

18th June DSC

Current Affairs 18th June 2025.

FATF Denounces Pahalgam Attack, Set to Highlight ‘State-Sponsored Terror’ in Report for First Time

Importance of FATF’s Condemnation

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) formally denounced the Pahalgam terror attack of 22 April 2025.

It emphasized that such incidents are impossible without financial resources and channels—establishing a direct connection between terrorism and its funding sources.

This is only the **third instance in a decade** that FATF has publicly condemned a terror strike, underlining the extraordinary seriousness of the incident.

Relevance: GS Paper 3 (Internal Security), GS Paper 2 (International Relations)

Global Alarm

Reports indicate mounting pressure from the international community, showing global unity in recognizing the attack’s gravity.

Reflects rising impatience over Pakistan’s ongoing role in cross-border terror funding.

Upcoming FATF Report

FATF is expected to publish a report in the coming month that will:

- Officially recognize “**state-sponsored terrorism**” as a distinct terror financing source for the **first time**.
- Reflect a major **policy transformation**, echoing India’s consistent position on Pakistan. Currently, **India’s National Risk Assessment** is the only formal framework that identifies Pakistan’s role in state-backed terror financing.

New Analytical Tools

FATF has created a **Terror Financing Risk & Context Toolkit** to assist assessors.

Its goal: Prevent countries such as Pakistan from misguiding FATF through partial or misleading data.

The toolkit ensures more **transparency and consistency** in evaluating terror-financing threats.

Engaging Stakeholders

FATF plans to organize a **webinar** to raise awareness among both public and private stakeholders about:

- Terror financing threats
- Emerging global risks
- The importance of vigilance and compliance

India’s Evidence Submission

India has reportedly submitted an extensive **dossier** urging FATF to intensify its scrutiny of Pakistan, possibly advocating for a **re-greylisting**.

The dossier seeks to document ongoing violations by Pakistan in spite of past warnings.

Wider Impacts

This policy development lends **international credibility** to India's long-standing stance on Pakistan's support for terrorism.

It may lead to harsher actions like **sanctions, greylisting, or blacklisting**, particularly if Pakistan is explicitly implicated.

This strengthens global accountability for state actors involved in supporting terrorism.

FATF: An Overview

- **Founded:** 1989, during the G7 Summit in Paris
- **Headquarters:** Paris, France
- **Membership:** 39 countries, including India
- **Secretariat:** Hosted by OECD

Core Mandate

To combat:

- **Money laundering**
 - **Terror financing**
 - **WMD proliferation financing**
- FATF lays out **40 universal Recommendations** to guide global compliance.

Instruments & Monitoring

- Maintains a **Grey List** (for jurisdictions under increased monitoring)
- Maintains a **Black List** (for high-risk countries with severe strategic flaws)
- Conducts **Mutual Evaluations** and continuous follow-ups

India's Role

- Became a **member in 2010**
- Advocates for Pakistan's greylisting on grounds of state-supported terror financing

Recent Shift

FATF now **recognizes state-backed terrorism** as a major source of global terror financing.

New Flowering Species Discovered in Aravallis

Details of the Finding

A previously unknown flowering plant named **Portulaca bharat** has been discovered in the Aravalli Hills near **Galtaji Temple**, Jaipur.

It thrives in rocky crevices on dry slopes in the region's semi-arid ecosystem.

Discovered by **Nishant Chauhan**, a member of the **Satpura Biodiversity Conservation Society**.

Relevance: GS Paper 3 (Environment & Ecology)

Botanical Relevance

Belongs to the **Portulaca** genus, recognized for:

- Succulent features
- Water-retentive tissues
- Resilience to arid climates

Portulaca bharat was identified as a new species following detailed morphological analysis and controlled cultivation.

Its discovery has been documented in the **Phytotaxa** international journal.

Ecological Importance

Classified as "**Data Deficient**" by the IUCN Red List due to its limited population range.

Shows signs of **narrow endemism**, currently known only from Galtaji Hills.

Faces high vulnerability from habitat loss and climate change.

Reveals unexplored biodiversity of the Aravallis.

Collaborative Research

Work backed by:

- **Amber Srivastava** (Botanical Survey of India)
- **Sudhanshu Shekhar Dash & Sushil Kumar Singh** (BSI, Kolkata & Dehradun)
Cultivation and observation conducted in **Hamirpur** (Himachal Pradesh) and **Lucknow**.

India's Portulaca Biodiversity

- Globally: ~153 species, primarily in tropical/subtropical zones
- In India: 11 species, with 4 being **endemics**
- Most species adapt to **semi-arid, dry regions**

Digital Access and Skills: CAMS Survey Findings

Background

Derived from the first comprehensive dataset by **CAMS (2022–2023)**, conducted by NSSO.

Covers **3.02 lakh households** and **12.99 lakh individuals**.

Objective: Measure progress towards **SDG 4.4**, targeting digital skills in youth and adults.

Relevance: GS Paper 2 (Social Issues)

Nationwide Internet Access

- **76.3%** households have broadband access
- Urban: **86.5%**
- Rural: **71.2%**
Though internet reach is widespread, **disparities remain across states and communities.**

Regional Variation

- High access (>90%): Delhi, Goa, Mizoram, Manipur, Sikkim, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh
- Low access (<70%): West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Arunachal Pradesh

Caste-Based Inequities

- General category: 84.1%
- OBCs: 77.5%
- SCs: 69.1%
- STs: 64.8%
Signifies a persistent **digital caste divide.**

Economic Divide

- Poorest 10%: 71.6% households lack broadband
- Richest 10%: Just 1.9% without broadband
- Second-lowest decile: 56.2% have access, showing some progress
Clearly, **economic status strongly influences digital access.**

Mobile Phone Penetration

- Rural: 94.2% households have access
- Urban: 97.1%
- Usage among 15+ age group: 83.9% rural, 92.4% urban
However, **exclusive use among women and lower castes is low**, especially in rural regions.
- Rural general category women: 25.3% use mobile exclusively
- Urban women: 51.2%
Figures are even lower for SCs, STs, and OBCs.

Technology Usage

- 4G use: 50% rural, 70% urban
- 2G/3G: 40.4% still rely on older tech
- 5G penetration: **minimal**

Digital Skill Gaps

- Internet use (15+): 53.6% rural, 74% urban
- Email: 20% rural, 40% urban
- Copy-paste: 40% rural, 60% urban
- Spreadsheet use: very low
- Online banking: only 37.8% of the 15+ population can use

Policy Takeaways

Marked digital divide along **region, caste, gender, and income** lines.

Digital skills are **lagging** behind access.

Suggestions:

- Offer **broadband subsidies** similar to water/electricity schemes
- Focus on **grassroots digital literacy** programs
- Promote **equal access** to meet SDG 4 objectives

Significance of Shipki La Pass

Historical Relevance

Located in **Kinnaur district**, Himachal Pradesh, at an altitude of **3,930 m**.

An ancient **Indo-Tibetan trade corridor**, active since at least the **15th century**, possibly earlier.

Traditional trade oaths were part of folklore, symbolizing long-standing **cross-border trust**.

Relevance: GS 1 (Culture, Heritage, Geography), GS 3 (Infrastructure, Trade)

Trade Disruption

Cross-border commerce stopped after the **1962 Sino-Indian war**.

Further strained by the **Doklam crisis (2017)** and the **COVID-19 pandemic**.

Despite the suspension, **local communities remain hopeful**.

Recent Moves

Himachal Pradesh CM has **reopened the pass to Indian tourists**—Aadhaar now suffices, no permits required.

This has rekindled hopes for **cross-border trade and pilgrimage**.

Trade Composition

Imports: wool, yak products, goatskins, religious goods, turquoise, gold

Exports: grains, spices, dried fruit, copperware, iron tools, tobacco

Trade contributed to **local industries**, such as **Kinnauri jewelry and crafts**.

Strategic Importance Despite Low Volumes

Reopening can **cut 14 days** off the **Delhi–Mansarovar pilgrimage**, boosting religious tourism. Can generate employment, revive hospitality, and promote **infrastructure growth**. Serves as a **people-centric diplomatic initiative** to foster cultural and economic ties.

Cultural Bonds

Residents across both sides share **pastoral livelihoods**, similar **surnames** (e.g., Namgyal), and practice **Buddhism**.

Shared festivals and monasteries underscore **civilisational links**, contrasting the tense India–Pakistan border dynamic.

Policy Impacts

Can function as a **“soft diplomacy corridor”** for India–China ties.

The **Kinnaur Indo-China Trade Association** and state leaders seek MEA support to revive trade.

May emerge as a model of **heritage diplomacy and border upliftment**.

India’s Nuclear Liability Law: Key Ambiguities

CLNDA Basics

The **Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act (CLNDA)** was enacted in **2010** to ensure swift compensation for nuclear harm.

It imposes **strict and no-fault liability** on the operator (typically **NPCIL**).

Operator liability capped at ₹1,500 crore; government covers additional amounts up to ₹2,100–2,300 crore.

India joined the **Convention on Supplementary Compensation (CSC)** in 2016.

Relevance: GS 2 (Governance)

India’s Unique Clause on Supplier Liability

Unlike CSC, CLNDA allows recourse against suppliers under these conditions:

- Section 17(a): If explicitly stated in the contract
- Section 17(b): If damage results from defective equipment/services—even if contract is silent
- Section 17(c): If caused by **intentional wrongdoing**

Major Legal Loopholes

- **Section 17(b)** imposes **automatic liability** on suppliers for defective parts, even if not contractually obligated—going beyond global norms.
- **Section 46** allows for **parallel legal actions**, including tort claims—opening suppliers to **unlimited civil/criminal liability**.
- No exact legal definition of **“nuclear damage”**, causing uncertainty.

Concerns of Investors

- Both domestic and foreign suppliers fear **unlimited liability**, especially under Section 46.
- Lack of clarity on **insurance needs** and coverage.
- Worry about **class-action suits** or civil claims, counter to CSC's aim of restricting liability to the operator.

Impact on Nuclear Projects

Key projects involving:

- **France (Jaitapur)**
- **USA (Kovvada)** are stalled
Only **Kudankulam** (Russia) has progressed, as it predates CLNDA and runs under separate rules.

Government's View

Claims CLNDA is **aligned with CSC**, and Section 17(b) is **discretionary**. However, legal experts argue each clause under Section 17 functions **independently**, making suppliers vulnerable even without contractual mention. Court rulings will depend on **statutory text**, not Parliament debates.

Wider Effects

Suppliers seek **amendments or clarity** to mitigate risks. Although meant to secure victims' rights post-Bhopal, the law has become a **barrier to foreign investment**. Without changes, India may miss opportunities to scale **nuclear energy**, essential for clean energy goals and national security.

Registrar-General of India Issues Notification for 2027 Census

Census Schedule and Reference Dates

The upcoming national Census will be conducted in the year 2027.

Key reference dates include:

- **March 1, 2027** for the majority of Indian regions.
- **October 1, 2026** for high-altitude and non-synchronous areas such as:
 - Ladakh
 - Jammu & Kashmir
 - Himachal Pradesh
 - Uttarakhand

Relevance: GS 2 (Governance)

Administrative Boundaries Freeze

A Gazette notification issued under Section 3 of the Census Act, 1948, brings into effect a freeze on administrative boundaries.

This means that no state may alter boundaries of districts, tehsils, police stations, etc., until Census operations are completed.

This is essential for consistency in data collection across enumeration blocks.

Digital Census Features

The 2027 Census will be entirely digital for the first time:

- Enumerators will use mobile-based applications.
- Citizens will be allowed to self-enumerate.
- This marks the introduction of comprehensive digital data collection in Indian Census history.

Data Protection Provisions

Strong data security systems will be adopted:

- Secured collection, transfer, and storage of data.
- The goal is to protect privacy and build public confidence.

Manpower and Planning

Planned deployment includes:

- 34 lakh supervisors and enumerators
 - 1.3 lakh Census officers
- The Census will be conducted in two stages:
- House Listing Phase
 - Population Enumeration Phase
- Preliminary trial runs will test:
- The effectiveness of the mobile app
 - Enumerator readiness and operational procedures

Administrative Oversight

The notification has been released by the Registrar-General under the Ministry of Home Affairs. Union Home Minister Amit Shah has already reviewed the preparedness.

Future notifications will clarify:

- Trial timelines
- First-phase operations

Importance of the 2027 Census

This will be India's first digital census, representing a major shift in both technology and logistics.

The exercise follows delays to the 2021 Census, caused by the pandemic and other issues. Freezing administrative boundaries ensures uniformity and reliability in longitudinal demographic data.

Ax-4 Mission: ISRO and Axiom Space Collaborate on Vital Pre-Launch Experiments

Mission Overview

Launch Date: June 19, 2025 (rescheduled four times due to technical/logistical delays)

Astronaut: Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla, Indian Air Force

Mission Duration: 14 days aboard the International Space Station (ISS)

Collaboration: Conducted with U.S.-based private firm Axiom Space

Relevance: GS 3 (Science and Technology)

ISRO's Coordination Role

ISRO is working closely with Axiom Space to:

- Refresh time-sensitive scientific samples.
- Ensure proper set-up of experiments in a zero-gravity environment.
- Collaborate with Indian Principal Investigators (PIs) from national laboratories and universities.

Seven Microgravity Experiments Backed by ISRO

Indian scientists have proposed the following studies for the ISS:

1. **Microalgae Growth** – Assessing how microgravity and radiation impact edible algae.
2. **Seed Germination** – Observing sprouting and viability of salad seeds in space.
3. **Tardigrades** – Studying the survival, reproduction, and gene expression of these extremophiles.
4. **Muscle Repair** – Investigating how metabolic supplements affect muscle regeneration.
5. **Human-Machine Interaction** – Understanding human responses to digital displays in zero gravity.
6. **Cyanobacteria Proteomics** – Comparing protein expression when fed with nitrate vs. urea.
7. **Crop Seed Studies** – Examining microgravity's effects on crop development and yield.

Collaborative Research with NASA

ISRO and NASA will jointly perform five additional experiments focusing on human physiology. These are part of NASA's broader biomedical research program on the ISS.

Scientific and Strategic Value

This mission marks the first time Indian researchers will conduct native experiments on the ISS. It boosts India's progress in:

- Human spaceflight capability
- Space-based biological research
- Global scientific partnerships

It also complements ISRO's Gaganyaan mission and long-term plans for a space station.

Arabian Desert's Hidden Lush Past Unearthed by Scientists

Geographic Context

The Arabian Peninsula is part of Earth's driest desert zone, stretching from the Sahara to the Thar Desert.

Historically, this terrain acted as a natural obstacle, preventing movement between Africa and Eurasia.

It has been considered arid for over 11 million years.

Relevance: GS 1 (Geography)

Breakthrough Research

Recent findings published in *Nature* reveal several wet phases over the last 8 million years.

During these periods, Arabia featured grasslands, rivers, and lakes — aiding animal and human movement.

Evidence comes from speleothems (cave mineral deposits) in 7 cave systems across central Saudi Arabia.

Climatic Patterns and Dating

22 speleothem samples were dated using Uranium-Thorium/Lead techniques.

- **Oldest wet phase:** Between 7.44 and 6.25 million years ago
- **Most recent wet phase:** Between 530,000 and 60,000 years ago
Over time, these periods became shorter and drier due to:
 - Weakening monsoons
 - Expansion of northern ice sheets during the Pleistocene

Ecological and Archaeological Clues

Hippo, crocodile, and horse fossils suggest rich wetland ecosystems existed ~74,000 years ago.

Over 10,000 ancient lakes and archaeological finds like stone tools from 500,000 years ago were discovered at sites such as the Jubbah Oasis.

These findings indicate Arabia served as a corridor for early human and animal migration.

Implications for Human Evolution

Previous assumptions held Arabia as uninhabitable until recent domestication of animals.

New findings support the "**Green Arabia Hypothesis**" — Arabia as a vital passage in the "Out of Africa" migrations.

It appears Homo sapiens and other hominin species migrated through Arabia during these wetter periods.

Scientific Importance

This research redefines theories on early human dispersal and biogeographical connectivity.

It demonstrates how climate-driven environmental shifts created temporary migration pathways.

It also helps explain the rise and fall of populations based on changing climates.



Contemporary Lessons

Historically, humans thrived during wetter climatic phases and declined or migrated during arid ones.

This raises concerns that modern climate change may again trigger large-scale migrations. While technology like air-conditioning may delay effects, it cannot permanently offset water and heat stress.

17th June 2025: Static MCQS

1. Consider the following statements:

- I. Anadyr in Siberia and Nome in Alaska are a few kilometers from each other, but when people are waking up and getting set for breakfast in these cities, it would be different days.
- II. When it is Monday in Anadyr, it is Tuesday in Nome.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a. I only
- b. II only
- c. Both I and II
- d. Neither I nor II

Correct Option: (a)

2. Consider the following countries:

1. United Kingdom
2. Denmark
3. New Zealand
4. Australia
5. Brazil

How many of the above countries have more than four time zones?

- a. All the five
- b. Only four
- c. Only three
- d. Only two

Correct Option: (a)

3. Who among the following was the founder of the 'Self-Respect Movement'?

- a. 'Periyar' E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker



- b. B.R. Ambedkar
- c. Bhaskarrao Jadhav
- d. Dinkarrao Javalkar

Correct Option: (a)

4. . Consider the following pairs:

Country Resource-rich in

- I. Botswana : Diamond
- II. Chile : Lithium
- III. Indonesia : Nickel

In how many of the above rows is the given information correctly matched?

- a. Only one
- b. Only two
- c. All the three
- d. None

Correct Option: (c)

5. Consider the following pairs:

- I. Region Country
- II. Mallorca : Italy
- III. Normandy : Spain
- IV. Sardinia : France

In how many of the above rows is the given information correctly matched?

- a. Only one
- b. Only two
- c. All the three
- d. None

Correct Option: (d)