WHAT IS THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (ICC)?

The International Criminal Court recently issued arrest warrants for the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, his former Defence Minister and Hamas officials, accusing them of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

- It is a global court which seeks to hold to account those guilty of some of the world's worst crimes.

- It is the only permanent international criminal tribunal.

  Background:

- The ICC was established by an international agreement, the Rome Statute, on 17 July 1998.

- The Rome Statute sets out the Court's jurisdiction, structures and functions.

- The Statute entered into force on 1 July 2002.

- Mandate: It investigates and where warranted, tries individuals charged with the gravest crimes of concern to the international community: genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and the crime of aggression.

  HQ: Hague, Netherlands.

  Members: 123 nations are States Parties to the Rome Statute and recognize the ICC's authority; the notable exceptions being the USA, China, Russia, Israel and India.

  Funding: The Court is funded by contributions from the States Parties and by voluntary contributions from Governments, international organizations, individuals, corporations, and other entities.

  Composition:

- Judges: The court has eighteen judges, each from a different member country, elected to non-renewable nine-year terms.
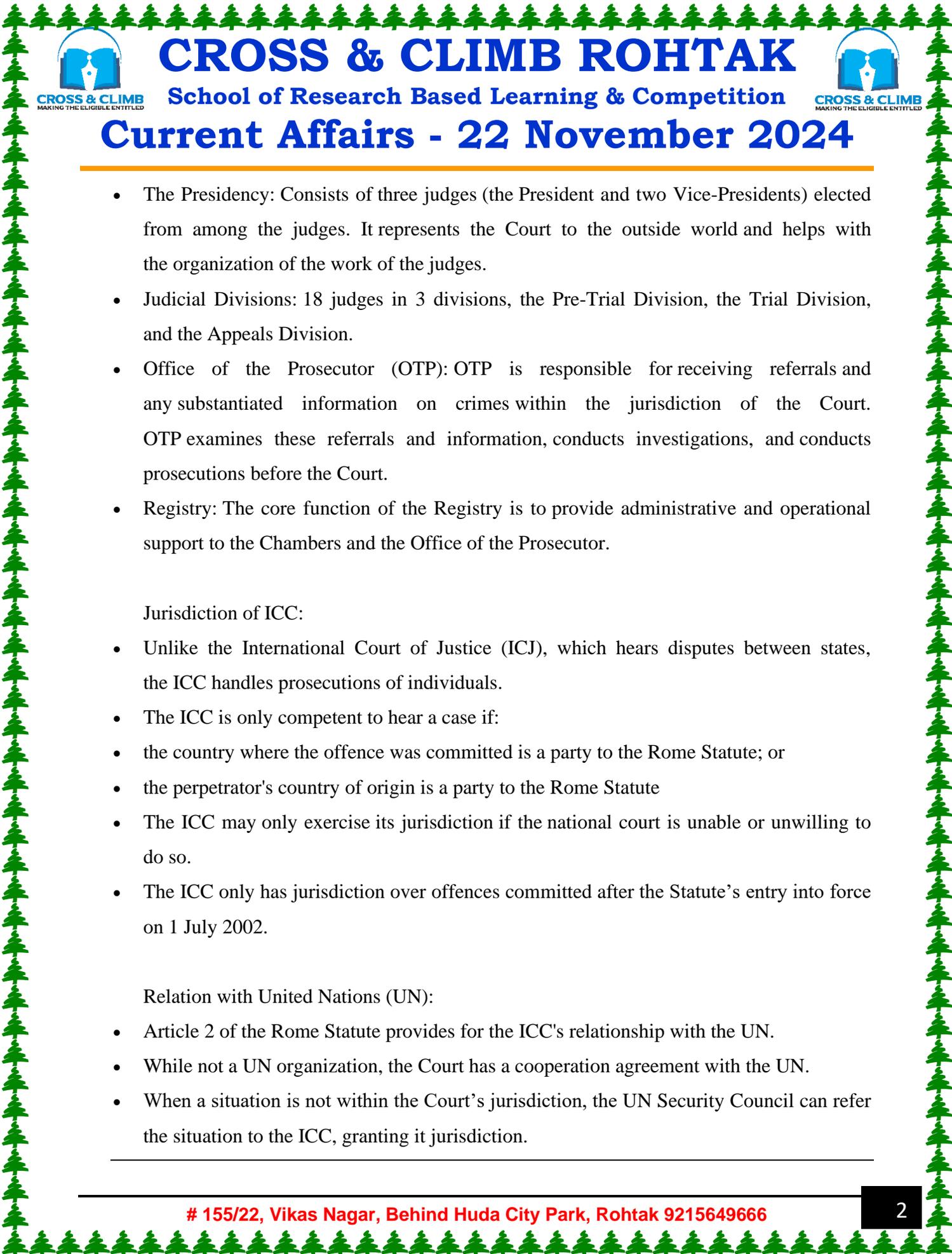
- The Presidency: Consists of three judges (the President and two Vice-Presidents) elected from among the judges. It represents the Court to the outside world and helps with the organization of the work of the judges.

- Judicial Divisions: 18 judges in 3 divisions, the Pre-Trial Division, the Trial Division, and the Appeals Division.

- Office of the Prosecutor (OTP): OTP is responsible for receiving referrals and any substantiated information on crimes within the jurisdiction of the Court. OTP examines these referrals and information, conducts investigations, and conducts prosecutions before the Court.

- Registry: The core function of the Registry is to provide administrative and operational support to the Chambers and the Office of the Prosecutor.

Jurisdiction of ICC:

- Unlike the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which hears disputes between states, the ICC handles prosecutions of individuals.

- The ICC is only competent to hear a case if:

- the country where the offence was committed is a party to the Rome Statute; or

- the perpetrator's country of origin is a party to the Rome Statute

- The ICC may only exercise its jurisdiction if the national court is unable or unwilling to do so.

- The ICC only has jurisdiction over offences committed after the Statute's entry into force on 1 July 2002.

Relation with United Nations (UN):

- Article 2 of the Rome Statute provides for the ICC's relationship with the UN.

- While not a UN organization, the Court has a cooperation agreement with the UN.

- When a situation is not within the Court's jurisdiction, the UN Security Council can refer the situation to the ICC, granting it jurisdiction.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE DATA BANK

- It is aimed at propelling innovation and boosting the country's national security.
- The initiative will provide researchers, startups, and developers access to high-quality, diverse datasets essential for creating scalable and inclusive AI solutions.
- It was launched by the Minister of Science and Technology Minister at the 7th Edition of the ASSOCHAM AI Leadership Meet 2024.
- It will enhance "national security through real-time analytics of satellite, drone, and IoT data".
- It also aligns with the country's goal to utilise AI for predictive analytics in disaster management and cyber security.

What is Artificial Intelligence?

- It is a field of science concerned with building computers and machines that can reason, learn, and act in such a way that would normally require human intelligence.
- AI is a broad field that encompasses many different disciplines, including computer science, data analytics and statistics, hardware and software engineering, linguistics, neuroscience, and even philosophy and psychology.

MEERKAT RADIO TELESCOPE

- MeerKAT is a connected array of radio telescopes located in the Northern Cape province of South Africa.
- It was originally known as the Karoo Array Telescope (KAT), which would consist of 20 receptors. When the South African government increased the

budget to allow the building of 64 receptors, the team renamed it "MeerKAT", – i.e., "more of KAT".

- It is part of South Africa's contribution to the global Square Kilometre Array (SKA) project, which aims to build the largest and most sensitive radio telescope in the world.

- It is a precursor instrument to the mid-frequency component of the Square Kilometre Array (SKA).

- It uses radio signals from space to study the evolution of the universe and everything it contains.

- It comprises 64 dishes, each 13.5 metres in diameter, with maximum separations of 8 km.

- The received signals travel to a subterranean processor building that combines them and allows the telescopes to work together as a single instrument.

- It is currently the most powerful radio interferometer at centimeter wavelengths.

CLIMATE CHANGE PERFORMANCE INDEX

Recently, the Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI 2025) report was released at the annual UN climate conference in Baku.

- It is published by think tanks Germanwatch, New Climate Institute, and Climate Action Network International.

- It tracks the progress of the world's largest emitters in terms of emissions, renewables, and climate policy.

- It was first published in 2005.

Highlights of the report

- India ranked 10th on a list of over 60 countries assessed for efforts to fight climate change.

- The 63 countries, along with the European Union, assessed in the CCPI are responsible for 90% of global emissions.

- According to CCPI experts, over the past year, India has made considerable progress in renewable energy policy, particularly with large-scale solar power projects and the launch of the Rooftop Solar Scheme.

- Energy efficiency standards have been introduced, but their coverage remains inadequate, the report said, adding, India is also advancing in electric vehicle deployment, especially with two-wheelers.

- The experts said that despite these positive developments, India remains heavily reliant on coal.

- India is among the 10 countries with the largest developed coal reserves and is currently planning to increase its production.

- India and the U.K. are the only two G20 countries among the high performers in the CCPI.

- Denmark ranks at the top (but technically fourth place), followed by the Netherlands and the U.K. The U.K., this year's big climber, benefitted from its coal phase out and the government's pledge to halt new licenses for fossil fuel projects

GLOBAL ALLIANCE AGAINST HUNGER AND POVERTY

The G20 Leaders' Summit held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil was headlined by the official launch of the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty

- It will serve as a platform for connecting countries in need of assistance with public policies targeted towards eradicating hunger and poverty, with partners willing to offer expertise or financial support.

- It consists of 81 countries (including India), 26 international organisations, 9 financial institutions and 31 philanthropic foundations and non-governmental organisations have already joined the Alliance.

- Any member country can access proven best practices from other members and identify potential partners willing to assist in the development of its own national model." Assistance may be in the form of technical expertise or financial support.

- The Alliance has identified an evidence-based policy basket, which comprises more than 50 policy instruments that member countries can avail support for.

- Of particular importance are the six "Sprints 2030", high-impact areas which will see target-oriented initiatives catering to the most vulnerable.

- These include: school meals; cash transfers; smallholder and family farming support programs; socio-economic inclusion programs; integrated maternal and early childhood interventions; and water access solutions.

Funding:

- The Alliance does not boast an exclusive fund.

- It envisions playing a matchmaking role, connecting countries in need with motivated donors and technical support.

- The $2-3 million required annually for its operations will come from member countries and institutions such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), UNICEF, and the World Bank.

IS DELHI BECOMING AN UNINHABITABLE CITY?

Overview of Air Pollution in Delhi:

- Delhi faces severe environmental challenges, with worsening air pollution and extreme weather patterns, particularly during winter and summer.

- The **Air Quality Index** (AQI) highlights Delhi's alarming pollution levels, primarily dominated by fine particulate matter (PM2.5), which penetrates deep into the lungs, posing significant health risks.

Air Quality Trends (2017–2023):

Average number of days per year (2017-2023)

	2020	without 2020
Poor to severe (AQI >200)	139	189
Satisfactory to moderate (50-200)	222	175
Good (0-50)	5	2
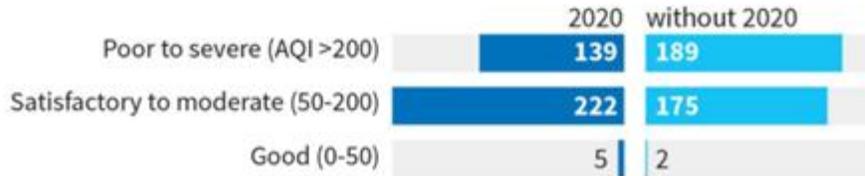
- **Healthy Air Days:** Delhi averaged only two days per year with healthy air.
- **Poor Air Quality:** Over half the year, residents inhale air deemed unfit for breathing.
- **Lockdown Impact:** Even during the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020, air quality improved only marginally, indicating systemic issues.

Contributors to Air Pollution:

Municipal solid waste 6%
Soil & road dust 4%
LPG use 6%
Vehicles 34%
SIA 11%
Delhi's contribution 49.44
Coal and fly ash 14%
Tyre/brake wear & tear 24%
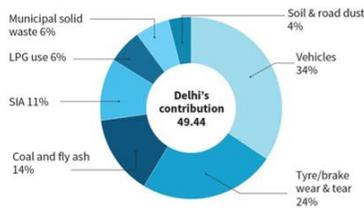
- **Stubble Burning:** Often blamed for Delhi's pollution, **stubble burning accounts for 15–35% of PM2.5 during peak days**. However, even in its absence, the AQI remains dangerously high.
- **Local Sources:** A report by IIT and TERI identifies local sources as responsible for half of PM2.5 levels in winter. Key contributors include:
  - **Vehicles (58%):** Combustion exhaust (34%) and wear-and-tear emissions (24%).
  - Other sources include **construction dust** and **industrial emissions**.

Seasonal Worsening in Winters:

- **Meteorological Factors:** Cold air traps pollutants near the ground, while stagnant winds prevent dispersion.
- **Rain and Wind Effects:** Months with higher rainfall (July–September) and stronger winds (February–June) show better air quality.

Health Impacts:

- **WHO Findings:** Air pollution affects almost every organ, causing systemic inflammation and potentially carcinogenic effects.

- **Death Rates:** In 2019, **1.67 million deaths in India were linked to pollution**, with Delhi showing higher mortality from ambient PM pollution than the national average.
- **Class Divide:** Poor residents face greater exposure and risks. Children from marginalized areas experience significantly reduced life expectancy compared to affluent peers.

Government Response:

- **Short-term Measures:** Initiatives like odd-even vehicle rules, water sprinklers, and mask distribution have had minimal impact.
- **Political Stalemate:** Blame-shifting between the central and Delhi governments has hindered systemic reforms.

Solutions Needed:

- **Public Transport Overhaul:** Transitioning from private vehicles to cleaner, efficient public transport with improved last-mile connectivity.
- **Holistic Action Plan:** Long-term strategies addressing emissions from all sources, paired with political commitment, are critical for reversing the decline in air quality.

TUNGARESHWAR WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Authorities have told the National Green Tribunal that the claims made in a media report about wild animals disappearing from the Tungareshwar Wildlife Sanctuary in Maharashtra due to encroachments were "inaccurate" and "sensationalised."

- Location: It is located in the Palghar district of Maharashtra, 75 km away from Mumbai.
- The sanctuary is spread over an area of 85 sq. km., which is mostly hilly.
- It serves as a vital corridor between Sanjay Gandhi National Park (also known as Borivali National Park) and Tansa Wildlife Sanctuary.
- Landscape: It is characterized by hilly terrain, dense forests, and small rivers or streams.

Vegetation: The forest is a unique blend of Dry Deciduous, Moist Deciduous, and Semi-Evergreen.

Flora: It is home to several species of trees, including teak, bamboo, and mango.

Fauna:

- Some commonly spotted animals in the sanctuary include Leopard, Wild Boar, Barking Deer, Langur, Bonnet and Rhesus Macaque and Black-naped Hare.
- A multitude of birds, including the Crested Serpent-eagle, Jungle Owlet, White-eyed Buzzard, Oriental Honey-buzzard, Emerald Dove, and Heart-spotted Woodpecker, can be found here.
- Several ancient temples are within its boundaries. The most famous of these temples is the Tungareshwar Temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva.