

UPSC Daily Current Affairs| Prelim Bits 20-05-2025

Contingency Risk Buffer (CRB)

Prelims: Indian Economy | Current events of national and international importance

Why in News

Recently, the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) central board has sought the government's approval to expand the range of the contingent risk buffer (CRB).

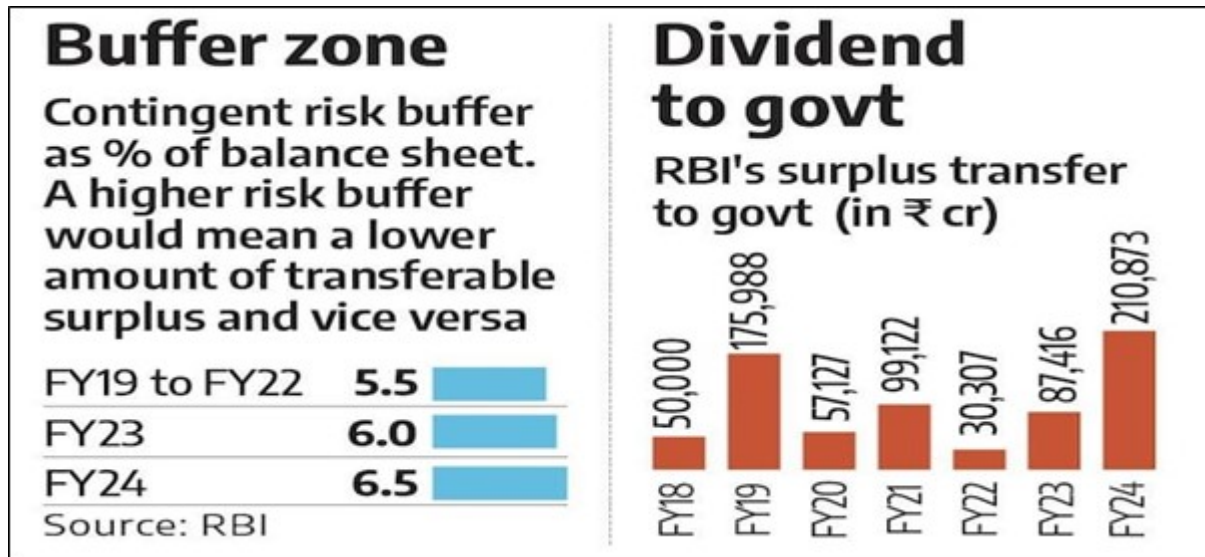
- **CRB** - It is a specific provision **fund kept by the central bank** primarily to be used during any unexpected and unforeseen contingencies.
 - **Unforeseen contingencies** - It could include depreciation of securities values, risks from monetary rate policy changes, systemic risks to the system, etc.
- The apex bank, for a fiscal year, has to keep the buffer fund of a **certain % of its balance sheet**.
- **Determined by** - RBI's Central Board.
- **Current CRB** - It is maintained at 5.5-6.5% of the RBI's balance sheet, in accordance with the recommendations of the Bimal Jalan committee.

The **Economic Capital Framework** adopted in 2019, based on the Bimal Jalan Committee's recommendations, stipulates that a specific portion of the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) surplus earnings is allocated to a Contingency Risk Buffer (CRB), while the remaining surplus is transferred to the Government of India.

Status of CRB in Recent Years

- **During accounting years 2018-19 to 2021-22** - Owing to the then prevailing macroeconomic conditions and the pandemic, CRB was maintained at 5.50 % of the balance sheet to support growth and overall economic activities.
- **In 2022-23** - With revival in economic growth, the CRB was increased to 6.00 %.
- **In 2023-24** - As the economy remains robust and resilient, the CRB was increased further to 6.50 %.

- **Significance** - The surplus, which the RBI transfers to the government, depends on how much risk buffer it wants to maintain.
- A higher risk buffer would mean a lower amount of transferable surplus and vice versa.



RBI's Central Board

- The Reserve Bank's affairs are governed by a central board of directors.
- **Appointment** - The board is appointed by the Government of India in keeping with the Reserve Bank of India Act of 1934.
- **Tenure** - They are appointed/nominated for a period of 4 years
- **Composition**
 - Official Directors - Full-time: Governor and not more than 4 Deputy Governors
 - Non-Official Directors - Nominated by Government: 10 Directors from various fields and 2 government officials
 - Others: 4 Directors - one each from four local boards
- **Functions** - General superintendence and direction of the Bank's affairs.

Reference

1. [Business Standard| Decision on Contingent Risk Buffer](#)
2. [RBI| RBI's Central Board](#)

Related News - [RBI's Surplus Transfer to Government](#)

Cooling-off Period for Post-retirement Jobs

Prelims: *Indian Polity and Governance*

Why in News?

Recently, Chief Justice of India, B R Gavai, has emphasized on abjuring post-retirement assignments.

- **Post-retirement jobs of government servants** - Accepting government posts after retiring from government service and joining private firms.
- Government permission is to be sought for post-retirement commercial employment if

the job is taken up within 1 year of leaving office.

- All India Services (Death-cum-Retirement Benefits) Rules, 1958 governs for all the 3 AIS (IAS, IPS and IFoS)
- Central Civil Services (pension) rules govern for all the Central Civil Services.
- Non-compliance with these rules can lead to the government declaring that the employee shall not be entitled to the whole or such part of the pension and for such period as may be specified.
- **Cooling-off period** - There are rules for those serving in central civil services and in all-India services.
- Officials have to undergo a **“cooling-off period” of 1 year** (Since 2015) before they can join a private commercial enterprise.
- Government servants who either resign from service or take voluntary retirement (VRS) also subject to cooling-off period.
- **Ethical issues** - The question of policy decisions or judicial pronouncements being influenced by the prospect of a post-retirement official job is a reality that cannot be ignored.
- There is instance where the mandate cooling off period had been waived or altered under different political regime.
- There is a conflict of interest between the post the officer held in the last 3 years of service and the interests and work of the organisation the officer joins after his/her resignation or voluntary retirement.
 - In 2022, Archana Goyal Gulati, who had worked in the Competition Commission of India (CCI), took VRS and joined Google after serving the cooling-off period.
- The other lacuna concerns government servants who join political parties after retirement.

Instances of Circumventing Cooling-off Period

- In 2007, Ashok Jha, after his retirement as Union finance secretary, was granted exemption to accept the office of president of Hyundai India before completing the cooling-off period.
- In 2014, rules of TRAI had been altered, to allow retiring chairpersons for future employment in state or the central government to accommodate Nripendra Misra's appointment as PM's principal secretary.
- In 2018, then foreign secretary S Jaishankar was granted a waiver just 3 months after his retirement to join Tata Sons as president, global corporate affairs.

Reference

[Business Standard| Issues with Post-Retirement Jobs](#)

Variation in India's Fertility Rates

Prelims: *Social, Economic Geography of India| Demographics*

Why in news?

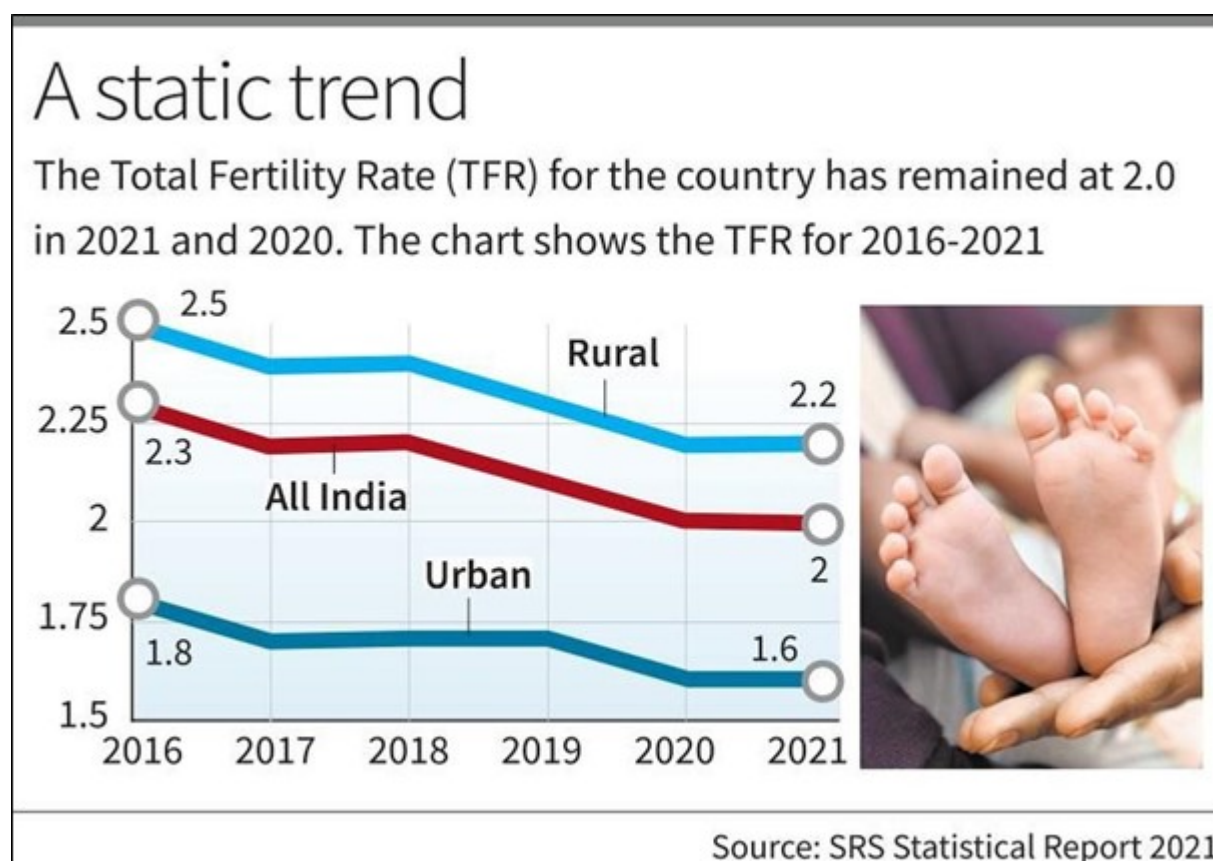
Recently Sample Registration System (SRS) Statistical Report of 2021 was released by the

Office of the Registrar General of India recently, showed that there is a wide regional variation in TFR data for States and Union Territories (UTs).

- **Total Fertility Rate (TFR)** - It is defined as the average number of children expected to be born per woman during her entire span of reproductive period (15-49 years).
- It is calculated by assuming that the age specific fertility rate is same and zero mortality.

Age-specific fertility rate is a measure of how many births occur to women of a particular age group.

- **Replacement level** - TFR of **2.1** is considered the replacement level, that each generation replaces itself.
- **India's TFR** - It remains **steady at 2.0 for 2021** as same as reported in 2020 as per Sample Registration System (SRS) Statistical Report of 2021.
- National TFR below replacement level of 2.1, indicating population stabilization.
- The overall declining trend observed over the past decade (2009-11 to 2019-21).



- **Regional variations** - Southern States and some States in the north, which are doing socio-economically well, the TFR is “far below” the replacement level.
- **Highest TFR** - Bihar at 3.0
- **Lowest TFR** - West Bengal and Delhi at 1.4
- **Six states above replacement level** - Bihar (3.0), Uttar Pradesh (2.7), Madhya Pradesh (2.6), Rajasthan (2.4), Jharkhand (2.3), Chhattisgarh (2.2).

- **States below replacement level** - All remaining states and UTs (majority of India) including West Bengal, Delhi, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and other southern states.

Elderly population

- Kerala *recorded the highest percentage of elderly population* with 14.4% of the total population falling under this category.
- Tamil Nadu 12.9% and Himachal Pradesh 12.3% are the other two States with the highest percentage of elderly population.
- On the other hand, Bihar 6.9% have the lowest percentage of the elderly population.

- **Policy needs** - Different strategies needed for high vs. low TFR states.
- **For Low TFR States** - Development-focused interventions for Low TFR states such as,
 - Expanding access to family planning services
 - Promoting girls' education and women's empowerment
 - Implementing behaviour change campaigns
 - Strengthening maternal and child health services
 - Encouraging male participation in reproductive health
- **For Low TFR States** - Expanding pension coverage, elder care infrastructure, and skill upgradation for senior citizens.

Reference

[The Hindu| Variation in India's Fertility Rates](#)

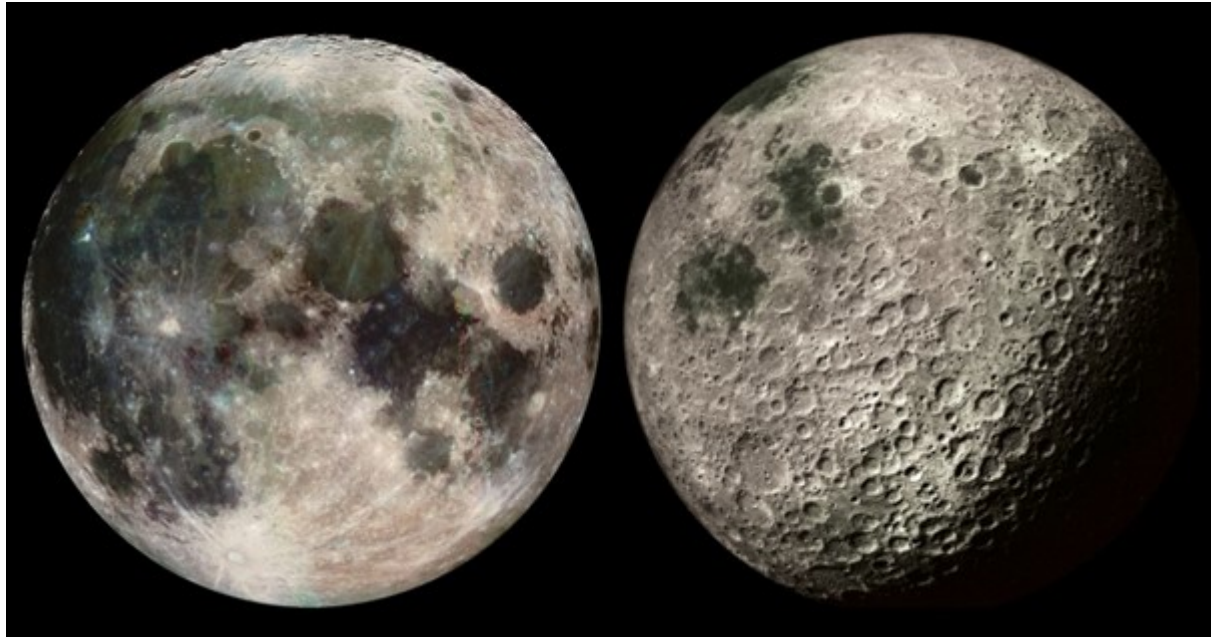
Why the Two Sides of the Moon are So Different

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance* | Geography

Why in news?

Recently NASA's Gravity Recovery and Interior Laboratory (GRAIL) mission revealed that moon's two hemispheres look different due to difference in internal composition of Moon.

The two sides of the Moon—the **nearside** (facing Earth) characterized by large, dark basaltic plains called Maria and the **farside** (facing away) is marked by rugged, heavily cratered terrain.



- **GRAIL mission** - It is a NASA mission aimed at mapping the Moon's gravitational field to enhance our understanding of its internal structure.
- It is launched in 2011 with two identical orbiters, GRAIL-A and GRAIL-B, later named **Ebb** and **Flow** through a student contest.
- **Objective** - To create detailed gravitational map of lunar surface and understand the Moon's asymmetric thermal evolution.
- **Method** - By measuring distance variations between spacecrafts caused by gravitational anomalies.
- These measurements, accurate to within a micron, allowed scientists to infer the Moon's internal mass distribution.

Reasons for differences in two hemispheres

- **Tidal deformation and gravitational asymmetry** - The nearside (facing Earth) flexes more during its orbit due to Earth's stronger gravitational pull — a process called tidal deformation.
- This suggests that the nearside is warmer and more geologically active deep inside compared to the farside, which is more rigid.
- The difference in internal flexibility results in creating the Moon's uneven surface features.
- **Crustal thickness and surface composition** - GRAIL data showed that the nearside crust is much thinner than the farside crust.
- The thinner crust made it easier for magma to rise and erupt, forming flat lava plains.
- In contrast, the farside's thicker crust blocked magma, leaving behind a rugged, cratered highland terrain.
- This difference in crust thickness also affected how heat-producing elements were distributed, deepening the contrast between the two sides.
- **Volcanic activity and heat distribution** - The nearside experienced intense volcanic eruptions billions of years ago, which created dark basalt plains called maria.
- These eruptions also build up heat-producing elements like thorium and titanium in

the ***nearside's mantle***.

- As a result, the ***nearside is 100-200°C hotter*** than the farside, leading to a long-lasting thermal imbalance.
- The ***farside, with fewer radioactive elements*** and less heat, remained mostly inactive and unchanged.

Significance of these findings

- **Future lunar missions** - It aids in developing lunar positioning, navigation, and timing systems.
- It is essential for success of upcoming crewed moon missions.
- **Broader space exploration** - The gravitational mapping techniques applicable to other moons for advanced search for extra-terrestrial life.

Reference

[Times of India| Why the Moon Look So Different on Each Side](#)

Parasnath Hill (Marang Buru)

Prelims: History of India| Social Geography of India

Why in news?

Recently, The Jharkhand High Court directed the state government to enforce a pre-existing ban on the consumption and sale of meat, alcohol, and other intoxicants on the hill.

- **Parasnath Hill** - It is the highest peak (4,478 feet) in Jharkhand.
- **Location** - Giridih district, Jharkhand
- **Dual sacredness** - Parasnath hill is considered to be sacred by both the Santal Adivasi and Jain communities.
- **Jain significance** - Parasnath hill is considered one of the holy pilgrimage sites in Jainism.
- **20 out of 24 Jain Tirthankaras** are believed to have attained *moksha* (liberation) on this hill.
- The hill hosts more than *40 Jain temples and dhams*, making it a major site for both the Shwetambar and Digambar sects.
- **Santal Adivasi significance** - The hill is known as ***Marang Buru*** or “Great Mountain” in the Santal tradition.
- It has ***Jug Jaher Than***, the most sacred grove for the Santals—akin to Mecca in spiritual importance.
- It is also the ***seat of tribal justice***, where the ***Lo Bir Baisi***, a council of tribal leaders, meets to resolve major disputes.
- ***Sendra festival***, a *three-day ritual hunting festival*, is a key Santal tradition practiced on the hill and it is observed annually on the full moon of the Baisakh month (April-May).
- **Legal and cultural disputes** - The Hill witnessed the conflict between Jains and

Santhal from 1911, primarily ***Jain's vegetarianism*** and Santhal's ***Sendra festival***.

- In 1978, the area was designated as a wildlife sanctuary, leading to restrictions on Adivasi rights and practices.
- In 2023, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change banned the sale and consumption of meat, alcohol, and other intoxicants within a 25-kilometer radius of the hill.
- The Jharkhand High Court upheld this ban in May 2025, directing the state government to enforce it and increase security to ensure compliance.

Reference

[The Indian Express| Story of a sacred Jharkhand hill](#)

One Liners 20-05-2025

Pushkar Kumbh Returns to Uttarakhand

After a 12-year gap, the Pushkar Kumbh Mela commenced in Uttarakhand on May 15, 2025, inaugurated by Chief Minister Dharam Singh at Keshav Prayag, Mana village.

- **Sacred Confluence Location** - Held at the confluence of the Alaknanda and Saraswati rivers, this holy site attracts thousands of Vaishnavite devotees, especially from South India.
- **Auspicious Astrological Timing** - Celebrated when Jupiter enters Gemini, the Mela holds deep spiritual significance in Hindu tradition, believed to purify the soul and grant moksha.
- **Historical and Mythological Links** - Mana village is associated with Maharishi Ved Vyas. It's also believed that Ramanujacharya and Madhvacharya received divine knowledge here.
- **Enhanced Infrastructure and Safety** - The Uttarakhand government has upgraded the pedestrian route and installed bilingual signage. Police and SDRF personnel ensure pilgrim safety along the route and at the confluence.
- **Intimate Spiritual Gathering** - Unlike larger Kumbhs, Mana's Pushkar Kumbh offers a more personal spiritual experience, fostering north-south connection and preserving cultural and spiritual unity until May 26, 2025.

Tanot Mata Temple Reopens

The 1,200-year-old Tanot Mata Temple near the India-Pakistan border in Jaisalmer is recently reopening as cross-border tensions ease.

- **Ancient Shrine to Hinglaj Mata** - This revered Hindu temple in Rajasthan is dedicated to Tanot Rai, considered a manifestation of the goddess Hinglaj Mata, and was established by local tribes.
- **Miraculous Wartime Survival** - During the 1965 and 1971 Indo-Pakistan wars, the temple miraculously survived heavy bombardment, with thousands of Pakistani bombs failing to explode nearby, strengthening faith in the deity's protective powers.
- **BSF Management and Remembrance** - Following the 1971 war, the Border Security Force (BSF) took over the temple's management. The Indian Army built a Vijay Sthamba within the complex, and victory over Pakistan is commemorated annually on December 16th.
- **Unexploded Bombs as Testimony** - Unexploded bombs from the wars are preserved and displayed in the Tanot Museum within the temple premises, serving as a testament to the miraculous events and the temple's resilience.

Geography

Transforming North-East Connectivity

The Shillong-Silchar Highway, a 166.8 km four-lane corridor, will connect Meghalaya and Assam by 2030, becoming the region's first high-speed route and boosting economic activity.

- **Infrastructure Initiative** - Spearheaded by National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL) under India's Act East Policy.
- **Aims to** - Enhance trade and connectivity, providing a vital alternative to the Siliguri Corridor for accessing other North-Eastern states.
- **Navigating Challenging Terrain** - Construction in the hilly region necessitates advanced engineering to counter landslides, employing modern slope stabilisation and monitoring technologies for safety and durability.
- **Cutting-Edge Technology Integration** - LiDAR is used for precise surveys, while rock anchors and high-strength mesh provide protection. Piezometers and inclinometers will continuously monitor slope stability during and after construction.
- **Catalysing Regional Growth** - Projected to reduce travel time significantly from 8.5 to 5 hours, the improved connectivity is expected to stimulate trade and tourism, establishing the North-East as a crucial link to South-East Asia.

Economy

RBI Eases FPI Norms for Corporate Debt

The RBI has relaxed investment rules for Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) in corporate debt, effective immediately, aiming to simplify investments.

- **Abolished Investment Limits** - Previously, FPIs faced short-term investment limits (max 30% under one-year maturity) and concentration limits (10-15% per issuer). These restrictions have now been removed.
- **Significance of the Relaxation** - This liberalises India's debt market, provides avenues for FPIs to retain sale proceeds, diversifies the investor base, and is expected to improve market liquidity and reduce borrowing costs.
- **Corporate Debt Securities Defined** - These are financial instruments like bonds and debentures issued by companies to raise funds, offering regular interest payments and principal repayment at maturity.
- **Narrowing Yield Spread Challenge** - A reduced difference between Indian and US 10-year bond yields (around 2%) makes Indian debt less attractive, potentially hindering significant FPI inflows despite eased norms.
- **Impact of External Risk Factors** - Geopolitical tensions and US Federal Reserve policies remain external risks that could make FPIs cautious and prefer safer assets, limiting the immediate impact of the relaxed regulations.

Environment

Odisha's Resilient Narayanpatna Goat

- The Narayanpatna goat, native to Odisha's Eastern Ghats, is valued for its disease resistance and climate resilience but faces threats from crossbreeding.
- **Unique Native Breed** - This non-descriptive goat, raised by tribal communities in Koraput, southern Odisha, is known for its hardiness, high reproductive efficiency, and adaptability to harsh conditions.
 - **Native Habitat and Rearing** - Found in Narayanpatna and Bandhugaon blocks within the Eastern Ghats, they are reared extensively in hilly, forested terrains with minimal inputs under a tropical monsoon climate.
 - **Distinctive Physical and Reproductive Traits** - Medium to large in size with varied coat colours, curved horns, and drooping ears. Bucks weigh 30-35 kg, and does 25-30 kg, with frequent twinning and early kidding.
 - **Exceptional Disease Resistance** - Naturally selected for strong resistance to common parasites, these goats require minimal veterinary care, showcasing their inherent hardiness.
 - **Socio-Economic Significance** - They serve as a crucial source of meat, income, and cultural exchange, acting as a financial safety net, with women and children actively involved in their rearing, promoting inclusive livelihoods.

Ancient Three-Eyed Predator Discovered

- Scientists recently described *Mosura fentoni*, a 506-million-year-old marine predator from the Cambrian period, belonging to the extinct Radiodonta group.
- **Moth-Inspired Name and Location** - Named after the fictional Mothra due to its moth-like appearance, fossils of *Mosura fentoni* were primarily unearthed in the Burgess Shale of the Canadian Rockies.
 - **Unique Physical Characteristics** - This early arthropod, about the size of an adult index finger, possessed three eyes and an elongated body with swimming flaps, resembling modern rays in motion.
 - **Novel Abdomen-Like Respiratory Structure** - Distinct among radiodonts, *Mosura fentoni* had a segmented rear section with gills, likely enhancing respiration and representing evolutionary convergence with modern arthropods.
 - **Insights into Early Arthropod Evolution** - The discovery highlights the surprising diversity of early arthropods, offering rare details about their internal anatomy and evolutionary paths towards modern forms.

Security

Teesta Prahar: Riverine Readiness Validated

Recently, Indian Army conducted Exercise Teesta Prahar in West Bengal's Teesta Field Firing Range.

- **The drill aimed** -to confirm the operational readiness of combat and support units in challenging riverine environments.
- **Integrated Military Branches** - The exercise involved the Infantry, Artillery, Armoured Corps, Mechanised Infantry, Para Special Forces, Army Aviation, Engineers, and Signals, simulating real combat scenarios to test integrated operations.
- **Core Exercise Elements** - Key features included a strong emphasis on jointness for battlefield synergy, rapid troop mobility across complex terrain, the integration of advanced technology for warfare, and adaptability across diverse environments.
- **Modern Weaponry Integration** - A highlight was the validation of new-generation weapon systems, showcasing the Indian Army's dedication to modernisation and technological advancement for enhanced combat effectiveness.
- **Broader Strategic Significance** - Coming after successful joint Army-Air Force operations, Teesta Prahar reinforced interoperability. It's part of a larger strategy to bolster capabilities in modern warfare scenarios.

BSF: India's First Line of Defence

Amid heightened border tensions with Pakistan, the Border Security Force (BSF) stands as India's primary border guarding organisation and first line of defence, supporting the armed forces.

- **Mandate and Deployment - Raised** in 1965, the BSF protects India's land borders during peacetime, prevents transnational crime, and assists the Army in wartime.
- **Deployed** - along the Indo-Pakistan and Indo-Bangladesh borders, the LoC, and in anti-Naxal operations.
- **Organisation and Capabilities** - As the world's largest border guarding force, the BSF comprises 186 battalions with 2.57 lakh personnel. Notably, it is the only CAPF with its own Air Wing, Marine Wing, and artillery regiments, alongside specialised camel and dog wings.
- **Unique Operational Units** - The BSF maintains a unique Tear Smoke Unit (TSU) for producing riot control munitions. It also possesses powers of arrest, search, and seizure under various acts related to passports, customs, and narcotics.
- **Leadership and Identity** - The BSF's logo features grain spikes embracing the national emblem, with the motto "DUTY UNTO DEATH." The force is headed by a Director General, an officer from the Indian Police Service (IPS).

Miscellaneous

Literary Giants Honoured with 58th Jnanpith Award

President Droupadi Murmu bestowed the 58th Jnanpith Award upon poet-lyricist Gulzar and scholar-saint Rambhadracharya in New Delhi.

- **Prestigious Recognition** - India's highest literary honour acknowledges their profound impact on Indian literature. The award includes a citation, cash prize, and a Vagdevi idol.
- **Celebrating Rambhadracharya** - Known for Sanskrit epics and spiritual works, the visually impaired scholar also founded JRDSU, serving over 2,000 students.
- **Honouring Gulzar's Artistry** - The celebrated poet and songwriter, recipient of Oscars and a Grammy, is lauded for his evocative contributions to literature, cinema, and television.
- **Significance of the Award** - The event highlights India's diverse literary landscape, uniting devotional Sanskrit and contemporary Hindi poetry.



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