



DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 20-09-2025

GS-1

1. Machu Picchu

GS-2

2. NE-SPARKS
3. Saudi Arabia-Pakistan defence pact
4. United Nations Human Rights Council

GS-3

5. National Tiger Conservation Authority

Machu Picchu

Syllabus: GS-1; Ancient Civilizations

Context

- Protests Halt Train Service, Stranding Hundreds of Tourists at Machu Picchu.



Background on Machu Picchu and the Inca Civilization

- This event highlights the immense popularity and logistical challenges of visiting this remote UNESCO World Heritage site.

About Machu Picchu

- **Era:** It is a **15th-century Inca site** built in the mid-1400s.
- **Location:** It is located **80 km northwest of Cuzco, Peru**, in the Cordillera de Vilcabamba of the Andes Mountains, saddled between two peaks—Machu Picchu (“Old Peak”) and Huayna Picchu (“New Peak”)—at an elevation of **7,710 feet**.
- **Builder:** It is believed to have been built by **Pachacuti Inca Yupanqui**, the ninth ruler of the Inca.

- **Construction:** The citadel consists of temples, palaces, terraces, and complexes built with large stone blocks without mortar, showcasing the advanced engineering of the **Inca civilization**.
- **Rediscovery:** It was brought to international attention by American explorer **Hiram Bingham in 1911**.
- **UNESCO Status:** It was designated a **UNESCO World Heritage site in 1983**.

Key Facts about the Inca Civilization

- **Timeline:** The empire flourished in ancient Peru between **c. 1400 and 1533 CE** and was the largest empire ever seen in the Americas at that time.
- **Society:** Inca society was highly stratified, with an emperor who ruled with the aid of an aristocratic bureaucracy.
- **Achievements:** They were known for their highly developed architecture, technology, and extensive road network.
- **Religion:** Their religion combined features of animism, fetishism, and the worship of nature gods.

NE-SPARKS

Syllabus: GS-2; Government policies and Interventions

Context

- Recently, the Union Minister of Development of North Eastern Region and Communications held a **virtual interaction** with school students from the North Eastern states.
- These students had just completed a visit to the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) facilities in Bengaluru under the NE-SPARKS program.
- This interaction underscores the government's high-level support for the initiative and its focus on engaging directly with the participants.



Key Details About NE-SPARKS

Aspect	Detail
Full Name	North East Students' Programme for Awareness, Reach, and Knowledge on Space
Supported by	Ministry of Development of North-East Region (MDoNER)
Collaborators	MDoNER in collaboration with all 8 North Eastern State Governments
Primary Goal	To ignite curiosity and foster awareness about space science and technology among NER students.

Aspect	Detail
Key Activity	Organizing exposure visits for selected students to premier ISRO centres, notably in Bengaluru.
Target Beneficiaries	800 meritorious science students (100 from each of the 8 North Eastern states).
Funding Pattern	60:40 ratio between MDoNER and the respective State Governments.

Objectives and Significance

1. **Igniting Interest in STEM:** The core mission is to spark a strong interest in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields among the youth of the North East.
2. **Bridging the Gap:** It aims to overcome geographical and informational barriers by providing students from remote regions with firsthand experience of India's cutting-edge space research.
3. **Creating Exposure:** The program offers an immersive experience, allowing students to witness ISRO's technological advancements, interact with scientists, and understand potential career paths in space science.
4. **Flagship Initiative:** It is recognized as a pioneering and flagship effort by MDoNER, highlighting its importance in the regional development strategy.

Saudi Arabia-Pakistan defence pact

Syllabus: GS-2; International Relations Context

- Pakistan and Saudi Arabia signed a mutual defence pact, formalising a defence and security partnership dating back to the 1960s.



1. The Recent Visit and Agreement:

- A high-level Saudi delegation, led by Saudi Defence Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman, visited Pakistan in May 2024.
- The visit resulted in the signing of a "milestone" agreement to enhance defence cooperation between the two long-standing allies. The Saudi Arabia-Pakistan agreement states that 'any aggression against either country shall be considered an aggression against both'.

2. The Deep Historical Context:

- The relationship is not new. It's often described as one of "**kin and cash**."
 - **Kin:** Pakistan has provided military manpower and expertise to Saudi Arabia for decades.
 - Pakistani troops were stationed in Saudi Arabia during the 1970s and 1980s, and Pakistani pilots have reportedly flown Saudi jets.
 - **Cash:** Saudi Arabia has provided Pakistan with crucial financial aid over the years, offering oil on deferred payments and giving direct financial assistance during economic crises.

3. Why Saudi Arabia is Reaching Out Now:

- **Diversifying Security Partnerships:** Traditionally dependent on the US for security, Saudi Arabia is now seeking to diversify its alliances.
 - This is driven by a perception of wavering US commitment to the Gulf and a desire for a more independent foreign policy under Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's "**Vision 2030**."
- **Countering Regional Rivals:** A stronger alliance with Pakistan, a nuclear-armed military power, is seen as a way to counterbalance the influence of regional rivals, notably **Iran**.
 - Pakistan shares a long border with Iran and maintains a complex relationship with it.
- **Protecting Economic Interests:** Saudi investments in Pakistan are massive (e.g., the \$10 billion refinery in Gwadar).
 - A defence pact helps secure these economic interests and the critical **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)**, in which Saudi Arabia is an investor.
 - Gwadar's port is also strategically located near the Strait of Hormuz.
- **Building a Sunni Bloc:** The article suggests Saudi Arabia may be interested in fostering a broader **coalition of Sunni-muslim nations**, with Pakistan as a key pillar.

4. Why Pakistan is Eager to Agree:

- **Economic Lifeline:** Pakistan is in a severe economic crisis. A deeper alliance with Saudi Arabia promises more financial aid, investment, and potential deposits into Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves.
- **Strategic and Diplomatic Weight:** Aligning closely with a leading Arab power boosts Pakistan's international standing and provides it with a powerful diplomatic patron.
- **Military Modernization:** Cooperation could lead to Saudi funding for Pakistani military modernization projects.

5. Challenges and Complications:

- **The India Factor:** Saudi Arabia's relationship with India has dramatically improved. India is now a major trading partner and a strategic ally for Riyadh.

- Saudi Arabia will be cautious not to antagonize India by forming a military alliance that is overtly hostile to Indian interests.
- Pakistan's primary military focus remains India.
- **Pakistan's Internal Instability:** Saudi investments and security partnerships require a stable Pakistan, which is currently grappling with political and economic turmoil.
- **Pakistan's Relationship with Iran:** Pakistan must walk a tightrope. While close to Saudi Arabia, it cannot afford open hostility with its neighbor Iran, with which it has cultural and religious ties.

Overall Significance

The potential defence pact signifies a major shift in the region's geopolitics. It represents:

- **Saudi Arabia's move towards a more independent and diversified foreign policy.**
- The **reinvigoration of a historical alliance** based on mutual need—Saudi Arabia needs military strength and Pakistan needs economic support.
- A complex **balancing act for all involved**, especially for Saudi Arabia as it manages its growing ties with both India and Pakistan, and for Pakistan as it manages its relations with Saudi Arabia and Iran.

United Nations Human Rights Council

Syllabus: GS-2: International Relations – Organisations.

Context:

- Recently, **India defended Qatar's sovereignty** at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC).

About United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)

- **Creation:** Established by the **UN General Assembly** on **15 March 2006**, replacing the Commission on Human Rights.
- **Nature:** Inter-governmental body within the **United Nations system**.
- **Mandate:**

- Promote **universal respect for protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms**.
- Address **violations of human rights**, including gross and systematic ones, and make recommendations.

Membership

- **Total members:** 47 States.
- **Election:** By **UN General Assembly** through **direct and secret ballot**.
- **Geographical distribution:** Based on **equitable representation**.
- **Term:** 3 years.
- **Re-election:** Not eligible for immediate re-election after **two consecutive terms**.

Functions of UNHRC

- **Investigative role:** Probes into allegations of human rights breaches in UN member states.
- **Thematic issues addressed:**
 - **Freedom of expression**
 - **Women's rights**
 - **LGBT rights**
 - **Rights of racial and ethnic minorities**
- **Coordination:** Works closely with the **Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)**.

National Tiger Conservation Authority

Syllabus: GS-3: Wildlife Conservation – Institutions and Organisations.

Context:

- The **Supreme Court** has sought responses from the Centre, the NTCA, and others on a **PIL demanding a CBI probe** into an alleged tiger-poaching and illegal wildlife trade racket in **Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh**.

About NTCA

- **Statutory body** under the **Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MoEFCC)**.
- **Established:** 2006, under the **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972** (as amended).
- Linked to **Project Tiger**, launched in 1973.

Objectives

- Provide **statutory backing** to Project Tiger.
- Strengthen **Centre–State accountability** in managing tiger reserves.
- Ensure **Parliamentary oversight** in tiger conservation.
- Address **livelihood concerns** of local people around reserves.
- Promote **in-situ conservation** of tigers through funding support under a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS)**.

Composition

- **Chairperson:** Union Minister of Environment, Forest & Climate Change.
- **Vice-Chairperson:** Minister of State in MoEFCC.
- **Members:** 3 Members of Parliament, MoEFCC Secretary, senior officials, and experts in tiger conservation.

Powers and Functions

- **Approve** state-level **Tiger Conservation Plans**.
- **Disallow ecologically unsustainable land use** (e.g., mining/industries) inside reserves.
- Frame **norms for eco-tourism** and regulate activities in core/buffer zones.
- Address **man-animal conflict** and promote **coexistence** outside reserves.
- Collect data on **tiger population, prey base, habitat, disease surveillance, mortality, patrolling** etc.
- **Approve and coordinate research** on tiger ecology and socio-economic issues.
- Prevent **fragmentation/diversion** of tiger habitats unless approved by the **National Board for Wildlife (NBWL)**.

- Support **eco-development and community participation**.
- Provide **legal, IT, and scientific support** to states.
- Conduct **capacity-building programmes** for staff of tiger reserves.
- Issue **binding directions** to authorities/persons for tiger protection.