

1. Rajasthan's Khichan in Phalodi and Menar in Udaipur have been designated as Ramsar sites

Two New Ramsar Sites in Rajasthan

- On the eve of World Environment Day, Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav announced two new Ramsar sites in Rajasthan:
 - o Menar Wetland Complex (Udaipur)
 - o Khichan Wetland (Phalodi)
- India now has a total of 91 Ramsar sites — wetlands of international importance.

Why Menar Wetland Was Selected

- Located in Udaipur, it consists of:
 - o Three ponds: Braham talab, Dhand talab, Kheroda talab
 - o Flooded farmland during monsoons
- Supports 110 waterbird species, including 67 migratory birds.

Why Khichan Wetland Was Selected

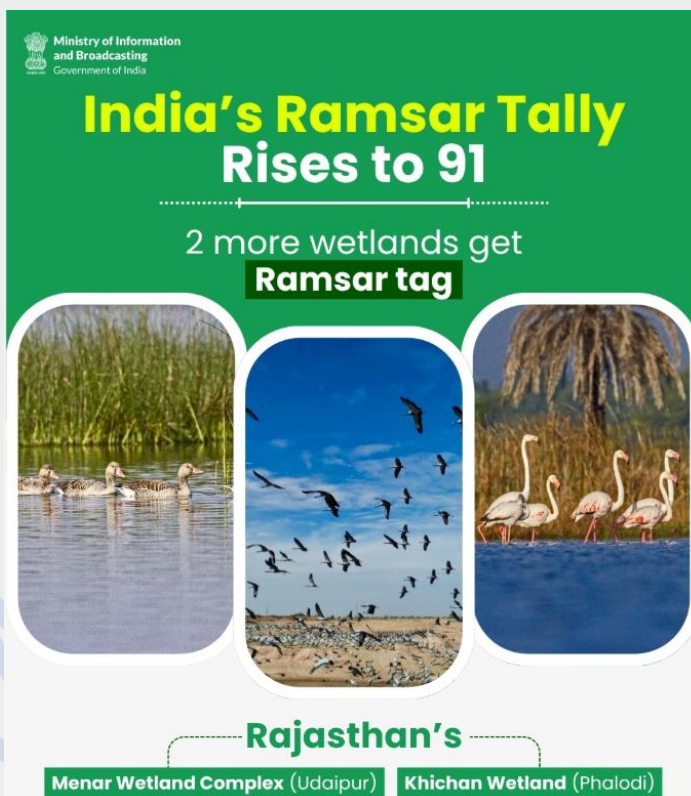
- Located in the northern Thar Desert in Phalodi, it includes:
 - o Ratri river and Vijaysagar pond
- Supports over 150 bird species.

Significance

These new designations showcase how community involvement and ecological awareness are helping protect India's rich natural heritage.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Environment

Source: The Hindu



2. Justice Hema Committee Report: Why Kerala Police Dropped Sexual Assault Cases in Malayalam Film Industry

Background: Formation of the Justice Hema Committee

- In February 2017, a leading Malayalam actress was abducted and sexually assaulted.

- Actor Dileep was accused of orchestrating the attack.
- This led to the formation of the Women in Cinema Collective (WCC), which demanded a government inquiry.
- In July 2017, the Justice Hema Committee was formed by the Kerala government to examine sexual harassment and gender discrimination in the Malayalam film industry.
- It was India's first such inquiry into the film industry.



Delayed Release of the Report

- The Committee submitted its report in December 2019 to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.
- The government withheld the report, citing concerns about protecting the privacy of women who gave testimonies.
- After pressure from RTI activists, the Kerala State Information Commission ordered its partial release in July 2024.
- The redacted report (63 pages removed) was made public on August 14, 2024.

Findings of the Report

- The report exposed a widespread culture of sexual harassment in the Malayalam film industry.
- Issues included:
 - Casting couch practices
 - Vulgar comments and sexual advances
 - Drunken male co-stars invading women's personal spaces
- Many women did not report incidents due to fear of retaliation.

Impact of the Report's Release

- Numerous women came forward publicly with their experiences.
- Several top actors faced allegations.
- Kerala police filed around 60 cases, both on their own and based on survivors' complaints.

Why the Police Dropped the Cases

- Recently, 35 cases were dropped due to:
 - Lack of evidence, especially for older incidents (over a decade old)
 - Non-cooperation from survivors, many of whom didn't want formal police action
- Survivors said:
 - They only wanted to share their experiences, not go through legal battles.
 - Some are now facing defamation suits by the accused.

What Survivors Want

- Women in the industry are calling for:
 - Systemic changes in how the industry functions
 - Establishment of internal complaints committees and support systems
- Many feel legal action alone isn't enough, and cultural reform is needed to ensure safety and dignity in the workplace.

This report highlights the gaps between testimony and justice, and the urgent need for institutional reform beyond just criminal cases.

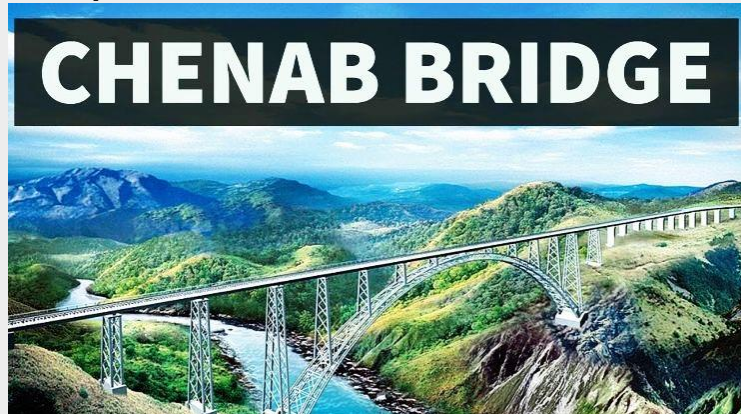
Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: Indian Express

3. Chenab Railway Bridge: World's Tallest Rail Bridge

Historic Rail Link to Kashmir Nears Completion

- On June 6, PM Narendra Modi inaugurated the Katra-Sangaldan rail section, completing the long-delayed Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Line (USBRL).
- This includes the world's highest railway bridge over the Chenab River, part of a 42-year project to connect Kashmir by train.



Chenab Bridge: A Record-Breaking Structure

- Cost: ₹1,400 crore
- Height: 359 meters above the riverbed (35 meters taller than the Eiffel Tower)
- Length: 1,315 meters total — including a 530m approach and a 785m deck arch bridge
- Type: Steel arch and concrete bridge
- Status: Tallest rail and arch bridge in the world
- Location: Between Bakkal and Kauri in Jammu's Reasi district

Major Engineering Challenges

- Located in seismic zone-V, an earthquake-prone and geologically unstable area.
- No road connectivity made transport of materials and machinery difficult.
- Construction had to be done without disrupting the Chenab River's flow.

Key Players in Construction

- Executed by: Konkan Railway Corporation
- o Safety Analysis: IISc Bangalore, IIT Delhi, IIT Roorkee

Safety and Longevity

- Lifespan: 120 years
- Speed Limit: Can support trains at up to 100 km/h
- Earthquake Resistance: Up to magnitude 8
- Explosion Resistance: Can withstand blasts equivalent to 40 tonnes of TNT
- Weather Proofing: Endures temperatures down to -20°C and winds up to 266 km/h
- Redundancy: Can still operate at reduced speed even if one pier is removed

Conclusion

The Chenab Bridge is not just an engineering feat but a symbol of national connectivity and resilience, linking Kashmir with the rest of India through one of the most challenging terrains in the world.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Economics

Source: Indian Express

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