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Current Affairs - 03 December 2025

WHAT IS A COLD WAVE?



- Cold waves are **unusual weather occurrences** caused by **extremely low temperatures in the near-surface atmosphere**.
 - Their **duration** can range from several days to a few weeks, contingent upon the geography and climatic conditions of the region.
 - The India Meteorological Department (IMD) defines a cold wave as a **rapid fall in temperature within 24 hours**.
 - This is distinguished by a **marked cooling of the air**, or with the **invasion of very cold air**, over a large area.
 - As per IMD, a cold wave is considered when the **minimum temperature of a station is 10°C or less for plains and 0°C or less for hilly regions**.
 - A cold wave and severe cold wave is considered a **negative departure from normal** i.e., 4.5°C to 6.4°C and more than 6.4°C in hill stations,
 - Similarly, the **departure in minimum temperature of $\leq 04^{\circ}\text{C}$ and $\leq 02^{\circ}\text{C}$ for plains** is considered a cold wave and severe cold wave, respectively.
 - Cold waves are **predominantly experienced** during the period **December-February**, when minimum temperatures drop to very low levels, **especially over the northern parts of India**.
 - **Health Risks:**
 - Exposure to extreme cold can lead to **frostbite, hypothermia**, and other cold-related illnesses.
 - **Non-freezing cold injuries**, such as **Immersion Foot**—caused by prolonged exposure to cold, wet conditions—are also a risk.
 - **In extreme cases**, cold exposure may result in **fatalities** if adequate precautions are not taken.
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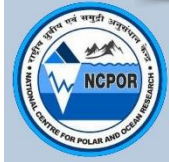
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NATIONAL CENTRE FOR POLAR AND OCEAN RESEARCH



National
Centre for
Polar and
Ocean
Research

Recently, the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR) celebrated its Silver Jubilee and also released commemorative postage stamps.

- It was established as an **autonomous Research and Development** Institution on the 25th May 1998.
- It was formerly known as the National Centre for Antarctic and Ocean Research (NCAOR).
- It has been at the forefront of leading **India's scientific expeditions** and research programmes in the **Polar regions and the Southern Ocean**.

Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Earth Sciences Government of India

Location: Vasco da Gama, Goa.

Mandate and Functions of National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research:

- It is designated as the **nodal organization** for the co-ordination and implementation of the **Indian Antarctic Programme**, and executing polar expeditions in the Antarctic, Arctic, Southern Ocean, and Himalayas.
- It also works on strategically vital projects like: **Mapping of Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)**, Continental shelf surveys, and the Deep Ocean Mission.
- It has established and operationalised permanent Indian research stations -- **DakshinGangotri, Maitri, and Bharati in Antarctica**, and **Himadri in the Arctic**, along with the **Himalayan station Himansh**.



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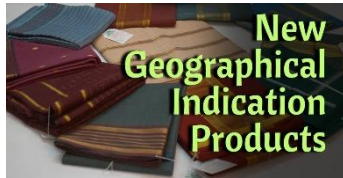
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NEW GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION PRODUCTS



- **Woraiyur Cotton Sari:**
 - It is native to Tiruchi district and is woven in Manamedu on the **banks of the Cauvery**.
 - They are known for their **distinctive Korvai border** (a continuous running pattern) with block colour palettes and geometric motifs.
 - The **Devanga community** has been the driving force behind the Woraiyur cotton sarees for generations.
- **Thooyamalli rice:**
 - Thooyamalli, meaning ‘pure jasmine’, is a **traditional sambha-season rice variety grown over 135 - 140 days**.
 - It is often **referred to as ‘pearl rice’** due to its shiny nature and is regarded highly for its nutritional benefits.
- **Kavindapadi ‘naatu sakkarai’**
 - Kavindapadi in Erode district is a major supplier of jaggery powder in Tamil Nadu, with vast stretches of sugarcane fields nourished by the **Lower Bhavani Project canal**. This signature jaggery powder is made locally by mechanically crushing the cane and slowly **evaporating the extracted juice**.
- **Namakkal ‘kalchatti’**
 - Namakkal’s famed **cookware made using soapstone** (makkal pathirangal).
 - It is **popularly known as kalchatti**, have been a staple in South Indian kitchens for generations.
- **Ambasamudram ‘choppu saman’**
 - **Origin:** The art of making **choppu saman (wooden toys)** has been practiced for over two centuries, with origins **tracing back to the 18th century**.
 - **Material used:** Traditionally, these toys made from indigenous trees **like the Manjal Kadamba tree (Neolamarckia cadamba), teak, and rosewood**.



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SANCHAR SAATHI: THE GOVT'S NEW MANDATORY PHONE APP

- It is an optional mobile app and website developed by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT).
- It aims to **empower** mobile users, enhance security, and raise awareness about government initiatives.
- The platform provides multiple citizen-focused services, along with updates and educational material on telecom, cybersecurity, and end-user protection.

Key Services Offered by Sanchar Saathi

- Sanchar Saathi provides a range of tools to strengthen user security, prevent fraud, and help track stolen devices.
- **Chakshu: Reporting Suspected Fraud Communication**
 - Chakshu allows users to report suspicious calls, SMS, WhatsApp messages, or other communications linked to:
 - Impersonation of DoT, TRAI, police, or government officials
 - Investment or trading scams
 - Fake KYC or payment-related messages from banks, utilities, or insurance
 - Malicious links, phishing attempts, unverified APKs, and device-cloning attempts
- **Block and Track Lost or Stolen Mobile Phones**
 - Sanchar Saathi enables users to:
 - Block a lost or stolen mobile device
 - Trace the device when someone tries to use it
 - Unblock it after recovery
 - The service uses the phone's IMEI number, a unique 15-digit identifier stored by mobile networks.
- **Mandatory Phone-Number Registration**
 - Registration using a mobile number is compulsory for using the app's features.

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- The app states this is required to “identify the mobile number” linked to its services.
- On Android phones, the app automatically detects the active phone number and sends a registration SMS to DoT without explicit user consent.
 - This has raised major privacy concerns.
- **What Permissions Sanchar Saathi Seeks on Android?**
 - **Send SMS** - Enables the app to send the automatic registration SMS to DoT.
 - **Call and SMS Logs** - Allows reporting suspicious calls or messages through the app.
 - **Photos and Files** - Needed to upload screenshots of scam calls/SMS or documentation for lost/stolen phone reporting.
 - **Camera Access** - Used to scan a phone’s IMEI barcode to verify device authenticity.

Legal Basis for Mandating Sanchar Saathi

- The government’s directive relies on expanded powers under the **Telecommunications Act, 2023** and the amended **Telecom Cyber Security (TCS) Rules, 2024**.
 - TCS rules were amended in 2025.

Constitutional Concerns and Right to Privacy

- Experts warn that forced installation and a ban on uninstalling the app may face constitutional scrutiny.
 - Smartphone makers warn that complying with the mandate may require deep OS-level changes, potentially weakening device security.
 - Concerns are amplified because:
 - Sanchar Saathi is government-backed, and state agencies receive broad exemptions under India's **Data Protection Act**.
 - Critics fear this could give the Centre greater control over digital ecosystems and expand state surveillance capabilities.
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WHATSAPP WEB AUTO-LOGOUT

- The government is enforcing new powers under the Telecommunication Cybersecurity Amendment Rules, 2025, which introduced a new regulatory category: Telecommunication Identifier User Entity (TIUE).
- TIUEs include any platforms that use mobile numbers to identify users — not just telecom operators.
- **Mandatory SIM Binding for Messaging Apps**
 - Platforms must now ensure that their services are continuously linked to the SIM card used during registration.
 - This means:
 - Users cannot access the app without the original SIM being present in the device.
 - All related web services (like WhatsApp Web) must auto-log out every six hours.
 - This SIM-binding requirement must be implemented within 90 days, and companies must submit a compliance report within four months.
- **Shift From OTP Verification to IMSI-Based Authentication**
 - Currently, platforms verify identities via OTP sent to mobile numbers.
 - Under the new rules, they must begin verifying users by accessing the IMSI (International Mobile Subscriber Identity) — a globally unique number stored on the SIM card.
 - This represents a significant architectural change in how platforms authenticate users.
- **Impact on Global Platforms Like WhatsApp**
 - For WhatsApp — with billions of global users and over 500 million in India — complying with India-specific SIM-binding rules will require major re-engineering, since such requirements do not exist in other countries.

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Why the Government Wants SIM Binding?

- The government argues that cybercriminals exploit messaging apps like WhatsApp without keeping the registered SIM in the device, making it difficult to trace fraud.
- According to DoT, some communication apps let users operate accounts even when SIM linked to registration is absent, enabling misuse from **outside India** for cyber-frauds.

Telecom Industry's Initial Support for SIM Binding

- When the cybersecurity rules were first proposed, telecom operators supported SIM binding. The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) argued that apps currently bind to a SIM only during initial verification, after which they continue functioning even if the SIM is removed — a loophole they believed enabled misuse.

New Practical Concerns Raised by Telecom Companies

- **Problems for International Travelers**
 - Users who travel abroad often use foreign SIM cards while continuing to access WhatsApp or other apps without re-registration.
 - The new rule would block access unless the original SIM is present, creating significant inconvenience for frequent travellers.
 - **Disruption to Professional Workflows**
 - The requirement to log out secondary devices like WhatsApp Web every six hours adds friction:
 - Many professionals rely on web access during work hours.
 - Some workflows require using messaging apps without having the phone nearby.
 - **Questions About Effectiveness Against Fraud**
 - Industry representatives also point out that:
 - Many scammers use illegally obtained SIM cards, often registered with forged or mule identities.
 - SIM binding may not effectively curb fraud if the underlying issue of fraudulent SIM issuance remains unaddressed.
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CHALLENGES FACED BY THE PM INTERNSHIP SCHEME

- Recent data shows that only 20% of shortlisted candidates actually accepted the offer, despite rigorous screening and shortlisting processes.
- Even more concerning is that around 20% of those who joined exited early, signalling deeper structural issues.
- **Possible Reasons for Low Offer Acceptance**
 - **Low Stipend or Financial Constraints:** Many candidates felt the stipend did not sufficiently cover relocation and living expenses in major cities.
 - **Better Private Sector Opportunities:** Graduates often receive higher-paying corporate offers, reducing the attractiveness of government internships.
 - **Limited Career Pathway:** The internship does not guarantee government employment, making it less appealing for students seeking stable career prospects.
 - **Geographical Mismatch:** Many postings required interns to work in distant states or field settings.

Government Response and Planned Improvements

- The government has acknowledged these challenges and is evaluating ways to improve the scheme. Proposed measures include:
 - **Enhancing Stipend Support**
 - There are discussions about revised stipends, especially for postings in Tier-1 cities where expenses are higher.
 - **Better Orientation and Mentorship**
 - A more robust orientation module and structured mentorship framework are being considered to ensure interns gain meaningful exposure.
 - **Improved Matching Between Interns and Departments**
 - The government aims to streamline the process so interns are placed in departments aligned with their academic background and career interests.
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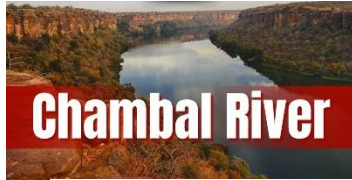
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KEY FACTS ABOUT CHAMBAL RIVER



- The Chambal River, called **Charmanvati** in ancient times, is one of the **major tributaries of the Yamuna**
- Located in **Central India**, the river forms part of the greater **Gangetic drainage system**.
 - It is a **perennial river** and has its source in Janapav, located to the south of Mhow Town close to Indore on the **southern sides of the Vindhya Mountain Range** in Madhya Pradesh.
 - It flows through three Indian states: **Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh**.

The **Chambal** and its tributaries drain the **Malwa region** of northwestern **Madhya Pradesh**, while its tributary, the **Banas**, which rises in the **Aravalli Range**, drains southeastern **Rajasthan**.

- **Notable Landmark: Pachnada confluence in Uttar Pradesh**, where it meets the Kwari, Yamuna, Sind, and Pahuj rivers.
- **Major Dams: Gandhi Sagar, Jawahar Sagar, Rana Pratap Sagar, and Kota Barrage** dams are built on this river.
- **National Chambal Sanctuary:**
 - Established in 1979, it covers **Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh**.
 - Known for protecting the **critically endangered Gharial crocodile**, along with other crocodile species, turtles, and diverse fish.
 - A hotspot for bird watching with many bird species, including the **endangered Indian Skimmer**.

What is a Ravine?

- It is a **narrow valley with steep sides**, usually caused by **stream bank erosion**.
- Ravines are **smaller than canyons** and **larger than gullies**.