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NATIONAL - REVIEW



Indian-flagged LPG carrier crosses the Strait of Hormuz



An Indian-flagged LPG carrier, Shivalik LPG Carrier, owned by the Shipping Corporation of India, has successfully crossed the strategically vital Strait of Hormuz amid ongoing tensions in West Asia. The vessel, carrying about 55,000 tonnes of LPG—roughly equivalent to nearly one day of India's LPG imports—had departed from Ras Laffan, Qatar, and was among several ships stranded due to the conflict that began on February 28. The government confirmed that the ship crossed the strait without naval escort, while another Indian-flagged tanker, Jag Prakash Oil Tanker, has also resumed movement after being halted in the Gulf of Oman. However, more than 20 Indian-flagged ships remain stranded inside the Persian Gulf, and authorities continue to monitor the safety of Indian seafarers in the region.

Govt. expresses concern over misinformation about ships

The Directorate General of Shipping has cautioned maritime stakeholders against circulating unverified reports about vessel movements in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz, noting that misinformation on social media is causing anxiety among seafarers and their families. In an advisory, the government stressed the need for responsible communication and urged shipping companies, unions, and individuals to rely only on authenticated updates from official sources. The move reflects concerns over national security and maritime safety, as inaccurate information during a sensitive geopolitical situation could create panic within the maritime community and complicate the management of India's strategic shipping and energy supply routes.

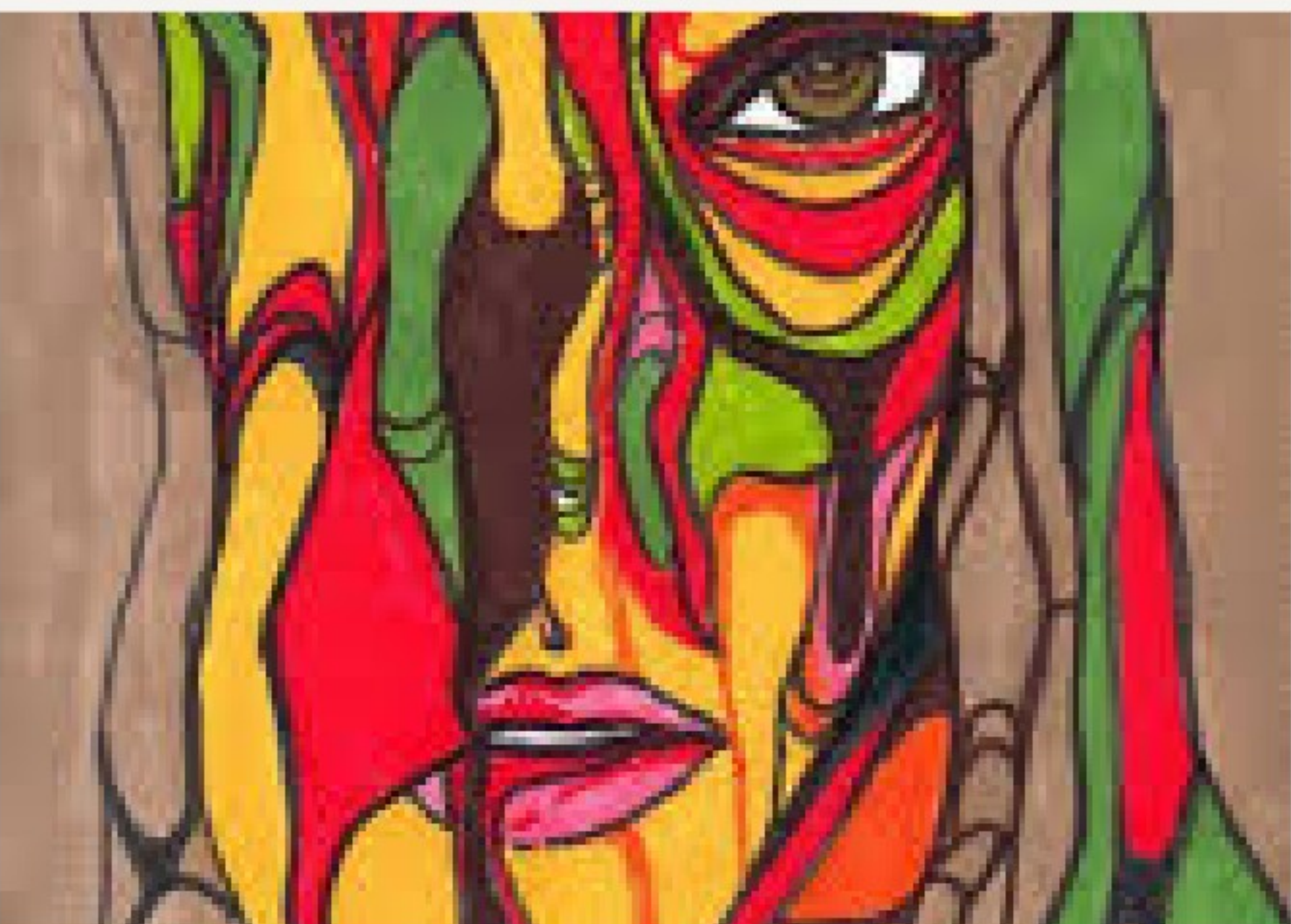
If BNS distinguishes between throwing and administering acid, RPwD Act must too: SC

What happened?

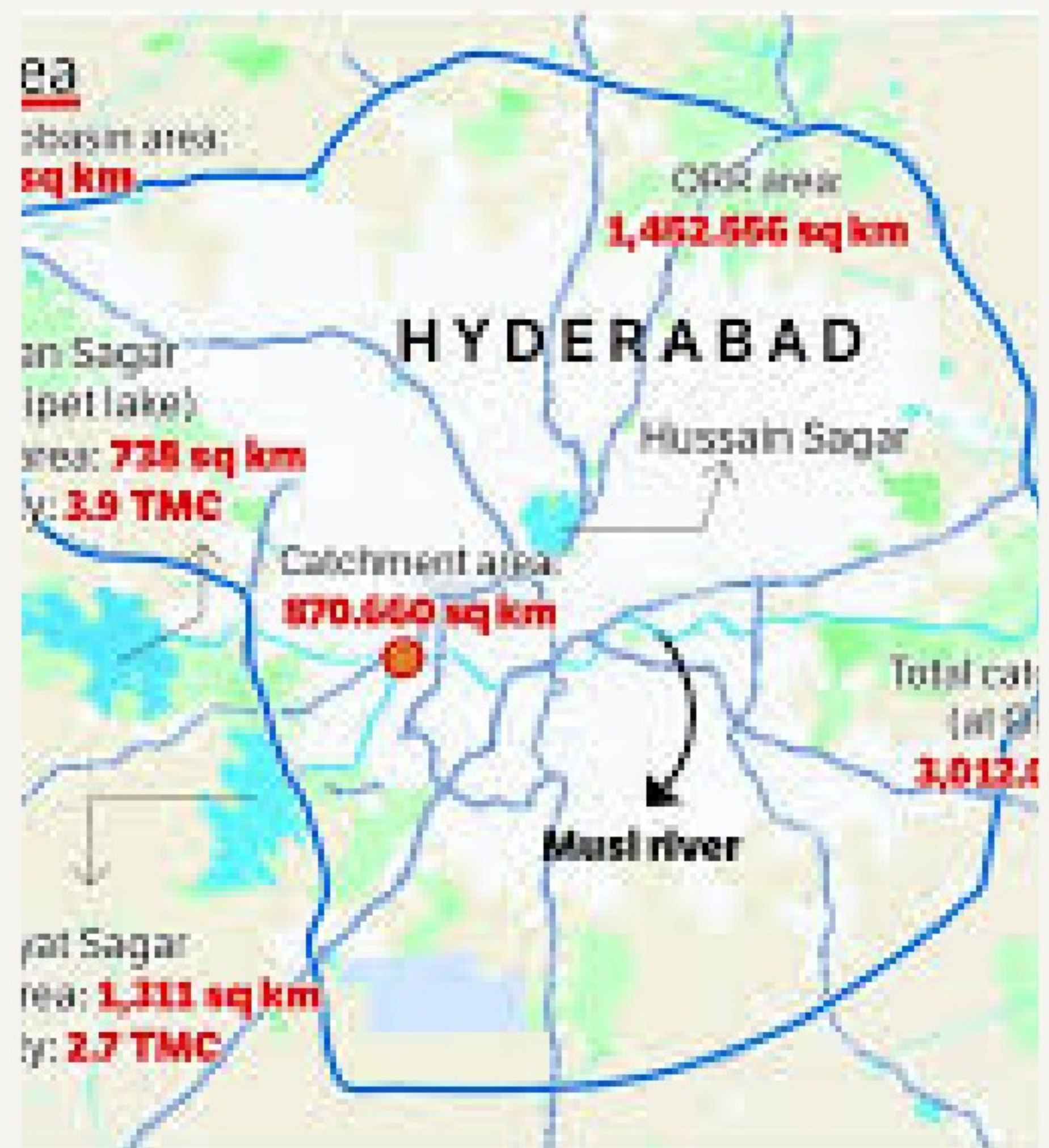
The Supreme Court, led by CJI Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi, has directed the Union government to consider amending the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016 to explicitly protect victims who are forcibly made to ingest acid. This follows a petition by acid attack survivor Shaheen Malik, who highlighted that while the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) criminalizes both “throwing” and “administering” acid, the RPwD Act does not currently account for the latter. The Court emphasized that statutory provisions must be comprehensive enough to address both existing offenses and foreseeable forms of harm, ensuring that perpetrators cannot exploit gaps in the law.

Why it matters?

This development underscores the role of governance in ensuring legal inclusivity and protection for vulnerable groups. By aligning the RPwD Act with BNS provisions, the law would recognize and safeguard victims of all forms of acid attacks, not just the most common forms. The Court’s direction reflects a proactive approach to lawmaking, emphasizing that statutes should anticipate potential offenses to prevent misuse, enhance victim protection, and uphold the principle of zero tolerance against grievous crimes. It also illustrates how judicial intervention can guide the government to strengthen existing legislation in line with evolving social realities and human rights obligations.



Musi riverfront development project



What happened? The Telangana government has proposed a Musi Riverfront Development project to transform Hyderabad’s seasonal Musi River into a perennial waterway with year-round flow. The plan includes channelling water from the Godavari River, expanding sewage treatment infrastructure, and developing leisure, shopping, and heritage spaces along the 55-km river stretch. The first phase has received in-principle funding approval from the Asian Development Bank. However, the project has sparked protests due to forced eviction and relocation of slum residents on the riverbanks, raising questions about transparency, public consultation, and the absence of an approved detailed project report.

Why it matters? The project is significant both environmentally and socially. Reviving the Musi River could improve urban water management, reduce pollution, and create cultural and economic hubs in Hyderabad. At the same time, it highlights the governance challenge of balancing urban development with the rights and livelihoods of long-standing residents. The backlash from residents and activists underscores broader issues of urban planning, participatory governance, and equitable development, demonstrating how infrastructure projects can affect both ecological sustainability and social justice.

Researchers publish first-of-its-kind checklist on fire flies across India

What happened? Researchers have compiled India's first comprehensive checklist of fireflies, documenting 92 species across 27 genera using over **260 years** of scientific records from **1881 to 2025**. Published in *Zootaxa*, the study highlights that more than 60% of these species are endemic, and many described in the 1800s have never been revisited in modern taxonomy. The checklist includes species names, original and subsequent researchers, years of documentation, and geographic distribution across 22 states and one Union Territory.

Why it matters?

The checklist fills a critical gap in Indian entomology, providing a foundational resource for studying fireflies, whose taxonomy has been fragmented and poorly documented. With over 50 species not recorded since their original description, the work enables researchers to track biodiversity, study endemic species, and inform conservation efforts. By consolidating centuries of scattered data, it lays the groundwork for systematic research and long-term monitoring of these ecologically important bioluminescent insects.



SC to look into plea against law on Muslim inheritance



What happened? The Supreme Court orally observed that it would be preferable to leave the matter of a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) to Parliament rather than strike down the Shariat Application Act, 1937, which governs Muslim inheritance. The law provides widows with a one-eighth share (or one-fourth if childless) and daughters half the share of sons. The petition, filed by Poulomi Pavini Shukla and argued by Prashant Bhushan, challenged this as discriminatory against Muslim women. The Bench questioned which law would apply if the Act were struck down, noting that a judicial intervention could create a legal vacuum.

Why it matters? The discussion highlights the tension between judicial activism and legislative prudence in implementing Article 44 of the Directive Principles, which encourages a Uniform Civil Code. The Court emphasized that inheritance reform for Muslim women intersects with broader social realities, including monogamy and gender equality, which are unevenly enforced nationwide. By deferring to Parliament, the Court signaled the need for a considered, systemic approach rather than piecemeal judicial fixes, while recognizing the ongoing demand for gender equality in personal laws.

Israel accused of chemical attacks in Lebanon

What happened? Human Rights Watch reported that the Israeli military “unlawfully” used white phosphorus shells on the southern Lebanese village of **Yohmor** on March 3, 2026. The attack came hours after Israel warned residents in Yohmor and other villages to evacuate. While independent verification of civilian casualties was not possible, the report highlighted the danger posed by white phosphorus, a chemical munition that can set buildings and human bodies ablaze, causing severe burns, infections, and organ damage. This follows a pattern, with similar use reported in Israel’s previous conflict with Hezbollah.

Why it matters? The incident raises serious concerns about compliance with international humanitarian law, which prohibits the use of incendiary weapons in populated areas. Beyond immediate civilian harm, repeated attacks using such munitions deepen the humanitarian crisis in southern Lebanon and strain regional stability. Coupled with broader environmental concerns—such as the alleged use of herbicides along the border—these actions underscore the persistent vulnerability of civilians and the critical need for accountability in conflict zones



Greece eco-project anchors hope for key seagrass species

Posidonia oceanica

The Mediterranean's Vital Seagrass

1. What is it?

- Flowering seagrass** (not seaweed)
- Endemic to the Mediterranean Sea**
- Grows in shallow waters** (up to ~40 m)

2. Why it Matters

Carbon Sink
CO₂

Produces Oxygen
O₂

Water Filtration

Coastal Protection

Marine Biodiversity

3. Major Threats

- Boat Anchoring**
- Coastal Development & Dredging**
- Pollution & Eutrophication**

4. Conservation Measures

- Eco-Moorings** (avoid anchor damage)
- Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)**
- Monitoring & Restoration**

What happened? At **Porto Rafti**, a popular yachting harbour near Athens, Greece has initiated a project to protect the **vulnerable Posidonia seagrass**, which has been damaged for decades by anchors scraping the seabed. Divers are installing new ecological moorings, which are anchored deep into the seabed and allow vessels to tie up safely without uprooting the seagrass. The Greek Ministry of Merchant Marine plans to expand this eco-mooring system across the country’s 13,000 km coastline, much of which is covered by Posidonia meadows.

Why it matters? Posidonia seagrass meadows are classified as a “**priority habitat**” by the European Union because they play a critical role in marine ecosystems. They store carbon, produce oxygen, purify water, and support biodiversity. Anchoring (the process by which a boat or ship is kept stationary in water by dropping a heavy device called an anchor onto the seabed.) has been identified as one of the most significant threats to these plants, and the project aims to balance marine recreation with conservation. Protecting Posidonia contributes to climate mitigation, safeguards marine life, and preserves the ecological health of the Mediterranean.

China pins hopes on society-wide AI push to add jobs, rejuvenate economy

What happened?

China is aggressively promoting artificial intelligence (AI) adoption as part of its five-year plan, aiming to boost productivity, create jobs, and offset the challenges of an ageing workforce and slowing economic growth. Policymakers and executives have emphasized AI's job-creation potential, with initiatives targeting university graduates, reskilling programs, and industry-specific deployment across manufacturing, services, and creative sectors. Chinese universities are introducing AI-focused curricula to equip students with skills that machines cannot easily replace, such as **critical thinking and cross-disciplinary problem-solving**. Meanwhile, **businesses are experimenting with AI-driven automation, from robotaxis to e-commerce solutions**, signaling a widespread structural transformation in the economy.

Why it matters?

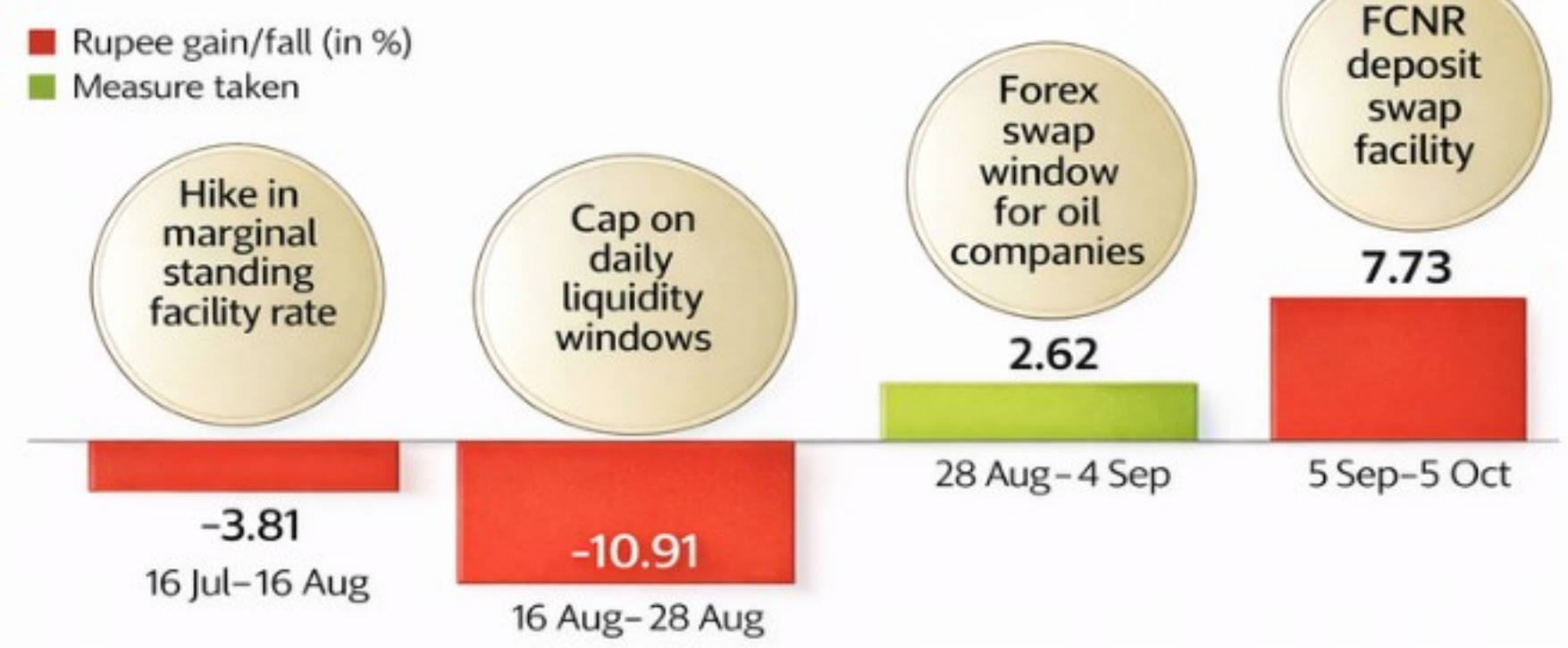
The rapid push for AI highlights the tension between economic opportunity and labour disruption. While China aims to leverage AI to sustain growth and create new employment avenues, experts warn that **automation could depress wages, displace workers, and exacerbate youth unemployment, potentially requiring social safety nets and human capital investment**. The policy approach—prioritizing AI adoption over preemptive mitigation of job losses—illustrates the challenges of balancing technological progress with social stability. China's experience could serve as a case study for other economies navigating the global AI transition, emphasizing the need for education, reskilling, and adaptive labour policies.



To stabilise rupee, RBI may use 2013 plan to help banks mop up NRI dollar deposits

Days of the future past

It pays to look at what measures worked in 2013 in stabilizing the rupee when the currency has fallen nearly 12% this year.



Source: RBI

What happened?

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is considering reviving a strategy last used in 2013 to attract foreign dollars via Foreign Currency Non-Resident (Banks) [FCNR(B)] and Non-Resident External (NRE) deposits. The plan could involve exempting these deposits from statutory pre-emptions like the Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) and Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR), and opening a special window for banks to swap long-term FCNR(B) dollar funds at a fixed rate. This move comes as the rupee has depreciated about 7.4% to 91.81 per dollar amid widening trade deficits, foreign portfolio outflows, and geopolitical tensions in West Asia.

Why it matters?

Reviving FCNR(B) and NRE incentives could stabilise the rupee, increase foreign currency inflows, and enhance the RBI's ability to intervene in the market. It would also boost rupee liquidity in the banking system and offer better returns to non-resident Indians, potentially offsetting uncertainties arising from global crises. Such measures illustrate how central banks can use targeted deposit schemes and liquidity tools to manage currency volatility, support domestic credit flows, and safeguard economic stability in the face of external shocks.

Statutory Liquidity Ratio popularly called SLR is the minimum percentage of deposits that the commercial bank maintains through gold, cash and other securities.

Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) :CRR is the portion of the deposits (total demand and time liabilities) of a bank to be kept as cash reserve

Why algorithmic sovereignty should be India's top priority

A recent hypothetical scenario involving the sinking of the Iranian frigate IRIS Dena inside the Exclusive Economic Zone of Sri Lanka highlights the growing influence of artificial intelligence in interpreting global events and legal frameworks. When an AI system was asked whether the action was legal under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, it initially concluded that it was “not illegal.” However, this response overlooked the fact that interpretations of Article 58 of the treaty differ significantly between Western countries and many nations in the Global South, including India, which often require coastal-state consent for foreign military activities in an Exclusive Economic Zone.

Bias in AI Systems and Legal Narratives

The episode illustrates how AI systems are shaped by the data used to train them. Because much of the available legal scholarship and military doctrine originates in Western institutions, AI outputs may unintentionally reflect Western strategic and legal perspectives. In the case above, the system did not initially recognise the alternative interpretation held by several countries such as China, Brazil, Indonesia, and South Africa, which place greater emphasis on coastal-state rights and the “due regard” principle under UNCLOS. This demonstrates that AI is not a neutral interpreter of international law but a product of the intellectual and institutional environments that generate its training data.

PRELIMS 2026 COUNTDOWN



71 DAYS TO GO

To safeguard strategic autonomy in the digital age, India must aim to become not only a user of AI technologies but also a producer of foundational models, datasets, and interpretive frameworks. Achieving this would require sustained investment in domestic computing capacity, indigenous training data, secure data infrastructure, and AI systems that incorporate Indian languages and realities as primary inputs.

Geopolitical Implications of Algorithmic Influence

As policymakers and analysts increasingly rely on AI tools, these systems may shape global discourse by promoting certain interpretations as default perspectives. This has wider geopolitical implications because legal interpretations related to maritime law, security, and humanitarian obligations—such as the rescue duties under the Second Geneva Convention—may receive unequal attention depending on the biases embedded in algorithmic systems. Consequently, the narratives that influence global governance and international law could increasingly be mediated through algorithmic outputs.

Emerging Debate on AI Sovereignty

The global AI landscape is gradually becoming bipolar, dominated by technological ecosystems led by the United States and China. For countries like India, this raises a strategic debate: whether to rely on foreign AI infrastructures or develop a sovereign AI ecosystem. While adopting external AI platforms may accelerate technological adoption, it may also create long-term dependence on foreign computing power, datasets, and foundational models.

Risks of Strategic Dependence

Exclusive reliance on externally developed AI systems may carry risks of cultural, linguistic, and strategic misalignment. Models trained largely on Western data may not adequately reflect India's social diversity, governance needs, or geopolitical priorities. Moreover, dependence on foreign-controlled data pipelines and computational infrastructure could result in a form of “digital colonialism,” where external algorithms shape knowledge production, innovation boundaries, and policy discourse.

PRELIMS CORNER :

1) Which of the following phenomena might have influenced the evolution of organisms? (2014)

1. Continental drift
 2. Glacial cycles
- Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

2) With reference to river Teesta, consider the following statements: (2017)

1. The source of river Teesta is the same as that of Brahmaputra but it flows through Sikkim.
2. River Rangeet originates in Sikkim and it is a tributary of river Teesta.
3. River Teesta flows into Bay of Bengal on the border of India and Bangladesh.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 3 only
- b) 2 only
- c) 2 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3



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Culture

Haleem stays on menu despite LPG crisis



Hyderabad's famous GI-tagged haleem, slow-cooked in traditional wood-fired ovens for Ramzan, is safe from LPG shortages. However, gas-dependent preparations like fried onions for biryani and haleem are facing disruption, leaving restaurants anxious about keeping up with festive demand.

Haleem is the first non-vegetarian dish in India to be given the Geographical Indication System (GIS) status. The famous dish Hyderabadi Haleem traces its roots to the migration of Yemeni soldiers who came to India to serve in the army of the Mir Osman Ali Khan and earlier Nizams of the Asaf Jahi dynasty. These migrants were granted land in the Barkas area of Hyderabad, which came to be known as "mini Yemen" because of its strong Arab cultural presence. Among the traditions they brought with them was Harees, a simple Arabic dish made by slow-cooking wheat and mutton into a thick porridge. Over time, the Yemeni settlers preserved their cultural practices while gradually interacting with the local Deccani environment, creating a unique blend of Yemeni and Hyderabadi traditions that shaped both community life and cuisine in Barkas.

Within this cultural exchange, Harees gradually evolved into what is now known as Hyderabadi Haleem. The dish required extensive preparation, often involving hours of slow cooking and hand-pounding the meat and grains to achieve its characteristic paste-like consistency. Nobles of the Nizam's court popularized the dish by serving it as a welcoming meal during gatherings, helping it gain popularity across the city.

Prelims Corner: Explanations

1) Answer is option c

Both Continental Drift and Glacial Cycles have played important roles in shaping the evolution and distribution of organisms on Earth.

Continental Drift: The gradual movement of Earth's continents over millions of years has separated and reunited landmasses. This geographic isolation caused populations of organisms to evolve independently, leading to speciation and the emergence of new species in different regions.

Glacial Cycles: Periodic advances and retreats of glaciers during the Ice Ages drastically altered climates and habitats. These environmental changes forced organisms to migrate, adapt to new conditions, or face extinction, thereby influencing evolutionary pathways.

Thus, both phenomena significantly influenced biological evolution.

The idea that continents were once connected was first suggested by the Dutch map-maker Abraham Ortelius in the 16th century when he observed that the coastlines of different continents appeared to fit together. Later, Antonio Pellegrini produced a map showing the possible joining of major landmasses. However, a comprehensive scientific explanation was provided in 1912 by the German meteorologist Alfred Wegener through his Continental Drift Theory.

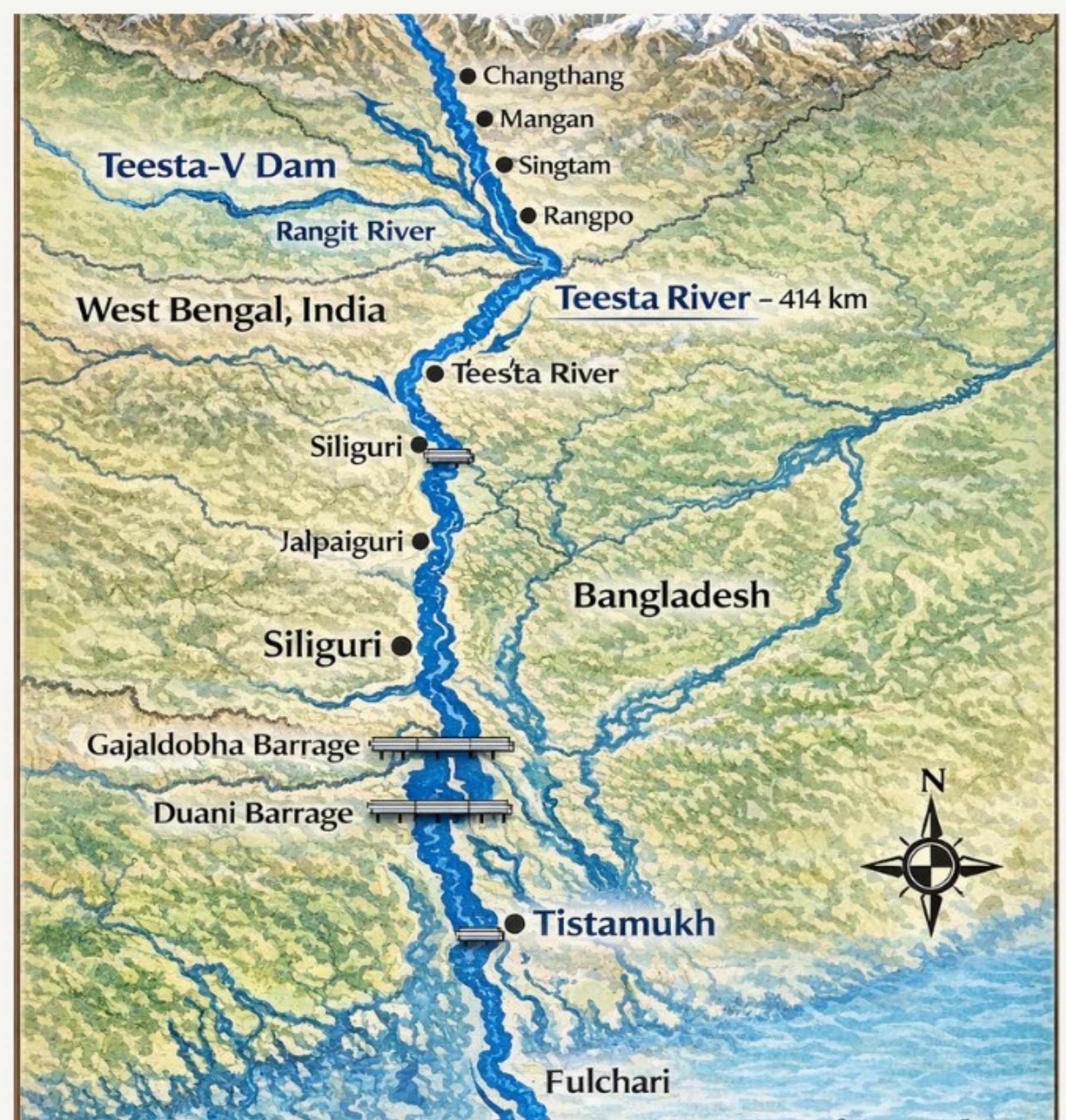
According to Wegener, all present-day continents were once part of a single supercontinent called Pangaea, meaning "all Earth." This landmass was surrounded by a vast ocean known as Panthalassa, meaning "all water." Around 200 million years ago, Pangaea began to split into two large landmasses: Laurasia in the north and Gondwanaland in the south. Over time, these landmasses further fragmented and drifted apart, eventually forming the continents that exist today. The theory helped explain the present distribution of continents and oceans and later contributed to the development of modern plate tectonics.

2) Answer is option b

The Teesta River originates in the eastern Himalayas from the glacial lake Tso Lhamo Lake in Sikkim. In contrast, the Brahmaputra River rises from the Angsi Glacier near Lake Manasarovar on the Tibetan Plateau, where it initially flows as the Yarlung Tsangpo. Since the two rivers originate from entirely different glacial systems, statement 1 is incorrect.

Statement 2 is correct. The Rangeet River (also called the Great Rangit) originates in the Himalayan region of Sikkim, particularly from glaciers around Mount Kabru. It flows north to south through Sikkim and eventually joins the Teesta at Teesta Bazaar in the Darjeeling–Sikkim region. The Rangit is one of the most important tributaries of the Teesta and contributes significantly to its discharge.

Statement 3 is incorrect. After flowing through Sikkim and the northern part of West Bengal, the Teesta enters Bangladesh. Instead of directly emptying into the Bay of Bengal, the river joins the Brahmaputra River (locally called the Jamuna) near Chilmari. The combined waters of the Brahmaputra and Ganga River eventually form the massive delta system that drains into the Bay of Bengal. Therefore, only statement 2 is correct.





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does. Keep going."
Sam Levenson