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Current Affairs - 19 September 2024

WHAT IS NPS VATSALYA SCHEME?



Vatsalya Scheme is an extension of the existing **National Pension Scheme (NPS)** but focuses on children.

- **Eligibility for NPS Vatsalya as follows**

- All **minor citizens** (age below 18 years).
- Both the child and the parent must be **Indian citizens**. All parties must comply with the Know Your Customer (KYC) requirements.
- **Account can be opened in the name of minor** and operated by parent or guardian. Minor will be the beneficiary.
- Scheme can be opened through **major banks, India Post, Pension Funds** and Online platform (e-NPS).
- **Contribution:** Subscriber to make a **minimum contribution of Rs 1000/-** per annum. There is **no limit** on the **maximum contribution**.
- On **attaining the age of maturity**, the plan can be converted seamlessly into a **normal NPS account**.

Withdrawal rules

- **After three years** of opening the NPS vatsalya account, partial withdrawals are allowed. Up to 25% of corpus can be withdrawn for specific purposes, including education, medical treatment for certain illnesses, or disabilities over 75%.
- Once the child attains the age of 18, the corpus of **up to Rs 2.5 lakh can be withdrawn** entirely and if it exceeds, the 20% can be withdrawn and rest 80% can be used for annuity purchase in the NPS.
- In the unfortunate event of a **subscriber's death**, the **entire corpus is given to the nominee**, usually the guardian. If the guardian dies, a new guardian must be assigned after completing a new KYC.
- If both parents die, a legal guardian can manage the account without further contributions until the child turns 18.



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NEXT GENERATION LAUNCH VEHICLE



Recently, the Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister of India has approved the development of Next Generation Launch Vehicle (NGLV).

- It will have **3 times the present payload capability** with 1.5 times the cost compared to LVM3, and will also **have reusability** resulting in low-cost access to space and **modular green propulsion systems**.
- The development of the NGLV is taken up which is designed to have a maximum payload capability of **30 tonnes to Low Earth Orbit**, which also has a reusable first stage.
- This development project will be implemented with maximal participation from the Indian industry, which is also expected to invest in the manufacturing capacity at the outset itself, thereby allowing a seamless transition to the operational phase subsequent to the development.
- NGLV will be demonstrated with **three development flights** (D1, D2 & D3) with a **target of 96 months** (8 years) for the completion of the development phase.
- The total fund approved is Rs. 8240.00 Crore and includes the development costs, three developmental flights, essential facility establishment, Programme Management and Launch Campaign.
- **Significance**
 - It will enable **national & commercial missions** including launch of human spaceflight missions to Bharatiya Antariksh Station.
 - **Lunar/inter-planetary exploration** missions along with communication & earth observation satellite constellations to Low Earth Orbit that will benefit the entire space ecosystem in the country.
 - This project will boost the Indian space ecosystem in terms of capability and capacity.



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WHAT IS THE NATIONAL BOARD FOR WILDLIFE (NBWL)?

National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) is a statutory board constituted by the Central Government under the **Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972**.

- It is responsible for guiding the government's decisions on matters related to wildlife conservation and **issuing approvals for projects in protected areas (PAs)**.
- The WLPA mandates that without the approval/recommendation of the NBWL, construction of tourist lodges, alteration of the boundaries of PAs, destruction or diversion of wildlife habitat, and de-notification of Tiger Reserves, cannot be done.

Structure:

- It is a **47-member committee, headed by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change** (environment minister) as **vice chairperson**.
- In addition to offices and institutions directly involved in conservation and protection of wildlife, the NBWL also has the **chief of army staff, defence secretary, and expenditure secretary** to Government of India as **members**.
- Further, the central government **nominates 10 members** who are eminent **conservationists, ecologists, and environmentalists**.
- The SC-NBWL shall **consist of the Vice-Chairperson** (environment minister), the **Member Secretary**, and **not more than ten members** to be **nominated by the Vice-Chairperson** from amongst the members of the NBWL.
- The SC-NBWL also **makes recommendations on the setting up of and management of National Parks, Sanctuaries, and other PAs** and on matters relating to restriction of activities in those areas.
- The SC-NBWL shall ordinarily meet once in three months.



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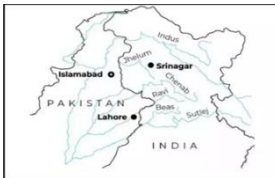
INDIA WANTS 'REVIEW & MODIFICATION' OF INDUS WATERS TREATY

India has sent a new formal notice to Pakistan seeking the "review and modification" of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), following a similar request in January 2023.

This latest notice, issued under **Article XII (3) of the IWT**, is significant as the inclusion of "review" suggests India's intention to potentially revoke and renegotiate the 64-year-old treaty.

Article XII (3) allows for modifications of the treaty through a duly ratified agreement between the two governments.

Indus Water Treaty (IWT)



- The Treaty is a water-distribution treaty between India and Pakistan, brokered by the World Bank.

- According to this treaty, **three rivers: Ravi, Sutlej and Beas were given to India** and the other three: Sindh, Jhelum and Chenab were given to Pakistan.

- **Rights & obligations under this treaty**

- India is under obligation to let the waters of the western rivers flow, except for certain consumptive use.
- The treaty allocates Pakistan approx. 80% of the entire water of the six-river Indus system and reserved for India just remaining 19.48% of the total waters.
- India can construct storage facilities on western rivers of up to 3.6-million-acre feet, which it has not done so far.
- The **IWT permits run of the river projects** on the western rivers, subject to specific design and operation criteria.
 - India is required to provide Pakistan with prior notification, including design information, of any new project.

- **Dispute redressal mechanism under the Treaty**



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- Article IX of the Treaty is a dispute resolution mechanism - **graded at three levels** to resolve a difference or a dispute related to projects on the Indus waters.
- **First level**
 - Either party has to inform the other side if they are planning projects on the Indus river with all the information that is required or asked for by the other party.
 - This process is done at the level of the **Permanent Indus Commission (PIC)**, created to implement and manage the goals of the IWT.
 - If PIC is unable to solve the question in contention, the question becomes difference and goes to second level.
- **Second level**
 - The second grade is the World Bank appointing a neutral expert to resolve the differences.
 - If a neutral expert cannot resolve the issue, the difference becomes a dispute and goes to third level.
- **Third level**
 - At this level, the matter goes to a Court of Arbitration (CoA) whose chair is appointed by the World Bank.
- **Reasons behind India's demand to renegotiate the treaty**
 - India's latest notice to Pakistan on the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) cites "fundamental and unforeseen changes in circumstances" as reasons for reassessment.
 - Concerns include changes in population demographics, environmental issues, the need for clean energy development to meet emission targets, and the impact of cross-border terrorism.



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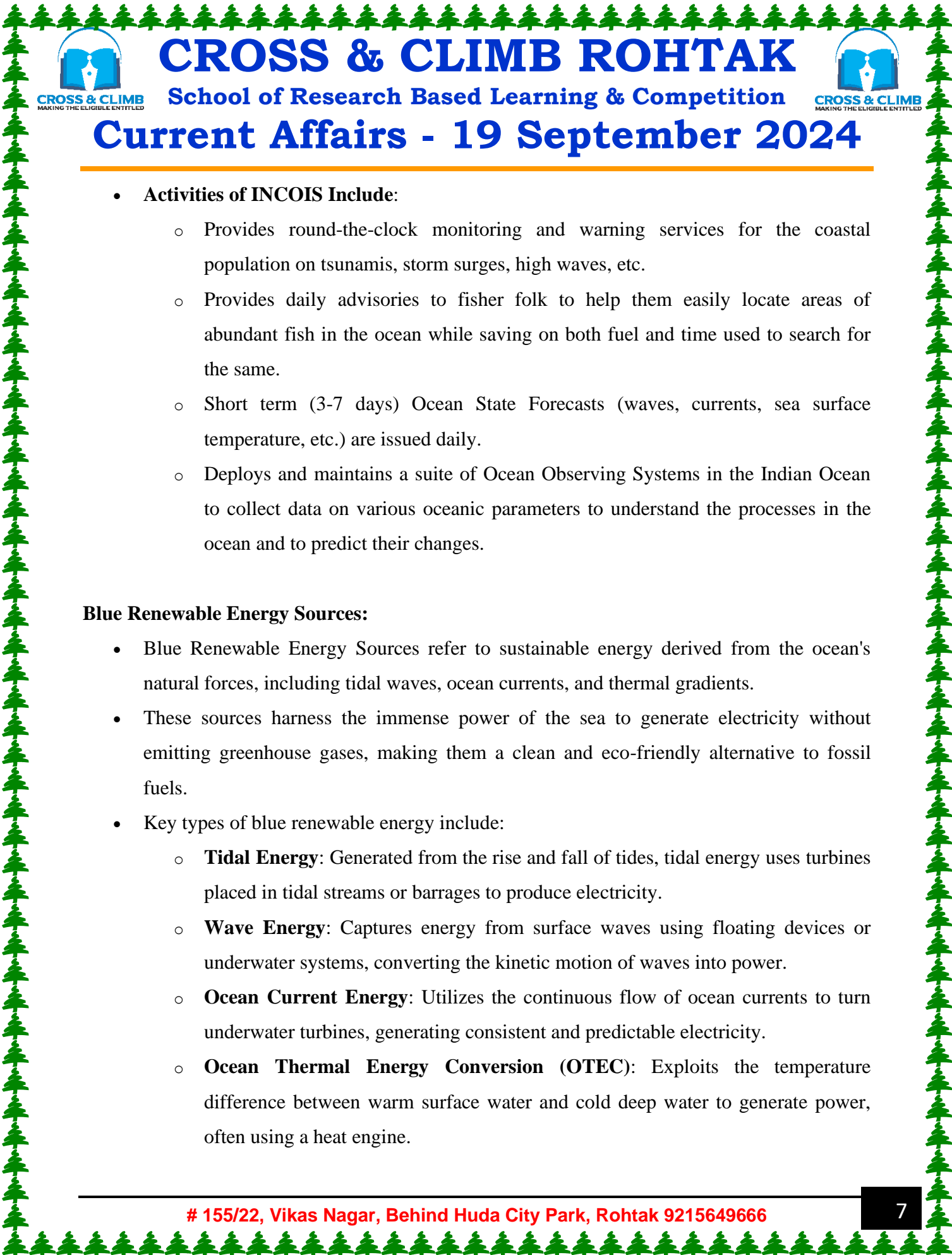
- The notifications come amid controversy over two Indian hydel power projects in Jammu & Kashmir — **Kishanganga and Ratle** — which Pakistan alleges violate the IWT.
 - These projects are "run-of-the-river" and generate electricity without obstructing river flow.

Reason behind the notice in January 2023

- India's latest notice to Pakistan regarding the IWT follows Islamabad's objections to two Indian hydel projects.
 - Pakistan initially sought a "Neutral Expert" to address its concerns but later proposed the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) for adjudication.
 - India objected, citing this as a breach of the treaty's sequential dispute resolution mechanism, which starts with the Indus Commissioners, then a Neutral Expert, and finally the PCA if needed.
 - The World Bank halted the dual processes in 2016, urging both countries to resolve the issue amicably.
 - Despite attempts by India, Pakistan did not engage in discussions between 2017 and 2022.
 - In 2022, the World Bank decided to proceed with both the Neutral Expert and PCA processes, **leading to India's January 2023 notice, the first in over 60 years.**
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INDIAN NATIONAL CENTRE FOR OCEAN INFORMATION SERVICES (INCOIS)

- Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) is an autonomous organization, established in 1999, under the Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- It is a unit of the Earth System Science Organization (ESSO).
- **Objective:** To provide ocean data, information and advisory services to society, industry, the government and the scientific community.



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- **Activities of INCOIS Include:**

- Provides round-the-clock monitoring and warning services for the coastal population on tsunamis, storm surges, high waves, etc.
- Provides daily advisories to fisher folk to help them easily locate areas of abundant fish in the ocean while saving on both fuel and time used to search for the same.
- Short term (3-7 days) Ocean State Forecasts (waves, currents, sea surface temperature, etc.) are issued daily.
- Deploys and maintains a suite of Ocean Observing Systems in the Indian Ocean to collect data on various oceanic parameters to understand the processes in the ocean and to predict their changes.

Blue Renewable Energy Sources:

- Blue Renewable Energy Sources refer to sustainable energy derived from the ocean's natural forces, including tidal waves, ocean currents, and thermal gradients.
- These sources harness the immense power of the sea to generate electricity without emitting greenhouse gases, making them a clean and eco-friendly alternative to fossil fuels.
- Key types of blue renewable energy include:
 - **Tidal Energy:** Generated from the rise and fall of tides, tidal energy uses turbines placed in tidal streams or barrages to produce electricity.
 - **Wave Energy:** Captures energy from surface waves using floating devices or underwater systems, converting the kinetic motion of waves into power.
 - **Ocean Current Energy:** Utilizes the continuous flow of ocean currents to turn underwater turbines, generating consistent and predictable electricity.
 - **Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion (OTEC):** Exploits the temperature difference between warm surface water and cold deep water to generate power, often using a heat engine.



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- Blue renewable energy holds significant potential for sustainable power generation, particularly for coastal and island nations, providing a reliable and environmentally friendly energy solution.
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NAGA KING CHILLI



Recently, Seiyhama village in Nagaland celebrated the third edition of the Naga king chilli festival.

Naga King Chilli belongs to genus *Capsicum* of family Solanaceae.

- It is also known as **raja mircha, Bhoot Jolokia and Ghost pepper.**
 - **It is** a spice renowned globally for **its extreme heat**, which exceeds 1 million Scoville heat units (SHU).
 - It is ranked among the hottest chillies in the world, the king chilli holds significant cultural and economic value for the Naga people.
 - It has received the prestigious **Geographical Indication (GI)** tag in 2008.
 - The cultivation of king chilli in Seiyhama is an ancient practice. Farmers begin searching for suitable plots in December or January, with **large bamboo groves** being the preferred location.
 - The **peak harvest** of king chilli occurs in **August and September**, with the final harvest in November and December.
 - **Significance:** The king chilli has long been used to **preserve food in Nagaland's hot, humid climate**, extending the shelf life of food and reducing waste.
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VENUS ORBITER MISSION



Venus Orbiter Mission is envisaged to **orbit a scientific spacecraft** in the orbit of planet Venus.



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Objectives

- It is for better understanding of the **Venusian surface and subsurface**, atmospheric processes and influence of Sun on Venusian atmosphere.
- The study of the underlying **causes of transformation of Venus**, which is whispered to be once habitable and quite similar to Earth would be an invaluable aid in understanding the evolution of the sister planets, both Venus and Earth.
- The Indian Venus mission is expected to answer some of the outstanding scientific questions resulting in various scientific outcomes.
- India Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will be responsible for the development of spacecraft and its launch.
- The mission is expected to be accomplished on the opportunity **available during March 2028**. The realization of the spacecraft and launch vehicle is through various industries.

Funding: The total fund approved for the VOM is Rs.1236 Cr out of which Rs 824.00 Crore will be spent on the spacecraft.

- The cost includes development and realization of the spacecraft including its specific payloads and technology elements, global ground station support cost for navigation and network as well as the cost of launch vehicle.

Significance: Venus, the closest planet to Earth and believed to have formed in conditions similar to Earth, offers a unique opportunity to understand how planetary environments can evolve very differently.
