

INTERNATIONAL RELATION

❖ **Indo-French Strategic Dialogue**

➤ **CONTEXT:** Recently, the National Security Advisor (NSA) of India held the 36th round of the Indo-French Strategic Dialogue with his French counterpart.

➤ **Outcomes**

- Both participants agreed to intensify efforts “towards strategic autonomy”.
- The two sides held discussions on a variety of issues:
 - ✓ The current global security situation in the context of the conflict in Ukraine
 - ✓ Regional security in the context of Afghanistan
 - ✓ Counter-terrorism
 - ✓ Cyber security
 - ✓ Defence cooperation in the Indo-Pacific
 - ✓ Other issues of mutual concern.
- PM Modi and Diplomatic Adviser to the President of France also discussed areas like “energy and culture”.
- The discussions reflected closeness in views of both India and France on all major international issues.
- The France-India strategic partnership is key to tackling the pressing challenges of 2023.
- France’s “full support” for India’s G-20 Presidency.

➤ **India- France Relations**

- **Strategic Relationship:** After India’s 1998 nuclear tests, France was the first country to initiate a Strategic Dialogue with India. By displaying a greater understanding of India’s security compulsions as compared to other countries, France refused to impose bilateral sanctions on India.
- ✓ India-France strategic partnership is based on “exceptional mutual trust, shared democratic values and a joint vision for a multipolar, rules-based world order”
- **Economic Relationship:** Bilateral trade with France has witnessed a steady rise in the last decade reaching USD 10.75 billion in 2020.
- ✓ Investment: France ranks 9th in foreign investment in India. The two sides have recognised the importance of fast tracking the discussions on an India-EU trade and investment agreement.
- ✓ Companies: More than 150 Indian companies are operational in France & more than 1000 French companies are present in India with turnover of \$20 billion
- **Defense Relationship:** India-France conducts a defense dialogue at the ministerial level.
- ✓ Joint defense exercises between the Air forces (Garuda series) and the Armies (Shakti), Navies (Varuna) are conducted regularly.
- ✓ P-75 Scorpene Dea 2005: An agreement for building six Scorpène submarines under technology transfer at Mazagaon Docks Ltd. in India with French help.
- ✓ Technology sharing and acquisitions of short-range missiles and radar equipment were concluded.
- ✓ The government-to-government agreement for 36 French Rafale multi-role combat aircrafts has taken place.
- ✓ India is close to taking a decision on a fighter jet to fly off the Navy’s aircraft carriers (Boeing’s F-18 Super Hornet or Dassault Aviation’s Rafael-M)
- ✓ India is also mulling over procuring 26 jets (probably Rafale, as per official sources).
- ✓ Safran of France is competing with other global engine manufacturers to co-develop a fighter jet engine with the DRDO.
- **Energy Sector Cooperation:** An agreement was signed a decade ago for building six European Pressurized (Nuclear) Reactors (EPR) with a total capacity of 9.6 GW.
- ✓ The International Solar Alliance was launched jointly by India and France.
- Science & Technology: Both the countries have signed a cooperation agreement for the Gaganyaan Mission of India.
- ✓ The French space agency will support India’s scientific experiments by providing French equipment and medical instruments for Indian astronauts.
- ✓ Joint Satellite Mission TRISHNA: TRISHNA is meant for ecosystem monitoring and water use monitoring and it is the 3rd joint mission of ISRO and CNES.
- **Maritime cooperation:** India and France share concern about China’s growing presence in the Indian Ocean Region. France showed more willingness to cooperate with India after the launch of AUKUS.
- ✓ French overseas territories in the Indian and the Pacific Oceans provide it with the second-largest exclusive economic zone globally. It has long maintained bases in Reunion Islands and Djibouti and established one in Abu Dhabi in 2009.
- ✓ Strengthening cooperation with France (the western Indian Ocean Region) makes eminent strategic sense even as India develops its presence in Oman (Duqm) and Seychelles (Assumption Island).
- ✓ Indo-French Naval Cooperation: Naval cooperation in the Gulf area where France has a base (in Abu Dhabi) for securing sea lanes of communication, and combating piracy, transnational crime & terrorism by fostering capabilities in the Indian and Pacific oceans.

➤ **Significance of India-France Relationship**

- Support to India's vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat by France along with reiteration of support for defense industrialisation, joint research and cutting edge technology development in India.
- Post-Brexit, Indian companies can look at France as an entry point to Europe.
- No Money for Terror-an international conference on fighting terrorist financing is ardently advocated by both India and France at UN Platform.
- Shared Vision of multipolar world order.
- India's claim to UNSC Permanent membership has been continuously backed by France.
- India's membership to the Multilateral Export Control Regimes like NSG, MTCR has been always supported by France.
- Reciprocal Logistics Support Agreement to facilitate fuel replenishment and maintenance of each other's warships, military aircrafts and troops during port calls and disaster relief.

INTERNAL SECURITY

❖ **Village Defence Committees**

➤ **CONTEXT:** After militants killed six people in two days in the Upper Dangri village of Jammu and Kashmir recently, locals have demanded that they be provided weapons to take on attackers. Responding to the demands, Lt Governor Manoj Sinha on January 2 assured the people that they would get a Village Defence Committee (VDC) on the lines of those in Doda district.

➤ **What is a VDC?**

- The VDCs were first formed in the erstwhile Doda district (now Kishtwar, Doda and Ramban districts) in mid 1990s as a force multiplier against militant attacks. The then Jammu and Kashmir administration decided to provide residents of remote hilly villages with weapons and give them arms training to defend themselves.
- The VDCs have now been renamed as Village Defence Guards (VDG). The new scheme to set up VDGs in vulnerable areas of J&K was approved by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs in March 2022. Like a VDC member, each VDG will be provided a gun and 100 rounds of ammunition.

➤ **How are VDGs different from VDCs?**

- Both VDG and VDC is a group of civilians provided guns and ammunition to tackle militants in case of attack until the arrival of security forces.
- Under the new scheme, the persons leading the VDGs will be paid Rs 4,500 per month by the government, while others will get Rs 4,000 each.
- In the VDCs, only the Special Police Officers (SPOs) leading them were provided a remuneration, of Rs 1,500 monthly. The SPOs, the lowest rank in the J&K Police, used to be retired army, para military or police personnel.
- The VDGs, will function under the direction of the SP/SSP of the district concerned.

➤ **What was the composition of VDCs?**

- A minimum of 10-15 ex-servicemen, ex-policemen and able-bodied local youth were enrolled in each VDC on a voluntary basis. On an average, at least five of them were provided .303 rifles and 100 rounds each, through the district Superintendent of Police. The allotment of weapons could go up depending on the credentials of the volunteers, total population of a village and its security requirements, as assessed by the district magistrate and SSP concerned.

➤ **Why was the need to set up VDCs felt?**

- The militancy that began in Kashmir in the early 1990s had spread to the adjoining Doda district by mid 1990s. The demand for arming the civilian population first rose after the massacre of 13 people in Kishtwar in 1993.
- As the killings increased, prompting the migration of Hindus from villages to nearby towns, the Home ministry in 1995 decided to set up the VDCs so as to stop this exodus, coming after Kashmiri Pandits were forced to flee the state in the early 1990s.
- Later, the scheme was expanded to other areas of the Jammu division as militants extended their activities to Udhampur, Reasi, Rajouri, Poonch, Kathua and Samba districts.

➤ **How did the idea to arm civilians come up?**

- The idea was taken from the 1965 and 1971 Indo-Pak wars, when the government armed ex-servicemen and abled-bodied youth in villages along the border to guard against infiltration of Pakistani spies.
- The scheme saw success, with locals guarding their areas at night and even providing information to Army troops that led to decimation of Pakistani posts and arrest of Pakistani spies.

➤ **VDCs' contribution in the fight against militants**

- During the peak of militancy in most parts of Jammu division, especially areas falling in Chenab Valley and Pir Panjal regions, the hills of Udhampur, and Reasi and Kathua districts, the VDCs played a significant role in combating militancy.

- They were the most-feared armed groups among militants in areas where poor road networks delayed the arrival of security forces. The villagers, well-versed with the local topography, averted many militant attacks and helped in their capture and killings.
- **What controversies did the VDCs get into?**
- Along with the successes, the VDCs also faced allegations of human rights violations and other crimes, including murder, rape and extortions. As per official figures placed on the floor of the erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly in 2016, 27,924 civilians were serving in 4,248 VDCs across the state. There were 221 FIRs against them, including 23 cases murders, seven cases of rape, rioting (15), NDPS Act (3) and 169 other cases.
- **Disarming of VDC members**
- After peace returned, there were demands from certain quarters to disband the VDCs in 2002. Since then, the demand has been raised from time to time, but successive governments have stopped short of disbanding them. However, over a period of time, the number of VDC members has dropped significantly, either because of their involvement in a criminal case, or the government taking back their weapons once they turned 60. Apart from this, many VDC members have surrendered their weapons in the absence of remuneration.
- **The fresh demand for arming civilians**
- The demand for revival of VDCs started after militant activities revived in areas where peace had returned long ago. A spurt was witnessed in infiltration attempts from across the border, and drones were used to drop weapons, explosives and cash at various places, especially in border areas of Jammu, Samba and Kathua districts.
- **What do the police say about the current situation in the UT?**
- A total of 186 militants, including 56 foreigners, were killed in 98 successful encounters in J&K during 2022. The year saw a 37 per cent decline in local youth joining terror ranks, from the previous year.
- Of the 100 youth who joined militancy in this period, 17 were arrested and 65 killed in encounters. Hunt is on for the remaining 18, said the police. Apart from this, the police have busted 146 terror modules, each comprising 4-5 people, and seized 188 AK series rifles, 275 pistols, eight M4 carbines, 354 grenades, 61 IEDs and sticky bombs, among others.
- A total of 649 people were booked under PSA for supporting militancy, while 55 vehicles were seized and 28 houses attached for being used for militant activity.

PRELIMS

1. World's first vaccine for honeybees

- **Context: The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has granted a conditional license for a vaccine for honeybees to curb American foulbrood (AFB), a fatal bacterial disease for the insect.**
- The first such vaccine gives hope of a new weapon against diseases that routinely ravage colonies relied upon for food pollination.
- The vaccine technology exposes queen bees to inactive (ie, "dead") bacteria, which enables the larvae hatched in the hive to resist infection.
- The vaccine is mixed in queen candy — the primary food source for both the queen bees and the attendant bees living in cages.
- **Americal foulbrood**
- AFB is caused by the spore-forming bacterium Paenibacillus larvae.
- It is not a stress-related disease and can infect the strongest to the weakest colony in an apiary.
- Heavy infections can affect most of the brood, severely weakening the colony and eventually killing it.
- The disease cannot be cured, meaning that the destruction of infected colonies and hives or irradiation of infected material is the only way to manage AFB.

2. Sagol Kangjei

- **CONTEXT: Recently Home Minister Amit Shah's programme in North East was one that the inauguration of a 122-foot-tall statue of a polo player astride a Manipur Pony in Imphal, a project that has been in the works for several years now. After inauguration Home minister tweeted: "It is believed that Sagol Kangjei, the modern-day Polo game originated in Manipur. Today, inaugurated a 122 feet Marjing Polo Complex in Imphal. This will surely take the legacy forward and inspire more youngsters toward the game,".**
- **Sagol Kangjei:**
- Modern polo is said to have originated from Sagol Kangjei, a sport indigenous to Manipur, in which players ride horses, specifically the Manipur Ponies, which are referenced in records dating back to the 14th century.
- The sport originated in Manipur and is associated with ancient manuscripts like Kangjeirol.
- Even festivals in Manipur such as Lai Haraoba Festival shows a play sequence in which Maibi (priestess) with a polo stick in hand goes out in search of a bride.
- There are no goalposts in traditional form as the players scores a point by hitting the ball out of the field.

➤ **The Manipur Pony:**

- The Manipur Pony is one of five recognised equine breeds of India, and has a powerful cultural significance for Manipuri society.
- The Marjing Polo Complex has been developed as a way to conserve the Manipur Pony.
- One source stated Tibetan ponies as its ancestors while another source stated its origin to be a cross between Mongolian wild horse & Arabian.
- In some manuscripts, it is referred to as Mangal-sa or Mongolian animal.
- In Manipuri mythology, the Manipuri pony was regarded to have descended from “Samadon Ayangba” the winged steed of Lord Margjing, one of the guardian deities of Manipur.

➤ **Conserving the breed**

- The small and dwindling numbers of the Manipur Pony has been a cause for concern.
- The 17th Quinquennial Livestock Census 2003 had recorded 1,898 Manipur Ponies;
- The number fell to 1,101 in the 19th Quinquennial Livestock Census in 2012.
- In 2014, it was found difficult to count even 500.

3. Kala Azar

➤ **CONTEXT: The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has expressed his happiness on the declining cases of Kala Azar disease.**

➤ **About:**

- Kala-Azar or Visceral Leishmaniasis is a slow progressing indigenous condition that is caused by a protozoan parasite.
- Kala-azar is one of the most lethal and neglected tropical diseases (NTDs).
- The parasite infects the reticuloendothelial system and may be found in abundance in bone marrow, spleen, and liver.
- Kala-azar is the second deadliest parasitic killer in the world after Malaria.
- **Distribution:** About 90% of global cases of Kala-azar were reported from eight countries: Brazil, Eritrea, Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan in 2021. India contributing 11.5 pc of total cases reported globally.
- **Symptoms:**
 - ✓ Recurring fever with a double rise in temperature.
 - ✓ Loss of appetite and weight loss.
 - ✓ Weakness and fatigue.
 - ✓ Dry, thin, scaly skin, and hair loss.
 - ✓ Grayish discoloration of the skin of hands, feet, face, and abdomen in light-skinned people, hence the name kala-azar or black fever.
 - ✓ Rapid deficiency in red blood cells or hemoglobin.
 - ✓ Enlargement of the spleen.
 - ✓ Liver enlargement.

➤ **Efforts:**

- WHO has set the target to eliminate Kala-azar by 2017.
- Government of India (GOI) launched a centrally sponsored Kala-azar control programme in the endemic states in the year 1990-91.
- GOI is directly working with development partners such as Bill Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and World Health Organization (WHO) to eliminate Kala Azar from India.
- On a monthly basis Kala-azar elimination is being reviewed by the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) as well as higher officials of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- The Centre is supporting the states in active case detection, surveillance, treatment, and supply of diagnostic kits, medicines, sprays, etc.

➤ **Present status**

- Less than one case per 10,000
- 98.7 per cent decline in cases of Kala-azar (2007 to 2022) in India.
- Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and West Bengal.
- Currently, more than 90% of the cases are contributed by Bihar and Jharkhand.
- Uttar Pradesh (2019) and West Bengal (2017) states have achieved their elimination targets at the block level.
- Only one block (Littipara) of Pakur district, Jharkhand is in the endemic category (1.23 cases/10,000 population).

ANSWER WRITING

Q. Analyze internal security threats and transborder crimes along Myanmar, Bangladesh and Pakistan borders including Line of Control (LoC). Also discuss the role played by various security forces in this regard.

India has a large and complex border covering around 15106.7 km, which it shares with Bangladesh, China, Pakistan, Nepal, Myanmar, Bhutan as well as a small portion with Afghanistan.

Challenges in the effective border management particularly to Myanmar, Bangladesh and Pakistan:

- **India-Myanmar Border:** The northeastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, and Mizoram share the border with Myanmar. Some of the insurgent groups like the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) and the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) operate from Myanmar, which threatens the security of India as well as Myanmar. Porous nature of the border provides safe route to human traffickers, illegal arms dealers, drug smugglers etc.
- **India-Bangladesh Border:** The Indo-Bangladesh Border (4,096 km) passes through West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram. The entire stretch consists of plains, riverine belts, hills and forests which make illegal migration easy. Illegal migration across this border poses serious security threats and acts as a fertile ground for organizations like the Inter-Services Intelligence of Pakistan to penetrate and expand their activities. Also, the poor law and order situation at the border has led to smuggling of arms and drugs. Supply of arms help in sustaining any conflict.
- **India-Pakistan Border:** Indo-Pakistan Border (3,323 km) runs along the states of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir. Direct accessibility of the borders and some technological developments enabling quick passage of information and transfer of funds has changed the focus and tenor of border security. Cross-border terrorism from Pakistan has exacerbated due to non-recognition of boundaries by its terrorist groups and their success in acquiring legitimacy due to religious or ethnic identity.

Role played by various security forces in this regard

- **Assam Rifles:** This force significantly contributed to opening the region to administration and commerce and over time they came to be known as the right arm of the civil and left arm of the military.
- **Border Security Force:** The BSF has air wing, marine wing, an artillery regiment, and commando units. It currently stands as the world's largest border guarding force. BSF has been termed as the First Line of Defence of Indian Territories. It is India's primary border guarding organization on its border with Pakistan and Bangladesh.
- **Sashastra Seema Bal:** The sole objective of this force is achieving 'total security preparedness' in the remote border areas for performing a 'stay-behind' role in the event of a war. SSB is now spread along the International Border across Uttarakhand, UP, Bihar, West Bengal, Sikkim, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh.

India should endeavor to meaningfully engage with Myanmar, Bangladesh and Pakistan and solicit their cooperation in resolving all outstanding issues and better manage their mutual border.

MCQ

1. Consider the following statements
 1. American foulbrood disease, an infection caused by the bacterium *Paenibacillus larvae* that weakens and kills honey bee colonies and currently has no treatment.
 2. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has recently granted a conditional license for a vaccine aiming to protect honey bees from American foulbrood disease.

Which of the above statement/s is are not correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2**

2. With reference to the Kala-azar, consider the following statements:
 1. It is a protozoan parasitic disease, spread by sandfly bites.
 2. The flies are infected with the parasite called 'leishmania donovani'.
 3. In India Kala-azar disease cases declined significantly in recent decade.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 3 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 2 only
- d) 1,2 and 3**

3. "Sagol Kangjei" a sport often mentioned in news is indigenous to which of the following state?

- a) Rajasthan
- b) Kerala
- c) Bihar
- d) Manipur**

4. With reference to Village Defence Committee consider the following

1. It is has statutory backup under Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.
2. Cabinet Committee on Security is the sole authority to approve for the formation of the committee

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Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2**

5. Consider the following statements

- 1. France is a founding member of the International Solar Alliance (ISA)
- 2. In recent context France is the 7th largest foreign investor in India
- 3. Exercise Shakti, an Army exercise has been conducted between India and France

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 1,2 and 3**

6. Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India functions under which ministry?

- a) Ministry of Home Affairs**
- b) Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation
- c) Ministry of Finance
- d) Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions

7. HMS Tamar Vessel often mentioned in news is related to which of the following country?

- a) USA
- b) UK**
- c) India
- d) Pakistan

8. With reference to the sovereign green bonds, consider the following statements:

- 1. Green bonds are financial instruments that generate funds for investment in environmentally sustainable and climate-suitable projects.
- 2. Sovereign Green Bonds is one form of Treasury Bills.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only**
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

9. Kuki –Chin refugees are in news recently, belongs to which of the following country?

- a) Myanmar
- b) Bangladesh**
- c) China
- d) Nepal

10. Consider the following statements

- 1. National Council of Science Museums (NCSM), is an autonomous organization under the Ministry of Culture
- 2. It Headquartered in Kolkata

Choose the correct statement/s using the codes given below

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2**
- d) Neither 1 nor 2