

### WHAT IS HOLODOMOR?

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe recently voted to recognize ‘Holodomor’ as a "genocide."



#### About Holodomor:

- It is a **man-made famine** that occurred in the Soviet republic of Ukraine from **1932 to 1933**, peaking in the late spring of 1933.
- It left an estimated **3.9 million people dead**.
- The **primary victims** of the Holodomor (literally "death inflicted by starvation") were **rural farmers and villagers**, who made up roughly 80 percent of Ukraine's population in the 1930s.
- It was part of a **broader Soviet famine (1931–34)** that also caused **mass starvation** in the grain-growing regions of **Soviet Russia and Kazakhstan**.
- In **2006**, by the **Law of Ukraine** “On the Holodomor of 1932-1933 in Ukraine”, the **Holodomor was recognized as genocide** of the Ukrainian nation.

#### Causes:

- The origins of the famine lay in the **decision** by Soviet leader **Joseph Stalin to collectivize agriculture in 1929**.
- Teams of Communist Party agitators **forced peasants to relinquish their land, personal property**, and sometimes housing to collective farms, and they **deported so-called kulaks—wealthier peasants**—as well as any peasants who resisted collectivization altogether.
- Collectivization **led to a drop in production**, the disorganization of the rural economy, and **food shortages**.
- It also **sparked a series of peasant rebellions**, including armed uprisings, in some parts of Ukraine.
- In 1932, the **Communist Party set impossibly high quotas** for the amount of **grain** **Ukrainian villages were required to contribute** to the Soviet state.

- When the villages were not able to meet the quotas, authorities intensified the requisition campaign, confiscating even the seed set aside for planting.
- Farms, villages, and whole towns in Ukraine were placed on blacklists and prevented from receiving food.
- Peasants were forbidden to leave the Ukrainian republic in search of food.
- In some cases, soldiers were posted in watchtowers to prevent people from taking any of the harvest. Millions starved as the USSR sold crops from Ukraine abroad.

## GUNJI VILLAGE

The Prime Minister's recent visit to Gunji, near Kalapani, Uttarakhand, has triggered an uproar in Nepal.



### About Gunji Village:

- Location:

- It is located in Dharchula tehsil of Pithoragarh district in northern Uttarakhand.
- It is situated near the borders of Tibet and Nepal and the confluence of the Kuthi Yankti and Kalapani Rivers, on the east end of the Kuthi Valley.
- The geographical area of Gunji village is 188.9 hectares.
- Altitude: 3500 meters
- It overlooks Mount Api in Nepal.
- The people residing here are seasonal migrants. With winters coming, people migrate to lower places (mostly to Dharchula) in the same district.
- As per the 2011 census, the village of Gunji has a population of 335 people living in 194 households.
- Gunji village is administered by Sarpanch (Head of Village) who is elected representative of the village.
- The village is on the traditional Indian/Nepalese route to Kailas–Manasarovar.
- To visit Gunji, one has to obtain an Inner Line permit.

## What is an Inner line permit (ILP)?

- ILP is an **official travel document issued by the Government of India to allow inward travel of an Indian citizen into a protected area** for a limited period.
- It is **obligatory for Indian citizens** from outside those states to **obtain a permit for entering the protected state**.
- The document is an effort by the government to **regulate movement to certain areas located near the international border** of India.
- This is an **offshoot of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulations, 1873**, which **protected the Crown's interest** in the tea, oil and elephant trade by **prohibiting "British subjects" from entering** into these "Protected Areas".
- The word "**British subjects**" was **replaced by Citizen of India in 1950**.
- There are **different kinds of ILPs**, one **for tourists and others** for people who intend to stay for long-term periods, often for employment purposes.

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## LARGE OZONE HOLE DETECTED OVER ANTARCTICA

### Why in news?

- Satellite measurements over Antarctica have detected a giant hole in the ozone layer.
  - The European Space Agency Copernicus Sentinel-5P satellite made the recordings as part of the **EU's environmental monitoring program**.
- The hole, which scientists call an "ozone-depleted area" was 26 million square kilometers in size, roughly three times the size of Brazil.

### Ozone (O<sub>3</sub>)

- **Production**
  - Ozone molecules are created by the interaction of ultra-violet (UV) radiation from the Sun with O<sub>2</sub> molecules.
  - An O<sub>2</sub> molecule is split, the two **free oxygen atoms** bond with other O<sub>2</sub> molecules to form O<sub>3</sub> molecules.
  - Oxygen (O<sub>2</sub>) makes up 21% of the Earth's atmosphere, and ozone makes up less than 0.001%.
- **Ozone layer**

- Because UV radiation is more intense at higher altitudes where the air is thinner, it is in the stratosphere where most of the ozone is produced, giving rise to what is called the ‘ozone layer’.
- The ozone layer extends between about 10 and 40km altitude, peaking at about 25km.
- **Significance**
- The ozone layer is very important for life on Earth because it has the property of absorbing the most damaging form of UV radiation, **UV-B radiation**.
- This has a wavelength of between 280 and 315 nanometres.
- Most skin cancers are caused by exposure to high amounts of UV radiation, so anything that shields us from UV rays helps reduce cancer rates.

## Ozone Hole

- **About**
- An ozone hole is a region of the stratosphere over Antarctica where the ozone layer is exceptionally depleted.
- The ozone hole is not technically a “hole” where no ozone is present, but is actually a region of exceptionally depleted ozone in the stratosphere over the Antarctic.
- **The ozone hole is the region over Antarctica with total ozone of 220 Dobson Units or lower.**
- **Reasons**
- The ozone hole has developed because people have polluted the atmosphere with chemicals containing chlorine and bromine.
- The primary chemicals involved are chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs for short), halons, and carbon tetrachloride.
- The culprit behind ozone depletion was not aerosols in aerosol cans, but the propellants we use as gases to propel the solutions inside.
- These gaseous propellants contain chlorine, which is released high in the stratosphere and depletes the ozone.
- **Steps taken**
- In 1987, **The Montreal Protocol** was created to protect the ozone layer by phasing out the production of these harmful substances.

## INDIA REITERATES STAND ON PALESTINE STATEHOOD

### Why in news?

- Days after the Israel-Hamas war broke, India reiterated its call for the creation of a sovereign Palestinian state.
- Also, the Ministry of External Affairs said that there was an obligation to uphold humanitarian principles.
- These statements came as India is sending a chartered flight to bring back Indian nationals under **Operation Ajay**.

### Operation Ajay

- India has launched Operation Ajay to bring back Indians from Israel as the conflict escalated with Israel retaliating against Hamas's attack.
  - Israel has declared war against Hamas and set up a war cabinet.
- Operation Ajay is not technically an evacuation operation. It is an operation to repatriate its citizens from Israel.
- Special chartered flights will bring back the Indians. Indian Navy ships will be deployed if the need arises.
  - There are about 18,000 Indians in Israel, and about 16 in Palestine — a dozen in the West Bank and 3-4 people in Gaza.

### News Summary: India reiterates stand on Palestine statehood

#### Background

- On October 7, hours after the Hamas's unprecedented attack on Israel, Prime Minister Narendra Modi posted a statement where he expressed his deep shock at the terrorist attacks and said that "we stand in solidarity with Israel at this difficult hour".
- Five days later, **in its first official statement on the Israel-Hamas war**, New Delhi has sought to nuance this.

#### Response given by the MEA

- **Universal obligation to observe international humanitarian law**
    - Ministry of External Affairs said that there is a universal obligation to observe international humanitarian law.
    - The phrase is seen as aimed at Israel which is conducting aerial strikes in Gaza.
    - The clause, “international humanitarian law,” also seeks to protect innocent civilians and so this is meant for Hamas.
      - Hamas killed civilians including women, children and the elderly.
      - The targeted attacks against Israeli civilians have claimed 1,300 lives on the Israeli side, and the death toll in Gaza because of Israeli air strikes rose to more than 1,350.
  - **Fight against terrorism**
    - MEA also said that there is also a global responsibility to fight the menace of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.
    - This statement is a strong signal of support to Israel.
  - **MEA reiterated its traditional position on the Israel-Palestine conflict**
    - India has advocated the resumption of direct negotiations towards establishing a sovereign, independent and viable State of Palestine living within secure and recognized borders, side by side at peace with Israel.
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## THE CASE FOR CASTE CENSUS IN INDIA

### Context

- Recently, the Bihar government released the results of its survey of castes in the state which put the share of Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) cumulatively at more than 63%.
- The survey has triggered a national debate and **therefore it is important to have an assessment of socio-economic data and arguments in favour and against of the nation-wide caste-based survey.**

### A Background of Caste-Based Surveys

- **Pre-Independence Era:** Caste wise enumeration of the population was introduced under the **British colonial administration in 1881 and continued till the 1931 census.**
- **Post Independence Surveys**
  - **Independent India's governments abandoned full caste enumeration** on the apprehension that it would **strengthen caste divisions and perpetuate the caste system.**
  - The caste system has persisted and flourished in independent India — even without the caste census along with its discriminatory and exclusionary consequences as revealed by official surveys and statistics.
- **Mandal Commission Report**
  - The report of the Backward Classes Commission headed by B.P. Mandal submitted to the President of India in 1980.
  - The report had the dictum inscribed at the outset, " **There is equality only among equals. To equate unequals is to perpetuate inequality.**"
  - The Mandal Commission report had concluded from the caste/community-wise population figures of the 1931 census.
  - It estimated the combined population of Hindu and non-Hindu OBCs to be **52%** of India's population.
  - And if the caste as a whole is socially and educationally backward, **reservation** can be made in favour of such a caste on the ground that it is a socially and educationally backward class of citizens **within the meaning of Article 15(4).**

### **Arguments in Opposition of the Nation-Wide Caste Based Survey**

- Opposition to a nationwide caste census has been based on the ground that the revelation of the exact population shares of OBCs greater than or equal to 52%, **would trigger demands for enhancing the 27% reservation quota for OBCs.**
- Such demands were already set into motion with the **Constitutional (103rd Amendment) Act, 2019**, which provided 10% reservation to EWS within the general category in admission to public and private educational institutions as well as civil posts and services.
  - **The law breached the 50% ceiling on reservation** and faced legal challenges, **but was ultimately upheld by a majority judgment of the Supreme Court in 2022.**

## WHAT ARE AEROSOLS?

A new analysis by the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) Physical Research Laboratory has shown that the Hindu Kush-Himalaya-Tibetan Plateau region has been witnessing an alarming increase in aerosol levels.



### About Aerosols:

- They are **tiny solid or liquid particles suspended in air** or as a gas.
- Aerosols can be **natural**, such as fog or gas from volcanic eruptions, or **artificial**, such as smoke from burning fossil fuels.
- Aerosol particles are **either emitted directly** to the atmosphere (**primary aerosols**) or **produced in the atmosphere from precursor gases** (**secondary aerosols**).
- Aerosol particles are tiny, but numerous, and **often comprise of a number of inorganic and organic substances**.
- True aerosol particles **range in diameter from a few millimicrometres to about 1 micrometre** (equal to 10<sup>-4</sup> cm).
- **Visible forms** of atmospheric aerosol plumes **include smoke, smog, haze and dust**.

### How do aerosols affect climate?

- Aerosol particles, such as dust, play an important **role in the precipitation process, providing the nuclei upon which condensation and freezing take place**.
- They affect climate by **reflecting or absorbing incoming solar radiation** and **enhancing the brightness, and thus reflectivity, of clouds**.
- **Although absorption**, like reflection, tends to **reduce sunlight at the ground level**, the **enhanced atmospheric heating eventually warms up the surface**, and counteracts the cooling caused by reflection.
- They also participate in chemical processes and **influence the electrical properties of the atmosphere**.



## NILGIRI TAHR

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister recently launched 'The Nilgiri Tahr' project for the conservation of Tamil Nadu's state animal.



It is an **endangered mountain ungulate endemic** to the southern part of the Western Ghats.

- **Scientific Name:** Nilgiritragus hylocrius
- **Locally,** the animal is called 'Varayaadu'.
- They are known for their **gravity-defying skills in climbing steep cliffs**, earning them the **nickname Mountain Monarch**.
- It is the **state animal of Tamil Nadu**.
- **Distribution:**
  - Their present distribution is limited to approximately **5% of the Western Ghats** in southern India (**Kerala and Tamil Nadu**).
  - **Eravikulam National Park** in Kerala has the **highest density and largest surviving population** of Nilgiri tahr.
- **Habitat:** They inhabit the **open montane grassland habitats at elevations from 1200 to 2600 m** of the South Western Ghats.
- **Features:**
  - It has a **stocky body with short, coarse fur** and a bristly mane.
  - **Males are larger than females** and of a darker color when mature.
  - **Both sexes have curved horns**, which are **larger in the males**, reaching up to **40 cm** in males and 30 cm in females.
  - Adult males develop a **light grey area or 'saddle' on their backs** and are hence called 'saddlebacks'.
  - It has a **short grey-brown or dark coat**.
- **Conservation Status:**
  - **IUCN Red List: Endangered**
  - **Wildlife (Protection) Act of India, 1972: Schedule I**