



DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 26-07-2025

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GS-3

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Lakshadweep

Syllabus: GS-1; Geography, GS-3; Climate change and ecosystem degradation

Context

- 24-year study reveals that coral cover in Lakshadweep saw 50% reduction

1. Geography and Location

- Lakshadweep is the smallest **Union Territory** of India located in the **Arabian Sea**
- Comprises 36 coral islands including 10 inhabited islands and several uninhabited ones
- Formed of **coral atolls** unlike the volcanic Andaman and Nicobar Islands
- Capital of Lakshadweep is **Kavaratti**

2. Coral Reef Study 1998 to 2022

- A 24 year scientific study revealed a **50 percent reduction in coral cover**
- Coral cover declined from about 372 percent in 1998 to around 191 to 196 percent in 2022
- Monitored islands include Agatti Kadmat and Kavaratti
- Main cause was **marine heatwaves related to El Nino** in 1998 2010 and 2016
- 2010 recorded the most severe **heat stress** with 67 Degree Heating Weeks
- Shift observed from heat-sensitive corals to stress-tolerant types like **Porites Favia and Isopora**

3. Coral Recovery Challenges

- Coral reefs need a minimum of six years without **bleaching** to recover fully
- Short intervals between bleaching events limit recovery especially for fast-growing species like **Acropora**
- Local environmental factors like depth and wave exposure influence reef resilience

4. Ecological and Policy Significance

- Coral reefs support coastal protection **fisheries and tourism**
- The study proposed a tool to classify reefs based on their recovery capacity and risk level
- Policy recommendations include
 - Creation of Marine Protected Areas
 - Early warning systems for heatwaves

- Community participation in reef protection
- Global efforts to mitigate climate change

5. Demographics and Culture

- Population is approximately 65000 as per the 2011 Census
- Majority religion is Islam with over 96 percent following the **Shafi school of Sunni Islam**
- Languages spoken include **Malayalam Jeseri and Dweep Bhasha**
- **Matrilineal customs** exist particularly in Minicoy Island
- Cultural traditions include **Uru boat-building coir craft** and celebration of Islamic festivals

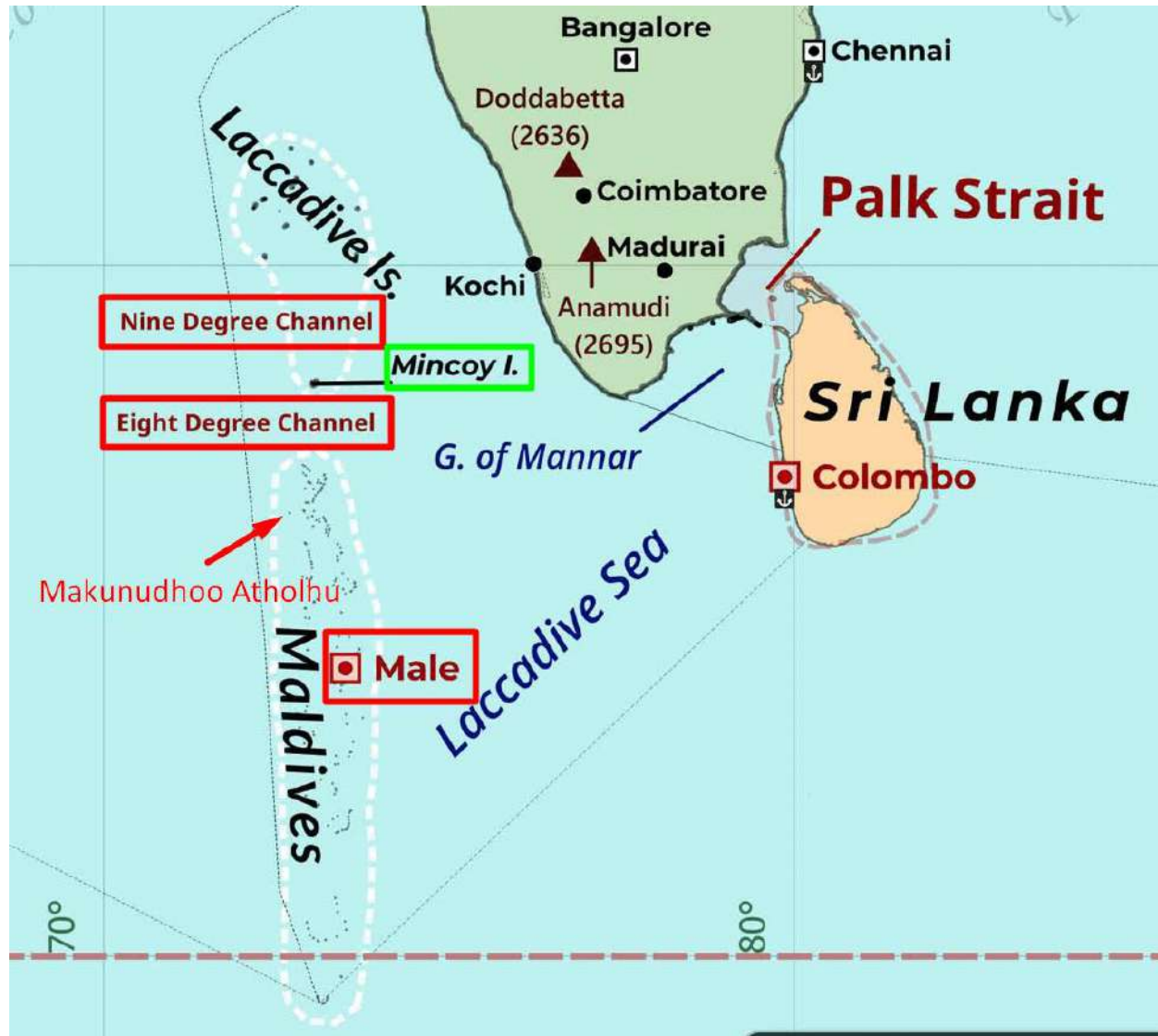
6. Administration and Governance

- Lakshadweep is administered by an Administrator appointed by the **President of India**
- Local governance is managed through district panchayat and island panchayats
- The Lakshadweep **Development Authority Regulation 2021** created public concern over land and cultural rights

7. Economy and Connectivity

- Economy is based on fishing coconut cultivation and coir production
- Eco-tourism potential is significant but must be balanced with environmental concerns
- The territory aims to transition to 100 percent renewable energy
- Connectivity is maintained through ships and air travel due to absence of roads or railways

Know more



India-China ties

Syllabus: GS-2; International Relations

Context

- Indian and Chinese travelers hail end of visa freeze between world's two most populous nations as diplomatic tensions thaw.

Historical Background

- **Ancient Ties:** Cultural and religious exchanges (e.g., Buddhism).
- **1950:** India was among the first to recognize the People's Republic of China.
- **1954 Panchsheel Agreement:** Five principles of peaceful coexistence were signed.
- **1962 War:** A full-scale border war occurred, straining relations.

Key Issues in India-China Relations

1. Border Disputes

- **Western Sector (Aksai Chin):** Claimed by India, controlled by China.
- **Eastern Sector (Arunachal Pradesh):** Claimed by China.
- **Line of Actual Control (LAC):** Not formally demarcated; source of frequent tensions.
- **Recent Standoff:** 2020 Galwan Valley clash, casualties on both sides; relations severely strained.



2. China-Pakistan Nexus

- **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC):** Passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir; India opposes.
- **Military & Nuclear Support:** China's close strategic ties with Pakistan worry India.

3. Trade Imbalance

- China is India's 2nd largest trading partner.
- **Trade Deficit:** Heavily skewed in China's favor (over \$75 billion in recent years).
- India imports electronics, machinery; exports mainly raw materials.

4. Strategic Rivalry

- **Indo-Pacific Strategy:** India's participation in Quad (with US, Japan, Australia) seen as counter-China move.
- **String of Pearls:** China's military presence around Indian Ocean.
- **India's Act East Policy:** Enhances engagement with ASEAN and East Asia, balancing China.

5. Multilateral Engagement

- Both countries cooperate in BRICS, SCO, G20, and climate negotiations.
- Despite tensions, both share common positions on Global South issues.

Way Forward

- **Diplomatic Engagement:** Continued dialogue to reduce border tensions.
- **Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs):** Hotlines, joint military exercises (currently suspended).
- **Trade Diversification:** Reduce dependence on Chinese goods.
- **Multilateral Pressure:** Engage global powers to ensure peaceful resolution.
- **Clear Border Agreement:** Define and demarcate LAC.

Conclusion

India-China ties are marked by both **competition and cooperation**. Managing the **border dispute, balancing strategic interests, and reviving economic and diplomatic channels** are key to ensuring regional peace and mutual growth.

PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana

Syllabus: GS-2; Government policies and Interventions

Context

- MNRE to launch utility-led solar program for houses without suitable rooftop space.

1. Overview

- Launched in **February 2024**, the PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana aims to provide **free electricity up to 300 units per month** to **1 crore households** by installing rooftop solar systems.
- It has a total outlay of **₹75,021 crore**, to be implemented by **2026-27**.
- The scheme promotes **clean energy, financial savings, and green employment**.

2. Objectives

- Reduce household electricity bills (up to ₹18,000/year).
- Promote renewable energy adoption and decentralised solar power generation.
- Help India achieve **net-zero emission goals**.
- Generate employment through rooftop solar projects.
- Reduce the burden on power distribution companies and save government expenditure on power subsidies.

3. Key Features

- **Subsidy Structure:**
 - For systems up to 2 kW: **60% subsidy**.
 - For 2–3 kW: **40% subsidy**.
 - Maximum subsidy: **₹78,000** for systems of 3 kW or more.
 - Additional **10% subsidy** for special category states.
- **Loan Facility:**
 - Collateral-free loans for up to 3 kW systems.
 - Interest rate around **7%**, linked to **Repo Rate + 0.5%**.
 - Repayment period: **up to 10 years**.
- **Free Electricity:**
 - Households will receive up to **300 units/month** free electricity from solar generation.
- **Implementation Framework:**
 - **National Programme Implementation Agency (NPIA)** oversees national coordination.
 - **State DISCOMs** handle ground-level execution, including vendor tie-ups and net metering.
 - **Model Solar Villages** to be developed with central assistance of ₹1 crore per district to promote adoption.

4. Benefits

- **Economic:** Cuts electricity bills; savings for government and households.
- **Environmental:** Reduces carbon emissions; supports sustainable development.
- **Social:** Empowers rural households; creates jobs in solar sector.

5. Challenges

- Infrastructure limitations in some states (e.g., single-phase to three-phase conversion).
- Low awareness and digital literacy in rural areas.
- Discoms' reluctance in faster approvals and net-metering.
- Supply chain and vendor coordination issues.

Rubber Plantation

Syllabus: GS-3; Agriculture

Context

- Ambrosia Beetle Threatens Rubber Plantations In Kerala.



About

- **Rubber** is a **commercial plantation crop** that thrives in **humid tropical climates**.

- It is primarily grown for **natural rubber**, extracted from latex of the rubber tree (*Hevea brasiliensis*).

Climatic and Soil Requirements

- **Climate:** Hot and humid; temperature between **25–35°C** and **rainfall above 200 cm** annually.
- **Soil:** Deep, well-drained, lateritic or alluvial soils rich in nitrogen and phosphorus.
- **Altitude:** Grows well up to **500 meters** above sea level.

Major Rubber Producing States in India

1. **Kerala** – Accounts for **over 75% of total production**.
2. **Tamil Nadu** – Especially in the Kanyakumari district.
3. **Karnataka**
4. **Tripura** – Major producer in Northeast India.
5. **Assam, Meghalaya, and Nagaland** – Upcoming regions due to climate suitability.

Agro-Scientific Aspects

- **Botanical Name:** *Hevea brasiliensis*
- **Family:** Euphorbiaceae
- **Harvesting:** Tapping of latex begins **6–7 years** after planting.
- **Life span:** Rubber trees yield latex for **25–30 years**.

Institutional Support

- **Rubber Board of India** (HQ: Kottayam, Kerala) – Regulates development, training, marketing, and research.
- **Tapping and Processing:** Involves specialized skills; smallholder cooperatives play a key role.
- **Schemes:**
 - Rubber Plantation Development Scheme
 - Replanting Subsidy Scheme

Uses of Natural Rubber

- Tyre and tube manufacturing
- Footwear
- Medical equipment (gloves, catheters)
- Industrial belts, hoses, etc.

Global Context

- India is the **6th largest producer** of natural rubber globally.
- **Top rubber-producing countries:** Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia, and China.
- India also imports rubber, mainly for tyre industries.

Challenges in Rubber Plantation

- **Climate change** affecting productivity.
- **Price fluctuations** in the global rubber market.
- **Competition** from synthetic rubber.
- Labour shortages and aging plantations.
- Pest and disease outbreaks (e.g., South American Leaf Blight - potential threat).

Government Initiatives & Policies

- Promotion of rubber in **non-traditional areas** (e.g., Northeast).
- **Minimum Support Price (MSP)** in some states.
- Encouragement of **eco-friendly processing techniques**.

Mangroves

Syllabus: GS-3; Mangroves Conservation, GS-2; Environmental Governance

Context

- July 26 is the International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystem.

What are Mangroves?

- Mangroves are **salt-tolerant trees and shrubs** that grow in **intertidal zones** of tropical and subtropical coastlines.
- They are uniquely adapted to **saline, waterlogged, and oxygen-deficient soils**.
- They act as a **transitional ecosystem** between land and sea.

Ecological Importance

- **Coastal protection:** Act as natural buffers against **cyclones, storm surges, and coastal erosion**.

- **Carbon sinks:** Store large amounts of "**blue carbon**", helping in **climate change mitigation**.
- **Nursery for marine life:** Provide breeding grounds for **fish, crabs, and molluscs**.
- **Water filtration:** Trap sediments and improve water quality.
- **Biodiversity hotspots:** Support diverse flora and fauna, including endangered species like **Royal Bengal Tiger** and **Saltwater Crocodile**.

Distribution in India

- Major mangrove regions:
 - **Sundarbans (West Bengal)** – Largest in India, UNESCO World Heritage Site
 - **Mahanadi, Godavari, Krishna deltas (Odisha & Andhra Pradesh)**
 - **Pichavaram (Tamil Nadu)**
 - **Vembanad (Kerala)**
 - **Andaman & Nicobar Islands**
 - **Goa, Maharashtra, Gujarat**



Threats to Mangroves

- Coastal development & land reclamation

- Pollution (oil spills, plastic waste, sewage)
- Aquaculture expansion (shrimp farming)
- Climate change (sea level rise, temperature rise)
- Overexploitation of mangrove wood

Conservation Measures in India

- **CRZ Notification, 2011** – Mangroves are classified as **CRZ-I** (no development zone).
- **National Mangrove Conservation Programme (NMCP)** – Initiated by **MoEFCC** for afforestation and protection.
- **State Forest Departments** involved in management and protection.
- **Mangroves for the Future (MFF)** – A regional initiative involving India and other Indian Ocean countries.

Latest Updates (as of 2025)

- **India has ~4,975 sq km of mangroves** (as per ISFR 2021); ~0.15% of total forest cover.
- **West Bengal** accounts for **42.45%** of total mangrove cover.
- **Increase of 17 sq km** in mangrove cover observed between ISFR 2019 and ISFR 2021.