

Today's Prelims Topics

Species Added to India's Flora and Fauna

Context

India added **683 new species to its fauna** and **433 taxa to its flora** in the year **2024**, as per the data released by the Environment Ministry.

Faunal Discoveries (683 total)

- **459 new species**
- **224 new records**
- Includes **2 new genera**, **37 new species of reptiles**, and **5 new species of amphibians**.
- **Significant Faunal Discoveries**
 - *Anguiculus dicaprio* – Snake species, named after **Leonardo DiCaprio**
 - *Dravidoseps gounasi* – New **genus** of reptiles
- **Top States for Faunal Discoveries**
 - **Kerala** – 101 (80 new species + 21 new records)
 - **Karnataka** – 82 (68 + 14)
 - **Tamil Nadu** – 63 (50 + 13)
 - **Arunachal Pradesh** – 72 (42 + 30)
 - **Meghalaya** – 42 (25 + 17)
 - **West Bengal** – 56 (25 + 31)
 - **Andaman & Nicobar Islands** – 43 discoveries

Floral Discoveries (433 taxa)

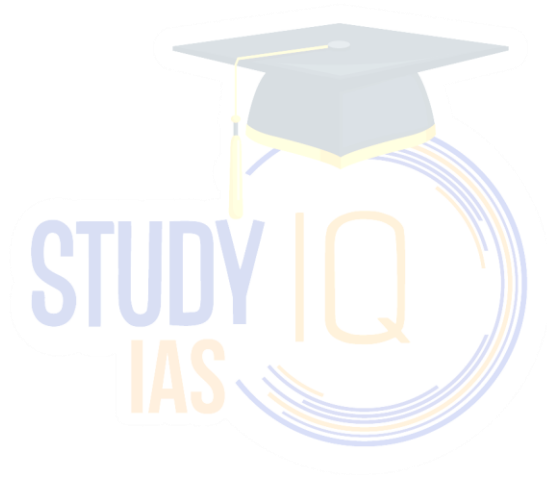
- **410 new species**
- **23 infraspecific taxa**
- **Top States for Floral Discoveries:**
 - **Kerala** – 58 taxa
 - **Maharashtra** – 45 taxa
 - **Uttarakhand** – 40 taxa
- **Breakdown of 2024 Plant Discoveries:**
 - 154 angiosperms
 - 4 pteridophytes
 - 15 bryophytes
 - 63 lichens
 - 32 algae
 - 9 microbes
- **Significant Floral Discoveries:**
 - *Bulbophyllum gopalanianum*
 - *Coelogyne tripurensis*
 - *Gastrodia indica*
 - *Gastrodia sikimensis*
 - (All are **rare orchids**)

Other Key Insights

- **Hotspot regions** (Western Ghats & Northeast) contributed **35%** of all discoveries.
- India has now documented a total of **56,177 plant species**, including:
 - Angiosperms
 - Gymnosperms

- Pteridophytes
- Bryophytes
- Lichens, algae, fungi, microbes

Source: [TheHindu](#)



BhashaSetu

Context

The Government has launched the **WAVEX Start-up Challenge 2025** to promote AI-based multilingual tools like '**BhashaSetu**' for real-time translation, transliteration, and voice localisation across **12 Indian languages**.

About WaveX

- A startup accelerator under the **WAVES initiative**, focused on **media, entertainment, and language technologies**.
- Already engaged over **30 startups** at the **WAVES Summit, Mumbai (May 2025)**, promoting pitches to government bodies, investors, and industry experts.

WAVEX Startup Challenge 2025 – 'BhashaSetu'

- **Launch & Organiser:** Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, under its flagship accelerator platform **WaveX**.
- **Purpose:** A national hackathon for startups to build an AI-powered multilingual language solution named '**BhashaSetu – Real-Time Language Tech for Bharat**'.

Challenge Scope & Features

- Support for **real-time translation, transliteration, and voice localisation**
- Must cater to **at least 12 major Indian languages**
- Aims for **inclusive, emotion-aware communication**.

Eligibility & Tech Guidelines

- **No minimum eligibility criteria**—open to startups at **any development stage**
- Encourages **scalable, cost-effective solutions** using **open-source or low-cost AI**
- Proprietary models allowed only if **affordable and practical for wide deployment**.

Support for Winners

- The winner receives **incubation support** via WaveX Accelerator:
 - **Mentorship**
 - **Workspace access**
 - **Development assistance**

Source: [TheHindu](https://www.thehindu.com)

Can a G.I. tag prevents cultural misappropriation?

Context

Italian luxury brand **Prada** showcased footwear inspired by India's **GI-tagged Kolhapuri chappals** at its Spring/Summer 2026 show in Milan, triggering allegations of **cultural misappropriation** and raising questions about the global enforceability of **Geographical Indications (GIs)**.

What is a Geographical Indication (G.I.)?

- A **Geographical Indication** is a type of **intellectual property**.
- It identifies goods as originating from a **specific location**, where:
 - Their **quality, reputation, or characteristics** are essentially linked to that **place of origin**.
- In India, GIs cover products like:
 - **Chanderi sarees** (Madhya Pradesh)
 - **Madhubani paintings** (Bihar)
 - **Pashmina shawls** (J&K)
 - **Kancheepuram sarees** (Tamil Nadu)
 - **Darjeeling tea** (West Bengal)
- GIs are **public property**, owned collectively by producer groups—not individual companies.

How Can Infringement Be Tackled?

- **Registered users or producers** can take legal action if:
 1. An entity misleads consumers about a product's origin.
 2. There is **unfair competition, passing off, or false claims** about GI status.
- GIs are **territorial**:
 1. Protection is limited to the **country of registration**.
 2. No automatic **international GI protection** exists.
- **Cross-border protection** can be pursued by:
 1. Getting recognition in the **country of origin**.
 2. Applying for protection in other jurisdictions.
- Based on frameworks like the **Paris Convention** and **TRIPS Agreement**.

Notable Cases of Cultural Misappropriation:

- **2026**: Prada showcased footwear inspired by **Kolhapuri chappals** → sparked cultural misappropriation claims.
- **1997**: USPTO granted patent to RiceTec for Basmati rice lines and grains (revoked after India's protest).
- **1995**: U.S. patent granted for turmeric's healing properties → challenged by India.
- **2000**: European Patent Office revoked U.S. patent on **neem-based** medicine formulations.

Source: [TheHindu](https://www.thehindu.com)

Index of Industrial Production (IIP)

Context

India's **Index of Industrial Production (IIP)** growth fell to a **9-month low of 1.2% in May 2025**.

About the Index of Industrial Production (IIP)

The **Index of Industrial Production (IIP)** is a crucial economic indicator that tracks the **short-term changes in the volume of industrial output** across various sectors in India. It helps assess the country's industrial health by capturing **monthly trends in manufacturing, mining, and electricity production**.

- The IIP is **released by the Central Statistics Office (CSO)** under the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)**.
- The **current base year is 2011–12**, which was adopted to better reflect the evolving industrial structure and production dynamics.

Sectoral Composition of IIP (by weight)

- **Manufacturing – 77.63%** (covers 809 items)
- **Mining – 14.37%** (29 items)
- **Electricity – 7.99%** (1 item)

Latest IIP Update (May 2025)

- IIP **slumped to 1.2%**, the **lowest in 9 months**, mainly due to:
 - **Slowdown in manufacturing growth**, which halved to **2.6%** (from 5.1% in May 2024)
 - **Contraction in mining and electricity output**
- The last time IIP was lower was in **August 2024**, when it grew just **0.1%**.

Eight Core Industries (Weight in IIP: 40.27%)

These are key infrastructure sectors that significantly influence the IIP:

1. **Refinery Products**
2. **Electricity**
3. **Steel**
4. **Coal**
5. **Crude Oil**
6. **Natural Gas**
7. **Cement**
8. **Fertilisers**

Source: [TheHindu](https://www.thehindu.com)

Editorial Summary

Indian Secularism

Context

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar stated that the inclusion of the words "socialist" and "secular" in the Preamble of the Constitution during the Emergency era was a "sacrilege to the spirit of Sanatan."

What is meant by Secularism in the Constitution?

- It is the principle that guides the relationship between the state and religions, ensuring that the state remains neutral in religious matters.
- It restricts the influence of religious institutions in the functioning of the state and guarantees equal treatment and freedom to followers of all religions.

Chronology of the Term "Secularism" in the Indian Constitution

Year/Period	Event/Case	Development regarding Secularism
1946–1950	Constitution drafting	Secular principles embedded, word not included
1950	Constitution adopted	Preamble omitted the word "secular"
1973	Kesavananda Bharati case	Secularism declared a "basic feature"
1976	42nd Amendment	"Secular" inserted in the Preamble
1994	S.R. Bommai case	Reaffirmed secularism as a "basic feature"
2024	Supreme Court ruling	Challenge to inclusion of "secular" dismissed

Is secularism anti-religious?

- **Secularism** means the state has no official religion and treats all religions equally. It **protects religious freedom** for everyone—allowing individuals to practice, profess, and propagate any religion or none at all.
- In the Indian context, **secularism is not against religion**, but rather ensures that no religion is given special preference by the state.
- **Secularism is neutral towards religion**—it is neither pro-religion nor anti-religion.

Constitutional Provisions Related To Secularism

Article	Provision	Secular Principle
Article 14	Equality before the law and equal protection of the laws	Prohibits discrimination by the state on religious grounds.
Article 15	Prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth	Ensures equal access to public spaces and opportunities regardless of religion.
Article 16	Equality of opportunity in public employment	Forbids discrimination on the basis of religion in government jobs.
Article 17	Abolishes untouchability	Promotes social equality, including among different religious groups.

Constitutional Provisions Related To Secularism		
Article 25	Freedom of conscience and right to freely profess, practice, and propagate religion	Guarantees individual religious freedom, subject to public order, morality, and health.
Article 26	Freedom to manage religious affairs	Religious denominations can manage their own affairs in matters of religion.
Article 27	Freedom from taxation for promotion of any particular religion	No person can be compelled to pay taxes for the promotion of a religion.
Article 28	Prohibits religious instruction in state-funded educational institutions	Ensures state neutrality in educational settings.
Article 29	Protection of interests of minorities	Safeguards the right of minorities to conserve their culture and religion.
Article 44	Advocates for a Uniform Civil Code for all citizens	Promote secular governance in matters of personal law, though it is not yet implemented

Is Secularism against both Inter and Intra Religious domination?

- **Against Inter-Religious Domination:** Secularism opposes any situation where one religion dominates or discriminates against another.
 - It emphasizes **equal respect and protection for all religions**.
 - **Example:** The Indian Constitution prohibits discrimination based on religion (Article 15).
- **Against Intra-Religious Domination:** Secularism opposes oppression or domination **within a single religious group**.
 - It allows the state to intervene if practices within a religion infringe on basic human rights, dignity, or equality.
 - **Example:** Abolishing untouchability and reforming personal laws in India (e.g., Sati abolition, Triple Talaq judgment).

Difference Between Indian and Western Secularism

Aspect	Indian Secularism	Western Secularism
Definition	Equal respect and treatment for all religions; not anti-religion	Complete separation between religion and state
Role of State	State may intervene in religion to ensure equality and reform	State maintains strict non-interference in religious matters
Religious Freedom	Guarantees religious freedom for both individuals and minorities	Focus on individual religious freedom
Law and Religion	Law accommodates diverse religious practices (personal laws, etc.)	Laws are formulated independently of religious principles
Educational Institutions	Religious minorities can run and receive aid for their own institutions	State cannot fund religious educational institutions
State Involvement	State can engage with religions for reform and social justice	State intervenes only if religion violates the law

Uniformity of Laws	Personal laws vary by religion (e.g., marriage, inheritance)	Single, uniform code of law for all citizens
Social Structure	Multi-religious, multi-caste society; focus on both inter- and intra-religious equality	Predominantly mono-religious; focus is usually intra-religious
Minority Rights	Explicit protection and promotion of minority religious rights	Minority equality often less emphasized
Political Influence	Religious groups can have influence in politics and voting	Minimal influence of religion in political processes
Expression of Religion	Open practice and public display allowed	Public display discouraged; religion is mostly private

What are the Challenges Associated with Secularism in India?

- **Communalism and Religious Violence:** Many of these riots were triggered during religious festivals or over contested places of worship, resulting in deaths and targeted violence.
 - E.g., in 2024, India witnessed an 84% increase in communal riots compared to the previous year.
- **Politicization of Religion:** Religious identity is used as a political tool to influence public opinion and elections.
 - E.g., The Babri Masjid demolition in 1992 and subsequent political mobilization around the Ram Janmabhoomi movement.
- **Discrimination Against Minorities:** Anti-conversion laws (e.g., MP, UP) and anti-cow slaughter laws are often used to discriminate against Muslims, Christians, and Dalits, affecting their livelihoods and religious freedoms.
- **Educational & Cultural Bias:** Secular values are undermined when educational content favors a single religious narrative.
 - E.g., NCERT textbook revisions accused of “saffronisation” skew historical understanding and marginalise minority perspectives.
- **Societal Challenges:** Deep-seated prejudices, myths, and stereotypes about religious groups continue to fuel divisions.

Way Forward

- **Promote Constitutional Values through Education:** Integrate secular and constitutional values in school curricula and textbooks.
 - Encourage critical thinking and respect for diversity among students.
 - **Example:** Programs like “Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat” promote cultural understanding.
- **Impartial Enforcement of Laws:** Ensure the law is applied equally to all, regardless of religion or community.
 - State institutions (police, courts, administration) must act without bias, especially during communal tensions.
 - **Example:** Quick action against hate speech and violence, regardless of the perpetrator’s religion.
- **Curb Politicization of Religion:** Strengthen Election Commission’s role to monitor and penalize religious appeals in politics.
 - Disallow political parties from seeking votes in the name of religion (as per Supreme Court’s 2017 guidelines).
- **Promote Interfaith Dialogue and Social Harmony:** Facilitate platforms for interfaith dialogue at local, regional, and national levels.

- NGOs, community leaders, and media can play a vital role in dispelling myths and fostering understanding.
- **Reform Personal Laws for Uniformity:** Move towards a Uniform Civil Code in a consultative, gradual manner to ensure equality while respecting diversity.
 - Focus on gender justice and human rights, not on undermining any community's identity.
- **Safeguard Minority Rights:** Actively protect the rights and interests of religious minorities to prevent alienation.
 - Ensure minority educational and cultural institutions are free from discrimination and undue interference.
- **Promote Inclusive Development:** Address economic and social marginalization of any community to reduce grievances that fuel religious divides.
 - **Example:** Focused government schemes for minority welfare, scholarships, and skill development.
- **Media Responsibility:** Media should report sensitively and avoid sensationalism on religious issues.
 - Encourage media literacy to counter misinformation and hate speech online.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS

- Discuss India as a secular state and compare with the secular principles of the US constitution. [2024]
- Are tolerance, assimilation and pluralism the key elements in the making of an Indian form of secularism? Justify your answer. [2022]
- What are the challenges to our cultural practices in the name of secularism? [2019]
- How is the Indian concept of secularism different from the western model of secularism? Discuss. [2018]
- How do the Indian debates on secularism differ from the debates in the West? [2014].

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Special Intensive Revision of Electoral Rolls

Context

The Election Commission initiated 'Special Intensive Revision' ahead of the Bihar election.

Types of Electoral Roll Revision

- **Intensive Revision:** A complete overhaul of the electoral roll, carried out afresh without reference to previous lists.
 - Booth-level officers conduct at least two rounds of household verification to ensure accuracy.
 - The **Election Commission of India (ECI)** conducts a “**Special Intensive Revision**” (SIR) of electoral rolls under the provisions of **Section 21(3) of the Representation of the People Act, 1950**.
- **Summary Revision:** Involves updating the existing roll rather than creating a new one.
 - No house-to-house verification; changes are incorporated based on claims and objections received before the final publication.
- **Special Summary Revision:** Ordered by the Election Commission if significant inaccuracies or undercoverage are detected.
 - The EC may modify the standard procedure as needed for better accuracy.
- **Partly Intensive and Partly Summary Revision:** A mixed approach where the draft roll is published, select areas are verified through household visits, and the claims/objection process is followed.

Chronology of Electoral Roll Revisions in India

- **1950:** Section 23 of the Representation of the People Act provided for annual revision with March 1 as the qualifying date.
- **1952:** Post-first general election, the EC directed annual revisions to cover one-fifth of each state yearly, ensuring complete revision before the next polls.
- **1956:** Annual intensive revision was targeted in urban areas, regions with migrant workers, and localities experiencing large population shifts.
- **1957:** After the Lok Sabha polls, EC directed intensive revision for one-third of the state area each year for the next three years; 1961 focused on urban and migratory areas.
- **1960:** Amendments led to annual roll revisions between January 1 and January 31.
- **1962:** Post-election, summary revision was deemed sufficient for 1963 and 1964. Intensive revision resumed for 40% of the country in 1965 and the remaining 60% in 1966.
- **1966:** District Election Officers were appointed; summary revisions took place in 1969-70 and 1975.
- **1976:** No Lok Sabha election due to Emergency; summary revision was conducted instead.
- **1983:** Staggered intensive revision began for rural constituencies ahead of the 1985 general elections.
- **1987-88:** All constituencies underwent intensive revision; a special revision was conducted in 1989.
- **1992:** Summary revision was ordered, followed by intensive revision in 1993 and the introduction of EPIC cards.
- **1995:** Intensive revision was implemented.
- **1999-2000:** Due to computerization, no intensive revision took place in these years.
- **2002:** Special intensive revision occurred in 20 states; 7 states saw intensive revision in 2003–04.

Issues Raised with Intensive Revision of Electoral Rolls

- **Potential Mass Disenfranchisement:** A large number of eligible voters, especially the poor, uneducated, and marginalized, may be excluded due to the lack of required documents (like birth certificates, matriculation certificates, passports).
 - Bihar's low documentation rates mean millions may lose their constitutional right to vote.
- **Administrative Feasibility & Timeline:** The scale of the exercise is massive (nearly 4.7 crore people in Bihar alone) with a tight timeline (just one month).
 - Electoral Registration Officers are unlikely to have the capacity to process and verify such a high volume of applications in such a short period, leading to errors or exclusion.
- **Exclusion Due to State Capacity Failures:** Many citizens lack documents not due to personal fault but because the State failed to provide birth registration, quality education, or timely certificates.
 - Penalizing citizens for administrative deficiencies is unjust.
- **Lack of Inclusion of Accessible Documents:** Aadhaar and ration cards, which are widely held, are not accepted as proof, whereas less common documents are allowed.
 - This increases the burden on the poorest and most vulnerable, who are least likely to have "elite" documents.
- **Migration and Deaths Not Properly Accounted:** Large numbers of permanent migrants and deceased persons from the 2003 rolls distort estimates and add confusion regarding who needs to reapply.
 - Migrants who have moved states may be excluded from both their new and old constituencies.
- **Disproportionate Impact on Marginalized Groups:** Women, minorities, and deprived castes—who already have lower document possession and educational attainment—are at greater risk of exclusion.

Way Forward

- **Expand the List of Acceptable Documents:** Include widely available documents like **Aadhaar cards**, **ration cards**, and **MGNREGA job cards** as proof of identity and residence.
 - Relax stringent requirements to make the process more inclusive.
- **Strengthen Outreach and Assistance:** Organize door-to-door campaigns, special camps, and help desks, particularly in rural and marginalized areas, to assist people in collecting and submitting documents.
- **Increase Timeframe for Submission and Verification:** Extend the window for submitting documents and completing the revision, allowing sufficient time for collection, scrutiny, and correction of errors.
- **Use Existing Databases and Technology:** Leverage existing government databases (like Aadhaar, NPR, and welfare scheme lists) to cross-verify and auto-enroll eligible citizens where possible.
- **Independent and Transparent Oversight:** Set up independent committees (with civil society participation) to monitor the revision process and address grievances swiftly.
- **Targeted Support for Vulnerable Groups:** Prioritize the inclusion of women, the poor, minorities, and marginalized communities through focused interventions and simplified procedures.
- **Periodic and Incremental Revision:** Adopt a gradual, ongoing revision approach rather than a one-time massive overhaul, to avoid sudden, large-scale exclusions.

Source: [Economic Times](#), [The Hindu](#)