

NEXT IAS

DAILY NEWS

ANALYSIS



11th December

Explained

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2. CIC Selection Process
3. Australia's Teen Social Media Ban- Lessons for the World
4. Sudan Civil War-A Humanitarian Crisis
5. Satellite, Science and Spectrum Fight

Decoded

6. Western Tragopan

DNA QUIZ

PRACTICE QUESTION

Playlist Link:



What to Read: <https://bit.ly/3FYdutC>

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www.nextias.com

DELHI CENTRE:
Vivekananda House
6-B, Pusa Road, Metro Pillar No. 111,
Near Karol Bagh Metro
New Delhi-110060
Phone: 8081300200

DELHI CENTRE:
Tagore House
27-B, Pusa Road, Metro Pillar No. 118,
Near Karol Bagh Metro
New Delhi-110060
Phone: 8081300200

DELHI CENTRE:
Mukherjee Nagar
637, Banda Bahadur Marg,
Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009
Phone: 9311667076

PRAYAGRAJ CENTRE:
31/31 Sardar Patel Marg,
Civil Lines, Prayagraj
Uttar Pradesh-211001
Phone: 9958857757

JAIPUR CENTRE:
Plot No. 6 & 7, 3rd Floor,
Sree Gopal Nagar,
Gopalpura Bypass, Jaipur-302015
Phone: 9358200511

EXPLAINED

1. DEEPAWALI ON UNESCO LIST

Backdrop : Deepavali now on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list

Relevance : GS 1/ Art&Culture

PYQ Corner : CSE 2023

- Q.** Which one of the following was the latest inclusion in the Intangible Cultural Heritage List of UNESCO?
- Chhau dance
 - Durga puja
 - Garba dance
 - Kumbh mela

About the News :

- A YEAR after Parsi New Year, Navroz, was added to UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity as India's nomination.
- India's Deepavali the festival of light, was on Wednesday inscribed on the prestigious list.
- Durga Puja and Garba have already made it to the list.
- The decision was taken during a key meeting of UNESCO being held at the Red Fort.
- India had sent the Deepavali nomination dossier to UNESCO in 2023 for the 2024-25 cycle.
- For the next year's cycle, India has sent a nomination dossier for Bihar's Chhath Puja for consideration of the UNESCO committee.

Prime Ministers Quote :

People in India and around the world were thrilled at the UNESCO honour.

"For us, Deepavali is very closely linked to our culture and ethos. It is the soul of our civilisation. The addition of Deepavali to the UNESCO Intangible Heritage List will contribute to the festival's global popularity even further,"

UNESCO's 20th ICH Committee Session Hosted in India for the First Time

- The 20th session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) is being held at the Red Fort, Delhi, from December 8–13, marking the first time India is hosting this UNESCO event.

- Over 1,000 delegates from 180+ countries are participating.

India's Nomination of Deepavali for UNESCO ICH List

- Officials highlighted that the nomination process for Deepavali drew extensive participation from diverse communities, groups, and individuals, with inputs provided through written, audio, and audiovisual formats.
- The Sangeet Natak Akademi, acting as the nodal agency, constituted a national committee of experts, academicians, practitioners, poets, and writers, ensuring regional representation to reflect the festival's pan-Indian character.
- The nomination also targets recognition of Deepavali's significance within the global Indian diaspora.

India's Current ICH Inscriptions

India already has 15 elements on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, including:

- Kutiyattam – Sanskrit theatre tradition of Kerala
- Ramlila – Traditional performance of Ramayana
- Ramman – Religious festival and ritual theatre of Uttarakhand
- Mudiyettu – Ritual dance drama of Kerala
- Kalbelia – Folk songs and dances of Rajasthan
- Chhau Dance – Semi-classical martial dance of eastern India
- Buddhist Chanting of Ladakh – Monastic recitation tradition
- Sankirtana – Ritual singing, drumming, and dancing of Manipur
- Traditional Brass and Copper Craft of Thatheras, Punjab (Jandiala Guru)
- Yoga – Ancient physical, mental, and spiritual practice
- Nawrouz – Spring festival (multinational inscription; India is one of the participating states)
- Kumbh Mela – Mass Hindu pilgrimage
- Durga Puja in Kolkata – Community-led festival of West Bengal
- Garba of Gujarat – Circle dance celebrating womanhood and fertility
- Vedic Chanting Tradition – Oral recitation of Vedas

Working of the committee :

UNESCO requires that elements on its **Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) list** be **inclusive, representative, and community-based**. These elements reflect the **skills, traditions, and social practices** of communities.

Example: Baguette Bread

- France's **baguette bread** was included as an ICH element.
- UNESCO Chief **Audrey Azoulay** noted it **celebrates the French way of life**, acting as a **daily ritual and symbol of sharing and conviviality**.
- Emphasis is on **preserving such skills and social habits** for the future.

Urgency of Conservation

- Globalization and conflicts **threaten diverse social histories**, making **safeguarding intangible heritage increasingly important**.
- UNESCO maintains a **special section for elements at risk**, highlighting practices in **urgent need of protection**.

Recent Additions in Urgent Need of Safeguarding (Dec 2022)

1. **Vietnam** – Art of pottery-making of Chm people
2. **Chile** – Santa Cruz de Cuca pottery
3. **Albania** – Handcrafted garment of Xhubleta
4. **Turkiye** – Traditional Ahlat stonework

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What does the committee do?

This is the first time India is hosting a session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. The Committee advances the objectives of the 2003 Convention — adopted on October 17, 2003 — and ensures their effective implementation.

The Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage is a key body established under the **2003 UNESCO**

Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

It oversees the implementation of the convention and works to ensure the protection, promotion, and transmission of intangible cultural heritage across the world.

Composition

- The Committee consists of **24 Member States** elected by the **General Assembly of the States Parties** to the 2003 Convention.
- Members serve a **four-year term**, with rotational representation ensuring geographic diversity.

Key Functions

1. **Evaluate nominations** for inscription on:
 - The **Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity**
 - The **List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding**
 - The **Register of Good Safeguarding Practices**
2. **Provide guidance** on best practices for safeguarding intangible heritage.
3. **Allocate International Assistance** from the ICH Fund for safeguarding programmes, capacity-building, and community initiatives.
4. **Monitor implementation** of the 2003 Convention by State Parties.
5. **Encourage community participation** and ensure that safeguarding actions respect the rights and wishes of the communities concerned.
6. **Promote awareness** of the importance of intangible heritage at national and international levels.

2.CIC SELECTION PROCESS

Backdrop: Rahul Gandhi records dissent as PM-led panel meets to select CIC, Vigilance Commissioner.

Relevance : GS 2/ Constitutional-Nonconstitutional bodies

About the News :

- At a meeting Wednesday of the three-member panel headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to choose the next Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioners, and a Vigilance Commissioner, Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi recorded his dissent while pointing out that the shortlists lacked names from the Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, OBC, EBC and minority communities.

- The third member of the panel is Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

Vacancy in the Chief Information Commissioner Post

- The post of **Chief Information Commissioner (CIC)** has been **vacant since September 13**, following the retirement of **Heerala Samariya**, a Dalit, upon attaining the age of 65.
- Additionally, **eight Information Commissioner (IC) posts** have been lying vacant for several years. Of the **maximum ten IC positions**, the Commission currently has only **two Commissioners**.

Repeated Opposition-Government Disagreements

This is **not the first instance of disagreement** between the government and the Opposition regarding CIC appointments.

- **2023 Appointment of Samariya:** Opposition leader **Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury**, a member of the PM-led selection committee, claimed he was **neither consulted nor informed** about her selection.
- **2020 Appointments:** Chowdhury opposed the appointment of **Yashvardhan Kumar Sinha** (former IFS officer) as CIC and **Uday Mahurkar** (journalist) as IC.
- Despite his **dissent note**, both were appointed by the government.
 - ♦ Vacancies in the CIC and IC posts have persisted, impacting the **functioning of the Information Commission**.
 - ♦ The recurring disagreements reflect **tensions between the ruling party and the Opposition** in appointments to independent oversight bodies.

CIC And other ICs :

CIC and Other ICs: Legal Framework

1. Governing Act

- ♦ The **Chief Information Commissioner (CIC)** and **Information Commissioners (ICs)** are governed by the **Right to Information Act, 2005 (RTI Act)**.
- ♦ The RTI Act provides for their **appointment, powers, functions, and tenure**.

2. Central Information Commission (CIC)

- ♦ **Constitution:** The Central Information Commission is a **statutory body** under the RTI Act.

♦ Composition:

- **1 Chief Information Commissioner (CIC)**
- **Up to 10 Information Commissioners (ICs)**

3. Appointment Process (Section 12(3) of RTI Act)

- ♦ **Appointing Authority:** **President of India**
- ♦ **Selection Committee Composition:**
 - Prime Minister – Chairperson
 - Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha (or largest opposition party leader if no LoP)
 - Union Cabinet Minister nominated by the PM
- ♦ **Eligibility:**
 - Eminence in **public life**
 - Experience in **law, administration, social service, journalism, management, science, or mass media**

4. Tenure and Service Conditions (Sections 13 and 16 of RTI Act)

- ♦ **Tenure:** Previously 5 years or until 65 years of age; post-2019 amendment, determined by the **Central Government**.
- ♦ **Salary & Allowances:** Prescribed by the **Central Government**.
- ♦ **Reappointment:** Allowed unless explicitly barred by government rules.

5. Powers and Functions (Sections 18-19 of RTI Act)

- ♦ **Adjudicatory Role:**
 - Hear **appeals against public authorities** refusing information
 - Ensure **compliance with the RTI Act**
- ♦ **Recommendation & Guidance:**
 - Advise the **Central Government on RTI matters**
 - Recommend amendments, procedures, and safeguards
- ♦ **Transparency Enforcement:** Ensure **effective public access to information**

6. Removal of CIC and ICs (Section 13(3) of RTI Act)

- ♦ Can be removed by **President** only on the grounds of **proven misbehavior or incapacity**.
- ♦ Removal process is **similar to that of a Supreme Court judge**, ensuring **security of tenure**.

7. State Information Commission

- ♦ **CIC equivalent at the state level** is called the **State Chief Information Commissioner (State CIC)**.
- ♦ Appointment process is **similar**, with:
 - **Governor** as appointing authority
 - Selection committee: Chief Minister (Chair), Leader of Opposition in Assembly, State Cabinet Minister nominated by CM
- ♦ Functions mirror those of the **Central Information Commission** but at the **state level**.

Comparison with other imp posts :

Aspect	Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) & Information Commissioners (ICs)	Lokpal & Lokayuktas	Central Vigilance Commissioner (CVC)	Election Commissioners (ECs)
Statutory Basis	Right to Information Act, 2005	Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013	Central Vigilance Commission Act, 2003	Constitution of India, Articles 324-329
Appointing Authority	President of India	President of India	President of India	President of India
Recommendation/ Selection Committee	3-member Committee: - Prime Minister (Chair) - Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha - Union Cabinet Minister nominated by PM	5-member Committee (for Lokpal): - Prime Minister (Chair) - Speaker of Lok Sabha - Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha - Chief Justice of India / Supreme Court Judge nominated by CJI - Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha	3-member Committee: - Prime Minister (Chair) - Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha - Chief Justice of India / Judge nominated by CJI	3-member Committee: - Prime Minister (Chair) - Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha - Chief Justice of India / Supreme Court Judge nominated by CJI
Eligibility Criteria	Eminence in public life; experience in law, administration, journalism, management, science, social service	Eminence in public life; integrity, experience in public administration, law, anti-corruption, social service	Eminence in public life; experience in administration, vigilance, law	Eminence in public life; usually senior IAS/IFS/IRS officers or legal/judicial background
Number of Posts	1 CIC + up to 10 ICs	1 Lokpal Chairperson + up to 8 Members	1 CVC + 2 Vigilance Commissioners	1 Chief Election Commissioner + 2 Election Commissioners
Tenure	Fixed by government (earlier 5 years or until 65)	5 years or until 70 years of age	4 years or until 65 years of age	6 years or until 65 years of age
Removal	By President on grounds of misbehavior or incapacity (Parliament approval needed)	By President on grounds of misbehavior or incapacity (Supreme Court inquiry)	By President on grounds of proved misbehavior or incapacity (Parliament approval)	By President on grounds of proved misbehavior/ incapacity (Parliament approval for CEC, but ECs cannot be removed independently)
Bipartisanship Safeguard	LoP in Lok Sabha + PM + Cabinet Minister	PM + Speaker + LoP + CJI nominee + LoP in RS	PM + LoP + CJI nominee	PM + LoP + CJI nominee
Primary Function	Oversee RTI Act implementation; protect right to information	Investigate corruption allegations against public officials	Monitor vigilance and integrity in government	Supervise free and fair elections

3. AUSTRALIA'S TEEN SOCIAL MEDIA BAN- LESSONS FOR THE WORLD

Backdrop : Australia's teen social media ban comes into effect-a world first

Relevance : GS 2/ Governance, Health, GS 3/ Digital Economy

About the News :

- Australia has become the first country in the world to enforce a minimum age for social media use, requiring platforms such as Instagram, YouTube and Snap to block more than a million accounts of users below the age of 16.
- The Australian legislation, which has drawn criticism from tech companies but support from parents, is likely to set a template for a broader global push to tighten regulation of young users' online safety.

Australia's New Social Media Age-Restriction Law

- The 'Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act' bans Australians under 16 from using major social media platforms.
- Platforms must take "reasonable" steps to identify existing accounts of under-16s, deactivate them, prevent new account creation, and block workarounds.
- Mechanisms must exist to correct errors, ensuring no account is removed unfairly.

Rationale Behind the Law

- Aims to protect young people from pressures and risks associated with social media use, including:
 - ♦ Cyberbullying
 - ♦ Exposure to harmful content
 - ♦ Excessive screen time driven by platform design
- Surveys showed that over half of Australian teens had experienced cyberbullying online.

Platforms Covered and Exemptions

- Platforms affected: Facebook, Instagram, Kick, Reddit, Snapchat, Threads, TikTok, Twitch, X, and YouTube (from Dec 10, 2025).
- Excluded: dating websites, gaming platforms, and AI chatbots (though AI chatbots remain under scrutiny).

- Age restrictions apply to platforms that facilitate online interaction between users, allow linking/interacting, or posting content.

Implementation Challenges and Industry Response

- Platforms are required to comply or risk fines up to AUD 33 million.
- Big Tech reactions:
 - ♦ Meta: Called the law inefficient, unlikely to make users safer
 - ♦ Snap: Warned it may push teens to less secure apps
 - ♦ X: Concerned about human rights and freedom of expression
 - ♦ YouTube: Argued account-less usage removes parental controls and safety filters

Concerns and Human Rights Considerations

- The Australian Human Rights Commission noted a blanket ban may curtail free speech and access to information.
- The government may revisit platform coverage if teens migrate to platforms not currently included.

Comparison to India :

- While India does not have a law specifically to regulate the use of social media platforms by children, under the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, tech companies are required to implement a mechanism for collecting "verifiable" parental consent before processing personal data of children, even though it does not prescribe a particular technical measure to collect such consent.
- As per India's law, a child has been defined as an individual below the age of 18.
- The law also directs companies to not process personal data of children in cases where it could cause any detrimental effect on the well-being of a child, and not tracking or engaging in behavioural monitoring or targeted advertising directed at children.

4. SUDAN CIVIL WAR-A HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

Backdrop : With close to 10 million people fleeing their homes, the displacement crisis in Sudan is currently the largest and fastest growing

Relevance : GS 2/IR, Places in News/Mapping

About the News :

- Sudan's economy has contracted sharply since the civil war broke out between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on April 15, 2023.
- Its GDP, which had already been weakening, saw its steepest contraction in 2023-24, shrinking by 29%

Root Causes of the Sudan Civil War

- The civil war in Sudan stems from a **power struggle between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF)**, led by **General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan**, and the **Rapid Support Forces (RSF)**, commanded by **Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo ('Hemedti')**.
- Both forces had previously cooperated in the **removal of President Omar al-Bashir in 2019** and the **2021 coup**.
- Tensions escalated over plans to **integrate the RSF into the national army**, with both generals seeking to **retain power, wealth, and influence**.

Division of Control in Sudan

- Sudan is now **split into zones of control**:
 - ♦ **SAF**: eastern and central Sudan, including **Port Sudan** and parts of **Khartoum**
 - ♦ **RSF**: most of **Darfur** and large parts of **Kordofan**
- Analysts suggest that **RSF's territorial gains** allow it to **run a parallel administration in the west**, while SAF retains central and eastern areas.

RSF Offensive and Civilian Impact

- The RSF intensified its **offensive in Kordofan**, including a **drone strike on Kalogi**, killing **dozens of civilians**, including children.
- The strike involved **three attacks**: a **kindergarten**, a **hospital**, and a **third strike on rescuers**.
- The RSF is consolidating control in **western Sudan** and pushing into the **oil-rich Kordofan region**, while SAF focuses on **key routes linking central Sudan to the west**.

Fall of El Fasher and Darfur Conflict

- **El Fasher**, North Darfur's capital and the last SAF stronghold, fell after an **18-month siege**.
- During the siege, the RSF **encircled the city**, cutting off civilian movement using sand berms.
- **ACLED data (April 2023 – Oct 2025)**: nearly **400 incidents** of violence targeting civilians in El Fasher and surrounding areas; over **1,400 deaths** reported.

Humanitarian Crisis

- **Total deaths** due to the conflict: over **50,000**.
- **Displacement**: at least **9.8 million people** forced to flee as of September 2025 — the **largest and fastest-growing displacement crisis globally**.

Impact on Food Security

- **Kadugli (South Kordofan)**: sorghum prices stable for decades, surged **10x to \$40 for 3 kg** by 2025.
- **El Fasher (North Darfur)**: 3.5 kg of millet exceeded **\$500**.
- **Nationwide food insecurity trends (2022–2025)**:
 - ♦ Minimal food security population decreased from **47% to 24%**
 - ♦ Crisis-level food insecurity rose from **13% to 31%**
 - ♦ Sudan entered **famine conditions** for the first time in **September 2025**, with **1% of the population at highest food insecurity**

Sudan : Mapping

Sudan is bordered by seven countries in Northeast Africa:

- ♦ Egypt to the north,
- ♦ Libya to the northwest,
- ♦ Chad to the west,
- ♦ the Central African Republic to the southwest,
- ♦ South Sudan to the south,
- ♦ Ethiopia to the southeast, and
- ♦ Eritrea to the east,
- ♦ with a coastline on the Red Sea to the east.



5. SATELLITE, SCIENCE AND SPECTRUM FIGHT

Backdrop : As the demand for satellite communication escalates, experts warn that without effective regulation and coordination, the rapid expansion of satellite constellations could lead to disruptions and congestion, and further the digital divide

Relevance : GS 2/ Social Justice, GS 3 / Economy, S&T

About the News :

- There's at least one space race already underway to get to the moon.
- There's also another one: to claim radio frequencies and orbital slots in the limited space around the earth.
- The main participants of this race are companies launching large fleets of satellites working together, called megaconstellations.
- These megaconstellations are already revolutionising Internet access around the world — but they're also sparking a fierce and fraught competition for the invisible highways across which they send and receive information.

Spectrum :

- In physics, 'spectrum' refers to energy levels.
- Satellite communications uses the word with a similar meaning: the spectrum is the range of radio frequencies available for wireless data transmission.
- Radio frequencies are to outer space activities as oxygen is to life on the earth's surface: essential.
- Enabling data transmission between satellites and ground stations through electromagnetic spectrum bands allocated by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) assigns the frequencies of electromagnetic radiation that different satellites and ground stations can use to talk to each other.
- The most sought after frequencies are Ku-band (12-18 GHz) and Ka-band (26-40 GHz) for high-speed satellite internet and L-band (1-2 GHz) for GPS.
- Each satellite must coordinate its spectrum use to avoid interfering with signals in another channel.
- But spectrum alone is insufficient: satellites also need to occupy certain physical orbital positions so that their broadcasts reach antennae on the ground.

Megaconstellations :

- Beyond commercial purposes, megaconstellations are a **strategic tool** for countries, especially outside the West, to achieve **technological sovereignty in space communications**.

Satellite Megaconstellation Race

- A global scramble for **spectrum and orbital slots** has led to rapid **satellite deployment**.
- **Major players:**
 - ♦ **SpaceX's Starlink:** 8,000+ satellites, targeting 42,000
 - ♦ **OneWeb:** 648 satellites
 - ♦ **Amazon Project Kuiper:** 3,200 satellites planned
 - ♦ **China's GuoWang:** aiming for 13,000 satellites

Market Growth

- The **satellite megaconstellation market** is projected to grow from **\$4.27 billion in 2024** to **\$27.31 billion by 2032**, a **25.5% annual growth rate**.
- Growth is driven by:
 - ♦ Rising **demand for high-speed Internet in remote regions**
 - ♦ **Declining satellite launch costs**

ITU :

- The **ITU** is a **specialised United Nations agency** with **194 member states**.
- It serves as the **sole global coordinator for satellite spectrum and orbital slots**, treating these as **"limited natural resources"** to be used **rationally, efficiently, and economically**.

First-Come, First-Served System

- The ITU requires **satellite operators to file frequency applications early** and **coordinate with affected administrations** before gaining international recognition.
- This system **advantages well-capitalised, spacefaring nations** that can navigate complex legal and technical processes.
- **Late entrants** risk losing access to **high-value spectrum-orbital combinations**.

World Radiocommunication Conference 2023 Reforms

- **Resolution 8:** Operators must **notify deviations** between planned and actual orbital deployments to prevent misuse of slots.

- **Megaconstellation Deployment Requirements:**
 - ♦ 10% deployed within 2 years
 - ♦ 50% within 5 years
 - ♦ 100% deployment within 7 years

Challenges for ITU in the Megaconstellation Era

- The ITU framework was originally designed for the **1960s–1990s satellite era**.
- Current challenges include managing **thousands of satellite deployments annually**, compared to hundreds in the past.
- **Operational Plan 2025–2029:** Prioritises **spectrum and satellite orbits**.
- Approximately **80% of ITU satellite-related agenda items** now involve **megaconstellations**, highlighting their dominance in **international spectrum management**.

Digital Divide :

- Without **regulatory mandates for universal service obligations** or **government subsidies**, satellite broadband risks becoming **premium infrastructure**, benefiting **urban and wealthy users** rather than bridging the **urban-rural digital divide**.

Megaconstellations and Global Connectivity

- Megaconstellations are **critical for bridging global connectivity gaps**, especially in regions lacking ground-based infrastructure.
- **Global Connectivity Index** illustrates disparities: Switzerland scores **34.41**, India **8.59**, highlighting a nearly **fourfold gap**.
- As of early 2025, **2.6 billion people remain offline**, predominantly in **South Asia, Africa, and Latin America**.

Advantages of Low-Earth Orbit Satellites

- Low-Earth Orbit (LEO) satellites (150–2,000 km) offer **lower latency (20–40 ms)** and **higher bandwidth** compared to geostationary satellites (35,786 km, latency 600+ ms).
- Enables **real-time applications** like **telemedicine and online education** in remote areas where terrestrial networks are limited.

Affordability Challenges

- **Starlink user terminals** cost around **\$600 (~₹53,168)** plus monthly fees, making them **unaffordable for rural populations** without subsidies or tiered pricing.
- ITU's '**Connecting Humanity Action Blueprint**' estimates that **\$2.6–2.8 trillion** in investments is needed by 2030 to close the digital divide.

India's Role and Initiatives

- ISRO's **GSAT-N2 satellite** provides **48 Gbps throughput**, covering remote regions including **Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Northeast India**.
- **Bharti Enterprises** holds a **39% stake in OneWeb**, positioning India in the **global LEO ecosystem**.
- **Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)** recommends **administrative spectrum allocation** rather than auctions for non-geostationary satellites, allowing **shared spectrum use** while accelerating deployment and ensuring affordability.

Way forward :

Urgency of Orbital Space Reform

- By 2030, **operators are projected to launch over 50,000 satellites**.
- Currently, Earth orbit hosts around **40,000 tracked objects**, including **27,000+ pieces of debris larger than 10 cm**, highlighting the **risk of congestion and collision**.

ITU-R 74 Resolution and Space Debris Management

- Adopted in 2023, **ITU-R 74** calls for the **sustainable use of spectrum and orbital resources**.
- Requires satellites to be **removed from orbit within 25 years** after mission completion to prevent accumulation of defunct spacecraft.
- **Current compliance rates are low (~70%)**, meaning debris continues to accumulate faster than it is removed, **threatening long-term orbital sustainability**.

Governance Challenges for Megaconstellations

- The success of megaconstellations depends on **governance frameworks** balancing:
 - ♦ **Commercial innovation**
 - ♦ **Scientific research**
 - ♦ **Equitable access**
 - ♦ **Orbital sustainability**
- Without **binding international standards and fair allocation**, competition for spectrum could escalate, creating an **overcrowded orbital environment**.

Implications for Emerging Space Nations

- ♦ For countries like **India**, shaping regulatory frameworks **proactively** is crucial.

- ♦ Decisions made now will determine whether **space remains a shared global resource** or becomes a **domain of inequality controlled by a few nations**.

6. WESTERN TRAGOPAN

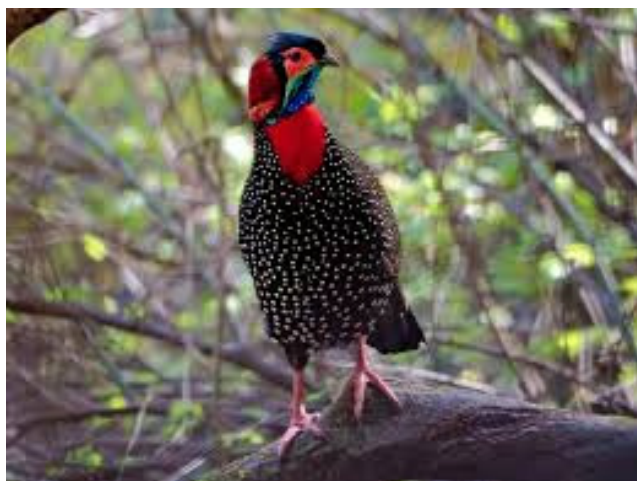
Backdrop : Breeding project gives endangered western tragopan breathing space

Relevance : GS 3/ Environment, S&T

About the News :

- The western tragopan (*Tragopan melanocephalus*) is one of India's rarest pheasants and the state bird of Himachal Pradesh.
- It was once found across parts of Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand, but now survives in small, fragmented pockets.
- Studies in the forests of Kazinag and Limber in Jammu & Kashmir have revealed that while habitats with suitable climates for the bird do exist, human disturbance and habitat fragmentation continue to endanger its future.
- Conservationists at the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) have estimated that only 3,000-9,500 mature tragopans remain and that all belong to a single subpopulation.
- Roughly a quarter lie across the western Himalayas and the northern parts of Pakistan.
- Yet deep inside Himachal Pradesh's Great Himalayan National Park, seasoned bird-watchers have said the tragopan still holds its ground.

Western Tragopan :



- Medium-sized brightly plumed landfowl found along the range of Himalayas from north-eastern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in northern Pakistan in the west to Uttarakhand within India to the east.

- The species is highly endangered and globally threatened.
- Medium-sized pheasant, **males more colorful than females**.
- **Male plumage:** Bright red throat and face, dotted with blue skin patches, black head, and barred orange-brown feathers.
- **Female plumage:** Camouflaged brown and grey, helps in nesting and protection.
- **Size:** 60–70 cm in length.
- **Diet:** Berries, seeds, leaves, insects, and small invertebrates.
- **Behavior:** Shy and elusive; males display **courtship rituals** with puffing throat skin and vibrant display during breeding season.
- **Breeding:** Lays **4–6 eggs**, nests on the ground in dense undergrowth.

Scientific Classification

- **Common Name:** Western Tragopan
- **Scientific Name:** *Tragopan melanocephalus*
- **Family:** Phasianidae (pheasants)
- **Conservation Status:** **Vulnerable** (IUCN Red List)

Great Himalayan National Park

- **Location:** Himachal Pradesh, India
- **Districts Covered:** Kullu and parts of Mandi
- **Established:** 1984
- **Area:** ~1,171 km²
- **UNESCO Status:** Declared a **World Heritage Site** in 2014

Geography and Climate

- **Altitude Range:** 1,500–6,000 meters above sea level
- **Topography:** Alpine peaks, deep valleys, rivers, and dense forests
- **Climate:** Temperate in lower regions; cold alpine conditions at higher elevations
- **Rivers:** The Beas River and its tributaries originate here

Flora

- **Forests:** Mixed coniferous, deodar, oak, pine, and birch
- **Alpine Meadows:** At higher elevations with rich medicinal and aromatic plants
- **Biodiversity:** Over **1,000 species of plants**, including rare and endemic species

Fauna

- **Mammals:** Snow leopard, Himalayan black bear, musk deer, goral, serow
- **Birds:** Western Tragopan, Monal pheasant, Himalayan snowcock
- **Reptiles & Amphibians:** Limited but includes endemic species
- **Insects:** Rich diversity due to varied altitudinal zones

Significance

- **Biodiversity Hotspot:** Part of the Himalaya biodiversity hotspot
- **Ecological Role:** Protects watersheds, prevents soil erosion, and maintains river ecosystems
- **Tourism & Research:** Popular for trekking, wildlife photography, and scientific research

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q.1 Consider the following cultural aspects of India :

1. Garba Dance
2. Kumbh Mela
3. Ramleela
4. Sankirtan
5. Bronze craft of Chhattisgarh

How many of the above have been included in UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list of Humanity ?

- (a) Only two
- (b) Only three
- (c) Only four
- (d) All

Q.2 Consider the following members :

1. Prime Minister
2. Chief Justice of India
3. Leader of Opposition in Loksabha
4. Any cabinet minister nominated by Prime Minister

Which of the above are members of selection panel for Chief Information Commissioner and other Information Commissioners ?

- (a) 1,2 and 3 only
- (b) 2,3 and 4 only

- (c) 1,3 and 4 only
- (d) 1,2,3 and 4

Q.3 Which of the following countries have banned use of social media for teenagers below 16 years of age in recent times ?

- (a) Germany
- (b) Australia
- (c) France
- (d) Italy

Q.4 Consider the following countries :

1. Ethiopia
2. Eritrea
3. Liberia
4. Egypt
5. Chad
6. Libya

How many countries have border with Sudan ?

- (a) Only three
- (b) Only four
- (c) Only five
- (d) All

Q.5 Consider the following statements about International Telecommunication Union (ITU):

1. It is a UN agency responsible for spectrum allocation to private players.
2. The private sector from Permanent members of UN Security Council is given priority over other countries private sector.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer				
1. (c)	2. (c)	3. (b)	4. (c)	5. (a)

