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DAILY CURATED NEWS | EXAM ORIENTED ANALYSIS | SMART NOTES & INFOGRAPHICS | BOOST YOUR PREPARATION

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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS-

1. **Whale Strandings Along Gujarat's Coast: A Monitoring Gap**
2. **India's Core Industries Record 7.9% Growth**
3. **Agrivoltaics World Conference 2026**
4. **Supreme Court Ruling on Religious Conversion and OBC Reservation**
5. **Transforming Wastewater Treatment under Namami Gange Programme**

1.Whale Strandings Along Gujarat's Coast: A Monitoring Gap

Source: IE Page 2

Subject: Environment | Biodiversity | Wildlife Conservation

Why in News?

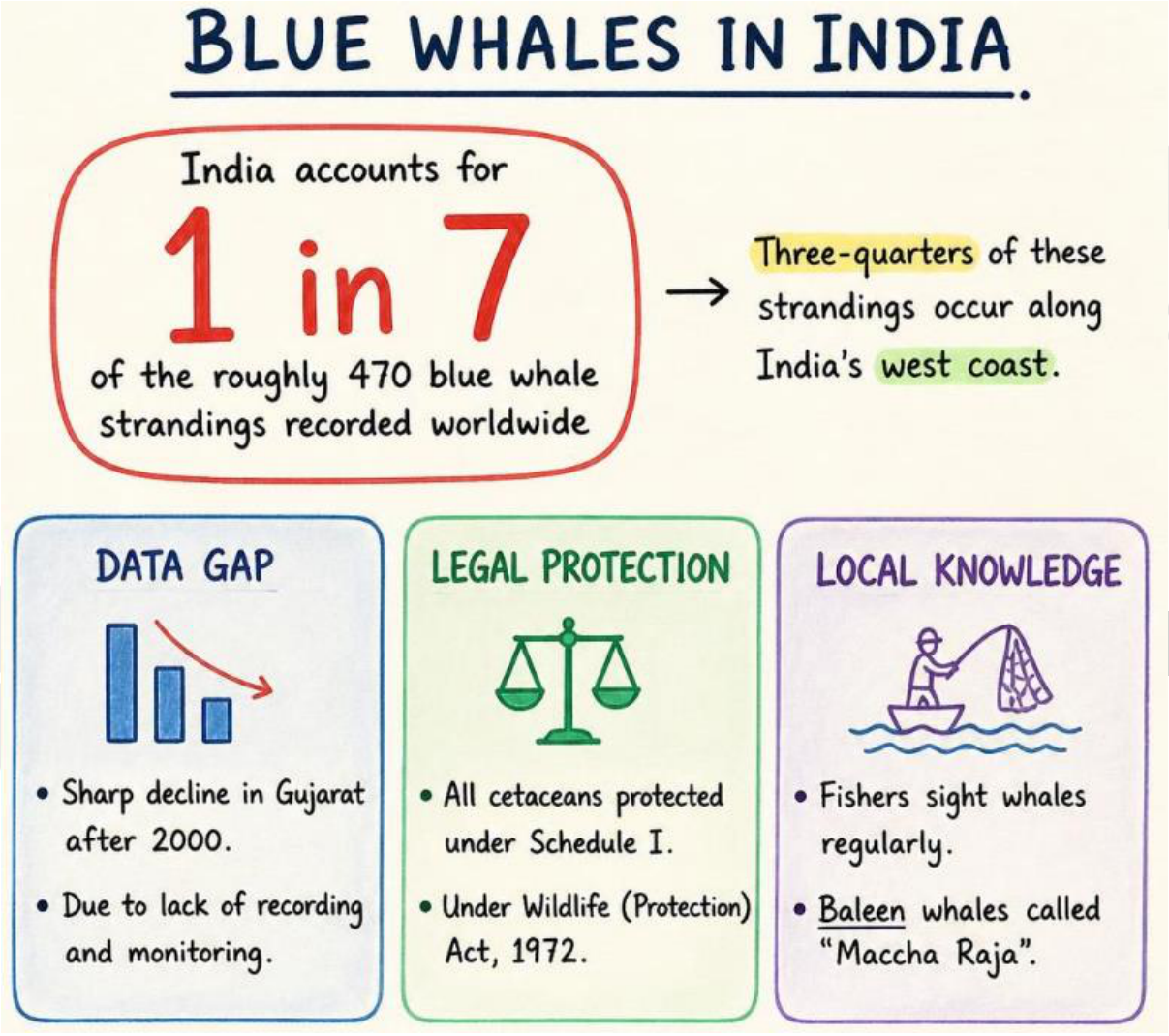
- A report highlights a decline in recorded whale strandings along Gujarat's coast after 2000, despite evidence that whales continue to frequent the region.
- The decline may reflect inadequate systematic monitoring and documentation rather than an actual decline in whale presence.
- Local fishers continue to report whale sightings, highlighting the importance of integrating local knowledge into marine conservation.

Key Findings

- Global context: India accounts for approximately one in seven of around 470 recorded blue whale strandings worldwide, with three-quarters of Indian strandings occurring along the west coast, according to the supplied article.
- Documentation gap: Systematic recording efforts along Gujarat's coast reportedly declined after 2001.
- Recent examples: A blue whale stranding in 2016 and a Bryde's whale calf stranding in 2023 highlight gaps in documentation.
- Marine diversity: Indian waters host approximately 30–35 cetacean species, including whales, dolphins and porpoises.
- Arabian Sea humpback whales: This genetically distinct, non-migratory population is estimated to number only around 100 individuals.
- Local knowledge: Fishers refer to baleen whales as "Maccha Raja", meaning king of all fish, reflecting their continued observations of whales.

Marine Mammals and Conservation

- Cetaceans: A group of marine mammals that includes whales, dolphins and porpoises.
- Dugong: A marine mammal belonging to the order Sirenia, distinct from cetaceans.
- Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ): Surveys cited in the article identified Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins as the most frequently sighted and spinner dolphins as the most abundant.
- Monitoring comparison: Maharashtra recorded 109 marine mammal strandings in 2020–21, illustrating how active monitoring can improve documentation.



Legal Protection in India

- Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972: Provides the legal framework for wildlife conservation and protection.

- Schedule I: The article states that cetaceans in India receive the highest level of protection under this Schedule.
- Article 48A: Directs the State to protect and improve the environment and safeguard forests and wildlife.
- Article 51A(g): Establishes the fundamental duty of citizens to protect the natural environment and show compassion for living creatures.
- 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1976: Moved forests and protection of wild animals and birds to the Concurrent List.

Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Act, 2022

The amendment streamlined the schedules under the Wildlife (Protection) Act from six to four.

Schedule	Coverage
Schedule I	Animal species receiving the highest level of protection
Schedule II	Other protected animal species
Schedule III	Protected plant species
Schedule IV	Specimens listed under CITES

Challenges and Way Forward

- Establish systematic coastal monitoring and standardised reporting of whale strandings.
- Train coastal communities and fishers to report sightings and stranded animals to forest and wildlife authorities.
- Develop a centralised database covering species, locations, causes of stranding and mortality.
- Strengthen scientific surveys and conservation measures for threatened populations, particularly Arabian Sea humpback whales.
- Integrate traditional and local ecological knowledge with scientific monitoring.

UPSC Prelims Practice

Q. With reference to marine mammals and their conservation in India, consider the following statements:

1. Cetaceans include whales, dolphins and porpoises.

2. Dugongs belong to the order Cetacea.
3. Article 48A directs the State to protect and improve the environment.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 1 and 3 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (b) 1 and 3 only

Explanation: Dugongs belong to the order Sirenia, not Cetacea.

UPSC Mains Practice

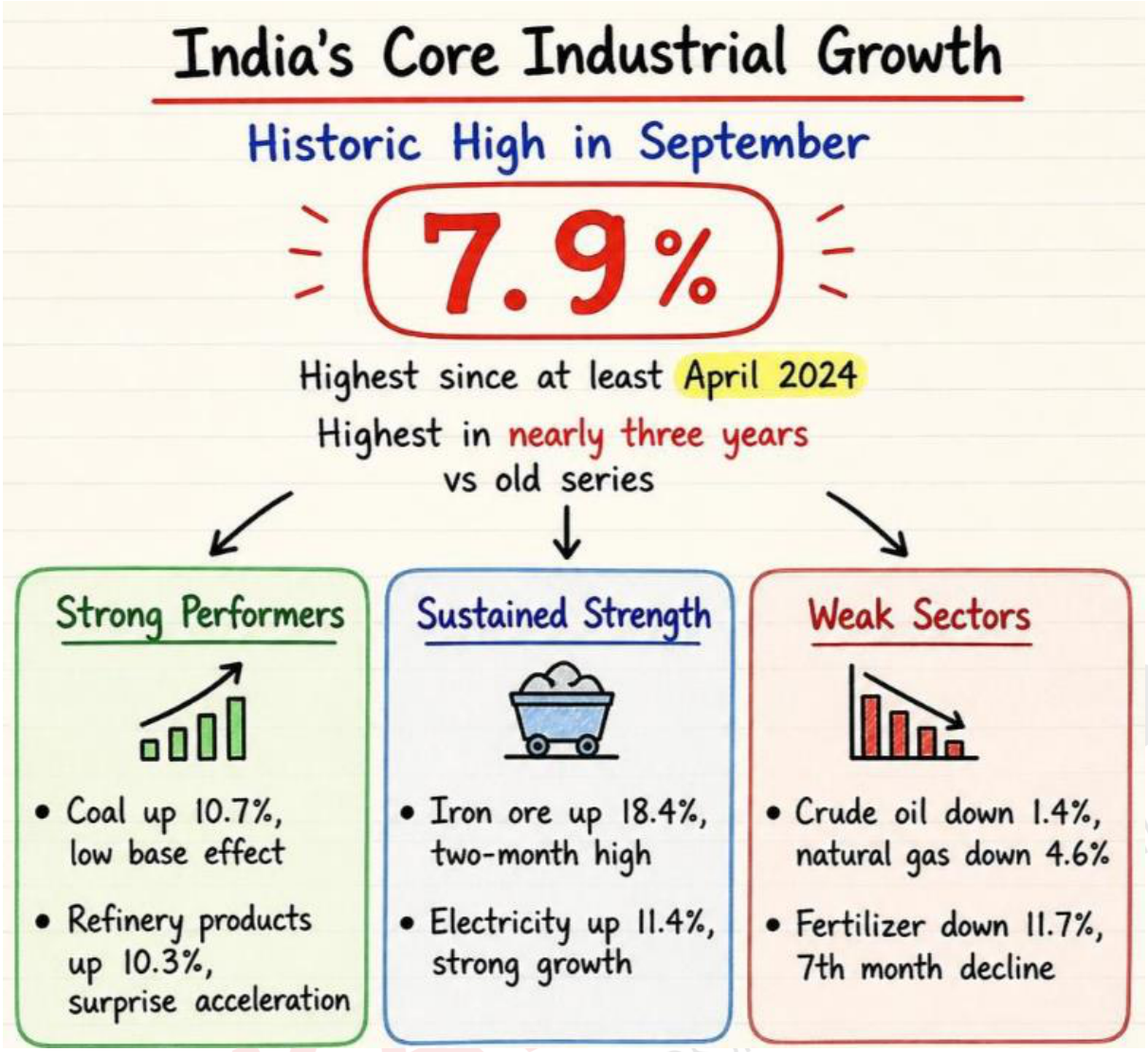
Q."Effective marine conservation requires both scientific monitoring and community participation." Discuss with reference to whale strandings along Gujarat's coast.

2.India's Core Industries Record 7.9% Growth

Source: The Hindu, Page 1

Why in News?

- India's core industrial output grew by 7.9% in September, the highest growth recorded since at least April 2024 under the new data series.
- The growth was driven mainly by coal, refinery products and iron ore.



Key Highlights

- Coal production grew by 10.7%, partly due to a low base effect following a contraction in September of the previous year.
- Refinery products recorded 10.3% growth, despite averaging only 1% growth during the first half of the financial year.
- Iron ore production grew by 18.4%, maintaining a trend of double-digit growth for nearly a year.
- Electricity output increased by 11.4%, while steel and cement grew by 4.9% and 9.8%, respectively.
- Domestic crude oil production contracted by 1.4%, while natural gas output declined by 4.6%.
- Fertiliser production fell by 11.7%, marking its seventh consecutive month of contraction.

3.Agrivoltaics World Conference 2026

Source: The Hindu

Why in News?

- India hosted the Agrivoltaics World Conference 2026 for the first time in the Global South, promoting the integration of solar energy generation with agriculture.
- Union Ministers Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Pralhad Joshi inaugurated the conference.

Agrivoltaics (AgriPV) is a dual-land-use system that integrates solar power generation with agriculture, addressing the "food vs. fuel" dilemma by allowing solar panels and crops to share the same sunlight.

Core Mechanisms and Benefits

Agrivoltaics creates a symbiotic relationship between energy infrastructure and plant biology.

- **The "Cooling" Effect:** Plants release moisture through transpiration, which cools the underside of the solar panels. This can improve solar panel efficiency by keeping them at optimal operating temperatures.
- **Water Conservation:** The shade from panels reduces soil evaporation by up to **29%**, making it highly effective in arid regions like Gujarat and Rajasthan.
- **Income Multiplication:** In a recent pilot in Rajasthan, farmers saw income rise from ₹40,000 to nearly **₹4 lakh per acre** by combining crop sales with fixed tariffs for electricity sold to DISCOMs.

Key Highlights

- Agrivoltaics aims to make farmers both Annadatas (food providers) and Urjadatas (energy providers) by combining crop cultivation with solar power generation.
- Small and marginal farmers, who constitute over 85% of India's farming community, are a key focus of agrivoltaic policies.
- India's installed non-fossil fuel electricity capacity reached 308.03 GW, accounting for over 55% of total installed capacity.
- The next phase of the PM-KUSUM scheme is expected to introduce an ambitious agrivoltaic programme.
- An estimated 47.5 million hectares, or around 30% of India's cropland, are technically suitable for agrivoltaics.

4.Supreme Court Ruling on Religious Conversion and OBC Reservation

Source: IE , Page 10

Subject: Indian Polity | Social Justice | Constitutional Law

Why in News?

- According to the supplied article, the Supreme Court delivered a judgment on October 15, 2026, concerning the eligibility of an OBC Hindu person for reservation after religious conversion.
- The ruling has triggered debate over whether OBC classification should be religion-neutral and how the source of social backwardness should be assessed.
- The Court emphasised that, in the case discussed, the social order associated with the applicant's original community was relevant to determining backward-class status.

Key Issues in the Judgment

- Source of backwardness: The Court stressed the need to examine the basis of a community's social backwardness rather than relying only on a person's earlier caste classification.
- Religious conversion: The article reports that the Court treated conversion as potentially changing the social context in which the original backwardness arose.
- Continuing disadvantage: The judgment acknowledged that educational and economic disadvantage may persist after conversion, but these factors alone do not automatically establish eligibility under a different notified OBC community.
- Debate on religion-neutrality: Traditionally, OBC identification has relied on social, educational and economic indicators. The ruling raises questions about how religious identity and community membership should be considered within this framework.
- Relationship with precedent: The article contrasts the ruling with the 1992 Indra Sawhney judgment, which recognised that caste-related social structures could operate across different religious communities, though in varying degrees.

Constitutional and Legal Framework

- Article 15(4): Enables special provisions for the advancement of socially and educationally backward classes and Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
- Article 16(4): Permits reservation in public employment for backward classes inadequately represented in State services.

- Article 341: Provides for the specification of Scheduled Castes by Presidential notification.
- Article 342A: Governs the identification of socially and educationally backward classes, including State and Union Territory lists for their own purposes.

Relevant Commissions and Judgments

- Mandal Commission (1979): Recommended 27% reservation for OBCs in central government employment.
- Indra Sawhney v. Union of India (1992): Upheld 27% OBC reservation and established the creamy-layer exclusion for advanced sections of OBCs.
- 102nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 2018: Granted constitutional status to the National Commission for Backward Classes under Article 338B.
- 105th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2021: Clarified the power of States and Union Territories to maintain their own lists of socially and educationally backward classes.

Creamy Layer Debate: As Reported in the Source

- The article refers to a March 2026 judgment, Union of India v. Rohith Nathan, concerning the assessment of creamy-layer status.
- According to the supplied material, the judgment questioned the use of parental income alone and highlighted the relevance of the nature and status of parents' employment.
- The article also reports that the Centre sought additional time to work out implementation, including the assessment of equivalent posts across different sectors.

Significance and Way Forward

- Evidence-based classification: Backward-class identification should be supported by relevant social, educational and economic evidence.
- Constitutional consistency: Reservation policies must comply with constitutional provisions and judicial interpretations.
- Social justice: Policymakers must consider continuing disadvantage while ensuring that eligibility follows the applicable legal criteria.
- Data and review: Backward Classes Commissions can undertake empirical studies to assess changing patterns of social exclusion and disadvantage.

UPSC Prelims Practice

Q. With reference to OBC reservation in India, consider the following statements:

1. Article 16(4) provides for reservation in public employment for inadequately represented backward classes.
2. The 102nd Constitutional Amendment Act granted constitutional status to the National Commission for Backward Classes.
3. The 105th Constitutional Amendment Act removed the power of States to maintain their own lists of socially and educationally backward classes.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only

Explanation: The 105th Amendment clarified the power of States and Union Territories to maintain their own lists for their respective purposes.

UPSC Mains Practice

Q."Determining reservation eligibility requires careful consideration of community membership, social disadvantage and constitutional principles." Discuss in the context of the Supreme Court's ruling on religious conversion and Backward Class reservation in Tamil Nadu.

5.Transforming Wastewater Treatment under Namami Gange Programme

Source: The Hindu

Why in News?

- The Namami Gange Programme is adopting diverse wastewater treatment technologies to reduce river pollution and support the conservation and rejuvenation of the Ganga.
- Since its launch in 2014, the programme has undertaken 199 sewerage infrastructure projects worth ₹31,327 crore, creating 2,237 million litres per day (MLD) of new sewage treatment capacity and rehabilitating 873 MLD.

Key Highlights

- The programme follows a technology-neutral approach, using technologies suited to different terrains, land availability and wastewater volumes.

- Food Chain Reactor (FCR) improves upon the Activated Sludge Process by reducing land requirements and power consumption while supporting nutrient removal.
- Electrocoagulation uses electric current for wastewater treatment and is suitable for cold climates and hilly regions, including parts of Uttarakhand.
- Multi-storey sewage treatment plants (STPs), such as the four-storey municipal plant at Muni Ki Reti, address land constraints through vertical construction.
- Constructed wetlands use plants and microorganisms for natural wastewater treatment, while Johkasou provides decentralised, packaged treatment for locations where conventional construction is difficult.
- NEREDA uses aerobic granular sludge for biological treatment, offering a smaller footprint and lower energy requirements. Soil Biotechnology uses physical and biochemical processes for natural treatment, as implemented at Devprayag.
- Faecal Sludge and Septage Management (FSSM) supports areas without conventional sewer networks, while anaerobic digestion of sludge generates biogas for energy recovery.
- Green STPs use solar power and energy-efficient equipment, while sludge management includes dewatering and thermal stabilisation.
- Rehabilitation of ageing STPs and trunk sewers helps maintain treatment standards and operational efficiency.

Implementation and Targets

- The programme aims to create 5,270 MLD of new STP capacity and rehabilitate 925 MLD of existing capacity.
- The Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM)-based Public-Private Partnership and the One City/Cluster–One Operator model support long-term operation, accountability and maintenance over 15 years.