



## Current Affairs of the Day

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## Xi visits Tibet, first trip by leader in years

China's President Xi Jinping this week became the first Chinese leader in many years to visit Tibet as well as its southeastern border region with India, as he inspected a newly opened and strategically important railway line.

### The "Sinicisation" of Tibetan Buddhism:

1. Mr. Xi arrived in Tibet on a three-day visit, landing at the airport in Nyingchi, which is located less than 20 km from the border with India's Arunachal Pradesh. He also visited Nyingchi town and its railway station to inspect the newly built Sichuan-Tibet railway.
2. From Nyingchi, Mr. Xi travelled to Lhasa, where he visited the Potala Palace — the traditional home of the Dalai Lamas — and Drepung monastery.
3. He called on monks there "to support the leadership of the Communist Party of China" and "maintain the unity of the motherland".
4. He said the Communist Party would "actively guide the development of Tibetan Buddhism", part of a broader effort to promote what the Party calls the "Sinicisation" of Tibetan Buddhism with an emphasis on patriotism and ensuring Beijing's authority on the appointment of lamas and key religious figures.

### The peaceful liberation of Tibet

1. The Seventeen Point Agreement was signed on May 23, 1951. China refers to the agreement as heralding what it calls "the peaceful liberation of Tibet".
2. The agreement has been rejected by the Dalai Lama, who has said the Communist Party had both forced it on Tibet and subsequently violated its commitments, leading him to eventually flee to India in exile in 1959.

### Military ideology

1. Mr. Xi met with soldiers of the Tibet Military Command of the People's Liberation Army, state media reported, calling on them to "implement the Party's military ideology in the new era" and to "comprehensively strengthen training and preparation work".
2. Developing connectivity to border areas was a particular focus of the visit, evident in the visit to Nyingchi, which assumed particular significance coming



a month after China started operating the first bullet train line in Tibet, linking Lhasa to Nyingchi near the border with Arunachal Pradesh.

3. The China State Railway Group said the 435-km line, on which construction began in 2014, has a designed speed of 160 km per hour and would connect the capital city of the Tibet Autonomous Region to the border city of Nyingchi with a travel time of three and a half hours.
4. The Lhasa-Nyingchi rail is one section of the Sichuan-Tibet railway line connecting the two provincial capitals, a strategic project described by the Chinese leader as “a major step in safeguarding national unity and a significant move in promoting economic and social development of the western region.”
5. This will be the second railway line connecting Tibet to the hinterland, following the already open Qinghai-Tibet rail.
6. Last month, China completed construction of a strategically significant highway through the Grand Canyon of the Yarlung Zangbo river, the “second significant passageway” to Medog county that borders Arunachal.

## Introducing Gross Environment Product in Uttarakhand: A jargon or reality?

The Uttarakhand government should introduce a well-defined concept of ecosystem services; planting a new term raises doubts about its objectives.

### GEP

1. The Uttarakhand government recently announced it will initiate valuation of its natural resources in the form of ‘Gross Environment Product’ (GEP), said to be along the lines of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
2. The idea of the valuation of the components of the environment is not new. But it got impetus following rapid degradation of ecosystems, which led to adverse impacts on more than 60 per cent of services we get from the ecosystems.
3. Ecosystem services represent the benefits humans get: Forests, lakes and grasslands; timber and dyed; carbon sequestration and nutrient cycling; soil formation and productivity; and tourism.



## Concerns with GEP

1. The decision of the Uttarakhand government to incorporate GEP appears to be a welcome step. But going ahead with the jargon raises serious doubts on the intent of the government. It may confuse policymakers and negate past efforts.
2. The purpose of introducing GEP is not transparent. Is it a process of simple valuation of state's ecological wealth, or to assess that what part of the GDP it contributes?
3. It is an attempt to claim budget from the centre against ecosystem services the state provides to the rest of the country and/or it is a process of providing benefits to its own residents.
4. Instead of introducing a well-defined concept of ecosystem services, planting a new term with no clear-cut narrative invites serious doubts on the intention of the government.
5. So, it is important that the state should be steady in approach, focussing on Ecosystem Services, which has global acceptance and a strong knowledge base.

## Farmer suicides

1. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) under the Union ministry of home affairs, compiles and disseminates information on suicides in its publication titled Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India. The NCRB had published reports upto 2019 that were available on its website.
2. According to the data the suicide rate among farmers had increased to 5957 in 2019, from 5763 in 2018.

## 351 polluted river stretches in India: A list across states

The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) in 2018 identified 351 polluted river stretches in India; Maharashtra has the highest number of polluted rivers at 53.

### Highlights:

1. The assessment of water quality for identification of polluted river stretches found that 31 states and Union territories (UT) had rivers and streams that did



not meet the water quality criteria. These states / UTs have to submit their action plans for the same.

2. Maharashtra has the highest number of polluted river stretches (53), followed by Assam (44), Madhya Pradesh (22), Kerala (21), Gujarat (20), Odisha (19), and West Bengal and Karnataka (17).

### **River Pollution: Untreated sewage**

1. Rivers in the country are polluted mainly due to discharge of untreated or partially treated sewage from cities/towns and industrial effluents in their respective catchments, problems in operation and maintenance of sewage / effluent treatment plants, lack of dilution, dumping of solid waste on river banks and other non-point sources of pollution. Rapid urbanisation and industrialisation have compounded the problem.
2. According to the report published by Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) in March 2021, sewage generation from urban areas in the country is estimated at 72,368 million litres per day (MLD), against which a sewage treatment capacity of 31,841 MLD was available.
3. This gap between sewage generation and treatment remains a major point source for the increase in pollution of rivers.

### **The National Water Quality Monitoring Programme:**

1. CPCB, in association with Pollution Control Boards/committees in different states/Union territories, have been monitoring the water quality of rivers and other water bodies across the country through a network of monitoring stations under the National Water Quality Monitoring Programme.
2. Based on water quality monitoring results, pollution assessment of rivers has been carried out by CPCB from time to time. As many as 351 polluted stretches were identified on 323 rivers based on monitoring results in terms of biochemical oxygen demand, an indicator of organic pollution, according to the last report published by CPCB in September 2018.

### **The responsibility of the states/UTs and local bodies**

1. Cleaning/rejuvenation of rivers is an ongoing process. It is the responsibility of the states / UTs and local bodies to ensure the required treatment of sewage





and industrial effluents to the prescribed norms before discharging into water bodies, coastal waters or land to prevent and control pollution therein.

2. The Union ministry has supplemented efforts of states / UTs by providing financial and technical assistance for abatement of pollution in identified stretches of rivers in the country through the Central Sector Scheme of Namami Gange for rivers in the Ganga basin, as well as through the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of National River Conservation Plan (NRCP) for other rivers.
3. NRCP has so far covered polluted stretches on 34 rivers in 77 towns spread over 16 states with the sanctioned cost of projects as Rs 5,965.90 crore. The sewage treatment capacity of 2,522 MLD has so far been created under the programme.
4. Under the Namami Gange Programme, a total of 346 projects including 158 projects for sewage treatment of 4948 MLD and sewer network of 5213 kilometres have been sanctioned at a cost of Rs 3,0235 crore.

## Rise in extreme rainfall events

Amid the revival of monsoon since the second week of July, there has been a significant variation in rainfall across the country.

### Extreme Rainfall:

1. Several parts of the western Konkan coast and the southern peninsula were witnessing instances of extreme rainfall.
2. According to the India Meteorological Department data on the regional distribution, the 'South Peninsula' received 29% more rain than normal during the period June1-July 23.
3. In the same period, northwest and central India witnessed a 10% and 2% deficit respectively and northeast India a 14% deficit, though this region has a higher base rainfall than other regions.
4. According to the district-wise rainfall data for Maharashtra, except five districts, all the other 31 got "large excess rains". Climate change is real, there is 600-900% excess rain in many Maharashtra districts in 2021 monsoon.



## Effects of Climate Change:

1. The frequency and strength of cyclones over the Arabian Sea has increased in the past two decades.
2. There is a 52% increase in the frequency of cyclones over the Arabian Sea from 2001 to 2019 and an 8% decrease over the Bay of Bengal compared with the period 1982-2002, when historically most cyclones have been in the Bay of Bengal, according to a study published in Climate Dynamics.
3. Even the duration of cyclones has increased by 80%. More cyclones were bringing in more moisture from the Arabian Sea and contributing to extreme rainfall events.

## Road ahead is daunting: Manmohan

The 1991 economic reforms lifted millions out of poverty, unleashed the spirit of free enterprises, and catapulted India into a \$3 trillion economy, but the road ahead is even more daunting than the 1991 crisis, former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said.

### Highlights:

1. To mark the 30th anniversary of economic liberalisation and the opening up of the Indian economy, Dr. Singh issued a statement in which he recalled the achievements, but also expressed his pain at the devastation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the loss of lives and livelihoods
2. The country needs to recalibrate its priorities to a dignified life for all Indians, he said.
3. The social sectors of health and education have lagged behind and not kept pace with our economic progress. Too many lives and livelihoods have been lost that should not have been.

### Desire to prosper

1. Over the last three decades, successive governments have followed this path to catapult our nation to a \$3 trillion economy and into the league of the world's largest economies.



2. More importantly, nearly 300 million fellow Indians have been lifted out of poverty in this period and hundreds of millions of new jobs have been provided for our youth.
3. The liberalisation process helped in the making of some world-class companies, and India has emerged as a global power in many sectors.

## Army to use jammers to protect forward bases from drone attacks

The Army is procuring jammers in large numbers and expanding the range of the existing ones to protect large military bases in forward areas from drone attacks.

### Drone threat:

1. Stating that several measures were being put in place, officials said. To begin with, the sentries posted along the installations were more alert now and on the lookout for possible presence of drones.
2. There have been several instances in the last couple of years where quadcopters were used to drop drugs, arms and ammunition from across the border in Jammu and Punjab.