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**1. India – UK Free Trade Agreement Negotiations**

**Syllabus:** GS II, International Relations, Bilateral agreements involving India and/or India's interests

**Prelims:** Free Trade Agreement, NAFTA

**Mains:** Implications of the free trade agreement in strengthening the India-UK relationship

**Context:** The ambitious launch of a free trade agreement negotiations between India and the United Kingdom took place with the objective of doubling the bilateral trade.

**Highlights of the Agreement:**

- The eventful agreement aims to double the bilateral trade by 2030 and it has been considered as a partnership that is built on shared history and rich culture.
- This free trade agreement has been recognised, so far, as the deepest trade deal.
- The bilateral partners agreed to collaborate on the areas such as the service sectors, innovation and technology.
- There were discussions on transitions from fintech to green-tech and automation to [Artificial Intelligence](#).
- India expects to gain from tariff reduction in labour-intensive sectors such as textiles, leather, jewellery apart from cereals and pharmaceuticals.
- The discussions touched upon enhancing the free movement of people.
- This negotiation will create new opportunities for growth and employment as the bilateral trade expands further.

**Free Trade Agreement:**

- A free trade agreement is a pact between two or more countries to reduce trade barriers facilitating imports and exports.
- The goods and services can be brought within the purview of free trade policy.
- It involves trade across international borders with little or no government tariffs, quotas, subsidies or any inhibition in the exchange of goods and services.
- It is implemented by a formal and mutual agreement between the participating nations.
- A government need not take specific action to promote free trade and is free from stringent regulations and interference which is often referred to as laissez-faire trade or trade liberalisation.

However, in the US and European Union, free trade agreements do not come without regulations and oversight.

- In the modern-day practice of international trade, few trade agreements result in completely free trade.
- The US has a number of free trade agreements such as the [NAFTA](#) and Central American Free Trade Agreement.

Read more about [India-UK Relations](#) in the linked article.

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## 2. Effects of Earthquake in Gujarat's Kachchh region

**Syllabus:** GS I, Important geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes

**Prelims:** Facts related to Earthquakes, Earthquake zones of India

**Mains:** Causes of earthquakes

**Context:** Major earthquake events in the last 30,000 years have created spectacular changes in the landscape of the Katrol hill fault in the Kachchh region of Gujarat. This was observed by a team of geologists from the Department of Geology, the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda.

**Details of the Study:**

- An attempt was made to decode the seismic activity in the Kachchh region by developing an understanding of the Katrol hill fault and the estimation of the length of its surface rupture that was produced by three large magnitude earthquakes in the recent geological past.
- The study was carried out by using field mapping and sophisticated instruments like Ground Penetrating Radar and laboratory equipment like Scanning Electron Microscope for examining the sediment samples collected from the faultline.
  - A faultline is a line on the rock surface that traces the geological fault.
- The events of the earthquake resulted in spectacular changes in the landscape by the disruption and reorganisation of the channel of Gunawari river in the fault zone.
- The paleo-earthquakes along the Katrol hill fault produced surface ruptures because they originated at relatively shallow depths.

Read more about [Earthquakes](#) in the linked article.

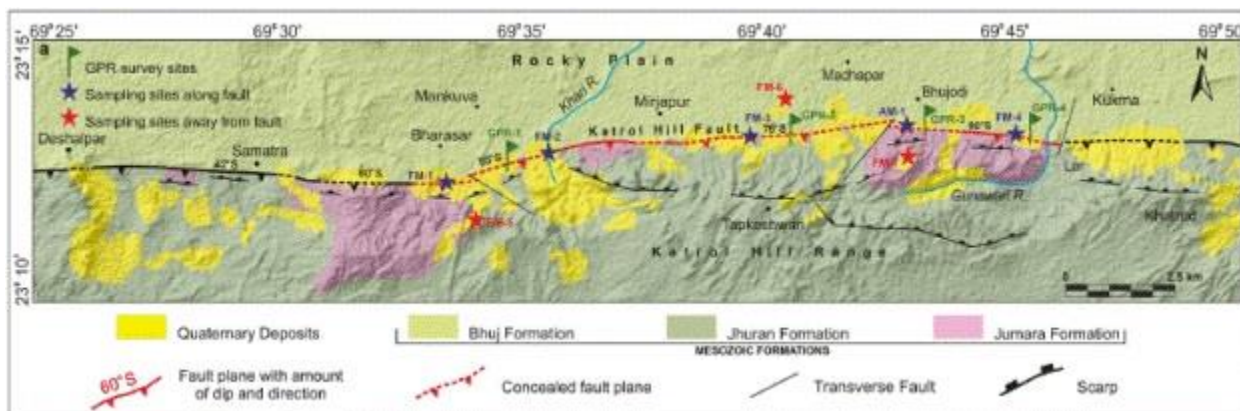


Image Source: PIB

### 3. Forest Survey Report 2021

Syllabus: GS III, Environment, Conservation

Prelims: About the Forest Survey of India, India State of Forest Report

Mains: India's progress in the conservation of forests

Context: The India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2021 prepared by the [Forest Survey of India](#) has been released.

#### Focus Areas of ISFR 2021

- Forest Cover
- Tree Cover
- Mangrove Cover
- Carbon stock
- Forest fire monitoring
- Forest cover in tiger reserves

### Important Findings of the Report:

- The total forest and tree cover of the country has been estimated as 80.9 million which is 24.62% of the total geographical area of the country. There has been an increase in forest cover (to 1540 sq km) and tree cover (to 721 sq km).
- Andhra Pradesh followed by Telangana and Odisha are the top three states showing an increase in forest cover.
- Based on the area, Madhya Pradesh has the largest forest cover followed by Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Maharashtra.
- In terms of percentage of forest cover, the top five states include:

States	Forest Cover %
Mizoram	84.53%
Arunachal Pradesh	79.33%
Meghalaya	76%
Manipur	74.34%
Nagaland	73.90%

- About 17 states/UTs have above 33% of the geographical area under forest cover.
- Total mangrove cover has been estimated as 4,992 sq km, which indicates an increase of 17 sq km in mangrove cover.
- Odisha followed by Maharashtra and Karnataka have shown an increase in mangrove cover.
- Total carbon stock in the country's forests is 7, 204 million tonnes, indicating an increase of 79.4 million tonnes in carbon stock. There is an annual increase in the carbon stock which is about 39.7 million tonnes.

### What's new in ISFR 2021?

- The Forest Survey of India included a new chapter related to the assessment of forest cover in tiger reserves, corridors and lion conservation areas of India. It is based on a decadal assessment of change in forest cover in those areas between the period of 2011 and the current cycle of 2019-2020.
- Above Ground Biomass is a new chapter that is added. This study was carried out at a pan-India level using Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) data. The study is still continuing and a detailed report will be submitted after its completion.
- FSI, in collaboration with Birla Institute of Technology and Science (BITS) Pilani, carried out a study on climate change hotspots in Indian forests.