EC Revisits EPIC-Aadhaar Link Plan

Background & Issue:
- The Election Commission (EC) is revisiting the earlier attempt (NERPAP in 2015) to link voter IDs (EPIC) with Aadhaar
- The initiative, halted after the Supreme Court's 2015 interim order limiting Aadhaar's mandatory use, is being reconsidered amid recent allegations of duplicate EPIC numbers and voter list manipulations.

Recent Developments:
- Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar has convened a meeting with top officials (Home Secretary, Legislative Secretary, and UIDAI CEO) to explore a renewed linking strategy.
- Opposition and ruling party complaints (e.g., Trinamool Congress flagging duplication in West Bengal) have intensified the debate.

A brief timeline of the efforts to link Aadhaar with voter ID

FEB. 2015: EC launches NERPAP to link Aadhaar with voter ID and eliminate duplicate entries. Over 300 million voters were linked within three months

AUG. 2015: Supreme Court issues an interim order restricting Aadhaar's mandatory use to welfare schemes and PAN linking

MARCH 11, 2025: Trinamool Congress delegation meets the Election Commission over allegations of duplicate EPIC numbers and cloned Aadhaar cards

Implications:
- **Electoral Integrity:** Addresses concerns over duplicate entries and voter verification errors.
- **Technological and Process Dimensions:** Involves digital platforms (ERONET) and voluntary Aadhaar seeding as per updated guidelines under the Representation of the People Act, 1950.

U.S. Travel Restrictions on 41 Nations

Background & Issue:
- The U.S. administration is considering broad travel restrictions affecting citizens from 41 countries.

Group Division:
- **Group 1:** Red — E.g., Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, Cuba, North Korea — face full visa suspensions.
- **Group 2:** Orange — E.g., Eritrea, Haiti, Laos, Myanmar, South Sudan — see partial suspensions affecting tourist, student, and some immigrant visas.
- **Group 3:** Yellow — including Belarus, Pakistan, Turkmenistan — face conditional partial suspensions based on their governments' remedial efforts within 60 days.

PROPOSED TRAVEL BAN LIST

Implications:
- **National Security:** Reflects ongoing concerns over deficiencies in the various national security risks.
- **Foreign Policy Continuity:** Echoes elements of the earlier Trump-era travel bans with potential adjustments by the current administration.
- **Diplomatic & Economic Impact:** May influence bilateral ties and affect sectors such as tourism and education.

Overhaul in ST Identification Criteria

Background & Issue:
- Top anthropologists and experts are calling for a revision of the criteria used to classify communities as Scheduled Tribes (STs) in India.

Debate & Discussion:
- Current criteria, established by the Lokur Committee in 1965, focus on traits like "primitive characteristics" and "geographical isolation" but are increasingly seen as outdated.
- Proposals suggest developing a "spectrum of tribalness" with multiple indicators (potentially up to 150) to more accurately capture the socio-cultural and historical nuances of communities.

Hundreds of communities, including the Meitels, across the country are currently demanding inclusion in the list of Scheduled Tribes. RITU RAJ KONWAR

Implications:
- **Policy Reform:** A shift towards a more dynamic and inclusive classification system could address inter-community conflicts and claims for ST status.
- **Social Justice:** May impact reservation benefits and government aid, influencing the socio-economic landscape.
- **Anthropological Perspective:** Encourages a move from a binary classification to a more nuanced, multidimensional assessment of tribal identity.

City of a Goddess: Attukal Pongala Ritual

Background & Cultural Significance:
- The annual Pongala ritual at the Attukal Bhagavathy temple in Thiruvananthapuram is one of the largest religious gatherings of women globally.

Key Ritual Elements:
- **Practice:** Women prepare and cook offerings (a mix of rice, jaggery, ghee, and coconut) as an act of devotion to the goddess.
- **Scale & Recognition:** Guinness World Records acknowledged it in 2009 for its massive participation (over 25 lakh women).
- **Logistics & Management:** Extensive measures by Kerala Police and Fire services, including deployment of 3,815 police personnel and 847 cameras, ensure crowd control and safety.

Implications & Dimensions:
- **Cultural Identity:** Reflects the empowerment of women and the importance of local traditions in cultural preservation.
- **Urban Management:** Demonstrates effective coordination between municipal authorities and emergency services during large-scale events.
- **Tourism & Global Appeal:** Enhances Kerala's reputation as a vibrant center of cultural tourism.

India's New Tiger Reserve – Madhav National Park

Designation & Rationale:
- Madhav National Park in Madhya Pradesh has been declared the country's 58th tiger reserve.
- Tiger reserves were originally established to counter a drastic decline in tiger numbers due to hunting, poaching, and habitat loss.

Key Features & Conservation Process:
- **Location & Size:** Located in Madhya Pradesh with a core area of 355 sq km and an adjoining buffer zone.
- **Tiger Population:** Initially lacking tigers, it now hosts a small but growing population (seven tigers reported recently) and serves as a corridor linking to Ranthambore and Kuno National Park.
- **Management:** Follows NTCA guidelines that mandate site-specific management plans, a core–buffer zone model, and integrated conservation interventions.

Homes for the big cat

As of the 2023 tiger census, India is estimated to have 3,682 tigers. About 30% of them are considered to be living outside tiger reserves

Tiger reserves are spread across the length and breadth of India, with Madhya Pradesh having the highest number of nine reserves

State	
Uttarakhand	2
Jharkhand	1
Arunachal Pradesh	3
Bihar	1
Assam	4
Rajasthan	4
U.P.	1
M.P.	9
Bengal	2
Mizoram	1
Maharashtra	6
Chhattisgarh	3
Odisha	2
A.P.	1
Telangana	2
Karnataka	5
Kerala	2
Tamil Nadu	5

Broader Context:
- India's 2023 tiger census estimates about 3,682 tigers, with roughly 30% living outside designated reserves.
- The move reflects continued efforts to enhance connectivity between tiger habitats and to manage human–wildlife conflict, with implications for regional biodiversity and tourism.
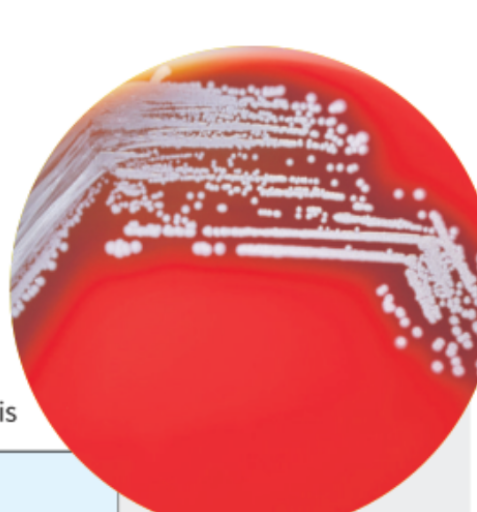
Environmental Mapping & Melioidosis in Odisha

Disease Overview:
- **Melioidosis,** caused by the bacterium *Burkholderia pseudomallei,* presents with varied clinical manifestations and high fatality in severe cases.

Survival of melioidosis-causing bacteria
Environmental conditions are primarily responsible for the survival of the bacteria

- As per a 2016 study, 1,65,000 people contract melioidosis annually worldwide. Southeast Asian countries contribute 44% of the global burden
- The bacteria can cause a range of clinical manifestations — trivial skin infection to unresolving pneumonia and fulminant sepsis
- The bacteria that causes melioidosis requires prolonged incubation conditions, and hence may develop latently
- The study focused on 144 disease cases over a nine-year period from 2013 to 2023
- The disease peaked during and after the monsoon season
- Environmental mapping indicated that Cuttack, Balasore, Khordha, and Jajpur districts have a high potential for disease occurrence
- Environmental mapping the diseases can become more widespread and/or shift to new regions
- As climate change alters rainfall patterns,

Study Insights & Findings:
- Research in Odisha (covering 2015–2023) correlates melioidosis outbreaks with monsoon season—cases peak during and after heavy rainfall.
- Key meteorological parameters such as rainfall, temperature, cloud cover, and solar radiation significantly influence bacterial survival and transmission.

Implications for Public Health:
- Mapping identifies high-risk districts (e.g., Cuttack, Balasore, Khordha, Jajpur) in densely populated areas.
- Highlights the importance of integrating climate analytics into disease surveillance and preparedness plans amid rapid urbanisation and climate change.

Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) – Govt Initiatives

Negotiation Progress:
- The Indian government is in the final stages of negotiating FTAs with key economies—the U.S., U.K., and EU—with expectations of announcements soon.

Objectives & Benefits:
- Aim to boost export opportunities, attract higher investments, and provide a more level playing field for Indian exporters.
- Efforts include a shift away from protectionist mindsets and promoting negotiations from a stance of strength and self-confidence.

Strategic Importance:
- Successful FTAs would enhance India's global trade competitiveness and could offset challenges posed by potential reciprocal tariffs from trading partners.

Ukraine Security Guarantees & Zelenskyy's Appeal

Security Demands:
- Ukrainian President Zelenskyy has urged Western allies for clear security guarantees, including the potential deployment of foreign ground contingents on Ukrainian soil backed by U.S. support.

Diplomatic Dynamics:
- Discussions at international fora (including the Raisina Dialogue and virtual summits) highlight divergent views among European leaders and U.S. strategists regarding the scope and nature of security assistance.
- The call is aimed at ensuring a more reliable and robust peace arrangement, countering Russian efforts to stall ceasefire negotiations.

Implications for Regional Security:
- The appeal underscores the importance of cohesive Western support for Ukraine amid the evolving dynamics of the Russia–Ukraine conflict and reflects broader shifts in transatlantic security cooperation.

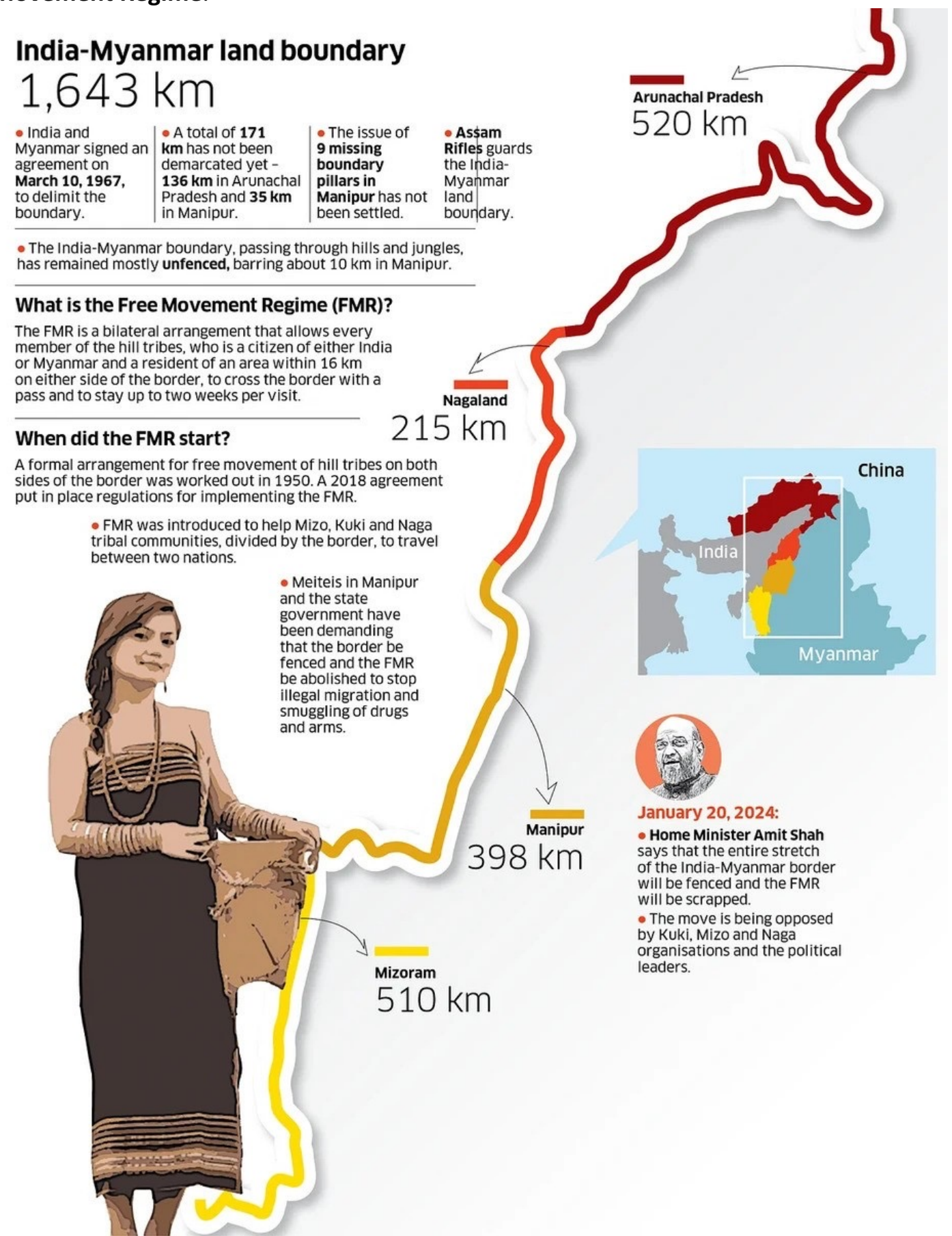## Fencing of the India-Myanmar Border

Background & Issue:
- India plans to construct an "anti-cut, anti-climb" fence along its entire 1,643-km border with Myanmar within the next 10 years.

Recent Developments:
- The project, initiated by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, has already seen significant expenditure (₹114.09 crore from April–December 2024).
- A parliamentary panel report outlines a total project cost of around ₹31,000 crore, which includes road connectivity to the Assam Rifles' bases.

Implications:
- **Security & Infiltration:** Aims to deter illegal border crossings and enhance surveillance (installation of cameras and border gates).
- **Regional Dynamics:** Potential model for similar projects along other international borders (with Pakistan and Bangladesh).
- **Socio-Cultural Impact:** Faces opposition from local ethnic groups (e.g., Naga and Kuki-Zo bodies) due to possible disruption of traditional cross-border ties and the Free Movement Regime.

India-Myanmar land boundary
1,643 km

- India and Myanmar signed an agreement on March 10, 1967, to delimit the boundary.
- A total of 171 km has not been demarcated yet - 136 km in Arunachal Pradesh and 35 km in Manipur.
- The issue of 9 missing boundary pillars in Manipur has not been resolved.
- Assam Rifles guards the India-Myanmar (and Manipur) boundary.

Arunachal Pradesh 520 km

- The India-Myanmar boundary, passing through hills and jungles, has remained mostly unfenced, barring about 10 km in Manipur.

China

What is the Free Movement Regime (FMR)?
The FMR is a bilateral arrangement that allows every member of the hill tribes, who is a citizen of either India or Myanmar and a resident of an area within 16 km on either side of the border, to cross the border with a pass and to stay up to two weeks per visit.

Manipur 215 km

When did the FMR start?
A formal arrangement for free movement of the tribes on both sides of the border was worked out in 1950. A 2018 agreement put in place regulations for implementing the FMR.

Myanmar

- FMR was introduced to help Mizo, Kuki and Naga tribal communities, divided by the border, to have between two nations.
- Meitels in Manipur and the state government have been demanding the the border be fenced and the FMR be abolished to stop illegal migration and smuggling of drugs and arms.

Manipur 398 km

January 20, 2024:
- Home Minister Amit Shah says that the entire stretch of the India-Myanmar border will be fenced and the FMR will be scrapped.
- The move is being opposed by Kuki, Mizo and Naga organisations and the political leaders.

Mizoram 510 km

Beed Police Drop Surnames on Name Plates

Background & Issue:
- In a bid to reduce caste-based biases and social tension, the Beed police have removed surnames from their name plates and now refer to each other only by their first names.

Context & Developments:
- The decision follows heightened communal tensions in Beed after the murder of a local sarpanch, which triggered community-based disputes.
- The new measure aims to project neutrality and enhance public trust in the police force.

Implications:
- **Social Harmony:** Seeks to mitigate caste-based prejudices and reduce potential biases during law enforcement.
- **Institutional Image:** Represents a progressive move towards depoliticising police identity and fostering an inclusive public service image.
- **Community Relations:** Expected to build confidence among diverse communities by promoting an unbiased approach.

First step: The new name plates given to the police personnel at the Beed SP office carry only their first name. EMMANUEL YOGINI

Billion-Dollar Fund for the Creators' Economy

Background & Issue:
- The Indian government has announced a $1 billion investment to boost the "creators' economy."

Key Elements:
- **Objective:** To help content creators upgrade skills, production quality, and global market outreach.
- **Event Context:** Announcement was part of a high-level session ahead of the World Audio Visual and Entertainment Summit (WAVES) 2025 in Mumbai.
- **Collaborative Effort:** Involves partnerships with state governments (e.g., Maharashtra) and participation of key ministers (I&B Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar).

ICC Warrant & Duterte's Arrest

ICC Reach & Enforcement:
- The ICC issues arrest warrants under the Rome Statute, but it depends on national governments for execution.
- Arrest mandates apply to all 125 signatories, yet compliance is inconsistent. Non-cooperation can be escalated via the Assembly of States Parties or UNSC intervention.

Duterte's Case & Investigation:
- Former Philippine President Duterte faces charges for crimes against humanity linked to his "war on drugs" (2011–2019).
- Despite the Philippines' withdrawal from the ICC in 2019, the court claims jurisdiction over crimes committed before that exit.
- His case represents a rare instance where the ICC's warrant is being actively pursued, unlike symbolic warrants against leaders in other countries.

Implications & Domestic Politics:
- Highlights the court's vulnerability to domestic political pressures, as national governments decide on enforcement.
- Could set a precedent for future accountability cases amid debates over national sovereignty versus international justice.

Raisina Dialogue Agenda

ORF • RAISINA DIALOGUE 2025 • Ministry of External Affairs

Overview & Themes:
- The annual Raisina Dialogue (10th edition) is set to discuss major global strategic issues, including U.S. foreign policy shifts, Ukraine, tariffs, and Indo-Pacific security.

Key Issues & Participants:
- **U.S. Policy & Global Alliances:** Debates over the implications of policies under President Trump, discussions on tariffs affecting global trade, and the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy.
- **Ukraine Conflict:** Expect discussions on peace prospects, security guarantees, and proposals for European contingents with a U.S. backstop.
- **Multilateral Engagement:** Notable participation from European, North American, and select Global South leaders; absence of traditional speakers (e.g., Russia's Lavrov) signals evolving geopolitical alignments.

Regional Representation:
- The dialogue reflects India's diplomatic balancing act—with strong participation from Europe and the U.S., while West and South East Asia maintain a muted presence, underlining regional diplomatic nuances.

The Rebels Who Shook Pakistan – BLA Overview

Historical Context & Evolution:
- Originating from the Baloch nationalist movement, the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) has evolved away from traditional clan-based leadership toward a younger, more urban, social media–savvy cadre.

Recent Operations & Impact:
- The BLA has staged high-profile attacks (e.g., on the Quetta-Peshawar Jaffar Express and Karachi airport road), signaling a resurgence despite setbacks (loss of key commanders, U.S. terrorist designation).
- Their operations highlight growing logistical capability and a shift in regional security dynamics, especially amid tensions between Pakistan and the Taliban.

Broader Implications:
- Reflects deeper issues of federal exploitation, resource control, and unresolved ethnic grievances in Balochistan.
- Also plays into regional geopolitics, with Pakistan pointing fingers at external influences while emphasizing internal security challenges.

What is Balochistan Liberation Army?

What it is:
- The Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), active since 2000, is the most prominent of the many separatist groups in Pakistan's Balochistan province
- Mapped Brigade is the BLA's dedicated suicide squad

The context:
- Balochistan is the country's largest province. It has oil and other natural resources, but the ethnic Baloch are Pakistan's poorest and most under-represented people
- Till 1947, Balochistan comprised multiple chiefdoms.
- Ahmed Yar Khan, the chief of Kalat, was the most powerful. He was forced to accede to Pakistan in 1948, after Pakistan invaded Kalat
- This triggered an insurgency which remains ongoing due to "unjust" behaviour of the Pakistan govt towards Balochs

Current scenario
- China-backed Gwadar Port is a symbol of the economic injustice faced by the Baloch — despite massive investment in the province, engineers and workers are hired from Punjab, Sindh, and even China
- In recent years, Baloch militants have repeatedly targeted both Pakistani and Chinese nationals in the country

Demands for autonomy
- There have been demands for greater regional autonomy for Balochistan, and it was emboldened by the secession of Bangladesh in 1971
- Since the dismissal of the provincial govt (National Awami Party) by the then PM Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto (Pakistan People's Party) followed by the forced secession operation in Balochistan, there has been a rise in insurgency
- There have been guerrillas for Balochistan independence (killed in 1974) and establish a Greater Balochistan
- The name 'mapped' was chosen for it.
- The Majeed Brigade carried out its first suicide attack on December 30, 2011
- After a long hiatus, the group became active again in 2018. It has been seen very active since then

Greenhouse Gas Emissions & Satellite Capacity

Key Findings from Modelling:
- Increased human-induced greenhouse gas emissions are projected to cool and contract Earth's upper atmosphere (mesosphere and thermosphere).
- This contraction could reduce atmospheric drag, thereby lengthening the orbital life of space debris.

Impact on Satellite Operations:
- Under high-emission scenarios (SSP5-8.5), the sustainable carrying capacity of low Earth orbit could decline by 50–66% by 2100, affecting millions of satellites.
- Reduced deorbiting rates increase collision risks, complicating satellite management and long-term space sustainability.

Broader Implications:
- The study underscores that climate mitigation is crucial not only for Earth's environment but also for preserving safe and sustainable access to outer space.

SpaceX Crew Launch to Replace Stranded NASA Astronauts

Mission Background:
- A replacement crew has been launched by SpaceX to the International Space Station (ISS) to facilitate the return of two stranded NASA astronauts after delays in the Starliner program.

Operational Details:
- The new crew comprises NASA military pilots and international astronauts (from Japan and Russia) and will overlap with the current crew to ensure a smooth handover.
- The mission underscores challenges in human spaceflight, including technical glitches (e.g., helium leaks, thruster failures) and the need for backup systems.

Implications & Broader Context:
- Highlights the operational resilience and adaptability of NASA and commercial partners in managing critical crew missions.
- The episode also carries political overtones, with public and administrative pressures to accelerate safe returns, illustrating the high stakes of modern space exploration.

P1 P3 P5 P6 P8 P9 P10 P11 P12