UPSC Daily Current Affairs| Prelim Bits 03-02-2025

World Wetlands Day

Why in News?

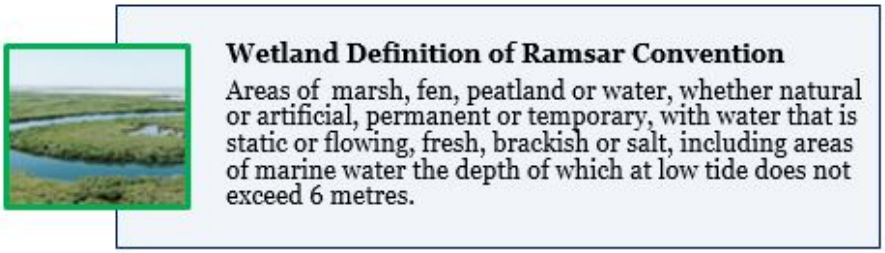
India announced new Ramsar Sites on the World Wetlands Day recently.

World Wetlands Day, 2025

- February 2 is annually marked as World Wetlands Day.
- **Aim -** To spread awareness about conserving one of the most critical ecosystems on the planet.
- **Theme, 2025 -** "Protecting Wetlands for Our Common Future".
- **Wetlands -** Wetlands are regions covered by water either perennially or seasonally, such as marshes and lakes.
- They are vital reservoirs of biodiversity, aid water conservation and provide habitat for numerous migratory birds, aquatic species, and plant life.
- They also help recharge groundwater, control floods and support fisheries and local communities.
- From the point of view of climate change mitigation, wetlands are ***important carbon sinks***, absorb more carbon from the atmosphere than they release.

Ramsar Convention

- Ramsar Convention is an ***international treaty*** that aims to conserve wetlands and their resources.
- It was the ***first modern treaty*** between nations to conserve natural resources
- It was signed in 1971 in the Iranian city of Ramsar and came into force in **1975.**



- These sites receive international support for conservation and management.
- **Pillars -** Provides a framework for national action and international cooperation
- Protects sites of global importance
- Ensures the sustainable use and conservation of wetlands

- **Main bodies of the Ramsar Convention -** The Conference of the Parties (COP) and Standing Committee.
- There are currently over 2,400 Ramsar Sites around the world.
- **Ramsar sites in India -** India has ***89*** Ramsar sites. Tamil Nadu has the most Ramsar sites at ***20***.
- India recently announced ***4 new Ramsar sites*** under the global agreement Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

Newly Added Ramsar Sites, 2025	
Udhwa Lake	Jharkhand
Theerthangal	Tamil Nadu
Sakkarakottai	Tamil Nadu
Khecheopalri	Sikkim

Reference

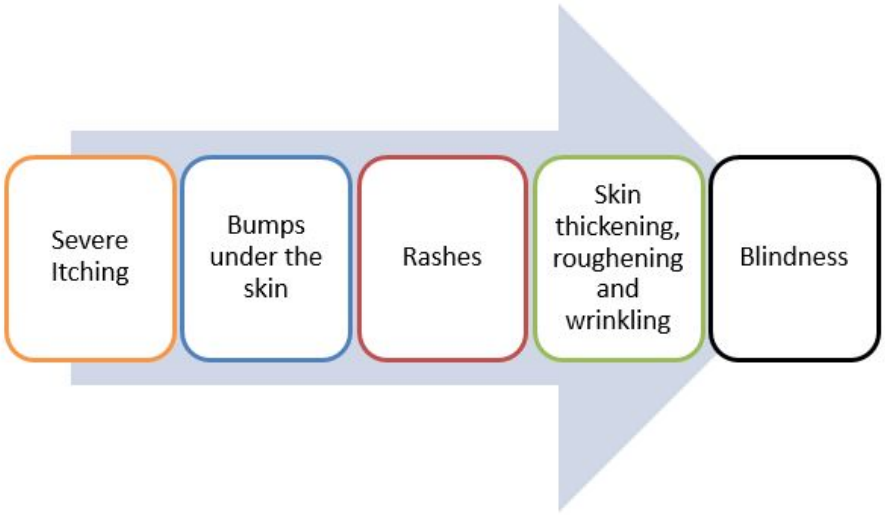
The Indian Express | World Wetlands Day

Onchocerciasis

Why in News?

WHO verifies Niger as the 1st country in the African Region to eliminate Onchocerciasis.

- Onchocerciasis, also known as river blindness, is a parasitic disease that affects the ***skin and eyes.***
- **Caused by -** Microscopic worm ***Onchocerca volvulus.***
- **Symptoms**



- **Transmission -** Transmitted to humans by the bites of infected black flies (Genus - Simulium) that breed in fast-flowing rivers.
- **Vulnerable** - More common in people who work in agriculture, especially those who live near rivers.
- Early exposure to *O. volvulus* infection is associated with epilepsy in children.
- **Prone countries** - Primarily affects rural populations in sub-Saharan Africa, and

Yemen, with smaller endemic areas foci found in parts of Latin America.

- **Prevention** - Onchocerciasis was brought under control in West Africa through the work of the Onchocerciasis Control Programme (OCP).
- This was later supplemented by large-scale distribution of ivermectin since 1989.
- The African Programme for Onchocerciasis Control (APOC) was launched in 1995 with the objective of controlling onchocerciasis in the remaining endemic countries in Africa.
- It is closed at the end of 2015 after beginning the transition to onchocerciasis elimination.
- **Treatment -** Population-based treatment with ***Ivermectin*** is the current core strategy to eliminate onchocerciasis, with a minimum requirement of 80% therapeutic coverage.
- Ivermectin is donated by Merck under the brand name of Mectizan.
- **Global status -** More than 99% of infected people live in Africa and Yemen, the remaining 1% live on the border between Brazil and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).
- In 2023 at least 249.5 million people required preventive treatment against onchocerciasis.
- **Onchocerciasis free countries -** Five countries have been verified by WHO as free of onchocerciasis after successfully implementing elimination activities for decades.
    - 4 in the region of the Americas - Colombia (2013), Ecuador (2014), Mexico (2015) and Guatemala (2016), and
    - 1 in Africa - Niger (2025).

Reference

WHO | Onchocersiasis

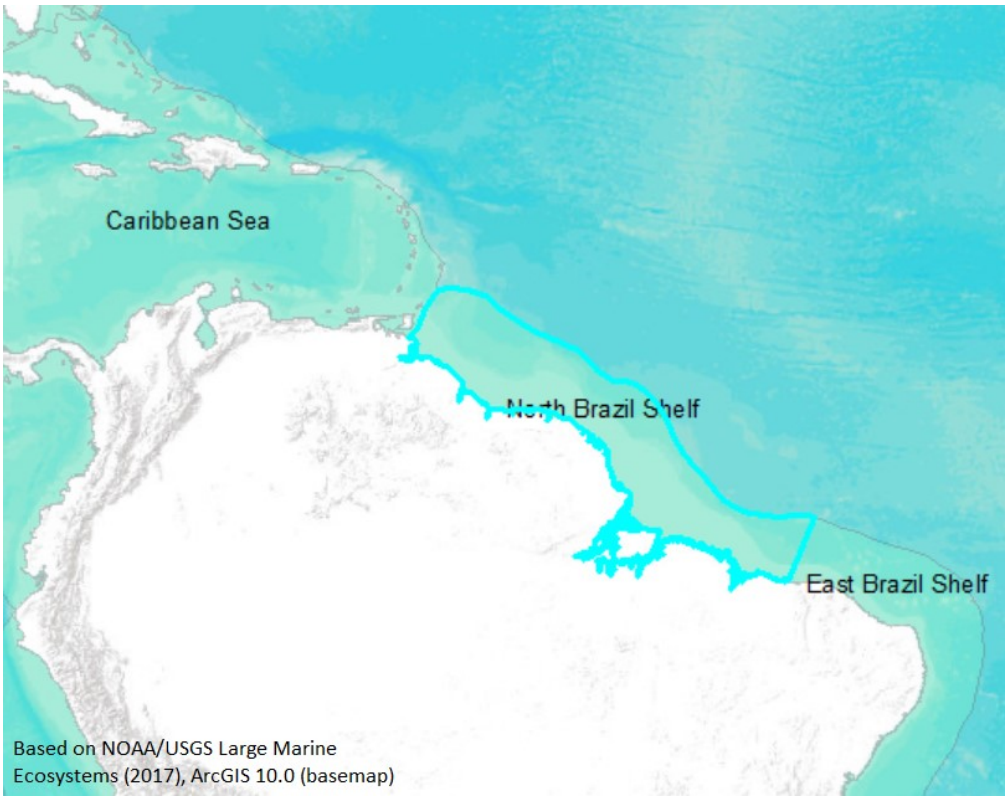
Ocean Coordination Mechanism (OCM)

Why in News?

Caribbean and North Brazil shelves (Large Marine Ecosystem) are recently brought under the initiative, Ocean Coordination Mechanism (OCM).

- It is a collaborative framework to ensure a more inclusive and sustainable approach to ***ocean conservation*** in the ***wider carribean region.***
- **Announced by** - The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
- It was conceived under the 10-year CLME+ Strategic Action Program (CLME+ SAP), endorsed by countries in the Wider Caribbean in 2014.
- **Implemented by** - IOC Sub commission for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions (IOCARIBE), UNESCO's agency.
- **Covered areas** - Caribbean Sea and North Brazil shelves.
- **Purpose -** Foster collaboration among countries, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), and key stakeholders.
- Promotes blue carbon projects, which use coastal ecosystems for carbon storage, benefiting both the environment and local communities.

- Coordinate and streamline actions such as sustainable fisheries, ecosystem restoration, pollution control, blue carbon development, marine spatial planning, and establishing marine protected areas.
- **Funding -** It has secured an initial $15 million investment from the Global Environment Facility through the UNDP/GEF PROCARIBE+ Project for the period 2024–2028.
- The initiative has also benefited from a substantial co-financing total of $126.02 million facilitated by the GEF.



Carribean Sea	North Brazil Shelf
• The Caribbean Sea is a body of water adjacent to the Atlantic Ocean, southeast of the Gulf of Mexico.	• The "North Brazil Shelf" refers to a large marine ecosystem (LME) located off the northeastern coast of South America.
• **Bordered by -** Venezuela, Colombia and Panama to the south, • Central American countries (Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras and Belize) on the west, • Greater Antilles (Cuba, Jamaica, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico) on the north and • Lesser Antilles on the east.	• Extending from the Caribbean Sea boundary near Venezuela to the Parnaiba River estuary in Brazil.
• The deepest site in this sea is the Cayman Trench between Cuba and Jamaica	• It's characterized by a wide continental shelf significantly influenced by the Amazon River's discharge and the North Brazil Current.

• The Wider Caribbean Region includes 35 states and territories that border 2 interconnected watersheds- the ***Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea.***	• It includes 6 countries, highly productive region with diverse marine life including numerous fish species and shrimp populations.

Reference

Down to Earth | Ocean Coordination Mechanism (OCM)

Black Kite

Why in News?

Recently, an article suggested that black kites have nesting habitats at a tower structure in Chennai.

- **Black Kite** – It is a bird of prey, and a ***migratory bird*** extends to an extremely large range of habitats.
- **Scientific Name** – Milvus migrans.
- It is often called ***Fork-Tailed Kites*****.**
- **Habitat –** Close access to water bodies such as rivers, ponds, lakes, and wetlands, woodlands, grassland, and open savannas.
- **Distribution –** Tropical portions of Australasia, Eurasia, and Africa.
- **Morphology –** Medium-sized raptors, dorsal, ventral and tail color is brown with darker brown striped feathers within.
- It has small, bead-like dark brown eyes and a large black, hook-shaped beak, long black talons, and pale-yellow legs.



- **Sexual dimorphism**
  - **Female** – It has a slightly *larger body size than males*, though they feature similar coloration.
- **Characteristics –** It typically lives in social groups.
- It migrates from Europe and northern Asia, wintering in sub-Saharan Africa and southern Asia.

- It has well-developed intraspecific communication and very loud vocalizing.
- **Diet –** An extremely *versatile feeder*, it takes carrion, birds, mammals, fish, lizards, amphibians, invertebrates, and forage on vegetable matter such as palm oil fruits.
- **Threats –** Poisoning
    - Shooting
    - Electrocution by power lines
    - Pollution of water by pesticides and other chemicals
    - Vulnerable to the effects of wind energy development.
- **Conservation Status**
    - **IUCN** – Least Concern.
    - **CITES** – Appendix II.
    - **Wild Life Protection Act, 1972** – Schedule-II.

References

1. The Hindu| Nesting activity by Black kites
2. ABW| Black kite's Habitat & Distribution
3. Birdlife| Black kite's Diet, Threats & Conservation

One Liners 03-02-2025

Polity & Governance

Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY)

PM Jan Arogya Yojana to now provide health cover for gig workers.

• **Launched in** – *2018*.
• **Umbrella scheme** – Ayushman Bharat.
• **Nodal Ministry** – Ministry Of Health & Family Welfare.
• **PM-JAY** – It is the *largest health assurance scheme* in the world.
• **Aim** – To provide a health cover for family, secondary and tertiary care hospitalization to poor and vulnerable families.
• It was earlier known as the *National Health Protection Scheme (NHPS)*.

Pradhan Mantri Dhan Dhanya Krishi Yojana

• **Launched in** – *2025*.
• **Nodal Ministry** – Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare.
• **Coverage** – *100 districts* with low productivity, moderate crop intensity, and below-average parameters.
• **Objectives** – Enhance agricultural productivity.
  - Adopt crop diversification and sustainable agricultural practices.
  - Augment post-harvest storage at panchayat and block level.
  - Improve irrigation facilities.
  - Facilitate availability of long- and short-term credit.
• It is also known as *Developing Agri-Districts Programme*.

Tailings Policy

• **Launched in** – *2025*.
• **Nodal Ministry –** Ministry of Mines.
• **Concept** – A policy for recovery *of valuable critical minerals from mining tailings*, which are the left-over materials from the processing of mined ore.
• **Objectives** – It further bolsters the objectives of the National Critical Mineral Mission.
• The good tailings management will increase domestic availability of critical minerals.
• It will strengthen strategic industries, including clean energy, semiconductors, defense, and space.
• It also promote the domestic processing industry.

Bharatiya Bhasha Pustak Scheme

• **Launched in** – *2025*.
• **Nodal Ministry –** Ministry of Education.
• **Concept** – To *provide digital books in Indian languages* for school and higher education students.
• **Aim** – To make learning more accessible by offering study materials in regional languages.
• **Accessibility** – Students *across schools and universities* will have access to textbooks and learning resources in digital formats.

Environment

Important Ramsar sites in India

Harike wetlands

• It is one of the *largest man-made wetlands* of northern India.
• **Located in** – Confluence of the river Beas and Sutlez at the Ferozepur and Amritsar border, Punjab.
• **Wetland status in** – *1990.*
• **Important species** – It hosts migratory birds like the Siberian crane, bar-headed geese, and many waterfowl.
• It is also known as *Harike Pattan*.

Kanjli wetlands

• It is one of the *man-made wetlands* in India.
• **Located in** – Kapurthala district along the Kali Bein river, Punjab.
• **Wetland status in** – *2002*.
• **Important species** – It hosts various fish species, turtles and migratory birds.

Ropar Wetlands

• It is a *man-made freshwater riverine*.
• **Located in** – Banks of the Sutlej River, Punjab.
• **Wetland status in** – *2002*.
• **Important species** – About 154 species of birds have been identified till now and housing over 20,000 water birds.

Nangal Wetlands

• It is a *human-made reservoir* constructed as part of the Bhakra-Nangal Project in 1961.
• **Located in** – Foothills of Shiwalik in the state of Punjab.
• **Wetland status in** – *2019*.
• **Important species** – It is home to over 40,000 migratory birds that come to India annually during the winter.

Index

State Mining Index (SMI)

• **SMI** – It is a transformative step that will enhance *professionalization of state mining departments*.
• **Nodal Ministry** – Ministry of Mines.
• **Objectives** – It will encouraging state to innovate and adopt best practices in mineral exploration, auctioning, and sustainable mining.
• It will drive efficiency, attract investments, and unlock the immense potential of our mineral resources.

Miscellaneous

World Forum of Accountants (WOFA) 2025

• **WOFA** – A *global gathering of accounting and finance professionals* dedicated to shaping the future of the profession.
• It provides a global platform to address the evolving landscape of finance.
• **Theme** – Accountability Meets Innovation (AI): For a Sustainable Planet.
• **Aim** – To inspire innovative approaches to environmental management and conservation.

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