DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 03-04-2024

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UNESCO Global Geoparks network

Syllabus: GS-1: Physical Geography – Geoheritage sites.

Context:

- *UNESCO's Executive Board has endorsed the addition of 18 sites to the UNESCO Global Geoparks network. This brings the total number of geoparks to 213 in 48 countries.*

About 18 Geopark sites:

Country	Geopark Name	Description
Belgium	*Schelde Delta UNESCO Global Geopark*	*Situated between the sinking North Sea Basin and the rising Brabant Massif, featuring a landscape rich in geological, morphological, and cultural-historical traces. Notable projects include the resurrection of the lost medieval town of Reymerswael and efforts to combat climate change and sea-level rise.*
Brazil	*Uberaba UNESCO Global Geopark*	*Located in southeast Brazil, known for its prehistoric landmarks, rich palaeontological heritage, and the introduction of the Zebu cattle breed, which revolutionized the Brazilian livestock market and serves as an international reference for cattle-breeding with lower CO2 emissions.*
China	*Enshi Grand Canyon-Tenglongdong Cave UNESCO Global Geopark*	*Situated in Hubei Province, home to world-famous erosion and dissolution landscapes, rich cultural heritage of ethnic minority groups, and remarkable biodiversity, including over 4,000 plant species and 500 terrestrial vertebrates.*
China	*Linxia UNESCO Global Geopark*	*Located in Gansu Province, characterized by dramatic Danxia landform along the Yellow River, famous Bingling Cave Temple grottoes, and one of the longest and best-preserved fossil trackways on record, along with unique traditions of the Hakka culture.*
China	*Longyan UNESCO Global Geopark*	*Offers a geological record of tectonic evolution in southeast China, with abundant geological heritage including dense natural forests, endemic animal and plant species, and unique traditions of the Hakka*

Country	Geopark Name	Description
		culture.
China	*Mount Changbaishan UNESCO Global Geopark*	*Located in Jilin Province, featuring dramatic landforms documenting significant volcanic eruptions, including the millennium eruption and the highest and largest crater lake in northeast Asia. Focused on comprehensive restoration of freshwater ecosystems and promoting sustainable tourism.*
China	*Wugongshan UNESCO Global Geopark*	*Situated in Jiangxi Province, characterized by fascinating geological landscapes including granite 'stone forests' and hot springs, rich in well-preserved geological heritage and promoting geotourism through various creative initiatives.*
China	*Xingyi UNESCO Global Geopark*	*Located in Guizhou Province, known for its imposing natural scenery, exceptionally preserved marine reptile and fish fossils, and various ethnic minority groups with unique cultural traditions.*
Croatia	*Biokovo-Imotski Lakes UNESCO Global Geopark*	*Situated in central Dalmatia, characterized by Mediterranean and Central European landscapes and cultures, featuring the Biokovo Mountain, Red Lake, Blue Lake, and rich cultural heritage including archaeological sites and medieval Stećak tombstones.*
Denmark	*The South Fyn Archipelago UNESCO Global Geopark*	*Encompasses terrestrial and marine zones in central and southern parts of Denmark, known for its hilly landscapes, lush fields, and sailing waters, featuring 55 islands and islets with unique traditions and cultures, and a focus on preservation and restoration of the marine ecosystem.*
Finland	*Impact Crater Lake – Lappajärvi UNESCO Global Geopark*	*Located in South Ostrobothnia, home to Europe's largest impact crater lake formed through a collision with a meteorite 78 million years ago, with interactive displays and sustainable development initiatives promoting economic wellbeing for local communities.*
France	*Armorique UNESCO Global Geopark*	*Offers a journey through more than 500 million years of geological history in Brittany, including diverse*

Country	Geopark Name	Description
		lithological, structural, and palaeontological formations, promoting remarkable geodiversity, cultural heritage, and educational activities for local schoolchildren.
France	*Normandie-Maine UNESCO Global Geopark*	*Lies within a pastoral region rich in geological history, including rocky escarpments, sheer cliff drops, and ancient megalithic sites, fostering community involvement and conservation efforts to preserve unique ecosystems and cultural heritage for future generations.*
Greece	*MeteoraPyli UNESCO Global Geopark*	*Nestled within the Thessaly region, known for the towering Meteora sandstone columns, iconic Byzantine monasteries, and diverse geological wonders including Tafoni formations and alpine meadows, promoting biodiversity and outdoor activities in unique terrain.*
Hungary	*Bükk Region UNESCO Global Geopark*	*Located in northern Hungary, characterized by diverse karst formations, nearly 1,150 caves, and rich biodiversity including insect fauna, cave-dwelling bat species, and rare bird species, emphasizing the preservation and promotion of geological and natural heritage for scientific research and environmental conservation.*
Poland	*Land of Extinct Volcanoes UNESCO Global Geopark*	*Encompasses the Kaczawskie Mountains and surrounding foothills in southwest Poland, featuring distinctive remnants of Paleozoic and Cenozoic volcanoes, abandoned quarries, and sustainable tourism initiatives supporting economic sustainability for local communities.*
Portugal	*Oeste UNESCO Global Geopark*	*Located along Portugal's central west coast, known for its Atlantic coastline exposing geological layers dating back to the late Triassic Period, rich palaeontological heritage including fossilized dinosaur nests, and sustainable development initiatives supporting local communities through fishing and traditional crafts.*
Spain	*Calatrava*	*Situated in Castilla-La Mancha, known for its distinctive*

Country	Geopark Name	Description
	Volcanoes. Ciudad Real UNESCO Global Geopark	*volcanic episodes defining the landscape, including the world's most prolific mining reservoir for mercury, exceptional plant and animal fossils preserved by major volcanic eruptions, and cultural significance with landscapes mentioned in Cervantes' novel Don Quixote, emphasizing human interaction with volcanic environments throughout history.*

About UNESCO Global Geoparks:

- *UNESCO Global Geoparks (UGGp) are certified geoparks meeting requirements for the* **Global Geoparks Network (GGN),** *administered by UNESCO.*
- *Founded in 2004 with the* **International Union of Geological Sciences** *(IUGS) to conserve Earth's geological heritage and promote sustainable development.*
- *Geoparks are unified areas managing* **sites of international geological significance** *for protection, education, and sustainable development.*
- *Compliance involves significant* **work by the host country to meet requirements**.
- *In 2015, UNESCO Member States ratified the rebranding to UGGp.*
- *The application and designation process is defined by the Statutes and Operational Guidelines of the UGGp.*
- *Currently, there are no UGGp's in the United States, with* **China having the largest number of global geoparks.**

X-class solar flare

Syllabus: GS-1: Physical Geography – Solar system.

Context:

- *The Sun emitted a strong solar flare, peaking at 4:56 p.m. ET on March 28, 2024.* **NASA's Solar Dynamics Observatory**, *which watches the Sun constantly, captured an image of the event.*
- *The flare mentioned is classified as an X1.1 flare, with X-class denoting the most intense flares and the number providing information about its strength.*

About Solar Flares:

- *Solar flares are* **intense bursts of electromagnetic radiation** *in the Sun's atmosphere.*
- *They typically occur in active regions and may be accompanied by* **other solar phenomena like coronal mass ejections and solar particle events.**
- **Solar flares follow the 11-year solar cycle**, *with their frequency varying over time.*
- *These flares are believed to happen* **when stored magnetic energy in the Sun's atmosphere** *accelerates charged particles in surrounding plasma.*
- *As a result, electromagnetic radiation is emitted across the spectrum.*
- *The high-energy radiation from solar flares is* **absorbed by Earth's upper atmosphere**, *particularly the ionosphere, without reaching the surface.*
- *This absorption can* **temporarily increase ionization in the ionosphere**, *potentially disrupting short-wave radio communication.*
- *Predicting solar flares is an active area of research due to their potential impact.*
- *Flares also occur on other stars, where* **they are known as stellar flares**.

Why is unemployment high among the youth?

Syllabus: GS-3: Indian Economy – Unemployment.

Context:

- *India Employment Report 2024 released recently*
- *Prepared jointly by Human Development and International Labour Organization*
- *Focuses on "youth employment, education, and skills"*
- *Analyzes Indian labor market trends for two decades, including COVID-19 years*
- *Lists emerging characteristics of employment challenges*
- *Explores impact of economic growth on employment*

Key findings:

- *Working-age population in India increased from 61% in 2011 to 64% in 2021, projected to reach 65% in 2036*
- *Approximately 7-8 million young people are added to the labor force annually*
- *Proportion of youth receiving education rose from 18% in 2000 to 35% in 2022*

- *However, the percentage of youth engaged in economic activities declined from 52% to 37% during the same period*
- *Unemployment in India is primarily a youth issue, especially among those with secondary education or higher*
- *Unemployment among youth has intensified over time*
- *In 2022, 82.9% of the total unemployed population consisted of youth*
- *The proportion of educated youth among all unemployed individuals increased from 54.2% in 2000 to 65.7% in 2022*
- *Among educated unemployed youth, women comprised a larger share (76.7%) compared to men (62.2%).*

Is the crisis the result of a lack of jobs?

- *The issue stems from both the absence of opportunities and the inability of educated youth to secure employment due to inadequate education quality.*
- *Mehrotra advocates for separating skills development from formal education to address the issue effectively.*
- *The report indicates a low proportion of technically qualified youth in India, with only 15.62% having vocational training in 2022, and merely 4.09% receiving formal vocational training.*
- *The increase in employment in the agriculture sector post-2019 is attributed to the lack of quality education among youth, hindering their employability in other sectors.*
- *Most jobs in 2023 (90.4%) were in the informal sector, with around half of the formal sector jobs (45.2%) being informal.*
- *The importance of generating more formal sector jobs, citing a tripling of the youth unemployment rate between 2012 and 2018 as evidence of the pressing need for formal employment opportunities.*

What is the quality of employment?

- *Jobs are described as low-productive and low-earning, with real wages and earnings either declining or stagnating.*
- *A significant proportion of both regular workers (40.8%) and casual workers (51.9%) do not receive the average daily minimum wage prescribed for unskilled workers, which is ₹480 per day.*

There are concerns raised by various stakeholders:

- *Central trade unions and the Samyukt Kisan Morcha express concern about "wage depression" highlighted in the report, particularly amidst unchecked food inflation.*

- *Amarjeet Kaur, a senior trade union leader, emphasizes that formal employment only accounts for 9% of total employment, leaving most workers without access to social security.*
- *Lack of formal employment opportunities may exacerbate unemployment and underemployment, hindering education and skill development for future generations.*

The report also notes regional disparities:

- *Individuals with higher education levels are more likely to access secure and formal employment options, leading to higher average returns.*
- *Youth in southern, western, and northeastern regions have a higher likelihood of being in formal employment.*
- *Socially marginalized youth are disproportionately represented in informal jobs.*

Jobs are scarce in the formal sector due to several reasons:

- *Thousands of posts remain unfilled for years, and a policy allowing one-third of vacancies to lapse after retirements contributes to the decrease in formal employment.*
- *The trend of contractual appointments and the preference for consultancies are also blamed for the decline in formal job opportunities.*

Regarding the gender gap in the labour market:

- *There is a significant disparity in labor force participation rates between genders, with low rates among women.*
- *The gender gap in labor force participation rates has remained consistent over the past two decades.*
- *In 2022, the labor force participation rate of young men was nearly three times higher than that of young women, with similar gaps observed in both rural and urban areas.*
- *A large proportion of young individuals, particularly women, are not in education, employment, or training (NEET).*
- *Between 2012 and 2019, there was a concerning increase in unemployment attributed to the decline in women's participation in the workforce, a trend that has slightly reversed since 2019.*
- *Young women are more likely to engage in agriculture compared to young men.*
- *Recommendations from the ILO and IHD include crafting policies to boost women's participation in the labor market, such as providing institutional care facilities, adaptable work arrangements, improved public transport, better amenities, and enhanced workplace safety, to address the gender gap in employment.*

The report has recommended several measures to address the challenges in India's labour market:

- *Implement "five missions":*

- *Make production and growth more employment-intensive.*
- *Improve the quality of jobs.*
- *Overcome labor market inequalities.*
- *Enhance effectiveness of systems for skills training and active labor market policies.*
- *Bridge deficits in knowledge on labor market patterns and youth employment.*

- *Integrate employment creation with macro and other economic policies to enhance productive non-farm employment.*
- *Support micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and promote decentralization.*
- *Increase agriculture productivity, create more non-farm jobs, and encourage entrepreneurship.*
- *Focus on policies that boost women's participation in the labor force.*
- *Ensure minimum quality of employment and basic rights of workers across all sectors.*

Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016 (RERA)

Syllabus: GS-3; Indian Economy – Infrastructure.

Context:

- *Govt reviews RERA functioning, begins meetings with homebuyers.*

About RERA

- *The Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016 aims to protect home-buyers and promote investments in the real estate sector.*
- *The Act establishes a Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA) in each state to regulate the real estate industry and resolve disputes efficiently.*

- *The Act came into force on May 1, 2016, with initial notification of 61 out of 92 sections. The remaining provisions were enforced on May 1, 2017.*
- *Central and state governments are mandated to notify the Rules under the Act within six months.*

Salient Provisions:

- *Fast*-**track mechanism for dispute resolution** *through an appellate tribunal and adjudicating officers.*
- **Mandatory registration** *of all real estate projects with RERA for jurisdiction.*
- *Written consent from two-thirds of allottees and RERA approval required for transferring rights and liabilities.*
- *Complaint filing with RERA for violations by promoters, buyers, or agents.*
- *RERA empowered to halt activities during enquiry.*
- *Appeal submission to* **Appellate Tribunal** *if dissatisfied with RERA's decision.*
- **Penalty up to 5% of property** *cost for promoter non-compliance with RERA orders.*
- **Appellate Tribunal non-compliance** *leads to imprisonment, fine (up to 10% of project cost), or both.*
- *Company officials and company* **held guilty for offences under the Act**.
- **No civil court jurisdiction** *over matters under RERA or Appellate Tribunal. No injunctions against RERA or Tribunal actions.*

First Tri-service Common Defense Station in Mumbai

Syllabus: GS-3; Internal Security – Defence reforms.

Context:

- *The Armed Forces plan to establish Mumbai as India's first "tri-service common defence station" for the Army, Navy, and Indian Air Force (IAF) to enhance jointness among the services.*

More about developments:

- *India currently lacks common defence stations, with the* **Andaman and Nicobar** *command being the only existing tri-service command since 2001.*
- *A* **common defence station in Mumbai** *would consolidate all facilities and resources of the three services, including logistics, infrastructure, and maintenance, under a single lead service, which would be the Navy in this case.*

Significance:

- *This consolidation* **aims to integrate logistics**, *infrastructure, and administration, currently operated separately by the three services in Mumbai.*
- *Resources such as hospitals, schools, training facilities, and storage and maintenance units will be shared among all services* **to optimize management and resource allocation.**
- **The plan aims to avoid duplication of efforts**, *enhance resource management, and establish a single channel for funds and supply delivery.*
- **Mumbai will be the first common defence station**, *with Sulur and Guwahati potentially being chosen as locations for the second and third stations, with different lead services for each.*

Integration Among Three Defense Services in India:

- **Integrated Theatre Commands (ITCs):** *Establishment of unified commands under a single commander for strategic geographical theatres involving the Army, Indian Air Force, and Navy.*
- **Office of the Chief of Defense Staff (CDS):** *Centralized leadership responsible for fostering coordination and synergy among the three services.*
- **Cyber and Space Commands:** *Integration of capabilities in cyber warfare and space operations across the defense services.*
- **Resource Sharing:** *Pooling and sharing of resources among the services to avoid duplication and enhance efficiency.*
- **Joint Training and Exercises:** *Conducting combined training programs and exercises to enhance interoperability and cohesion among the forces.*

Integrated Theatre Command:

- *Unified command structure with a single commander for strategic theatres.*
- *Commander has access to resources from all three services for effective operations.*
- *Commander not answerable to individual services, promoting seamless coordination.*

Shekatkar Committee Recommendations:

- *Suggested creation of three integrated theatre commands: northern for China border, western for Pakistan border, and southern for maritime operations.*

Joint Command in Andaman & Nicobar Islands:

- *First Tri-Service theatre command of the Indian Armed Forces.*
- *Located at Port Blair in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.*
- *Established in 2001 to safeguard India's strategic interests in Southeast Asia and the Strait of Malacca.*

- *Aims to increase rapid deployment of military assets in the region.*

Strategic Forces Command (SFC):

- *Another tri-service command, responsible for managing and controlling the country's nuclear assets.*

Current Situation:

- *Indian Armed Forces have a total of 17 commands.*
- *Army and Air Force each have 7 commands, while the Navy has 3 commands.*
- *Each command is led by a 3-star rank military officer.*