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GENERAL STUDIES-1



Cauvery River Waters: Seeking Clarity in Distress-Sharing Formula

Context:

Due to the lack of sufficient Southwest Monsoon Rain this year, the catchment areas of the Cauvery River in Karnataka and Kerala have taken a hit. The reinforcing of the Distress–Sharing Formula by the Supreme Court is the need of the hour.

Background:

- Tamil Nadu had urged the Supreme Court to direct measures on Karnataka for releasing 24,000 cubic feet per second (cusecs) from its reservoirs.
- Karnataka refused by citing poor inflow of water due to reduced rainfall in the catchment areas of Kodagu (Origin point) where it had seen a 44% rainfall deficit from June to August.

Relevance:

GS-02, GS-01- (Water Resources, Inter-State Relations, Dispute Redressal Mechanisms, Tribunals, Co-operative Federalism)

Prelims:

Cauvery and its tributary Arkavati, Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal, Central Water Commission(CWC)



Mains Question:

Discuss the challenges and recent developments in the Cauvery River water dispute between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, and analyze the potential solutions related to the distress-sharing formula. (10 marks)

Dimensions of the Article:

- Historical Context
- Previous Attempts at Distress-Sharing
- Current Standoff and Disagreements
- Role of CWMA and Need for Transparency

Historical Context:

The historical context of the Cauvery River water dispute between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka is crucial to understanding the ongoing issues. This decades-long conflict stems from differences in water-sharing agreements and has seen multiple attempts at resolution, including the involvement of judicial bodies like the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal in 1991.

Previous Attempts at Distress-Sharing:

The article mentions a significant episode in 2002-03 when a distress-sharing formula was explored due to the scarcity of monsoon rains over three years. This situation severely affected water reservoirs in Karnataka, primarily the Krishnaraja Sagar (KRS), Kabini, Hemavathy, and Harangi reservoirs. Tamil Nadu, the lower riparian state, also faced water shortages in its Mettur dam. This historical context underscores the recurrent nature of water-related distress in the region.

Current Standoff and Disagreements:

The current standoff between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka revolves around the idea of a distress-sharing formula. Tamil Nadu proposes considering the deficit in inflows to Karnataka's reservoirs compared to the average flows over the last 30 years. It also accounts for the rainfall pattern in different catchment areas of the Cauvery River.

In contrast, Karnataka contends that the overall distress situation cannot be accurately determined until the end of January. It insists on incorporating the outcome of the northeast monsoon (October-December) along with that of the southwest monsoon (June-September) in the calculations. Karnataka, as an upper riparian state heavily reliant on the southwest monsoon for various needs, emphasizes the importance of addressing its water requirements for the upcoming months.

The Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) comes into play, attempting to address these disagreements. However, its approach has not fully satisfied either Tamil Nadu or Karnataka. While it directed Karnataka to release a certain volume of water during specific periods, concerns and disputes persist.

Role of CWMA and Need for Transparency:

This authority, established in June 2018, comprises officials and technical experts tasked with addressing water-related issues rationally and objectively. However, it has not yet made substantial progress in finding a resolution.

To enhance transparency and build trust, the article suggests that the CWMA should publish the proceedings of its meetings on a public website. This transparency would help dispel misconceptions and provide clarity on the matter, considering that the Cauvery River has historically been a subject of emotional and political contention.

Conclusion:

It is imperative to find a distress-sharing formula at the earliest to resolve the dispute between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. However, a cooperative approach is more than just the need of the hour for such a longstanding dispute.

The Census: People count

Context:

The Census is more than just a headcount; it's the foundation for planning and development. India has conducted this critical population assessment every decade since 1881. However, the 2020 Census, meant for 2021, was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the pandemic's restrictions have lifted, the BJP government at the Centre has yet to provide political clearance for the Census, causing concerns about political motives. Home Minister Amit Shah, recently, stated that the Census would happen after the 2024 general election but left the specific date or year uncertain, leading to speculation. This delay may be linked to the contentious issue of caste enumeration, which the BJP is seeking to avoid. Furthermore, the 2026 Census will lay the groundwork for the next delimitation of Lok Sabha seats, potentially providing incentives for the BJP to postpone it further. Recent changes to the Citizenship Act and disputes between some states and the Centre over the National Population Register (NPR) have further complicated the Census discussions.

Relevance:

GS-02, GS-01 (Population and Associated Issues, Government Policies & Interventions)

Mains Question:

Examine the significance of the Census in India and the potential consequences of delaying it for political reasons. (150 words)

Dimensions of the Article:

- Caste Enumeration and Political Implications
- Digital Transformation and Self-Enumeration
- Technological Advancements and Data Integration
- Ensuring Transparency and Collaboration

Caste Enumeration and Political Implications:

One potential reason for the Centre's eagerness to delay the Census until 2024 is the contentious issue of caste enumeration. The BJP government may be seeking to evade this issue, which could have significant political consequences.

A Census after 2026 will serve as the basis for the next delimitation of Lok Sabha seats, involving the redistribution of representation among states.

Digital Transformation and Self-Enumeration:

The upcoming Census is set to be the first digital census, allowing citizens to "self-enumerate." During self-enumeration, individuals will be required to provide their Aadhaar or mobile number.

Approximately 30 lakh government officials and schoolteachers will serve as enumerators, responsible for collecting data from an estimated population of over 140 crore.

The process approximately takes least as 11 months, but advancements in technology are changing the quality and mechanism of population data collection.

Technological Advancements and Data Integration:

The advancements in the technological areas have enabled a centralized population register that integrates data from various sources like Aadhaar, ration cards, passports, and driving licenses.

The Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Act, 2023, will give real-time updates to the centrally stored data, eliminating the need for a human interface which will streamline processes such as adding individuals to the electoral roll when they turn 18 and also removing them after their death.

Way Forward:

- Ensuring Transparency and Collaboration
- The government should foster collaboration with states and political parties to address the various issues surrounding the Census.
- Open dialogue alongside being transparent is essential to ensure that this critical exercise serves its intended purpose without unnecessary delays or controversy.



With climate change, tackling new disease scenarios

Context:

The latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), released in March, carries a dire message: climate change is significantly elevating the global risk of infectious diseases.

Background:

The intricate connection between climate and disease becomes more evident with each passing year. For example, mosquito-borne diseases no longer follow their expected seasonal patterns, and conditions like dengue now exhibit multiple peaks throughout the year. Variations in temperature, rainfall, and humidity disrupt the usual patterns of disease transmission, affecting the distribution of disease-carrying vectors and their animal hosts. Furthermore, heat has been shown to alter the genetic structure of pathogens, influencing their infectivity and virulence.

Relevance:

GS-02, GS-01 (Health, Climate change, Physical geography)

Prelims:

- IPCC
- Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)
- Non-communicable diseases

Mains Question:

Discuss the impact of climate change on the prevalence and transmission of infectious diseases, highlighting the vulnerabilities and challenges it poses to public health systems. (250 words)

Dimensions of the Article:

- Climate Change and Disease Dynamics
- Habitat Loss and Human-Animal Interaction
- Expanding Spectrum of Infectious Agents
- Ecosystem Disruptions
- India's Vulnerability
- Surveillance and Reporting

Climate Change and Disease Dynamics

The intricate relationship between climate and infectious diseases is increasingly evident. The disruption of expected disease patterns, such as the altered periodicity of mosquito-borne diseases, highlights the influence of climate variables like temperature, precipitation, and humidity.

These factors not only affect disease transmission but also impact the distribution of disease vectors and their animal reservoirs.



Habitat Loss and Human-Animal Interaction

Habitat loss forces disease-carrying animals into closer proximity to human habitats, raising the risk of human-animal interaction and the transfer of pathogens from wildlife to humans.

This phenomenon is exemplified by the Nipah virus outbreaks in Kerala. The transfer of viruses from animals to humans, even those that are harmless to animals, can lead to fatal consequences for humans.

Expanding Spectrum of Infectious Agents

The changing climate has broadened the spectrum of infectious agents threatening human populations. More than half of all known infectious diseases that affect humans worsen as climate patterns change.

Diseases are finding new transmission routes, including through environmental sources, medical tourism, and previously reliable food and water sources.

Ecosystem Disruptions

Climate change is not only affecting infectious diseases but also transforming ecosystems.

The introduction of invasive species and the expansion of existing life forms disrupt complex ecosystems, confounding the ability of ecologists and epidemiologists to predict disease outbreaks.

India's Vulnerability

India is particularly vulnerable to the impact of climate change on health. Early summers and erratic monsoons have led to water scarcity across regions like the Gangetic Plains and Kerala.

These climatic shifts have contributed to severe health crises, including dengue epidemics in Dhaka and Kolkata, as well as the Nipah outbreak in Kerala.

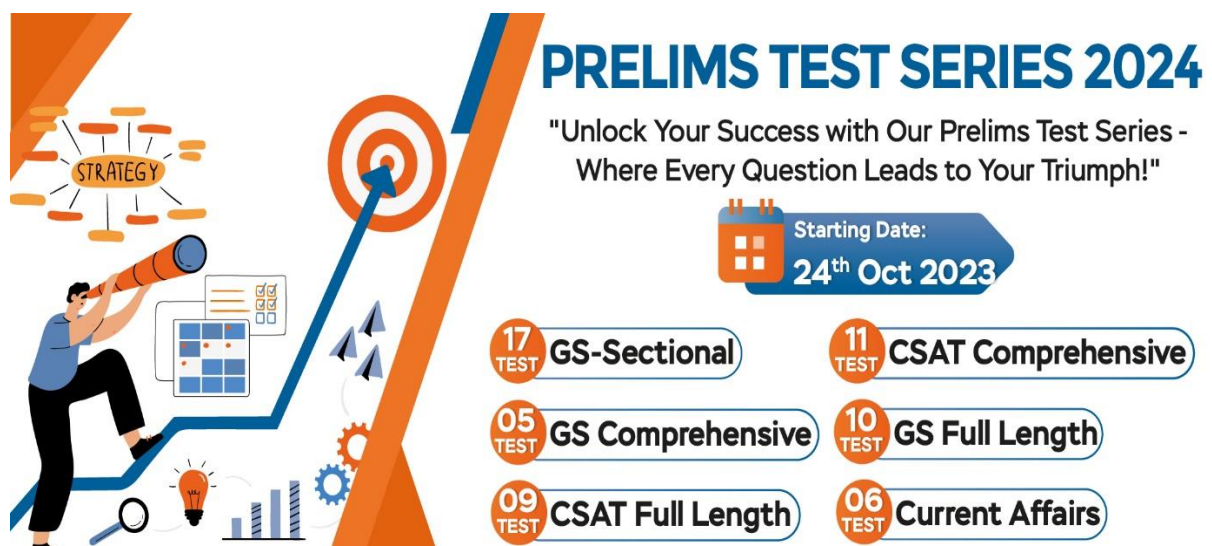
Surveillance and Reporting

Detecting and responding to changing disease scenarios require an overhaul of surveillance and reporting strategies. While India has made progress in reporting outbreaks over the past two decades, the existing surveillance systems are not equipped to handle emerging disease challenges.

The Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) and the Integrated Health Information Platform (IHIP) have been introduced to improve disease monitoring but have not fully met expectations.

Way Forward:

- **One Health Approach:** This integrates the monitoring of human, animal, plant, and environmental health, recognizing the interconnectedness of these elements. It encompasses the management of zoonotic diseases, neglected tropical diseases, vector-borne diseases, antimicrobial resistance, and environmental contamination.
- **Synergy Among Government Departments:** India needs to establish greater synergy among various government departments, including animal husbandry, forest and wildlife, municipal corporations, and public health agencies. These entities must collaborate to build robust surveillance systems capable of responding to emerging disease threats.
- **Data Sharing and Coordination:** Building trust and confidence among government agencies is essential for effective disease control. Agencies must share data and establish clear lines of responsibility. Effective coordination and management, especially with the involvement of external funding agencies like the World Bank, are imperative



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A milestone in Hindu marriage reform in India

Context:

In a surprising turn of events, Illavarasan, a young resident of Tamil Nadu, found himself entangled in a legal conundrum regarding his Suyamariyathai marriage. This unique form of marriage, legitimized under the Hindu Marriage (Tamil Nadu Amendment) Act 1967, faced an unexpected challenge in the Madras High Court. This very court, back in 1953, had declared such marriages null and void due to their deviation from traditional Hindu marriage rituals.

Relevance:

GS – 01, GS – 02 (Social Empowerment, Judgements & Cases, Indian Society)

Prelims:

Special Marriage Act of 1954, UK's Marriage Act of 1949, Inheritance Rights, Muslim Marriage Act, of 1954, and Hindu Marriage Act of 1955.

Mains Question:

Examine the historical and legal evolution of Suyamariyathai marriages in Tamil Nadu, highlighting the complexities they face in the contemporary legal landscape. Discuss the role of legislative amendments and judicial interpretations in shaping the status of such marriages. (250 words)

Self-Respect Marriages:

Overview:

Self-respect marriage is a progressive movement originating in South Asia with the overarching goal of achieving a society where backward castes enjoy equal human rights and encouraging these marginalized communities to nurture self-esteem within a caste-based societal framework that historically relegated them to the lowest rung of the hierarchy.

Aim:

The primary objective of the Self-Respect Marriage movement is to dismantle the deeply entrenched practice of caste endogamy and empower individuals from marginalized castes to lead lives of dignity and respect.

Trailblazer:

Periyar E. V. Ramasamy emerged as the driving force behind this movement, particularly in the state of Tamil Nadu, where he vehemently opposed the prevailing Brahmanical norms and practices that perpetuated caste-based discrimination.

Commencement:

The movement was formally launched in 1925, and a significant milestone was achieved in 1928 with the first Self-Respect Marriage, solemnized by none other than Periyar himself.

Distinctive Features:

Periyar's vision for Self-Respect Marriages revolves around promoting inter-caste unions founded on principles of mutual respect and equality. These marriages defy entrenched patriarchal norms and notions of possession. Over time, individuals have turned to Self-Respect Marriages as a means to reclaim agency, fostering companionships rooted in dignity and egalitarianism.

The Hindu Marriage (Tamil Nadu Amendment) Act, 1967:

A pivotal moment in the evolution of Self-Respect Marriages occurred in 1968 when the Hindu Marriage (Tamil Nadu Amendment) Act was passed, introducing Section 7-A. This legal provision validated Self-Respect and secular marriages between two Hindus who meet the minimum age requirement for marriage. These marriages must also be registered following the law.

Distinct Ceremonial Characteristics:

Self-respectful marriages typically diverge from traditional Hindu wedding rituals. They are solemnized in the presence of friends, relatives, or other witnesses, often without the involvement of a priest. Unlike conventional ceremonies, they do not incorporate customary elements like a sacred fire (holy fire) or a mangal sutra.

Limitations:

Despite its noble intentions, the concept of reformed marriages through Self-Respect Marriages has encountered limitations. Its applicability remains confined to Hindu ceremonies, governed by the Hindu Marriage Act, and is legally recognized exclusively in the state of Tamil Nadu.

Dimensions of the Article:

- The Origin of Suyamariyathai Marriages
- The Denial of Conjugal Rights: Impact on Women
- The Self-Respect Movement: A Challenge to Brahmanical Norms
- Legislative Struggles
- A Legislative Victory: The Hindu Marriage (Tamil Nadu Amendment) Act 1967

The Origin of Suyamariyathai Marriages:

The Madras High Court in 1953, referencing Manusmriti, mandated that lawful Hindu marriages required a priest's solemnization and adherence to the Saptapadi ritual. Consequently, it stated that self-respect marriages, prevalent among professed Hindus, as invalid.

These marriages with the absence of traditional Hindu rites, were deemed incongruent with Hindu Law, making the children born from them illegitimate.

This historical context sets the stage for the legal complexities surrounding Suyamariyathai marriages.

The Denial of Conjugal Rights: Impact on Women:

The judiciary's stance on self-respect marriages had grave implications for individuals like Rajathi, who sought court intervention for restitution of conjugal rights after her self-respect marriage with Chelliah.

The district court, relying on the invalidity of her marriage under the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, denied her rights and criticized self-respectful marriages for allegedly depriving women of their conjugal rights.

These early interpretations reflected the judiciary's resistance to alternative non-Brahminic marriage practices, perpetuating a derogatory view of women in such unions.

The Self-Respect Movement: A Challenge to Brahmanical Norms

The self-respect movement's core contention was that traditional Hindu marriages, particularly Brahmanical ones, upheld caste hierarchy and patriarchal dominance.

It advocated for a dissoluble contract-based conjugal relationship, irrespective of religious customs. Moreover, in the backdrop of widespread bigamy among Hindu men, the movement called for the civil registration of all marriages and championed women's rights to dissolve marriages, remarry, and claim property rights.

This dimension highlights the ideological conflict between the self-respect movement and established norms.

Legislative Struggles:

The journey towards legal recognition of Suyamariyathai marriages was far from straightforward.

In 1944, during the drafting of the Hindu Code Bill, leaders and activists of the Self-Respect movement demanded comprehensive reforms to Hindu law, including recognition of non-religious marriages.

However, the Hindu Law Committee's report in 1947 did not address these demands. The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 granted legal status only to reformed marriages like Virasaiva, Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj, and Prarthana Samaj marriages, marginalizing self-respectful marriages.

Clause 7 of the Hindu Marriage Act 1955 accorded significance to Hindu rituals, recognizing only customary rites such as thali tying, disregarding non-ritualistic and anti-Purohit Hindu contractual weddings.

Parliament and the judiciary uniformly recommended registering self-respect marriages under the Special Marriage Act, of 1954, which inadvertently led to

couples relinquishing rights over ancestral property and departing from the Hindu joint family.

A Legislative Victory: The Hindu Marriage (Tamil Nadu Amendment) Act 1967

The Dravidian movement's protracted struggle culminated in the enactment of the Hindu Marriage (Tamil Nadu Amendment) Act 1967, which validated Suyamariyathai marriages under Hindu law.

This legislative milestone challenged prevailing Brahminic interpretations of Hindu marriage, aiming to provide legal rights to women and the means to seek divorce and redress in cases of bigamy. This amendment marked a critical shift in the perception of non-ritual, consensual inter-caste marriages.

Way Forward:

Despite the legal recognition of Suyamariyathai marriages, challenges persist. Recent instances, such as the Union Ministry's reluctance to recognize these marriages and certain judicial interpretations, reveal ongoing obstacles. To ensure the continued protection of the rights of individuals entering such marriages, a concerted effort is needed to raise awareness and address legal ambiguities.

Conclusion:

The journey of Suyamariyathai marriages in Tamil Nadu is a testament to the resilience of the self-respect movement and its pursuit of gender equality and social justice within the realm of marriage. While legislative amendments have marked significant progress, the struggle is far from over. A vigilant approach, both at the legislative and societal levels, is essential to ensure that these unique marriages continue to thrive and that individuals who choose this path are afforded the rights and recognition they deserve in the eyes of the law.

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Assam's unsung hero rediscovered on stage

Context

Malati Mem, a multilingual play based on the life and revolutionary fervour of Mangri Orang, an Adivasi with roots in central India, was presented on August 29 by the North East Regional Centre (NERC) of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA). Her nickname among her fellow plantation workers was Malati Mem; the second term is a shortened version of memsahib.

What do we know about Malati Mem?

- **Identity and background:**
 - Malati Mem was an Assamese tribal woman also known as Mungri.
 - During the colonial era, she toiled on tea plantations in the Darrang area of Assam.
- **Anti-Opium Campaign:**
 - Malati Mem gained notoriety for her involvement in anti-opium initiatives.
 - These campaigns were a part of the Swadeshi movement, during which Indians boycotted products created outside, such as opium and alcohol.



- **Participation in the Swadeshi Movement:**
 - She vigorously opposed the promotion and use of opium and foreign liquor on the tea plantations during the Swadeshi movement.
 - Her participation in these activities demonstrated how committed she was to the cause of Indian independence.
- **Martyrdom:**
 - Tragically, Malati Mem was killed in 1921 by colonial authorities during a confrontation.
- She perished while taking part in the non-cooperation movement, becoming a personification of the struggle against British colonial control.
- **Assam's first female martyr:**
 - Malati Mem has the honour of being acknowledged as the first Assamese woman martyr.

- This historical honour was bestowed upon her in recognition of her bravery and sacrifice in the struggle against British control.
- **Legacy:**
 - The narrative of Malati Mem serves as a reminder of the contributions of common people who were essential in India's struggle for independence.
 - People are still motivated by her memory, which also draws attention to the contributions made by several unsung heroes during this crucial era in India's history.
- **Historical Significance:**
 - Malati Mem's life and her role in the anti-opium campaigns reflect the broader anti-colonial sentiment among the tea plantation workers in Assam.
 - Despite being illiterate and marginalized, she and others actively participated in the Indian independence movement.
- **Recognition through Theatre:**
 - In recent times, Malati Mem's story gained renewed attention through a multilingual play titled "Malati Mem."
 - This play was directed by Pari Sarania and aimed to showcase the contributions of icons from the northeastern region on a national stage.

What do we know about the Anti Opium movement in Assam during the time of Independence?

The Assamese anti-opium movement was a part of the larger Swadeshi movement and the Indian independence fight against British colonial control. Opium, a narcotic drug that was being pushed and benefited from by the British colonial government, was the main focus of opposition to its production, sale, and consumption.

The following are the main facets of the anti-opium movement in Assam:

- **Colonial Opium Monopoly:** In India, opium production and distribution were monopolized by British colonial authority. Opium was a major source of income for the British Raj and was farmed and processed in some areas, notably parts of Assam.
- **Economic exploitation:** In Assam, tribal peoples and employees of tea plantations frequently participated in the cultivation of opium. These groups were exploited economically and coerced into growing opium for the British administration.
- **Health and Social Issues:** The push against opium was propelled by worries about the effects that opium use would have on one's health and social life. Opium addiction harms people's health, their families, and their communities, causing social breakdown.
- **Part of the Swadeshi Movement:** The Assamese anti-opium movement was intimately associated with the Swadeshi boycott of British goods and the promotion of items created in India. The movement worked to stop the manufacture and use of opium because it considered it a representation of British economic exploitation.

- **Local Leadership:** Local leaders and activists in Assam, including individuals like Malati Mem, were instrumental in guiding the movement against opium. Particularly well-known for her commitment to this cause was Malati Mem.
- **Protests and Resistance:** The anti-opium movement included a variety of protest and resistance tactics, such as petitions, rallies, and public awareness campaigns concerning the drug's negative consequences.
- **Martyrdom:** Some of the movement's activists suffered greatly as a result of their resistance. For instance, Malati Mem was martyred in 1921 while taking part in the movement of non-cooperation against opium and British control.
- **Impact and Outcome:** While the anti-opium movement in Assam did not eliminate opium production and consumption, it did raise awareness about the issue and contributed to the larger struggle for Indian independence. The movement drew attention to the exploitative economic policies of the British colonial administration.

Three Hoysala temples declared World Heritage Sites

Context

The Hoysala temples at Belur, Halebid, and Somanathapur in Karnataka were designated UNESCO World Heritage Sites on Monday. This decision will provide these locations with international prominence and the potential for an increase in tourism.

What are the World Heritage sites?

- World Heritage Sites are locations or structures that are regarded as having exceptional universal importance. They have been recognized as having cultural, historical, scientific, or other value by UNESCO. An international treaty protects these sites, which are spread across more than 160 nations.
- The Galápagos Islands served as the first World Heritage Site.
- These are the requirements for World Heritage Sites:
 - Significance on a cultural or natural level
 - Significance that goes beyond national boundaries
 - Importance for both current and future human generations
- The international community is united in a common mission to identify and safeguard the world's most outstanding natural and cultural heritage.

Which sites are the recent additions to the world heritage sites?

- The Hoysaleswara temple in Halebid and the Chennakeshava temple in Belur have been included on UNESCO's preliminary list since 2014.
- The Somanathapur Keshava temple was added to the tentative list in 2022, and the Indian government formally proposed all three for UNESCO World Heritage designation.

- Following that, they were included in the list of World Heritage Sites during the World Heritage Committee's 45th session.

What is the historical background behind the temples?

- Known for its distinctive temple design, the Hoysala dynasty dominated the Deccan region of India between the 10th and 14th centuries. The best examples of this unique architectural style are the temples at Belur, Halebid, and Somanathapur.
- From the 10th to the 14th century, South India, particularly Karnataka, was dominated by the Hoysala dynasty. Belur served as the dynasty's first capital before it was eventually shifted to Halebidu. Hoysala's were renowned for their bravery and power.
- The earliest Hoysala family record is from the year 950. Arekalla was the first chieftain, followed by Maruga and Nripa Kama I. Munda succeeded him and ruled from 1006 to 1026.
- The Hoysala held sway over the Kaveri (Cauvery) River basin and the southern Deccan. Dorasamudra, which is now Halebid, served as their capital.
- For almost 20 years, the Hoysala repelled an invasion by Muslims. King Ballal III of the Hoysala Empire was however assassinated by Delhi Sultanate soldiers at the Battle of Madurai in 1343 CE.
- The Hoysalas created a type of architecture known as Hoysala architecture.



What is the Architectural significance of the Temples?

- These Hoysala temples are renowned for their exquisite carvings and stunning architecture.

- They are constructed on elevated platforms and have a stellate layout. Because soapstone (chlorite schist) was used in the building, intricate carving was possible.
- The sculptures and horizontal friezes, many of which include the signatures of the artisans, are unheard of in Indian art history.

What are the specifications of the Hoysala architecture?

- The building style known as Hoysala architecture was created between the 11th and 14th centuries while the Hoysala Empire was mostly centred in southern Karnataka.
- Hoysala temples are sometimes referred to as hybrid or vesara because of their distinctive style, which appears to be a cross between the Dravida and Nagara styles.
- The Hoysala temples are composed of several shrines arranged in the shape of an intricately constructed star and centred around a central pillared hall.
- They are constructed from the comparatively soft stone known as soapstone.
- Their highly unusual star-like ground designs and an abundance of ornate carvings make them stand out from other medieval temples.

What are the benefits of adding the temples to the UNESCO World Heritage list?

- **Global acknowledgement and Prestige:** The UNESCO World Heritage designation is a symbol of prestige and global acknowledgement. It implies that not just for India but for the entire human race, the Hoysala temples are of exceptional cultural and historical worth. These sites' international reputation is improved by this designation.
- **Cultural Preservation:** When a site is designated as a World Heritage Site, preservation and protection measures are frequently stepped up. This may entail providing funds for conservation initiatives, tightening restrictions on construction around the sites, and raising public awareness of the need for their preservation.
- **Benefits to Tourism and the Economy:** UNESCO certification can result in a large rise in tourism. World Heritage Sites are more likely to attract tourists from across the world, which can help the local economy by increasing the number of tourism-related companies like hotels, restaurants, and handicraft shops.
- **Education and Awareness:** Important educational resources are World Heritage Sites. They stand for both historical significance and cultural diversity. To enhance awareness and knowledge of these places, both locally and globally, UNESCO frequently funds educational projects and activities.
- **Community Pride and Involvement:** The local people near World Heritage Sites frequently take great pleasure in their cultural heritage and are actively involved in it. Being a part of a World Heritage Site can increase locals' sense of ownership and accountability, which can motivate them to actively participate in the site's protection and marketing.

- **worldwide Cooperation:** To preserve World Heritage Sites, UNESCO promotes worldwide cooperation. This may entail cooperating with other nations who are struggling with comparable preservation issues by exchanging knowledge, technology, and best practices.

Maharashtra's ephemerals: plants that wait for the monsoon to bloom

Context

The springtime is frequently linked to blooming. Few individuals are aware, however, that in some regions of Maharashtra, some plant species wait all year to bloom only during the monsoon because they enjoy the rain.

What are ephemerals?

Ephemerals are short-lived plants that have one or more generations each year, according to botany. They only develop during favourable times, such as when there is enough rain, and survive adverse times as seeds.

Ephemerals consist of:

- **Spring ephemerals:** Quickly emerging perennial plants have a brief growth and reproduction phase before reverting to their underground portions in the fall. To take advantage of the available sunlight, these plants flower before deciduous trees begin to leaf out.
- **Desert Ephemerals:** Desert-dwelling plants only occasionally receive enough moisture for growth and flowering throughout the year. Ephemeral plants found in the desert include milkweed and poppies.

By the middle of the summer, ephemerals may be gone. Some survive as underground root networks, while others are truly ephemerals, with only seeds remaining until next spring.

What are the characteristics of the ephemerals that are found in Maharashtra?

Types of Monsoon Ephemerals: Annual and perennial ephemerals are the two different forms of monsoon ephemerals. Annual ephemerals have a brief lifespan and are grown from seeds every year, but perennials have underground support systems like tubers or bulbs that enable them to endure.

- **Blooming Period:** The end of May marks the beginning of the monsoon ephemerals' blooming season, which lasts through June, July, August, and September. Some plants develop leaves before they blossom.
- **Species Diversity:** The monsoon season brings forth a variety of flowering plants, including ground orchids, lilies, wild yam, Indian squill, and others. These plants serve as important sources of nectar and pollen for native pollinators.



What are the challenges faced by environmentalists to conserve these species?

- **Loss of Habitat:** The loss of habitat brought on by urbanization, agriculture, and infrastructure development is one of the biggest dangers to these species. The native habitats of these plants are being destroyed as cities grow and agricultural land is turned into housing and other human uses.
- **Land Use Changes:** Changes in land use, such as deforestation and the conversion of natural landscapes into urban or suburban areas, can harm the ecosystems that support these plants. There may be a loss of suitable habitats as a result of this change in land use.
- **Climate Change:** The timing and patterns of the monsoon rains can be impacted by climate change. The flowering and reproductive cycles of these plants can be disturbed if the monsoon season becomes unexpected or fluctuates in strength, which will make it more difficult for them to survive.
- **Invasive Species:** A fall in the populations of native species can result from invasive plant species outcompeting native monsoon ephemerals for resources. The content and organization of nearby ecosystems may change as a result of these invasive species.
- **Overharvesting:** Some people might gather these plants for a variety of uses, such as ornamentation or folk medicine. These species' populations may become depleted and in danger of extinction due to overharvesting.

- **Lack of Knowledge:** Conservation efforts may be hampered by a lack of knowledge about the significance of these plants and their place in the ecosystem. Gaining support for their protection requires public outreach and education.

How can we conserve these plants?

- **Protecting and restoring habitat:** Establish protected areas, reserves, or conservation easements to identify and save important habitats. Plant native plants, eradicate invasive species, and enhance soil and water quality to restore degraded environments.
- **Observation and Research:** To learn more about the ecology, range, and behaviour of these plants, conduct scientific research. Populations should be watched to gauge their health and monitor changes over time.
- **Education and Information:** Educate the public on the value of monsoon ephemeral plants to regional ecosystems. Conduct outreach initiatives and educational programs to include communities and advance conservation.

Conclusion

Overall, the article underscores the importance of these monsoon ephemerals in maintaining local ecosystems and the need for conservation efforts to protect them in the face of environmental changes and habitat destruction. It also highlights how such experiences can inspire individuals to develop a deeper appreciation for the natural world.

The team from Telangana visits Buddhist caves in Sri Lanka

Context

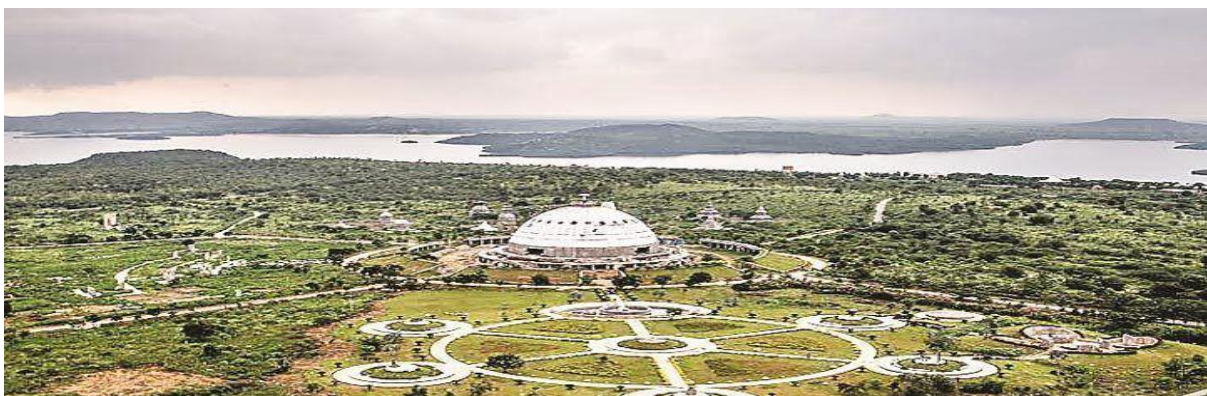
On Sunday, a Buddha Vanam team from Telangana toured the Buddhist rock-cut caverns at Mathale along the Colombo-Kandy highway in Sri Lanka. These caves date back to the third century BC.

What is the Buddhavanam Project?

The Telangana government has undertaken a large project called Buddhavanam, which is situated in Nagarjunasagar on the northern bank of the River Krishna. This project was started to encourage tourism in the state and has been given the go-ahead by the Indian government. It is part of a larger initiative to create a comprehensive Buddhist Circuit, which is meant to draw both domestic and foreign visitors, especially those from Southeast Asia.

What are the features of the Project?

- **Size and Purpose:** At a whopping 279 acres, Buddhavanam is a sizable Buddhist history theme park. Being among the biggest of its sort, it stands out.
- **Buddha's Life:** The main goal of Buddhavanam is to present many facets of the life of Gautama Buddha. The Entrance Plaza, Buddhacharitha Vanam (which depicts the life of Buddha), Jataka Park (which includes stories from the Jataka tales), Dhyana Vanam (a meditation area), Stupa Vanam (containing stupas), Maha Stupa, a large stupa, and an internal Buddhist Heritage Museum are some of the elements that are included in this.
- **Complex Carvings:** The drum and dome parts of the Mahastupa at Buddhavanam are decorated with complex carvings. In addition to having artistic value, these carvings provide tourists with a beautiful vista.
- **Historical Background:** Buddhavanam is close to Nagarjuna Sagar, a reservoir created by building a dam over the River Krishna. This region, formerly known as Nagarjuna Konda or Sriparvata-Vijayapuri, served as the Ikshvaku dynasty's capital city between the third and fourth century A.D.
- **Acharya Nagarjuna:** Nagarjunakonda is named in honour of the illustrious Madhyamika philosopher and Buddhist scholar, Acharya Nagarjuna. This area served as a hub for Mahayana Buddhism and was home to numerous Buddhist sects, monasteries, shrines, and stupas that were devoted to spreading the teachings of Buddhism.
- **Archaeological Findings:** Between 1954 and 1960, extensive excavations at Nagarjunakonda uncovered several noteworthy structures. A Maha Stupa, Votive Stupas, Chaityas, Silamandapas, and various Buddhist sculptures and artefacts were among the discoveries. A palatial complex and a few brick-built Brahmanical temples were also uncovered.
- **Preservation efforts:** Many of these old buildings were in danger of being submerged because of the Nagarjunasagar reservoir. As a result, several buildings—including the Maha Stupa and sculptures—were rebuilt on Nagarjunakonda Island and at Anupu, a ferry stop on the River Krishna's right bank.
- **Museum:** The holy relics of the Buddha are kept in the Island Museum on Nagarjunakonda Island, which also houses other found antiquities. Visitors can get an insight into the area's extensive Buddhist heritage by viewing these artefacts and relics on display.



What is the significance of the caves that the team visited in Sri Lanka?

The Buddhist rock-cut caves at Mathale on the Colombo-Kandy route, which the Telangana team visited in Sri Lanka, are thought to date back to the third century BC. They are significant historical and cultural sites for various reasons.

- **Historical Significance:** These caverns are important since it is thought that they are where Lord Buddha's teachings were initially recorded on palm leaves. An important development in the history of Buddhism was this occurrence, which signified the change from the oral to the written transmission of Buddhist teachings.
- **Early Buddhist Literature:** The Sutr, Vinaya, and Abhidhamma pikas, which make up the Tripitaka and are considered to be the primary texts of Buddhism, were recorded in the caves. The teachings and tenets of Buddhism were recorded in writing, enabling their transmission across generations and geographical boundaries.
- Acharya Buddhaghosha, a well-known Theravada Buddhist philosopher, is thought to have spent some time living in these caves and producing the influential Buddhist work Visuddhimagga. His presence here increases the caverns' historical and academic significance.
- **Cultural and Religious History:** These caverns have great spiritual value for Buddhists and are a part of Sri Lanka's cultural and religious history. They draw both local Buddhist devotees and travellers interested in Buddhism as they serve as locations for prayer, meditation, and pilgrimage.
- **Buddhist Connection:** The caverns offer proof of Sri Lanka's long-standing historical and cultural ties to Buddhism, which is an important part of the nation's identity and legacy. They highlight Sri Lanka's contribution to the preservation and spread of Buddhist teachings.
- **Value in terms of archaeology:** The rock-cut caverns and the artefacts retrieved from the neighbourhood shed light on Sri Lanka's ancient Buddhist civilization's contacts with India.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Buddhavanam is an amazing initiative by the Telangana government to honour and preserve the Buddhist legacy of the region, highlighting the life of Gautama Buddha and the historical importance of Nagarjunakonda. Visitors and tourists have a rare chance to discover and gain knowledge of the rich cultural and historical connections between Buddhism and this area.

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Tibetans are seeking more autonomy, not separation from China, says Dalai Lama

Context

The Dalai Lama claims that while Tibetans want more autonomy, they do not want political secession and that while he would like to return to Lhasa, he would rather stay in Dharamshala.

What is the historical background of the Tibetan issue?

- **Seventeen-Point Agreement :**
 - The Seventeen Point Agreement was signed by officials of the Tibetan Government and the People's Republic of China in 1951 on behalf of the 14th Dalai Lama.
 - The agreement recognised China's control over Tibet while providing Tibet with some autonomy in exchange for the protection of Tibetan culture and religious freedom.
- **Rejection of the Agreement:**
 - The Dalai Lama later declared that he had signed the Seventeen Point Agreement under duress and without the backing of the Tibetan people.
 - The relationship between the Tibetan Government and the Chinese authorities was strained by the Dalai Lama's rejection of the accord.
- **Worldwide Recognition Efforts:**
 - To assert Tibet's independence or win substantial autonomy, the Tibetan government worked to gain worldwide support for its cause.
 - However, the majority of countries now recognise Tibet as a part of China, making these efforts mostly ineffective.
- **Modernization and Military Conflict:**
 - To bolster its position, the Tibetan Government began modernization initiatives, including the modernization of its military.
 - When Chinese forces pushed into Tibet in October 1950, a military confrontation erupted in the western Kham region's Chamdo region.
 - The Tibetan army was defeated in the battle, and Chinese forces took control of the area.
- **Peaceful Liberation vs. Chinese Invasion :**
 - The Chinese government referred to their efforts in Tibet as the "Peaceful Liberation of Tibet," highlighting the historical ties between Tibet and China and presenting their actions as a method of reintegrating Tibet into China.
 - The Central Tibetan Administration and the Tibetan diaspora, on the other hand, frequently refer to the incidents as the "Chinese invasion of Tibet," considering China's activities to constitute an occupation and a suppression of Tibetan freedom.
- **Tibetan Rebellion and Exile:**

- In 1959, Tibetans protested the deterioration of their cultural and religious liberties by launching a broad rebellion against Chinese control in Tibet.
- Military repression was used as a response by the Chinese government.
- The Tibetan Government-in-Exile was founded in Dharamshala after the Dalai Lama and many other Tibetans fled into exile in India.
- The Chinese authorities disbanded the Tibetan authorities after the uprising and made measures that had a profound effect on Tibetan social structures and culture.



What is the recent development in the issue?

- **Dalai Lama's Position on Autonomy:** The Dalai Lama maintains that more autonomy inside the People's Republic of China is what Tibetans want, not political secession.
- **Conciliatory Statements Reiterated:** In a recent interview at his residence in Dharamshala, the Dalai Lama reiterated his conciliatory statements on the desire for autonomy. He underlines the need to support both Chinese and Tibetans within a single framework.
- **China's Past Rejections:** China Disapproves of Remarks As a result of the continuous conflict between the Tibetan leadership and the Chinese government, China has rejected the Dalai Lama's comments and continues to label him a "splittist" or separatist.

- **Contact from the Chinese Government:** The Dalai Lama shocked many when he revealed that he had been contacted "officially or unofficially" by the Chinese government. He stated that he was open to having discussions about the Tibetan issue.

What is the significance of the possible reunion between Dalai Lama and China?

- **Tibet's Autonomy and Cultural Preservation:** The Dalai Lama's return to Tibet may result in an accord that grants Tibetans more autonomy within the People's Republic of China. Tibet's autonomy and cultural preservation. This would be important for maintaining Tibetan religious rituals, culture, and language, all of which have been challenged by Chinese rule.
- **Reduction of Tensions:** Historically, one of the main points of contention between Tibetans and the Chinese government has been the exile of the Dalai Lama and his views on autonomy. A reconciliation might ease these tensions and promote a more tranquil society.
- **Human Rights and Political Freedoms:** The Dalai Lama's visit could be viewed as a chance to discuss concerns about political and religious freedom in Tibet as well as other human rights problems. It might spark conversations about political changes and more liberties for Tibetans.
- **International diplomacy:** If the Dalai Lama and China were to reunite, international diplomacy would probably be involved, possibly with the help of third parties as mediators. Wider diplomatic repercussions could result from this and could have an impact on China's relations with other nations, particularly those who have welcomed the Dalai Lama.
- **Stability in the Region:** China and its neighbours, including India, have clashed over the Tibet problem. A peaceful outcome could help to maintain peace in the area and lessen the likelihood of future crises involving Tibet.
- **Tibetan Diaspora:** The Dalai Lama significantly impacts the Tibetan diaspora. The future goals and aspirations of Tibetans living in Tibet and in exile may be influenced by his visit to the region.
- **Symbol of Religious and Cultural Unity:** The Dalai Lama is not only a political figure but also a well-known spiritual figure in Tibetan Buddhism. He is a symbol of religious and cultural unity. His return might represent harmony within the Tibetan Buddhist community and could have broader effects on Tibetan cultural and religious traditions.

How is this situation going to impact India?

- **China and diplomatic relations:** The Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government-in-exile, which is located in Dharamshala, have long been granted asylum by India. If there were to be reconciliation, it might have an impact on India's diplomatic ties with China, which have frequently been strained over the Tibet issue.
- **Border Conflicts:** Border disputes between China and India, particularly those that occur in the Himalayan region, have been connected to the Tibet

question. A resolution of the Tibet issue could potentially have implications for these border disputes and influence the dynamics along the India-China border.

- **Economic Relations:** Major trading partners India and China could be affected by any changes to diplomatic relationships. Economic factors influence how India responds to the crisis.
- **Community of Tibetan Refugees:** There is a sizable Tibetan refugee population in India, which has various villages and institutions. A resolution might have an impact on this community's present and future, possibly resulting in changes to its legal standing or support from the Indian government.

More women Odhuvars in T.N. temples

Context

These women come from different origins, but they all share the same ambition: to serve the gods by singing their adoration through pathigams as Odhuvars, or devotional singers, in Saivite temples.

Who are Odhuvars?

- Odhuvars are male singers who have traditionally performed religious hymns and songs at South Indian temples honouring deities like Shiva, Ganesha, and Muruga.
- Their main duty is to lead the main pujas or worship services in these temples with sacred chants.

Etymology of "Odhuvar":

- The name "Odhuvar" comes from the Tamil verb "odhu" or "othu," which denotes chanting or singing. It perfectly captures their function as chanters and singers of devotional hymns.

Content of Hymns:

- The Tirumurai, a set of twelve books containing hymns that extol the virtues of deities like Shiva, Parvati, Ganesh, and Muruga, is usually where the verses chanted by Odhuvars come from.
- The Tirumurai has great spiritual and cultural significance and is a fundamental component of the Saivite tradition in South India.
- Tirumurai compilation: Saint Nambiandar, who was instrumental in preserving and disseminating these religious manuscripts, compiled the Tirumurai.
- It is made up of hymns and songs that have been created over the years by numerous saints and followers.

Age-old gender roles:

- Historically, men have been the only ones to play the part of Odhuvar. The South Indian temple traditions were strongly embedded with this practice.
- Recent alterations: This custom has seen a noticeable transformation recently, with women now playing the position of Odhuvar in temples.
- In the context of temple ceremonies, this symbolizes a change in conventional gender norms.

What is the Tirumurai?

- Tirumurai is a Tamil word meaning "Holy Order" or "Sacred Collection." It is a compilation of devotional poetry and songs praising Lord Shiva.
- **Period and Authors:**
 - The Tirumurai is a collection of twelve volumes of songs and hymns from the period and authors.
 - These works were created between the sixth and the eleventh centuries CE.
 - This collection includes poetry from numerous different Tamil Nadu poets throughout several centuries.
- **Compilations by Nambiyandar Nambi:**
 - The first seven volumes, together referred to as Tevaram, were compiled by Nambiyandar Nambi in the 12th century CE.
 - Works by illustrious saints and poets like Appar, Sambandar, and Sundarar may be found in the Tevaram volumes.
- **Expansion of the Collection:**
 - As time went on, it became necessary to add more significant Shaiva literature to the collection.
 - Manickavasagar's compositions Tiruvasakam and Tirukovayar are included in the eighth volume.
 - There are numerous lesser-known compositions included in the ninth edition.
 - The legendary Siddhar Tirumular is credited with writing the tenth volume, Tirumandiram.
- **Contributions from a Variety of Authors:**
 - The eleventh book includes writing from authors like Cheraman Perumal and Karaikal Ammaiyar.
 - Nambiyandar Nambi's work was included in the eleventh Tirumurai because the Chola monarch of the period was moved by it.
- **Influence on the Shaiva Siddantha Philosophy:**
 - The Tirumurai, along with the Vedas and Shaiva agamas, form the core of Shaiva Siddhartha philosophy's canonical literature.
 - This way of thinking, which emphasizes devotion to Lord Shiva, is extensively practised in South India and Sri Lanka.

Eight institutes give an array of reasons for Joshimath's sinking

Context

Separate investigations into the causes of land subsidence in Joshimath, Uttarakhand, by eight eminent Indian institutions, identified seismic activity, construction flaws, population pressure, inadequate drainage systems, and other factors as the "likely" causes of the Himalayan town's sinking.

Where is Joshimath Located at?

- Joshimath is situated in the northern Indian state of Uttarakhand. It is a town located in the Garhwal area of the Indian Himalayas in the Chamoli district of Uttarakhand. Joshimath is a crucial trekking and pilgrimage centre in Uttarakhand, especially for people going to the surrounding holy temples of Badrinath and Hemkund Sahib.
- The town is renowned for its scenic beauty and for serving as a regional hub for adventure and religious tourism.
- It is one of the four cardinal mathematics or monasteries founded by Adi Shankara, the others being Joshimath near Badrinath in Uttarakhand, Dwarka in Gujarat, Puri in Odisha, and Sringeri in Karnataka.

What is the environmental issue faced by the place?

- Joshimath has been dealing with a serious environmental problem called land subsidence. The progressive sinking or settling of the Earth's surface is referred to as land subsidence, and it can have major repercussions for the stability and safety of the impacted area. Joshimath is sinking 6cm per year causing concerns among the people living there

What are the differences between Land Subsidence and Landslides?

- Landslides and land subsidence are two different geological processes.
- The gradual, frequently undetectable lowering or settling of the Earth's surface over time as a result of things like groundwater extraction or geological movements is known as land subsidence.
- Landslides, on the other hand, are sudden, erratic movements of rock, soil, or debris down slopes, frequently brought on by conditions like intense rainfall or seismic activity.
- Landslides are limited occurrences with material sliding over specified surfaces, whereas subsidence affects large areas and is characterized by a consistent downward movement.
- Infrastructure can slowly deteriorate due to subsidence, yet quickly suffer catastrophic destruction from landslides, putting people's lives and property in danger.



What are the factors that led to the Land Subsidence?

- **Geological Factors:** A region of the Indian Himalayas known for its geological instability is where the town is located. The location may be prone to subsidence due to the underlying geology, which includes the types of rocks and soil in the area.
- **Seismic Activity:** The Himalayan region is notorious for its seismic activity, and earthquakes can cause subsidence and ground movement. The risk is heightened by nearby tectonic activity and active fault lines.
- **Construction Practices:** Non-engineered construction practices have been listed in reports as one of the contributing elements. Joshimath has a large number of structures that do not adhere to building rules, and poor building practices can cause soil subsidence.
- **Population Pressure:** Over time, the town has seen both population increase and urbanization. The development of infrastructure to support the growing population may place further strain on the environment.
- **Poor Drainage:** Poor drainage can cause waterlogging and soil erosion, which may aggravate land subsidence.
- **Environmental Factors:** Subsidence can also be caused by environmental factors such as ice melting, precipitation infiltration, and wastewater discharge.

What are the means through which we can stop the Land Subsidence?

- **Better Engineering Practices:**
 - Make sure construction is carried out following the law by enforcing building codes and regulations.
 - Encourage the use of designed building techniques and materials to prevent subsidence.
- **Monitoring and Early Warning systems:**
 - Establish a thorough monitoring system that incorporates geological, hydrological, and seismic monitoring to identify concerns associated with subsidence.
 - Install early warning systems that can notify local government officials and citizens of probable subsidence incidents.
- **Planning and management of infrastructure:**
 - Create urban and infrastructure planning plans that take into account the local geology and environment.
 - To reduce the risk of subsidence, ensure good site selection for important infrastructure, such as dams and hydropower plants.
- **Improved Drainage Systems:**
 - To control surplus water, stop soil erosion, and lessen water infiltration into the ground, design and maintain efficient drainage systems.
 - Manage wastewater and stormwater properly to reduce their negative effects on the subsurface.
- **Environment protection**
 - As they can aid in soil stabilization and lower the risk of subsidence, preserve natural plants and ecosystems.
 - Put erosion control measures in place to safeguard susceptible regions.
- **Management of Water:**
 - To avoid over-extraction of groundwater, which can cause land subsidence, implement sustainable groundwater management techniques.
 - Reduce dependency on groundwater for agriculture and other uses and encourage the use of other water sources.

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Dadasaheb Phalke award for actor Waheeda Rehman

Context

The Dadasaheb Phalke Lifetime Achievement Award will be handed to renowned Bollywood actor Waheeda Rehman in 2021 in recognition of her outstanding contributions to Indian cinema, Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur announced on Tuesday.

Who is the Recipient of the Dadasaheb Phalke Award for the year 2023?

- **Honoré:** Waheeda Rehman, an actress who is 85 years old, will receive the Dadasaheb Phalke Lifetime Achievement Award.
- **Notable Movies:** Waheeda Rehman has won praise from critics for her performances in several Hindi movies, including "Pyaasa," "Kaagaz ke Phool," "Chaudhavi Ka Chand," "Saheb Biwi Aur Ghulam," "Guide," and "Khamoshi."
- **Profession Highlights:** With a career spanning more than five decades, Waheeda Rehman is renowned for playing her roles with utmost elegance. She won a national cinema honour for her performance as a clanswoman in the movie "Reshma aur Shera."

What is the Dadasaheb Phalke Lifetime Achievement Award?

The Dadasaheb Phalke Award is indeed India's highest honour in the field of cinema

- **Significance:** Dadasaheb Phalke Award recipients are announced each year during the National Film Awards event. It is regarded as the most esteemed honour in Indian cinema.
- **Organizer:** The Directorate of Film Festivals, a unit of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, is responsible for planning and giving out the prize.
- **Criteria:** Awards are given in recognition of the recipients' "outstanding contributions to the growth and development of Indian cinema." Eminent figures from the Indian cinema industry serve on the selection committee.
- **Components of the award:** The Dadasaheb Phalke Award comes with a shawl, a medallion called the Swarna Kamal (Golden Lotus), and a cash award of 1,000,000 rupees.
- **Inception:** The award was established in 1969 by the Indian government to honour Dadasaheb Phalke, a visionary director who made significant contributions to Indian cinema. The first full-length feature film made in India, "Raja Harishchandra" (1913), was directed by Dadasaheb Phalke, who is frequently referred to as "the father of Indian cinema."
- **First Recipient:** Actress Devika Rani earned the Dadasaheb Phalke Award for the first time at the 17th National Film Awards.
- Total awardees people have received awards overall as of 2022, with actress Asha Parekh receiving the 68th National Film Awards for the year 2020.

- **Posthumous Awardees:** Actors Prithviraj Kapoor (1971) and Vinod Khanna (2017) are the two honourees who received posthumous awards. The prize was accepted by Raj Kapoor, Prithviraj Kapoor's son on his behalf.

Conclusion

The Dadasaheb Phalke Award, which honours remarkable achievements in Indian cinema, is extremely prestigious in the Indian film industry.



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GENERAL STUDIES-2



China-India Relations: Mapping ties

Context:

Fresh turbulence has emerged, encompassing disputes over a new Chinese map and speculations about President Xi skipping the upcoming G-20 Summit in New Delhi.

Relevance:

GS_02 (India and its Neighbourhood, International Relations)

Prelims:

- Aksai Chin Region
- China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)
- Nine-Dash Line
- Line of Actual Control (LAC)

Mains Question:

Discuss the challenges and opportunities in India's relationship with China, considering the need for stability in the region. (150 words)



Dimensions of the Article:

- Recent Provocations
- Past Actions Fuelling Present Tensions
- The Role of Summit Meetings
- Rebuilding Trust Through Sensitivity
- A Road Ahead

Recent Provocations:

- China released a new map in August 2023, asserting territorial claims over Arunachal Pradesh, Aksai Chin, and the South China Sea.
- This move drew sharp criticism from India, as well as from Malaysia and the Philippines.

- While China argued that this was a routine update, the timing and implications were hard to overlook.

Past Actions Fuelling Present Tensions:

In 2019, India's new map after the re-organization of Jammu and Kashmir and the formation of Ladakh as a Union Territory triggered a strong response from China.

This move, like China's recent map, did not alter India's external borders concerning China. Nevertheless, it contributed to the deepening mistrust between the two nations.

Some analysts suggest that China's assertive actions along the Line of Actual Control, which sparked the ongoing crisis, were, in part, a reaction to India's reaffirmation of its claims to Aksai Chin in 2019.

The Role of Summit Meetings:

Historically, summit meetings between Chinese and Indian leaders have provided opportunities to ease tensions.

The 2017 BRICS Summit, following the Doklam standoff, showcased how high-level interventions could reduce friction between the nations. However, the prospects of such a reconciliation appear bleak at present.

Rebuilding Trust through Sensitivity:

The path to improving China-India relations necessitates a gradual process of rebuilding trust, anchored in increased mutual sensitivity.

China must exhibit the same sensitivity that it expects from its neighbours if it genuinely seeks to mend these strained relations.

Repairing the damage caused by recent provocations and previous escalations will require substantial effort and goodwill from both sides.

A Road Ahead:

To navigate these turbulent waters successfully, both nations should commit to open dialogue, and peaceful negotiations, and respect each other's territorial integrity.

The emphasis must be on pursuing regional stability and cooperation rather than stoking tensions.

Conclusion:

The recent clash over territorial claims and the ambivalence surrounding President Xi's participation in the G-20 Summit highlights the urgent need for diplomatic initiatives. Building trust through sensitivity, dialogue, and cooperation is the only sustainable way for these Asian giants to realize their shared potential and contribute positively to regional stability.

A progressive UCC must protect the child's best interests.

Context:

As discussions about the potential introduction of a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) by the government have surfaced, it's essential to broaden the scope beyond traditional topics like polygamy and divorce. The UCC should not limit itself to altering the rule that designates the father as the natural guardian; it must go further by unequivocally establishing the principle of the 'best interests of the child' in all custody disputes. It should also challenge the absolute rights of biological parents over adoptive parents.

Relevance:

GS-02 (Government Policies and Interventions)

Prelims:

- Fundamental Rights
- Law Commission
- Directive Principles of State Policy
- Uniform Civil Code

Mains Question:

Why is it crucial to have a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) for the nation and discuss the potential challenges and benefits of this approach? 150 words.

Dimensions of the Article:

- Custody Laws in India
- Different Approaches to Child Custody
- Complex Custody Issues
- Protecting Adoptive Parents' Rights

Custody Laws in India:



In India, laws governing child custody have evolved over the years, with considerations shifting towards the welfare of the child as the primary concern.

For instance, the Guardians and Wards Act of 1890 emphasizes the child's well-being when deciding custody matters.

However, the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act of 1956 still designates the father as the natural guardian, followed by the mother. In practice, the mother usually retains custody until the child reaches five years of age, provided she remains Hindu. But the phrase 'after him' doesn't necessarily mean 'after the father's lifetime'; instead, it implies 'in the father's absence.'

Different Approaches to Child Custody:

Islamic law approaches child custody differently. Here, the custody right belongs to the child, not the parents. The father ranks sixth in the hierarchy of potential custodians, following the mother, maternal grandmother, paternal grandmother, sister, maternal aunt, and paternal aunt.

In the Hanafi school, the mother retains custody until a son turns seven and a daughter reaches 17. In contrast, the Shafii and Hanbali schools grant custody to the mother until her daughter's marriage.

Under the Maliki school, the mother can have custody of a male child until he reaches puberty and a female child until her marriage, after which the child gains the right to choose.

Complex Custody Issues:

However, the complexities of child custody extend beyond disputes between biological parents. Two significant issues arise – the claims of biological parents after adoption and the rights of a biological father accused of rape.

Protecting Adoptive Parents' Rights:

A progressive UCC must not overly emphasize biological ties. It should prioritize the rights of adoptive parents, encouraging adoption.

Furthermore, it should not insist on the matrimonial bond between parents and should ideally provide for guardianship, even for single parents, surrogate parents, and LGBTQ+ parents.

Way Forward:

The way forward in child custody laws and a potential UCC is clear. The 'best interests of the child' principle should be at the forefront of all custody disputes, irrespective of biological connections. The law must protect adoptive parents' rights and discourage the involvement of an accused rapist father in custody matters, as it sets an alarming precedent.

Conclusion:

As the government contemplates the introduction of a UCC, it must address the complexities of child custody. By prioritizing the 'best interests of the child' principle and safeguarding the rights of adoptive parents, the UCC can ensure a fair and equitable approach to custody matters in India.

Jammu and Kashmir Statehood

Context:

The current scenario surrounding the restoration of Jammu and Kashmir's (J&K) statehood is marked by a lack of commitment from the Central Government regarding a specific timeline.

Relevance:

GS-02 (Government Policies and Interventions)

Prelims:

Article 370 and 35(A)

Mains Question:

Evaluate the implications of the delay in restoring the statehood of Jammu and Kashmir and the challenges related to the constitutional aspects of this transition. (150 words)

Dimensions of the Article:

- Historical Context and Constitutional Transition
- The Current Situation
- The Constitutional and Historical Considerations



Historical Context and Constitutional Transition:

The transformation of J&K's status by making Article 370 inoperative and extending the entire Indian Constitution to the region led to the division of the state into two Union Territories: Jammu and Kashmir, retaining a Legislative Assembly, and Ladakh, without an Assembly.

The government's inclination lies in conducting panchayat and municipal elections, in addition to polls for the Assembly.

Both the Election Commission of India and the State's Election Commission are at a juncture where a decision must be made, with the process of updating electoral rolls reported to be nearing completion.

The Current Situation:

The government contends that J&K is currently experiencing a degree of normalcy, characterized by marked reductions in terrorism, infiltration, and incidents of stone-throwing.

Given this claim, it becomes puzzling to comprehend any further delays in organizing elections. However, it's crucial to underline that the government's depiction of normalcy should not, and is unlikely to, influence the adjudication of constitutional issues stemming from how the special status was revoked.

Chief Justice of India, Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, astutely noted during the proceedings that the developmental efforts undertaken by the government post-August 2019 hold no relevance to the constitutional challenge.

The Constitutional and Historical Considerations:

The ongoing proceedings before a Constitution Bench, spanning 14 days, have been marked by rigorous scrutiny of the constitutional and historical factors that will ultimately determine the validity of the changes to the state's status and territorial organization.

Any positive changes brought about by the administration on the ground should serve as a compelling argument for the necessity of early elections and the restoration of both popular governance and statehood. These changes should not be misconstrued as a validation of the government's actions in 2019.

Way Forward:

The government must act with urgency in facilitating the reinstatement of J&K's statehood. The absence of statehood limits the region's capacity to have a say in its governance, hindering its ability to address its unique concerns and aspirations.

While constitutional matters are being meticulously examined, it remains essential to prioritize the return of popular rule through elections. The government's assertion of normalcy must translate into concrete steps for the region's socio-political advancement.

Conclusion:

The evolving ground situation necessitates swift action in the form of elections and the eventual reinstatement of statehood. Striking a balance between constitutional complexities and the democratic rights and aspirations of the people is imperative, ensuring that the journey towards restoring J&K's statehood is both equitable and timely.

Measuring hunger across states

Context:

The Global Hunger Index (GHI) for the year 2022 ranked India at 107 out of 121 countries, placing it behind Nigeria (103) and Pakistan (99).

Relevance:

GS-02 (Growth and Development, Health)

Mains Question:

Discuss how variations occur in undernourished levels among different Indian states and explain the potential of the sub-national data collections of the GHI for policy formulation and implementation. 250 words.

Dimensions of the article:

- Factors Contributing to Hunger and Malnutrition
- Hunger Across States and Union Territories
- Historical Context
- Challenges in Recent Years
- The Role of the GHI

Factors Contributing to Hunger and Malnutrition:

Disparities Among States: The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World report for 2022 tells that India has 224.3 million undernourished individuals and it is not evenly distributed in all states. Utilizing subnational data having the GHI dimensions gives a more localized hunger index for Indian states and union territories.

The State Hunger Index (SHI): Calculated using indicators such as the prevalence of calorie undernourishment, stunting, wasting, and mortality among children below the age of five, the SHI offers an insightful perspective. In place of Calory-specific counting, the SHI incorporates body mass index (BMI) undernourishment among the working-age population. The SHI scores range from 0 to 100, with higher scores indicating greater hunger. Scores below 10 indicate low hunger, 10-20 moderate, 20-30 serious, 30-40 alarming, and 50 or above extremely alarming.

Hunger Across States and Union Territories

Alarming Hunger in Certain States: States like Bihar, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh score alarmingly high on the SHI, with a score of 35. This categorizes them as 'alarming.' Notably, their performance aligns with nations in Africa, such as Haiti, Niger, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.

High Hunger Scores Across Several States: States like Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Tripura, Maharashtra, and West Bengal all score above the national average (29). These states' performance mirrors that of countries with significant hunger issues.

Moderate Hunger in Some Regions: On the other hand, states like Chandigarh, Sikkim, Puducherry, Kerala, Manipur, Mizoram, Punjab, Delhi, Arunachal Pradesh, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Tamil Nadu fall under the 'moderate hunger' category, with scores below 16.

Serious Hunger Prevalent: All other states, scoring below the national average but above 20, face a problem of 'serious hunger.' Interestingly, no state falls under the 'low hunger' category. It's important to note that the impact of COVID-19 on the SHI is not accounted for due to the unavailability of post-pandemic estimates.



Historical Context:

In 2008, Purnima Menon, Anil Deolalikar, and Anjor Bhaskar undertook an effort to assess hunger variation at the sub-national level using the methodology employed at that time for calculating the GHI. Their findings revealed Punjab as the leader among the 17 assessed states, closely followed by Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. In contrast, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar, and Chhattisgarh ranked as the least-performing states.

Challenges in Recent Years

Over the past five years, India's GHI score has deteriorated primarily due to an increase in calorie undernourishment. The Food and Agriculture Organization reports a rising proportion of calorie undernourishment in India since 2017, reaching 16.3% in 2020, a figure reminiscent of the 2009 statistic.

The Indian government has disputed these findings, citing concerns about the data and methodology used in GHI calculations. However, it has failed to provide concrete empirical evidence to substantiate its claims.

The government has not conducted a National Sample Survey (NSS) round on nutritional intake since 2011-12, which used to offer valuable insights into the prevalence of calorie undernourishment at both the national and subnational levels. Regrettably, the NSS report lacks information on household food insecurity, as it introduced four key questions in the 78th round conducted in 2020-21.

The Role of the GHI:

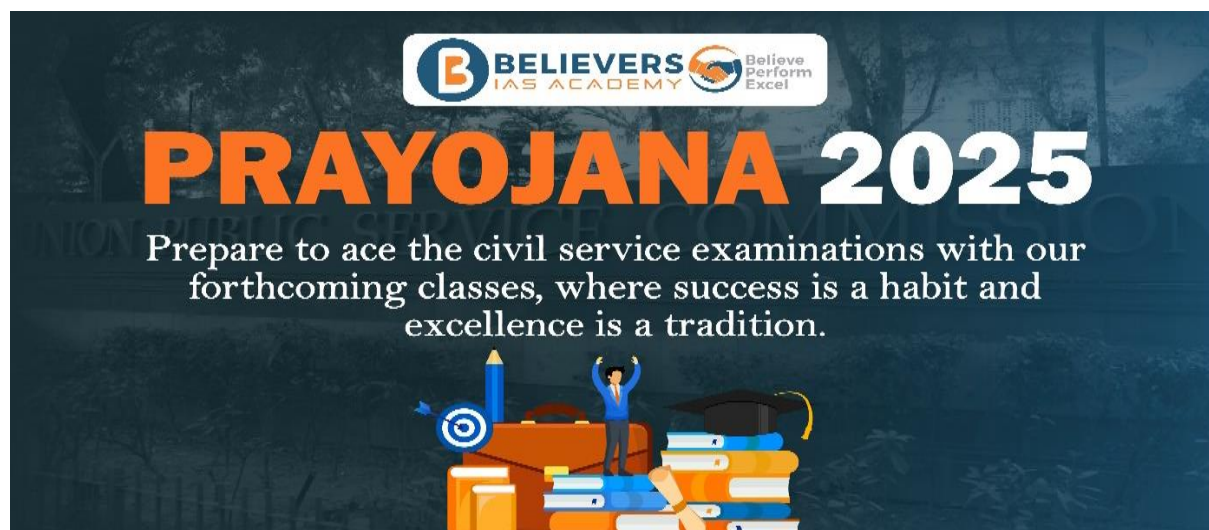
While the Global Hunger Index has faced significant scrutiny from experts concerning its conceptualization, selection of indicators, and aggregation methods, it remains a critical tool for gaining insights into the state of undernourishment and child nutrition.

India's underwhelming performance in the GHI is primarily attributed to its high levels of undernourishment and child malnutrition. Notably, India ranks unfavourably in child wasting, performing worse than many low-income African nations.

According to data from the National Family Health Survey-5, one-third of children under the age of five in India are stunted and underweight, while every fifth child is afflicted by wasting.

Conclusion:

Despite India's commendable strides in alleviating extreme poverty over the last 15 years, as demonstrated by the recent National Multidimensional Poverty Index, persistent challenges continue to cast a shadow on efforts to address disparities in food insecurity, hunger, and child malnutrition.



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Outlook for regional and global affairs

Context:

The 15th BRICS summit held in Johannesburg recently made a significant announcement: six new members, including Iran, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Egypt, Ethiopia, and Argentina, have been invited to join the five-member grouping consisting of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. This expansion reflects BRICS' growing global influence and its aim to challenge the dominance of Western-led international institutions.

Relevance:

GS - 02 (Groupings & Agreements Involving India)

Prelims:

- BRICS
- UNSC
- Beijing Declaration

Mains Question:

Discuss the significance of BRICS' recent expansion by inviting six new member countries and its potential impact on global geopolitics. 150 words.

Dimensions of the Article:

- BRICS: An Alternative to Western-Dominated Institutions
- Economic Clout and Global Presence
- Geo-Strategic Significance of New Members
- BRICS Achievements and Shared Vision
- Outlook for Regional and Global Affairs



BRICS: An Alternative to Western-Dominated Institutions

BRICS has emerged as an alternative to the Western-dominated international institutions that have held sway since World War II. The dissatisfaction of BRICS members with institutions like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), United Nations (UN), and the World Trade Organization (WTO) has been a unifying factor.

These institutions have been criticized for reflecting an outdated world order. The BRICS summit in Johannesburg reaffirmed the group's commitment to creating a more representative and equitable international order.

Economic Clout and Global Presence

The proposed expansion of BRICS will significantly bolster its global presence. With the inclusion of new members, BRICS will account for 46% of the world's population and 37% of the global GDP in PPP terms, surpassing the GDP of the G-7 countries.

BRICS members represent 23% of global exports and 19% of global imports. This expansion will particularly impact the energy sector, as BRICS' share of global oil production will increase from 20% to 42%.

Geo-Strategic Significance of New Members

The addition of new members carries significant geo-strategic value. West Asian members, in particular, already have strong ties with existing BRICS members.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE supply a significant portion of their oil to China and India. Russia is also exploring Brazil as a potential market.

Iran, despite U.S. sanctions, has increased oil production, with a substantial portion going to China.

Egypt and Ethiopia play crucial roles in the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea region, while Argentina is a major Latin American economy. These additions enrich BRICS with geo-strategic diversity.

BRICS Achievements and Shared Vision

Over its 15-year history, BRICS has consistently issued consensual declarations, expanded its content, focused on specific goals, and broadened its areas of interest.

The Johannesburg Declaration emphasizes reforms in international organizations and encourages the use of local currencies in trade transactions among BRICS members and other trading partners.

Moreover, the declaration reflects shared positions on various political issues, including the importance of the United Nations and concerns in West Asia, Ukraine, and global terrorism.

Outlook for Regional and Global Affairs

New BRICS members, particularly those from West Asia, align with the group's political and economic framework.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE have pursued independent foreign policies, engaging with regional players and embracing dialogue.

Iran's entry into BRICS offers opportunities for enhanced regional economic cooperation and the revival of connectivity projects like- Chabahar Port, in which India is involved.

Conclusion:

BRICS' expansion signifies its growing influence and determination to reshape global affairs. The addition of new members strengthens its economic clout and global presence. Furthermore, BRICS' achievements, shared vision, and rejection of a new Cold War narrative demonstrate its commitment to fostering cooperation, reform, and representation in international institutions.

India, Bharat and a host of implications

Context:

The usage of the terms "Bharat" and "India" carries historical, ideological, constitutional, and international significance. Recently, political dimensions have emerged surrounding these words due to the formation of the acronym "INDIA" by certain opposition parties. This acronym stands for the 'Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance.' The government's use of 'President of Bharat' in official invitations, instead of 'President of India,' is seen as an attempt to counter the potential political power of "INDIA."

Relevance:

GS - 02 (Indian Constitution)

Prelims:

- Article 1
- Origin of the Name Bharat and India
- Vishnu Purana

Mains Question:

Discuss the historical, constitutional, and international implications of using the terms 'Bharat' and 'India' in official documents and international contexts. 150 words.

Dimensions of the Article:

- Historical Context
- 58th Amendment
- The Risk of Alienation

Historical Context:

During the transfer of power from British rule to Indian hands in 1947, the Indian Independence Act of 1947 created two dominions: India and Pakistan.

The Muslim League advocated for India to be named either "Hindustan" or "Bharat," arguing that these names represented the two successor states emerging from the dissolution of the British Indian Empire.

India, however, asserted that it was the legitimate successor state to British India, and Pakistan had seceded from it. This argument was eventually settled in India's favour, and Pakistan had to establish its international identity, including applying for UN membership.

India has consistently used the name 'India' in international and multilateral contexts, reflecting its international personality. For example, joint statements with other countries are titled 'India-[Country] Joint Statement.' In diplomatic documents, the word 'India' is used in the English language.

58th Amendment:

The 58th Amendment to the Constitution in 1987 empowered the President to publish the authoritative text of the Constitution in Hindi.

This authoritative Hindi text could be used in legal proceedings. As a result of this amendment, the Hindi version of the Constitution became 'authoritative' and is titled 'Bharat ka Samvidhan.'

The English version of the Constitution is titled the 'Constitution of India,' emphasizing the word 'India.'

This constitutional arrangement has led to the practice of using 'India' in English and 'Bharat' in Hindi in internal and international documents. For example, the English-language Gazette is called the 'Gazette of India,' while in Hindi, it is 'Bharat ka Rajpatra.'

The Risk of Alienation:

The current government and Sangh Parivar appear to favour using 'Bharat' over 'India.' This preference is evident in the use of 'President of Bharat' in G-20 invitations.

However, they cannot make this change internationally without officially altering the country's name to 'Bharat' and abandoning 'India.' Such a change may alienate parts of the population that prefer 'India' to 'Bharat.'

Way forward:

A strike of caution must be considered in addressing an issue this big of changing names as it may pose greater challenges in areas concerned with International dealings.

Bridging the malnutrition gap, the Bemetara way

Context:

The battle against malnutrition persists due to many factors - inadequate knowledge of proper eating practices, prevalence of myths about food, etc. Hence, to ensure food security and address malnutrition, an effective approach called Nutrition Counselling is in the news.

Relevance:

GS-02 (Issues Related to Children and Women, Health, Government Policies & Interventions)

Prelims:

- Malnutrition
- Global Hunger Index
- POSHAN Abhiyaan
- Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM)

Mains Question:

Discuss the role of nutrition counselling in combating malnutrition in India, with a focus on its effectiveness, challenges, and potential for widespread implementation. (150 words)



Dimensions of the Article:

- Challenge of Malnutrition
- The Case of Bemetara, Chhattisgarh
- Poth Laika Abhiyaan: Nutrition Counselling and Monitoring
- Encouraging Outcomes
- Cost-Effective Approach

Challenge of Malnutrition

Despite efforts to enhance food security, malnutrition remains a pressing issue in India. Programs like the Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nourishment (POSHAN) Abhiyaan have incorporated social and behavioural change communication (SBCC), which includes various awareness initiatives.

However, the systematic implementation of nutrition counselling is yet to be established uniformly across states.

The Case of Bemetara, Chhattisgarh

Bemetara, a relatively prosperous district in Chhattisgarh, puzzles observers due to its high prevalence of Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) among children. This problem highlights the significance of nutrition education.

Poth Laika Abhiyaan, meaning "Healthy Child Mission" in the Chhattisgarhi language, is a nutrition counselling program operating in 72 severely affected Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) in Bemetara.

Supported by UNICEF, Chhattisgarh, this initiative trains ground-level staff from the Health and Women and Child Development departments to provide nutrition counselling to parents of SAM and Medium Acute Malnutrition (MAM) children.

Poth Laika Abhiyaan: Nutrition Counselling and Monitoring

Every Friday, parents are counselled in simple language about the importance of a balanced diet, hand hygiene, and other health-related tips.

This counselling dispels harmful dietary myths and superstitions. Moreover, the progress of targeted children is closely monitored. Local leaders, including sarpanchs, panchayat sachivs, and religious figures, participate in these sessions.

Door-to-door visits are conducted to monitor the children's progress.

Encouraging Outcomes

The results of Poth Laika Abhiyaan are promising. Over nine months, from December 2022 to July 2023, 53.77% of targeted children have shown improvement and were brought out of malnutrition.

Specifically, 61.5% of MAM children and 14.67% of SAM children experienced positive changes. Comparing these outcomes with a control group of 20 AWCs

where the mission was not implemented, the effectiveness of the program becomes evident.

The control group showed only a 30.6% improvement, with no SAM children benefiting. This highlights a substantial 23% increase in the rate of improvement compared to the control group.

Cost-Effective Approach

Notably, Poth Laika Abhiyaan is a cost-effective initiative. Unlike providing meals, which requires significant budgeting and risks of leakage, this program involves minimal expenses, primarily training and regular monitoring. Thus, it has demonstrated its cost-effectiveness in tackling malnutrition.

Way Forward:

To truly accelerate the eradication of malnutrition, the success of Poth Laika Abhiyaan needs replication on a broader scale across districts and states.

It is essential to complement food distribution to the disadvantaged with nutrition counselling and monitoring. Only through the widespread implementation of this straightforward yet impactful strategy can India move closer to realizing the ambitious and noble goal of a "Kuposhan Mukh Bharat" or a "Malnutrition-Free India."

Conclusion:

Nutrition counselling stands as a powerful tool in addressing malnutrition in India. While the nation has made commendable efforts to ensure food security, the persistence of malnutrition issues underscores the importance of educating people on proper eating practices. The success story of Poth Laika Abhiyaan in Bemetara, Chhattisgarh, demonstrates that this simple and cost-effective approach, when implemented systematically and widely, can significantly contribute to achieving a malnutrition-free India. It is a reminder that sometimes, simplicity is the most sophisticated solution to complex challenges.

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India needs to build closer ties with ASEAN for economic, and strategic reasons

Context:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to Jakarta for the annual ASEAN-India summit signifies India's efforts to strengthen its relationship with the economically significant Southeast Asian nations. With India holding the presidency of the G-20 summit, this visit was strategically timed to solidify traditional ties with neighbouring Asian economies amid global trade uncertainties and challenges.

Relevance:

- GS-02 (International relations)
- Prelims:
- ASEAN
- UNCTAD

Mains Question:

Explain India's strategic and economic interests in fostering closer ties with ASEAN countries, particularly in the context of global trade uncertainty and geopolitical tensions. (150 words)

Dimensions of the Article:

- Global Trade Uncertainty and Shared Vulnerability
- India's Strategic Messaging and Reliability

Global Trade Uncertainty and Shared Vulnerability



The current global trade landscape is marred by uncertainties and negative factors that could impact economies worldwide. As highlighted by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in its 'Global Trade Update,' the outlook for global trade in the latter half of 2023 appears pessimistic. Factors such as downgraded global economic forecasts, persistent inflation, financial vulnerabilities, and geopolitical tensions are looming threats.

In this context, the ASEAN-India summit's joint leaders' statement on 'Strengthening Food Security and Nutrition in Response to Crises' underscores the shared

vulnerability that the region faces concerning heightened global food insecurity. Multiple factors have exacerbated this insecurity, including the conflict in Ukraine, the effects of climate change, and national policy responses to inflationary pressures.

India's recent restrictions on rice exports have raised concerns, particularly as prices of this regional staple have reportedly reached a 15-year high. The onset of an El Niño event, historically associated with disruptive weather patterns, adds to the region's uncertainty. These developments understandably make ASEAN leaders cautious.

India's Strategic Messaging and Reliability

During his visit, Prime Minister Modi emphasized the importance of a rules-based post-COVID-19 world order and a free and open Indo-Pacific. These messages were primarily directed towards ASEAN members who are increasingly uneasy about China's assertiveness and territorial claims in the South China Sea. India's implicit message to ASEAN is that it can be a reliable long-term strategic and economic partner without territorial ambitions that might threaten the region's stability.

India also positioned itself as a voice to amplify the concerns of the Global South. It stressed that cooperation would be beneficial for all parties involved. As India grapples with an underwhelming free trade agreement (FTA) with the ASEAN nations, the importance of its trade relations with Eastern economies cannot be overstated. Trade volumes have increased, but a significant trade deficit exists, with imports surpassing exports. Concerns have arisen that Chinese goods are leveraging lower tariffs under the FTA to enter the Indian market, leading to a review of the agreement, expected to conclude in 2025.

Way Forward:

- **Trade Diversification:** India should focus on diversifying its trade basket with ASEAN countries, emphasizing the export of value-added goods.
- **Strategic Partnerships:** Building strong strategic partnerships with ASEAN members, particularly those concerned about China's actions, should remain a priority for India.
- **Regional Stability:** India can play a role in promoting regional stability in the Indo-Pacific by emphasizing its commitment to a rules-based order.

Conclusion:

India's engagement with ASEAN is pivotal for both economic and strategic reasons. In the face of global trade uncertainties and concerns over China's actions, India seeks to strengthen its relationships with Southeast Asian nations. By fostering deeper ties, India can secure its interests, build a more diversified trade portfolio, and contribute to regional stability. This engagement highlights India's role as an all-weather ally and a reliable partner in a changing world.

An overhaul, the criminal law Bills, and the big picture

Context:

The central government presented three Bills- the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023, and the Bharatiya Sakshya (BS) Bill, 2023 which aims to replace the long-standing Indian Penal Code, 1860, the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), 1973, and the Indian Evidence Act, 1872.

Relevance:

GS-02 (Government Policies and Interventions)

Mains Question:

What are the key provisions and potential implications of the three new bills that replace the Indian Penal Code, 1860, the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), 1973, and the Indian Evidence Act, 1872 for law enforcement agencies in India? (250 words)

Dimensions of the Article:

- Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS)
- At the Scene of Crime
- Duration of Police Custody

Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS)

The BNSS introduces a significant provision regarding the registration of cognizable offences in any police station, regardless of the location where the offence occurs. While this practice, known as "recording first information report (FIR) at Zero," has been informally in use for years, formalizing it in the BNSS could simplify the process for complainants.

However, a provision allowing preliminary inquiries for offences punishable with more than three but less than seven years of imprisonment has raised concerns. This differs from the Supreme Court's Lalita Kumari judgment (2013), which mandated FIR registration for cognizable offences. While preliminary inquiries might have advantages, such as encouraging compromises or identifying false cases, their constitutional validity is questionable.

The BNSS retains all provisions of the CrPC on arrest. Incorporating the Supreme Court's Armesh Kumar judgment (2014), which mandates justifiable reasons for arrest, could have been more appropriate. Additionally, a clause permits arrest for offences punishable with less than three years of imprisonment only with the Deputy Superintendent of Police's prior permission if the accused is infirm or aged over 60. This may provide relief for these categories if judiciously employed.

The new Sanhita allows handcuffing in specific cases, including terrorism, murder, rape, acid attacks, or offences against the state. While this might aid under-staffed police forces in securing custody, it's crucial to remember that justification and adherence to Supreme Court guidelines on handcuffing remain unchanged.



At the Scene of Crime

The BNSS mandates forensic expert visits and the collection of forensic evidence for offences punishable with more than seven years of imprisonment. However, its effectiveness depends on the state government's commitment to enhancing forensic infrastructure, which remains a challenge. The Sanhita encourages audio-video recording of investigation steps, including searches, with smartphones as recommended tools. Yet, it is essential to develop facilities for crime scene videography and photography, as directed by the Supreme Court.

Despite the ban on the two-finger test in rape cases and its acknowledgement as unscientific and violative of victims' dignity and privacy, this ban is not explicitly mentioned in the BNSS. It was an opportunity for the government to ensure legal compliance with its instructions.

Regarding the disclosure of a rape victim's identity, authorizing the next of kin to disclose the identity in the case of a minor victim might be redundant. The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act exclusively handles this matter and does not have a similar provision. This provision may require reconsideration as the next of kin may not always be an appropriate party to delegate such authority, as expressed by the Supreme Court.

Duration of Police Custody

The provision extending police custody beyond 15 days may help in cases where additional evidence emerges during investigations. However, this extension is

subject to judicial discretion, with additional custody allowed only after the initial 40 or 60 days out of a total detention period of 60 or 90 days. The accused remains eligible for release on default bail as per CrPC provisions, ensuring judicial oversight.

The BNSS enlarges the scope of judicial inquiry into suspicious deaths, including dowry deaths. However, it relaxes the mandatory recording of statements for specific categories of individuals. This provision should not be misused, especially in cases involving women and children.

Way Forward:

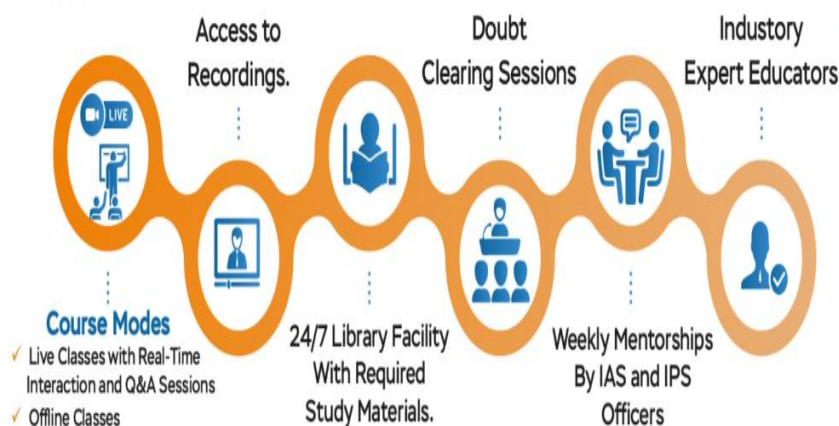
While the proposed changes in the BNSS indicate progress, they are not revolutionary. True reform requires addressing understaffing, inadequate infrastructure, limited training resources, and poor living conditions in police stations. Piecemeal adjustments to the law alone cannot eliminate the colonial-era mindset; holistic police reform is essential.

Conclusion:

The Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) introduces several provisions that can impact law enforcement agencies in India. While some of these changes are progressive, they are not radical. To bring substantial change to policing in India, comprehensive reform addressing infrastructure, resources, and living conditions within police stations is indispensable. These legal amendments can be effective only when coupled with broader police reforms.

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The G-20 summit – India’s moment

Context:

India’s successful hosting of the G-20 Leaders’ Summit, which led to the unanimous adoption of the New Delhi Declaration is noteworthy because of the complex geopolitical dynamics involving the G-7-EU, Russia, and China. The article highlights India’s role in achieving consensus on critical issues and its efforts to make the G-20 more relevant and accessible to a wider global audience.

Relevance:

GS-02 (Groupings & Agreements Involving India and/or Affecting India’s Interests)

Prelims:

African Union, Financial Inclusion Document, World Bank, India – Middle East – Europe Economic Corridor, India-Mercosur preferential trade agreement, G20

Main Question:

How did India manage to foster consensus and facilitate meaningful dialogue among diverse global stakeholders during its G-20 presidency, and what are the implications of this achievement? (150 words)

Dimensions of the Article:

- Overcoming Geopolitical Divides
- India’s Pragmatic Approach
- The Strength of India’s “Middle Path”
- Inclusive Measures
- Expanding the G-20 Horizons
- Enhancing Global Relevance

Overcoming Geopolitical Divides:

India’s recent G-20 presidency, marked by the Leaders’ Summit, stands as a remarkable success story. One of the most notable accomplishments was the unanimous adoption of the New Delhi Declaration.

This outcome was particularly noteworthy due to the deep-seated divides between the “Western” G-7-EU alliance and the Russia-China combined regarding the Ukraine war. Previous attempts at consensus, such as in the UN Security Council, had resulted in deadlock due to mutual vetoes by these opposing sides. This scenario cast doubt on India’s ability to bridge these divides successfully.

India’s Pragmatic Approach:

In contrast to previous unsuccessful attempts, India’s negotiating team took a pragmatic approach. They first sought consensus on other important issues before addressing the contentious paragraphs related to Ukraine.

A significant breakthrough occurred when the G-7 members compromised on their insistence on language critical of Russia, opting for more neutral phrasing. This achievement was nothing short of miraculous in today's global landscape marked by polarization.



The Strength of India's "Middle Path":

India's foreign policy, characterized by its "middle path" approach, proved to be a substantial asset. This policy, along with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's engagement with numerous G-20 leaders throughout the year, contributed significantly to achieving consensus.

India's unique initiative of involving the "Global South," including many G-20 members, further bolstered its position. These nations, reluctant to take sides in the geopolitical struggle, aimed to shift priorities towards global development concerns.

Key Initiatives and Progress:

The New Delhi Declaration, spanning 83 paragraphs, made notable progress in regulating cryptocurrencies and defined the need for nearly \$10 trillion to address climate change adaptation and mitigation projects in the Global South.

However, consensus on specific deadlines for fossil fuel "phase-out" was elusive.

Inclusive Measures:

India's G-20 presidency also witnessed several other inclusive initiatives. The admission of the 55-member African Union rectified an imbalance, as previously only the EU was recognized as a regional grouping within the G-20.

The formation of the Global Biofuel Alliance marked a significant step towards advancing research and adoption of alternative energy sources in a world still heavily reliant on fossil fuels.

Additionally, the proposal for an India-Middle East-Europe Corridor, with potential U.S. investment, presents exciting opportunities, although details regarding funding and execution require further elaboration.

Expanding the G-20 Horizons:

India took the G-20 beyond the conventional single-venue format by organizing over 200 meetings in more than 60 cities, attracting over 1,00,000 official visitors from 125 countries.

This innovative approach, though incurring additional costs, challenges the traditional perception of the G-20 as a static, high-table event focused on arcane subjects. It remains to be seen if future G-20 hosts will adopt this model.

Enhancing Global Relevance:

India's G-20 presidency sought to make the organization more accessible and relevant to a broader global audience. Historically viewed as a staid and esoteric gathering of world leaders, the G-20, under India's leadership, aimed to create tangible change in the lives of people worldwide.

Prime Minister Modi's decision to hold a virtual "review" meeting in November, before India's presidency concludes, presents an opportunity to ensure the implementation and scrutiny of the decisions made during this historic G-20 summit, thus cementing what has been termed "India's G-20 moment."

Conclusion:

India's G-20 presidency achieved remarkable success by fostering consensus on critical global issues and transcending geopolitical divides.

The unanimous adoption of the New Delhi Declaration signifies a significant diplomatic achievement.

India's pragmatic approach, "middle path" foreign policy, and engagement with the Global South were instrumental in this success.

Inclusivity, innovative initiatives, and an expanded format made the G-20 more accessible and relevant.

The upcoming virtual review meeting in November will be an essential step to ensure the implementation of decisions taken during this transformative G-20 summit.

India's G-20 presidency leaves a lasting imprint as it endeavours to popularize an organization that was once seen as distant and inaccessible, ultimately aiming to bring tangible change to the lives of people across the globe.

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Nipah virus

Context:

The article discusses the recurring Nipah virus outbreak in Kerala, emphasizing the need for an integrated One Health approach to prevent zoonotic spillovers.

Relevance:

GS-02 (Health)

Prelims:

Nipah virus infection, zoonotic virus, Ribonucleic acid virus, encephalitic syndrome

Main Question:

How can an integrated One Health approach help prevent zoonotic spillovers like the Nipah virus outbreak in Kerala? (10 marks)

Dimensions of the Article:

- Nipah Virus Outbreak in Kerala
- Current Response
- The Importance of Constant Vigilance
- The One Health Approach

Nipah Virus Outbreak in Kerala:

Kerala is grappling with its fourth Nipah virus outbreak in five years, posing a significant public health challenge.

This zoonotic virus, transmitted from fruit bats to humans, has caused deaths and instilled fear among the population, particularly in Kozhikode, the epicentre of these outbreaks.

With no specific cure available, supportive care is the sole treatment for Nipah infection, even within a hospital setting.

The situation is reminiscent of the 2018 outbreak, which claimed the lives of 21 out of 23 infected individuals.

Current Response:

In response to the recent outbreak, Kerala's Health Minister, Veena George, has initiated measures such as placing hundreds of people on the contact list of the deceased under medical observation.

Sadly, a nine-year-old child is now on ventilator support. To manage the situation, a control room has been established in Kozhikode to oversee developments, and local hospitals are advised to follow infection control protocols.

Sixteen teams have been formed to implement containment measures, and a central team has been dispatched to assist the State government. Neighbouring states have also taken precautions to prevent cross-border transmission.

The Importance of Constant Vigilance:

While previous Nipah outbreaks have equipped medical teams with established protocols for management, isolation, containment, and treatment, the key lesson from global outbreaks may still be overlooked.

Research indicates that human activities significantly contribute to zoonotic spillovers. In the case of Nipah, the rapid expansion of agriculture in the original habitat zones of fruit bats has repeatedly been linked to these outbreaks.

As governments strive to control infectious diseases and associated fatalities, it is imperative to adopt a One Health approach.

The One Health Approach:

The COVID-19 pandemic has shed light on the One Health concept, which advocates for an integrated approach that balances and optimizes the health of humans, animals, and the environment.

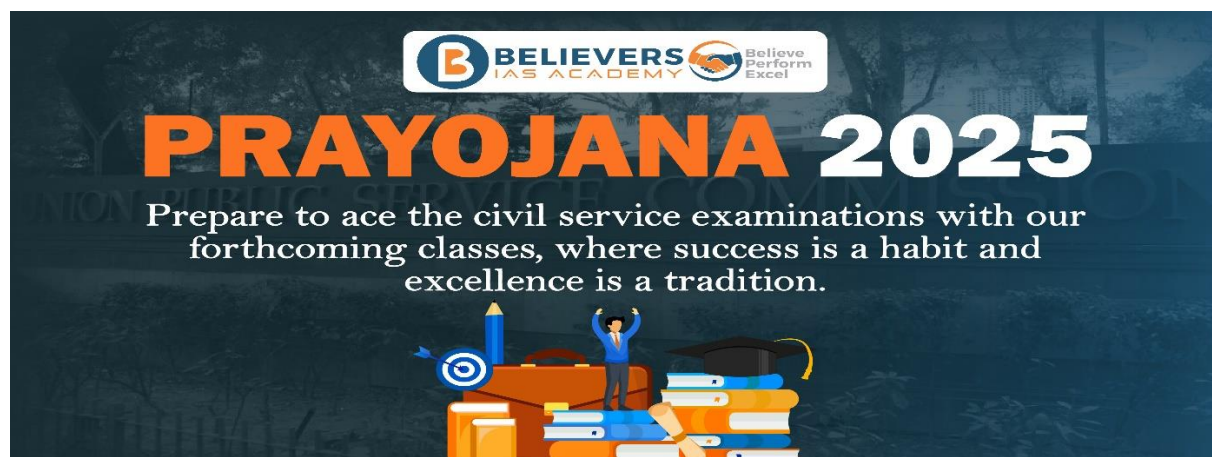
This approach recognizes the interdependence of these elements, understanding that the health of one entity profoundly affects the others.

To address the recurring Nipah outbreaks and similar zoonotic threats, Kerala, and indeed the world must adopt a One Health perspective.

Conclusion:

The Nipah virus outbreaks in Kerala underscore the urgency of adopting a One Health approach. This integrated strategy, which considers the health of humans, animals, and the environment, offers the best chance to prevent and manage zoonotic spillovers.

While challenges persist, collective action at the local, national, and global levels can protect us from future outbreaks and ensure a healthier coexistence between humans and our natural surroundings.



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Post Office Bill (2023)

Context:

The new Post Office Bill (2023) has been introduced in the Rajya Sabha to replace the outdated Indian Post Office Act (1898).

Relevance:

GS-02 (Government policies and interventions)

Mains Question:

Discuss the key provisions of the new Post Office Bill (2023) and its implications for the postal department and the courier industry in India. (10 marks)

Dimensions of the Article:

- Expanding the Role of Post Offices
- Pricing Flexibility
- National Security and Public Safety
- Limitations in the Courier Industry
- Digital Addressing and Futuristic Delivery
- The End of Exclusive Privilege

Expanding the Role of Post Offices:

The 1898 Act was primarily focused on mail services, but the new Bill acknowledges the changing landscape where post offices are now a vital vehicle for delivering various citizen-centric services.

This expansion of services beyond traditional mail is a significant shift.



Pricing Flexibility:

One of the critical aspects of the new Bill is the authorization given to the Director General of Postal Services to create regulations related to pricing and charges for services offered by post offices.

Unlike the previous requirement for parliamentary approval for charge revisions, this provision allows the postal department to respond quickly to market demands and competition in the industry. It provides flexibility in determining prices, crucial in a highly competitive market.

National Security and Public Safety:

The new Bill grants the central government the authority to intercept, open, or detain items during transmission by the Post Office in the interest of national security, public order, and public safety.

While a similar provision existed in the 1898 Act for articles containing dangerous substances, the new Bill takes a more generic approach. This provision aims to prevent smuggling and unlawful transmission of contraband goods through postal parcels.

Limitations in the Courier Industry:

While the Bill empowers India Post to intervene in the interest of national security, it has limitations in controlling the courier/express/parcels (CEP) industry. This industry is largely comprised of medium and small players, and there is no provision for them to register with a designated authority.

Therefore, the effectiveness of intercepting and opening parcels on grounds of national security and public service remains limited.

Digital Addressing and Futuristic Delivery:

The new Bill introduces standards for addressing items, address identifiers, and the usage of postcodes. This provision opens the door to the adoption of digital addressing, potentially using geospatial coordinates instead of traditional physical addresses.

This futuristic concept could streamline sorting and enable accurate delivery of mail and parcels. It may also facilitate the use of drones for parcel delivery, as experimented in some countries.

The End of Exclusive Privilege:

Perhaps the most significant change in the new Bill is the removal of the provision granting the central government the “exclusive privilege” of conveying letters and performing related services.

This privilege became outdated with the advent of courier services in the 1980s. The ambiguity between the definitions of ‘letter’ and ‘document’ contributed to this

change. The new Bill aligns with the modern perception of a letter as a personal written communication physically sent by post.

Conclusion:

The Bill represents a positive step towards modernizing India's postal services and adapting to contemporary communication needs. It balances the need for security with the demands of a competitive market.

In diverse India, name change demands consensus.

Context:

The recent official invitation from Rashtrapati Bhavan for the G-20 summit in New Delhi raised eyebrows due to an unexpected nomenclature change. It referred to the President of India as the 'President of Bharat,' triggering a controversy. This incident is emblematic of the current political climate characterized by deep-seated distrust, unexplained vindictiveness, and a surge in revanchism among those in power. It has left the nation in a state of apprehension about its future.

Background:

Curiously, there has been no official explanation for this sudden alteration in formal communication from the head of state. This abrupt shift in terminology took everyone by surprise. Some supporters of the government suggested that the country's name could be interchangeably used as 'Bharat,' as stated in Article 1 of the Constitution. They even proposed that a parliamentary resolution during the upcoming special session could formalize this change. Surprisingly, some senior advocates of the Supreme Court also endorsed this viewpoint.

However, it's crucial to clarify that Parliament possesses the authority to alter the country's name by amending the Constitution under Article 368. But, the public remains perplexed amid the general uproar that has provided little enlightenment on the matter.

Relevance:

GS-02 (Government Policies and Interventions)

Prelims:

Article 368, Article 52, Article 1, Article 393, Article 394A

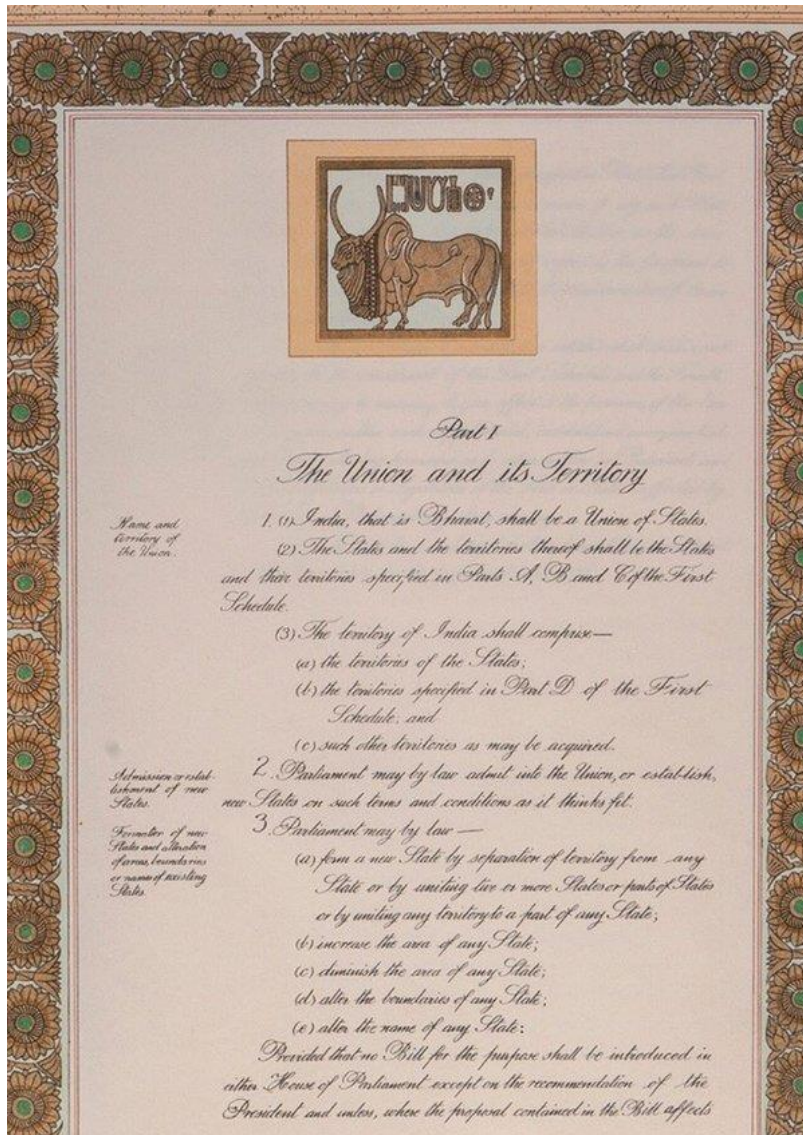
Mains Question:

What are the constitutional implications and societal impacts of changing the official name of a country? 15 marks

Dimensions of the Article:

- Constitutional Examination
- Potential for Confusion
- A Question of Colonial Distance

Constitutional Examination:



First, it is important to understand the matter of changing the country's name from a purely constitutional standpoint. The official invitation from Rashtrapati Bhavan referred to the "President of Bharat." Currently, constitutionally speaking, there is no position titled "President of Bharat" in the country.

Article 52 of the Constitution explicitly states that there shall be a "President of India." This term, "President of India," represents the official nomenclature for the head of state, which can only be altered through a suitable amendment to Article 52.

Therefore, it is evident that the use of "President of Bharat" does not align with the Constitution's Article 52.

Article 1 of the Constitution reads, “India, that is Bharat, shall be a Union of States.” These words do not imply that ‘India’ and ‘Bharat’ are interchangeable, allowing ‘Bharat’ to serve as the official country name. In fact, within the original Constitution, the term ‘Bharat’ is not employed in any articles except in the Hindi version published under the authority of the President as per Article 394A.

Had the Constitution framers intended to use ‘Bharat’ interchangeably, they would have included it in certain sections of the Constitution, which serves as the authoritative Constitution of India as officially described in Article 393.

In this context, “India, that is Bharat...” used in Article 1. The phrase “that is” is explanatory, intended to clarify or elucidate the preceding term ‘India.’ Therefore, Article 1 essentially means that ‘India,’ also known as ‘Bharat,’ shall constitute a Union of States.

The Hindi translation of Article 1 reads, “Bharat means India,” underscoring ‘Bharat’ as a translation of ‘India’ in the original Constitution. Consequently, ‘India’ remains the authentic name of the country until legally altered.

Potential for Confusion:

The interchangeable use of ‘Bharat’ and ‘India’ in official communications can generate significant confusion. The official name of the country is the Republic of India, used in all official correspondence with foreign nations and international organizations.

Agreements and treaties with foreign countries are conducted under the banner of the Republic of India, not the Republic of Bharat. Adopting ‘Bharat’ interchangeably could perplex foreign governments, leading to inconsistent references in agreements. A country should have a single official name, which can be either ‘India’ or ‘Bharat,’ but not both.

A review of Constituent Assembly debates reveals that the draft Constitution initially stated, “India shall be a union of states.” The inclusion of ‘Bharat’ occurred later during the debates due to strong pressure from several members who favoured ‘Bharat’ over ‘India.’ Various formulations were proposed by members like H.V. Kamath, K.T. Shah, Seth Govind Das, and Shibban Lal Saxena. However, B.R. Ambedkar added the phrase “that is Bharat” as a compromise. Importantly, he never suggested that ‘Bharat’ could be used interchangeably in the original Constitution.

A Question of Colonial Distance:

The decision to change a country’s name should not be driven by political agendas but should be the result of consensus in a diverse nation like India. The name should resonate emotionally with people across the country to prevent feelings of alienation among any group.

Advocating for liberation from India’s colonial past should be accompanied by a broader plan to eliminate all colonial symbols, including Rashtrapati Bhavan, Parliament House, and the Assembly building, alongside restructuring the

administrative framework and other aspects. Even the entire Indian railway system carries echoes of the colonial era.

Way Forward and Conclusion:

The use of 'Bharat' as an alternative name for 'India' in official communications raises constitutional concerns and the potential for international confusion. A name change of this magnitude should be a matter of national consensus, approached with caution to avoid alienation and maintain consistency on the international stage.

A change of this nature should not be driven solely by political motives but should be evaluated comprehensively, considering its historical, cultural, and societal implications. In the spirit of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam,' any such decision should reflect the unity and inclusiveness of a diverse nation like India.

Assessing outcomes of the G-20 summit

Context:

The 18th G-20 Summit recently concluded in New Delhi, resulting in the issuance of the 'New Delhi Leaders' Declaration.' This summit's outcome was a subject of concern in the days leading up to it, with doubts about whether it would culminate in a consensus-based, comprehensive declaration or a 'Chair's summary,' highlighting divisions among member nations. However, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement of complete consensus on the declaration's contents on the first day of the summit dispelled these concerns. Moreover, the inclusion of the African Union (AU) as a G-20 member was another cause for celebration.

Relevance:

GS-02 (Groupings & Agreements Involving India and/or Affecting India's Interests)

Prelims:

African Union, Global Biofuels Alliance, Financial Inclusion Document, World Bank, India – Middle East – Europe Economic Corridor, GE F-414 Jet Engine, India-Mercosur preferential trade agreement, G20

Mains Question:

What are the key elements of the 'New Delhi Leaders' Declaration' from the 18th G-20 Summit, and how do they reflect the priorities and aspirations of the G-20 nations in the current global context? 15 marks

Dimensions of the Article:

- Driving Philosophy
- Commitment to Goals

- Geopolitical Issues
- Inclusive Expansion
- Wide-Ranging Agenda
- Reinvigorating Multilateralism

Driving Philosophy:

The 'Preamble' and the concluding paragraph of the 'Conclusion' in the declaration underscore the fundamental goals and driving motivations of the G-20 leaders. They emphasize unity, a shared destiny, and the philosophy of harmonious coexistence with the ecosystem.

This philosophy recognizes the imperative to balance development with environmental preservation, rejecting the notion that countries must choose between poverty alleviation and environmental protection.

Commitment to Goals:

Paragraph 5 of the declaration outlines 12 significant goals to which all G-20 members are fully committed. These goals encompass various aspects, including inclusive growth, the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, debt vulnerability, reform of Multilateral Development Banks, and incorporating the perspectives of the Global South into the G-20's future agenda.

The commitment to these goals reflects the collective intent to address pressing global challenges comprehensively.

Geopolitical Issues:

A substantial portion of the declaration, spanning eight paragraphs, addresses what previous ministerial meetings referred to as "geopolitical issues." The negotiators achieved a delicate balance between Russia's concerns and the G7's insistence on upholding principles such as territorial integrity and sovereignty.

This middle-ground approach, crafted through collaborative efforts by Indian diplomats and their counterparts, salvaged the summit from potential failure. The declaration calls for a "comprehensive, just, and durable peace in Ukraine." However, the effectiveness of this call in influencing the conflict's stakeholders remains uncertain.

Inclusive Expansion:

One of the most notable developments at the 18th G-20 Summit was the expansion of G-20 membership. The declaration characterizes the African Union (AU) as "a permanent member," although the G-20 does not distinguish between permanent and non-permanent members but comprises members and guests.

This inclusive step was taken to create a more inclusive world. The leaders also expressed their commitment to strengthen ties with and support the African Union in realizing the aspirations outlined in Agenda 2063. Facilitating AU participation in G-

20 activities at the government level and within various Engagement Groups will require substantial support.

Wide-Ranging Agenda:

The G-20's central agenda encompasses a broad spectrum of issues, including economic and financial sectors, climate action, energy transitions, the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), technological transformation through Digital Public Infrastructure, reform of international financial institutions, trade, taxation, and the empowerment of "all" women and girls.

While ambitious and aspirational, the feasibility of achieving these goals, especially regarding financial resources, remains a subject of scrutiny. The declaration's effectiveness will depend on concrete actions and resource mobilization. Experts have pointed out the need for significant new financial resources to support various initiatives.

Reinvigorating Multilateralism:

Paragraph 47 emphasizes the indispensability of reinvigorated multilateralism, reforms, and international cooperation in addressing 21st-century global challenges. The declaration advocates for more responsive UN institutions that cater to the entire membership and seeks to make global governance more representative, effective, transparent, and accountable.

While these proposals have garnered support from the entire G-20 leadership, the path to their implementation remains complex and uncertain.

Conclusion:

The success of the 18th G-20 Summit indicates that the declaration enjoys unanimous backing and introduces novel concepts, goals, and objectives compared to previous declarations. However, the ultimate gauge of success will be the extent to which the summit's decisions are implemented. This assessment will take time and necessitates vigilance.

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Strained India-Canada Relations: Unpacking Trudeau's Allegations

Context:

The recent turn of events involving Canada and India has cast a shadow over their diplomatic relations. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's startling accusation, linking the killing of Canadian Khalistani leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar to "agents of the Government of India," has plunged their ties to a new low.

Background:

The Indian Punjab state constituting about 58% of the Sikh population and another 39% of Hindus was vandalized by a violent Khalistan separatist movement in the 1980s and early 1990s. The main focal point of the movement today is centred amongst the Punjabi overseas population.

Recently, Hardeep Singh Nijjar was shot dead outside a Sikh temple in British Columbia.

Supposedly, Nijjar had campaigned for an Independent Sikh nation – KHALISTAN to be given out of the Indian Punjab state. Since then, he has been wanted by the Indian authorities and also had been designated as a "Terrorist".

The incident created a meltdown in social media targeting Indian Intelligence Agencies.

Recent Events:



Trudeau's claim, coupled with Canada's expulsion of a senior Indian diplomat, has triggered a series of reactions, including India summoning the Canadian High Commissioner and expelling Canada's Station chief for intelligence. Moreover, the United States and Australia, both partners with Canada in the "Five Eyes" intelligence-sharing alliance, have expressed deep concerns over this issue. The External Affairs Ministry of India has also accused Canadian diplomats of engaging

in “anti-India” activities, hinting at potential further scrutiny of diplomats. In response, the Canadian government has raised concerns about the violation of the international rule of law and Canadian “sovereignty,” potentially leading to further confrontations. It’s important to note that, unlike Pakistan, where such confrontations are common, Canada is a member of the Western NATO alliance and home to a significant Indian and Indian-origin Canadian population. Thus, the repercussions of this rift will extend beyond just these two nations.

Relevance:

GS-02 (International Relations)

Mains Question:

Discuss the recent diplomatic strain between Canada and India, analyzing its potential implications on bilateral relations, regional dynamics, and international alliances, while also considering strategies for conflict resolution. 250 words.

Dimensions of the Article:

- Serious Allegations Unveiled
- Escalation of Diplomatic Tension
- International Concerns
- Antagonistic Rhetoric
- Political Implications

Serious Allegations Unveiled:

The heart of this escalating crisis lies in Justin Trudeau’s allegations. He publicly implicated the Government of India in the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a prominent Khalistani leader in Canada.

Trudeau claimed that evidence had been shared with India and discussed with Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a recent bilateral meeting. Such a serious accusation, if substantiated, could have far-reaching consequences.

Escalation of Diplomatic Tensions:

In response to Canada’s expulsion of a senior Indian diplomat, India summoned the Canadian High Commissioner and reciprocated by expelling Canada’s Station chief for intelligence. This tit-for-tat action underscores the intensification of diplomatic tensions between the two countries.

International Concerns:

The situation has reverberated globally, with the United States and Australia expressing “deep concerns” due to their partnership with Canada in the “Five Eyes” intelligence-sharing agreement. This international dimension adds complexity to the dispute and potentially complicates India’s relationships with these nations.

Antagonistic Rhetoric:

Both sides have engaged in hostile rhetoric. India has accused Canadian diplomats of engaging in “anti-India” activities, implying that more diplomats may face scrutiny. In contrast, the Canadian government has asserted the violation of international rule of law and Canadian sovereignty. This exchange of allegations exacerbates the dispute.

Political Implications:

Justin Trudeau’s allegations have garnered support from his political rivals in Canada’s Parliament, including leaders like Pierre Poilievre and Jagmeet Singh, who have been critical of India. This suggests that even if Trudeau’s government changes, the chill in relations may persist, affecting the long-term trajectory of Canada-India ties.

Broader Impact:

Unlike the situation with Pakistan, where such disputes are routine, Canada is a member of the Western NATO alliance. Furthermore, it hosts a significant Indian and Indian-origin Canadian population. Consequently, the consequences of this diplomatic rupture will extend beyond the immediate bilateral relationship.

Way Forward and Conclusion:

In light of this tense situation, a careful and strategic approach is imperative. Justin Trudeau must prioritize either providing concrete evidence to substantiate his serious allegations or acknowledging his inability to do so. India’s concerns about Canadian safe havens for anti-India, separatist Khalistani groups have been validated by various incidents over the years. The fact that Nijjar, the chief of the “Khalistan Tiger Force,” was a Canadian citizen speaks volumes. Therefore, Trudeau’s allegations must be rigorously scrutinized.

India must also consider the future of its relations with Canada. Previous attempts at reconciliation, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit in 2015 and recent free trade talks, have encountered obstacles. The acrimonious meeting between Trudeau and Modi at the G-20 and Trudeau’s latest allegations have strained diplomatic relations and halted free trade talks. Consequently, diplomatic niceties appear to be exhausted.

Both Canada and India must reflect on the next steps. Resolving this issue will require cautious and thoughtful diplomacy. The repercussions of this rift extend beyond these two nations and could impact regional dynamics and international alliances. As such, strategies for conflict resolution should be explored, with an emphasis on rebuilding trust and understanding between the two countries.

The Women's Reservation Bill

Context:

The recent passage of the [Women's Reservation Bill](#) in the Lok Sabha, nearly three decades after its initial introduction in Parliament, marks a significant step towards breaking a longstanding political barrier.

Background:

In a Lok Sabha where women Members of Parliament represent a mere 15% of the total, the stark gender inequality in political representation calls for attention and action. The 128th Constitution Amendment Bill, known as the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, aims to address this by reserving one-third of the seats in the Lok Sabha and legislative Assemblies for women.

This amendment includes a 15-year sunset clause for the quota, which can potentially be extended. While the historical struggle for women's reservation has been fraught with challenges and false starts, the Lok Sabha's approval of the bill is commendable. However, its implementation faces delays due to its linkage to delimitation and the Census, presenting a noteworthy challenge.

Relevance:

GS-02 (Gender, Government Policies and Interventions)

Prelims:

Right to Equality, Women Reservation bill, constitutional provisions related to women empowerment.

Mains Question:

Discuss the significance of the Women's Reservation Bill in promoting gender equality in political representation in India and the challenges it faces in terms of implementation. (250 words)

Dimensions of the Article:

- Historical Perspective
- Gender Inequality in Political Representation
- Provisions of the Women's Reservation Bill
- Implementation Challenges
- Local Bodies as a Model
- Broader Challenges for Women

Historical Perspective

The introduction of the Women's Reservation Bill is a crucial development in the context of India's historical struggle for gender equality in politics.

Despite its initiation almost three decades ago, the bill's passage signifies a long-overdue recognition of the need to shatter the political glass ceiling that has hindered women's participation in decision-making processes.

Gender Inequality in Political Representation

The current composition of the Lok Sabha, where women constitute only 15% of the total members, highlights a glaring gender imbalance in political representation.

This underrepresentation of women in the highest legislative body of the country raises concerns about the inclusivity and diversity of voices in decision-making.

Provisions of the Women's Reservation Bill

The Women's Reservation Bill seeks to reserve one-third of the seats in the Lok Sabha and legislative Assemblies for women. Additionally, it includes a provision that mandates allocating nearly one-third of the seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to women.

While some demands for an internal quota for women of Other Backward Classes have emerged, it is essential to ensure that such discussions do not impede the bill's implementation.

Implementation Challenges

Despite its approval in the Lok Sabha, the implementation of the Women's Reservation Bill faces hurdles related to delimitation and the Census. The linkage between delimitation and the principle of women's reservation raises questions about the necessity of such a connection. As a result, women may not have access to the 33% reservation in the upcoming 2024 general election.

Local Bodies as a Model

Panchayati Raj institutions have shown good examples by having women representation exceeding 50% in several States.

Lessons can be drawn from the experiences of women at the grassroots level who have overcome various challenges, including patriarchal attitudes and limited recognition in official roles, to make a meaningful impact.

Broader Challenges for Women

Women in India confront numerous challenges like unequal access to healthcare, nutrition, and education, as well as inadequate safe spaces.

Moreover, India has the lowest female labour force participation among G-20 countries at 24%, there has been a decline in female workforce participation.

Way Forward:

As the Women's Reservation Bill progresses toward becoming law, it is imperative to fine-tune proposals and measures to ensure that the legislation results in meaningful political representation for women rather than symbolic gestures. Local governance

models, where women have excelled, should serve as a source of inspiration and practical insights. The emphasis should be on overcoming the multifaceted challenges faced by women, ranging from social and cultural barriers to unequal access to resources and opportunities.

India and the Great Power Contest in West Asia

Context:

The global geopolitical landscape is undergoing notable shifts, and amidst these changes, the United States, led by President Joe Biden, is charting a nuanced course in its approach to West Asia.

Background:



This region, of immense geostrategic importance, has seen the U.S. play a dominant role for decades. However, this dominance is now being challenged by various factors. President Biden's strategy for West Asia can be dissected into two core components.

The first centres on the continuation of the Trump-era policy, aiming to foster closer ties between the Gulf Arab nations and Israel, both key allies of the U.S. The ultimate goal is to address shared geopolitical challenges, notably the rise of Iran. While the Abraham Accords laid the groundwork for improved relations, true potential awaits the forging of a deal between Israel and Saudi Arabia, a linchpin Arab nation. This represents a notable shift, especially considering President Biden's earlier stance on Saudi Arabia. The U.S. administration believes that such a pact could not only enhance Arab-Israeli relations but also bolster the United States' regional influence without the need for further military commitments.

The second facet of President Biden's approach seeks to reassure America's allies and friends that the U.S. remains committed to West Asia. The I2U2 minilateral, comprising India, Israel, the U.S., and the UAE, is emblematic of this approach. It

aims to expedite economic integration between South Asia and West Asia, offering innovative solutions to the challenges faced by countries in the Global South.

The recently announced India-Middle East-Europe Corridor, unveiled during the G-20 summit, holds significant promise in this regard. By establishing an economic corridor that spans from India's western coast through the Gulf, Jordan, and Israel, and ultimately reaching the Mediterranean, this project could bring India and Europe closer while bolstering the U.S.'s regional influence. Despite shifting its focus to Eastern Europe and East Asia, the U.S. recognizes that West Asia remains strategically vital, particularly due to China's growing interests in the region.

Relevance:

GS-02 (International relations)

Main Question:

Discuss the key dimensions and challenges of President Biden's West Asia strategy, emphasizing its implications for regional geopolitics and the role of India in shaping the evolving dynamics. (250 words)

Dimensions of the Article:

- Part One: Strengthening Ties and Forging Alliances
- Part Two: Reassurance and Sustained Engagement

Part One: Strengthening Ties and Forging Alliances

The first dimension of President Biden's West Asia strategy revolves around strengthening ties with key allies in the region, primarily the Gulf Arab nations and Israel. This approach is not entirely new, as it builds upon the Trump-era policy, exemplified by the Abraham Accords. These accords laid the foundation for closer relations between Israel and the UAE, marking a significant departure from the region's historical dynamics.

However, the full potential of this policy hinges on the establishment of a similar agreement between Israel and Saudi Arabia, a nation with substantial regional influence. President Biden, despite initial reservations about Saudi Arabia, has been proactive in reaching out to the Kingdom. The ultimate goal is to transform Arab-Israeli relations, bolstering the U.S.'s regional standing without resorting to military commitments.

Part Two: Reassurance and Sustained Engagement

The second dimension of President Biden's approach aims to reassure West Asia that the U.S. remains committed to the region. This assurance is essential as the U.S. has shifted its security priorities toward Eastern Europe and East Asia. Nonetheless, West Asia retains its strategic significance, especially concerning energy resources and regional stability. China's growing engagement in the region has added complexity to the U.S.'s approach.

The U.S. recognizes that complete withdrawal from West Asia could create a void for China to fill. To counter this, the U.S. seeks to strengthen alliances among regional partners and involve India as a stable partner in shaping economic engagement and integration. This collaborative approach aims to compete with China's influence in the region.

Conclusion:

President Biden's West Asia strategy is multifaceted, aiming to strengthen ties with traditional allies and reassure the region of the U.S.'s enduring commitment. By fostering closer relations between key players, notably Israel and Saudi Arabia, and promoting economic integration through initiatives like the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor, the U.S. seeks to maintain its influence in West Asia.

However, this strategy faces challenges, including the increasing autonomy of regional powers and the delicate balance of power in the Iran-Israel rivalry.

Nonetheless, the U.S. views India as a crucial partner in this evolving landscape, and India should approach this opportunity with a multi-engagement strategy, striving to play a significant geopolitical role in West Asia while maintaining its traditional balance.

A clear message to the industry on dispute resolution

Context:

Given the delays and increased cost of litigation in Indian courts, the discussion surrounding the Indian legal system inevitably gravitates towards Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR).

Relevance:

GS-02 (Judiciary, Dispute redressal mechanism)

Prelims:

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), Online Dispute Resolution (ODR), NITI Aayog, Mediation Bill, Lok Adalats, Plea-Bargaining, NALSA.

Mains Question:

Discuss the significance and implications of the Mediation Act, of 2023, in the context of the Indian legal system. How does this legislation impact the resolution of disputes and the burden on Indian courts? (Word Limit: 250)

Dimensions of the Article:

- The Mediation Bill, 2023
- Balancing Act: Benefits and Concerns

- Mediation vs. Arbitration
- Parliament's Clear Message to Indian Industry

The Mediation Bill, 2023

The recent approval of The Mediation Bill, 2023, during the monsoon session of Parliament, marks a significant moment in India's legal landscape.

Earlier, Indian law had encouraged courts to refer disputing parties to ADR methods, including mediation, if a possibility of settlement exists.

Regardless of any prior mediation agreement, it will compel each party to engage in pre-litigation mediation before resorting to Indian courts.

Additionally, the Act mandates courts and relevant institutions to maintain a roster of mediators.

Balancing Act: Benefits and Concerns

This requirement is anticipated to reduce the influx of frivolous claims filed in Indian courts. The confidential nature of mediation may also shield the parties' relationship from deterioration due to a publicized dispute.

Nonetheless, concerns arise regarding the viability of mediation when enforced as an obligation rather than a sincere attempt at an amicable resolution. In such cases, it might empower an uncooperative defendant to delay a legitimate claim. Thankfully, the Act includes safeguards to address these apprehensions. It stipulates that mediation must ordinarily be conducted by a neutral empanelled mediator with unwavering expertise.

Parties are also mandated to complete the mediation within 180 days of their initial engagement. Importantly, the Act retains the option for parties to seek urgent interim relief from a court in exceptional circumstances before or during mediation. These provisions prioritize expertise and efficiency while preventing the misuse of pre-litigation mediation.

Mediation vs. Arbitration

An aspect that often goes unnoticed is how the Act effectively positions mediation alongside commercial arbitration in India. The parallels between the respective supporting legislations are evident.

Both impose strict timelines for proceedings, emphasize confidentiality, require Indian courts to refer parties to mediation or arbitration, offer default mechanisms for mediator or arbitrator appointment, and define the procedure for terminating their roles. Moreover, both ensure the enforceability of mediated settlement agreements and arbitral awards, respectively.

The establishment of a Mediation Council of India mirrors the proposed Arbitration Council of India from 2019. Thus, mediation and commercial arbitration become allies, albeit at different stages of the same journey.

Parliament's Clear Message to Indian Industry

Parliament's message to the Indian business world is unequivocal: courts should no longer be the default arena for resolving commercial disputes. Parties are encouraged to amicably settle their disputes through mediation and, alternatively, through commercial arbitration.

While access to Indian courts remains available when necessary, it must be seen as a last resort. In this context, the Act fosters cooperation between the mediation and arbitration of commercial disputes, alleviating the burden on Indian courts.

The Rise of Institutional Mediation

The Act also emphasizes the importance of institutional mediation in India, similar to recent amendments prioritizing institutional arbitration under the A&C Act. It envisions "mediation service providers" offering not only mediation services but also all necessary facilities, secretarial assistance, and infrastructure for efficient mediation.

These mediation service providers are akin to arbitration institutions, some of which in India already offer mediation services aligned with global best practices. Thus, these institutions are poised to play a significant role in India's mediation landscape. This approach positions India as a global hub for all aspects of commercial dispute resolution, not just arbitration.

Extended exclusion

Context:

The state of Manipur is poised to extend the enforcement of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) for an additional six months, encompassing the hill areas, effective from October. Recent violent ethnic strife between the Meitei and Kuki communities complicates matters. The Army has requested the reinstatement of AFSPA in the Valley districts, citing the hindrance it faces in counterinsurgency operations due to the absence of the law. While it's evident that AFSPA should not persist, the exclusion of areas that have witnessed substantial violence raises questions.

Relevance:

GS-02, GS-03 (Poverty and Developmental Issues) (Issues Related to SCs & STs) (Minorities) (Government Policies & Interventions) (Pressure Groups) (North-East Insurgency)

Prelims:

- Meitei Tribe, Kuki Tribe, Naga Tribe.
- 6th schedule, Inner Line Permit (ILP).

- Xaxa Committee

Mains Question:

Examine the dynamics surrounding the extension of AFSPA in Manipur, particularly the exclusion of the Imphal Valley, in light of the recent ethnic conflict. Analyze the potential implications of this decision on the security situation and the need for reconciliation measures between conflicting communities. (250 words)

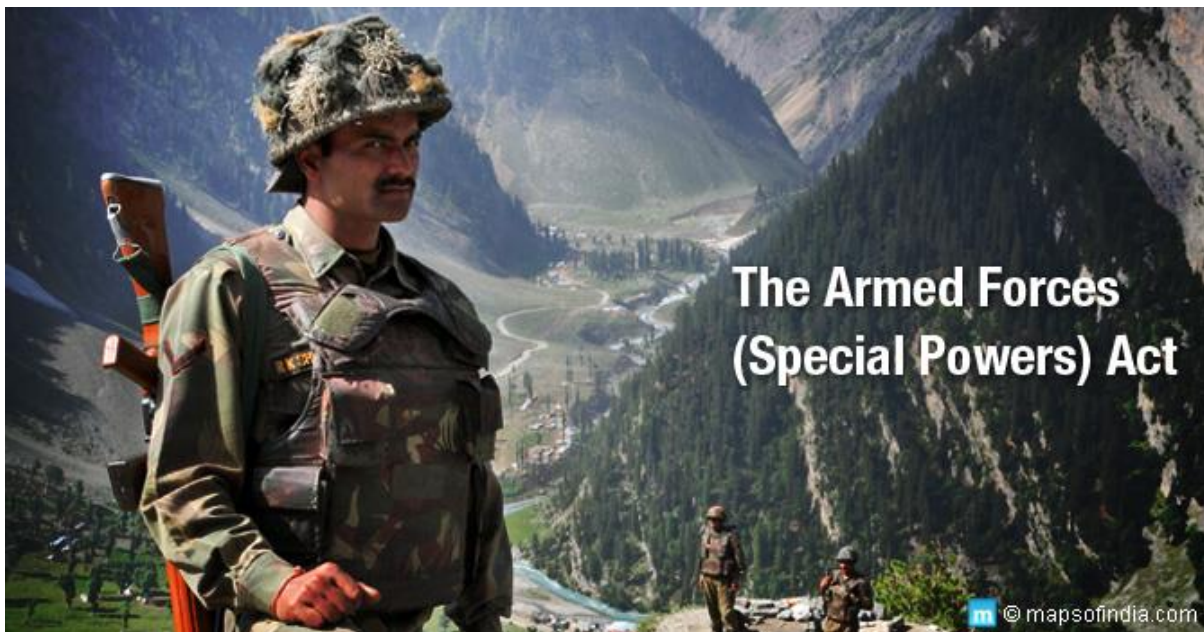
Dimensions of the Article:

- AFSPA's Extension
- The Irony of Exclusion: Imphal Valley vs. Hill Areas
- Partisan Conduct: Government's Stance
- The Need for Reconciliation: Preventing Escalation

AFSPA's Extension:

The decision to extend AFSPA in Manipur inevitably prompts the question of its continued relevance. AFSPA grants extensive powers to armed forces in designated 'disturbed areas,' which has long been a subject of contention.

The law's enforcement, even in the absence of imminent conflict, raises concerns about its necessity in present times.



The Irony of Exclusion: Imphal Valley vs. Hill Areas

What adds complexity to the situation is the exclusion of the Imphal Valley from AFSPA's ambit while extending it to the hill areas. This distinction seems ironic, given the recent violent clashes between the Meitei and Kuki communities.

The Army's request to reimpose AFSPA in the Valley districts underscores its apprehensions regarding insurgent groups exploiting the unrest.

Partisan Conduct: Government's Stance

The government's decision to maintain the status quo on the 'disturbed areas' raises questions about its objectivity. It appears that the exclusion of the valley districts from AFSPA may be perceived as a partisan move.

While the government cites the inability to conduct a detailed ground assessment amidst ongoing law and order duties, the underlying concern seems to be the fear of displeasing the majority Meitei community.

The Need for Reconciliation: Preventing Escalation

The situation in Manipur is fraught with the potential for further conflict, especially in the backdrop of the Meitei community's animosity towards the Assam Rifles.

The recent incidents involving vehicles resembling Assam Rifles' trucks heighten the risk of escalating tensions. The central government must initiate a sincere effort to foster reconciliation between the conflicting Meitei and Kuki communities.

Way Forward:

The government must address the contentious issue of AFSPA's extension judiciously. While the law's necessity is debatable, the exclusion of areas that have experienced recent violence requires careful consideration.

The government should prioritize reconciliation efforts between the Meitei and Kuki communities to prevent the situation from deteriorating further.

Conclusion:

The extension of AFSPA in Manipur, particularly the exclusion of the Imphal Valley, raises pertinent questions about the law's relevance and the government's stance. It is crucial to strike a balance between security concerns and the need for reconciliation between communities. The government's approach to this delicate issue will play a pivotal role in maintaining peace and stability in Manipur.

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Special Session of Parliament from Sept. 18 to 22

Context

Soon after the end of the G-20 Summit in this city on September 10, the Union administration on Thursday declared a Special Session of Parliament from September 18 to 22.

What is a Parliamentary session?

- A parliamentary session is the time frame between a house's initial sitting and when it is prorogued. The session is when a legislature meets to pass laws.
- According to Article 85, the Houses of Parliament must be called together so that no more than six months pass between two sessions. Except for exceptional sessions, the Parliament typically meets three times every year.
- On the recommendation of the Council of Ministers, the President calls both regular and special sessions of Parliament. The President may, however, call a session of Parliament at his discretion if he believes that the six-month period may be coming to an end and the Union Council of Ministers has not requested it.

What are the different types of sessions being called in the Indian Parliament?

- **Budget Session:** The Indian Parliament's longest and most important session is the budget session. It normally lasts through May and starts in late January or early February. The Budget Session's salient characteristics are as follows:
- **Presentation of the Union Budget:** The session begins with a speech from the president to a joint session of both chambers of parliament. This session is dedicated to presenting and debating the Union Budget, which summarizes the government's financial strategies for the upcoming fiscal year.
- **Approval of the Budget:** The budget's different components, including taxes, spending, and government policies, are discussed and voted on by both houses of Parliament.
- **Monsoon Season:** Typically, the monsoon season lasts from July through September. The second-longest session of Parliament covers a range of legislative topics. The term "Monsoon Session" derives from the session's scheduling, which falls during India's monsoon season.
- **Winter Session:** From November through December, Parliament is in session. The legislative agenda takes up the majority of this session, which is the shortest of the three regular ones. Bills and other significant issues are discussed and passed during this session.
- **Special Sessions:** Outside of the regular sessions, Parliament may summon special sessions at any time to handle urgent matters. These meetings are held to talk about and consider issues that need to be resolved right away. On

the recommendation of the Council of Ministers, the President decides whether to hold a special session.



How are the special sessions being conducted?

- **Summoning the special session:** The decision to call a special session is made by the President of India on the recommendation of the Council of Ministers, which is normally presided over by the Prime Minister. The choice is made depending on how urgent or significant the issues are that need to be resolved. The President officially calls a special session of Parliament into session and notifies lawmakers of the date and length of the meeting.
- **Setting the agenda:** The government establishes the agenda for the extraordinary session through the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs. The exact bills, resolutions, or topics that will be discussed and debated during the session are included on this agenda. Both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha's presiding officers are informed in advance of the agenda.
- **Conduct of Business:** During the special session, the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha conduct business following their customary practices. This involves the introduction of bills, discussions about the problems listed on the agenda, debates, and voting on legislation. Both the Lok Sabha Speaker and the Rajya Sabha Chairman preside over their respective houses.
- **Debates and Question Hour:** Just like in ordinary sessions, Members of Parliament (MPs) have the opportunity to pose inquiries to the government during Question Hour. In addition, extraordinary sessions enable focused discussions on the pressing issues or circumstances that prompted the session. MPs get the chance to discuss the topics, share information, and express their opinions.
- **Legislative Process:** If there are any bills or resolutions on the agenda, they go through the voting, committee examination, and repeated readings that

make up the legislative process. Legislation is still passed using the same procedure as in ordinary sessions.

- **Adjournment:** Daily sittings of both houses during the special session may be adjourned as with ordinary sessions, with particular dates and times designated for their reconvening. The adjournment gives time for more thought and allows for breaks between sittings.

Conclusion: When all items on the agenda have been addressed or the time allotted for the session has passed, as stipulated by the President in the summoning notification, the special session is over. The President may prorogue (officially adjourn) the session following its conclusion.

After India, Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia protest China's map

Context

On Thursday, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia each issued a statement expressing their disagreement with China's proposed "standard map" for 2023, which has also sparked a fervent response from India.

What does China's New Standard Map portray?

- **Territorial Claims:** China's territorial claims over contested areas, such as Arunachal Pradesh and the Aksai Chin region, are reiterated by the map. This implies that despite persistent conflicts with India, China continues to claim its authority over these regions.
- **South China Sea Claims:** China's sweeping claims to the whole South China Sea are highlighted by the inclusion of the "Nine-Dash Line" on the map. As various nations in the area, including the Philippines and Vietnam, have rival territorial claims in the South China Sea, this is a hotly contested topic. China's map essentially affirms its hegemony in this important maritime region.
- **Taiwan Claim:** A tenth dashed line on the map highlights China's claims to Taiwan. This is a provocative action because Taiwan is a democratic, self-governing island that China regards as being on its territory. China's position on Taiwan's status is reflected in it.
- **Name Standardization:** China's practice of standardizing place names in contentious areas like Arunachal Pradesh is an intentional effort on its part to reassert its control and authority over these territories. China frequently renames locations to support its claims.
- **Emphasis on Map Awareness:** The release of the map during "National Mapping Awareness Publicity Week" emphasizes China's dedication to precise and uniform mapping. This demonstrates how crucial mapping and cartography are to China's geopolitical goals.

- **Implications for Diplomacy and the Region:** China's distribution of this map may cause diplomatic problems and strained ties with its neighbours, including Malaysia, the Philippines, India, and Malaysia. As nations in the Indo-Pacific region react to China's territorial aggression, it could also have an impact on regional dynamics.
- **Geopolitical Signalling:** China's actions in making this map public can be considered as a part of their larger geopolitical plan. It underlines its willingness to challenge the status quo in numerous contentious territories and indicates a more proactive approach to territorial disputes.



What are the border dispute points between India and China?

- **Aksai Chin:** Aksai Chin is an area that India claims, but China administers. It is situated in the western part of the boundary. Due to its proximity to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), this area is of strategic importance.
- **Arunachal Pradesh (South Tibet):** China claims the entirety of the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh in the eastern part and refers to it as "South

Tibet." This area is governed by India, which regards it as an essential component of its territory.

- **Line of Demarcation:** Throughout the border, particularly in some parts, there is no mutually agreed-upon Line of Actual Control (LAC). After the Sino-Indian War of 1962, the LAC was created, and it has since become a source of contention and occasional conflict.

What effects will the new standard map have?

- **Diplomatic Tensions:** Tensions in diplomacy may arise as a result of China's use of maps to assert its authority over disputed territories. Affected nations may complain diplomatically and restate their claims in response, which might sour bilateral ties.
- **Impact on Bilateral Relations:** China's relations with the impacted nations may be strained as a result of the release of these maps. Cooperation in several sectors, including trade, investment, and interpersonal interactions, may be impacted as a result.
- **Regional Power Balance:** The border disputes and territorial claims have an impact on the overall regional power structure. To offset China's influence, it can have an impact on how strategically aligned a nation is with other countries and regional organizations.
- **Territorial Assertion:** China is reiterating its territorial claims by including disputed areas on its official map. This might intensify current conflicts and raise tensions with nearby nations.
- **Legal and International Reaction:** The publication of these maps may encourage the affected nations to bring up the subject in international forums to get support for their stance. Discussions about adherence to international standards and guidelines for territorial integrity and conflict resolution may also result from this.
- **Geopolitical Signaling:** One way that maps are used in geopolitics is through signalling. As part of a larger geopolitical strategy, China's actions in distributing these maps can be regarded as suggesting a more forceful posture on territorial disputes and regional dominance.

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RBMCCP-33	August 04 th 2024	7:00 AM - 10:00 AM	15 Months



Delhi may turn venue for dialogue on reviving the Black Sea Grain Initiative

Context

In meetings outside of the G-20 Summit, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is attempting to resuscitate the Black Sea Grain Initiative (BSGI or BSI) while world leaders assemble in Delhi on Friday. The agreement that makes it easier for Russia and Ukraine to export grain expired in July.



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What is the Black Sea Grain Initiative?

An agreement known as the Black Sea Grain Initiative was reached between Russia, Ukraine, Turkey, and the UN. To guarantee that Ukraine could export its grain through the Bosphorus, the deal was negotiated in July 2022. Three Ukrainian Black Sea ports were able to export food and fertilizer thanks to the program. The ports are located in Yuzhny/Pivdennyi, Chornomorsk, and Odessa. To keep an eye on the initiative's execution, the Joint Coordination Centre (JCC) was set up.

Which are the countries benefited from the BSGI?

- Russia, Ukraine, Turkey, and the UN came to an agreement known as the Black Sea Grain Initiative (BSGI). In July 2022, the UN helped mediate an agreement allowing Ukraine to export grain and other agricultural items via Black Sea shipping lanes. The contract expired on July 17, 2023.
- The BSGI permitted Ukraine to restart exporting millions of tons of grain over the Black Sea's international waters. Over 725,000 metric tons of wheat were shipped from Ukraine by the World Food Programme to aid in humanitarian efforts in Yemen, the Horn of Africa, and Afghanistan.

Why did Russia pull out of the deal of the Black Sea Grain Initiative?

- **Unmet Demands:** Russia asserted that its demands for the continuation of the BSGI accord had not been met by the United Nations (UN) or Western nations. Although the material presented does not go into specifics, the requests are probably related to the agreement's terms and conditions.
- **Western sanctions' effects:** Even though food and fertilizer are excluded, Russia said that these restrictions were nevertheless impeding its exports. This shows that the sanctions may have damaged Russia's agricultural exports in ways that went beyond those that were officially exempt.
- **Contravention of the second deal:** Russia claims that the Western sanctions violate a second agreement that was reached in July of the previous year. The UN agreed to support Russian exports, especially those associated with grain trade, for a three-year term as part of this second accord. The sanctions, in Russia's opinion, violated this commitment.
- **Sanctions Targets:** In addition to Russian citizens, the state agriculture bank was also the target of the sanctions. The inclusion of this bank under the sanctions may have significantly impacted Russia's capacity to conduct commerce given that it is essential for Russia's agricultural exports.
- **SWIFT Exclusion:** Russia urged that its national agricultural bank be allowed to rejoin the SWIFT global payments network. A nation's ability to conduct international trade can be significantly hampered by the removal of SWIFT, a crucial financial messaging network utilized for international transactions.
- **Rejection of Compromise:** Moscow rejected a compromise put out by the UN and the European Union (EU), which sought to establish a new division inside the bank and let it conduct transactions involving the trade of grains. The fact that Russia rejected this agreement showed that its demands were higher than those put forward in the compromise.

What is the proposed Compromise?

- The suggested agreement entails expanding Russia's accessibility to financial markets. In exchange, Russia would undertake not to attack or bomb Ukrainian grain-exporting ships or ports.

- A fresh set of recommendations for Russia to think about has been created in cooperation with Turkey and the UN. These suggestions are meant to deal with the problems that caused the BSGI to expire.

What would be the impact of non-revival of the black sea gain Initiative?

- Because Russia and Ukraine together account for a sizeable share (21.9%) of global exports of barley, maize, and wheat, the BSGI is important on a global scale.
- If the BSGI agreements are not resurrected, food prices could rise globally, which could have negative repercussions, particularly in African nations.

What is the way forward from this crisis?

- **Diplomatic Engagement:** The parties involved must maintain their diplomatic engagement. This covers the United Nations, Western nations, Russia, Ukraine, and other parties involved. Dialogue and discussion should continue through open diplomatic channels.
- **Addressing Sanctions:** Discussions between Russia and Western nations are necessary to address the sanctions, which Russia thinks are impeding its exports. Part of the solution can involve finding common ground or taking required action to modify punishments.
- **Readmission to SWIFT:** It is important to address Russia's request for the reinstatement of its national agricultural bank within the SWIFT global payment network. Considerations for everyone's financial and economic security may be included in discussions about this issue.
- **Clarifying and Addressing Demands:** It's critical to address each party's unique demands and concerns. It is crucial to pinpoint potential points of compromise and endeavour to satisfy these requests to the satisfaction of all parties involved.
- **International Mediation:** If direct negotiations fail to produce a resolution, dialogue and negotiations may be facilitated through international mediation by an impartial third party or institution, such as the United Nations.

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African Union to join G-20, as Sherpas reach a deal

Context

According to sources with knowledge of the proceedings at the Sherpa summit at a resort on the outskirts of Delhi, the African Union (AU) is scheduled to join the G-20 after negotiators reached an agreement on clearing its membership.

This will make the African Union, with its 55 members, and the European Union the only two regional organizations in the G-20.

What is the African Union?

- The African continent is home to the 55 member states that make up the African Union (AU). To replace the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the AU was founded in 2002.
- The countries that make up the AU are split into five geographical areas. The African Union Commission (AUC), the AU's secretariat, is headquartered in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The AUC manages the day-to-day operations of the AU.
- On September 9, 1999, in Sirte, Libya, the Sirte Declaration introduced the AU. The African Union will be given permanent membership by the G20.
- What is the current status of the African Union in the G20 meeting?
- At the 18th G20 summit in New Delhi, the G20 is anticipated to announce its decision to award the AU permanent membership. The world's richest and most powerful nations make up the G20.
- The AU's membership in the G20 is part of India's commitment to be the voice of the Global South. In June, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi suggested joining the AU.



What are the advantages for the African Union in the G20 summit?

- **Economic Influence:** The combined GDP and commerce of the G20 countries account for a sizeable percentage of the global economy. A nation or regional entity can influence international economic policies and projects by joining the G20.
- **Coordination of policies:** G20 gatherings offer member nations a forum for discussing and coordinating economic strategies. This can be especially useful when dealing with national or international economic problems.
- **Access to Resources:** Participating in the G20 can make it easier to acquire financial resources, such as money for important projects, investments, and development aid. It can also draw FDI from abroad and encourage economic expansion.
- **Networking and diplomacy:** Being a member of the G20 permits a nation to take part in high-level economic and diplomatic negotiations with other significant economies. This could improve alliances, trade connections, and diplomatic relations.
- **Global Governance:** Aside from the economy, the G20 meetings also address a wide range of international topics, such as security, health crises, and climate change. Participation in these debates can influence how important decisions are made about global governance.
- **Influence on International Agendas:** G20 members have the chance to influence international affairs and promote their interests. For nations or regional organizations looking to pursue particular policy goals, this can be crucial information.

What is India's role in AU's entry to G20?

- **Advocacy for Inclusion:** India, which hosted the G20 conference where the AU's inclusion was decided, probably played a crucial part in supporting the AU's accession. Indian representatives would have attempted to forge an understanding among G20 participants and advocate AU membership as a means of boosting participation from the Global South.
- **Interests of the Global South are Promoted:** India has a history of fighting for the rights of underdeveloped nations, particularly those in Asia and Africa. In line with its larger initiatives to advance the issues and goals of the Global South on the international scene, India supports the AU's membership in the G20.
- **Diplomatic Leadership:** India took the lead in the negotiations as the G20 summit's host country. Due to its position of leadership, India was able to dictate the summit's agenda and outcomes, including selections for the AU's membership.
- **Facilitating Dialogue:** To facilitate a smooth process for the AU's entry into the G20, India may have served as a bridge between G20 members and the AU, encouraging conversation and negotiations between the two parties.
- **Emphasizing the Role of the Global South:** The fact that India is supporting AU membership can be interpreted as an effort to highlight the growing

significance of the Global South in international economic and political matters. India hopes to have a long-lasting influence on the G20's acceptance of the AU by promoting its inclusion.

Which other country supported the AU's Admission?

- **China:** According to Mao Ning, a spokesman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry, China was the first nation to formally declare support for the G20 membership of the African Union. During the China-Africa Leaders' Dialogue, President Xi Jinping reaffirmed China's active support for the AU's full membership. China views the AU as a crucial partner in creating a high-level China-Africa relationship and defending global justice and fairness.
- **Russia:** The G20 Sherpa for Russia also endorsed joining the AU. Moscow was one of the first nations to support the AU's admission to the G20, according to Russian media.

Modi presents a 12-point proposal to expand India-ASEAN relations

Context :

At the annual ASEAN-India Summit on Thursday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi outlined a 12-point plan to increase collaboration between India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in several areas, including connectivity, trade, and digital transformation, while also advocating for the creation of a post-COVID world order based on rules.

What is ASEAN Grouping?

ASEAN, or the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, is a Southeast Asian regional organization with 10 member countries. The ASEAN Declaration was signed on August 8, 1967, by the foreign ministers of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. ASEAN has evolved and expanded its ambitions beyond its basic goal of limiting communism to become a significant regional political and economic union.

What is the 12-point proposal proposed by PM Modi in ASEAN?

- At the ASEAN-India Summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi outlined his vision for expanding collaboration between India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in various areas in a 12-point proposal.
- Establishing an economic corridor and multimodal connectivity between India, South-East Asia, West Asia, and Europe
- Offer to ASEAN allies to share India's Digital Public Infrastructure Stack

- Focusing on collaboration in financial connectivity and digital transformation, the ASEAN-India Fund for the Digital Future
- The Economic and Research Institute of ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) will continue to receive funding in its role as a knowledge partner for boosting participation.
- Call for addressing concerns faced by the Global South collectively through international fora
- An invitation to ASEAN nations to join the WHO-established Global Center for Traditional Medicine in India
- Encouragement to collaborate on a mission LiFE
- Offer to talk about India's experience in getting people access to affordable, high-quality medications Dechadhi Kendras
- A request for cooperation in the fight against terrorism, financing of terrorism, and online misinformation
- To join the Coalition for Disaster Resistant Infrastructure, the ASEAN nations are invited.
- Encourage collaboration in disaster management
- Encourage more collaboration on marine security, safety, and domain awareness

Conclusion

Overall, the proposal made by Prime Minister Modi during the ASEAN-India Summit demonstrates India's dedication to enhancing its ties with ASEAN nations, boosting regional cooperation, tackling security issues, and supporting economic growth and connectivity in the Asia-Pacific region.

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‘At G-20, Japan backs India, not China, as a bridge to Global South’

Context

Beyond the short-term results of the G-20 Summit, one significant finding with long-term repercussions is the placement of India as a crucial link between the West and the "Global South" in the eyes of Japanese academics.

How does Japan See the rivalry between India and China?

- India and China are seen as competing for dominance in the "Global South" by Japanese experts.
- Different attitudes to and interests in international affairs are the foundation of this rivalry.
- India wants to position itself as a responsible and significant actor in the developing world, in contrast to China, which has increased its influence globally through programs like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

What is Japan's Strategic interest in India leading the global south?

- As a G-7 member, Japan has a stake in promoting India as a crucial partner in the "Global South."
- This strategy is viewed as a means of balancing out China's expanding influence both locally and worldwide.
- Japan's dedication to this policy is demonstrated by Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's invitation of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the G-7 summit in Hiroshima.

What are the problems faced by Japan if the Chinese lead the global south?

- **Geopolitical Tensions:** Current geopolitical tensions in the Asia-Pacific area may be made worse by China's leadership in the Global South. China and Japan have long-running territorial disputes, especially in the East China Sea. Conflicts over these issues could become more complicated and even violent if an assertive China were to lead the Global South.
- **Economic Competition:** Japan may face difficulties as a result of China's economic hegemony in the Global South. Japan's economic sway in the area may be diminished as a result of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which has encouraged substantial infrastructure expenditures in numerous nations. Chinese businesses may compete more fiercely with Japanese businesses in several industries.
- **Security Concerns:** Japan's security interests may be jeopardized if a China-led Global South aligns more closely with Beijing's foreign policy goals. Japan has relied on its alliances to uphold regional security, especially those with the United States. Japan's security calculations may be impacted by a change in the global south's allegiances.

- **Global Governance:** Changes in global governance may result from China's leadership in the Global South, which may have an impact on international organizations and forums. Japan is a G-7 member and has supported multilateralism and democratic principles. International diplomacy may be influenced by different philosophies and strategies of a China-led Global South.

How does Japan plan to use the G20 and G7 to collaborate with India?

- As the G-7 Chairman, Japan's main priority has been to work with India.
- The objective is to narrow the gap between the G-7 and the larger G-20, minus China and Russia, on several problems.
- Collaboration attempts to address global issues like debt crises, investment transparency, and climate financing.
- The goal of this collaborative endeavour is to align the G-20's outcomes with those of the G-7 and India.

What is the role of Asian countries in Global governance?

- The place of Asian nations in global governance is a topic of contention that extends beyond the rivalry between China and India.
- It has long been problematic that Western nations predominate in international organizations like the G-20.
- Asian countries are working to strengthen their aggregate impact on global governance and want a bigger say in setting global priorities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the placement of India as a conduit between the West and the "Global South" reflects changing dynamics in international relations. It highlights the strategic value of India in containing China's dominance and promoting cooperation to address global issues. But in the next years, it will be crucial to keep an eye on the continuing hostilities between China and India as well as broader concerns about the place of Asian nations in global governance.

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We have a lot to bring to the G-20 table: African Union chief

Context:

The President of Comoros, Mr Assoumani, stated in an exclusive interview with The Hindu that G-20 members should finance the industrialization of Africa. He asked the G-20 economies to use African resources to produce goods in Africa, assuring the members that Africa is ready to do all it takes to address the immigration crisis facing the European countries.

What are the challenges faced by Africa?

- **Conflict and Instability:** Political unrest, civil wars, and other conflicts are commonplace in many African nations. These disputes frequently emerge from difficulties like racial tensions, administrative concerns, and resource competitiveness. The AU tries to mediate and settle these disputes, but it has a lot of obstacles to overcome.
- **Political Governance:** Some African nations experience problems with corruption, flimsy institutions, and a dearth of democratic procedures. Though it might be difficult to have an impact on member states' internal affairs, the AU seeks to promote democracy and good governance.
- **Economic development:** Despite recent economic growth in Africa, the continent still faces several economic difficulties, including extreme poverty, high unemployment rates, and income inequality. The AU must deal with scarce resources and infrastructure gaps while attempting to further regional integration and economic development.
- **Healthcare and Disease:** The burden of infectious diseases like HIV/AIDS, malaria, and the current COVID-19 pandemic are among the health concerns facing Africa. Healthcare access continues to be difficult, particularly in rural areas.
- **movement and Displacement:** Due to causes including conflict, economic opportunities, and climate change, Africa has seen significant intra- and inter-regional movement. It is a difficult issue to manage migration and attend to the rights and needs of migrants.

What advantages would the African Union have if they joined the G20?

- **Economic Growth and Investment:** The G20 nations, which have some of the largest economies in the world, may invest in Africa to promote economic growth and development. Increased FDI from G20 members could help with industrialization, infrastructure development, and job creation in African nations.
- **Industrialization:** The G20 may assist Africa in putting more value on its raw materials and natural resources, which could result in economic diversification and less reliance on commodity exports. The G20 could also provide

assistance, expertise, and investment for the continent's industrialization efforts.

- **Trade opportunities:** The G20 contains significant trading nations. A closer relationship between the AU and the G20 might make trade agreements and market access easier, fostering regional trade and economic integration within Africa and with the G20 economies.
- **Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping:** Although the G20's main objective is economic, it can have an impact on conversations about peace and security. Collaboration between the AU and G20 countries may result in more funding for peacekeeping and conflict resolution initiatives in Africa's conflict-prone regions.
- **Mitigation and Adaptation to Climate Change:** The G20 can contribute significantly to international efforts to address climate change. Increased funding for climate adaptation and mitigation initiatives in Africa may be the consequence of collaboration between the AU and G20 nations, assisting the continent in addressing climate-related issues.



How can investments in Africa help with their drought situations?

- **Water Infrastructure:** Investing in water infrastructure, such as irrigation systems, dams, and reservoirs, can assist in better storing and managing water supplies. Water can be stored during rainy seasons and released during dry ones by well-maintained reservoirs, ensuring a more dependable water supply for agriculture and populations.
- **Drought-Resistant Agriculture:** By investing in the development of drought-resistant crop types and farming methods, it is possible to increase the drought resistance of African agriculture. This involves encouraging the adoption of seeds resistant to drought and techniques like conservation agriculture.

- **Water harvesting and storage:** Rural communities can gather and store rainwater for drinking and agricultural use during dry spells by investing in small-scale water storage systems and rainwater harvesting equipment.
- **Reforestation and Erosion Control:** Investments in reforestation and erosion control projects can aid in preventing desertification and soil erosion, two problems that are frequently made worse by dry conditions.
- **International Cooperation:** To gain access to funds and technical know-how for drought mitigation projects, African nations can cooperate with international organizations and donor agencies.

How are the Ukrainian conflict and India's ban on Rice affecting Africa?

The African Union has been debating solutions to deal with the effects of the conflict in Ukraine, which has affected fertilizer and agricultural supply routes to Africa. In addition to calling for a halt to the violence, President Assoumani highlighted alarm over its effects on food security in Africa.

He brought up India's recent prohibition on rice exports and emphasized how important Indian rice is to Africa. Given the food crisis in numerous African nations, he emphasized the necessity for India to intervene and secure supplies. President Assoumani further emphasized the opportunity for India to assist Africa in improving its capacity.

What are the benefits for India if the African Union is part of G20?

- **Enhanced Economic Partnerships:** Within the G20 framework, India may strengthen its economic connections with African nations. A framework for deeper economic interaction, including trade and investment, with a continent that has enormous growth potential would be made available by the AU's membership.
- **Access to African Markets:** The AU's participation in the G20 could promote trade agreements and Indian products and services' ability to enter African markets. Given the burgeoning middle class and developing consumer markets in Africa, this would be especially beneficial.
- **Access to Natural Resources:** Minerals and oil are among the abundant natural resources found in Africa. The G20's increased interaction with the AU may boost India's businesses and the country's energy demands' access to these resources.
- **Opportunities for Investment:** The G20 platform may encourage Indian companies to engage in African infrastructure, industry, and agriculture, thereby generating profits and stimulating India's economy.
- **Influence diplomatically:** India could use the G20 to strengthen its position in Africa. Addressing common global issues like terrorism, climate change, and pandemic preparedness may benefit from this.

Philippines condemns 'illegal' actions by Chinese boats in South China Sea

Context

After the boats allegedly interfered with another resupply operation to a distant military station in the contested South China Sea, the Philippines denounced the "illegal" conduct of the Chinese vessels on Friday.

What is the historical background behind the China-Philippines sea dispute?

- **Ancient Claims:** Chinese sovereignty claims date back centuries and include the Second Thomas Shoal (also called Ayungin in the Philippines), which is located in the South China Sea. These assertions are frequently supported by historical documents from long-gone Chinese dynasties like the Xia dynasty, which lasted for almost 4,000 years.
- **Colonial Period:** Spanish and the United States were just two of the European nations that ruled the Philippines throughout the colonial era. These colonial powers did not, however, make numerous claims to land in the South China Sea.
- **World War II:** The Philippines were held by Japan at this time, and there was a lot of naval activity in the area. Territorial issues and tensions in the region remain as a result of the war.
- **Post-World War II Period:** In 1946, the Philippines won independence from the US following World War II. More recent territorial conflicts in the South China Sea started during this time.
- **1950s and 1960s:** In the 1950s and 1960s, China started claiming the Spratly Islands and the Paracel Islands as part of its territorial claims in the South China Sea. These territorial claims were supported by ancient documents and old maps.
- **1970s and 1980s:** As several nations asserted their territorial claims in the South China Sea, including the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Brunei, tensions grew. In 1974, China took over the Paracel Islands from Vietnam, and in 1995, it took over Mischief Reef from the Philippines.
- **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS):** The 1982 adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) established guidelines and criteria for maritime borders and exclusive economic zones (EEZs). A framework for resolving territorial disputes by international law was created by the agreement.
- **Arbitration and The Hague Ruling:** The Philippines brought a complaint against China at the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague in 2013, questioning the legitimacy of China's "nine-dash line" and its actions in the South China Sea. The tribunal decided in favour of the Philippines in 2016, finding that China's claims to the South China Sea were illegal under UNCLOS and that it had no "historic title" to the region.

- **China's Rejection of The Hague Decision:** Despite the judgement, China rejected it and persisted in claiming sovereignty over the South China Sea. Additionally, other claimant nations kept up their regional operations.

Why has the Philippines grounded a warship on a reef?

- **Territorial Claim:** Both China and the Philippines have territorial claims to the Second Thomas Shoal, where the BRP Sierra Madre is berthed. The Philippines wants to stake a claim to the territory by mooring a warship there and demonstrating its presence and sovereignty.
- **Deterrence:** The presence of a grounded cruiser with a small number of Philippine soldiers acts as a deterrence to incursions by other claimant nations, particularly China. It sends a message that the Philippines is determined to defend its territorial claims and keep a military presence there.
- **Value as a Symbol:** The Philippines' willingness to defend its interests in the South China Sea is symbolized by the grounding of the BRP Sierra Madre. It communicates that the Philippines will not give in to rival territorial claims and is prepared to utilize strategic assets to defend its position.
- **Resupply Mission:** The soldiers stationed on the grounded vessel depend on routine resupply trips to stay alive in this far-off place. The Philippine military's presence on the shoal depends on these resupply trips, which also serve to show the nation's commitment to upholding its territorial claims.



What steps did China take to prevent the supplies to Second Thomas Shoal?

- **Chinese Coast Guard Interference:** China's Coast Guard vessels have frequently interfered in international affairs. Ships from the Chinese Coast Guard have regularly tried to obstruct or slow down supply runs from the Philippines to the BRP Sierra Madre. They have attempted to physically impede the supply boats, deployed water cannons, and participated in risky manoeuvres around them.
- **Vessel Presence:** Chinese naval vessels, including fishing boats and coast guard ships, have been stationed close to the Second Thomas Shoal. Many people see this presence as an effort to frighten or discourage Philippine resupply operations
- **Shadowing:** Chinese ships have reportedly followed Philippine ships, including supply boats, while they patrolled the waters near the Second Thomas Shoal. This persistent presence may lead to an uncomfortable or even deadly atmosphere.
- **Warnings and Verbal Protests:** China has warned and verbally protested to the Philippines to stop its activities near the Second Thomas Shoal and to recognize its sovereignty over the region.
- **Legal and diplomatic pressure:** China has regularly disregarded decisions made by international tribunals, such as the 2016 decision by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague that invalidated China's South China Sea claims. Beijing has favoured bilateral consultations and negotiations and has used diplomatic pressure on nations like the Philippines to prevent the problem from going global.

What is the way forward from this situation?

- **Negotiations and Diplomacy:** The primary method of resolving the conflict should continue to be diplomacy. China and the Philippines are two of the parties concerned; they should communicate and negotiate to agree. It might also be possible to pursue multilateral negotiations with all claimant governments.
- **Code of Conduct:** A code of conduct (COC) for the South China Sea is being developed by China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). A successful COC that resolves important problems like sea rights and territorial disputes could help ease tensions and offer a framework for handling conflicts.
- **Arbitration and Legal Mechanisms:** As the Philippines did in its case against China in The Hague, nations may think about using international legal mechanisms, such as arbitration, to settle particular issues within the bounds of international law. However, it is important to promote adherence to arbitral decisions.
- **Conflict Avoidance Measures:** Putting conflict avoidance and confidence-building techniques into practice can help stop maritime accidents. This entails creating channels of communication between naval troops, creating rules of engagement, and working together on search and rescue missions.

G-20 clinches New Delhi Declaration

Context

In an unexpected early breakthrough and win for India's Presidency, G-20 countries on Saturday welcomed the African Union's entry into the organization and also agreed on a single statement, forging consensus on the problematic "Ukraine paragraphs".

What was the consensus statement taken on the Ukraine war in G20?

- A consensus was reached on a common statement regarding the Ukraine war at the G20 summit in New Delhi. The declaration refrained from criticizing Russia for the conflict but urged other nations to refrain from annexing new territory by force. The UN Charter's need that all states adhere to it was also highlighted in the declaration.
- In comparison to last year, the proclamation used softer wording when discussing Russia's contribution to the war. For instance, the proclamation eliminated any mentions of Russian invasion and departure. Instead, the proclamation urged all nations to adhere to the UN Charter's prohibitions on using force and its provisions regarding territorial integrity.
- Additionally, the document noted that the G20 is primarily a forum for economic discussion and is not the appropriate venue for resolving geopolitical concerns and security issues.
- The fact that this declaration seemed to be less critical of Russia than the G-20 statement from Bali the year before represented a change from the positions previously held by the United States, the European Union, and the G-7 nations.

Which countries played a key role in reaching this consensus?

- A proposal put forth by Indonesia, India, Brazil, and South Africa that had been heavily negotiated throughout the summit helped to achieve the breakthrough in consensus.
- The G-7 and EU bloc's current president, Japan, also contributed to reconciling member nation divides.

Why did the EU and G7 groupings agree to the consensus statement?

- The EU and G-7 nations were given the option of approving the compromise wording or not issuing any statement at all.
- The absence of a declaration would have made it difficult to distinguish from the recent BRICS Summit, where Russia and China had agreed to a joint statement on Ukraine.
- It was believed that maintaining the G-20 platform and organization was essential for global collaboration.

What was the other important decision taken at the summit?

- The African Union's admission to the G-20 was another noteworthy development at the conference.
- This action was perceived as improving the G-20's efficacy and giving the global south, notably the African continent, a voice in international fora.

What were the environmental and economic decisions taken in the meeting?

- Eight of the 83 paragraphs in the New Delhi Declaration were devoted to the economic effects of the crisis in Ukraine.
- Agreements linked to bolstering multilateral development banks, regulating cryptocurrencies, and increasing financial inclusion were the outcome of the summit's finance track.
- The declaration also emphasized the need for considerable investments in clean energy technology and a significant increase in climate financing to reach net-zero emissions by 2050.

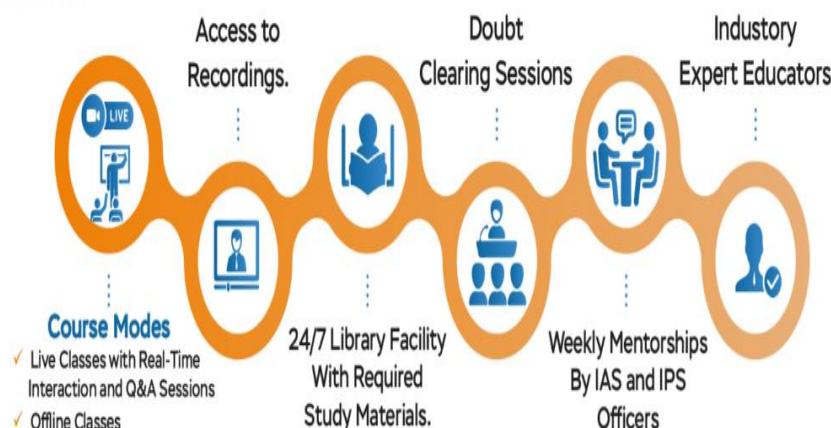
Conclusion

Overall, the section explains how India's G-20 leadership was crucial in reaching an agreement on a unified statement regarding Ukraine and in including the African Union in the G-20. It also emphasizes how crucial it is to keep the G-20 functioning as a forum for international cooperation.

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CBI does not require permission to probe pre-2014 cases too: SC

Context

On Monday, a Constitution Bench ruled that the Supreme Court's 2014 decision invalidating the need that the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to obtain prior authorization before looking into corruption allegations involving high government officials had a retrospective effect.

What is the Delhi Special Police Establishment (DSPE) Act?

- In 1946, the Delhi Special Police Establishment (DSPE) Act was adopted. A special police force was constituted in Delhi by the legislation to look into specific offences in the Union territory. The DSPE Act gives the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) its authority. In 1941, the CBI was created to oversee domestic security.
- According to the DSPE Act, the CBI must request authorization from state governments before conducting an investigation into a crime in a particular state. The Central Government has the authority to designate the offences that the Delhi Special Police Establishment should look into.
- The Central Government needed an agency to look into employee bribery and corruption, therefore the DSPE Act was put into effect in 1946.



What is section 6(A) of the DSPE Act?

- The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is required by Section 6A of the Delhi Special Police Establishment (DSPE) Act of 1946 to acquire prior government approval before investigating any cases of corruption involving officers with the level of joint secretary or higher.

- Any inquiry or investigation into a violation of the 1988 Prevention of Corruption Act (PC Act) must have approval. When a person is detained immediately for accepting or attempting to take gratification other than legal compensation, consent is not necessary.
- According to the Supreme Court, Section 6A of the DSPE Act is not effective as of the day it was inserted. This means that the provision granting immunity from arrest to officers of the level of joint secretary and above has been struck down.

What is the Retrospective Effect of removing section 6(A)?

- The Supreme Court's 2014 decision rejecting Section 6A of the DSPE Act has a retrospective impact, according to the Constitution Bench.
- As a result, Section 6A of the legislation, which mandated prior approval for the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to look into corruption allegations involving high government officials, is regarded as null and void as of the day it was enacted, or September 11, 2003.

What was the validity of Section 6A and the impact on Fundamental Rights?

- In 2014, the Supreme Court ruled that Section 6A of the DSPE Act was unconstitutional.
- The most recent verdict reiterates this ruling by highlighting the fact that Section 6A violated fundamental rights and was unlawful ab initio, which means it was never valid in the first place.
- The Indian Constitution's Part-III, in particular, places a strong emphasis on fundamental rights, which the Constitution Bench emphasized must be upheld.
- A law is deemed to be unenforceable and non-existent when it is ruled to have violated fundamental rights. This emphasizes how important it is to safeguard fundamental rights inside the law.

How is the equality seen before the law in respect to Section 6(A)?

- The ruling made it clear that Section 6A of the DSPE Act is not affected by Article 20(1) of the Constitution, which states that a person can only be punished under a law that was in effect at the time of the offence.
- In other words, as Article 20(1) relates to many legal issues, the retroactive effect of this decision does not violate it.
- The rule of equality before the law was highlighted in the 2014 Supreme Court decision that initially found Section 6A unlawful.
- It emphasized that corruption is bad for the country and that government employees shouldn't be exempt from the rule of law because of their level or position.
- The ruling made clear that corrupt officers should not be classified into distinct categories because they are all subject to the same procedure of inquiry and investigation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the most recent Supreme Court ruling has retroactively confirmed the unconstitutionality of Section 6A of the DSPE Act. Senior government officials implicated in corruption cases before the 2014 verdict can no longer rely on this provision to shield them. The ruling emphasizes how crucial it is to protect fundamental rights and equality before the law while battling governmental misconduct.

Transfer of personal data under the UN treaty will be under domestic laws: India

Context

India has suggested that the transfer of "personal data" under the convention will be done in line with the country's internal laws and not other applicable international laws at the international forum where United Nations member states are negotiating a pact to combat cybercrimes.

What is the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime?

- Since May 2021, the UN has been debating a global treaty on cybercrime. It would be the first legally binding UN document on a cyber issue if it were approved by the UN General Assembly. The treaty seeks to allow for the investigation and prosecution of cybercrime as well as harmonize domestic criminal law aspects of cybercrime.
- The Budapest Convention on Cybercrime is another name for the agreement. In November 2001, it was made available for signature in Budapest. The agreement addresses offences perpetrated through computer networks, such as
 - copyright violation
 - fraud involving computers
 - child Pornography
 - Deficiencies in network security
- According to the treaty, each party must implement legislation and other measures to make unlawful deliberate access to all or a portion of a computer system a crime under domestic law.
- Denmark, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, and Finland are a few nations that have accepted the agreement.

Domestic Laws vs. International Laws:

India has urged that the proposed cybercrime agreement should conform to the domestic laws of the country rather than other relevant international laws. India's aim to maintain control over the handling and cross-border transmission of personal data is highlighted by this stance.



Impact of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act

The Digital Personal Data Protection Act of India, passed by Parliament in August, significantly influences the country's position. The Act permits the processing of personal data to meet legal duties as well as protect India's sovereignty, integrity, and security. This demonstrates how India prioritizes national security issues when it comes to data privacy.

Data Disclosure Requirements:

The Act requires businesses to inform users of the names of any other businesses that will be handling their data. It further emphasizes the importance of national security by explicitly excluding the disclosure or sharing of such data in the case of authorized data interception.

Review of UN Cyber Crime Agreement:

The Union Home Ministry of India has examined the UN Cyber Crime Convention's draft to determine what modifications would need to be made to current procedures if India signed and ratified the agreement. This exemplifies India's proactive strategy for bringing its domestic legislation into compliance with international agreements.

Removal of the Multilateral Arrangements Clause:

India has asked that the convention's provision encouraging states to "establish multilateral arrangements" for the transmission of personal data be removed. This could be interpreted as India favouring bilateral agreements or wanting more control over data transfers.

Prior Written Consent for Data Transmission:

India has agreed to a provision that state parties may only transmit personal data to a third country with the original transferring state party's prior written consent. This implies that while India is amenable to data transfers, it wants to make sure that they are governed by stringent checks and clearances.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, India's approach to the talks on a treaty against cybercrime demonstrates its focus on national security and sovereignty when it comes to handling and sending personal data. It aims to find a balance between safeguarding its own interests and data security with global cooperation in fighting cybercrime. The way other UN members react to India's offers and issues will probably determine how these negotiations turn out in the end.

Jal Jeevan Mission remains a pipe dream

Context

On Independence Day 2019, the water-stressed Mahoba district in south-eastern Uttar Pradesh reported only 1,612 families having tap connections. Four years later, 1,29,209 families — or around 98% of all rural homes in the district — have water connections, according to the public dashboard of the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), the Centre's 3.6 lakh crore plan that aims to supply piped water to every village home by 2024.

What is the Jal Jeevan Mission?

- The Jal Jeevan Mission aims to deliver safe and enough drinking water to all rural Indian homes by 2024 via individual household tap connections.
- The program will also include mandated source sustainability measures such as recharge and reuse through greywater management, water conservation, and rainwater collection.
- The Jal Jeevan Mission would take a community-based approach to water, with substantial information, education, and communication as critical components.
- On August 15, 2019, the Mission was officially launched.

What were the mission and objectives of the Jal Jeevan Mission?

Missions:

- States/UTs are developing a participatory rural water supply strategy to ensure long-term potable drinking water security for every rural household and public institution, such as GP buildings, schools, Anganwadi centres, health centres, wellness centres, and so on.

- States/UTs for the development of water supply infrastructure so that by 2024, every rural family has a Functional Tap Connection (FHTC) and water in sufficient amount and of prescribed quality is accessible regularly.
- States and territories must plan for drinking water security.



Objectives

- To make FHTC available to every rural family.
- Priority should be given to providing FHTCs in quality-affected areas, villages in drought-prone and desert areas, Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) villages, and so on.
- To connect schools, Anganwadi centres, GP buildings, health centres, wellness centres, and community structures to a functional water supply.
- To check the operation of tap connections.
- To encourage and ensure voluntary ownership among the local community by contributions in cash, kind, and/or labour, as well as voluntary labour (shramdaan).

What is the current situation of the Jal Jeevan Mission?

- Significant Increase in Reported Tap Connections: Many residences now have tap connections, eliminating the need to travel long distances for drinking water. Many remote villages gained access to water for the first time in their lives.
- For example, In 2019, the Mahoba district had only 1,612 houses having tap connections.
- By 2023, this figure had risen to 1,29,209 families, accounting for approximately 98% of rural houses in the district.

What are the concerns that arose out of the Jal Jeevan Scheme?

Disputes in Official Data:

- Many villages that have been formally certified as having 100% coverage of Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTC) do not have working taps.
- Some houses have taps but receive little to no water from them, and in the best-case scenario, they receive only approximately two hours of water each day.

Reporting Errors:

- Even though the official JJM dashboard indicates 100% household tap connections in all 385 villages, the reality is much different.
- This adds to Uttar Pradesh's estimate of 1.6 crore households with working tap connections, implying widespread access to drinking water.

What are the challenges faced by the Scheme?

- **Infrastructure Development:** Building the necessary infrastructure, such as pipelines, water treatment plants, and distribution networks, is a big issue, particularly in isolated and geographically difficult places.
- **Funding & Budget Restriction:** The JJM is a big plan that necessitates significant financial resources. Obtaining and allocating finances for such a large-scale project might be difficult.
- **Technical challenges:** Technical and engineering challenges include designing and executing water delivery systems capable of efficiently transporting clean water across large distances and different terrains.
- **Water Source Quality:** Ensuring a regular and safe supply of water from rivers, dams, or other sources can be difficult, particularly in locations where water supplies are contaminated or unreliable.
- **Water Treatment and Quality Assurance:** It is vital to maintain the quality of water throughout the distribution system. Treatment plants must operate efficiently, and water quality must be tested regularly to ensure that it fulfils safety criteria.
- **Challenges in Operations and Maintenance:** Water supply system operation and maintenance are critical to sustaining the scheme's benefits. This includes fixing concerns such as leaks, breakdowns, and system maintenance.

How do we resolve these issues and move forward?

- **Sustained support:** Ensure that the mission receives continuous and enough support. To fulfil the large investment necessary, mobilize financial resources from both government allocations and external sources.
- **Technical Knowledge:** Use specialist technical knowledge while planning and installing water supply systems, especially in difficult terrain. Build capability by collaborating with engineering and water management organizations.

- **Water Source Management:** To maintain a regular and safe supply of water, prioritize the protection and sustainable management of water sources such as rivers, dams, and reservoirs.
- **Water Quality Assurance:** Conduct stringent water quality testing and monitoring at all stages of the water delivery system. Address contamination issues as soon as possible and make sure the treatment plants are operational.
- **Operation and Maintenance:** Establishing robust mechanisms for the operation and maintenance of water supply infrastructure is essential. Train and deploy skilled workers, and involve local populations in system maintenance.
- **Community Engagement:** Encourage community participation in water supply system design, decision-making, and maintenance. Raise awareness about the significance of healthy drinking water and sanitation practices.

Conclusion

In summary, while there has been a large increase in reported tap connections as part of the Jal Jeevan Mission in Mahoba district, there are disparities between official data and the actual provision of clean and reliable water service to families. Infrastructure concerns and the need to enhance water quality remain critical issues in attaining the mission's objectives.

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Aadhaar unreliable in 'hot, humid' India: rating agency

Context

Concerns regarding security and privacy weaknesses in centralized identifying systems, such as India's Aadhaar scheme, have been raised by major global rating agency Moody's Investors Service. It was mentioned that the unique ID method frequently leads to "service denials" and that deploying biometric technologies in humid environments is unreliable.

What is the Aadhaar card?

- The Unique Identifying Authority of India (UIDAI) issues the 12-digit identifying number known as the Aadhaar card. Each resident citizen of India is given a different number. The number is created by fusing demographic data, like address and date of birth, with biometric information, including fingerprint and iris scans.
- Anywhere in India, an Aadhaar card is accepted as identification and proof of address. Additionally, it is utilized to obtain benefits including receiving government aid, opening a bank account, and more.
- The Aadhaar card is a rigid PVC card that is portable and has security features. EAadhhar, mAadhhar, Aadhaar letters, and Aadhaar cards are all equally legitimate forms of Aadhaar.



Who is Moody's Investor Service?

Moody's Investors Service is a well-known credit rating organization that evaluates and assigns credit ratings to various institutions and financial instruments, including government bonds, corporate debt, and structured financial products. These grades—which range from Aaa to C—help institutions and investors assess

creditworthiness and make wise investment choices. The financial sector as well as regulators frequently evaluate risk and ensure financial stability using Moody's research.

What are the concerns raised by Moody's Investor Service?

- **Service Denials:** According to Moody's, the Aadhaar system frequently results in "service denials." This implies that individuals may experience difficulties accessing welfare benefits and public services because of authentication-related problems.
- **Biometric Reliability:** There have been concerns raised about the accuracy of the biometric technologies employed in Aadhaar, such as iris and fingerprint scans. According to Moody, these technologies might not function well in hot and muggy weather, which might be troublesome, especially for manual labourers.
- **Authorization Obstacles:** According to the paper, one of the difficulties Aadhaar faces is the burden of obtaining authorization. It can be difficult to get and keep individual authorization.

What are the security concerns raised by Moody's Investor Service?

- **Data Concentration:** In centralized ID systems like Aadhaar, Moody's voiced concern over the concentration of sensitive information with particular companies. The likelihood of data breaches, which may have dire repercussions for certain people, rises as a result of this concentration of data.
- **Online Fraud:** Because user information and credentials are centralized, centralized ID systems may be vulnerable to online fraud. This may result in unauthorized access to and improper use of personal data.

What are the recommendations given by the agency to improve the Aadhaar services?

- **Advantages of DID:** DID stands for Decentralized ID Systems. DID systems have several benefits, and Moody suggested them as an alternative to centralized ID schemes like Aadhaar. DID systems, which frequently utilize blockchain technology, provide the following benefits:
- **User Control:** DID systems offer users more control over their personal information and identities. Users now have more control over how they manage their login information and access to online resources.
- **Reduced Online Fraud:** Online fraud risk is decreased by the decentralized design of DID systems because there is no single point of failure where user data can be compromised.
- **Successful examples:** Successful DID system implementations were mentioned in the paper in places including Catalonia, Azerbaijan, and Estonia. Particularly in Estonia, which has adopted Self-Sovereign Identity (SSI) to

give citizens total control over their digital identities, public services are completely digitalized.

- **Opposed to Centralized Systems:** In centralized systems, user identity data is managed and controlled by a single organization (such as a bank or a government agency). This organization may share or utilize this data internally or with third parties, potentially posing privacy issues. DID systems provide a contrast by allowing consumers more control over their data and lowering the risk of abuse.

What are the impacts that can occur due to the recommended changes of Decentralization?

Positive Changes:

- **Improvements in Privacy and Security:** DID systems are made to allow users more control over their personal information and online personas. Lowering the possibility of identity theft and data breaches can improve privacy and security.
- **Reduced Fraud:** Since there is no centralized store of sensitive data that might be targeted by cybercriminals, DID systems can reduce online fraud and identity theft.
- **User Empowerment:** People now have more control over their digital identities, which gives them more power in many areas of their lives, such as service access, money management, and online interactions.
- **Efficiency and Convenience:** DID systems can speed up identity verification procedures, facilitating people's access to services, opening bank accounts, and taking part in online transactions.
- **Innovation and Access:** Decentralized systems can encourage innovation in financial inclusion and digital services, opening up access to marginalized groups.

Negative Changes:

- **Implementation challenges:** Changing to a DID system can be difficult and expensive, requiring extensive modifications to current procedures and infrastructure.
- **Technology Obstacles:** While blockchain-based DID systems have benefits, they could also encounter technical obstacles such as scalability and interoperability problems.
- **Digital Divide:** If not all residents have access to the required technology and connectivity, implementation may widen the digital divide.
- **Regulatory and Legal Considerations:** To address concerns about identification, liability, and data protection, DID systems may need new regulatory frameworks and legal considerations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Moody's has drawn attention to issues with India's Aadhaar program, including service denials, biometric dependability, and authorisation challenges. They

have also voiced worries about security and privacy related to centralized ID schemes. Moody suggests decentralized identity (DID) systems as an alternative, particularly those built on blockchain technology because they provide users more control over their data and lower the risk of online fraud. The potential advantages of this strategy were demonstrated by citing examples of effective DID implementations in other regions.



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RBECCP-27	December 24 th 2023	5:30 PM - 8:30 PM	2.3 Years
RBMCCP-28	January 24 th 2024	7:00 AM - 10:00 AM	2 Years
RBACCP-29	March 08 th 2024	11:00 AM - 2:00 PM	22 Months
RBMCCP-30	May 17 th 2024	7:00 AM - 10:00 AM	20 Months
RBECCP-31	May 17 th 2024	5:30 PM - 8:30 PM	20 Months
RBACCP-32	June 24 th 2024	11:00 AM - 2:00 PM	18 Months
RBMCCP-33	August 04 th 2024	7:00 AM - 10:00 AM	15 Months



GENERAL STUDIES-3



Activities and Natural Disasters: A Call for Comprehensive Solutions

Context:

In monsoon-prone regions like northern India, concerns are mounting regarding the influence of human activities on natural disasters.

Relevance:

GS – 03 (Disaster Management, Indian Geography)

Mains Question:

Discuss some comprehensive solutions that can be developed to mitigate natural disasters, particularly for vulnerable populations? 150 words.

Dimensions of the Article:

- Human-Induced Amplification
- Urbanization's Impact
- Uneven Disaster Preparedness
- Knowledge versus Implementation
- The Himalayan problem
- Decision-Making Quandaries
- Balancing Act

Human-Induced Amplification:

- Human activities have contributed to the intensification and frequency of climate-related disasters.
- Activities like encroachment into floodplains and expansion of urban areas into natural water bodies have disrupted the balance of ecosystems.

Urbanization's Impact:

- As people move to urban centres, natural landscapes and ecosystems bear the brunt of this rapid change.
- Many regions have experienced transformations that exceed the land's carrying capacity, resulting in extreme losses during disasters.

Uneven Disaster Preparedness:

- While India has made strides in disaster preparedness, progress remains uneven. Urban centres like Mumbai have taken commendable steps to enhance disaster management.
- Predictive models and infrastructure improvements have bolstered preparedness. However, the pace of adaptation varies across regions. This disparity arises from the interplay of urbanization, economic interests, and environmental preservation.

Knowledge versus Implementation:

- India boasts building codes and trained municipal authorities capable of managing disaster preparedness. However, a disconnect exists between this knowledge and its practical application.
- This disconnect is occasionally a result of underestimating risks when embarking on infrastructure projects.
- Risk assessment, reliant on historical data, can fall short when this data is outdated or incomplete, leading to inadequate planning.

The Himalayan problem:

- The Himalayan region, notorious for its vulnerability to landslides and floods, faces distinct challenges.
- The absence of a comprehensive observational network for monitoring rainfall patterns and meteorological data handicaps risk assessment and prediction efforts.

Decision-Making Quandaries:

- India has institutions actively monitoring climate patterns and risk levels. These institutions work tirelessly to comprehend the scale of the climate crisis. However, the crux often lies in the decision-making process. Clashing priorities and a lack of cohesive planning can obstruct effective disaster preparedness.

Balancing Act:

- The intricacies of urbanization, economic development, and environmental preservation give rise to competing interests.
- Decision-makers grapple with the juxtaposition of a desire for connectivity and economic growth on one hand and the necessity of preserving ecosystems on the other.
- Striking a harmonious balance between these conflicting priorities remains a formidable challenge for government agencies.

Way Forward:

- To effectively address the mounting impact of natural disasters on communities worldwide, the focus must shift toward bridging the gap between knowledge and action.
- Prioritizing sustainability and devising holistic solutions that adapt to evolving risk landscapes are paramount.
- Informed decision-making and meaningful action in disaster preparedness and mitigation are the cornerstones of our response to the growing frequency and severity of natural disasters.

Analyzing India's Economic Landscape

Context:

In the first quarter of the year, the GDP and GVA showed 7.8% growth, signifying a positive turn for the Indian economy. However, this growth fell slightly short of the 8% target set by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

Relevance:

GS-03 (Indian Economy)

Prelims:

- GDP
- Inflation
- Monetary policy

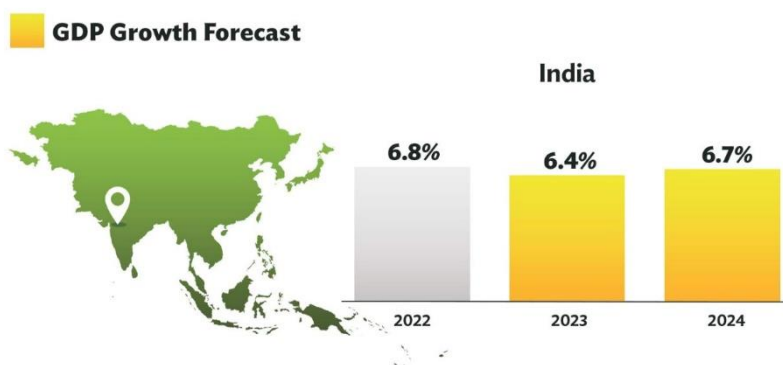
Mains Question:

Discuss the trends in India's economic growth and the potential challenges it may face in trying to become the 5 trillion economy. (150 words).

Dimensions of the Article:

- Growth Trends and Projections
- Agricultural Sector and Monsoon Uncertainty
- Services Sector
- Investment Cycle and Manufacturing
- Inflation and Fiscal Risks

Growth Trends and Projections:



The 7.8% growth is promising, but it is just below the Reserve Bank of India's initial estimate of 8%.

Chief Economic Adviser V. Anantha Nageswaran remains optimistic, asserting that these figures do not undermine the possibility of achieving a 6.5% growth rate for the entire year.

This places India in a favourable position as the fastest-growing major economy, surpassing China's 6.3% growth rate in the same quarter.

Agricultural Sector and Monsoon Uncertainty:

While the farm sector's GVA showed steady growth at 3.5% in Q1, concerns arise due to the slow progress of the monsoon and the looming threat of low reservoir levels impacting the rabi crop.

This adds an element of unpredictability to the agricultural sector, which plays a pivotal role in India's economy.

Services Sector:

The services sector demonstrated robust growth, with trade, hotels, and transport expanding by 9.2%.

The fact that employment-intensive segments remain 1.9% below pre-COVID-19 levels suggests that the recovery is far from complete.

It raises questions about the depth of the revival in this crucial sector.

Investment Cycle and Manufacturing:

Government claims of a revived private investment cycle are countered by data on gross fixed capital formation, which reveals that government capital spending is the primary driver.

Although manufacturing GVA has seen a slight uptick, going from 4.5% to 4.7%, a comprehensive resurgence in consumption demand is still awaited.

Private consumption spending grew by 6%, but experts believe this growth primarily stems from high-income earners.

The durability of this growth hinges on the persistence of elevated inflation, especially in essential food items.

Inflation and Fiscal Risks:

Inflationary pressures pose a significant challenge, potentially impacting demand from lower-income segments and rural areas. Interventions to counter inflation, such as export restrictions on rice and onions, may impede overall economic growth and disrupt the external trade balance.

Relief measures like the recent ₹200 reduction in LPG cylinder prices, which could become more common ahead of the general election, present fiscal risks that need to be carefully managed.

Way Forward:

India must navigate these challenges while capitalizing on its growth potential. Balancing fiscal measures to control inflation with the need for sustained economic growth remains a priority. Additionally, focusing on job-intensive sectors and encouraging private investment will be crucial for a more inclusive recovery.

Conclusion:

While the recent GDP and GVA growth numbers are promising, various challenges loom on the horizon, including agricultural uncertainties, incomplete recovery in employment-intensive sectors, and persistent inflation. The government must adopt prudent fiscal and economic policies to ensure a more balanced and resilient growth trajectory, ultimately benefiting all segments of the population. The road ahead may be uneven, but with careful planning and strategic actions, India can continue to chart its course toward economic prosperity.

China's Economic Challenges

Context:

The recent news of China's economic slowdown has stirred a mixed bag of reactions. For years, China has grappled with concerns about economic deceleration and the dreaded middle-income trap. Now the ongoing deflation is casting a shadow not only over China but the global economy as well.

Relevance:

GS – 03 (Growth & Development, Monetary Policy, Fiscal Policy)

Prelims:

- Concerns of Over-Deflation in China
- Consumer Price Index
- Deflation
- Inflation
- Gross Domestic Product
- Debts

Mains Question:

Prioritizing the quality of life as a part of their growth strategy is the new normal for any country. Comment. 150 words.

Implications for India:



Trade Balance: China may reduce its imports, affecting various sectors such as electronics, pharmaceuticals, and agriculture. India needs to diversify its export destinations to mitigate this risk.

Commodity Prices: China is a major consumer of commodities, and its reduced demand can lead to a fall in global commodity prices. This could benefit India as it's a net importer of commodities like crude oil and metals, leading to lower input costs for Indian industries.

Investment: A slowdown in China might redirect Chinese FDI towards other destinations, including India, potentially boosting the Indian economy.

Manufacturing Competitiveness: As China's labour costs rise, India becomes more attractive as a manufacturing destination. India can capitalize on this by improving its infrastructure and ease of doing business to attract companies looking to relocate their manufacturing operations.

Geopolitical Dynamics: India needs to closely monitor China's actions, especially along the border areas, as economic instability might affect China's risk appetite and potentially impact the existing border tensions between the two countries.

Dimensions of the Article:

- The Era of Unstable Growth
- The "New Normal" Realities
- Labour Costs and Sectoral Imbalances
- A Complex Political Economy
- The Ever Grande Crisis and Housing Bubble
- Economic Instability's Ripple Effect

The Era of Unstable Growth:

In 2007, the then Premier Wen Jiabao candidly pointed out that China's economy suffered from instability, imbalance, lack of coordination, and unsustainability. This acknowledgement set the stage for potential corrective actions.

However, when the global financial crisis hit in 2008, China opted for an infrastructure-centric strategy. Massive investments were funnelled into railways, highways, energy, and construction sectors.

This approach temporarily obscured issues like insufficient domestic consumption, regional disparities, and inadequate social safety nets. The motivation was simple: the Chinese leadership's domestic legitimacy was closely tied to ensuring prosperity for its citizens. It was a race to maintain double-digit growth rates.

However, by the time Xi Jinping assumed power, the consequences of this strategy began to grow bigger. China's financial markets were plagued by a lack of regulatory oversight, with loans distributed based on proximity and *guanxi* (nodal networks of factions, friendships, and relationships). The steroids of growth had worn off, leaving an economic hangover.

The “New Normal” Realities:

Xi Jinping aptly refers to China as the world's second-largest economy and the largest developing nation. In 2017, during the 19th Chinese Communist Party congress, the party committed to prioritizing quality of life as a part of its growth strategy. This shift acknowledged evolving citizen expectations, signalling the end of the era driven by exports, infrastructure spending, and large-scale investments.

China termed this transition the “new normal,” marking an adjustment from over two decades of 10%+ growth. Previously, higher growth equated to more jobs and increased disposable income. However, slower growth means fewer employment opportunities, leading to rising unemployment, particularly concerning the influx of new graduates.

Labour Costs and Sectoral Imbalances:

During Xi's first term (2012-17), the growth rate of exports significantly slowed, reflecting the rise in China's labour costs due to increased wages and social security investments. This shift was a consequence of the Foxconn suicides, which brought considerable embarrassment and social challenges.

Meanwhile, certain sectors like housing, energy, and construction continued overproducing, far exceeding actual demand.

Despite early success in supply-side reforms that shuttered underperforming firms and regulated commodities markets, these problems persist.

A Complex Political Economy:

China boasts a political economy like no other. The ability to overcome its economic challenges rests on political decisions.

In late 2020, Xi Jinping introduced the term “Disorderly expansion of capital.” Although not elaborated upon, its timing, following the Ant Group IPO withdrawal, was notable. Scholars have questioned China’s capacity for true innovation as long as the party retains control over capitalist activities.

Promises made during the third plenum of the 18th Central Committee in 2013 to allow markets a greater role in resource allocation have been rolled back.

The government still intervenes, as seen during the 2015 stock market crisis when banks were forced to acquire stakes in sluggish stocks.

The Evergrande Crisis and Housing Bubble:

The Evergrande crisis (2020-2023) laid bare China’s housing bubble and regulatory missteps, symptomatic of broader economic issues. Path dependency has long been a concern, and the leadership is aware of the crash landing it could trigger.

China’s middle-income trap and ambition to ascend the value chain – transitioning from manufacturing to design – appear challenging. The economic slowdown, projected at around 5%, still adds substantial value compared to India’s anticipated 6.1% growth for 2023 due to China’s size. This may lead to lower commodity prices globally, impacting markets like crude oil, cement, and steel.

The State-Owned Enterprise Problem:

Their entrenched contracts and political connections grant them immunity, impervious to operational reforms.

SoEs also provide social security to a significant number of current and retired workers, making them a politically sensitive issue.

Economic Instability’s Ripple Effect:

Recent data from the second quarter of the year indicates heightened financial caution among individuals and companies, with a propensity to hoard cash.

The aftermath of COVID-19 still lingers, causing concerns like food shortages even in urban areas. Investors are wary of a potential larger slump, waiting for signs of stabilization.

Conclusion:

The “new normal” of slower growth, coupled with structural imbalances and a complex political economy, demands thoughtful resolutions. The way China navigates its economic instability will not only affect its rise but also other players on the global stage.

Aditya-L1: India's Solar Mission

Context:

ISRO is transitioning from lunar exploration to solar study, signifying the nation's evolving prowess in space exploration. Aditya-L1's findings hold the promise of shaping future space missions and unravelling the solar wind's intricacies.

Relevance:

GS-03 (Space technology)

Prelims:

- Aditya-L1 Mission
- L1 (Lagrangian/Lagrange Point 1)
- Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)

Mains Question:

Explain the significance of the Aditya-L1 mission and the potential insights it may provide about the sun. How does this mission mark a significant development in India's space exploration? (250 words)

Dimensions of the Article:

- Aditya-L1's Mission
- Launch Vehicles and Payloads
- L1 Orbit and Its Significance
- VELC Payload Features and Significance
- Other Solar Missions

Aditya-L1 Mission:

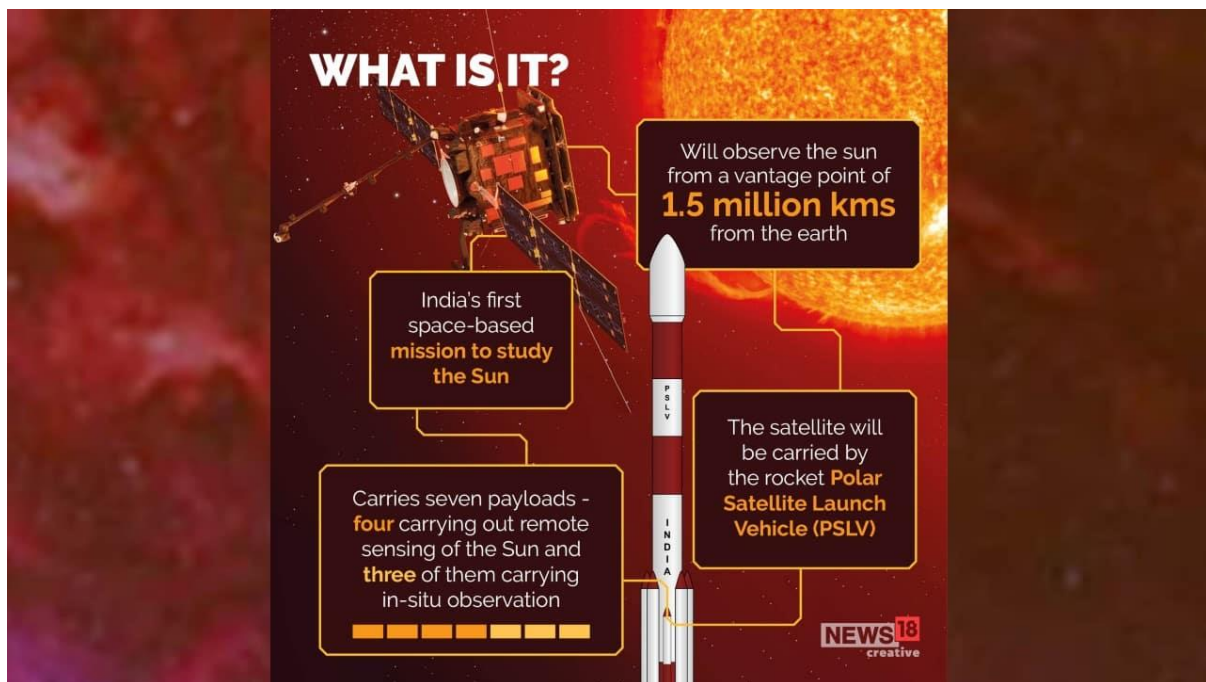
- The Aditya-L1 Mission is a project aimed at studying various aspects of the Sun.
- It involves launching the Aditya L1 spacecraft using the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) with seven payloads onboard.

Launch Vehicle and Payloads:

The Aditya L1 spacecraft will be launched using the PSLV and will carry seven payloads (instruments):

- VELC
- Solar Ultraviolet Imaging Telescope (SUIT)
- Solar Low Energy X-ray Spectrometer (SoLEXS)
- Aditya Solar Wind Particle Experiment (ASPEX)
- High Energy L1 Orbiting X-ray Spectrometer (HEL1OS)

- Plasma Analyser Package for Aditya (PAPA)
- Advanced Tri-axial High-Resolution Digital Magnetometers



L1 Orbit and Its Significance:

- Aditya-L1 will be launched to the Lagrangian Point 1 (L1) orbit, situated approximately 1.5 million km from Earth.
- L1 is a point in the Earth-Sun orbital system, offering gravitational conditions favourable for the spacecraft.
- Placing a satellite in the halo orbit around L1 enables uninterrupted observation of the Sun, without being affected by occultation or eclipses.

VELC Payload Features and Significance:

The Visible Emission Line Coronagraph (VELC) is the key payload among the seven instruments. Developed over 15 years, it is a highly precise instrument designed in India.

VELC's significance lies in its capability to study the corona's temperature, velocity, and density. It aids in understanding processes leading to coronal heating, solar wind acceleration, space weather drivers, magnetic field measurement, and the origin of coronal mass ejections.

Other Solar Missions:

- **NASA's Parker Solar Probe:** Focuses on tracing energy and heat movement in the Sun's corona and studying the solar wind's acceleration source. Part of NASA's 'Living With a Star' initiative.
- **Helios 2 Solar Probe:** A joint venture of NASA and erstwhile West Germany's space agency, it approached within 43 million km of the Sun's surface in 1976.

- **Solar Orbiter:** Joint mission by ESA and NASA to gather data on how the Sun shapes and controls the dynamic space environment across the solar system.
- **Active Sun-Monitoring Spacecraft:** Includes ACE, IRIS, WIND, Hinode, Solar Dynamics Observatory, and Solar-Terrestrial R

Way Forward:

- To maximize the scientific output of Aditya-L1, ISRO should foster collaborations with international space agencies and research institutions.
- ISRO should also focus on investing in cutting-edge data analytics and processing capabilities to ensure that the information garnered from the mission is effectively used.
- ISRO should launch comprehensive public outreach programs, including exhibitions, lectures, and interactive platforms, to educate and inspire the next generation of space enthusiasts.

India's GST Potential: Reforming Tax Policy

Context:

India's Goods and Services Tax (GST) collections have shown promising figures in the first five months of 2023-24 which provides room for consideration of revising tax rates, simplifying the complex GST structure, and addressing inflation.

Relevance:

GS-02, GS-03 (Government Policies and Interventions, Growth and Development, Indian Economy)

Prelims:

- GST council
- Inflation
- One nation one tax

Mains Question:

Discuss the significance of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in transforming India's tax landscape. Analyze the challenges faced during its implementation and the measures taken to ensure compliance. (250 words)

Dimensions of the Article:

- Steady Growth in GST Revenues
- Mixed Signals in Revenue Sources
- Effect of Mandatory E-Invoicing
- Simplifying the Complex GST Structure

- Balancing Political and Economic Priorities
- Way Forward

Steady Growth in GST Revenues:

- GST revenues of the initial five months of the FY 2023-24 have hit 11.3% growth which has a monthly average of ₹1.66 lakh crore, showing an increase from around ₹1.5 lakh crore in the previous year.
- The first quarter of the fiscal year showed a slightly higher growth rate 11.5% as compared to July and August where it was a slow rise since July 2021.
- August: Revenues related to July transactions reached a 3-month low of ₹1.59 lakh crore, down from July's 3-month high of ₹1.65 lakh crore.

Mixed Signals in Revenue Sources:

- When we break down the numbers, we observe that revenues from goods imports saw a 3% rise in August after experiencing two months of contraction. This hints at a potential recovery in discretionary demand.
- Revenues from domestic transactions and services imports grew by 13.8%, which is slower than the 15.1% growth witnessed in July. The upcoming festive season may contribute to revenue growth from both sources.
- Yet, the resurgence of high inflation might shift momentum towards items preferred by high-income households, leaving those with lower incomes struggling to cope with rising food prices, potentially reducing spending on other goods.

Effect of Mandatory E-Invoicing:

The mandatory implementation of e-invoicing for firms with an annual turnover exceeding ₹5 crore is expected to positively impact this month's revenues. However, the true effect of this change will likely become evident in the next couple of months.

Despite this, the overall trajectory of GST revenues remains promising, supported by efforts to combat evasion and fake registrations. These trends alleviate concerns about lacklustre collections during the initial years of GST implementation.

Simplifying the Complex GST Structure:

The robust GST revenue presents an opportunity to simplify and rationalize the multiple-rate GST structure, a concept introduced by the GST Council in 2021.

The Finance Ministry had previously indicated that this restructuring would have to wait until inflation subsides. However, this year, it suggested that the rationalization plan is on hold, even before the recent surge in prices.

A ministerial group (GoM) responsible for recommending a new rate structure has yet to be reconstituted.

Balancing Political and Economic Priorities:

While political considerations might limit the scope for a major GST overhaul, postponing this move could hinder economic growth potential.

Skillfully implemented changes in tax rates could also aid in the battle against inflation, especially for essential items.

Given the complexity of this exercise, it is crucial to continue the dialogue with States by reviving the GoM rather than starting anew a year later.

Way Forward:

The encouraging growth in GST revenues provides a moment to revisit India's tax policy. A balanced approach that addresses both economic and political concerns should guide any restructuring efforts.

The complexity of the GST system necessitates collaboration and ongoing dialogue with State governments to ensure a smooth transition towards a more simplified and effective tax regime.

Conclusion:

While the recent slowdown in GST revenue growth may raise concerns, the overall graph is promising. This growth creates an opening for tax policy reform, specifically simplifying the GST structure, which has the potential to stimulate economic growth and manage inflation. Balancing political considerations with economic imperatives will be crucial in shaping the future of India's tax system and ensuring the well-being of its citizens.

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Ridding India of food insecurity

Context:

The article addresses the pressing issue of food price inflation in India, which has been on the rise despite the country's status as one of the fastest-growing economies globally. It highlights concerns about the affordability of a nutritious diet for a significant portion of the population and calls for intervention to ensure food security.

Relevance:

GS-03 (Indian Economy)

Mains Question:

How can India tackle the challenge of rising food price inflation and ensure that a healthy diet remains affordable for its vast population? (150 words)



Dimensions of the Article:

- The Escalation of Food-Price Inflation
- Alarming Findings on Affordability
- Understanding the Implications
- The Failure of Macroeconomic Policy
- The Green Revolution's Significance
- Learning from Past Successes and Mistakes

- Key Initiatives
- The Role of States
- An Open-Minded Approach

The Escalation of Food-Price Inflation:

While India boasts rapid economic growth, it grapples with an increasingly alarming problem: food price inflation. This surge in the cost of food has been noticeable since 2019, persisting throughout subsequent years.

In July of the current year, the annual inflation rate exceeded 11%, marking the highest level in the past ten years. This relentless increase in food prices threatens the ability of a substantial portion of the population to access nutritionally adequate food.

Alarming Findings on Affordability:

A startling revelation comes from the Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) report titled 'State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World,' indicating that a staggering 74% of India's population cannot afford a healthy diet as of 2021.

Given India's vast population of 1.4 billion, this translates to approximately one billion individuals struggling to afford essential nutrition. This concerning trend is further corroborated by studies conducted within India, demonstrating a diminishing capacity of households to finance their food needs.

Understanding the Implications:

A study, focusing on the price of food in Mumbai from 2018 to 2023, found that while the cost of preparing a typical meal at home increased by 65%, the average wages of both manual and salaried workers grew at comparatively slower rates of 38% and 28%, respectively. This disparity between rising food costs and income growth results in a significant decline in purchasing power, inevitably impacting food consumption.

Furthermore, reports of increasing rates of anaemia, largely attributed to nutrient deficiencies, in the National Family Health Survey conducted from 2019 to 2021 underscore the FAO's findings. This survey revealed that over 50% of adult women were anaemic, reinforcing the plausibility of the FAO's estimate that more than half of India's population cannot afford a nutritious diet.

The Failure of Macroeconomic Policy:

In attempting to control inflation, macroeconomic policies, particularly those of the Reserve Bank of India, have proven ineffective. The Reserve Bank's approach, characterized as "inflation targeting," falls short when addressing food inflation originating from supply-side issues.

Central banks cannot solve this problem within a reasonable timeframe. The solution lies in supply-side interventions aimed at stabilizing food prices and increasing agricultural yields.

The Green Revolution's Significance:

India has valuable experience in tackling such challenges, notably during the Green Revolution of the 1960s. Faced with severe food shortages after consecutive droughts, the government initiated a supply-side response by providing farmers with high-yielding seeds, affordable credit, and guaranteed prices through procurement.

This endeavour yielded remarkable success, transforming India from a food-import-dependent nation into one capable of self-sufficiency.

Learning from Past Successes and Mistakes:

While acknowledging that past interventions had their flaws, such as excessive chemical fertilizer use and a focus on cereals over pulses, we must redirect our efforts towards correcting these shortcomings. It is crucial to address the primary goal of reducing the cost of food production.

A second agricultural revolution is now imperative, with a mission-oriented approach to contain the escalating food prices. Addressing these challenges requires multiple actions, including investment in irrigation, land leasing reforms, revitalizing agricultural research, and reinstating extension services.

Key Initiatives:

There has been a disconnect between increased public expenditure on irrigation and a corresponding increase in irrigated land, which must be rectified. Land fragmentation poses productivity challenges, and allowing land leasing can offer a solution.

India's network of public agricultural research institutes needs revitalization, and extension services, which have dwindled, must be reinstated. These initiatives should align with a comprehensive program to significantly boost protein production, a category where India lags.

The Role of States:

States play a vital role in these endeavours. Collaborative efforts, akin to the coordination during the first Green Revolution, are essential. Central and State governments must work together through cooperative federalism.

Simultaneously, States should reevaluate their approaches to agricultural productivity and not merely rely on food allocations from the central pool for their Public Distribution Systems.

An Open-Minded Approach:

To make a meaningful impact, a non-ideological approach is essential, whether at the central or State level. The first Green Revolution, by embracing private enterprise and prioritizing self-sufficiency in food, led to a significant reduction in poverty.

In a similar vein, a diverse array of ecological measures should be on the table to ensure that all Indians can access a nutritious diet permanently.

Conclusion:

Securing access to a healthy diet for all Indians is the paramount economic policy challenge today. Macroeconomic policies alone are insufficient to address food-price inflation stemming from supply-side issues. The lessons from India's past successes, particularly the Green Revolution, should guide our actions as we embark on a second agricultural revolution. The imperative is to reduce the cost of food production through various interventions. States' active participation and collaborative efforts are crucial in this endeavour. Above all, an open-minded, non-ideological approach that embraces ecological sustainability is necessary to ensure the well-being of all Indians through affordable and nutritious food.

Path to Biofuel Sustainability

Context:

The need for understanding the difference between sustainable and unsustainable biofuels and India's dream of decarbonization.

Relevance:

GS-03 (Conservation)

Mains Question:

How can India effectively balance its biofuel strategy to prioritize sustainable options and mitigate environmental challenges? (250 words)

Dimensions of the Article:

- The confusion around Biofuel
- Distinguishing Sustainable Biofuels
- Challenges in India
- A Shift Towards Sustainable Biofuels
- Prioritizing Biomass Use
- Challenges in Achieving Sustainability

The Biofuel Conundrum:

There is a growing realization that transitioning to EVs isn't without challenges, such as the need to replace existing internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles and supporting infrastructure, which is capital-intensive.

Also, the reliance on imported batteries and critical minerals for EVs raises environmental concerns as to how these minerals are mined, among other issues.

Biofuels, on the contrary, offer an alternative path, as they can be used in existing ICE engines and infrastructure with minimal modifications, reducing import dependence.



Distinguishing Sustainable Biofuels:

- The term 'biofuel' encompasses both sustainable and unsustainable varieties. Understanding this distinction is crucial for effective decarbonization efforts.
- In India, the predominant biofuel is first-generation (1G) ethanol, primarily sourced from food crops.
- The country aims to achieve a 20% ethanol blending target with petrol by 2025-26, mainly through 1G ethanol from crops like sugarcane and food grains.
- However, second-generation (2G) ethanol, derived from crop residues, faces challenges in contributing significantly to this target due to feedstock supply chain issues.

Challenges in India:

1. Groundwater Depletion and Food Security:

Growing crops like sugarcane for 1G ethanol production has led to groundwater depletion. While India currently enjoys a food surplus, the implications of groundwater depletion and diverting food crops for energy production could threaten future food security.

Crop yields have stagnated, and global warming is expected to reduce them further, necessitating a sustainable approach.

2. Environmental Concerns and GHG Emissions:

The agriculture sector is a significant contributor to direct greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, making it challenging to justify increasing emissions for motor fuel

production while aiming to decrease GHG emissions from the transport sector. This counterproductive loop needs reconsideration.

A Shift Towards Sustainable Biofuels:

The solution lies in shifting towards sustainable biofuels produced from crop residues and wastes with minimal water and GHG footprints.

The recently formed Global Biofuels Alliance aims to promote sustainable biofuels and ethanol adoption. This marks a significant commitment from India to the global effort to combat climate change.

Prioritizing Biomass Use:

The Energy Transitions Commission recommends prioritizing biomass for sectors with limited low-carbon alternatives, such as long-haul aviation and road freight. These sectors may rely on biofuels while electrification efforts progress.

1G ethanol, aimed at petrol vehicles, might not align with this vision, but 2G ethanol could qualify as a sustainable fuel, especially if produced through decentralized methods.

Challenges in Achieving Sustainability:

Balancing economies of scale with the energy requirements and costs of biomass collection and transportation over large distances is a substantial challenge.

Decentralized biofuel production from crop residues could be a solution, but it might hinder economies of scale.

The Global Biofuels Alliance can play a vital role in driving innovation to establish efficient biomass supply chains and smaller-scale biofuel production units.

Conclusion:

India's biofuel strategy must evolve towards sustainability to balance decarbonization goals with environmental and societal needs. By distinguishing between sustainable and unsustainable biofuels and embracing innovative approaches, India can contribute significantly to the global effort to combat climate change while ensuring food security and resource preservation.

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Global dispute settlement, India and appellate review

Context:

The recent G-20 Declaration has upheld the importance of reforming the World Trade Organization (WTO) and ensuring a functional dispute settlement system by 2024.

Background:

The WTO's dispute settlement mechanism has faced challenges since 2019, primarily due to the United States' blockage of appellate body appointments. This system, often regarded as the crown jewel of the WTO, plays a pivotal role in maintaining coherence and predictability in trade disputes. However, the commitment expressed in the G-20 Declaration raises questions about the future of the appellate process, given the U.S.'s opposition.

Relevance:

- GS-02, GS-03 (Bilateral Groupings and Agreements)
- Prelims:
- WTO
- WTO's appellate body
- Anti-dumping duties

Mains Questions:

What challenges does the WTO face in defining the role of the appellate body and addressing the issue of creating binding precedents? (150 words)



Dimensions of the Article:

- The Vital Role of WTO's Dispute Settlement System
- Uncertain Future of Appellate Review
- Emerging Need for Appellate Review in Investment Law
- Benefits of Appellate Review in ISDS
- UNCITRAL's Role in ISDS Reforms
- India's Position and Interests

The Vital Role of WTO's Dispute Settlement System

The WTO's dispute settlement mechanism, characterized by a two-tier panel and appellate body structure, has been instrumental in issuing over 493 rulings since its establishment in 1995.

This mechanism ensures the coherence and predictability of trade rulings, instilling confidence in the WTO's dispute resolution process.

Uncertain Future of Appellate Review

Despite the G-20 Declaration's commitment to a well-functioning dispute settlement system, uncertainty looms over the inclusion of an appellate process. The U.S. appears inclined towards reducing the role of international courts and tribunals in trade disputes.

This raises concerns about the future of a crucial check on legal interpretation and consistency in international trade law.

Emerging Need for Appellate Review in Investment Law

International investment law, particularly the investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) mechanism, is witnessing efforts to establish an appellate review process. Currently, ISDS operates through ad hoc arbitration tribunals without appellate oversight.

This has led to inconsistent interpretations of treaty provisions and unpredictable outcomes, creating instability in international investment law.

Benefits of Appellate Review in ISDS

An appellate review mechanism in ISDS would address inconsistencies, harmonize interpretations, and bring coherence to the system. It could correct errors of law and ensure predictability and certainty.

This mechanism is superior to existing processes like annulment proceedings, which have limited scope, and court challenges based on procedural grounds.

UNCITRAL's Role in ISDS Reforms

Discussions regarding the establishment of an appellate review mechanism are ongoing at the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL).

Critical issues, such as the mechanism's form, standard of review, time frame, and effect of decisions, are under consideration at UNCITRAL.

India's Position and Interests

While India has not formally stated its stance on appellate review in ISDS, it is presumed to support the idea based on Article 29 of the Indian model Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT).

India's concerns about inconsistency and incoherence in ISDS make the creation of an appellate review mechanism align with its interests. India's participation in investment treaty negotiations with the European Union further emphasizes the need to take a stand on this issue.

Way Forward:

The establishment of an appellate review mechanism in ISDS and the restoration of the WTO's appellate body are crucial steps towards ensuring a rule-based global order. Such mechanisms will enhance confidence among states and investors in international trade and investment law. It is imperative for India to actively support these initiatives to advance its interests in a harmonized and predictable global trade and investment environment.

Economy grows 7.8%, fastest in 4 quarters

Context

GVA from trade, lodging, transportation, communications, and broadcasting services increased 9.2% in Q1, while GVA from finance, real estate, and professional services increased 12.2%. The employment-intensive construction sector, public administration, defence, and other services all had increases in GVA of 7.9%.

What is GDP?

- The entire monetary worth of all goods and services produced inside a nation's borders during a certain period is known as the Gross Domestic Product or GDP. It is a comprehensive indicator of a nation's economic health.
- The following equation is used to compute GDP: $\text{GDP} = \text{private consumption} + \text{gross private investment} + \text{government investment} + \text{government spending} + (\text{exports} - \text{imports})$.
- Typically, a nation's national statistical agency will calculate GDP.
- India's GDP increased by 7.8% in the April to June 2023–2024 quarter. Domestic consumption and investment growth drove this increase, which was a one-year high. India's economy continued to grow at the quickest rate among developed nations thanks to improved performance in the banking and agricultural sectors.

What is GVA?

- The value of the goods and services generated in an economy is measured by the macroeconomic indicator known as Gross Value Added (GVA). It is the

total cost of all output produced, excluding any production-related intermediary costs. A crucial factor in determining the economy's GDP is GVA.

- GVA is computed by subtracting the value of intermediate inputs from the total value of output. Raw materials and other products and services used in the production process are considered intermediate inputs.
- The GVA formula is: $GVA = GDP - Taxes + Subsidies$
- Without taking into account the effects of taxes and subsidies, GVA offers a more realistic representation of the actual value produced by various industries and economic sectors.



What is the difference between GDP and GVA?

Gross Value Added (GVA) and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) are two crucial economic metrics that shed light on a nation's overall economic performance. Although they are related ideas, there are some significant distinctions between them:

Gross Domestic Product (GDP):

- The gross domestic product (GDP) is the total monetary worth of all finished products and services produced within a nation's boundaries over an extended period (often a quarter or a year).
- The value of the goods and services produced by all economic sectors, including domestic and international businesses operating within the nation's borders, is included.
- Three methods can be used to calculate GDP: the production method (which adds up the value added by each industry), the expenditure method (which

adds up consumption, investment, government spending, and net exports), and the income method (which adds up all incomes from factors of production like wages, profits, and rents).

Gross Value Added (GVA)

- GVA is a measure of the overall value created by an economy's various production-related sectors.
- It is computed by taking the total output of products and services produced in a specific sector and subtracting the value of intermediate consumption (cost of inputs).
- By removing the double-counting of intermediate inputs that are prevalent in GDP calculations, GVA provides a clearer view of the contribution of each sector to the economy.
- GVA is a tool for assessing a sector's overall economic performance, and it is frequently combined with other sectors to calculate GDP.

How is India's economic performance in the first quarter of the financial year?

- **Growth in GDP and GVA:** In the first quarter of the current fiscal year, India's GDP and Gross Value Added (GVA) both grew by 7.8%, which is a four-quarter high. A measurement of economic output known as GVA growth accounts for the value added at each step of manufacturing.
- **Growth-affecting variables:** According to economists, several variables could potentially slow down the rate of growth for the rest of the fiscal year. A bad monsoon, high inflation, and potential threats to the global economy all affect India's growth trajectory.

How did each sector perform in the first quarter of the financial year?

- **Manufacturing:** After experiencing a period of decline, the manufacturing sector showed indications of recovery by expanding for the second straight quarter. In the first quarter, the growth rate improved marginally from the fourth-quarter level of 4.5% to 4.7%.
- **Agricultural:** Between April and June, the forestry, agricultural, and fishing sectors all grew by 3.5%.
- **Services:** The largest growth spike was seen in the services sector, which made a major contribution to the total projections. Financial, real estate, professional services, trade, hotels, transportation, communication, broadcasting-related services, public administration, defence, and other services are some of the major service sectors that saw significant expansion.

Conclusion :

Overall, the 7.8% growth rate in India's GDP and GVA during the first quarter is seen favourably, although economists disagree on whether this growth rate will continue throughout the rest of the fiscal year. The trajectory of India's economic growth in the

upcoming months will be influenced by several variables, including the performance of various sectors and foreign problems.

Seven years on, mission to clean the remains a work in progress

Context

After announcing the ambitious National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) seven years ago, the government has only put in treatment facilities that can handle 20% of the anticipated sewage output in the five major States that border the river. By 2024, this is projected to rise to around 33%. Senior NMCG officials have recently made predictions that the treatment facilities will be able to handle 60% of sewage by December 2026.

Namami Gange Programme:

- The Namami Gange Programme, an integrated Ganges development project, was introduced in July 2014.
- It seeks to efficiently reduce pollution, protect the Ganges, and restore it.
- The programme involves several activities to accomplish its goals and encompasses eight states.
- One of the goals of the Ministry of Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation is to eradicate open defecation from 1,674-gramme panchayats (village councils) close to the Ganges.
- The river has received significant funding for cleanup, with more than 2,958 Crores (US\$460 million) spent as of July 2016.
- To reduce pollution, the programme mandated the closure of 48 industrial facilities along the Ganges.
- The Namami Gange Programme will spend 20,000 crore over the next five years, which is a huge increase over prior initiatives.
- It places a strong emphasis on coordination between federal and state government ministries and agencies and seeks to address pollution hotspots through public-private partnerships (PPPs).
- Interventions to reduce pollution, infrastructure for sewage treatment, riverfront development, river surface cleaning, biodiversity conservation, reforestation, public education, and industrial effluent monitoring are the main areas of focus for the programme.
- Jobs will be created, livelihoods will be enhanced, and populations reliant on the Ganges will have better health as a result of the programme.

What is the progress of the programme after 7 years of implementation?

- The NMCG has been a focus of government effort for seven years.

- Currently, approximately 20% of the anticipated sewage generated in the five major states along the Ganga River can be treated by sewage treatment facilities (STPs).
- By 2024, this percentage is projected to reach about 33%, and by December 2026, it will reach 60%.
- The Namami Gange mission places a lot of emphasis on STPs and sewerage networks, which account for around 80% of the project's overall costs.
- With only 811 MLD of capacity completed between 2014 and 2021, progress has originally been sluggish.
- However, 1,455 MLD capacity was finished in the most recent fiscal year (2022-23), indicating an increase in efforts.



Where does the majority of the sewage comes from?

- The figures are based on an estimated 11,765 MLD (million litres per day) of sewage generated in the Ganga River's five states (Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, and West Bengal).
- This estimate covers sewage produced within the states but not necessarily going into rivers, as well as anticipated population growth.

What is the objective of NMCG?

- The mission of Namami Gange's primary goal is to keep untreated sewage out of the Ganga River.
- By 2026, the NMCG wants to have STPs in place that can handle sewage loads of around 7,000 MLD.
- With assistance from other branches of the Union government, the states are required to build the remaining capacity on their own.

What are the challenges faced by the programme?

- Problems with land acquisition caused delays in the project's execution.

- Project execution processes and the activities of many agencies are outlined in Detailed Project Reports, which need changes.
- It was necessary to dispel the false belief that the construction of treatment plants was the only province of the federal government.

What are the indicators of clean river water?

- According to the report, the water quality of the Ganga has greatly improved and is currently within the acceptable ranges for primary bathing water quality.
- The increased number of dolphins and the presence of Indian carp, both signs of cleaner water, attest to this progress.
- The NMCG is attempting to create an air quality-like index for water quality.
- By offering a consistent gauge of water quality along the Ganga River, this index will improve communication and river water quality monitoring.

Indian Navy's stealth frigate Mahendragiri launched

Context

Sudesh Dhankhar, the wife of Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar, launched Mahendragiri, the seventh and last stealth frigate of Project 17A, on Friday at Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd. (MDL) in Mumbai.

What is Project 17-A?

- Stealth guided-missile frigates are being constructed for the Indian Navy as part of Project 17A (P-17A). The ships, which are a successor class to the Project 17 (Shivalik Class) frigates, have enhanced stealth capabilities, cutting-edge weapons and sensors, and platform management systems. The Nilgiri was launched as the first stealth ship in 2019.
- The ships were created in-house by the Warship Design Bureau of the Indian Navy. The ships are being constructed by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders (MDL) and Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE).
- On September 1, 2023, Mahendragiri, the seventh and last ship of the Project 17A frigates, was launched. The vessel is 17.8 meters broad and 149 meters long. It is anticipated to be put into service in 2024.

What are Frigate class ships?

A frigate is a class of naval warships that, in terms of size, capabilities, and function, sits between a destroyer and a corvette. In addition to escorting larger ships, patrolling territorial waters, engaging in anti-submarine warfare, and engaging in air and surface combat, frigates are multipurpose ships.

What are the characteristics?

- **Size:** The normal size of a frigate is that of a medium-sized warship, bigger than a corvette but smaller than a destroyer.
- **Armament:** They are armed with a variety of weapons, including torpedoes, naval guns, electronic warfare systems, and anti-ship and anti-aircraft missiles. Due to their adaptability, frigates can combat various threats.
- **Sensors and Systems:** Frigates are outfitted with sophisticated radar, sonar, and sensor systems that allow them to find and follow aircraft, surface ships, and submarines.
- **Multi-Mission Capability:** Frigates are versatile assets for naval operations since they are built to perform a variety of tasks. They are capable of air defence, surface, and anti-submarine warfare.
- **Speed and Endurance:** Frigates can operate independently or as a member of a naval task force and are designed for long-term operations at sea. They have the speed and stamina required for lengthy deployments.
- **Protection:** These ships frequently have armour to safeguard critical systems, close-in weapon systems (CIWS) for protection against incoming threats, and countermeasures against missiles.



How does this showcase the capabilities of Indian industries?

- President Murmu highlighted this occasion as a significant step toward the Atmanirbhar Bharat (Self-Reliant India) vision.
- Local shipbuilding is thought to be a key factor in reducing dependency on imports and advancing the country's technological prowess.

- An illustration of India's commitment to technological advancement in the maritime and defence sectors is Project 17A.
- To increase local capabilities and reduce reliance on outside sources, the initiative is a crucial step.

Which are the other Naval ships under this series?

The P-17A frigates were given their name in honour of the old Nilgiri-class frigates, which were used by the IN from 1972 to 2013. The names used by the earlier class were given to the first six ships in the series: Nilgiri, Himgiri, Taragiri, Udaygiri, Dunagiri, and Vindhyagiri. Without a namesake from the earlier class, Mahendragiri became the replacement name for the seventh and last P-17A series ship.

What are the benefits of launching the final frigate in the series?

- **Enhanced Naval Capabilities:** With the addition of Mahendragiri to the fleet, India's military now has two cutting-edge stealth frigates. This improves the Indian Navy's total naval capability because these frigates are outfitted with cutting-edge equipment and weapons for a variety of maritime operations.
- **Enhanced Maritime Security:** With Mahendragiri on board, India is now better equipped to patrol and protect its maritime borders and interests. It helps defend the country's economic and security interests by assisting in the safeguarding of India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and marine trade routes.
- **Dissuasion:** The presence of contemporary frigates like Mahendragiri can dissuade potential enemies. It makes it quite evident that India is capable of protecting its maritime interests and successfully addressing any security challenges.
- **Operational Flexibility:** The Indian Navy can use Mahendragiri and other frigates of a similar design for a variety of activities, including HADR (humanitarian assistance and disaster relief) operations, anti-submarine warfare, anti-surface warfare, and anti-air operations. Responding to varied maritime concerns requires adaptability.
- **Regional Influence:** An adequately stocked navy with contemporary frigates can increase India's influence in the greater Indo-Pacific region as well as the Indian Ocean region. This may be crucial for diplomatic and strategic interactions with regional allies and neighbours.

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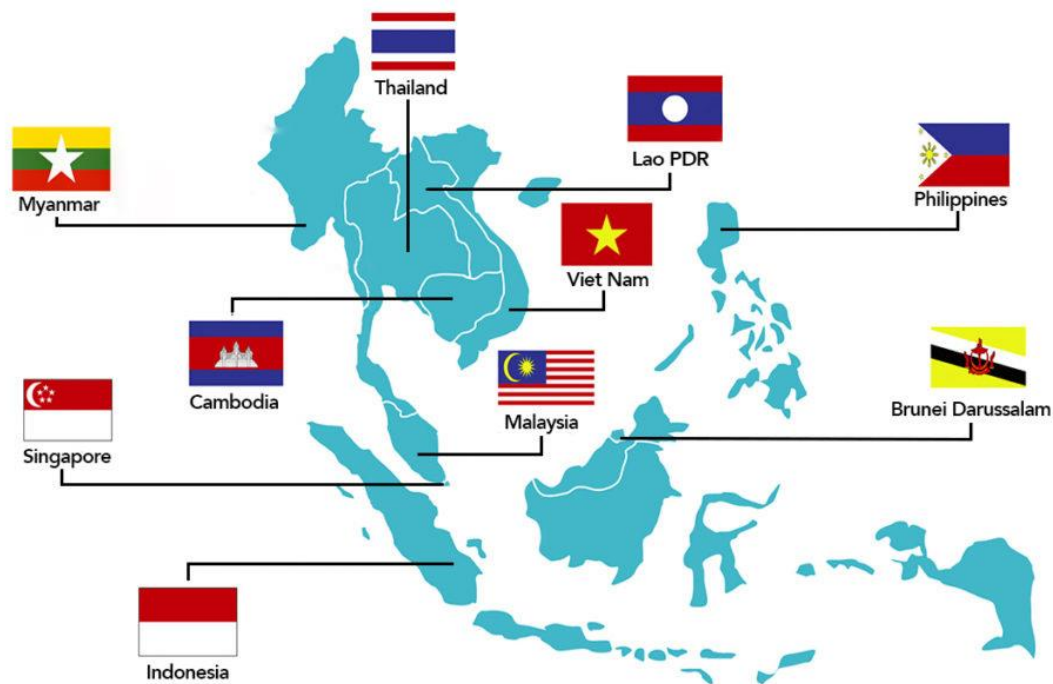
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RBACCP-29	March 08 th 2024	11:00 AM - 2:00 PM	22 Months
RBMCCP-30	May 17 th 2024	7:00 AM - 10:00 AM	20 Months
RBECCP-31	May 17 th 2024	5:30 PM - 8:30 PM	20 Months
RBACCP-32	June 24 th 2024	11:00 AM - 2:00 PM	18 Months
RBMCCP-33	August 04 th 2024	7:00 AM - 10:00 AM	15 Months



ASEAN a key pillar of 'Act East' policy: Modi

What is ASEAN?

- ASEAN is an acronym that stands for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. It is a political and economic union of ten Southeast Asian countries. Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam are the members.
- The governments of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand founded ASEAN in 1967. The organization's goals are to support Southeast Asia's peace and security, economic prosperity, social improvement, and cultural development.
- "One Vision, One Identity, One Community" is ASEAN's motto. ASEAN Day is celebrated on August 8th.
- The 43rd ASEAN Summit will be held in Jakarta on September 5-7, 2023.



What role does India play in ASEAN?

- The involvement of India in ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) is diverse and has evolved. India's relationship with ASEAN is led by its "Look East" strategy, which was later updated to "Act East," indicating a more proactive and dynamic approach. Here is a summary of India's position in ASEAN:
- Strategic Alliance: India and ASEAN have a strategic alliance. This collaboration spans multiple domains, including political, economic, security, and sociocultural cooperation. It underlines India's commitment to strengthening ties with ASEAN members.

- **Economic Cooperation:** Economic cooperation is an important part of India's connection with ASEAN. The ASEAN-India Free Trade Area, which aims to encourage trade and investment between India and ASEAN member countries, is a member of India. In addition, India has been an active participant in regional economic conferences such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the East Asia Summit (EAS).
- **Security and defence:** India works with ASEAN member countries on security and defence matters such as counter-terrorism, maritime security, and disaster management. To improve security in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asian regions, the Indian Navy undertakes joint exercises and patrols with many ASEAN states.
- **Cultural and Educational Exchanges:** India encourages cultural and educational exchanges with ASEAN countries. This comprises student grants, cultural events, and academic institution connections.

What are the recent developments in the ASEAN summit in Indonesia?

- Prime Minister Modi visited Indonesia to attend two major summits: the 20th ASEAN-India Summit and the 18th East Asia Summit (EAS).
- Leaders from ASEAN member countries, as well as other significant regional and global entities such as Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Russia, and the United States, attended the East Asia Summit.

What were the issues that were discussed between India and other ASEAN countries?

- India and ASEAN have a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, a high-level relationship that has energized their relations.
- Modi stated his intention to discuss a variety of regional issues during the summits, including:
 - **Food and energy security:** Regional initiatives to maintain stable food and energy supply.
 - **Environment:** Addressing environmental issues and supporting environmentally sustainable behaviours.
 - **Health:** Discussing healthcare collaboration, which is especially important in light of regional health issues.
 - **Digital Transformation:** Exploring the potential for digital innovation and technological collaboration in the region.

What was the purpose of the meeting between Russia and India?

- **Bilateral Relations:** The meeting's goal was to promote and expand India-Russia relations. Both countries have a long history of close and strategic cooperation, and such meetings allow them to address various facets of their relationship, such as political, economic, and defence cooperation.
- **Preparation for Upcoming Summits:** Given that the meeting took place immediately before the G20 Summit in Delhi, it's possible that the ministers

addressed the summit's agenda and priorities. This could include conversations about significant problems that will be highlighted at the G20 meetings.

- **Bilateral and Multilateral Cooperation:** This means that the ministers likely discussed the status of current agreements and efforts between India and Russia, as well as potential areas for future collaboration.
- **Addressing Differences:** Russia objected to certain phrasing on Ukraine in the G20 Leaders' Declaration. The conference may have included discussions about how to resolve these differences and reach a consensus at the summit.

Launch of Global Biofuels Alliance a key moment in the quest for clean energy: PM

Context

India officially inaugurated the Global Biofuels Alliance on Saturday, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi pleaded with the G-20 to join the initiative to raise the global ethanol-to-gasoline blend to 20%.

What is the Global Biofuels Alliance?

- India has launched the Global Biofuel Alliance (GBA) to hasten the use of biofuels on a worldwide scale. The alliance's objectives are to:
 - Utilize sustainable biofuels more often.
 - Establish benchmarks and certification
 - Advance technology
- Compared to gasoline, biofuels burn more efficiently and emit fewer greenhouse gases. Up to 86% less greenhouse gas emissions can be achieved with cellulosic ethanol. Producing enough biofuel to drastically reduce fossil fuel use, however, can result in issues like increasing pollution and a reduction in food access. It can be expensive to manufacture and incorporate biofuels into daily fuel usage.
- 80% of the growth in the use of biofuels worldwide is accounted for by the United States, Canada, Brazil, Indonesia, and India.

When was the initiative launched?

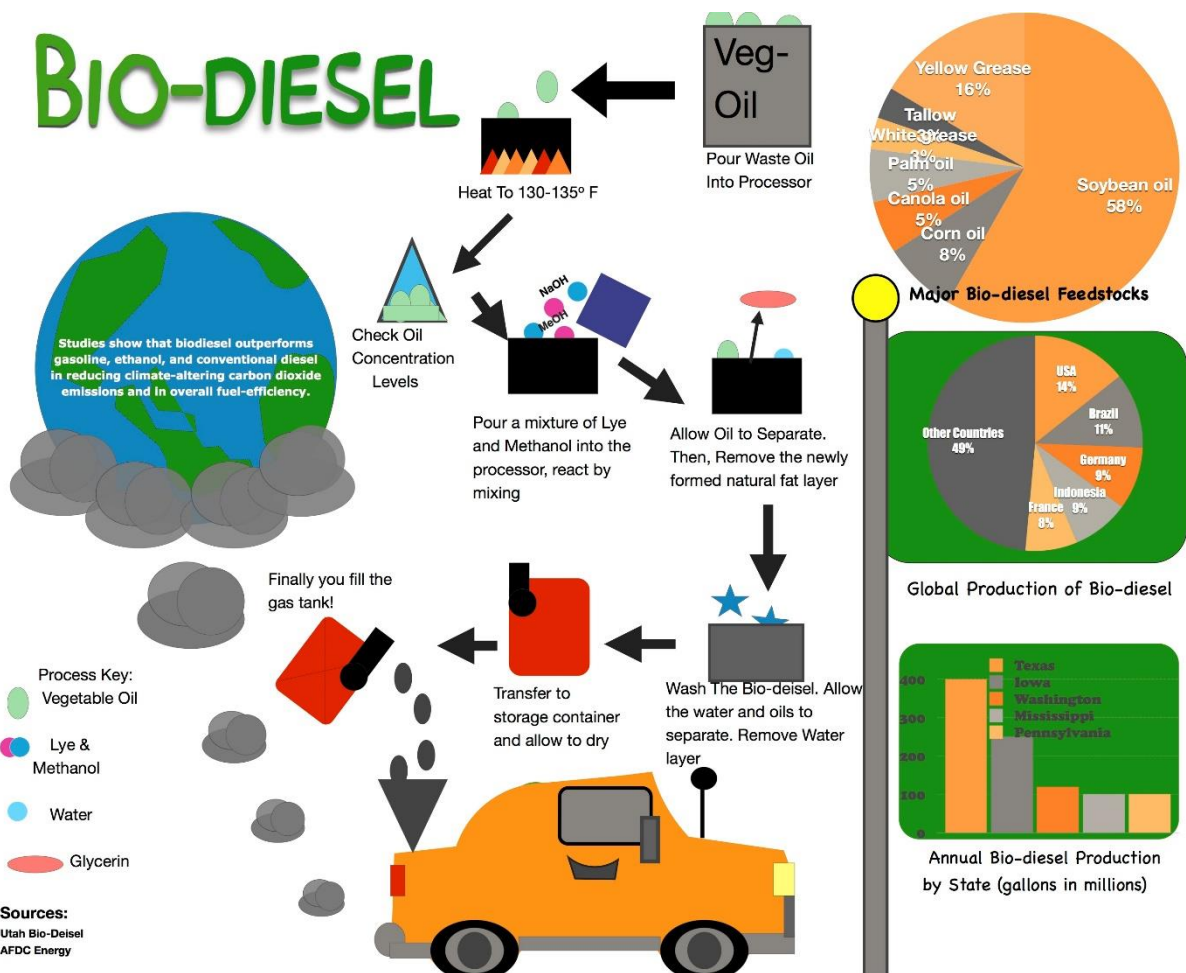
During the G-20 Summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the coalition. President Joe Biden of the United States, President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh, and Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni of Italy were among the other world leaders present at the launch.

Who are the founding members of the alliance?

The Global Biofuels Alliance was founded by the United States, India, Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Italy, Mauritius, South Africa, and the United Arab Emirates. Singapore and Canada are participating as observers.

What is the Green Credit Initiative?

- India's Green Credit Programme is a national effort that tries to encourage individuals to take environmentally friendly acts. The government included the program in its budget for 2023–2024. Through the initiative, people, businesses, and organizations could create "green credits" for actions that benefit the environment.
- To leverage green credits, the initiative would employ a competitive market-based strategy. Green credits are tradable results that serve as incentives. They would be provided to people and organizations that engage in particular activities and make environmental changes. On a domestic market basis, these green credits would be exchangeable.
- As a component of the government's 2023–2024 budget, the program was initially suggested on February 1st.



What are the focused areas of the alliance?

- **Focus on Sustainability:** The partnership places a high priority on sustainability in the supply and production of biofuels. It strives to guarantee that the cost of biofuels stays low and that they are made in an environmentally friendly way.

- **Goals for Clean Energy and the Environment:** The Global Biofuels Alliance's founding is in line with more general objectives for clean energy, sustainability, and combating climate change. It demonstrates a commitment to utilize greener, renewable energy sources, such as ethanol, to cut greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector.
- **Global Collaboration:** The alliance represents a united front on the part of nations to address the world's energy and environmental problems, particularly as we move toward more environmentally friendly energy sources.

What are the benefits of the alliance for the world?

- **Reduced Greenhouse Gas Emissions:** When compared to conventional fossil fuels, ethanol, which is produced from renewable sources like sugarcane or corn, often has a lower carbon footprint. Increasing the amount of ethanol blended with gasoline can aid in lowering greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation industry, aiding in the fight against global warming.
- **Energy Security:** Domestic production of biofuels, such as ethanol, using renewable resources can lessen a nation's reliance on imports of fossil fuels. This increases energy security and lessens sensitivity to changes in the price of oil around the world.
- **Energy Source Diversification:** The transportation sector's energy sources are diversified through encouraging the use of biofuels. The energy supply may become more resilient and less susceptible to supply disruptions as a result of this diversity.
- **Agriculture Support:** The production of biofuels frequently depends on crops, which can be profitable for farmers and rural areas. It can boost agricultural development and generate employment there.
- **Cleaner Air:** When burned, biofuels often emit less harmful pollution than conventional gasoline. This may result in better air quality and a decline in the health risks brought on by air pollution.

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India, Saudi Arabia join EU and U.S. for an economic corridor project

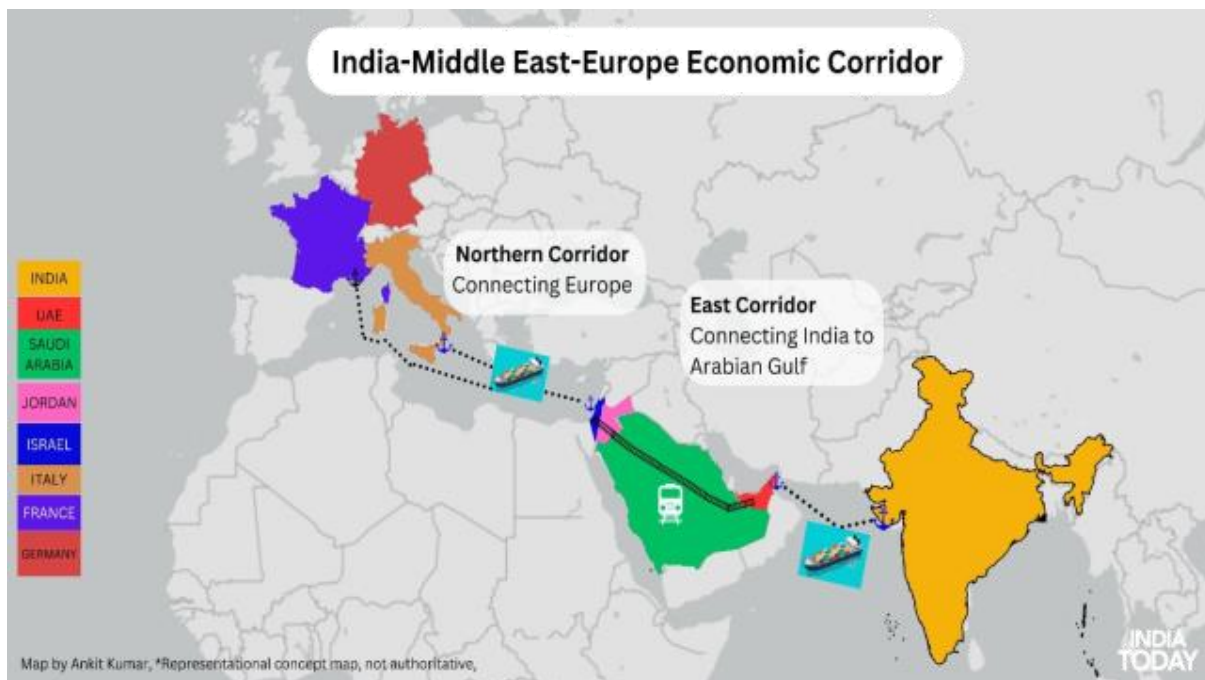
Context

India and Saudi Arabia launched the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII) and the alongside the European Union and the United States. The G-20 summit's participation by Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, who will also pay a state visit to India on Monday, coincided with the introduction of the dual initiatives.

Who are the participants?

Some significant players participated in the launch of the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor and the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII):

- India
- Saudi Arabia
- European Union
- USA



When was this initiative launched?

- These programs were unveiled when Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman visited the host nation and attended the G-20 conference.
- The Crown Prince was slated to travel to India on a state visit after the G-20 summit.

What does the Economic Corridor Initiative consist of?

- An important economic project called the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor was announced.
- Its goal is to encourage trade and economic cooperation amongst the participating nations while enhancing connectivity.

What is the importance of the connectivity?

- **Economic Growth:** Connectivity is crucial for economic growth. This connectivity can be found in the form of energy supply (pipelines, power grids), digital infrastructure (the internet, communication networks), and transportation networks (roads, railways, ports, and airports). It promotes trade and commerce by enabling the effective movement of commodities, services, and people.
- **Trade facilitation:** Better connection lowers trade restrictions, such as the price and duration of transportation. This encourages trade and economic interchange on a global scale, which is advantageous to both firms and consumers.
- **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI):** Nations with strong connectivity frequently draw more FDI. Businesses are more likely to make investments in areas where it is simple for them to transport goods, get access to resources, and connect with their international operations.
- **Job Creation:** Construction, maintenance, and allied businesses gain employment as a result of infrastructure development and connection improvement projects. Additionally, improved connections can spur economic growth and create more jobs in impoverished areas.
- **Regional Development:** Connectivity and infrastructure that have been carefully planned can aid in redistributing economic activity among regions. Fostering balanced growth can lessen the gap in development between urban and rural areas.

What is the significance of the BRICS Membership?

A notable advancement in regional and global collaboration was observed with the recent permanent membership of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in the BRICS organization, which also includes Iran.

Conclusion

In conclusion, with an emphasis on the development of sustainable and green infrastructure, these initiatives and events represent a significant effort to improve economic cooperation, connection, and trade between the participating countries. The discussions and activities surrounding Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman's state visit to India highlight the expanding connections and cooperation between both countries.

Nipah breaks out again in Kerala, claims 2 lives

Context

Two deaths from the viral infection were reported from the Kozhikode area, bringing the Nipah scare back to Kerala.

The deaths were verified on Tuesday by Mansukh Mandaviya, the union minister of health. Two other cases of the virus, which spreads from person to person and from animal to human, including bats and pigs, have been identified.

What is the Nipah Virus?

- The Nipah virus (NiV) is a virus that affects both humans and pigs and causes encephalitis, or brain swelling. Mild to severe disease, and even death, might result from it. Although it can potentially spread through pigs and other animals, NiV is primarily disseminated by fruit bats.
- In 1999, following an outbreak in Malaysia and Singapore, NiV was initially identified. It first appeared as a respiratory and neurological condition in pigs that later spread to people who handled diseased animals. NiV may have emerged as a result of agricultural growth and intensification, according to research.
- Nearly every year, NiV encephalitis outbreaks have been reported in regions of Asia, particularly in Bangladesh and India. In recent years, outbreaks have also happened in the Philippines, Malaysia, and Singapore.
- In the UK, NiV is categorized as an airborne, highly contagious disease. Transmission from person to person has been documented.

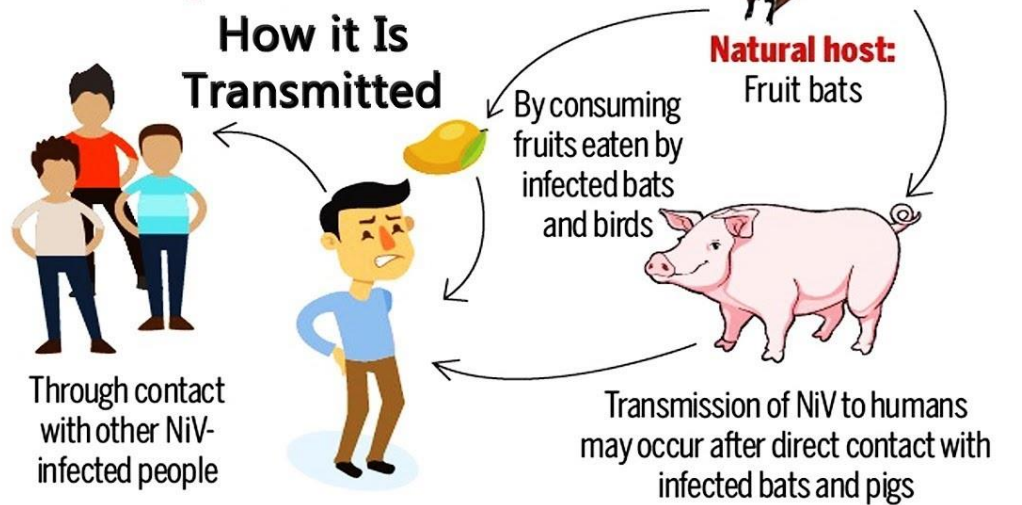
When was the last time the Nipah virus was reported in India?

- On May 19, 2018, news of the final Nipah virus (NiV) outbreak in Kerala, India, was released. This was South India's first NiV outbreak.
- A Malaysian and Singaporean outbreak in 1999 led to the initial identification of the Nipah virus. Over 100 fatalities and approximately 300 human cases were the effects of the outbreak.
- Where is the present case of Nipah being reported?
- In the Kerala district of Kozhikode, there were two documented deaths caused by the Nipah virus. Both August 30 and September 11 saw the deaths. The virus has been confirmed in two more cases.

How is this virus being transmitted from Person to Person?

- Humans can contract the Nipah virus from animals like pigs or bats. Also, it can spread from person to person.
- The Nipah virus can be spread by contaminated food or directly from person to person and has a rather high case-fatality ratio, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

What is Nipah Virus



What are the precautions taken by the Government to curb Nipah?

- **Isolation and Quarantine:** Patients who have been diagnosed as having the Nipah virus are quarantined to stop the spread of the sickness. It's common practice to confine and watch for signs in close contact with sick people.
- **Contact Tracing:** To find and isolate those who may have had close touch with infected patients, health authorities conduct in-depth contact tracing. This reduces the risk of subsequent cases.
- **Public Awareness:** The government runs programs to inform the public about the Nipah virus, its symptoms, and protective measures. Included in this are tips on maintaining good personal cleanliness, avoiding sick people, and avoiding fruits and uncooked date palm sap that have been contaminated with bat excrement.
- **Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** To prevent infection, healthcare professionals and others who come into close contact with patients are given the proper PPE.
- **Surveillance:** To track the virus's transmission, increased surveillance is carried out. This entails keeping an eye out for any unusual sickness patterns and swiftly testing suspicious cases.

Conclusion

The government must act quickly and decisively to stop the Nipah virus's spread and safeguard the public's health. For the citizens of the impacted area, they must monitor the situation and adhere to the health professionals' recommendations.

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Rajnath lays the foundation stone for Nyoma airfield near the LAC in eastern Ladakh

Context

On Tuesday, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated the vital Nechiphu tunnel on the axis to Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh and effectively set the groundwork for the Nyoma airstrip in eastern Ladakh close to the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Where is Nyoma Situated in India?

- Nyoma is a village in Jammu and Kashmir, India's Leh district. It is 147 kilometres away from Leh and situated on the banks of the Indus River. The village's Buddhist monastery is well-known.
- The highest fighter airfield in the world is located at Nyoma. The airstrip is only 50 kilometres from the Chinese border and is situated at an elevation of 13,000 feet. Nyoma is home to the fourth base of the Indian Air Force in Ladakh.



Why is the place important for the Indian Air Force?

- **Proximity to LAC:** Nyoma is situated in eastern Ladakh, close to the Line of Actual Control (LAC), which serves as the region's de facto boundary between India and China. Having a working airstrip near the LAC enables quick response and the deployment of military aircraft in case of any emergencies or threats given the ongoing border tensions and disputes in this region.
- **Enhanced Operational Reach:** The IAF depends on Nyoma's position at a high altitude. It is one of the highest airfields on the entire planet. Operating in high-altitude areas poses particular difficulties, such as decreased engine performance and lower air density. An airport at this level shows the IAF's

capacity to function successfully in difficult terrain and elevations, expanding its operational range and flexibility.

- **Strategic Positioning:** Nyoma is ideally situated to allow for the quick deployment of fighter planes and other aircraft to protect and control the borders in eastern Ladakh. If there are any security threats along the northern border, this airfield can considerably shorten the IAF's response times.
- **Infrastructure creation:** India's larger goal to build border infrastructure, including airstrips, roads, and bridges, in rural and border areas includes the creation of the Nyoma airfield. These upgrades are intended to increase military communication, logistics, and mobility, enabling more effective and efficient defence operations.
- **Defence and deterrence:** Having a well-maintained airfield, such as Nyoma, serves as a deterrent to future enemies. It makes it clear that India is committed to upholding its territorial integrity and national security in the area by remaining militarily active and ready.

What are the characteristics of the new Airfield in Nyoma?

- Due to its location in eastern Ladakh close to the Line of Actual Control (LAC), the Nyoma airstrip is a project of strategic importance to India. The region's aviation infrastructure will be strengthened, and the Indian Aviation Force's (IAF) capabilities near the northern border will be improved. One of the highest-altitude airfields in the world, it is anticipated to cost over 200 crore to build.
- The Nyoma airfield's runway is expected to be finished in around two years. As soon as it is completed, it will be able to house all IAF fighter jets, enhancing India's military presence and response capabilities in the border region.
- India's air force's lack of effective air support was one of the main reasons why India lost the Indo-China War. Fighter jets were unable to reach the area of contact since there were no airfields nearby. Our capabilities will be strengthened by this airfield.

What are the other infrastructure projects in the area?

- Along with the Nyoma airfield, the Defense Minister also officially opened 90 other infrastructure projects in 11 different states and union territories.
- These projects, which have an estimated cost of about 2,900 crore, comprise the renovation of airfields, helipads, roadways, and bridges.
- These changes are intended to improve infrastructure and communication in border regions, especially in states like Arunachal Pradesh, Ladakh, and Jammu and Kashmir.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Rajnath Singh, the Defense Minister, reaffirmed India's commitment to bolstering its border infrastructure and military capabilities in strategically significant regions like Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh by inaugurating the Nyoma airstrip and

other infrastructure projects. These changes are intended to strengthen India's capacity to successfully address regional security challenges.

IAF chief takes delivery of first C-295 transport aircraft in Spain

Context

The Indian Air Force received its first C-295MW transport aircraft from Airbus on Wednesday, marking a significant upgrade to its transport fleet. At the Airbus plant in Seville, Spain, IAF commander Air Chief Marshal V.R. Chaudhari formally received the symbolic keys to the first aircraft. The 56 C-295 planes will take the place of the outdated Avro planes.

What Kind of Aircraft is a C-295MW transport aircraft?

- **Development of the C-295 and First Flight:** The C-295 is a derivative of the CASA/IPTN CN-235 transport aircraft. Development of the C-295 began in the 1990s. The first flight of the C-295 prototype was on November 28, 1997.
- **Spanish Air Force:** In April 1999, the Spanish Air Force placed an order for nine C-295s with a military configuration, becoming the aircraft's first client. The design was put into use by the Spanish Air Force two years later.
- **Versatile Capabilities:** The versatility of the C-295 is well known. It is capable of carrying out a variety of tasks, such as maritime patrol, MEDEVAC, ELINT, cargo and parachute drops, and medical evacuation. Thanks to pallet-mounted systems, some equipment for modifying the aircraft for various missions can be readily inserted and withdrawn.
- **Civil Variant:** Despite the C-295's military success, commercial development of the aircraft stalled for a while. The first deal for a civilian C-295 wasn't finalized until 2017.
- **International Use:** A large number of countries have purchased the C-295, including Spain, Egypt, Poland, Canada, Brazil, Mexico, Portugal, and others. Additionally, it has been deployed to the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, and Chad, among other overseas operations.

what is the deal between Indian Airforce and Airbus?

- **Number of Aircraft:** The agreement covers the purchase of 56 C-295MW transport planes.
- **Contract Value:** The value of the 56 C-295MW aircraft under contract is roughly \$2,5 billion (or 22,000 crores).
- **The signing of the deal:** In September 2021, the deal for the C-295MW aircraft was signed.
- **Manufacturing Arrangement:** By the deal, 16 C-295MW aircraft will be supplied from Airbus facilities in Seville, Spain, in a fly-away condition. Airbus and Tata Advanced Systems Ltd. (TASL), in a joint venture, will produce the

remaining 40 aircraft in India. To aid the Indian manufacturing process, Vadodara, Gujarat, is setting up a final assembly line (FAL).

- **Timeline for Indian Manufacturing:** In September 2026, the nation's first aircraft is anticipated to be delivered.
- **Equipment and Systems:** An Indian electronic warfare suite is installed on the C-295MW aircraft for the IAF. A countermeasure distribution system developed by Bharat Dynamics Ltd. (BDL) and an indigenous radar warning receiver and missile approach warning system made by Bharat Electronics Ltd. (BEL) has also been certified and installed on the aircraft.
- **Impact:** The agreement is anticipated to have positive effects on India and Spain's bilateral relations and to strengthen economic links. It also represents a significant stride in the modernization and improvement of the transport fleet of the Indian Air Force.



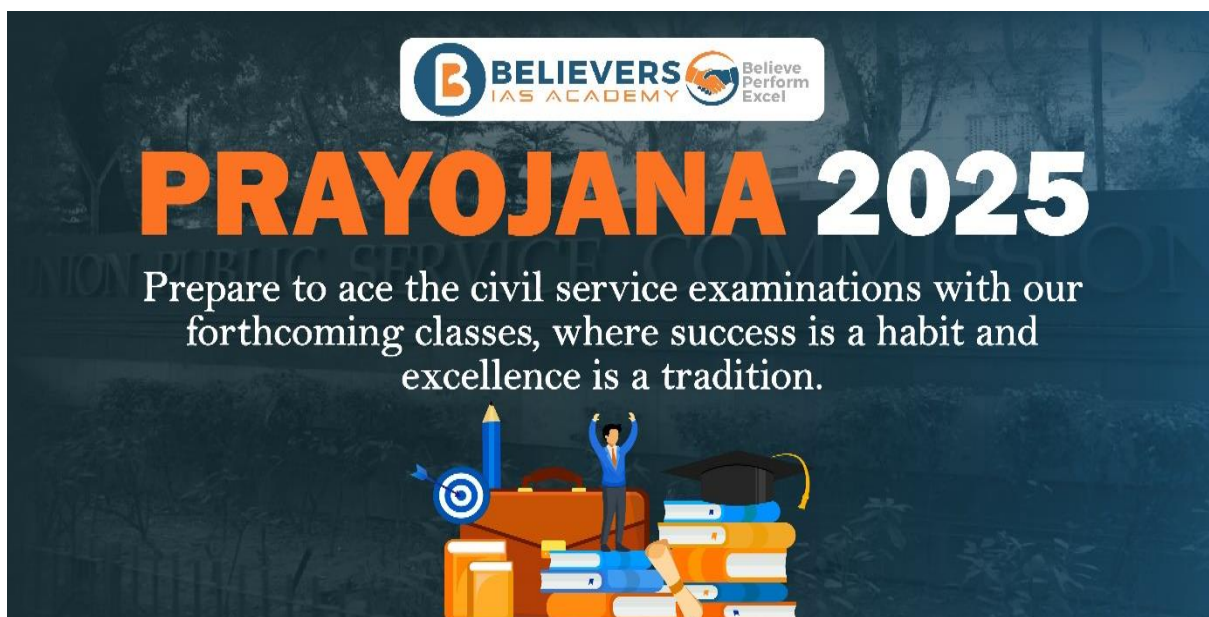
How is it going to enhance the capabilities of the Indian Air Force?

- **Modernization of the Transport Fleet:** The C-295MW, a cutting-edge and adaptable transport plane, will take the place of the IAF's fleet's outdated Avro aircraft. The Avro aircraft had been in service for several decades and needed to be updated because maintenance on them was getting more and more complicated and expensive.
- **Versatility:** The C-295MW is a versatile aircraft with the ability to carry out a variety of tasks. It can move people, cargo, and paratroopers. Additionally, it can be utilized for medical evacuation (MEDEVAC), which is crucial for delivering urgent medical assistance in remote or disaster-affected locations.
- **Improved Payload and Range:** The C-295MW offers an increase in payload and range over the Avro aircraft, with a carrying capacity of nine tonnes. The ability to carry more cargo over longer distances is made possible by the higher payload capacity.
- **Short and Unpaved Runways:** The C-295MW is built to take off and land on runways that are Short and Unpaved, making it appropriate for operations in difficult terrain and remote airstrips. Both military and humanitarian efforts can benefit from this skill.
- **Electronic Warfare Suite:** By supplying electronic countermeasures and threat identification capabilities, the aircraft's Indian electronic warfare suite improves its ability to operate in disputed settings.

- **Integration of Indigenous Systems:** The C-295MW aircraft's integration of indigenous radar warning receiver, missile approach warning, and countermeasure dispensing systems—all produced by Bharat Electronics Ltd. (BEL)—contributes to the growth of India's defence industry and lessens reliance on foreign suppliers.

How is the deal going to impact the Indo-Spain Relationship?

- **Increasing Bilateral Cooperation:** India and Spain have just signed a large defence contract. It represents a strengthening of defence cooperation between the two nations and is one of the largest defence contracts in the C-295 aircraft program's history. Overall bilateral ties may be strengthened as a result.
- **Economic Impact:** The transaction has a value of about 22,000 crores (\$2.5 billion), which makes it economically significant. These agreements, which frequently entail knowledge transfer, manufacturing partnerships, the creation of jobs and business possibilities in both countries and other factors, can strengthen economic relations between states.
- **Technology sharing:** Technology transfer and experience exchange are involved in the joint manufacturing of a sizeable portion of the C-295MW aircraft in India in partnership with Tata Advanced Systems Ltd. (TASL). This could improve India's capacity for aerospace manufacturing and support high-tech enterprises.
- **Enhanced Defence Collaboration:** The agreement may pave the way for additional defence industry cooperation, including cooperative research and development initiatives, technology exchange, and possibly new government contracts.
- **Positive diplomatic relations:** Successful defence contracts frequently lead to good relations between nations on the diplomatic front. In addition to military, trade, culture, and education can all benefit from the successful completion of this deal by fostering goodwill and collaboration.



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AI cameras gun for poachers

Context

Wildlife officials in one of India's most populated tiger zones are testing a new set of video traps — cameras with infrared sensors put in woods to count wild animals or watch the movement of suspected poachers — that harness the power of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Where is the Kanha-Pench corridor situated?

- The Kanha-Pench corridor is a forest corridor in Madhya Pradesh, a state in central India. It is the link between the Kanha and Pench Tiger Reserves. The corridor is one of India's most important forest corridors. It enables tigers to move freely between the two reserves. The corridor is approximately 200 kilometres long.
- The corridor is one of the world's most important tiger protection areas. It supports one of the most important tiger metapopulations in central India.
- In India, the National Tiger Conservation Authority and the Wildlife Institute of India have identified 32 significant tiger corridors. A Tiger Conservation Plan is in place to put these routes into action.
- The Kanha-Pench corridor is located in the Satpura Maikal range. The park is home to a large population of Royal Bengal tigers, Indian leopards, sloth bears, barasinghas, and Indian wild dogs. The jungles featured in Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* are based on this reserve.

What are the challenges faced by the wildlife in this corridor?

- The Kanha-Pench corridor, a historically significant natural corridor in central highland India, is under attack from a slew of problems that jeopardize its ecological integrity and wildlife survival.
- **Road and Railway Development:** Infrastructure development in the form of road and railway construction can fragment the corridor, making it impossible for wildlife to move freely between the Kanha and Pench tiger reserves. Because of this fragmentation, isolated populations can form, limiting genetic diversity and raising the danger of inbreeding.
- **Mining Operations:** Mining activities in the corridor have the potential to disturb the natural landscape, ruin habitats, and pollute water supplies, badly impacting both species and their ecosystems.
- **Deforestation:** Forest clearing for diverse objectives such as agriculture, logging, and urban expansion can dramatically diminish available wildlife habitat. Deforestation not only has an impact on the biodiversity of the corridor, but it also adds to climate change and disrupts natural ecological processes.
- **Aggressive Urbanization:** Rapid and unmanaged urbanization has the potential to encroach on the corridor, diminishing habitat availability and increasing human-wildlife conflicts.

- **Uncontrolled Human Activity:** A variety of human activities, like as poaching, illicit logging, and encroachment, can have a direct impact on wildlife numbers and ecosystems.
- **Increasing Human and Cattle Populations:** As human populations rise in and around the corridor, habitat degradation, increased land use, and higher pressures on natural resources may occur. Furthermore, farmed cattle can compete for dietary resources with wild herbivores.



What is the Latest step introduced by the government to protect the wildlife?

- **AI-Powered Camera Traps:** Wildlife officials in Madhya Pradesh, India, are experimenting with a new set of camera traps that are equipped with AI technology. These video traps are intended to count wild animals and monitor potential poaching.

What are the uses of AI Camera traps in the area?

- **Poacher Detection:** AI-enabled camera traps have recorded photographs of poachers, resulting in convictions in some cases. This technology has proven to be a powerful weapon in combating criminal activity in the area.
- **Remote Monitoring:** Traditional camera traps have restrictions, such as the requirement for physical access to obtain photographs and cumbersome designs. The new TrailGuard AI camera-alert system, on the other hand, is thin and unobtrusive, making it easier to install in remote forest sites.
- **Targeted Imaging:** Unlike standard motion-triggered camera traps, which capture any movement, the TrailGuard AI system may be set to collect photographs of humans or specific species of interest, such as lions, tigers, and cheetahs.

- **Testing and Notifications:** The TrailGuard AI camera-alert system has been tested in the Kanha-Pench corridor and the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve by researchers and developers. Within seconds of detection, researchers and forest department authorities were notified of the presence of wildlife, including tigers, by email or push alerts. This rapid notification system allows for quick reactions to any dangers or conservation requirements.

What are the advantages of having an AI camera set up?

- **Enhanced Security:** Artificial intelligence cameras can be employed for advanced surveillance and security. They are capable of detecting unusual or suspicious activity in real-time, such as intruders, unauthorized access, or odd behaviour, and triggering quick alerts or replies.
- **Object Recognition:** AI cameras can recognize and identify objects or people in their areas of vision. This is useful in applications such as access control, tracking specific products on conveyor lines, and identifying missing people.
- **Anomaly Detection:** Because AI cameras can detect anomalies in data or images, they are useful in industries such as manufacturing and quality control. They are capable of detecting flaws or anomalies in items, machinery, or infrastructure.
- **Data Collection:** AI cameras can swiftly and efficiently collect vast amounts of data. This data can be used in a variety of disciplines for analytics, machine learning, and predictive modelling
- **Savings on security, operations, and maintenance:** AI cameras can eliminate the need for human surveillance and monitoring, resulting in cost savings on security, operations, and maintenance.
- **Customization:** Because AI camera systems can be adapted to individual applications and requirements, they are versatile and adaptable to a variety of contexts.

Conclusion

Overall, it appears that the deployment of AI-powered video traps is a promising breakthrough in wildlife monitoring and protection activities, providing more efficient and targeted surveillance in crucial conservation regions.

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RBMCCP-25	October 16 th 2023	7:00 AM - 10:00 AM	2.5 Years
RBACCP-26	December 24 th 2023	11:00 AM - 2:00 PM	2.3 Years
RBECCP-27	December 24 th 2023	5:30 PM - 8:30 PM	2.3 Years
RBMCCP-28	January 24 th 2024	7:00 AM - 10:00 AM	2 Years
RBACCP-29	March 08 th 2024	11:00 AM - 2:00 PM	22 Months
RBMCCP-30	May 17 th 2024	7:00 AM - 10:00 AM	20 Months
RBECCP-31	May 17 th 2024	5:30 PM - 8:30 PM	20 Months
RBACCP-32	June 24 th 2024	11:00 AM - 2:00 PM	18 Months
RBMCCP-33	August 04 th 2024	7:00 AM - 10:00 AM	15 Months



With lessons from the Ukraine war, the Army revises its artillery plan

What is the historical background of Indian Artillery?

- **Mughal Empire (1526-1857)**
 - The Mughal Empire (1526-1857), one of the most powerful empires in Indian history, made substantial contributions to the development and employment of artillery in India.
 - Firearms and artillery were brought by Emperor Babur, who established the Mughal Empire in India. In conflicts against indigenous Indian monarchs, Babur's soldiers employed early cannons.
- **The Marathas (1674-1818):**
 - The artillery corps of the Maratha Empire, which arose in the 17th century, was well-organized. In different battles and campaigns, they used cannons and other artillery pieces.
- **British East India Company**
 - India became a battleground for many European nations during the colonial era. In particular, the British East India Company developed superior artillery systems and tactics.
 - During this time, the British Indian Army established modern artillery units equipped with cannons and howitzers.
- **World War I and the Declaration of Independence:**
 - As part of the British Indian Army, Indian artillery forces played an important role in both World Wars. They were used in a variety of combat zones.
 - The Indian Army inherited and continued to improve its artillery after India gained independence from British colonial rule in 1947.
- **Post-Independence Period:**
 - India focused on strengthening indigenous artillery capability after independence. In this regard, the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) and the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) performed critical roles.
 - India has created and acquired a diverse array of artillery systems, including field guns, howitzers, rocket launchers, and anti-aircraft guns.

What are the lessons learnt from the Russian-Ukrain war?

- **Firepower is essential:** The Ukraine war demonstrated the significance of firepower as a key factor in modern combat.
- **Target Acquisition and Engagement in Record Time:** The battle in Ukraine demonstrated the need for early target acquisition and engagement.
- **Survivability Matters:** The Ukraine war showed the importance of artillery survival in the face of contemporary threats.

- **Preparation for Prolonged Warfare:** The Ukraine crisis emphasized the need to be prepared for long-term wars and the importance of sustaining operations
- **Lesson on Indigenization and Modernization:** The Ukraine war highlighted the need for modernizing indigenous military equipment and weapons.



What are the changes that the Indian army is planning to bring to its artillery corps?

- **Focus on the Firepower:** The Indian Army emphasizes the importance of firepower as a key aspect of modern warfare. It is investing in artillery systems that can provide increased firepower in terms of both range and precision.
- **Rapid Response and Mobility:** In response to the shorter target acquisition and engagement times seen in current conflicts, the Army is responding by obtaining more nimble and responsive artillery equipment. Self-propelled and mounted gun systems that can be quickly deployed and repositioned are examples of this.
- **Enhanced Survivability:** Recognizing the importance of survivability, the Army is using techniques like "shoot-and-scoot," which involves firing on a target fast and then relocating to evade counter-fire. This strategy improves artillery unit survivability.
- **Preparation for Long-Term Conflict:** The Indian Army is taking steps to guarantee that it is ready for long-term battles. This entails establishing a strong defence industry ecosystem to ensure a long-term supply of equipment and weapons.
- **Indigenization and Modernization:** India is working to modernize its artillery by introducing new systems such as the M777 Ultra Light Howitzer and the K9-Vajra Self-Propelled Guns. There is also a focus on indigenization, minimizing reliance on foreign suppliers, and building domestic capabilities.

Conclusion

To summarize, the Indian Army's artillery unit is undergoing a major makeover to meet the demands of modern warfare. This includes a heavy emphasis on firepower, agility, survivability, and indigenization, which are all critical for maintaining a viable and successful artillery force in the face of changing security concerns.

Tamil Nadu, Kerala to join hands to count endangered Nilgiri Tahr

Context

Tamil Nadu is currently working on a standardized technique to count the endangered population of the only mountain ungulate in southern India after launching Project Nilgiri Tahr last year for the conservation of the State animal. Since the species is only present in a few habitats in the two States, the Tamil Nadu Forest Department would also suggest to its Kerala counterpart that a synchronized census be conducted.

What is the Project Nilgiri Tahr?

- The government of Tamil Nadu launched Project Nilgiri Tahr, a five-year program, to protect the Nilgiri Tahr, the state animal. The project's objectives are to:
 - Restore the ecosystem's fragmentation, particularly in the Shola grasslands, where the Tahr thrives.
 - the Tahr population back into its former environment
 - Develop a better understanding of the Nilgiri Tahr population through surveys and radio telemetry investigations. Ensure that suitable rehabilitation facilities are offered.
 - Deal with immediate threats
 - Educate the public about the species
- The project's budget is 25.14 crore rupees

What do we know about the Nilgiri Tahr?

- The Nilgiri Tahr (*Nilgiritragus hylocrius*) is a critically endangered mountain goat.
- It is the state animal of Tamil Nadu and the sole mountain ungulate in southern India.
- The Nilgiri Tahr is a stocky goat with brown colouring and a bristly mane. It also has short, coarse fur.
- The males have a darker colour and are bigger than the females.
- The wide montane grasslands of the Western Ghats' upper elevations, including the Nilgiris, the Anamallais, and the Nelliampathies, are home to the Nilgiri Tahr. The species is unique to the southern Western Ghats, which are

located in the states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. The Nilgiri Tahr, which was once present over the entire length of the Western Ghats, is now only scattered in tiny areas.

- In comparison to ibex and wild goats of the family Capra, the Nilgiri Tahr is more closely related to sheep of the species Ovis.
- Females can have two pregnancies in a single year.
- There may only be 3,122 Nilgiri Tahr, according to a 2015 World Wildlife Fund for Nature assessment.
- The Nilgiri Tahr population at Eravikulam National Park (ENP) has increased, though. The park saw 803 Tahr observed during the annual census in April, up from 785 the year before.



Why is the Nilgiri Tahr endangered in India?

- The Western Ghats are home to the critically endangered Nilgiri Tahr, a mountain ungulate. The Nilgiri Tahr is most at risk from:
 - habitat destruction brought on by hydroelectric projects, monoculture plantations, and deforestation
 - disruption brought on by invasive species
 - Overgrazing of domesticated animals
 - Unlawful hunting
 - Changing weather

- Although the Nilgiri Tahr is completely protected in India, poaching is still a concern. The population has increased from about 1,000 in 1970 to about 2,600 in 2010 thanks to conservation measures.
- The Nilgiri Tahr can be protected through conservation initiatives like habitat restoration, replanting, and population monitoring.
- Threats to the habitat include wattles, pines, and eucalyptus in the grasslands, which pose a threat to the Nilgiri Tahr. The Tahr's natural habitat may be disturbed by these exotic plants.
- Project Nilgiri Tahr has a component that looks at the causes and potential treatments for the lumpy skin illness that has been observed in the Nilgiri Tahr. The species is worried about this sickness.

What is the purpose of the survey for Nilgiri Tahr?

- **Standardized Population Count:** The Tamil Nadu Forest Department is striving to create a uniform procedure to count the critically endangered Nilgiri Tahr population. The monitoring and preservation of the species depend on this.
- **Synchronized Census:** Tamil Nadu is recommending to Kerala that synchronized censuses be conducted. A reliable population estimate for the Nilgiri Tahr would be provided by a synchronized count because it is only found in certain habitats in both states.
- **Drone Use:** For the first time, drones may be utilized for the census. Since the Nilgiri Tahr lives in montane meadows with rocky, steep terrain at high altitudes, conventional counting techniques are difficult. Effective surveys of these areas can be assisted by drones.
- **Time of the Proposed Census:** The proposed censuses are scheduled for November, following the Southwest Monsoon, and March or April, following the calving season. These times were selected to catch the population at various stages.
- **Survey Methods:** Bounded count and double-observer survey methods, combined with camera traps in difficult terrain, may be used during the census. These techniques aid in ensuring precise population estimations.

Conclusion

Overall, Project Nilgiri Tahr is an important conservation effort aimed at protecting the endangered Nilgiri Tahr and preserving its habitat in the Western Ghats region of Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

Punjab govt. commits to a 50% reduction in stubble-burning cases

Context :

According to the Commission for Air Quality Management in NCR and Adjoining Areas (CAQM), the Punjab government pledged in its State Action Plan to reduce occurrences of paddy stubble burning by at least 50% this year compared to last year.

What is the Stubble Burning Method?

Stubble burning is one way to get rid of crop waste, notably the straw and stubble that is still present in fields after the main crop, such as rice, wheat, or other grains, has been harvested. The residual crop residue in the field is purposefully set on fire using this technique to quickly clear it.

What are the effects of Stubble Burning?

Positive Effects

- **Cost-Effective:** Burning crop debris from fields is sometimes regarded as a cost-effective technique of doing so. It does away with the necessity for labour-intensive techniques like mechanical removal.
- **Pest and Weed Control:** Burning crop leftovers can help control pests and weeds that could otherwise affect the following crop. Insects, weed seeds, and plant diseases that are present in the residue can all be destroyed by fire.
- **Reduced Nitrogen Tie-up:** Burning stubs can help to release some of the nitrogen that has been trapped in the residue. Burning can increase the availability of nitrogen for the subsequent crop, which is crucial for plant growth.

Negative Effects

- **Nutrient Loss:** Crop residue burning results in the loss of important nutrients like carbon, nitrogen, and organic matter. Otherwise, the soil might gain from these nutrients by becoming more fertile and stable.
- **Air Pollution:** Burning twigs causes smoke and other air pollutants to be released. Particulate particles, carbon dioxide, volatile organic compounds, and other dangerous chemicals are all part of this pollution. It contributes to air pollution, which can harm human health by aggravating preexisting illnesses and causing respiratory issues.
- **Contribution to Green House:** Burning Stubble releases carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, contributing to greenhouse gas emissions. These gases influence climate change and global warming.
- **Electrical and electronic equipment damage:** When stubble is burned, conductive waste elements created by the burning residue may harm power lines and sensors in agricultural machinery.

- **Risk of Uncontrolled Fires:** Under dry, windy circumstances, it is possible for fires started by burning stubble to become out of hand. This puts adjacent crops, properties, and even human lives in peril.
- **Loss of Soil Health:** Over time, the practice of burning stubble can result in the deterioration of soil quality. It decreases the amount of organic matter in the soil, which may lead to soil erosion and a decrease in the soil's ability to retain water.

Where is Stubble burning followed in India?

- Stubble burning is primarily followed in several states in northern India. The northern plains of India, particularly the states of Punjab, Haryana, and portions of Uttar Pradesh, are where the practice is most prevalent. The widespread cultivation of crops like rice and wheat in these areas is well-known, and the result is a large volume of crop residue that remains after harvest.
- **Punjab:** One of the main areas where stubble burning is prevalent is Punjab. Due to its tremendous agricultural production, particularly in the cultivation of rice and wheat, the state is referred to as the "Granary of India". Farmers frequently burn their stubble to swiftly prepare fields for the following crop.
- **Haryana:** Significant stubble burning also occurs in Haryana, which borders Punjab. Similar to Punjab, Haryana is a significant producer of both rice and wheat in India.
- **Uttar Pradesh:** Even though stubble burning is less common in Uttar Pradesh than it is in Punjab and Haryana, it is nevertheless used in several regions of the state, particularly those with extensive rice and wheat farming.
- **Delhi-NCR Region:** The Delhi National Capital Region (NCR) is severely affected by the consequences of stubble burning in the nearby states of Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh. During the winter, burning stubble contributes to serious air pollution issues in Delhi and the neighbouring areas.

What was decided by the Punjab Government to reduce stubble burning?

- The Punjab government has pledged to cut down on incidences of burning rice stubble by at least 50% this year compared to last year. The State Action Plan to Combat Air Pollution includes this pledge.
- Elimination Attempt: The State Action Plan also seeks to end instances of rice stubble burning in six districts: Hoshiarpur, Malerkotla, Pathankot, Rupnagar, SAS Nagar, and SBS Nagar.

What are the alternatives to stubble burning?

Mechanical Techniques

- **Crop Residue Mulching:** Using specialized equipment, crop leftovers can be cut into tiny pieces and then scattered uniformly on the field's surface as

mulch rather than being burned. This increases soil fertility, decreases weed development, and improves soil moisture retention.

- **Zero-Tillage Agriculture:** Using crop residue as a cover, zero-tillage or minimal-tillage farming techniques entail planting the following crop straight into the tilled soil. This lessens the requirement for residue removal and contributes to better soil health.
- **Happy Seeder:** A specialized tool known as the "Happy Seeder" allows seeds to be planted straight into fields that have crop leftovers. The residue is cut and lifted, seeds are drilled into the ground, and then the residue is scattered evenly back over the field. This lessens the requirement for burning while improving soil fertility.

Biological Techniques:

- **Biological Decomposition:** Farmers can promote natural crop residue decomposition by leaving crop remains on the surface of the field. As a result, the waste can gradually be broken down by soil microbes, enhancing the soil with organic matter.
- **Utilization of Decomposer Microbes:** Some farmers utilize enzymes or microbial solutions to hasten the breakdown of crop waste. After harvest, these solutions are sprayed on the field to hasten the breakdown process.
- **Diversification:** Instead of growing rice or wheat, farmers can choose crops that produce less agricultural residue, including millets, pulses, or oilseeds. Because of their shorter stalks, these crops might not need as much residue treatment.

Conclusion

Overall, the Punjab government's measures and dedication, as well as cooperative efforts among surrounding states, aim to lessen the negative effects of paddy stubble burning and enhance the region's air quality, especially during the crucial winter months when air pollution tends to increase.

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Centre Softens Angel Tax Rules

Context

On investments made by non-resident investors into start-ups at a premium over their fair market value, the government has loosened some of the provisions of the angel tax that was established in this year's Budget. It incorporated five distinct share valuation techniques and provided a 10% tolerance for departures from the generally accepted share valuations.

What are the Angel Tax Rules?

Angel Tax, formally known as Section 56(2)(vii B) of the Income Tax Act of 1961 is a tax on the excess capital raised by unlisted companies from investors, particularly angel investors when the investment amount exceeds the fair market value (FMV) of the shares issued.

What is the definition of a start-up according to the Angel tax rules?

To be eligible for certain exemptions from Angel Tax, a startup must be defined as per the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) guidelines. The definition typically includes companies that are less than ten years old, have an annual turnover not exceeding Rs 100 crore, and are engaged in innovation, development, deployment, or commercialization of new products, processes, or services driven by technology or intellectual property.



What are the criteria for getting an Angel Tax exemption?

- **DPIIT Registration:** Startups that want to be exempt from the angel tax must register with the DPIIT.
- **Merchant Banker Valuation:** A merchant banker shall use the prescribed methodology to estimate the fair market value of the startup's shares.
- **Investor Criteria:** Individual investors must meet minimum net worth and income criteria.
- **Valuation of Shares:** The fair market value (FMV) of the startup's shares is essential. If the investment amount received is more than the FMV, the extra amount may be considered income and be subject to Angel Tax.
- **Exemption for Investments by Certain Entities:** Investments by venture capital funds, listed companies, and non-resident investors are usually exempt from Angel Tax. These exemptions are meant to encourage investment in startups.

What is the latest introduction to the Angel Tax Return?

Five Valuation Methods

- **Net Asset Value (NAV) method:** This method calculates the value of a company by adding up the value of all its assets and subtracting the value of all its liabilities.
- **Discounted Free Cash Flow (DCF) method:** This method calculates the value of a company by discounting the future cash flows that the company is expected to generate.
- **Comparable Companies method:** This method compares the company to similar companies that have recently been sold and uses the sale prices of those companies to estimate the value of the company being valued.
- **Precedent Transactions method:** This method looks at recent transactions involving similar companies and uses those transactions to estimate the value of the company being valued.
- **Income Approach method:** This method calculates the value of a company by multiplying the company's earnings by a price-to-earnings ratio

Impact on Foreign Investors:

These changes are specifically aimed at providing relief to prospective foreign investors in Indian startups. Resident investors do not have the option to value equity shares using these five alternative methods.

Clarity and Reduction of Litigation:

The amendments to Rule 11UA under the Income Tax Act are expected to bring more clarity to both investors and investees. This clarity will help in selecting an appropriate valuation method, which, in turn, reduces the chances of future litigation related to the valuation of startup investments.

Conclusion

In summary, these amendments to the angel tax provisions aim to make it easier for non-resident investors to invest in Indian startups by offering more valuation methods and providing a tolerance margin for deviations in share valuations. These changes are expected to promote investment in the startup ecosystem and reduce the administrative burden and uncertainties related to valuation.



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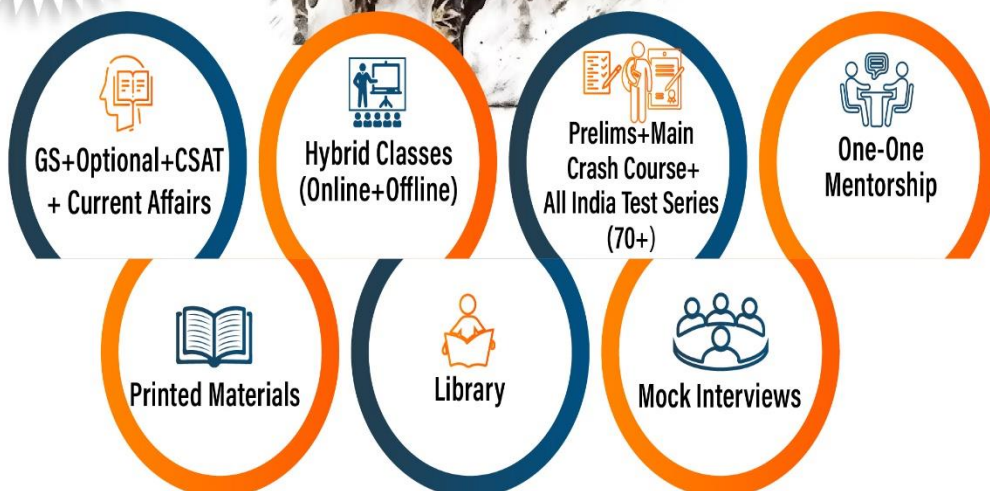
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GENERAL STUDIES-4



Evolving Meanings of Sanatana Dharma: A Call for Profundity and Reflection

Context:

This article delves into the complexities surrounding the term “Sanatana Dharma” and its association with Hinduism. It discusses how the usage and interpretation of this term have evolved and its implications in contemporary society, particularly about casteism and discrimination.

Relevance:

GS-04 (Contribution of Moral Thinkers)

Prelims:

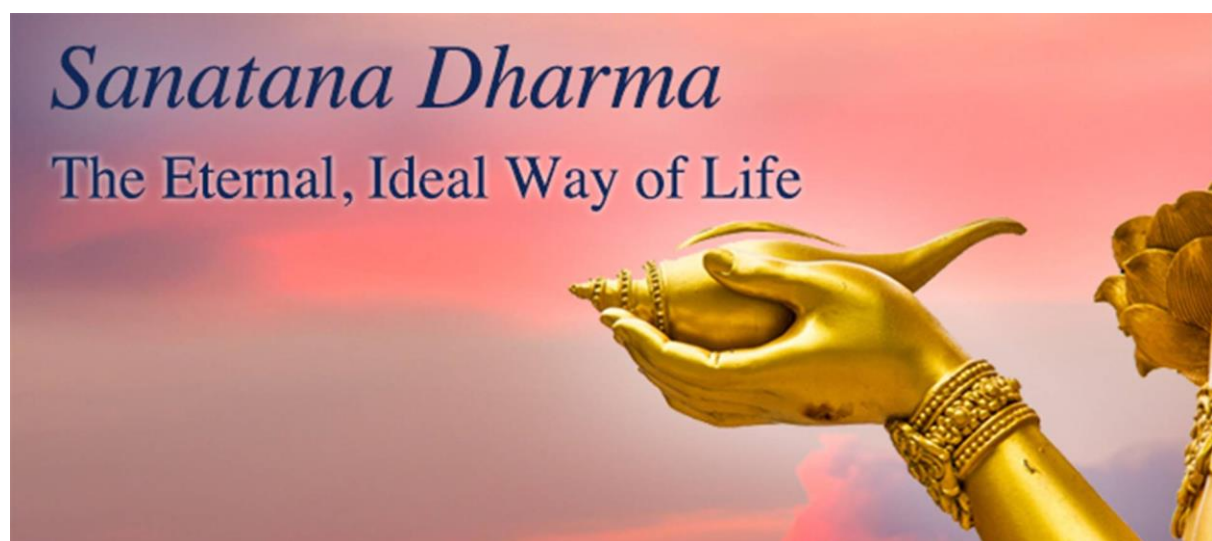
Schools of Philosophy

Main Question:

How has the term “Sanatana Dharma” been manipulated and weaponized, and what responsibilities do caste-privileged Hindus have in addressing caste discrimination within the framework of Hinduism? (250 words)

Dimensions of the Article:

- Critique of Hinduism and Ambedkar’s Perspective
- Interpretations of Caste and Hinduism
- Ambedkar’s Own Stand
- Changing Meanings of ‘Sanatana Dharma’
- Failure to Address Caste Discrimination
- The Need for Change



Critique of Hinduism and Ambedkar's Perspective:

- Babasaheb Ambedkar, in his work "Annihilation of Caste," offered scathing critiques of Hinduism, advocating for its transformation.
- He urged for the destruction of a version of Hinduism that perpetuated casteism and discrimination. However, his call was not to eliminate Hinduism but to reform it from within.

Interpretations of Caste and Hinduism:

- Many from Brahminical castes perceive caste as a natural social order linked to occupation, integral to Hinduism.
- Progressive individuals from these castes call for ending violence associated with caste but not necessarily the caste system itself. They often grapple with distinctions between varna, jati, and caste, while sidelining historical and present realities. To them, Ambedkar's criticisms of Hinduism, when viewed alongside his other critiques, can be offensive.

Ambedkar's Own Stand:

Ambedkar's statement, "I will not die as a person who calls himself a Hindu," doesn't imply his belief in Hinduism but rather his association with Hinduism's deeply entrenched social hierarchy due to his birth. He later disassociated himself from this membership.

Changing Meanings of 'Sanatana Dharma':

- The term 'Sanatana Dharma' is now synonymous with Hinduism, encompassing its rituals, philosophy, and ancient spiritual traditions. However, this broad usage is relatively recent and has been promoted mainly by Brahminical sections of society.
- Meanings of words evolve, influenced by place, context, and reason. While growing up in a Brahmin household, the author knew it as Hinduism, while some might label it as Brahminism.

Failure to Address Caste Discrimination:

- Even though some spiritual leaders address caste privilege, they rarely force individuals to confront their bigotry. There is a lack of critical examination of texts and practices that propagate caste discrimination.
- The responsibility for the actions of casteist individuals is often not accepted by those distancing themselves from caste violence.

The Need for Change:

- To protect 'Sanatana Dharma,' those within the Hindu faith must engage in deep introspection and transformation.
- Ambedkar's call for recognizing the impermanence and ever-changing nature of life applies to Hinduism as well. Cosmetic changes won't suffice; a philosophical re-evaluation is imperative.

Way Forward and Conclusion:

- The article underscores the evolving meanings and manipulations of the term 'Sanatana Dharma' within the context of Hinduism.
- It emphasizes the responsibility of caste-privileged Hindus to address and eradicate caste discrimination.
- To protect the essence of 'Sanatana Dharma,' there is a need for profound introspection and a commitment to meaningful change, as advocated by Babasaheb Ambedkar.



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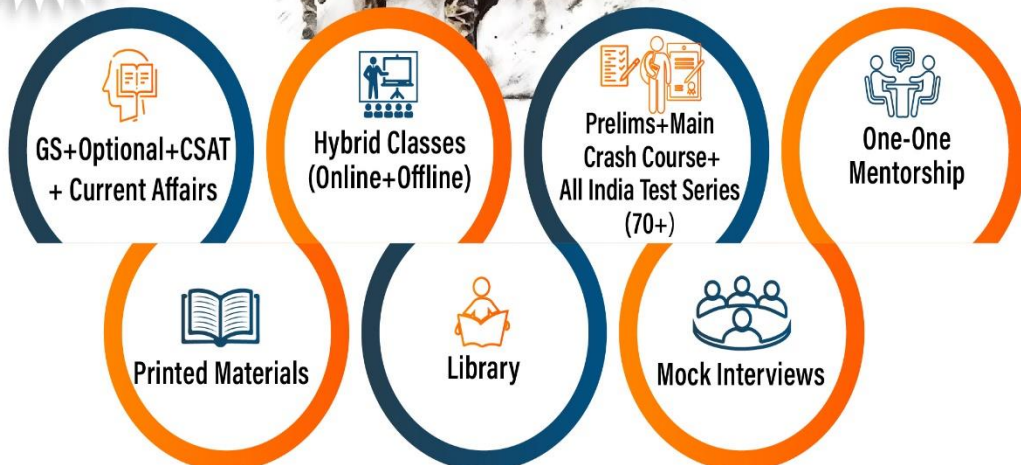
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RBMCCP-28	January 24 th 2024	7:00 AM - 10:00 AM	2 Years
RBACCP-29	March 08 th 2024	11:00 AM - 2:00 PM	22 Months
RBMCCP-30	May 17 th 2024	7:00 AM - 10:00 AM	20 Months
RBECCP-31	May 17 th 2024	5:30 PM - 8:30 PM	20 Months
RBACCP-32	June 24 th 2024	11:00 AM - 2:00 PM	18 Months
RBMCCP-33	August 04 th 2024	7:00 AM - 10:00 AM	15 Months

