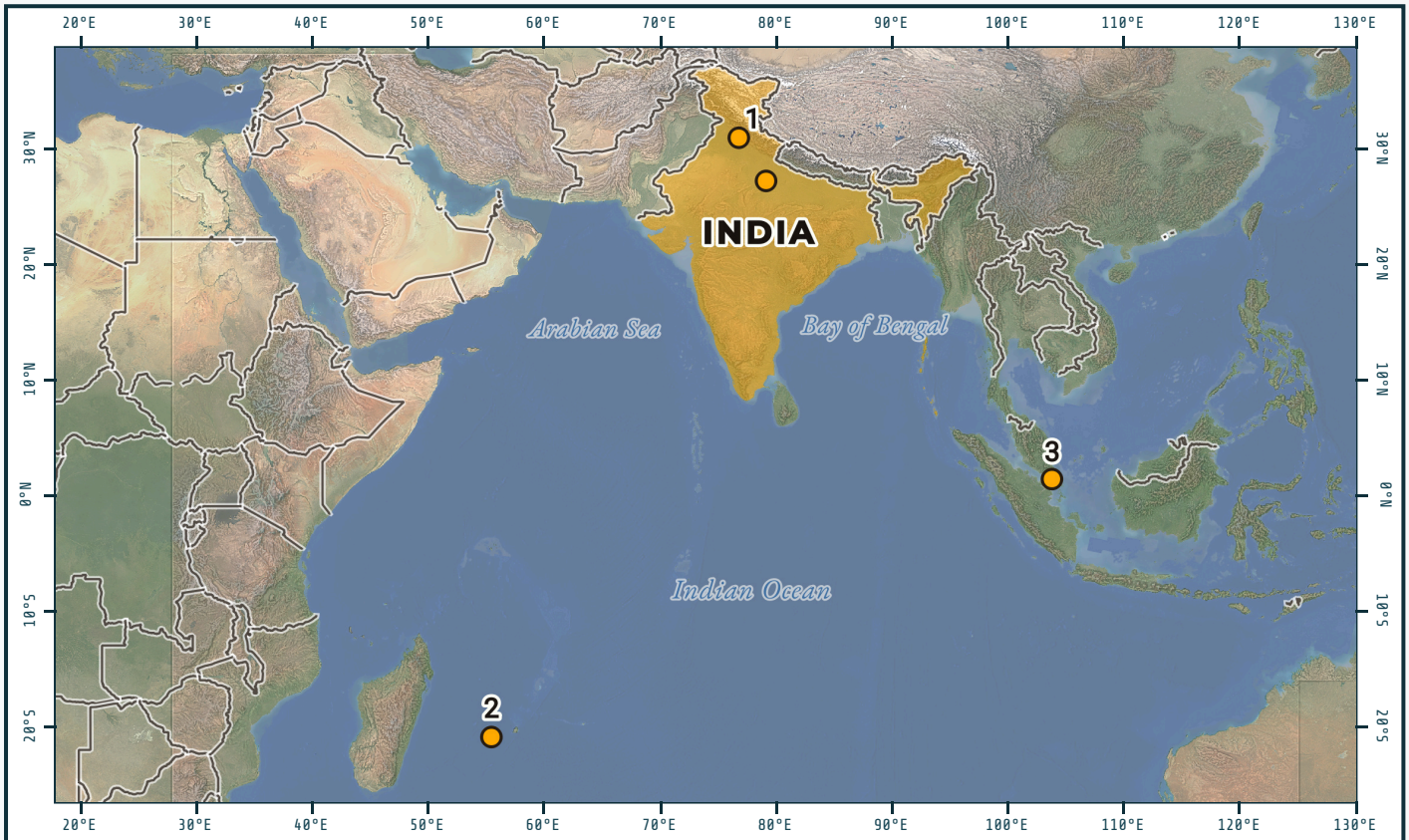


Places *in* News

**OCT 2026
WEEK 3**

News of 15–21 October 2026

MAP · FACTS · PYQ · MAINS



In this issue

COORDINATES · PAGE

- | | | | |
|--|---------------|--|---------------|
| <p>1 Sukhna & Sauj Jheel</p> <p>Two new Ramsar sites take India's tally to 103
30.7°N 76.8°E · 27.0°N 79.1°E</p> | <p>Page 2</p> | <p>2 Southern Indian Ocean (SIOFA)</p> <p>India to become a full member of the high-seas fishing pact
HQ 20.9°S 55.5°E</p> | <p>Page 3</p> |
| <p>3 Indonesia → Singapore haze</p> <p>Peat fires make Singapore the most polluted major city
1.35°N 103.8°E</p> | <p>Page 4</p> | | |

▶ **WATCH** 3D map video · Hindi + English audio

youtu.be/8u9MFocosDA

FIND US

YouTube
youtube.com/upsccolourfulnotes

X
x.com/upsccolorfull

Telegram
t.me/upsc_colorfull_notes

Facebook
fb.com/105201971398442

Website
upsccolorfullnotes.com

Hindi channel
youtube.com/channel/UCIqoxZhBbQqfJkDI21D-_Cg

Instagram
instagram.com/upsccolorfullnotes

Why did a 1958 city lake and a small village lake both get a Ramsar tag?

WHY IN NEWS

On **15 Oct 2026** India's Ramsar tally reached **103** with **Sukhna Wetland** (Chandigarh) and **Sauj Jheel** (Uttar Pradesh). Ramsar published both that day; their formal designation dates are earlier (16 Mar and 18 Jun 2026).



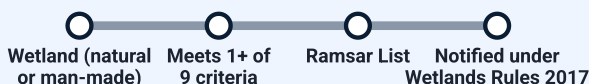
Red dots = the two new Ramsar sites. Sauj lies beside Saman Bird Sanctuary (Ramsar site since 2019). Grey dots = major cities for reference.

KEY FACTS

- Sukhna** = a **human-made** lake: an earthen dam built in **1958** on a seasonal stream below the **Shivalik** hills. It is Chandigarh's first Ramsar site.
- Sauj Jheel** = a small **natural**, seasonal lake in the **Ganga plains**, fed by rain and farm run-off. It drains into the **Saman** Ramsar site next door; UP now has 14.
- Why listed – birds.** Sukhna: threatened species such as the **Pallas's fish eagle**, and a stopover on the **Central Asian Flyway**. Sauj: **30,000+ waterbirds**; one criterion needs 20,000.
- The count:** India is **3rd in the world** by number of Ramsar sites (after the UK and Mexico). **Tamil Nadu (20)** and **Uttar Pradesh (14)** lead.

CONCEPT · WHAT COUNTS AS A WETLAND

Ramsar definition (1971, Iran): marsh, fen, peatland or water — **natural or artificial**, fresh, brackish or salt.



Why it matters: a site needs only **one** of nine criteria — Sukhna met three (all species-based); Sauj met four, including **20,000+ waterbirds**.

Status: India joined in **1982**; its first sites were **Chilika** and **Keoladeo**.

Remember: Ramsar does **not** make it mandatory to protect **all** wetlands (asked in Prelims 2019).

MAP MEMORY

- Sukhna:** Shivalik foothills; its outflow joins the **Ghaggar** basin; catchment in Chandigarh, Punjab and Haryana.
- Sauj:** Ganga plains of UP, beside **Saman** (Ramsar 2019).
- Largest** Indian site: Sundarban (WB). **Smallest:** Vembannur (TN), then Renuka (HP).

WHAT NEXT

The tag brings duties: notification under the **Wetlands Rules 2017** and a management plan. Sukhna fights silt and weeds; Sauj, grazing and fishing.

UPSC PRELIMS PYQ · 2022

Consider the following pairs (Wetland/Lake : Location):

- Hokera Wetland : Punjab
- Renuka Wetland : Himachal Pradesh
- Rudrasagar Lake : Tripura
- Sasthamkotta Lake : Tamil Nadu

How many pairs given above are correctly matched?

(a) Only one pair

(b) Only two pairs

(c) Only three pairs

(d) All four pairs

✓ (b) — Hokera is in Jammu and Kashmir and Sasthamkotta in Kerala; both wrong pairs named a neighbouring state.

MAINS LINK · 2018 GS-III

What is wetland? Explain the Ramsar concept of 'wise use' in the context of wetland conservation. Cite two examples of Ramsar sites from India.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Consider the following pairs (Ramsar site : State):

- Sauj Jheel : Uttar Pradesh
- Kolleru Lake : Odisha
- Loktak Lake : Manipur

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

(a) Only one

(b) Only two

(c) All three

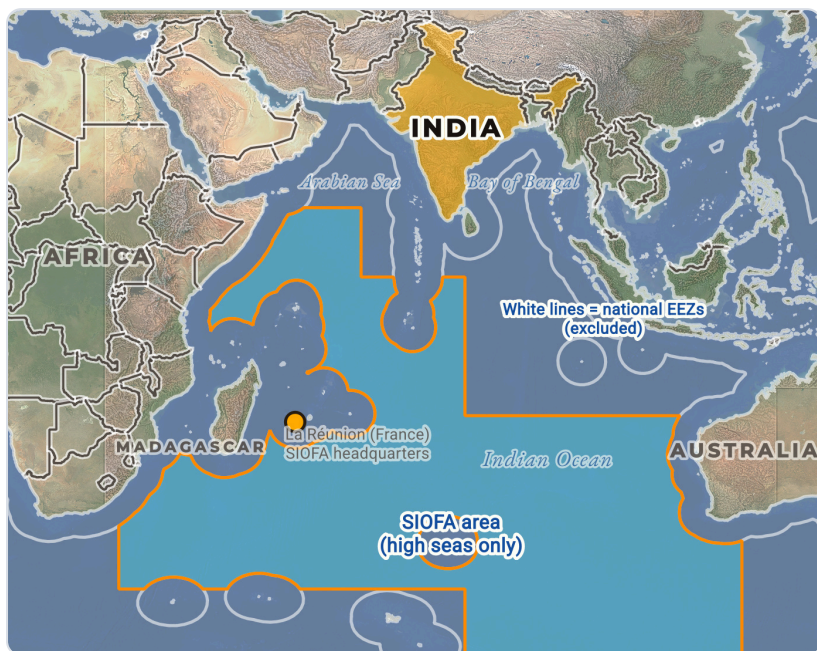
(d) None

Answer on the last page

Who makes the fishing rules in the open ocean beyond any country's waters?

WHY IN NEWS

On **14 Oct 2026** the Union Government approved India's accession to the **Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA)**. A cooperating non-member since **2022**, India will become a full member (Contracting Party).



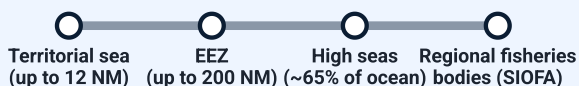
Shaded = SIOFA area (high seas; national EEZs excluded). Dot = HQ, La Réunion.

KEY FACTS

- Covers:** high-seas fishing in the southern Indian Ocean — **squid, toothfish, alfonsino** and other non-migratory stocks. Signed in **Rome, 2006**; in force since **2012**.
- Area:** from Africa to Australia; south of India it starts at the Equator. National EEZs inside it are excluded. HQ: **La Réunion (France)**.
- Two bodies:** **IOTC** for tuna and tuna-like fish (India a member since **1996**), **SIOFA** for the other fish.
- Why now:** Indian boats fish mostly within **60–80 NM** of the coast; a few countries, led by China, take the high-seas catch. After India's **High Sea Fisheries Guidelines (Dec 2025)**, full membership gives a full say in SIOFA's committees and access to its data.

CONCEPT · ZONES OF THE SEA (UNCLOS)

UNCLOS 1982 splits the sea by distance from the coast: territorial sea, Exclusive Economic Zone, then the high seas.



Why it matters: the high seas are open to all, so UNCLOS asks states to cooperate through regional fisheries organisations.

Remember: **Innocent passage** through a territorial sea is a right of ships of **all** states, even land-locked ones (Prelims 2022).

MAP MEMORY

- La Réunion:** French island east of Madagascar — SIOFA HQ.
- IOTC** = tuna; **SIOFA** = other fish of the southern high seas.

MAINS LINK · 2025 GS-III

Why is maritime security vital to protect India's sea trade? Discuss maritime and coastal security challenges and the way forward.

WHAT NEXT

Under SIOFA's **High Seas Boarding and Inspection** scheme, India can check fishing vessels at sea — a tool against illegal (IUU) fishing.

UPSC PRELIMS PYQ · 2022

With reference to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, consider the following statements:

1. A coastal state has the right to establish the breadth of its territorial sea up to a limit not exceeding 12 nautical miles, measured from baseline determined in accordance with the convention.
2. Ships of all states, whether coastal or land-locked, enjoy the right of innocent passage through the territorial sea.
3. The Exclusive Economic Zone shall not extend beyond 200 nautical miles from the baseline from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

✓ (d) — all three are UNCLOS text; statement 2 is the one most often doubted.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Consider the following statements:

1. The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) regulates tuna and tuna-like species.
2. The headquarters of SIOFA is in Mauritius.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer on the last page

■ WHY IN NEWS

On **16 Oct 2026** **Singapore** topped IQAir's live ranking of the world's most polluted major cities. The smoke comes from forest and **peatland fires** in Indonesia; Singapore is sending notices to ten companies under its **2014 haze law**.



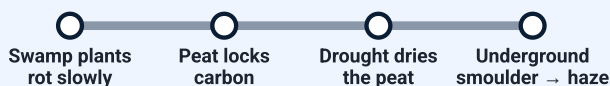
Orange = fire islands (Singapore's NEA); brown = peat. Arrows = the season's south-to-north winds that carried the smoke. Grey dots = cities.

■ KEY FACTS

- **Where:** fires on **Sumatra** and **Borneo**. Borneo is shared by Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei; Indonesia's part is **Kalimantan**.
- **Why so much smoke:** dried **peat** smoulders underground at low heat for weeks — by one estimate about **3×** the fine particles (PM2.5) of other tropical forest fires.
- **Why this year:** June–September is the region's dry season, and a strong **El Niño** made it drier. The season's winds from the south carried the smoke north to Singapore and Malaysia.
- **Why the land burns:** fire is used to clear forest and peat for **palm oil** and timber plantations.
- **The law gap:** the **ASEAN haze agreement (2002)** — the world's first regional one — has no enforcement mechanism; Indonesia ratified it last (2014). Singapore's **2014 Act** covers firms whose fires abroad send haze to Singapore.

■ CONCEPT · WHY PEAT FIRES SMOKE

Peat: decaying plants in swamps produce peat — low carbon, high moisture, low heating capacity (NCERT).



Why it matters: peatlands cover ~3% of land but store about twice the carbon of all the world's forests.

Status: Indonesia holds about **36%** of the world's tropical peatland.

Remember: the oil palm is native to **West Africa**, not Southeast Asia (asked in Prelims 2021).

■ MAP MEMORY

- **Strait of Malacca:** between Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula; joins the Andaman Sea and the South China Sea.
- **Borneo** = 3rd largest island. **Sumatra** is the land closest to Great Nicobar (Prelims 2017).

■ INDIA ANGLE

~**83%** of India's crude palm oil imports come from Indonesia and Malaysia (2023). India's own cross-border smoke: **stubble burning** and Delhi-NCR (CAQM).

■ UPSC PRELIMS PYQ · 2024

One of the following regions has the world's largest tropical peatland, which holds about three years' worth of global carbon emissions from fossil fuels; and the possible destruction of which can exert detrimental effect on the global climate. Which one of the following denotes that region?

(a) Amazon Basin

(b) Congo Basin

(c) Kikori Basin

(d) Rio de la Plata Basin

✓ (b) — the Congo Basin. The Amazon is the biggest rainforest, not the biggest tropical peatland.

■ MAINS LINK · 2022 GS-III

Discuss in detail the photochemical smog emphasizing its formation, effects and mitigation. Explain the 1999 Gothenburg Protocol.

■ PRACTICE QUESTION

Consider the following statements:

1. The ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution was the first regional arrangement of its kind in the world.
2. Borneo is shared by three countries.
3. The Strait of Malacca joins the Andaman Sea and the Java Sea.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one

(b) Only two

(c) All three

(d) None

Answer on the last page



1. **Sukhna & Sauj Jheel** — (b) 1 and 3 are correct. Kolleru Lake is in **Andhra Pradesh**; Odisha's best-known Ramsar site is Chilika.
2. **Southern Indian Ocean (SIOFA)** — (a) Only 1 is correct. SIOFA's headquarters is in **La Réunion**, a French island; Mauritius is a SIOFA member.
3. **Indonesia → Singapore haze** — (b) 1 and 2 are correct. The Strait of Malacca joins the Andaman Sea (Indian Ocean) and the **South China Sea** (Pacific).