety and protection. Furthermore, to implement Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and streamline wastewater and garbage disposal and a rainwater harvesting system.
- **ASI had identified 100 monuments as “AdarshSmarak” for upgradation.**

### About Adopt a Heritage scheme

- An initiative of the **Ministry of Tourism in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)**.
- Under this scheme, the government invites **entities, including public sector companies, private sector firms and individuals**, to develop selected monuments and heritage and tourist sites.
- Basic amenities like drinking water, ease of access for the differently-abled and senior citizens, standardised signage, cleanliness, public convenience, surveillance system and night-viewing facilities are provided and maintained under the scheme.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

## Central Bank Digital Currency

### In news

RBI has said that it is working towards a phased implementation strategy for its digital currency (i.e. Central Bank Digital Currency).

### Key takeaways

- It **would reduce currency costs for the government and would help offset the threat of virtual currencies.**
- It could also protect the public from the abnormal level of

### Digital Payments Gain Currency

<p><b>CBDC:</b> A legal tender issued by a central bank in a digital form</p> <p><b>86%</b> of central banks in the world are <b>researching CBDC</b>, <b>14%</b> are in pilot testing phase</p>	<p><b>RBI EXAMINING</b></p> <p><b>Scope:</b> whether retail or wholesale</p> <p><b>Technology:</b> distributed ledger or centralised ledger</p> <p><b>Validation base:</b> token or account-based system</p> <p><b>Distribution format:</b> Issued by central bank or by banks</p> <p><b>Enabling legal framework</b> amendments to RBI Act, Coinage Act, FEMA, IT Act</p>	<p><b>CBDC ADVANTAGE</b></p> <p><b>Reduced</b> dependence on cash</p> <p><b>Savings</b> on cost of printing currency</p> <p><b>A more robust</b> settlement mechanism</p> <p><b>Elimination</b> of ‘time zone difference’ in forex transactions</p>
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volatility that some of these virtual currencies experience.

- Transacting with CBDC would be an instantaneous process.
- Alternative to physical cash.
- **Criminal activities can be easily spotted and ended** such as terror funding, money laundering, and so forth.

#### About Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC)

- It is essentially a **legal tender issued by the central bank**.
- It has the same functional capabilities as a fiat currency-> the only notable difference is the form it takes, i.e. a digital form.
- It is different from existing private digital currencies such as Bitcoin and Ethereum->Private crypto assets have no legal issuers and they cannot be considered as money or currency, whereas the CBDC can be.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

### Gatekeeper Model to prevent Suicides

#### In news

In order to prevent suicides triggered by mental health issues in prisons across the country, the **National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS), Bengaluru**, has recommended the “Gatekeeper Model”.

#### About the Gatekeeper Model

- Under the model, **certain inmates will be selected and trained to identify prisoners who seem to be at risk of suicide**. They would then refer them to treatment or supportive services.
- It is important to regularly assess Prisoners with mental disorders for severity of suicidal risk and also put on regular and supervised medication.
- **‘Buddy System’** — social support through trained prisoners called “buddies” or “listeners” — was found to have a good impact on the well-being of suicidal prisoners.
- Periodic telephone conversations with friends and family would also foster support.
- These initiatives were part of several other recommendations made by NIMHANS to effectively manage mental health issues among prisoners and staff.

**Note:** NIMHANS is an Institute of National Importance.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

### Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR)

#### In news

SC dismisses plea by Bharti Airtel, Vodafone Idea seeking direction for correction of errors in AGR calculation.

#### About AGR

- Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) is the **annual license fee (LF) and spectrum usage charges that telecom operators are charged by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT)**.

- **As per DoT, the charges are calculated based on all revenues earned by a telco – including non-telecom-related sources** such as deposit interests and asset sales. However telecoms insist that AGR should comprise only the revenues generated from telecom services.

#### **Background**

- In 2005, the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) challenged the government's definition for AGR calculation. The **SC in 2019 upheld the definition of AGR** as stipulated by the DoT.
- Further, The Supreme Court insisted that telecom operators could pay their AGR dues to the DoT over the next 10 years starting April 1, 2021.
- Consequently, Bharti Airtel Ltd and Vodafone Idea Ltd had moved the apex court seeking directions to the DoT to recalculate AGR dues, citing “mathematical errors” in the calculation of the outstanding amount by the department.
- However, recently, the SC dismissed the applications of the two telecom companies.

Source: [Live Mint](#)

#### **EV100 drive**

##### **In news**

Maharashtra government has announced its decision to become the first state in the country to join hands with Climate Group's EV100 campaign.

##### **About EV100 campaign:**

- It is an **initiative of Climate Group, an international non-profit organization.**
- **Aims: to make electric transport the new normal by 2030.** For that, it will encourage companies to switch from vehicles running on fossil fuels to EVs and install charging infrastructure.
- Maharashtra's Electric Vehicles (EVs) policy aims to achieve 25% electrification of last-mile delivery vehicles by 2025.
- Climate Group through its EV100 campaign will act as a bridge between private companies and the State government to ease the process of shifting their fleets to EVs.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

#### **ARMEX-21**

##### **In news**

Union Defence Minister has flagged-in the Indian Army Skiing Expedition (ARMEX-21) in New Delhi.

##### **About ARMEX-21:**

- It is an **Army Skilling Expedition conducted by the Indian Army.**
- It was conducted in the mountain ranges of the Himalayan region to promote the adventure activity in the country and the Indian Army.

- During the expedition, the team covered 1,660 kms from Karakoram Pass in Ladakh to Malari in Uttarakhand. They also gathered information about several hitherto uncharted areas along the international boundary.

**About Karakoram Pass:**

- Karakoram Pass is a **mountain pass between India and China in the Karakoram Range**.
- The mountain pass is located on the boundary between the Indian UT of Ladakh and the Xinjiang Autonomous Region of China, and connects Leh with Yarkand.
- The pass has neither vegetation nor snow because of the high-speed wind.
- The pass also plays a major geographic role in the dispute between Pakistan and India over control of the **Siachen Glacier area immediately to the southwest of the pass**.

Source: [PIB](#)

## **U.S., Afghanistan, Pakistan and Uzbekistan to form quad group**

**In news**

USA, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Uzbekistan have agreed in principle to establish a new quadrilateral diplomatic platform focused on enhancing regional connectivity.

**Key takeaways:**

- The parties intend to cooperate to expand trade, build transit links, and strengthen business-to-business ties by recognising the historic opportunity to open flourishing interregional trade routes.
- **Strategic location of Afghanistan**
  - Afghanistan is bordered by Pakistan to the east and south, Iran to the west, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan to the north, and China to the northeast.
  - It is **located at the heart of the historic Silk Road**.
  - It was long the crossroads of commerce between Asian countries connecting them to Europe, and enhancing religious, cultural, and commercial contacts.
  - The formation of the new quad group is important amid China's desire to extend its Belt Road Initiative (BRI) to Afghanistan.

Source: [TheHindu](#)

## **Climate change has added over 1,000 lakes in Swiss Alps: Study**

**In news**

According to the study published by the Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology (Eawag), climate change has dramatically altered the Swiss Alp landscape — at a quicker pace than expected — as melting glaciers have created more than 1,000 new lakes across the mountains

**Key takeaways**

- The **inventory of Swiss Glacial lakes showed that almost 1,200 new lakes have formed in formerly glaciated regions of the Swiss Alps since the end of the Little Ice Age around 1850**.



- Around 1,000 of them still exist today which is far more than the few hundreds the researchers had expected to find at the beginning of the project.
- **Marked acceleration in formation was surprising and 180 have been added in the last decade alone.**
- Glaciers in the Swiss Alps are in steady decline, losing 2% of their volume last year alone.
- Even if the world were to fully implement the 2015 Paris Agreement -- which calls for capping global warming at least two degrees Celsius -- two-thirds of the Alpine glaciers will likely be lost, according to a 2019 study by the ETH technical university in Zurich.

Source: [TheHindu](#)

### Terms in news

**Monitor Lizard:** It is a protected species under India's wildlife protection law. These are non-venomous but can bite or even use their strong claws in retaliation if threatened or provoked.

**Microplastics:** Synthetic solid particles sized ranging from 1 micrometre to 5 millimetre (mm), which are insoluble in water. Microplastics are recognised as a major source of marine pollution.

**Article 25 (Right to religion)** is subject to Article 21 (Right to life). If a particular religious practice is threatening the health and lives of people, such practice is not entitled for protection under Article 25.

**Good Friday agreement 1998:** The economic integration and soft borders between the two Irelands were one of the key aspects of this agreement.

**The philosophy of biocentrism:** It holds that the natural environment has its own set of rights which is independent of its ability to be exploited by or to be useful to humans.

**The philosophy of Anthropocentrism:** It argues that of all the species on earth, humans are the most significant and that all other resources on earth may be justifiably exploited for the benefit of human beings.