



DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 19-08-2025

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1. Mt. Elbrus
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3. Nominations to Union Territory Assemblies

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Mt. Elbrus

Syllabus: GS-1; Geography

Context

- A mountaineer from Arunachal Pradesh recently scaled **Mt. Elbrus (5,642 m)**, the highest peak in Europe.



About Mt. Elbrus

- **Location:** Southwest Russia, in the **Caucasus Mountains**, straddling the Europe–Asia boundary.
- **Geological Formation:**
 - Formed over **2.5 million years ago** due to the **northward collision of the Arabian Plate with the Eurasian Plate**.
 - A **stratovolcano**; most active during the **Holocene Epoch** but now **dormant**.
- **Elevation:** **18,510 ft (5,642 m)** → highest point in **Russia and Europe**.
- **Protected Area:** Lies within **Prielbrusye National Park**.
- **Seven Summits:** Part of the famous **Seven Summits challenge** (tallest peak on each continent).
- **Structure:** Inactive volcano with **two dormant volcanic domes** (East & West summit).

Climate

- Harsh, cold conditions.
- Even in summer, **night temperatures dip to -8°C**.

Glaciers & Rivers

- **Major Glaciers:** Bolshoi Azaou, Irik Glacier.
- **Major Rivers originating here:** Baksan, Malka, Kuban – important rivers of Russia.

Ravi River

Syllabus: GS-1; Geography- Rivers of India

Context

- **Heavy rainfall** in the Himalayan regions has caused a **significant rise in water levels** in the Ravi River.
- Authorities are monitoring the situation for potential **flood risks**, especially in downstream areas of **Punjab (India) and Pakistan**.

Key Facts About Ravi River

- **Origin:** Rohtang Pass, Himachal Pradesh (India).
- **Length:** 720 km (320 km in India).
- **Catchment Area:** 14,442 sq. km in India.
- **Flow:** Fed by **snowmelt** and **monsoon rains** (June–September).
- **Tributaries:** Siul, Baira, Ujh rivers.
- **Dams:**
 - **Ranjit Sagar Dam (Thein Dam)** – Major hydropower & irrigation project.
 - **Chamera Dam Complex (I, II, III)** – Power generation.
- **Indus Water Treaty (1960):** Ravi, along with Beas & Sutlej, is allocated to **India** for water usage.

Concerns

- **Flooding risks** due to heavy monsoon rains.
- **Transboundary water management** between India and Pakistan.

Know more



Nominations to Union Territory Assemblies

Syllabus: GS-2; Polity

Context

- The recent clarification by the **Union Home Ministry** that the **Lieutenant Governor (LG) of Jammu & Kashmir** can nominate **five members** to the Legislative Assembly **without ministerial advice** has reignited debates on **executive authority, democratic principles, and the balance of power** between the Union government and Union Territories (UTs).

1. Constitutional Framework for Nominations

- The **Indian Constitution** and **Parliamentary statutes** govern nominations to legislatures:

A. General Constitutional Provisions

- **Rajya Sabha:** The President nominates **12 members** (Art. 80) based on Union Cabinet advice.
- **State Legislative Councils:** **One-sixth members** are nominated by the Governor (Art. 171).
- **Abolition of Anglo-Indian Nomination:** The **104th Constitutional Amendment (2020)** removed reserved seats for Anglo-Indians.

B. Union Territory-Specific Laws

UT	Governing Law	Nominated Members	Authority
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UT	Governing Law	Nominated Members	Authority
Delhi	Govt. of NCT of Delhi Act, 1991	None	–
Puducherry	Govt. of UTs Act, 1963	Up to 3	Central Govt.
J&K	J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019	5 members	LG (without ministerial advice)

- **J&K's Case:** The **LG nominates members** (including women, Kashmiri migrants, and PoK displaced persons) **without consulting the Council of Ministers**.

2. Judicial Precedents

A. Puducherry (2018) – Madras HC & SC

- **Madras HC** upheld the **Centre's power** to nominate members **without ministerial advice**.
- **SC later upheld the nominations** but avoided ruling on whether the LG must act on ministerial advice.

B. Delhi Services Case (2023) – SC's "Triple Chain of Accountability"

- While not directly about nominations, the **Supreme Court emphasized** that **elected governments must control civil services** to ensure democratic accountability.
- Suggests that **LG should act on ministerial advice** in legislative matters.

3. Democratic Concerns

1. Political Imbalance:

- a. In smaller Assemblies (e.g., **Puducherry – 30 seats, J&K – 90 seats**), even **3-5 nominated members** can tilt majorities.
- b. If the **Centre and UT have different ruling parties**, nominations could **destabilize elected governments**.

2. Undermining Federalism:

- a. **Direct control by the Centre/LG** over nominations weakens **representative democracy**.
- b. **J&K's unique case**: Since it was a **full state earlier**, excessive central control may appear **politically contentious**.

4. Way Forward

To ensure **constitutional clarity and democratic fairness**:

1. Legislative Clarity:

- a. Amend laws to **clearly define** whether **LG acts independently or on ministerial advice**.

2. Democratic Safeguards:

- a. **Nominations should not alter electoral mandates** or create artificial majorities.

3. Advisory Role of Council of Ministers:

- a. Following the **Delhi Services Case logic**, **LG should consult ministers** for nominations.

4. J&K-Specific Approach:

- a. Since **statehood may be restored**, nominations should be **temporary and non-partisan**.

Conclusion

The Home Ministry's affidavit highlights the tension between executive discretion and democratic norms. While legal provisions allow LG-led nominations, the broader principle of representative democracy suggests that elected governments should have a say. A balanced approach—ensuring both constitutional compliance and democratic legitimacy—is crucial, especially in sensitive regions like J&K.

Almond Cultivation

Syllabus: GS-3; Agriculture

Context

- This year's (2025) high yield has boosted farmer incomes, highlighting the crop's cultural and economic significance in the region.



Key Facts About Almond Cultivation

1. **Types:** Sweet almonds (edible) and bitter almonds (used in oils/flavorings; contain toxic compounds).
2. **Climate & Soil:**
 - a. **Temperature:** 7°C–24°C (cold regions preferred).
 - b. **Altitude:** 750–3,200 meters above sea level.
 - c. **Rainfall:** 75–110 cm annually.
 - d. **Soil:** Deep, loamy, well-drained.
3. **Top Producers:** USA (California), Australia, Spain, Turkey.
4. **India's Almond States:** Jammu & Kashmir (primary), Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Kerala, and Andhra Pradesh's hills.

Uses of Almonds

- Food (snacks, sweets, almond milk), cosmetics, and medicinal oils.

Challenges in Almond Farming

- Climate change (erratic weather).
- Competition from cheaper imports (e.g., US almonds).
- Limited modern techniques and policy support.
- Shrinking farmland in traditional regions like Kashmir.

Significance

- Almonds are a high-value crop, but farmers face sustainability issues due to external pressures and environmental factors.

Ambergris

Syllabus: GS-3; Biodiversity

Context

- **Ahmedabad Rural SOG seized 2.97 kg of ambergris** (worth ₹2.97 crore in the international market) and arrested two individuals.

Key Facts About Ambergris

1. Origin:

- Produced in the **digestive system of sperm whales** (*Physeter macrocephalus*).
- Forms around indigestible squid beaks; expelled as a black, sticky substance that hardens over time.



IBT

**AMBERGRIS OR WHALE VOMIT IS
EXTREMELY RARE AND VALUABLE**

2. Uses & Value:

- "**Floating Gold**": Highly prized in **perfume industry** as a rare fragrance fixative.
- Used in **traditional medicine** and as a **spice** in some cultures.

3. Legal Status:

4. **Illegal Trade:** Ambergris smuggling is a growing concern in India due to its high black-market value.

- Banned in India** under the **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972** (sperm whales are protected).
- Illegal in the **USA, Australia**, and other countries under CITES.

5. **How It's Found:**

- Floats on ocean surfaces, oxidizes to gray/waxy texture, and washes ashore.
- Sold in lumps (15g to 420 kg); aged pieces are most valuable.