

7. Short news

1. 46TH ASEAN Summit

The Indian Prime Minister will participate virtually in the ASEAN summit in Kuala Lumpur.

About ASEAN

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was founded on 8 August 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand. Members – Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam.(10)

Objective – Promote regional stability, economic growth, and cultural cooperation among Southeast Asian nations.

Secretariat – Headquartered in Jakarta, Indonesia

About ASEAN 2025 Summit

The 46th ASEAN Summit will be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Theme – 'Inclusivity and Sustainability'

Participation – Leaders from all member states and invited partners, including India, engage in policy dialogue and multilateral discussions.

India-ASEAN Partnership

The India-ASEAN partnership began in 1992 when India became a Sectoral Dialogue Partner. It was upgraded to a full Dialogue Partner in 1995 and further to a Strategic Partnership in 2012.

Strategic Ties – India and ASEAN share a comprehensive strategic partnership, emphasizing security, trade, and regional stability.

Economic Cooperation – India is part of the ASEAN-India Free Trade Area (AIFTA), boosting trade and investment.

Cultural & Connectivity Initiatives – India participates in ASEAN cultural, educational, and connectivity projects, including digital and infrastructure linkages.

2. Saranda Forest

The Supreme Court has directed the Jharkhand government to designate Saranda Forest as a wildlife sanctuary to protect biodiversity including elephants and sloth bears.

About Saranda Forest

Saranda, located in West Singhbhum district of Jharkhand, is famous for its dense Sal (*Shorea robusta*) forests.

Issues regarding the forest

Biodiversity Threats – It faces habitat degradation, fragmentation, and declining wildlife populations due to illegal mining and anthropogenic pressures.

Conflict Between Conservation and Mining – The area contains significant iron ore and manganese reserves (26% of India's iron ore), leading to tensions between protecting biodiversity and sustaining mining revenue.

Tribal Rights and Legal Compliance – Sanctuary notification raises concerns over the rights of Ho, Munda, and other Adivasi communities under the Forest Rights Act and Fifth Schedule.

About Sal (*Shorea robusta*) Tree

Sal is a deciduous, hardwood tree native to India, Nepal, and surrounding regions, forming dense forests that support rich biodiversity.

Economic Importance – Its timber is highly durable and used in construction, furniture, and railway sleepers; resin from Sal is used in varnishes and traditional medicines.

Environmental Role – Sal forests prevent soil erosion, maintain watershed health, and provide habitat for wildlife such as elephants, deer, and various bird species.

3. New Sevilla Forum on Debt

The Sevilla Forum on Debt was launched at the 16th United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD16) in Geneva.

About United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

The UNCTAD is a permanent intergovernmental body established in 1964 to promote inclusive and sustainable global trade and development, especially for developing countries. UNCTAD 16 – Conference was held in Geneva, Switzerland, from October 20–23, 2025. **Theme** – “Shaping the Future – Driving Economic Transformation for Equitable, Inclusive, and Sustainable Development.”

About the Sevilla Forum on Debt

Initiative – Spanish-led, supported by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA).

Objective – Provide an open and inclusive space for dialogue and action on sovereign debt reform.

Participants – Developed and developing countries, creditors, international institutions, civil society, and academia.

Functions – Track the implementation of agreements from the Sevilla Commitment adopted at the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4), 2025. This agreement sets out a roadmap to modernize global finance, strengthen the voice of borrower nations, as well as promote responsible lending and borrowing.

Complementary Platforms – Forms part of the Sevilla Platform for Action, complementing initiatives like the Debt Pause Clause Alliance and Global Hub for Debt Swaps.

Global Debt – Public debt reached \$102 trillion in 2024, with developing countries accounting for \$31 trillion and paying \$921 billion in interest. 3.4 billion people live in countries where debt servicing exceeds spending on health or education, highlighting the urgent need for reform.

Significance – The Forum represents a breakthrough for developing countries, fostering coordinated global action to reduce unsustainable debt burdens while linking financial reform to development priorities.

