

# SANSKRITI IAS DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

17-08-2026

## Hara Mangrove Forest

The Conversation

Iran oil spill: the war is leaving environmental scars that ceasefires cannot heal

Oil slicks moving along Iran's southern coast have reached the Hara mangrove forests of Qeshm Island. Iranian authorities say the extent of...



**Why in News:** Recent satellite images have highlighted an **oil spill off Qeshm's southern coast**, posing a threat to the Hara mangrove forest.

### Geographical and Ecological Profile

- **Hara forests** are located along the **Strait of Hormuz** in the Persian Gulf and mainly comprise **grey mangrove (Avicennia marina)**.
- The forests were designated a **UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in 1976**.

### Ecosystem Services

- Their specialised roots enable them to survive in **saline conditions** and help protect coastlines from **erosion**.
- Hara mangroves function as **Blue Carbon ecosystems**, storing substantial amounts of carbon.
- They act as nursery grounds for **shrimp, crabs and fish**, supporting regional fisheries.
- The mangrove canopy provides habitat for migratory birds such as **great stone-curlew and herons**.



### Socio-economic Significance

- The forests support **sustainable tourism in Qeshm**, particularly through tourism centred on their waterways.

## New Development Bank

**Why in News:** **Iran** is set to join the **New Development Bank (NDB)**, the multilateral

ET The Economic Times

New Development Bank plans \$7.5 billion funding to deepen rupee lending

The New Development Bank is set to invest \$7.5 billion in India, focusing on local currency financing aimed at strengthening emerging...



development bank established by the BRICS countries.

### Institutional Background

- The **NDB**, formerly called the **BRICS Development Bank**, was established by **Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa**.
- Its founding agreement was signed at the **BRICS Summit in Fortaleza, Brazil, on 15 July 2014**, and it became operational in **2015**.
- Its headquarters is in **Shanghai, China**, with regional offices including **Johannesburg, São Paulo and Moscow**.

### Mandate and Membership

- The NDB finances **infrastructure and sustainable development projects** in BRICS and other emerging and developing economies.
- Its sectors include **clean energy, transport, water and sanitation, environmental protection, social infrastructure and digital infrastructure**.
- Membership is open to **any UN member**.

### Capital and Governance

- The NDB has **USD 100 billion authorised founding capital**, with **USD 50 billion initial subscribed capital** divided equally among the five founders.
- Its governance includes a **Board of Governors** and a **Board of Directors**.
- Unlike the **World Bank and ADB**, NDB members have **equal voting power**.

## Earthquake Swarm

TH The Hindu

### Why is Maharashtra experiencing an earthquake swarm? | Explained

The Hindu's explainer on the Maharashtra earthquake swarms.



**Why in News:** A series of small earthquakes in **Maharashtra** has drawn attention to the phenomenon known as an **earthquake swarm**.

### Seismological Characteristics

- An **earthquake swarm** consists of multiple earthquakes of comparable intensity occurring in a relatively small area over a short period.
- Swarms may involve **hundreds or thousands of low-intensity earthquakes** without a clearly identifiable main shock.
- Such sequences may continue for **weeks**, particularly in active geothermal regions.

### Major Triggers

- **Fluid movement** can cause fault slip when water or other fluids circulate through underground cracks.

- **Magma movement** can generate earthquakes as magma-filled fractures push through the Earth's crust.
- **Slow-slip events** involve gradual fault movement, typically by centimetres to tens of centimetres over **weeks to years**.

## Mahadayi River

TH The Hindu

### No proposal for Environmental Clearance pending for Mahadayi: Centre

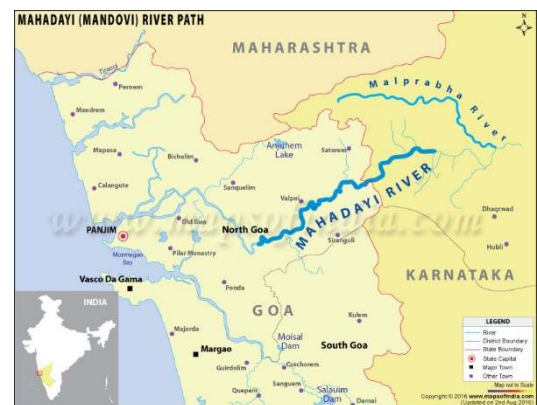
There is no proposal before the Union government from Karnataka seeking an Environmental Clearance (EC) for diversion of the Mahadayi river...



**Why in News:** The Union Government informed the Lok Sabha that it has received **no proposal from Karnataka for Environmental Clearance** for diversion of the Mahadayi River.

### Geographical Profile

- The **Mahadayi**, also called **Mandovi** or **Mhadei**, is a **rain-fed interstate river** shared by **Karnataka and Goa**.
- It originates in the **Bhimgad Forest of Belagavi district, Karnataka**, and flows westward into the **Arabian Sea at Panaji, Goa**.
- The river is approximately **81 km long**, with **29 km in Karnataka** and **52 km in Goa**.



### Geographical and Ecological Features

- The river basin is particularly important for **Goa's water requirements**, covering much of North Goa.
- **Panaji and Old Goa** are situated on its left bank.
- **Divar, Chorao and Vashee** are major freshwater islands near Old Goa, while **Chorao** hosts the **Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary**.

### Interstate Water Dispute

- Major tributaries include **Rogaro, Kushavati, Nanorem, Nanuz, Valvota and Mapusa**.
- The dispute centres on Karnataka's proposed diversion of water from the **Kalasa and Bhandura tributaries** towards the **Malaprabha basin**.
- The **Mahadayi Water Disputes Tribunal (2018)** allocated **13.42 TMC (380 MCM)** to Karnataka, including limited diversion of **1.72 TMC from Kalasa and 2.18 TMC from Bhandura**.

## SAFTA

The Hindu

### DRI uncovers illegal use of SAFTA agreement in arecanut imports to India

The masterminds were facilitating the import of arecanut from South-East Asian countries into one of the EPZ (Export Processing Zone) in...



**Why in News:** The **Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI)** dismantled a network allegedly importing Southeast Asian areca nuts by falsely declaring them as **Bangladeshi origin** to obtain concessional duties under SAFTA.

### **Institutional Framework**

- **SAFTA (South Asian Free Trade Area)** is the free-trade arrangement of **SAARC**.
- It came into force in **2006**, replacing the **1993 SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA)**.
- Its signatories are **Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka**.

### **Special Treatment**

- The agreement recognises the need for **special and differential treatment for Least Developed Countries (LDCs)**.
- **Afghanistan** was the last country to join SAFTA.

### **Trade Objectives**

- SAFTA seeks to **reduce trade barriers** and facilitate cross-border movement of goods among member states.
- It promotes **fair competition**, equitable benefits and mechanisms for **dispute resolution**.
- It also provides a framework for expanding **regional economic cooperation**.

## National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission

**Why in News:** The **Supreme Court** expressed concern over pending cases before the NCDRC and suggested considering **regional and circuit benches** to address the backlog.

The Times of India

### Consumer forums can't be mere rehabilitation centres for retired: Supreme Court

India News: NEW DELHI: Flagging slow disposal in consumer forums, Supreme Court on Thursday said the consumer dispute redressal commissions...



### **Legal and Institutional Framework**

- The **National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC)** is a **quasi-judicial body** established in **1988 under the Consumer Protection Act, 1986**.

- It aims to provide **inexpensive, speedy and summary redressal** of consumer disputes.
- Its head office is located in **New Delhi**.

### Composition and Jurisdiction

- The Commission is headed by a **sitting or retired Supreme Court Judge or a sitting or retired Chief Justice of a High Court**.
- It exercises jurisdiction over specified high-value consumer complaints and has **appellate and revisional jurisdiction** over State Commissions and District fora.
- Its jurisdiction covers disputes involving both **goods and services**.

### Appeal and Access

- An aggrieved person may appeal an NCDRC order to the **Supreme Court within 30 days**.
- Complaints may be filed by a **consumer, registered voluntary consumer association, Central or State Government**, or one or more consumers representing numerous consumers.

## Other Important News of the day

| Places in News | Mount Elbrus                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
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|                | <p><b>Why in News:</b> Andhra Pradesh Police Sub-Inspector <b>V. Venkateswara Rao</b> scaled Mount Elbrus to mark India's 80th Independence Day.</p> <p><b>Geographical Significance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Mount Elbrus</b> is located in <b>southern Russia</b> and is the highest peak of the <b>Caucasus Mountains</b>.</li> <li>➤ At <b>5,642 metres</b>, it is regarded as the highest mountain in <b>Europe and Russia</b>.</li> <li>➤ Elbrus is one of the <b>Seven Summits</b>, representing the highest peaks of the seven continents.</li> </ul> <p><b>Geological Features</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Elbrus is an <b>inactive volcano</b> consisting of two principal dormant volcanic summits.</li> <li>➤ The <b>Caucasus Mountains</b> formed through the northward collision of the <b>Arabian Plate with the Eurasian Plate</b>.</li> </ul> |



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|                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Elbrus formed more than <b>2.5 million years ago</b> and was most active during the <b>Holocene Epoch</b>.</li> </ul> <p><b>Glacial and River Systems</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Its snowfields cover about <b>138 sq. km</b> and contain around <b>22 principal and 77 secondary glaciers</b>.</li> <li>➤ Major glaciers include <b>Bolshoi Azaou and Irik Glacier</b>.</li> <li>➤ The <b>Baksan, Malka and Kuban rivers</b> originate from glaciers associated with Elbrus.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <p><b>Environment</b></p> | <p><b>Loggerhead Sea Turtle</b></p> <p><b>Why in News:</b> Mumbai Police rescued a distressed <b>100-kg loggerhead sea turtle</b> found struggling to swim in the Arabian Sea.</p> <p><b>Taxonomy and Identification</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The <b>Loggerhead Sea Turtle</b> belongs to the family <b>Cheloniidae</b> and has the scientific name <b>Caretta caretta</b>.</li> <li>➤ It is the <b>world's largest hard-shelled turtle</b> and the <b>second-largest extant turtle</b>, after the leatherback.</li> <li>➤ Its name derives from its <b>large head and powerful jaws</b>, adapted for feeding on hard-shelled prey.</li> </ul> <p><b>Distribution and Adaptations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Loggerheads occur across the world's oceans except the <b>coldest seas</b>.</li> <li>➤ Major nesting areas include the <b>western Atlantic and Indian Ocean regions</b>, particularly <b>Oman, the United States and Australia</b>.</li> <li>➤ They use the <b>Earth's geomagnetic field for long-distance navigation</b>.</li> </ul> <p><b>Physical Features and Conservation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Adults generally have a shell length of about <b>0.9–1.2 metres</b>, with a reddish-brown carapace and pale yellow plastron.</li> <li>➤ Loggerheads can live for <b>80 years or more</b>.</li> <li>➤ The species is classified as <b>Vulnerable under the IUCN Red List</b>.</li> </ul> |



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| <p><b>Space</b></p>                  | <div> <h2>Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope</h2> </div> <div> <p>Moneycontrol.com</p> </div> <div> <p><u><b>CONFIRMED!!! NASA's Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope is scheduled to launch on August 30, aboard a...</b></u></p> </div> <div> <p>NASA's Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope is preparing for its August 30 launch. The powerful new observatory will survey huge areas of the...</p> </div> <div> </div> <div> <p><b>Why in News:</b> NASA's <b>Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope</b> is scheduled to begin its journey to deep space on <b>30 August</b>.</p> </div> <div> <h3>Scientific Objectives</h3> </div> <div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The Roman Telescope is <b>NASA's next flagship orbital observatory</b> designed to study <b>dark energy, dark matter and exoplanets</b>.</li> <li>➤ It will provide deep observations of the <b>Milky Way</b> and survey hundreds of millions of stars.</li> <li>➤ Its microlensing survey is expected to identify approximately <b>2,600 exoplanets</b>.</li> </ul> </div> <div> <h3>Orbital Position</h3> </div> <div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The telescope will operate around the <b>Sun-Earth Lagrange Point 2 (L2)</b>.</li> <li>➤ L2 provides a suitable location for sustained astronomical observations away from Earth's immediate vicinity.</li> </ul> </div> <div> <h3>Key Instruments</h3> </div> <div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The <b>Wide Field Instrument</b> is a <b>300-megapixel infrared camera</b> with a field of view about <b>100 times greater than Hubble's infrared instrument</b>.</li> <li>➤ It is expected to measure light from about <b>one billion galaxies</b> during the mission.</li> <li>➤ The <b>Coronagraph Instrument</b> will demonstrate high-contrast imaging and spectroscopy of nearby exoplanets.</li> </ul> </div> |
| <p><b>Science and Technology</b></p> | <div> <h2>Friedreich's Ataxia</h2> </div> <div> <p><b>Why in News:</b> A study by researchers at the <b>University of Oklahoma Health</b></p> </div> <div> <p><b>Sciences Center</b> linked Friedreich's ataxia to mutations in the <b>FXN gene</b>.<br/><b>Genetic and Cellular Basis</b></p> </div> <div> <p>THE Hindu</p> </div> <div> <p><u><b>Scientists find why a debilitating genetic disorder affects only Eurasians</b></u></p> </div> <div> <p>Scientists uncover the genetic origins of Friedreich's ataxia, revealing its prevalence among Eurasians due to unique mutations.</p> </div> <div> </div>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

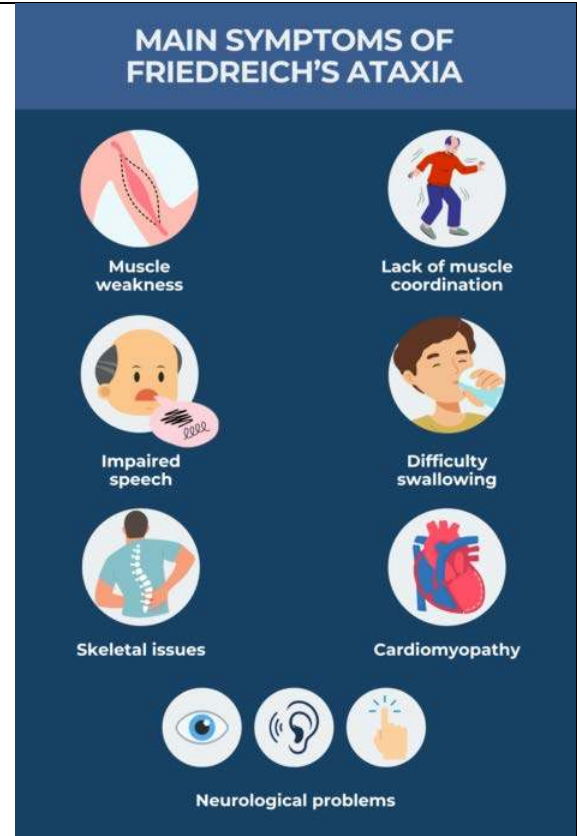
- **Friedreich's ataxia (FA)** is a rare **inherited disorder** causing progressive damage to the nervous system.
- It is caused by mutations in the **FXN gene**, which codes for the mitochondrial protein **frataxin**.
- Reduced frataxin impairs **ATP production** in mitochondria and causes accumulation of toxic by-products.

#### Inheritance and Clinical Features

- The disease develops when an individual inherits **two defective copies of FXN**, one from each parent.
- A person carrying only one abnormal copy is generally a **carrier**.
- Symptoms commonly begin between **5 and 15 years** and include **ataxia, muscle weakness, speech problems, involuntary eye movements and scoliosis**.

#### Disease Progression

- Many affected individuals may require a **wheelchair 15–20 years after symptom onset**.
- There is currently **no cure**, and treatment focuses on managing symptoms and maintaining function.



## Uttar Pradesh in News

### Uttar Pradesh Leads India in Domestic Tourism

Moneycontrol.com

#### Two temple towns drive UP travel surge, catapult state to India's top tourist destination

Uttar Pradesh has emerged as India's leading state in domestic tourism, with 646.8 million domestic tourist visits in 2026, according to...



**Why in News:** **Uttar Pradesh** recorded **646.8 million domestic tourist visits in 2026**, the highest among Indian states.

#### Tourism Leadership

- **Tamil Nadu (306.8 million), Karnataka (304.6 million) and Andhra Pradesh (290.3 million)** followed Uttar Pradesh.
- **Ayodhya, Varanasi, Prayagraj, Mathura and Vindhyachal** emerged as major tourism destinations.

#### Religious Tourism

- **Ayodhya** recorded **7.20 crore visits** during January–June 2026, while **Varanasi** recorded **2.25 crore visits** during January–March 2026.

#### Infrastructure and Investment

- Tourism projects worth **₹1,283.33 crore** are focused on **beautification, connectivity and tourist facilities**.
- The **Uttar Pradesh Tourism Policy** received investment proposals worth **₹37,688.58 crore**, with **Swadesh Darshan** and **PRASHAD** supporting infrastructure development.

#### Youth Participation

- The **Chief Minister Tourism Fellowship Programme** and **Youth Travel Mart** promote youth participation in tourism.