



NEWS ANALYSIS

19 SEPTEMBER 2024

Today's Prelims Practice Question

Q)'Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement' (TEPA) is sometimes seen in the news in the context of negotiations held between India and

- (a) Gulf Cooperation Council
- (b) Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
- (c) Shanghai Cooperation Organization
- (d) European Free Trade Association

Explanation

India and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) signed a Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA), boosting trade and investment prospects. EFTA consists of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland, operating alongside the EU but outside its customs union.



Today's Prelims practice Question

Arrange the following places from West to East.

1. Lebanon
2. Cyprus
3. Iraq
4. Jordan

Select the correct answer code:

- a) 1-2-4-3
- b) 2-1-4-3
- c) 2-1-3-4
- d) 1-2-3-4

Simultaneous elections

Simultaneous polls plan gets Union Cabinet nod

Govt. to form implementation group to hold consultation; PM calls proposal an 'important step' towards making democracy 'participative', Congress terms it impractical, against Constitution

Sandeep Phukan
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday accepted the recommendations of a high-level committee headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind which had proposed simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and Assemblies as the first step, and municipal and panchayat polls within 100 days of the general election in the next phase.

"This is an important step towards making our democracy even more vibrant and participative," Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a strong votary of simultaneous polls, said in a post on X.

Calling it a giant stride towards electoral reforms, Home Minister Amit Shah,



Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw addressing a press conference on simultaneous elections, in New Delhi on Wednesday. Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting L. Murugan is at right. [A1](#)

is a post on X, said, "This reflects Modi ji's iron will to bolster our democracy through clean and financially efficient elections and accelerate economic growth through more productive allocation of resources."

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, however,

dismissed the idea as "impractical".

"This is against the Constitution, this is contrary to democracy, this is against federalism. The country will never accept this," he said.

Announcing the Union Cabinet's approval to the proposal of simultaneous

It will destroy federalism, says Opposition

NEW DELHI

Opposition parties criticised the proposal for simultaneous elections, claiming that it will destroy federalism and is "impractical". They asked how the government would deal with situations when a ruling party loses majority in a State or at the Centre. [» PAGE 11](#)

elections at a media briefing, Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said an implementation group would be formed to take forward the recommendations of the Kovind panel.

CONTINUED ON
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- The Union cabinet has accepted a high-level committee's recommendations on **'One Nation, One Election'** for holding simultaneous polls for the Lok Sabha, state assemblies and local bodies in a phased manner after a countrywide **consensus-building exercise**.

What is One Nation, One Election?

- ❑ The 'One Nation One Election' proposal aims to hold simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha (India's national parliament) and all state legislative assemblies.
- ❑ This synchronized system is expected to streamline the election process and reduce the frequency of elections across the country.
- ❑ Until 1967, independent India had witnessed four simultaneous elections for Parliament and state assemblies.

Important Reports/Recommendations

- The **Election Commission** first suggested the proposal in 1983. It was reiterated by the **Law Commission in 1999**, under **Justice B.P. Jeevan Reddy**.
- Subsequent discussions by **parliamentary committees in 2015** and the **Law Commission's draft report in 2018** have also explored its feasibility, though the latter concluded that the current constitutional framework does not support it.

Amendments in Articles 83 and Article 172 recommended

- ❑ To ensure that simultaneous elections do not conflict with the Constitution, the **Kovind committee** has proposed amendments to
- ❑ **Article 83**, which governs the term of the Lok Sabha, and
- ❑ **Article 172**, which covers the tenure of state assemblies
- ❑ The committee suggested a one-time transitory measure to synchronise all elections and proposed when Lok Sabha is constituted after the general elections, the President would by notification on the same date as that of the first sitting bring into force the provisions for transition.
- ❑ This date would be called the appointed date.

The Way Ahead

Niti Aayog refers to UK which enacted the **Fixed-term Parliaments Act, 2011**, mandating completion of a term of Parliament before general elections are held

Recommends dividing states and union territories into two groups for simultaneous polls

Says the term of 14 states in the first group commence in April-May 2019	For the remaining 17, it can be from Oct-Nov 2021
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Says fixed terms can be implemented by “suitable amendments in the Constitution and the applicable statutory framework”

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The infographic features a background illustration of a crowd with a large 'X' over a clock face, symbolizing the end of a term. A hand holding a dollar sign is also depicted.

One nation One election

Advantages

- ▶ **Conducting all elections concurrently would save significant resources spent on separate state and national elections.**
- ▶ **It would streamline the electoral calendar, eliminating frequent disruptions due to elections in different states.**

Disadvantages

- ▶ **Coordinating elections at various levels of government—national, state, and local—poses logistical and administrative challenges.**
- ▶ **Simultaneous polls could favor nationally dominant parties over regional ones, potentially undermining federalism.**
- ▶ **National issues could dominate over regional issues**

Fourth summit of Quad at Wilmington

In Wilmington, juxtaposing immediacy with legacy

After much anticipation, the leaders of the Quad (Australia, India, Japan and the United States) will convene for their fourth summit in Wilmington, Delaware, U.S., on September 21. This meeting marks a full circle since the first in-person Quad Leaders' Summit hosted by U.S. President Joe Biden in 2021, symbolising the steady evolution of this strategic partnership. The summit takes place against a backdrop of pressing global challenges and transitions in leadership among some member-nations, set on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and the United Nations Summit of the Future.

The meeting holds immediate significance, especially considering past postponements of Quad summits at the highest level. Both Mr. Biden and Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida are facing leadership transitions; Mr. Biden has announced that he will not seek re-election, and Mr. Kishida's Liberal Democratic Party is facing potential defeat in Japan. These impending changes underscore the urgency to consolidate the Quad's strategic direction and commitments before new leadership dynamics emerge.

India, originally slated to host this year's summit, graciously deferred to the U.S., and will now host the next meeting. This decision aligns with practical considerations for Mr. Biden, who, amid a busy election cycle, may have found it challenging to make another international visit following his recent trip to India for the G-20 summit.

Indo-Pacific integration

One of the primary goals of this summit will be to reinforce the Quad's framework on maritime domain awareness (MDA), which has become increasingly critical in linking regional security, supply chains, infrastructure, and technology initiatives. During their last meeting in July 2024 in Tokyo, the Quad Foreign Ministers announced the expansion of the Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA) to the Indian Ocean region, reflecting a strategic effort



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The fourth Quad Leaders' Summit will be an opportunity to assess its progress in ensuring a peaceful and stable Indo-Pacific

to integrate this vast expanse into the broader Indo-Pacific narrative. This initiative aims to standardise regional laws and enhance accountability for violations of international maritime norms, thus promoting a rules-based order further.

The July meeting also highlighted the importance of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) as the foundation for freedom of navigation and operational abilities of nations. With this in mind, the Wilmington summit is expected to further explore the potential launch of the Quad Maritime Legal Dialogue under the Quad Maritime Security Working Group which seeks to consolidate expertise in international maritime law, providing robust legal frameworks that could serve not only the Quad nations but also other countries in the region.

A key focus will be the operationalisation of the South Asia programme through the Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) based in India. This step signals India's expanding role in the MDA and its commitment to maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific by facilitating real-time information sharing with like-minded partners. The IFC-IOR, which currently hosts 12 International Liaison Officers, represents a growing coalition of nations dedicated to upholding freedom of navigation and a rules-based maritime order.

Tracking progress, looking to opportunities

The Quad's expansive agenda, spread across 16 working groups, reflects its ambition to address a wide array of critical issues that include climate change, critical and emerging technologies, infrastructure and connectivity, health, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, maritime security, and counterterrorism. The Wilmington summit presents an opportunity for the leaders to assess progress on these fronts and commit to new initiatives. Among the key developments on the agenda will be reviewing the implementation of the Open-Radius Access Network (RAN)

network in Palau, the deployment of a space-based climate warning system in Mauritius, the advancement of off-grid solar projects in the Indo-Pacific islands, and the outcomes of the inaugural Quad science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) cohort.

The Quad is evolving rapidly as a benchmark framework for ensuring a peaceful and stable Indo-Pacific, particularly in light of the shifting geopolitical landscape. As regional supply chains and infrastructure networks adapt, the Quad senses an opportunity to play a crucial role in regional security. This is especially pertinent as threats from hostile actors across the Indo-Pacific have increased amid ongoing conflicts in West Asia, the Russia-Ukraine war, and a fracturing world order. China's assertive behaviour, often outside accepted international norms, has compounded the region's security challenges, highlighting the need for a unified and proactive Quad response. Besides, the reconfiguration of global supply chains away from China has underscored the imperative of regional economic resilience and de-risking strategies. For the Quad, this shifting dynamic presents a unique opportunity for regional economic growth while simultaneously enhancing security through diversified and resilient supply chains.

The outlook

The Quad summit in Wilmington also serves as a prelude to the Inaugural Summit of the Future, which aims to reshape global governance by addressing critical issues such as sustainable development, international peace and security, technological innovation, and the welfare of future generations. In many respects, the Quad already acts as a regional microcosm of these broader global aspirations, championing cooperation and stability in the Indo-Pacific.

As the Quad continues to mature, this summit could be a pivotal moment to assess its progress stacked against global aspirational metrics on similar issues, perhaps allowing the Quad to lay the groundwork for future initiatives.

- ❑ The leaders of the **Quad (Australia, India, Japan, and the United States)** are convening for their fourth summit in Wilmington, Delaware.
- ❑ This summit occurs against pressing global challenges and significant leadership transitions in member countries, aiming to consolidate the **Quad's strategic direction** before these changes take effect.

Leadership Dynamics

- ❑ India originally scheduled to host this year's summit deferred to the U.S. for practical reasons, allowing for a smoother engagement amid Biden's busy election cycle following his recent G-20 attendance.
- ❑ The summit is set against the **United Nations General Assembly backdrop**, emphasizing its importance in **shaping international responses to contemporary global issues**.
- ❑ The summit is pivotal as it responds to increasing **threats in the Indo-Pacific, including China's assertive behavior** and ongoing conflicts, emphasizing the Quad's role in regional stability and economic resilience

What Is The Quad?

The Quad, officially the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD), is not a formal alliance. It is an informal strategic forum comprising four maritime democracies:

India, Japan, Australia and the United States



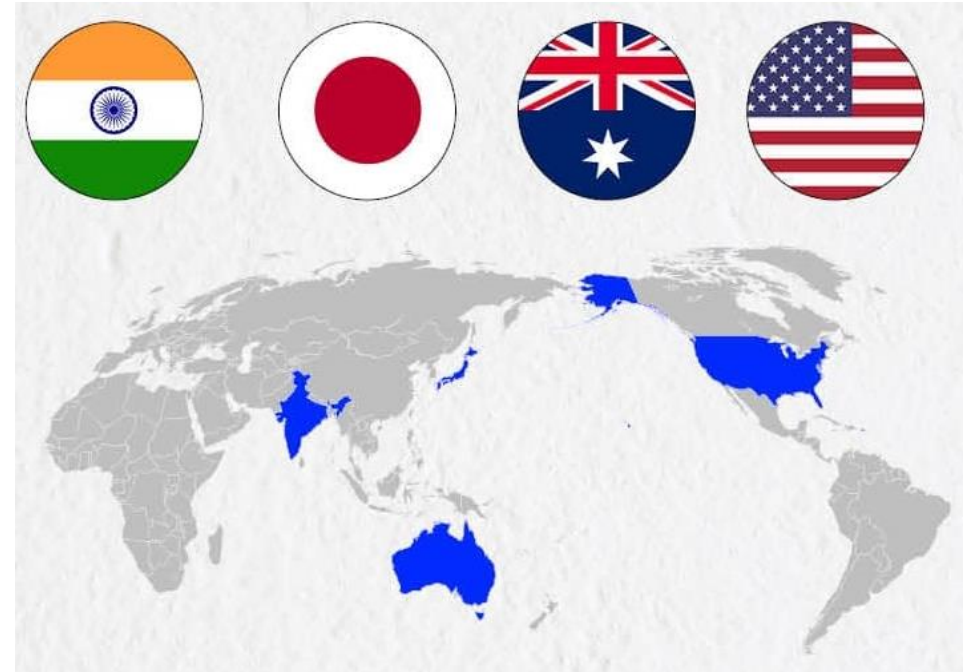
PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

Maritime security, addressing climate change, combating Covid-19 pandemic, among others.

The Quad is also seen as an attempt to counter the growing might of China

Strategic Focus Areas

- ❑ One key agenda is reinforcing the **Quad's framework on MDA**, crucial for regional security, supply chains, and technology initiatives, following the July 2024 expansion to the Indian Ocean.
- ❑ The summit will explore launching the **Quad Maritime Legal Dialogue** under the **Quad Maritime Security Working Group**, aiming to consolidate expertise in international maritime law for the benefit of member states and the broader region.
- ❑ Operationalizing the South Asia programme through **India's Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR)** is expected to enhance real-time information sharing among Quad partners, promoting a free and open Indo-Pacific.



Cabinet approves Bharat Antariksh station

Chandrayaan-4, Venus orbiter get approval from Union Cabinet

Gaganyaan expansion project also gets nod; next lunar project plans to bring moon rocks to earth; space docking experiment later this year

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

In a boost to the space programme, the Union government on Wednesday approved the Chandrayaan-4 mission to bring moon rocks to earth, send a spacecraft to orbit Venus and expand the Gaganyaan project to build an Indian space station.

The Cabinet, at a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, also approved a proposal of the Department of Space to build a next-generation launch vehicle capable of placing heavier payload in orbits, which could also be key to achieving the targets of setting up a space station and landing an Indian astronaut on the moon.

"Great news for the space sector! The Union Cabinet has approved the first step towards the Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS), expanding the Gaganyaan programme," Mr. Modi said in a post on X. "This landmark decision brings us closer to a self-sustained space station by



Cutting edge: A model of the Gaganyaan crew module at the Bengaluru Space Expo 2024 on Wednesday. K. MURALI KUMAR

2035 and a crewed lunar mission by 2040," he said. Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the government had allocated ₹2,104 crore for the Chandrayaan-4 mission.

"A natural successor to Chandrayaan-3 is the demonstration of the ability to collect lunar samples and return them safely back to earth," ISRO Chairman S. Somanath said. Chandrayaan-4 will involve multiple launches, and the premier space agency is set to perform a space docking

experiment later this year to develop its capabilities for the challenging endeavour.

The Cabinet approved ₹1,236 crore for the Venus Orbiter Mission, which is expected to be launched in March 2028. This will be India's second interplanetary mission after the Mars Orbiter Mission, launched on November 5, 2013. The Cabinet also gave its nod to an additional funding of ₹11,170 crore to the Gaganyaan programme, which already has a sanctioned budget of ₹9,023 crore.

- ❑ The Union Cabinet has approved the development of the first module of the **Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS-1)** by expanding the scope of the **Gaganyaan programme**.
- ❑ This decision marks a crucial step towards establishing **India's own space station by 2035** and paves the way for a **crewed lunar mission by 2040**.

- ❑ The **Gaganyaan Programme was approved in 2018**. It envisages undertaking the human spaceflight to **Low Earth Orbit (LEO)** and to lay the foundation of technologies needed for an Indian human space exploration programme in the long run.
- ❑ The **revised Gaganyaan programme** now encompasses eight missions to be completed by December 2028, including the launch of the **BAS-1 unit**.
- ❑ This expansion involves **additional uncrewed missions** and hardware requirements to support the ongoing human spaceflight initiatives.
- ❑ The total funding for the Gaganyaan programme has been increased to Rs 20,193 crore, with an additional allocation of Rs 11,170 crore to accommodate the expanded scope.
- ❑ The programme aims to develop and demonstrate critical technologies for long-duration human space missions, with four missions under the ongoing **Gaganyaan programme scheduled by 2026**, followed by the development of the BAS-1 module and four additional missions for technology demonstration and validation by 2028.

Significance of Bharatiya Antariksh Station

- ❑ **The Bharatiya Antariksh Station** is expected to boost microgravity-based scientific research and technology development, fostering innovations in key areas.
- ❑ This initiative is also anticipated to **generate increased employment opportunities** in high-technology sectors related to space and allied industries.
- ❑ Beyond its technological and scientific objectives, the expanded programme aims to inspire India's youth to pursue careers in science and technology, offering unique opportunities in microgravity research and development.
- ❑ The resulting innovations and technological spin-offs are expected to benefit society at large, positioning India as a leading nation in space exploration and research.
- ❑ The Cabinet also approved the **Chandrayaan-4 mission** to Moon and the Venus Orbiter Moon to Earth's mysterious twin.

Cabinet approves PM- AASHA Scheme

PM-AASHA schemes to continue with additions: Centre

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the continuation of schemes of the Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan (PM-AASHA).

The Centre said the schemes under PM-AASHA will ensure remunerative prices to farmers and control price volatility of essential commodities to benefit consumers.

The Cabinet also fixed the Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) rates for the upcoming rabi season on phosphatic and potassic (P and K) fertilisers. The tentative budgetary requirement for this will be ₹24,475.53 crore.

The total financial outgo for PM-AASHA will be ₹35,000 crore during the 15th Finance Commission cycle up to 2025-26. The Centre has converged the Price Support Scheme (PSS) and Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF) schemes in PM-AASHA.

"PM-AASHA will now have the components of PSS, PSF and the Price Deficit Payment Scheme (PDPS) and Market Intervention Scheme (MIS)," the Centre said.

It said the extension of the PSF scheme will help in



The schemes under PM-AASHA will ensure remunerative prices to farmers, the Centre said.

protecting consumers from extreme volatility in prices of agri-horticultural commodities by maintaining strategic buffer stock of pulses and onion for calibrated release. It will also discourage hoarding and unscrupulous speculation, and ensure supplies to consumers at affordable prices.

Subsidy for fertilizers

On the fertilizer subsidy, the Centre said it will ensure availability of fertilizers to farmers at subsidised, affordable and reasonable prices. It added that the rationalisation of subsidy on P and K fertilisers is taken in view of the recent trends in the international prices of fertilizers and inputs.

- The Union Cabinet approved the continuation of the **Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan (PM-AASHA) scheme**, allocating Rs. 35,000 crore for the **15th Finance Commission Cycle**, extending until 2025-26.



What is PM-AASHA?

- ❑ Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan' (PM-AASHA) is an **umbrella scheme** to ensure **Minimum Support Price (MSP)** to farmers.
- ❑ It comprises the erstwhile **Price Support Scheme (PSS)** with certain modifications and rolling out of new schemes of **Price Deficiency Payment Scheme (PDPS)** and pilot of **Private Procurement and Stockist Scheme (PPSS)**.

Govt launches Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan (PM-AASHA)

Unprecedented steps to protect & augment farmers' income



Price Support Scheme (PSS):

Physical procurement of pulses, oilseeds and copra to be done by Central Nodal Agencies along with state govts. Central Govt to bear procurement expenditure & losses due to procurement up to 25% of production.

Price Deficiency Payment Scheme (PDPS):

Will cover all oilseeds for which MSP is notified. Farmers will get direct payment of the difference between the MSP and the selling price.

Pilot of Private Procurement & Stockist Scheme (PPSS):

Participation of private sector in procurement operation to be piloted. For oilseeds, states have the option to roll out the scheme on pilot basis in selected district/ APMC(s) involving private stockist.

Q)Mangroves hold crucial resources that can help protect the rich and diverse biosphere. Nature-based solutions offer a holistic and sustainable approach to protect mangroves in India. Analyse.

Walls to curb encroachment of mangrove land in city

NDHA LIM TRIPATHI
MUMBAI, NOV. 24

In order to curb encroachments on mangrove land, the state mangrove cell has come up with a way to restrict movement on these lands. The cell will float orders by the first week of December and aims to first build compound walls in vulnerable areas for which it will spend nearly 20 crore.

Areas more vulnerable to encroachment including Colaba, Chembur, Malabar and Trombay will be considered first for construction of compound wall. Mumbai has a total of 9.1 per cent mangroves. Three thousand and five hundred encroachments have already been demolished and around five hundred encroachments are yet to be looked into.

The state mangrove cell by the second week of December will remove about 1,000 houses for encroaching

mangrove areas in the city. Nearly 4,000 such houses have been identified by the cell.

M. Vasudevan, chief conservator of forests KCCFL, state mangrove cell, told The Indian Age, "The idea is build a compound wall to create a clear demarcation of land so that people are restricted from encroaching upon the land again. We will also be installing closed circuit cameras on the wall for monitoring movement and will take necessary action against

encroachers."

The cell aims to finish construction of these walls in vulnerable areas in the coming year. The estimated cost of building compound walls in these areas is around 25 to 6 crore. However, according to sources, the total project cost will be higher in coming years.

"Orders for this will be issued by the first week of December after which, we aim to begin construction of walls in a month or two," Mr. Vasudevan added.



The cell aims to construct the walls in the coming year

Approach

- ❑ Introduce state of mangrove forest in India.
- ❑ Discuss ecological services provided by Mangroves.
- ❑ Discuss threats to mangrove forests both natural and anthropogenic.
- ❑ Conclude the answer by writing a way forward

Mangroves are the characteristic littoral plant formation of tropical and subtropical sheltered coastlines. They exhibit remarkable capacity for salt water tolerance, strong wind velocity, varying tides and high temperature. E.g.: Rhizophora, Avicenia, Bruguiera etc. Total cover of Mangroves in India is about 4,975 sq km as per latest State of Forest Report 2019.

Ecological Services provided by Mangroves:


- Mangroves enhance natural recycling of nutrients.
- Mangrove supports numerous flora, avifauna and wild life.
- Provide a safe and favourable environment for breeding, spawning, rearing of several fishes.
- They supply woods, fire wood, medicinal plants and edible plants to local people.
- They provide numerous employment opportunities to local communities and augments their livelihood.

Natural forces due to climate change:

- ❑ Sea-level rise results in Mangrove systems do not keep pace with changing sea-level and fall .
- ❑ Extreme high-water events affect the position and health including through altered sediment elevation and sulphide soil toxicity .
- ❑ Storms can increase damage to mangroves through defoliation and tree mortality and they collapse.
- ❑ Precipitation or decreased rainfall and increased evaporation will increase salinity, decreasing net primary productivity, growth

Anthropogenic activities:

- ❑ Mangroves are being destroyed and facing severe threats due to urbanization, industrialization, and discharge of domestic sewage, industrial effluents and pesticides.
- ❑ Saltpans and aquaculture also pose major threat to the mangroves.
- ❑ 40% of mangrove forests in West Coast of India have been converted into farmlands and housing colonies over the last three decades.

- 
- ❑ Nationwide mapping of the mangrove areas, by remote sensing techniques coupled with land surveys, and time series to assess the rate of degradation of the ecosystems.
 - ❑ Quantitative surveys of area, climatic regime, rate of growth of forest trees and seasonal variations of environmental parameters.
 - ❑ Inclusion of mangrove species under threat in the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) Red list. *Sonneratia griffithii* in India
 - ❑ Assessment of suitable sites for reserve forests. : Artificial regeneration through mangrove nurseries or aerial seeding.
 - ❑ Joint management of mangroves with local community participation.



Thank you

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