

Tourism in India

- In October 2022, the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Home Affairs organized the National Conference on Tourist Police (to develop tourist-specific policing), aimed at working with the police and sensitizing them on addressing the needs of foreign and domestic tourists.
- In partnership with the Ministry of Education, the Tourism Ministry has begun establishing 'Yuva Tourism' clubs to nurture young ambassadors of Indian tourism.
- In another instance, the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways is aiming to make India an attractive cruise tourism destination using state-of-the-art infrastructure.
- India's middle class is now prioritizing some of their discretionary spending on new experiences such as cruises.
- In partnership with the Ministry of External Affairs, tourism officers have been placed in 20 Indian missions in countries that contribute to some of the highest foreign tourist arrivals in India.
- Their role includes facilitating and providing inputs for country-specific sensibilities and having them reflected in tourism products.
- Similarly, with the Ministry of Roadways and the Petroleum Ministry, steps are being taken to ensure that highways and fuel stations have clean sanitation infrastructure.
- The Ministry of Tourism is also funding several commercial flight routes in partnership with the Ministry of Civil Aviation, making them viable.

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New draft National Tourism Policy 2022

- The new draft of National Tourism Policy 2022 aims to do just this.
- The policy has been formulated after situational analysis including the impact of COVID-19 and taking into account future projections for the tourism sector with a vision for India@100.
- One of the ideas includes an institutional structure that can take concurrent and coordinated action across the Union, State, and local government levels in partnership with industry.
- It is this 'whole of government' approach that has equipped India with the ability to host the G-20 presidency 20 countries, 11 special invitee countries, and nearly one

lakh delegates will participate in 200 meetings at over 50 locations.

- Every delegate or visitor who is in India to attend the G-20 summit will return as a brand ambassador and spread the word on India's rich cultural, spiritual, and natural heritage.
- The Ministry of Tourism's declaration of "Visit India Year 2023" aims to promote various tourism products and destinations to increase India's share in the global tourism market.

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School without barrier

- A UNESCO 2019 report mentioned that children with disability/disabilities (CWD) comprise 1.7% of the total child population in India (Census 2011).
- As they are faced with physical, institutional, socioeconomic, and communication barriers from an early age, more than 70% of five-year-olds with disabilities in India have never attended any educational institution
- Several barriers impede the participation of CWD in accessing educational opportunities such as inaccessible school buses; inaccessible facilities in schools

(drinking water facilities, canteens, and toilets); and inappropriate infrastructure in classrooms (uncomfortable seating, slippery flooring, and low illumination).

- Misinformed attitudes and perceptions among parents, teachers, staff, and communities' further influence the child's emotional development.
- The lack of teaching and learning practices that integrate inclusive technologies and digital equipment to engage the child, such as assistive devices, are additional challenges.
- Article 21A of the Constitution and the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 outlines the fundamental right to education and the right to have free and compulsory education for children aged 6--14 years.
- The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, which adopted a 'zero rejection policy', emphasizes that "every child with special needs, irrespective of the kind, category and degree of disability, is provided meaningful and quality education".
- India ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Aligning with this commitment, the government launched the Accessible

India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan) in 2015.

- An important pillar of this campaign is accessibility to the built environment.
- The government has also been supportive of the principle of Leave No One Behind (LNOB), which is the central, transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- Anchored under the Mainstreaming LNOB project by UN-Habitat, pilot training programs on enhancing accessibility and inclusion were implemented in two schools in Delhi with support from IIT Kharagpur and the Department of Social Welfare, Delhi government.
- A multi-pronged participatory approach towards providing an enabling environment for the empowerment of future citizens is needed to ensure that stakeholders in the school ecosystem collectively work towards promoting accessible inclusion in schools.
- This includes awareness and sensitisation programmes for children, parents, and caregivers; training trainers for upskilling of school faculty and special educators and providing access to updated teaching toolkits and materials; technical training for local

government departments; and a co-learning platform for knowledge-sharing between all.

- Additionally, five principles equitability, usability and durability, affordability, cultural adaptability, and aesthetic appeal should be embedded from the planning to implementation to evaluation stages of providing infrastructure services in schools.

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Ken Betwa link

What is the Ken-Betwa link?

- The link will be in the form of a canal that will be fed by the new Daudhan Dam on the Ken, to be built within the Panna Tiger Reserve.
- The national government has said that the dam will generate 103MW of hydroelectric power.
- Hydrological and ecological experts aren't convinced, mainly because the government's plan is based on a 'surplus and deficit' model'

What clearances has the KBLP received?

- India enacted the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 at a critical juncture, when its wildlife was in peril.

- The key provisions of the Act (Sections 18 and 35) relate to setting aside areas of significance to wildlife as 'sanctuaries' and 'national parks'. Sections 29 and 35(6) restrict human activities within them without prior approval.
- In the case of the Panna Tiger Reserve, the Central Empowered Committee (CEC) of the Supreme Court has found such diversion to not be necessary to improve and better manage wildlife in the park.
- Additionally, downstream of the national park lies the Ken Gharial Sanctuary, created to protect the critically endangered Gangetic gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*).

What about its legality?

- There are significant legal problems with the approval granted to the KBLP.
- The CEC has stated that the "approval by the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife to the Ken -Betwa link Project has not been proved to be necessary for the improvement and better management of the wildlife therein as provided in Section 35(6) of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

How will Panna's tigers be affected?

- The Panna tiger reserve lost all of its tigers by 2009, requiring a remarkable effort spanning almost a decade to reintroduce them.
- Panna is an exceptional tiger habitat because of its deep gorges, which will be drowned if a new dam is built.
- Independent experts have also said that it will be more economical and faster if the governments restored Bunderlkhand's erstwhile Chandel-period lakes and ponds and if they replicated the successful field- pond schemes on priority.
- The region is already blessed with adequate annual rainfall.
- Against this background, rushing the KBLP sans due diligence both technical and legal will intensify water conflicts between Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh; dash locals' longstanding expectations of irrigation and drinking water; and cost a decade's labor and fund.

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GM crops

- Bt cotton is the only genetically modified (GM) crop that has been approved for commercial cultivation in 2002 by the Government of India. Long-term studies were conducted by ICAR on the impact of Bt cotton

which did not show any adverse effect on soil, microflora, and animal health.

- However, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Science and Technology, Environment and Forests, in its report on 'Genetically modified crops and its impact on the environment', submitted to parliament on August 25, 2017, recommended that GM crops should be introduced in the country only after critical scientific evaluation of its benefit and safety, and also recommended restructuring of the regulatory framework for unbiased assessment of GM crops.
- In 2002 approval for the commercial release of Bt cotton hybrids/ varieties resistant to cotton bollworms were given.
- Bt Brinjal resistant to brinjal shoot fly developed by M/S Mahyco in collaboration with University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad; Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore and ICAR-Indian Institute of Vegetable Research, Varanasi was approved by GEAC in 2009 but due to 10 years moratorium imposed on GM crops by the Technical Expert Committee (TEC) appointed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India, no further action on commercialization has been taken.
- GM mustard Dhara Mustard Hybrid 11 (DMH 11) developed by Delhi University is pending for commercial release as GEAC has advised to generate complete safety assessment data on environmental bio-safety, especially science-based beneficial insect species. No such request is pending in the matter.
- ICAR always promotes the science based innovative technology including research on GM crops. 'Network Project on Transgenic in Crops' (presently Network Project on the Function pigeon pea and Genetic Modification in Crops) was launched by ICAR in 2005 for development of GM crops in the case of pigeonpea, chickpea, sorghum, potato, brinjal, tomato and banana for different traits and the material is in different stage development.
- The Government of India has very strict guidelines to test and evaluate the agronomic value of the GM crops so as to protect the interests of the farmers.
- These guidelines address all concerns with regard to the safety of GM seeds.
- The regulatory system for GM crops as operative in the Department of

Biotechnology, Ministry of Science and Technology (Review Committee on Genetic Manipulation; RCGM) and Ministry of Environment and Forests (Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee; GEAC) has guidelines to consider the GM crops on case-by-case basis towards testing.

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