

**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**India and Canada Relations:**

**In context:** The article discusses the developments in Indo-Canadian relations following Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegations against India regarding the killing of Khalistani separatist leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar. India also expelled a Canadian diplomat in response to Canada's expulsion of an Indian diplomat.

**What has Canada's Prime Minister claimed?**

- ✓ Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has claimed that agents of the Indian government were involved in the June assassination of Canadian Khalistani leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar.
- ✓ He further stated that Canada has provided pertinent evidence with India and discussed its concerns with Prime Minister Modi in a bilateral meeting in September 2023.

**The fallout from the allegations:**

- ✓ Diplomatic expulsions: In a tit-for-tat action, India and Canada dismissed top diplomats to express their unhappiness.
- ✓ Confrontation escalation: The concerns expressed by both countries may lead to increased conflict.
- ✓ Canadian politics: The choice to criticize India could have been influenced by domestic political factors.
- ✓ International worry: Canada's Five Eyes Alliance partners, the United States of America and Australia, have also expressed concern.
- ✓ Diaspora: Canada has a sizable Indian diaspora as well as numerous Indian-origin Canadians who may be impacted by strained bilateral ties.

**What is the Khalistan movement?**

✓ **About**

- The Khalistan movement is a fight for a separate, sovereign Sikh state in present day Punjab (both India and Pakistan).
- The movement was crushed in India following **Operation Blue Star** (1984) and **Operation Black Thunder** (1986 and 1988).
  - Operation Blue Star began on June 1, 1984 to flush out militants from the Golden Temple and neutralise Bhindranwale.
- The Khalistan movement is banned in India, where officials see it and its affiliated groups as a national security threat.
- But the movement still has some support in north India, as well as beyond, in countries like Canada and the United Kingdom which are home to a sizable Sikh diaspora.

✓ **Khalistan and Canada**

- As per the 2021 Canadian census, Sikhs account for 2.1 per cent of Canada's population, and are the country's fastest growing religious group.
  - After India, Canada is home to the largest population of Sikhs in the world.
- In 2002, Toronto-based Punjabi-language weekly **Sanjh Savera** greeted Indira's death anniversary with a cover illustration of her murder.
  - The magazine received government advertisements, and is now a prominent daily in Canada.
- Last year in Brampton - home to Canada's largest Sikh population - a pro-Khalistan organisation known as Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) held a so-called **referendum on Khalistan**.

**When did the movement start and why?**

✓ **Origin lies in India's independence and subsequent Partition along religious lines**

- The Punjab province, which was divided between India and Pakistan, saw some of the worst communal violence and generated millions of refugees.
- Lahore, the capital of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's great Sikh Empire, went to Pakistan, as did holy Sikh sites including Nankana Sahib, the birthplace of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism.
- While most Sikhs found themselves in India, they were a small minority in the country, making up around 2 per cent of the population.

✓ **Struggle for greater autonomy & States Reorganisation Commission**

- The political struggle for greater autonomy began around the time of Independence, with the **Punjabi Suba Movement** for the creation of a Punjabi-speaking state.
- The **States Reorganisation Commission**, in its 1955 report, rejected this demand, but in 1966, after years of protest, the state of Punjab was reorganised to reflect the Punjabi Suba demand.
- The erstwhile Punjab state was trifurcated into the Hindi-speaking, Hindu-majority states of **Himachal Pradesh** and **Haryana**, and the Punjabi-speaking, Sikh-majority **Punjab**.

✓ **Anandpur Sahib Resolution**

- In 1973, leaders of the Akali Dal met at the sacred town of Anandpur Sahib, the birthplace of the Khalsa.
- They released a list of demands that would guide the political path of the Akali Dal.
- Among other things, the Anandpur Sahib Resolution demanded autonomy for the state of Punjab, identified regions that would be part of a separate state, and sought the right to frame its own internal constitution.

- The Akali Dal was trying to cash in on the growing demand for an autonomous state which had emerged alongside the Punjabi Suba movement.
  - This demand had gone global by 1971 — when an advertisement appeared on The New York Times proclaiming the birth of Khalistan.
- ✓ **Rise of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale**
  - Many in Punjab sought to go beyond just a demand for greater autonomy. One such man was Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale.
  - Bhindranwale was a charismatic preacher who soon positioned himself as the authentic voice of the Sikhs.
  - He found a captive audience in the state's youth, especially those in the lower rungs of the social ladder, and massed a massive following.
  - By 1982, he took up residence inside the Golden Temple, directing demonstrations and clashes with the police.
  - The movement was geared towards the demands first articulated in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution.
  - However, amidst growing religious polarisation, sectarian violence, and Bhindranwale's own harsh rhetoric against Hindus, the then government declared the movement tantamount to secession.

#### **Difficulties in Indo-Canadian Relations**

- ✓ Uniting for Consensus (UfC), often known as the Coffee Club, is a movement that seeks to oppose the G4 countries' proposal to increase the number of permanent seats on the UN Security Council.
- ✓ India belongs to the G4, whereas Canada belongs to the Coffee Club.
- ✓ Khalistan: India has chastised Canada for its leniency toward Khalistani followers in the country.
- ✓ India has expressed worry about temple vandalism and sacrilege in Canada, as well as recent escalation such as praising Indira Gandhi's killing and defacing Bharat Mata.

#### **India:**

- ✓ India will have to reconsider its strategy toward Canada, with whom it has had a strained relationship due to the Khalistan problem.
- ✓ In 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi became the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Canada since 1973, and India and Canada worked to enhance bilateral ties through the visit of Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Joly and expedited talks on the Free Trade Agreement.

**Conclusion:** The rumored heated encounter between Trudeau and Modi on the sidelines of the G-20 summit in New Delhi in September 2023, as well as the suspension of FTA negotiations, demonstrates the negative.

### **GEOGRAPHY**

#### **Deoxygenation of river**

**IN CONTEXT:** Recently, a study published in the journal Nature Climate Change, revealed that rivers are warming and losing oxygen faster than oceans. The study shows that of nearly 800 rivers, warming occurred in 87% and oxygen loss occurred in 70%.

#### **How was the research conducted?**

- ✓ The research was led by Pennsylvania State University's research team, who used artificial intelligence and deep learning approaches to reconstruct historically sparse water quality data from nearly 800 rivers across the U.S. and central Europe.
- ✓ It was found that rivers are warming up and deoxygenating faster than oceans, which could have serious implications for aquatic life and the lives of humans.
- ✓ To conduct their analysis, the researchers trained a computer model on a vast range of data from annual precipitation rates to soil type to sunlight, for 580 rivers in the United States and 216 rivers in Central Europe.

#### **Findings of the study**

- ✓ **Widespread Deoxygenation:** The study found that rivers are experiencing deoxygenation at a rate faster than oceans. Specifically, nearly 70% of the 800 rivers studied in the United States and Central Europe showed oxygen loss.
- ✓ **Rapid Warming:** In addition to deoxygenation, the research revealed that 87% of the rivers studied were experiencing warming. This indicates that river temperatures are rising.
- ✓ **Urban vs. Rural Differences:** Urban rivers exhibited the most rapid warming, while rural rivers showed slower warming but faster deoxygenation. This suggests that human activities and urbanization may play a significant role in these trends.
- ✓ **Future Projections:** The study projected that future deoxygenation rates in these rivers could be between 1.6 and 2.5 times higher than historical rates. This suggests that the problem is likely to worsen in the coming years.
- ✓ **Immediate Threat to Aquatic Life:** Low oxygen levels in rivers pose an acute threat to aquatic species. The study warns that within the next 70 years, certain fish species could face extinction due to prolonged periods of low oxygen.
- ✓ **Implications for Water Quality and Ecosystems:** The findings have significant implications for the quality of river water and the overall health of riverine ecosystems. Deoxygenation can disrupt the balance of aquatic life and ecosystem functioning.
- ✓ **Challenges in Understanding:** The study highlighted that riverine water temperature and dissolved oxygen levels, crucial indicators of water quality and ecosystem health, are poorly understood due to a lack of consistent data and the complexity of variables affecting oxygen levels in watersheds.

- ✓ **Comparison to Coastal Dead Zones:** It draws a parallel between the deoxygenation observed in rivers and the creation of dead zones often seen in coastal areas like the Gulf of Mexico. This implies that some rivers may no longer sustain life as they did in the past.

**What are the causes of deoxygenation?**

- ✓ **Eutrophication (Nutrient Run-off and Sewage Pollution):** It is a major contributor to deoxygenation in coastal waters. It results from increased nutrient run-off from agricultural activities, sewage discharge, and land pollution.
  - Excessive nutrients, particularly nitrogen and phosphorus, stimulate the growth of algae and phytoplankton.
  - As these organisms die and decompose, oxygen is depleted from the water, leading to "dead zones" with very low oxygen levels.
- ✓ **Nitrogen Deposition from Fossil Fuel Burning:** The burning of fossil fuels releases nitrogen oxides (NOx) into the atmosphere. These nitrogen compounds can be deposited into oceans through atmospheric deposition and runoff.
- ✓ **Widespread Impacts from Ocean Warming:** Ocean warming, driven by climate change, is a significant factor contributing to deoxygenation. As the ocean temperature increases, water holds less dissolved oxygen.
- ✓ **Acidification and CO2 Emissions:** Anthropogenic carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions are a key driver of ocean acidification, which is closely linked to deoxygenation. Elevated CO2 levels reduce the pH of seawater, making it more acidic.

**Impact on Marine Life**

- ✓ **Threatening fish species:** Low oxygen zones in the ocean can lead to huge fish kills, with thousands of fish washing up dead on the shore. Lower oxygen levels in rivers have also been seen to result in huge masses of fish floating dead on the river surface.
  - **For example:** Earlier this year, receding flood waters resulted in such low oxygen levels that the Darling River near the Australian town of Menindee became clogged with millions of fish.
- ✓ **Increase in Greenhouse Gas:** Declining oxygen can also lead to increased amounts of greenhouse gases being released from the river and toxic metals being produced.
  - The researchers' model also showed that many species of fish could die out completely as a result of the oxygen loss and warming temperatures in the rivers over the next 70 years.
- ✓ **Reduced Growth Rate:** Marine species may experience slower growth rates due to limited oxygen availability, affecting their development and overall health.

**What can be done?**

- ✓ **Reducing Carbon Emissions:** One of the primary causes of oxygen loss in the oceans is global warming driven by greenhouse gas emissions, and to slow down and potentially reverse this trend, it's crucial to significantly cut carbon dioxide emissions.
- ✓ **Mitigating Greenhouse Gas Emissions:** Slowing down ocean deoxygenation can be achieved by mitigating greenhouse gas emissions, which will require global efforts to transition to cleaner energy sources and reduce reliance on fossil fuels.
- ✓ **Addressing Nutrient Pollution:** Nutrient runoff from agriculture and sewage effluents contributes to oxygen depletion in coastal waters. To tackle this problem, solutions should be tailored to local needs and economies.
- ✓ **Protecting Marine Ecosystems:** It's essential to better protect marine ecosystems, as this can help conserve marine genetic biodiversity and promote the recovery of ocean life. However, this should be coupled with significant reductions in carbon dioxide emissions to be truly effective.

**PRELIM FACTS**

**1. Digital Quality of Life Index**

**IN CONTEXT:** India Ranked 52nd in Digital Quality of Life Index India has been ranked 52nd out of 121 countries in the Digital Quality of Life Index Survey 2023.

The annual survey by the Netherlands-based firm has ranked 121 countries on five factors:

- Internet quality,
- Internet affordability,
- e-infrastructure,
- e-government,
- e-security.
- ✓ In Asia, India takes 13th place, with Singapore the leader in the region.
- ✓ The top 3 Countries in the Digital Quality of Life Index survey are Denmark, South Korea, and Finland India ranks first in 2023 Global Crypto Adoption Index India has been ranked first in the 2023 Global Crypto Adoption Index, released annually by crypto analysis firm Chainalysis.
- ✓ India's rank has jumped from 4th place in 2022 to 1st in 2023. Overall 154 nations were ranked in grassroots crypto adoption.
- ✓ The ranking shows how average people in a country are adopting and using crypto in their daily lives. Top 5 Countries in Crypto Adoption: India Nigeria Vietnam United States Ukraine

**2. ELEPHANT CORRIDORS**

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**In Context:** A new elephant corridor report released by the central government showed a 40 per cent increase in elephant corridors across 15 elephant range states in India..

**Highlights of the new Report**

- ✓ The number of elephant corridors have increased to 150 against 88 registered by the Government of India in 2010.
- ✓ The elephant population in the country is estimated to be over 30,000.
- ✓ West Bengal has the most elephant corridors — 26 — amounting to 17 per cent of the total corridors, the report said. East central region contributed to 35 per cent, that is 52 corridors, while North East region was second largest with 32 per cent number meaning 48 corridors in total.
- ✓ Southern India registered 32, that is 21 per cent of the elephant corridors, while northern India was lowest with 18 corridors or 12 per cent.
- ✓ Majority of the corridors were noted to be within state boundaries and the intensity of the use of corridors has increased by 40 per cent. However, it showed that 19 per cent of the corridors, that is 29, showed a decrease in use while 10 others were seen impaired and demanding restoration for facilitating elephant movement.
- ✓ The decrease in corridor use is attributed to the habitat fragmentation, shrinkage and destruction.
- ✓ The increase in the elephant corridors also reflected that elephants have expanded their ranges in Vidarbha region of Maharashtra neighbouring Chhattisgarh and southern Maharashtra bordering Karnataka.
- ✓ Elephants have also seen a increased presence in Madhya Pradesh found in Sanjay Tiger reserves and Bandhavgarh.
- ✓ Besides that, ranges have also increased in northern Andhra Pradesh where the elephants access movement from Odisha.
- ✓ In these states, long- term viability of habitats to support elephant populations, followed by a data-driven approach in identifying corridors would be pertinent.
- ✓ Similarly, data on elephant movement remains sketchy in many northeastern states that harbour a relatively small population of elephants.

**3. KISAN RIN PORTAL**



**In Context:** The Kisan Rin Portal was launched recently, it is a digital platform aimed at helping farmers avail subsidised loans under the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme. The launch event was attended by the Union Finance Minister and Union Agriculture Minister.

**Key Highlights about the Kisan Rin Portal and related initiatives:**

- ✓ **Objective:** The primary objective of the Kisan Rin Portal is to make it easier for farmers to access subsidised credit through the Kisan Credit Card scheme. The KCC scheme provides farmers with affordable credit to meet their agricultural and related financial needs.
- ✓ **Comprehensive Information:** The Kisan Rin digital platform provides a comprehensive view of farmer data, including details about loan disbursements, interest subvention claims, and the progress of scheme utilization. This means that farmers and relevant authorities can access and track important information related to KCC loans on a single platform.
  - The Kisan Credit Card is a government-backed scheme that provides farmers with a credit facility to meet their agricultural expenses, including crop production, post-harvest expenses, and even consumption needs. These loans are typically provided at a subsidized interest rate.
- ✓ **Seamless Integration with Banks:** The portal aims to facilitate seamless integration with banks, making the process of availing credit more efficient. This integration can lead to quicker loan processing and disbursement for farmers.
- ✓ **Campaign and Manual Launch:** In addition to the Kisan Rin Portal, a door-to-door KCC campaign was also launched. This campaign likely involved reaching out to farmers directly to inform them about the benefits of the KCC scheme and how to access it.

- A manual for the Weather Information Network Data Systems (WINDS) portal was launched. This manual would help users understand and utilize the WINDS portal, which could be related to weather information and its impact on agriculture.
- ✓ **Summary:** The Kisan Rin Portal is a digital platform that aims to streamline the process of availing subsidised loans under the Kisan Credit Card scheme for farmers in India. It provides comprehensive information and integration with banks, making it easier for farmers to access credit and manage their financial needs in agriculture. The launch event also included the initiation of a KCC campaign and the release of a manual for the WINDS portal.

#### 4. **ANAMUDI SHOLA NATIONAL PARK**

**In Context:** From a stark burnt-out land, the Pazhathottam area in Anamudi Shola National Park has transformed into a green heaven teeming with life due to conservation efforts.

##### **Anamudi Shola National Park**

- ✓ Anamudi Shola National Park is a protected area located along the Western Ghats of Idukki district in Kerala state.
- ✓ It lies just east of Eravikulam National park.
- ✓ It is surrounded by Eravikulam National Park, Pampadum Shola National park, Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary and Mathikettan Shola Park.
- ✓ Anamudi shola National Park consists of three Shola Reserve Forests namely Pannavan shola, Pullaradi shola and Indivara shola together occupying an area of 42068 Sq.Km.
- ✓ It was declared as a National Park in the year of 2003.
- ✓ The park provides safe and comfortable habitat to the wild species of flora and fauna.
- ✓ The rich wildlife includes Elephant, Tiger, Panther, Indian Bison, Nilgiri tahr, Gaur, Spotted Deer, Sambar, Giant Grizzled Squirrel, Hanuman Langur, Sloth Bear, Flying Squirrels etc.



#### **ANSWER WRITING**

**Q. “The reservation of seats for women in the institution of local self-government has had a limited impact on the patriarchal character of the Indian political process”. Comment. 15**

**Introduction:** Given its far reaching consequences, the 73rd Amendment along with 74th is called a silent revolution. The most revolutionary provision is said to be the reservation of one-third of the seats for women in local bodies (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the SCs and STs). Further not less than one-third of the total number of offices of chairpersons in the panchayats at each level shall be reserved for women.

**Impact of amendment on patriarchal character of Indian political process:**

- ✓ But has it really made a considerable impact towards improving the status of women is debatable. In spite of progressive nature of the constitution, traditional social structures that restricted women’s social participation were reinforced in which men hold primary power and pre-dominate roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege.
- ✓ The reservation of seats in the panchayati raj institutions has enabled women to contest and win elections but lot of structural and procedural challenges restrict their capacity to become effective leaders. Women’s increased vulnerability to poverty, lower educational status and lack of financial independence are all compounded by the perpetuation of traditional and outdated social attitudes, which give preference to male leaders. Women are often assumed to be proxy for male family members, who are not able to contest the seat due to reservation system and their capacity to make their independent decisions is completely compromised.
- ✓ The violent nature of politics also has negative impact on women’s political participation and makes it difficult for them to exercise their power and decisions in today’s politics and continues to pose big challenges for them. The women from ST/SC categories have to face double burden of caste and gender discrimination due to which they are pushed towards the outskirts of mainstream Indian politics. The women from minorities are also subjected to the ill effects of patriarchy. Following data shows that there is no major change in women participation in politics in India even after enactment of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act:
- ✓ According to Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and UN Women report — Women in Politics, 2017, the Lok Sabha had 64 (11.8 per-cent of 542 MPs) and Rajya Sabha 27 (11 per cent of 245 MPs) women MPs.
- ✓ There are just 62 women among the 678 elected members of the Assemblies in the elections, as per data compiled by the Association for Democratic Reforms and the Centre for Policy Research. It was 77 in the previous election. The total number of women MLAs has come down to 9 per cent in 2018 from 11 per cent in 2013.

- ✓ In India, between 2010 and 2017 women's share rose 1 percentage point in the Lower House (Lok Sabha)
- ✓ Representation of women at local government levels varied from state to state. There are 13.72 lakh elected women representatives (EWRs) in PRIs (Panchayati Raj Institutions) which constitute 44.2 per cent of total elected representatives (ERs) as on December, 2017.
- ✓ Women's participation in political parties remained low in the 1990s with 10-12% membership consisting of women. From 1980-1970, 4.3% of candidates and 70% of electoral races had no women candidates at all.

**Conclusion:** In order to see effective results of all the constitutional and governmental efforts towards women empowerment and their increased participation in political sphere for a more inclusive social order, there is a need to address the several structural and institutional deficiencies which result in the limited success of the schemes and programmes of the government.

**MCQs**

1. A Consider the following statements.
  1. The elephant population in the country is estimated to be over 50,000.
  2. Karnataka has the most elephant corridors.
  3. Elephants have seen a decreased presence in Madhya Pradesh found in Sanjay Tiger reserves and Bandhavgarh.

How many of the above are incorrect?

a) Only 1                      b) Only 2  
c) All 3                        d) None
2. Arrange the following locations from North to South:
  1. Periyar National Park
  2. Mathiketan Shola National Park
  3. Anaimudi National Park
  4. Silent Valley National Park

Select the correct code from the options given below:

a) 3,4,1,2                      b) 2,4,3,1  
c) 3,4,2,1                      d) 4,3,2,1
3. Consider the following statements about Anamudi Shola national park
  1. It is located in the state of Tamil Nadu surrounded by Mathiketan Shola Park and Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary.
  2. It consists of montane wet temperate forests and moist deciduous forests.

Choose the correct statements:

a) 1 only                        b) 2 only  
c) Both 1 and 2                d) Neither 1 nor 2
4. Considered the following statement:
  1. WHO has released first-ever report on hypertension titled 'Global Report on Hypertension: The Race against a Silent Killer.
  2. It is a condition of higher blood pressure than normal, measured by diastolic and systolic blood pressure levels.

Choose the correct statements:

a) 1 only                        b) 2 only  
c) Both 1 and 2                d) Neither 1 nor 2
5. Recently, the old parliament building is said to be inspired from the Chausath Yogini temple. Considered the following statement:
  1. It is located in the state of Andhra Pradesh is also known as Ekattarso Mahadeva Temple.
  2. Built by – Kachchhapaghata King Devapala, belonged to the Pala dynasty.

Choose the correct statements:

a) 1 only                        b) 2 only  
c) Both 1 and 2                d) Neither 1 nor 2
6. Consider the following statements:
 

**Statement 1:** Exchange-traded funds (ETFs) are a type of investment fund and can include assets like stocks, bonds, or commodities.

**Statement 2:** ETFs are actively managed investment vehicles that aim to outperform the market.

Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

a) Both Statement-1 and Statement-2 are correct, and Statement-2 is the correct explanation for Statement-1.  
b) Both Statement-1 and Statement-2 are correct, and Statement-2 is not the correct explanation for Statement-1.  
c) **Statement 1 is correct, but Statement 2 is incorrect.**  
d) Statement 1 is incorrect, but Statement 2 is correct.
7. With reference to the religious practices in India, the 'Samvatsari' and 'Pratikraman' belong to which of the following?
 

a) **Jainism**                      b) Buddhism  
c) Shaivism                      d) Vaishnavism
8. "YES-Tech" recently seen in the news, is related to which of the following?
 

a) Estimation of carbon footprint of industries  
b) A new technology to detect the presence of black holes  
c) **A new automated real-time yield estimation system**  
d) A tech to diagnose AIDS at initial stage
9. Consider the following statements regarding Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO):
  1. It is a corporate fraud investigating agency set up by the Government of India on the recommendations of Naresh Chandra Committee on corporate governance.
  2. It is a multi-disciplinary organization under the Ministry of Finance.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) **1 only**  
b) 2 only  
c) Both 1 and 2  
d) Neither 1 nor 2
10. Anamudi Shola National Park, which was recently seen in the news, is located in which of the following Indian State?
 

a) Tamil Nadu                      b) **Kerala**  
c) Karnataka                      d) Maharashtra