



## **DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 19-01-2026**

### **Mapping Perspective**

1. Similipal Tiger Reserve / National Park

### **Prelims Perspective**

2. Finke River (Larapinta)
3. Traditional Indelible Ink

### **Mains Perspective**

4. POCSO Law and Romeo-Juliet Exception
5. India–Israel Joint Declaration on Fisheries and Aquaculture

## **Similipal Tiger Reserve / National Park**

**Syllabus: GS-3: Biodiversity conservation**

### **Context:**

The **latest crocodile census** has reported an **increase in the crocodile population** in **Similipal National Park**, Odisha, indicating improving wetland and riverine ecosystem health.

### **About Similipal National Park**

- **Location:**
  - Situated in **Mayurbhanj district, Odisha.**
- **Area:**
  - Covers approximately **2,750 sq. km**, making it one of the largest protected areas in eastern India.
- **Etymology:**
  - Named after the **Simul (Silk Cotton) tree** (*Bombax ceiba*), which grows abundantly in the region.

### **Conservation Status**

Similipal enjoys **multiple layers of protection:**

- **National Park**
- **Wildlife Sanctuary**
- **Tiger Reserve**
- **Biosphere Reserve**
- Part of the **Mayurbhanj Elephant Reserve**

### **Physiography & Geography**

- Lies in the **Deccan Peninsular Biogeographic Zone.**
- Exhibits a **unique biodiversity mix** of:
  - Western Ghats
  - Eastern Ghats
  - Eastern Himalayan elements
- Terrain consists of **high plateaus and forested hills.**
- **Highest peaks:**
  - **Khairiburu**

- **Meghashini** (1,515 m above mean sea level)
- Major **waterfalls**:
  - **Barehipani** (second highest in India)
  - **Joranda**

### **Vegetation & Flora**

- **Forest Types**:
  - Predominantly **moist mixed deciduous forests**
  - Patches of **tropical semi-evergreen forests**
  - Sporadic **dry deciduous forests and grasslands**
- **Flora Highlights**:
  - **Sal (Shorea robusta)** is the dominant tree species.
  - Home to:
    - **7% of India's flowering plant species**
    - **8% of India's orchid species**
- Extensive **grasslands** support large herbivore populations.

### **Fauna**

- **Flagship Species**:
  - **Bengal Tiger**
  - **Asian Elephant**
  - **Hill Mynah** (State bird of Odisha)
- **Unique Features**:
  - Holds the **highest tiger population in Odisha**.
  - **Only tiger reserve in India with melanistic (black) tigers**.
- **Major Mammals**:
  - Leopard
  - Gaur
  - Sambar
  - Barking deer
  - Four-horned antelope
  - Wild boar
  - Jungle cat
  - Giant squirrel
  - Common langur

### **Indigenous Communities**

- Inhabited by several **tribal groups**, including:
  - Kolha
  - Santhal
  - Bhumija
  - Bhatudi
  - Gond
  - Khadia
  - Mankadia
  - Sahara

### Crocodile Habitat in Similipal

- Rivers and streams such as **Budhabalanga and its tributaries** provide suitable freshwater habitats.
- Presence of:
  - **Sandbanks** for basking and nesting
  - **Undisturbed river stretches** for breeding
- Increase in crocodile numbers indicates **healthy aquatic ecosystems**.

### Conservation Efforts

- **Crocodile Conservation Programme (1975):**
  - One of the **earliest species-recovery programmes** in India.
  - Focused on protection, captive breeding, and habitat management.
- Regular **crocodile censuses** help:
  - Monitor population trends
  - Identify threats like poaching and habitat degradation

### Crocodile Species in India

India is home to **three species of crocodilians**:

#### 1. Mugger (Marsh Crocodile) – *Crocodylus palustris*

- **Most widely distributed** crocodile species in India.
- Found in **freshwater habitats**: rivers, lakes, reservoirs, and marshes.
- **Primary species recorded in Similipal National Park.**
- **IUCN Status**: Vulnerable
- **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**: Schedule I

#### 2. Gharial – *Gavialis gangeticus*

- Restricted to **large river systems** like the Ganga, Chambal, and Son.
- Long, narrow snout adapted for fish-eating.
- **Not found in Similipal.**
- **IUCN Status:** Critically Endangered
- **WPA, 1972:** Schedule I

### 3. Saltwater Crocodile – *Crocodylus porosus*

- Found in **coastal areas**, mangroves, and estuaries (e.g., Sundarbans, Bhitarkanika).
- **Largest living reptile.**
- **Absent in Similipal.**
- **IUCN Status:** Least Concern
- **WPA, 1972:** Schedule I

### Ecological Importance of Crocodiles

- Act as **keystone species** in freshwater ecosystems.
- Regulate fish populations and maintain ecological balance.
- Nesting activities help create microhabitats for other species.

## Finke River (Larapinta)

### Syllabus: GS-1; Geography

#### Context

The Finke River is highlighted as possibly the **world's oldest river system**.

#### About Finke River

- **Location:** Central Australia
- **Indigenous name:** Larapinta (Arrernte people)
- **Nature:** Major but **intermittent river**

#### Course

- Originates in **MacDonnell Ranges**, Northern Territory
- Formed by **Davenport Creek + Ormiston Creek**
- Flows ~**600 km** towards **Simpson Desert**, South Australia

### Unique Features

- Often appears as **waterholes**
- Becomes torrential after heavy rains
- Floodwaters may reach **Macumba River** → **Lake Eyre**

### Geological Significance

- Dated to **Devonian-Carboniferous** period  
(≈ **419–299 million years ago**)
- Age determined using **geological records, weathering profiles, radionuclide dating**

### Tributaries

- Ellery Creek
- Palmer River
- Hugh River



## **Traditional Indelible Ink**

**Syllabus: GS-3; Science & Technology**

### **Context**

Maharashtra State Election Commission decided to revert to **traditional indelible ink** for local body elections after reports that marker-pen ink could be wiped off.



### **What is Indelible Ink?**

- Permanent ink applied on a voter's finger after voting to prevent **multiple voting**.

### **Origin in India**

- First used in **1962 (Third General Election)**.

### **Manufacturer**

- **Mysore Paints and Varnish Limited (MPVL)**
  - Karnataka government undertaking
  - Formula developed by **National Physical Laboratory (CSIR-NPL)**

### **Key Features**

- **Silver nitrate-based formulation**
- Reacts with **keratin** and light → chemical stain
- **Difficult to remove**
- Applied on **left index finger (nail + cuticle)**

- **Visibility:**
  - Skin: 3–4 days
  - Nail: 2–4 weeks

### Significance

- Prevents impersonation and repeat voting
- Enhances credibility of elections
- Proven reliability for **over 60 years**

## **POCSO Law and Romeo-Juliet Exception**

**Syllabus: GS-2: Judiciary – SC Judgement.**

### Context:

- The **Supreme Court of India** has flagged **systemic misuse of the POCSO Act** in cases involving **consensual adolescent relationships**.
- The Court urged the **Union Government** to examine the feasibility of introducing a **“Romeo-Juliet clause”** to prevent criminalisation of consensual intimacy between adolescents close in age.

### Core Issues Highlighted by the Court

#### Criminalisation of Consensual Adolescence

- Under the **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012**, any sexual act involving a person below 18 years is criminalised.
- Consent is legally irrelevant—even if:
  - Both individuals are adolescents
  - Relationship is voluntary and romantic
  - Age difference is marginal (even **one day below 18** triggers POCSO)

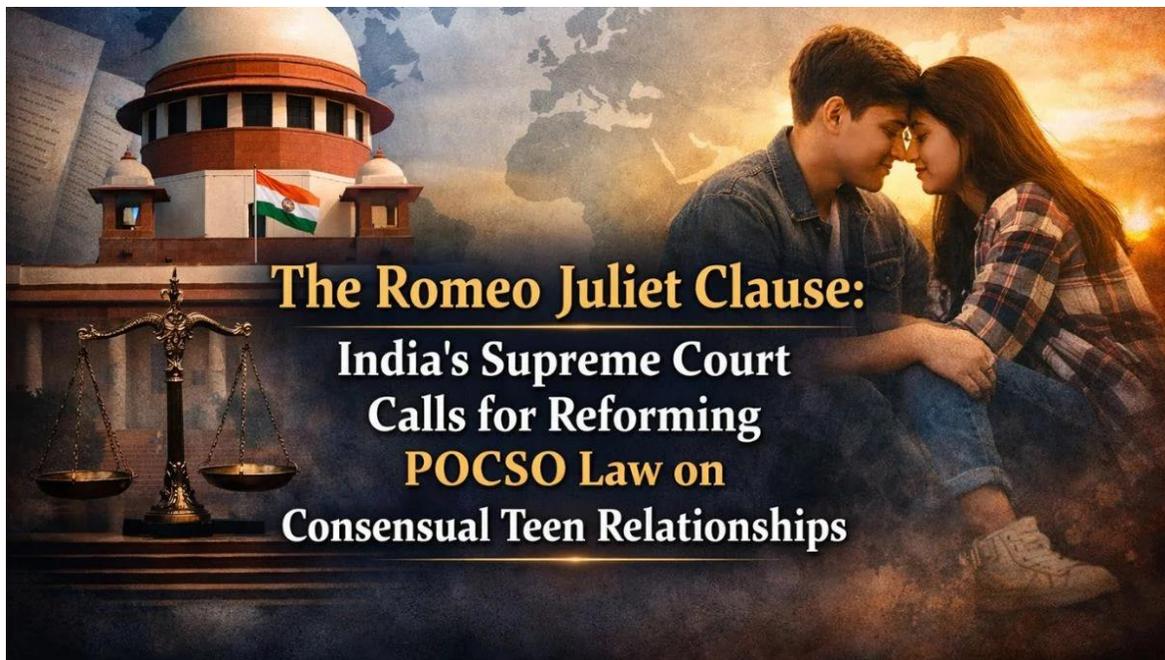
#### Harmful Impact of Criminal Process

- Adolescents are subjected to:
  - Police investigation
  - Arrest and detention

- Criminal trial and incarceration
- Results in:
  - Long-term **psychological trauma**
  - Social stigma
  - Disruption of education and life chances

### Misuse and Weaponisation of POCSO

- The Court observed that POCSO is often **used as a coercive tool** rather than a protective law.
- Common patterns:
  - **Misrepresentation of age** to invoke stringent provisions
  - **Familial misuse** to penalise relationships disapproved on:
    - Caste lines
    - Religious identity
    - Social or moral non-conformity



### What is a Romeo-Juliet Clause?

- A **statutory close-in-age exemption**, developed in:

- United States
- Parts of Europe
- Named after **Shakespeare's teenage lovers**.

### Key Features

- **Does NOT lower the age of consent**
- Shields adolescents **close in age** from criminal liability for consensual intimacy
- Seeks to:
  - Retain a **strong child protection framework**
  - Acknowledge **biological and social realities of adolescence**

### Limitations of the Romeo-Juliet Approach

- **Redrawing the line problem:**
  - If exemption applies to 16–18 years, what about 15 years 11 months?
- **Principled inconsistency:**
  - Same conduct becomes criminal solely due to a minor age difference
- Risk of:
  - Arbitrary thresholds
  - Continued exclusion of vulnerable adolescents just outside the exemption

### About the POCSO Act, 2012

#### Objective

- To protect children (below 18 years) from:
  - Sexual assault
  - Sexual harassment
  - Use in pornography

#### Salient Features

- **Gender-neutral law**
  - Applies to all children irrespective of gender
  - Victims and offenders can be male or female

- **Wide categorisation of offences**
  - Penetrative sexual assault
  - Non-penetrative sexual assault
  - Sexual harassment
  - Aggravated offences
- **Stringent punishments**
  - Rigorous imprisonment
  - Life imprisonment in aggravated cases
- **Child-friendly justice system**
  - Special Courts for speedy, in-camera trials
  - Protection from hostile questioning
  - No exposure to accused
  - Compensation and rehabilitation provisions

**Practice Qs:**

Q. The Supreme Court has expressed concern over the misuse of the POCSO Act in cases of consensual adolescent relationships and suggested examining a “Romeo–Juliet clause”. Critically examine the issue. How can India balance child protection with adolescent autonomy? (15 marks, 250 words)

## **India–Israel Joint Declaration on Fisheries and Aquaculture**

**Syllabus: GS-3: Indian Economy – Fishery Sector.**

**Context:**

- **India and Israel** signed a **Joint Ministerial Declaration of Intent** at the **2nd Global Summit on “Blue Food Security: Sea the Future 2026”**.

19 January 2026

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- Aim: **Deepening cooperation in fisheries and aquaculture** to strengthen **Blue Economy** and **food security**.

### Joint Ministerial Declaration on Fisheries & Aquaculture



### Nature of the Declaration

- Provides a **comprehensive bilateral framework** for cooperation in:
  - Fisheries
  - Aquaculture
  - Research, innovation, and capacity building

### Priority Areas of Cooperation

- **Advanced Aquaculture Technologies**
  - Recirculating Aquaculture Systems (RAS)
  - Biofloc technology
  - Cage culture
  - Aquaponics
  - Mariculture
  - Seaweed cultivation
- **Scientific & Technological Collaboration**
  - Genetic improvement of fish stocks
  - Broodstock development
  - Pathogen-free seed production

➤ **Sustainability & Governance**

- Sustainable fishing practices
- Climate-resilient aquaculture
- Resource efficiency

➤ **Institutional & Economic Measures**

- Capacity building and skill development
- Trade facilitation in fisheries products
- Establishment of **Indo-Israel Centres of Excellence**

**Strategic Significance**

- Enhances **productivity, resilience, and sustainability** of fisheries
- Strengthens **Blue Economy cooperation**
- Supports **nutrition security and livelihoods**

**Fisheries and Aquaculture in India: Key Facts**

**Global Position**

- **Second-largest fish producer globally**, after China
- Contributes **~8% of global fish production**

**Production Trends**

- Fish production:
  - 2023–24: 184.02 lakh tonnes
  - 2013–14: 95.79 lakh tonnes
- Nearly **doubling in a decade**
- Growth driven primarily by:
  - Inland fisheries
  - Aquaculture

**Government Initiatives**

**Blue Revolution (2015–16)**

- Objective:

- Holistic development of fisheries sector
- Contribution:
  - Laid the **foundation for rapid sectoral growth**
  - Focus on production, infrastructure, and modernization

**Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY), 2020**

- Aim:
  - Reform fisheries **value chain**
  - Enhance fish production and productivity
  - Improve **socio-economic welfare of fishers and fish farmers**
- Focus Areas:
  - Sustainable aquaculture
  - Post-harvest management
  - Infrastructure and market access