




22 February 2025

National and International News

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| <p>United States Agency for International Development (USAID)</p> | <p>Why in news?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> US President Donald Trump has taken steps to close the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). <p>Key Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was established in the 1960s to oversee and administer international humanitarian aid. USAID was established under the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, making its existence legally mandated by Congress. Its key areas of work include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food security: USAID provides famine relief and operates an advanced food shortage prediction system. Healthcare: It funds vaccination programs, pandemic prevention, and global disease control. Infrastructure and development: The agency supports clean water initiatives, disaster relief, and economic development programs. Humanitarian aid: USAID plays a vital role in war-torn regions like Ukraine and sub-Saharan Africa. The top recipient countries of USAID include: Ukraine, Ethiopia, Jordan, Somalia etc. USAID collaborates with governments, NGOs, businesses, and international organizations, offering grants and assistance for development projects. Some notable initiatives include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), addressing HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention. Feed the Future, tackling hunger and food security issues. Power Africa, expanding electricity access across Africa. Water for the World Act, improving water, sanitation, and hygiene services. USAID's Role in India: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> USAID's engagement with India began in 1951 under the India Emergency Food Aid Act signed by President Harry Truman. The funding freeze is unlikely to have a major impact on India, given its reduced dependence on USAID assistance. However, it may affect select ongoing projects in health and sanitation. In 2024, USAID allocated \$79.3 million for India's healthcare sector. |
| <p>G20</p> | <p>Why in news?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar stated that India and |



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| | <p>China have "worked hard to preserve" the G-20 during talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi at the G-20 Foreign Ministers' meeting in Johannesburg.</p> <p>Key Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The G20 (Group of Twenty) comprises 19 countries (Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Türkiye, United Kingdom and United States) and two regional bodies: the European Union and the African Union (as of 2024). • The G20 members represent around 85% of the global GDP, over 75% of the global trade, and about two-thirds of the world population. • It was established in 1999, its primary objective is to promote international financial stability and sustainable development by facilitating dialogue among major economies. • Founding Members: The G20 founding members are Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States, European Union, and the African Union. |
| <p>Places in news: Pir Panjal Valley</p>  | <p>Why in news?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India and Pakistan Army officials hold a flag meeting in the Pir Panjal Valley amid escalating tension at the LoC. <p>Key Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a mountain range in the northern Indian subcontinent. • It starts in Ramban and extends westward in the south of Jammu and Kashmir (Vale of Kashmir) to the last extremity of Muzaffarabad District. • It is rising sharply to an average elevation of more than 13,000 feet (4,000 meters). • It separates the Jammu Hills to the south from the Vale of Kashmir, beyond which lie the Great Himalayas. • It separates itself from the Himalayas near the bank of the Sulej river and forms a divide between the rivers Beas and Ravi on one side and the Chenab on the other. • Major passes: Six historical passes, Hajipir Pass, Gulabgarh Pass, Ratanpir Pass, Pir Panjal Pass, Banihal Pass, and Bairam Gala Pass are in this mountain range. • Important peaks: Deo Tibba (6,001 m) and Indrasan (6,221m) are two important peaks at the eastern end of the mountain range. <p>About LOC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The LoC emerged from 1948 as "ceasefire line" negotiated by the UN after the Kashmir War. |



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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was designated as the LoC in 1972, following the Shimla Agreement between the two countries. It is delineated on a map signed by DGMOs of both armies and has the international sanctity of a legal agreement. • The part that is under Indian control is known as the state of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. The Pakistani-controlled part is divided into Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. The northernmost point of the Line of Control is known as NJ9842. |
| <p>National Mineral Mission (NCMM)</p> | <p>Critical Mission</p> <p>Why in news?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After the Cabinet's approval of a ₹16,300-crore National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM) in January, India plans to auction additional critical mineral mines by 2031. <p>Key Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Indian government has approved the National Critical Minerals Mission (NCMM) with a total outlay of ₹34,300 crore over seven years. • The mission aims to reduce import dependence on critical minerals, boost domestic exploration and processing, and accelerate India's shift towards green energy technologies. • Key Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Boosting Domestic Exploration: A significant portion of the mission's funds will focus on expanding mineral exploration within the country and in offshore regions. ○ Reducing Import Dependence: India aims to reduce its reliance on imports of critical minerals like lithium, cobalt, nickel, and rare earth elements, which are vital for electric vehicles (EVs), battery manufacturing, and renewable energy technologies. ○ Developing Processing and Recycling Capabilities: The mission will promote investment in mineral processing parks, recycling technologies, and research into sustainable extraction methods. ○ Overseas Mineral Acquisitions: Public sector enterprises and private companies will be encouraged to acquire mineral assets overseas to ensure a consistent supply of critical minerals. ○ Regulatory and Financial Support: The mission will simplify regulatory approvals and provide financial incentives to support mineral exploration and development. <p>About Critical Minerals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A mineral is critical when the risk of supply shortage and associated impact on the economy is (relatively) higher than other raw materials. • These minerals are essential for economic development and national security, and their lack of availability/ the concentration |



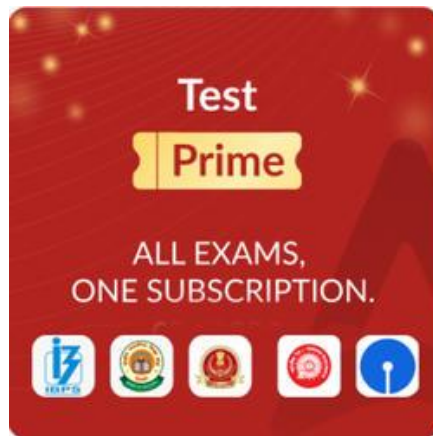
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| | | <p>of extraction/ processing in a few geographical locations could potentially lead to supply chain vulnerabilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In July 2023, released a list of 30 critical minerals for India. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ These minerals are Antimony, Beryllium, Bismuth, Cobalt, Copper, Gallium, Germanium, Graphite, Hafnium, Indium, Lithium, Molybdenum, Niobium, Nickel, PGE, Phosphorous, Potash, REE, Rhenium, Silicon, Strontium, Tantalum, Tellurium, Tin, Titanium, Tungsten, Vanadium, Zirconium, Selenium and Cadmium. |
| BOBP-IGO | | <p>Why in news?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● India has recently assumed the Chairmanship of the Bay of Bengal Inter-Governmental Organisation (BOBP-IGO) from Bangladesh. ● The event was part of a high-level conference focused on mainstreaming ecosystem approaches to fisheries management in small-scale fisheries. <p>Key Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The BOBP-IGO was established in 2003. ● This Regional Fisheries Advisory Body (RFAB) gives advice on fishing to countries around the Bay of Bengal. ● Its primary aim is to assist member countries in enhancing livelihood opportunities for small-scale fisherfolk in the Bay of Bengal region. ● Current member countries include Bangladesh, Maldives, and Sri Lanka. ● Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, and Thailand participate as cooperating non-contracting parties. ● Key areas identified by India for enhanced cooperation include marine resource management, training and capacity-building programmes, research and policy advocacy, and addressing Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing. |
| Kuno National Park | | <p>Why in news?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Five more cheetahs were released into the Madhya Pradesh's Kuno National Park bringing the total to 12. <p>Key Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It is located in the Morena and Sheopur districts in Madhya Pradesh. It covers an area of 750 sq.km. ● It derives its name from the meandering Kuno River (one of the main tributaries of the Chambal River) that graces the region. ● Initially established as a wildlife sanctuary, it was only in 2018 that the government changed its status into a national park. ● It was selected under 'Action Plan for Introduction of Cheetah in India'. ● Vegetation: Kuno is primarily a grassland region, though a few |



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| | <p>rocky outcrops are found here too.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flora: Kardhai, Salai, and Khair trees dominate the forested area of Kuno National Park, which is mostly mixed forest. • Fauna: The protected area of the forest is home to the jungle cat, Indian leopard, sloth bear, Indian wolf, striped hyena, golden jackal, Bengal fox, and dhole, along with more than 120 bird species. <p>About Action Plan for Introduction of Cheetah in India:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The "Action Plan for Introduction of Cheetah in India" primarily focuses on reintroducing African cheetahs into India's suitable habitats, particularly Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh. • Cheetahs will be translocated from countries like Namibia and South Africa with the goal of establishing a viable cheetah population in the coming years. • It is overseen by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) under the Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change. |
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