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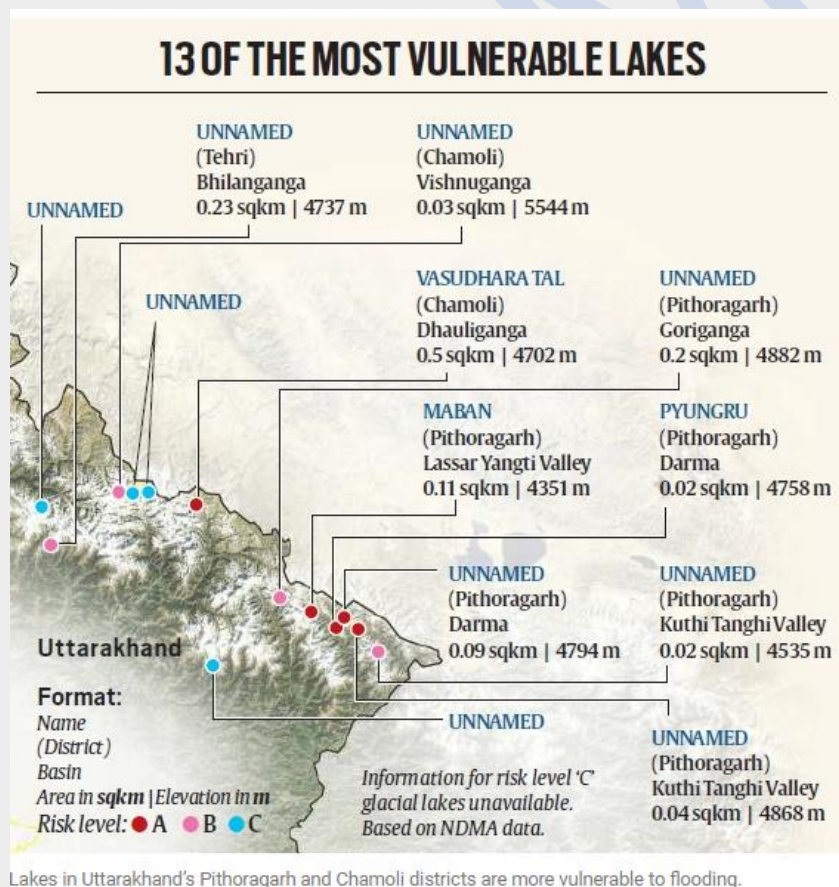
**1. Why Uttarakhand govt wants to evaluate the risk of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods**

**Why in News?**

The Uttarakhand government has constituted two teams of experts to evaluate the risk posed by five potentially hazardous glacial lakes in the region. These lakes are prone to Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs), the kind of events that have resulted in several disasters in the Himalayan states in recent years.

The goal of the risk assessment exercise is to minimise the possibility of a GLOF incident and provide more time for relief and evacuation in case of a breach.

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), which operates under the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, has identified 188 glacial lakes in the Himalayan states that can potentially be breached because of heavy rainfall. Thirteen of them are in Uttarakhand.



Lakes in Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh and Chamoli districts are more vulnerable to flooding.

Rising surface temperatures across the globe, including India, have increased the risk of GLOFs. Studies have shown that around 15 million people face the risk of sudden and deadly flooding from glacial lakes, which are expanding and rising in numbers due to global warming.

**What are GLOFs?**

GLOFs are disaster events caused by the abrupt discharge of water from glacial lakes — large bodies of water that sit in front of, on top of, or beneath a melting glacier. As a glacier withdraws, it

leaves behind a depression that gets filled with meltwater, thereby forming a lake.

The more the glacier recedes, the bigger and more dangerous the lake becomes. Such lakes are mostly dammed by unstable ice or sediment composed of loose rock and debris. In case the boundary around them breaks, huge amounts of water rush down the side of the mountains, which could cause flooding in the downstream areas — this is referred to as a GLOF event.

GLOFs can be triggered by various reasons, including glacial calving, where sizable ice chunks detach from the glacier into the lake, inducing sudden water displacement. Incidents such as avalanches or landslides can also impact the stability of the boundary around a glacial lake, leading to its failure, and the rapid discharge of water.

GLOFs can unleash large volumes of water, sediment, and debris downstream with formidable force and velocity. The floodwaters can submerge valleys, obliterate infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and buildings, and result in significant loss of life and livelihoods.

### **What is the situation in Uttarakhand?**

Uttarakhand has witnessed two major GLOF events in the past few years. The first took place in June 2013, which affected large parts of the state — Kedarnath valley was the worst hit, where thousands of people died. The second occurred in February 2021, when Chamoli district was hit by flash floods due to the bursting of a glacier lake.

As mentioned earlier, Uttarakhand has 13 glacial lakes which are prone to GLOF. Based on the analysis of available data and research from various technical institutions, these lakes have been categorised into three risk levels: 'A', 'B', and 'C'.

Five highly sensitive glacial lakes fall into the 'A' category. These include Vasudhara Tal in the Dhauliganga basin in Chamoli district, and four lakes in Pithoragarh district — Maban Lake in Lassar Yangti Valley, Pyungru Lake in the Darma basin, an unclassified lake in the Darma basin, and another unclassified lake in Kuthi Yangti Valley.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Disaster Management

Source: Indian Express

## **2. Sanjay Singh gets bail: What are the ED's allegations against the senior AAP leader and MP?**

### **Why in News?**

The Supreme Court gave bail to senior Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Singh in a case relating to the alleged Delhi excise scam after the Enforcement Directorate (ED) did not oppose it.

Singh was the third AAP leader to be arrested in the case after former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia and AAP communications in-charge Vijay Nair. Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal was arrested in the same case on March 21, and sent to Tihar jail on April 1.

### **When and why was Sanjay Singh arrested?**

Singh was arrested on October 4, 2023 after a 10-hour search at his home in North Avenue, New Delhi. According to the ED, Singh is a "key conspirator" in the alleged scam, in which the wholesale liquor business in Delhi was given to private entities in return for kickbacks. In its first prosecution complaint, the ED said the policy, which came into force in November 2021 but was scrapped in July 2022, was "formulated with deliberate loopholes" that "promoted cartel formations through the back door" to benefit AAP leaders.

According to the ED, the alleged proceeds of crime amounted to more than Rs 292 crore, and a part of the money was used by the AAP in its election campaign in Goa.

The Delhi Excise Policy 2021-22 envisaged the exit of the state from the liquor business to allow it to reach its full potential. The stated goal of the policy was to shut down black marketing and the liquor mafia, increase revenue, improve the consumer experience, and ensure equitable distribution of liquor vends across the capital. The licensees were allowed to offer discounts and set their own prices instead of selling at the MRPs fixed by the government.



**Supreme Court grants bail & directs ED to release AAP MP Sanjay Singh during the pendency of trial in a money laundering case relating to Excise Policy Scam matter**

#### **What were the specific allegations against Singh?**

In its remand application, the ED had said: "Sanjay Singh has exploited and gained illegal money/ kickbacks, which is 'proceeds of crime' generated from the liquor policy (2021-22)

scam... (He) has been part of the conspiracy of collecting kickbacks from liquor groups... (He) has a close relationship with Dinesh Arora since 2017 as revealed by Dinesh Arora as well as from his call records."

Dinesh Arora is a businessman whom the ED had earlier accused of being a "conduit for kickbacks" between the "South group" and the AAP. The ED had claimed that Arora had told investigators that he spoke to many restaurant owners at Sanjay Singh's behest, and had "arranged cheques amounting to Rs 82 lakh for collection of party funds for the upcoming elections". The ED had also alleged that Arora had given Rs 2 crore in cash to Singh.

Arora in 2022 turned approver in the CBI case and got bail. In July 2023, Arora was arrested by the ED, but he became an approver in the ED case as well.

In its reply to Singh's plea for bail in Delhi High Court on January 30 this year, the ED had said: "... It is evident that Sanjay Singh was involved in creating a special purpose vehicle (M/s Aralias Hospitality Pvt Ltd) to launder the proceeds of crime that would have been generated from the business arising out the policy changes as conspired by him and his co-conspirators... Singh was then involved in acquiring, possessing, concealing, dissipating and using proceeds of crime generated from the Delhi liquor scam pertaining to the policy period of 2021-2022."

#### **What did courts say about the allegations against Singh before this?**

On December 22, 2023, Special Judge M K Nagpal, while dismissing Singh's bail plea, had said: "...This court is of prima facie view that the case against (the) applicant is genuine and the said evidence and material shows (the) involvement of (the) applicant in the commission of the alleged offence of money laundering because he is shown to have been, directly or indirectly, involved in the process or activities connected with proceeds of crime."

On February 7 this year, Delhi High Court refused Singh bail, saying "prima facie, it is clear that...(Singh) was part of the preparation of the old excise policy and thereafter, the new excise policy was made to suit the co-accused(s) who were to pay kickbacks to the present applicant (Singh) and co-accused(s) and the party concerned, from the profit so generated due to excise policy".

The court had said there were "specific statements that Rs 2 crore was paid to Sarvesh Mishra for Sanjay Singh at his official residence in lieu of the new excise policy made to suit them and generate profit for them... The role at this stage of the applicant (Singh) cannot completely be ruled out."

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: Indian Express

### **3. Massive earthquake hits Taiwan: What is the Ring of Fire?**

#### **Why in News?**

Nine people died and more than 800 got injured in Taiwan after the island was hit by its biggest earthquake in at least 25 years on April 4 morning. While Taiwan's earthquake monitoring agency said the quake was 7.2 magnitude, the US Geological Survey (USGS) put it at 7.4.

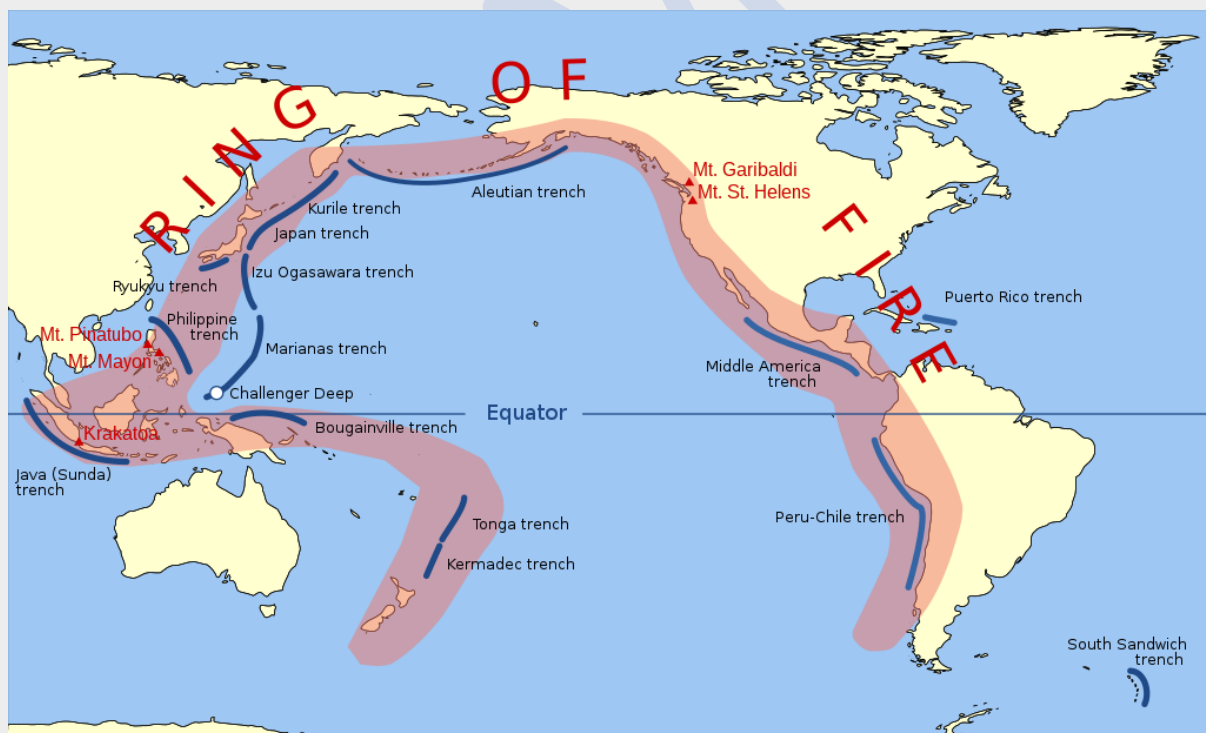
The epicentre of the quake was located just 18 kilometres south-southwest of Hualien County, which is situated in eastern Taiwan. Multiple aftershocks were experienced.

Notably, Taiwan is prone to earthquakes as it lies along the Pacific “Ring of Fire” — where 90% of the world’s earthquakes take place. The island and its surrounding waters have registered about 2,000 earthquakes with a magnitude of 4.0 or greater since 1980, and more than 100 earthquakes with a magnitude above 5.5.

### Ring of Fire (Also known as Circum-Pacific belt)

Ring of fire is long horse shoe shaped region in Pacific Ocean. It is almost 40,000 km long. This region lies on margins of various tectonic plates and is highly seismic. Due to convergence or divergence of various tectonic plates, many volcanoes erupt in this region. With eruption of volcanoes and subduction of plate boundaries, many earthquakes also originate from this region. This region is home to more than 75% of world’s volcanoes and almost 90% of world’s earthquakes.

Because of frequent explosion of volcanoes, this region is known as Ring of Fire. Major Archipelago and world’s deepest oceanic trenches are also in this region. For Example, Mariana Trench or Challenger deep, Java trench and others are found in this region. Similarly, Philippines Archipelago and Indonesian Archipelago are also found in this region.



Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper I; Geography  
Source: The Indian express