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## **DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 15-04-2025**

### **GS-2**

1. Bridging the Gap Between Child Rights and Protection in India
2. India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEEC or the IMEC)

### **GS-3**

3. Phawngpui National Park
4. Traditional Seeds in India

## **Bridging the Gap Between Child Rights and Protection in India**

**Syllabus:** GS-2: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

### **Context:**

- India has **nearly 20% of the world's child population**.
- Children are **politically voiceless** (no voting rights), economically dependent, and often **neglected in policymaking**.
- Result: High vulnerability to **neglect, abuse, exploitation, and systemic apathy**.

### **Magnitude of the Problem: Crimes Against Children**

- As per **NCRB 2022**:
  - **18 crimes against children occur every hour**.
  - **One-third** of these fall under the **POCSO Act**.
  - Majority of perpetrators are **family members or acquaintances**.
- Over **10 million children (5-14 years)** are engaged in **child labour**.
  - India has the **highest number of child labourers globally**.

### **Legal Framework for Child Protection in India**

#### **Key Legislations**

- **Juvenile Justice Act, 2015**:
  - Focus on **care, protection, and rehabilitation** of children.
- **POCSO Act, 2012**:
  - Provides **stringent punishment** for sexual offenses against children.
- **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006**:
  - Prohibits and penalizes **child marriages**.
- **Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016**:
  - Bans child labour in **hazardous occupations**.

#### **Challenges in Implementation**

- **Weak monitoring and enforcement**.
- **Poor awareness** among stakeholders.
- **Inadequate institutional support** and **low conviction rates** under POCSO.

## Constitutional Provisions for Child Welfare

- **Article 15(3)**: Allows special provisions for children.
- **Article 21A**: Free and compulsory education for children aged 6–14.
- **Articles 23 & 24**: Ban **trafficking, begar, and hazardous child labour**.
- **Directive Principles**:
  - **Article 39(e)(f)**: Protection against exploitation and moral abandonment.
  - **Article 45**: Early childhood care and education.
  - **Article 47**: Raise nutrition and public health standards.
- **Article 51A(k)**: Duty of parents/guardians to educate their children.

## Why Child Rights Remain Elusive

- **Policy Neglect**:
  - Children's issues receive **low priority** unless sensationalized.
- **Poor Law Enforcement**:
  - Lack of **child-friendly police units**, overburdened welfare officers.
- **Judicial Hurdles**:
  - **Low conviction** under POCSO due to:
    - Family pressure.
    - Hostile witnesses.
    - **Non-sensitive judicial environments**.
- **Prevalence of Child Labour & Marriage**:
  - Driven by **poverty, cultural practices, and lack of enforcement**.

## Urgent Reforms Required

### Governance and Policy

- **Mainstream child concerns** in policy audits, budgeting, and institutional reviews.
- Establish **child impact assessments** in policy decisions.

### Legal Reforms

- Amend **POCSO** to:
  - Provide **context-sensitive interpretation** for consensual adolescent relationships (16–18 years).
- Institutionalize **One-Stop Crisis Centers** in every district.

## Police & Law Enforcement

- Ensure **child-friendly police stations**.
- Implement **JJ Act mandates with penalties for non-compliance**.
- Train police in **child-sensitive handling**.

## Child Care Institutions (CCIs)

- Conduct **regular joint inspections** by District Magistrate (DM) and Superintendent of Police (SP).
- Provide **skill-building, mentorship, and rehabilitation** support.

## Community Empowerment

- Activate **Village Child Protection Committees**.
- Conduct **community sensitization** for police, judiciary, and parents.

## Global Best Practices in Child Protection

- **Sweden & Norway:** Use of **Child Advocacy Centers** for trauma-informed proceedings.
- **UK: Every Child Matters** framework ensures integrated child welfare.
- **USA & Australia: Mandatory reporting** laws for teachers, doctors, and social workers.
- **Iceland (Barnahus Model):**
  - Provides **medical, legal, psychological** services under one roof.
  - Reduces trauma and enhances access to justice.

## Way Forward

- Recognize **child safety and development** as **cornerstones of Viksit Bharat 2047**.
- Integrate child rights into the **national development agenda**.
- Ensure **adequate funding, inter-sectoral coordination, and community participation**.

## Conclusion

- India's children are a **demographic dividend**, but their potential is being lost to **systemic failures**.
- Protecting children's rights is essential to build a **resilient, inclusive, and empowered society**.
- As the saying goes: "**The future of the nation lies in the hands of the children we protect today.**"

## **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEEC or the IMEC)**

**Syllabus: GS-2: International Relations – Infrastructure Projects.**

### **Context:**

The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) represents a transformative vision for global connectivity, aiming to enhance economic integration between Asia, the Persian Gulf, and Europe.

### **Introduction**

- The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) is a **strategic economic initiative** announced during the **G20 Summit in New Delhi (2023)**.
- It aims to enhance connectivity and economic integration between **India, the Middle East, and Europe** through a **multi-modal transport network** comprising **railways, shipping lines, and road routes**.

### **Key Highlights:**

- **Announced on:** September 9, 2023, at the G20 Summit.
- **Participating Countries:** India, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel, EU (France, Germany, Italy), and the USA (as a supporting partner).
- **Objective:** To boost trade, infrastructure, and digital connectivity while countering China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

### **Key Components of IMEC**

#### **Physical Connectivity (Rail & Shipping)**

- **Rail Link:** Connects **India (Mumbai/Jawaharlal Nehru Port)** to the **UAE (Fujairah Port)** via shipping, then via **rail through Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Israel**, reaching **Europe (Greek Port of Piraeus)**.
- **Shipping Route:** Alternative maritime path from India to Europe via the **Arabian Sea, Red Sea, and Mediterranean**.

#### **Digital & Energy Infrastructure**

- **Undersea Cables:** High-speed data connectivity.
- **Hydrogen Pipeline:** Green energy (hydrogen) export from the Middle East to Europe.
- **Renewable Energy Integration:** Solar and wind energy projects along the corridor.

#### **Economic & Trade Benefits**

- **Reduced Transit Time:** Cuts shipping duration between India and Europe by **40%** (from ~40 days to ~10 days).

- **Lower Costs:** Reduces logistics expenses compared to the Suez Canal route.
- **Trade Expansion:** Expected to boost trade in **pharmaceuticals, food products, and electronics.**

## Strategic Significance

### Geopolitical Importance

- **Counter to China's BRI:** Provides an alternative to China's debt-laden infrastructure projects.
- **Strengthens India's Role:** Positions India as a key player in global trade corridors.
- **West Asia Integration:** Enhances ties between **Israel, Saudi Arabia, and UAE** (post-Abraham Accords).

### Economic & Energy Security

- **Diversifies Supply Chains:** Reduces dependency on the **Strait of Hormuz and Suez Canal.**
- **Energy Cooperation:** Facilitates oil and gas trade; promotes green hydrogen exports.

### Challenges

- **Political Instability:** Conflict risks in West Asia (e.g., Israel-Palestine tensions, Iran-Saudi rivalry).
- **Funding & Implementation:** Requires massive investments (~\$20 billion estimated).
- **Coordination Issues:** Multiple stakeholders with differing priorities.

### Comparison with Other Corridors

| Feature     | IMEC                     | China's BRI               | International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) |
|-------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| Route       | India-Middle East-Europe | China-Central Asia-Europe | India-Iran-Russia-Europe                             |
| Key Players | India, UAE, Saudi, EU    | China                     | India, Iran, Russia                                  |
| Focus       | Trade, Digital, Energy   | Infrastructure Loans      | Rail & Road Connectivity                             |

| Feature    | IMEC               | China's BRI         | International Transport Corridor (INSTC) | North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) |
|------------|--------------------|---------------------|--|--|
| Challenges | Geopolitical risks | Debt-trap diplomacy | Sanctions on Iran                        |  |

### India's Gains from IMEC

- **Trade Boost:** Access to EU and Middle East markets.
- **Strategic Leverage:** Counters Pakistan's Gwadar Port (BRI node).
- **Energy Security:** Stable oil/gas imports from the Gulf.
- **Global Leadership:** Reinforces India's role in shaping global trade norms.

### Way Forward

- **Fast-track Agreements:** Finalize MoUs among participating nations.
- **Private Sector Involvement:** Attract investments (e.g., ADIA, Saudi PIF).
- **Digital & Green Focus:** Expand renewable energy and tech partnerships.
- **Risk Mitigation:** Diplomatic engagement to ensure regional stability.

### Conclusion

The IMEC is a **transformative initiative** that strengthens India's economic and geopolitical influence. While challenges exist, its successful implementation could reshape **Eurasian trade dynamics** and provide a **credible alternative to BRI**.

## Phawngpui National Park

### Syllabus: GS-3: Wildlife Protection - Protected Area

#### Context:

Nearly one-ninth of Mizoram's Phawngpui National Park was affected by forest fires that originated from a jhum cultivation site in March 2025.

#### Phawngpui National Park - Mizoram

#### Location & Topography:

- Located in **southeastern Mizoram**, near the **Myanmar border**.
- Encompasses the **Blue Mountain**, Mizoram's highest peak (2,157 m).

- Spread over ~50 sq. km; features a 10 km ridge, steep cliffs, and grassy glades.

#### Biodiversity:

- Montane Sub-tropical forests with:
  - Oak, Rhododendrons, and rare bamboo species.
- Critical habitat for:
  - Mrs. Hume's Pheasant (*State Bird*),
  - Slow Loris, Tiger, Leopard,
  - Asiatic Black Bear, and Capped Langur.

#### Ecological Uniqueness:

- Only Indian habitat of the Mount Victoria Babax (shared with Myanmar).
- Cliff ecosystems support rare species:
  - Dark-rumped Swift, Blyth's Tragopan, Peregrine Falcon.

#### Conservation Challenges:

- Increasing forest fires, particularly from **jhum (slash-and-burn) cultivation**.
  - In March 2025, nearly **one-ninth of the park** was affected by fire.
- Threat to:
  - Wildlife breeding cycles,
  - Forest integrity,
  - Cliff and glade ecosystems.
- Pressure from **eco-tourism** (notably around the **Far Pak glade**).

## Traditional Seeds in India

#### Syllabus: GS-3: Conservation of Genetic Diversity - Seeds

#### Context:

Imagine an India where every farmer grows the same handful of crops — wheat, rice, and a few vegetables — while thousands of traditional seed varieties disappear. This is not a distant future; it is happening now.

#### Importance of Traditional Seeds

- Rich genetic diversity and cultural heritage.
- Climate resilience (tolerance to droughts, floods).
- Nutrition-dense and adaptable to local agro-climatic conditions.
- Low external input farming (less reliance on fertilizers and pesticides).

## Reasons for Their Decline

- **Market Preferences:** Dominance of wheat and rice in procurement, retail, and consumption.
- **Policy Bias:** Green Revolution-style focus on high-yield varieties.
- **Seed Systems:** Lack of institutional support for community seed banks.
- **Research Gaps:** R&D has focused on yield, not resilience or diversity.
- **Consumer Disconnect:** Lack of awareness and demand for traditional crops.

## Consequences of Losing Traditional Seeds

- Erosion of genetic biodiversity.
- Increased vulnerability to climate change.
- Rising input costs and soil degradation.
- Nutrition insecurity.
- Cultural loss (e.g., disappearance of heritage grains).

## Success Stories & Positive Examples

- **Odisha Millet Mission** – Integrating millets into nutrition schemes.
- **MSSRF's Tribal Agrobiodiversity Centre** – Promoting community conservation.

## Way Forward

- **Policy Support:** Expand MSP and public procurement to cover traditional crops.
- **Seed Banks:** Establish regional conservation centres and community seed banks.
- **R&D Reorientation:** Promote participatory plant breeding with farmers.
- **Market & Branding Support:** Promote local processing units, geographical indications, and eco-labeling.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** Highlight nutrition and climate benefits to influence consumer behavior.
- **Institutional Collaboration:** Multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable seed systems.

## Conclusion

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- Reiterate the central message:
  - *"India need not choose between productivity and sustainability — traditional seeds offer a bridge to a future that is food-secure, climate-resilient, and culturally proud."*
- Call for coordinated national action.