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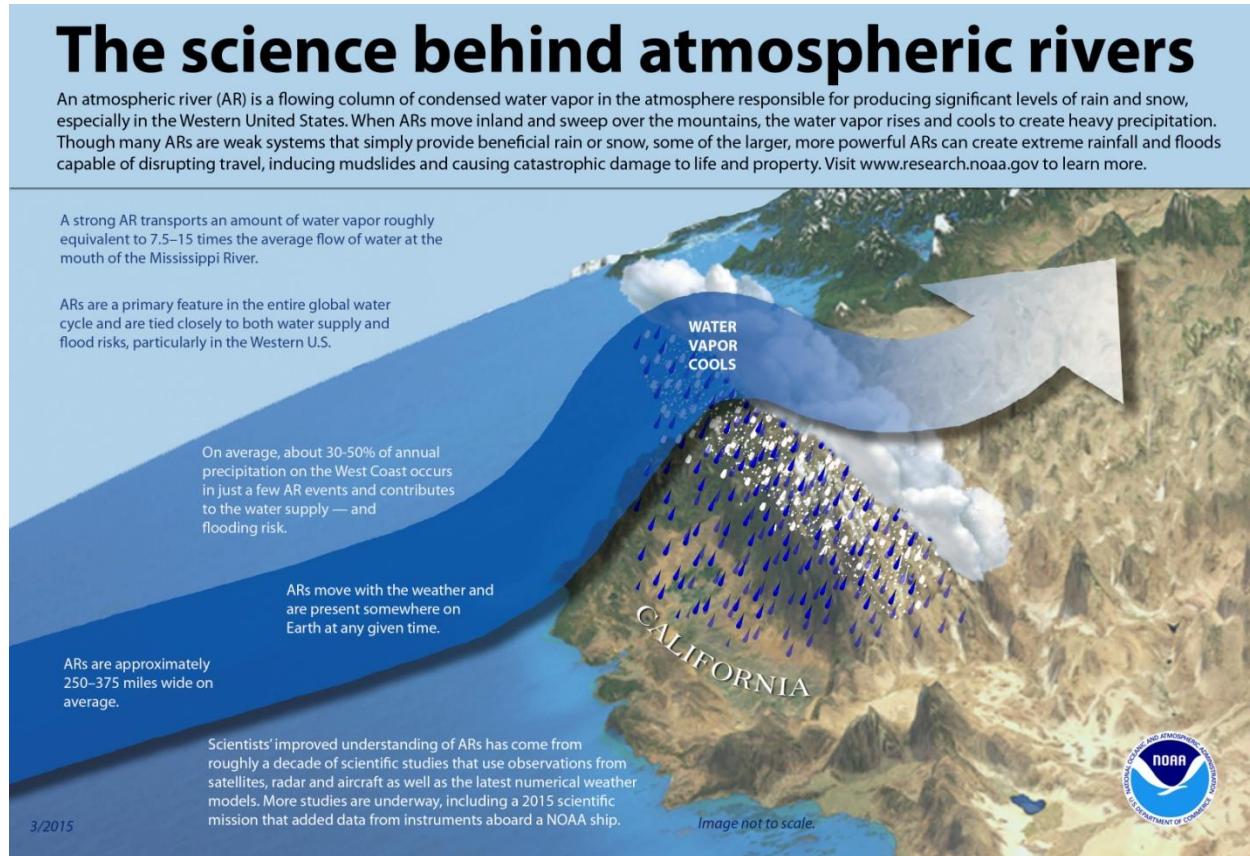
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Atmospheric rivers

Syllabus: GS-1; Geography

Context

- Atmospheric rivers are shifting poleward, reshaping global weather patterns.



About

- **Atmospheric rivers** are long, narrow regions in the atmosphere that transport large amounts of water vapor from tropical regions to higher latitudes. They can be thought of as "rivers in the sky" and play a crucial role in the global water cycle.

Characteristics:

- **Dimensions:** Typically extend for thousands of kilometers in length and can be hundreds of kilometers wide.
- **Water Vapor Transport:** An atmospheric river can carry the equivalent of the average flow of the Mississippi River in water vapor.
- **Formation:** These phenomena often form when warm, moist air moves over cold ocean waters, leading to condensation and cloud formation.

Impact:

- **Precipitation:**
 - Atmospheric rivers are responsible for a significant portion of precipitation in certain regions, particularly along the west coasts of North America and South America.
 - They can lead to heavy rainfall and snowfall, especially in mountainous regions.
- **Flooding:**
 - Intense precipitation events associated with atmospheric rivers can cause flash floods, landslides, and river flooding, posing risks to infrastructure and communities.
- **Drought Mitigation:**
 - They can help alleviate drought conditions by providing much-needed moisture to affected areas.
- **Snowpack Contribution:**
 - In mountainous areas, atmospheric rivers contribute significantly to the snowpack, which is essential for water supply during warmer months.

Climate Change and Trends:

- **Increasing Intensity:** Research suggests that climate change may lead to more intense and frequent atmospheric river events, as warmer air can hold more moisture.
- **Shifts in Patterns:** Changes in atmospheric circulation patterns due to climate change may alter the frequency and impact of atmospheric rivers in different regions.

Monitoring and Forecasting:

- **Satellite Observations:** Atmospheric rivers can be monitored using satellite imagery, which helps in predicting precipitation events and their potential impacts.
- **Numerical Weather Prediction Models:** Improved forecasting models are crucial for understanding and anticipating the effects of atmospheric rivers, aiding in disaster preparedness and response.

Case Studies:

- **California Droughts and Floods:** Atmospheric rivers have been a critical factor in California's climate, contributing to both severe droughts and significant flooding events.

- **Winter Storms:** In the eastern United States, atmospheric rivers can interact with winter storms, enhancing snowfall and leading to hazardous conditions.

Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955

Syllabus: GS-2; Citizenship

Context

- Supreme Court upholds Section 6A of Citizenship Act as valid law.

About

- Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955, was introduced through an amendment in 1985 to implement the provisions of the Assam Accord.
- The Assam Accord was signed between the Government of India and the leaders of the Assam Movement on August 15, 1985, to address the issue of illegal immigration in Assam, particularly from Bangladesh.

Key Provisions of Section 6A:

1. **Cut-off Date for Citizenship:** Under Section 6A, there are two key cut-off dates for determining the citizenship status of individuals residing in Assam:
 - **Before January 1, 1966:** People who entered Assam from Bangladesh before January 1, 1966, are deemed Indian citizens.
 - **Between January 1, 1966, and March 24, 1971:** Those who entered Assam during this period are allowed to reside in Assam, but they are required to register themselves with the authorities. After residing in the state for 10 years, they are eligible for citizenship.
2. **Illegal Immigrants Post-March 24, 1971:** Individuals who entered Assam after March 24, 1971, are considered illegal immigrants and are not eligible for Indian citizenship under Section 6A.
3. **Special Provisions for Assam:** This section is applicable only to the state of Assam, making it a unique provision to address the concerns of illegal immigration in the state as compared to other parts of India.
4. **Electoral Rights:** Those who entered Assam between January 1, 1966, and March 24, 1971, are not allowed to vote in elections for a period of 10 years after their registration, even though they can reside in the state.

Significance of Section 6A:

- **Assam Accord Implementation:** The section was key to implementing the Assam Accord, which was aimed at addressing the ethnic and political turmoil caused by the perceived influx of illegal immigrants.
- **Political Relevance:** Section 6A has been at the center of political discourse in Assam, as the issue of illegal immigration remains sensitive. It has often led to debates on national security, cultural identity, and demographic changes in the state.

Judicial Review: The constitutionality of Section 6A has been challenged in the Supreme Court of India, particularly on the grounds that it provides a different legal framework for citizenship in Assam compared to the rest of the country. The matter is currently under judicial review.

Recent Supreme Court Judgement on Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955

- In April 2023, the Supreme Court of India began hearing petitions challenging the **constitutionality of Section 6A** of the Citizenship Act, 1955.
- The petitioners argued that the provisions under Section 6A violated the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Indian Constitution, particularly **Article 14 (Right to Equality)**.
- They also contended that having different cut-off dates for citizenship in Assam (as per Section 6A) compared to the rest of India was discriminatory and unfair.

The key points from the ongoing Supreme Court hearing are:

1. **Issue of Discriminatory Citizenship:**
 - Petitioners argued that having separate provisions for citizenship for Assam, based on Section 6A, created two classes of citizens in India: one for Assam and another for the rest of the country.
 - They also highlighted how this differential treatment violated the principle of equality and uniformity in citizenship across the nation.
2. **Historical Context:**
 - The Assam Accord and Section 6A were implemented to address specific local concerns regarding illegal immigration from Bangladesh into Assam. However, the court was asked to examine whether such local concerns can justify exceptions to uniform citizenship laws.
3. **Constitution Bench Review:**
 - A **five-judge Constitution Bench** of the Supreme Court, led by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud, is conducting the hearings. The bench is

examining whether Section 6A conforms to the **basic structure doctrine**, particularly whether it violates the constitutional mandate of equality and integrity of India's citizenship laws.

4. NRC and Citizenship:

- The ongoing case is linked to broader debates around the **National Register of Citizens (NRC)** in Assam, which was updated in 2019. Over 1.9 million people were excluded from the final NRC list, leading to legal and political debates around their citizenship status, which is also connected to the provisions of Section 6A.

5. Impact on Assam's Demographics:

- The court is also considering the demographic changes in Assam and the concerns of indigenous communities regarding the cultural, linguistic, and political impact of illegal immigration. Petitioners argued that the influx of immigrants between 1966 and 1971 under Section 6A has significantly altered the state's demographic balance.

Supreme Court's Pending Judgement: As of 2024, the Supreme Court has not yet delivered its final verdict on the constitutionality of Section 6A.

However, the outcome is expected to have far-reaching implications for Assam's citizenship status, the NRC process, and India's broader citizenship laws.

The judgement could potentially redefine the legal framework for addressing illegal immigration, especially in border states like Assam.

India-Canada Relations

Syllabus: GS-2; International Relations

Context

- India-Canada relations sink over Khalistan issue.

About

- India and Canada share a multi-faceted relationship, encompassing economic, political, cultural, and people-to-people ties. The partnership has evolved over the years, but recent challenges have added complexities to the relationship.

Historical Background

- **Colonial ties:** Both countries were part of the British Empire, and India and Canada had strong diplomatic relations post-independence.
- **Commonwealth Membership:** Both nations are members of the Commonwealth, which has facilitated cooperation on various fronts, such as education, development, and diplomacy.
- **Bilateral relations:** India and Canada established diplomatic relations in 1947, right after India gained independence. Their relationship has been strong with a focus on trade, education, and shared values of democracy.

Political Relations

- **Diplomatic Visits:** Several high-level visits have occurred between India and Canada. For example, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau visited India in 2018.
- **Strategic Partnership:** Both countries cooperate in multilateral fora like the United Nations, G20, and World Trade Organization.
- **Contemporary Issues:**
 - **Khalistan Issue:** The separatist Khalistan movement has been a point of tension. Canada has a significant Sikh diaspora, and allegations of support for the movement have strained relations with India.
 - **Diplomatic Tensions (2023):** The relationship faced major challenges in 2023 after allegations by Canada of India's involvement in the killing of a pro-Khalistan leader. This has led to diplomatic standoffs, with both countries reducing diplomatic staff.

Economic Relations

- **Trade and Investment:**
 - Bilateral trade between India and Canada was worth about USD 11.2 billion in 2022.
 - Major Indian exports to Canada include textiles, pharmaceuticals, and IT services, while Canada exports pulses, fertilizers, and industrial goods to India.
- **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI):**
 - Canadian pension funds have made significant investments in India, especially in sectors like infrastructure, real estate, and renewable energy.
- **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA):**
 - Both countries have been negotiating a CEPA to enhance trade relations. The talks have, however, been slowed by political tensions.

Energy Cooperation

- **Nuclear Energy:**
 - The **Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement** signed in 2010 allows Canadian companies to export uranium to India. This agreement marked a new chapter in the energy relationship, enabling nuclear energy cooperation.
- **Renewable Energy:**
 - Canada has been keen to invest in India's renewable energy sector, especially in solar and wind energy.

Educational and Cultural Relations

- **People-to-People Ties:**
 - Canada is home to a large Indian diaspora, with around 1.6 million people of Indian origin. This forms the bedrock of strong cultural and social links.
 - A large number of Indian students study in Canadian universities, making India one of the top sources of international students for Canada.
- **Cultural Exchange:** Indian films and cultural programs are popular in Canada, and events like the International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) Awards have been hosted in cities like Toronto.

Defense and Security Cooperation

- **Joint Military Exercises:** Both countries have participated in joint military exercises as part of international coalitions and are involved in peacekeeping missions under the UN.
- **Counterterrorism:** Both nations have been working together on counterterrorism initiatives, especially after the 1985 Air India bombing. However, differences over issues like the Khalistan movement have posed hurdles in deeper security cooperation.

Challenges in Relations

- **Khalistan Movement:** The presence of pro-Khalistan elements in Canada has been a major irritant for India, leading to strained diplomatic ties.
- **Human Rights:** Canada has raised concerns about human rights issues in India, particularly regarding religious freedoms and civil liberties, which has created tensions.
- **Geopolitical Differences:** India's growing ties with the US and Canada's close alliance with the US have created avenues for cooperation but also differences, especially in areas like climate change and global governance.

Khalistan Movement and Diplomatic Tensions

- **Allegations Against India:** In September 2023, Canadian Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** accused Indian intelligence of involvement in the killing of **Hardeep Singh Nijjar**, a Canadian citizen and prominent Khalistani separatist leader. India denied the allegations, describing them as "absurd and politically motivated."
- **India's Response:** In response to Trudeau's accusations, India strongly condemned Canada's alleged tolerance of pro-Khalistan groups operating from Canadian soil. India has consistently expressed concerns about the Khalistan separatist movement, which seeks an independent Sikh state in India's Punjab region. This issue has been a longstanding irritant in bilateral relations.
- **Diplomatic Fallout:**
 - Both countries expelled each other's diplomats in September 2023.
 - India temporarily suspended visa services for Canadian nationals, citing security threats to its missions.
 - Canada also reduced its diplomatic presence in India, citing intimidation concerns.
- **Khalistan Referendum:** Pro-Khalistan groups in Canada organized "referendums" seeking an independent Khalistan. India has expressed strong objections, calling on Canada to curb the activities of these groups, accusing them of supporting terrorism.

Minimum Support Prices

Syllabus: GS-3; Agriculture

Context

- Centre approves MSP hikes for rabi crops for marketing season 2025-26

About

- Minimum Support Price (MSP) is a government-set price at which it purchases crops from farmers, irrespective of the market price. It serves as a safety net for farmers to protect them from significant losses during price fluctuations.

Objective:

- To ensure that farmers receive a fair price for their produce.
- To promote agricultural production and ensure food security in the country.
- To stabilize farm incomes and promote equitable agricultural growth.

Legal Framework:

- MSP is primarily announced under the **Price Support Scheme (PSS)** of the **Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare**, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.
- The **Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP)** recommends MSP based on various factors including cost of production, trends in market prices, demand and supply, and the impact on the overall economy.

Calculation of MSP:

- MSP is determined based on the **A2+FL cost**, which includes:
 - A2: Actual paid-out costs (seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, labor, etc.)
 - FL: Imputed value of family labor.
- Additionally, a margin of **50%** over the A2+FL cost is generally added to determine the MSP.

Crops Covered:

- MSP is applicable to various crops, primarily cereals, pulses, oilseeds, and commercial crops.
- The government announces MSP for **23 crops**, including:
 - Rice
 - Wheat
 - Coarse cereals (maize, jowar, bajra, etc.)
 - Pulses (gram, tur, urad, etc.)
 - Oilseeds (groundnut, sunflower, soybean, etc.)
 - Cotton and jute.

Procurement Process:

- The **Food Corporation of India (FCI)** and state government agencies procure the crops at MSP.
- The procured crops are then stored and distributed through the **Public Distribution System (PDS)** or sold in the open market.

Importance of MSP:

- **Income Security:** Provides farmers with a guaranteed income, which helps in reducing their financial risks.

- **Agricultural Growth:** Encourages farmers to produce more by assuring them of a profitable return.
- **Market Stability:** Helps in stabilizing prices and avoiding price crashes during bumper harvests.

Challenges:

- **Implementation Issues:** Delays in procurement and insufficient storage facilities can hinder the effectiveness of MSP.
- **Coverage Limitations:** Not all farmers are covered under MSP, particularly those who do not sell their produce through government channels.
- **Regional Disparities:** MSP benefits may vary by region, favoring states with better procurement mechanisms.
- **Quality of Produce:** The MSP does not guarantee prices for substandard produce.

Gandhi Sagar Sanctuary

Syllabus: GS-3; Biodiversity

Context

- Gandhi Sagar Sanctuary set to become India's next Cheetah haven after Kuno.

About

- **Location:** The sanctuary is situated in the Vindhya Mountain Range, around 50 km from Mandsaur city and near the Gandhi Sagar Dam.
- **Area:** The sanctuary spans approximately 367 square kilometers.
- **Establishment:** It was established in 1983 to conserve the diverse flora and fauna in the region.

Flora and Fauna

- **Biodiversity:** The sanctuary is home to a variety of ecosystems, including forests, scrubland, and grasslands, supporting a rich diversity of wildlife.
- **Wildlife:** Notable species include:
 - **Mammals:** Indian leopard, sambar deer, chital (spotted deer), nilgai, wild boar, and more.

- **Birds:** A variety of birds, including migratory species, can be spotted in the sanctuary, making it a birdwatcher's paradise.
- **Reptiles:** The sanctuary also hosts several species of reptiles, including snakes and lizards.

Conservation Efforts

- **Habitat Protection:** The sanctuary plays a vital role in protecting the habitats of several endangered and vulnerable species.
- **Community Involvement:** Local communities are often engaged in conservation efforts and sustainable tourism practices to ensure the protection of wildlife.

Tourism

- **Activities:** Visitors can engage in wildlife watching, nature trails, and photography. The scenic beauty of the area, combined with the presence of the Gandhi Sagar Dam, makes it an attractive spot for eco-tourism.
- **Accessibility:** The sanctuary is accessible by road, with the nearest major city being Mandsaur.

Significance

- **Ecological Importance:** The sanctuary contributes to the preservation of biodiversity in the region and serves as a crucial habitat for various species.
- **Cultural Heritage:** The surrounding areas are rich in cultural heritage, with several temples and historical sites nearby, enhancing the experience for visitors.

Challenges

- **Threats:** Like many wildlife sanctuaries, Gandhi Sagar Sanctuary faces challenges such as poaching, habitat destruction, and human-wildlife conflict.
- **Conservation Needs:** Continuous efforts are required to strengthen conservation measures and promote awareness about the importance of wildlife protection.

More to know

