



# Daily Current Affairs

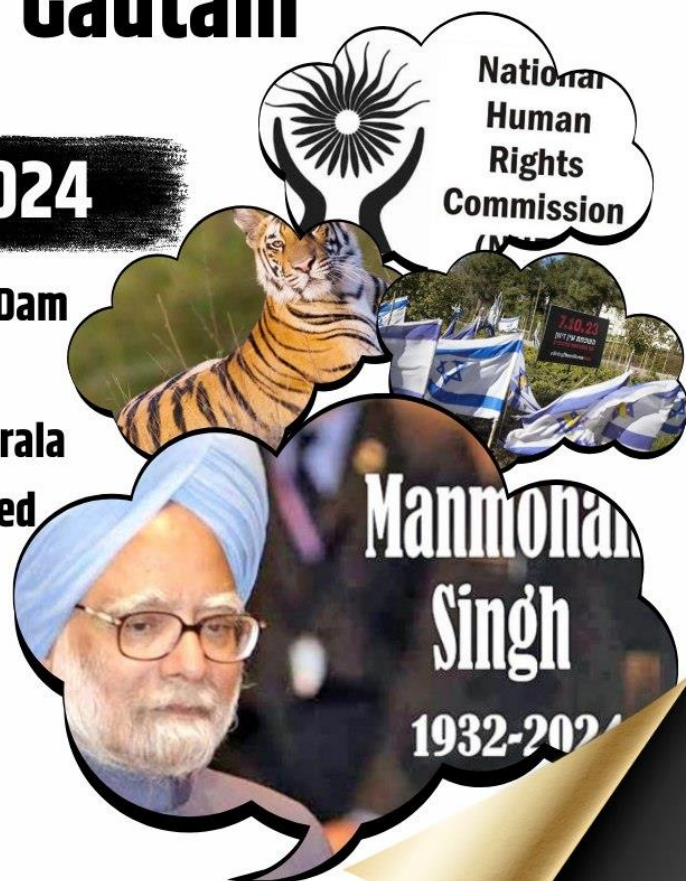


## To The Point

by Dhananjay Gautam

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## China's \$137 Billion Brahmaputra Hydropower Dam: Impacts on India and the Environment

**Context:** China has approved the construction of the **world's largest hydropower dam** on the lower stretches of the **Yarlung Tsangpo River** (Brahmaputra). This ambitious project, with an estimated cost of **\$137 billion**, aims to produce a staggering **300 billion kilowatt-hours (kWh)** of electricity annually, dwarfing the capacity of the **Three Gorges Dam**, the current global leader in hydropower.



### Course of the Brahmaputra River:

- Originating in Tibet as the **Yarlung Tsangpo**, the river flows through **Arunachal Pradesh** and **Assam** in India before entering **Bangladesh** and emptying into the **Bay of Bengal**.
- A **perennial river**, it supports livelihoods through **irrigation**, **fisheries**, and **inland transport**.
- While it deposits **fertile alluvial soil** crucial for agriculture, its lower course often causes **devastating floods**, particularly in **Assam** and **Bangladesh**, due to geographic and climatic factors.

### China's Brahmaputra Dam Project:

#### Project Details:

- The dam is being constructed in **Medog County**, Tibet Autonomous Region, where the **Yarlung Tsangpo** drops by **2,000 meters**, creating ideal conditions for hydropower generation.
- Part of China's **14th Five-Year Plan (2021–2025)** and **Long-Range Objectives through 2035**, the project aims to support **renewable energy goals** and promote **regional development** in Tibet.
- The dam's projected capacity is **60 gigawatts**, triple that of the Three Gorges Dam, generating an annual output of **300 billion kWh** of renewable energy.

#### Significance:

- Contributes to **China's carbon neutrality** goal by **2060**.
- Strengthens **water security** and supports economic growth, generating **20 billion yuan** (\$3 billion) annually for Tibet.

### Concerns and Implications for India:

#### Agricultural Impact:

- The dam could **retain silt**, essential for maintaining the fertility of agricultural lands downstream.
- Reduced silt deposits may **adversely affect farming** in India's Brahmaputra basin.

#### Water Resource Challenges:

- China describes the project as a **run-of-the-river hydropower dam**, but experts warn of reduced **water flow** during dry seasons and increased flooding during monsoons if excess water is released.
- Such changes could lead to **disasters in Assam**, impacting local communities.

#### Water as a Geopolitical Weapon:

- China's upstream control gives it significant leverage over the **Brahmaputra's flow**.
- During events like the **2017 Doklam standoff**, China withheld **hydrological data**, highlighting the potential for **weaponizing water resources** during conflicts.

#### Seismic and Ecological Risks:

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- The **Himalayan region's seismic activity** poses significant risks to the dam's infrastructure, potentially endangering downstream populations.
- The project could **disrupt fragile ecosystems**, home to critically **endangered species**, exacerbating the effects of **deforestation, soil erosion, and climate change**.

### India's Response:

#### Safeguarding Interests:

- India has urged China to **protect downstream interests** while expressing concerns about the dam's potential impact.

#### Countermeasures:

- India plans to construct a **10 GW hydropower project** in the **Dibang Valley**, Arunachal Pradesh, to counterbalance China's influence on the river.

#### Data Sharing Agreements:

- India and China rely on the **Expert Level Mechanism (ELM)**, established in **2006**, to exchange data on **trans-border rivers**. This remains vital for **flood forecasting** and disaster management.

#### The Way Forward:

The construction of the **Brahmaputra hydropower dam** reflects China's push toward **renewable energy leadership**, but it raises critical concerns for **India's water security** and the **fragile Himalayan ecosystem**. India must continue to prioritize **regional cooperation**, strengthen its **disaster preparedness**, and leverage international platforms to ensure sustainable and equitable management of trans-boundary rivers.

#### Yarlung Tsangpo River:

The **Yarlung Tsangpo River**, often referred to simply as the **Tsangpo**, is **Tibet's longest river** and the **fifth longest in China**. Its upper section is also known as **Dangque Zangbu**, meaning "**Horse River**". This river holds immense geographical and cultural significance, flowing through the Tibetan plateau before becoming the **Brahmaputra River** in India and eventually emptying into the Bay of Bengal.



## 2 Tiger Translocation from Madhya Pradesh: A Conservation Initiative

**Context:** The Madhya Pradesh government has unveiled plans to translocate **15 tigers** to the states of **Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha**. This ambitious move is aimed at enhancing tiger populations in regions with low densities and is subject to **Central Government approval**.



### Details of the Translocation:

- The initiative will involve **12 tigresses** and **3 tigers**, sourced from the renowned **Bandhavgarh, Pench, and Kanha Tiger Reserves** in Madhya Pradesh.
- The program aims to ensure a balanced ecosystem in the recipient states by boosting their predator-prey dynamics.

### About Kanha Tiger Reserve (KTR):

#### Location and History:

- Kanha, the **largest national park** in Madhya Pradesh, is located in the **Mandla and Balaghat districts**, nestled within the **Maikal range of Satpuras**.
- Established as a **national park in 1955**, it was declared a **Tiger Reserve in 1973**.

#### Highlights:

- Cultural Reference:** Kanha inspired **Rudyard Kipling's "The Jungle Book"**.
- Mascot:** Introduced **Bhoorsingh the Barasingha**, India's first official wildlife mascot.
- Flora:** Dominated by **sal trees** and **tropical moist deciduous forests**, interspersed with bamboo and grassy meadows.
- Fauna:** Home to **Royal Bengal Tigers**, leopards, and sloth bears, and internationally recognized for saving the **Barasingha (Swamp Deer)** from extinction.

### About Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve:

#### Location and Historical Significance:

- Situated in the **Umaria district**, Bandhavgarh lies between the **Vindhyan** and **Satpura ranges**.
- Declared a **national park in 1968** and a **Tiger Reserve in 1993**.
- Cultural Significance:** Hosts the ancient **Bandhavgarh Fort**, believed to have been gifted by **Lord Rama** to his brother **Lakshmana**, giving the fort its name ("**Brother's Fort**").

#### Flora and Fauna:

- Vegetation:** Predominantly **tropical moist deciduous forests**, with species like **Sal, Tendu, and Amla**.
- Fauna:** Known for the **highest density of Royal Bengal Tigers** globally. Also houses leopards, wild dogs, wolves, jackals, and deer species.

### About Pench Tiger Reserve:

#### Location and Name:

- Spanning the **Seoni and Chhindwara districts** in Madhya Pradesh and extending into Maharashtra, the reserve is named after the **Pench River**, which flows through it.



- Includes the **Indira Priyadarshini Pench National Park**, **Pench Mowgli Sanctuary**, and buffer zones.
- Cultural Connection:** The inspiration behind **Rudyard Kipling's "The Jungle Book"**.

#### Biodiversity:

- Flora:** Comprises **teak forests**, mixed vegetation, and grassy patches.
- Fauna:** Hosts predators like **tigers, leopards, and wolves**, along with herbivores such as **Chital, Sambar, and Gaur**.
- Birdlife:** Over **325 avian species**, including the **Malabar Pied Hornbill, Indian Pitta, and Grey-Headed Fishing Eagle**.

#### Conservation Significance:

This tiger translocation initiative not only bolsters **tiger conservation efforts** but also emphasizes **ecosystem restoration** and **wildlife management**. By relocating tigers to areas with lower populations, Madhya Pradesh is setting a precedent for **biodiversity enhancement** and sustainable conservation practices in India.

#### Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh:

Madhya Pradesh is home to several renowned tiger reserves that play a crucial role in the conservation of the **Royal Bengal Tiger**. The notable tiger reserves in the state are:

1. **Kanha Tiger Reserve**
2. **Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve**
3. **Panna Tiger Reserve**
4. **Pench Tiger Reserve**
5. **Sanjay Dubri Tiger Reserve**
6. **Satpura National Park**

These reserves, spread across the state, are part of India's ongoing efforts to protect tigers and preserve biodiversity. Each of these reserves has unique landscapes, rich flora, and fauna, making them significant both for wildlife conservation and ecotourism.



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## NHRC Addresses Alarming Tribal Suicides in Kerala

**Context:** The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has taken suo motu cognizance of a disturbing rise in suicides among the tribal population in Peringammala Panchayat, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.

National  
Human  
Rights  
Commission  
(NHRC)

- Recent Statistics:

- 23 suicides reported in 2024.
- 138 suicides occurred between 2011 and 2022.

This escalating crisis highlights the urgent need for focused intervention to safeguard the **human rights and mental well-being** of the tribal communities.

**About the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC):****Establishment and Purpose:**

- The NHRC is an **independent statutory body** founded on **October 12, 1993**, under the **Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993**.
- It functions as a **guardian of human rights**, addressing violations related to **life, liberty, equality, and dignity**, as guaranteed by the **Indian Constitution** and **international covenants**.

**Global Compliance:**

- The NHRC adheres to the **Paris Principles** on Human Rights, ensuring **transparency, accountability**, and alignment with global standards.

**Definition of Human Rights:**

As per **Section 2(1)(d)** of the **Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993**, **human rights** refer to rights associated with:

- Life, liberty, equality, and dignity**,
- Protected under the **Constitution** or enforced through **international treaties** in Indian courts.

**NHRC Composition:****Full-Time Members:**

- Chairperson:** A retired Chief Justice of India or a Supreme Court judge.
- Members:**
  - One **Supreme Court judge** (sitting or retired),
  - One **Chief Justice of a High Court**,
  - Three **human rights experts**, including at least **one woman**.

**Ex-Officio Members:****Chairpersons of:**

- National Commissions** for Minorities, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Women, and Backward Classes,
- National Commission for Protection of Child Rights**,
- Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities**.



### NHRC Appointment Process:

Members are appointed by the **President of India** based on recommendations from a **six-member committee**:

- **Prime Minister** (Chairperson),
- **Speaker of the Lok Sabha**,
- **Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha**,
- **Leaders of Opposition** in both Houses of Parliament,
- **Union Home Minister**.

For judicial members, consultation with the **Chief Justice of India** is mandatory.

### NHRC Tenure and Service Conditions:

- **Tenure**: Members serve for **3 years** or until the age of **70**, whichever is earlier.
- **Reappointment**: Permissible after term completion.
- **Restrictions**: Post-tenure, members cannot accept employment with **Central or State governments**.

### Salaries and Allowances:

- Determined by the **Central Government**, but **cannot be altered to their disadvantage** after appointment.

### NHRC Removal Process:

The **President of India** can remove members for reasons including:

- **Insolvency**, employment outside office, physical/mental incapacity, or criminal conviction.
- For **misconduct or incapacity**, the matter is referred to the **Supreme Court**, and removal is based on its recommendation.

### Frequently Asked Questions:

#### 1. What is the tenure of NHRC members?

Members, including the Chairperson, serve for **3 years** or until they reach **70 years of age**, whichever comes first, ensuring stability and experienced leadership.

#### 2. How many members are in the NHRC?

The NHRC comprises:

- **1 Chairperson**,
- **5 full-time members**, and
- **7 ex-officio members**, all collaborating to uphold and protect **human rights** across India.

### Conclusion:

The **NHRC's proactive intervention** in addressing the suicide crisis among Kerala's tribal population underscores its commitment to protecting vulnerable communities. Strengthening mental health support and human rights advocacy remains critical to resolving such challenges.

## 4 Israel's Expansion in Golan Heights Sparks Mixed Reactions

**Context:** Israel has recently intensified efforts to expand its presence in the **Golan Heights**, a region of strategic importance and international controversy. This move follows the ousting of **Syrian President Bashar al-Assad**, who had held power for nearly 25 years.

### Israel's Actions in the Golan Heights:

#### Military Movements:

- After Assad's removal, **Israeli tanks** entered the **Golan Heights' demilitarized buffer zone** in Syria, established under the **1974 ceasefire agreement** between Israel and Syria.
- Israel claims this incursion was a **temporary measure** to strengthen border security.

**Settlement Expansion Plan:** Israel has approved a **\$11 million plan** to **double the population of Israeli settlers** in the Golan Heights.

#### Legal Status of the Golan Heights:

- The **international community** views the **Golan Heights** as **occupied Syrian territory**.
- In **2019**, the **United States** became the only nation to officially recognize Israel's annexation of the Golan Heights, a decision condemned by many other countries.
- The **United Nations** continues to regard Israeli settlements in the region as **illegal under international law**.

#### Demographics of the Golan Heights:

##### Current Population:

- The Golan Heights is home to approximately **50,000 people**:
  - Half are **Israeli settlers**.
  - The other half are **Arab Druze**, an **ethnic and religious minority**.

##### The Druze Perspective:

- Many Druze in the Golan Heights identify as **Syrians under Israeli occupation**.
- While some have accepted **Israeli residency**, most have resisted taking full **Israeli citizenship**.

##### What is a Kibbutz?

- A **kibbutz** (plural: kibbutzim) is a **collective community** in Israel, traditionally centered on **agriculture** and founded on principles of:
  - Shared ownership**,
  - Equality**,
  - Communal living**.
- Originating in the early 20th century, kibbutzim were established by **Jewish immigrants** aiming to create **socialist, self-sufficient communities** in Israel.

**The Conflict of Emotions:** While Israel views the Golan Heights expansion as a step towards bolstering security and infrastructure, the move has ignited **conflicting emotions**:

- Supporters** see it as essential for Israel's sovereignty and safety.
- Critics**, including the international community and many Druze residents, view it as a violation of **international law** and **Syrian sovereignty**.

This complex situation continues to fuel debate on the future of the Golan Heights and its impact on regional stability.





## 5 Over 10,000 Migrants Perished in 2024 While Attempting to Reach Spain by Sea

**Context:** In a tragic statistic for 2024, over **10,000 migrants** lost their lives attempting to reach **Spain** by sea, according to a report by the Spanish migration rights organization **Caminando Fronteras (Walking Borders)**. This marks a shocking **58% rise** in fatalities compared to the previous year, with an average of **30 deaths per day** recorded.



### Key Findings of the Report:

#### The Atlantic Route:

- The majority of these deaths occurred along the treacherous **Atlantic route** leading to the **Canary Islands**, a significant entryway into **Europe** from **West Africa**.
- Mauritania** has emerged as a primary **departure point** for migrants heading toward the Canary Islands.

#### Migration Routes to Europe via Sea:

##### 1. Western Mediterranean Route:

- Migrants traveling this route often depart from **Morocco** and **Algeria**.
- Their primary destinations include the **Strait of Gibraltar** and the Spanish enclaves of **Ceuta** and **Melilla**.

##### 2. Atlantic Route:

- This dangerous path sees migrants leaving from **West African nations** like **Senegal** and **Mauritania**, aiming to reach the **Canary Islands**.
- Known for its **perilous conditions**, the **Atlantic crossing** involves journeys of **1,000–1,500 km** in **small, overcrowded boats** like fishing vessels or inflatable rafts, which are ill-equipped for the high seas.

#### Why the Atlantic Crossing Is Especially Dangerous:

- Extreme weather** and **strong ocean currents** add to the risks.
- The **increased border controls** along these routes push migrants to take more **hazardous paths**, further increasing fatalities.

#### About the Canary Islands:

##### Geographical Location:

- The **Canary Islands** are a Spanish archipelago located off the **northwest coast of Africa**, approximately **100 km west of Morocco** in the Atlantic Ocean.

##### Composition:

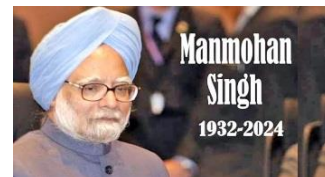
- The archipelago consists of **seven main islands**:
  - Tenerife**, the largest.
  - Fuerteventura**, **Gran Canaria**, **Lanzarote**, **La Palma**, **La Gomera**, and **El Hierro** (the smallest).
- Formed millions of years ago by **volcanic eruptions**, the islands have distinct geological and cultural features.

#### A Growing Crisis:

The alarming increase in **migrant fatalities** highlights the urgent need for **international cooperation** and **comprehensive policies** to address the challenges faced by those seeking safety and better opportunities. While Europe grapples with its migration policies, the **Atlantic and Mediterranean routes** remain grim reminders of the human cost of migration.

## 6 Dr. Manmohan Singh: The Visionary Behind India's Economic Transformation

**Context:** Dr. Manmohan Singh, serving as **India's Finance Minister from 1991 to 1995**, played a pivotal role in reshaping the nation's economic destiny. At a time when India faced one of its gravest financial crises, his bold reforms not only stabilized the economy but also set the foundation for sustained growth and globalization.



### The Crisis That Sparked Change:

#### Balance of Payments (BOP) Crisis:

- By mid-1991, India was grappling with a **severe Balance of Payments crisis**, leading to dwindling confidence in the country's economic management.
- **Foreign exchange reserves** plummeted to just **\$896 million** in January 1991—barely enough to cover a few weeks of imports.
- The **Gulf War** exacerbated the situation by causing a spike in oil prices.

#### Gold Reserves Sale:

- In April 1991, **20 tonnes of confiscated gold** were sold to UBS, raising \$200 million.
- In July 1991, **47 tonnes of gold** were shipped to the **Bank of England** to secure \$405–\$450 million, temporarily averting default.

### Game-Changing Economic Reforms:

#### 1. 1991-92 Budget: A Landmark Vision

Dr. Singh presented a historic budget that laid the foundation for **economic liberalization**.

#### 2. Rupee Devaluation:

- The rupee was devalued in **two phases** (9% and 10%) over three days, making **exports more competitive** and attracting **foreign capital**.

#### 3. New Industrial Policy:

- Announced on **July 24, 1991**, this policy dismantled the **License Raj**, significantly reducing bureaucratic red tape.
- Opened multiple sectors to **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)** and reduced the dominance of public-sector enterprises.

#### 4. Currency Convertibility:

- Introduced **full convertibility** of the rupee on the current account, simplifying **international trade and investment**.

#### 5. Repeal of the MRTP Act:

- The **Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act** was repealed, enabling companies to expand capacity without prior approvals.

#### 6. Banking Sector Overhaul:

- **Interest rate-setting** by banks was deregulated.
- Licenses for **private banks** were introduced, and public-sector banks were listed on stock exchanges.

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- Adopted **capital adequacy norms** as recommended by the **Narasimham Committee**.

#### 7. Disinvestment in PSUs:

- Encouraged **privatization** by allowing mutual funds and private investors to invest in **Public Sector Units (PSUs)**.

#### 8. Financial Market Reforms:

- Launched the **National Stock Exchange (NSE)** and introduced **paperless trading**, enhancing transparency.
- Allowed **Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs)** to invest in Indian stock markets, attracting global capital.

#### 9. Empowering SEBI:

- The **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** was strengthened to ensure efficient regulation of capital markets.

#### Impact of the Reforms:

Dr. Singh's visionary policies transformed India from a **state-controlled economy** to a more **market-oriented system**. His reforms not only **averted economic collapse** but also positioned India as a significant player in the global economy.

Through his leadership, Dr. Manmohan Singh laid the groundwork for **inclusive growth**, fostering innovation, investments, and a brighter future for India.

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