

INDIAN HERITAGE AND CULTURE, HISTORY**89th Anniversary of Dandi march of 1930**

On occasion of the 89th anniversary of the iconic Dandi March, PM Modi published a blog titled 'When a handful of salt shook an empire' paying tributes to the contributions made by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel to the movement.

Dandi March

- On March 12, 1930, Gandhi along with 80 satyagrahis started out from Sabarmati Ashram and marched over 390 km to reach the coastal village of Dandi.
- The march, a protest against the coercive salt tax imposed by the British, was the most significant organised challenge to British authority after the Non-Cooperation Movement of the early 1920s.
- The march sparked a series of acts of civil disobedience across India against the salt laws.
- Over 60,000 people were arrested across the country. Soon after, the Congress planned a Satyagraha at the Dharasana Salt Works, 25 miles south of Dandi.
- However, the plan was shelved after Gandhi was arrested days before the beginning of the movement.

Role of Sardar Patel

- Sardar Patel indeed play a very significant role in mobilizing people for the Dandi march.
- However, when Gandhi proposed the idea of a salt march, the working committee of the Congress was not convinced of the impact it would have.
- However, once the decision was taken, Patel threw his entire weight behind it and gave the movement its initial momentum.
- It is believed Patel chose Dandi, and even planned the route Gandhi would take.
- As Patel went about mobilizing people for the march, the district administration of Surat realized it was necessary to get him out of the way.
- Consequently, on March 7, five days before the march was scheduled, Patel was arrested.

GEOGRAPHY**Areca nut gets its first GI tag for 'Sirsi Areca nut'**

For the first time in the areca nut sector, 'Sirsi Supari' grown in Uttara Kannada has received the Geographical Indication (GI) tag.

Sirsi Areca nut

- It is cultivated in Yellapura, Siddapura and Sirsitaluks.
- Totgars' Cooperative Sale Society Ltd., Sirsi, is the registered proprietor of the GI.
- The areca nut grown in these taluks have unique features like a round and flattened coin shape, particular texture, size, cross-sectional views, taste, etc.
- These features are not seen in areca nut grown in any other regions.
- Its average dry weight is 7.5 g and average thickness is 16 mm.
- This particular variety has a unique taste due to differences in chemical composition.
- The total average flavonoids content in it is around 90 whereas in others it is around 80.
- The total carbohydrates in 'Sirsi Supari' are 23% to 26%, total arecoline is 0.11% to 0.13%, total tannin content is 14.5% to 17.5%.

Geographical Indications in India

- A Geographical Indication is used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin.
- Such a name conveys an assurance of quality and distinctiveness which is essentially attributable to its origin in that defined geographical locality.
- This tag is valid for a period of 10 years following which it can be renewed.
- Recently the Union Minister of Commerce and Industry has launched the logo and tagline for the Geographical Indications (GI) of India.
- The first product to get a GI tag in India was the Darjeeling tea in 2004. There are a total of 325 products from India that carry this indication.
- Darjeeling Tea, Mahabaleshwar Strawberry, Blue Pottery of Jaipur, Banarasi Sarees and Tirupati Laddus are some of the GIs.
- The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999 (GI Act) is a sui generis Act for protection of GI in India.
- India, as a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), enacted the Act to comply with the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights

- Geographical Indications protection is granted through the TRIPS Agreement. See also the Paris Convention, the Madrid Agreement, the Lisbon Agreement, the Geneva Act.

CONSTITUTION AND POLITY**Centre allows states to put enemy properties exclusively to 'public use'**

- The Centre has allowed state governments to put to "public use" some enemy properties that were left behind by people who migrated to Pakistan since the Partition and to China after the 1962 Sino-Indian war.
- The move comes amid the central government's efforts to sell more than 9,400 enemy properties, worth over Rs 1 trillion, and Rs 3,000 crore worth of enemy shares.
- The guidelines for disposal of the Enemy Property Order, 2018, have been amended to facilitate "usages of enemy property by the state government exclusively for public use.
- Of the total properties left behind by those who took Pakistani citizenship, 4,991 are located in Uttar Pradesh, the highest in the country. West Bengal has 2,735 such estates and Delhi 487.
- The highest number of properties left by Chinese nationals is in Meghalaya (57). West Bengal has 29 such properties and Assam seven.

Enemy Property

- As per the Enemy Property Act, 1968, 'enemy property' refers to any property that was belonging to a person who migrated from India to an enemy country when a war broke out.
- After the war with China and Pakistan in 1962 and 1965, the government took over the properties, under the Defence of India Act, from persons who migrated to these countries.
- The confiscated property included both movable and immovable properties such as securities, jewellery, land, and buildings.
- Later in 1968, a law called the Enemy Property Act was enacted to regulate such properties and entrusted with the Custodian of Enemy Property (CEPI).

Total Estimates of Property

- There are 9,280 such properties left behind by Pakistani nationals and 126 by Chinese nationals.
- A total 6,50,75,877 shares in 996 companies of 20,323 shareholders are under the custody of the Custodian of Enemy Property for India.
- Of these companies, 588 are functional or active companies, 139 of these are listed and the remaining is unlisted.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**National Knowledge Network to Bangladesh**

India has decided to extend its National Knowledge Network to Bangladesh.

NKN:

- NKN is a multi-gigabit pan-India network which facilitates the development of India's communications infrastructure, stimulates research and creates next generation applications and services.
- Aim: With its multi-gigabit capability, NKN aims to connect all universities, research institutions, libraries, laboratories, healthcare and agricultural institutions across the country to address such paradigm shift.
- What it does? It enables collaboration among researchers from different educational networks such as TEIN4, GARUDA, CERN and Internet2. It also enables sharing of scientific databases and remote access to advanced research facilities. The leading mission oriented agencies in the fields of nuclear, space and defence research are also part of NKN.

Role of NKN:

- Establishing a high-speed backbone connectivity which will enable knowledge and information sharing amongst NKN connected institutes.
- Enabling collaborative research, development and innovation amongst NKN connected institutes.
- Facilitating advanced distance education in specialized fields like engineering, science, medicine etc.
- Facilitating an ultra-high speed e-governance backbone.
- Facilitating connection between different sectoral networks in the field of research

'Trends in International Arms Transfers-2018'

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) has released the Trends in International Arms Transfers 2018 Report. The assessment was done for a five-year period (2014-2018).

Highlights of the report:

- India was the world's second largest importer of major arms in 2014-18 and accounted for 9.5% of the global total.
- After eight years of holding the position of the largest importer of weapons, India has been superseded by Saudi Arabia and dropped down to become the second largest importer of weapons in the world. Last year (for the period 2013-17), India accounted for 13% of all imports and was the world's largest importer.
- Reasons for gradual lowering of imports by India: Imports decreased by 24% between 2009-13 and 2014-18 (two five-year blocks), partly due to delays in deliveries of arms produced under licence from foreign suppliers, such as combat aircraft ordered from Russia in 2001 and submarines ordered from France in 2008.
- The five biggest exporters in five-year block period 2011-2015 were the US, Russia, France, Germany and China. The US and Russia remain by far the largest exporters, accounting for 36% and 21%, respectively, of the total global trade.
- China, which is now the fifth largest exporter of weapons, has been aiding Pakistan and Bangladesh in stepping up their military prowess in the region. The two countries accounted for 53% of Beijing's exports from 2014-2018. On the other hand, Beijing is also an importer. China is the world's sixth largest arms importer in 2014-18 and accounted for 4.2% of the global total.
- Pakistan recorded a 39% dip in arms imports in 2014-18 compared to 2009-13, with the US becoming "increasingly reluctant" to provide military aid or sell arms to Pakistan.
- US arms exports to Pakistan fell 81% between 2009-13 and 2014-18. Pakistan has instead turned to other suppliers. For example, in 2018 it ordered four frigates and 30 combat helicopters from Turkey.

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute:

- Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) established in 1966 is an independent international institute dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament.
- Based in Stockholm the Institute provides data, analysis and recommendations, based on open sources, to policymakers, researchers, media and the interested public.

World Gold Council (WGC) Report

World Gold Council (WGC) has released a report on gold holdings of various countries.

Key facts:

- India, which is the world's largest consumer of gold, has the 11th largest gold reserve, with the current holding pegged at 607 tonnes.
- International Monetary Fund (IMF) is third on the list with total gold reserves of 2,814 tonnes.
- Top slot is occupied by the U.S., which boasts of gold reserves of 8,133.5 tonnes, followed by Germany with 3,369.7 tonnes.
- Among Asian countries, China and Japan have more reserves of the precious metal when compared to India.
- Pakistan, with its gold reserves of 64.6 tonnes, occupies the 45th position.

World Gold Council:

- The World Gold Council is the market development organisation for the gold industry. It works across all parts of the industry, from gold mining to investment, and their aim is to stimulate and sustain demand for gold.
- The World Gold Council is an association whose members comprise the world's leading gold mining companies. It helps to support its members to mine in a responsible way and developed the Conflict Free Gold Standard.
- Headquartered in the UK, they have offices in India, China, Singapore, Japan and the United States.

ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES**India's biodiversity-rich zones also 'hotspots' of human impacts**

Human impacts on species occur across 84% of the earth's surface, finds a study published in PLOS Biology, an international journal dedicated to biological science.

Human Footprint Data

- Southeast Asian tropical forests — including India's biodiversity-rich Western Ghats, Himalaya and the north-east also fall in this category.

- Malaysia ranks first among the countries with the highest number of impacted species (125).
- India ranks 16th in such human impacts, with 35 species impacted on average.
- The study mapped the distribution of eight human activities — including hunting and conversion of natural habitats for agriculture — in areas occupied by 5,457 threatened birds, mammals and amphibians worldwide.

Roads poses threat

- India has the world's second largest road network.
- While the impact of roads is highest (affecting 72% of terrestrial areas), crop lands affect the highest number of threatened species: 3,834.

Hot spots

- Southeast Asian tropical forests — including those in India's Western Ghats, Himalaya and north-east — are among the 'hotspots' of threatened species.
- For instance, the average number of species impacted in the South Western Ghats montane rainforests is 60 and in the Himalayan subtropical broadleaf forests, 53.

Cool spots

- There are 'cool-spots' (the world's last refuges where high numbers of threatened species still persist).
- Cool-spots could be the result of protection or because of intact habitat that has not been cleared yet.
- India still has crucial refuges that need protecting. Identifying such areas could aid conservation and development planning for countries.

DEFENCE

Indigenization of Aeronautics

At the Aero-India 2019 airshow and aviation exhibition, there were two significant developments for India's national security as well as aeronautical industry.

- Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas Mark 1 received its long-awaited Final Operational Clearance.
- This means it is combat-ready and can be exploited to the limits of its approved envelope.

Then, Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) announced its decision to shelve the Kaveri turbo-jet engine project.

Need for indigenous engines and aircraft

- All major aerospace powers have possessed the capability to design airframes as well as power-plants.
- India needs to design and produce its own aero-engines.
- This is necessary because the performance and capabilities of any indigenously built aircraft will be limited by the technology that we are permitted to import.
- Many of the problems the Tejas faced emanate from lack of engine thrust.
- U.S.-made alternatives do not deliver adequate thrust for the Tejas Mk 1 to meet all its missions.
- For the Tejas Mk IA, Mk II, the LCA Navy, and other aircraft programmes such as the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft, India will need turbo-jet engines of even greater thrust.
- It is vital for India to develop a family of homegrown jet engines to power indigenous combat aircraft as well as re-engine imported ones.

National Projects

- Both the Tejas and Kaveri projects form key components of India's technological aspirations.
- A long production run for the Tejas is essential to hone its design and production skills.
- The same holds good for the Kaveri. But, the design and production of a functional turbojet engine are even more challenging.
- The government to declare both these projects as 'national missions' and initiate urgent remedial actions.
- The success of both the Kaveri and Tejas programmes will transform the aerospace scene and put India in the front ranks of aeronautical nations.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Every champion was once a contender who refused to give up.