
Prelims Exam Topics

DHAULADHAR WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Context

A **snow leopard** has been photographed for the **first time** in the **Dhauladhar Wildlife Sanctuary**.

About Dhauladhar Wildlife Sanctuary

- **Location:** The **Dhauladhar Wildlife Sanctuary** is located in **Kangra district, Himachal Pradesh**.
- **Landscape:** It spans an elevation of **1,600–4,500 m**, encompassing the **Dhauladhar** and **Bara Bhangal** ranges.
- **Vegetation:** Dominated by **Western mixed coniferous forests** comprising **deodar, fir, spruce, blue pine, oak, and alpine pastures**.
- **Habitat:** Characterised by **high-altitude forest ecosystems** supporting diverse Himalayan flora and fauna.
- **Fauna:** Home to species such as the **Musk Deer, Himalayan Black Bear, Serow, Himalayan Weasel, Himalayan Palm Civet**, and birds including the **Cheer Pheasant, Western Tragopan, and Speckled Wood Pigeon**.

NATHU LA PASS

Context

Border trade through **Nathu La Pass** has resumed after a **six-year suspension**.

About Nathu La Pass

- **Location:** **Nathu La** is a **high-altitude mountain pass** in the **Himalayas**, located about **54 km east of Gangtok** in **Sikkim**, linking India with **China's Tibet Autonomous Region**.
- **Connectivity:** It forms part of an **offshoot of the ancient Silk Road** and is among the **highest motorable passes** in the world.
- **Border Trade:** It is one of the **three operational border trade routes** between **India and China**, the others being **Shipki La (Himachal Pradesh)** and **Lipulekh (Uttarakhand)**; trade is restricted to **specified items** such as **silk, clothes, yak hair, and yak tails**.

ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE INDEX (EPI)

Context

Yale University recently released the **Environmental Performance Index (EPI) 2026**, ranking **India 176th out of 177 countries**.

About Environmental Performance Index (EPI)

- **Nature:** The **Environmental Performance Index (EPI)** is a **biennial global index** developed by the **Yale Center for Environmental Law & Policy (YCELP)** in collaboration with the **Center for International Earth Science Information Network (CIESIN), Columbia University**.
- **Objective:** It evaluates countries on **environmental health and ecosystem vitality**, providing a data-driven assessment of environmental performance and policy effectiveness.
- **Coverage:** Assesses countries across indicators such as **air quality, climate change, biodiversity, water resources, agriculture, fisheries, waste management, and sanitation**.
- **Key Findings (EPI 2026)**
 - **Global Ranking:** **Estonia** topped the index, while **Laos** ranked last.
 - **India's Performance:** India ranked **176th (Score: 22.46)**.
 - **Areas of Improvement:** India showed progress in **climate change mitigation, waste management, and sanitation**, driven by renewable energy expansion, improved energy efficiency, and sanitation initiatives.
 - **Major Concerns:** Weak performance persisted in **air quality, biodiversity conservation, tree cover, fisheries sustainability, pesticide pollution, and urban environmental management**, mainly due to rapid urbanisation, industrialisation, habitat degradation, and pollution.

SUSPENSION POLYVINYL CHLORIDE (S-PVC)

Context

The **Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT)** has imposed a **six-month import restriction** on **Suspension Polyvinyl Chloride (S-PVC) resin**, a key raw material used in the manufacture of pipes.

About Suspension Polyvinyl Chloride (S-PVC)

- **Nature:** Suspension Polyvinyl Chloride (S-PVC) is a PVC resin produced by polymerising vinyl chloride monomer (VCM) in an aqueous medium using initiators and additives to achieve the desired molecular properties.
- **Production Process:** It is one of the four major PVC manufacturing processes, the others being emulsion, bulk, and solution polymerisation.
- **Applications:** Widely used in the production of pipes, irrigation systems, electrical conduits, and insulated wires for construction and infrastructure.

EXERCISE ROTOR CLAP III

Context

The Indian Air Force (IAF) recently concluded Exercise ROTOR CLAP III at the Pokhran Field Firing Range in Rajasthan.

About Exercise ROTOR CLAP III

- **Nature:** Exercise ROTOR CLAP III is a specialised helicopter exercise conducted by the Indian Air Force (IAF), focusing on Counter-Unmanned Aerial Systems (Counter-UAS) operations.
- **Objective:** The exercise aims to validate helicopter operational concepts against emerging drone threats and enhance combat readiness in a dynamic battlefield environment.

POWERBANK-50

Context

The PowerBank-50 satellite battery pack, developed by Hyderabad-based startup TakeMe2Space, has recently achieved 'flight heritage' status.

About PowerBank-50

- **Nature:** PowerBank-50 is an indigenously developed lithium-ion battery pack designed to power small satellites.
- **Developer:** It has been developed by TakeMe2Space, a Hyderabad-based space technology startup.
- **Achievement:** It is India's first indigenous satellite battery to receive 'flight heritage' status after successfully completing its maiden space mission aboard Skyroot Aerospace's Vikram-1 launch vehicle.

- **Mission Validation:** A PowerBank-50 unit powered Cosmoserve Space's experimental payload onboard the **Orbital Adjustment Module (OAM)** at an altitude of **450 km**, operating successfully under **vacuum, radiation, and extreme temperature conditions**.
- **Design:** Weighing about **380 g** and storing **over 50 Wh of energy**, it incorporates an **intelligent battery management system, onboard heaters, and an aluminium flight enclosure**.
- **Applications:** Multiple units can be **stacked to power CubeSats and microsatellites**, with an operational life of **up to five years in Low Earth Orbit (LEO)**.
- **Flight Heritage:** Certification earned by a space component after **successful operation in an actual space mission**, demonstrating its reliability.



Mains Exam Topics

JAMMU AND KASHMIR MILITANCY

Context:

Recent targeted attacks on migrant workers from Chhattisgarh in Jammu & Kashmir's Kulgam district have renewed concerns over the evolving security situation in the region.

How has Jammu & Kashmir militancy evolved from a territorial insurgency into a networked security challenge?

- **Recruitment De-territorialisation:** Militancy's recruitment base shifted from mass mobilisation rooted in Valley-specific grievances to individualised, technology-driven radicalisation operating beyond J&K's geography. Consequently, the insurgent ecosystem was no longer confined to territorial control zones.
 - E.g., NIA investigations have traced radicalised recruits from Kerala and Karnataka joining Kashmir-linked terror modules.
- **Hybrid Militant Mechanism:** As recruitment became geographically dispersed, sustaining conventional militant camps became difficult. Consequently, militant groups adopted **hybrid militants**—part-time, unlisted armed civilians who strike and then blend back into civilian life.
 - E.g., J&K Police have documented social media-recruited hybrid militants involved in targeted killings before returning to civilian identity.
- **Encrypted Command Diffusion:** Command-and-control shifted to encrypted, cross-border digital communication, allowing handlers to direct operatives while remaining operationally concealed.
 - E.g., NIA charge sheets describe Pakistan-based handlers issuing operational instructions through encrypted messaging platforms.
- **Proxy Front Multiplication:** Increasingly relied on multiple proxy fronts that preserved strategic direction while maintaining plausible deniability and reducing exposure to international sanctions.
 - E.g., The Resistance Front (TRF) and People's Anti-Fascist Front (PAFF) are widely assessed by Indian security agencies and several international assessments as fronts linked to LeT/JeM, although they publicly project themselves as indigenous groups.
- **Narco-Terror Financing Network:** Financing increasingly shifted from traceable hawala transfers towards narcotics trafficking, generating covert revenue for dispersed militant cells.

- E.g., Joint NCB–NIA investigations have linked heroin trafficking through the Punjab border to financing Pakistan-backed terror modules operating in Jammu & Kashmir.

What consequences can arise from highly successful counter-insurgency campaigns in Jammu and Kashmir?

- **Tactical Displacement:** Successful counter-insurgency dismantles organised militant formations but does not necessarily eliminate extremist intent. Violence consequently shifts from coordinated insurgency to dispersed, low-visibility hybrid attacks that increasingly evade conventional security metrics.
 - E.g., Declining infiltration and encounter figures have coincided with targeted civilian killings by hybrid militants.
- **Political Legitimacy Deficit:** The persistence of hybrid violence despite declining militant numbers limits the ability of tactical success alone to establish political normalcy. Security-led stability may therefore be viewed as administrative order rather than durable political reconciliation, leaving a gap between state control and political trust.
 - E.g., Despite improved security conditions after 2019, debates over political representation and constitutional status have continued in parts of the Valley.
- **Governance Overcentralisation:** An incomplete transition from security-led stability to political legitimacy encourages continued dependence on security institutions for preserving order. Administrative authority therefore remains concentrated in central and security-led structures instead of progressively shifting to routine civilian governance.
 - E.g., The continuation of AFSPA in notified areas alongside prolonged phases of centrally administered governance reflects the priority accorded to preserving security gains.
- **Narrative Radicalisation Migration:** The predominance of security-led governance narrows opportunities for physical mobilisation without fully neutralising extremist narratives. Radicalisation consequently migrates towards digital ecosystems where mobilisation is less dependent on territorial presence or militant infrastructure.
 - E.g., NIA investigations have identified individuals radicalised primarily through encrypted online content without exposure to conventional militant infrastructure.
- **External Sponsor Recalibration:** Digital-first radicalisation reduces dependence on large militant formations, encouraging external sponsors to support decentralised and deniable modes of conflict. Proxy fronts, externally supported hybrid militant activation, drone-enabled logistics, and narco-terror financing consequently become more prominent than conventional infiltration.

- E.g., Pakistan-backed networks have increasingly relied on proxy organisations such as TRF, drone-enabled arms drops, and narcotics-linked financing to sustain militancy

Way Forward to Address Militancy in Jammu & Kashmir

- **Strengthen the Jammu & Kashmir Police:** Position the J&K Police at the core of counter-terrorism efforts by enhancing its operational capacity, as its local knowledge of language, culture, and terrain enables more effective and intelligence-driven operations.
- **Deepen Democratic Governance:** Reinforce democratic institutions from panchayats to the legislature to ensure public grievances are addressed through participatory governance, reducing alienation and extremist influence.
- **Ensure Responsive and Transparent Administration:** Promote accountable, corruption-free governance and improve citizen-administration engagement to rebuild public trust and weaken separatist narratives.
- **Promote Employment and Livelihood Opportunities:** Expand private investment, industrial development, and skill-building programmes such as **Himayat** to address youth unemployment and reduce susceptibility to militant recruitment.
- **Disrupt Terror Financing:** Intensify financial intelligence and investigations through agencies like the **National Investigation Agency (NIA)** to dismantle hawala networks, front organisations, and Over-Ground Worker (OGW) funding channels.
- **Maintain Diplomatic Pressure on Pakistan:** Sustain diplomatic engagement at forums such as **FATF** and the **UN**, while employing calibrated strategic measures to increase accountability and constrain cross-border terror infrastructure.