

NEWS TODAY

Soaring land prices, grabs, and carbon schemes driving Land Inequality

A report, titled 'Land Squeeze', released by **International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food)** underscores a series of **unprecedented pressures on global farmland (land squeeze)** which are now accelerating and converging.

Dimensions of Land Squeeze in India

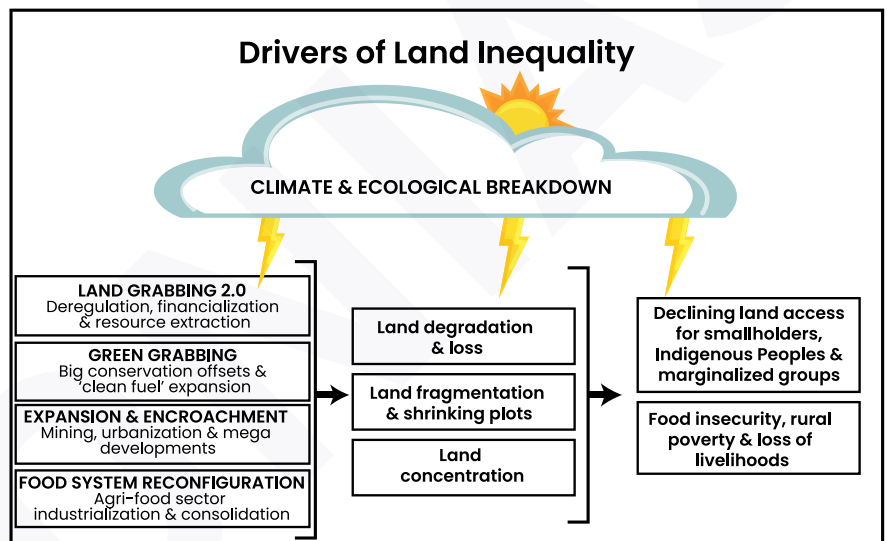
- ▶ **Land degradation and desertification:** >70% of its arable land is undergoing land degradation.
- ▶ **Land concentration:** Top 10% landowners own 45% of farmland.
- ▶ **Land Fragmentation:** Average agricultural holdings in India are **1.08 hectares (2015-16)**.

Steps taken to address land inequality in India

- ▶ **Land Reforms:** Abolition of **intermediaries**, tenancy reforms, **ceiling** on land holding size, and **land consolidation**.
- ▶ **Joint Forest Management Program:** For enhanced access to forest resources & decreased land degradation.
- ▶ **Voluntary group farming** in some Indian states, including Kerala and Telangana, increased women's access to land, providing livelihoods, and empowering them.

Way Forward

- ▶ Build **integrated land, environmental, and food systems governance** to halt green grabs by placing right to land at the heart of climate governance.
- ▶ **Caps on farmland investment**, giving farmers rights of first refusal on land sales
- ▶ Build **public pension and insurance systems** to secure farmers' livelihoods and facilitate managed transfer of land to new farmers.



Advocates not liable under Consumer Protection Act (CPA) for deficiency of services: Supreme Court

SC overruled **National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (2007) judgment** which ruled services rendered by lawyers are covered under CPA 1986 (re-enacted in 2019).

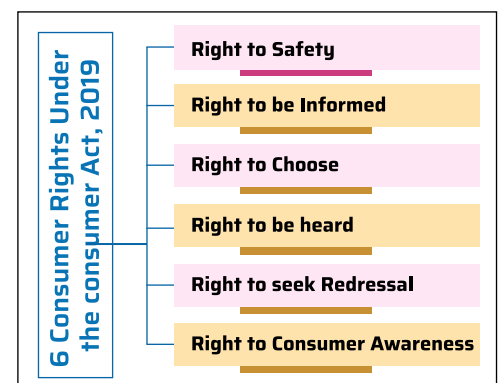
- ▶ **Professionals have to be treated differently from persons** carrying out business and trade and are not under the purview of the CPA.
- ▶ The bench also requested CJI to revisit VP Shantna's (1995) judgment which held that **doctors and medical professionals can be held liable under the CPA**.

About CPA

- ▶ CPA 1986 was enacted to **provide for better protection of the interests of consumers and establishment of consumer protection councils** for the settlement of consumer disputes, etc.
- ▶ **CPA 2019 replaced the CPA 1986** and strengthened the provisions for consumer protection.

Key Features of CPA 2019

- ▶ **Broadened the definition of 'consumer':** Included persons who buy/avail goods/ services **online/through electronic means**.
- ▶ **Established Central Consumer Protection Authority:** A central authority to promote, protect, and enforce consumer rights (refer to infographic).
- ▶ **Streamlined Dispute Redressal Mechanism:** Enables **mediation and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms** & e-filing of complaints.
- ▶ **Product Liability Action:** against manufacturers, service providers, etc.
- ▶ **Provides specific measures to prevent unfair trade practices in e-commerce and direct selling sectors.**



'Five-Year Review of India's Merchandise Trade' report

Report, released by **Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI)**, assesses impact of international disruptions and domestic hurdles and reviews market shifts in trade performances.

- Report also highlights **varied impact of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)** on India's global trade dynamics.

About FTAs

- FTAs are **treaties between two or more countries** to reduce or eliminate certain barriers to trade and investment, and to facilitate stronger trade and commercial ties between participating countries.
 - ⊕ It can cover areas such as trade in **goods, services, intellectual property rights (IPRs)**, etc.

Key findings of the report on India's FTAs

- India's **merchandise imports** from FTA partners grew by **~38%** whereas export grew by just **~14.5%**.
- **FTA with ASEAN** (signed in 2010), saw **growth in imports** at a faster pace than **exports**.
- Overall, **India ranked 17th globally in merchandise exports** whereas it is **ranked 8th in merchandise imports**.

Issues with India's FTAs

- **Lower FTA utilisation:** India's FTA utilization **remains low at around 25%**, as against 70-80% for developed countries.
- **Higher compliance cost:** Due to **complex certification processes and rules of origin**.
- **Non-tariff barriers (NTBs):** Persistence of stringent standards, sanitary and phytosanitary measures and technical barriers by partner countries like Japan.
- **Limited awareness:** **Inadequate promotion and outreach activities** about of FTA benefits among exporters.

Key Recommendations on FTAs by Surjit Bhalla Committee (2019)

- Adopt an **integrated approach** towards trade in goods and services and investment.
- **Implement an extensive programme on technical regulations** based on international standards to address issues with NTBs.
- **Institutional support to MSMEs** to take advantage of FTAs in consonance with international obligations.
- Develop an objective **database on the utilization of FTAs**.
- Better **inter-ministerial coordination**, State-wise outreach and Institutional mechanism for Stakeholders' consultation, etc.
- **Use trade remedies** like anti-dumping and countervailing duties available under FTAs.

India set to face hotter heatwaves amid preparation gaps according to study by World Weather Attribution group

According to the study, India faced **pronounced impact from hotter heatwaves**, further intensified by climate change.

- **El Niño** events have also increased likelihood and **intensity of heatwaves** over India.

About Heatwaves

- **India Meteorological Department (IMD)** declares a **heatwave** when the temperature of a place crosses 40 °C in plains, 37°C in the coastal areas, and 30°C in the hills.

Impact of Heatwaves

- **Impact on Vulnerable Sections:**
 - ⊕ **Forced schools to close down:** resulting in education gap faced by children from low-income families, risk of dropouts, and negatively impacting human capital.
 - ⊕ **Old age People:** A recent study highlighted that 245 mn more older adults, mostly in Asia, and Africa, will face acute heat.
- **Reduced crop yields:** By putting increased pressure on farmers, water resources, and agricultural systems.
- **Other Impacts:** Health Hazards (**suspected deaths and heat stroke**), **Workers' safety** (Long working hours and no facilities)

Issues faced in addressing Heatwaves

- **Heatwave Action Plans (HAPs)** are often underfunded.
- HAP often **ignore local contexts**.
- **Lack of proper identification of vulnerable groups** and periodic evaluations.

Way Forward

- **Long-term adaptation management plans** and climate change policies.
- **Workplace interventions:** Scheduled rest breaks, fixed work hours, and rest-shade-rehydrate programs.

Steps Taken

- **National Action Plan on Heat-Related Illnesses:** Developed in 2021 by MoH&FW
- **Heat Action Plans:** Implemented in 23 States (prepared by IMD in collaboration with National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)).
- IMD issues **color code impact-based heat warnings** jointly with NDMA.
 - ⊕ Includes **Green (No action)**, **Yellow Alert (Be updated)**, **Orange Alert (Be prepared)**, and **Red Alert (Take Action)**.

GANHRI deferred accreditation of the National Human Rights Commission-India (NHRC) second year in a row

The NHRC's "A-status" has only been deferred once before, in 2016, but it was restored in 2017.

- NHRC has been accredited as 'A' by Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) since the beginning of the accreditation process for NHRIs in 1999.
- The deferment will affect India's ability to vote at the Human Rights Council and some United Nation General Assembly bodies.

Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI)

- GANHRI was established as the International Coordinating Committee of institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights in 1993.
- It was renamed as GANHRI in 2016.
- It has 120 members (India is a member)
- It accredits NHRI with a 'A status' (full compliance) or 'B status'; (partial compliance) based on their adherence in meeting the requirements of the Paris Principles.
 - ⊕ Paris Principles set out internationally agreed minimum standards that NHRIs must meet to be considered credible and independent.

Reasons for deferral of Accreditation:

- Police officers engaged in the investigation of human rights violations;
- Lack of pluralism in the composition of the NHRC;
- Lack of diversity in staff and leadership;
- Insufficient action to protect marginalised groups.

China-Myanmar module of NSCN-IM helped banned outfits in Manipur: NIA

National Investigation Agency (NIA), in a chargesheet, said that "China-Myanmar module" of the Isak-Muivah faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM) supported cadres of banned Meitei outfits to infiltrate India.

- Infiltration was aimed to exploit the current ethnic unrest in Manipur with a larger goal to destabilize the State and wage a war against the Government of India.
 - ⊕ Previously, union government signed a ceasefire pact in 1997 with NSCN-IM leadership in India and a framework agreement to find a political solution was signed with the group in 2015.

Insurgency in North-East Region (NER)

- For more than 50 years, the North East has seen an unending cycle of violent conflicts dominated by insurgencies with demands ranging from outright sovereignty to greater political autonomy.

Factors for persistence of insurgency in NER

- **Ethnic conflict:** Demands for separate statehood or autonomy by various ethnic groups, such as Nagas, Bodos, Kukis, etc.
- **Illegal immigration and demographic changes:** Influx of illegal immigrants, particularly from Bangladesh, leading to rise of organizations like ULFA in Assam.
- **Developmental deficit:** Limited infrastructure and economic opportunities in the region bred resentment among local population.
- **External interference:** Various insurgent groups have received support, training, and shelter from external actors.

Steps taken to tackle Insurgency in NER

- **Political dialogues and peace talks:** Bodo Peace Accord (2020), Bru-Reang Agreement (2020), etc.
- **Developmental initiatives:** North Eastern Council for integrated development of NER, Prime Minister's Development Initiative for the North-East (PM-DevINE), etc.
- **Confidence-building measures:** Civic Action Program, Surrender and Rehabilitation policies for insurgents, etc.
- **International cooperation:** Intelligence sharing, coordinated operations, etc., with neighbouring Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Myanmar.

Also in News



Tea Board of India (TBI)

According to data released by TBI, tea production across the tea estates of Assam and West Bengal may drop by 50%.

About TBI

- It is a statutory body set up in 1954 under the Tea Act, 1953.
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Commerce.
- **Headquarter:** Kolkata.
 - ⊕ Overseas offices are in London, Dubai, and Moscow.
- **Member:** 31 members (including Chairman)
- It is reconstituted every three years.

Major Tea Growing Regions

- Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tripura, Himachal Pradesh, etc.



Red Panda (Ailurus fulgens)

A Red panda was recently sighted in Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary (Arunachal Pradesh).

About Red Panda

- Small arboreal mammal found in high-altitude forests of Nepal, India, Bhutan, Myanmar, and China.
- **Habitat:** Temperate forest of Himalayas (Sikkim, West Bengal, Meghalaya, and Arunachal Pradesh).
 - ⊕ It thrives best at 2,200-4,800m in mixed deciduous and conifer forests with dense understories of bamboo.
- **Protection status:**
 - ⊕ IUCN status: Endangered
 - ⊕ Wildlife Protection Act: Schedule I
 - ⊕ CITES: Appendix I
- **Conservation Issues:** Habitat fragmentation and degradation, Predation by feral dogs, Occasional hunting and poaching.



Blue Flag Certification

Tamil Nadu Coastal Zone Management Authority has recommended the Injambakkam-Akkarai stretch development project with the condition to explore blue flag certification.

About Blue Flag Certification

- It is a **voluntary globally recognized eco-label/tag** given to environment-friendly & clean beaches marinas and boat.
- It is accorded by the Denmark-based non-profit **Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE)**.
 - FEE has identified **33 criteria**, to qualify for blue flag.

There are **12 blue flag-certified beaches in India**. E.g., Minicoy Thundi and Kadmat in Lakshadweep, Ghoghla-Diu, Golden-Odisha, etc.



Wholesale Price Index (WPI)

WPI inflation recently hit 13-month high of 1.26% in April 2024.

About WPI

- It measures the **average change in the prices of commodities** for bulk sale at the **early stage of transactions**.
 - Base year:** 2011-2012.
- Released by:** Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce & Industry.
- WPI Index basket covers: Primary Articles (22.62%), Fuel and Power (13.15%) and Manufactured products (64.23%, highest).**
 - WPI basket does not cover services.**
- The **weightage of food in WPI is approx. 24%** which is lesser than CPI.



Sahul

Archaeologists have found evidence of a lost landscape known as Sahul in the ancient times.

About Sahul

- Sahul was a **supercontinent exposed on the Earth's surface during the last ice age** due to glaciation, which lowered global sea levels.
- Sahul was above sea levels around 70,000 years ago and **connected Australia, New Guinea, and neighboring islands** like the Aru Islands.
- It **helped humans travel across continents, from Asia to Australia** almost 7,000 decades ago.

INDIA VIX

India Volatility Index (VIX)

Recently, India VIX surged above the critical threshold of 21, indicating heightened volatility in India's stock market.

About India VIX

- It is a measure of the amount by which an **underlying Index is expected to fluctuate**, in the near term (30 calendar days).
 - Higher the India VIX values, higher the expected volatility and vice-versa.
- It is based on **index option prices of NIFTY**.
- Uses **computation methodology of Chicago Board of Options Exchange (CBOE)**.
 - CBOE was first to introduce a **volatility index for US markets in 1993**.



CAATSA

US State Department warned India of sanctions under the **Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA)** after **India-Iran deal on Chabahar port**.

About CAATSA

- It is a **US federal law**, enacted in 2017, which aims to punish countries having **deep engagements with Russia, North Korea, and Iran** using economic sanction.
- It entails **economic & financial penalties** for any nation that have significant **transactions with Russian intelligence and military agents**.
- In 2018, US House of Representatives passed an amendment to exempt **India from economic sanctions** under CAATSA for purchasing **S-400 missile defence system from Russia**.



Exercise Tarkash

The seventh edition of the **Indo-U.S. joint counter-terrorism exercise 'Tarkash'** was recently held in Kolkata.

- It was held between the **India's National Security Guard (NSG) and U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF)**.

Personality in news



Arun Chandra Guha (1892-1983)

Freedom fighter and renowned writer Arun Chandra Guha was remembered on his birth anniversary.

About Arun Chandra Guha

- Born in **Barisal (East Bengal)**.
- He was a **member of the Constituent Assembly** and, since 1946 a **Member of Parliament** till the third Lok Sabha (1963).

Key Contributions

- Started taking interest in politics during the **Swadeshi movement of 1905**.
- After 1910, he took an active part as a **member of the Jugantar Party**, a secret revolutionary society.
- Published Bengali and English journals, **Mandira and Forward**, respectively.
- Subscribed to Jatindranath Mukhopadhyay, alias **Bagha Jatin's Zimmermann plan**.
- Literary works:** Shristi Sabhyata, First Spark of Revolution, etc.

Values: Patriotism, Courage, Leadership, etc.

