

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

India-SL fishermen issue

22 Indian fishermen arrested on charges of trespassing into Sri Lankan waters

Reasons for the Arrest

- **Crossing Borders:** Indian fishermen often enter Sri Lankan waters, leading to their arrest. For example, 69 fishermen have been arrested this year for such violations.
- **Destructive Fishing Practices:** They are accused of using bottom trawling, which is banned in Sri Lanka since July 2017. This method is harmful to marine life and the livelihood of Sri Lankan fishermen.
- **Geographical Constraints:** Under the Tamil Nadu Marine Fishing Regulation Act 1983, Indian fishermen can operate only beyond three nautical miles from their coast. The proximity of the International Maritime Boundary Line, just nine nautical miles away, leads to frequent unintentional crossings.

Implications on India

- **Increased Tensions:** The arrests contribute to ongoing tension between India and Sri Lanka, affecting diplomatic relations.
- **Humanitarian Concerns:** The fishermen face long detentions, with some remaining in custody for months. This raises humanitarian issues.
- **Financial Losses:** The confiscation of expensive fishing equipment, like nets and boats, leads to significant financial hardships. In 2024, 10 boats were seized.
- **Impact on Diplomatic Relations:** Despite high-level diplomatic interventions, including agreements for periodic meetings and working groups, the issue remains unresolved, indicating strained relations between India and Sri Lanka.

Way Forward

- **Promote Alternative Fishing Methods:** As India has promised to end bottom trawling and incentivize deep-sea fishing under the Blue Revolution Scheme, more efforts are needed to ensure this transition.
- **Respect Maritime Boundaries:** Educate and equip fishermen to avoid crossing into Sri Lankan waters, considering the close proximity of the International Maritime Boundary Line.
- **Regularize Diplomatic Talks:** Implement the agreed-upon bi-annual meetings between the Ministers of Fisheries and ensure the Joint Working Group on Fisheries meets every three months as planned.
- **Address Humanitarian Concerns:** As emphasized by India's Prime Minister, treat the issue as a humanitarian concern, focusing on the well-being of the fishermen and their families.

POLITY & CONSTITUTION

Citizenship Amendment Act

Why in News?

The Ministry of Home affairs notified the Citizenship amendment Rules, 2024 that would enable the implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act.

Citizenship Amendment Act

- The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), enacted on December 12, 2019, and enforced on January 10, 2020, aims to grant citizenship to migrants from Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi, or Christian communities originating from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, or Pakistan.

Concerns associated with the implementation of the CAA:

- **Targeting a Specific Community:** There are concerns that the CAA, coupled with the proposed National Register of Citizens (NRC), may disproportionately benefit non-Muslims excluded from the citizens' register, while Muslims could face challenges in proving their citizenship.
- **Issues in the North-East:** The CAA contradicts the Assam Accord of 1985, which mandates the deportation of illegal migrants from Bangladesh, irrespective of religion, who entered Assam after March 25, 1971.
- **Demographic and Economic Strain:** Illegal Bangladeshi migrants, estimated to be around 20 million in Assam, have significantly altered the state's demography and strained its resources and economy.
- **Alleged Violation of Fundamental Rights:** Critics argue that the CAA violates Article 14 of the Constitution, guaranteeing the right to equality, and undermines the secular principles enshrined in the preamble.
- **Exclusion of Other Refugees:** The Act excludes refugees like Tamils from Sri Lanka and Hindu Rohingya from Myanmar, raising concerns about discrimination.
- **Administrative Challenges:** Differentiating between persecuted refugees and illegal migrants poses significant administrative challenges for the government.
- **Impact on Bilateral Relations:** The Act's focus on religious persecution in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan may strain India's bilateral ties with these countries.

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has clarified several aspects related to the CAA:

- Exclusion of Indian Citizens: The CAA does not affect the rights of Indian citizens in any way.
- Unchanged Citizenship Process: The existing legal process for acquiring Indian citizenship remains unchanged for foreigners of any category, as outlined in the Citizenship Act, 1955.
- Continuation of Eligibility Criteria: Legal migrants from any country and of any religion will continue to be eligible for Indian citizenship based on the existing eligibility criteria outlined in the law.

PRELIM FACTS**1. Golden Langur**

There are around 7396 golden langurs in India according to a survey.

About Golden Langur :

- It can be most easily recognized by the color of their fur, after which they are named.
- It has been noted that their fur changes colors according to the seasons.
- The color of the young also differs from adults in that they are almost pure white.
- It is limited to Assam, India and neighboring Bhutan where they live year-round.
- The area they inhabit is restricted to the region surrounded by four geographical landmarks:
 - the foothills of Bhutan (north),
 - Manas river (east),
 - Sankosh river (west), and
 - Brahmaputra river (south).

Conservation status

- IUCN: Endangered
- CITES: Appendix I
- Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 : Schedule I

2. Agni 5

India test-fires Agni-V ballistic missile with multiple warhead technology under Mission Divyastra.

About the mission

- The flight test named Mission Divyastra was carried out from Dr A. P. J. Abdul Kalam Island in Odisha.
- The indigenously developed Agni-5 missile has Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicle (MIRV) technology.
- This technology will ensure that a single missile can deploy multiple war heads at different locations.

Agni 5

- The maiden flight test of Agni-V, India's longest range ballistic missile with a "range of more than 5000 kms" was conducted in April 2012 and has since been tested multiple times.
- It has also been canistered, which improves ease of handling and operation.
- Agni-V uses a three-stage solid fuelled engine and is capable of striking targets at ranges of over 5,000 Kms and can reach most parts of China.
- DRDO officials had stated over the last several years that MIRV tech was under development.

3. Large Language Model (LLM) Inflection 2.5

Inflection AI launched its latest Large Language Model (LLM) Inflection 2.5, which powers its friendly chatbot Pi personal assistant.

Large Language Models (LLMs)

- A large language model (LLM) is a type of artificial intelligence (AI) algorithm that uses deep learning techniques and massively large data sets to understand, summarize, generate and predict new content.
- Deep learning involves the probabilistic analysis of unstructured data, which eventually enables the deep learning model to recognize distinctions between pieces of content without human intervention.
- It helps to understand how characters, words, and sentences function together.

Pi chatbot and Inflection 2.5

- Pi is an AI chatbot with which one can have deep and meaningful conversations. The name Pi stands for personal intelligence.
- Compared to ChatGPT, Pi is more humane and has been promoted as a chatbot that has a personality.
- Inflection-2.5 is an "upgraded model that is competitive with all the world's leading LLMs like GPT-4 and Gemini.
- With the new upgrade, Pi has now been endowed with world-class real-time web search capabilities to ensure that users get access to high-quality and up-to-date information in real-time.

4. Satellite-based Toll Collection

The government is planning to implement a highway toll collection system based on the global navigation satellite system.

Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS)

- GNSS refers to a constellation of satellites providing signals from space that transmit positioning and timing data to GNSS receivers. The receivers then use this data to determine location.
- Examples of GNSS include Europe's Galileo, the USA's GPS, Russia's GLONASS and China's BeiDou.

How will the GNSS-Based Toll System work?

- The system will use an automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) system through cameras installed on highways and deduct tolls based on the distance traveled by a vehicle.
- The device monitors the movements while driving, accurately marking the entry and exit points on tolled segments. By analyzing travel distance, it computes the charges accordingly.
- This eliminates the uniformity of fixed tolls at booths, ensuring fairness for drivers traversing shorter distances.

Difference between FASTags and ANPR tech

- The current system of FASTags facilitates the process of electronic payment at the toll plaza, which has a scanner. This allows the vehicle to pass through the plaza, without needing to stop.
- In the case of the GNSS-based system, the toll will be deducted based on the distance measured by ANPR technology, thereby making the toll plazas redundant.

5. Kerala Declared Man-Animal Conflict as State Disaster

Kerala has declared man-animal conflict a state-specific disaster.

About

- There has been repeated deaths from animal attacks and rising anger over them.
- At present, managing man-animal conflict is the responsibility of the forest department, which acts as per the Wild Life Protection Act.
- Once the issue is declared a state-specific disaster, the onus to deal with it shifts to the state disaster management authority, which is powered by the Disaster Management Act.

State & District Disaster Management Authority

- At the state level, the Chief Minister is the ex officio chairman of the body.
- In the districts, the district disaster management authority is headed by the district collector, who is also the executive magistrate.

Other state-specific Disasters

- In 2015, Odisha had declared snakebite a state-specific disaster.
- In 2020, Kerala declared Covid as a state specific disaster.
- Besides, heat waves, sunburn and sunstroke have been declared so in 2019.

ANSWER WRITING

Q. Discuss the benefits of commercial coal mining in India and the challenges associated with it.

India has shifted to the commercial coal mining regime. Commercial coal mining allows the private sector to mine coal commercially without placing any end-use restrictions. Under this, coal mining blocks are granted through a competitive bidding process. Now, 100% foreign direct investment (FDI) through automatic route is allowed in coal mining activities, including associated processing infrastructure. Associated processing infrastructure includes washery and facilities for crushing and coal handling

Benefits from commercial coal mining:

- **Reducing India's dependence on import:** India meets a fifth of its annual requirement of coal through imports. Commercial coal mining is expected to reduce this bill by at least 1/3rd.
- **Modernizing the coal sector:** New mining majors will set new benchmarks in terms of mechanization, automation, mining practices etc.
- **Development of states:** The entire revenue from the auction of coal mines would accrue to the coal bearing states. This will incentivize them to utilize the revenue accrued for the growth and development of backward areas.
 - In captive coal mining, companies were not required to pay royalty to states as mined coal was meant for their own end use.
- **Enhancing the productivity of the coal sector:** Opening the sector to private players and foreign investments will end the monopoly of Coal India Limited and bring in competition. Also, earlier captive coal mining entities had no incentive to enhance their production beyond their own needs.
- **Development of aspirational districts:** Most of the mines auctioned under new norms are in aspirational districts. These mines would create employment as well as other economic opportunities in the area.

Challenges associated:

- **Broad eligibility criteria:** As the new regime is allowing those who have no previous mining experience, they may turn out to be non-serious bidder who may use coal mines as assets to leverage in the market without any intention of actually mining them as happened during 2000s.

- **Overexploitation of resources:** As under the new regime there is no restriction of end use, it might lead to more and more coal mining for profit in a shorter period of time.
- **Concerns of state governments:** States like Jharkhand are raising concerns that the new regime will lead to destruction of vital forest cover and its tribal communities will be displaced.
- **Deep pockets and risk management capabilities are needed:** After winning the coal auction, rehabilitation and resettlement needs to be managed. Very few firms in India today have the financial and risk management capabilities to go through all of this.

To make the new commercial coal regime a success, few steps such as addressing the concerns of the state regarding their revenue share, enacting sustainable coal mining code for removing overlapping jurisdictions of multiple bodies etc. need to be taken

MCQs

- Consider the following statements with respect to 'Uttar Poorva Transformative Industrialization Scheme (UNNATI)'
 - It is aimed at developing industries and generating employment in the Aspirational Districts
 - This will be a Central Sponsored Scheme
 - Implementation of the scheme will be overseen by the Ministry of Heavy Industries
 How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two
(c) All three (d) None
- 'Dolutegravir' seen in news recently is a

(a) Performance-enhancing substances
(b) Novel cancer drug
(c) Anesthetic
(d) Anti-retroviral drug
- Consider the following statements regarding article 131 of the Constitution of India
 - The Supreme Court of India has exclusive and original jurisdiction over legal issues originating between States or between States and the Union
 - The original jurisdiction also extends to disputes arising out of any treaty, agreement which came into being before the commencement of the Constitution
 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
- Consider the following statements with respect to 'UNCOVER program'
 - It is a part of the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) initiative
 - It aims to study ultra-low luminosity galaxies responsible for the epoch of reionization
 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
- Consider the following statements about Einstein Probe (EP)
 - The goal of the EP is to explore the transient and variable X-ray sky, capturing powerful bursts of high-energy light.
 - It is a joint initiative of Indian Space Research Organisation and European Space Agency.
- 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
- Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), a tariff on carbon-intensive products is a mechanism of which of the following organization?

(a) World Trade Organization
(b) World Bank
(c) United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
(d) European Union
- Consider the following statements about Pong dam
 - It is the highest earth-fill dam in India and is one of India's largest man made reservoir.
 - It is located on river Bhagirathi in the state of Uttarakhand.
 - Pong Dam Lake Bird Sanctuary in the vicinity of reservoir is declared as a Ramsar site.
 How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two
(c) All three (d) None
- Consider the following countries:
 - Oman
 - Saudi Arabia
 - Sudan
 - Iran
 Which of the above-mentioned countries share coastal line with Red Sea?

(a) 1,2 and 3 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 2 (d) 1,3 and 4
- With reference to 'Square Kilometre Array Observatory (SKAO)' consider the following statements
 - Its aim is to build and operate cutting-edge radio telescopes to transform the understanding of the Universe.
 - Its headquarters is located in USA.
 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
- 'Cigaritis meghamalaiensis' which was recently in news is

(a) Frog (b) Snail
(c) Snake (d) Butterfly