

UPSC Daily Current Affairs| Prelimbits 25-07-2025

54th Chief Justice of Madras High Court

Prelims - Current Events of National and International Importance | Indian Polity & Governance.

Why in News?

Recently, Justice Manindra Mohan Shrivastava took oath as the 54th Chief Justice of the Madras High Court in a ceremony held at Raj Bhavan, Chennai.

- **Appointed by** - President of India.
- **Oath of office** - Administered by State Governor.
- **Powers derived from** - Article 217.
- **Qualification** -
 - Citizen of India,
 - Held a judicial office in the territory of India for ten years; or
 - An advocate of a high court (or high courts in succession) for ten years.
- **Tenure** - Constitution has not fixed the tenure.
 - He holds office until he attains the **age of 62 years.**
- Any questions regarding his age are to be decided by the president.
- **Resignation** - He can resign from his office by writing to the president.
- **Salaries and allowance** - The salaries, allowances, privileges, leave, and pension of the judges of a high court are determined from time to time by the Parliament.
- Salaries are drawn from the consolidated fund of the state while pensions are from the Consolidated fund of India.
- **Removal** - He can be removed from his office by the President on the recommendation of the same session of the Parliament.
- Grounds of removal are proven misbehavior or incapacity.
- He can be removed on the same manner and grounds as a judge of the Supreme Court.

High Courts

- The high court represents the state's judicial administration.
- **Articles 214 to 231** in Part VI of the Constitution deal with the organization, independence, jurisdiction, powers, procedures and so on of the high courts.
- There are 25 high courts in the country, 3 of which have jurisdiction in more than one state.
- The number of judges, which consists of the chief justice and other judges, varies from state to state and is determined by the president.
- **Functions**
- **Original jurisdiction** - In certain cases, they can hear a case directly, such as those related to fundamental rights or matters transferred from lower courts.
- **Appellate jurisdiction** - High Court judges hear appeals against decisions made by subordinate courts (like district and sessions courts) in both civil and criminal matters.
- **Writs jurisdiction** - High Courts can issue various writs (like Habeas Corpus, Mandamus, Prohibition, Quo-warranto, and Certiorari) to protect fundamental rights and ensure justice.
- **Supervisory jurisdiction** - High Courts have the power to supervise and control all courts and tribunals within their jurisdiction (except those dealing with the armed forces).
- **Court of record** - Its proceedings, judgments, and acts are officially recorded and considered permanent legal documents.
- **Administrative powers** - High Courts also handle administrative tasks like appointing staff, determining salaries, and making rules for subordinate courts.
- **Power of judicial review** - High Courts can review laws and ordinances to ensure they are consistent with the Constitution and declare them unconstitutional if they are not.

Reference

[The Hindu | 54th Chief Justice of Madras High Court](#)

India & European Free Trade Association (EFTA)

Prelims - Current events of National & International importance.

Why in News?

Recently, the Commerce and Industry Minister said that the Free Trade Agreement between India and the four-nation European bloc EFTA will be implemented from October 1.

- **EFTA** - It is an intergovernmental organisation established to promote free trade and economic integration, benefiting its four Member States.
- **Member states** - Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland, as well as their trading partners worldwide.

- India's biggest trading partner - **Switzerland**.
- India-EFTA two-way trade - \$24.4 billion in 2024-25.
- **Tariff lines or product categories** - Offering 82.7% by India, which cover 95.3% of EFTA exports, of which more than 80% of imports are gold.

Outcomes of EFTA agreement

- India secured a follow-up commitment in the EFTA categories

| Countries | EFTA sub-sectors |
|-----------|------------------|
|-----------|------------------|

| | |
|---------------|-----|
| Switzerland | 128 |
| Norway | 114 |
| Iceland | 110 |
| Liechtenstein | 107 |

- **Reduction of duties** - India will phase out customs duties under the trade pact on these goods over 10 years, allowing several products, such as Swiss watches, chocolates, and cut and polished diamonds.

Benefits

- **Strategic Investment Timeline** - The bloc will invest \$100 billion in 15 years, consisting of two phases
 - First phase - \$50 billion within 10 years after the implementation of the agreement.
 - Second phase - \$50 billion in the next five years.
- **Job creation on a large scale** - It facilitates the creation of 1 million direct jobs in India.
- **Access to high-quality products** - Domestic customers will have access to top-grade Swiss products, including watches, chocolates, biscuits, and clocks, at lower prices.
- **Boost to services sector** - India has identified 105 sub-sectors for the EFTA, including legal, audio-visual, R&D, business services, computer services, accounting, auditing, distribution, and Health services.
- **Entry into the EU market** - Over 40% of Switzerland's global services exports are directed to the EU, making it a strategic gateway for Indian firms to expand their presence in the European market.

Reference

[The Hindu | India vs European Free Trade Association \(EFTA\)](#)

Hornbill Conservation Centre

***Prelims** - Current events of National & International importance | General issues on Environmental ecology, Bio-diversity & climate change.*

Why in News?

The Tamil Nadu government has announced the establishment of India's first Centre of Excellence for Hornbill Conservation at the Anamalai Tiger Reserve (ATR) in Coimbatore district.

Hornbills

- Hornbills are birds, easily recognizable by their large, downward-curved bills, often brightly colored and featuring a unique bony structure called a casque on the upper mandible.
- The name "hornbill" itself stems from this prominent, horn-like projection.
- The keystone species often known as “farmers of the forest”, play a crucial ecological role as seed dispersers, helping to regenerate native forests.
- **Habitat** - They inhabit the canopy of tall evergreen forests.
- **Distribution** - They are found in Sub-Saharan Africa, Indian-Subcontinent, Philippines, Indonesia and the Solomon Islands.
- **Diet** - Hornbills are omnivorous
- **Threats** - Deforestation, habitat fragmentation, and the impacts of climate change.

- **Reason behind selection** - Anamalai Tiger Reserve was selected for its ecological richness, existing conservation infrastructure, and for its track record in protecting endangered species, including
 - Tigers,
 - Elephants,
 - Lion-tailed macaques, and
 - Other endemic wildlife.
- **Focus** - Four hornbill species found in the Western Ghats
 - Great Indian Hornbill (IUCN -Vulnerable)
 - Malabar Grey Hornbill (IUCN -Vulnerable)
 - Malabar Pied Hornbill (IUCN - Near threatened)
 - Indian Grey Hornbill (IUCN - Least concern)
- **Funding** - Department of Environment, Climate Change and Forests has sanctioned funds under the **Endangered Species Conservation Corpus Fund** to establish the Centre.
- **Collaboration** - Tamil Nadu Forest Department will team up with leading national and international organisations, including
 - Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History,
 - Nature Conservation Foundation,
 - Wildlife Institute of India, and
 - International Union for Conservation of Nature’s Hornbill Specialist Group.
- **Activities** - It include habitat mapping, nest monitoring, scientific research, climate impact assessments, and restoration of degraded forest areas by planting native trees such as fig and Canarium that support hornbill populations.
- **Community participation** - Residents will be involved in conservation efforts through nest adoption programmes, scholarships for students, and sustainable livelihoods such as seed collection.
- **Capacity-building programs** - Forest staff and host awareness activities, including field visits for school children and community outreach.
- **Similar hornbill conservation activities** - In other landscapes such as the Kalakkad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve (KMTR), Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve (STR), and parts of Kanyakumari district.

Quick facts

Keystone species

- A keystone species is a plant or animal that plays a unique and crucial role in the way an ecosystem functions.
- Without them, the ecosystem would be dramatically different or cease to exist altogether.
- Its disappearance could affect other species that rely on it for survival.

Reference

SASCI Scheme

Prelims - Current events of National & International importance

Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Tourism has rolled out operational guidelines for the SASCI scheme to state governments.

- **SASCI** - Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment - Development of Iconic Tourist Centres to Global Scale' (SASCI) scheme.
- **Aim** - Transforming select **tourist destinations** into globally competitive attractions.
- It is a **centrally funded initiative** for advancing select tourist destinations through capital investment and innovation.
- **Launched by** - Ministry of Tourism.
- **Selection method** - These projects are identified based on the project proposals submitted by the relevant state governments.
- **Scrutiny parameters** - Connectivity to the site, tourism ecosystem, carrying capacity, sustainability measures, sustainable operation and management, project impact and value created, and tourism marketing plans, etc.
- **Key features**
 - **Time bounded framework** - projects are to be developed and completed within maximum 2 year's period
 - **State execution** - implemented and managed by the concerned State Government.
 - **Digital interaction** - promotional activities endeavours in the international and domestic markets through social media, promotional websites, events etc.
- **Significance**
 - Developing end to end tourist experience,
 - Funding support to the shortlisted proposals,
 - Strengthening all points of the tourist value chain,
 - Harnessing quality expertise for design and development,
 - Sustainable operations and maintenance etc.

Reference

[DD News](#) | [SASCI Scheme](#)

[PIB](#) | [SASCI Scheme](#)