18/04/2024

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Centre tweaks Green Credit Programme norms; to focus on restoration of ecosystem (18 April) (GS Paper III: Environment)

- The Green Credit Programme (GCP) encourages investment in afforestation projects in degraded forest lands for green credits.
- The Union Environment Ministry clarified that the focus should be on restoring ecosystems rather than just tree planting for financial gains.
- **Forest departments of 13 states have offered 387 land parcels of degraded forest land, totaling nearly 10,983 hectares.**
- **Individuals and companies can apply to the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE) to pay for the restoration of these forests.**
- The actual afforestation will be carried out by state forest departments.
- **After two years, each planted tree will be evaluated by the ICFRE,** and if successful, it will be worth one 'green credit'.
- These green credits can be used by financing organizations in two ways:
    1. To comply with forest laws requiring organizations to compensate for forest land diversion by providing an equivalent amount of land elsewhere.

2. To report under environmental, social, and governance norms or to fulfill corporate social responsibility (CSR) requirements.

Prof. Jodhka to get Malcom Adiseshiah Award 2024 (18 April) (Prelims)

Adiseshiah Award
- **Prestigious Indian Award:** Recognizes outstanding contributions to **Development Studies**.
- **Instituted by:** The **Malcolm & Elizabeth Adiseshiah Trust**.
- **Types of Awards:**
  - Malcom S. Adiseshiah Award for Distinguished Contributions to Development Studies.
  - Elizabeth Adiseshiah Award (introduced in 2018), presented to young scholars below the age of 45.

Focus of the Award:
- Honors significant and original contributions to the field of social sciences through research, teaching, publications, advocacy, and policymaking.

Nomination and Selection:
- **Nominations:** Invited from distinguished experts in the academic and development sector.
- **Independent Jury:** A national-level jury of eminent persons recommends the awardees.

Award Presentation:
- Awarded annually, typically in November.
- Includes a cash prize, a citation, and the opportunity to deliver the Malcolm Adiseshiah Memorial Lecture.

About Dr. Malcolm S. Adiseshiah:
- Renowned Indian economist and educator.

- Former Deputy Director-General of UNESCO.
- Founded Madras Institute of Development Studies (MIDS).

- Surinder S. Jodhka, a professor at the School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, has been selected for the Malcom Adiseshiah Award 2024.
- Vikas Kumar, an associate professor at the School of Development, Azim Premji University, will be honored with the Elizabeth Adiseshiah Citation-2024.
- These awards are given annually to recognize outstanding social scientists.

- The recipients are chosen based on their contributions and achievements in the field of social sciences.

How can small-scale farmers benefit from trees on farms? (18 April)

Background:
- Prior to 2014, agroforestry practices existed in India but lacked a dedicated national policy framework.
- The need for a policy arose due to:
  - Limited governmental support for agroforestry.
  - Technical and regulatory hurdles faced by farmers.
  - Pressure on existing forests due to insufficient tree cover outside forests.

Introduction of the National Agroforestry Policy (NAP) in 2014:
- A landmark initiative by the Government of India, making it **the first country in the world to adopt a comprehensive agroforestry policy**.
- Launched by the **Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India**, during the World Congress on Agroforestry held in Delhi.

Key Objectives of the NAP:
- **Improve Livelihoods:** Enhance income generation and economic opportunities for farmers, particularly smallholders, by integrating trees with agriculture.
- **Promote Environmental Sustainability:** Increase forest cover, improve land health, conserve biodiversity, and mitigate climate change through carbon sequestration.
- **Ensure Institutional Support:** Establish mechanisms for research, development, extension, capacity building, and market linkages for agroforestry practices.

NAP's Focus Areas:
- **Promoting Adoption:** Encourage farmers to adopt agroforestry practices by providing subsidies, technical guidance, and training programs.
- **Regulatory Framework:** Simplify regulations related to harvesting, transportation, and marketing of trees grown on farmlands.
- **Research and Development:** Invest in research on suitable agroforestry models, tree species selection, and integration with various agricultural systems.
- **Institutional Mechanism:** Establish a dedicated institutional body to oversee policy implementation and coordination.

Benefits of the NAP:
- Provides a roadmap for the development of the agroforestry sector in India.
- Empowers farmers with knowledge and resources for sustainable land management.
- Contributes to achieving national goals for environmental protection and climate change mitigation.

- Agriculture in India has historically involved diverse land-use practices, integrating crops, trees, and livestock.
- Agroforestry, which encompasses this integrated approach, is gaining popularity as an alternative to monocropping inspired by the Green Revolution.
- The impact of natural disasters like the Gaja cyclone led farmers like Chitra in Tamil Nadu to explore agroforestry as a means of diversifying their crops and mitigating risks.
- India has made efforts to promote agroforestry, notably through the establishment of the National Agroforestry Policy in 2014, building on decades of research.
- However, the adoption of agroforestry remains limited to medium or large landholding farmers, with smallholders facing challenges such as long gestation periods, lack of incentives, and weak market linkages.
- Chitra's success with agroforestry highlights its potential for enhancing farmer livelihoods and presents a case for creating an enabling environment to encourage tree cultivation on farms.

A recurrent water problem

- The "Trees Outside of Forests India" (TOFI) initiative is a five-year effort aimed at increasing tree cover outside of traditional forest areas in India.
- It is a collaboration between the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and India's Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change.
- TOFI focuses on seven Indian states and aims to identify opportunities for expanding tree cover and engaging relevant stakeholders to facilitate this expansion.
- The initiative aims to overcome key obstacles to increasing trees outside of forests (TOF) cover, particularly in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Haryana, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh.
- Through research and consultations, water availability and financial constraints have emerged as common challenges for smallholder farmers across these states.
- However, TOFI believes that solutions to these barriers are achievable with the right interventions and support.

Finding the right native species

- The National Agroforestry Policy drafted in 2014 acknowledged water availability as a challenge, particularly for smallholder farmers.
- Smallholders often struggle to secure additional funding for water and may incur debt in doing so, especially during the sapling stage of tree growth.
- **Water competition between trees and crops** is a concern in water-constrained environments, such as hard rock aquifers and regions with low rainfall.
- Growing trees that do not compete with crops for water can help overcome this constraint.
- An open-source water-accounting tool called 'Jaltol,' adapted by WELL Labs in Bengaluru, helps assess instances where trade-offs occur between trees and crops for water usage.
- Tools like 'Jaltol' enable practitioners to select suitable tree-crop combinations for agroforestry in water-stressed regions.

- Choosing the right tree species is crucial for enhancing the sustainability of livelihoods in agroforestry.
- Farmers are often attracted to fast-growing, herbivore-repelling non-native tree species, which can threaten soil health and human well-being.
- Casuarina and eucalyptus trees, both non-native species, are examples of fast-growing timber species grown primarily in large monocrop block plantations, rather than as intercrops or tree-crop combinations.
- Finding native species that meet multiple criteria is challenging but essential for reversing land degradation and diversifying livelihood opportunities.
- Decision support tools, like **'Diversity for Restoration**,' leverage extensive plant trait databases to identify appropriate native species aligned with restoration objectives.
- 'Diversity for Restoration' will soon be launched with recommendations for the Western Ghats region, followed by other areas.

Payment for ecosystem services

- Despite various studies identifying impediments and solutions to agroforestry, its on-ground implementation still lacks systemic support for financing and market linkages.
- Government policies and schemes often overlook the diverse needs of smallholders and fail to account for regional variations in landholding and biophysical conditions.
- For instance, the Indian Forest and Wood Certification Scheme 2023 has strict eligibility criteria that may make certification costs prohibitive for smallholders.
- Policymakers should assess the viability of existing policies and schemes as financial pathways for agroforestry transition.
- Ecosystem credits and payment for ecosystem services (PES) are emerging incentive mechanisms that promote nature-centered economics.
- PES involves a service user paying a service provider for ecosystem services like pollination, which can incentivize practices that improve soil and groundwater health and enhance biodiversity.
- However, the effectiveness of these mechanisms depends on identifying buyers and sellers of ecosystem services based on the unique services of a specific biophysical region, not just administrative boundaries.

A modus vivendi

- Agroforestry adoption in India needs to involve smallholders, who own the majority of agricultural land.
- However, ecological and socio-economic factors currently hinder the widespread adoption of agroforestry by smallholders.
- Secure land tenure is essential for smallholders to engage in agroforestry practices.
- Economic viability, including access to markets, is crucial for agroforestry to be sustainable and beneficial for smallholders.
- Agroforestry has the potential to align the interests of conservationists, agro-economists, and policymakers by promoting healthy ecosystems and resilient livelihoods.

- Creating an enabling environment is necessary to facilitate the rapid adoption of agroforestry by smallholders.

When this tiny frog in Brazil screams, you won't hear it (18 April)   (GS Paper III: Basic Science)

- Frogs employ various defense mechanisms against predators.
- These include being poisonous, brightly colored, or inflating their bodies to appear larger.
- Another defense strategy is making loud sounds to alert nearby frogs about predators.
- Scientists recently discovered that a tiny frog species in the **Brazilian Atlantic rainforest emits ultrasonic sounds.**
- These ultrasonic 'screams' are inaudible to humans but can scare off predators.
- Researchers from the Institute of Biology, São Paulo, and the Project Dacnis preserve recorded these ultrasonic sounds.
- The frog, known as the tiny leaf litter frog (Haddadus binotatus), emits these screams as a defensive movement against predators.
- During this behavior, the frog raises the upper portion of its body, opens its mouth wide, and throws its head back.
- However, the researchers did not hear any sounds emitted by the frog.
- Researchers used specialized equipment to check for the presence of a call emitted by the leaf litter frog.
- They found that the frog's scream was at a frequency much higher than humans could hear.
- The call's frequency ranged from 7 kHZ to 20 kHZ, within the human hearing range, and up to 20 kHZ to 44 kHZ, beyond human hearing.
- Leaf litter frogs emit these ultrasonic calls as a defense mechanism against predators or possibly to attract other animals that could protect them.
- Mariana Retuci Pontes, one of the scientists involved, suspected this defense mechanism after encountering a similar frog in Brazil's rainforests.
- The frog made defensive movements similar to the leaf litter frog when she picked it up, but she didn't have the equipment to record its calls at the time.
- The discovery raises questions about which predators are affected by the screams, how they react to them, and the ultimate purpose of the scream.

The Great Indian Bustard and climate action verdict   (18 April)   (GS Paper III: Climate Change Mitigation and Species Conservation.   GS Paper II: Fundamental Right)

With the final decision of India's top court still pending, this is an ideal chance for the judiciary to pursue the just transition framework and enable inclusive and equitable climate action

- The Supreme Court of India has acknowledged a fundamental right to be free from the adverse effects of climate change.
- Environmentalists primarily focus on its implications for protecting the Great Indian Bustard.
- **By recognizing the right but not defining its specifics, the Court allows for future discussions on its content.**
- This approach may lead to a more informed understanding of the right over time.
- The use of the just transition framework is proposed as a way forward.
- It can promote fair climate action and contribute to a more inclusive definition of the right.

The Right

- Rajasthan and Gujarat host the critically endangered Great Indian Bustard and have potential for solar and wind power development.
- Public interest litigation was filed in 2019 to conserve the bustard, seeking **a ban on power infrastructure construction.**
- **Supreme Court (in M K Ranjitsinh & Ors. vs. Union of India & Ors. Case, 2021) imposed a blanket ban on overhead power lines in a 99,000 square kilometre area, including bustard conservation zones.**
- **Existing power lines were ordered to be undergrounded due to collision hazards.**
- Government challenged the ban citing **climate commitments and practical challenges.**
- On March 21, 2024, the **Court modified the ban, tasking an expert committee to reassess the situation.**
- The committee will evaluate undergrounding feasibility and propose bustard conservation measures.
- Final judgment will be pronounced after the committee submits its report in July 2024.
- The Court recognized a new right against the adverse impacts of climate change, derived from **Articles 14 and 21 of the Indian Constitution.**
- It emphasized the threat climate change poses to the right to life and highlighted **disproportionate vulnerability affecting the right to equality.**
- The source of this right was determined through a combination **of judicial jurisprudence, India's climate action, international commitments, and scientific consensus.**
- Unlike its usual practice, the Court chose not to articulate the right further but acknowledged the need for it.
- This departure from the **norm reflects a restrained approach,** allowing for a more informed articulation of the right in the future.
- However, the recognition of the right does not appear in the operative part of the judgment, meaning it's **not legally binding.**
- While influential in shaping future climate action, its exact impact remains uncertain.

Just transition framework

- The main issue in the case was balancing the impact of renewable energy projects on the bustard.
- **The judgment framed the problem as a choice between protecting biodiversity and promoting climate action, treating them as opposing goals.**
- The recognized right only focuses on protecting human interests from climate change impacts.
- An alternative approach suggested is using the just transition framework, **which aims to make transitions to a low carbon economy fairer and more inclusive.**
- This framework can address the conflict between climate action and biodiversity protection by promoting inclusive climate action.
- It can lead to the development of **more inclusive climate rights that consider the interests of non-human nature and ecological justice.**
- If adopted by the Court, this case would be among **the first to consider non-human interests in just transition litigation.**

- This approach could contribute to broadening the concept of a just transition to include considerations beyond human interests.

A 'shared burden'

- The Court's final decision is pending, presenting an opportunity to use the just transition framework for inclusive climate action.
- A right against climate change has been recognized but not yet articulated, offering a chance to discuss its content and make it inclusive.
- The responsibility to shape this right falls on the state, activists, litigants, and academics.
- These stakeholders play a role in the recognition, articulation, and enforcement of rights.
- Their participation is crucial for making climate rights effective and inclusive.

Rain shocks: On the monsoon in 2024 (18 April) (GS Paper I: Geography)

> **The India Meteorological Department (IMD)**
> - The principal agency of the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) responsible for weather forecasting, meteorological observations, and seismology in India.
> - **Established in** 15 January 1875, making it one of the oldest scientific departments in India.
> - **Headquarters:** Mausam Bhavan, Lodhi Road, New Delhi
> - **Vision:** To be a leading national center for weather, climate, and seismological services, contributing to societal safety and well-being.
> - **Mission:** To provide timely and accurate weather forecasts, warnings, and advisories; contribute to climate change research; and provide seismological services.
>
> **Key Services Provided by IMD:**
> - **Weather Forecasting:** Issues short, medium, and long-range weather forecasts crucial for various sectors like agriculture, aviation, disaster management, and public safety.
> - **Monsoon Forecasting:** Specialized forecasts for India's monsoon seasons are critical for agriculture planning and water resource management.
> - **Cyclone Warnings:** IMD plays a vital role in monitoring and issuing timely warnings for cyclones in the North Indian Ocean, minimizing risks and loss of life.
> - **Climate Monitoring and Research:** IMD actively monitors and researches climate patterns to understand long-term trends and their impacts.
> - **Seismological Services:** Operates a network of observatories to monitor earthquakes and provide related information and warnings.
> - **Hydrometeorological Services:** Tracks and forecasts hydrological events like floods and droughts.

India's farmers must account for a stronger monsoon while sowing

- The India Meteorological Department (IMD) predicts a 6% surplus in monsoon rainfall from June to September compared to the average of 87 cm.
- This forecast is unusual as the IMD typically refrains from suggesting surplus or deficit rainfall in its April forecast.

- Despite the anticipated surplus, there's a 30% chance of excessive rains, defined as more than 10% above normal.
- Excessive rains are as likely as 'above normal' showers, with most expected in August and September.
- The forecast is based on the development of La Niña, aided by a positive Indian Ocean Dipole, potentially leading to rains in southern India.
- June and July are expected to have neutral conditions, neither El Niño nor La Niña.
- Excessive rainfall after two arid months may lead to **extreme floods, posing risks to lives, livelihoods, and infrastructure.**
- The 2018 floods in Kerala serve as a reminder of India's vulnerability to natural disasters.
- **States should prepare emergency plans, bolster infrastructure, conduct dam stability audits, and establish early-warning networks.**
- Farmers should be informed about the potential for a stronger monsoon in the second half and adjust their sowing operations accordingly.

Missing medical colleges: On the case of the Madurai AIIMS   (18 April)

India's poor doctor-population ratio cannot be set right without better Centre-State ties

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Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY)
- **Central Sector Scheme:** Launched by the Government of India in March 2006.
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Primary Objectives
- **Addressing Regional Imbalances:** Aims to correct imbalances in the availability of affordable and reliable tertiary healthcare services across India.
- **Augmenting Medical Education:** Focuses on increasing the availability of quality medical professionals, especially in underserved states.

Key Components:
1. **New AIIMS:** Establishing All India Institutes of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in various states. AIIMS building
   - These institutions offer a comprehensive range of medical facilities, education, and research.
2. **Upgrading Medical Colleges:** Upgrading selected government medical institutions and hospitals to provide super-specialty facilities.

Features of New AIIMS Under PMSSY
- **960-Bed Hospital:** Includes specialty and super-specialty departments, along with trauma centers, AYUSH facilities, and ICU beds.
- **Medical College:** Each AIIMS has an undergraduate medical college with an intake of 100 students annually.
- **Nursing College:** Includes nursing education, aligned with Nursing Council of India norms.
- **Residential Facilities:** Hostel and residential facilities for students, faculty, and staff.

Progress and Impact
- **Multiple AIIMS Operational:** Several new AIIMS are currently operating across India, and more are under construction.

- **Increased Access:** PMSSY has helped improve healthcare access in underserved regions.
- **Expansion of Medical Workforce:** Training new doctors and healthcare professionals addresses the shortage of skilled human resources.

- AIIMS institutions were established to improve healthcare education and bridge the gap between demand and supply of doctors.
- The Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY) was launched in 2003 to support this initiative.
- Despite intentions to enhance healthcare infrastructure, implementation challenges have hindered progress.
- AIIMS Madurai, a project aimed at providing quality medical education, has faced significant delays and infrastructure deficiencies.
- **Construction delays have led to students being accommodated in other facilities, impacting their education and experience.**
- The delay in completing AIIMS Madurai became a contentious issue during the 2021 Tamil Nadu Assembly elections.
- Efforts to address the situation and complete the project have been made, but challenges persist in ensuring timely completion and quality education delivery.
- Collaboration between the central and state governments is crucial to resolve these issues and ensure the effective functioning of AIIMS institutions.

The limitations of Ambedkarite Dalit politics today   (18 April)

- April events celebrating Babasaheb Ambedkar's birth anniversary have become national rituals.
- These events highlight a vibrant Dalit mass engaged in mainstream public culture.
- However, there's a lack of unity in Ambedkar's political legacies in the political sphere.
- Dalit political parties are becoming passive and marginalized.
- Ambedkar envisioned Dalit-Bahujan groups as claimants of state power and aimed for a greater social alliance with Adivasis, working classes, and agrarian laborers.
- Post-Ambedkar, Dalit politics aimed to establish Dalit-Bahujan as a transformative force in democratic institutions.
- Contemporary Ambedkarite Dalit politics is fragmented, lacking visionary leadership, a strong social base, and effective political strategies.

Ideological camaraderie

- Post-independence saw the rise of agrarian backward castes as ruling elites in major states.
- In the mid-1990s, powerful Dalit political leadership emerged, notably the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) under Kanshi Ram and Mayawati in Uttar Pradesh.

- The BSP became a significant political force, hinting at the potential for social justice politics to impact Indian democracy.
- Maharashtra also saw the emergence of Republican-Bahujan leaders like Prakash Ambedkar and Ramdas Athawale.
- Parties like Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK) in Tamil Nadu and Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) in Bihar provided space for dignified articulation of Dalit political cause.
- Despite ideological camaraderie around Ambedkar's iconography and slogans of social justice, these parties occasionally deviated from core principles.
- Examples include BSP's alliance with BJP in Uttar Pradesh in 1995 and Ram Vilas Paswan joining BJP-led alliance in 1999.
- In Maharashtra, Ramdas Athawale distanced his party from radical Dalit movement ideas and formed an alliance with BJP in 2011.
- Some Dalit parties like VCK and Prakash Ambedkar's Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA) maintained a consistent anti-BJP stance and allied with secular parties.

The challenge of Hindutva hegemony

- The BJP's rise as a mobilizer of Dalit-Bahujan groups under Hindutva umbrella faces little challenge from Dalit parties due to lack of strategic interventions, innovative slogans, and capable leadership.
- Dalit parties have limited influence beyond certain geographical boundaries, failing to mobilize significant Dalit populations in states like Punjab, Bengal, Himachal Pradesh, and Haryana.
- Other marginalized communities like Adivasis and Muslims also hesitate to overwhelmingly support Dalit parties due to doubts about their ideological commitment and electoral capacity.
- In the lead-up to the 2024 general election, Dalit parties could have presented a new outlook and innovative political program to influence Dalit-Bahujan voters, such as forming a unified political bloc of Ambedkarite parties like BSP, VCK, and VBA.
- However, Dalit parties have remained attached to regional specificities and lacked the political imagination to revamp social justice politics, often deciding to go it alone in the political battle against the BJP.
- The refusal to form a unified secular front with mainstream Opposition parties may allow Dalit parties to remain visible in democratic processes but could neglect the growing anxieties and troubles faced by the poor Dalit-Bahujan mass under the Hindutva regime.
- The fragmented and powerless state of Dalit-Bahujan politics today highlights deviations from Ambedkar's political legacies, with the absence of a national political agenda, ruptures in political ideology, and limitations in challenging the right-wing dominance.
- A new generation of Dalit-Bahujan leaders and intellectuals must emerge to overcome these obstacles and rediscover a transformative political alternative aligned with Ambedkar's principles.

Hapur verdict, challenging vigilantism

(18 April)

The Hapur conviction is an acknowledgement that the state was not only a participant but also an enabler.

- In a landmark ruling, **a trial court in Hapur, Uttar Pradesh, awarded life imprisonment to 10 men for their involvement in the cow protection-related lynching of a Muslim man named Qasim Qureshi.**
- The incident occurred in June 2018 in Bajhera Khurd village, where Qureshi was lynched to death and another man, Samiuddin, was severely assaulted, based on false accusations of cow slaughter.
- The additional district and sessions court judge Shweta Dixit found the men guilty of murder, attempt to murder, rioting, and promoting religious enmity, and sentenced them to life imprisonment along with a fine of ₹59,000 each.
- This conviction is significant as it marks one of the few instances where perpetrators of illegal vigilante crimes, particularly cow protection-related violence, have been held accountable.
- Cow vigilantism has seen a sharp rise in India, fueled by state interest in cow protection campaigns and amendments to cow slaughter prevention laws in states like Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.
- These laws and special task forces set up by the government have allowed cow vigilantes to operate with impunity, often with the tacit approval of law enforcement agencies.
- The conviction in the Uttar Pradesh case is only the fifth of its kind in India, with similar convictions recorded in Jharkhand and Rajasthan.
- The Hapur lynching conviction is significant because it holds the perpetrators accountable and criticizes the police for fabricating the First Information Report (FIR) and creating an alternative narrative of the incident.
- The judgment raises concerns about police accountability and alleges collusion of police personnel and investigating officers in the violence.
- It reveals attempts by the police to misdirect the investigation initially, such as not conducting an official identification parade for the victim, which aided the accused in securing bail.
- Despite the conviction, it indicates that the state cannot ensure unconditional security for cow vigilantes, highlighting the fragility of the alliance between state and non-state actors in such violence.
- The conviction serves as a warning to potential cow vigilantes, showing that the power ultimately lies with state agents, even if the boundaries between state and non-state actors blur in the exercise of violence.
- However, the conviction does not signify an end to the state's sanction of anti-Muslim violence; instead, it highlights how the state delegates illegal policing to vigilantes while remaining distanced from its punitive consequences.
- The judgment underscores the need for addressing systemic issues within law enforcement and the broader implications of state-sanctioned violence against minorities.

State-induced lynching

- Despite the life imprisonment sentence in the Hapur lynching case, the underlying issue of state-induced lynching remains untouched, unpunished, and unchanged.
- The close association of the police in such violence has persisted through several instances, indicating systemic issues within law enforcement.
- Processes such as the fabrication of the FIR, manipulation of the investigation, defective evidence collection, and police harassment are common in cases of anti-minority violence.
- While the conviction in the Hapur case may seem like a victory for justice by imposing maximum punishment on the culprits, it also highlights the ongoing sustenance of state crimes while non-state actors are held accountable.

Sexism on the campaign trail (18 April)

Leaders in Karnataka are in a dispute over the effect of schemes targeting women

- The Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act, also known as the Women's Reservation Bill, 2023, was introduced in Lok Sabha on September 19, 2023.
- It aims to allocate 33 percent of seats in Lok Sabha, State legislative assemblies, and Delhi legislative assembly for women.
- The bill was part of a legislative debate that spanned 27 years, including the lapsed Women's Reservation Bill (2010), due to lack of consensus among political parties.
- It was the first bill considered in the new parliament building.
- Lok Sabha passed the bill on September 20, 2023, with 454 votes in favor and two against.
- The Rajya Sabha passed the bill unanimously on September 21, 2023, with 214 votes in favor and none against.
- President Murmu signed the bill on September 28, 2023, and the gazette notification was published the same day, indicating that the reservation will come into force after the first delimitation (frozen until 2026).

women reservation bill

- The issue of women's representation in legislative bodies was discussed as early as the Constituent Assembly of India's inaugural session in 1946, where Sarojini Naidu was the only woman present.
- Deliberations on a quota for women in politics occurred in 1996, 1997, and 1998, but progress was hindered due to various reasons, including the dissolution of Lok Sabha and lack of consensus among political parties.
- Despite women constituting more than half of the global population, there's been a growing concern about their underrepresentation in political decision-making bodies.
- The Women's Reservation Bill, also known as the Constitution 108th Amendment Bill of 2008, aims to address this democratic deficiency by ensuring greater participation of women in legislative bodies.
- The bill has faced six unsuccessful attempts to pass since its introduction in 1996.

- In 2010, former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Mulayam Singh Yadav, raised concerns about the bill, suggesting it could lead to male parliamentarians behaving inappropriately towards their female colleagues.
- In 2023, the Lok Sabha had less than 15% women MPs, indicating underrepresentation of women in Parliament.
- Many state assemblies also have low female representation, with some having less than 10% women members.
- Female representation in Lok Sabha has gradually increased over the years, from 5% in the 1st Lok Sabha to 14% in the 17th Lok Sabha.
- In the 2019 general election, 78 women were elected to the Lok Sabha, a quarter higher than the previous election in 2014.
- The Women's Reservation Bill aims to increase the number of women MPs to 181 in the Lok Sabha.
- Currently, there are 78 female members in the Lok Sabha and 24 in the Rajya Sabha.
- The bill proposes 33% reservation for women in Parliament and state legislative assemblies for 15 years.
- It also mandates quotas for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes within the reserved seats for women.
- Implementation of the reservation will occur after a new census is published and the delimitation exercise is completed.
- The delimitation process involves revising constituency boundaries based on population changes.
- The bill requires ratification by at least 50% of the states for full ratification, considering its impact on state rights.

- Recent events in Karnataka have sparked a debate between top political leaders regarding the effectiveness of the government's flagship guarantee schemes for women.
- Former Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy of the Janata Dal (Secular) criticized two of these schemes aimed at women, citing negative impacts on women in villages.
- He specifically mentioned free travel in non-luxury government buses and monthly financial support of ₹2,000 for women heads of families, suggesting they led some women astray.
- Kumaraswamy's comments drew condemnation from Congress leaders, particularly Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, who leads the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee.
- The exchange between the two leaders has escalated beyond a discussion about the effectiveness of the schemes, evolving into a power struggle for Vokkaliga leadership, with both leaders vying for control in their political territory.
- Mr. Kumaraswamy's statement reflects two common notions regarding women-centric schemes:
- The idea that money given to women comes from "pickpocketing" men, implying funds that men might otherwise spend on alcohol.
- The belief that increased mobility and financial independence for women leads them to neglect traditional roles like cooking and caring for their families.
- These notions have been promoted by the Opposition to discredit the schemes, with previous narratives suggesting that the schemes create divisions within families.
- Such narratives are often propagated aggressively on social media platforms.
- While there may be debates about the effectiveness and implementation of the schemes, the patriarchal and feudal reactions to them indicate that they have achieved their purpose of granting women a degree of autonomy.

A reluctant apology

- Mr. Kumaraswamy apologized to women voters for any offense caused by his remarks but maintained a patronizing tone, suggesting he was warning them about the misuse of women's "innocence" by the Congress.
- He criticized Congress leaders for their own instances of misogyny, citing examples such as MLA Shamanur Shivashankarappa's comment about a BJP candidate and AICC general secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala's remark about BJP MP Hema Malini.
- Misogynistic remarks are common in political discourse, especially during elections.
- The lack of fair representation of women in assemblies and parliament raises questions about the normalization of such talk.
- In the Karnataka Lok Sabha elections, eight women are running for seats, representing a slight improvement from previous elections, but still far from the ideal envisioned by the Women's Reservation Act, 2023.

On India's 'heat action plans' (18 April)   (GS Paper III: Environment)

El Niño
- **Definition:** El Niño is the warm phase of the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) cycle, a recurring climate pattern involving changes in the Pacific Ocean's temperature and atmospheric circulation.
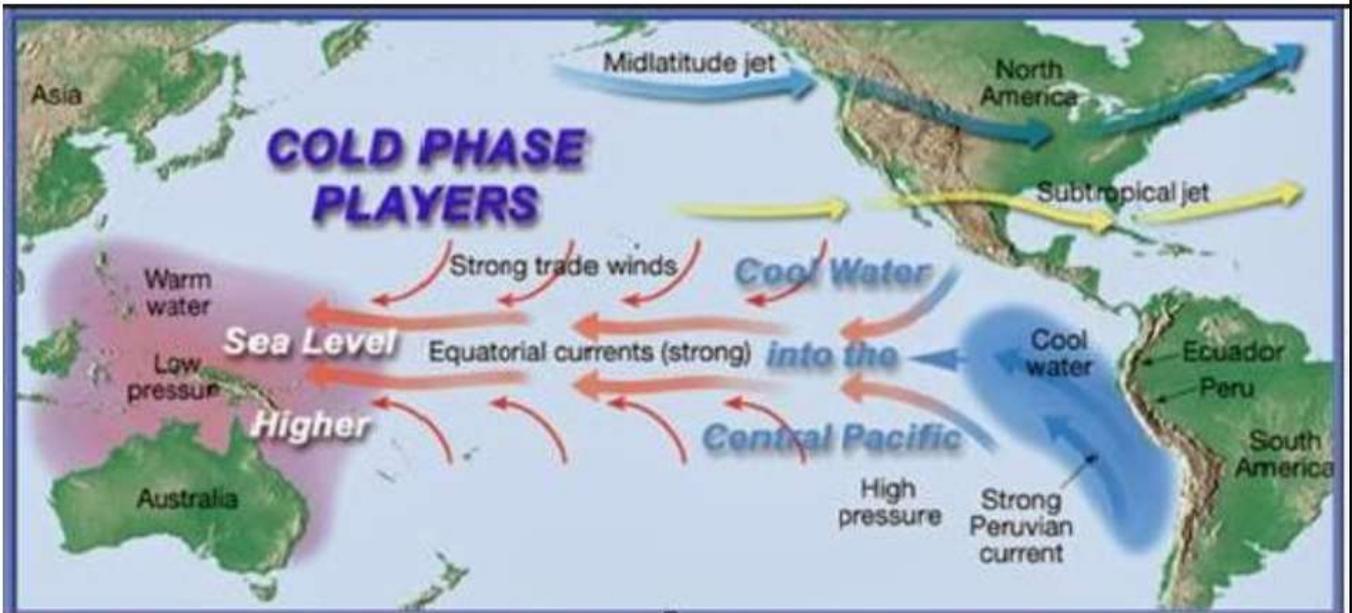
- **Oceanic Signature:** Warmer-than-average sea surface temperatures (SSTs) develop in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean.
- **Atmospheric Effects:** Weakened trade winds and changes in atmospheric pressure patterns accompany the warm water.

Impacts of El Niño
- **Global:** El Niño can trigger changes in weather patterns worldwide, leading to:
  - Droughts in some regions (e.g., Australia, Southeast Asia)
  - Increased precipitation in others (e.g., California, Peru)
  - Disruptions to marine ecosystems
- **India:** El Niño events are often associated with below-average monsoon rainfall in India, impacting agriculture and water resources.

La Niña
- **Definition:** La Niña is the cool phase of the ENSO cycle, characterized by cooler-than-average SSTs in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean.

Normal Conditions

La Niña Conditions
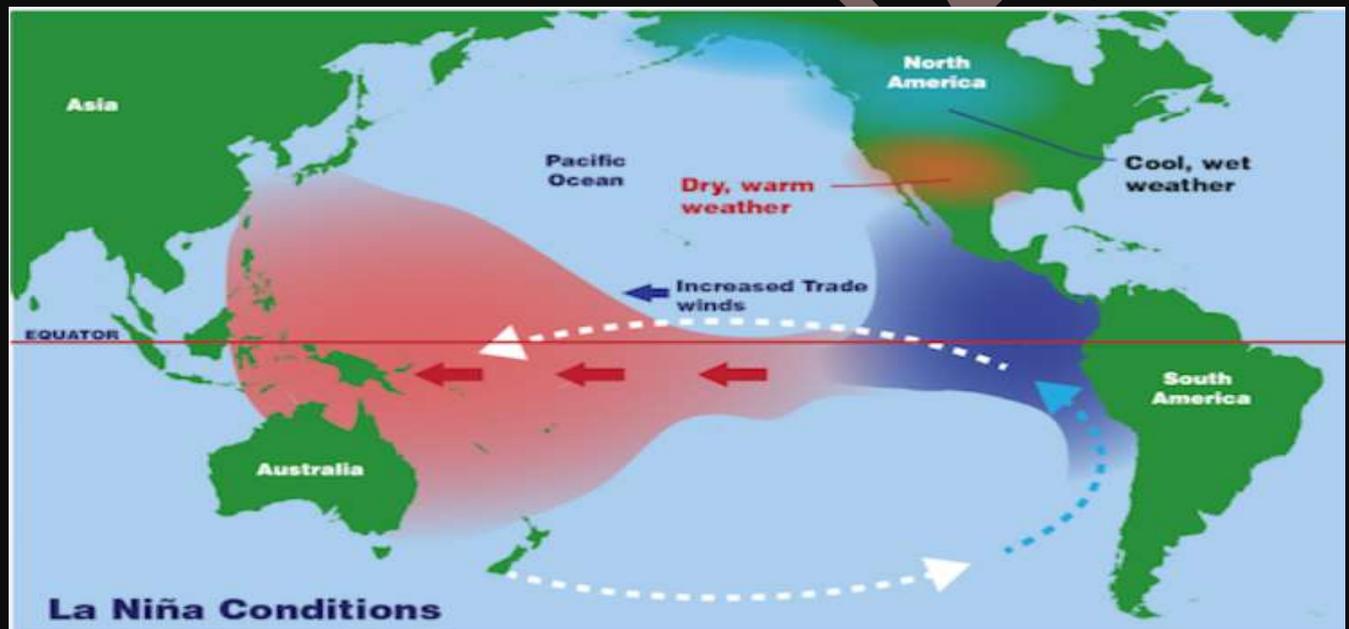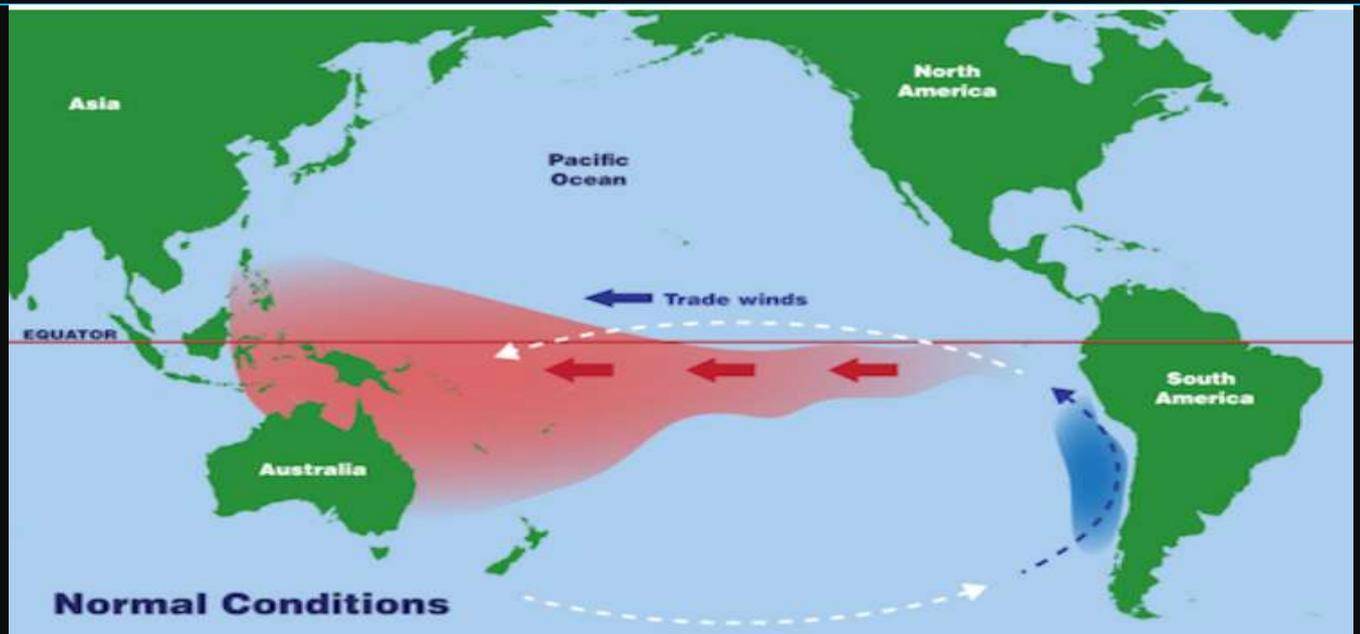
- **Oceanic Signature:** Stronger trade winds push warm surface water westward, leading to cooler SSTs in the eastern Pacific.
- **Atmospheric Effects:** Enhanced trade winds and changes in atmospheric pressure patterns accompany the cool water.

Impacts of La Niña

- **Global:** La Niña can influence global weather patterns, causing:
    - Increased precipitation in some areas (e.g., Australia, Southeast Asia)
    - Droughts in others (e.g., California, East Africa)
    - Changes in hurricane activity
- **India:** La Niña events are generally associated with normal or above-average monsoon rainfall in India, benefiting agriculture.

Positive Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD)

- A climate phenomenon characterized by sustained warmer-than-average SSTs in the western Indian Ocean and cooler-than-average SSTs in the eastern Indian Ocean.

INDIAN OCEAN DIPOLE
Positive phase
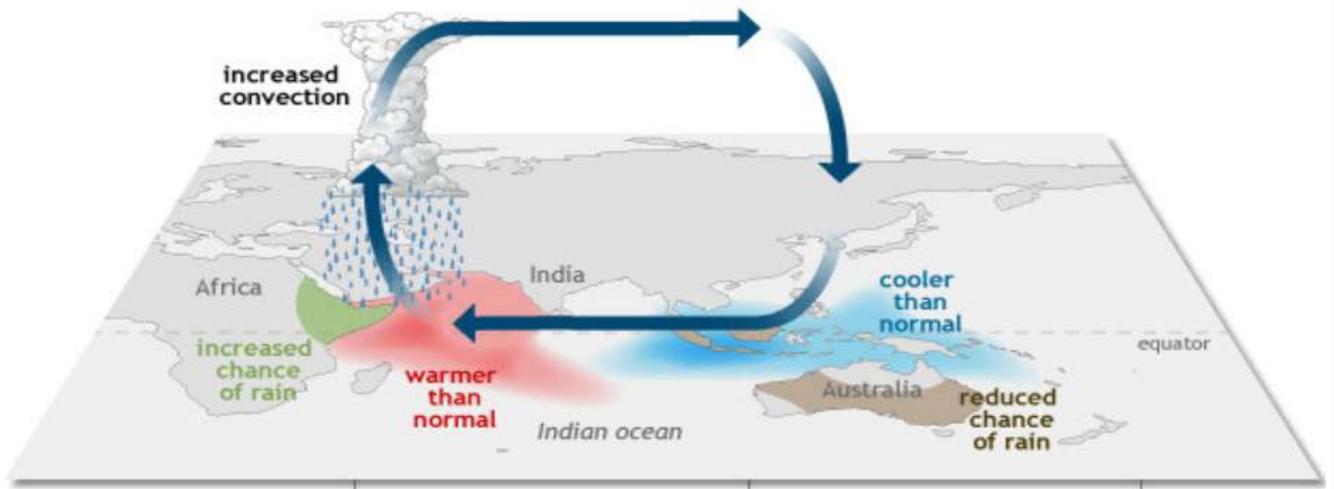
- **Development:** Often coincides with El Niño events due to global atmospheric circulation patterns impacting the Indian Ocean.
- **Impacts:** A positive IOD can lead to:
    - Reduced rainfall over Indonesia and Australia
    - Increased rainfall over eastern and southern Africa

Indian Ocean Dipole and El Niño Relationship:
- Not all El Niño events trigger a positive IOD, and vice versa.
- The strength of both phenomena can influence their combined impact on regional climates.

- Typically, heat alerts from the India Meteorological Department (IMD) are common during summer.
- However, this year, **heat alerts began as early as February.**
- Parts of northeast and western India have already experienced significantly warmer temperatures, ranging from 3.1 to 5 degrees Celsius above normal.
- The IMD has forecasted further increases in maximum temperatures and the frequency of heatwave conditions in the upcoming days, particularly over eastern and southern India.
- This situation raises concerns about India's preparedness to deal with the hazards posed by heatwaves.

What is a heatwave?

- The definition of a heatwave varies depending on the geography of different regions, according to the IMD (India Meteorological Department).
- **A heatwave is officially declared by the IMD when the maximum temperature recorded at a station meets certain criteria:**
    - **For plains regions, a heatwave is declared if the temperature reaches 40 degrees Celsius or higher.**
    - **In coastal areas, the threshold is 37 degrees Celsius or higher.**
    - **For hilly areas, it's 30 degrees Celsius or higher.**
- The severity of a heatwave is determined by how much the temperature deviates from the normal range.

- A "normal heatwave" occurs when the departure from the normal temperature range is between 4.5 to 6.4 degrees Celsius.
- If the departure is greater than this range, it's classified as a "severe heatwave."
- Alternatively, a heatwave can also be declared based on the actual maximum temperature recorded:
    - A "heatwave" is declared **if the temperature exceeds 45 degrees Celsius.**
    - A **"severe heatwave" is declared if it exceeds 47 degrees Celsius.**

- The IMD considers the latter two criteria only if:

    - At **least two stations** in a meteorological subdivision report such high maximum temperatures, or
    - At least one station records a departure from the normal **range for at least two consecutive days.**

How are we tackling heatwaves?

- Heat Action Plans (HAPs) aim to reduce the negative effects of increasing heatwaves.
- Developed at **State, district, and city levels.**
- National Disaster Management Authority and IMD collaborating with 23 States on HAPs.
- No centralized database, but at least 23 HAPs exist.
- Some States like Odisha and Maharashtra have district-level HAPs.
- HAPs typically include:
    - Overview of heat profile and past events.
    - Vulnerability assessment.
    - Response plan before, during, and after heatwaves.
    - Roles of different departments like disaster management, labor, and police.

What do the HAPs recommend?

- Heat action plans (HAPs) recommend various measures to tackle heatwaves.
- Use **forecasts and early warning systems** to alert the public and authorities.
- **Educate** the public through campaigns about heatwave risks.
- **Establish heat shelters and cooling centers**.
- **Provide clean drinking water to prevent dehydration.**
- **Direct hospitals to be well-equipped** with supplies and trained staff to handle heat-related illnesses.
- **Encourage long-term measures like urban planning strategies** promoting tree planting.
- **Use heat-resistant building materials** to reduce urban heat island effect.
- **Implement cool roofing technologies** to lower indoor temperatures.
- **Advocate for effective coordination among stakeholders**, including government agencies, healthcare providers, community organizations, and emergency services.

What debilitates HAPs from addressing the problem effectively?

- **While Heat Action Plans (HAPs)** are valuable guidelines, they still need practical adjustments to suit India's diverse weather and socio-economic conditions.
- Currently, heatwaves are determined nationally, but they should be assessed at smaller scales like States, districts, and cities.
- **Factors like urban heat island effect, roofing type, and proximity to water or green areas influence local temperatures.**
- Local experiences of extreme temperatures should be considered in defining heatwaves.
- **The scope of heatwaves should expand to include humid heat and warmer nights, not just extreme dry heat.**
- **Developing a heat index considering multiple factors beyond temperature is necessary.**
- Tailored HAPs for specific climatic conditions, demographics, and infrastructure of regions can lead to better strategies suited to local contexts.

Inconsistent methods & Vulnerable populations:

- Methods for vulnerability assessments in Heat Action Plans (HAPs) vary and need consistency.
- **Transition to robust climate risk assessments** is necessary to identify heatwave likelihood and estimate exposure to vulnerable populations and assets.
- **Hotspot mapping using geospatial data** is needed for targeted interventions.
- **HAPs prioritize protecting vulnerable populations, but lack targeted interventions considering local social and demographic factors.**
- **Over 90% of India's economy is informal, and strategies must address socio-economic differences during heatwaves.**
- Dedicated budgets for HAPs are necessary for consistent implementation.
- Dialogue between the state, civil society organizations, and worker unions is essential to plan financial mechanisms for informal workers to stay indoors during heatwaves without losing income.

Resource allocation & Breaking down silos:

- Implementation of Heat Action Plans (HAPs) varies based on local government priorities and capacities.
- **Dedicated budgets are needed for HAPs** to ensure consistent implementation.
- **Dialogues between the state, civil society organizations, and worker unions** are crucial to plan financial mechanisms for informal workers during heatwaves.
- HAPs are currently standalone plans with limited finance, but integrating them with broader action plans for urban resilience and climate adaptation can pool resources.
- Integration with broader action plans can enhance the effectiveness of HAPs and prompt improvements in data collection and monitoring systems.
- HAPs often focus on building infrastructure like cool roofs but need to include nature-based solutions, such as green and blue spaces, for addressing extreme heat in hotspots.

T .N. among leaders in many socio-economic measures (18 April)

- Tamil Nadu, which is heading to national polls, shows holistic development across economic, social, and environmental indicators.
- It ranks among the top major states in child-health, women empowerment, and educational attainment.
- The state's economic performance is strong, particularly supported by its manufacturing sector.
- However, this economic growth has come at a cost, as Tamil Nadu lags in environment-related indicators.
- There's a need for the state to focus on sustainable development to balance its economic growth with environmental conservation.
- Table 1 presents Tamil Nadu's rankings in various social indicators and its scores for specific parameters in the years 2005-06, 2015-16, and 2019-21.
- The rankings include both major states and smaller states like those in the northeast and Goa. Rankings among major states are separately depicted.
- In 2019-21, Tamil Nadu's female population aged six or above who ever attended school was 80.4%. It ranked 11 out of 30 states analyzed overall but ranked inside the top three among major states.
- For women aged 20-24, the percentage married before turning 18 was 12.8% in 2019-21, ranking 13 out of 30 states. Although the percentage decreased over the years, the state's ranking improved from 9th in 2005-06 to 13th in 2019-21.
- Tamil Nadu ranked among the top three major states in both infant mortality rate and the share of stunted children in 2019-21.
- Its relative ranking in the share of wasted children improved from 23rd in 2005-06 to 10th in 2019-21, placing it much closer to the top three states in the share of underweight children.
- Tamil Nadu ranks fourth in the share of households with any member covered under a health insurance/financing scheme.
- However, there's significant room for improvement in the population share utilizing improved sanitation facilities.
- The state's ranking in the Human Development Index (HDI) has improved from 16th in 1990 to 11th in 2021.
- Economically, Tamil Nadu has shown improvement, ranking eighth out of 27 states in 1993-94 and rising to the sixth spot overall (third among major states) in per capita net state domestic product in 2021-22.
- The manufacturing sector is a significant contributor to the state's economy, employing 18.7% of the workforce, the third-highest share among major states.
- In terms of the contribution of manufacturing to the state's total Gross Value Added, Tamil Nadu ranks sixth overall and fourth among major states.

- Educationally, Tamil Nadu performs well, boasting the highest Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in higher education and the third-highest GER in higher secondary schooling among major states.
- However, the state lags in environment-related indicators due to industrial growth.
- For instance, it ranks 25 out of 28 states in terms of hazardous waste generated per capita, and 22 out of 30 in terms of fossil fuels consumed per capita.

'FY24: new private investments dip 15%; States lead capex rise (18 April)

- Fresh private sector investment plans in India dropped by 15.3% in 2023-24.
- Foreign investors reduced new outlays by almost a third during the same period.
- This decline contributed to a nearly 5% decrease in the value of new investment announcements compared to the previous year's record high of nearly ₹37 lakh crore in 2022-23.
- The manufacturing sector saw the most significant drop in proposed outlays, decreasing by 40% from ₹19.85 lakh crore in FY23 to less than ₹11.9 lakh crore in 2023-24.
- Manufacturing's share in new investments declined to 33.8% of the total ₹35.22 lakh crore outlays announced last year, down from almost 54% in 2022-23.
- Investments in irrigation and mining also decreased significantly by 48.7% and 19.25%, respectively, while electricity and infrastructure investments increased by 96% and 22%, respectively.
- State governments led the capex growth, increasing spends on new investment projects by 27% to almost ₹7.69 lakh crore.
- The value of the Centre's fresh projects rose by 8.4% to ₹6.09 lakh crore.
- Maharashtra attracted the maximum new projects with proposed outlays of almost ₹8 lakh crore, replacing Andhra Pradesh, which had attracted the most investments in 2022-23. In FY24, AP attracted ₹1.06 lakh crore and was ranked ninth.
- Gujarat maintained its second position in investment share, holding about 12% of total investments.
- Karnataka slipped to the fourth rank from its previous position.
- Odisha rose two places to third despite an 11.4% decrease in investment value, reaching ₹3.23 lakh crore.
- Tamil Nadu's rank improved from eighth to fifth, with its share in new investments rising to 7.7% from under 5% in the previous year.
- Tamil Nadu attracted commitments of ₹2.71 lakh crore, showing an increase of almost ₹1 lakh crore year-on-year.
- Shashikant Hegde, director and CEO at Projects Today, anticipated a potential slowdown in new investment announcements in the first quarter of the year due to the extended general election period.
- Hegde believed that after the new government assumed office in June, the flow of fresh investment would likely gain traction.

- He emphasized the importance of timely execution of investment projects, highlighting that delays, especially in critical sectors like green hydrogen, semiconductors, electric vehicles, and transport infrastructure, could hinder India's economic growth in the coming years.

Question 1: The Malcolm Adiseshiah Award is conferred for outstanding contributions in which of the following fields? (A) Environmental Conservation (B) Social Work (C) Development Studies (D) Classical Indian Dance	Answer: (C) Development Studies **Explanation:** The Malcolm Adiseshiah Award recognizes distinguished contributions within the field of Development Studies in India.
Question 2: Which of the following institutions is associated with the establishment of the Malcolm Adiseshiah Award? (A) Planning Commission of India (B) National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD) (C) Madras Institute of Development Studies (MIDS) (D) Indian Council for Social Science Research (ICSSR)	Answer: (C) Madras Institute of Development Studies (MIDS). **Explanation:** The Adiseshiah Award was instituted by the Malcolm and Elizabeth Adiseshiah Trust, with the Madras Institute of Development Studies playing a key role in administering the award.
Question 3: Consider the following statements about the Malcolm Adiseshiah Award: 1. It is awarded to distinguished economists and social scientists. 2. It carries a cash prize and a citation. 3. It is awarded only to Indian citizens. Which of the above statements are correct? (A) 1 and 2 only (B) 2 and 3 only (C) 1 and 3 only (D) 1, 2, and 3	Answer: (A) 1 and 2 only **Explanation:** Statements 1 and 2 are correct. Statement 3 is incorrect. The award is open to both Indian and foreign scholars ordinarily resident in India.
Question 4: Which of the following personalities was a recipient of the Malcolm Adiseshiah Award? (A) Amartya Sen (B) Pranab Bardhan (C) Utsa Patnaik (D) All of the above	Answer: (D) All of the above **Explanation:** All the listed economists have been past recipients of the prestigious Adiseshiah Award, highlighting its focus on recognizing excellence in development studies.
Question 5: The National Agroforestry Policy, 2014 aims to increase tree cover outside conventional forests in India for which of the following reasons? 1. Enhanced livelihood opportunities for rural communities 2. Improved ecological stability and resilience 3. Increased domestic timber production (A) 1 and 2 only (B) 2 and 3 only	Answer: (D) 1, 2, and 3 **Explanation:** The National Agroforestry Policy identifies all these reasons as core objectives. It emphasizes the multifunctional role of agroforestry in benefiting farmers, the environment, and the timber industry.

(C) 1 and 3 only (D) 1, 2, and 3	
Question 6: Which of the following is a key objective of the National Agroforestry Policy, 2014? (A) Simplification of regulations for harvesting and transit of trees grown on farmlands (B) Expansion of protected forest areas (C) Establishment of a National Agroforestry Fund (D) Mandatory inclusion of agroforestry practices in all agricultural schemes	Answer: (A) Simplification of regulations for harvesting and transit of trees grown on farmlands. **Explanation:** Removing regulatory hurdles and simplifying the process for farmers to utilize trees grown on their land is a key focus of the National Agroforestry Policy.
Question 7: To achieve its objectives, the National Agroforestry Policy, 2014 advocates for: (A) Establishment of a National Agroforestry Mission (B) Strict enforcement of compensatory afforestation norms (C) Expansion of monoculture plantations on degraded lands (D) Restriction on the use of non-native tree species	Answer: (A) Establishment of a National Agroforestry Mission **Explanation:** The policy calls for setting up a dedicated mission or board at the national level within the Ministry of Agriculture to provide institutional support to agroforestry.
Question 8: Consider the following statements about Agroforestry: 1. It involves the integration of trees on farms and agricultural landscapes. 2. It has the potential to mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change. 3. Which of the above statements are correct? (A) 1 only (B) 2 only (C) Both 1 and 2 (D) Neither 1 nor 2	Answer: (C) Both 1 and 2 **Explanation:** Both statements are accurate. Agroforestry is defined by its integrated approach and offers both economic and climate adaptation benefits.
Question 9: Which of the following phenomena is associated with a cooling of the eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean? (A) El Niño (B) La Niña (C) Positive Indian Ocean Dipole (D) Negative Indian Ocean Dipole	Answer: (B) La Niña **Explanation:** La Niña is characterized by cooler-than-average sea surface temperatures in the eastern and central equatorial Pacific Ocean.
Question 10: Which of the following climatic events can sometimes coincide with a positive Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) event? (A) El Niño (B) La Niña (C) North Atlantic Oscillation (D) Arctic Oscillation	Answer: (D) El Niño **Explanation:** Changes in global atmospheric circulation can cause both El Niño and a positive IOD to occur together. While not always the case, there's a known relationship between these two phenomena.
Question 11: With reference to the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD), consider the following statements:	Answer: (b) Neither 1 nor 2 **Explanation:**

1. A positive IOD event is characterized by cooler-than-average sea surface temperatures in the western Indian Ocean. 2. A positive IOD event can lead to increased rainfall over parts of India. Which of the above statements are correct? (A) 1 only (B) 2 only (C) Both 1 and 2 (D) Neither 1 nor 2	Statement 1 is incorrect - Positive IOD features warmer-than-average SSTs in the western Indian Ocean and cooler SSTs in the eastern part. Statement 2 is correct - While complex, a positive IOD generally leads to increased rainfall over much of India.