



DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 31-07-2025

GS-1

1. Bigha

GS-2

2. Mera Gaon Meri Dharohar (MGMD) Initiative
3. Schengen Visa

GS-3

4. Pralay Missile
5. What did the ICJ say on climate obligations?

Bigha

Syllabus; GS-1 & 3; Land Reforms

Context

- The **Assam government** has initiated an **eviction drive** in the **Uriamghat** area of **Golaghat district** to clear approximately **11,000 bighas** of encroached forest land.

What is Bigha?

- **Bigha** is a **traditional unit of land measurement** still prevalent in rural and agrarian regions of **India, Bangladesh, and Nepal**. It is commonly used to assess agricultural holdings, residential plots, and village lands in local transactions.

Geographical Usage in India

- Bigha continues to be widely used in:
- **North & Central India:** Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand
- **Eastern States:** West Bengal, Jharkhand, Assam
- **Western India:** Gujarat

Historical Context

- The **origin of Bigha** predates the metric system and can be traced to **ancient South Asian land revenue practices**.
- It was extensively used during **pre-colonial and colonial periods** for land taxation, cultivation records, and agrarian economy.
- Bigha became deeply embedded in the **socio-economic fabric** of rural communities, even surviving the post-independence standardization efforts.

Measurement Variations

One of the key complexities of Bigha is its **lack of standardization**, with **significant regional variation**:

State/Region	Area of One Bigha
West Bengal, Assam	~14,400 sq. ft.
Punjab	~9,070 sq. ft.

State/Region	Area of One Bigha
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Uttar Pradesh (Western) ~27,000 sq. ft.

Uttar Pradesh (Eastern) ~6,750 sq. ft.

- For comparison, **1 Acre = 43,560 sq. ft. = ~4,047 sq. m.**
- Bigha is usually smaller than an acre and often **subdivided into smaller units** like **Biswa, Katha, and Nalli**, with local variations.

Bigha Outside India

- **Bangladesh:** Standardized during British colonial rule to **14,400 sq. ft.** (approx. **1,340 sq. m.**).
- **Nepal:** Defined as **6,772.63 sq. m.**, though local variations persist across districts.

Contemporary Relevance

- Despite modern survey methods and legal requirements favoring metric units, **Bigha remains integral** in:
 - Informal land deals in rural areas
 - Revenue records in certain state jurisdictions
 - Cultural land transactions and local governance

Conclusion

- The **Bigha system**, though unstandardized, remains a living tradition in South Asian land culture. While modern cadastral systems promote metric units, a complete transition in rural consciousness remains a **policy and administrative challenge**, necessitating awareness, digitization, and local capacity building.

Mera Gaon Meri Dharohar (MGMD) Initiative

Syllabus: GS-2; Government policies and Intervention

Context

- The Government of India has so far documented the cultural identity of **over 4.7 lakh villages** under the MGMD initiative.

About the MGMD Initiative

- **Launched:** 27th July 2023
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Culture
- **Implementing Agency:** Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA)
- **Under:** National Mission on Cultural Mapping (NMCM)
- **Part of:** *Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav* celebrations
- MGMD is a **pan-India cultural mapping programme** aimed at digitally documenting the **intangible cultural heritage** of India's **6.5 lakh villages**.
- The project seeks to build a **comprehensive virtual platform** reflecting India's diverse cultural fabric across **States and Union Territories**.
- It promotes **cultural appreciation** in rural communities, with the aim of enhancing **economic development, social cohesion, and artistic growth**.

Key Features

- **Focus:** Intangible cultural assets of rural India
- **Implementation:** Through IGNCA, using a structured and participatory mapping framework
- **Categories of Mapping:**
 - **Arts and Crafts Villages**
 - **Ecologically Oriented Villages**
 - **Scholastic Villages** (linked to scriptures and texts)
 - **Epic Villages** (associated with *Ramayana, Mahabharata, or Puranas*)
 - **Historical Villages** (connected to local/national history)
 - **Architectural Heritage Villages**
 - **Other Distinctive Villages** (e.g., fishing, shepherding, horticulture)

Significance

- Creates a **cultural database** to inform policy, education, tourism, and rural development.
- Acts as a **repository** of India's rich oral traditions and indigenous practices.
- Strengthens **community pride** and **intergenerational transmission** of local knowledge.

Schengen Visa

Syllabus: GS-2; International Relations- Soft Power

Context

- **Indian travellers with a clean visa history are now eligible for a fast-tracked, long-term Schengen visa under the European Commission's new "Cascade" system.**
- This initiative facilitates easier access to multi-year, multiple-entry visas based on a traveller's prior visa usage, rewarding consistent and rule-abiding travel behaviour.

About

- **Definition:** A short-term visa allowing non-EU nationals to visit or transit through the **Schengen Area**, which currently includes **29 European countries**.
- **Purpose:** Tourism, business, family visit, medical reasons, or cultural/sporting participation.
- **Duration:** Up to **90 days within a 180-day period**. Multiple entries are allowed within this time frame.
- **Restrictions:** Does **not allow** the holder to **work** in the Schengen Area.
- **Border Rules:**
 - **No internal borders** among Schengen countries.
 - **Harmonized external border controls**.

Countries Issuing Schengen Visas

- **EU States:** All except **Cyprus and Ireland**.
- **Non-EU States in Schengen:** **Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland** (EFTA members).
- **Total:** **29 countries**.

New "Cascade Visa Scheme" for Indian Travellers

- **Launched by:** **European Commission** to facilitate easier travel for "trusted travellers."
- **Eligibility:** Indian citizens with a **clean visa history**.

Visa Duration Tiers:

Previous Visa Usage

3 Schengen visas in 2 years

Eligible for Validity Conditions

1-year visa Multiple-entry

Previous Visa Usage

1-year multiple-entry visa in past 2 years
2-year multiple-entry visa in past 3 years

Eligible for Validity Conditions

2-year visa
5-year visa
Multiple-entry

Key Points:

- Applicants must have a **valid passport** for the duration.
- Still subject to **90/180-day stay rule**.
- Does **not permit employment** in Schengen countries.
- Allows travel **across all 29 Schengen countries** like visa-free nationals.

Pralay Missile

Syllabus: GS-3; Science & Technology

Context

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) recently conducted **two consecutive successful flight-tests** of the *Pralay* missile from **Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Island**, located off the coast of Odisha. These tests mark a significant step toward the missile's operational deployment.

About the Pralay Missile

- The **Pralay Missile** is a **short-range, surface-to-surface, quasi-ballistic missile**, developed **indigenously by DRDO** to enhance India's tactical strike capabilities. It is designed for rapid deployment and high precision, especially in conventional warfare scenarios.

Key Features of Pralay Missile

- **Type:** Solid-fuel, quasi-ballistic missile
- **Range:** 150 to 500 km
- **Payload Capacity:** 500–1,000 kg
- **Warhead:** Conventional (capable of carrying multiple types of warheads)
- **Speed:** Terminal velocity up to **Mach 6.1**
- **Accuracy:** High-precision targeting with **Circular Error Probable (CEP) <10 meters**
- **Mobility:** Can be launched from road-mobile platforms

- **Target Flexibility:** Can strike radar installations, command posts, airstrips, and enemy infrastructure
- **Maneuverability:** Capable of mid-flight trajectory changes to evade interception

Development and Industry Partners

- **Lead Developer:** *Research Centre Imarat (RCI)*, a key DRDO laboratory
- **Collaborating DRDO Labs:** Various other research and engineering facilities
- **Industry Partners:** *Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL)*, *Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL)*, and several **private sector firms and MSMEs**

Significance

- The Pralay missile fills a critical gap in India's **conventional deterrence posture**.
- It provides a quick-response strike capability and complements other missile systems like BrahMos, enhancing battlefield readiness in tactical theatres.

PRALAY: Surface-to-Surface Missile

Pralay is a canisterised tactical, surface-to-surface, and short-range ballistic missile for battlefield use developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation of India

ENGINE: Two stage rocket motor with third stage MaRV

SPEED: Mach 1 to 1.6

RANGE: 150-500 km

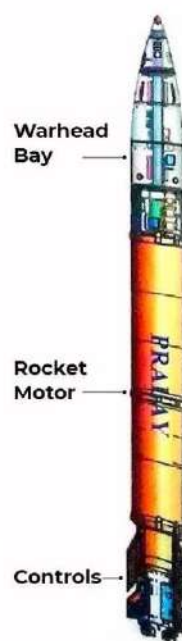
TRAJECTORY: low

GUIDANCE SYSTEM: Inertial navigation system

LAUNCH PLATFORM: 8x8 BEML-Tatra transporter erector launcher

MASS: 5 tonnes (4.9 long tons; 5.5 short tons)

OPERATIONAL RANGE: 150-500 km (93-311 mi)



Can change its path after covering certain range mid-air and is difficult to be tracked

It is capable of being launched from a mobile launcher and has latest navigation system and integrated avionics

It has the **capability to defeat interceptor missiles**

What did the ICJ say on climate obligations?

Syllabus: GS-3; Climate Change

Context

- ICJ issued an advisory opinion on states' obligations regarding **anthropogenic GHG emissions** and consequences of non-compliance.
- Reaffirmed core principles of the **UNFCCC, Kyoto Protocol, and Paris Agreement**.
- Comes amid concerns about **weakened multilateralism**, especially post-U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Agreement.

Key Affirmations by the ICJ Favorable to the Global South

- **Reaffirmation of the UNFCCC Framework:**
 - Recognized the **continuity and relevance** of the UNFCCC, Kyoto Protocol, and Paris Agreement.
 - Rejected attempts by developed nations to **sideline the UNFCCC** in favor of Paris-only obligations.
- **Annex-I and Annex-II Countries:**
 - Upheld **additional responsibilities** of developed nations listed in Annexes.
 - Affirmed obligations regarding **climate finance, technology transfer, and capacity building**.
- **Common But Differentiated Responsibilities & Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC):**
 - Termed CBDR-RC as the **core guiding principle** (Art. 3 of UNFCCC).
 - Expanded CBDR-RC's relevance **beyond climate treaties** (e.g., biodiversity).
 - Recognized evolving definition of "developed" and "developing" based on **national circumstances**.

On Temperature Goals

- **ICJ Interpretation of Paris Agreement Goal:**
 - Asserted that limiting temperature rise to **1.5°C** has become the primary target (not the "well below 2°C" originally stated).
 - Based this on decisions from **COP-26 and COP-28**.
 - Ignored original treaty language and **equity concerns** in interpreting this shift.
- **Criticism of ICJ's Approach:**
 - Over-reliance on selective interpretations of **IPCC AR6 reports**.

- Neglected **equity-based scrutiny** of GHG reduction targets (e.g., 43% by 2030, 65% by 2035).
- Ignored feasibility and consequences of **overshooting 1.5°C**.

Legal Obligations & Enforcement

- **Nature of Obligations:**
 - Distinction between:
 - **Obligations of Conduct** (e.g., pursuing mitigation efforts).
 - **Obligations of Result** (e.g., submitting NDCs periodically).
 - Most climate-related obligations fall under the **conduct** category.
- **On Enforcement:**
 - No new enforcement framework introduced.
 - Enforcement depends on **domestic or regional courts**, and case-specific circumstances.
 - Highlights limits of **international climate law enforcement**.

Gaps and Limitations in the Opinion

- **Neglect of Developmental Concerns:**
 - Overlooks the **energy and development needs** of the Global South.
 - Ignores the **need for equitable carbon space** and support for low-carbon development.
- **Lack of Emphasis on International Economic Reform:**
 - Ignores structural barriers to climate justice like **inadequate finance** and **technology access**.
 - Separate opinion by **Judge Xue Hanqin** highlights the need for a supportive international economic system.
- **CBDR-RC as Interpretative, Not Normative:**
- ICJ held that CBDR-RC **does not impose new obligations**.
- Only used as a **guiding principle** for interpreting existing treaties—a **concern for developing nations**.

Reparation and Litigation Prospects

- **Possibility for Climate Litigation:**
- Opens door for **national or regional courts** to enforce obligations.
- Allows affected nations (e.g., Small Island States) to pursue **compensation/reparation**.
- Requires proof of **attribution, wrongfulness, and causation**.

Conclusion: A Missed Opportunity?

- **Limited Impact on Global Climate Negotiations:**
- Reproduces existing North-South **fault lines**.
- Falls short of catalyzing **transformative global climate action**.
- Valuable for affirming principles, but **lacks game-changing elements**.