Topics

- Snakebite as disease
- human rights at sea’ initiative
- NCAP
- What does the Representation of the People Act, 1951 state with respect to requirements for valid nomination?
- Mains

By saurabh pandey sir

Target Mains 2024/25

Q“ Human rights at sea can be protected with good maritime security and good ocean governance “ Discuss

प्रश्न" अच्छी समुद्री सुरक्षा और अच्छे समुद्री प्रशासन से समुद्र में मानवाधिकारों की रक्षा की जा सकती है" चर्चा करें

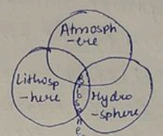
send your answer - Saurabh pandey upsc telegram channel

Q

"Biosphere will not remain unchanged/touched with changes in cryosphere". Elaborate.

Biosphere refers to the Zone of Earth where life exists. It encompasses all living organisms, plants, animals, and microorganism as well as habitats and ecosystem.

- Interaction between living organisms and their environment.



Cryosphere refers to the part of Earth surface where is in frozen forms includes glacier, ice sheets and permafrost.

Biosphere will not remain untouched with changes in cryosphere can significant impact on them. are :-

Sea level Rise

- Glacier and ice sheet melts to Rise sea level.
- to lead loss of livelihood,
- loss of Marine species
- loss of coastal habitats.
- To increase soil erosion.
- lead shifting of coastal population to centre India.

Habitat Loss

- loss of biodiversity.
- Species unique adapted to cold environment.

- Glacier and ice sheets melts lead habitats are lost.
- lead Habitat fragmentation (refers large habitat divided into smaller)
- Reduce Population of species.

Changing Water Availability

- Cryosphere stores amount of freshwater in form of ice and glacier etc.
- Ice Melting modified water availability in downstream ecosystem.
- affect freshwater

Adverse effect of Climate change

- Increased temperature
- Melting glacier stored carbon and microplastics
- Warming and CC affected ecosystem globally.
- ~~Right/of~~ Changing in cryosphere.

Steps taken

- Managing and Maintaining the impact of climate change
- ensure ecosystem health.
- Mitigate climate change impact.
- Modifying Habitats.

However changes in cryosphere have far implication for biosphere from Mitigate impact of climate change & modified or alter biodiversity and to ensure the Habitat health.

TOPERS FIRST FULL LENGTH TEST -2 (PRELIMS VIJAY SERIES)

1- Ankur
2- Puja yadav
3- Nikki Aggarwal

Prelims Vijay series TEST-2 (full length)

Student leaderboard

Student name	Marks	Grade	Rank
Ankur	137.93/200	B	1
Puja Yadav	118.6/200	B	2
Nikki Aggarwal	101.92/200	B	3
MAYANK AWASTHI	101.26/200	B	4th
Renu	93.23/200	C	5th
Asmita	89.94/200	C	6th

Powerful antidote to toxins in cobra, krait venoms developed

The current process of producing antivenom is outdated, involving injecting large animals with snake venom and collecting the animals' blood for the antibodies it produces. A group of scientists sidestepped animals and used human antibodies instead, eventually finding the potent 95Mat5

Rohini Subrahmanyam

For some people, snakes are exotic yet dangerous creatures of the wild; eerie but elusive, and not something to worry about in day-to-day life. For others, especially some farmers in India and Africa, they are a constant and terrifying threat to life.

Venom from snake bites leads to more than 100,000 deaths every year, with around 400,000 people left permanently disabled. The mortality burden is especially higher in low and middle-income countries in Africa and Asia, with India alone at a staggering average of 58,000 deaths in a year according to a 2020 report. However, considered a "poor man's disease", relatively less attention has been paid to the devastation caused by the bites. In some of these countries, snakebite incidence is distressingly high but inadequate access to proper healthcare prevents fast and efficient treatment, leading to disproportionately more deaths.

Things were set to improve in 2017 when the World Health Organization (WHO) finally stepped in to alert the world about one of its biggest hidden health crises. It officially classified snakebite envenoming as a highest priority neglected tropical disease.

The banded krait (*Bungarus fasciatus*) is a large species of elapid snake found in the Indian subcontinent. ARUP2602 (CC BY-SA 4.0)

Animals in the middle

A major issue is that the current process of producing antivenom is outdated: it involves injecting large animals like horses with snake venom and collecting the animals' blood for the antibodies it produces against the venom.

But the horses' blood could contain antibodies against other microorganisms as well, even against other components of the venom that are not harmful to humans. So only a fraction of the antibodies in the antivenoms is useful to humans, leading to more variability and the need for larger doses.

In addition, because these antibodies are produced in another animal, the chances of humans developing an adverse or allergic reaction to these antivenoms are also higher.

A variety of venoms

Driven by these concerns, a group of scientists – part of a consortium funded by the Wellcome Trust – decided to sidestep animals and use human antibodies instead. Using a type of toxin found in many kinds of snakes, they synthetically developed a broadly applicable human antibody against the toxin. Their results were recently published in the journal *Science Translational Medicine*.

"Venoms of snakes in India are so diverse that venoms of the same species across regions can't be neutralised by the same antivenom," Kartik Sunagar, head of the Evolutionary Venomics lab at the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, and one of the lead authors of the study, said.

"Even in the same geographical location, if you look at individuals of the same species, antivenom can only neutralise some venoms and not others. There is a stark variation in venoms, so that's why we wanted to figure out a solution that might work across regions and across species."

Screening billions of antibodies

The scientists focused on three-finger toxins (3FTxs) – one of the most abundant and lethal ingredients in elapid venoms. Elapids are a major medically relevant family of snakes that include cobras, kraits, and mambas.

The scientists narrowed their focus on α-neurotoxins, a specific class of 3FTxs that target receptors in human nerve and muscle cells. These toxins prevent the receptors from responding to acetylcholine, a neurotransmitter involved in carrying messages from the neurons to the muscles, leading to paralysis, an inability to breathe, and eventually death.

Joseph Jardine, an antibody expert at Scripps Research Institute, in California, led the initial work of "finding the needle in the haystack" – i.e. finding the best antibody that could target the toxins among the billions of human antibodies available.

The scientists first synthesised variants of their toxin of interest, called long-chain 3FTxs (3FTx-L, a type of three-finger α-neurotoxins), in the lab. They then screened billions of human antibodies expressed on the surface of yeast cells for ones that bound best to the toxins in their study. This selection of antibodies far exceeds any number of antibodies that an animal's immune system could cook up in response to a venom. After multiple rounds, they had a shortlist of antibodies that broadly reacted with most of the 3FTx variants they used.

All but king cobra

Nicholas Casewell's group at the Liverpool School for Tropical Medicine in the U.K. then tested the antibodies *in vitro* in human cells, to see which of them could best neutralise the toxins. This step brought them to an antibody they dubbed 95Mat5.

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Finally, Dr. Sunagar's group tested 95Mat5 *in vivo* in mice, to see if this broadly neutralising antibody could help protect against lethal doses of α-bungarotoxin, the 3FTx-L in the highly venomous many-banded kraits. They also injected mice with whole venom from king cobras, black mambas, and monocled cobras – all different elapid snakes from Asia and Africa with venom containing 3FTx-L variants – and tested to check how their antibody worked against them.

They found 95Mat5 worked well against all the snake venoms, protecting the mice from death, with the only exception being the king cobras' venom, where the antibody delayed but could not prevent death.

"We were surprised by the results of the black mamba, where the 3FTx-L is only 17% of the total venom composition. By knocking out that one toxin, we were able to protect mice fully from the other toxins in the venom in what may be a synergistic effect," said Irene Khalek, a scientist at Scripps Research Institute and one of the authors of the study.

An 'impossible' find

"The study is really well-performed, and I would expect that the antibody could be used as an important component in future antivenoms against mambas and cobras in Africa and Asia," Andreas Hougaard Laustsen-Kiel, head of the Tropical Pharmacology Lab at the Technical University of Denmark, said.

Dr. Laustsen-Kiel was involved in a different study, published in *Nature Communications* last year, where a group of scientists discovered a similar broadly neutralising antibody against long-chain α-neurotoxins from snakes.

"Because snake venoms are so complex, I would have thought it impossible to make an antibody that could knockout the whole venom," Dr. Sunagar said.

Closer to a universal solution

In the current study, the scientists found one reason why their antibody worked so well against their toxins of interest: the crystal structures of their antibody 95Mat5 and 3FTx-L variants revealed that the antibody bound the toxin exactly where the toxin would have bound its target receptor in human nerve and muscle cells. By mimicking the receptor-toxin interaction, the antibody could whisk the toxins away from the receptors and prevent them from exerting their deadly effects.

The current antibody works well against a specific kind of toxin present in the venom of many dangerous snakes, but it is also a small first step towards a universal antivenom.

The scientists said they are keen on discovering specific antibodies like these against toxins in other snake venoms as well, like in vipers.

"We need to discover antibodies for a couple of other toxins, then we can have a universal solution for the majority of snakes in the world," Dr. Sunagar said.

(Rohini Subrahmanyam is a freelance journalist.)

Snakebite as disease

- World Health Organization (WHO) stepped in to alert the world about one of its biggest hidden health crises.
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The Hindu analysis by saurabh pandey sir

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The Indian seafarer deserves better in choppy high seas

K.M. Seethi

an Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) Senior Fellow, is Director, Inter University Centre for Social Science Research and Extension (IUCSSRE), Mahatma Gandhi University (MGU), Kerala. He was Senior Professor of International Relations and Dean of Social Sciences at the MGU

With Indians playing a significant role in keeping the global shipping industry running, their welfare and safety acquires significance

Amid rising safety concerns among Indian seafarers following the recent attacks on commercial ships in sensitive geographical areas such as the Red Sea and the Strait of Hormuz, India submitted three papers to the 111th Session of the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) Legal Committee (LEG), which is from April 22 to 26, 2024. These submissions address crucial issues such as seafarers' security, contract terms, and broader maritime security challenges. India has stressed the need for a comprehensive approach to maritime security and advocated improved contractual conditions for seafarers. While acknowledging the IMO's efforts to combat maritime fraud, India has called for broader international cooperation to tackle various maritime threats, including piracy, armed robbery, extremist attacks, regional conflicts, and emerging risks such as drone attacks and the use of maritime weapons.

Sea piracy is back

Recent pirate attacks off the coast of Somalia, including hijackings, suggest a resurgence of piracy. In December 2023 and January 2024, Somali pirates targeted vessels such as the *MV Ruen* and *MV Lila Norfolk*. India has called for vigilance, proactive measures, and international cooperation to combat piracy and protect seafarers, in line with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

India has also highlighted the impact of unlawful recruitment practices on seafarers' well-being and international trade. Since 2020, over 200 cases of seafarer exploitation have been reported to the Indian Maritime Administration. India has urged international coordination to address these issues and ensure seafarers' rights under the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006.

The maritime industry, vital for global trade, depends heavily on seafarers who often face challenges and risks.

India, with 9.35% of global seafarers and ranking third globally, confronts these issues, evident from recent incidents such as the seizure of *MSC Aries* and the detention of *MT Heroic Idun* at Nigeria (this last case went on for several months).

These events highlight the vulnerabilities of Indian seafarers, catalogued by a survey, showing how a majority lacked legal representation, felt unfairly treated, and were unaware of their rights. India has submitted papers to the IMO's Legal Committee, which emphasise seafarers' security and contract terms. Yet, enhanced international cooperation is needed to safeguard seafarers and ensure uninterrupted navigation, especially amid rising incidents involving Indian seafarers and geopolitical tensions.

Three years ago, the Maritime Union of India highlighted a 40% increase in kidnappings in the Gulf of Guinea, with 134 cases of assault, injury, and threats reported. Incidents such as the kidnapping of 20 Indian nationals from the *MT Duke* (off the western coast of Africa) and the ship owners paying hefty ransoms highlight the dangers faced by seafarers.

An Indian initiative on rights

In response, the Indian government and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) launched the 'human rights at sea' initiative. Reports reveal cases of seafarers being held in foreign jails, stranded in foreign waters, and subjected to illegal detentions. 'Human Rights at Sea' has highlighted abuses against Indian seafarers, including 200 held in foreign jails and 65 stranded in Indonesia for 151 days. The NHRC has highlighted the challenges of holding ship owners accountable for violations against Indian seafarers operating under foreign registrations to evade taxes and has stressed the need for proactive cooperation among stakeholders and mechanisms to protect human rights in the maritime industry.

Maritime piracy is a growing concern for Indian seafarers. With around 2,50,000 Indian seafarers serving on specialised cargo vessels worldwide, recent data from the International Maritime Bureau show a more than 10% increase in serious piracy incidents over the last 10 months. Armed pirates have boarded nearly 90% of targeted cargo ships, endangering seafarers.

Addressing piracy requires a comprehensive land-based solution. While private guards on merchant navy ships can deter piracy, the volatile nature of piracy-prone oceans poses challenges, as highlighted by Bjorn Hojgaard, CEO of Anglo-Eastern Univan Group, a major employer of Indian seafarers.

Further, reports suggest that Iranian shipping companies, in collaboration with international recruiters, exploit Indian seafarers by luring them with false promises of high salaries and opportunities in the Middle East. These seafarers often face overwork, are provided insufficient food, and are forced into transporting illegal cargo, despite paying hefty fees to secure overseas jobs.

Seafarers need support

Despite these risks, many Indian seafarers remain committed to their careers at sea, which makes it imperative to have improved rights and protection. Currently representing 9.35% of the global seafaring population, India aims to increase its share to 20% in the next 10 to 20 years, with ship management companies playing a crucial role.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Indian seafarers demonstrated their resilience and professionalism, enhancing India's standing in the global maritime market. The Ukraine-Russia conflict has also created opportunities for new players in the Indian maritime sector.

Recent attacks on commercial ships have heightened safety concerns among Indian seafarers, with some considering quitting their jobs due to security fears. This underlines the urgent need for government support and enhanced protection measures.

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On the National Clean Air Programme

Why has the implementation of Clean Air Action Plans been inconsistent? Why are cities not using the allocated funds set aside by the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change? What are some of the tools which can improve our understanding of the origins of pollution?

EXPLAINER

Anirban Banerjee

The story so far:

When the Indian government launched the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) in 2019, it was to cut the concentration of atmospheric Particulate Matter (PM) by 20-30% by 2024, from 2017 levels. This was later revised to 40% by 2026.

What is the NCAP?

Under NCAP, cities continuously violating annual PM levels in India need to prepare and implement annual Clean Air Action Plans (CAAPs). To facilitate this, the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change has allocated ₹10,422.73 crore. Most cities proactively submitted their CAAPs yet their implementation has been inconsistent. On average, only 60% of the allocated funds have been used thus far, according to the Ministry, with 27% of cities spending less than 30% of their designated budgets. Visakhapatnam and Bengaluru have spent 0% and 1% of their NCAP funds, respectively. Implementation delays hinder NCAP's success, particularly delays in approvals from the competent authorities (for example, the technical specification of tendering processes or for procuring products such as mechanical sweepers and electric buses).

There is also a lack of standard operating procedures for the implementation process. Time-consuming tasks required to implement control measures and the absence of well-defined timelines create further delays. Yet other reasons include bureaucratic red-tape and lingering doubts regarding the effectiveness of proposed mitigation measures. After the recent findings over the inefficacy of outdoor smog towers, decision-makers' hesitation is justified. But overcoming this also requires a systemic approach based on Emissions Inventory (EI), Air Quality (AQ) modelling, and Source Apportionment (SA).

Clearing the air: An anti-smog gun spraying water in New Delhi on January 12. FILE PHOTO

How can scientific tools help?

EI and SA studies are critical to identify and understand the origins of pollution. EIs provide insights into local pollution sources and their contributions, allowing experts to forecast future emissions based on demographic shifts and technological advancements across sectors, among other factors. EIs also help shape targeted pollution control strategies. They have their limitations, too, particularly in assessing the impact of transboundary pollution sources – such as when determining the effect of stubble-burning outside Delhi on the city's air quality.

SA studies offer a detailed analysis of contributions from various pollution sources, including those located afar. However, they aren't suited for predictive analysis and require substantial resources, including specialised personnel and equipment for chemical analysis. SA studies also can't distinguish between the origins of pollution, like, say, emissions from diesel trucks 200 m away and 20 km away, because diesel emissions have similar chemical signatures.

These gaps can be bridged through AQ modelling, which informs our understanding of pollution dispersion, including from distant sources.

How are these being used?

Ideally, the cities should look into EI and SA data to pinpoint air pollutants and prepare mitigation measures targeting each polluting activity. According to the Portal for Regulation of Air-pollution in Non-Attainment cities, only 37% of cities have completed EI and SA studies, meaning the remaining 63% don't have a clear idea about what is polluting their air. Thus, the effectiveness of CAAPs is questioned if the cities don't know the individual emissions reduction potentials of their proposed mitigation measures. Based on the potential and infrastructure requirements, cities need to set proper yearly targets and fund them.

Moreover, the NCAP's reliance on concentration data – a measure of population exposure to harmful pollution – further complicates the situation. Pollution from high-emitting industries and other sources outside city limits, carried into urban areas by winds complicates urban air-quality management. Many existing control measures focus only on primary PM emissions, neglecting their secondary precursors. A shift towards comprehensive strategies addressing both primary and secondary pollutants is thus important. Further, although one of the NCAP goals is to set up infrastructure to forecast AQ, no city barring Delhi, Pune, Mumbai, and Ahmedabad has a decision-support system.

What does NCAP need to succeed?

Beyond the need for data and models, swift implementation on the ground is essential. For this, implementation agencies should seek to reduce bureaucratic red tape by utilising shared, standardised technical evaluations. As NCAP funding is linked with the performance of cities (based on the annual average PM concentration reduction), prior budgeting and time management play crucial roles. Technical feasibility, budgeting, and time estimates need to be part of the initial plans.

The journey towards cleaner air in India, as charted by NCAP, will be difficult but is necessary. NCAP's success hinges on a multifaceted approach that combines rigorous scientific studies, strategic funds, and swift and effective implementation of mitigation measures.

Author works in Air Quality at Center for Study of Science, Technology and Policy.

THE GIST

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NCAP

- Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) launched National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) in January, 2019 with an aim to improve air quality in 131 cities (non-attainment cities and Million Plus Cities) in 24 States/UTs by engaging all stakeholders.
- The programme envisages to achieve reductions up to 40% or achievement of National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Particulate Matter10 (PM 10) concentrations by 2025-26.

BY 2024, POLLUTION CUT BY 30%

NATIONAL CLEAN AIR PROGRAMME (NCAP)

Cities to be covered: 102

GOAL: To meet annual average ambient air quality standards

MID-TERM (5 YEARS) TARGET: Reducing air pollution by 20-30% by 2024, taking 2017 as base year

HOW: Through city-specific air pollution abatement action plan

BUILD CAPACITY BY SETTING UP:

1. National emission inventory
2. Air Information Centre for data analysis
3. Source apportionment studies
4. Guidelines for indoor air pollution
5. Rural monitoring stations

CLEARING THE AIR

AIM OF NATIONAL CLEAN AIR PROGRAMME

To meet prescribed annual average ambient air quality standards at all locations in the country

How it will work

A NEW INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FINALISED

Apex committee under environment minister

Steering committee under secy (environment)

Monitoring committee under joint secretary

National project implementation unit at CPCB (5-6 scientific personnel)

State-level project monitoring units (3-4 scientific personnel)

National project monitoring unit in environment min (25 scientific personnel)

The Hindu analysis by saurabh pandey sir

- 82 cities under NCAP have been provided annual target of 3-15% reduction of PM10 levels to achieve overall reduction of air quality up to 40% PM10 levels, and 49 cities under XVth Finance Commission air quality grant, have been given an annual target of 15% reduction in annual average Particulate Matter10 (PM10) concentrations and improvement of good air quality days (Air Quality Index less than 200)

- There is also a lack of standard operating procedures for the implementation process.
- Time-consuming tasks required to implement control measures and the absence of well-defined timelines create further delays. Yet other reasons include bureaucratic red-tape and lingering doubts regarding the effectiveness of proposed mitigation measures.

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Why was the BJP candidate declared winner in Surat?

Why was the Congress candidate's nomination paper not accepted? What does the Representation of the People Act, 1951 state with respect to requirements for valid nomination?

Rangarajan.R

The story so far:

The BJP's candidate from the Surat Lok Sabha constituency in Gujarat has been declared elected unopposed. This follows the rejection of the nomination paper of the candidate set up by the Congress party and the withdrawal of nominations by other candidates.

What is the law for nomination?

Section 33 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 (RP Act) contains the requirements for a valid nomination. As per the RP Act, an elector above 25 years of age can contest Lok Sabha election from any constituency in India. The proposer(s) of the candidate should however be elector(s) from that respective constituency where the nomination is being filed. In case of a recognised party (national or State), the candidate needs to have one proposer. Candidates set up by unrecognised parties and independents need to be subscribed by ten proposers. A candidate can file up to four nomination papers with different set of proposers. This is to enable the acceptance of nomination of a candidate even if one set of nomination paper is in order.

Section 36 of the RP Act sets out the law with respect to the scrutiny of nomination papers by the Returning Officer (RO). It provides that the RO shall not reject any nomination for a defect that is not of a substantial character. However, it specifies that signature of the candidate or proposer found not genuine is grounds for rejection.

What is the current issue?

In the present case, the candidate of the Congress party for the Surat constituency, Nilesh Kumbhani had filed three sets of nomination papers. The proposers for these three nomination papers were his brother-in-law, nephew and business partner. A BJP worker objected to Mr. Kumbhani's nomination alleging that the signatures of his proposers were not genuine. The RO also received affidavits from the proposers claiming that they had not signed the nomination papers of the candidate. He sought reply/clarification from the candidate within a day on the objections raised. As the proposers could not be produced before the RO within the stipulated time for scrutiny, all three sets of nomination papers were rejected.

The election rules allow for a substitute candidate to be fielded by a political party. The nomination of this substitute candidate would be accepted if the nomination of the original candidate is rejected. In this case, the Congress party had fielded Suresh Padsala as its substitute candidate. However, the nomination paper of the substitute candidate was also rejected for the same reason, that is of the proposer's signature not being genuine. The other nominations were either rejected or withdrawn paving the way for BJP candidate Mukesh Dalal to be declared winner.

What is the legal recourse?

There have been at least 35 candidates who have been elected unopposed to the Lok Sabha. Majority of them were in the first two decades after independence with the last being in 2012.

In the instant case, however, the Congress party has alleged that the proposers were coerced to backtrack on their signatures. It has approached the Election Commission (EC) seeking to set aside the decision of the RO and restart the election process.

However, it is unlikely that the EC would act on this request as Article 329(b) of the Constitution read with RP Act provides that no election shall be called into question except by an election petition before the concerned High Court. One of the grounds on which such an election petition can be filed is improper rejection of nomination papers. Hence, the legal recourse available is to file an election petition in the Gujarat High Court.

The RP Act provides that High Courts shall endeavour to conclude such trials within six months, which has mostly not been followed in the past. Speedy disposal of election petitions would be a step in the right direction.

Rangarajan. R is a former IAS officer and author of 'Polity Simplified'. He currently trains civil-service aspirants at 'Officers IAS Academy'. Views expressed are personal.

THE GIST

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The Hindu analysis by saurabh pandey sir

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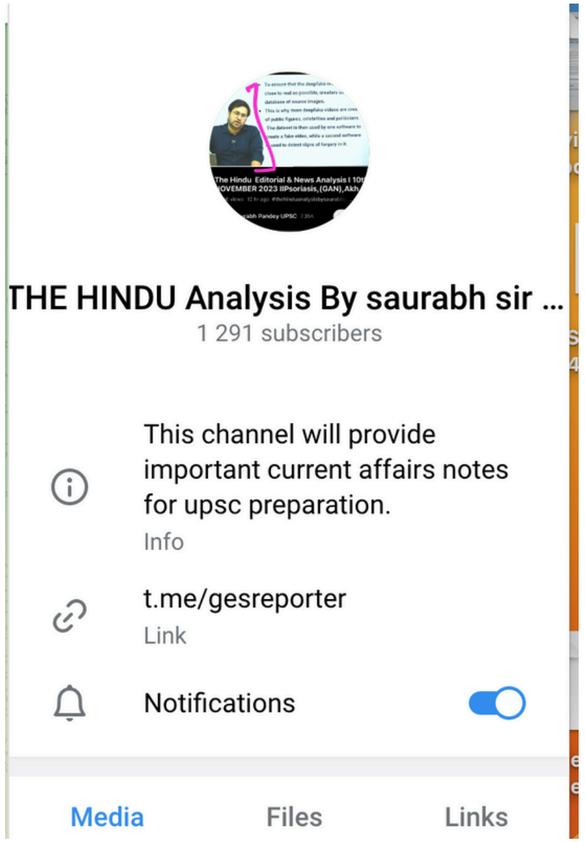

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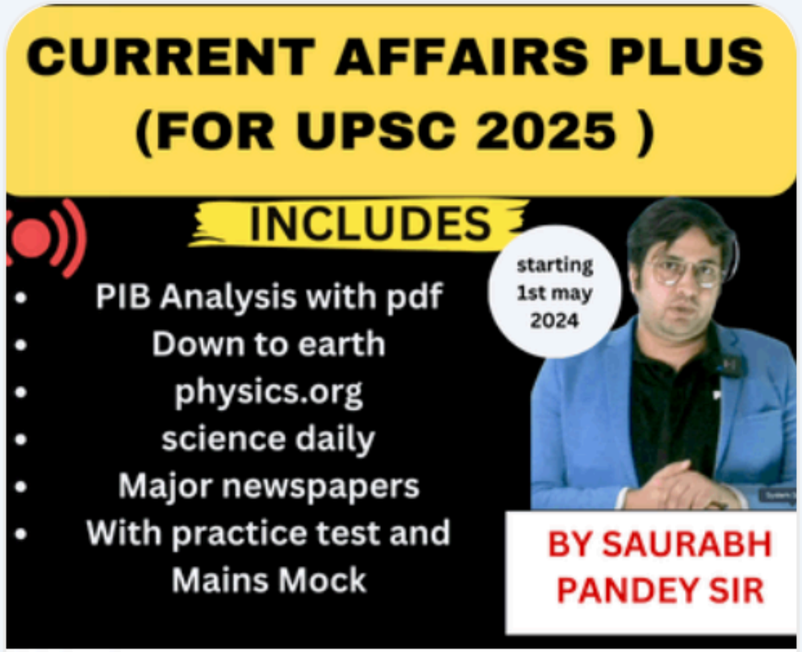

Current affairs Plus For UPS C 2025 (PIB, Down to eart...

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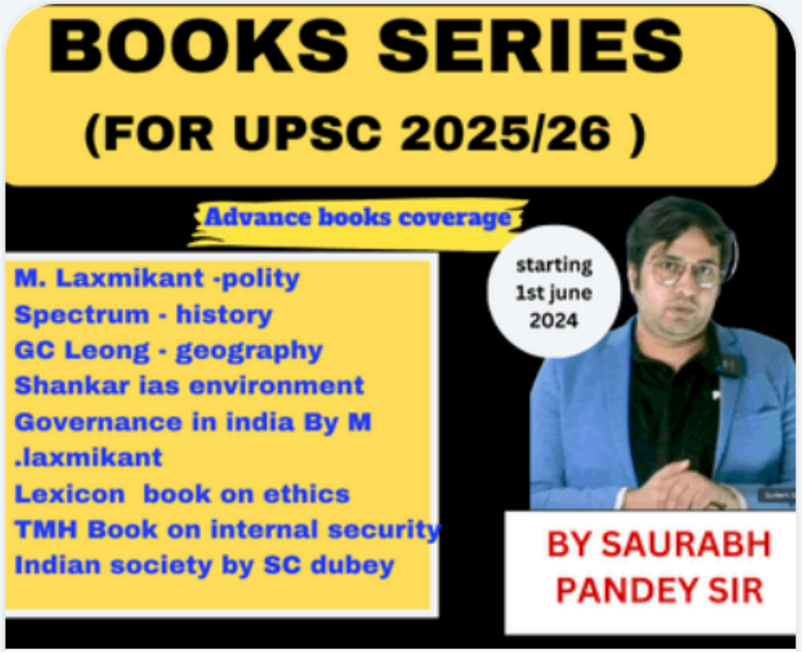

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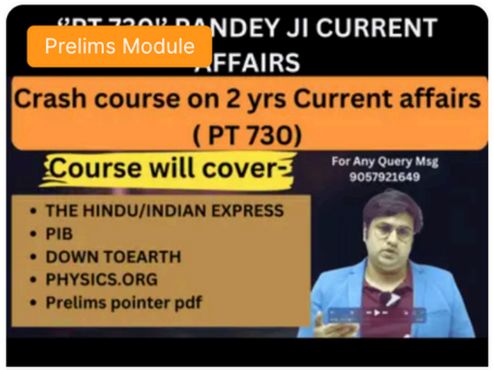

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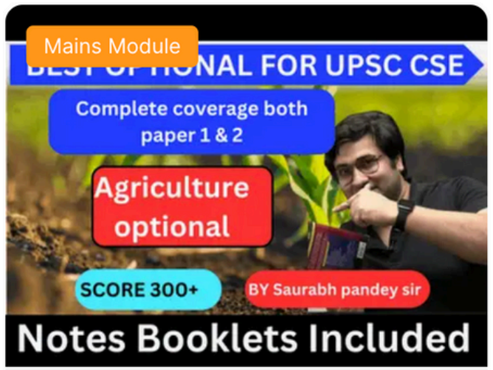

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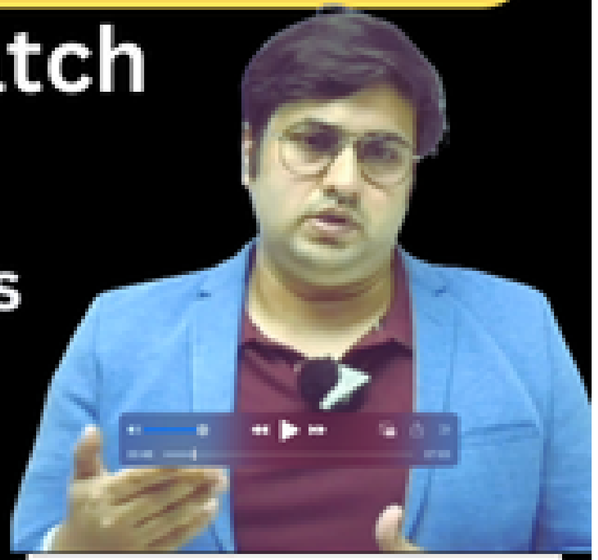
LAST MILE BATCH

"LAST MILE" BATCH For Prelims 2024

C-GESIA Batch

- PT 730- 2yrs current
- International relations
- Agriculture for GS
- 10 Full length Tests
- Advance Geo, environment and science



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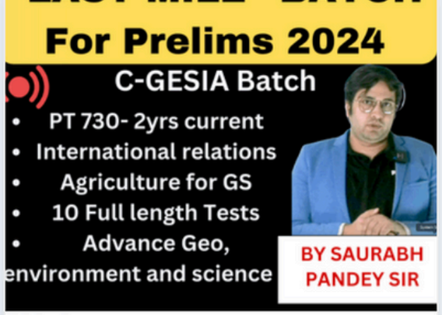

Last Mile Batch For UPSC Pr elims 2024. (C-GESIA BAT...

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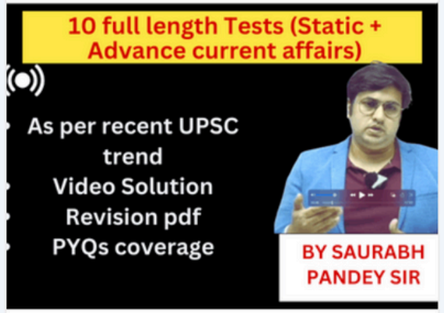
5 months



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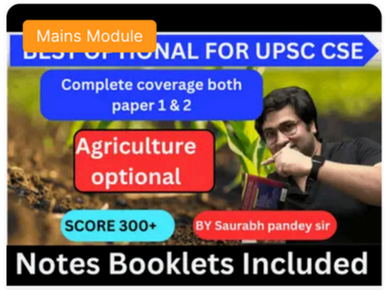

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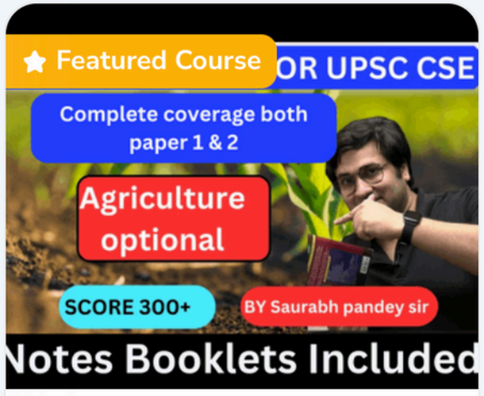

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8 months

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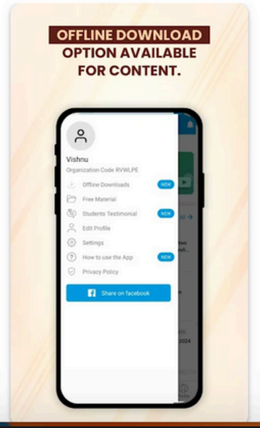

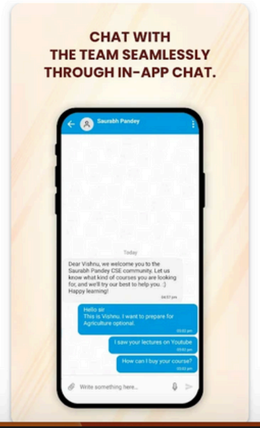

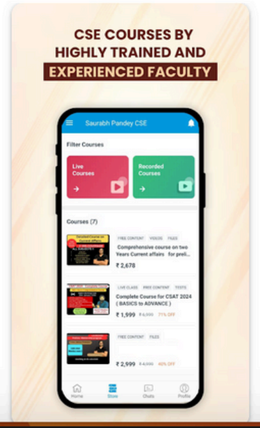

App support

Target Mains 2024/25

Q“ Human rights at sea can be protected with good maritime security and good ocean governance “ Discuss

प्रश्न" अच्छी समुद्री सुरक्षा और अच्छे समुद्री प्रशासन से समुद्र में मानवाधिकारों की रक्षा की जा सकती है" चर्चा करें

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