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TODAY'S ANALYSIS

(30 January 2025)

TOPICS TO BE COVERED

- WETLAND CITY ACCREDITATION
- INDIA CHINA RELATIONS IMPROVING
- KAILASH MANSAROVAR YATRA
- MCQs



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WETLAND CITY ACCREDITATION

Overview:

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** recently praised **Indore** and **Udaipur** for becoming the **first two Indian cities** to be included in the global list of **wetland cities** under the **Ramsar Convention on Wetlands**.
- This recognition, awarded to **31 cities worldwide**, highlights India's growing focus on **wetland conservation** alongside **urban development**.



CONSERVATION TO GET A BOOST

➤ Udaipur is surrounded by 5 lakes , which also conserve many fish species and attract migratory birds	➤ First batch of wetland cities from China, France and Sri Lanka, among others, was notified in 2018
➤ Ramsar Conference of the Parties in 2015 (COP12) passed the establishment of Wetland City Accreditation system globally	➤ Second batch of cities from Japan, Morocco, Iraq, Spain, and others was declared in 2022

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WHAT IS WETLAND CITY ACCREDITATION?

- **Wetland City Accreditation (WCA)** is a program that recognizes cities for their efforts in managing and protecting **wetlands**.
- The program was introduced in **2015** during the **12th Conference of the Ramsar Convention in Uruguay**.
- Cities that receive this recognition show a commitment to **sustainable development** and are seen as examples for others to follow.
- This recognition lasts for **6 years**, after which cities must apply for renewal.

WHAT IS WETLAND?

- Wetlands are areas where water is found either **permanently or seasonally**. These areas are home to many plants and animals.
- **Types of Wetlands** include **marshes, swamps, and bogs**.
- Wetlands are important because they help with **water purification, flood control, and biodiversity**.

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WETLANDS IN INDORE & UDAIPUR

Indore:

- **Sirpur Lake:**

- Located in Indore, **Sirpur Lake** is a **Ramsar site**, meaning it has international importance.
- It supports a variety of **water birds** and plays a key role in the city's **biodiversity**.
- There are plans to develop **Sirpur Lake into a bird sanctuary**, which will make it an even more important spot for **conservation** and **tourism**.

Udaipur:

- Udaipur is famous for its beautiful **lakes**, including **Pichola Lake, Fateh Sagar, Rang Sagar, Swaroop Sagar**, and **Doodh Talai**.
- These lakes are not only important for the city's heritage but also help in managing water resources and protecting the city from extreme weather events like **droughts** and **heatwaves**.
- The wetlands in Udaipur support local **wildlife** and are crucial for maintaining **climate resilience**.

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BENEFITS OF WETLAND CITIES

- **Flood Control:** Wetlands absorb excess water during rains, helping to reduce the risk of **flooding** in cities.
- **Water Purification:** Wetlands filter out harmful substances from water, improving its **quality**.
- **Biodiversity Support:** Wetlands provide **habitats** for many species, including **migratory birds** and other wildlife.

INDIA'S WETLAND CONSERVATION & RAMSAR SITES

Ramsar Convention:

- The **Ramsar Convention** is an international treaty signed in **1971** in **Ramsar, Iran**, aimed at protecting wetlands around the world.
- It helps countries to **conserve wetlands**, which are valuable for their role in **flood control, water purification**, and providing **wildlife habitats**.
- **India became a signatory** in **1982** and has since been working to increase the number of Ramsar sites in the country.

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India's Ramsar Sites:

- As of **January 2025**, India has **85 Ramsar sites**.
- India has been steadily adding Ramsar sites, with **26 sites** between **1982-2013** and **59 new sites** between **2014-2025**.
- **Tamil Nadu** has the **highest number** of Ramsar sites, followed by **Uttar Pradesh**.

WHY WETLAND CONSERVATION IS IMPORTANT?

- **Water Security:** Wetlands are essential for managing **water resources** in India. They help recharge **groundwater** and reduce **soil erosion**.
- **Climate Resilience:** Wetlands act as natural buffers against extreme weather events like floods and droughts, helping cities become more **resilient** to climate change.
- **Biodiversity:** Wetlands support many species of plants, animals, and birds, contributing to **biodiversity** and **ecological balance**.
- **Urban Livability:** Wetland conservation improves the **quality of life** in cities by providing clean **air** and water, and supporting local **wildlife**.

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INDIA CHINA RELATIONS IMPROVING

In **January 2025**, India and China took major steps to improve their relations, **3 months after resolving the military stand-off at the Line of Actual Control (LAC)**.

- These steps include resuming **direct flights**, issuing **visas**, increasing exchanges in various sectors, and restarting the **Mansarovar Yatra** for Indian pilgrims.
- Both countries also agreed to restart talks on shared **rivers** and the sharing of **hydrological data**, which China had not been providing.
- These measures are part of a larger effort to stabilize and rebuild ties between the two countries.



India, China decide to resume Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, direct flights

The two sides announced several measures to 'rebuild' bilateral ties over two-and-a-half months.

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KEY AGREEMENTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Resumption of Direct Flights and Visa Issuance:

- **Direct Flights:** India and China agreed to restart **direct flights**, which had been stopped in **2020** due to the **COVID-19 pandemic** and rising tensions at the **LAC**.
- **Visa Issuance:** The countries will begin issuing **visas** again, **allowing easier travel for business, tourism, and study between the two nations**. This move is seen as a step toward improving the relationship.

Mansarovar Pilgrimage:

- **Mansarovar Yatra:** The pilgrimage to **Mount Kailash** and **Mansarovar**, which had been **stopped since the border tensions in 2020**, will restart in the **summer of 2025**.
- **Implications:** Restarting this pilgrimage is an important symbolic and practical **step** toward improving relations, showing both governments' recognition of its cultural significance.

Trans-Border Rivers and Hydrological Data:

- **Hydrological Data Sharing:** A key agreement is the restart of talks on shared **rivers**, especially concerning the sharing of **water data**.

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- China had stopped sharing this data, particularly for the **Brahmaputra River** (known as **Yarlung Zangpo** in Tibet), which is important for water management in India.
- **Expert-Level Mechanism:** The **India-China Expert Level Mechanism** will meet to discuss the return of hydrological data and other cooperation related to shared water resources.
- **Brahmaputra River Concerns:** India has expressed worry about China's **hydropower projects** on the Brahmaputra, which could affect water flow into India.

BILATERAL RELATIONS AND CELEBRATORY EVENTS

- **75th Anniversary of Diplomatic Ties: 2025** marks the **75th year** of diplomatic relations between India and China.
- Both countries plan to celebrate this anniversary with events to strengthen cultural and economic ties.
- **Foreign Minister's Remarks:** Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi called for an end to **mutual distrust** and **separation**, stressing the need for both countries to focus on **cooperation** instead of **conflict**.
- **Government Commitment:** Both sides pledged to work on stabilizing relations, aiming to find mutual benefits and avoid further disputes.

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ECONOMIC & TRADE RELATIONS

Trade and Economic Disputes:

- Despite record levels of trade, India and China have imposed restrictions on each other due to **political tensions** that began after **2020**.
- **India's Restrictions:** India put several restrictions on **Chinese businesses**, such as requiring **Home Ministry approval** for **Chinese investments** (as a security measure), denying **business visas**, and carrying out **raids** on Chinese telecom companies.
- **China's Restrictions:** China responded by limiting exports of key materials to India, like **Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs)**, **high-tech products**, and equipment for major infrastructure projects (e.g., **Tunnel Boring Machines**).
- **Trade Imbalance:** China remains one of India's biggest trade partners, but India has expressed concerns over the growing **trade deficit** and the lack of fair opportunities for **Indian businesses** in China.

DIPLOMATIC ENGAGEMENTS

Foreign Secretary's Visit to China:

- **Vikram Misri's Visit:** Indian **Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri** visited **Beijing** from **January 26-27, 2025**, for talks with Chinese officials, including **Vice Foreign Minister**

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Sun Weidong, Foreign Minister Wang Yi, and Liu Jianchao (Member of the Chinese Communist Party's Central Committee).

- **Resumption of Bilateral Dialogue:** Misri's visit marked the return of regular dialogues between the two sides, which had been suspended after the **2020 Galwan clashes**.
- **India's Support for China's SCO Chairmanship:** During his visit, Misri showed India's support for China's leadership of the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)** in **2025**, highlighting the importance of cooperation in multilateral organizations.

FUTURE ENGAGEMENTS

- **Modi-Xi Summit Possibility:** Officials did not comment on whether an **informal summit** between **Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi** and **Chinese President Xi Jinping** will happen in **2025**, similar to previous meetings in **Wuhan (2018)** and **Mamallapuram (2020)**. However, the return of regular dialogues suggests more **high-level interactions** could take place.
- **SCO Summit in June 2025:** Prime Minister Modi is expected to attend the **SCO summit** in **June 2025**, which will provide another opportunity to strengthen ties between the two countries.

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KAILASH MANSAROVAR YATRA

- The yatra includes visits to **Mount Kailash** and **Mansarovar Lake** in Tibet.
- The **Ministry of External Affairs, India** organises the Yatra during **June to September** through **two** different routes:
 - **Lipulekh Pass** (Uttarakhand)
 - **Nathu La Pass** (Sikkim).
- It is open to **eligible Indian citizens** holding valid Indian passports.
- The Yatra is **organised with the support** from state governments of Uttarakhand, Delhi, and Sikkim; and cooperation of Indo Tibetan Border Police.
- Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) **does not provide any subsidy** or financial assistance to Yatris.



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LOCATION

- **Mount Kailash** is located in the **Kailash Range** (forms part of the Trans Himalaya) in Tibet.
- **Lake Manasarovar** is a high altitude **freshwater lake** near Mount Kailash in Tibet.
- **Four rivers** emerge from the Kailash-Mansarovar region: **Sutlej, Brahmaputra, Indus and Kamali (Karnali)**.



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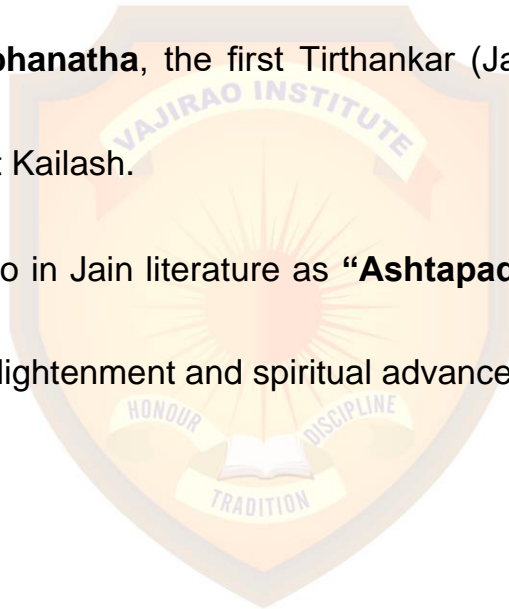
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RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE OF KAILASH MANSAROVAR YATRA

- Hindus believe Mount Kailash is the **abode of Lord Shiva**. **Mansarovar lake** is said to be one of Goddess Sati's 51 Shakti Peethas.
- Tibetans, Buddhists and Jains revere it as the '**Stairway to heaven**'.
- Jains hold that **Rishabhanatha**, the first Tirthankar (Jains' spiritual preacher), found enlightenment at Mount Kailash.
- The Mount is referred to in Jain literature as "**Ashtapada**," or "the eight steps," which can pave the way to enlightenment and spiritual advancement.



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MCQs

1. Which cities in India have been accredited as the Wetland cities?

- (A) Udaipur & Bharatpur
- (B) Udaipur & Ujjain
- (C) Udaipur & Indore
- (D) None of the above

Ans. (C)

2. Which state in India has the highest number of Ramsar sites in India?

- (A) Gujarat
- (B) Odisha
- (C) West Bengal
- (D) None of the above

Ans. (D)

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3. A pilgrim going for the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra from India to China passes through which pass?

(A) Khardung La

(B) Jelep La

(C) Nathu La

(D) Baralacha La

Ans. (C)

4. Which of these rivers do not originate from the Kailash Mansarovar?

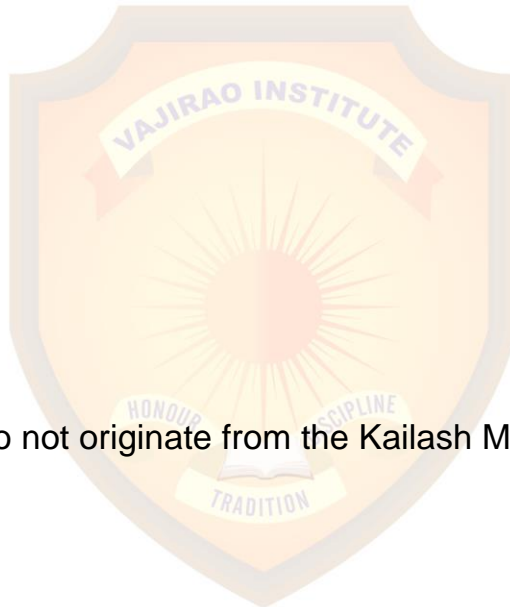
(A) Yarlung Tsangpo

(B) Indus

(C) Yangtse

(D) Sutlej

Ans. (C)



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