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1. India adds 11 more wetlands to the list of Ramsar sites, a total of 75 (Aug. 13, 2022)

India on August 13 added 11 more wetlands to the list of Ramsar sites in the 75th year of independence making it a total of 75 Ramsar sites covering an area of 13,26,677 hectares in the country.

Important facts

- The 11 new sites are - Four in Tamil Nadu, Three in Odisha, Two in Jammu & Kashmir and One each in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.
- A total of 28 sites have been declared as Ramsar sites during the year 2022.
- Tamil Nadu has the highest number of Ramsar sites (14), followed by Uttar Pradesh (10).

11 wetlands designated as Ramsar sites

S.No	Name of wetland	Area in Ha	State
1.	Tampara Lake	300	Odisha
2.	Hirakud Reservoir	65400	
3.	Ansupa Lake	231	
4.	Yashwant Sagar	822.90	Madhya Pradesh
5.	Chitrangudi Bird Sanctuary	260.47	Tamil Nadu
6.	Suchindram Theroor Wetland Complex	94.23	
7.	Vaduvur Bird Sanctuary	112.64	
8.	Kanjirankulam Bird Sanctuary	96.89	
9.	Thane Creek	6521.08	Maharashtra
10.	Hygam Wetland Conservation Reserve	801.82	Jammu and Kashmir
11.	Shallbugh Wetland Conservation Reserve	1675	
	Total area of 11 sites	76316	

Year wise designation of 75 Ramsar sites

S. No.	Year of Designation	No of site designated (As per date of designation)	Sites designated upto 2013 and after 2014 to till date	Area covered in Ha
1	1981	2	26 (1981 to 2013)	633871
2	1990	4		
3	2002	13		
4	2005	6		
5	2012	1		
6	2019	11	49 (2014 to 2022)	692807
7	2020	5		
8	2021	14		
9	2022	19		
	Total	75	75	1326678

Summary of 11 new Ramsar sites

- Tampara Lake** = It is among the most prominent freshwater lakes in the State of Odisha situated in Ganjam district. There are at least 60 species of birds, 46 species of fish, at least 48 species of phytoplankton and more than seven species of terrestrial plants and macrophytes.
- Hirakud Reservoir** - It is the largest earthen dam in Odisha started operating in 1957. Of the 54 fish species found in the reservoir, one is classified as endangered, six near threatened and 21 fish species of economic importance. At present, about 480 metric tonnes of fish are caught annually from fisheries and it is the mainstay of livelihood for 7,000 fisher families.
- Ansupa Lake** - It is the largest freshwater lake of Odisha situated in Cuttack district and has its fame from time immemorial for its scenic beauty, biodiversity, and natural resources. It is home to at least 194 species of birds, 61 species of fishes and 26 species of mammals in addition to 244 species of macrophytes.
- Yashwant Sagar** - It is one of the two Important Bird Areas (IBA) in the Indore region as well as one of the most important birding sites in Malwa region of Madhya Pradesh. It

is mainly used for water supply in Indore city and is also being used for fish farming on a commercial scale.

5. **Chitrangudi Bird Sanctuary** - It is located in Ramanathapuram district in Tamil Nadu. The wetland has been a protected area since 1989 and declared as Bird Sanctuary.
6. **Suchindram Theroor Wetland Complex** - It is part of the Suchindrum-Theroor Manakudi Conservation Reserve. It is declared an Important Bird Area and lies at the southern tip of the Central Asian flyway of migratory birds.
7. **Vaduvur Bird Sanctuary** - It is a large human-made irrigation tank and shelter for migratory birds as it provides a suitable environment for food, shelter, and breeding ground.
8. **Kanjirankulam Bird Sanctuary** - It is a Protected area near Mudukulathur Ramanathapuram District, Tamil Nadu, declared in 1989. It is notable as a nest for several migratory heron species that settle in the acacia groves there.
9. **Thane Creek** - It is located in Maharashtra. There are several sources of fresh water to the creek, of which Ulhas River is the largest, followed by many drainage channels from various suburban areas of Mumbai, Navi Mumbai & Thane. It has been declared as Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary.
10. **Hygam Wetland Conservation Reserve** - It falls within the River Jhelum basin and plays a significant role as a flood absorption basin, biodiversity conservation site, eco-tourism site, and livelihood security for the local communities. It is located in the Baramulla district.
11. **Shallbugh Wetland Conservation Reserve** - It is located in the District Srinagar, UT of J&K. Large areas of the wetland dry up between September and March. The area has extensive reedbeds of *Phragmites communis* and *Typha angustata*, and rich growth of *Nymphaea candida* and *N stellata* on open water.

2. Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh unveils India's first Saline Water Lantern (Aug. 13, 2022)

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology, Dr Jitendra Singh on 13 August launched India's first Saline Water Lantern.

About Saline Water Lantern

- It uses the sea water as the electrolyte between specially designed electrodes to power the LED lamps.
- It is the first-of-its kind lantern named "**Roshni**".
- The Roshni Lamp has been invented by the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), Chennai.
- This technique can also be used in areas where sea water is not available, as any saltwater or normal water mixed with common salt can be used to power lanterns.

Significance

- It will bring "ease of living" to the poor and needy, especially the fishing community living along India's 7500 km long coastline.
- It will also give a boost to and complement Prime Minister Narendra Modi's UJALA scheme launched in 2015 for the distribution of LED bulbs across the country.
- It is not only cost-effective, but very easy to operate.

3. Govt to bring model by-laws to govern all Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies (Aug. 13, 2022)

Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah has said that the government will bring a model bye-law to govern all Primary Agriculture Cooperative Societies (PACS) in the country.

Important facts

- He was addressing a national conference on rural cooperative banks organised by the Ministry of Cooperation and the National Federation of State Cooperative Banks (NAFSCOB) at Vignan Bhavan in New Delhi on 12 August.
- He said that sick and discontinued packs should be revived or taken for liquidation.
- PACS will not be viable just by giving agriculture loans, they should diversify their business.
- He stressed the need to set up more than 2 lakh new PACS across the country to achieve the target of providing agri-finance of Rs 10 lakh crore through cooperatives.
- Presently there are more than 95,000 packs, of which only 63,000 packs are operational.
- The implementation of these model bye-laws will depend on the states as cooperatives are a subject in the State List (Schedule VII).

What are Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies (PACS)?

- These are grassroots level cooperative credit institutions that provide short-term and medium-term agricultural loans to farmers for various agricultural and agricultural activities.
- It works at the gram Panchayat and village level.
- The first Primary Agricultural Credit Society (PACS) was set up in 1904.
- PACS are registered under the Co-operative Societies Act and regulated by RBI.

Objectives of PACS

- Raise capital for the purpose of making loans
- Supporting members' essential activities
- Collect deposits from members with the goal of improving their savings habit

- Arrange for the supply and development of improved breeds of livestock to the members
- Supply agricultural inputs and services to members at reasonable prices

4. 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign to mark 75 years of India's Independence to kick off today (Aug. 13, 2022)

The '**Har Ghar Tiranga**' campaign is starting from August 13 to encourage people to bring home and hoist the tricolour to commemorate the 75th year of India's independence.

What is the Har Ghar Tiranga campaign?

- This campaign will run till 15th August.
- The campaign envisages to inspire Indians everywhere to hoist the national flag at their home.
- Since the announcement of the campaign, more than 20 crore national flags have been made available to the people.
- The idea behind this initiative is to inculcate the feeling of patriotism in the hearts of the people and promote awareness about the tricolour.
- Apart from homes, the flag will also be hoisted in public undertakings, local self-governing bodies, government, educational institutions, commercial establishments and private firms.

About National Flag

- On 22 July 1947, the Constituent Assembly adopted the national flag.
- The flag which was chosen has undergone several changes since it was originally designed by Pingali Venkayya in 1923.
- Venkayya was a freedom fighter.
- He was known as Jhanda Venkayya because he published a book on 30 designs for the Indian flag in 1916.
- His 146th birth anniversary was on 2 August 2022.

Flag Code of Conduct, 2002

- The rules for the use, display and hoisting of the National Flag are laid down in the Flag Code of Conduct, 2002.
- This code of conduct was implemented on 26 January 2002.
- The Flag Code of Conduct, 2002, allows unrestricted display of the tricolour while maintaining the honour and dignity of the flag.
- The Flag Code of India, 2002 is divided into three parts-

- The first part contains a general description of the national flag.
- The second part deals with the display of the national flag by members of the public, private organisations, educational institutions, etc.
- The third part gives information about the hoisting of the national flag by the central and state governments and their organisations and agencies. It mentions that the tricolour cannot be used for commercial purposes.
- Apart from this, the flag should not be used as a festival or for the purposes of any kind of decoration.
- For official display only flags conforming to the specifications prescribed by the Bureau of Indian Standards and bearing its mark may be used.

Hoisting the national flag is a fundamental right

- A bench headed by Chief Justice of India **VN Khare** in its judgement said that under **Article 19(1)(a)** of the Constitution of India, citizens have a fundamental right to hoist the national flag in its premises throughout the year.
- However, it was also held by the court that the dignity of the national flag should be maintained in the premises.

Constitutional and Statutory Provisions

- **Article 51A(a)** - To abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag and the National Anthem.
- Emblems and Names (Prevention of Improper Use) Act, 1950
- Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971

5. 150th birth anniversary of Sri Aurobindo (Aug. 12, 2022)

On the occasion of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Maharshi Aurobindo and the 75th Year of Independence, the Union Ministry of Culture is commemorating the life and philosophy of Shri Aurobindo by undertaking Spiritual Programmes in 75 prisons across the nation from 12 to 15th August.

Important facts

- These programs aim to transform the lives of inmates by imbibing Aurobindo's philosophy and adopting yoga and meditation.
- The ministry has partnered with notable spiritual leaders and organizations to carry out these programs.
- Mainly keeping in mind the association with the national freedom struggle, the Ministry of Culture has identified 75 prisons across the country where these events will be held.
- Five organizations including Ramakrishna Mission, Patanjali, Art of Living, Isha Foundation and Satsang Foundation have been roped in to organize the programme.

Who was Maharshi Aurobindo?

- He was born in Calcutta on 15th August 1872.
- He was a yogi, seer, philosopher, poet and Indian nationalist.
- He propounded the principle of divine life philosophy on earth through spiritual development.
- His education began at a Christian convent school in Darjeeling.
- He entered the University of Cambridge, where he mastered two classical and several modern European languages.
- He cleared the ICS exam securing 11th rank out of 250 candidates.
- He also studied yoga and Indian languages, including classical Sanskrit.

Role in Indian Revolutionary Movement

- He participated in the struggle to free India from the British from the year 1902 to 1910.
- He was imprisoned by the British in the year 1908 in the Alipore Bomb Case.
- Two years later he fled British India and took refuge in the French colony of Pondicherry.
- He converted his entire life in Pondicherry into a complete and spiritual form and devoted himself to the development of yoga.
- In Pondicherry he founded a community of spiritual seekers which took shape in the year 1926 as Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

His literary works

- Bhagavad Gita and Its Message
- Bases of Yoga
- The Future Evolution of Man
- Rebirth and Karma
- Hour of God

6. Latvia and Estonia withdraw from cooperation group between China and Central and Eastern European countries (Aug. 12, 2022)

Latvia and Estonia have withdrawn from a cooperation group between China and more than a dozen Central and Eastern European countries.

Important facts

- The move comes amid Western criticism of China over increasing military pressure on Taiwan.
- Relations between Lithuania and China deteriorated after Taiwan was allowed to open a de facto embassy late last year.
- Latvia and Estonia said they would continue to work towards a constructive and pragmatic relationship with China while respecting a rules-based international order and human rights.

China and Central & Eastern European (CEE) 17+1 cooperation group

- It is a China-led format founded in 2012 in Budapest.
- It aims to expand cooperation between Beijing and Central and Eastern European (CEE) member states with investment and trade for the development of the CEE region.
- It also aims at the development of infrastructure projects such as modernization of bridges, motorways, railway lines and ports in the member states.
- It includes twelve EU member states and five Balkan states.
- Name of the countries in 17+1 - Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Slovenia.

7. India-UK conclude fifth round of FTA talks (Aug. 12, 2022)

India and the United Kingdom (UK) concluded the fifth round of talks for an FTA on the 29th of last month.

Important facts

- In the fifth round of talks, technical experts from both sides came together to discuss 15 policy areas.
- Currently, India is holding FTA talks with some of its trading partners including the European Union, Canada and Israel.

Consensus between both countries

- Officials in India and the UK will continue to work intensively throughout the summer to finalize talks on a comprehensive and balanced free trade agreement by the end of October 2022.
- UK agrees to end duties on Indian rice and textile items.
- India may allow duty-free entry of British apples, medical equipment and machinery manufactured in the UK.
- India initially proposed an early harvest agreement or interim FTA that would be ready by Diwali.

- Through this agreement, India-UK bilateral trade is estimated to double to about \$100 billion by 2030.
- An agreement is also expected to be reached on mutual recognition of higher education qualifications.
- India is likely to get more skill visas, as the UK currently faces a shortage of experts in the IT and programming sectors.
- The India-UK FTA agreement is also expected to give a boost to the domestic textile sectors.

What is Free Trade Agreement (FTA)?

- Under this agreement, customs duties, regulatory laws, subsidies and quotas etc. are simplified on the products under import-export between two countries.
- Its main objective is to simplify trade.
- A major advantage of FTA is that the cost of production of the two countries between which this agreement is made becomes cheaper as compared to other countries.
- This encourages trade and gives impetus to the economy.

8. India expresses concern over shelling near Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant (Aug. 12, 2022)

India has expressed concern over reports of shelling near the **Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant** in Ukraine and called for mutual restraint to ensure that the safety and security of nuclear facilities is not endangered.

Important facts

- India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ruchira Kamboj said that India expresses its concern over reports of shelling near the Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant.
- The statement came as Ukraine again accused Russia of shelling the Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant (NPP) on 11 August.
- India attaches high importance to ensuring the safety and security of nuclear plants, as any accidents involving nuclear facilities can potentially have serious consequences for public health and the environment.
- In March 2022, the Russian military took control of Europe's largest nuclear power plant, the Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant.
- An emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council was held on this development regarding the plant.
- On February 24, Russia launched a "special military operation" in Ukraine, which the West called a "war without cause".
- As a result, Western countries have also imposed severe sanctions on Moscow.

About Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant

- It was built between 1984 and 1995, is the largest nuclear power plant in Europe and the sixth largest in the world.
- It is located in south-east Ukraine in Enerhodar on the banks of the Kakhovka reservoir on the Dnieper river.
- It is located about 200 km from the disputed Donbass region and 550 km south-east of Kyiv.
- In normal times it generates one-fifth of Ukraine's total electricity.

World's largest nuclear power plants

1. **Kashiwazaki-Kariwa** - Japan - capacity - 7,965 megawatts
2. **Bruce Nuclear Generating Station** - Canada - 6,384 MW
3. **Kori Nuclear Power Plant** - South Korea - 6,040 MW
4. **Hanul Nuclear Power Plant** - South Korea - 5,928 MW
5. **Hanbit Nuclear Power Plant** - South Korea - 5,875 MW
6. **Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant** - Ukraine - 5,700 MW

9. Argentine Rear Admiral Guillermo Pablo Ríos appointed Chief Military Observer of UNMOGIP (Aug. 12, 2022)

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has appointed a veteran Argentine naval officer as Head of Mission and Chief Military Observer for the United Nations Military Observer Group (UNMOGIP) in India and Pakistan.

Important facts

- Rear Admiral Guillermo Pablo Ríos of Argentina has replaced Major General Jose Eladio Alcán of Uruguay.
- After graduating as a Middle Shipman from the Naval Academy, Rear Admiral Ríos has had a distinguished career in the Argentine Navy since 1988.
- He, most recently, served as the General Director of Education, Training and Doctrine of the Joint Staff (2022).
- Prior to this, he was Marine Infantry Commander (Core Commander) (2020-2021).
- He has also served as Marine Infantry Fleet Commander (Brigade Commander) (2019), Head of Education, Navy Warfare School (2018) and Defence, Military, Navy and Air Force in Russia (2016-2018).
- He has also been a training officer in the United States Marine Corps Regiment under the United States and Argentina Marine Exchange Program (2002-2003).

- Ríos has served in two peacekeeping missions, including the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) in 1993 and 1994, and the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO) in 2007.
- He has also served as a Humanitarian Mining Observer with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Angola (1997–1998).
- He holds a master's degree from the Naval University Institute and E-Salad University in Argentina.

About UNMOGIP

- UNMOGIP was established in January 1949.
- Following the Indo-Pakistani War and the Armistice Agreement in 1971, UNMOGIP's main tasks are to oversee developments related to strict adherence to the ceasefire.
- It has 44 military observers, 25 international civilian personnel from 10 countries and 47 local civilian staff.
- India has maintained that UNMOGIP has outlived its utility and is irrelevant after the Simla Agreement and the establishment of the Line of Control (LoC).
- The last report of the Secretary-General of the Security Council on UNMOGIP was published in 1972.
- The group is financed by the United Nations.

Simla Agreement

- It was signed by India and Pakistan in July 1972.
- It established the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir, which was similar to the ceasefire line established by the Karachi Accords.
- Under this, India and Pakistan mutually agreed on certain principles.
- They emphasised respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, not interfering in each other's internal affairs.

10. Ceasefire between Palestine, Israel takes effect in Gaza (Aug. 9, 2022)

A ceasefire between Israel and Palestinian militants went into effect on 8 August and was agreed to end nearly three days of violence that left dozens of Palestinians dead.

Important facts

- In early 2022, tensions escalated between Palestinians and Israeli police at the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.
- Israeli jets hit targets of Islamic Jihad leaders in Gaza.

- In response, the Iranian-backed Palestinian Jihad terrorist group fired dozens of rockets at
- Israel.
 - According to an Israeli military statement, militants fired about 580 rockets towards Israel in Gaza.

UNSC meeting

- The United Nations Security Council has scheduled an emergency meeting to end the violence.
- China scheduled the session in response to a request from the United Arab Emirates.
- China will preside over the UNSC for August 2022, representing Arab countries in the council.

What is the dispute between Israel and Palestine?

- Under the United Nations Original Partition Plan of 1947, Jerusalem was proposed as an international city.
- In the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, the Israelis captured half of the city of Jerusalem.
- The eastern part of this city where Haram al-Sharif is located was captured by Jordan.
- In 1967, the Six-Day War was followed by an armed conflict between Israel and a coalition of Arab states that mainly included Jordan, Syria and Egypt.
- Israel annexed Jordan-controlled East Jerusalem in the 1967 Six-Day War.
- Israel sees the entire city as its "unified, eternal capital".
- Whereas Palestine does not want to accept any settlement for a future Palestinian state until East Jerusalem is recognized as its capital.