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Researchers in Kerala tap red ivy plant to develop innovative wound-healing pad

The Hindu: 12/09/2025- Page 3



Top Maoist among 10 killed in Chhattisgarh encounter

The Hindu: 12/09/2025- Page 4



CJI says SC will not sit idle if constitutional authority fails to discharge its duties

The Hindu: 12/09/2025- Page 1

First tri-service all-women circumnavigation sailing expedition flagged off

The Hindu: 12/09/2025- Page 6



India and Mauritius not just partners but a family

The Hindu: 12/09/2025- Page 6



President urges restraint as Nepal talks stall



Members of Nepal's Gen Z movement, whose massive protests led to the fall of the K.P. Sharma Oli government, remained divided on who should lead the next interim administration, even as President Ram Chandra Poudel urged restraint in order to restore order and security. Nepal has experienced an uneasy calm over the past two days after youth-led protests turned violent, with the death toll rising to 34. But the political crisis remains unresolved.

With the Nepal Army appointed as the chief negotiator to help identify a leader for the interim government, many are questioning whether it is an appropriate or constitutional role for the military. Nepal's youth took to the streets on September 8, after weeks of online consultations, demanding "an end to corruption and misgovernance". The protests were triggered by the Oli government's controversial social media ban. Gen Z leaders say they are not against the Constitution but want Parliament dissolved, a demand that echoes what Mr. Shah has been advocating. The Army has also been in contact with the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP), a new political force that rose to prominence in the last election riding an anti-establishment wave.



Can vultures help prevent pandemics?

»page 7



Philippines' sinking island battling rising sea levels »page 8

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Researchers in Kerala tap red ivy plant to develop innovative wound-healing pad

Researchers at the Jawaharlal Nehru Tropical Botanic Garden & Research Institute (JNTBGRI), Kerala, have developed a new wound-healing pad using nanomaterials and the red ivy plant (murikooti pacha, Strobilanthes alternata).

Innovation and Discovery

- Scientists isolated the molecule acteoside from the red ivy plant, which had not previously been linked to this species.
- The pad uses an electrospun nanofiber layer made from biodegradable and non-toxic polymers, which is very thin and allows for optimal gas exchange to help wounds "breathe".

Wound-Healing Properties

- The acteoside molecule, even at low concentrations (0.2%), is highly effective for wound healing.
- The wound pad includes neomycin sulfate (an antibiotic), blended with FDA-approved polymers for added safety and efficacy.

Cultural and Botanical Context

- Red ivy grows abundantly in tropical regions, including India, and has been used in traditional medicine for treating cuts and wounds.
- This represents a modern application of traditional botanical knowledge with advanced materials science.

Top Maoist among 10 killed in Chhattisgarh encounter

Ten Maoists, including senior leader Manoj (alias Modem Balakrishna), were killed by security forces in a Chhattisgarh district encounter, marking a significant blow to the banned Communist Party of India (Maoist).

- The operation is seen as a significant setback for the Maoist organisation due to the loss of several senior members and the strategic targeting of leadership.

1. Security Implications

- Maoism is considered India's most serious internal security threat by the government.
- Regular attacks on security forces, police stations, and paramilitary camps.
- Disruption of infrastructure projects like railways, mining, roads, and telecom networks.

2. Socio-Economic Implications

- Maoists exploit grievances like land alienation, displacement due to mining/industries, lack of forest rights, and poverty.

3. Political Implications

- Undermines democratic governance by rejecting electoral politics.
- Creates a governance vacuum in affected areas, weakening the authority of the state.

4. Humanitarian Implications

- Heavy toll on civilians, including killings, forced recruitment (including child soldiers), and suppression of dissent in Maoist-controlled areas.
- Tribal and marginalized communities caught between Maoist violence and state counter-insurgency measures.

Recent Trends: Maoist influence has declined in many states, though Chhattisgarh and parts of Jharkhand remain hotbeds.



India and Mauritius not just partners but a family: Modi

India and Mauritius are described as having a relationship closer than partnership, likened to a family, according to Prime Minister Narendra Modi during discussions in Varanasi with Mauritius Prime Minister Navinchandra Ramgoolam.

Bilateral Cooperation and Agreements

- Both nations signed agreements to deepen ties, particularly focusing on the Indian Ocean's stability, prosperity, and security as a shared priority.
- Cooperation areas include technology, development projects, and ocean research, with plans for a new AYUSH centre, enhanced school and hospital infrastructure, and collaborative initiatives in technology and disaster management.

Cultural and Historical Connections

- Modi emphasized centuries-old cultural exchanges, traditions, and migration from India to Mauritius that shape everyday life and shared values.
- The article highlights how Mauritius has welcomed people and practices from India, reinforcing strong emotional and civilizational ties.

Future Initiatives

- Upcoming joint projects include training for Mauritian officials, research support, and new collaborations in education, healthcare, oceanography, and disaster management, further elevating the Indo-Mauritian partnership.
- Modi reiterated that the growing partnership is built on shared heritage, cooperation, and people-to-people connections.



Govt. contemplates raising civil border guards along China border

- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) is considering raising civil Border Wing Home Guards (BWHGs) along the China border, similar to arrangements made along the India-Pakistan border.

Purpose and Structure

- BWHGs are civilian volunteers living in border areas, used as support for border guarding forces and the Indian Army during emergencies.
- Currently, only Rajasthan has operational BWHGs, but other states like Meghalaya, Tripura, Assam, West Bengal, Punjab, Gujarat may also be considered.

Operational Details

- In Rajasthan, BWHGs take on constable-like responsibilities, typically serving for three to four years, and are compensated at ₹800-900 per day.
- 2,279 BWHGs function in Rajasthan, their activation during the recent Operation Sindoar was crucial for intelligence and administrative support.

Strategic Importance and Recent Developments

- Talks have intensified since June 2020 after violent clashes between Indian and Chinese troops at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh, which led to the death of twenty Indian personnel.
- Around 50,000 Army and ITBP personnel now guard the LAC, with active patrolling at 65 friction points and expanded control posts in buffer zones.

Government Initiatives

- The MHA's recent meeting focused on boosting BWHGs' strength to aid with border intelligence, presence, and information gathering in sensitive areas along the China border.





Home Minister launches faster immigration clearance at 5 airports

- Union Home Minister Amit Shah launched the Fast Track Immigration/Trusted Traveller Programme (FTI-TTP) at five more airports, improving immigration clearance for preferred Indian citizens and Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholders by reducing waiting times to just 30 seconds without the need for fingerprinting or extensive documentation.

Programme Highlights

- The FTI-TTP was first rolled out at Delhi's IGI Airport in July 2024 and is now extended to Lucknow, Thiruvananthapuram, Tiruchirappalli, Kozhikode, and Amritsar.
- Further expansion will include Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Cochin, and Ahmedabad over the next two months.

Features and User Benefits

- The initiative enhances not just convenience but also the speed, scale, and scope of immigration processes for registered travellers.
- Registered travellers can travel using only their passport and OCI card, and do not need to return for biometric verification each time.
- About 3 lakh travellers are registered, with 2.65 lakh actively using the facility; efforts are underway to increase these numbers.

Government Objectives

- The programme aims to provide seamless experience at airports for trusted travellers and bring India closer to global travel standards.
- Amit Shah stressed the importance of maximizing participation and integrating FTI-TTP with upcoming airport developments across India.

CJI says SC will not sit idle if constitutional authority fails to discharge its duties

- The Supreme Court of India will not remain inactive or powerless if a constitutional authority fails to fulfil its duties, regardless of their status, as asserted by the Chief Justice of India, B.R. Gavai.

Judicial Oversight and Separation of Powers

- The Chief Justice emphasised that in a democracy, the judiciary has the responsibility to ensure constitutional powers are exercised properly, and cannot be rendered powerless when authorities do not discharge their duties.
- The doctrine of separation of powers is highlighted, with judicial intervention necessary only when constitutional functions are blocked or delayed, such as in cases involving Governors and pending legislation.

Context of Presidential Reference

- The remarks came during a Presidential Reference hearing that drew attention to conflicts between Opposition-ruled states and their Governors over delays in clearing legislative bills.
- The Chief Justice responded to arguments from the Union government and Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta about Governors returning or holding bills without timely decisions.

Legislative Process and Judicial Role

- Further the implications of delayed gubernatorial assent on state legislation, noting recent events where several bills in opposition-ruled states remain pending for long periods.
- The Supreme Court affirmed its commitment to act decisively to uphold constitutional responsibilities and to address any attempts to obstruct the legislative process through inaction.



Howsoever high an authority may be, he is not above the law... I am a strong believer in the doctrine of separation of powers. ...if one wing of democracy fails in the discharge of his duties, would the court, which is the custodian of the Constitution, be powerless and forced to sit idle?

B.R. GAVAI
Chief Justice of India



PRELIMS CORNER :

1. In collaboration with Dadabhai Naoroji and Naurojee Fourdonji, who among the following was the leader of Rahanumai Mazadai Sabha ?

- (a) Nana Shankar Sheth
- (b) S. S. Bengalee
- (c) K. T. Telang
- (d) Cornelia Sorabji

2. "Stand-By Arrangements" and "The Extended Fund Facility" are related to the provisions of which of lending by which of the following ?

- (a) Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
- (b) World Bank
- (c) New development Bank
- (d) International Monetary Fund

3. Which of the following Acts enacted by the British Government in reference to the English East India Company was also known as the "half-loaf system" ?

- (a) Regulating Act of 1773
- (b) Pitt's India Act of 1784
- (c) Charter Act of 1813
- (d) Act for the Better Government of India, 1858

First tri-service all-women circumnavigation sailing expedition flagged off

India's first tri-service all-women circumnavigation sailing expedition, Samudra Pradakshina, was flagged off by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh from the Gateway of India in Mumbai, marking a historic step in commemorating women's empowerment and national pride.

Expedition Details

- This is the first of its kind expedition, with women officers from the Army, Navy, and Air Force participating.
- The team will sail on the vessel INSV Triveni, a 50-foot yacht, covering a challenging route around India's coastline.

Route and Duration

- Over the next six months, the officers will traverse approximately 26,000 nautical miles along the equator, visiting major ports such as Leeuwin, Cape Horn, and Good Hope.
- The journey will conclude with their return to Mumbai in May 2026.

Global & Strategic Imperatives

- Most advanced militaries (USA, UK, Israel, France) have women in combat and command roles.
- For India, aiming to be a global power, tri-service integration ensures modernization and aligns with global standards.
- Enhances India's image in UN missions, international collaborations, and joint exercises.

Social & Psychological Benefits

- Breaks stereotypes that armed forces are "male domains."
- Promotes a culture of inclusivity and merit-based recognition.



The need for revised strategies against Aedes mosquitoes



1. The Problem

- Aedes-borne viral diseases (ABVD) include dengue, Zika, and chikungunya, which are major public health concerns in India.
- Aedes mosquitoes adapt well to human settings: they bite indoors during the day, at night under artificial light, and breed in outdoor/indoor water containers.
- Current strategies for controlling them are not sufficient.

2. First Line of Defence

- Household measures like mosquito coils, vaporizers, and sprays are widely used but costly and not fully effective.
- Larval breeding sites (containers with stagnant water) must be eliminated to cut transmission.
- Fogging and insecticide use are limited in effectiveness and may have health/environmental downsides.

3. Top-Down Measures

- Innovative approaches like the use of Wolbachia-infected mosquitoes show promise but are expensive and not yet widely scalable.
- Municipal corporations carry out insecticidal spraying and larvicide use, but these are not consistently effective.

4. Barriers to Success

- High costs of preventive measures.
- Community mobilisation challenges: people often don't consistently eliminate breeding sites.
- Market bias: repellents and coils dominate, while effective larval-control products (like temephos) are less available to households.

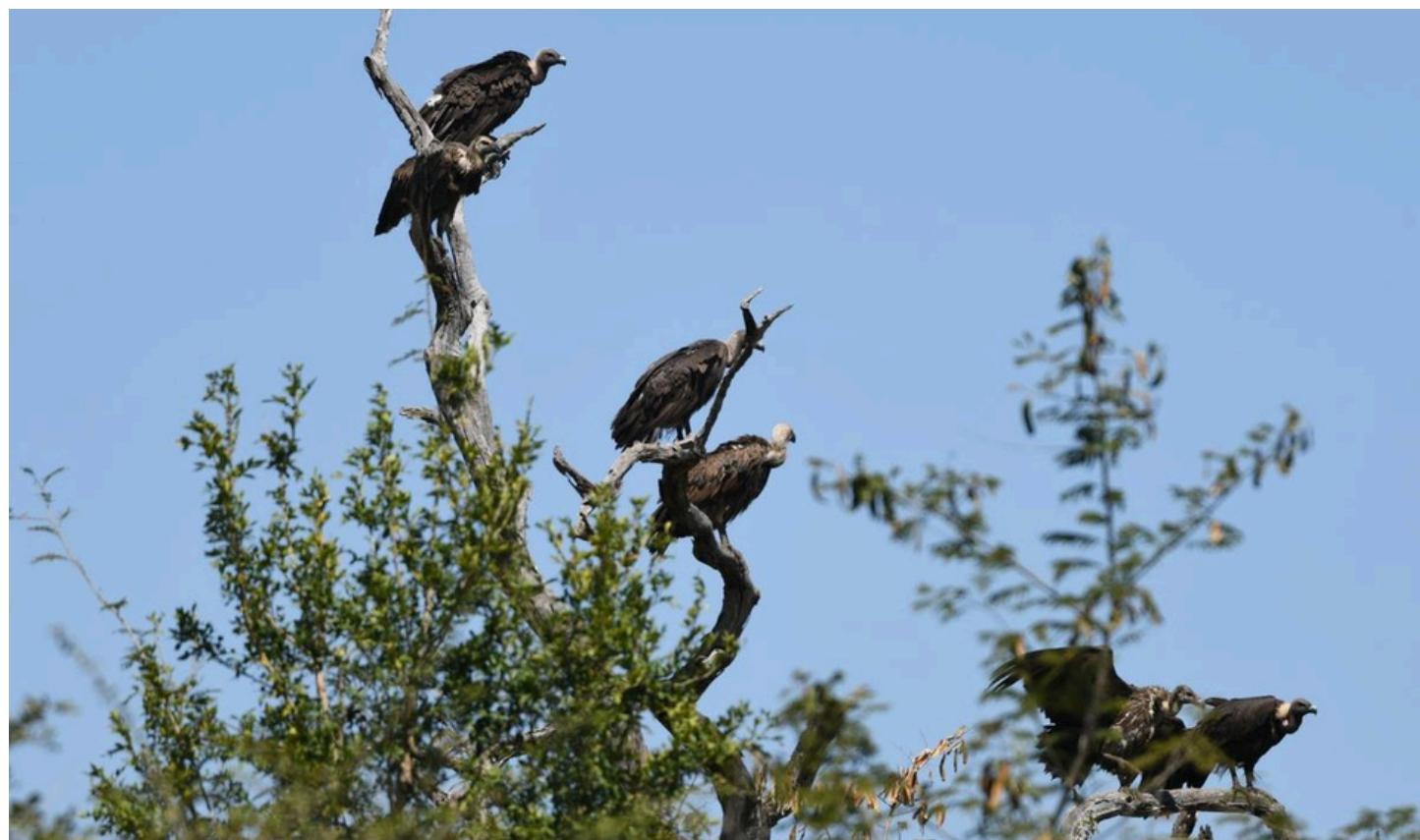
5. Government Response

- The Health Ministry has specific guidelines for larval source management.
- The National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP) promotes eliminating breeding sites, use of temephos, and personal protection.

6. Way Forward

- Community-driven efforts are key: households must identify and remove breeding sites weekly.
- Need a “bottom-up” approach alongside top-down spraying – educating people about cost-effective larval control measures.
- Develop and promote affordable larval control products instead of relying only on repellents and coils.
- Greater emphasis on environmental management, including better disposal of solid waste and improved water storage.

Can vultures help prevent pandemics?



Role of Vultures in Public Health

- Vultures are nature's waste managers, preventing the spread of pathogens like anthrax, rabies, and Clostridium botulinum by swiftly consuming carcasses.
- By reducing animal remains, they lower the risk of zoonotic spillover (diseases jumping from animals to humans).

2. Decline of Vultures in India

- India's vulture population has declined by over 95% since the 1990s due to the veterinary drug diclofenac, which is toxic to them.
- This decline is not just an ecological loss but a public health challenge, increasing risks of disease outbreaks.

3. Ecological and Health Linkages

- Vultures are part of the Central Asian Flyway (CAF), a migratory route linking continents.
- Their loss disrupts ecosystems, increases carcass accumulation, and heightens cross-border disease risks.
- Conserving vultures strengthens the One Health framework, which connects human, animal, and environmental health.

4. Relation to Pandemics

- Protecting vultures reduces future pandemic risks by controlling carcass-related spillover hotspots.
- Their conservation offers a cost-effective pandemic prevention strategy, compared to the high costs of outbreak control.

5. Challenges

- Conservation programmes remain underfunded and fragmented, both in India and globally.
- Financial systems and health frameworks rarely integrate vulture protection.
- Risks like electrocution, poisoning, and habitat degradation continue unchecked.

6. Strategies for Protection

A post-2025 National Strategy could focus on five pillars:

1. Satellite telemetry to monitor vultures and carcass dumps.
2. Decision Support Systems (DSS) integrating wildlife, livestock, and health data.
3. Cross-sector coordination among environment, veterinary, and health agencies.
4. Transboundary collaboration across CAF countries.
5. Community stewardship involving women and local groups.

7. Opportunities for India

- India can become a global leader in biodiversity-linked health security by embedding vulture conservation into its pandemic preparedness framework.
- Successful vulture protection can inspire other CAF countries to adopt similar models.

Why are European nations now moving to recognise Palestine?

Recent Developments

- Several European nations, including Spain, Ireland, and Norway, have formally recognised the state of Palestine.
- This marks a significant diplomatic shift, creating pressure on other major powers (like France) to clarify their stance.

Why Recognition Now?

- Triggered by the October 7 attacks and Israel's subsequent large-scale military response in Gaza, which caused humanitarian catastrophe and destruction.
- The war shocked European sensibilities and highlighted the failure of the two-state solution.
- The ICJ case against Israel for alleged genocide has increased pressure on European governments.

Impact of the Ukraine War

- Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 reaffirmed Europe's stance on sovereignty and international law.
- This reinforced the need for consistency in foreign policy: if Europe defends Ukraine's sovereignty, it must also uphold Palestinian rights.

Domestic Political Pressures

- European public opinion has shifted strongly:
- A 2023 Eurobarometer survey showed 72% of Europeans support upholding international law in all conflicts.
- Growing protests, civil society movements, and university activism are pushing governments to act.
- Governments risk losing credibility if they appear inconsistent or passive on Palestine.

Why Some Countries Move Faster

- Countries like Spain, Ireland, and Norway have historical sympathy with Palestine and traditions of supporting anti-colonial struggles.
- Others, like Germany and Austria, remain reluctant due to historical responsibility for the Holocaust and close ties with Israel.
- Eastern European countries (Hungary, Poland) also remain more cautious.

EU-Level Coordination Challenges

- The EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy requires unanimous agreement among all 27 members, making a unified stance nearly impossible.
- Hence, recognition happens state by state, but coordinated moves by groups of nations (like Spain, Ireland, and Norway) generate greater political impact.

Significance

- Recognition does not end the occupation, but it signals growing European unwillingness to tolerate the current status quo.
- It represents a moral and political shift, aligning Europe's policies with its rhetoric on international law and human rights.
- This move could create a de facto shift in Europe's collective posture toward Palestine and increase momentum for broader recognition.

Philippines' sinking island battling rising sea levels

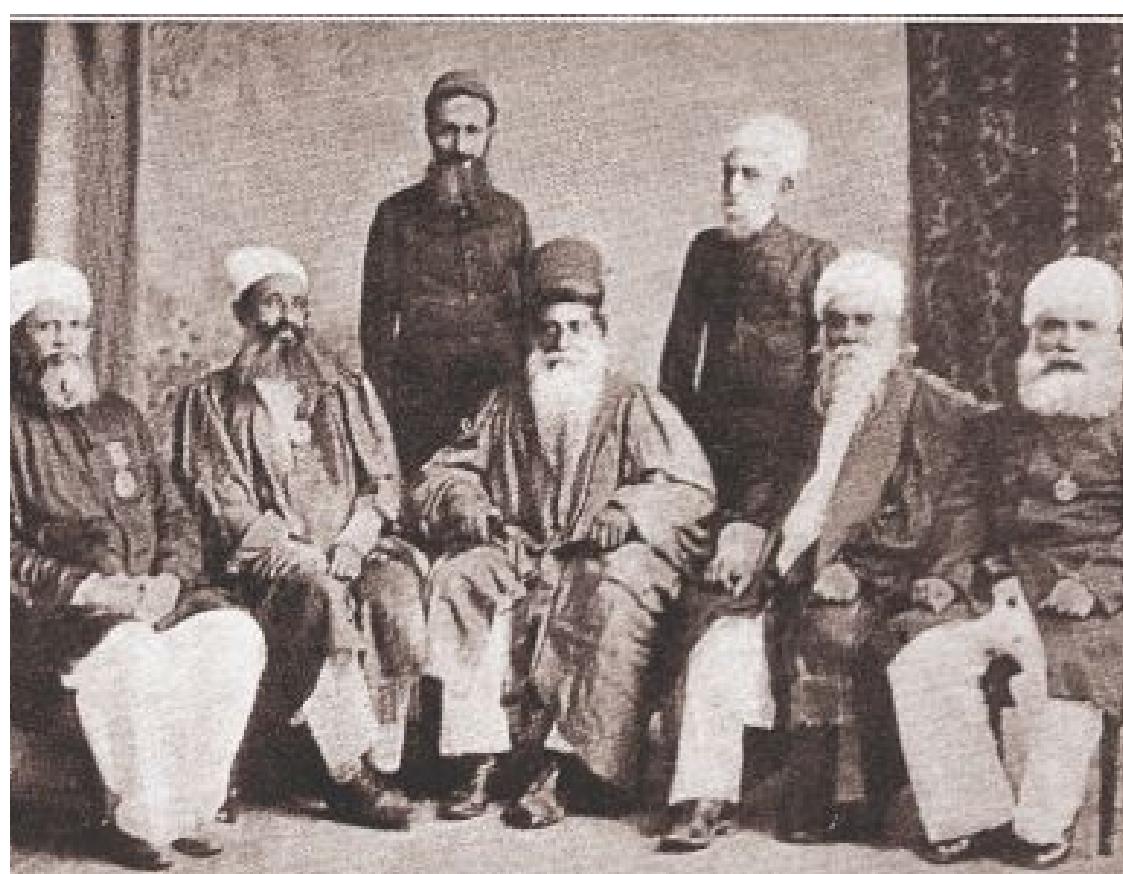
- On the Philippine island of Pugad the rising tides of Manila Bay began swallowing the island — a seven-hectare speck of land in danger of sinking completely underwater.
- Tamayo is one of 2,500 people living in Pugad's only village. The island is not the only one at risk in coastal Bulacan.
- Parts of the province are sinking at a rate of almost 11 centimetres a year, the fastest in the Philippines, according to a study led by geologist Mahar Lagmay.
- The gradual sinking, known as land subsidence, is an "alarming" phenomenon caused by the overextraction of groundwater, and exacerbated by rising sea levels due to global warming, Mr. Lagmay said. "The rates of subsidence [on Pugad Island] are quite high," he said.
- With high tides flooding the streets at least three times a week, the sea already dictates the rhythm of daily life on Pugad.
- Class schedules are adjusted based on tide charts to prevent children from contracting flood borne diseases.
- Homes have been raised on stilts to keep floors dry.
- Sea levels across the Philippines are already rising three times faster than the global average of 3.6 millimetres per year, and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has said this could accelerate to 13 millimetres annually



Prelims Corner: Explanations

Q1. Ans **b**

In 1851, the reformers in Bombay - Naoroji Furdonji, Dadabhai Naoroji and S.S. Bengalee started a Religious Reform Association called the Rehnumai Mazadayasan Sabha. It stood for the modernisation of Parsi religion and social customs. It launched a struggle for the introduction and spread of education among women, grant of a legal status to them and for uniform laws of inheritance and marriage for the Parsi community.



and is the dominant lending instrument of the IMF, especially for emerging market countries. When a country faces serious medium-term balance of payments problems because of structural weaknesses that require time to address, the IMF can assist through an Extended Fund Facility (EFF). Compared to assistance provided under the Stand-by Arrangement, assistance under an extended arrangement features longer program engagement, to help countries implement medium term structural reforms, and a longer repayment period. International Monetary Fund provides lending facilities for emerging, and advanced market economies in crises, the bulk of IMF assistance has been provided through Stand-By Arrangements (SBAs) to address the short-term or potential balance of payments problems.

Q2. Ans **d**

The "Stand-By Arrangements" and "The Extended Fund Facility are IMF lending facilities to help members with balance of payments problems. IMF's Stand-By Arrangement was created in June 1952 to provide financing to countries requiring help with balance of payments problems. The SBA has often been used by member countries

Q3. Ans **b**

The Pitt's India Act of 1784, sometimes described as the "half-loaf system," as it sought to mediate between Parliament and the company directors, enhanced Parliament's control by establishing the Board of Control, whose members were selected from the British cabinet.

Case Study:



How a Techie Brought Corporates & Communities Together to Revive 40 Wells & 6 Lakes.

US-based Kapil Sharma, originally from Raipur, founded 'SayTrees', a non-profit dedicated to urban and rural afforestation and lake rejuvenation. Since its inception, SayTrees has planted trees and revitalised lakes and wells in Bengaluru and Pune. People are now using air conditioners in Bengaluru, which never had such harsh summers before. Taking this up as his responsibility, Kapil started 'SayTrees'. Kapil began visiting government offices to understand his role and capacity as a citizen. In 2007, he started planting saplings on weekends. Every year, more and more people began joining him. What started as a weekend initiative has now grown into an active group of 100 people who conduct afforestation drives across the country with community engagement. A decade after its launch, the organisation began working on water conservation as well. Kapil credits his three P's formula — project, people, and paisa (money) — for their success in achieving this feat. Recently, they rejuvenated Choodasandra lake, which spans 23 acres in the Bangalore city.

Spotlight: Amid chronic labour shortages, Russia sends convicts to Arctic labour camps

It was a mild spring evening in the Russian city of Krasnoyarsk, but Yekaterina Fatyanova was scrambling to pack winter clothes. With just a few hours' notice, the Siberian activist and part-time newspaper editor had been ordered to board a plane the next day and fly 1,500 km north, beyond the Arctic Circle, to serve a two-year punishment for violating Russia's war censorship laws.

Her destination: Norilsk, a grim, polluted city of 175,000 people that was once a notorious outpost of Soviet leader Josef Stalin's Gulag network of prison camps. Her sentence: forced labour, a punishment that involves sending convicted offenders to work for companies or local municipalities instead of confining them to prison. She was about to join the growing ranks of convicts plugging gaps in Russia's workforce at a time of chronic labour shortages because of Ukraine war.

Forced labour, introduced in its current form in 2011, is a 'humane punishment', according to govt., that reduces reoffending while allowing convicts to contribute to society; critics, however, liken it to slave labour; Finance Ministry projects \$590 million revenue this year from the work of convicts. Convicts live under supervision in "correctional centres" but are not officially designated as prisoners. They receive wages, are allowed cell phones and are granted several hours of "personal time" each day. But critics see echoes of the past in the expansion of the system in places like Norilsk, a city that was built on Soviet prison labour. Today, Norilsk houses a men's penal colony, where perpetrators of more serious crimes are sent, and a men's correctional centre. A new centre for women opened in April — the facility to which Fatyanova was sent the following month. Russian officials have made no secret of the fact that they see convict labour as a boon for companies struggling to recruit staff. Fatyanova said she hoped that speaking about her situation might draw attention to the plight of Russian political prisoners.

