

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**Voice of the Global South Summit**

In News: The Honorable PM of India recently inaugurated a virtual event, “Voice of the Global South Summit”.

About: India hosted the summit in a bid to articulate the views of the developing countries regarding the effects of the pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

The event has planned eight ministerial sessions including finance, energy, education, foreign affairs, and commerce.

Theme: It was held under the theme - ‘Unity of Voice, Unity of Purpose’ - essentially envisages bringing together countries of the global south and sharing their perspectives and priorities on a common platform across a whole range of issues.

Uniting Global south:

Prime Minister through this event has set the stage on behalf of developing countries, many of which are united by a history of colonisation.

Offering to become the voice of the Global South, India during the event gave a new agenda to the world on behalf of the countries of the South: ‘respond, recognise, respect, and reform’.

The ‘Global South’ broadly refers to countries in Asia, Africa, and South America.

Voice of global South in the ongoing Crisis:

According to PM, the world is facing a lasting crisis and there is no clarity about how long this “state of instability” will last.

The Global South does not have adequate voice in the “eight decades old model of global governance” and that it should shape the “emerging order”.

As stated by him, “Most of the global challenges have not been created by the Global South. But they affect us more. We have seen this in the impact of COVID pandemic, climate change, terrorism and even the Ukraine conflict. The search for solutions also does not factor in our role or our voice”.

India’s goal: The goal of India in 2023 is to represent the Global South.

As India begins its G20 Presidency this year, it is natural that our aim is to amplify the voice of the Global South.

Significance of categorization**1. Shared similarities:**

What sets the terms Global North and south apart is that first, they are arguably more accurate in grouping countries together, measuring similarly in terms of wealth, indicators of education and healthcare, etc.

Another commonality between the South countries is that most have a history of colonisation, largely at the hands of European powers.

2. Present requirements:

Why the concept is being reiterated now is partly because of the economic emergence of some of these South countries, such as India and China, in the last few decades.

Many consider the world to now be multi polar rather than one where the US alone dominates international affairs.

3. Challenging the ideal:

The progress achieved by many Asian countries is also seen as challenging the idea that the North is the ideal.

Criticisms

The term is too broad: The problem of proper naming is still not resolved. North countries paying for funding green energy, having historically contributed to higher carbon emissions, many in the Global North have objected to China and India’s exclusion from this, given their increasing industrialisation.

No different objective: There is also the question of whether the South simply aims to replace the North and the positions it occupies, again continuing a cycle in which a few countries accumulate crucial resources.

Possible neglect of Africa: In the rise of Asia, the continued neglect of Africa has been questioned as well.

Way ahead

In this multi polar world, the whole North and South needs to come together to fight the issues of developed and developing countries and promote the East like the West.

Some economists have argued that international free trade and unhindered capital flows across countries could lead to a contraction in the North–South divide.

In this case more equal trade and flow of capital would allow the possibility for developing countries to further develop economically.

As some countries in the South experience rapid development, there is evidence that those states are developing high levels of South-South aid.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES & INTERVENTIONS

Human Rights Watch's World Report 2023

- Recently, the 33rd edition of Human Rights Watch's World Report was released.
- This edition reviews human rights practices in close to 100 countries.

Report highlights

Politically motivated charges: In the section on India, the HRW said authorities throughout India arrested activists, journalists, and other critics of the government on what it called "politically motivated" criminal charges, including that of terrorism.

On minorities: The report also said that Indian authorities had "intensified and broadened" their crackdown on activist groups and the media through 2022.

Abuse & repression: It added that the "Hindu nationalist" Bharatiya Janata Party-led government used "abusive and discriminatory policies to repress Muslims and other minorities".

Demolishing properties: The authorities in several BJP-ruled states demolished Muslim homes and properties without legal authorization or due process as summary punishment for protests or alleged crimes, the HRW said.

Religious conversions: It added that authorities also "misused" laws forbidding forced religious conversions "to target Christians, especially from Dalit and Adivasi communities".

Bilkis Bano case & Violence against women:

Referring to the release of the 11 Hindu men convicted and sentenced to life in jail for the gang rape of Bilkis Bano and the murder of 14 members of her family, and the celebration of their release by some BJP members, the HRW said, "The action highlighted the government's discriminatory stance toward minority communities even in cases of violence against women."

On J&K:

- On Jammu and Kashmir, the HRW said that even after three years of removal of Article 370 and creation of two federally-administered territories, "the government continued to restrict free expression, peaceful assembly, and other basic rights there".
- The global human rights observer referred to suspected militant attacks on minority Hindu and Sikh communities in the Kashmir Valley

Welcoming the Supreme Court rulings:

The HRW also noted the increasingly liberal steps taken by the Supreme Court in India.

It also referred to the top court's following significant rulings:

- Extending abortion rights to all women regardless of marital status and to people other than cisgender women, widening the definition of a family to include same-sex couples, single parents, and other households.
- It also took note of the SC's banning of the two-finger tests.

About:

- Human Rights Watch (HRW) is an international non-governmental organization.
- The group pressures governments, policymakers, companies, and individual human rights abusers to denounce abuse and respect human rights, and often works on behalf of refugees, children, migrants, and political prisoners.

HQ:

- It is headquartered in New York City that conducts research and advocacy on human rights.

Basic human rights:

- Pursuant to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), Human Rights Watch opposes violations of what the UDHR considers basic human rights.
- This includes capital punishment and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Freedoms:

- HRW advocates freedoms in connection with fundamental human rights, such as freedom of religion and freedom of the press.

Aim:

It seeks to achieve change by publicly pressuring governments and their policymakers to curb human rights abuses, and by convincing more powerful governments to use their influence on governments that violate human rights.

Significant Constitutional provisions in India

The six fundamental rights are:

- Right to equality (Article 14–18)
- Right to freedom (Article 19–22)
- Right against exploitation (Article 23–24)
- Right to freedom of religion (Article 25–28)
- Cultural and educational rights (Article 29–30)
- Right to constitutional remedies (Article 32)

Freedom of Speech and Expression:

- It is protected as a fundamental right in the Constitution of India under Article 19(1) (a) which states that all citizens shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression.

Freedom of Religion under the Indian Constitution:

- Various fundamental rights are provided as well as guaranteed by our Indian Constitution under Part III.
- Articles 25-28 of the Indian Constitution guarantee the right to freedom of religion to all citizens who are residing within the territory of India.
- Freedom of conscience and free profession of religion. (Article 25)
- Freedom to manage religious affairs (Article 26)
- Freedom from payment of taxes for promotion of any particular religion(Article 27)
- Freedom to attend religious instructions (Article 28)
- India, being a secular nation gives every citizen the right to follow the religion he believes in.
- By the 42nd amendment, 1976 of the Indian Constitution, the term ‘Secular’ was inserted in our preamble.

PRELIMS

1. Ganga Vilas Cruise:

CONTEXT: Recently, the Prime Minister of India flagged off the world’s longest river cruise, MV Ganga Vilas in Varanasi.

- During the event, the Prime Minister also inaugurated Tent City in Varanasi and laid the foundation stones for several other inland waterways projects.
- The cruise will be managed by private operators, the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI), under the Ministry of Shipping, Ports and Waterways (MoPSW) has supported the project.
- It connecting National Waterway 1 (NW-1) which includes Ganga and National Waterway 2 (NW-2) on Brahmaputra, the cruise will cross 27 river systems.
- The 51 days cruise is planned with visits to 50 tourist spots including World Heritage Sites, National Parks, River Ghats, and major cities like Patna in Bihar, Sahibganj in Jharkhand, Kolkata in West Bengal, Dhaka in Bangladesh and Guwahati in Assam.

2.Parshuram Kund Festival

CONTEXT: Recently, the Arunachal Pradesh government informed that Parshuram Kund Festival (PKF) is to be celebrated from 12 to 16 January 2023.

- At north-eastern portion of Tezu, Arunachal Pradesh.
- Also known as The Kumbh of Northeast
- It is believed that a dip in the holy water of Parshuram Kund washes away all the sins.
- Parashuram Kund is situated within the Kamlang Reserve Forest area.
- This place on the Lohit River carries a strong mythological link with the legend of Parshurama, a Hindu sage.
- According to the legend, sage Parsurama washed away his sin of matricide in the waters of the Lohit river at Bramhakund.
- The Kund is surrounded by dense forest of Ruddraksha trees, the fruit of which is considered sacred to Hindu ascetics as well as general believers of the faith.
- This place on the Lohit River carries a strong mythological link with the Kalika Purana, the Srimad Bhagavat and the Mahabharata

3.SPRINT Scheme

CONTEXT : The Indian Navy has recently inked an agreement with Sagar Defence Engineering Pvt. Ltd for acquiring armed autonomous boat swarms under the 'SPRINT' initiative.

- 'SPRINT' Scheme is an initiative to promote development of niche defence technologies by domestic companies.
- The task of development of this technology is one of the 75 challenges that have been introduced by the Indian Navy under Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav last year.
- To achieve 'Aatmanirbharta' in defence, Naval Innovation and Indigenization Organisation (NIIO), in conjunction with the Defence Innovation Organisation (DIO), aims to induct at least 75 new indigenous technologies/products into the Indian Navy till August 2023.
- This collaborative project is named SPRINT (Supporting Pole-Vaulting in R&D through Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX), NIIO and Technology Development Acceleration Cell (TDAC)).
- It was launched by Prime Minister in July, 2022.
- It will transform Navy from a 'Buyer's Navy' to a 'Builder's Navy'.

4.Asian Waterbird Census-2023

CONTEXT: The Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) is to be done from January 7, 2023 to January 22, 2023.

How is this Census done?

- This census is conducted by Wetlands International South Asia in coordination with BNHS (Bombay Natural History Society) in mid-January every year.
- It provides a reference list of internationally important AWC sites and wetlands in India. Similarly, in other places of Asia, the coordination of AWC makes the counting of aquatic birds possible.

Which areas are covered?

- This census is conducted all over Asia and Australia. Thousands of volunteers participate in this census as per international protocol and methodology. This citizen-science program supports the conservation and management of wetland and water birds around the world.

Objectives of AWC

- Obtain information on the water birds' population on an annual basis at the wetlands in the region during the non-breeding period.
- Annual monitoring of wetlands status and conditions.
- Increase interest of the citizens on the wetlands and water bird conservation.

ANSWER WRITING

Q. Increased import of gold and crude oil has increased the Current Account Deficit of India. In this context, discuss the various measures adapted by the Government of India to reduce import dependence on gold and crude oil.

Introduction:

- India's jewelry and jewellery sector is one of the largest in the world, accounting for about 29% of the world's consumption. Almost 65% of jewelry made in India is handmade. Gold Mine brings important sustainable socio-economic development to India. The gold mining industry was of little importance in the country. Despite being an impoverished country with low per capita income, India tops the world in buying gold.
- To curb a surge in gold imports and check 'windfall gains' being made by producers of crude oil and petroleum products, the Centre has raised the import duty on the Gold to 15%, from 10.75%.
- Current Account Deficit is the record of trade in goods and services and transfer payments. It is a part of the Balance of Payment and records a deficit when the imports of goods and services exceed its exports. The Current Account Deficit of India was 2.8 percent of GDP in Q1 of 2022-23 as per the RBI. India typically runs a current account deficit due to import of gold and crude oil. Various measures are adopted by the Government of India to reduce import dependence on gold and crude oil.

Measures taken to reduce the Gold Imports:

- Sovereign Gold Bonds Scheme: SGBs are government securities denominated in grams of gold. They are substitutes for holding physical gold. Investors have to pay the issue price in cash and the bonds will be redeemed in cash on maturity. The Bond is issued by the Reserve Bank on behalf of the Government of India. It was launched in 2015.
- Gold Monetization Scheme: It modified the existing 'Gold Deposit Scheme' (GDS) and 'Gold Metal Loan Scheme' (GML). It was launched in 2015 with the intention to mobilize gold held by households

and institutions of the country and facilitate its use for productive purposes, and in the long run, to reduce the country's reliance on the import of gold.

Measures taken to reduce the Crude Oil Imports:

- Hydrocarbon Exploration Licensing Policy, 2016: It provides a single license for the exploration of all the hydrocarbons. It is based on the revenue sharing model that ensures guaranteed return for the government.
- Open Acreage Licensing (OAL) Mechanism: It gives an option to a company looking for exploring hydrocarbons to select the exploration blocks on its own, without waiting for the formal bid round from the Government.
- Maintaining Strategic Reserves: The strategic reserve held by a country is in addition to the existing storage of crude oil and petroleum products with oil companies. India has established Strategic Petroleum Reserves in the following locations:
 1. Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh
 2. Mangaluru, Karnataka
 3. Padur, Karnataka
 4. Chandikole, Odisha

Apart from the above measures, efforts have been made to promote the use of environment friendly fuel for transportation, E -Vehicles, increased exploration, and production of hydrocarbons by promoting ease of doing business, and thus boosting domestic manufacturing of crude oil and gold.

MCQs

1. Consider the statements about Inland Waterways Authority of India.
 1. It was established in the year 1986.
 2. The head quarter of Inland Waterways Authorities of India (IWAI) is located at Noida.
 Which of the following statements is /are correct?
 - a) 1 only
 - b) 2 only
 - c) **Both 1 & 2**
 - d) Neither 1 nor 2
2. Consider the following pairs

FESTIVAL	STATE
1) Magh Bihu	Assam
2) Pongal	Gujrat
3)Uttarayan	Tami Nadu

 Which of the pairs given above is/are correct?
 - a) **1 only**
 - b) 3 only
 - c) 1 and 2 only
 - d) all of the above
3. With reference to the national centre for good governance, consider the following statements:
 1. It works under the department of administrative reforms and public grievances.
 2. It is a statutory body.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - a) **1 only**
 - b) 2 only
 - c) Both 1 & 2
 - d) Neither 1 & 2
4. What MV Ganga Vilas, Which was recently seen in news?
 - a) **A longest river cruise**
 - b) An invasive species
 - c) A Submarine
 - d) A telescope
5. Which of the following stadiums is associated with Hockey?
 - a) Eden Gardens
 - b) Sardar Patel Stadium
 - c) **Dhyan Chand National Stadium**
 - d) Nehru Stadium

6. Which Statement about Indian Skimmers is incorrect?
- Indian Skimmers are found in the coastal estuaries of western and eastern India.
 - It is endangered in the IUCN red list.
 - This is protected by CITES Appendix-I.**
 - Recently located in Coringa Wildlife sanctuary in Andhra Pradesh.
7. Consider the following statements.
- A detailed assessment of the survey, conducted as part of the Asian Water bird Census 2023, shows the populations of some migratory water birds, especially duck species, visiting the region are falling.
 - The survey jointly organized by the Social Forestry wing of the Forest department and Birders Ezhupunna, a bird watching group, recorded 15,335 birds of 117 species.
- Which of the pairs given above is/are correct?
- 1 only
 - 3 only
 - Both 1 and 2**
 - None of the above
8. Consider the following statements about “Voice of the Global South Summit”.
- India hosted the summit in a bid to articulate the views of the developing countries regarding the effects of the pandemic and the war in Ukraine.
 - The event has planned eight ministerial sessions including finance, energy, education, foreign affairs, and commerce.
 - It was held under the theme - ‘Unity of Voice, Unity of Purpose’.
- Which of the following statements is /are correct?
- 1 only
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 & 2
 - All of the above**
9. Consider the following statements.
- Recently, a report titled “Groundwater year book 2021-2022” was released on the state of groundwater released by the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB).
 - Twelve Indian states have uranium levels beyond permissible limits in their groundwater.
 - Punjab is the worst-affected state in terms of the percentage of wells found to have uranium concentration of more than 30 ppb.
- Which of the following statements is /are correct?
- 1 only
 - 2 and 3 only
 - Both 1 & 2
 - All of the above**
10. Consider the following statements.
- Human Rights Watch (HRW) is an international non-governmental organization.
 - It is headquartered in New York City that conducts research and advocacy on human rights.
- Which of the following statements is /are correct?
- 1 only
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 & 2**
 - None of the above