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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

1. Electoral Roll Revision and Form 7 Controversy in Karnataka
2. U.S. Immigration Restrictions and Their Impact on India
3. Kashmir's Traditional Rice Varieties: East Asian Origins
4. Tigress T-138: Tiger Reintroduction in Buxa Tiger Reserve
5. Godzilla' El Niño
6. Iran–Mecca Pact Nations De-escalation Talks

1.Electoral Roll Revision and Form 7 Controversy in Karnataka

Source: The Hindu

Why in News?

During the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Karnataka, election officials reportedly filed over one-third of the Form 7 applications seeking deletion of voters' names without specifying mandatory reasons. This has raised concerns about procedural compliance, transparency and the protection of eligible voters' rights.

Form 7 and Types of Electoral Roll Revision

Form 7 is used to object to the inclusion of a name in the electoral roll or seek deletion of an existing entry on permissible grounds.

- Special Intensive Revision (SIR): A detailed exercise involving voter enumeration and verification to update electoral rolls.
- Special Summary Revision (SSR): A periodic revision of existing electoral rolls through claims, objections and corrections.
- Summary Revision: A routine update of electoral rolls while retaining the existing list as the basis for revision.

The process is governed by the Representation of the People Act, 1950, and the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960.

Key Issues in Karnataka

- Scale of applications: Around 1.82 lakh Form 7 applications were reportedly filed, including 61,509 submitted by election officials.
- Missing reasons: More than 53,000 official-filed forms reportedly lacked the required reasons for deletion.
- Late submissions: Over 60,800 forms were reportedly filed between September 24 and October 22, 2026, after the September 23 deadline for claims and objections.

- Software-generated forms: Officials reportedly attributed the applications to software identifying voters with logical discrepancies or whose details could not be mapped to the 2002 electoral rolls.
- Possible conflict of roles: Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) and Assistant Electoral Registration Officers (AEROs) were listed as objectors despite their role in administering electoral registration.
- Risk of wrongful deletion: Applications lacking valid grounds and proper verification may undermine eligible citizens' ability to exercise their voting rights.

Under Rule 17 of the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960, claims and objections that are not lodged in the prescribed manner must be rejected.

Important Electoral Reforms

- Four qualifying dates: The Election Laws (Amendment) Act, 2021 introduced January 1, April 1, July 1 and October 1 as qualifying dates for eligible citizens attaining 18 years of age to register as voters.
- Aadhaar linkage: Aadhaar can be linked voluntarily with electoral records to help identify duplicate entries. However, Aadhaar is not proof of Indian citizenship.
- Gender-neutral terminology: The law replaced "wife" with "spouse" in relevant provisions concerning service voters.
- Legal safeguards: Deletion of a voter's name must follow prescribed procedures, including verification and applicable notice and hearing requirements.

Significance and Way Forward

Accurate electoral rolls are essential for free and fair elections. However, the process must balance the removal of duplicate or ineligible entries with safeguards against the wrongful exclusion of eligible voters.

- Ensure every Form 7 application contains valid grounds and required particulars.
- Audit software-generated applications and maintain transparent records of decisions.
- Provide proper notice and an opportunity to respond before deletion, as required by the applicable rules.
- Strengthen independent oversight and accountability during electoral roll revision.
- Make it easier for voters to verify their registration status and seek correction or appeal.

Conclusion: Electoral roll revision must uphold both accuracy and universal adult suffrage under Article 326 of the Constitution. Technology can improve voter verification, but it must operate within the law and must not replace due process.

2. U.S. Immigration Restrictions and Their Impact on India

Source: The Hindu

Why in News?

Changes to U.S. immigration policies, including H-1B visa selection and employment-based green card procedures, have raised concerns for Indian professionals and the Indian IT industry. The debate reflects growing support in parts of the U.S. political system for tighter immigration controls, even as technology companies seek access to skilled foreign workers.

H-1B Visa: Key Features

The H-1B visa is a temporary, non-immigrant visa that allows U.S. employers to hire foreign workers in specialised occupations requiring highly specialised knowledge and, generally, a relevant bachelor's degree or equivalent.

- Annual cap: 85,000 places under the regular cap and the U.S. advanced-degree exemption combined, comprising 65,000 regular-cap places and 20,000 additional places for eligible U.S. advanced-degree holders. Certain employers and categories are exempt.
- Duration: Generally granted for up to three years initially, with extensions commonly permitted up to six years, subject to applicable exceptions.
- Indian professionals: Indian nationals account for a substantial share of H-1B beneficiaries, making changes to the programme particularly important for India.
- Employment-based permanent residence: The PERM labour-certification process is a key step for many employer-sponsored green card applications. It is distinct from the H-1B temporary work visa.

Recent U.S. Immigration Policy Changes

- Wage-weighted H-1B selection: Effective February 27, 2026, the selection system gives greater weight to applications offering higher wages, while retaining opportunities across wage levels. This may disadvantage some entry-level placements and labour-intensive outsourcing firms.
- $100,000 payment requirement: A 2025 U.S. proclamation introduced a $100,000 payment requirement for certain new H-1B petitions involving workers outside the United States. Its implementation has faced legal challenges, so its enforceability must be distinguished from the administration's policy announcement.

Impact on India

- Indian IT sector: Higher hiring costs and wage-based selection could affect Indian IT service companies that depend on deploying employees to U.S. client locations.
- Services exports: The U.S. is a major destination for Indian software and IT-enabled services exports; tighter mobility rules may encourage firms to deliver more services from India.
- Indian professionals and students: Uncertainty over work visas and permanent residence may influence career planning and decisions about studying or working in the U.S.
- Potential opportunities: Companies may expand domestic U.S. hiring and offshore operations in India, while Indian professionals with specialised skills may remain in demand.
- Bilateral relations: Immigration restrictions could become a point of friction in India–U.S. relations, alongside cooperation in technology, trade and skilled-worker mobility.

Why Restrictions May Continue Beyond Trump

Immigration policy is influenced by more than the preferences of a single administration.

- Bipartisan concerns: Both major U.S. political parties have expressed concerns about visa fraud, wage suppression and the protection of domestic workers, although they differ on the extent and design of restrictions.
- Business interests: Technology companies seek access to specialised global talent, while some outsourcing firms face criticism over the use of lower-wage foreign labour.
- Domestic employment pressures: Concerns about employment opportunities for American graduates can sustain political support for tighter rules.
- Policy and legal continuity: Regulations, administrative decisions and court proceedings can extend the effects of immigration policies beyond a presidential term.

Way Forward

- For India: Diversify export markets and strengthen domestic research, innovation and high-value technology services.
- For IT companies: Expand local hiring where appropriate, develop offshore delivery models and invest in specialised skills.
- For Indian professionals: Build expertise in emerging areas such as artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, cloud computing and advanced engineering.

- For bilateral relations: India and the U.S. should pursue dialogue on transparent visa procedures, skilled-worker mobility and protection against recruitment abuses.

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3.Kashmir's Traditional Rice Varieties: East Asian Origins

Source: The Hindu

Why in News?

- A study by Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology (SKUAST-Kashmir) found that traditional Kashmiri rice varieties share genetic links with rice from the Korean Peninsula and Northeast China.
- These varieties contain valuable cold-tolerance genes, which could help develop climate-resilient rice.

Key Findings

- Researchers analysed 142 rice germplasm accessions from Kashmir and compared them with the global 3K Rice Genome Panel, comprising 3,010 rice samples.
- Genes such as HAN1 and CTB4a are associated with cold tolerance.
- The findings suggest historical movement of rice germplasm from East Asia to Kashmir, possibly through Central Asia and early trade routes or across the Himalayas.
- Traditional landraces preserve genetic traits that may have been lost in modern, high-yielding varieties.

Significance

- Climate change adaptation: Cold-tolerance genes can support crop breeding under changing climatic conditions.
- Food security: Genetic diversity helps strengthen agricultural resilience.
- Crop improvement: Traditional landraces can provide useful genes for developing improved rice varieties.
- Agricultural heritage: The findings offer insights into the historical movement and evolution of rice cultivation in Kashmir.

Germplasm Conservation

Germplasm refers to the genetic material of plants, including seeds and tissues, used for conservation, research and crop improvement.

- In-situ conservation: Preserving genetic diversity in natural habitats or through continued cultivation of traditional varieties by farmers.
- Ex-situ conservation: Preserving genetic material outside its natural setting through seed banks, field gene banks, tissue culture and cryopreservation.
- National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (NBPGR): A key Indian institution responsible for conserving and managing plant genetic resources.

Way Forward

- Conserve traditional rice landraces through seed banks and on-farm cultivation.
- Document their genetic traits and promote research into climate-resilient crop varieties.
- Encourage collaboration between farmers, agricultural universities and plant-breeding institutions.

4.Tigress T-138: Tiger Reintroduction in Buxa Tiger Reserve

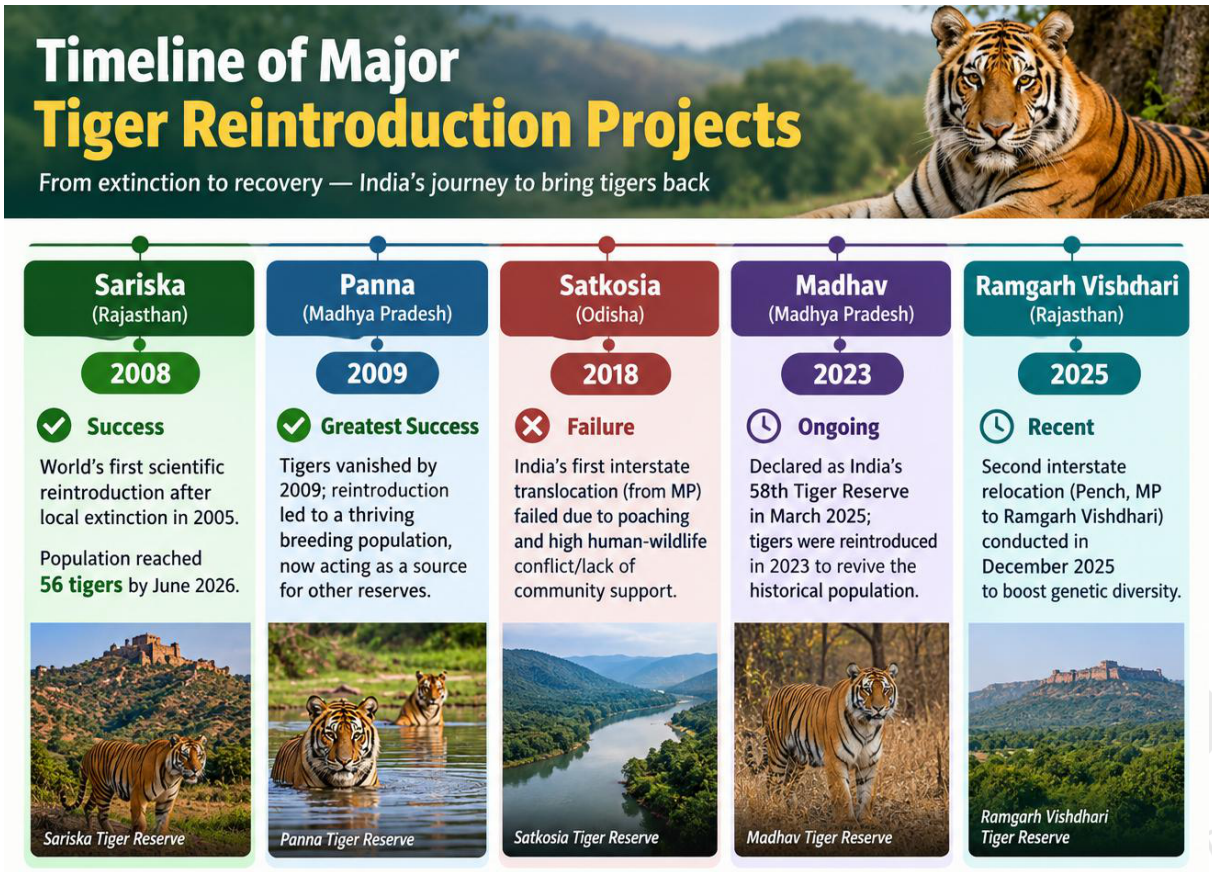
Source: The Hindu

Why in News?

- Tigress T-138, translocated from Bihar's Valmiki Tiger Reserve to West Bengal's Buxa Tiger Reserve, travelled around 35 km into Assam's Raimona National Park.
- Forest authorities are tracking the GPS-tagged tigress and coordinating across state boundaries.

Key Facts

- T-138: A three-year-old tigress translocated on September 30 as part of a tiger reintroduction programme.
- Buxa Tiger Reserve: Located in Alipurduar district, West Bengal; the reserve was established in 1983.
- Raimona National Park: Located in Kokrajhar district, Assam, near the Indo-Bhutan border; declared a national park in 2021.
- Valmiki Tiger Reserve: Located in Bihar and a source of tigers for the reintroduction programme.
- The operation marked India's first inter-state tiger translocation using an airlift, according to the report.



Latest Development: Buxa Tiger Reintroduction (2026)

As of **October 2, 2026**, a new chapter in tiger conservation began with the launch of the phased Tiger Reintroduction Programme in **Buxa Tiger Reserve (West Bengal)**.

- **The Release:** A three-year-old tigress, **T138**, was translocated from the **Valmiki Tiger Reserve (Bihar)** and released into a soft enclosure in Buxa.
- **Significance:** This is West Bengal's first such relocation project. Buxa was chosen due to its landscape similarity (Terai Arc ecosystem) to Valmiki and its role as a critical transboundary corridor connecting India with **Bhutan** and **Assam**.
- **Pre-Release Prep:** Over 380 hectares of grasslands were restored and 800+ chital (prey) were released to ensure a sustainable habitat.

Institutional Framework

Tiger reintroductions are not isolated events but highly scientific, multi-agency collaborations.

- **Key Agencies:** The **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)** (statutory body under MoEFCC), the **Wildlife Institute of India (WII)**, and respective **State Forest Departments**.
- **Legal Basis:** Conducted under the **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972** and the guidelines of the **National Tiger Conservation Authority**.
- **Active Management:** Includes habitat restoration, prey-base augmentation (moving deer/gaur), and voluntary village relocation to create "inviolate" core areas.

Objectives of the Reintroduction Programme

- Restore a viable tiger population in Buxa.
- Address the decline of tigers associated with habitat degradation, land-use changes and reduced prey availability.
- Strengthen tiger conservation and maintain ecological balance.

Significance of Raimona National Park

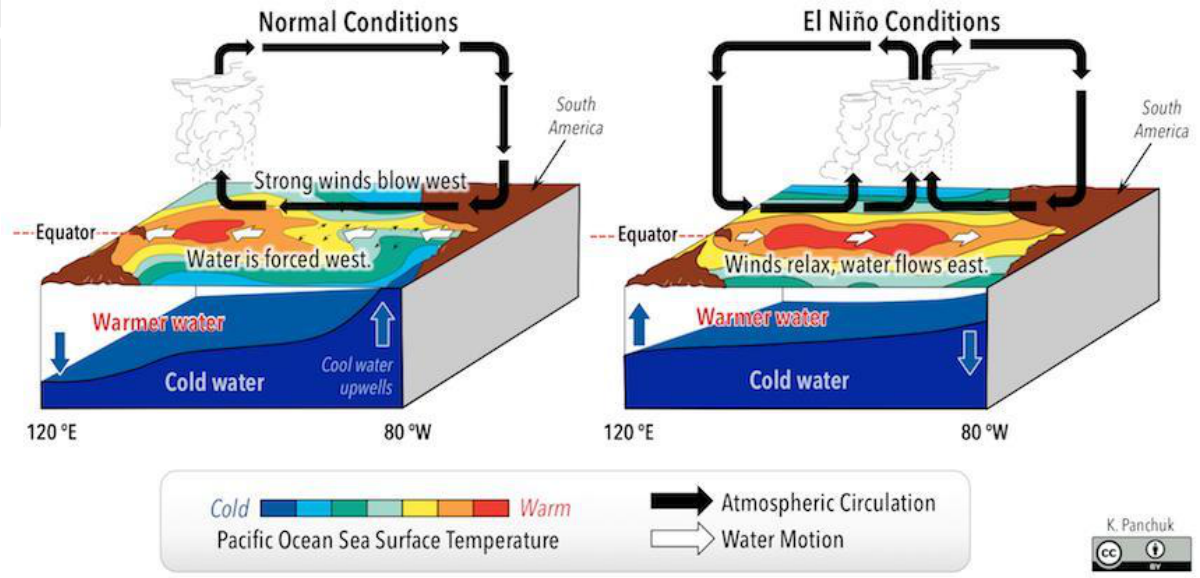
- Forms part of an important transboundary conservation landscape connected with Bhutan's Phibsoo Wildlife Sanctuary and Jigme Singye Wangchuck National Park.
- Wildlife movement across state and international boundaries highlights the need for landscape-level conservation.
- The tigress's presence has raised local concerns, underlining the importance of community awareness and human–wildlife conflict management.

5.'Godzilla' El Niño

Source: The Hindu

Why in the News?

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) warned that an exceptionally strong El Niño could trigger extreme weather, unusually high temperatures and food insecurity, with impacts potentially extending into 2027. "Godzilla" El Niño is an informal term, not an official scientific classification.



What is El Niño?

- Definition: Abnormal warming of sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean.
- Mechanism: Weakened trade winds allow warm surface waters to shift eastward, weakening the Walker circulation.
- ENSO phases: El Niño (warm), La Niña (cool) and ENSO-neutral.
- Measurement: Niño 3.4 region; Oceanic Niño Index (ONI) measures three-month average sea-surface temperature anomalies, while RONI adjusts for background tropical ocean warming.

Major Impacts

- Indian monsoon: El Niño often increases the risk of deficient southwest monsoon rainfall. The supplied news report states that the 2026 monsoon ended at 87% of the long-period average (LPA).
- Heatwaves: Higher temperatures increase heat stress, water demand and electricity consumption.
- Agriculture: Crop losses, increased irrigation demand and pressure on rural livelihoods.
- Food and water security: Droughts can reduce reservoir storage, groundwater recharge and agricultural output.
- Global impacts: Droughts and floods in parts of Africa and the Americas, regional temperature anomalies and marine ecosystem stress.

Way Forward

- Promote drought-resistant crops, crop diversification and micro-irrigation.
- Strengthen rainwater harvesting and watershed management.
- Improve seasonal forecasts and district-level heat alerts.
- Expand crop insurance and maintain effective food buffer stocks.
- Develop region-specific preparedness for droughts, floods and heatwaves.

Quick Revision

Term	Key fact
El Niño	Warm phase of ENSO
La Niña	Cool phase of ENSO

Niño 3.4	Key equatorial Pacific monitoring region
ONI	Three-month sea-surface temperature anomaly index
WMO	UN specialised agency for weather and climate

PRELIMS — MCQ

Q. With reference to El Niño, consider the following statements:

1. It involves warming of the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean.
2. It is associated with a strengthening of the Walker circulation.
3. It can influence the Indian southwest monsoon.

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

MAINS — GS PAPER III

Question: "Explain the mechanism of El Niño and examine its implications for the Indian monsoon, agricultural productivity and food security. Suggest suitable adaptation measures." (250 words)

Answer framework:

- Introduction: Define ENSO and El Niño.
- Body: Explain trade winds, Walker circulation, monsoon variability and socioeconomic impacts.
- Way forward: Climate-resilient agriculture, water conservation, early-warning systems and disaster preparedness.
- Conclusion: Strengthen climate resilience through science-based planning and region-specific adaptation.

6.Iran–Mecca Pact Nations De-escalation Talks

Source: The Hindu

Why in the News?

Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan held talks with Iran in Tehran to prevent further escalation in West Asia and avert a wider conflict involving Iran, the United States and Israel.

The discussions reportedly concluded without concrete announcements, but the participating countries agreed to continue dialogue.

Key Developments

- Participants: Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, Pakistan and Iran.
- Key officials: Saudi Defence Minister Khalid bin Salman, Pakistan's Army Chief Asim Munir, and Türkiye's intelligence chief Ibrahim Kalın.
- Iranian leadership: President Masoud Pezeshkian and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi.
- Objective: Prevent renewed hostilities and promote regional stability.
- Mediation: Pakistan and Qatar have also been involved in diplomatic efforts between Washington and Tehran.
- UN position: Secretary-General António Guterres has stressed the need to prevent further escalation.

What is the Mecca Joint Defence Agreement?

- A regional defence arrangement reportedly involving Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Türkiye, as described in the supplied news report.
- The initiative is aimed at cooperation on regional security and de-escalation.
- Important distinction: Do not confuse this reported arrangement with the 1981 Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), a separate regional organisation.

For examination purposes, verify the agreement's formal name, membership and legal status against official statements before treating it as an established treaty.

Why Is West Asia Facing Instability?



worldatlas.com

- Iran–US–Israel tensions: Threats and military confrontation raise the risk of a wider regional conflict.
- Yemen conflict: Houthi attacks on Saudi territory and infrastructure add to regional insecurity. The Houthis are aligned with Iran, though their relationship involves their own interests and decision-making.
- Strategic energy infrastructure: Attacks on oil facilities and shipping routes threaten global energy supplies.
- Regional rivalries: Competing security interests and proxy conflicts complicate diplomatic settlements.
- Diplomatic uncertainty: Talks without concrete outcomes may not immediately reduce the risk of renewed hostilities.

Significance for India

- Energy security: Instability can raise crude oil prices and India's import bill.
- Diaspora safety: Millions of Indians live and work across the Gulf and wider West Asia.

- Maritime security: Disruptions around the Strait of Hormuz and Red Sea can affect trade and shipping costs.
- Trade and connectivity: Prolonged conflict can disrupt commercial routes and regional connectivity projects.
- Strategic autonomy: India must maintain working relations with Iran, Israel, Saudi Arabia and the United States while supporting peaceful conflict resolution.

UPSC Prelims Practice MCQ

Q.Consider the following statements about West Asia:

1. The Gulf Cooperation Council was established in 1981.
2. The Strait of Hormuz is a strategically important route for global oil shipments.
3. The Houthis are based primarily in Yemen.

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

UPSC Mains Practice — GS Paper II

Question: “West Asian instability has significant implications for India's energy security, diaspora and strategic interests. Discuss how India can balance its relations with competing regional powers.” (250 words)

Answer framework:

- Introduction: India's economic and strategic stakes in West Asia.
- Challenges: Energy dependence, diaspora safety, maritime disruptions and regional rivalries.
- Approach: Strategic autonomy, multi-alignment, diplomatic engagement, energy diversification and maritime cooperation.
- Conclusion: A stable West Asia is essential for India's economic resilience and long-term strategic interests.