Swiss Glaciers Show Holes

Prelims: Environment | Current events of national and international importance

Why in news?

Recently scientists in Switzerland have found that many glaciers are developing large holes, making them look like Swiss cheese.

- **Holes in glaciers** – The glaciers are no longer "dynamic," meaning they aren’t creating enough new ice from snowfall at higher altitudes to replace melting at lower altitudes.
- As a result, ice just melts in place, becoming weaker.
- Water flows or air movements inside the ice blocks create small holes.
- Over time, these holes grow bigger, their roofs collapse, and they become visible from the surface.



Reason for the Holes

- It is due to the fact the glaciers are losing strength and structure.
- Glaciers in Switzerland have been shrinking steadily, especially since the 1980s.
- The worst years for melting were 2022 and 2023.
  Faster melting threatens:
    - Drinking water supplies

    - Agriculture
    - Hydropower (electricity from water)
    - River flows during dry seasons
- **Recent incidents –** A glacier collapse caused a massive mudslide in the Swiss village of Blatten.
- Some glaciers have lost up to 10 meters of vertical ice in a single year.
- **Global situation –** Similar glacier losses seen in the Himalayas and Tian Shan range in Asia.
- Global warming is pushing melting to higher altitudes.
- The Paris Climate Agreement aimed to limit warming to 1.5°C, but many glaciers will disappear even if that target is met.
- **Significance –** It reflects the tragedy of rapid climate change in real time.

Reference

The Hindu| Swiss Glaciers Show Holes

