

## Five more Indian wetlands get Ramsar recognition

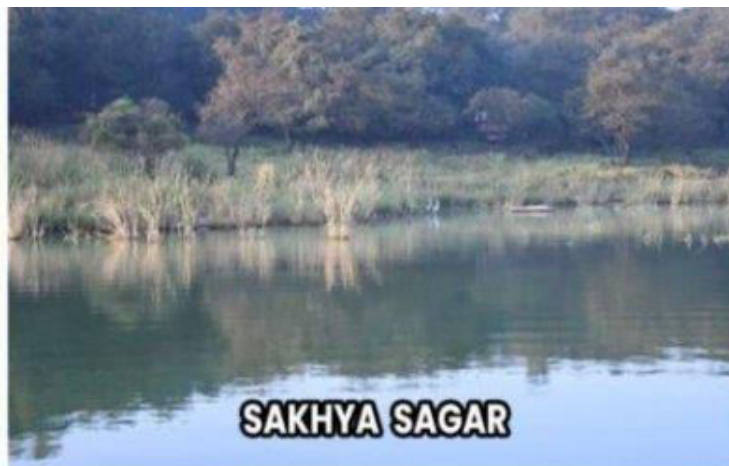
(GS Paper 3, Environment)

### Why in news?

- Recently, five more Indian sites have been recognised as wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.
- Three of these wetlands are in Tamil Nadu and one each in Mizoram and Madhya Pradesh, making a **total of 54 Ramsar sites** in the country.
- The sites include the Karikili Bird Sanctuary, Pallikaranai Marsh Reserve Forest & Pichavaram Mangrove in Tamil Nadu, Pala wetland in Mizoram, and Sakhya Sagar in Madhya Pradesh.



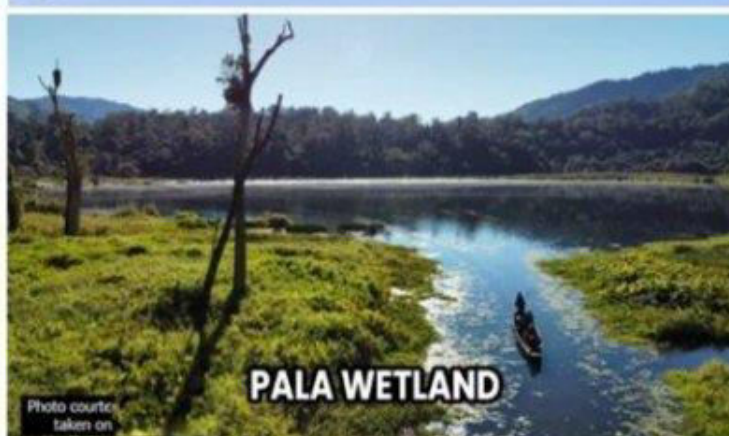
**PICHAVARAM MANGROVE**



**SAKHYA SAGAR**



**PALLIKARANAI MARSH**



**PALA WETLAND**

### Which sites have been given Ramsar recognition?

The five newly recognised wetlands of international importance include:

#### **Karikili Bird Sanctuary:**

- **Located in Kanchipuram district**, nearly 86 kilometers away from Chennai, this bird sanctuary is spread over a five-kilometer-wide belt and is home to cormorants, egrets, grey heron, open-billed stork, darter, spoonbill, white ibnis, night herons, grebes, grey pelican among others.
- It hosts more than 100 bird species.

#### **Pallikaranai Marsh Reserve Forest:**

- One of the last remaining natural wetlands of Chennai city, the marsh drains in an area of 250 square kilometers encompassing 65 wetlands.
- According to the Tamil Nadu State Wetland Authority, the Pallikaranai Marsh is one of the few natural coastal aquatic habitats that qualify as a wetland in India.

#### **Pichavaram Mangrove:**

- The Pallikaranai wetland is a freshwater marsh in Chennai and is located adjacent to the Bay of Bengal. It is said to be the city's only surviving wetland ecosystem.
- Separated from the sea by a sand bar, Pichavaram one of the largest Mangrove forests in India.
- It is also home to nearly 180 species.

#### **Sakhya Sagar:**

- Created from the Manier River in 1918, Sakhya Sagar is located near Madhav National Park in the Shivpuri district of Madhya Pradesh.

#### **Pala wetland:**

- Palak Dil or Pala Tipo means swallowing lake in Mara language, and the wetland, located near Phura village in Saiha district of Mizoram, is home to a wide range of animals, birds, and reptiles.
- Its **geographical location falls under the Indo-Burma biodiversity hotspot** and is therefore rich in animal and plant species.
- The lake is a major component of the Palak Wildlife Sanctuary and it supports the major biodiversity of the sanctuary.

#### **What is Ramsar recognition?**

- The Ramsar recognition aims to develop and maintain an international network of wetlands that are important for the conservation of global biological diversity and for sustaining human life through the maintenance of their ecosystem components, processes, and benefits.
- The recognition is part of the Ramsar Convention, an international treaty for the conservation and wise use of wetlands.
- It is **named after the Iranian city of Ramsar**, on the Caspian Sea, where the treaty was signed on February 2, 1971.

## **Lok Sabha passes Family Courts' Amendment Bill, 2022** **(GS Paper 2, Polity and Governance)**

#### **Why in news?**

- Recently, the Lok Sabha passed the Family Courts' Amendment Bill, 2022 by voice vote.
- It **validates the existence of the three family courts in Himachal Pradesh and Two in Nagaland** with retrospective effect.
- The bill also seeks validation of the decisions taken by the two states and the family courts.

#### **Details:**

- The family courts located at Shimla, Dharmashala, and Mandi in Himachal Pradesh will come into force, with a retrospective effect of February 15th 2019.
- The Family Courts located at Dimapur and Kohima in Nagaland will come into force with retrospect effect from November 12th 2008 on enactment of the Bill.
- The enactment was necessitated as it came to light in connection with a case that the central Government notifications were not existing with respect to these five family courts.

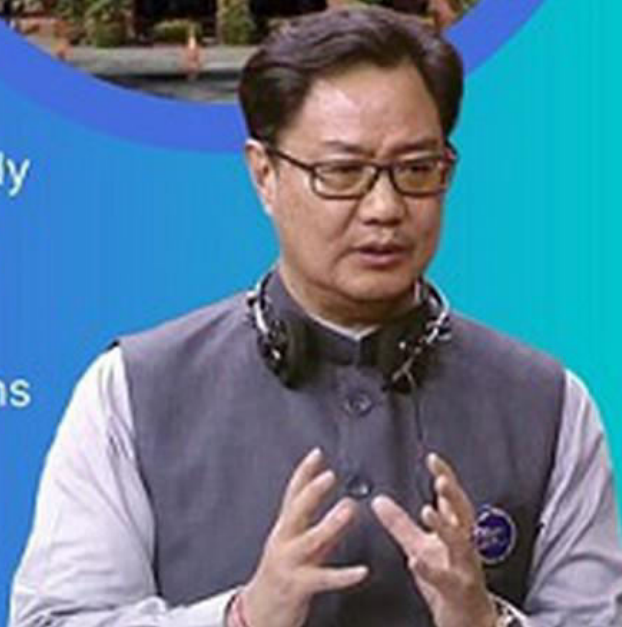
#### **Family Courts Act 1984:**

- The Family Courts Act 1984 was enacted for establishing family courts with a view to promote conciliation and secure speedy settlement of disputes relating to marriage and family affairs.
- The **Act came into force on September 14, 1984** and as of April 2022, there were 715 family courts established and functioning in 26 states and union territories, including three such courts in Himachal Pradesh and Nagaland.
- Himachal Pradesh established three family courts at Shimla, Dharamshala and Mandi vide notification dated February 15, 2019, and the Government of Nagaland has established two Family Courts at Dimapur and Kohima vide notification dated September 12, 2008.
- The same are yet to be brought into force by the Central Government vide notification in the Official Gazette as prescribed under Section 1(3) of the Family Courts Act, 1984.

# The Family Courts

(Amendment) Bill, 2022,  
Passed by Lok Sabha

- Statutory Cover given to already functioning family courts in Himachal Pradesh & Nagaland
- Validation provided to all actions taken so far under the Act



## Amendment:

- The Amendment Act seeks to amend the Act of 1984 by inserting a proviso in Section 1(3) to provide for the establishment of Family Courts in Himachal Pradesh and Nagaland.
- It also seeks to insert a new section 3A to retrospectively validate all actions under the said Act taken by the two states and the Family Courts of those states prior to the commencement of the Family Courts (Amendment) Act, 2022.

## Initiatives for Family Courts:

- Law and Justice Ministry requested the states **to ensure at least a family court in each district**. The legal counseling will be made completely free of cost and efforts are on in this direction.
- Several initiatives have been taken to improve the judicial infrastructure in the country, all types of technological advances have been made using continuing the court trials during the Covid-19 pandemic.

## Russia to quit International Space Station partnership with US after 2024

(GS Paper 2, International Relation)



### Why in news?

- Recently, Russia has decided to **quit the International Space Station (ISS) after 2024** and focus on creating its own orbital outpost.
- The development had been on the cards ever since Russia announced the invasion of Ukraine and Russian forces marched towards Kyiv nearly four months ago.



### Background:

- The decision comes weeks after the **US criticised Russian astronauts for using the Space Station** to push political narratives after cosmonauts displayed flags of Ukrainian areas controlled by Russian forces.
- The development also happened just days after a Russian and a European astronaut conducted a joint spacewalk to fit a robotic arm on the **Russian module Nauka** that recently arrived at the flying laboratory.

### What it translates?

- The announcement paves the way for Russia's long-term plan of launching its own station in orbit, boosting its domestic research in the sector.
- Russia had been the leader in space exploration up until NASA landed the first human on the Moon in what was one of the biggest developments to have come out of the cold war.

### Advantage China:

- The news will be well received in China, which is **building its own space station, Tiangong**, and nearing its completion by the end of 2022.
- The latest development is set to boost chances for the Chinese National Space Administration to attract not just scientific research proposals but also investments.
- China is on a roll given that there are already plans in place to de-orbit the ISS by the end of this decade.

- The Space Station, which had been over three decades in the making had been a hub of deep space exploration and a symbol of cooperation between the West and Russia after the cold war ended.

#### **China & Russia:**

- Russia and China have already been vibing when it comes to space exploration and the two have plans to jointly develop a research base on the Moon.
- The two had in June 2021 unveiled plans **Joint International Lunar Research Station (ILRS)**, which includes building facilities both on the surface and in the lunar orbit. While engineers are undecided on the final location of the lunar base, initial studies put the Amundsen crater on the South Pole as a potential site.

#### **Boost for Private Companies:**

- Russia's withdrawal from the Space Station will **open a new door for private companies** to enter the Space Station as the laboratory requires a permanent presence and funding to sustain itself. The private sector will not only bring new research but also major dollars for NASA to keep pushing it till 2030.
- Several **private companies like Blue Origin** are already working on building a commercial space station, **Orbital Reef, in Low Earth Orbit**, and the development could mean they are up for capturing a big chunk of that market.
- **SpaceX** will also be looking to score a big chunk of this pie as it **works to push to Moon and Mars in the future.**

#### **End of an era:**

- The announcement marks the beginning of the end of the Space Station that has been the center of scientific research outside the planet for over two decades.
- Nearly 110 countries have so far been part of research and experimentation done in zero-gravity on the station that flies at 27,576 kmph about 400 kilometers above the planet.
- Pegged at nearly \$100 billion, the Space Station is about as long as a football field and consists of two main sections, one run by Russia, and the other by the US. At the moment, the flying laboratory is home to seven humans including three Russian cosmonauts and four astronauts of American and European descent.
- **NASA has announced plans to deorbit the Space Station in 2031** after it completes its extended mission timeline in 2030.
- It is worth mentioning that the Russian segment will be crucial to deorbit the Space Station and the two countries will surely work out a way to ensure that even if Russia walks out after 2024.

#### **Way Forward:**

- Whatever way this goes, the Space Station will remain the epitome of engineering, physics, and diplomatic excellence that ensured a continuous collaboration in the heavens while the world churned around.

### **India (Trade and Investment) All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG)**

**(GS Paper 3, Economy)**

#### **Why in news?**

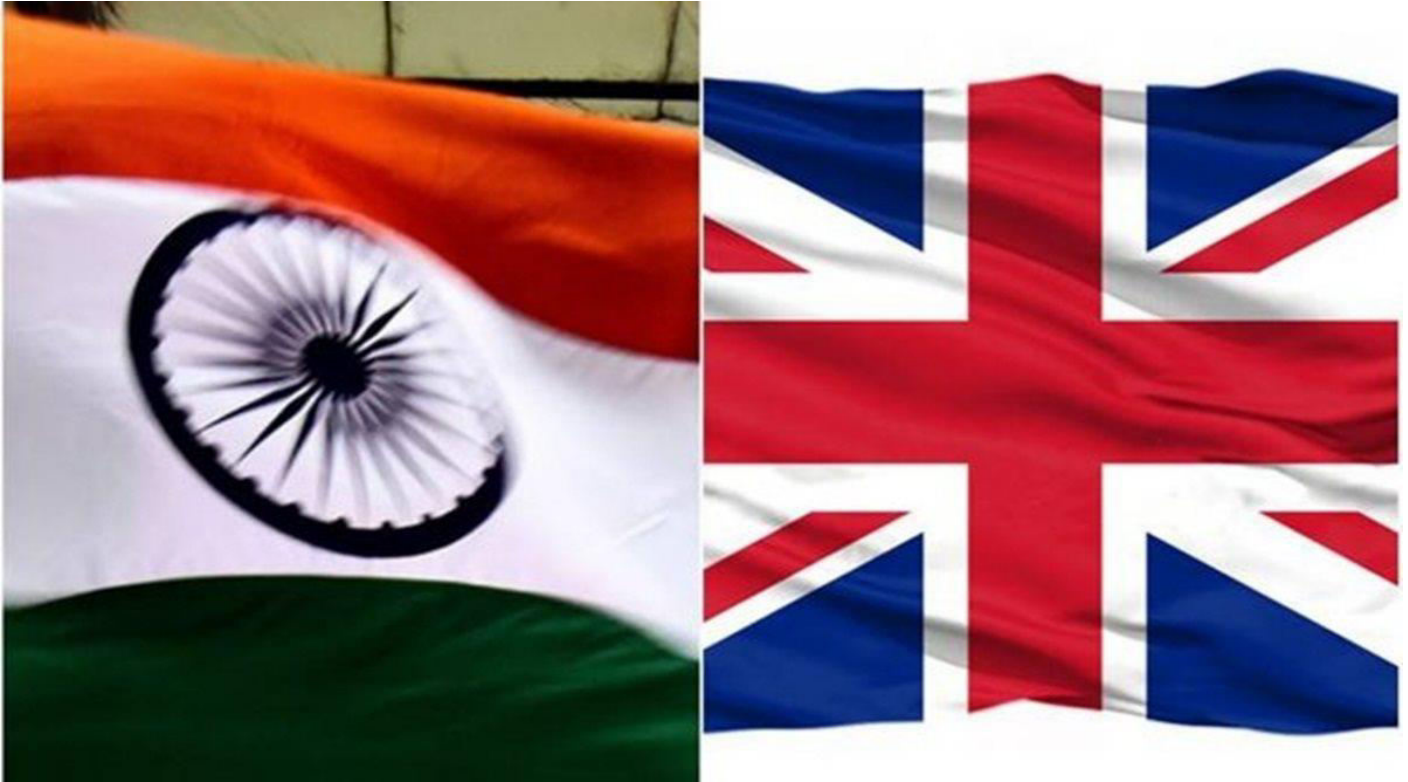
- A new **cross-party UK parliamentary panel** has been created to promote trade, investment and people-to-people ties with India, **backed up by British Indian think tank, 1928 Institute.**
- The **India (Trade and Investment) All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG)** was formally registered as part of celebrations of the 75th anniversary of India's independence and is made up of **25 members of Parliament** and peers of different political affiliations.

#### **APPGs:**

- APPGs are informal, cross-party groups in the UK formed by MPs and members of the House of Lords who share a common interest in a particular policy area, region or country and have no official status within Parliament.

#### **Mandate:**

- With a stated **goal to promote trade and investment between India and the UK** for the mutual betterment of their citizens, whilst building an inclusive living bridge between the two countries, the new APPG hopes to **support the ongoing India-UK free trade agreement (FTA) negotiations** and promote its benefits once concluded.
- Given 75 years of India's Independence, the creation of an All-Party Parliamentary Group focused on India will set the tempo between the UK Parliament and India/Indians.



#### **Key Highlights:**

- **From trips across different parts of Britain to visits to India**, the India (Trade & Investment) APPG said it will work with diverse stakeholders and encourage beneficial collaborations.
- This APPG will be the conduit which not only connects UK and Indian policymakers but **connects businesses and entrepreneurs to drive growth**.
- The APPG will ensure that dialogue and engagement will cut across all levels of business, particularly encouraging a **wider lens on female led business and start-ups**.

#### **Way Forward:**

- The new APPG will officially kick-start its activities when Parliament resumes after its summer recess under a new Prime Minister in September.