



WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

JANUARY, 2023

Week-3

15-21 Jan., 2023

★★ Useful for ★★

**CSE, ESE, PSUs, State Services Exams,
SSC and Banking Exams**

15th JANUARY, 2023

Global Risks Report, 2023

- **Context:** 'Failure to mitigate climate change' as well as 'failure of climate change adaptation' are the two most severe risks facing the world in the next decade, according to the Global Risks Report 2023 released by the World Economic Forum (WEF).

Key Highlights

- **Natural disasters and extreme weather:** According to report, 'Natural disasters and extreme weather events' is the second-most severe risk that the world needs to be prepared for in the next two years.
- **Pandemic and war:** The current global pandemic and war in Europe has been held responsible for the energy, inflation and food crises.
- **Cost of living:** As per report, 'cost of living' ranks as the top most serious global risk in the short term (over the next two years).
- **Low and middle-income countries:** As per report, natural disasters or extreme weather events disproportionately affect low- and middle-income countries. Such events figure among the top five risks in 25 countries, especially developing coastal countries across Latin America, Africa and South-East Asia including India.
- **'Failure on climate action to address climate change'** has continued to figure among the top risks in the report since 2011.
- **'Failure to mitigate climate change'** ranks among one of the most severe threats in the short term too. It is also a significant global risk that the world is least prepared for.
- **'Biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse'** has not been perceived to be of concern over the short term. It has been ranked as the fourth most severe risk in the long term or over the next ten years (by 2033).
- **The global economic gap** will widen by 2024 when the developing countries will have fallen 5.5 per cent below their pre-pandemic expected GDP growth and

advanced economies would have surpassed the same by almost 0.9 per cent.

- **Cybersecurity threats** are growing and outpacing societies' ability to effectively prevent or respond to them. Attacks on critical infrastructure, misinformation, fraud and digital safety will impact public trust in digital systems and increase costs for all stakeholders.

About Global Risks Report

- 'Global risk' is defined as the possibility of the occurrence of an event or condition which, if it occurs, would negatively impact a significant proportion of global gross domestic product, population or natural resources, according to the WEF.
- The Global Risks Report series tracks global risks perceptions among risk experts and world leaders in business, government, and civil society.
- **It examines risks across five categories:**
 - Economic
 - Environmental
 - Geopolitical
 - Societal
 - Technological.

Global Economic Prospects

- **Context:** The World Bank in its report 'Global Economic Prospects' pointed out that "further adverse shocks" could push the global economy into recession in 2023, with small states especially vulnerable.

Key Highlights

- According to bi-annual "Global Economic Prospects" report, global growth is projected to decelerate sharply, reflecting synchronous policy tightening aimed at containing very high inflation, worsening financial conditions, and continued disruptions from Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

- Investment growth in emerging market and developing economies (EMDEs) is expected to remain below its average rate of the past two decades.
- Further adverse shocks could push the global economy into recession.
- Small states are especially vulnerable to such shocks because of the reliance on external trade and financing, limited economic diversification, elevated debt, and susceptibility to natural disasters.
- It is critical that emerging market and developing economies (EMDE) policy makers ensure that any fiscal support is focused on vulnerable groups, that inflation expectations remain well anchored, and that financial systems continue to be resilient.
- Urgent global and national efforts are also needed to mitigate the risks of global recession and debt distress in EMDEs, and to support a major increase in EMDE investment.

Identity Standards for Basmati Rice

- **Context:** The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has specified the identity standards for basmati rice.

Key Highlights

- The comprehensive regulatory standards will be enforced from 1 August, 2023.
- According to FSSAI, these regulatory standards for basmati rice shall also be applicable to brown basmati rice, milled basmati rice, parboiled brown basmati rice and milled parboiled basmati rice.
- The standards aim to establish fair practices in trade of Basmati rice and protect consumer interest, both domestically and globally.
- As per these standards, Basmati rice shall possess natural fragrance characteristic of basmati rice and be free from artificial coloring, polishing agents and artificial fragrances.
- These standards also specify various identity and quality parameters for basmati rice such as average

size of grains and their elongation ratio after cooking; maximum limits of moisture, amylose content, uric acid, defective/damaged grains and incidental presence of other non-basmati rice etc.

- Basmati rice is a premium variety of rice cultivated in the Himalayan foothills of the Indian sub-continent and is universally known for its long grain size, fluffy texture and unique inherent aroma and flavour.
- Agro-climatic conditions of the specific geographical areas where Basmati rice is grown; as well as the method of harvesting, processing and ageing of the rice contributes to the uniqueness of Basmati rice
- India accounts for two thirds of its global supply.

16th JANUARY, 2023

Pashu Sakhi Project

- **Context:** Under the Pashu Sakhi project, the Doctor Didis (friends of the animals) are creating social capital in rural Jharkhand.

Key Highlights

- The World Bank-funded Pashu Sakhi project trains village women in basic livestock care, has changed the way that women are seen as well as how domestic animals are reared.
- Pashu Sakhi is a Community Animal care Service Provider (CASP) which will enable the last mile coverage in rural areas where clinical services for livestock are not available on time or are expensive to afford for the rural poor.
- The project was conceived under the National Rural Livelihood Mission, with the objective of building a line of community resource persons.
- The Pashu Sakhi model under JOHAR had been selected by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization and the International Food Policy Research Institute as one of the top eight global best practice models for farmer service delivery.

Rajasthan: First State to Adopt Blindness Control Policy

- **Context:** Rajasthan has become the first State to implement a policy to control blindness, with the objective of ensuring the “right to sight”.

Key Highlights

- The Department of Medical and Health, on the direction of the Chief Minister released the policy document for the prevention of blindness.
- It is aimed to bring light to the lives of more than three lakh people suffering from visual impairment in the state.
- The prevalence rate of blindness in the country was 1.1 percent in 2020 and work would be done to bring it down to 0.3 percent through the blindness control policy.
- Under the policy, the Rajasthan government will mandatorily run Keratoplasty Centres and Eye Banks at all the government medical colleges.
- Efforts to eliminate visual impairment would be made in the districts in collaboration with voluntary organisations, trusts, hospitals and other charitable institutions working in this field.
- The state government will carry out a campaign for eye donation on an extensive level along with the private institutions.
- Special training will be imparted to eye experts, eye surgeons, post-graduate students, counsellors working for eye donation and eye assistants etc.

Jupiter ICy moons Explorer Mission (JUICE)

- **Context:** The JUperiter ICy moons Explorer Mission (JUICE) will be the first time that the European Space Agency (ESA) has sent a spacecraft beyond the asteroid belt.

Key Highlights

- JUICE is the first large-class mission in the ESA Cosmic Vision 2015-2025 programme.

- The spacecraft will launch on an Ariane 5 in April 2023 on an eight-year journey including gravity assist flybys of Earth and Venus before arriving in the Jupiter system in 2031.
- It will spend at least three years making detailed observations of the giant gaseous planet Jupiter and three of its largest moons, Ganymede, Calisto and Europa.
- It will understand if the oceans of these icy moons could have ever been suitable habitats for life.

17th JANUARY, 2023

Garuda Aerospace-Cognizant MoU

- **Context:** IT major Cognizant has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Chennai-based drone startup, Garuda Aerospace to fit advanced digital capabilities on its drones.

Key Highlights

- The partnership aims at bringing innovative solutions at scale for enterprises looking to achieve greater agility, productivity, and high return on investment.
- Cognizant and Garuda Aerospace are collectively targeting end-to-end drone-based management and monitoring offerings for businesses across sectors.
- Garuda Aerospace boasts a fleet of 400 drones and a well-trained team of over 500 pilots in 26 cities across the country.
- In September 2022, it received approval from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) as an official remote pilot training organization (RPTO).
- This makes Garuda the 31st RPTO in India to have been approved since the Union government liberalized drone regulations.
- Garuda Aerospace also launched a ‘drone yatra’ to educate and demonstrate drone’s efficacy among farmers.

Sethusamudram Project

- **Context:** Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin has moved a resolution in the state assembly seeking the revival of the Sethusamudram Project.

Key Highlights

- The Supreme Court is also hearing a plea seeking a direction to declare the Ram Setu a national heritage monument.
- PIL is against the Centre's Sethusamudram Canal project.
- The Sethusamudram Project is a proposed shipping canal project in India that would connect the Gulf of Mannar and the Palk Strait, bypassing the traditional shipping route through the Palk Strait.
- The project would involve the construction of a shipping canal through the shallow waters of the Palk Bay and the Gulf of Mannar, which would reduce the distance and time required for ships to travel between the east and west coasts of India.
- The canal project was put on hold by the Government of India in 2007.
- The project has been controversial, with concerns about its environmental impact and the potential damage to the Ram Setu, an ancient natural bridge that is considered sacred by Hindus.
- Environmentalists are concerned that dredging and blasting required for the construction of the canal would harm the coral reefs and other marine life in the area.
- Some Hindus consider Ram Setu to be sacred and argue that the construction of the canal would cause damage to the bridge and desecrate a religious site.

Doppler Weather Radar Network

- **Context:** Union Minister of State for Earth Sciences has said that the entire country will be covered by Doppler Weather Radar Network by 2025 to predict extreme weather events more accurately.

Key Highlights

- Union minister Jitendra Singh inaugurated four Doppler weather radar systems in Jammu & Kashmir, Uttarakhand, and Himachal Pradesh.
- Union minister Jitendra Singh has said that the Doppler weather radar network will cover the entire country by 2025 for more accurate forecasts related to extreme weather events.
- The number of doppler radars in the country has increased from 15 in 2013 to 37 in 2023.
- India will add 25 more radars in the next 2-3 years, taking the number to 62.
- The existing doppler radars will be upgraded to remove uncertainty in rainfall estimates.
- Ten doppler lidars will be commissioned in the Himalayan region.
- The environment monitoring network will be further augmented by increasing the number of sky radio meters from 20 to 30 by 2025.
- By 2025, the number of stations in the black carbon monitoring network will be increased from 25 to 45.
- The number of stations in the surface ozone monitoring network will go up from 7 to 25 and that in the precipitation chemistry network from 11 to 21.
- The IMD also aims to establish 660 District Agro Meteorological Units (DAMUs) by 2025 and increase the coverage from 3,100 blocks in 2023 to 7,000 blocks in 2025.
- Loss of lives due to cyclones and heat waves has been reduced to single or double-digit figures due to the response action by the disaster managers and the public under the umbrella of National Disaster Management Plans, guidelines, and SOPs.

18th JANUARY, 2023

PARAKH: India's first National Assessment Regulator

- **Context:** NCERT launched India's First National Assessment Regulator "PARAKH".

Key Highlights

- The National Council for Education Research and Training (NCERT) has released India's first national assessment regulator, PARAKH, which will work on setting norms, standards, and guidelines for student assessment and evaluation for all recognized school boards in the country.
- The PARAKH regulator aims to set up assessment guidelines for all boards to help remove disparities in the scores of students enrolled with different state boards.
- PARAKH stands for The Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development.
- It is established within the education survey division of the NCERT.
- PARAKH has been launched as a part of the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.
- It has envisaged a standard-setting body to advise school boards regarding the new assessment patterns and the latest research and promote collaboration between them.
- PARAKH will work in three major assessment areas including large-scale assessments, school-based assessments, and examination reforms

India's FY23 Fiscal Deficit

- **Context:** The upcoming Indian budget for 2023-24 will be a challenging one for the government to follow the roadmap for fiscal consolidation amidst a global environment of declining inflation, said a top economist of State Bank of India in a report.

Key Highlights

- For India, this could make things difficult to set a nominal gross domestic product (GDP) number significantly higher than 10 per cent, with a deflator about 3.5 per cent. But this could also mean a higher GDP growth than anticipated at about 6.2 per cent.

- Expenditure is likely to be on the higher side of the budget estimates (BE) by around Rs 3 lakh crore on account of higher subsidy bill and additional spending announced by the Government
- The fiscal deficit of the Indian government for FY23 will be about Rs.17.5 lakh crore.
- For FY23, total receipts of the Government would be higher than the budget estimates (BE) by around Rs 2.3 lakh crore, on account of higher direct tax receipts (about Rs 2.2 lakh crore), higher GST receipts (Rs 95,000 crore) but lower dividends (about Rs 40,000 crore), lower fuel tax net of cess (Rs 30,000 crore) and lower disinvestment receipts (about Rs 15000-20,000 crore).

LHS 475b Exoplanet

- **Context:** NASA's James Webb Space Telescope Discovers New Exoplanet Named LHS 475b.

Key Highlights

- The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) announced that the James Webb Space Telescope has discovered its first new exoplanet. Researchers have labelled the planet as LHS 475 b, and it's roughly the same size as Earth.
- Located just 41 light-years away, the planet orbits very close to a red dwarf star and completes a full orbit in just two days. Researchers hope that in the coming years, owing to the Webb telescope's advanced capabilities, they will be able to detect more Earth-sized planets.
- So far, most of the discovered exoplanets are similar to Jupiter as Earth-sized planets are much smaller in size and harder to discover with older telescopes.
- LHS 475b, It is roughly the same size as Earth, with a diameter of 99% that of Earth.
- It differs from Earth in two respects, first that it completes one orbit in only two days and secondly it is hundreds of degrees hotter than Earth.

About Exoplanets

- Exoplanets are planets that orbit other stars and are beyond our solar system.
- The first exoplanets were discovered in the 1990s
- According to NASA, to date, more than 5,000 exoplanets have been discovered.
- Exoplanets come in a host of different sizes.
- They can be gas giants bigger than Jupiter or as small and rocky as Earth.
- They are also known to have different kinds of temperatures — boiling hot to freezing cold.
- Studying exoplanets not only broadens our understanding of other solar systems but also helps us piece together information about our own planetary system and origin.

19th JANUARY, 2023

Center for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (C4IR)

- **Context:** The World Economic Forum (WEF) has chosen Hyderabad for establishing its Center for the Fourth Industrial Revolution focused on healthcare and life sciences.

Key Highlights

- The C4IR Telangana will be an autonomous, non-profit organization and the only such World Economic Forum in India with a thematic focus on healthcare and life sciences.
- WEF entered into a collaboration agreement with the state government at the Forum's annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland.
- C4IR Telangana is the 18th center to join the Forum's Fourth Industrial Revolution Network, which spans four continents.
- The center will help Telangana become an important node in the global network and consolidate its leadership position globally.

- Telangana accounts for one third of global vaccine output and is regarded as a leading life sciences hotspot in Asia. Also, the state contributes about 35 per cent of India's pharmaceutical production.
- According to the statement, the proposed hub will advance and accelerate the development and adoption of newer technologies including genomics, personalized medicine and healthcare manufacturing, with a focus on the interplay between life sciences and technology in the region and globally.

Giving to Amplify Earth Action (GAEA) Initiative

- **Context:** The World Economic Forum, supported by more than 45 partners, has launched the Giving to Amplify Earth Action (GAEA).

Key Highlights

- GAEA is a global initiative to fund and grow new and existing public, private and philanthropic partnerships (PPPPs).
- It is aimed to help unlock the \$3 trillion of financing needed each year to reach net zero, reverse nature loss, and restore biodiversity by 2050.
- It said that with the ongoing energy and cost of living crises, the ambition of steering the planet towards a 1.5-degree Celsius warming pathway "hangs in the balance."
- Current funding is slow and inadequate, and a new approach is needed to get capital flowing.
- Despite the rise in philanthropic financing for climate mitigation in recent years, it totaled at \$810 billion in 2021, but just 2% went towards reducing emissions.

Kollam: India's first Constitution Literate District

- **Context:** The Indian district of Kollam has become the country's first constitution literate district.

Key Highlights

- The announcement was made by Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.
- The district's success is the result of a seven-month campaign launched by the Kollam district panchayat, District Planning Committee, and the Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA) to educate citizens about the country's laws and their rights.
- The campaign aimed to provide constitutional literacy to 23 lakh citizens belonging to 7 lakh families in the district.
- To achieve this goal, awareness classes were organized for around 90% of the people in Kollam.
- Around 16.3 lakh people above the age of 10 were educated by 2,200 trainers called "senators," who visited schools, offices, auto stands, and tribal councils to create awareness.
- The Constitution literacy campaign in Kollam district is expected to help in a number of ways. By providing education about the country's laws and citizens' rights, the campaign aims to create a more informed and aware citizenry.
- This can lead to better understanding of one's rights and responsibilities as a citizen, and can also help in holding the government accountable for its actions. It also helps the government's efforts to improve secularism and the social environment.

20th JANUARY, 2023

Saaṅṅhi Mobile App

- **Context:** SEBI launches Saaṅṅhi mobile app for investor education.

Key Highlights

- The new Saaṅṅhi mobile app by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) aims to create awareness among investors about the basic concepts of the securities market.

- The app will also explain about KYC process, trading and settlement, mutual funds (MF), recent market developments, investor grievances redressal mechanism, etc.
- This mobile app is yet another initiative of SEBI with a view to empowering investors with knowledge about securities market. With the recent surge in individual investors entering the market, and more importantly a large proportion of trading being mobile phone based, this app will be helpful in easily accessing the relevant information.

RBI's 2023 Monetary Policy

- **Context:** The Reserve Bank of India's 2023 monetary policy objective is to hold inflation within the mandated tolerance band and guide it towards the medium-term target of 4% by 2024

Key Highlights

- Recent data indicated "the first milestone of monetary policy is being passed – bringing inflation into the tolerance band".
- The objective during 2023 is to tether inflation therein so that it aligns with the target by 2024 – the second milestone.
- Annual retail inflation rose 5.72% in December versus 5.88% in the previous month, dipping below 6% for a second straight month after having stayed above the central bank's tolerance band of 2%-6% for 10 months.
- In India, with inflation being brought within the RBI's tolerance band, macroeconomic stability is getting bolstered and lead indicators are suggesting that the current account deficit (CAD) too will narrow through the rest of 2022 and 2023.
- The CAD had reached 4.4% of GDP in the July-September quarter of the current fiscal year ending March, its worst since the June quarter of 2013.

Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)

- **Context:** Recently, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs MCA proposed a broad range of changes to the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).

Key Highlights

- The ministry has proposed to empower the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) to slap hefty fines on those that contravene IBC rules.
- NCLT's discretion has been increased in the new measures, so focus will be on strengthening NCLT for effective implementation.
- It has also explicitly clarified that the adjudicating authority must admit an insolvency case if the default is established and need not get into other specifics like the reason for the default, etc., which was delaying the admission of applications.
- The ministry has suggested developing a state-of-the-art electronic platform that can handle several processes under the Code with minimum human interface.
- This e-platform may provide for a case management system, automated processes to file applications with the Adjudicating Authority (AA), delivery of notices, enabling interaction of IPs (Insolvency Professionals) with stakeholders, storage of records of CDs (Corporate Debtors) undergoing the process, and incentivising participation of other market players in the IBC ecosystem.
- The liquidation process is also sought to be made more open, flexible and equitable to provide comfort to the creditors
- The ministry has also proposed redesigning the Fast-Track Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (FIRP) to allow financial creditors to drive the insolvency resolution process for a CD outside of the judicial process while retaining some involvement of the Adjudicating Authority (AA) to improve the legal certainty of the final outcome.

- Further, the resolution plan approved through this procedure will have the same sanctity as a regular plan approved during the CIRP (Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process).
- The ministry has pitched for a special framework for real estate to limit bankruptcy proceedings to only insolvent projects.
- Another proposal is to enable a resolution professional to transfer the ownership and possession of a plot, apartment or building to the allottees with the consent of the CoC (Committee of Creditors).

21st JANUARY, 2023

Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) Report

- **Context:** The annual status of education report (ASER) survey released by Pratham, shows trends in nationwide gap in school education.

Key Highlights

- Pratham, a non-governmental organisation (NGO), has been surveying children aged 6 to 14 and publishing ASER since 2005 to track trends in school enrolment, attendance, and reading and arithmetic abilities.
- The ASER survey was held nationwide after a gap of four years, reaching 19,060 villages across 616 districts.
- The last ASER report based on the physical household surveys was released in 2018.
- As many as 3,74,544 households and 6,99,597 children in the age group 3-16 were surveyed.
- As per report, basic reading ability of children in age group 5-16-year-olds enrolled in both government and private schools across the country have sharply dropped amid Covid-19 pandemic, "reversing" the slow improvement achieved in the intervening years.

- The report also highlighted a decrease in the percentage of out-of-school girls across the country, and a sharp increase of 7.1 percentage points in the number of children enrolled in pre-primary age groups in 2022.
- The ASER reading test assesses whether a child can read letters, words, a simple paragraph class first level of difficulty, or a “story” class second level of difficulty.
- According to the report, the percentage of class third students in government and private schools who can read at class second level dropped from 27.3% in 2018 to 20.5% in 2022.
- Among class 8 students, the drop in basic reading ability was less as compared to observed trends in classes 3 and 5.
- Nationally, 69.6% of children enrolled in class 8 in government or private schools can read at least basic text in 2022, falling from 73% in 2018.
- The report highlighted a nationwide decline in children’s basic arithmetic levels in comparison to 2018 levels for most grades. But the decline was less steep than in the case of basic reading.
- For instance, children in class 3 who are able to at least do subtraction dropped from 28.2% in 2018 to 25.9% in 2022.
- Similarly, the number of children in class 5 across India who can do division has also fallen slightly, from 27.9% in 2018 to 25.6% in 2022.
- The proportion of children (age 6 to 14) enrolled in government schools increased sharply from 65.6% in 2018 to 72.9% in 2022.
- The percentage of girls aged 11-14 years who were out of school stood at 2% in 2022, a sharp improvement from 2018 when the figure was 4.1%.
- In 2008, nationally, more than 20% of girls in the 15–16-year age group were not enrolled in school. In 2022, this figure had decreased to 7.9%.

World’s Largest Hydroelectric Project

- **Context:** China is building a 60,000 MW dam on the Yarlung Tsangpo River, which will become the world's largest hydroelectric project.

Key Highlights

- China is building a 60,000 MW dam on the Yarlung Tsangpo River. The project was announced in 2021.
- Once completed, it will be the world’s largest hydroelectric dam and will surpass China’s Three Gorges Dam, which is currently largest hydroelectric project in terms of installed capacity.
- The under-construction dam is in Medog county, Tibet which is in close proximity to Arunachal Pradesh.
- The Yarlung Tsangpo is the upper stream of the Brahmaputra River located in the Tibet Autonomous Region, China. It is the longest river of Tibet.

India’s response

- India is planning a hydropower project on the strategically important Siang River in Arunachal Pradesh of 11,000 MW capacity.
- The project will aim at live storage of 9 billion cubic meters of water.
- The report on the project has been sent to the Central Electricity Authority for approval.
- The cost of setting up a hydroelectric project is generally 6-10 crore/MW, and the gestation period for such projects is usually over nine years, depending on the size and the works.
- Siang is the most important river in Arunachal which also forms the main trunk of river Brahmaputra. The river flows from China, where it is called Yarlung Tsangpo.

Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZ)

- **Context:** The creation of the Ecologically Sensitive Zones (ESZ) has sparked protests in Kerala.

Key Highlights

In 2022, the SC, while hearing a PIL to protect forest lands in Tamil Nadu's Nilgiris, gave the guidelines which was later expanded to cover the entire country, directed the following:

- **Mandatory 1-km ESZ:** All states have a mandatory 1-km ESZ from the demarcated boundaries of every protected forest land, national park and wildlife sanctuary.
- **Maintain status quo:** If the existing ESZ goes beyond 1-km buffer zone or if any statutory instrument prescribes a higher limit, then such extended boundary shall prevail.
- **Scaling buffer zone:** In case the question of the extent of buffer zone was pending a statutory decision, then the court's direction to maintain the 1-km safety zone would be applicable until a final decision is arrived at.
- **Prohibited activities:** No new permanent structure could come up for any purpose within an ESZ.
- **Compliance authority:** The court vested the powers to ensure compliance with the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) and the Home Secretary of the State/UT. The PCCF was to make a list of all structures within the ESZs and report it to the SC within 3 months.
- **Failure to adhere:** The court also warned that in the event of any State/UT failing to submit a proposal, an area of 10 km would be considered as a buffer zone in respect of such sanctuaries or national parks and restrictions would be imposed in those areas. **Exemption:** The SC also noted maintaining uniform mandated 1km ESZ may not be possible and

hence, directed the States to approach the Central Empowered Committee (CEC) and MoEFCC seeking relaxation as and when required in the public interest.

Kerala's Response

- The Kerala State Assembly passed a resolution urging the Central government to exempt the state's human settlements, farmlands and public institutions from the scope of the ESZ.
- The Kerala State Remote Sensing and Environment Centre (KSRSEC) identified a total area of 1,588.709 sq. km (29.65% of the geographical area of state) would come under ESZ, including residential and commercial buildings.
- It also reported that 115 villages and 83 tribal settlements will come under the ESZ of the State.
- As per the 2011 census, the population density of Kerala comes to 860 people per sq. km and it is more than twice the population density of the country.

Protected areas in India

- Protected areas cover 5.26% of India's land area as 108 national parks and 564 wildlife sanctuaries notified under the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 (WPA).
- Surrounding these protected areas is an area of approx. 3.4% of the country's land, falls under the ESZ regime.
- Governments have notified 341 ESZs in 29 States and 5 UTs, while another 85 ESZs are awaiting notification.
- Together, protected areas and the ESZs cover 8.66% of India's land area.

