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Current Affairs - 05 November 2024

WHAT IS THE CENTRAL WATER COMMISSION (CWC)?



Glacial lakes and other water bodies across the Himalayan region saw a 10.81% increase in area from 2011 to 2024 due to climate change, signalling a heightened risk of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs), according to a Central Water Commission's (CWC) report.

- It is a premier technical organization of India in the field of water resources.
- It is presently functioning as an attached office of the **Ministry of Jal Shakti**, Department of Water Resources, River Development, and Ganga Rejuvenation, Government of India.

Headquarters: New Delhi

Functions:

- The Commission is entrusted with the general responsibilities of **initiating, coordinating, and furthering, in consultation with the State Governments concerned, schemes for control, conservation, and utilization of water resources throughout the country** for purposes of Flood Control, Irrigation, Navigation, Drinking Water Supply, and Water Power Development.
- It also undertakes the investigations, construction and execution of any such schemes as required.

Organisation Structure:

- It is headed by a **chairman**, with the status of **Ex-Officio Secretary to the Government** of India.
- The work of the Commission is divided among **3 wings**, namely,
 - **Designs and Research (D&R) Wing**
 - **River Management (RM) Wing**
 - **Water Planning and Projects (WP&P) Wing.**



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LIGNOSAT

The world's first wooden satellite LignoSat built by Japanese researchers was launched into space in an early test of using timber in lunar and Mars exploration.



- LignoSat”, a fusion of “**ligno**” (the Latin word for wood) and “satellite”.
- It is **developed** through collaborative research and development by a team comprising members from **Kyoto University and Sumitomo Forestry Co.**

Objective: Their objective is to leverage the eco-friendliness and cost-effectiveness of wood in space exploration.

- It is tasked to demonstrate the **cosmic potential of renewable material** as humans explore living in space.
- It is **constructed from magnolia wood**, chosen for its durability and adaptability.
- It will first be sent to **the International Space Station (ISS)** aboard a SpaceX rocket from the Kennedy Space Center.
- Once it reaches the ISS, it will be released from the Japanese experiment module to test its durability and strength.
- Researchers will receive data from the satellite to monitor its performance, including signs of strain and its ability to withstand extreme temperature changes.

Why is wood used?

- Wooden satellites are viewed as more **environmentally friendly upon reentering the Earth's atmosphere** after their mission. Unlike metal satellites, which pose air pollution risks due to the generation of metal particles during reentry, wooden satellites mitigate these concerns.
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US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

- The U.S. presidential election is held every **four years** to elect the President and Vice President of the United States.
- **It follows an indirect voting process**, where citizens vote for a slate of electors who then choose the President and Vice President.
- **Constitutional requirements for presidential candidates**
 - Be a natural-born citizen of the United States
 - Be at least 35 years old
 - Have been a resident of the United States for 14 years
- **Primary Elections and Caucuses**
 - Primaries and caucuses are two ways that people help states and political parties choose presidential nominees. These take place in each state and run from early in the election year until the summer.
 - During this stage, party members vote for their preferred candidates, and delegates are assigned to represent these choices at the national conventions.
- **National Conventions**
 - Following the primaries, each party holds a national convention where delegates officially nominate the party's candidates for President and Vice President.
- **The General Election**
 - The general election occurs on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November.
 - Voters in each state cast their ballots for President, effectively choosing electors who will represent their state in the Electoral College.
- **Electoral College Voting and Inauguration**
 - In December, the electors meet in their respective state capitals to cast their official votes. These votes are counted by Congress in early January, and the President-elect is formally declared.

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- The elected President is then inaugurated on January 20, marking the official start of their term in office.

Electoral College Mechanism in US

- **Electoral College System**
 - Americans don't directly vote for the President; instead, they vote for electors who form the Electoral College.
 - There are 538 electors, and a candidate needs 270 to win the presidency.
- **Allocation of Electors**
 - Each state has a designated number of electors, roughly based on its population.
 - By voting for a candidate, voters are actually choosing that candidate's party-designated electors for their state.
- **Duties and voting by electors:**
 - Electors meet in December to formally vote for the President and Vice President.
 - While electors traditionally vote in line with their party's candidate, there is **no federal law binding them to do so**.
 - However, **many states have laws** enforcing elector loyalty, and faithless electors are rare, as seen in the 2016 election.

Role of Swing States

- Some states, known as “swing states” or “battleground states,” have historically close races and can vote either Democratic or Republican.
 - These states play a pivotal role, as the winner-takes-all system makes their outcome critical to securing the required 270 electoral votes.
 - Seven key swing states—Pennsylvania, Georgia, North Carolina, Michigan, Arizona, Wisconsin, and Nevada—are critical in the current U.S. presidential election.
 - Together, these states hold 93 Electoral College votes and are being heavily targeted by both Kamala Harris and Donald Trump's campaigns.
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DEBATE SURROUNDING VILLAGE RELOCATION FOR TIGER RESERVES

The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) has intervened in the debate surrounding village relocations from tiger reserves.

The commission responded to complaints against the National Tiger Conservation Authority's (NTCA) June advisory requesting state forest departments to submit action plans for village relocations.

Legal and Procedural Requirements for Relocation:

- **Families living inside tiger habitat:**
 - As per NTCA, 591 villages comprising 64,801 families live inside critical tiger habitats, also known as core areas, in 54 tiger reserves across 19 states.
 - So far, 251 villages with 25,007 families have been relocated outside tiger reserves.
- **Legal requirements:**
 - **Under the Wildlife Protection Act**, areas free of human settlements can be created in the core of tiger reserves.
 - However, this is to be done after recognising the rights of tribal communities under the **Forest Rights Act (FRA) 2006**, and with the informed consent of the **Gram Sabha**
- **Procedural requirements (Voluntary Village Relocation Program [VVRP] of the NTCA):**
 - Additionally, before the voluntary relocation,
 - **The state government has to conclude** (based on consultations with ecological and social scientists),
 - That the activities of the tribal communities or forest dwellers or their presence are sufficient to **cause irreversible damage to tigers and their habitat.**

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- They have to also conclude that there is **no other reasonable option** for the community to co-exist with tigers.
- **Compensation:**
 - The NTCA had raised the **relocation compensation** for families opting for voluntary relocation **from ₹10 lakh to ₹15 lakh per family in 2021**.
 - Those accepting the resettlement package receive two hectares of land, homestead land, house construction assistance, a financial incentive, and basic amenities, including water, sanitation, electricity, and telecommunication.

Debate Surrounding Village Relocations from Tiger Reserves:

- **Opposition to NTCA's advisory:**
 - NTCA advised state forest departments to **prioritise the relocation of villages from core tiger habitats across 54 tiger reserves**.
 - However, this advisory prompted pushback from over 150 tribal rights groups and activists.
 - The petition to NCST pointed out that the NTCA letter did not dwell on the legal and procedural requirements, making it violative of laws.
 - They argued that NTCA's approach violates FRA and the Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Act 2006, as **village relocation should be voluntary**.
 - **NCST take on NTCA advisory:**
 - NCST **requested an update** from NTCA on village relocations and their adherence to NCST's prior recommendations.
 - **The commission also seeks an action-taken report** from the Union Environment Ministry and NTCA on its 2018 recommendations to revise the compensation for villagers who voluntarily relocate from tiger reserves.
 - The NCST wants to ensure this package aligns with the **2013 Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act's** guidelines and entitlements.
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RESERVATION IN INDIA

- India's reservation system has been instrumental in providing access to opportunities for historically marginalized communities, especially **Scheduled Castes (SCs)** and **Scheduled Tribes (STs)**.
- However, recent debates question whether the benefits of this system are equitably distributed among all SC subgroups.
- The Supreme Court has proposed introducing a "**quota-within-quota**" to address these disparities, leading to a nationwide discussion on whether such measures are justified by data.

Foundation & Evolution of Reservation in India:

- The reservation policy, rooted in **B.R. Ambedkar's vision**, aimed to create equal opportunities by reserving spots in education, public employment, and governance for marginalized communities.
- While the intention was to dismantle caste-based inequalities, the outcomes have been uneven, with some SC subgroups reportedly benefiting more than others.
- As a result, there are **growing calls to redesign the reservation system** to ensure a balanced distribution of opportunities.

Conclusion:

- India's reservation system has uplifted many marginalized groups, yet it faces challenges in delivering equitable outcomes within the SC category.
 - A quota-within-quota system may benefit states with pronounced disparities, but it is not a universal solution.
 - Improving access to reservation benefits and addressing caste-based discrimination across the board should be prioritized.
 - Moving forward, **reservation policies should be informed by robust, updated data to ensure they serve as genuine tools for social justice.**
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RALENGNAO BOB KHATHING



Recently, defence Minister inaugurated the Major Ralengnao 'Bob' Khathing Museum of Valour at Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh.

- Ranenglao 'Bob' Khathing was born on February 28, 1912, in Manipur's Ukhrul district. He was a Tangkhul Naga.
- During World War II he became the first Manipuri to get the King's Commission.

Bob Khathing's Army service

- He was given the coveted award of **Member of British Empire (MBE)** for his role in galvanising Naga support against the Japanese in Burma and India and also the **Military Cross (MC)** for his acts of bravery above and beyond the call of duty.
- Bob was commissioned into the **9/11 Hyderabad Regiment** (now Kumaon Regiment). In 1942, he was transferred to the Assam Regiment in Shillong.
- During the Second World War, he was part of a **guerrilla outfit called Victor Force**, raised by the British to combat the Japanese on the Burma-India road.
- He was **appointed as advisor** to a **force known as SANCOL**, comprising 153 Gurkha Parachute Battalion which was formed in June 1944 under the command of Major John Saunders, to this force.

He led the expedition to peacefully **integrate Tawang into India**.

- He was also instrumental in establishing **essential military and security frameworks**, such as the Sashastra Seema Bal, Nagaland Armed Police, and the Naga Regiment.
 - He was the first **person of tribal origin to serve as an ambassador for India** in then Burma, now Myanmar.
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GOBIND SAGAR LAKE



Himachal Chief Minister recently inaugurated water sports activities at Gobind Sagar Lake.

- It is a **manmade reservoir** located in the Una and Bilaspur districts of **Himachal Pradesh**.
 - It is named in honour of Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Sikh Guru.
 - Its source is the **Bhakra Dam on the Sutlej River**.
 - One of the world's highest gravity dams, the Bhakra Dam is perched at an elevation of 225.5 m above its lowest foundations.
 - Gobind Sagar reservoir is 90 km. long and encompasses an area of approximately 170 sq. km.
 - The maximum and mean depths of the reservoir are 163.07 m and 55 m, respectively, making it **one of the deepest man-made lakes** in the world.
 - It is surrounded by lush green hills and the snow-capped peaks of the Himalayas.
 - It is also the third-largest in the country concerning the storage of water.
 - It helps in supplying water for irrigation to the **states of Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, and Rajasthan**, significantly benefiting agriculture in the region.
 - **Flora and Fauna:**
 - In 1962, the lake was recognized as the '**waterfowl refuge**.'
 - Even today, the Gobind Sagar Lake is home to many species of birds and animals like **Panther, Wolf, Chausinga**, Sambar, Hyena, Sloth bear, Nilgai, **Chinkara** and wild boar.
 - It is home to fifty species and sub-species of **fishes namely** Tor Putitora (**Mahasheer**), Labeo Dero (**Gid**), Mystus Seenghala (**Singhara**) and mirror carp.
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