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Increase in World Military Spending during Covid-19: SIPRI

Why in News

According to the latest data published by **Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)**, the military spending across the world rose to USD 1,981 billion in 2020, during **Covid-19 pandemic**.

The **2.6% increase in world military spending** came in a year when the global GDP shrank by **4.4%** largely due to the **economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic**.

Key Points

- **Global Scenario:**

- **Military spending as a share of Gross Domestic Product (GDP)**, reached a global average of **2.4% in 2020**, up from 2.2% in **2019**.
- The **five biggest spenders in 2020**, which together accounted for 62% of global military expenditure were: the **United States>China>India>Russia>the United Kingdom**.
 - **US:** 2020 was the **third consecutive year of growth in US military spending**, following seven years of continuous reductions.

This reflects growing concerns over **perceived threats from strategic competitors such as China and Russia**, as well as the Trump administration's drive to bolster what it saw as a depleted US military.
 - **China:** China's **spending has risen for 26 consecutive years**, the longest series of uninterrupted increases by any country in the SIPRI Military Expenditure Database.
- Nearly all members of the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)** saw their **military burden rise in 2020**.
- The **countries with the biggest increases in military burden** among the top 15 spenders in 2020 were **Saudi Arabia, Russia, Israel and US**.

- **Regional Scenario:**

- **Europe:** Military spending across Europe **rose by 4.0%** in 2020.

Germany and France were the 7th and 8th largest spender globally.
- **Asia and Oceania:** In addition to **China, India** (USD 72.9 billion), **Japan** (USD 49.1 billion), **South Korea** (USD 45.7 billion) and **Australia** (USD 27.5 billion) were the **largest military spenders** in the Asia and Oceania region.

All four countries increased their military spending between 2019 and 2020 and over the decade 2011-20.
- **Sub-Saharan Africa:** Military expenditure in sub-Saharan Africa **increased by 3.4%** in 2020 to reach USD 18.5 billion.

The biggest increases in spending were made by Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Nigeria, all in the **Sahel region**, as well as Uganda.
- **South America:** Military expenditure in South America **fell by 2.1%**.

The decrease was **largely due to a 3.1% drop in spending by Brazil**, the sub region's largest military spender.
- **Middle Eastern Countries:** The **combined military spending of the 11 Middle Eastern countries** for which SIPRI has spending figures **decreased by 6.5% in 2020**.
 - Eight of the nine members of the **Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)** for which SIPRI has figures cut their military spending in 2020.
 - Angola's spending fell by 12%, Saudi Arabia's by 10%, and Kuwait's by 5.9%.
 - **Non-OPEC oil exporter Bahrain** also **cut its spending by 9.8%**.

- **India's Scenario:**

- **India** was the **third largest military spender** in the world in 2020, behind only the US and China.
- India's **military expenditure was USD 72.9 billion** and it **accounted for 3.7% of the global military expenditure share**.
- India's **spending since 2019 grew by 2.1%**. The increase **can be largely attributed to India's ongoing conflict with Pakistan and renewed border tension with China**.

The continuing military confrontation with China in eastern Ladakh, of course, **has led India to make several emergency arms purchases from abroad** since the crisis erupted in early May 2020.

- India's annual military expenditure also **includes a huge pension bill for 33-lakh million veterans and defence civilians**.

In the 2021-2022 defence budget, for instance, the pension bill was Rs. 1.15 lakh crore out of the total Rs 4.78 lakh crore outlay.

- India **has to maintain an over 15-lakh strong armed forces** because of the two active and unresolved borders with China and Pakistan.

Consequently, the revenue expenditure for the day-to-day running costs and salary bill in the defence budget by far **outstrips the capital outlay for military modernization**, leaving critical operational shortages on different fronts, ranging from fighters to submarines.

- With a **weak domestic defence-industrial base**, India of course continues to languish in the strategically-vulnerable position of **being the world's second-largest arms importer just behind Saudi Arabia**.

India **accounted for 9.5% of the total global arms imports during 2016-2020**.

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

- This **think tank** is an **independent international institute** dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament.
- It was **established in 1966 at Stockholm (Sweden)**.
- It provides data, analysis and recommendations, based on open sources, to policymakers, researchers, media and the interested public.

Source: IE

The Armenian Genocide

Why in News

Recently, the **US President** officially **recognised the mass killings of Armenians by Ottoman Turks in 1915-16 as an act of genocide.**

The Armenian diaspora marks **24th April** as **Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day.**

Key Points

- **Genocide (Meaning):**
 - According to **Article II of the United Nations (UN) Convention on Genocide of December 1948**, genocide has been described as **carrying out acts intended “to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group”.**
 - **Raphael Lemkin**, the Polish lawyer, **coined the term “genocide” in 1943.**
- **Armenian Genocide:**
 - The Armenian Genocide is **called the first genocide of the 20th century.**
 - It refers to the **systematic annihilation of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire from 1915 to 1917.**
 - After the **First World War** broke out in **November 1914**, the Ottoman Turks participated in the war, siding with Germany and the Austro-Hungarian empire.
 - The Ottoman Turks **believed the Armenians would side with Russia** in the war. This resulted in the **Ottoman Turks engaging in a mass-removal campaign of Armenians from the border areas along the Eastern Front.**
 - On **24th April, 1915**, **Ottoman Turkish** government officials **arrested and executed thousands of Armenian intellectuals.** It was the **start of the Armenian Genocide.**
 - **Armenian families**, including small children, were forced to walk for days without food, water and shelter in the deserts of Syria and Arabia.
 - According to estimates, **approximately 1.5 million Armenians died** during the genocide, either in massacres and in killings, or from ill treatment, abuse and starvation.



- **Significance of this Recognition:**

The acknowledgement by the US government will have **little legal impact on Turkey**, other than becoming a cause for embarrassment for the country and **giving other countries the impetus to also acknowledge the genocide.**

According to the Armenian National Institute, **30 countries officially recognise the Armenian Genocide.**

- **Turkey's Response:**

- Such moves would **only set back the already strained relationship between US and Turkey**, both of whom are North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies.

Ties between the US and Turkey have been strained over **a range of issues** that include Turkey's purchase of Russian **S-400** defence systems, foreign policy differences with regard to Syria, human rights and other intersecting legal issues.

- Turkey has **acknowledged that atrocities were committed against Armenians, but denies it was a genocide** (which comes with legal implications) and challenges the estimates that 1.5 million were killed.

- **India's Stand:**

India, that has **not formally recognised the Armenian Genocide** has primarily adopted this stance **in the interests of its wider foreign policy decisions and geo-political interests in the region.**

- India **does not have any domestic law on genocide**, even though it **has ratified the United Nations Convention on Genocide.**
- This was even observed by the Delhi High Court in *State v. Sajjan Kumar* (2018). The case **concerned the mass killing of Sikhs during the anti-Sikh riots in 1984 in Delhi** — and throughout the country.

- **Other Related News to Armenia:**

- Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict:**

- Recently, Russia has brokered a new peace deal between **Armenia and Azerbaijan**. Both countries have been in **a military conflict over the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh** in the South Caucasus.
- Nagorno-Karabakh, the centre of the conflict, is located within Azerbaijan but is populated, mostly, by those of Armenian ethnicity (and mostly Christian compared to the Shia Muslim majority Azerbaijan).

Source: TH

Project Dantak

Why in News

Recently, **Project DANTAK** which is one of the oldest Projects of the **Border Roads Organisation (BRO)** commemorated its **Diamond Jubilee in Bhutan**.

Over 1,200 DANTAK personnel laid down their lives while constructing important infrastructure in Bhutan.



Key Points

- **About:**

- Project DANTAK was **established on 24th April 1961**.
- It was a result of the visionary leadership of **the third King of Bhutan and then Prime Minister of India Jawahar Lal Nehru**.
- DANTAK was tasked **to construct the pioneering motorable roads**.

- **Achievements:**

- **Road Connectivity:**

Over the years, the Project has completed approximately 1600 km of blacktopped roads and 120 km of tracks in Bhutan with 5000 meters of bridges over them.

- **Other Projects Executed:**

Include the construction of Paro Airport, Yonphula Airfield, Thimphu – Trashigang Highway, Telecommunication & Hydro Power Infrastructure, Sherubtse College, Kanglung and India House Estate.

- **Medical and Education Facilities:**

The medical and education facilities established by DANTAK in far flung areas were often the first in those locations.

- **Food Outlets:**

The food outlets along the road introduced the Bhutanese to Indian delicacies and developed a sweet tooth in them.

- **Indo-Bhutan Relationship:**

- **Indo-Bhutan Treaty of Peace and Friendship, 1949:**

- The Treaty provides for, among other things, **perpetual peace and friendship, free trade and commerce and equal justice** to each other's citizens.
- In **2007**, the **treaty was re-negotiated**, and provisions were included to encourage Bhutan's sovereignty, abolishing the need to take India's guidance on foreign policy.

- **Multilateral Partnership:**

Both of them share multilateral forums such as **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)**, **BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal)**, **BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation)** etc.

- **Economic Partnership:**

- **Mutually beneficial hydro-power cooperation** with Bhutan forms the core of bilateral economic cooperation.

The **720 MW Mangdechhu** was commissioned in August 2019.

HEPs namely, 1200 MW Punatsangchhu-I, 1020 MW Punatsangchhu-II and Kholongchhu HEP (600 MWs) are under various stages of implementation.

- **India is Bhutan's largest trading partner.**

Border Roads Organisation

- BRO was **conceived and raised in 1960 by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru** for coordinating the speedy development of a network of roads in the North and the North Eastern border regions of the country.
- It works **under the administrative control of the Ministry of Defence.**
- It has diversified into a large spectrum of construction and development works comprising airfields, building projects, defence works and tunneling and has endeared itself to the people.

- **Some Recent Achievements:**

- **Atal Tunnel:** It is located in Himachal Pradesh's Rohtang pass. It connects Solang Valley near Manali to Sissu in Lahaul and Spiti district.
- **Nechiphu Tunnel:** Foundation stone was laid on the Balipara-Charduar-Tawang (BCT) road in West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh.
- **Daporijo Bridge:** It is over Subansiri river in Arunachal Pradesh.
- **Kasowal Bridge:** It is over Ravi river. It connects Kasowal enclave in Punjab along the India - Pakistan border to the rest of the country.
- **Darbuk-Shyok-Daulat Beg Oldie Road:** It connects Leh via the villages of Darbuk and Shyok at southern Shyok River Valley, with the Daulat Beg Oldi (DBO) post near the northern border.
- **Barsi Bridge (longest bridge on Manali–Leh highway):** It is built on Bagga river, which joins with Chandra river at Tandi in Lahaul to flow down into Jammu & Kashmir as the Chenab.

Source: TH

US Supports India in Covid-Crisis

Why in News

Recently, the Prime Minister of India and US President had a telephone conversation with assurances exchanged on smoothening **out issues related to supply chains for vaccines** for **Covid-19**.

- The telephone call came in the **background** of not just flagging supply chain issues with the US with regard to vaccines but also the **lack of certain resources in India to fight the pandemic**, as the country has been hit by exponentially rising cases and deaths.
- Earlier in 2020, **India and the US planned to work together** on vaccine research and testing for Covid-19.

Key Points

- **Bilateral Discussion:**

- India discussed its initiative at the **World Trade Organisation (WTO)** for a relaxation in the norms of the agreement on **Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property (TRIPS)** to ensure quick and affordable access to vaccines and medicines for developing countries.
 - The **1995 agreement on TRIPS** is a key legal instrument that **harmonises Intellectual Property (IP) protection** by imposing binding obligations on member countries to ensure a minimum level of protection and enforcement of IP rights in their territories.
 - IP rights **could hinder the supply of vaccines and drugs at affordable prices.**
- India also mentioned its commitment to contain the Covid-19 pandemic globally through **Vaccine Maitri**, and its participation in **COVAX** and the **Quad Vaccine Initiatives**.
- Both discussed the Covid-19 situation in their respective countries, including India's ongoing efforts to contain the **second wave of Covid-19** through expedited vaccination efforts, and ensuring supply of critical medicines, therapeutics and health care equipment.
- **Recent Developments in the Relations:**
 - India-US ties were **elevated to "comprehensive global strategic partnership"** in 2020.
 - India and the US signed the **Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-Spatial Cooperation (BECA)**, with which the two countries have inked all the all four foundational agreements to bolster defence ties.
 - Among the **many highlights** are deepening government-to-government dialogues, shared vision of the Indo-Pacific, regional cooperation, defence and security ties, and ability to respond to unexpected challenges.

- **India's Request:**

- Emphasized the **need to ensure smooth and open supply chains of raw materials** and inputs required for manufacture of vaccines, medicines, and therapeutics related to Covid-19.
- **Requested for supply of seven essential items** that it needs on an urgent basis. These are **oxygen concentrators, oxygen cylinders, oxygen generators, oxygen generation plants, remdesivir, favipiravir, and tocilizumab.**

- **US' Steps:**

- It has **diverted its pending orders** of vaccine filters to India's vaccine manufacturers. It will **help India make more vaccines.**
- It has **identified sources of specific raw material** urgently required for Indian manufacture of the **Covishield** vaccine that will immediately be made available for India.

- **Other Countries Helping India:**

- **Singapore** has donated four cryogenic oxygen tanks to India.
- The **United Kingdom** has announced that it will ship over “600 pieces of vital medical equipment” to help India fight Covid19.
- **Australia** has announced that it will send oxygen, ventilators and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) kits to India as part of an immediate support package.
- **Saudi Arabia** is shipping 80 metric tonnes of liquid oxygen to India.
- **Germany** is preparing a “mission of support” for India.
- **Russia** had also announced that it would send 3,00,000-4,00,000 units of Remdesivir injection. It is also planning to send Covid-19 assistance including oxygen concentrators, generators, and drugs needed to treat the disease.
- **China** has also announced that it would provide support and help based on India’s needs.

Source: TH

Chandler Good Government Index

Why in News

Recently, India has been **ranked 49th** in the **Chandler Good Government Index (CGGI)**.

Finland has topped the list.

Key Points

- **About:**

- The CGGI is **released by the Chandler Institute of Governance** which is a private nonprofit organization **headquartered in Singapore**.
- The Index classifies **104 countries** in terms of government capabilities and outcomes.
- Each country is measured across over 50 open data points. The index focuses **on seven pillars:**
 - Leadership and foresight.
 - Robust laws and policies.
 - Strong institutions.
 - Financial stewardship.
 - Attractive marketplace.
 - Global influence and reputation.
 - Helping people rise.

- **Objective:**
 - It **supports government leaders and public officers worldwide in nation building** and strengthening public institutional capacity through training, research and advisory work.
 - It also **shares tools and frameworks for effective policymaking, and empowers nations to provide better public services** for citizens.
- **Performance of South Asian Countries:**

India ranked 49th, Sri Lanka 74th, Pakistan 90th and Nepal 92nd.
- **Indian Initiatives for Good Governance:**
 - **Good Governance Index:**
 - It has been launched by the **Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions** to determine the status of governance in the country.
 - It assesses the **impact of various interventions taken up by the State Government and UTs.**
 - **Good Governance Day:**
 - It is celebrated annually on **25th December** to mark the birth anniversary of the former Prime Minister **Atal Bihari Vajpayee.**
 - Its aim is to create awareness of accountability in government among the citizens of India.
 - **National e-Governance Plan:**

It has the vision to “**make all government services accessible to the common man in his locality**, through common service delivery outlets and ensure efficiency, transparency & reliability of such services at affordable costs to realize the basic needs of the common man.”
 - **Right to Information Act, 2005:**

It plays an effective role in ensuring transparency in governance.
 - **Other Initiatives:**

Governance

- **About:**
 - It is the **process of decision-making** and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented).
 - **Governance** can be used in several contexts such as **corporate governance, international governance, national governance and local governance.**
- **Good Governance:**

It is an approach to **government that is committed** to creating a system founded in **justice and peace that protects individual’s human rights and civil liberties.**
- **Eight Characteristics of Good Governance as Identified by the United Nations:**



Source:TH

Crop Diversification

Why in News

Recently, a top agriculture economist has suggested that the best chance of **Crop Diversification** is through animal agriculture/animal husbandry.

Key Points

- **About:**

- Crop diversification refers to the **addition of new crops or cropping systems to agricultural production** on a particular farm taking into account the different returns from value-added crops with complementary marketing opportunities.
 - **Cropping System:** It refers to the crops, crop sequences and management techniques used on a particular agricultural field over a period of years.
- Many farmers also use the **mixed crop-livestock system** to increase their standards of living and income.
 - Animal husbandry or Animal Agriculture is the branch of science **dealing with the practice of breeding, farming and care of farm animals (livestocks)** such as cattle, dogs, sheep and horses by humans for advantages.
 - It refers to **livestock raising and selective breeding**. It is a **branch of agriculture**.

- **Types:**

| Type of diversification | Nature of diversification | Potential benefit |
|--|---|--|
| Improved structural diversity | Makes crops within the field more structurally diverse | Pest suppression |
| Genetic diversification in monoculture | Cultivation of mixture of varieties of same species in a monoculture | Disease suppression, Increased production stability |
| Diversify field with fodder grasses | Growing fodder grasses alongside of food/pulse/oilseed/ vegetable etc. | Pest suppression, opportunity to livestock farming |
| Crop rotations | Temporal diversity through crop rotations (Sequential cropping) | Disease suppression, Increased production stability |
| Polyculture | Spatial and temporal diversity of crops (Growing two or more crop species within the field) | Insect, pest disease suppression, climate change buffering and increased production |
| Agroforestry | Growing crops and trees together (Spatial and temporal diversity) | Pest suppression and climate change buffering |
| Mixed landscapes | Development of larger-scale diversified landscapes through mixture of crops and cropping system with multiple ecosystems | Pest suppression and climate change buffering |
| Micro-watershed based diversification | Integration of crop with other farming components for year round income and employment generation, besides sustaining soil and environmental health | Insect, pest and disease suppression, climate change buffering and increased production, employment and income |

- **Benefits:**

- **Increase Income on Small Land Holding:**

- At present, **70-80% farmers have land below 2 hectare**. To overcome this, existing cropping patterns must be diversified with high value crops such as maize, pulses, etc.
- The Government of Haryana has also supported this by announcing that farmers switching to other alternate crops instead of paddy will be paid Rs. 7000 per acre incentive (**Mera Pani - Meri Virasat** Scheme).

- **Economic Stability:**

Crop diversification **can better tolerate the ups and downs in price of various farm products** and it may ensure economic stability of farming products.

- **Mitigating Natural Calamities:**

Sudden adverse weather conditions like erratic rainfall, drought, hail, incidence of insect and pest disease. Under this situation, **crop diversification through mixed cropping may be useful**.

- **Balance Food Demand:**

- Most of the Indian population suffers from **malnutrition**. Most of the girl children have **anemia**. Including crops like pulses, oilseed, **horticulture**, and vegetable crops can improve socio economic status by adding quality to the food basket and also improve soil health with the aim of food safety and nutritional security.
- The Government of India has now targeted to increase the area under pulses and oilseeds through **National Food Security Mission (NFSM)**.

- **Conservation:**

- Adoption of crop diversification **helps in conservation of natural resources like introduction of legume in rice-wheat cropping system**, which has the ability to fix atmospheric Nitrogen to help sustain soil fertility.
- **Soil Health Card** (SHC) provides information to farmers on nutrient status of their soil along with recommendations on appropriate dosage of nutrients to be applied for improving soil health and its fertility.

- **Challenges:**

- Majority cropped area in the country is completely **dependent on rainfall**.
- Sub-optimal and **over-use of resources** like land and water resources, causing a negative impact on the environment and sustainability of agriculture.
Animal agriculture is the **second largest contributor** to human-made **Greenhouse Gas (GHG)** emissions after fossil fuels and is a leading cause of deforestation, water and air pollution and biodiversity loss.
- **Inadequate supply of seeds and plants** of improved cultivars.
- Fragmentation of land holding **less favouring modernization and mechanization of agriculture**.
- **Poor basic infrastructure** like rural roads, power, transport, communications etc.
- Inadequate post-harvest technologies and **inadequate infrastructure for post-harvest handling** of perishable horticultural produce.
- Very **weak agro-based industry**.
- Weak research - extension - farmer linkages.
- **Inadequately trained human resources** together with persistent and large scale illiteracy amongst farmers.
- Host of **diseases and pests** affecting most crop plants.
- **Poor database** for horticultural crops.
- **Decreased investments in the agricultural sector** over the years.

Way Forward

- Although there are challenges which can not be ignored, crop diversification provides an opportunity to **double farmers income** and create **food security** for the nation.
- Therefore, the **government must promote crop diversification** by purchasing crops produced other than wheat and rice at **Minimum Support Price**. This could also help conserve the dwindling supply of underground water.
- **Agricultural emissions can also be limited** through smarter livestock handling, technology-enabled monitoring of fertilizer application, simple changes in field layout and other, more efficient agricultural techniques.

Source:IE

PowerGrid Infrastructure Investment Trust

Why in News

The **Power Grid Corporation of India (PGCIL)** launched its **Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT) - PowerGrid Infrastructure Investment Trust (PGInvIT)**.

Key Points

About PGInvIT:

- This is the **first time a state-owned entity (PGCIL) is monetizing its infrastructure assets through the InvIT route.**
- This will be **only the third InvIT to be listed in the Indian markets**, after IRB InvIT and India Grid Trust, both of which went public in 2017.
- The InvIT route was **proposed by the Centre as an alternative fundraising route** for state-run companies to manage funding requirements without having to depend on government support.

Power Grid

- It is a **public limited company** under the administrative control of the **Ministry of Power.**
- It is the **largest power transmission company in India.**
- It started its commercial operation in the year 1992-93 and is today, a **Maharatna company.**
- **About Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT):**
 - It is a **collective investment scheme similar to a mutual fund**, which enables **direct investment** of money from **individual and institutional investors in infrastructure projects** to earn a small portion of the income as return.
 - InvITs **can be treated as the modified version of REITs (real estate investment trusts)** designed to suit the specific circumstances of the infrastructure sector.
 - It is **created to hold income-generating and operational infrastructure assets** such as roads, power transmission lines, gas pipelines, etc.

These assets have long-term contracts with strong counterparties that provide a steady cash flow over the long term – typically 15-20 years.
 - The InvITs are **regulated by the SEBI (Infrastructure Investment Trusts) Regulations, 2014.**
 - An InvIT **consists of four elements:**
 - **Trustee** has the responsibility of inspecting the performance of an InvIT.
 - **Sponsor(s)** are promoters of the company that set up the InvIT.
 - **Investment Manager** is entrusted with the task of supervising the assets and investments of the InvIT.
 - **Project Manager** is responsible for the execution of the project.
 - Units of InvITs **can be listed and traded on a stock exchange**, providing them liquidity.

Or they **can be private and unlisted**, in which case they are not publicly traded and largely invested in by institutional investors.

- **Advantages of Setting up InvITs:**

- **For sponsors** (infrastructure developers), InvITs **provide a convenient route to monetize revenue-generating assets, unlock equity gains, and deleverage their balance sheets** (i.e. to reduce debts).
- InvITs also **present a more tax-friendly structure**. Being a trust, all income received by the InvIT from underlying assets receives a pass-through treatment and is not taxable at the InvIT level.
- **For investors** such as banks, financial institutions, pension funds, insurance companies, and even retail investors, InvITs **provide a good low-risk investment opportunity**.

- **Disadvantages of InvITs:**

- InvITs are **sensitive to changes in regulatory and tax law**.
- Infrastructure **assets are not inflation-linked in India**.
A high rate of inflation has a significant impact on the performance of InvITs.

Source:BS
