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1. Legacy of Khusrau, musical flagbearer of Sufism's pluralistic tradition

Context: Prime Minister of India attended the 25th edition of Jahan-e-Khusrau, a Sufi music festival honoring Amir Khusrau, highlighting his contributions to India's pluralistic Sufi tradition. The 13th century mystic artist is seen as a father figure for North India's syncretic Ganga-Jamuni culture. Khusrau made lasting contributions to Indian classical music and qawwali, and is also credited for developing Hindavi, a precursor to modern Hindi & Urdu.

Key points

- **About Amir Khusrau:** He was a 13th-century Persian and Hindavi poet, musician, and scholar. Known as "Tuti-yi-Hind" (Parrot of India) for his eloquence in poetry. A disciple of Sufi saint Nizamuddin Auliya, he balanced his role as a court poet with devotion to the Chishti Sufi order.
- **Period & Patronage:** Lived from 1253 to 1325 CE, during the Delhi Sultanate. Served under five Delhi Sultans: Muizuddin Qaiqabad, Jalaluddin Khalji (bestowed the title Amir), Alauddin Khalji, Qutbuddin Mubarak Shah and Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq
- **Family Background:** Born in Patiyali, Etah (present-day Uttar Pradesh). Father was a Turkic noble from Central Asia, and mother was Indian Muslim. Came to India due to the Mongol invasions of Transoxiana.
- **Contributions of Amir Khusrau:** *Literary Contributions* - Wrote in Persian and Hindavi, blending Turkic, Persian, and Indian cultural influences. His works include Masnavi (Nuh Siphir, Qiran-us-Saadain), ghazals, riddles, and folk poetry. Developed riddles, proverbs, and playful verses, influencing early Hindi and Urdu literature.
Musical Legacy - Introduced and popularized qawwali, merging Persian, Arabic, and Indian musical traditions. Credited with crafting several ragas, khayal singing style, and bol-bant in Hindustani classical music. Believed to have invented the sitar and tabla, though historical evidence is debated.
- **Influence on Sufi Tradition & Ganga-Jamuni Tehzeeb:** Advocated for Hindu-Muslim unity, fostering India's syncretic culture. Revered in Sufi traditions, his compositions are sung at Sufi dargahs and religious gatherings.
- **Legacy & Enduring Influence:** His qawwalis, including Chhaap Tilak, Zehal-e-Maskeen, and Sakal Ban Phool Rahi Sarson, remain popular today. His poetry influenced later Persian, Urdu, and Hindi poets, shaping India's composite cultural identity. Khusrau's grave is near Nizamuddin Auliya's dargah in Delhi, a testament to their spiritual bond.

2. The necessity of mainstreaming wetland conservation

Context: In the heart of Bengaluru, software developers find themselves racing against time to outbid Chinese rivals for major Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven projects with international clients. Despite being part of a skilled workforce, deals often slip away due to capabilities Indian firms struggle to match. This is not just a single developer's dilemma. It is a glimpse into India's crossroads. If India wants to lead in the AI race, it must recognise that the challenge lies in whether market regulations will stifle its momentum.

Key points

- **The issues in India:** *Export competitiveness* - Hinges on the nationwide deployment of productivity-enhancing technologies.
Indian services and consultancies - Must incorporate AI technologies to maintain their lead position in the global market.
Regulatory and administrative pressure - Will not necessarily resolve the core problem of monopolistic business practices.
Compliance costs - Additional AI-related compliance costs may hamper India's ability to outpace commercial rivals.
- **Navigating the global AI race:** *India's position* - The world's IT powerhouse gives it a unique advantage in the AI era.
Global AI regulation - Attempts to govern and regulate AI occur as industrialised nations compete for industrial leadership.
EU's need for legislation - The EU has chosen to legislate through binding laws mainly due to its unique structural deficiencies.
India's export concerns - The costs of regulatory failure are too high if India's exporting capabilities are at stake, particularly given Chinese dominance in hardware and cloud technologies.
- **India's strategic approach:** The Indian government can use its diplomatic influence to ensure that open-source models remain open, accessible, and commercially viable. It can pair this with international strategic partnerships for energy security, computing resources, and international standardisation.
- **Required regulations:** *Public responsibility* - Public officials must listen to political and social concerns amid the strong adoption of AI.
India's regulatory stance - India is not explicitly pursuing ex-ante product regulation on AI like Europe or California.
India's existing legal framework - India has a comprehensive framework covering antitrust, corporate liability, free speech, and public order. These laws already address AI development and use cases. India may not need AI-specific rules under legislation like the IT Act.
- **Conclusion:** India must choose its own path according to its national interests. The challenge lies not in whether businesses prefer a local or foreign AI platform but in encouraging rapid adoption and supporting open-source and other alternatives accessible for fine-tuning and transferring learning in its IT industry.

GS 2: POLITY, GOVERNANCE, SOCIAL JUSTICE, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS/INSTITUTIONS

3. India, EU to work on major defence, security partnership

Context: India and the European Union (EU) today decided to work on a major security and defence partnership and explored ways to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific based on global law and respect for sovereignty amid China's military muscle-flexing in the region. In an address at a think-tank ahead of the talks, the European Commission chief said proposed security and defence partnership will help the two sides to tackle common threats such as cross-border terrorism and attacks on critical infrastructure.

Key points

- **Security and Defence Cooperation:** The EU is expanding maritime cooperation with India, deploying a liaison officer at the Indian Navy's Information Fusion Centre in Gurugram. The EU's Enhancing Security Cooperation in and with Asia (ESIWA) initiative boosts security ties with Asia, including India, to safeguard key Indian Ocean Sea lanes.
- **EU-India Strategic Partnership:** A Roadmap to 2025: Strengthens trade, investment, digitalization, climate change, security, global governance and climate resilience, ensuring sustainable growth and technological advancement.
- **Energy & Climate Action:** *EU-India Clean Energy and Climate Partnership* - Expands collaboration in renewable energy, smart grids, and clean technology financing for sustainable energy.
EU-India Green Hydrogen Partnership - Develops policy frameworks and pilot projects to promote green hydrogen and offshore wind energy.
Sustainable Consumption & Production (SWITCH-Asia Programme) - Encourages eco-friendly manufacturing, waste management, and sustainable consumer practices.
- **Trade & Economic Cooperation:** *EU-India Trade and Technology Council (TTC)* - Enhances digital governance, trade resilience, and green technology partnerships for future-ready economies.
Global Green Bonds Initiative - Promotes issuance of green bonds to finance sustainable infrastructure and climate projects.
- **Challenges:** *Stalled Free Trade Agreement (FTA) Negotiations* - EU demands lower tariffs on automobiles, spirits, and dairy, conflicting with India's domestic trade policies.
Investment Barriers & Regulatory Hurdles - India's trade regulations remain restrictive, with technical barriers to trade (TBT) and sanitary & phytosanitary (SPS) measures affecting European businesses.
Limited Defence Cooperation - India's deep defence ties with Russia and growing engagements with the U.S. leave little room for European defence collaborations.
- **Way Forward:** *Fast-Track the FTA & Address Trade Barriers* - Prioritize resolving tariff disputes, particularly in automotive, pharmaceuticals, and digital trade.
Strengthen Defence & Security Ties - Expand joint naval exercises, cyber defence partnerships, and intelligence-sharing mechanisms.
Develop Alternative Supply Chains - Expand semiconductor and AI collaborations under the India-EU Trade and Technology Council (TTC).
- **Conclusion:** The India-EU partnership is at a critical juncture, with economic, security, and technological collaborations shaping their future engagement. Addressing trade disputes, regulatory barriers, and geopolitical divergences will be key to realizing the full potential of this partnership. A stronger India-EU alliance will enhance global stability, drive economic resilience, and reinforce India's role in the evolving global order.

4. The necessity of mainstreaming wetland conservation

Context: The suo motu public interest litigation by the Meghalaya High Court very recently, to monitor the conservation of wetlands in the State brings the focus back on this important ecosystem. Since 1971, February 2 is observed every year as 'World Wetland Day' to mark the adoption of the Ramsar Convention, an international treaty for the conservation of wetlands, which was signed in the Iranian city of Ramsar. The theme this year was 'Protecting Wetlands for Our Common Future'.

Key points

- **Overview:** *Wetlands* - One of the most biologically productive ecosystems, provide multiple benefits.
Global Coverage - Wetlands cover an area of 12.1 million km², or around 6% of the earth's surface.
Ecosystem Services - Provide 40.6% of global ecosystem services.
- **Ramsar Convention COP14 and Wetland Conservation:** The Ramsar Convention COP14 that was held in Wuhan, China and Geneva, Switzerland from November 5-13, 2022.
Key Focus - Laid stress on preparation of the fifth Ramsar Strategic Plan.
Recognition - Recognised that the conservation and management of wetlands cannot be a stand-alone initiative.
Approach - Needs to be contextualised and appropriately linked to other international environment development initiatives.
- **The situation in India:** India is a signatory to the Ramsar Convention.
 - *Number of Ramsar Sites (as of 2024)* - 89 Ramsar sites (wetlands of international importance).
 - *Geographical Distribution* - Spread across coasts to Himalayan territory.
 - *Diversity* – Includes River stretches such as the Upper Ganga River.
- **Threats to Wetlands:** *Loss Since 1900* - As much as 50% of the area under wetlands has been diverted to accommodate various other uses, as one of the studies indicated.
Decline (1970-2015) - Wetland surface area, both coastal and inland, declined by about 35% between 1970 and 2015.
Loss Rate (WET Index) - The rate of loss estimated with the Wetland Extend Trends (WET) index is (-0.78%) a year, which is more than three times higher than the loss rate of natural vegetation as estimated by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.
- **Decline of Wetland Species:** *Inland Wetland Species* - Around 81% of inland wetland species population have declined since 1970.
Coastal & Marine Species - 36% of coastal and marine species have declined since 1970.
- **Conservation and Management Challenges:** *Major Challenge* - The conservation and the management of wetlands have emerged as a major challenge as they are linked to other development issues.
Potential Solutions - Can serve in devising nature-based solutions for water management and the mitigation of climate change impacts, besides providing blue-green infrastructures in urban areas.
- **Conclusion:** Wetlands act as a source as well as sink of carbon. Therefore, their role in climate change mitigation must be carefully evaluated and monitored, something which is hardly attempted now. Wetland management warrants an innovative ecosystem-based approach and it should be mainstreamed within the development plan, as advocated during the Ramsar COP14.

5. Dressed For Success

Context: To become Viksit Bharat by 2047, India must prioritise on job creation. The textiles and apparel industry are India's second-largest employer after agriculture, providing direct employment to 45 million people. The sector is expected to motor on at an annual growth rate of 10% and become a USD 250 billion market by 2030, with the potential to add millions of jobs. If the export grows from the current USD 45 billion to the targeted USD 100 billion, and if the economy grows at 6-7% a year, textiles can add up to one million jobs every year from now to 2030.

Key points

- **Global Opportunities:** *Shifting Dynamics* - China, Bangladesh, and Vietnam (top exporters) face geopolitical and internal challenges. Global markets increasingly view India as a stable alternative.
India's Advantages - Stable economy and government. Strong diplomatic ties. Centuries-old textile tradition. Young workforce.
- **Government Initiatives Driving Growth:** *Key Schemes* - PM MITRA Parks to develop integrated textile hubs in labour-rich regions. PLI Scheme to incentivize large-scale manufacturing. RoSCTL to rebate taxes to boost export competitiveness.
Impact - Addresses infrastructure gaps and cost inefficiencies.
- **Domestic Market Potential:** *Growth Drivers* - Rising middle class and Gen Z demand. E-commerce and quick commerce expanding access to fashion.
Consumption Trends - Resilient demand despite crises (e.g. Covid). Domestic market expected to reach \$100 billion.
- **Challenges to Overcome:** *Cost Disadvantages* - 15-20% higher costs vs. Bangladesh/Vietnam due to labour inefficiency.
Geographic mismatch - Jobs in hubs (e.g. Tiruppur) vs. labour availability in UP, Bihar, Odisha.
High attrition (10%) - Migration, high living costs, and wage sensitivity.
Gender Dynamics - Women form 90% of blue-collar workforce. They need safe, stable jobs for empowerment.
- **Measures for sustainable development:** *Location Strategy* - Develop PM MITRA Parks in labour-surplus states (UP, Bihar, Odisha, MP).
Empowering Women Workers - Formalize employment to integrate women into the economy.
Balancing Automation & Jobs - Use automation to boost efficiency but prioritize job creation through industry expansion.
- **Way ahead:** *Recalibration Needed* - Align policy incentives with labour availability. Address infrastructure gaps (housing, transport). Leverage domestic demand to cushion global market volatility.
Outcome Potential - Position India as a global textile giant, capturing market share from China. Achieve USD 100 billion exports and 10 million+ new jobs by 2030.