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## 1. What is the cipher case, in which former Pak PM Imran Khan has been sentenced to 10 years?

### Why in news?

Former Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan and ex-Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi were sentenced to 10 years in jail by a special court in the cipher case that pertains to the disclosure of a classified cable sent to Islamabad by Pakistan's ambassador in Washington in early 2022. Both Imran and Shah Mahmood have been found guilty of making the document public.



Although Imran has claimed that the cable is proof of a US conspiracy to push the Pakistani military to oust him in a parliamentary vote in 2022, he has denied revealing its content publicly — the former PM has said news outlets got the document from other sources.

### What was the classified cable?

The document at the centre of the controversy contained an account of a meeting that took place on

March 7, 2022, between US State Department officials, and then Pakistani ambassador to US Asad Majeed Khan.

The complete text of the purported cable hasn't been disclosed yet as it is protected under Section 5 of the Official Secrets Act 1923 of Pakistan. However, in August 2023, American news organisation reproduced a section of the document — it said that it received the document from a source in Pakistan's military.

In the meeting, the US officials expressed their displeasure regarding Imran's neutrality on the Russian invasion of Ukraine — the then PM was in Moscow on February 24, 2022, when President Valmadir Putin announced the invasion of Ukraine.

The US official went on to say: "I think if the no-confidence vote against the Prime Minister succeeds, all will be forgiven in Washington because the Russia visit is being looked at as a decision by the Prime Minister". "Otherwise," he continued, "I think it will be tough going ahead."

Asad Majeed sent the details of the gathering to Islamabad through a cable, labelled "Secret". Notably, just a day after the meeting, on March 8, Imran's political rivals in Parliament moved forward with a key procedural step toward the no-confidence vote. More than a month later, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chief was ousted from office after the vote succeeded.

The US State Department on multiple occasions has denied that its officials encouraged their Pakistani counterparts to oust Imran.

### **What is the cipher case?**

Imran talked about the secret document for the first time on March 27, 2022, at a huge gathering in Islamabad, where he pulled out a 'letter' from his pocket, claiming it to be proof of an international conspiracy to remove him from the top job.

Since then, especially after his ouster, Imran has repeatedly brought up the classified cable and its content to claim that the US was behind the no-confidence vote against him. In response, in July 2023, the Pakistan Muslim League (N)-led government accused the former PM of "exposing an official secret document".

Pakistan's Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) registered an FIR against Imran under Section 5 of the Official Secrets Act 1923 for making the contents of the classified cable public. Offences under Section 5, if proved in a court of law, involve punishment of imprisonment from two to 14 years, and in some cases even a death sentence.

In August 2023, Imran was convicted and sentenced to three years in prison in the Toshakhana graft case. While that sentence was later suspended, he has remained behind bars due to other cases. He is also barred from running in the upcoming elections in February 2024.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Organisations

Source: The Hindu and Indian Express

## **2. How to grow seafood outside the sea — and why a Govt lab in Kochi has taken up this project**

### **Why in news?**

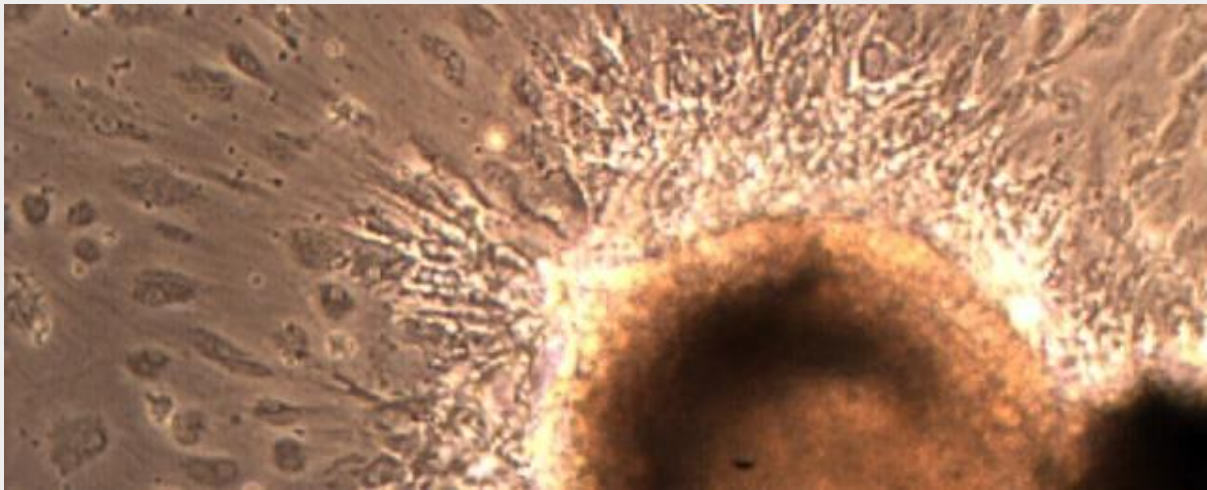
Kochi-headquartered ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) has entered into a collaborative research agreement with a private-sector start-up offering cultivated meat technology solutions to grow fish meat in the laboratory.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by the institute, which works under the Union Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare, with New Delhi-based Neat Meatt Biotech is the first initiative of its kind in the country.

### **What is lab-grown fish?**

It is merely a type of lab-grown — or cultivated/ cultured — meat. Seafood without the sea is 'grown' in the same way as other cultivated meats are grown — without the need to raise and kill an animal.

Cultivated fish meat is produced by isolating specific cells from fish and growing them in a laboratory setting using media that is free of animal components. The final product is expected to replicate the flavour, texture, and nutritional qualities of 'real' fish meat.



#### **What is the need to grow fish meat in the lab?**

Experiments are ongoing in many countries on developing commercially viable lab grown fish meat, which is expected to address the ever growing demand for seafood, and reduce excessive pressure on wild resources. Overfishing — the removal of fish faster than the resource can replenish itself — has resulted in dramatic reductions in populations of certain species, which has impacted entire marine ecosystems in many areas.

In theory, lab grown fish meat has significant potential for ensuring food security and environmental benefits. Besides taking some load off traditional fishing, lab grown fish meat will be antibiotics- and environmental contamination-free, and will have no contact with microplastics or heavy metals in the polluted oceans.

#### **What other kinds of meat are being produced in labs?**

The Dutch pharmacologist Mark Post was the first to present a proof of concept for cultured meat in 2013. Several dozens of companies around the world are now reported to be working on developing lab-grown meat from cells, including chicken, pork, lamb, fish and beef.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; S&T

Source: The Indian Express

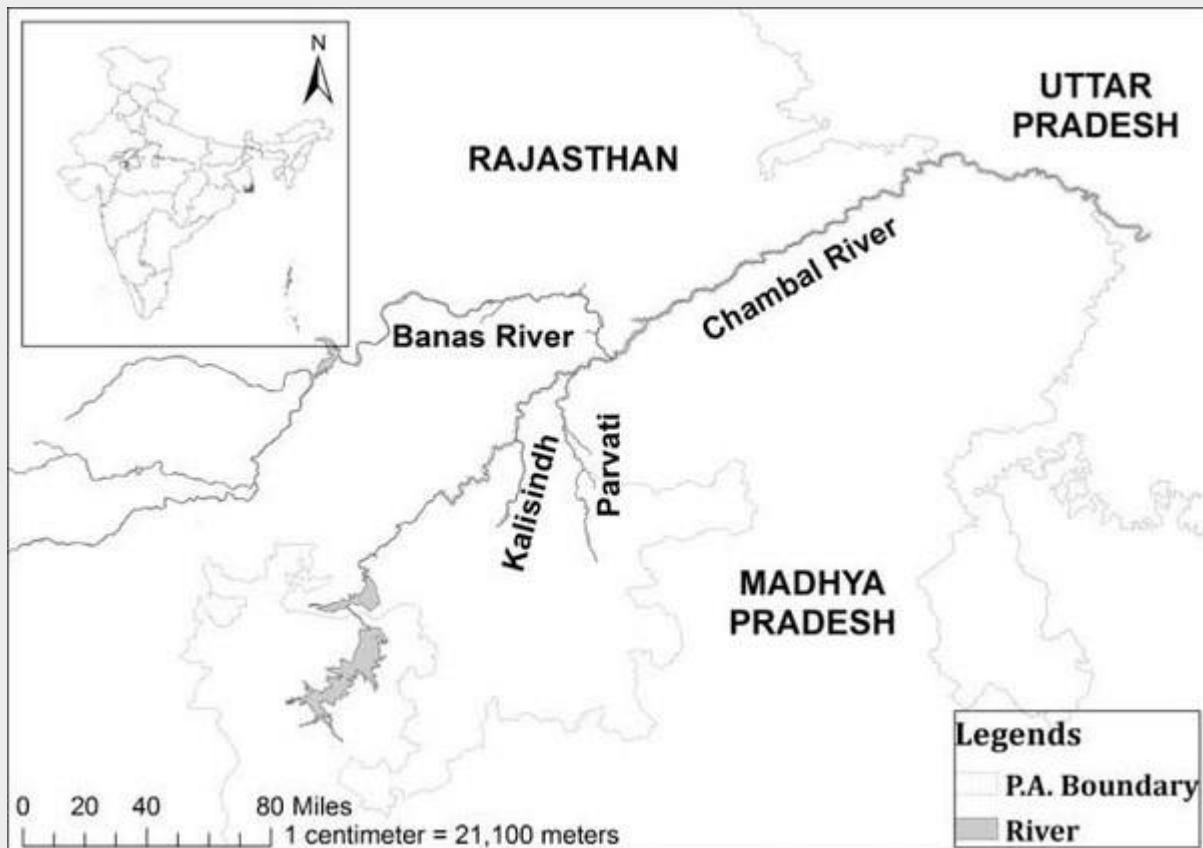
### **3. The river-linking project Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Centre have signed MoU for?**

#### **Why in news?**

Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti to implement the Modified Parbati-Kalisindh-Chambal-ERCP (Modified PKC-ERCP) Link Project.

The project envisages integration of the long-pending PKC river link project with the Eastern

Rajasthan Canal Project, under the national perspective plan of interlinking of rivers (ILR) programme of the Government of India.



The ERCP is politically significant in Rajasthan, and the last government had been pushing for a national project status for it.

### **What is the Modified PKC-ERCP?**

The Modified PKC-ERCP is an inter-state river linking project. According to the ministry, preparations for a Detailed Project Report (DPR) on this are on. Based on the outcome of the DPR, a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) will be finalised among Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and the Centre, covering the sharing of water, exchange of water, sharing of costs and benefits, implementation mechanisms, arrangements for management and control of water in the Chambal basin, etc.

### **What is the PKC link project?**

The Parbati-Kalisindh-Chambal (PKC) link project is one of the 30 links included in the National Perspectives Plan formulated by the erstwhile Union Ministry of Irrigation (now Ministry of Water Resources) and the Central Water Commission in the year 1980.

As per the National Water Development Agency (NWDA), the preliminary feasibility report of the Kalisindh-Chambal link canal project was prepared and circulated to the states concerned in September 1991. The report proposed diversion of water from river Newaj (a tributary of Kalisindh) and Kalisindh to the river Chambal at either the Rana Pratap Sagar dam or the Gandhi Sagar dam.

Rajasthan came up with the proposal of the ERCP in 2019, and to utilise water resources optimally, the Task Force for Interlinking of Rivers (TFILR) discussed its merger with the PKC link project. This integration was approved by the Special Committee for Interlinking of Rivers in December 2022.

**What is the ERCP?**

The Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project (ERCP) is aimed at intra-basin transfer of water within the Chambal basin, by utilising surplus monsoon water available in Kalisindh, Parvati, Mej and Chakan subbasins and diverting it into water deficit sub-basins of Banas, Gambhiri, Banganga and Parbati.

**What are the benefits of the modified project?**

According to the Jal Shakti Ministry, the link project proposes to provide drinking and industrial water in 13 districts of eastern Rajasthan, and Malwa and Chambal regions of Madhya Pradesh, apart from providing irrigation in 2.8 lakh ha. area (or more) each in both the states (total of 5.6 lakh ha or more).

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper I; Geography

Source: The Indian Express