

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**.



Wetland Definition of Ramsar Convention

Areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed 6 metres.

- 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

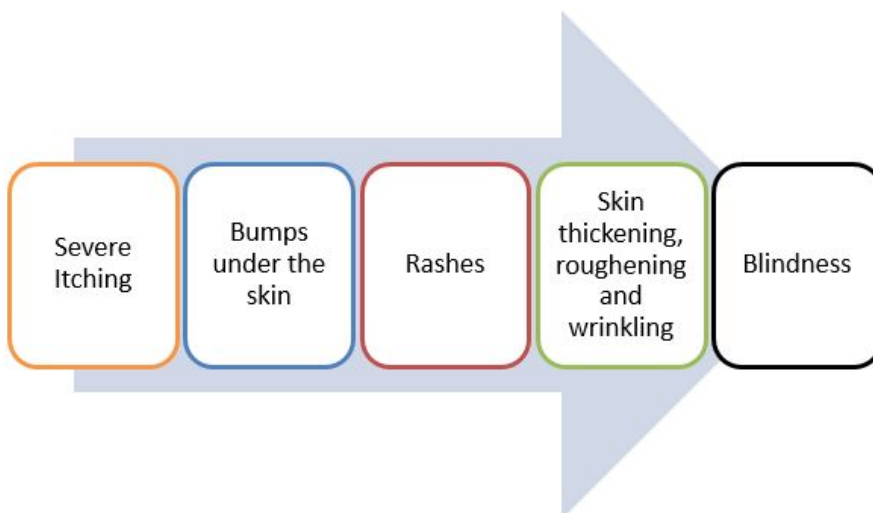
[The Indian Express | World Wetlands Day](#)

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 | Onchocerciasis](#)

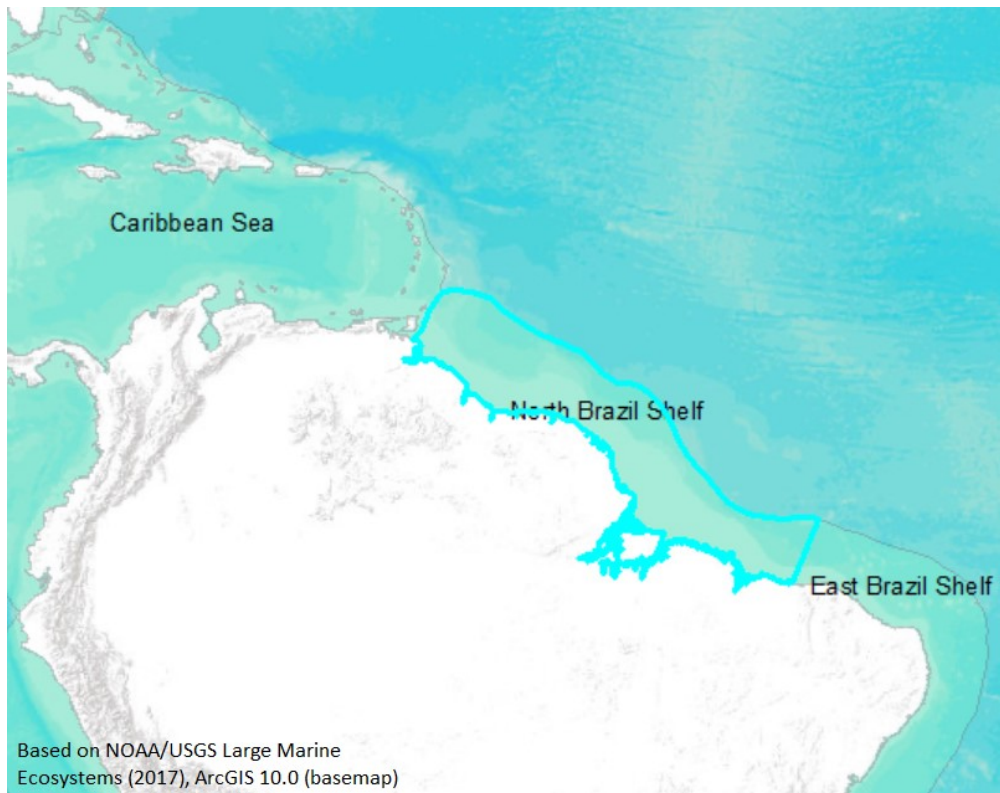
Ocean Coordination Mechanism (OCM)

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 caribbean 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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Caribbean Sea is a body of water adjacent to the Atlantic Ocean, southeast of the Gulf of Mexico. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The "North Brazil Shelf" refers to a large marine ecosystem (LME) located off the northeastern coast of South America.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extending from the Caribbean Sea boundary near Venezuela to the Parnaiba River estuary in Brazil.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The deepest site in this sea is the Cayman Trench between Cuba and Jamaica 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's characterized by a wide continental shelf significantly influenced by the Amazon River's discharge and the North Brazil Current.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Wider Caribbean Region includes 35 states and territories that border 2 interconnected watersheds- the <i>Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It includes 6 countries, highly productive region with diverse marine life including numerous fish species and shrimp populations.
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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 Sutlej 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 encourage 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.