WEEKLY DIGEST

SEPTEMBER 2025

WEEK-3

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MANKI - MUNDA SYSTEM

CONTEXT

Tribal communities in Jharkhand's Kolhan region staged protests, alleging interference in their traditional Manki-Munda self-governance system following the removal of some Mundas.

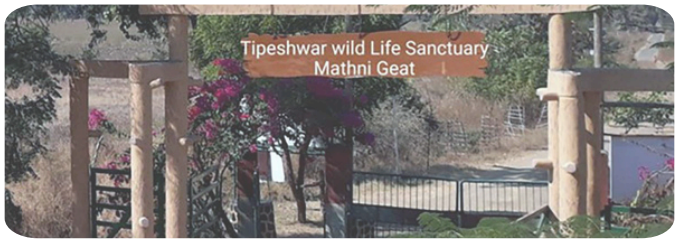
ABOUT MANKI-MUNDA SYSTEM

- It is a traditional, decentralised self-governance model followed by the Ho tribe of Jharkhand's Kolhan region.
- It revolves around village heads (Mundas) and pidh heads (Mankis) who collectively resolve disputes and maintain order.
- Origin & History: Pre-British era: Functioned as a community-driven governance system with no concept of land tax or external sovereign control.
- British Era Recognition:
  - After early Ho and Kol revolts, the British realised direct control was unsustainable.
  - In 1833, Captain Thomas Wilkinson codified the system in 31 rules (Wilkinson's Rules), later implemented in Kolhan Government Estate (KGE) in 1837.
  - Mankis and Mundas were made intermediaries between colonial administration and the community, integrating Kolhan into British India while preserving autonomy.
- HOW IT WORKS?
  - Munda: Head of a single village, resolves socio-political disputes locally.
  - Manki: Head of a pidh (cluster of 8–15 villages), hears appeals when Munda-level resolution fails.
  - System relies on customary law, not formal legislation, and continues in use even after Independence.
- **KEY FEATURES**
  - Hereditary Leadership: Roles are passed from father to son.
  - Decentralised & Community-based: Gram Sabha–like participation in dispute resolution.
  - Cultural Autonomy: Protects Ho identity, traditions, and land rights.
  - Legal Continuity: Though challenged, courts have allowed Wilkinson's Rules to continue due to lack of alternatives.

TIPESHWAR WILDLIFE SANCTUARY (TWS)

CONTEXT

- Five individuals were arrested for poaching an Indian Pangolin in Tipeshwar Wildlife Sanctuary (TWS), Yavatmal, Maharashtra.



ABOUT TIPESHWAR WILDLIFE SANCTUARY (TWS)

- Tipeshwar Wildlife Sanctuary is a protected forest area and emerging tiger reserve located in Maharashtra.
- Renowned for its high tiger density and rich biodiversity, it offers a peaceful, less-crowded alternative to the popular Tadoba reserve, making it ideal for wildlife enthusiasts seeking a more intimate safari experience.
- Location:
  - Situated in the Pandarkawada region of Yavatmal district, the sanctuary spans 148.63 square kilometers.
  - It is named after Goddess Tipai, whose temple is located in the nearby Tipeshwar village
- It was designated a Wildlife Sanctuary under the Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972, Tipeshwar rose to national prominence as the habitat of Tigress Avni, the inspiration behind Vidya Balan's film Sherni.
- Since 2010, focused conservation initiatives have led to a significant rise in tiger numbers—from just 3 to around 20 individuals.
- Key Features:
- Flora: Dominated by teak forests (covering about 60% of the area) and red sandalwood (around 15%), the sanctuary also hosts diverse plant species including mahua, achar, lendia, tiwas, and nearly 250 varieties of bamboo.
- Fauna: The sanctuary shelters a wide range of wildlife including tigers, leopards, sloth bears, hyenas, jackals, chital, sambar, wild boars, and the elusive Indian pangolin. It also supports 26 reptile species and rare mammals such as the Rusty Spotted Cat and False Vampire Bat.
- Avifauna: A haven for birdwatchers, TWS is home to 256 species of birds — resident, migratory, and rare. Notable species include the Painted Francolin, Rain Quail, Lesser Whistling Duck, and Eurasian Wryneck.
- Butterfly Diversity: With 97 recorded butterfly species, including rare ones like the Black Rajah and Peacock Royal, the sanctuary adds to its ecological richness.
- Tipeshwar offers jeep safaris, nature trails, and rural tourism experiences, helping promote sustainable tourism and providing livelihood opportunities to local communities.

SARNATH

CONTEXT

- India has officially nominated Sarnath for the UNESCO World Heritage List in the 2025–26 cycle, potentially ending its 27-year wait on the tentative list.
- Additionally, the ASI will install a new plaque acknowledging Babu Jagat Singh (1787–88) for uncovering Sarnath's archaeological significance, correcting earlier credit given to the British.

ABOUT SARNATH:

- It is located about 10 km northeast of Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, is one of the four most sacred Buddhist pilgrimage sites, alongside Lumbini, Bodh Gaya, and Kushinagar.
- It is venerated as the place where Gautama Buddha delivered his first sermon—the Dhammachakkappavattana Sutta—signifying the foundation of the Buddhist Sangha.
- **Origin & Early History:**
  - Referred to as Mrigadava or Rishipatana in ancient Buddhist texts, Sarnath's spiritual significance was firmly established during the reign of Emperor Ashoka (268–232 BCE), who erected the iconic Lion Capital Pillar (now India's National Emblem) and commissioned several stupas and monasteries.
  - The Dhamek Stupa marks the exact spot of the Buddha's first sermon, while ruins of viharas reflect the presence of an early monastic community.

- **Growth Under Royal Patronage:**
  - Ashokan Period: Ashoka's patronage transformed Sarnath into a key pilgrimage destination.
  - Kushana & Gupta Dynasties (1st–6th CE): These eras witnessed major structural expansion, restoration of earlier monuments, and the construction of new monasteries, turning Sarnath into a flourishing center of Buddhist learning and practice.
  - Sarnath continued to thrive as a major monastic complex until the 12th century CE.
- **Decline and Ruin:**
  - In the 12th century, Sarnath faced large-scale destruction. While some historians link this to Qutb-ud-din Aibak's invasion in 1193 CE, others point to earlier conflicts involving Brahmanical forces followed by Islamic raids.
  - The monastic population was dispersed, and the site lay abandoned and overgrown for nearly 700 years.
- **Modern Rediscovery:**
  - 1787–88: Laborers working for local official Babu Jagat Singh accidentally discovered Buddha statues while excavating soil.
  - 1799: British official Jonathan Duncan documented the findings, sparking colonial interest.
  - 1835–36: Alexander Cunningham definitively identified the site as the location of Buddha's first sermon.
  - 1904–05: Archaeologist Friedrich Oertel conducted systematic excavations, unearthing 476 artefacts and 41 inscriptions.
- **Key Features Today:**
  - Dhamek Stupa: A massive cylindrical structure marking the site of the first sermon.
  - Ashokan Pillar & Lion Capital: The original pillar stood here; its Lion Capital now serves as India's national emblem.
  - Archaeological Museum: Displays numerous important artefacts, including sculptures, inscriptions, and a famous seated Buddha in Dharmachakra Mudra.

CENTRAL INFRORMATION COMMISSION

CONTEXT

- The Central Information Commission (CIC) has become headless for the seventh time in 11 years following the retirement of Chief Information Commissioner Heeralal Samariya.

ABOUT CENTRAL INFORMATION COMMISSION:

- The Central Information Commission is the highest appellate authority under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005.
- It handles second appeals and complaints related to access to public information from central government bodies.

- **Establishment:**
  - Formed on 12 October 2005 through a Central Government notification under Section 12 of the RTI Act.
  - Headquarters: New Delhi, India.

- **Structure:**
  - Headed by a Chief Information Commissioner (CIC).
  - Supported by up to 10 Information Commissioners (ICs).
  - Appointments are made by a committee consisting of:
  - The Prime Minister (Chairperson),
  - The Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha,
  - A Union Cabinet Minister nominated by the Prime Minister.

Objective:

- To promote transparency and accountability in government functioning.
- To empower citizens by ensuring their right to access public information.
- To help curb corruption and strengthen participatory democracy.

Key Functions & Powers:

- Adjudication: Hears second appeals against decisions made by Central Public Information Officers (CPIOs).
- Complaint Resolution: Investigates complaints regarding delays, denials, or excessive fees related to RTI applications (Section 18).
- Monitoring Compliance: Oversees proactive disclosures by public authorities as required under Section 4 of the RTI Act.
- Penalties: Can impose fines on officials for non-compliance or obstruction under Section 20.
- Annual Reporting: Submits a report to Parliament detailing the implementation of the RTI Act (Section 25).

- **Quasi-Judicial Powers:**
  - The CIC functions like a civil court and has the authority to:
  - Summon and examine witnesses under oath,
  - Enforce attendance,
  - Require production of public records,
  - Issue directives to improve transparency and record-keeping practices

JUNGLE WARFARE SCHOOL

CONTEXT

- The government plans to establish a new Jungle Warfare School at Karreguta Hills in Bijapur, Chhattisgarh — once a Maoist stronghold — to train personnel from the CRPF, DRG, CoBRA, and state police forces..

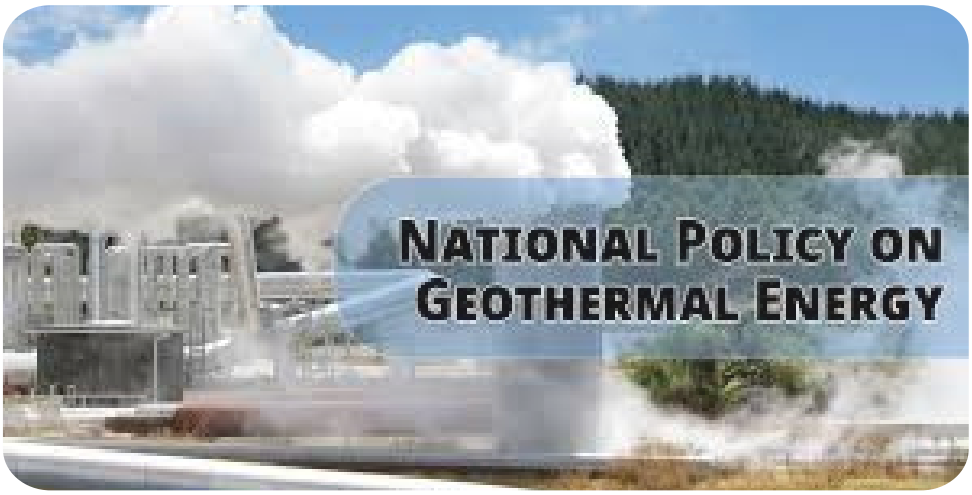
ABOUT JUNGLE WARFARE SCHOOL:

- Jungle Warfare Schools are specialized training institutions for military and police forces, focused on equipping personnel with the skills needed for combat, mobility, and survival in dense forests and rugged, hilly terrain.
- They emphasize counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism tactics, particularly suited for asymmetric warfare in jungle environments.
- Objective:
  - To strengthen the operational readiness of security forces deployed in Left-Wing Extremism (LWE)-affected areas.
  - To train personnel in terrain-specific tactics such as ambush handling, guerrilla warfare, cave operations, and counter-strategies used by insurgents.
- Key Features:
  - Realistic Operational Setting: Located in challenging terrain like Karreguta Hills, with natural caves, dense forests, waterfalls, and narrow valleys to simulate real combat conditions.
  - Integrated Training: Personnel from various forces — including CRPF, CoBRA, STF, DRG, and state police — train side by side for enhanced coordination.
  - Comprehensive Modules: Training covers:
  - Jungle navigation and survival skills
  - Counter-ambush tactics
  - Cave-clearing and close-quarter battle techniques
  - Night operations
  - Intelligence gathering
  - Detection and disposal of IEDs

NATIONAL POLICY ON GEOTHERMAL ENERGY 2025

CONTEXT

- The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) has launched the National Policy on Geothermal Energy (2025) to fast-track the exploration and development of geothermal energy resources across the country.



ABOUT NATIONAL POLICY ON GEOTHERMAL ENERGY 2025

- The National Policy on Geothermal Energy 2025, launched by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), is a strategic framework aimed at tapping into India's estimated 10 GW geothermal energy potential.
- The policy focuses on integrating geothermal energy into the national renewable energy mix and fostering a robust public-private ecosystem for its sustainable development.
- **Key Objectives:**
  - Research & Innovation:
    - Enhance exploration, drilling, reservoir management, and cost-effective power generation, along with direct-use technologies.
  - Collaborative Approach:
    - Foster partnerships with other ministries, research institutions, international geothermal organizations, and the oil & gas sector.
  - Decarbonization Goals:
    - Promote geothermal energy use in space heating/cooling, industrial processes, agriculture, and tourism to aid climate goals.
  - Infrastructure Reuse:
    - Encourage the use of abandoned oil and gas wells for geothermal production to lower costs and reduce environmental impact.

Key Features:

- **Vision & Strategic Goals:**
  - Establish geothermal energy as a core component of India's renewable energy strategy.
  - Strengthen energy security and contribute to achieving Net Zero emissions by 2070.

- **Geothermal Resource Potential:**
  - Over 381 hot springs identified by the Geological Survey of India (GSI) across 10 geothermal provinces, including:
  - Himalayas, Cambay Graben, Godavari Basin, and Aravalli Belt.
  - High-potential sites: Puga (Ladakh), Manikaran (Himachal Pradesh), Tattapani (Chhattisgarh

- **Scope of Applications:**
  - Encompasses power generation, district heating/cooling, cold storage, greenhouse and aquaculture heating, desalination, and eco-tourism.
  - Encourages development of hybrid systems (e.g., geothermal + solar).
  - Supports mineral extraction (like lithium and boron) to boost commercial viability.

- **Development & Investment Model:**
  - 100% FDI allowed in the geothermal sector.
  - Promotes risk-sharing mechanisms, joint ventures with oil & gas companies, and single-window state clearances.
  - Offers a range of fiscal incentives, including:
  - GST and import duty exemptions
  - Tax holidays
  - Accelerated depreciation
  - Viability Gap Funding (VGF)

- **Implementation Mechanism:**
  - MNRE designated as the nodal agency, ensuring coordination across ministries.
  - Establishment of Geothermal Centres of Excellence for R&D and pilot projects.
  - Policy rollout guided by standard operating procedures (SOPs) and regular progress monitoring.

MACHU PICCHU

CONTEXT

- Peru evacuated 1,600 tourists from Machu Picchu after protests disrupted train services, with demonstrators demanding to be included in the bidding process for selecting a new bus operator.

ABOUT MACHU PICCHU:

- Machu Picchu is a 15th-century Inca citadel and one of the New Seven Wonders of the World. Designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1983, it is Peru's most famous archaeological site, drawing approximately 4,500 visitors daily.
- The site is renowned for its exceptional preservation, advanced engineering, and blend of ceremonial, residential, and agricultural zones.
- Location:
  - Located about 80 km northwest of Cusco, in the Cordillera de Vilcabamba range of the Andes Mountains, Peru.
  - It sits at an altitude of 2,350 meters (7,710 feet) above sea level, overlooking the Urubamba River Valley.
  - Nestled between two iconic peaks: Machu Picchu ("Old Peak") and Huayna Picchu ("New Peak").
- Historical Background:
  - Believed to have been built during the reign of Pachacuti Inca Yupanqui (c. 1438–1471) as a royal retreat or estate.
  - Abandoned in the mid-16th century, likely due to the Spanish conquest and water scarcity.
  - Rediscovered in 1911 by Yale historian Hiram Bingham, with the help of local guide Melchor Arteaga.

Architectural Highlights:

- Urban Design:
  - Organized into ceremonial, residential, and agricultural sectors, linked by thousands of precisely carved stone steps.
- Agricultural Terraces:
  - Ingeniously constructed with an aqueduct system for effective irrigation and erosion control.
- Notable Structures:
  - Temple of the Sun: Used for religious ceremonies.
  - Temple of the Three Windows: Exhibits classic Inca trapezoidal architecture.
  - Intihuatana Stone: A carved sundial believed to have astronomical and ceremonial purposes.
  - Royal Tombs & Palaces: Indicate elite and royal usage.

- **Getting There:**
  - Access is primarily via train to Aguas Calientes, followed by a bus ride to the site.
  - Alternatively, adventurous travelers can hike the Inca Trail, a 3–6 day trek through the mountains.

- **Cultural & Economic Significance:**
  - Cultural Legacy: A powerful symbol of the Inca Empire's architectural genius and cultural achievements.
  - Tourism Hub: Peru's most economically significant tourist attraction, contributing substantially to foreign revenue and local employment.

WORLD TRADE REPORT 2025

CONTEXT

- The World Trade Organization (WTO), in its World Trade Report 2025, stated that Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the potential to boost global trade by 34–37% and increase GDP by 12–13% by 2040—provided that digital divides are addressed and inclusive policy frameworks are implemented.

ABOUT WORLD TRADE REPORT 2025

- The World Trade Report is the WTO's annual flagship publication, analyzing global trade trends, policies, and the future of the multilateral trading system.
- The 2025 edition, titled "Making Trade and AI Work Together to the Benefit of All," explores the transformative impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on global trade and inclusive economic growth.

- **Major Highlights:**
  - AI as a Catalyst for Trade
    - AI could increase global trade in goods and services by up to 40% by 2040, primarily by lowering trade costs and boosting productivity.
  - Economic Impact
    - If digital divides are addressed and AI is adopted widely, global GDP could grow by 12–13% by 2040.
  - AI-Related Trade Expansion
    - In 2023, trade in AI-enabling goods (semiconductors, chips, servers) reached USD 2.3 trillion, and is expected to grow with open trade policies.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFIED:

- Lower Trade Costs:
  - AI enhances supply chain efficiency by reducing logistics expenses and streamlining processes such as customs clearance through automation.
- New Service Exports:
  - AI enables the expansion of globally tradable services, including telemedicine, data analytics, and remote diagnostics, opening new export avenues.
- Innovation and Knowledge Sharing:
  - Increased digital trade fosters global innovation — a 10% rise in digital trade correlates with a 2.6% increase in AI patent citations, indicating broader diffusion of technological advancements.
- Inclusive Development:
  - With inclusive implementation, AI can help reduce wage disparities and create new employment opportunities, particularly in data annotation, cloud-based services, and localization of AI applications in developing economies.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

- Digital Divide:
  - Many low- and middle-income countries lack essential infrastructure, digital skills, and computing resources, limiting their ability to benefit from AI-driven trade growth.
- Regulatory Fragmentation:
  - The rise in quantitative restrictions on AI-related goods — from 130 in 2012 to 500 in 2024 — threatens to hinder innovation, raise trade costs, and disrupt global supply chains.
- Concentration of AI Capabilities:
  - The dominance of a few countries and large tech firms in AI development raises concerns about monopolistic control and limited access to critical AI technologies for others.
- Labour Market Disruption:
  - AI may displace routine cognitive jobs such as translation and transcription, potentially widening income inequality if reskilling measures are not implemented.
- Environmental Impact:
  - Data centers, which power much of AI infrastructure, already consume around 1.5% of global electricity, highlighting the urgent need for sustainable and energy-efficient AI systems.

WTO's STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Close the Digital Infrastructure Gap
   - Invest in broadband, cloud services, and computing capacity in low- and middle-income countries to support AI adoption.
2. Promote Inclusive Skilling
   - Launch global initiatives to reskill workers for AI-enabled roles and avoid job polarization.
3. Ensure Open & Predictable Trade Policies
   - Reduce tariffs and non-tariff barriers on AI-enabling goods.
   - Encourage interoperable AI standards and discourage protectionism.
4. Advance Global AI Governance
   - Develop international frameworks for data sharing, algorithmic transparency, and ethical AI use to foster trust and accountability.
5. Align AI with Sustainability Goals
   - Support the development of energy-efficient AI solutions and carbon-neutral cloud infrastructure.

CONCLUSION:

- The report positions AI as a game-changing force in global trade and economic growth. However, realizing its full potential requires:
- Bridging the digital divide
- Avoiding regulatory fragmentation
- Ensuring AI becomes a driver of inclusive prosperity rather than increased inequality
- With the right mix of trade, technology, and social policy, AI can serve as a powerful tool for equitable global development.

YELLOW-CRESTED COCKATOOS

CONTEXT

- In Hong Kong, critically endangered yellow-crested cockatoos are struggling to find natural nesting sites due to tree loss and aggressive urban pruning. In response, conservationists are installing artificial nest boxes to help sustain the species and support their reproduction.

ABOUT YELLOW-CRESTED COCKATOOS:

- The Yellow-crested Cockatoo (Cacatua sulphurea) is a medium-sized parrot known for its striking yellow crest, snow-white plumage, and loud, social nature.
- Renowned for their vocalizations and strong social bonds, they are often seen in active, noisy flocks.
- Native Range:
  - Native to Indonesia and Timor-Leste, where they were once widespread across regions like Nusa Tenggara, Sulawesi, and the Masalembu Islands.
  - Today, their populations are fragmented and limited to small groups on islands such as Komodo, Flores, Sumbawa, Timor, and parts of Sulawesi.
- Habitat:
  - Naturally inhabit tropical dry forests, woodlands, and tree hollows, which are essential for nesting.
  - In urban areas, they've adapted to living in parks and tall trees, coexisting with human activity but still dependent on suitable nesting cavities.
- Conservation Status:
  - Classified as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List, primarily due to habitat loss, illegal trapping, and the pet trade.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

- Physical Traits:
  - Medium-sized with white feathers and a vibrant yellow crest that fans out when the bird is excited or alarmed.
  - Equipped with a strong, curved black beak designed for cracking seeds and nuts.
  - Smaller in size compared to the more common sulphur-crested cockatoo.

- Social Behavior:
  - Extremely gregarious and vocal, they are often seen in flocks, calling to each other with loud squawks.
  - Exhibit lifelong monogamous pair bonding and strong cooperative behavior within groups.

- Breeding Biology:
  - Nest in natural tree cavities, laying 2–3 eggs per breeding cycle.
  - Both parents share responsibilities for incubation and chick rearing, displaying high parental care until fledging.

- Movement Patterns:
  - Generally a sedentary species, remaining within a fixed home range throughout the year.
  - May move locally in response to habitat disturbances or in search of food, water, or secure nesting sites