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DEEP-SEA DISCOVERY, ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

- India is entering a new frontier of scientific and technological exploration: the **deep ocean**.
- Advances in underwater robotics, submersibles and seabed exploration have created the ability to access mineral resources thousands of metres beneath the ocean.
- India holds **three International Seabed Authority** exploration contracts covering about 95,000 sq km across the Central Indian Ocean Basin, Central Indian Ridge and Carlsberg Ridge.
- Under the **Deep Ocean Mission**, India is developing deep-sea mining technology, underwater robotics and the **MATSYA-6000 human submersible**.
- The National Institute of Ocean Technology has tested a mining machine at around **5,270 metres depth**

The Ecological Limits of Technological Progress

- The assumption that **technological feasibility equals ecological acceptability** is particularly risky in the deep ocean. Seabed mining could disturb habitats, generate sediment plumes and disrupt ecological relationships.
- Since many deep-sea ecosystems are poorly understood, the long-term effects of large-scale disturbance may be **uncertain or irreversible**.
- Exploration can expand knowledge, establish environmental baselines and develop technology without automatically leading to commercial extraction.

Strategic Minerals Versus Ecological Necessity

- Deep-sea minerals have legitimate strategic importance for **renewable energy, electric mobility** and advanced manufacturing.
- Yet strategic value alone cannot establish ecological permission.
- Before extraction, India should determine whether minerals are genuinely necessary at the proposed scale and whether demand can be reduced through recycling, efficiency, substitution and **circular-economy practices**.

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From Extraction to a Circular Economy

- The deep-sea mining debate is fundamentally linked to patterns of resource consumption.
- Continuously opening new extraction frontiers is not a sustainable response to rising mineral demand. A stronger approach would emphasise resource efficiency, recycling, reuse, repair and substitution.
- **Mission LiFE** provides a relevant framework by encouraging responsible consumption and behavioural change.
- A **circular economy** can reduce pressure on both terrestrial and marine ecosystems by keeping materials in productive use for longer.

India's Opportunity for Ecological Leadership

- India's current position at the exploration stage provides an opportunity to develop a model of **deep-sea ecological governance**.
- The deep ocean can be recognised as **natural capital**, rather than merely a mineral reserve.
- Any future exploitation should be preceded by comprehensive biodiversity assessments, transparent monitoring, rigorous environmental standards and compelling evidence of necessity.
- India can demonstrate that **technological leadership** and environmental restraint are compatible.

Conclusion

- India's deep-sea programme demonstrates significant **scientific, technological and strategic capabilities**.
- Yet progress should not be measured solely by how deeply India can explore or how efficiently it can extract resources.
- True scientific maturity requires combining technological capability with **ecological wisdom, precaution and restraint**.
- Exploration should continue to expand knowledge, while commercial exploitation should remain subject to strong evidence of necessity and environmental safety.

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NEW CBFC FILM CERTIFICATION GUIDELINES: WHAT HAS CHANGED

- The Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) is a statutory body under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, established under the **Cinematograph Act, 1952**.
- Its function is to certify films for public exhibition in India. Contrary to common perception, the Board's mandate is certification rather than censorship; it assigns films to categories indicating audience suitability, though it may also require modifications before granting a certificate.

Certification Categories

- Following the Cinematograph Rules, 2024, the certification structure includes:
 - U: Unrestricted public exhibition
 - UA: Unrestricted with parental guidance, now subdivided into three age-based markers
 - A: Restricted to adults
 - S: Restricted to a specialised class of persons, such as doctors or scientists
- The UA category now carries three new sub-categories: UA 7+, UA 13+ and UA 16+, marking content suitable for children aged seven, thirteen and sixteen respectively.

New Guidelines:

- The revised guidelines retain all aspects of the detailed 1991 version, with two new additions.
- **Addition One: Drug-Related Warnings**
 - Scenes depicting or involving the use, consumption or trafficking of narcotic drugs or other psychotropic substances must now carry a disclaimer or statutory warning.
 - This aligns film certification with the broader government push against substance abuse, including the recently launched national anti-drug campaign targeting youth.

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- **Addition Two: Age-Based Markers**

- The second addition specifies new age markers in line with the three UA sub-categories notified under the **Cinematograph Rules, 2024**.
- Where the Board considers it necessary to caution parents or guardians about whether their wards should watch a film, it will certify the film for unrestricted public exhibition with an endorsement to that effect.
- This gives parents a more granular indication of suitability than the single UA category previously allowed.

Continuing Provisions from the 1991 Framework

- The bulk of the guidelines carry forward long-standing requirements.
- **On Violence and Crime**
 - The CBFC is to ensure that anti-social activities and violence are not glorified or justified, and that the modus operandi of criminals or other visuals and words likely to incite an offence are not depicted.
 - Scenes justifying or glorifying drinking are also to be avoided.
- **On Children**
 - Scenes showing the involvement of children in violence, as victims, perpetrators or forced witnesses, or showing children subjected to any form of child abuse are not to be presented needlessly.
- **On Vulnerable Groups and Animals**
 - The Board is to discourage scenes showing abuse or ridicule of physically and mentally handicapped persons, as well as scenes depicting cruelty to or abuse of animals.
- **On Obscenity and Depiction of Women**
 - The guidelines require that human sensibilities are not offended by vulgarity, obscenity or depravity, that dual-meaning words catering to baser instincts are not allowed, and that scenes degrading or denigrating women in any manner are not presented.

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GRAHAM BILL AND THE CRISIS OF SELECTIVE INTERNATIONAL MORALITY

- The proposed Graham Bill, which seeks to **target** countries such as **India and China** for purchasing Russian oil, is an example of the selective application of international norms and the expansion of American coercive power.
- The central issue is not merely the use of secondary sanctions against third countries, but the broader question of sovereignty, democratic accountability, international law and strategic autonomy.
- Even if Russia is blamed for the Ukraine war and Iran's regime is opposed, the US **cannot legitimately impose** costs on countries that did not start or control these conflicts.

The Democratic Accountability Deficit:

- **Externalising domestic failures:**
 - The war with Iran has generated significant domestic criticism and global economic and security disruptions, yet the US political system appears unable to impose meaningful accountability on the executive.
 - Instead of scrutinising the conduct and consequences of war, the US Congress is portrayed as attempting to discipline other countries through sanctions.
- **Executive power and congressional abdication:**
 - The problem goes beyond Donald Trump as an individual. There is a broader historical pattern of executive discretion in US foreign policy and war-making.
 - The bipartisan support for measures targeting third countries is therefore presented as particularly significant.
 - Congress, rather than restraining executive power, is argued to have strengthened it, raising questions about the **representative character** of American institutions.

Selective Application of International Principles:

- **Unequal burden-sharing:**
 - The Graham Bill allegedly assumes that the US can impose economic costs on countries that had no role in initiating a war and were not consulted in its conduct.

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- “Arrogance of power”:
 - The arrogance operates at several levels:
 - **Power mistaken for virtue:** Material power is treated as evidence of moral legitimacy.
 - **Self-legitimizing power:** The powerful assume that others must justify their actions, while they themselves remain exceptions.
 - **Resistance to self-restraint:** Excessive confidence discourages acknowledgement of failure or compromise.
 - **Epistemic overreach:** Major powers may develop mistaken assumptions about how other societies and states will respond to coercion.

Way Ahead for India:

- **Protecting strategic autonomy:**
 - The Graham Bill could pressure India to reduce its purchases of Russian oil, affecting **energy security** and creating a challenge for India’s strategic autonomy and its freedom to pursue an independent foreign policy.
 - However, strategic autonomy does not mean opposing the US. India can **deepen India-US cooperation** while retaining the freedom to disagree with Washington on issues affecting India's national interests.
 - Excessive concessions to avoid US pressure could weaken India’s bargaining position and policy independence.
- **Need for a principle-based foreign policy:** India should apply consistent principles such as sovereignty, non-interference, peaceful resolution of disputes and respect for international law across Ukraine, Gaza and Iran conflicts.
- **Strengthening global partnerships:**
 - Rather than depending excessively on any single power, India can strengthen ties with Russia, the EU, Japan, Gulf countries and the Global South.
 - This would increase its diplomatic space and resilience against external pressure.

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ADVANCE AUTHORIZATION SCHEME



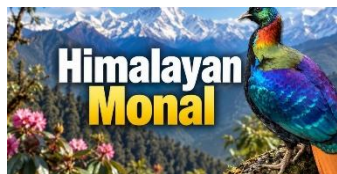
- It allows duty free import of inputs, which are physically incorporated in an export product.
- In addition to any inputs, packaging material, fuel, oil and catalysts which are consumed/utilized in the process of production of export products, are also allowed.
- It is overseen by the **Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT)**.
- The inputs **imported are exempt from duties like,**
- Basic Customs Duty, Additional Customs Duty, Education Cess, Anti-dumping duty, Safeguard Duty and Transition Product-Specific Safeguard duty, Integrated tax, and Compensation Cess, wherever applicable, subject to certain conditions.
- An export obligation is usually set as a condition for issuing Advance Authorization.

Advanced Authorization Coverage:

- **Manufacturer Exporters:** Entities engaged in manufacturing goods for export.
- **Merchant Exporters tied to Supporting Manufacturer(s):** Traders who do not manufacture themselves but procure goods from a supporting manufacturer for export.
- The Advanced **Authorization shall be issued for**
 - Physical exports
 - Intermediate supply
 - Supplies made to specified categories of deemed exports
 - Supply of 'stores' on board of a **foreign-going vessel/aircraft**, provided that there are specific Standard Input Output Norms (SION) in respect of items supplied.
- **Advance Authorization is valid for 12 months** from the date of issue of such Authorization.

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HIMALAYAN MONAL



- The Himalayan Monal (*Lophophorus impejanus*) is also known as the **Impeyan Monal or Danphe**.
- They are among the larger birds in the Phasianidae family.
- It is the state bird of Uttarakhand.
- **Appearance:** It exhibits **high sexual dimorphism**—the males are decked head to toe in **multicoloured plumage** and exhibit a long green metallic crest, while the females have a pale blue eye patch, **white throat, and a streaky brown body**.
- **Habitat:**
 - It occupies the **upper temperate forests** of conifers and oak with open grasslands.
 - It typically inhabits altitudes **between 2,500 and 4,000 meters** in **Great Himalayan National Park (GHNP)**.
 - It is commonly sighted in **Tirthan Valley**, especially **during the spring and post-monsoon seasons**.
- **Distribution:** It is found across the **Himalayan mountains**, including in **Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Sikkim**.
- **Behaviour:**
 - It is a **ground-dwelling bird**, often seen digging through leaf litter or soft soil with its powerful beak in search of roots, tubers, seeds, insects, and grubs.
 - It exhibits a **clear altitudinal migration**, descending as low as 2,000m in winter.
 - However, it also **shows tolerance to snow** and has been observed digging through snowfall for roots, tubers and invertebrates.
- **Threats:** It faces threats from habitat loss, hunting, and disturbance from tourism.
- **Conservation Status:**
 - **IUCN Red List:** Least Concern

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GANDHI SAGAR WILDLIFE SANCTUARY



- It is situated in **northwestern Madhya Pradesh**, with one of its boundaries running along the border of Rajasthan.
- The sanctuary was notified in 1974 and is spread over an area of 368 sq.km.
- **Rivers:** The **Chambal River** flows through the sanctuary, dividing it into two parts.
- The presence of the **Gandhi Sagar Dam** further enhances the region, forming a **large reservoir**.
- The sanctuary houses **sites of historical and archaeological significance**, such as **Chaurasigarh, Chaturbhujnath Temple, Bhadkaji rock paintings, Hinglajgarh Fort, and Taxakeshwar Temple**.

Topography: A major part of the sanctuary consists of vast open landscapes with sparse vegetation and rocky terrain, with small patches of dense forests here and there.

Flora:

- It lies within the **Khathiar-Gir dry deciduous forests ecoregion**.
- The principal tree species found are **Khair, Salai, Kardhai, Dhawda, Tendu, Palash** and the like.

Fauna:

- Herbivores like **Chinkara, Nilgai** and Spotted Deer, and carnivores like the Indian **Leopard, Striped Hyena** and Jackal are found in good numbers in the region.
- It was chosen as a favourable **site for the reintroduction of cheetahs** in India.
- It is a designated **Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA)**.