

Daily Current Affairs

Date : 16 April 2026



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Launch of 'Project Caracal' in Rajasthan



Why in News?

- Recently, the Rajasthan Forest Department officially launched 'Project Caracal' in the state.



Key Points:

- Location:** The project was launched from the Ranthambore Tiger Reserve, situated in Sawai Madhopur.
- Project Implementation:** By the Rajasthan Forest Department, in collaboration with the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), SACON, and Tiger Watch.

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- **Objective of 'Project Caracal':** To map the Caracal population, enhance monitoring, and promote community participation in conservation efforts.
- **Project Leadership:** Led by Dr. Shomita Mukherjee as the Principal Investigator, with Dr. Ayyan Sadhu and Dr. Dharmendra Khandal serving as Co-Principal Investigators.

Facts for Prelims (Caracal):

- The Caracal is a medium-sized wild cat, known for its long black ears and its ability to leap over 3 meters high to catch flying birds.
- **Scientific Name:** Caracal caracal.
- **Local Name:** In India, it is known as 'Syahgosh' (meaning 'Black-eared Cat').
- **Habitat:** Found in semi-arid scrublands, savanna grasslands, dry forests, and ravines.
- **Distribution in India:** Primarily found in Rajasthan and Gujarat.
- **In Rajasthan:** It is predominantly found in the Ranthambore Tiger Reserve and the Mukundra Hills Tiger Reserve.
- Apart from India, the Syahgosh is found in several countries across Africa, the Middle East, and Central and South Asia.

Conservation Status:

- **IUCN Red List:** Least Concern (Lowest Risk Category).
- **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Included in Schedule I.
- **Note:** In 2021, the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) and the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change included the Caracal in the list of 'Critically Endangered' species under the 'Species Recovery Programme'.

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Financial Assistance for the 'Rajasthan Highway Modernization Project'

Why in News?

- Recently, the World Bank's Board of Executive Directors approved the 'Rajasthan Highway Modernization Project'—valued at over \$225 million (approximately ₹2,000 crore)—aimed at improving the efficiency, resilience, and safety of state highways in Rajasthan.



Key Points:

- Loan Amount:** A loan of \$225 million from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD).
- Maturity:** The final maturity period of the loan is 35 years. This includes a 'Step-up Loan' feature as well as a 5-year grace period.

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- This approved project marks the introduction of the ‘Step-up Loan’ facility in India for the very first time.
- **Step-up Loan Facility:** A Step-up Loan is a repayment mechanism wherein the initial monthly installments (EMIs) are lower, and the EMI amount gradually increases over time as income levels rise.
- Through this project, approximately 800 kilometers of selected highways in the state will undergo upgrading and maintenance. Furthermore, this project will prove instrumental in transforming the Rajasthan State Highway Authority into a modern and service-oriented institution.

Facts for Prelims (Externally Aided Projects in Rajasthan):

- In accordance with the recommendations of the 12th Finance Commission, the Government of India has been providing external financial assistance to the state on a ‘back-to-back’ basis for new projects approved on or after April 1, 2005. Under this arrangement, the state receives the exact same maturity period, grace period, and amortization schedule as those obtained by the Government of India from external lenders.
- **Currently, a total of 14 projects are being implemented in Rajasthan:—**

Serial No.	Scheme	Organization	Description
1.	Rajasthan Urban Sector Development Program RUIDP (Phase-III)	3853 crore (highest expenditure) (4017.56 crore cost)	ADB (Asian Development Bank) — Water supply and sewerage works in Tonk, Sriganganagar, Jhunjhunu, Pali, Bhilwara. Works are in progress in a total of 12 cities.

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2.	Rajasthan Medium Urban Sector Development Project (Phase-IV) Tranche-I	ADB	Water supply and sewerage works in 14 cities. Project duration: January 2020 to November 2028; sewerage, sludge and septage management in 12 other cities.
3.	Rajasthan Medium Urban Sector Development Project (Phase-IV) Tranche-II	ADB	Under this project, infrastructure work is being carried out in 16 cities.
4.	Rajasthan State Highway Investment Project, Tranche-II	ADB	March, 2025 (completed)
5.	Rajasthan State Highway Investment Project, Tranche-III	ADB	-
6.	Rajasthan Forestry and Biodiversity Development Project Phase-2	AFD (Agence Française de Développement)	Strengthening, development and conservation of natural forests in 13 districts (Eastern Rajasthan).
7.	Rajasthan Rural Water Supply	JICA	Construction of water treatment plants and water

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	Fluorosis Mitigation Project (Phase-2)	(Japan International Cooperation Agency)	supply facilities in Jhunjhunu and Barmer districts.
8.	Rajasthan Water Sector Livelihood Improvement Project	JICA	Rehabilitation and restoration of 137 irrigation projects in 30 districts of Rajasthan.
9.	Desert Areas Rajasthan Water Sector Restructuring Project (Tranche-1 & II)	NDB (New Development Bank)	70% NDB and 30% State funding. Beneficiary districts (10): Sriganganagar, Hanumangarh, Churu, Nagaur, Bikaner, Jhunjhunu, Sikar, Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, Barmer.
10.	Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project-II	WB + AIIB	WB + AIIB - 70%, Government of Rajasthan - 30%
11.	Rajasthan State Highway Development Program - II (Tranche-1)	WB	Financial partnership: (December 2025 - completed) World Bank - 1779 crore rupees State Government - 893 crore rupees Private sector - 323 crore rupees

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12.	Strengthening Public Financial Management in Rajasthan Project	WB	Financing - World Bank + State Government Project duration - July 2018 to June 2025 (completed)
13.	Transmission System Green Energy Corridor Project-II in Rajasthan	KfW Germany	47% KfW loan, 33% Central grant, 20% State share
14.	Rajasthan Climate Change Response and Ecosystem Services Enhancement	JICA	Sustainable ecosystem management, biodiversity conservation and rural development in 19 districts of Rajasthan.

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Rajasthan Shamlat Convention – 2026: Jaipur

Why in News?

- The ‘Rajasthan Shamlat Convention – 2026’ was organized on April 15–16, 2026, at the Indira Gandhi Panchayati Raj Institute (IGPRS), Jaipur.



Key Points:

- **Theme of the Convention:** Shaping our Prosperity with Commons.
- **Objective:** To ensure the conservation and optimal utilization of common resources (pastures, water sources, forests, wetlands, etc.) in Rajasthan.
- **Key Organizers:** Foundation for Ecological Security (FES); International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP) – 2026; Department of Panchayati Raj; and Department of Agriculture, Government of Rajasthan.
- **Shamlat:** In Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, and Jammu & Kashmir, ‘Shamlat’ land refers to common village land designated for community use—such as for grazing, pathways, or ponds. Managed by the Gram Panchayat, this land is collectively owned.

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Other Significant Points:

- **Gau Mata Ashray Sthal (Cow Shelters):** The Government of Rajasthan announced the establishment of 'Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Pasture Development-based Gau Mata Ashray Sthal' in one Gram Panchayat within each of the 457 Panchayat Samitis across the state, intended for destitute cattle.
- **150 Seed Banks in the State:** To facilitate the development of Gocher (grazing) and Oran (sacred grove) lands, and to promote indigenous trees, fodder, and grasses, the Government of Rajasthan announced the establishment of 150 botanical seed banks in its 2024–25 budget.

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‘Nari Shakti Vandan Sammelan’: Jaipur

Why in News?

- On April 15, 2026, the ‘Nari Shakti Vandan Sammelan’ (Women's Empowerment Conference) was organized at the Birla Auditorium in Jaipur.



Key Points:

- Main Theme of the Conference:** "From Panchayat to Parliament: Women in Decision-Making—Preparing for a New India."
- Objective of the Conference:** To raise societal awareness regarding the ‘Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam’ (Women's Empowerment Act), which grants 33 percent reservation to women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies.

Facts for Prelims:

Key Schemes Implemented by the State Government for the Socio-Economic Empowerment of Women:

Educational Development:

- Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (Save the Daughter, Educate the Daughter) Scheme.

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Economic Development:

- Mukhyamantri Nari Shakti Udyam Protsahan Yojana (Chief Minister's Women's Entrepreneurship Promotion Scheme).
- Mukhyamantri Nari Shakti Prashikshan evam Kaushal Samvardhan Yojana (Chief Minister's Women's Training and Skill Enhancement Scheme).
- Mukhyamantri Work-from-Home – Job Work Yojana (Chief Minister's Work-from-Home Scheme).
- Panna Dhai Suraksha evam Samman Yojana (Panna Dhai Safety and Dignity Scheme).

Social Welfare:

- Mukhyamantri Kanyadan Yojana (Chief Minister's Daughter's Marriage Assistance Scheme).
- Vidhavā Vivāh Upahār Yojana (Widow Remarriage Gift Scheme).
- LPG Cylinder Subsidy Scheme.
- Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (Prime Minister's Maternity Benefit Scheme).
- Kishori Balika Yojana.
- Mahila Vikas Karyakram (Women's Development Program).
- Mukhyamantri Samuhik Vivah evam Anudan Yojana (Chief Minister's Mass Marriage and Grant Scheme).
- Lado Protsahan Yojana (Lado Incentive Scheme).
- Kalibai Bhil Udaan Yojana.
- 181 Women's Helpline.
- Formation of 600 'Kalika' Patrolling Units and 65 'Anti-Romeo' Squads.
- The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.

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- Three-Tier Women's Grievance Redressal Committee.
- Kalibai Bhil Women and Child Development Research Institute.
- State Hub for Women's Empowerment: "Mission Shakti."

Social Security:

- Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme.
- Mukhyamantri Ekal Nari Samman Pension Yojana (Chief Minister's Single Women's Dignity Pension Scheme).
- Divisional-Level 'Nari Niketan' (Women's Shelter) / State-Level 'Mahila Sadan' (Women's Home).

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NEWS IN SHORTS

S. No.	News
1.	<p>Manushree Saxena</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Manushree Saxena, an 8-year-old karate player from Jaipur, has earned a Black Belt (2nd Degree) and secured a place for herself in the 'Asia Book of Records'.
2.	<p>IAS Shankar Lal Kumawat</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Recently, the Central Government appointed Sikar resident and IAS officer Shankar Lal Kumawat as the Joint Secretary in the Department of Revenue, under the Ministry of Finance.Shankar Lal Kumawat is an IAS officer of the 2010 batch, belonging to the Tamil Nadu cadre.
3.	<p>ADB's 'Environmental and Social Framework Orientation Workshop': Jaipur</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Recently, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) organized a two-day orientation workshop on its Environmental and Social Framework (ESF) with the objective of providing a foundational understanding of environmental and social standards.Venue: Jaipur.
4.	<p>Jodhpur's 'Mharo Khet' Featured in TIME Magazine</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">'Mharo Khet', located near Jodhpur, has been included by TIME magazine in its 2026 list of the 'World's Greatest Places'.Spread across 40 acres, this boutique farm stay offers a nature-centric experience, featuring sustainable practices, farm-to-table dining, and 10 luxury cottages.

5.

Official Language Seminar Organized by the Department of Financial Services in Udaipur

- The Department of Financial Services (DFS) under the Ministry of Finance organized an Official Language Seminar in Udaipur on April 9–10, 2026.
- **Main Theme of the Seminar:** ‘The Contribution of Indian Languages to the Nation's Development’.



NATIONAL

Harvest Festivals in India

Why in News?

- The President and the Vice President have extended their greetings on various harvest festivals and New Year celebrations across India.



Key Points:

Various Harvest Festivals and New Year Celebrations:

- **Baisakhi** – Punjab and Haryana
- **Bohag Bihu** – Assamese New Year
- **Meshadi Puthandu** – Tamil New Year
- **Vishu** – Kerala New Year
- **Pana Sankranti** – Odia New Year
- **Cheiraoba** – Lunar New Year in Manipur
- **Poila Baisakh** – Bengali New Year

Indian Governance and State System

Composition of the Lok Sabha: Proposal for a Constitutional Amendment Bill

Why in News?

- The Central Government has proposed the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026, and the Delimitation Bill, 2026.

Key Points:

Key Features of the 131st Constitutional Amendment Bill

- **Increase in the Number of Lok Sabha Members:** It is proposed to increase the membership from the current 543 members to 850 members. Of these, 815 members will be from the States and 35 members from the Union Territories.
- **Amendment to Article 82 of the Constitution:** This Bill proposes to remove the third proviso to Article 82. This proviso mandates that the next delimitation exercise shall be undertaken based on the first census conducted after the year 2026.
- Removing the aforementioned proviso will facilitate the delimitation exercise using census data available prior to the 2026-27 census.
- **Amendment to Article 334A:** This amendment will ensure the implementation of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (Women's Reservation Act), which guarantees a one-third reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies immediately following the delimitation exercise.

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Key Features of the Delimitation Bill, 2026

- Upon enactment, this Bill will repeal and replace the Delimitation Act, 2002.
- **Delimitation Commission (DC):** The Central Government shall constitute a Delimitation Commission. This Commission shall be presided over by a sitting or retired Judge of the Supreme Court.
- **Functions:** The Delimitation Commission shall readjust the allocation of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, and redefine the boundaries of constituencies based on the latest census data.
- **Orders of the Delimitation Commission:** Once published in the Gazette of India, the orders of the Delimitation Commission shall have the force of law and shall not be open to challenge in any court of law.

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INTERNATIONAL

Khanij Bidesh India Limited (KABIL)

Why in News?

- KABIL has obtained environmental clearance for the deep exploration of 5 lithium blocks in Argentina.



KABIL
खनिज बिदेश इंडिया लिमिटेड
KHANIJ BIDESH INDIA LTD.

Key Points:

- Lithium is a soft, silvery-white alkali metal, and it possesses the lowest density among all metals.
- Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile (the 'Lithium Triangle') account for more than 75 percent of the global lithium supply.

About KABIL:

- **Introduction:** Established in 2019, it is a Joint Venture (JV) company formed by National Aluminium Company Limited (NALCO), Hindustan Copper Limited (HCL), and Mineral Exploration and Consultancy Limited.
- The company operates under the aegis of the Union Ministry of Mines.
- **Objective:** The company identifies, acquires, develops, processes, and commercially utilizes deposits of strategic minerals—including lithium—located abroad, in order to ensure their supply to India.

BRICS and Quad Groups

Why in News?

- India is set to host several key diplomatic meetings, including the BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting and the Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

Key Points:

BRICS

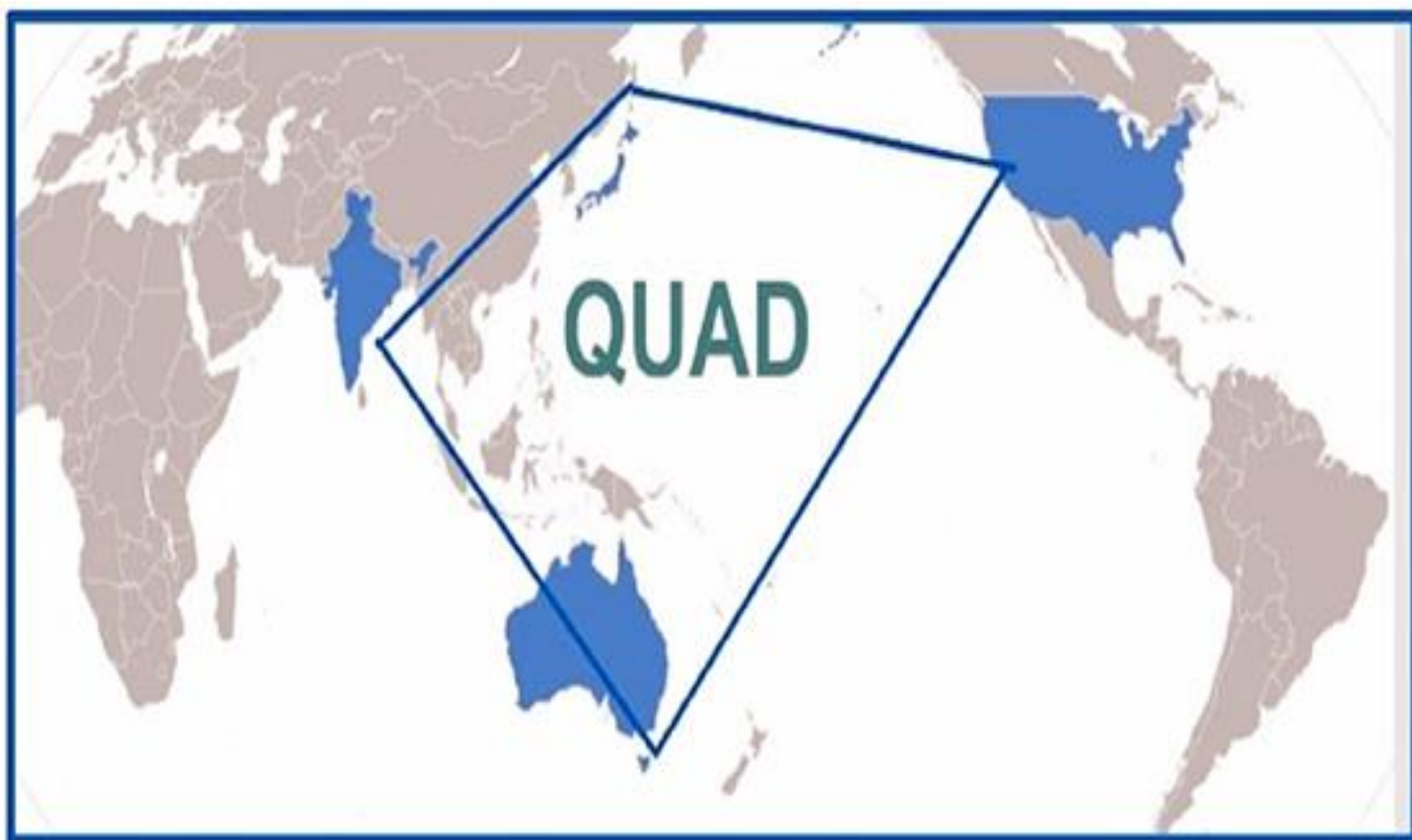
- History:** BRIC was formally launched in 2006, during a meeting of Foreign Ministers held on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York; its first summit was held in Russia in 2009.
- In 2010, South Africa was admitted to the group, thereby expanding it into BRICS; the country participated in its first summit in 2011.
- It brings together eleven major emerging markets and developing countries from across the globe.
- Member Countries:** Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, and the United Arab Emirates.
- In 2025, several countries—including Belarus, Bolivia, Kazakhstan, Cuba, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Uganda, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam—joined as BRICS partner nations.
- Objectives:** It serves as a useful platform for consultation and cooperation on contemporary issues of global and regional significance, as well as on matters concerning global political and economic governance.

Pillars of Cooperation:



Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad)

- This is an informal strategic grouping comprising India, the United States, Japan, and Australia, aimed at supporting a free, open, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region.



- **Origins:** It began as a disaster relief coordination effort following the 2004 Tsunami and was subsequently formalized in 2007, by Japan's then-Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe.
- However, the initiative lost momentum due to limited cohesion among members and concerns regarding its perceived anti-China stance.
- The group was revived in 2017, with broader objectives extending beyond maritime security.
- **Secretariat:** The Quad possesses neither a secretariat nor a formal decision-making structure, and it does not entail mutual defense commitments.

Various Developments Associated with the Quad

- Malabar Naval Exercises.
- In 2021, Quad leaders convened a virtual summit and released "The Spirit of the Quad," which outlined their shared principles and objectives.
- **Quad Cancer Moonshot:** The Cancer Moonshot is a joint endeavor aimed at reducing cancer-related deaths—particularly those caused by cervical cancer—within the Indo-Pacific region, by mobilizing both public and private resources.
- Under this initiative, India will supply partner nations with HPV vaccines, screening kits, and diagnostic equipment valued at \$7.5 million.
- **Quad Critical Minerals Initiative:** The Critical Minerals Initiative aims to strengthen and diversify global supply chains for essential minerals.

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Quantum Computing

📣 Why in News?

- On the occasion of World Quantum Day, India's first quantum computing testbed facility was launched at SRM University, located in Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh.



📌 Key Points:

- April 14 is observed as World Quantum Day. This date (4/14) refers to the first three digits of Planck's constant ($4.14 \times 10^{-15} \text{ eV}\cdot\text{s}$), a fundamental constant governing quantum physics.

Quantum Computing:

- Quantum computing is an emerging field of computer science. It utilizes the properties of quantum mechanics to solve problems that, lie beyond the reach of classical computers.
- Quantum computers employ quantum bits, or qubits (a linear combination of 0 or 1). These are analogous to the bits (a sequence of 0s or 1s) used in today's digital computers.



INDEXES AND REPORTS



UNDP Report: Economic Impacts of the West Asia Conflict on India



Why in News?

- A UNDP report titled 'Rising Military Tensions in the Middle East: Implications for Human Development in Asia and the Pacific' states that South Asia is bearing the greatest relative economic cost due to the conflict in West Asia.



Key Points:

Impact of the Conflict on India

- **Impact on Human Development:** This crisis could push approximately 2.5 million Indians into poverty.
- **Energy and Financial Impact:** Rising gas prices have weakened the Indian Rupee and necessitated a shift toward the use of coal. This has increased pollution and health-related risks.
- India sources over 40% of its oil imports and 90% of all LPG imports from West Asia.

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- **Impact on Trade and Healthcare Exports:** Supply disruptions have jeopardized non-oil exports to West Asia, which amount to approximately \$48 billion.
- **Impact on Agriculture and Food:** India sources over 45% of its fertilizer imports from West Asia, and approximately 85% of the urea produced in India relies on imported Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG).
- If supply disruptions persist for an extended period, it could have a severe impact on the upcoming critical Kharif season.
- **Impact on Labor and Remittances:** Approximately 9.37 million Indians work in the Gulf countries, and their jobs could be at risk. These individuals contribute 38–40% to India's total remittance inflows.

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International Labour Organization (ILO) Report

Why in News?

- The International Labour Organization (ILO) report titled “Universal Social Protection in Changing Labour Markets: Protecting Workers in All Forms of Employment” recommends robust social protection systems for all types of workers.



Key Points:

- According to the ILO, social protection is a set of policies and programs designed to prevent and alleviate poverty and vulnerability throughout an individual's entire life span.
- **This includes:** child and family benefits, maternity benefits, unemployment assistance, healthcare protection, old-age pensions, etc.

Why is Social Protection Necessary?

- **Preventing poverty:** Example: Subsidies under the Public Distribution System (PDS).
- **Enabling resilience against crises:** Example: Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana.

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- **Economic stability.**
- **Reducing gender inequalities: Example:** Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana.

ILO Recommendations

- **Guaranteeing universal access:** Comprehensive benefits from social protection schemes must be ensured for all workers, including the self-employed, temporary, and part-time workers.
- **Combining schemes to achieve universal coverage.**
- **Ensuring a minimum floor of national social protection.**
- **Other recommendations:** Measures such as adopting women-friendly arrangements and establishing policy coordination are required.

India's Initiatives for Expanding Social Protection Coverage

- **Cess-based Welfare Funds:** A cess levied on industries is utilized for the social protection of workers who do not fall within the scope of the traditional employer-employee relationship.
- **Sector-specific Welfare Boards:** These boards provide social protection benefits to workers in sectors such as mining, construction, the bidi industry, and the film industry.
- **Tripartite Governance Model:** Welfare boards ensure representation for workers, employers, and the government, thereby fostering dialogue and accountability at the institutional level.
- **Protection of Gig and Platform Workers:** A Platform Worker Welfare Levy has been introduced, and legislation such as the Rajasthan Platform-Based Gig Workers (Registration and Welfare) Act, 2023, has been enacted.