

# NEWS TODAY

## Tourism Sector is expected to contribute USD 512 Billion to India's GDP by 2028: Invest India

### ► Status of Tourism sector

- ⊕ **100% FDI** is allowed through automatic route in **tourism construction projects** including development of hotels, resorts, and recreational facilities.
- ⊕ India ranked **6<sup>th</sup>** in terms of **Travel & Tourism contribution to GDP in 2022**.
- ⊕ **India was ranked 54<sup>th</sup>** out of 117 countries in **Global Travel and Tourism Development Index 2021** of World Economic Forum.

### ► Significance of Indian Tourism Sector

- ⊕ **Economic benefits:** Employment generation, and increase in foreign exchange earnings.
  - ◆ Tourism sector is projected to create **53 million jobs by 2029**.
- ⊕ **Social benefits:** Developing understanding and respect for each other's culture, enhanced quality of life due to improved infrastructure, etc.
- ⊕ **Cultural benefits:** Revives cultural diversity, intangible heritage of country etc.

### ► Growth Drivers for Tourism in India

- ⊕ Ease of travel due to facilities like e-Tourist Visa.
- ⊕ **Rise in disposable income** of middle class.
- ⊕ **Increased Medical Tourism** as India provides affordable treatment, quality healthcare infrastructure and highly-skilled doctors at low cost.

### ► Concerns related to Indian Tourism Sector:

- ⊕ Ecological destruction and disturbance.
- ⊕ Poor infrastructure, accessibility and safety issues.
- ⊕ Lack of trained and skilled manpower.

### Initiatives taken to promote Tourism Sector

- ⊕ **Swadesh Darshan 2.0** to develop sustainable tourism destinations, following a destination & tourism-centric approach.
- **National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Heritage Augmentation Drive (PRASHAD)** scheme to safeguard India's ancient civilizational heritage.
- **Incredible India Tourist Facilitator Certification Program** aims to create a pool of well trained and professional Tourist Facilitators across the country.
- **Dekho Apna Desh initiative** to promote domestic tourism.

## Supreme Court seeks report by Directorate of Enforcement (ED) on illegal sand mining in Tamil Nadu

### ► About Sand Resource:

- ⊕ Sand is the **second most exploited natural resource** in the world after **water** (as per the **United Nations Environment Programme**).
- ⊕ **Main sources:** Rivers (riverbed and flood plain), lakes and reservoirs, coastal /marine sand, etc.
- ⊕ **Regulation in India:** Sand is a minor minerals under the Mines and Minerals (Development & Regulation) Act, 1957 (MMDR Act).
  - ◆ The regulation of minor mineral (including control of illegal mining) comes under the legislative and administrative domain of the **State Governments**.

### ► Illegal Sand Mining is prevalent in the country mainly due to **poor enforcement of regulation**, domination of organized crime groups (sand mafias), lack of **sustainable alternatives**, etc.

### ► Impacts of Sand Mining:

- ⊕ **Biodiversity-** Both, inland and coastal sand mining leads to habitat loss of aquatic (also marine) and terrestrial flora and fauna.
- ⊕ **Hydrological function-** Change in water flows, **lowering** of the water table, **polluting ground water**, increase in salinity levels in rivers etc.
- ⊕ **Infrastructures-** Damage to bridges, river embankments and coastal infrastructure.
- ⊕ **Extreme events-** Decline of protection against extreme events such as floods, storm surge etc.

### Key Measures taken to Ensure Best Practices in Sand Mining

- **Sustainable Sand Management Guidelines (2016)** supplemented by the **Enforcement & Monitoring Guidelines for Sand Mining-2020** for restoration and maintenance of river ecology.
- **Sand Mining Framework (2018)** by **Ministry of Mines**.
  - ⊕ **Framework envisages** alternative sources of sand in form of **Manufactured Sand (M-Sand)** from crushed rock fines, and sand from **Overburden (OB)** of coal mines.
    - ◆ **Overburden** (also called waste or spoil) refers to the material that lies above an area that lends itself to economical exploitation, such as the rock, soil, and ecosystem that lies above a coal seam or ore body.

## Carbon Removals and Carbon Farming (CRCF) Regulation in European Union (EU)

- European Parliament and the European Council recently reached a **provisional agreement** on a regulation to establish the first **EU-level Carbon Removal Certification Framework**.
  - ⊕ This certification framework will boost innovative **carbon removal technologies** and **carbon farming**.
  - ⊕ It establishes **quality criteria standards** and **outlines monitoring** and **reporting processes** to prevent **greenwashing**.
    - ◆ **Greenwashing** is a term used where a company makes false or misleading statements that their products/services are more sustainable than they are in reality.
- **About Carbon Farming:**
  - ⊕ It uses **regenerative practices** to improve agriculture, restore ecosystems, and combat climate change by storing carbon and reducing emissions.
  - ⊕ **Common Methods:** Agroforestry, conservation farming (minimising soil disturbance), integrated nutrient management, Renewable Energy Production Grasslands Conservation, etc.
- **Potential Benefits:**
  - ⊕ **Carbon Sequestration:** Studies have shown agricultural soils can absorb 3-8 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent every year.
    - ◆ This capacity can bridge the gap between feasible emissions reductions and the indispensable stabilisation of the climate.
  - ⊕ **Promoting Farmers Income:** Carbon credit systems can incentivise farmers by providing additional income through environmental services.
- **Challenges:** Inadequate policy support, lack of resources to invest in sustainable land management practices by small land holding farmers etc.

### Key Initiatives Facilitating Carbon Farming

- **Global**
  - ⊕ **4 per 1000 Initiative:** encourages stakeholders to engage in a transition towards a regenerative, productive and highly resilient agriculture.
    - ◆ It was launched during the UNFCCC COP21 (2015) in Paris.
  - ⊕ **World Bank-supported initiatives:** E.g. Kenya's Agricultural Carbon Project.
- **India**
  - ⊕ **Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS):** Launched by the Ministry of Power for trading of carbon credits among obligated entities.
  - ⊕ **National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture:** Promote agroforestry, micro irrigation, crop diversification, etc. by the government of India, to **encourage farmers to be part of the carbon trading in agriculture**.

## World Trade Organisation (WTO) commemorated 30th anniversary of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS)

- **TRIPS Agreement** was evolved as part of the **Uruguay Round** of the **General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)**, predecessor to **WTO**.
  - ⊕ It was included as one of the main annexes to the **Marrakesh Agreement** that established the **WTO**.
  - ⊕ It came into force on **January 1, 1995**.
- **Key Highlights:**
  - ⊕ **About:** Most **comprehensive multilateral agreement** on **intellectual property rights (IPR)**.
    - ◆ IPR gives the creator an **exclusive right** over the use of **his/her creations** (inventions; literary and artistic works; designs, etc.) for a **certain period** of time.
  - ⊕ **Standards:** Sets out the minimum standards of **protection** to be provided by each Member.
    - ◆ It has incorporated provisions from **World Intellectual Property Organization's (WIPO) Paris and Berne Conventions**.
  - ⊕ **Coverage:** Copyright, trademarks, geographical indications, industrial designs, patents, layout-designs of integrated circuit etc.
  - ⊕ **Dispute settlement:** Any disputes regarding TRIPS obligations are subjected to **the WTO's** dispute settlement procedures.
    - ◆ Also, provided for Council for TRIPS (Forum where WTO members discuss issues relating to agreement)
  - ⊕ **Compulsory licensing:** Allowed **compulsory licensing** to produce the patented product or process without the consent of the patent owner. It helped developing and under developed country.

### Key Information

- India joined the TRIPS Agreement in **1995**.
  - ⊕ In compliance with TRIPS Agreement, **amendments were brought** in the Patents Act, 1970. E.g. **Patents (Amendment Act) of 2005**.
- **Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement:** It affirmed that the TRIPS Agreement does not and should not prevent members from taking measures to **protect public health** and the right of members to fully use flexibilities in the Agreement for this purpose.

## Marine Heatwaves (MHWs) causes severe coral bleaching in Lakshadweep Sea: ICAR-CMFRI Study

- ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) has found that **Lakshadweep has been affected by MHWs since October 2023**, resulting in coral bleaching.
  - ⊖ **Primary causes** of these MHWs are **changes in ocean currents and excessive heat transfer into atmosphere**, which results in abnormally high water temperatures.
  - ⊖ Coral bleaching happens when **corals lose their vibrant colors and turn white**. It is mainly caused due to changes in temperature, light, or nutrients.
- **About MHWs**
  - ⊖ It is defined when **seawater temperatures exceed a seasonally-varying threshold** (usually the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile) for at least 5 consecutive days.
  - ⊖ MHWs can last for **weeks, months or even years**.
- **Impacts of MHWs**
  - ⊖ MHWs can **cause extreme weather events** such as tropical storms and hurricanes.
  - ⊖ **Reduction in monsoon rainfall** over Central India.
  - ⊖ **Native species are forced to migrate** to cooler waters, and invasive species such as sea urchins, jellyfish etc. thrive.
  - ⊖ Higher temperatures, combined with water de-oxygenation, can lead to toxic algal bloom.
  - ⊖ **Livelihood loss due to increased mortality** of economically important species.
  - ⊖ **Biodiversity and Habitat loss** due to food web disruption.

### Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) - Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI)

- **Genesis:** Established under **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare** in 1947 and later it joined ICAR in 1967.
- **Headquarter:** Kochi, Kerala
- **About:** Emerged as a **leading tropical marine fisheries research institute** in the world.
- **Mandate**
  - ⊖ Monitor and **assess marine fisheries resources of Exclusive Economic Zone** including impact of climate and anthropogenic activity.
  - ⊖ **Act as a repository of geo-spatial information** on marine fishery resources and habitats.

## ECI directs Ethical use of Social Media Platforms (SMPs) by political parties and their representatives

- ECI issued these directions due to **violations of Model Code of Conduct (MCC) during Lok Sabha election campaigning** by political parties.
- **Concerns related to misuse of Social Media in elections**
  - ⊖ Potential to **sway voters' opinions, erode trust in electioneering process** by use of manipulated content on SMPs.
  - ⊖ Misuse of AI-based tools to **create deepfakes** that distort information or propagate misinformation.
- Political parties have been informed by ECI of **existing legal provisions that govern regulatory framework against use of misinformation using deepfakes**. This includes
  - ⊖ **Section 123(4) of Representation of People Act, 1951:** It is a corrupt practice for a person to publish any **false statement** about a candidate's **personal character, conduct, etc.**
  - ⊖ **MCC: Criticism of other parties** should be limited to **policies, past record and work** and avoid **criticism of private lives, etc.**
  - ⊖ **Section 505 of IPC: Publishing any statement or spreading rumours** that incite **animosity between social classes** can result in **imprisonment which may extend to three years**.
- **Other directions include**
  - ⊖ Political parties have to **remove deepfake audios/videos within 3 hours** from SMPs; identify and warn party member responsible for posting it.
  - ⊖ **Report presence of any unlawful information** and fake user account.

### About Election Commission of India (ECI)

- ECI is an **autonomous and permanent constitutional authority**.
- It **administers elections to Parliament, Legislature of every State** and to **offices of President and Vice-President** of India.
- It consists of **Chief Election Commissioner and two Election Commissioners**. They have **tenure of six years, or up to the age of 65 years**, whichever is earlier.
- **Election Commission decides election schedule** for both general elections and bye-elections.
- Election Commission **resolves disputes relating to splits/mergers** of recognized political parties.

## Also in News



### Capital Gains Tax

- The Finance Minister has refuted claims of plans to bring changes to the capital gains tax structure.
- **About Capital Gains Tax**
  - ⊖ Under the Income Tax law, any profits or gains arising from the transfer of a 'capital asset', is chargeable to tax under the heading of 'Capital Gains'.
  - ⊖ **Types:**
    - ◆ **Short-Term Capital Gain:** For assets generally held for less than 36 months.
    - ◆ **Long-Term Capital Gain:** For assets held for 36 months or more. However, tenure varies in the case of different assets. For e.g. Long term capital gain is levied on listed shares if period of holding is more than 1 year.



### Drip Pricing

- The Department of Consumer Affairs has issued a warning against drip pricing.
- **About Drip Pricing**
  - ⊖ It is a **pricing technique in which firms advertise only part of a product's price** and reveal other charges later as the customer goes through the buying process.
  - ⊖ It is used as a tactic to **attract customers into initiating the purchasing process**
  - ⊖ It has been identified as a **dark pattern** under Guidelines for Prevention and Regulation of Dark Patterns, 2023.
    - ◆ A **Dark pattern** refers to practices adopted by online platforms that mislead people into paying for items or services they did not intend to do originally.



### Bengal Gazette

- Recently, the Hicky's Bengal Gazette was in the news.
- **About Bengal Gazette**
  - ⊕ On January 29, 1780, Hicky's newspaper i.e. Bengal Gazette or Calcutta General Advertiser, was founded
  - ⊕ **Irishman James Augustus Hicky** published **India's first printed newspaper i.e. Bengal Gazette.**
  - ⊕ It was a **weekly English-language newspaper** published in Kolkata (formerly Calcutta), the capital of British India.
  - ⊕ It was **closed down in 1782** after it **criticized the then Governor General Warren Hastings.**



### MQ-9B Predator drones

- Indian Army and Indian Air Force will be jointly deploying **MQ-9B Predator drones** in Gorakhpur and Sarsawa (Saharanpur) air bases as per reports.
- **About MQ-9B**
  - ⊕ It has two variants- **SkyGuardian** and **SeaGuardian**
    - ◆ **SeaGuardian** is used by Indian Navy since 2020.
  - ⊕ **SkyGuardian** is the next generation of **remotely piloted aircraft systems (RPAS).**
    - ◆ It can fly for up to 40+ hours in all types of weather.
    - ◆ It is equipped with Multi-mode Radar, an advanced electro-optical/infrared (EO/IR) sensor etc.
    - ◆ It is capable of a variety of roles including **surveillance, over-the-horizon targeting**, airborne early warning, electronic warfare etc.



### Tactical Nuclear Weapon (TNW)

- Russia plans to hold tactical nuclear weapon drill to deter West.
- **About TNWs**
  - ⊕ A TNW is **any weapon** that have **not been classified as "strategic"** under US- Russian arms control agreements like Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty etc.
  - ⊕ Refers to **short-range weapons**, including **Land-based missiles** (range less than 500 km), and **Air- and sea-launched weapons** (range less than 600 km).
  - ⊕ TNWs are the **least-regulated category of nuclear weapons** covered in arms control agreements.
  - ⊕ TNWs constitute a large percentage of the arsenals of nuclear weapon states.



### Leopard

- International Leopard Day, **observed on May 3**, promotes conservation of leopards and their habitats.
- **About Indian Leopard (Panthera pardus fusca)**
  - ⊕ **Characteristics:** Can be **diurnal and nocturnal**; Good climbers and rely on trees for cover.
  - ⊕ **Habitat Distribution:** India, Nepal, Bhutan, and parts of Pakistan, excluding mangrove forests and deserts.
    - ◆ In India, they are found in **Tropical rainforests, temperate deciduous, alpine coniferous forests.**
  - ⊕ **Importance of Leopard:** Maintaining ecological balance, regulate populations of their prey species, etc.
  - ⊕ **Threats:** Habitat Loss, Poaching etc.
  - ⊕ **Protection Status:**
    - ◆ IUCN- Vulnerable
    - ◆ CITES- Appendix I
    - ◆ **Wildlife Protection Act 1972:** Schedule 1



### Catatumbo Lightning

- **Catatumbo lightning** is a natural phenomenon that occurs at the mouth of the Catatumbo River, where it meets **Lake Maracaibo.**
  - ⊕ The lightning strikes almost continuously up to 160 nights in a year.
  - ⊕ The area is called the **lightning capital of the world.**
- **Factor responsible for high frequency of lightning:**
  - ⊕ The convergence of **cool air from the Andes and moist air from the Caribbean** generates a constant cycle of convection.
  - ⊕ As the warm air rises, it cools and condenses, leading to the formation of Cumulonimbus clouds which in turn, create an environment for electrical activity.
- Lake Maracaibo in Venezuela is the largest lake in Latin America.



### Secure IoT

- IIT-Madras incubated startup Mindgrove launched **Secure IoT**, India's debut high-performance **SoC (system on chip).**
  - ⊕ SoC combines many electronic parts into one chip, like a mini-computer.
- **About Secure IoT**
  - ⊕ It is the first indigenous **microcontroller chip.**
  - ⊕ **Applications:** In **deep embedded** applications like smart variants of fans, speakers, wearables, etc.
  - ⊕ **Due to its features** like **Cost effectiveness (30% cheaper** than other chips in the segment), adaptability, and top-notch security features it will reduce dependence over imports of chips.

## Places in News



### Ghana (Capital: Accra)

- India-Ghana agreed to strengthen trade ties at 4th joint trade committee meeting in Accra.
- **Political features**
  - ⊕ **West African country on Gulf of Guinea.**
  - ⊕ **Land Border:** Burkina Faso (north), Togo (east), Côte d'Ivoire (west).
  - ⊕ **Maritime border:** Atlantic Ocean (south).
- **Geographical features**
  - ⊕ **Major rivers:** Volta, Tano, Pra, etc.
  - ⊕ **Highest peak:** Mount Afadjato.
  - ⊕ **Greenwich Meridian passes through Ghana.**

