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MCQs

THE HINDU

India's river interlinks may create invasive species 'highways'

Prelims: General Studies Paper 1

Current events of national and international importance

Main's: General Studies 3

Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

Why in Focus?

- The **National River-Linking Project (NRLP)** proposes linking 37 major river basins to transfer water from "surplus" to "deficit" basins.
- Recent research by Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment, published in Scientific Reports, **warns that river-linking could facilitate the spread of invasive alien species between previously isolated river basins.**

The National River Linking Project (NRLP), based on the National Perspective Plan proposes to transfer surplus water to water-deficit regions. It is implemented by the National Water Development Agency (NWDA) under the Ministry of Jal Shakti, with the Ken–Betwa Link Project being its first major approved project, aimed at addressing water scarcity in Bundelkhand.

Key Highlights

- The **project could transfer around 174 billion cubic metres of water and generate nearly 34,000 MW of power.**
- The **concepts of "surplus" and "deficit" basins may overlook seasonal and year-to-year variations** in river flows.
- **Inter-basin transfers can alter downstream flows, sediment transport, floodplains, deltas and aquatic habitats.**
- River links **could act as "ecological highways", allowing invasive species and aquatic pathogens to enter new ecosystems.**
- **Northeastern and peninsular river basins, including the Western Ghats, Kaveri, Krishna, Lower Ganga and Brahmaputra, are particularly vulnerable.**
- The **Lower Ganga–Mahanadi link could transfer invasive species towards the Mahanadi basin**, which supports several threatened species.

Implications

- **Increased competition from invasive species may threaten native and endemic species.**
- **Aquatic pathogens could move** between previously isolated river systems.
- **Reduced downstream flows may affect riverine ecosystems and endemic species.**
- **Altered sediment transport could damage river habitats and food chains.**



- **Changes in aquatic ecosystems could affect fisheries**, farmers and local communities.
- **Ecological degradation and invasive species** may impose long-term economic costs.
- **Changes in river flows and ecosystems could have implications** for downstream countries.

Way Forward

- **Adopt basin-level, evidence-based planning** before implementing river-linking projects.
- **Move beyond the simplistic surplus–deficit approach and account for seasonal and ecological variations** in river flows.
- **Ensure environmental flows and protect downstream ecosystems**.
- **Conduct comprehensive assessments of invasive species** and pathogen risks before inter-basin transfers.
- **Develop a dedicated national framework for prevention, monitoring and management** of invasive alien species.
- **Integrate biodiversity, livelihoods, fisheries and climate considerations** into infrastructure planning.
- **Follow a holistic approach that balances water security** with ecological sustainability.

Mains Question

“The National River-Linking Project offers potential benefits for water security but may pose significant ecological risks. Discuss the environmental implications of inter-basin water transfers and suggest measures for sustainable implementation.” (250 words)

Why did the J&K Statehood resolution cause a row?

Prelims : General Studies Paper I

Indian Polity and Governance-Constitution, Political System, Panchayati Raj, Public Policy, Rights Issues, etc.

Mains: General Studies 2

Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.

Why in Focus?

- J&K Chief Minister **Omar Abdullah** introduced a resolution in the Assembly seeking the **immediate restoration of full Statehood** to Jammu and Kashmir.
- The resolution was passed with the support of **61 out of 90 members**, while the **BJP stayed away from voting** over references to earlier resolutions on autonomy and special status.

Key Highlights:

- J&K was downgraded from a **State to a Union Territory in 2019** after Parliament diluted its earlier special constitutional position.
- The Assembly resolution called upon the **Government of India** to fulfil its commitment to restore **Statehood** to J&K.
- The **BJP objected to the wording** because the resolution also referred to the **2000 autonomy resolution** and the **2024 special-status resolution**.
- The BJP wanted a resolution dealing **only with restoration of Statehood** and argued that references to earlier demands were unnecessary.
- The **2000 autonomy resolution**, passed unanimously, sought to restore J&K's **pre-1953 autonomy**, while retaining Union control mainly over defence, foreign affairs and communications.
- The Union Government under **Atal Bihari Vajpayee rejected the 2000 resolution**, calling its recommendations unacceptable.
- Omar Abdullah argued that restoration of Statehood should **not be linked to the complete end of militancy**, as this could make Pakistan indirectly determine when Statehood is restored.
- The **Chief Secretary and Law Secretary** advised the Speaker not to allow the resolution, arguing that the matter was **sub judice**.
- This intervention led to a debate over whether government officials could question the **powers and authority of the J&K Assembly**.

Implications:

- The dispute shows continuing political differences over **Statehood, autonomy and J&K's constitutional position**.



- References to **Article 370, Article 35A and past autonomy demands** continue to create divisions even within the debate over Statehood.

Article 370 and Article 35A were constitutional provisions that granted special autonomous status and residency rights to Jammu and Kashmir before being revoked by the Indian government on August 5, 2019

- The disagreement between the **Assembly and bureaucracy** has raised questions about the legislature's authority under the Union Territory framework.
- Linking Statehood to **security conditions and militancy** could further delay the restoration process.

Way Forward:

- The restoration of **Statehood** should be considered separately from other political and security conditions, as argued by the J&K Chief Minister.
- Clear rules on the respective powers of the **J&K Assembly and bureaucracy** can help prevent institutional conflicts.
- The Centre and J&K administration should maintain **institutional dialogue** to address differences over the functioning and powers of the Assembly.
- Political discussions should focus on building **consensus among different political groups** on the question of Statehood.

Mains Question:

Discuss the political and constitutional issues surrounding the demand for restoration of Statehood to Jammu and Kashmir. (250 Words)

What happened on the flydubai aircraft?

Prelims : General Studies Paper I

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies 3

Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security.

Why in Focus?

- A **flydubai flight from the UAE to Israel** was diverted to Saudi Arabia after one pilot allegedly attacked the other and attempted to take control of the aircraft.
- The incident has triggered a **formal investigation**, including examination of a possible **terror angle**, while flydubai has suspended flights to and from Israel.

Key Highlights:

- The incident occurred on **September 30, 2026**, on flydubai flight **FZ 1073**, carrying **172 passengers and crew**.
- The aircraft was a **Boeing 737-8 MAX** flying from the **UAE to Israel**.
- The Indian captain, **Smit Machchhar**, was reportedly attacked by the co-pilot during the flight.
- Initial reports mentioned a **pocket knife**, while later reports cited the possible use of the aircraft's **crash axe**.
- The pilots were injured and passengers reportedly helped **subdue the attacker** after the cockpit door was opened.
- The aircraft transmitted emergency codes **7700 and 7500**, indicating a general emergency and possible **unlawful interference**.
- The aircraft experienced a sudden descent from around **34,000 feet to 19,000 feet**, followed by further changes in altitude.
- The aircraft was diverted to **Tabuk, Saudi Arabia**, where it made a safe emergency landing despite damage to its **rudder and vertical stabiliser**.
- Other flydubai crew members travelling on the flight intervened and helped **secure and land the aircraft safely**.
- Flydubai said the **cause and motive remain unknown** and warned against premature conclusions until the investigation is completed.
- The incident has drawn attention to previous cases of suspected **unlawful interference involving aircraft**, including Japan Airlines Flight 350 and Germanwings Flight 9525.



Implications:

- An attack inside the **flight deck** can threaten aircraft control and the safety of all passengers and crew.
- The incident highlights the risks associated with **unlawful interference** and the need for effective cockpit security.
- The exact **motive and circumstances** remain under investigation, including the possible terror angle.
- The incident has raised concerns over the **security screening and assessment of pilots** operating flights to Israel.

Way Forward:

- Authorities should complete the investigation to establish the **exact cause, motive and sequence of events**.
- **Security checks on pilots** flying into Israel are being strengthened following the incident.
- Airlines and aviation authorities need to ensure effective measures to prevent **unauthorised interference inside the cockpit**.

Mains Question:

Discuss the major aviation security challenges posed by unlawful interference and incidents involving flight crew. Suggest measures to strengthen cockpit and passenger safety. (250 Words)

KEYWORDS

National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)

- The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) is **an independent statutory body established in 1993 under the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993**.
- The **Chairperson and members of the NHRC are appointed by the President on the recommendation of a six-member committee headed by the Prime Minister**, comprising the Speaker of Lok Sabha, Union Home Minister, Leaders of Opposition in Lok Sabha and

Rajya Sabha, and Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha.

- The **NHRC can inquire suo motu, on petitions or on court orders into human-rights violations or negligence in preventing** such violations by public servants.
- In cases involving the armed forces, the **NHRC can seek a report from the Central Government** and make recommendations after examining the report.
- The NHRC **has powers of a civil court, but its recommendations are not legally binding, and it cannot inquire into a complaint if more than one year has elapsed** since the alleged violation.

Indian Air Force Day

- Indian Air Force Day is celebrated **annually on 8 October to commemorate the establishment of the Indian Air Force in 1932**.
- The **Indian Air Force (IAF) was established under the Indian Air Force Act, 1932**, and its first operational flight commenced on 1 April 1933.
- The motto of the IAF is **“Nabhah Sparsham Diptam” (Touch the Sky with Glory)**, derived from the 11th chapter of the Bhagavad Gita.
- India **operates the fourth-largest air force in the world**, reflecting its significant aerial defence capabilities.
- The **President of India is the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces**, including the Indian Air Force.

Places in News

Mathikettan Shola National Park



- **Mathikettan Shola National Park in Kerala** was in the news due to concerns over rising human–elephant conflict in areas surrounding the park.
- Mathikettan Shola National Park is located in Idukki district, Kerala, in the Western Ghats, and was notified as a National Park in 2003.
- The park covers an area of 12.82 sq. km and forms part of the Cardamom Hill Reserve, within the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Western Ghats.
- It lies between Eravikulam National Park and Pampadum Shola National Park, thereby strengthening ecological connectivity in the southern Western Ghats.
- The park is characterised by a shola–grassland ecosystem and supports species such as Asian Elephant, Nilgiri Tahr, Nilgiri Marten, Dhole and Nilgiri Langur.
- Mathikettan Shola serves as an important elephant corridor and watershed, with streams originating in the park ultimately draining into the Panniyar River.

Ethiopia



- Ethiopia was in the news due to renewed fighting in the Tigray region as government forces advanced towards regional capital Mekelle.
- Ethiopia is a landlocked country in the Horn of Africa, located entirely within the tropics.
- Its capital is Addis Ababa, situated almost at the centre of the country.
- Ethiopia shares borders with Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya, South Sudan and Sudan.
- The Blue Nile (Abbay) is one of the country's most important rivers and flows through Ethiopia before entering Sudan.
- Ethiopia has great linguistic diversity, with more than 80 languages and over 200 dialects; Amharic is the federal working language.
- Ethiopia is considered Africa's oldest independent country and is also one of the world's oldest states.



Spain

- **Spain** is located in **southwestern Europe** and occupies about **85% of the Iberian Peninsula**.
- It shares the Iberian Peninsula with **Portugal** and is separated from **France** by the **Pyrenees Mountains**.
- Spain also borders **Andorra** and has a land border with **Gibraltar**, a British Overseas Territory.
- It is bounded by the **Mediterranean Sea** to the east and southeast and the **Atlantic Ocean** to the west and southwest.
- The **Bay of Biscay**, part of the Atlantic Ocean, lies to its north.
- Spain was recently in the news due to **large protests over the housing crisis**.

