Topics - MINDS MAPS included (Daily current affairs)
12th November 2024

- Mattupetty Dam
- Appointment of CJI.
- South Asian Telecommunication Regulators' Council (SATRC)
- the Indian Naval Sailing Vessel Tarini Expedition
- COP16
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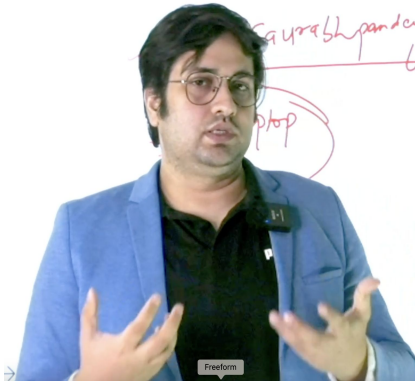

By saurabh Pandey

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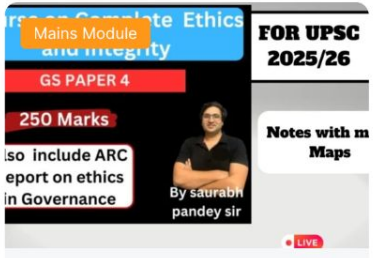

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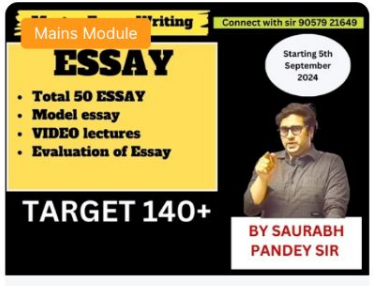

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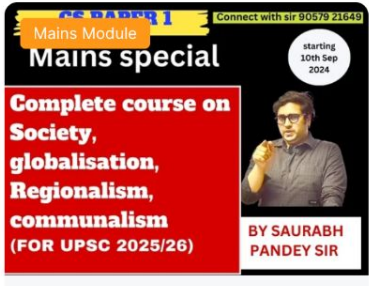

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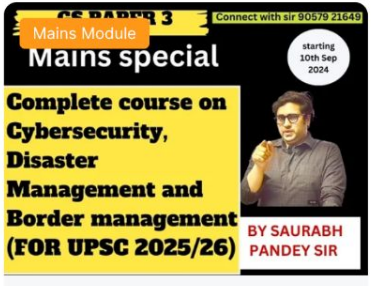

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Seaplane lands in Mattupetty dam, raises ecological concerns

The Hindu Bureau
IDUKKI

The seaplane, which took off from Kochi, lands at the Mattuppetty reservoir near Munnar in Idukki on Monday. JOMON PAMPAVALLEY

Promising new tourism prospects, the trial run of Kerala's first seaplane service was held on Monday.

According to officials, the plane took off from Kochi and landed at the Mattupetty dam reservoir in Idukki district around 11 a.m. after a 30-minute flight. An official team led by Water Resources Minister Roshy Augustine welcomed the aircraft at Mattupetty, where it halted for over 30 minutes before returning to Kochi.

District Tourism Promotion Council secretary Jitheesh Jose said the seaplane service would be a game changer for the tourism sector in Idukki, especially Munnar hill station. "Hours of travel and the absence of rail and air connectivity are the major hurdles to attracting premium tourists to Munnar. The seaplane service will help attract people from around the globe," he said.

A 3.5-kilometre reservoir area and the adequate water storage throughout the reservoir are the main advantages of the seaplane landing facility in Mattupetty. A large number of tourists and tourism stakeholders witnessed the landing of the seaplane.

Meanwhile, as the State government moves forward with the project, the Forest Department has recommended a mitigation plan to address potential impact of the project on local wildlife if the service were to continue.

'Eco-sensitive zone'

In a letter submitted to Idukki District Collector V. Vigneshwari on Sunday, Munnar Assistant Conservator of Forests (ACF) Job J. Neriamparampil emphasised the ecological significance of the Mattupetty area. He noted that the reservoir is surrounded by sensitive forest landscapes, including the Anamudi Shola National Park to the north (just 3.5 km away), as well as Pampadum Shola National Park and Kurinjimala Sanctuary to the east, both with designated eco-sensitive zones. The Kanan Devan Hills Reserve Forest also extends into the area, providing a habitat for endangered wildlife such as wild elephants, a Schedule I protected species under Indian law.

The letter highlights that wild elephants frequently use the reservoir's catchment area and often move between the national parks through submerged sections of the reservoir. The ACF also expressed concerns that seaplane operations could disturb these animals and escalate human-wildlife conflicts. He stressed that a mitigation plan, approved by the National Board for Wildlife, is essential to manage potential impacts on local wildlife.

Forest Department sources suggest that a carefully implemented mitigation plan could allow the seaplane service to operate with minimal disruption to wildlife. "Wild elephants regularly graze in grasslands near Mattuppetty dam and often cross the reservoir at certain points. By keeping these areas off-limits for seaplane landings and tourism activities, we could significantly reduce disturbances,'' said a Forest Department official.

The official added that if a mitigation plan is called for, the department would submit a comprehensive proposal.

On Monday, Forest Department sources reported seeing four female elephants about 700 metres from the seaplane's landing site at Mattupetty. "The landing caused noticeable disturbance to the animals, which lingered near the same spot," said a source.

Plea to halt project

During a joint inspection held on November 5, the department voiced its concerns regarding the project's impact on the Mattupetty ecosystem.

Additionally, Idukki-based environmentalist M.N. Jayachandran has filed a petition with the Chief Wildlife Warden, calling for a halt to the seaplane project at Mattupetty dam.

Topic → Mattupetty Dam

Overview of Mattupetty Dam

Location: Munnar, Kerala, India 🇮🇳

Purpose: Water storage, hydroelectric power, tourism 🚤

Significance: Scenic beauty, wildlife habitat 🌲

Trial reforms, promoting mediation among new Chief Justice's priorities

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu administering the oath of office to Justice Sanjiv Khanna at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on Monday. PTI

Justice Sanjiv Khanna, who took oath as the 51st Chief Justice of India on Monday, said the core principles of the judiciary was to provide equal treatment, fair opportunity at justice to all and unbiased adjudication to all, regardless of status, wealth or power.

Chief Justice Khanna, in an official statement released by the Supreme Court, said judges had a "constitutional duty to ensure easy access to justice to all citizens of our great nation".

"Judiciary is an integral, yet distinct and independent part of the governance system. The Constitution trusts upon us the role of constitutional guardian, protector of fundamental rights, and responsibility to fulfil the important task of being service provider of justice," Chief Justice Khanna said.

He underscored the judiciary's commitment and responsibility as "protectors of citizens' rights and dispute resolvers".

The Chief Justice identified his top priorities as making judgments comprehensible to the citizens, promotion of mediation, adoption of focused reforms in criminal case management such as reducing trial duration and efforts to make litigation less gruelling. He termed the judiciary the "third wing of democracy".

Chief Justice Khanna was administered the oath of office by President Droupadi Murmu at the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

The short but impressive ceremony saw Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Ministers, former Chief Justices of India, and sitting and retired judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts in attendance.

Six-month tenure

Justice Khanna succeeds Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, and is scheduled to retire on May 13, 2025.

After being sworn in, Chief Justice Khanna acknowledged the gathered audience before travelling to the Supreme Court to hear the 47 cases listed at Court One – as the Chief Justice's court is called.

Next door, in Court Two, where he had presided for months before his appointment as the Chief Justice, hangs the life-size portrait of his uncle, the legendary Justice H.R. Khanna, whose championing of personal liberty during the dark days of Emergency in 1977 cost him his Chief Justiceship of India. The story of the elder Justice Khanna still resonates as activists and citizens booked under draconian laws struggle for bail.

The Chief Justice, in the statement, identified case backlogs, making litigation affordable and accessible, and the need for simplifying complex legal procedures as the key challenges ahead of him during his six-month tenure.

Topic - Appointment of CJI

⚖️ The Chief Justice of India is the head of the judiciary system and the Supreme Court of India.

🏛️ The appointment is made by the President of India, based on seniority among the judges of the Supreme Court.

📜 The process involves recommendations from the outgoing Chief Justice and consultations with other senior judges.

🗳️ The Chief Justice plays a crucial role in the appointment and transfer of judges in the higher judiciary.

🔍 The tenure of the Chief Justice is until the age of 65, unless they resign or are removed.

🏆 The Chief Justice also has significant influence over court proceedings and the allocation of cases.

📅 The appointment process has been subject to various reforms and discussions regarding transparency and merit.

Summary: The Chief Justice of India is appointed by the President, primarily based on seniority, and plays a vital role in the judiciary system

Overview of the Appointment Process

Key Articles:

Article 124: Establishment of the Supreme Court

Article 217: Appointment of High Court Judges

Eligibility:

Must be a judge of a High Court or an advocate with at least 10 years of experience.

Nominating Authority:

The outgoing Chief Justice of India typically recommends the next appointee.

TRAI chief to chair South Asian Telecom Regulators' Council

Aroon Deep
NEW DELHI

Delegates from Afghanistan, Pakistan Sri Lanka, Bhutan, the Maldives and Nepal attend event

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India has hosted South Asian nations for a multilateral event in New Delhi. Notably, the South Asian Telecommunication Regulators' Council (SATRC), the three-day event from Monday organised by the Asia Pacific Telecommunity (APT), has a delegation from the Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, a significant inclusion.

The Afghan officials present at the annual council declined to answer questions, but provided their names: Saed Baraat Shah Agha Nadeem, the chairman of the Afghanistan Telecom Regulatory Authority (ATRA), Sebghatullah Andar, the Telecommunication Monitoring and Control Director, and Rohullah Raihan, a protocol director. There was also a Pakistani delegation, led by Khawar Siddique Khokhar, member (Compliance & Enforcement) at the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA).

At the plenary session, TRAI Chairman Anil Kumar Lahoti was voted the chair of SATRC for the coming year, a customary appointment as India host-

"It is important that Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) policies are increasingly related to development objectives," Mr. Lahoti said in remarks after being voted chair.

He brought up spam as an issue on which countries would have to collaborate to address. "This is not a political forum, this is a sectoral gathering," he told *The Hindu* when asked about the significance of the countries in attendance. "We are fortunate that all the eight member countries of the SATRC are present here." The other countries were Sri Lanka, Bhutan, the Maldives, and Nepal.

"We need to work harder and more patiently than ever to build our region," Mr. Nadeem of ATRA said at his remarks in the plenary session, in which he also highlighted the importance of regional and sub-regional cooperation in telecommunications,

Topic → South Asian Telecommunication Regulators' Council (SATRC)

Overview of SATRC

Purpose: Coordination among South Asian telecom regulators

Significance: Enhances regional cooperation in telecommunications

Members: Various South Asian countries' telecom regulatory authorities

Recent Developments

Leadership Changes:

Anil Kumar Lahoti elected as Chairman

Focus on strengthening digital policies

Conferences:

SATRC-25 conference held in New Delhi

Discussions on secure, standard-driven digital policies

- At present, SATRC is consisted of nine South Asian countries. The countries are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Affiliate members from those countries are also taking active participation in the council's activity.

Key Focus Areas

Development Goals:

- Improve telecommunications infrastructure
- Foster innovation in the telecom sector

Policy Initiatives:

- Encourage transparent regulations across the region
- Collaborate on cybersecurity measures

Challenges

Digital Divide: Addressing disparities among member states

Regulatory Harmonization: Aligning policies for seamless communication

Future Directions

Strengthening Cooperation: Enhance collaboration among regulators

Sustainable Development: Focus on eco-friendly telecom practices

Women naval officers circumnavigating globe reach Australia in their first stop

Dinakar Peri
NEW DELHI

After a 39-day voyage at sea, two women officers undertaking a global circumnavigation expedition in Indian Naval Sailing Vessel *Tarini*, arrived at its first port of call in Australia on Saturday after covering a distance of 4,900 nautical miles from Goa. The historic expedition was flagged off from Goa by Navy chief Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi on October 2.

Around 2.30 p.m. IST on November 9, after a challenging 39-day voyage at sea under Navika Sagar Parikrama-II, *INSV Tarini* arrived at its first port of call in Fremantle, Australia, the Navy said in a statement.

"The vessel has covered a distance of 4,900 NM from Goa, crossing the Equator on October 16 and the Tropic of Capricorn on October 27. During this 38-day non-stop voyage, the Indian Navy duo of Lt. Cdr. Dilna K. and Lt. Cdr. Roopa A. encountered a range of weather conditions from calm to severe, facing winds up to 40 knots and sea state of six," the Navy said.

Two women Navy officers, Dilna K. and Roopa A., aboard *INSV Tarini* arrive at the first port of call in Freemantle, Australia. ANI

Throughout the journey, the crew remained in good health and high spirits, demonstrating resilience in the face of extreme conditions, it stated. The progress of the expedition has been closely followed by Admiral Tripathi receiving daily updates.

As *INSV Tarini* arrived in Fremantle, it was given a warm welcome by dignitaries, including the Consul-General of India at Perth, the Defence Adviser from Canberra, the Secretary of the Indian Navy Sailing Association (INSA), representatives from the Royal Australian Navy, along with members of the media and Indian naval veterans residing in Australia. The celebration was further enriched by the sound of classical music, which the Tamil Association of Western Australia performed using *parai* (drum) and *kombu thaarai* (drum), offering a rich cultural touch to the reception, the Navy said.

Commander Abhilash Tomy (retired), an accomplished sailor who has been mentoring the crew since August 2023, said they had sailed well till now.

"We estimated 35 days for the trip and the crew has managed in 38, which is quite fair," he said on the first leg of the voyage. "There was a wide variety of conditions from calm to rough. The boat looks to be in good condition, which means that the crew has looked after it well, sailing conservatively but averaging good speeds," he told *The Hindu*.

Topic → the Indian Naval Sailing Vessel Tarini Expedition

Overview of the Expedition

- Duration: 39 days at sea 🌊
- Distance: 4,900 nautical miles from Goa to Fremantle 🇦🇺
- Flagged Off: By Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi on October 2, 2023

Key Events During the Voyage

- Arrival: November 9, 2023, at Fremantle
- Crossings:
  - Equator: October 16
  - Tropic of Capricorn: October 27
- Weather Conditions: Varied from calm to severe ⛈️
  - Winds up to 40 knots
  - Sea state of six

Crew Details

Officers: Lt. Cdr. Dilna K. and Lt. Cdr. Roopa A. 👩‍✈️👩‍✈️

Health: Good health and spirits throughout the journey

Mentorship: Commander Abhilash Tomy (retired) providing guidance

Reception in Fremantle

Welcome Ceremony: Warm reception by dignitaries 🎉
- Consul-General of India at Perth
- Defence Adviser from Canberra
- Secretary of the Indian Navy Sailing Association
- Royal Australian Navy representatives

Cultural Celebration:
- Performance by Tamil Association of Western Australia

Challenges Faced

Weather Variability: Encountered a range of conditions
Sailing Strategy: Conservative sailing approach for safety ⚓

Will financial roadblocks continue to hinder conservation efforts?

A big bone of contention at the COP16 was the mobilisation of resources to meet the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework target of $700 billion a year for biodiversity conservation by 2030, including $30 billion from developed countries. But pledges at COP16 totalled $163 million

Aparna Sundaresan
Indu K. Murthy

A view of the closing session at the COP16 summit in Cali, Colombia, November 1, 2024. CAMILO RODRIGUEZ/REUTERS

The 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP16) to the U.N. Convention on Biological Diversity recently concluded in Cali, Colombia. Representatives from U.N. countries tried to negotiate measures to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030, which threatens both human well-being and the stability of human societies. A key sticking point was who'd pay for implementing these measures and how much.

A highlight of COP16 was the engagement of Indigenous people and local communities – but otherwise it raised a big red flag: it revealed countries are not on track to meet the "30x30" target, which calls for the world to protect 30% of the world's land and oceans by 2030.

How much of a setback is this?

The highs of COP16

Inclusive decision-making: Negotiators reached a landmark agreement to establish a permanent body made up of Indigenous people and members of local communities and agreed this body's inputs would have to be included in decisions about biodiversity conservation. The move is intended to protect traditional knowledge systems and strengthen their representation and participation in policymaking.

At COP16, negotiators also recognised the role of people of African descent in conserving nature and made sure to include them in biodiversity initiatives and help integrate their traditional knowledge and conservation practices into global efforts.

Biodiversity funding: COP16 established a framework called the 'Cali Fund.' It obligates major corporations – particularly in the pharmaceutical and biotechnology sectors – to share the financial benefits they derive from using genetic resources with the communities that nurture those resources. Companies have to contribute 0.1% of their revenue or 1% of their profits from products developed using genetic information to the fund. This figure could potentially exceed $1 billion a year and should help support biodiversity conservation projects and benefit local communities.

Half of the money from this fund will be allocated to Indigenous communities to help conservation efforts and to acknowledge their contributions to biodiversity. Contributions to the fund are voluntary, but it is a critical step towards more equitable benefit-sharing in the realm of biodiversity, especially considering the challenges surrounding global financing for biodiversity initiatives.

Biodiversity defence: COP16 also proposed guidelines to manage invasive alien species, a direct driver of biodiversity loss, by developing new databases, improving cross-border trade regulations, and enhancing coordination with e-commerce platforms. This decision emphasises the need for technical support, capacity building, and international cooperation across developing countries.

Momentum for blue: Negotiators also agreed to a new and upgraded process to identify 'Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas' (EBSAs), which are critical and vulnerable parts of the ocean. This process has faced various political and legal hurdles since its inception in 2008; COP16 revived it by agreeing on mechanisms to update existing EBSAs and identify new ones.

One Health: The Global Action Plan on Biodiversity and Health established at COP16 underscores the need for a holistic "One Health" approach, which calls for a collective focus on ecosystem, animal, and human health. By addressing the common drivers of biodiversity loss and poor health, such as deforestation and climate change, the plan aims to prevent zoonotic diseases, reduce non-communicable diseases, and promote sustainable ecosystems. It also encourages partnerships among health professionals, conservationists, and policymakers to develop tools and measures to track the progress of biodiversity plus health initiatives.

Innovating with caution: Redesigning organisms or creating new biological systems (synthetic biology) was an important topic of discussion at COP16. Applications – including bioengineered species for ecosystem restoration or sustainable materials to reduce resource strain – are promising because they can address environmental challenges. However, researchers have raised concerns over the risks involved and the unintended ecological effects of introducing synthetic organisms that could disrupt ecosystems, affecting natural species.

Countries' representatives also discussed regulatory frameworks to manage these risks and ensure a balance between innovation and conservation.

The lows of COP16

Among the unresolved issues at the meeting, financial commitments and a lack of a monitoring framework are at the forefront.

Uphill battle for finance: A big bone of contention was the mobilisation of financial resources to meet the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) target of $700 billion a year for biodiversity conservation by 2030, including $30 billion from developed to developing countries. But pledges at the conference totalled only $163 million.

Redesigning organisms or creating new biological systems was an important topic of discussion at COP16. Applications – including bioengineered species for ecosystem restoration or sustainable materials to reduce resource strain – are promising because they can address environmental challenges

Disagreements over the governance and distribution of funds led to an impasse, with discussions on financial mechanisms being suspended without resolution. This was because developing nations advocated for a dedicated global nature fund for conservation, whereas wealthy nations blocked the proposal due to concerns over fund structure and the idea that existing frameworks were enough to meet financial needs.

Monitoring and implementation: Implementing the GBF was another key issue at COP16, but progress was limited. Only 44 of the 196 countries submitted an updated National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plan (NBSAP) review framework for evaluating their progress through a "global stocktake." Many countries have still not submitted their NBSAPs. The lack of a mandatory enforcement framework could weaken the goal.

India at COP16

India unveiled its updated NBSAP at COP16, outlining a roadmap for biodiversity conservation efforts aligned with the GBF. The updated plan aims to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 and achieve harmonious coexistence with nature by 2050 through a "Whole-of-Government" and "Whole-of-Society" approach.

India is challenged with balancing conservation with economic growth. So the updated NBSAP outlines 23 national biodiversity targets and emphasises a transformative approach to biodiversity conservation and ecosystem restoration. In particular, it focuses on inter-agency cooperation, financial solutions, and involving community members in restoring degraded ecosystems, protecting wetlands, and sustainably managing marine and coastal areas.

Looking ahead

Establishing inclusive decision-making bodies and frameworks for benefit-sharing shows progress. But without adequate financial commitments and robust monitoring mechanisms, reaching the 2030 targets will be difficult.

While nations reflect on the outcomes of COP16, it is clear that conserving biodiversity is crucial for environmental health, socio-economic resilience, and climate stability. For nations like India, where biodiversity is deeply tied to cultural heritage and economic stability, the stakes are particularly high.

Governments must set ambitious targets and take steps to translate these into actionable, measurable, and time-bound goals. Transparency in reporting and shared knowledge systems are vital for tracking progress and addressing gaps. As the world looks forward to COP17 in Armenia next year, collaborative action and cross-border efforts could make or break our ability to beat the triple planetary crises of pollution, climate change, and biodiversity loss.

(Aparna Sundaresan is a senior analyst and Indu K Murthy leads the Climate, Environment and Sustainability sector, both at the Center for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP), a research-based think tank.aparna.sundaresan@cstep.in, indukmurthy@cstep.in)

Topic -- COP16

🌍 COP16 Conclusion: The 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the U.N. Convention on Biological Diversity took place in Cali, Colombia, focusing on halting biodiversity loss by 2030.

💰 Funding Framework: The 'Cali Fund' was established, requiring major corporations to share financial benefits from genetic resources, potentially exceeding $1 billion annually for biodiversity conservation.

🤝 Indigenous Engagement: A landmark agreement was reached to create a permanent body of Indigenous people and local communities to ensure their input in biodiversity conservation decisions.

🌱 30x30 Target: The meeting highlighted that countries are not on track to meet the "30x30" target of protecting 30% of the world's land and oceans by 2030.

🌍 Inclusion of African Descent: The role of people of African descent in nature conservation was recognized, ensuring their traditional knowledge is integrated into global biodiversity efforts.

📈 Voluntary Contributions: Contributions to the Cali Fund are voluntary, but they represent a significant step towards equitable benefit-sharing in biodiversity initiatives.

⚠️ Setback Acknowledgment: The conference raised concerns about the current trajectory of biodiversity conservation efforts and the need for urgent action
🌍 Biodiversity Defense: COP16 proposed guidelines to manage invasive alien species, emphasizing the need for databases, trade regulations, and international cooperation.
🌊 Momentum for Blue: A new process was agreed upon to identify and update Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs), addressing previous political and legal challenges.

🏥 One Health Approach: The Global Action Plan on Biodiversity and Health promotes a holistic approach to tackle ecosystem, animal, and human health, aiming to prevent diseases and promote sustainable ecosystems.

⚗️ Innovating with Caution: Discussions on synthetic biology highlighted its potential for ecosystem restoration but raised concerns about ecological risks and the need for regulatory frameworks.

🤝 International Cooperation: Emphasis on technical support and capacity building in developing countries to enhance biodiversity management and health initiatives.

📊 Partnerships Encouraged: The plan encourages collaboration among health professionals, conservationists, and policymakers to track progress in biodiversity and health initiatives.

⚖️ Regulatory Frameworks: Countries discussed the need for regulations to balance innovation in synthetic biology with conservation efforts to mitigate ecological risks.

Summary: COP16 focused on biodiversity management, marine area protection, a holistic health approach, and the cautious advancement of synthetic biology, emphasizing international cooperation and regulatory frameworks

💰 Financial Commitments: The COP16 meeting highlighted unresolved issues regarding financial commitments, particularly the target of $700 billion annually for biodiversity conservation by 2030.

🌍 Pledges vs. Needs: Only $163 million was pledged at the conference, far below the required financial mobilization, including $30 billion from developed to developing countries.

⚖️ Governance Disputes: Disagreements over the governance and distribution of funds led to a stalemate, with developing nations pushing for a global nature fund, which wealthy nations opposed.

📉 Suspended Discussions: Discussions on financial mechanisms were suspended without resolution due to differing views on fund structure and adequacy of existing frameworks.

📊 Monitoring Challenges: Implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) faced challenges, with only 44 out of 196 countries submitting updated National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs).

🚫 Lack of Enforcement: The absence of a mandatory enforcement framework could undermine the effectiveness of the GBF goals.

📅 Global Stocktake: Many countries have yet to submit their NBSAPs, limiting the ability to evaluate progress through a global stocktake.

INDIA AT COP16

🌍 Updated NBSAP: India presented its updated National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) at COP16, focusing on biodiversity conservation aligned with the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).

📅 2030 and 2050 Goals: The plan aims to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 and achieve harmonious coexistence with nature by 2050.

🤝 Whole-of-Government and Society Approach: Emphasizes a collaborative approach involving government and society in biodiversity conservation efforts.

🌱 23 National Biodiversity Targets: The updated NBSAP includes 23 specific targets aimed at transformative biodiversity conservation and ecosystem restoration.

💰 Financial Solutions and Community Involvement: Highlights the need for financial solutions and community engagement in restoring ecosystems, protecting wetlands, and managing marine areas sustainably.

🔍 Challenges Ahead: Without adequate financial commitments and monitoring mechanisms, achieving the 2030 targets may be difficult.

🌐 Importance of Collaboration: The text stresses the need for collaborative action and transparency in reporting to effectively address the intertwined crises of pollution, climate change, and biodiversity loss.

Summary: India's updated NBSAP at COP16 outlines a comprehensive strategy for biodiversity conservation, aiming for significant targets by 2030 and 2050, while emphasizing collaboration and community involvement.

The COP29 summit venue in Baku. ALEXANDER NEMENOV/AFP

A guide to COP29 climate summit jargon

Reuters

With U.N. climate talks tackling complex topics from energy policy to global financial aid, the annual summit has developed its own ever-growing lexicon.

Here's a guide to some of the terms in play at this year's COP29 discussions.

UNFCCC: This acronym stands for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which is the name of both the 1992 treaty committing nearly 200 countries to fighting global warming and the secretariat set up to implement that treaty.

COP: This acronym stands for Conference of Parties, and describes the annual summit of countries that have signed the UNFCCC treaty. This year's COP29 meeting in Baku marks the 29th such gathering since the UNFCCC took effect in 1994.

NCQG: This relatively new acronym will be focal at COP29. It stands for the New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance, an annual target for funding developing country climate efforts.

NDC: Most often, these NDCs or Nationally Determined Contributions are referred to simply as "country pledges" and describe national action plans for reducing its emissions and adapting to climate impacts. The next round of NDCs are due in February, though some countries plan to submit new plans in Baku.

GLOBAL WARMING: The term describes the gradual increase in the global average temperature.

CLIMATE CHANGE: While this term is often used interchangeably with "global warming," it means something different. Climate change describes global warming as well as its consequences, such as extreme weather events.

GREENHOUSE GASES: These gases, sometimes referred to simply as GHGs, are able to trap solar heat in the atmosphere and cause global warming. The most powerful GHGs are methane (CH4) and carbon dioxide (CO2), which are also referred to as "carbon emissions" because both molecules contain carbon. The world's excess carbon emissions come mostly from the burning of fossil fuels and other industrial activities.

NET ZERO: This term does not mean releasing zero emissions, but rather releasing no more than the amount being recaptured by CO2 abatement technologies, tree planting, or other means. Reaching "net zero" would mean atmospheric GHG concentrations stop increasing.

LOSS AND DAMAGE: Governments last year pledged $800 million toward a new 'loss and damage' fund to help poorer nations being hit by climate-fueled disasters. The fund, which now has a director and a host nation, will now be deciding how the funds should be dispersed and calling for more contributions at COP29.

CARBON OFFSET: Also known as a "carbon credit," these instruments allow a country or company to compensate for some of their carbon emissions by investing in projects to bring emissions down elsewhere.

ARTICLE 6: This term refers to a provision in the Paris Agreement on carbon offsets, and is used as shorthand for UNFCCC efforts to regulate international trading in carbon credits. Governments are hoping to resolve rules for trading carbon offsets at COP29 to allow for these markets to become operational.

Topic -- key terms COP29

🌍 UNFCCC: Stands for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, a 1992 treaty involving nearly 200 countries committed to combating global warming.

🏛️ COP: Acronym for Conference of Parties, referring to the annual summit of UNFCCC signatories; COP29 is taking place in Baku, marking the 29th gathering since 1994.

💰 NCQG: New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance, a new focus at COP29 aimed at establishing annual funding targets for climate efforts in developing countries.

📜 NDC: Nationally Determined Contributions, or country pledges, which outline national plans for emission reductions and climate adaptation; new NDCs are expected in February, with some to be submitted in Baku.

🌡️ Global Warming: Refers to the gradual increase in the global average temperature.

🌪️ Climate Change: Encompasses global warming and its effects, including extreme weather events.

🌱 Greenhouse Gases: GHGs, such as methane (CH_4) and carbon dioxide (CO_2), trap solar heat in the atmosphere, primarily emitted through fossil fuel combustion and industrial activities.

🌍 Net Zero Definition: "Net zero" refers to balancing emitted greenhouse gases (GHGs) with those recaptured, not eliminating emissions entirely.

📉 Impact on GHG Concentrations: Achieving net zero would halt the increase in atmospheric GHG concentrations.

💰 Loss and Damage Fund: An $800 million fund was established to assist poorer nations affected by climate-related disasters, with governance and fund distribution to be decided at COP29.

🌱 Carbon Offset Explained: Carbon offsets, or carbon credits, allow entities to compensate for their emissions by investing in projects that reduce emissions elsewhere.

📜 Article 6 of the Paris Agreement: This provision pertains to the regulation of international carbon credit trading, with hopes to finalize trading rules at COP29.

🤝 COP29 Goals: The upcoming COP29 conference aims to enhance contributions to the loss and damage fund and operationalize carbon offset markets.

🔄 Call for Contributions: The fund is actively seeking additional financial contributions to support its initiatives

Giving shape to India's carbon credit mechanism

Shashank Pandey

Research Fellow at the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy

The Conference of Parties-29, from November 11 to 22, 2024, in Baku, Azerbaijan, is about to shift focus to the heated discussion on the aspect of climate finance again. An essential component of this discussion will be the carbon credits framework and disagreements over it between developed and developing countries. India updated its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in 2023 to underline, among other things, the establishment of a domestic carbon market as a part of its climate strategy. The Energy Conservation (Amendment) Act of 2022 provided a statutory mandate for such a Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS). Through this, India aims to align its climate commitments under the Paris Agreement with broader economic goals. Yet, for the market to truly support these objectives, it must be meticulously designed to ensure credibility, efficiency, and fairness. From global experiences, India must incorporate two pivotal lessons in its carbon market framework for long-term success.

Upholding integrity of carbon credits

At the heart of any carbon market lies the integrity of its carbon credits. The global experience has seen the repercussions of inadequate accountability in credit generation, leading to instances of greenwashing. This issue is pronounced in the voluntary carbon market (VCM), where investigations have exposed overstatements of project benefits, especially within the forestry sector. A similar risk is feared in India's voluntary carbon market operationalised under the Green Credit Programme (GCP). The tree plantation guidelines released by the government under the GCP were criticised for perpetuating greenwashing by encouraging non-scientific tree plantation. It is also feared that under the CCTS, projects may fail to ensure "additionality", a critical measure ensuring that emission reductions exceed those of a business-as-usual scenario.

To navigate these challenges, India must enforce rigorous protocols to verify the authenticity of generated carbon credits. A proposed national registry would be a robust mechanism to track carbon credits and address potential double-counting issues. Additionally, independent third-party verifiers can play a crucial role in assessing the additionality and permanence of carbon reduction projects. By emulating international best practices from entities such as the IETA or Gold Standard that have greatly emphasised the generation of carbon credits, India can cultivate a high-integrity market, attracting domestic and global investors.

India's carbon credit mechanism needs to be aligned with international and domestic realities if it is to be effective

Alignment with global standards

India's carbon market must also harmonise with international carbon trading mechanisms, notably Article 6 of the Paris Agreement. Article 6.2 facilitates countries in achieving their climate objectives through Internationally Transferred Mitigation Outcomes (ITMOs), making compliance a critical aspect for participating nations. The Article 6 rulebook, finalised at the COP26 summit in Glasgow, outlines how countries can engage in carbon trading while upholding environmental integrity.

For India, this means incorporating mechanisms to prevent the double counting of credits, a crucial step to maintain the credibility of global emission reduction efforts. India can align its market with domestic and international standards by integrating transparent systems for accounting emissions reductions and carbon credit transfers. Such alignment and a focus on global best practices will enable India to contribute to global emissions reductions while actively safeguarding national interests.

One of the critical aspects is ensuring environmental integrity, specifically under Article 6.2, which establishes a framework for countries to cooperate on climate mitigation efforts through international carbon markets. The World Bank's "Ensuring Environmental Integrity under Article 6 Mechanisms" report emphasised maintaining robust environmental integrity within carbon markets, especially under the Paris Agreement's Article 6 framework. It highlights that carbon markets risk double-counting emissions reductions without stringent safeguards, which can dilute the credibility of climate commitments. The report stressed that high governance, verification, and accountability standards are necessary to avoid "low-quality" carbon credits from entering the market.

Focus on disclosure

Ensuring transparency is one mechanism to ensure compliance and conformance with such standards. To enhance transparency and uphold environmental integrity within India's carbon credit system, it is imperative to have comprehensive disclosure of project details, including carbon reduction techniques, benchmarks and third-party verification reports, on a centralised, easily accessible platform. Ensuring that projects adhere to stringent additionality criteria guarantees that the credits reflect real, additional emissions reductions. Regular audits are essential for verifying the sustainability of these projects. Oversight by independent auditors approved by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) in India is crucial, alongside real-time tracking of credit transactions to boost accountability and provide insights into the type of projects and their environmental impacts.

The Voluntary Carbon Markets Integrity Initiative (VCMI) framework introduces a tiered system for companies to assess carbon credit claims. This is to ensure the credibility of carbon offset claims, aiming to enhance market transparency. However, implementation faces challenges, especially within India's CCTS initiatives, due to potential transparency issues and the high costs of establishing monitoring, reporting, and verification systems. These costs could deter smaller projects initially.

India's carbon credit mechanism, albeit nascent, demands stringent enforcement and an alignment with international and domestic realities to be effective. By focusing on transparency and integrity, India has the opportunity to not only provide for a more mature carbon market but also to stimulate its climate finance aspirations, paving the way for practical, sustainable development.

Topic → Indian carbon market

🌍 Global Standards Alignment: India's carbon market needs to harmonize with international trading mechanisms, particularly Article 6 of the Paris Agreement.
📜 Article 6.2: This article facilitates countries in achieving climate objectives through Internationally Transferred Mitigation Outcomes (ITMOs), emphasizing compliance for participating nations.
🔍 Environmental Integrity: Ensuring environmental integrity is crucial, particularly to prevent double counting of carbon credits, which is vital for maintaining the credibility of emission reduction efforts.
🔗 Transparent Systems: India must integrate transparent systems for accounting emissions reductions and carbon credit transfers to align with both domestic and international standards.

📊 Robust Governance: High standards of governance, verification, and accountability are necessary to prevent low-quality carbon credits from entering the market.

🌱 Global Contribution: By aligning its carbon market with global best practices, India can contribute to global emissions reductions while protecting its national interests.

📈 World Bank Report: The World Bank emphasizes the importance of maintaining robust environmental integrity within carbon markets under the Paris Agreement's Article 6 framework.

Summary: India's carbon market must align with international standards to ensure environmental integrity and effective participation in global carbon trading.

Can AMU finally claim a 'minority' status?

What does Article 30(1) of the Constitution state? Why did the 1967 *Azeez Basha* judgment state that Aligarh Muslim University cannot be considered a minority institution? On what grounds has the 1967 judgment been revoked by the Supreme Court now?

EXPLAINER

Aaratrika Bhaumik

The story so far:

In a narrow 4-3 majority verdict, the Supreme Court on November 8, overturned its 1967 ruling in *S. Azeez Basha versus Union of India*, which had previously served as the basis for denying Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) its minority institution status. The majority verdict was penned by former Chief Justice of India (CJI) D.Y. Chandrachud and endorsed by Justices Sanjiv Khanna, J.B. Pardiwala, and Manoj Misra. Justices Surya Kant, Dipankar Datta and S.C. Sharma dissented.

What is a 'minority institution'?

Article 30(1) of the Constitution guarantees religious and linguistic minorities the fundamental right to establish and manage educational institutions of their choice. Article 30(2) further mandates that the state must ensure "equality of treatment" in granting aid to all educational institutions, regardless of their minority status. Notably, such institutions enjoy greater autonomy than most others. Under Article 15(5), they are exempt from providing reservations for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and may reserve up to 50% of seats for students from their own community. In the landmark *T.M.A. Pai Foundation* (2002) case, the Supreme Court clarified that a 'minority' status should be determined based on the demographic composition of the concerned State, rather than the national population.

What is the background of the case?

In 1875, Muslim reformer and educationist Sir Syed Ahmed Khan established the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental (MAO) College in Aligarh to offer modern British education rooted in Islamic values to Muslims. In 1920, the Aligarh Muslim University Act (AMU Act) was passed, incorporating MAO College and the Muslim University Association into AMU. Under Section 23 of the Act, only Muslims were permitted to be members of the university's governing body, known as the Court. While the institution primarily catered to Muslims, students from other religious communities were also admitted. In 1951, this mandate for Muslim-only representation on the Court was abolished. A subsequent amendment in 1965 redistributed the Court's powers among other administrative bodies, with provisions allowing the President of India to nominate members to it.

In 1967, the Supreme Court, in *Azeez Basha*, upheld the amendments to the Act, reasoning that AMU was neither established nor administered by the Muslim minority since it had been established through central legislation. This decision sparked widespread protests, ultimately leading to an amendment of the AMU Act in 1981, which officially recognised the university's minority status.

In 2005, the university introduced a policy reserving 50% of seats in its postgraduate medical courses for Muslim students. This was subsequently challenged before the Allahabad High Court which struck it down on the ground that the university did not qualify as a minority institution as per the *Azeez Basha* ruling.

In 2006, a two-judge Bench of the Supreme Court stayed the reservation policy and referred the case to a larger Bench.

Long awaited: The entrance gate of Aligarh Muslim University. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

In 2019, a three-judge Bench headed by former CJI Ranjan Gogoi referred the *Azeez Basha* decision for reconsideration by a seven-judge Bench.

The matter stayed in limbo till October 2023 when CJI Chandrachud constituted a seven-judge Bench to hear it.

What did the majority rule?

Justice Chandrachud, in an expansive interpretation of Article 30, affirmed that educational institutions established prior to the adoption of the Constitution are equally entitled to the protections granted under Article 30(1). He clarified that statutory enactments conferring legal recognition or status upon such institutions do not compromise their minority character, provided their foundational purpose was "predominantly" aimed at benefiting the minority community.

The majority verdict further emphasised that an institution does not forfeit its minority character simply because its administration is no longer vested with the community. The judges reasoned that founders or the minority community might appoint individuals from outside the community to helm the administrative affairs, particularly if the institution seeks to focus on secular education. "This may be the case for professional colleges which offer specialised courses such as law, medicine, or architecture, where the founders may not possess the knowledge, experience, or insight necessary to manage or administer the institution personally," they added.

Accordingly, the majority overturned the longstanding *Azeez Basha* ruling, asserting that treating legal formalities for recognition or degree conferral as grounds to nullify an institution's minority status would constitute a breach of fundamental rights. However, Justice Chandrachud clarified that the onus rests on the concerned religious or linguistic minorities to demonstrate that the educational institution was primarily established for the benefit of their community to qualify for protection under Article 30(1). He pointed out that such an assessment of the "brain" behind an institution's creation could be conducted through a comprehensive review of documents, correspondence and historical records.

Dismissing the Centre's contentions, the judges further declared that recognising an institution as one of national importance does not inherently diminish its minority character, as the national and minority attributes are "not at odds with each other nor mutually exclusive." They also refused to assign any weight to either the provision of religious instruction or the prominence of religious buildings, such as the St. Stephen's College church or AMU mosque, in determining an institution's minority status.

What do the dissenting opinions state?

Justice Kant primarily differed from the majority on procedural grounds, arguing that the two-judge Bench in *Anjuman-e-Rahmaniya versus District Inspector of Schools* (1981), which had initially questioned the precedent set by a five-judge Bench in *Azeez Basha*, overstepped its jurisdiction by referring the matter directly to a seven-judge Bench. He reasoned that this undermined the Chief Justice's authority as the "master of the roster."

While concurring with Justice Kant on procedural impropriety, Justice Datta questioned the legitimacy of AMU's minority status, asserting that conferring such recognition after nearly a century would amount to "historical revisionism." Notably, he critiqued the lack of constructive discussions among the judges on the Bench, revealing that the draft opinions from Justice Chandrachud – later forming the majority judgment – were received late and underwent frequent revisions. In a likely reference to the majority ruling, Justice Datta remarked that judges should refrain from disregarding long-standing precedents in favour of judicial activism.

Justice Sharma too concluded that initial support from a minority community does not automatically grant an institution minority status, particularly if the actual control vests with the government.

What happens next?

A regular Bench, assigned by CJI Sanjiv Khanna, will now reevaluate AMU's minority character based on criteria set by the majority without being constrained by *Azeez Basha*. Meanwhile, the stay on the university's 2005 reservation policy will persist until a final determination is made.

This reassessment is likely to have far-reaching implications for AMU's autonomy, its authority to reserve seats for Muslim students, and the broader discourse on minority rights in India.

THE GIST

- Article 30(1) of the Constitution guarantees religious and linguistic minorities the fundamental right to establish and manage educational institutions of their choice.
- In 1967, the Supreme Court, in *Azeez Basha*, reasoned that AMU was neither established nor administered by the Muslim minority since it had been established through central legislation.
- Justice Chandrachud affirmed that educational institutions established prior to the adoption of the Constitution are equally entitled to the protections granted under Article 30(1). He clarified that statutory enactments conferring legal recognition or status upon such institutions do not compromise their minority character, provided their foundational purpose was "predominantly" aimed at benefiting the minority community. The majority verdict further emphasised that an institution does not forfeit its minority character simply because its administration is no longer vested with the community.

SAURABH PANDEY
CSE
FROM BASICS TO UPSC BRILLIANCE

Topic - SC ON Aligarh Muslim University

- I n a narrow 4-3 majority verdict, the Supreme Court on November 8, overturned its 1967 ruling in S. Azeez Basha versus Union of India, which had previously served as the basis for denying Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) its minority institution status.

Minority institution

📜 Constitutional Guarantee: Article 30(1) of the Constitution grants religious and linguistic minorities the right to establish and manage their own educational institutions.

⚖️ Equality of Treatment: Article 30(2) mandates that the state must provide equal treatment in funding educational institutions, irrespective of their minority status.

🏫 Autonomy: Minority institutions enjoy greater autonomy compared to other educational institutions.

🚫 Reservation Exemption: Under Article 15(5), minority institutions are exempt from providing reservations for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

👥 Community Reservations: Minority institutions can reserve up to 50% of seats for students from their own community.

- ⚖️ Demographic Determination: The Supreme Court's T.M.A. Pai Foundation (2002) ruling clarified that 'minority' status is determined by the demographic composition of the state, not the national population.
- 📈 Legal Precedent: The T.M.A. Pai Foundation case is a landmark decision that shapes the understanding of minority rights in education

What did the majority rule?

- 📜 Article 30 Interpretation: Justice Chandrachud affirmed that educational institutions established before the Constitution are entitled to protections under Article 30(1).
- 🏫 Minority Character: Statutory recognition does not compromise an institution's minority character if its primary purpose benefits the minority community.
- 👥 Administration Flexibility: An institution retains its minority status even if its administration is led by individuals outside the community, especially for——— secular education.

⚖️ Overturning Precedents: The majority ruling overturned the Azeez Basha decision, stating that legal formalities for recognition cannot nullify minority status.
📚 Burden of Proof: Religious or linguistic minorities must prove that an institution was primarily established for their benefit to qualify for Article 30(1) protections.

🌍 National Importance: Recognizing an institution as nationally important does not diminish its minority character; both attributes can coexist.

🏛️ Religious Instruction Irrelevance: The presence of religious instruction or buildings does not determine an institution's minority status.

Summary: The majority ruling emphasizes that educational institutions established for minority communities retain their status and protections under Article 30, regardless of administrative changes or national recognition

Amid FPI exodus, the retail equity cult rises

In October, domestic investors poured in a record ₹41,886.7 crore in equity mutual funds, even as foreign investors pulled out ₹94,000 crore

Ashokamithran T.
MUMBAI

Silver lining: Mutual funds' assets increased to ₹68.2 lakh crore last month from ₹67.7 lakh crore in September. AP

October may have seen the highest exodus of foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) from the Indian stock markets but domestic retail investors remained upbeat about equity investments, ramping up their savings parked in mutual funds focused on investing in shares to a record high of almost ₹42,000 crore.

Data released by the Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI) on Monday showed inflows into equity mutual funds were 21.7% over September's fresh investment receipts of ₹34,419 crore. This was in sharp contrast to FPIs who appeared to have turned bearish on India, selling shares worth ₹94,000 crore in October, and whose net investments into the country this year turned negative during the first week of November.

The assets under management of mutual funds rose to ₹68.2 lakh crore last month from ₹67.7 lakh crore in September, with inflows into Systematic Investment Plans or SIPs hitting a record ₹25,323 crore.

"The continued SIP surge signals the growing preference for disciplined investing in Indian investors" said AMFI chief executive Venkat Chalasani.

Topic - FPI

📈 A Foreign Portfolio Investor (FPI) is an individual or institutional investor who invests in financial assets in a country outside their own.

🌍 FPIs typically invest in stocks, bonds, and other securities to diversify their investment portfolios.

💰 FPIs are attracted to foreign markets for potential higher returns and to spread risk across different economies.

📊 Unlike Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), FPIs do not seek to control or manage the companies they invest in.
🔄 FPIs can quickly enter and exit markets, making them more liquid compared to other types of investments.

📉 Regulatory frameworks in different countries can impact the activities and strategies of FPIs.

🏦 FPIs play a significant role in enhancing market liquidity and can influence stock prices in the markets they invest in.

Summary: A Foreign Portfolio Investor (FPI) invests in financial assets outside their home country, seeking diversification and potential returns without seeking control over the companies

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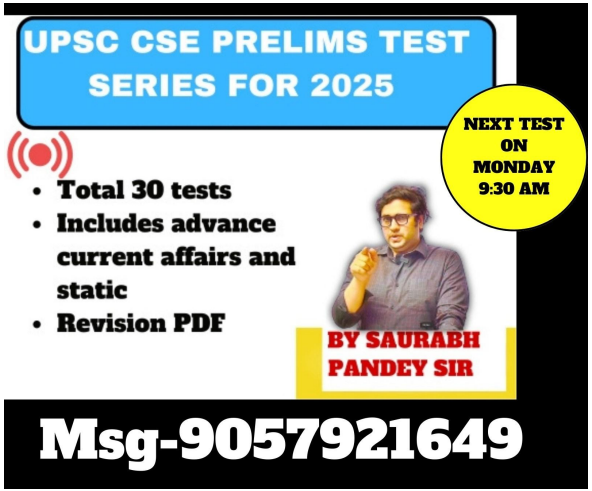
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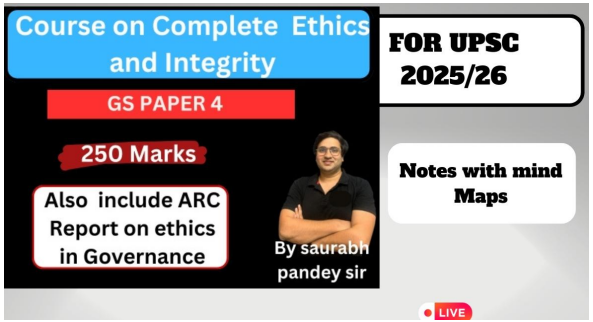
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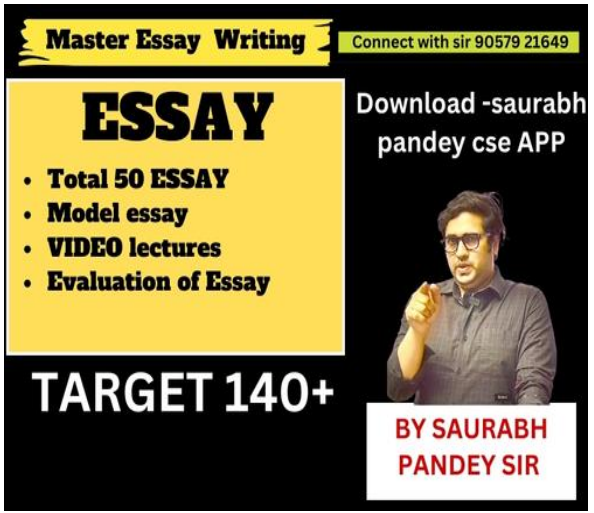
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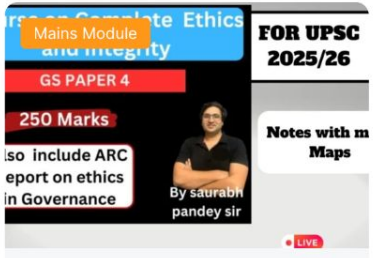

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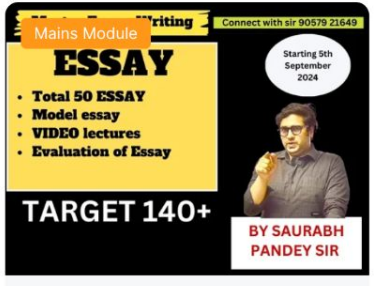

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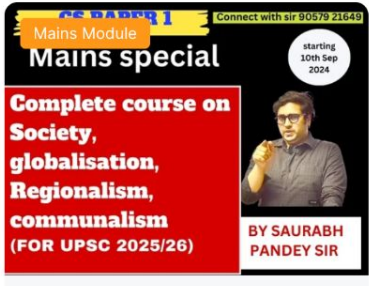

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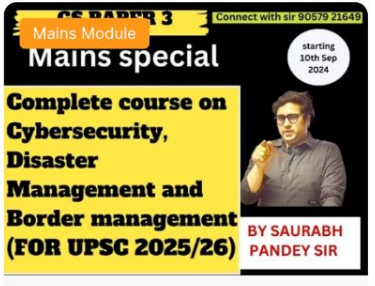

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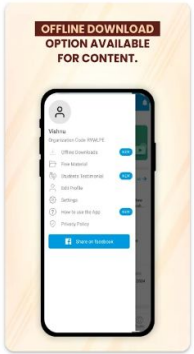

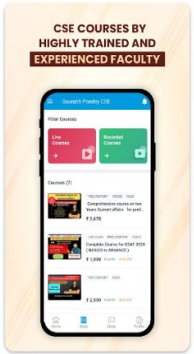

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