

Ramsar Sites and Wetlands

❖ Context

- The Principal Bench of the **National Green Tribunal in New Delhi** has slapped a penalty of ₹10 crore on the Kerala government for its failure to check the indiscriminate pollution of the **Vembanad and Ashtamudi lakes**, listed as Ramsar sites.

❖ Key Highlights:

- **Vembanad Lake** : Vembanad is the **longest lake in India, as well as the largest lake in the state of Kerala**.
 - The lake has its source in four rivers, **Meenachil, Achankovil, Pampa and Manimala**.
 - It is separated from the Arabian Sea by a narrow barrier island and is a popular backwater stretch in Kerala.
 - It is the **second-largest Ramsar site in India** only after the Sundarbans in West Bengal.
- **Ashtamudi Lake** : Ashtamudi Lake is a **large freshwater lake** located in the Kollam district of Kerala, India.
 - The lake is also called the gateway to the backwaters of Kerala and is well known for its houseboat and backwater resorts.

❖ About Wetlands:

- Wetlands are **ecosystems saturated with water, either seasonally or permanently**.
- They include mangroves, marshes, rivers, lakes, deltas, floodplains and flooded forests, rice-fields, coral reefs, marine areas **no deeper than 6 meters** at low tide, as well as human-made wetlands such as waste-water treatment ponds and reservoirs.
- **Importance of Wetlands** :
 - 40% of the world's species **live or breed** in wetlands.
 - Wetlands are "**nurseries of life**" – 40% of animals breed in wetlands.
 - Wetlands are "**kidneys of the earth**" – they clean the environment of pollutants.
 - Wetlands "**matter for climate change**" – they store 30% of land based carbon.
 - Wetlands "**minimize disaster risks**" – they absorb storm surge.

❖ About Ramsar Convention:

- The Ramsar Convention is the intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.
- The Convention was **adopted in the Iranian city of Ramsar in 1971** and came into force in 1975.
- Since then, almost 90% of UN member states have become "**Contracting Parties**" and committed to the Convention's three pillars :
 - Work towards the wise use of all their wetlands.
 - Designate suitable wetlands for the list of Wetlands International Importance and ensure their effective management.
 - Cooperate internationally on transboundary wetlands, shared wetland systems and shared species.
- The convention **entered into force in India on 1 February 1982**.
- **Montreux Record** :
 - It is maintained as part of the Ramsar List.
 - Two wetlands of India are in Montreux Record- **Keoladeo National Park (Rajasthan) and Loktak Lake (Manipur)**.
 - **Chilka lake (Odisha)** was placed in the record but was later removed from it.
- **Side Note** : India has so far declared **75 wetlands** as **Ramsar sites** covering 23 states and Union Territories.
 - **Mission Sahbhagita** : The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) launched it in 2022.
 - Its objective is to healthy and effectively manage the network of 75 wetlands of national and international significance.

World Food Programme (WFP)

❖ Context

- According to a new **World Food Programme (WFP)** report the reach of school meals in low-income countries remains four percent below pre-pandemic levels, despite a recovery overall.



❖ Key Highlights:

- About : Founded in **1961**.
 - It is the **food-assistance branch of the United Nations**.
 - It is the **world's largest humanitarian organization** focused on hunger and food security, & the largest provider of school meals.
 - It is a **member of the United Nations Development Group** and part of its Executive Committee. It is **headquartered in Rome** and has offices in 80 countries.
 - As of 2020, it served 115.5 million people in 80-plus countries, the largest since 2012.
- **Goals** : **Eradicate hunger & malnutrition, attain food security and augment nutrition by 2030 (Zero Hunger)**.

• Functioning :

- WFP's operations are **entirely funded through the generous voluntary contributions** of donor governments, institutions, corporations & individuals.
- It is **governed by an Executive Board** which consists of representatives from member states (36 Members).
- It works in close tandem with the Food and Agriculture Organization (**FAO**) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (**IFAD**).
- **Key Reports** : **Global Report on Food Crisis**

Face to Face Centres





Parole

❖ Context:

- In a significant direction, the Supreme Court recently directed that all prisoners, who were released on emergency parole by the **High Powered Committee** during the COVID-19 period based on the orders of the Supreme Court, surrender within 15 days.

❖ About Parole:

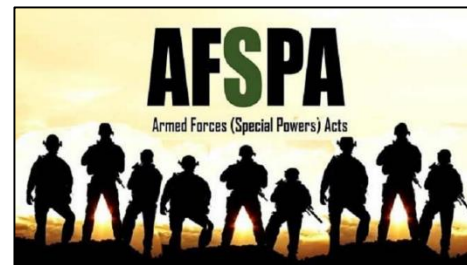
- Parole is a type of conditional release from prison that allows a person to serve the remainder of their **sentence in the community**, under the supervision of a parole officer, rather than behind bars.
- It is typically granted to individuals who have demonstrated good behavior while in prison and who have completed a portion of their sentence.
- Parole conditions may include things like **regular check-ins with a parole officer**, drug and alcohol testing, community service, and employment or education requirements.

- Violating these conditions can result in a return to prison to serve out the remainder of the sentence.
- The goal of parole is to provide individuals with the opportunity to **transition back into society** in a supervised & supportive environment while still holding them accountable for their actions.
- It also helps to **reduce overcrowding** in prisons and save taxpayer money by avoiding the need to **incarcerate individuals** who may be able to safely live in the community.

Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA)

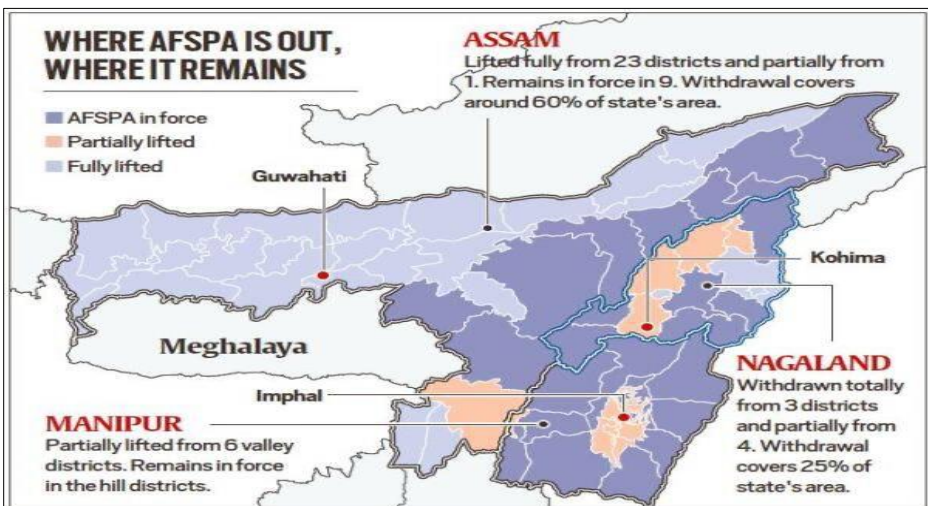
❖ Context

- Citing improved security in the Northeast, Home Minister said that the Centre has decided to **further reduce the jurisdiction of 'disturbed areas' under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA)** in Assam, Nagaland and Manipur.



❖ Key Highlights:

- The Centre from April, 2022, had reduced disturbed areas under AFSPA in Nagaland, Assam and Manipur as follows-
 - Of all the 33 districts of Assam, AFSPA has been **completely removed from 23 districts and partially from one district** of the state.
 - After the recent changes in the state, **9 districts and one district partially will continue to be under the ambit of AFSPA.**
 - AFSPA has been **reduced partially from seven districts in Nagaland, six districts in Manipur.**
- It was **completely repealed in Meghalaya in 2018, Tripura in 2015, and Mizoram in the 1980s.**
- AFSPA remains in force in parts of these three states as well as in **parts of Arunachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir.**
- With the latest decision, starting April 1, the Disturbed Areas notification will be lifted from **one more district in Assam, four more police stations in Manipur and three more police stations in Nagaland.**



❖ Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA)

• Background :

- The Act in its original form was promulgated by the British in response to the Quit India movement in 1942.
- After Independence, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru decided to retain the Act, which was first brought in as an **ordinance and then notified as an Act in 1958.**
- AFSPA has been **imposed on the Northeast states, Jammu & Kashmir, and Punjab during the militancy years.**

• About the Act :

- AFSPA **provides for special powers for the armed forces** that can be imposed by the Center or the Governor of a state, on the state or parts of it, after it is declared "disturbed" under Section 3.
- The Act defines these as areas that are "**disturbed or dangerous conditions where the use of armed forces in aid of the civil power is necessary**".
- AFSPA has been used in areas where militancy has been prevalent.

• Powers Given to Armed Forces :

- It gives sweeping powers to the armed forces.
- It allows them to **open fire, even causing death, against any person** in contravention to the law or carrying arms and ammunition.
- It gives them powers to arrest individuals without warrants, on the basis of "reasonable suspicion", and also search premises without warrants.
- The Act further **provides blanket impunity to security personnel** involved in such operations
 - There can be **no prosecution or legal proceedings against them** without the prior approval of the Centre.



LVM 3 -M3 Rocket



❖ Context:

- ISRO has successfully launched the LVM 3 -M3 rocket from Sriharikota, carrying 36 satellites, including the **One Web India - 2 mission**.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The launch took place from the second launch pad of the **Sathish Dhawan Space Centre**, and the rocket successfully completed the three stages, including the ignition of the cryogenic engine, within the prescribed time limit.
- The ground stations at Thiruvananthapuram, Lucknow, Bangalore, and the ship station at Antarctica are tracking the data from the launch.
- The first **16 satellites of the One Web India - 2 series** were placed in the right orbit, and the remaining 20 satellites will also be positioned soon.
- The use of the cryogenic Mark 3 engine has proved successful & the extremely **challenging manoeuvres of the satellites were done remarkably**.

❖ About One Web:

- The 'OneWeb' in its name refers to the UK-based OneWeb Group Company, with which the space agency had **signed a commercial agreement to launch seventy-two satellites to low-earth orbits**.
- The agreement was signed between **OneWeb and NewSpace India Limited (NSIL)**, the latter being ISRO's commercial arm.
- The first set of **thirty-six satellites was launched on October 23, 2022**.
- The satellites were lifted-off onboard India's largest Launch Vehicle Mark-III (LVM-3) rocket.
- After five consecutive successful missions (including Chandrayaan-2), this was LVM-3's sixth.
- Like the first set, the second one, too, will be placed into a 450 km circular orbit with an inclination of 87.4 degrees.
- Together, the satellites weigh around 5,805 kg, according to ISRO.

News in Between the Lines

Earth Hour



❖ Context

- Earth Hour, **celebrated every year on March 26**, is the largest global grassroots movement for the environment.

❖ Key Highlights:

- This year being the **17th edition**, with **residents switched off their electrical appliances and non-essential lighting fixtures for one hour starting at 8.30 p.m. (local time)** to show their concern for the environment.
- The Earth Hour has grown rapidly to become the world's most significant grassroots environmental movement. It has inspired the world to save electricity.
- Earth Day (April 22) celebrates our natural environment by inspiring people to plant trees, recycle regularly and keep the planet tidy.

❖ About Earth Hour:

- Earth Hour is an annual event **organized by the World Wildlife Fund since 2007**.
- It was famously **started as a lights-off event in Sydney, Australia in 2007**.
- Every year, it brings together millions of people, businesses, and leaders worldwide to shine a spotlight on the urgent need to address nature loss and climate change.
- This initiative is more about creating awareness among people and stopping the wastage of energy.

Marburg Virus



❖ Context

- Tanzania has recently confirmed its first-ever outbreak of the Marburg virus.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The Marburg virus is a highly contagious and deadly virus that causes viral **hemorrhagic fever**. It is similar to the Ebola virus and can cause disease with a high **case-fatality ratio of up to 88%**. Human infection with the virus typically results from prolonged exposure to mines or caves inhabited by Rousettus bat colonies.
- The virus spreads through **human-to-human transmission via direct contact** with the blood, secretions, organs or other bodily fluids of infected people, as well as surfaces and materials contaminated with these fluids.
- **Symptoms** of Marburg virus disease include high fever, severe headache, severe malaise, muscle aches and pains, severe watery diarrhoea, abdominal pain and cramping, nausea, vomiting, and severe hemorrhagic manifestations.

Face to Face Centres



National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management



❖ Context

➤ Recently, the first General Body Meeting of NCSCM was held to review its progress and plan for the future.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management (NCSCM) is an Indian government research & development institution **focused on coastal zone management**.
- It was established in 2010 under the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, and is headquartered in Chennai, Tamil Nadu**.
- NCSCM's primary objective is to provide **scientific and technical support** to the government and other stakeholders in order to promote the sustainable development of coastal areas.
- The Centre conducts research, develops tools and technologies, and provides capacity-building and training programs related to coastal zone management.
- It also serves as a knowledge hub for coastal and marine ecosystems, and supports the implementation of various government policies and programs related to coastal management.

Nowruz



❖ Context

➤ The Parsi community in India, which follows Zoroastrianism, celebrated Nowruz on March 21, marking the beginning of the New Year.

❖ About Navroz:

- Nowruz or Navroz, the **Iranian New Year that marks the beginning of the spring season**.
- It is **celebrated** with great fervor and enthusiasm **among various Parsi communities across the world including India**.
- The word 'now' means new and 'ruz' means day, which translates to 'a new day'.
- Nowruz marks the **beginning of Farvardin, the first month of the Solar Hijri calendar** and is usually **celebrated on March 20 or 21 globally**.
- **In India, the festival is observed around August 16-17 by the Parsi community** following the Shahenshahi calendar which **does not account for leap years**, which means the holiday has now moved by 200 days from its original day.
- Nowruz is celebrated in many countries having significant Persian cultural influence like Iran, Iraq, India, Afghanistan and parts of Central Asia, America, Europe.
- The **United Nations General Assembly** proclaimed the International Day of Nowruz in 2010.
- The festival had also been listed as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2016.

Lake Natron



MCQ Quiz

[Daily Current Affairs](#)

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❖ Context

➤ The lake has become a centre of attraction for experts and analysts due to its unique features and mysterious history.

❖ Key Highlights:

- Lake Natron is a salt or alkaline lake located in north Ngorongoro District of the Arusha Region **in Tanzania**.
- Its alkaline and hostile conditions make it difficult for most animals to survive, yet it supports a **thriving ecosystem of salt marshes, freshwater wetlands, and flamingos**.
- It has been reported that the lake turns animals that touch it into **"stone"**.
- This sounds like folklore or a horror movie script, but it can be true to some extent because of the presence of salt in it.
- The lake contains salt, soda, and magnesite deposits.
- Ol Doinyo Lengai, also known as the Mountain of God, contributes to the lake's hostile conditions.
- It is the only active volcano to emit **natrocarbonatites - a rare carbonatite lava**.
- Sodium carbonate and other minerals that enter the lake from the surrounding hills make the **water alkaline**.

Face to Face Centres

