

### WHAT IS STONEHENGE?



- It is a **prehistoric stone circle monument** and archaeological site located in Wiltshire, England.
- It is composed of roughly 100 **massive upright stones** placed in a circular layout.
- It was **built in several stages**:
  - The **first monument** was an early henge monument, built about 5,000 years ago, and the unique stone circle was erected in the late Neolithic period, about 2500 BC.
  - In the **early Bronze Age**, many burial mounds were built nearby.

#### **Purpose:**

- Though there is no definite evidence as to the intended purpose of Stonehenge, it was presumably a religious site and an expression of the power and wealth of the chieftains, aristocrats, and priests who had it built.
  - It is just one part of a larger sacred landscape that contained many other stone and wooden structures, as well as burials.
  - It was **aligned with the Sun** and possibly used for observing the Sun and Moon and working out the farming calendar.
  - Along with more than 350 nearby monuments and henges (ancient earthworks consisting of a circular bank and ditch), including the kindred temple complex at Avebury, Stonehenge was designated a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** in 1986.
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### ECONOMIC ADVISORY COUNCIL TO THE PRIME MINISTER (EAC-PM)

The Chairman of the Economic Advisory Council (EAC) to the Prime Minister emphasized the need for a new poverty line at a data user conference organized by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) recently.

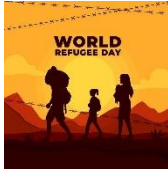


It is an **independent body** constituted in 2017 to give advice on economic and related issues to the Government of India, specifically to the Prime Minister.

- The Terms of Reference of EAC-PM include **analyzing any issue, economic or otherwise, referred to it by the Prime Minister** and advising him thereon, addressing issues of macroeconomic importance, and presenting views thereon to the Prime Minister.
  - These could be either suo-motu or on reference from the Prime Minister or anyone else.
  - They also include attending to any other task as may be desired by the Prime Minister from time to time.
- EAC also prepares a **monthly report on economic developments** at home and abroad for the Prime Minister.
- It monitors economic trends on a regular basis and brings to the PM's attention important developments at home and abroad and **suggests suitable policy responses**.
- The council regularly **interacts with stakeholders and the public**, and communicates its findings and recommendations through reports, presentations, and public events.

#### Composition:

- The EAC-PM is headed by the Chairman and includes a mix of economists and experts from academia, research institutions, and the private sector.
- There is **no fixed definition** of the exact number of members and staff of the EAC-PM.
- It is common for the Council to be **reconstituted time and again** with different organizational structures headed by various economists who are of recognized international eminence.
- For administrative, logistic, planning, and budgeting purposes, **the NITI Aayog serves as the nodal agency for the EAC-PM**.



## WORLD REFUGEE DAY

World Refugee Day is annually celebrated globally on June 20th.

- This day is dedicated to the millions of people who have been forced to escape their homes due to war, persecution, or natural catastrophes.
- **History of World Refugee Day:**
  - The first ever World Refugee Day was celebrated on June 20, 2001, to commemorate the **50th anniversary of the 1951 Convention** relating to the Status of Refugees.
  - The day was earlier recognized as Africa Refugee Day, and later in December 2000, the **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)** officially declared it an International Day for Refugees.
- The theme of World Refugee Day 2024 is '**For a World Where Refugees Are Welcomed.**'

### Who is a refugee?

- According to the 1951 Refugee Convention, a person is considered a refugee if they are **unable to return to their homeland** because they have a legitimate fear of being harmed because of their race, religion, involvement in a social group, or differing political opinions.
- Refugees are **forced to flee** their homes due to conflict, persecution, violence, or other forms of human rights violations. They often arrive in host countries with nothing but the clothes on their backs.
- Other non-typical refugee categories include **stateless individuals**, who have no country of citizenship claimed against them, and **asylum seekers**, who travel in search of international protection.
- In 2024, 130.8 million individuals were estimated by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) to have been forcibly displaced, or stateless globally, with over 32 million of them being refugees.

- **75% of refugees worldwide reside in low- and middle-income countries**, according to UNHCR figures.

## About United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR):

- It **protects refugees worldwide and facilitates their return home** or resettlement.
- History: It was established by the UNGA in 1950 in the aftermath of the Second World War to help the millions of people who had lost their homes.
- It is a global organization dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights and building a better future for people forced to flee their homes because of conflict and persecution.
- It was awarded **Nobel Peace Prizes** in 1954 and 1981.
- It **started the Nansen Refugee Award in 1954** for recognition of outstanding service to the cause of refugees, displaced or stateless people.
- **Headquarters:** Geneva, Switzerland



## [SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2024](#)

**The world is way off track on most of the sustainable development targets agreed in 2015, such as tackling poverty and hunger, says the recently released Sustainable Development Report 2024.**

- It reviews progress made each year on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) since their adoption by the 193 UN Member States in 2015.
- It is annually **published by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)**.
- **Highlights of SDR 2024:**
  - Published on the eve of the UN Summit of the Future, the SDR 2024 recommends a set of key reforms to the UN system to meet the challenges of the 21st century.
  - **Theme: The SDGs and the UN Summit of the Future**
  - This year's edition also presents a new index of countries' support for UN-based multilateralism and discusses long-term pathways to attain sustainable food and land systems.

- This year, **Finland, Sweden, and Denmark top the rankings.**
- Globally, **only 16% of the SDG targets are on track** to be achieved by 2030, with the remaining 84% showing limited progress or its reversal.
- The pace of progress varies widely across country groups. Nordic countries continue to lead on SDG achievement, with BRICS demonstrating strong progress and poor and vulnerable nations lagging far behind.
- Sustainable development remains a long-term investment challenge. Reforming the **Global Financial Architecture is more urgent than ever.**
- Global challenges require global cooperation. **Barbados ranks the highest** in its commitment to UN-based multilateralism; the United States ranks last.
- SDG targets related to food and land systems are particularly off-track. The SDR presents new **FABLE (Food, Agriculture, Biodiversity, Land, and Energy) pathways** to support sustainable food and land systems.

## E-SHRAM PORTAL



The Indian delegation to the 112th International Labour Conference (ILC) led by Secretary, Ministry of Labour & Employment showcased the e-Shram portal and its present integrations and achievements during the sidelines of the ILC at Geneva, Switzerland.

- It was launched by the **Ministry of Labour and Employment** in 2021 for registration and creation of a comprehensive **National Database of Unorganized Workers.**
- It allows an unorganised worker to register himself or herself on the portal on self-declaration basis, under 400 occupations in 30 broad occupation sectors.
- It is a “**One-Stop-Solution**” for **Unorganised Workers of the country.**
- The registration in the portal is fully Aadhaar verified and Aadhaar seeded. Any unorganised worker can register himself or herself on the portal on a self-declaration basis.

- The Ministry aims to facilitate access to various **social security schemes** being implemented by various Ministries/ Departments for the benefit of the unorganised workers through the e-Shram portal.
  - The portal is presently integrated with **National Career Service (NCS) Portal**, Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH), **myScheme portal** and **Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Mandhaan (PMSYM)** scheme.
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## 2024 HINDU KUSH HIMALAYAS SNOW UPDATE

**Why in news?** As per the Hindu Kush Himalaya snow update of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) report, the Ganga River basin — India's largest — reached a record low snow persistence in 2024. The Brahmaputra and the Indus basins have suffered similarly, threatening water supply to millions of people.



### **Hindu Kush Himalaya**

- The Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region is a vast mountain area that stretches across **eight countries**: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan.
- This region is often called the "**Third Pole**" because it contains the largest amount of ice and snow outside of the polar regions.
- **Source of 10 large Asian river systems**
  - It is the source of ten large Asian river systems – the Amu Darya, Indus, Ganges, Brahmaputra, Irrawaddy, Salween, Mekong, Yangtze, Yellow River, and Tarim.
  - The basins of these rivers provide water to 1.9 billion people, a fourth of the world's population.
- **Snow covered area**
  - A considerable volume of water resources is stored as snow and glacier ice in the HKH.

- Cryosphere components including permafrost and glacial lakes provide various ecosystem services for mountain and downstream communities.
- **Indian areas in HKH region**
  - Entire territory of 11 mountain states/UTs (Jammu & Kashmir (Indian administered area), Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh), & Darjeeling district of West Bengal state lies in HKH region.

## International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)

- ICIMOD is a regional intergovernmental learning and knowledge-sharing center.
- **Established** -It was established in 1983 with its **headquarters in Kathmandu, Nepal**.
- **Member Countries** - It serves **eight** member countries in HKH region: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan.
- **Focus Areas**
  - Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability: Monitoring climate change impacts and promoting adaptive measures.
  - Livelihoods and Poverty Reduction: Supporting sustainable livelihoods and reducing poverty in mountain communities.
  - Ecosystem Management: Promoting the sustainable management of mountain ecosystems.
  - Water Resources: Ensuring sustainable management and use of water resources.
  - Disaster Risk Reduction: Enhancing resilience to natural disasters in the region.

## Snow persistence

- Snow persistence refers to the duration of time that snow remains on the ground in a specific area.
- It is a measure of how long snow cover is present during a given period, typically over a season or year.

- Snow persistence is an important indicator in various fields, such as hydrology, climatology, and ecology, as it influences water availability, climate patterns, and ecosystem health.
  - **Factors Influencing Snow Persistence**
    - Temperature: Warmer temperatures lead to faster melting of snow, reducing snow persistence.
    - Precipitation: The amount and type (snow vs. rain) of precipitation.
    - Elevation: Higher elevations typically have longer snow persistence due to cooler temperatures.
    - Vegetation: Dense vegetation can insulate snow, slowing its melt and increasing persistence.
    - Topography: The shape and slope of the land can influence how snow accumulates and melts.
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## WHAT IS THE ENERGY TRANSITION INDEX?



India has been ranked 63rd on a global Energy Transition Index released by the World Economic Forum.

- It is published by the **World Economic Forum**.
- It was developed with the ambitious aim to comprehensively **monitor the global energy transition**.
- The heart of the Index is an analytic framework that measures transition as a shift towards an energy system that supports **sustainability, security and access**, and towards institutions that enable this performance.

### **Key points about Energy Transition Index 2024 (ETI-2024)**

- European countries lead the World Economic Forum Energy Transition Index 2024 rankings; **Sweden** came top, followed by Denmark, Finland, Switzerland and France.





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- Emerging economies such as **Brazil and China made notable progress**, although 83% of countries moved backwards from last year in at least one of the three energy system performance dimensions – security, equity and sustainability.
  - India has been ranked 63rd in ETI -2024.
  - The gap in energy transition performance between advanced and developing economies **continues to narrow**, although disparities in investments and regulation remain.
  - While 107 of the 120 countries benchmarked in the report demonstrated progress on their **energy transition journeys** in the past decade, the overall pace of the transition has slowed and balancing its different facets remains a key challenge.
  - The WEF also lauded the strides made by India in its clean energy infrastructure, with renewable energy and biomass comprising 42 per cent of its power generation capacity, making it the fourth-largest renewables market globally.
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