

## Current Affairs - 04 May 2025

### INDIA TURNS THE HEAT ON PAKISTAN: WATER CURB, TRADE & SHIPPING CRACKDOWN

#### India Restricts Water Flow from Baglihar Dam

- India has temporarily restricted the flow of water from the Baglihar dam on the Chenab River, targeting Pakistan's Punjab region.
  - The Chenab River plays a critical role in irrigating Pakistani farmlands.
- The move is intended as a short-term punitive measure in response to the recent Pahalgam terror attack.
  - Even a brief choke in water flow serves as a signal that India is prepared to take coercive steps.
- **Treaty-Compliant Yet Strategic**
  - Though the Baglihar dam is a **run-of-the-river hydroelectric project** permitted under the Indus Water Treaty, India's action highlights its ability to use treaty-compliant infrastructure strategically in response to cross-border terrorism.
- **Possible Action on Kishanganga Dam**
  - As per analysts, similar measures could soon be implemented at the Kishanganga dam on the Jhelum River, indicating a broader strategy to pressure Pakistan using water resources.

#### India Imposes Total Trade Ban on Pakistan Following Pahalgam Terror Attack

- In response to the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack, India has banned all direct and indirect imports from Pakistan with immediate effect.
- The move is aimed at safeguarding national security and public policy.
- With this, India-Pakistan trade, once valued at over \$2.4 billion annually, has now come to a complete standstill.

#### Foreign Trade Policy Updated

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- A new provision has been inserted in the Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) 2023, explicitly prohibiting the import or transit of any goods originating in or exported from Pakistan.
- Exceptions, if any, will require special government approval.

### India Bans Maritime Link with Pakistan Following Pahalgam Attack

- India has banned all Pakistani-flagged vessels from docking at Indian ports. The ban is effective immediately and will remain in force until further notice.
- **Indian Vessels Also Restricted from Pakistani Ports**
  - The Directorate General of Shipping (DGS) has also prohibited Indian-flagged ships from visiting Pakistani ports.
  - It invoked Section 411 of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958, in the interest of national security and public infrastructure safety.
- **Limited Scope, Exemptions Possible**
  - The order applies only to ships flying the Indian or Pakistani flags.
  - Vessels flagged under third countries are not covered by the directive.
  - Exemptions may be considered on a case-by-case basis, especially for ships already enroute.
- **Minimal Impact Due to Low Trade Volume**
  - Maritime trade between the two countries has been negligible, with only about 14 ship visits in 2024.
  - Most trade has traditionally occurred via land borders or through third countries. Hence, the ban is expected to have limited economic impact.

### India Suspends Postal Services with Pakistan

- India has suspended the exchange of all categories of mail and parcels with Pakistan via both air and surface routes.
- The directive was issued by the Department of Posts under the Ministry of Communication, effectively halting all postal communication between the two countries.

### CASTE ENUMERATION IN INDIA'S NEXT CENSUS: OBJECTIVES, IMPLICATIONS, AND CHALLENGES

- Caste data was first collected in India in the **1881 Census under British rule** and continued until the 1931 Census, which remains the last official dataset providing a detailed caste breakdown.
- The 1941 Census did collect caste data, but the findings were never published due to the Second World War.
- Post-Independence, India officially discontinued this practice, choosing only to count SC and ST populations for administrative purposes.
- However, the 1931 data later formed the basis for the **Mandal Commission recommendations**, which proposed a 27% reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) based on the finding that OBCs comprised 52% of the population.
- **In 2011, the Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) was conducted but failed to deliver a reliable caste breakdown**, partly due to its open-ended format which recorded over 46 lakh caste entries, making the data unusable for policy purposes.

#### Objectives of the Caste Census

- The key goals behind including caste in the upcoming Census are:
  - **Informed Policy-Making:** Updated caste data will help refine the allocation of welfare benefits and development programs based on actual demographics.
  - **Reservation Reassessment:** Current reservation percentages are based on outdated or projected data. The caste census will enable a fresh evaluation of the need and extent of quotas for various communities.
  - **Social Justice:** It is expected to support more inclusive governance by bringing visibility to marginalized and underrepresented communities within the OBC, SC, and ST categories.
  - **Evidence-Based Governance:** Reliable caste data will aid academic research and enable evidence-backed political and economic interventions.

### Political Significance and Reversal of Stance

- After the **Bihar** government conducted its own caste survey in 2023, followed by similar exercises in **Telangana** and **Karnataka**, the national discourse began to shift.
- These state-level surveys revealed that backward classes make up over 60% of the population in many regions, fuelling demands for increased representation.
- In this context, the Centre's announcement appears aimed at regaining political ground, particularly as opposition parties campaign on themes of social justice and demand enhanced reservation caps.

### Potential Impacts on Reservation Policies

- One of the most significant implications of the caste census is its potential to alter existing affirmative action policies.
- The current cap on reservations is set at 50% by the Supreme Court. However, data from recent state surveys suggest that OBCs and other backward groups may warrant a higher quota, pushing political parties to demand an increase.

### Implementation Challenges

- The decision to include caste in the Census presents several operational and political challenges:
  - **Caste Classification:** Preparing a national-level caste code directory is a complex task, given the regional, linguistic, and sub-group variations in caste identities.
  - **Overlap and Disputes:** Different states maintain their own OBC lists, leading to discrepancies. There is also contention over classifications of certain castes as SC, ST, or OBC.
  - **Political Sensitivities:** Any inclusion or exclusion in caste lists is likely to spark political controversy, especially in election-bound states.
  - **Delayed Timeline:** Although the announcement has been made, the actual Census has not been scheduled. The 2021 Census was indefinitely postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and no new date has been announced.

### INDIAN COUNCIL OF AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH (ICAR)



- The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) is an autonomous organisation under the **Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE)**, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India.
- Formerly known as the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research, it was established on 16 July 1929 as a registered society under the **Societies Registration Act, 1860**, in pursuance of the report of the **Royal Commission on Agriculture**.
- The ICAR has its headquarters in **New Delhi**.
- The Council is the apex body for coordinating, guiding and managing research and education in agriculture, including horticulture, fisheries, and animal sciences, throughout the country.
- India has one of the largest agricultural systems in the world, with 113 ICAR institutes and 74 agricultural universities across the country.
- Through its research and technology, India has significantly increased production from 1950-51 to 2021-22: foodgrains grew by 6.21 times, fruits and vegetables by 11.53 times, fish by 21.61 times, milk by 13.01 times, and eggs by 70.74 times. This has greatly improved the country's food and nutritional security.

#### **New Genome Rice Varieties**

- The first variety, named as **DRR Dhan 100 Kamala**, was developed from a popular high yielding green rice **Samba Mahsuri** and the second variety is from Maharashtra Technology University **1010 (MTU1010)**, which is also widely used by farmers across the country.
- The new variety developed from Samba Mahsuri can be harvested 15-20 days ahead of its original. The yield is almost 25% more, which is about eight tonnes more per hectare.



### INSIDER TRADING



- Insider trading involves **buying or selling a publicly traded company's stock based on nonpublic, material information about that company.**

- Material, nonpublic information is any undisclosed information that could substantially impact an investor's decision to buy or sell a security.
- The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) defines an 'insider' as someone who has access to price-sensitive information about a particular company's shares or securities.
- In India, insider trades are regulated by the SEBI under the Insider Trading Regulations, 2015.
  - To prevent such acts of insider trading and to promote fair trading in the market for the interest of common investors, SEBI has prohibited the firms from purchasing their own shares from the secondary market.
  - SEBI can impose fines and prohibit individuals or entities from trading in the capital market if found in violation of rules.

### INDIAN INSTITUTE OF CREATIVE TECHNOLOGY

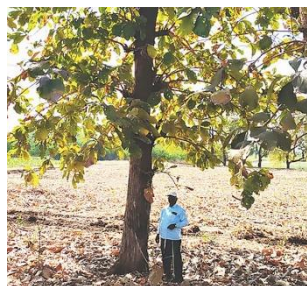


- The Indian Institute of Creative Technology (IICT) is India's first dedicated institute for **Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, Comics and Extended Reality (AVGC-XR)**, established as a National Centre of Excellence in Mumbai.
- IICT is modelled after the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), aiming to set new benchmarks in creative technology education and research.

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- The institute's mission is to create Indian intellectual property leveraging the country's rich cultural heritage and to cultivate talent for the global digital content industry.
- IICT will feature state-of-the-art infrastructure, including immersive studios, animation and gaming labs, virtual production setups, editing and sound suites, and smart classrooms.
- The permanent campus will be developed over ten acres at Dadasaheb Phalke Chitranagari (Film City), Goregaon, Mumbai, while initial operations will begin at Bandra-Kurla Complex (BKC).

### TEAK (TECTONA GRANDIS)



Tissue-cultured teak is being promoted as a high-yield, fast-return solution to boost India's timber cultivation and trade, raising debates about its productivity, economic viability, and ecological sustainability.

- Teak (*Tectona grandis*) is globally valued for its **durability, strength, and resistance to pests and water**, earning it the title of "**king of timbers**".
- It is one of the **world's most valuable tropical hardwoods**, extensively used in **shipbuilding, construction, furniture, flooring, and musical instruments**.
- **India holds 35%** of the world's **planted teak forests**, with **Asia accounting for over 95%** of global teak resources.
- As per the **FAO Global Teak Resources and Market Assessment 2022**, **Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra** have the largest areas of **native teak forests**.

### Geographic Distribution

- It is native to **South and Southeast Asia**, especially **India, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, and Indonesia**.
- In India, teak is found in **Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Assam, and the Northeast region**.

- It grows primarily in **moist deciduous and mixed deciduous forests**.
- It prefers **well-drained soils** and **full sunlight**. It can grow up to **30–40 meters** in height and live for **hundreds of years**.

### Ecological and Structural Characteristics

- **Large, deciduous tree** with a **straight, cylindrical trunk** (1–1.5 m diameter).
- **Leaves**: Oblong, glossy, dark green; arranged in **opposite pairs**.
- **Flowers**: Small, white/cream, **fragrant**, borne in clusters.
- **Wood colour**: Golden brown to dark brown.
- **Ecological role**: Supports **wildlife and biodiversity** in native ecosystems.

### Regulatory Context

- **Green felling** (commercial harvesting of trees) is **prohibited** in **government forests** under the **Forest Conservation Act, 1980**, and **National Forest Policy, 1988**.
- Hence, **private teak plantations** are key to meeting **domestic and export demands**.

### PANGOLIN



Global trafficking of pangolin scales has sharply declined since 2020, primarily due to COVID-19-related disruptions, sustained law enforcement actions, and evolving smuggling tactics, according to the Wildlife Justice Commission (WJC) report.

- **Species**: There are **8 species of pangolins**: **4 in Africa** (Black-bellied, White-bellied, Giant Ground, Temminck's Ground) and **4 in Asia** (Indian, Chinese, Sunda, Philippine pangolins).

### Physical and Behavioural Traits

- **Habitat**: Pangolins live in **tropical forests, grasslands, and agricultural areas**, and are found **close to human settlements**. The **Indian pangolin** is common across **India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh**.



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- **Diet and Ecosystem Role:** They feed primarily on ants and termites, contributing to pest control and soil aeration, making them crucial for ecosystem balance.
- **Threats:** They are heavily targeted for **illegal trade in Asia**, where their scales are used in **traditional medicine** and meat is considered a delicacy. Additionally, **habitat loss** has worsened their decline.

### Conservation Status:

- **Indian pangolin** is **Endangered** on the **IUCN Red List**.
  - **The Chinese pangolin** is listed as **Critically Endangered**.
  - Both are protected under **Schedule I** of India's **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**.
  - All 8 species are listed in **CITES Appendix I**, prohibiting international commercial trade.
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