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## Current Affairs - 28 September 2025

### WHAT IS ARMED FORCES (SPECIAL POWERS) ACT (AFSPA), 1958



- It is a law enacted by the Parliament in 1958 which gives the armed forces special powers and immunity to maintain public order in “disturbed areas”.
- When is it applied?

It can be applied only after an area has been declared “disturbed” under section 2 of the Act.

- **Declaration of Disturbed Areas:**
  - Defined under Section 3 of the Act, a “disturbed area” is where the use of armed forces is deemed necessary to support civil authorities in maintaining law and order.
  - An area can be declared disturbed due to conflicts or disputes between various religious, racial, linguistic, regional, or caste-based communities.
  - The central government, Governor of the state, or the administrator of the Union Territory can declare the whole or part of a state or union territory as a disturbed area.
  - Once declared, the region is maintained as disturbed for at least three months under The Disturbed Areas (Special Courts) Act, 1976.
  - The scope and duration of AFSPA can vary depending on the region’s security situation.
- The ‘special powers’ of armed forces under AFSPA are:
  - They have the authority to prohibit a gathering of five or more persons in an area, can use force even to cause death or even open fire after giving due warning, if they feel a person is in contravention of the law.
  - If reasonable suspicion exists, the army can also arrest a person without a warrant, enter or search a premises without a warrant, and ban the possession of firearms.



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- Any person arrested or taken into custody may be handed over to the officer in charge of the nearest police station along with a report detailing the circumstances that led to the arrest.
- These armed forces are immune from prosecution unless the Union Government provides sanction to the prosecuting agencies.
- Where is AFSPA in force now? Currently, AFSPA is active in Assam, Manipur, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, and the UT of J&K.

### NEW RAMSAR SITES



- **Location:** It is located in **Buxar, Bihar**.
- It is an **oxbow lake** located on the southern edge of the Ganga
- The flood pulses of the Ganges influence land use and land cover in the wetland, exposing marshes and agricultural areas during the dry months and increasing inundation after monsoons.
- It acts as a buffer for nearby villages during flooding events.
- **Fauna:** In total, over 50 bird species are found in the site and its surroundings; in the pre-monsoon season, exposed marshland and shrubs provide food and breeding habitats.
- Local communities rely on the wetland for fishing, farming and irrigation.

### About Udaipur Jheel

- It is located in **West Champaran, Bihar**.
- It is also an **oxbow lake**, bordered to the north and west by the **dense forest of Udaipur Wildlife Sanctuary**.
- **Flora:** Over 280 plant species are found in the wetland, including **Alysicarpus roxburghianus**, a perennial herb endemic to India.
- The wetland is an important wintering ground for around 35 migratory bird species, including the vulnerable common pochard (*Aythya ferina*).
- **Threats:** The wetland faces threats from illegal fishing and intensive agriculture, particularly the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides.



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### COLD DESERT BIOSPHERE RESERVE – UNESCO RECOGNITION



In a significant recognition of India's conservation efforts, UNESCO has designated the Cold Desert Biosphere Reserve in Himachal Pradesh as part of its prestigious World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR).

- This inclusion marks a global acknowledgement of the ecological, cultural, and scientific importance of the fragile Trans-Himalayan ecosystem.
- With this addition, India now has **13 biosphere reserves listed under UNESCO**, highlighting the country's commitment to biodiversity protection and sustainable development.

#### **About the Cold Desert Biosphere Reserve**

- The Cold Desert Biosphere Reserve spans 7,770 sq. km. across Himachal Pradesh's **Lahaul-Spiti district**.
- Situated at altitudes ranging from 3,300 to 6,600 meters, the region represents one of the coldest and driest ecosystems in the world.
- It covers landscapes such as windswept plateaus, glacial valleys, alpine lakes, and high-altitude deserts.
- The reserve integrates the Pin Valley National Park, Kibber Wildlife Sanctuary, Chandratat Wetland, and the Sarchu plains, making it a hub of biodiversity and cultural heritage.
- It is divided into three zones: core (2,665 sq. km), buffer (3,977 sq. km), and transition (1,128 sq. km), to balance conservation goals with sustainable community practices.

#### **Biodiversity and Cultural Richness**

- The Cold Desert is home to a diverse range of flora and fauna.
- It harbours 732 vascular plant species, including 30 endemics and 47 medicinal herbs crucial to the traditional Sowa Rigpa (Amchi) healing system.



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- Among its iconic fauna are the **snow leopard**, **Himalayan ibex**, **blue sheep**, **Himalayan wolf**, and several bird species like the **golden eagle** and **Himalayan snowcock**.
- Around 12,000 residents inhabit scattered villages across the reserve.
- They continue to practice traditional pastoralism, yak and goat herding, and small-scale farming of barley and peas.
- The communities also maintain ancient Tibetan herbal medicine traditions, often guided by Buddhist monasteries and local councils that regulate the use of alpine resources.

### India's Growing Biosphere Network

- With the addition of the Cold Desert Biosphere Reserve, India's tally of UNESCO-recognised biospheres has reached 13.
- This reflects the country's broader strategy to align conservation with sustainable community development.
- India's biospheres now include diverse ecosystems, from the Nilgiri and Sundarbans to the Great Nicobar and Pachmarhi.
- Union Environment Ministry noted that this achievement follows the inclusion of two new Ramsar sites in India, bringing the country's total wetlands of international importance to 93.
- The move reflects India's consistent push to integrate ecological preservation with international frameworks.

### Future Outlook

- The UNESCO recognition is expected to encourage greater research collaborations, promote responsible tourism, and improve climate resilience strategies in high-altitude ecosystems.
  - It also calls attention to India's role in safeguarding fragile mountain landscapes that are both biodiversity hotspots and cultural treasures.
  - The designation strengthens the global narrative of balancing conservation with community livelihoods, offering India an opportunity to showcase its traditional knowledge systems, pastoral practices, and eco-cultural heritage.
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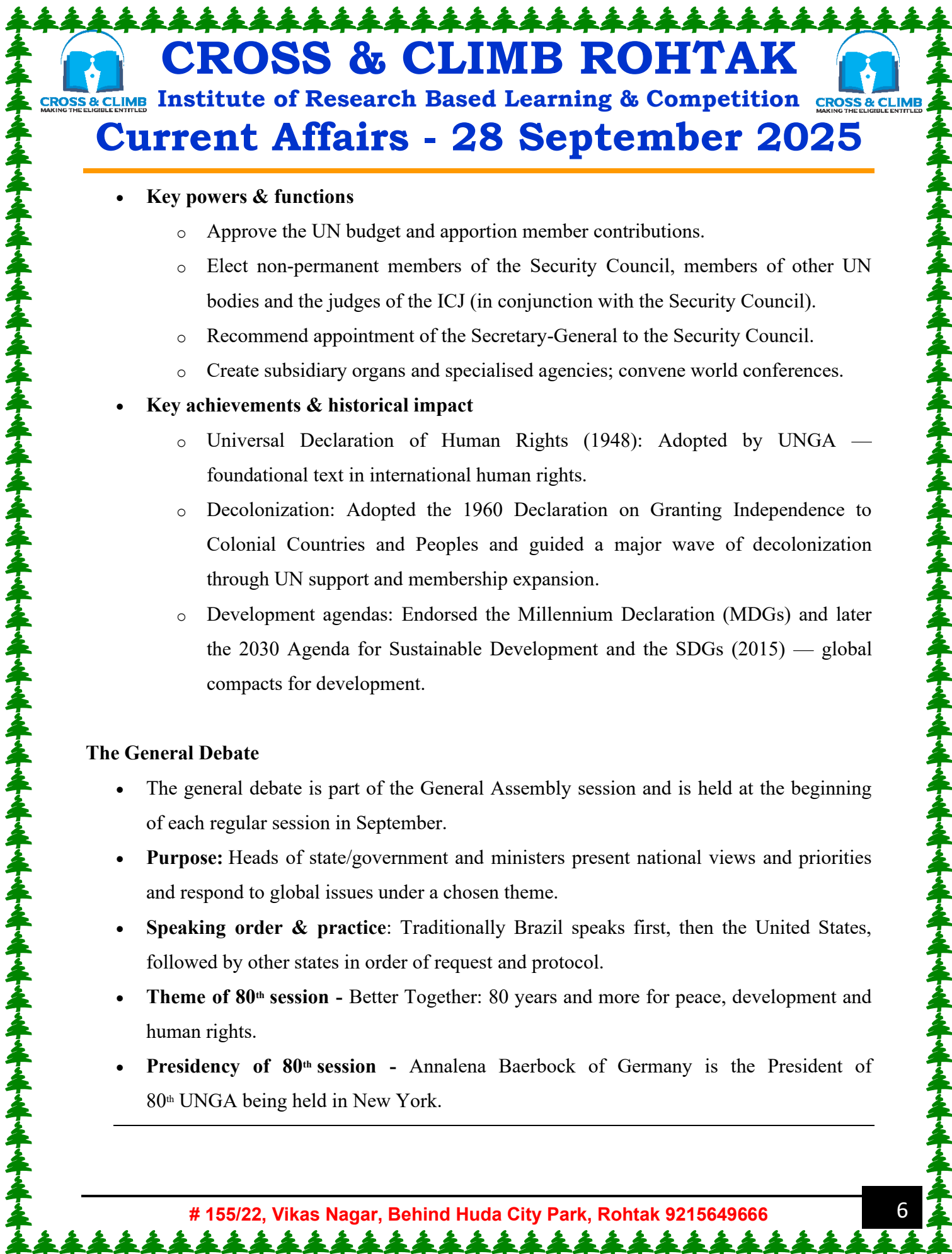
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### INDIA URGES MAJOR UN REFORMS AMID GROWING GLOBAL CRISES

- The UN General Assembly (UNGA) is the main deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations.
- All **193** UN member states are members (each with one vote). The **Holy See and Palestine** are permanent observers.
- It provides a global forum for multilateral discussion of international issues — peace & security, development, human rights, international law, budgetary and administrative matters.
- **Working**
  - It holds an annual **Regular Session** (High-Level Week in September) plus **Special** and **Emergency Special Sessions** when required.
  - **Structure:** Six Main Committees handle substantive work:
    - Disarmament & International Security
    - Economic & Financial
    - Social, Humanitarian & Cultural
    - Special Political & Decolonization
    - Administrative & Budgetary
    - Legal
  - **President & Bureau:** A President (**elected for one year**) chairs sessions and sets procedural priorities; elected from different regional groups on rotation.
- **Decision-making & voting:**
  - **Important questions** (admission of members, budget, peace & security recommendations) normally require a **two-thirds majority**.
  - **Other questions** require a **simple majority**.
  - **Nature of GA decisions:** Most resolutions and declarations are **non-binding** politically influential instruments; binding enforcement is typically the Security Council's domain.



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- **Key powers & functions**
  - Approve the UN budget and apportion member contributions.
  - Elect non-permanent members of the Security Council, members of other UN bodies and the judges of the ICJ (in conjunction with the Security Council).
  - Recommend appointment of the Secretary-General to the Security Council.
  - Create subsidiary organs and specialised agencies; convene world conferences.
- **Key achievements & historical impact**
  - Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948): Adopted by UNGA — foundational text in international human rights.
  - Decolonization: Adopted the 1960 Declaration on Granting Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and guided a major wave of decolonization through UN support and membership expansion.
  - Development agendas: Endorsed the Millennium Declaration (MDGs) and later the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs (2015) — global compacts for development.

### The General Debate

- The general debate is part of the General Assembly session and is held at the beginning of each regular session in September.
  - **Purpose:** Heads of state/government and ministers present national views and priorities and respond to global issues under a chosen theme.
  - **Speaking order & practice:** Traditionally Brazil speaks first, then the United States, followed by other states in order of request and protocol.
  - **Theme of 80<sup>th</sup> session** - Better Together: 80 years and more for peace, development and human rights.
  - **Presidency of 80<sup>th</sup> session** - Annalena Baerbock of Germany is the President of 80<sup>th</sup> UNGA being held in New York.
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### CORPORATE AVERAGE FUEL EFFICIENCY (CAFE) NORMS



- Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency (CAFE) norms are **government-mandated standards** that require auto manufacturers to meet a fleet-wide average fuel economy target.
- These are introduced by the **Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)** in 2017, and aim to regulate fuel consumption and **CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from passenger vehicles** under 3,500 kg.
- In India, CAFE norms were introduced in two phases, with the first stage effective from **2017-18 and the second from 2022-23**.
- These norms apply to vehicles powered by **petrol, diesel, LPG, CNG, hybrids, and electric power**.
- **Objective:** CAFE norms were designed to:
  - Reduce oil imports
  - Cut air pollution
  - Promote cleaner vehicles like EVs, CNG cars, and hybrids.

### **Key Facts about Bureau of Energy Efficiency:**

- It was established in 2002 under the provisions of the **Energy Conservation Act, 2001**.
- **Objective:** The primary objective of BEE is to reduce energy intensity in the Indian economy.
- **Function and Duties:**
  - It coordinates with designated consumers, designated agencies and other organizations; recognizes, identifies and utilizes the existing resources and infrastructure, in performing the functions assigned to it under the Energy Conservation Act.
  - The EC Act provides for regulatory and promotional functions which are assigned to the organisation..



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### JAL SANCHAY JAN BHAGIDARI INITIATIVE



- It was **launched in 2024**.

**Aim:** The initiative aims to **enhance water recharge** through rainwater harvesting/aquifer recharge/borewell recharge/ recharge shafts etc.

**Objective:** To ensure that **every drop of water** is conserved through **collective efforts**, following a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach.

- It is designed to **foster active participation** from all stakeholders, including government agencies, local communities, industries, NGOs and resident welfare associations.

**The initiative will ensure:**

- **Boost in Groundwater Levels:** Capture and store rainwater and surface runoff to stabilize and increase groundwater levels,
- **Promotion of Water Conservation** Foster a culture of water conservation by engaging communities in local water resource management.
- **Enhancement of Climate Resilience** Mitigate the impacts of climate change by developing storage solutions for heavy rainfall and providing a buffer against droughts.
- **Improvement of Water Quality:** Utilizing artificial recharge methods to naturally filter water as it percolates through soil layers, reducing salinity and contamination.

**Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Jal Shakti

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### AMRABAD TIGER RESERVE



- It is located in the **Nallamala hills** of the **Eastern Ghats** in **Telangana**
- It covers a total area of 2,611.39 sq.km, with 2,166.37 sq. km. designated as the core area.
- **In terms of core area**, it is the **second-largest tiger reserve** in India.
- This expansive reserve was **originally part of the larger Nagarjunasagar-Srisailem Tiger Reserve before the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana** in 2014.
- The reserve is renowned for its rugged terrain, deep valleys, and dense forests.
- Within the reserve lies the historic **Nagalapuram fort**.
- The **Krishna River** and its perennial streams originating within the reserve contribute to the **water supply of major reservoirs** such as the **Srishailem Dam** and **Nagarjunsagar Dam**.
- The **Chenchu tribe** is one of the major tribal communities that live in the ATR.

#### **Flora:**

- Amrabad is characterized by **dry deciduous forests**, primarily made up of **sal, teak, bamboo**, and acacia trees.
- The forest is rich in **medicinal plants** and shrubs, which have long been used by local tribes for traditional remedies.

#### **Fauna:**

- Apart from tigers, the reserve supports a range of other big cats, such as **leopards** and **wild cats**, along with herbivores like **sambar deer**, **chital** (spotted deer), **nilgai** (blue bull), wild boar, and the Indian bison (gaur).
- Over 303 bird species have been identified in this region. Some important groups include **Eagles, Pigeons, Doves, Cuckoos**, Woodpeckers, Drongos, etc.