

## Testwale Current Affairs PDF

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### 1. IndiaAI ecosystem ( March 17, 2023 )

task force for framing a draft roadmap for the artificial intelligence ecosystem

The **Ministry of Electronics and IT** set up a **task force for framing a draft roadmap for the artificial intelligence ecosystem** by the end of April.

#### An overview of the news:

- The Minister of **State for Electronics and IT** has announced the establishment of the IndiaAI platform, which aims to support research and provide tools for startups in the field of artificial intelligence.
- This platform will **focus on promoting Indian startups, research, and innovation**, which could contribute to the growth of the Indian economy.
- Estimates suggest that **AI could potentially add USD 967 billion** to the Indian **economy by 2035** and **USD 450-500 billion** to India's **GDP by 2025**, which is a significant amount and could account for 10% of the country's USD 5 trillion GDP target.

#### About IndiaAI platform:

- INDIAai stands for '**The National AI Portal of India**' platform.
- The platform was **launched in 2018**.
- It is a joint initiative of the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** and the **National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM)**.
- The primary objective of the IndiaAI platform is to create a collaborative ecosystem for AI in India by bringing together industry, academia, startups, and the government.
- The platform provides a forum for stakeholders to exchange ideas, collaborate on projects, share best practices, and access AI resources such as datasets, algorithms, and tools.
- IndiaAI also aims to support the development of **AI-based solutions** that address societal challenges such as healthcare, education, agriculture, and urban development.
- The platform provides access to funding, mentorship, and other resources to startups and entrepreneurs working on AI-based solutions.
- **IndiaAI has several initiatives like:**
  - AI for All program: which aims to provide AI training to over 1 million citizens in India, and the AI research and innovation hub, which is a network of AI research centers and labs across the country.

## **2. 3rd session of National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction begins in New Delhi ( March 10, 2023 )**

Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** inaugurated the **third session of the National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (NPDRR)** in **New Delhi** on 10 March.

### **An overview of the news**

- The **main theme** of the 3rd session of this Platform is “**Building Local Resilience in a Changing Climate**”.
- The theme of the session is in line with the **10-point agenda** announced by the Prime Minister for building local capacities, especially in the context of the rapidly changing disaster risk landscape in the wake of climate change.
- The session will identify gaps, recommendations and partnerships to further accelerate disaster risk reduction efforts.
- During the event, the Prime Minister presented awards to the winners of the **Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar**.
- The **winners of the 2023** award are **Odisha State Disaster Management Authority and Lunglei Fire Station of Mizoram**.
- The Prime Minister also inaugurated the exhibition to showcase innovative ideas and initiatives and technologies in the field of Disaster Risk Reduction.
- More than **a thousand dignitaries** will participate in this two-day, third session.
- Home Minister **Amit Shah** chaired the ministerial session in which wide-ranging consultations were held with ministers from states and union territories.

### **About NPDRR**

- NPDRR is a **multi-stakeholder forum** constituted by the Government to facilitate dialogue and share experiences, ideas, action oriented research and explore opportunities in the area of disaster risk reduction.

## **3. UN inks first 'High Seas Treaty' in a bid to protect ocean bodies of the world ( March 6, 2023 )**

world's oceans located outside national boundaries.

For the first time in history, the **United Nations** signed the '**High Seas Treaty**' to protect the **world's oceans located outside national boundaries**.

### **An overview of the news**

- The treaty is the result of nearly a decade of negotiations on environmental concerns.
- The treaty was agreed upon on 4 March after 38 hours of negotiations at the **United Nations Headquarters in New York**.

- The last international agreement on ocean conservation was signed 40 years ago in
- **1982.**

### **What is the UN High Seas Treaty?**

- The treaty will create a **new body to manage the conservation of marine life** and establish marine protected areas in the high seas.
- The treaty brings **30 percent of the world's oceans** into a protected area, spends more on marine conservation, and sets new rules for ocean mining.
- The treaty aims to protect against potential impacts such as **deep-sea mining.**
- The treaty would put restrictions on how much fish could be caught in the high seas.

### **What are High Seas?**

- **International water bodies** that cross the boundaries of nations are considered high seas.
- They cover about **two-thirds of the world's oceans.**
- These are water bodies where all countries have the right to **fish, sail and conduct research.**
- But so far only about **1% of this water** – known as the high seas – has been protected.
- These are also important areas for exploration of **valuable minerals, pharmaceuticals, oil and gas reserves.**

### **Vulnerable marine species**

- According to the **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)**, about **10% of marine species** are at risk of extinction.
- In addition, **41% of threatened species** are affected by climate change.
- **Shellfish, sharks and whales** are under particular pressure due to their use as seafood and medicines.

## **4. Wheat Crisis in India ( March 1, 2023 )**

India is unlikely to ease restrictions on wheat exports. Agricultural scientists have recommended additional irrigation for rabi crops due to the unprecedented heat in the **month of February** this year.

### **An Overview of the news:**

- Grain stocks in the world's second-biggest producer fell to around 106 million tonnes in 2022 after a **2.5% cut** in output due to heatwaves.
- India will not lift its ban on wheat exports for the time being and the government will have a sufficient amount of state-owned emergency reserves as required under the rules on April 1.
- The month of February has been unusually warm.
- For agriculture, it was a reminder of last year's unusual temperature in March and its impact on wheat, the important rabi crop.

**Wheat in India:**

- Wheat is the second most important cereal crop in India after rice, the staple food crop in the north and north-western part of the country.
- Wheat is a heat sensitive crop.
- Wheat is a rabi crop which requires cool growing weather and bright sunlight at the time of maturity.
- Required temperature: Between **10-15°C** (sowing time) and **21-26°C** (ripening and harvesting).
- Required Rainfall: About **75-100 cm**.
- Top Wheat Producing States: **Uttar Pradesh > Punjab > Haryana > Madhya Pradesh > Rajasthan > Bihar > Gujarat**.

**5. Bhupender Yadav Launched 'Save Wetlands Campaign' For Wetland Conservation ( Feb. 7, 2023 )**

Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, **Bhupender Yadav** on 4 February launched the '**Save Wetlands Campaign**' in the presence of Chief Minister of Goa, Pramod Sawant.

**An overview of the news**

- The campaign is based on a "**whole of society**" approach to wetland conservation.
- It enables positive actions for wetland conservation at all levels of society and involves all levels of society.
- This campaign will provide an opportunity to sensitise people about the value of wetlands, increase the coverage of wetlands and citizen participation for wetland conservation in the years to come.
- During the occasion two publications were also released '**India's 75 Amrit Dharohar- India's Ramsar Sites Factbook**' and '**Managing Climate Risks in Wetlands - A Practitioner's Guide**'.

- The factbook provides information on **75 Ramsar sites**, including their value, the threats they face and management arrangements in place.
- The Practitioner's Guide on Climate Risk Assessment provides step-wise guidance on the integration of adaptation and mitigation responses into **wetland management planning**.

### **Number of Wetlands Sites in India**

- There are a total of **75 wetland sites** in India that are included in the **Ramsar sites**.
- About **49 wetland sites** in India have been included in Ramsar sites in the last **9 years**.
- India's **13 lakh hectares of land** comes under Ramsar sites. The largest wetland site in India is the **Sundarbans site**.
- The theme of this year's Wetland Day is '**It's time for wetlands restoration**'.

### **6. “Yaya Tso” declared as Ladakh's first Biodiversity Heritage Site ( Feb. 7, 2023 )**

Recently **Yaya Tso** has been declared as the **first Biodiversity Heritage Site of Ladakh**.

#### **An overview of the news:**

- **Yaya Tso is a lake** situated at an **altitude of 4,820 metres in Ladakh** which is known as the paradise of birds.
- It is a nesting site for birds and animals such as bar-headed goose, black-necked stork and Brahminy duck. It is one of the highest breeding grounds of black-necked stork in India.
- Yaya Tso Lake has been declared as the first Biodiversity Heritage Site of Ladakh under Biodiversity Act by Chumathang Village Panchayat, Biodiversity Management Committee in association with Secure Himalaya Project.

#### **Secure Himalaya Project:**

- It is a scheme of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India.
- It was launched in the year 2017 in collaboration with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).
- This is a 6 year project and will be functional till the year 2023.
- The main objective of this project is to conserve snow leopards in the area.
- Under this project, 4 Himalayan states of Jammu and Kashmir (now Union Territory), Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Sikkim come.

**Biodiversity Heritage Site:**

- Biodiversity Heritage Sites are areas that contain unique, vulnerable ecosystems in terrestrial, coastal and inland waters and wild species with rich biodiversity, as well as endemic, rare, threatened and keystone species.
- As per Section 37 of the Biological Diversity Act, State Governments are empowered to notify, in the Official Gazette, areas of biodiversity importance as Biodiversity Heritage Sites, in consultation with local bodies.

**India's first BHS:**

- **India's first Biodiversity Heritage Site was declared in 2007 at Nallur Tamarind Grove in Bengaluru, Karnataka.**
- Recently the Tamil Nadu government has declared Arittapatti in Melur block of Madurai district as Tamil Nadu's first and India's 35th Biodiversity Heritage Site.

**Recently added 5 BHS:**

- Debari or Chabimura in Tripura (September 2022)
- Betling Shib in and around Tripura (September 2022)
- Hejong Tortoise Lake in Assam (August 2022)
- Borjuli Wild Rice Site in Assam (August 2022)
- Amarkantak in Madhya Pradesh (July 2022)

**7. PM Modi to launch key green energy initiatives at India Energy Week ( Feb. 4, 2023 )**

PM Modi to launch key green energy initiatives at India Energy Week

Key **energy initiatives** will be unveiled by PM Modi during **India Energy Week** which will be held in **Bengaluru** from February 6 to 8.

**An overview of the news**

- It will witness the participation of over **600 exhibitors** from across the globe, over **34 ministers** and **several CEOs** from top energy companies.
- He will dedicate the **HAL helicopter factory at Tumakuru** to the nation and also lay the foundation stone for various development initiatives.
- **China, America, Russia, Brazil** and many other countries will participate in this important event.

- This is the **first time** that India is hosting such an event with a record number of CEOs from top energy companies.
- According to the **International Energy Agency (IEA)**, India will account for **25 percent of global energy demand by 2040**.

### **Blending of ethanol in fuel**

- An important initiative to be launched during the India Energy Week will be to increase **blending of ethanol in the fuel**.
- PM Modi is expected to launch the **E20 initiative** at the upcoming event.
- Under the E20 programme, India aims to increase the percentage of blending of ethanol in fuel to **20 per cent by 2025**, as against the earlier target of **2030**.
- In the initial phase, the program will cover **13 states and 100 petrol pumps**.
- India has saved **Rs 40 lakh crore** on fuel by blending **10% ethanol** and farmers have got economic benefits for producing ethanol.
- This initiative has environmental and economic benefits.
- Ethanol blending will play an important role in reducing fuel imports and help the country move towards clean energy.

### **India Energy Week 2023**

- It is expected to feature more than **30 energy Ministers, 50 CEOs and 10000+ delegates**.
- This will provide a unique opportunity to showcase India as an engine of global economic growth and a driver of global consumption.
- It will provide an unprecedented opportunity for regional, international leaders and CEOs to come together for strategic policy making and technical knowledge sharing.
- During the 19 strategic conference sessions, a wide spectrum of issues covering the entire energy sector will be discussed.
- It covers themes such as Energy Security, pathways for decarbonization, Resilient Energy Supply Chains, Emerging Fuels such as Biofuel and Hydrogen, Investments in Upstream and Midstream Sector etc.

### **8. MoU signed to develop waste-to-wealth plants in million plus cities ( Feb. 3, 2023 )**

MoU signed to develop waste-to-wealth plants in million plus cities

The **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA)** and **Engineers India Limited (EIL)** have signed an **MoU** for construction of **waste-to-energy and bio-methanation projects** in million plus cities for "**Green Growth**" of India.

### **An overview of the news**

- The MoU was signed in the presence of **Manoj Joshi**, Secretary, MOHUA and **Vartika Shukla**, CMD, EIL.
- The ministry has decided to set up **solid waste processing facilities** on a large scale in million plus cities.
- India has **59 million plus cities** and to manage the organic/wet fraction of municipal solid waste bio-methanation plants have been proposed in these cities.
- In February 2022, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated **Asia's largest municipal solid waste based cow dung plant in Indore**, aimed at generating **19,000 kg of bio-CNG gas**.
- Bio-methanation plants linked to the **Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban 2.0, Gobardhan and SATAT schemes** will produce bio-CNG as a renewable energy.
- In the first phase, **25 million plus cities** will be selected to develop large scale process plants.

### **Waste to Energy plants**

- Waste-to-energy plants use the **dry waste fraction** of municipal solid waste and produce **renewable energy**.
- These plants work by burning waste at high temperatures and using the heat to produce steam.
- The steam drives a turbine which produces electricity.

## **9. MISHTI, Amrit Dharohar, PM PRANAM ecological conservation initiative in the budget ( Feb. 2, 2023 )**

Finance Minister **Nirmala Sitharaman's** budget speech launched various schemes and policies aimed at **ecological conservation**.

### **An overview of the news**

- Targeting various ecological issues, these schemes come with the promise of preserving the ecological health of India.
- The newly introduced schemes are **MISHTI, Amrit Dharohar and PM PRANAM**.

### **MISHTI (Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats & Tangible Incomes)**



- This is a new scheme which will facilitate **mangrove plantation** on salt lands along the sea coast of India.
- The scheme will operate through “**convergence between MGNREGS, Campa Fund and other sources**”.
- It aims at intensive afforestation of coastal mangrove forests.
- There are such forests on both the east and west coasts of India, with the **Sundarbans** in Bengal being one of the largest mangrove forests.

### **Amrit Dharohar**

- The scheme will be implemented over the next three years to encourage optimum use of **wetlands and enhance biodiversity**, carbon stock, ecotourism opportunities and income generation for local communities.
- It will emphasise on the importance of lakes and their conservation.

### **PM PRANAM (Prime Minister Programme for Restoration, Awareness, Nourishment and Amelioration of Mother Earth)**

- The program will endeavour to encourage States and Union Territories promoting balanced use of **alternative fertilisers and chemical fertilisers**.
- It aims to **reduce the subsidy burden** of the government, which is estimated to reach Rs 2.25 lakh crore in 2022-23.

### **Bhartiya Prakritik Kheti Bio-Input Resource Centres**

- To adopt “**natural farming**”, 10,000 **bio-input processing centers** will be set up.
- These centers will form a nationally distributed micro fertilizer and pesticide manufacturing network.
- This will affect more than 1 crore farmers in the next three years.

## **10. A rare low altitude basalt plateau discovered in the Western Ghats of Maharashtra ( Jan. 20, 2023 )**

Recently **a rare low altitude basalt plateau has been discovered in the Western Ghats of Maharashtra.**

### **An overview of the news**

- A basalt plateau discovered in the Thane region of the Western Ghats could prove to be a storehouse of information on 76 species of plants and shrubs from 24 different families.

- This rare low altitude basalt plateau has been **discovered in Manjare village of Thane district by ARI team led by Dr. Mandar Datar.**
- This is the fourth type of plateau recognized in this region; The last three are high and low altitude laterite and high altitude basalt plateaus.
  - The discovery may help to understand the impact of climate change on species survival and raise awareness of the need to protect rocky outcrops around the world and the importance of their enormous biodiversity.

#### Western Ghats:

- The **Western Ghats** are also known as the **Sahyadri Hills**.
- The Western Ghats is one of the four global biodiversity hotspots in India.
- The Western Ghats are made up of a range of mountains in the states of Kerala, Maharashtra, Goa, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.
- It is recognized as a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**.
- **Anamudi peak** in Kerala is the **highest peak in the Western Ghats**.