

## Edition: International

### The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

May 2024						
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### An Important News - Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary

- ➡ Over 30 flamingos were found dead. These birds were killed in a hit by an aircraft near the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (Near this Sanctuary).
- ➡ The Maharashtra Government has declared the area along the western bank of Thane Creek as the "Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary" since 2015.
- ➡ It is Maharashtra's second marine sanctuary after the Malvan sanctuary.
- ➡ It is recognized as an "Important Bird Area" by the Bombay Natural History Society..

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**GS:3 [Defence : Various Security Forces & Agencies & Their Mandate]****About CDS:**

- ➡ **Current CDS : Anil Chauhan**
- ➡ It is the military head and permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC) of the Indian Armed Forces.
- ➡ It is the highest-ranking uniformed officer on active duty in the Indian military and chief military adviser to the Minister of Defence.
- ➡ The Chief also heads the **Department of Military Affairs**.
- ➡ The CDS is assisted by a vice-chief, the Chief of Integrated Defence Staff.
- ➡ The first Chief of Defence Staff was General Bipin Rawat.
- ➡ **Aim :** improving coordination, tri-service effectiveness and overall integration of the combat capabilities of the Indian armed forces.
- ➡ The government amended Service Rules of the Army, Navy and Air Force, allowing retired Service Chiefs and three-star officers eligible for consideration for the country's top military post.

## Joint culture in the armed forces is way forward: CDS

Integrated Theatre Commands will lead to reforms such as single- to multi-domain operations and fusing space and cyberspace into traditional domains, says General Anil Chauhan

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Stating that jointness and integration are prerequisites to the creation of functional Integrated Theatre Commands (ITC), the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), General Anil Chauhan, said on Tuesday that theatre commands would lay the foundation for catapulting the armed forces into the next orbit of military preparedness and war fighting.

"The creation of such commands will separate the 'operational' functions from the Raise-Train-Sustain (RTS) and other administrative functions, and will allow greater focus of the operational commander to matters of security," Gen. Chauhan said at the 22nd Major General Samir Sinha memorial lecture organised at the United Service Institution of India.

Jointness 2.0, which is developing a joint culture in the armed forces, is the way forward, he stressed,



**Future plans:** Gen. Anil Chauhan delivers the 22nd Major General Samir Sinha Memorial Lecture in New Delhi on Tuesday. PTI

calling upon the three Services to create a joint culture as they move towards forming joint operational structures. The CDS said Jointness 1.0 was about better bonhomie and consensus among the Services, and as there were no major differences, there is an impetus to move towards the next level which is Jointness 2.0.

**Highest common factor**

"Joint culture, though different from service-specific

culture, needs to respect the uniqueness of each Service. We must be able to distil the best of each Service, and incorporate the highest common factor, rather than settle for the least common denominator," Gen. Chauhan said. In this regard, he said the proposed ITCs would not be an end state but the beginning of the next set of reforms.

The ITC would lead to many reforms such as single to multi-domain opera-

tions, fusing space and cyberspace into traditional domains, digitisation of battlefield information and visualisation, net-centric to data-centric among others, he added.

**Mandate of CDS**

The mandate of the CDS is to ensure "jointness" of the three Services in operations, logistics, transport, training, support services, communications, repairs and maintenance and the top priority is the reorganisation of the armed forces geography-centric ITC.

The effort got delayed due to a lack of consensus between the Services and was stalled by the death of the first CDS, Gen. Bipin Rawat, and then the delay in the appointment of his successor. With Gen. Anil Chauhan taking over as the second Chief of Defence Staff, the stalled process is back on track and is in advanced stages. The formation of ITC has also been included by the BJP in its election manifesto.

**Multi Domain Operations (MDO)**

- ➡ It is not just actions on land, in sea, air, cyber, space and in the electromagnetic spectrum. It comprises operations conducted across multiple domains and contested spaces.
- ➡ It needs convergence of capabilities to overcome an adversary's strengths. This means having a common operating picture across all domains which forms the basis of any decision.
- ➡ It is the best positioned and capable operator of any service using its capabilities across any domain. Thus, an Army coastal missile battery could be tasked to strike an enemy naval vessel detected by the radar of an Air Force aircraft.

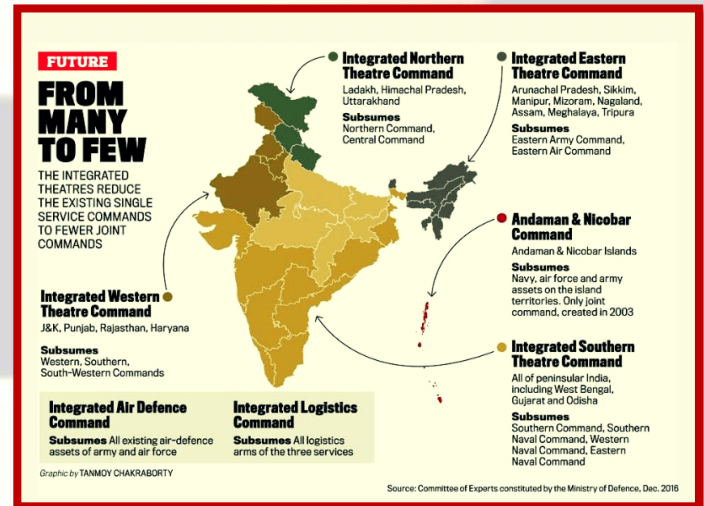
**Integrated Theatre Commands**

## Daily News Analysis

- Combining the resources of all three services ( the Army, Navy, and Air Force) under a single commander to secure a particular geographic area is known as integrated theatre commands.
- There are theatre commands in several countries, including China and the United States. The reports of the military reforms commission headed by Lt. General (ret.) DB Shekatkar made the concept of Theatre Command a suggestion.

### Current commands in India

- The Indian armed forces currently have **17** commands.
- There are **seven commands** each of the Army (Northern, Eastern, Southern, Western, Central, South-western and Army Training Command)
- The **Air Force has seven commands** (Western, Eastern, Southern, Southwestern, Central, Training and Maintenance).
- The **Navy has three commands** (Western, Eastern and Southern).
- A **four-star military commander** is in charge of each command.





## In Odisha, villagers facing caste-based discrimination seek help to cast vote

**Satyasundar Barik**  
BRAHMAGIRI (ODISHA)

The 2024 Lok Sabha election might be a nationwide celebration in democracy for millions, but Ashok Sethi and his family, citizens living in this coastal region, may have to forego another opportunity to vote.

Five years ago, at Nua-gaon in the Krushnaprasad block of the Puri Lok Sabha constituency, Mr. Sethi and his fellow villagers faced ostracism for refusing to wash dirty clothes, an exploitative vocation they had inherited from their forefathers.

Now stranded in Brahmagiri, 15 km from his own village, Mr. Sethi holds out hope that the Odisha Human Rights Commission (OHRC) will intervene, enabling them to exercise their right to vote.

In the same locality lives Maheshwar Barik and his



Villagers who were driven out from their villages stranded in Brahmagiri. BISWARANJAN ROUT

family members, who too had refused to perform the "hereditary" job of cutting hair and clearing leftover food on social occasions in 2018. They were also driven out from Manpur village in the Brahmagiri police station limits. Following the OHRC's intervention, they managed to go back to their own village under police protection and vote in the 2022 panchayat election.

Mr. Barik hopes a simi-

lar arrangement will enable him to cast his vote this year.

On the other hand, San-gram Puhan, who fled his village, along with 30 families, in 2021 upon their refusal to perform caste-based servitude are enjoying a rare rapprochement, though temporary, at Nathapur in the Krushnaprasad block of Puri.

As every vote matters this time in a closely fought election, the villagers who were driven out have been invited to return to exercise their franchise.

Baghambar Pattnaik, a renowned human right activist, on Monday moved the OHRC, seeking police protection for families driven out from their villages, so that they could exercise of their voting rights. "These villagers are defenceless in the wake of the dominance of upper caste families in their respective villages. Even after the pas-

sage of six years, they feel threatened when thinking of returning home and participating in the election. I have urged that these villagers should be taken in police vans to their respective polling booths for the protection of their voting rights," Mr. Pattnaik said.

The activist said he had taken up over 100 cases of caste-based "social boycotts" to the OHRC and National Human Rights Commission.

"In 2014, voters belonging to the washermen community in the Kanas block of Puri district were able to cast votes after the NHRC intervened in a similar social boycott," Mr. Pattnaik said.

Mr. Sethi said 20 voters belonging to four discriminated and shunned families had missed the 2019 simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly elections in the State, and the 2022 panchayat election.

The caste system has been a persistent feature of Indian society for centuries. Due to its harmful and divisive effect on society, concerted efforts have been made to eliminate the caste system and its influence, such as:

- ➔ **Constitutional provisions:** Right to equality (article 14), right against discrimination (article 15), prohibition of untouchability (article 17), National Commissions for SCs, STs, OBCs (NCSC, NCST, NCBC), etc.
- ➔ **Legal provisions:** Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, Protection of Civil Rights Act, Manual Scavengers and Rehabilitation Act, National Human Rights Commission etc.
- ➔ **Political measures:** Dr BR Ambedkar's call for 'annihilation of caste,' affirmative-action based policies, initiatives from civil society organisations etc.

## Daily News Analysis

**Despite efforts to eliminate it, the caste system has evolved and continues to persist in the following ways:**

- ➡ **Social discrimination:** Lower-caste individuals face discrimination in various spheres of life, including individual rights, opportunities in education and employment, and access to public services and public places.
- ➡ **Caste Inequalities:** The caste system has created structural inequalities with certain castes being historically disadvantaged. These structural inequalities persist. As a result, development status has a rough parallel with caste status, as most of the impoverished masses of India belong to backward castes.
- ➡ **Caste-based politics:** Political parties treat caste groups as vote-banks. Parties form caste based alliances and coalitions to fight elections and form government. This caste-based politics reinforces the caste system and perpetuates divisions among different communities.
- ➡ **Marriages:** Caste continues to hold its sway in formation of marriage relations. Inter-caste marriages remain a taboo and face stiff opposition from society, in the form of social boycott and even violence including 'honour killing.'
- ➡ **Social Inertia:** Certain cultural beliefs such as the notion of purity and pollution reinforce the caste system by associating certain roles, behaviours, and attributes to individuals based on their caste. E.g., employment of scheduled caste persons in roles of scavenging or use of caste-based slurs.

**Following factors have contributed to the continuance of caste-based discrimination and inequality in society:**

- ➡ **Political Reasons:**
  - **Mandalisation of politics:** Politicization of caste due to 'Mandal politics' has made caste the deciding factor in politics.
  - **Periodic elections:** Repeated cycle of electoral campaigning reinvigorates caste consciousness due to caste-based political mobilisation.
- ➡ **Policy inadequacy:**
  - **Inadequate reservation system:** The reservation system has not proved sufficient in either ending casteism or caste-based disabilities. Few dominant castes within the reserved castes corner the benefits.
  - **Legal Measures:** A top-down approach of constitutional-legal structures fails at the ground level due to inadequate social conviction against the evils of caste-based discrimination. E.g., demands for changes in the SC-ST Act due to alleged misuse.
- ➡ **Socialisation:** Children absorb casteism from within families and relatives as they see them practice it in their behaviour and language.
- ➡ **Structural Inequalities:** Dalits and lower castes face resource poverty and lack of assets like land which remain in hands of dominant castes. Due to historical backwardness in education, literacy etc., backward castes face generational lag in availing opportunities.

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## GS 2 : [International Relation]

The ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine has intensified with Russia's recent nuclear posturing, including drills simulating the use of tactical nuclear weapons and the stationing of nuclear arms in Belarus. This escalation raises significant concerns about global nuclear stability and the principles governing nuclear deterrence.

**Controversy Surrounding Russia's Nuclear Posturing:**

- ➡ **Introduction to the Issue:** Russia's nuclear manoeuvres, framed as responses to comments by Western leaders supporting Ukraine, seem more like attempts at brinkmanship rather than reactions to genuine existential threats. This nuclear posturing is particularly alarming given the potential for lowered thresholds for nuclear weapon use.
- ➡ **Shift in Nuclear Doctrine:** Historically, nuclear deterrence relied on the principle of mutually assured destruction and the notion that nuclear weapons are a last resort. Russia's current strategy represents a significant departure from these norms, potentially normalizing the use of nuclear threats in conventional conflicts.
- ➡ **Impact on Global Security:** By lowering the nuclear use threshold, Russia risks setting a precedent that could encourage other nuclear and non-nuclear states to adopt similar postures, thus increasing global nuclear proliferation and instability.

**Global Security Concerns and Policy Implications:***The risks of Russia's nuclear posturing*

**T**he war between Russia and Ukraine has entered its second year and there is no end in sight. Earlier this month, in a concerning escalation, Russia announced that it plans to hold drills simulating the use of tactical nuclear weapons along the border with Ukraine. Earlier in March, Russia had said that it would station nuclear weapons in Belarus. Such nuclear posturing in the middle of a war is worrying.

Russia cited statements by leaders from countries which are aiding Ukraine in the war as the reason for upping the nuclear ante. It was referring to French President Emmanuel Macron's statement that he would potentially deploy troops to Ukraine and British Foreign Secretary David Cameron's remark that Ukraine will be allowed to use British long-range weapons to strike targets inside Russia.

**Shift in understanding**

However, Russia's plans appear to be attempts at brinkmanship and coercion rather than responses to an actual existential threat. Russia's claims that Mr. Macron and Mr. Cameron's comments constitute an existential threat requiring nuclear preparedness are a stretch at best. Neither France nor the U.K. has made moves that genuinely threaten Russia's survival which would then call for Moscow's justification for its action.

On the surface, Russia's sabre-rattling may seem like a predictable move to deter further intervention by Ukraine and its allies. After all, threatening the first use of nuclear weapons for deterrence, that is, to prevent the start or escalation of conflict, is often a tactic used by nuclear powers like North Korea which face threats at their borders from larger adversaries. However, in the latest crisis, Russia is mulling lowering the threshold for the use of nuclear weapons. If this becomes an accepted norm, it could have huge consequences.

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**Ankit K.**

is a Delhi-based analyst specialising in the intersection of warfare and strategy

For decades after the Cold War, the logic of nuclear deterrence has been based on certain inviolable understandings. Most important among these is that any nuclear use would inevitably result in destruction in both the countries fighting the war. This principle of deterrence is known as mutually assured destruction. In addition, a country resorted to the nuclear option only in case of an existential threat by an adversary. In the case of Russia and Ukraine, the war is largely destabilising on conventional levels and does not directly jeopardise Russia's own existence; yet, Russia has shown its willingness to exercise its nuclear option. Moreover, the Russian nuclear doctrine codified nuclear first use only in the most extreme case of threat to its survival. The fact that these long-held nuclear red lines are being stretched and redrawn over the course of a war represents worrying shifts in the core understanding of nuclear deterrence.

**Dangerous precedent**

By making explicit nuclear threats at lower levels of conflict, Russia is on a dangerous path. If nuclear powers routinely threaten to use nuclear weapons as a coercive tactic when pushed into a corner during a conventional conflict, it may encourage other states to follow suit. This may lead to smaller nuclear-armed nations wondering whether openly brandishing their nuclear might will be enough to undermine the resolve of stronger conventional military opponents. Countries like Iran and North Korea may feel emboldened to cross the nuclear weapons threshold, confident that flaunting their nuclear deterrent will make adversaries back down out of fear of escalation.

Thus, while the odds of any tactical nuclear strike by Russia remain low at present, Moscow's nuclear signalling sets a dangerous precedent. Nuclear weapons may no longer be weapons of last resort. The clear distinction

between nuclear and conventional warfare is gradually being undermined in this war.

There are other dangerous precedents being set too. Russia's move threatens to undermine already lacklustre and admittedly halfhearted efforts towards non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and disarmament. The ongoing war has exposed the vulnerability of non-nuclear states to aggression from states with nuclear weapons. Russia's move could potentially motivate other states to pursue nuclear weapons to deter threats. Ukraine's decision in the Budapest Memorandum to give up its nuclear arsenal in the 1990s, in exchange for security assurances from Russia, the U.K., and the U.S., now appears ill-advised. Iran's recent statement regarding revisiting its nuclear doctrine if there are existential threats from Israel is a case in point. While Iran has maintained that it does not intend to develop nuclear weapons, the prospect of Iran shifting its policy in response to perceived existential threats from Israel undermines non-proliferation efforts. Such a move may discourage other smaller nations like North Korea from voluntarily letting go of their nuclear capabilities or pursuing disarmament, fearing a similar fate of nuclear aggression.

The unfolding dynamics have created a new nuclear flash point. By raising the risk by lowering the threshold for the use of nuclear weapons, Russia has changed the understanding of how nuclear deterrence works. Simultaneously, its actions illustrate how nuclear weapons provide asymmetric advantages in case of conventional warfare. This has thus increased proliferation anxieties for smaller states across the world, especially in regions where there are long-standing tensions between states. If the cloud of nuclear war floats above the battlefield, war could take precedence over deterrence and proliferation over disarmament leading to further nuclear instability.



## Daily News Analysis

- **Dangerous Precedent:** Russia's actions may embolden other nations like Iran and North Korea to consider or flaunt nuclear capabilities as a deterrent in conventional conflicts. This could lead to an increase in nuclear arsenals globally and undermine efforts toward nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.
- **Erosion of Non-Proliferation Efforts:** The war has highlighted the vulnerabilities of non-nuclear states, potentially motivating them to seek nuclear capabilities. The Budapest Memorandum, where Ukraine gave up its nuclear arsenal for security assurances, now appears ineffective, potentially discouraging future disarmament agreements.
- **Shift in Nuclear Deterrence:** The traditional clear distinction between nuclear and conventional warfare is being blurred. Russia's signaling suggests that nuclear weapons might be considered for coercion in lower-stakes conflicts, thereby altering the global nuclear deterrence landscape.



## GS 3 : [Environment : Climate Change]

# Analysing local environmental footprints

What is the importance of evaluating household environmental footprints? Which are the three footprints analysed in this study? Do these footprints associated with luxury consumption show an increase as one analyses households that are richer and affluent? What should policymakers do?

### EXPLAINER

Soumyajit Bhar

**W**hile climate change is a global concern, issues such as water scarcity and air pollution are often localised or regionalised. For example, excessive water use in one region may not directly affect water scarcity elsewhere. Focusing on local environmental issues is crucial; and herein comes the importance of understanding household environmental footprints.

#### How are household environmental footprints distributed in India?

A recent study titled 'Water, air pollution and carbon footprints of conspicuous/luxury consumption in India', of which the author is one of the contributors, highlights the environmental impact of affluent individuals, particularly those who engage in consumption beyond basic needs. This study specifically examines the CO<sub>2</sub>, water, and particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) footprints associated with luxury consumption choices among households in India across different economic classes. The analysis contrasts these luxury consumption footprints with those associated with non-luxury consumption. The luxury consumption basket includes various categories such as dining out, vacations, furniture, social events etc.

#### How were environmental impacts assessed in this study?

Methodologically, the study employed an input/output analysis of the entire economy to map or link different components of household consumption to the resources or materials involved in their production. This approach enabled the capture and aggregation of the (indirect or embedded) environmental impacts associated with each stage of production. For example, the water footprint was utilised to quantify water



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usage throughout various stages of production of different goods and services, as well as direct water usage by households. The PM<sub>2.5</sub> footprint encompassed both embedded emissions and direct emissions from household activities such as the use of fuelwood, kerosene, and vehicular fuels. Similarly, the CO<sub>2</sub> footprint was used to capture both embedded and direct CO<sub>2</sub> emissions associated with household consumption.

#### What were the key findings?

The study reveals that all three environmental footprints increase as households move from poorer to richer economic classes. Specifically, the footprints of the richest 10% of households are approximately double the overall average across the population. A notable surge in footprints is observed from the ninth to the 10th decile, with the air pollution footprint experiencing the

highest increase at 68% in the 10th decile compared to the ninth. Conversely, the rise in the water footprint is the lowest at 39%, while CO<sub>2</sub> emissions stand at 55%. This suggests that Indian consumers, particularly those in the top decile, are still in the 'take-off' stage, with only the wealthiest segment exhibiting substantial increases in consumption-related environmental footprints. The heightened footprints in the 10th decile are primarily attributed to increased expenditure on luxury consumption items.

#### What are the key contributors?

The study identifies eating out/restaurants as a significant contributor to the rise in environmental footprints, particularly in the top decile households, across all three footprints. Additionally, the consumption of fruits and nuts is highlighted as a factor driving the increase in water footprint in the 10th decile. Luxury consumption

items such as personal goods, jewellery, and eating out contribute to the rise in CO<sub>2</sub> and air pollution footprints. Notably, the presence of fuels like firewood in the consumption baskets of poorer households is emphasised, showcasing contrasting impacts of modern energy transitions. While transitioning from biomass to LPG reduces direct footprints, the lifestyle choices associated with affluence lead to a rise in PM<sub>2.5</sub> footprints (and subsequently, the CO<sub>2</sub> footprint).

The average per capita CO<sub>2</sub> footprint of the top decile in India, at 6.7 tonnes per capita per year, is noted to be higher than the global average of 4.7 tonnes in 2010 and the annual average of 1.9 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>eq/cap required to achieve the Paris agreement target of 1.5°C. While still below the levels of the average citizen in the U.S. or U.K., this disparity underscores the need for urgent attention from policymakers. Given the influence of elite lifestyles on broader societal aspirations, policymakers should prioritise efforts to nudge consumption levels of affluent households downwards to align with sustainability goals.

#### What are the implications?

The study emphasises that while sustainability efforts often focus on global climate change, global environmental footprints do not necessarily align with local and regional scale footprints. However, local and regional environmental issues exacerbated by luxury consumption disproportionately affect marginalised communities. For instance, water scarcity and air pollution disproportionately impact marginalised groups, further marginalising them, while affluent sections can afford protective measures such as air-conditioned cars and air purifiers. This underscores the importance of multi-footprint analysis in addressing environmental justice concerns and ensuring equitable sustainability efforts.

*Soumyajit Bhar is Assistant Professor at the School of Liberal Studies of BML Munjal University, Gurugram.*

### THE GIST

▼ A recent study highlights the environmental impact of affluent individuals, particularly those who engage in consumption beyond basic needs.

▼ The study identifies eating out/restaurants as a significant contributor to the rise in environmental footprints, particularly in the top decile households, across all three footprints.

▼ The study emphasises that while sustainability efforts often focus on global climate change, global environmental footprints do not necessarily align with local and regional scale footprints.

## Context

- ➡ While climate change is a global concern, issues such as water scarcity and air pollution are often localised or regionalised.
- ➡ **For example, excessive water use in one region may not directly affect water scarcity elsewhere.**
- ➡ Focusing on local environmental issues is crucial; and herein comes the importance of understanding household environmental footprints.

## How are household environmental footprints distributed in India?

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## Daily News Analysis

- This study specifically examines the CO<sub>2</sub>, water, and particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) footprints associated with luxury consumption choices among households in India across different economic classes.
- The analysis contrasts these luxury consumption footprints with those associated with non-luxury consumption. The luxury consumption basket includes various categories such as dining out, vacations, furniture, social events etc.

### What were the key findings?

- The study reveals that all three environmental footprints increase as households move from poorer to richer economic classes.
- Specifically, the footprints of the richest 10% of households are approximately double the overall average across the population.
- A notable surge in footprints is observed from the ninth to the 10th decile, with the air pollution footprint experiencing the highest increase at 68% in the 10th decile compared to the ninth.
- Conversely, the rise in the water footprint is the lowest at 39%, while CO<sub>2</sub> emissions stand at 55%.
- This suggests that Indian consumers, particularly those in the top decile, are still in the 'take-off' stage, with only the wealthiest segment exhibiting substantial increases in consumption-related environmental footprints.
- The heightened footprints in the 10th decile are primarily attributed to increased expenditure on luxury consumption items.

### What are the key contributors?

- The study identifies eating out/restaurants as a significant contributor to the rise in environmental footprints, particularly in the top decile households, across all three footprints.
- Additionally, the consumption of fruits and nuts is highlighted as a factor driving the increase in water footprint in the 10th decile.
- Luxury consumption items such as personal goods, jewellery, and eating out contribute to the rise in CO<sub>2</sub> and air pollution footprints.
- While transitioning from biomass to LPG reduces direct footprints, the lifestyle choices associated with affluence lead to a rise in PM<sub>2.5</sub> footprints (and subsequently, the CO<sub>2</sub> footprint).
- The average per capita CO<sub>2</sub> footprint of the top decile in India, at 6.7 tonnes per capita per year, is noted to be higher than the global average of 4.7 tonnes in 2010 and the annual average of 1.9 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>eq/cap required to achieve the Paris agreement target of 1.5°C.
- While still below the levels of the average citizen in the U.S. or U.K., this disparity underscores the need for urgent attention from policymakers.
- Given the influence of elite lifestyles on broader societal aspirations, policymakers should prioritise efforts to nudge consumption levels of affluent households downwards to align with sustainability goals.

### Implications

- The study emphasises that while sustainability efforts often focus on global climate change, global environmental footprints do not necessarily align with local and regional scale footprints.

## Daily News Analysis

- ➔ However, local and regional environmental issues exacerbated by luxury consumption disproportionately affect marginalised communities.
- ➔ For instance, water scarcity and air pollution disproportionately impact marginalised groups, further marginalising them, while affluent sections can afford protective measures such as air-conditioned cars and air purifiers.
- ➔ This underscores the importance of multi-footprint analysis in addressing environmental justice concerns and ensuring equitable sustainability efforts.

## Important Terms | Organisation For Prelims

### Non-Performing Assets (NPAs)

- ➔ **Definition:** A NPA is a loan or advance for which the principal or interest payment remained overdue for a period of 90 days.
  - For banks, a loan is an asset because the interest paid on these loans is one of the most significant sources of income for the bank.
  - When customers, retail or corporates, are not able to pay the interest, the asset becomes 'non-performing' for the bank because it is not earning anything for the bank.
  - Therefore, the RBI has defined NPAs as assets that stop generating income for banks.
  - Banks are required to make their NPAs numbers public and to the RBI as well from time to time.
- ➔ **Classification of assets:** As per the RBI guideline, banks are required to classify NPAs further into:
  - **Substandard assets:** Assets which have remained NPA for a period less than or equal to 12 months.
  - **Doubtful assets:** An asset that has remained in the substandard category for a period of 12 months.
  - **Loss assets:** It is considered uncollectible and of such little value that its continuance as a bankable asset is not warranted, although there may be some recovery value.
- ➔ **NPA Provisioning:** Provision for a loan refers to a certain percentage of loan amount set aside by the banks.





## Daily News Analysis

- The standard rate of provisioning for loans in Indian banks varies from 5-20% depending on the business sector and the repayment capacity of the borrower.
- In the cases of NPA, 100% provisioning is required in accordance with the Basel-III norms.
- ➔ **GNPA and NNPA:** There are primarily two metrics that help us to understand the NPA situation of any bank.
  - **GNPA:** It is an absolute amount that tells about the total value of gross NPAs for the bank in a particular quarter or financial year as the case may be.
  - **NNPA:** Net NPAs subtracts the provisions made by the bank from the gross NPA. Therefore, net NPA gives the exact value of NPAs after the bank has made specific provisions for it.
- ➔ **NPA Ratios:** NPAs can also be expressed as a percentage of total advances. It gives us an idea of how much of the total advances is not recoverable. For example,
  - GNPA ratio is the ratio of the total GNPA of the total advances.
  - NNPA ratio uses net NPA to find out the ratio to the total advances.



## Climate change, a passing cloud in Indian politics

**T**he fifth phase of India's general election is over and the electoral rhetoric of both the major parties, i.e., the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Indian National Congress, have conspicuously side-lined one of the most critical issues of our times – climate change. This omission is particularly stark against the backdrop of global environmental crises and the pressing demands for sustainable development.

Recent events, such as environmental activist Sonam Wangchuk's outcry over ecological degradation in Ladakh – underscoring the urgency of integrating robust climate action into national policy frameworks – shows us how critical climate mitigation and adaptation has become and its urgent need to become political, especially for electoral politics. Despite Mr. Wangchuk's calls for environmental security in the region, which resonated widely among the people of Ladakh, and then, subsequently, on social media, the response from the Modi government has been muted. This lack of response is symptomatic of a larger political reluctance to engage with environmental issues as central electoral themes.

### A calculated omission

The reluctance of both the BJP and Congress to foreground climate change in their electoral platforms is not just a matter of oversight but a calculated omission. Integrating serious climate action into their political agendas would entail acknowledging and addressing the trade-offs between rapid industrial growth and environmental sustainability. Such acknowledgment could alienate powerful industrial constituencies and disrupt the economic status quo, which heavily relies on fossil fuels and high-emission industries.

This strategic avoidance plays out in the manifestos, where climate policies, if mentioned, are vague and lack commitment to specific, measurable actions. For instance, the Congress party's manifesto has a chapter, 'Environment Protection and Climate Change Authority' and proposes a 'Green New Deal Investment Programme' without clear directives or commitments to specific reductions in carbon emissions. Similarly, the BJP's manifesto praises past initiatives but fails to propose forward-looking strategies that align with the global scientific consensus, which calls for immediate and drastic action to mitigate climate change impacts.

The absence of detailed climate action plans in



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Integrating serious climate action into political agendas could alienate powerful industrial constituencies and disrupt the economic status quo

these manifestos reflects a broader trend in Indian politics where short-term economic gains are often prioritised over long-term environmental sustainability. That said, we must remember India's vulnerability to climate impacts, including rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and severe air pollution, which pose significant threats to its population and economy. Moreover, the silence on climate change in electoral discussions sends a disheartening message to educated, middle-class voters, who are increasingly aware of and concerned about global environmental issues. This demographic, capable of influencing policy through public opinion and voting power, I believe, seeks more than just token mentions of sustainability. They demand actionable plans that ensure that India not only meets its international commitments under agreements such as the Paris Agreement but also adopts a leadership role in global climate advocacy.

Why, then, is there such a glaring gap between the needs of the electorate and the political offerings? Part of the reason lies in the perceived political cost of ambitious climate policies. Comprehensive climate strategies may require tough decisions, such as phasing out coal, increasing taxes or prices on carbon emissions, and enforcing stringent environmental regulations – measures that could be unpopular in the short run despite their long-term benefits.

### What we have now

Currently, the National Action Plan on Climate Change serves as the overarching guiding body for India's climate policy efforts that are spread across several policy documents, sector-specific strategies, and laws. In 2023, some very important policy documents and laws covering the energy sector emerged, which included the National Electricity Plan 2023, the National Green Hydrogen Mission and the Energy Conservation (Amendment) Act, 2022. These documents and laws play a crucial role in shaping the energy landscape. That said, one must note that the Indian leadership has shown no commitments in phasing out coal. These policies, however, are top-down in nature; these are being made by the top brass, based on international trends and immediate requirements. India, as a nation, is still lacking a considerable number of citizens who demand corrective policies to ensure climate policies and actions, as a bottom-up approach.

The Climate Action Tracker (developed by Climate Analytics, an independent global climate science and policy institute with an office in Berlin) gives India an overall rating of "Highly

Insufficient" in its policies and actions tracking, based on 2030 projections. That said, there is more that the central and various other State governments can do. States or regions that are on the frontline of vulnerability need to develop plans that bring India's projection below 2-degree pre-industrial levels. A good example of comprehensive climate policymaking in India would be the Mumbai Climate Action plan developed by the Mumbai municipality, in collaboration with the C40 and the World Resources Institute.

In contrast to the complex web of climate bodies in India, we have a silver lining that should mark the beginning of climate jurisprudence in our country: *M.K. Ranjitsinh and Others vs Union of India*, where in March 2024, the Supreme Court of India ruled that the people of India have the right to be free from the adverse effects of climate change by drawing upon Article 21 and Article 14 of the Indian Constitution. This opens up many government sector bodies working on climate policies and action to much-needed legal scrutiny and makes them answerable to citizens.

### The challenge

So, what now? The challenge for India, therefore, is to bridge this gap between electoral politics and climate policy. It requires a shift in political calculations, where long-term environmental and social gains are valued over immediate economic benefits. And, the media and civil society have pivotal roles in this transformation. By consistently highlighting the inadequacies in the current political discourse on climate change, they can drive a narrative that places environmental sustainability at the heart of India's development agenda.

The 2024 general election presents a critical opportunity for Indian voters, especially the informed and increasing middle class, to demand that their leaders take a more proactive and committed stance on climate change. This means not only voting with an eye towards policies that promise immediate benefits but also supporting those that promise sustainable growth and environmental security. The electorate must push for a paradigm shift in how climate policy is integrated into the broader national development strategies, ensuring that the progress made today does not come at the expense of tomorrow's security.

As India stands at this electoral crossroads, the choices made will resonate far beyond the immediate political cycle, influencing the global fight against climate change and the future of sustainable development worldwide.

**GS Paper 02 : Environment – Environmental pollution and degradation**

**PYQ: (UPSC CSE (M) GS-1 2020):** Examine the status of forest resources of India and its resultant impact on climate change. (250 words/15m)

**Practice Question:** Analyze the role of the judiciary in shaping climate jurisprudence in India and its potential to influence policy and action on climate change.

**Context:** The article highlights the conspicuous absence of climate change discourse in India's recent general election, despite global environmental crises and calls for sustainable development.

- ➡ The discourse on climate change in Indian politics highlights the glaring omission of this critical issue from the electoral agendas of major political parties. This omission persists despite the pressing global environmental crises and the urgent need for sustainable development.
- ➡ It discusses the calculated omission of climate issues by major political parties, the challenges of integrating climate action into electoral platforms, and the urgent need for proactive policies amidst increasing public awareness.

### Political Avoidance:

- ➡ The recent Indian general election witnessed a notable absence of discourse on climate change from major political parties' agendas.
- ➡ Despite global environmental crises and calls for sustainable development, both the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Indian National Congress largely ignored this critical issue.
- ➡ This omission reflects a broader trend of sidelining long-term environmental sustainability for short-term economic gains.

### Calculated Omission

- ➡ The absence of climate change discourse is not accidental but a calculated omission by major political parties.
- ➡ Integrating serious climate action into their agendas would require acknowledging trade-offs between rapid industrial growth and environmental sustainability, potentially alienating powerful industrial constituencies.

### Vague Manifesto Commitments:

- ➡ Two of the largest parties in India BJP and Congress manifestos lack detailed climate action plans, with vague mentions of environmental policies that lack specific, measurable commitments.

## Daily News Analysis

- ➡ This reflects a broader trend in Indian politics prioritising short-term economic gains over long-term environmental sustainability.

### Public Awareness and Demand for Action:

- ➡ Educated middle-class voters, increasingly aware of global environmental issues, demand more than token mentions of sustainability in electoral discourse.
- ➡ However, the silence on climate change sends a disheartening message to this demographic, capable of influencing policy through public opinion and voting power.

### Challenges and Opportunities for Climate Action:

- ➡ India's vulnerability to climate impacts necessitates comprehensive climate strategies, but such policies may be unpopular due to short-term economic costs.
- ➡ While India has various climate policies and laws, including the National Action Plan on Climate Change, the country lacks significant bottom-up demand for climate action.
- ➡ **Legal and Policy Frameworks:** The Supreme Court's ruling in *M.K. Ranjitsinh vs Union of India* recognizes citizens' right (Articles 21 and 14 of the Indian Constitution) to be free from adverse climate effects, marking the beginning of climate jurisprudence in India.
- ➡ **Need for Political Will:** Bridging the gap between electoral politics and climate policy requires a shift in political calculations, valuing long-term environmental and social gains over immediate economic benefits. Media and civil society play crucial roles in driving a narrative that prioritises environmental sustainability in India's development agenda.
- ➡ **Role of Electorate in 2024 General Election:** The 2024 general election presents an opportunity for voters to demand more proactive and committed climate policies from their leaders. Informed voters must push for policies that ensure sustainable growth and environmental security, influencing the global fight against climate change.

### Conclusion:

- ➡ As India stands at an electoral crossroads, choices made will impact the global fight against climate change and the future of sustainable development worldwide.
- ➡ It's imperative for political parties and the electorate to recognize the urgency of climate action and integrate it into national policy agendas for a sustainable future.



## Daily News Analysis

### Absence of political discourse on climate change from major political parties' agendas in India:

#### ► Reasons for Absence of Political Discourse on Climate Change:

- **Priority on Economic Growth:** Political parties prioritise economic development over environmental concerns, viewing climate change as a secondary issue.
- **Lack of Public Awareness:** Limited public awareness and understanding of climate change mitigate political pressure to address the issue.
- **Short-Term Focus:** Political parties tend to focus on short-term electoral gains rather than long-term environmental sustainability.
- **Industry Influence:** Pressure from powerful industrial lobbies may discourage political leaders from advocating for stringent climate policies.
- **Complexity of the Issue:** Climate change is a complex and multifaceted issue, making it challenging for politicians to address effectively.

#### ► Challenges:

- **Policy Inertia:** Resistance to change existing policies and reluctance to implement new climate initiatives hinder progress.
- **Resource Constraints:** Limited financial resources and competing priorities pose challenges to funding climate mitigation and adaptation efforts.
- **International Commitments:** Meeting international climate commitments while balancing domestic interests presents a challenge for political leaders.
- **Political Polarisation:** Climate change often becomes politicised, leading to partisan divides and hindering bipartisan cooperation on solutions.

#### ► Way Forward:

- **Public Engagement:** Increase public awareness and engagement on climate change through education, outreach, and media campaigns.
- **Policy Integration:** Integrate climate considerations into broader policy agendas, such as economic development and energy security.
- **Stakeholder Collaboration:** Foster collaboration among government, industry, civil society, and academia to develop and implement climate policies.
- **Incentive Mechanisms:** Create incentives for businesses and individuals to adopt sustainable practices and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Capacity Building:** Enhance institutional capacity and expertise on climate change within government agencies and regulatory bodies.
- **International Cooperation:** Strengthen international partnerships and cooperation to address global climate challenges and fulfil international commitments.
- **Encourage Political Leadership:** Encourage political leaders to prioritise climate action and incorporate climate goals into their electoral agendas.
- **Policy Innovation:** Promote innovation in climate policy, including market-based mechanisms, technology solutions, and nature-based approaches.



## Daily News Analysis

- **Accountability Mechanisms:** Establish mechanisms to hold political leaders accountable for climate commitments and progress toward emissions reduction targets.

## Mapping : Africa

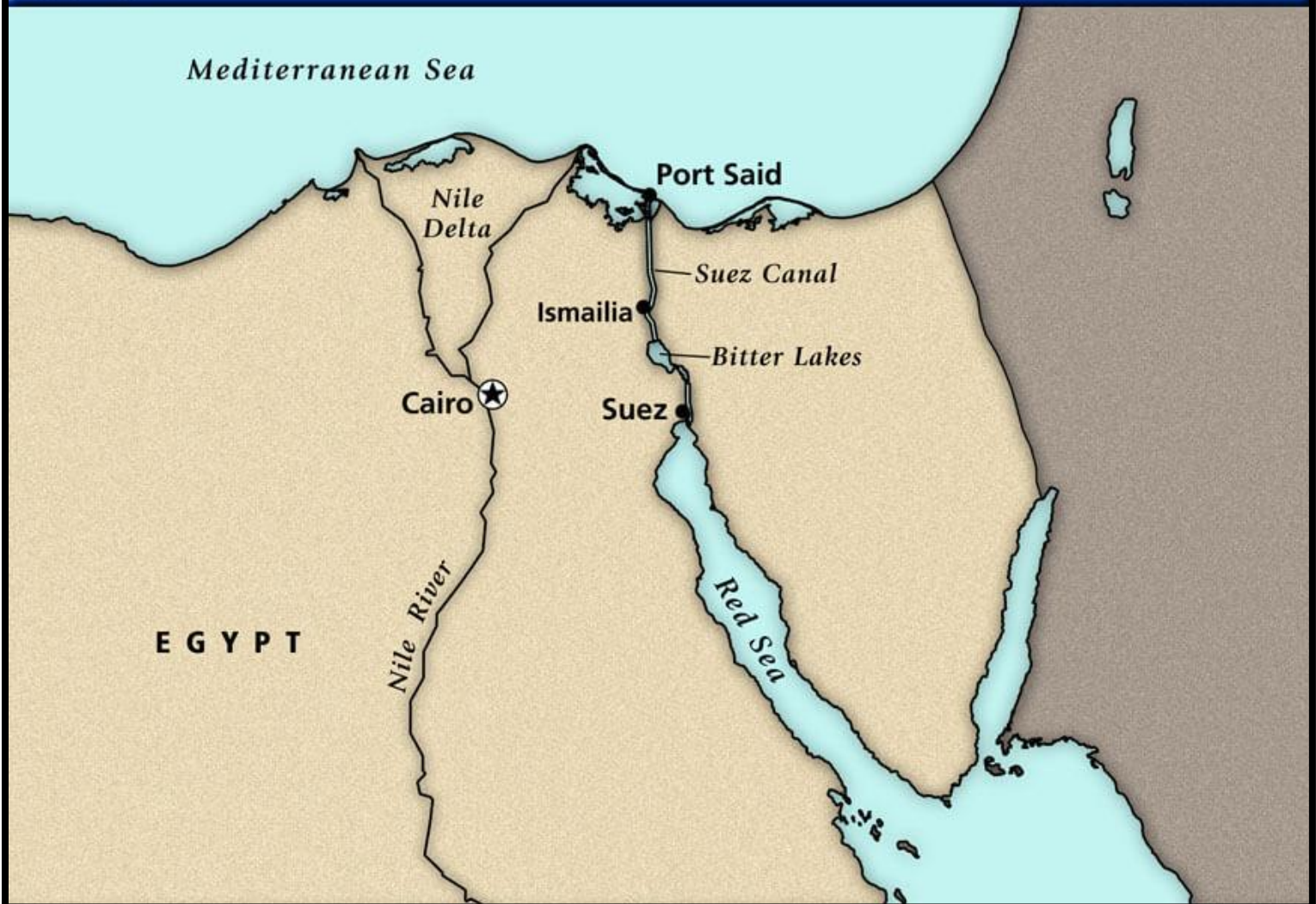


- ➡ Africa is the **second largest continent** in the area (30,330,000 sq Km) which covers 6% of Earth's total surface area and 20.4 % of its total land area.
- ➡ Africa is sometimes nicknamed the **"Mother Continent"** as it's the oldest inhabited continent on Earth. Africa is the **only continent** which is traversed by **the equator, the Tropic of Capricorn and the Tropic of Cancer**.
- ➡ **Greenwich Meridian passes** through the western part of Africa. It is the only continent where the **0° latitude meets the 0° longitudes**, these lines meet at the Gulf of Guiana.
- ➡ **Algeria** is Africa's largest country by area, and **Nigeria** by population. **Seychelles** is the smallest country in Africa.

## Daily News Analysis

- ▶ Separated from Europe by the **Mediterranean Sea**, it is joined with Asia at its northeast extreme end by the **Isthmus of Suez** 163 Km wide. It is bounded by the **Red Sea** along the **Sinai Peninsula** to the northeast, the **Indian Ocean** to the southeast, and the **Atlantic Ocean** to the west.
- ▶ It is divided in half almost equally by the Equator. Africa has eight major physical regions: the Sahara, the Sahel, the Ethiopian Highlands, the savanna, the Swahili Coast, the rain forest, the African Great Lakes, and Southern Africa.
- ▶ It has fully recognized **54 sovereign states**.

### Suez Canal





## Daily News Analysis

<b>Algeria</b>	<b>Guinea</b>	<b>Morocco</b>
<b>Angola</b>	<b>Guinea-Bissau</b>	<b>Mozambique</b>
<b>Benin</b>	<b>Kenya</b>	<b>Namibia</b>
<b>Botswana</b>	<b>Lesotho</b>	<b>Niger</b>
<b>Burkina Faso</b>	<b>Liberia</b>	<b>Nigeria</b>
<b>Burundi</b>	<b>Libya</b>	<b>Rwanda</b>
<b>Cameroon</b>	<b>Madagascar</b>	<b>Sao Tome and Principe</b>
<b>Cape Verde</b>	<b>Malawi</b>	<b>Senegal</b>
<b>Central African Republic</b>	<b>Mali</b>	<b>Seychelles</b>
<b>Chad</b>	<b>Mauritania</b>	<b>Sierra Leone</b>
<b>Comoros</b>	<b>Mauritius</b>	<b>Somalia</b>
<b>Congo</b>	<b>Morocco</b>	<b>South Africa</b>
<b>Democratic Republic of the Congo</b>	<b>Mozambique</b>	<b>Sudan (North)</b>
<b>Cote d'Ivoire</b>	<b>Namibia</b>	<b>South Sudan (Rep.)</b>
<b>Djibouti</b>	<b>Niger</b>	<b>Swaziland</b>
<b>Egypt</b>	<b>Nigeria</b>	<b>Tanzania</b>
<b>Equatorial Guinea</b>	<b>Sao Tome and Principe</b>	<b>Togo</b>
<b>Eritrea</b>	<b>Senegal</b>	<b>Tunisia</b>
<b>Ethiopia</b>	<b>Seychelles</b>	<b>Uganda</b>
<b>Gabon</b>	<b>Sierra Leone</b>	<b>Zambia</b>
<b>Gambia</b>	<b>Mauritania</b>	<b>Zimbabwe</b>
<b>Ghana</b>	<b>Mauritius</b>	