



News Analysis (16 Jun, 2021)

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42nd Session of FAO Conference

Why in News

Recently, the **Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare** addressed the **42nd session of Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) Conference**.

- The Conference takes place **every two years** and is FAO's **supreme governing body**.
- It determines the **policies of the Organization, approves the budget**, and makes recommendations to Members on food and agriculture issues.

Key Points

- **India's Efforts for Food Security during the Covid-19 Pandemic:**
 - **High Production of Foodgrains:** India registered an **all-time high production of foodgrains at 305 million tonnes as well as in exports** during 2020-21, contributing to **global food security**.
 - **KISAN RAIL:** It was introduced to transport the essential commodities including perishable horticulture produce, milk and dairy produce from the production centres to the large urban markets.
 - **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package:** Under this scheme, free food grains were provided to 810 million beneficiaries and it has been further extended in which workers will be benefited till November, 2021.
 - **PM Kisan Scheme:** More than **Rs.1,37,000 Crore** have been sent to the bank accounts of over **100 million farmers** under this to **provide income support to the farmers**.

- **Climate Change and Agricultural Schemes:**

- **Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY)**: It was launched in 2015 to address the issues of water resources and provide a permanent solution that envisages Per Drop More Crop.
- **Green India Mission**: It was launched in 2014 under the umbrella of **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)** with the primary objective of protecting, restoring and enhancing India's diminishing forest cover.
- **Soil Health Card (SHC)**: It was launched with the main objective of analysing cluster soil samples and advocating farmers regarding their land fertility status.
- **Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY)**: It was executed to extensively leverage adaptation of climate-smart practices and technologies in conjunction with the **Indian Council of Agricultural Research** and state governments of India.
- **Rainfed Area Development (RAD)**: It focuses on **Integrated Farming System (IFS)** for enhancing productivity and minimizing risks associated with climatic variabilities.
- **Sub-mission on Agro Forestry (SMAF)**: It aims to encourage farmers to plant multi-purpose trees together with the agriculture crops for climate resilience and an additional source of income to the farmers, as well as enhanced feedstock to inter alia wood-based and herbal industry.
- **National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA)**, to develop, demonstrate and disseminate the techniques to make agriculture resilient to adverse impacts of climate change.
- **Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North Eastern Region (MOVCDNER)**: It is a **Central Sector Scheme**, a sub-mission under **NMSA**, aims to develop certified organic production in a value chain mode.

Food and Agriculture Organization

- **FAO is a specialized agency of the United Nations** that leads international efforts to defeat hunger.
- **World Food Day** is celebrated every year on **16th October** to mark the anniversary of the founding of the **FAO** in 1945.
- It is one of the UN food aid organisations **based in Rome (Italy)**. Its sister bodies are the **World Food Programme** and the **International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)**.

- **Initiatives Taken:**
 - **Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS)**.
 - Monitors the **Desert Locust** situation throughout the world.
 - The **Codex Alimentarius Commission or CAC** is the body responsible for all matters regarding the implementation of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme.
 - **The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture**.
- **Flagship Publications:**
 - The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA).
 - The State of the World's Forests (SOFO).
 - **The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI)**.
 - The State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA).
 - The State of Agricultural Commodity Markets (SOCO).
 - **World Food Price Index**.
- **India and FAO:**
 - **Support of FAO** in endorsing the Indian proposal for an **International Year of Pulses** which was celebrated in **2016** and for **declaring 2023** as the **International Year of Millets**.
 - **India released a commemorative coin of Rs. 75 denomination** to mark the 75th Anniversary of the FAO (16th October 2020).

Source: PIB

Global Expansion of Nuclear Arsenal: SIPRI Report

Why in News

According to a recent report published in the **SIPRI Yearbook 2021**, the **number of nuclear warheads which are ready and deployed have increased globally**.

- The SIPRI Yearbook is **released by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)** which researches international armament and conflict.
- The SIPRI “Yearbook 2021” assesses the current state of armaments, disarmament and international security.

Key Points

- **Nine Nuclear Armed States:**

- The nine nuclear armed states are: **US, Russia, the U.K., France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea.**
 - These countries **together possessed an estimated 13,080 nuclear weapons** at the start of 2021.
 - **Russia and the US together possessed over 90% of global nuclear weapons** and have extensive and expensive modernisation programmes under way.
 - Both the US and **Russia have approved** the extension of the **New START treaty.**
 - The Treaty is the last remaining **nuclear Russia-US arms control treaty** which expired in February 2021.
- **China's nuclear arsenal consisted of 350 warheads up from 320** at the start of 2020.

China is in the middle of a significant modernisation and expansion of its nuclear weapon inventory.
- **India possessed an estimated 156 nuclear warheads** at the start of 2021 **compared to 150** at the start of last year, while **Pakistan had 165 warheads, up from 160** in 2020.

India and Pakistan are seeking new technologies and capabilities that dangerously undermine each other's defence under the nuclear threshold.
- **Low Levels of Transparency:** The availability of reliable information on the status of the nuclear arsenals and capabilities of the nuclear-armed states vary considerably.

- **Largest Military Spenders:**

- The growth in **total spending in 2020** was largely influenced by expenditure patterns in the **United States and China** (first and second largest spenders respectively).
- **India's** spending of USD 72.9 billion, an increase of 2.1% in 2020, ranked it as the **third highest spender in the world.**

- **Importers of Major Arms:**

- SIPRI **identified 164 states** as importers of major arms in 2016-20.
- **Country Wise:** The **five largest arms importers** were **Saudi Arabia, India, Egypt, Australia and China**, which together accounted for 36% of total arms imports.
- **Region wise:** The region that received the largest volume of major arms supplies in 2016-20 was **Asia and Oceania**, accounting for 42% of the global total, followed by the **Middle East**, which received 33%.

- **Suppliers of Major Arms:**

The **five largest suppliers** in 2016-20 - the **United States, Russia, France, Germany and China** - accounted for 76% of the total volume of exports of major arms.

- **Recent Instances of Armed Conflict:**

- The **territorial conflict between India and Pakistan over Kashmir**. The situation in 2020 largely reverted to the status quo of relatively low levels of armed violence.
- In June 2020, for the first time in over five decades, the **border tensions between China and India** in the disputed eastern Ladakh region of Kashmir turned deadly.
- A new armed conflict broke out in the **Tigray region of northern Ethiopia** in November 2020 between federal government forces and the Tigray People's Liberation Front, which killed thousands and forced more than 46, 000 refugees to flee into eastern Sudan.

Nuclear Weapons

- **About:**

- Nuclear weapon is **a device designed to release energy in an explosive manner** as a result of nuclear fission, nuclear fusion, or a combination of the two.
- Fission weapons are commonly referred to as **atomic bombs**, and fusion weapons are referred to as thermonuclear bombs or, more commonly, **hydrogen bombs**.
- These have been used in the **bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945**.

- **Treaties Preventing Nuclear Proliferation and Testing**

- The **Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)**.
- The Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests In The Atmosphere, In Outer Space And Under Water, also known as the **Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT)**.
- The **Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)** was signed in 1996 but has yet to enter into force.
- The **Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)**, which will enter into force on 22nd January 2021.

- **Other Related Initiatives:**

Nuclear Suppliers Group, the **Missile Technology Control Regime**, the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, and the **Wassenaar Arrangement**.

- **India's Nuclear Weapon Program:**

- India **tested its first nuclear device in May 1974**, and **remains outside both the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)**.
- However, India has a facility-specific safeguards agreement in place with the **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)** and a waiver from the **Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG)** allowing it to participate in global civilian nuclear technology commerce.
- It was admitted as a member into the **Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR)** in 2016, **Wassenaar Arrangement** in 2017 and **Australia Group** in 2018.
- India **maintains its official commitment to no-first-use of nuclear weapons**.

Source: TH

Policy for Declassification of War History

Why in News

The Union Defence Minister has approved a **policy on archiving, declassification, compilation and publication of war and operations histories** by the **Ministry of Defence (MoD)**.

Key Points

- **Desirability of Authoritative Record:**

- Timely publication of war histories **would give people an accurate account of the events**, provide **authentic material for academic research** and **counter the unfounded rumours**.
- The requirement of having war histories written with clear cut policy on declassification was recommended by the **Kargil Review Committee, 2019** headed by **K Subrahmanyam** to analyse the lessons learnt and prevent future mistakes.
- **Post Kargil conflict, a Group of Ministers (GoM) recommendations on national security, 2001** also mentioned the desirability of an authoritative war history.

- **Provisions of Policy:**

- **Transfer of Record:** Each organisation under the MoD such as **Services (Army, Airforce and Navy), Integrated Defence Staff, Assam Rifles** and **Coast Guard**, will transfer the records, including war diaries, letters of proceedings and operational record books, etc., **to the history division of MoD** for proper upkeep, archival and writing the histories.

The **History Division** will be responsible for coordination with various departments while compiling, seeking approval and publishing of war and operations histories.

- **Constitution of a Committee:** For compilation of war and operations histories, the policy mandates the constitution of a committee headed by Joint Secretary, MoD and composed of **representatives of the Services, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** and other organisations and **prominent military historians**, if required.
- **Timeline:** The policy sets clear timelines with regard to compilation and publication of war and operations histories.
 - The **committee should be formed within two years** of completion of war and operations.
 - Thereafter, collection of records and **compilation should be completed in three years** and disseminated to all concerned.
 - The records **should ordinarily be declassified** (i.e. no more secret) in **25 years**.
 - **Records older than 25 years** should be appraised by archival experts and transferred to the **National Archives of India** once the war/operations histories have been compiled.
- **Responsibility for Declassification of Records:** This rests with the respective organisations as specified in the **Public Record Act 1993** and **the Public Record Rules 1997**.
- **For Internal Consumption First:** The compiled history on wars and operations, within five years, will be for internal consumption first, and **later the committee may decide to publicly release whole or parts of it**, considering the sensitivity of the subject.

- **Declassification of Older Wars:**

The declassification of older wars like the **1962 war** and **Operation Bluestar** is not automatic and will be taken up on a case by case basis by a committee to be constituted under the new policy.

Source: TH

Redefining Boundaries of UAPA: Delhi High Court

Why in News

Recently, the Delhi High Court granted bail to student activists in a **Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), 1967** case.

While delivering the judgement, the court **redefined the boundaries** of the otherwise **"vague" Section 15** of the UAPA.

Key Points

- **High Court's Ruling:**
 - **Extent of Terrorist Activity:**
 - Terrorist activity **cannot be broadly defined to include ordinary penal offences.**

By doing so, it **raised the bar for the State to book an individual for terrorism under the UAPA.**
 - The extent and reach of terrorist activity must travel beyond the effect of an ordinary crime and **must not arise merely by causing disturbance of law and order or even public order.**

It must be such that **it travels beyond the capacity of the ordinary law enforcement agencies to deal with it** under the ordinary penal law.
 - **Careful while Defining Unlawful Activities:**

The courts must be **careful in employing the definitional words and phrases used in Section 15 of UAPA in their absolute literal sense**, they should differentiate clearly how terrorism is different even from conventional, heinous crime.

 - **Section 15** of the UAPA defines **“terrorist act”** and is punishable with imprisonment for a term of at least five years to life. In case the terrorist act results in death, the punishment is death or imprisonment for life.
 - The court referred to how the Supreme Court itself, in **case of Kartar Singh v State of Punjab 1994**, flagged similar concerns against the misuse of another anti-terror law, the **Terrorists and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, 1987 (lapsed in 1995)**.
 - **Intent of Enacting UAPA:**
 - To **bring terrorist activity within its scope**, was, and could only have had been, to deal with matters of profound impact on the 'Defence of India', nothing more and nothing less.
 - It was **neither the intent nor purport of enacting UAPA that other offences of the usual and ordinary kind**, however grave, egregious or heinous in their nature and extent, **should also be covered by UAPA.**
 - **Right to Protest:**
 - Observed that **protests against Governmental and Parliamentary actions are legitimate**; and though such protests are expected to be peaceful and non-violent, it is not uncommon for protesters to push the limits permissible in law.
 - The line between the **constitutionally guaranteed right to protest (Article 19) and terrorist activity seems to be getting somewhat blurred.**

- **Significance of the Ruling:**

This is the **first instance of a court calling out alleged misuse of the UAPA against individuals** in cases that do not necessarily fall in the category of “terrorism” cases.

According to data provided by the Ministry of Home Affairs in Parliament in March, a total of **1126 cases were registered under UAPA in 2019, a sharp rise from 897 in 2015.**

Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, 1967

- UAPA was **passed in 1967**. It aims at **effective prevention of unlawful activities associations in India.**

Unlawful activity refers to any action taken by an individual or association intended to disrupt the territorial integrity and sovereignty of India.

- The Act **assigns absolute power to the central government**, by way of which if the Centre deems an activity as unlawful then it may, **by way of an Official Gazette**, declare it so.

It has **death penalty and life imprisonment as highest punishments.**

- Under UAPA, **both Indian and foreign nationals can be charged**. It will be applicable to the offenders in the same manner, even if crime is committed on a foreign land, outside India.
- Under the UAPA, **the investigating agency can file a charge sheet in maximum 180 days after the arrests and the duration can be extended further** after intimating the court.
- The **2004 amendment added “terrorist act” to the list of offences to ban organisations for terrorist activities**, under which 34 outfits were banned.

Till 2004, “unlawful” activities referred to actions related to secession and cession of territory.
- In August, Parliament cleared the **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Bill, 2019** to designate individuals as terrorists on certain grounds provided in the Act.
 - The Act empowers the Director General of **National Investigation Agency (NIA)** to grant approval of seizure or attachment of property when the case is investigated by the said agency.
 - The **Act empowers the officers of the NIA, of the rank of Inspector or above, to investigate cases of terrorism** in addition to those conducted by the DSP or ACP or above rank officer in a state.

Source:IE

Early Southwest Monsoon

Why in News

After arriving at the Kerala Coast two days behind the schedule, the Southwest Monsoon has hit early across some areas of south peninsular and central India.

Key Points

- **Cause of Early Monsoon:**

- **Cyclone Yaas**, formed in the Bay of Bengal in May, helped in bringing the crucial southwest monsoon winds over the Andaman Sea..

As a rule-of-thumb, the monsoon makes its onset over Kerala roughly ten days after it makes its advent over the south Andaman sea.

- After delaying in Kerala, **fast progress was mainly due to strong westerly winds from the Arabian Sea**, and also the **formation of a low-pressure system over the North Bay of Bengal**, that currently lies over **eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar**.
- An **off-shore trough**, prevailing **between Maharashtra and Kerala**, has helped the monsoon arrive early over Karnataka, Goa, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra and southern Gujarat.

- **Further Progress:**

- Over **Northwest India**, the monsoon becomes **active only when the monsoon currents** - either from the Arabian Sea or the Bay of Bengal - reach the region. As it is not expected to happen soon, the monsoon progress will remain slow.
- Also, a stream of **mid-latitude westerly winds** is approaching Northwest India, which will **hinder the monsoon advancement** in the immediate coming days.

- **Early Monsoon and Rainfall Quantum:**

- The **time of monsoon onset over a region has no direct impact on the rainfall quantum** received during the season, or in the monsoon's progress.
- For instance, **the monsoon took 42 days in 2014 and 22 days in 2015** to cover the entire country. Even with such distinct ranges, **India recorded deficient rainfall during both years**.

- **Impact on Summer-Sown Crops:**

The early arrival of monsoon rains in central and northern India will help farmers accelerate sowing of **summer-sown crops** such as paddy rice, cotton, soybean and pulses, and may boost crop yields too.

- **Indications of Climate Change:**

- The onset of the monsoon over various parts of the country each year can be ahead of time, in time or late. These variations are generally considered normal, given the complexity of the monsoon.
- However, climate experts have linked **extreme weather events like intense rainfall over a region within a short time span or prolonged dry spell** during the four months (June-September) as indications of climate change.

Monsoon in India

- **About:**

- The **climate of India** is described as the '**monsoon**' type. In Asia, this type of climate is found mainly in the south and the southeast.
- Out of a total of **4 seasonal divisions** of India, **monsoon** occupies 2 divisions, namely:
 - **The southwest monsoon season** - Rainfall received from the southwest monsoons is seasonal in character, which occurs between June and September.
 - **The retreating monsoon season** - The months of October and November are known for retreating monsoons.

- **Factors Influencing South-West Monsoon Formation:**

- **The differential heating and cooling of land and water** creates a low pressure on the landmass of India while the seas around experience comparatively high pressure.
- **The shift of the position of Inter Tropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ)** in summer, over the Ganga plain (this is the equatorial trough normally positioned about 5°N of the equator. It is also known as the monsoon-trough during the monsoon season).
- **The presence of the high-pressure area**, east of Madagascar, approximately at **20°S over the Indian Ocean**. The intensity and position of this high-pressure area affect the Indian Monsoon.
- **The Tibetan plateau gets intensely heated** during summer, which results in strong vertical air currents and the formation of low pressure over the plateau at about 9 km above sea level.
- **The movement of the westerly jet stream** to the north of the Himalayas and the presence of the **tropical easterly jet stream** over the Indian peninsula during summer.
- **Tropical Easterly Jet** (African Easterly Jet).
- **El Nino/Southern Oscillation (SO)**: Normally when the tropical eastern south Pacific Ocean experiences high pressure, the tropical eastern Indian Ocean experiences low pressure. But in certain years, there is a reversal in the pressure conditions and the eastern Pacific has lower pressure in comparison to the eastern Indian Ocean. This periodic change in pressure conditions is known as the SO.

Source: IE

Humayun's Tomb: Mughal Architecture

Why in News

Recently, the **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** notified that all centrally protected monuments, sites, and museums across the country including the Humayun's Tomb will reopen for visitors from 16th June 2021.

- Humayun's tomb in Delhi is a fine specimen of the great **Mughal architecture**.
- **ASI**, under the Ministry of Culture, is the **premier organization for the archaeological research and protection** of the cultural heritage of the nation.

Key Points

- **Humayun's Tomb:**



About:

- This tomb, **built in 1570**, is of particular cultural significance as **it was the first garden-tomb on the Indian subcontinent**.
It **inspired several major architectural innovations**, culminating in the construction of the Taj Mahal.
- It was built under the patronage of Humayun's son, the **great Emperor Akbar**.
- It is also called the '**dormitory of the Mughals**' as in the cells are **buried over 150 Mughal family members**.
- It is **an example of the charbagh** (a four quadrant garden with the four rivers of Quranic paradise represented), with pools joined by channels.
- The **United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)** recognized it as a **World Heritage Site in 1993**.

- **Mughal Architecture:**

- **About:**

- This is a building style that flourished in **northern and central India** under the patronage of the Mughal emperors from the **mid-16th to the late 17th century**.
- The Mughal period marked a striking **revival of Islamic architecture in northern India**. Under the patronage of the Mughal emperors, Persian, Indian, and various provincial styles were fused to produce works of unusual quality and refinement.
- It became so widespread especially in north India that these can be seen further in the **colonial architecture of Indo-Saracenic style**.

- **Important Features:**

- **Mixed Architecture:** It was a blend of Indian, Persian, and Turkish architectural style.
- **Diversity:** Different types of buildings, such as majestic gates (entrances), forts, mausoleums, palaces, mosques, sarais, etc.
- **Building material:** Mostly, red sandstone and white marble were used.
- **Speciality:** Specific features such as the **Charbagh style** of the mausoleums, pronounced **bulbous domes**, slender turrets at the corners, **broad gateways**, beautiful **calligraphy, arabesque**, and **geometric patterns** on pillars and walls, and palace halls supported on pillars.

The **arches, chhatri, and various styles of domes became hugely popular** in the Indo-Islamic architecture and were further developed under the Mughals.

- **Some Examples:**

- **Taj Mahal:**

- Built by **Shah Jahan** between **1632 and 1653**, in memory of his wife Mumtaz Mahal.
- UNESCO recognized the Taj Mahal as a **World Heritage Site in 1983**. It is located in Agra.

- **Red Fort:**

- Built by **Shah Jahan in 1618** when he decided to move the capital from Agra to Delhi. It was the residence of Mughal rulers.
- UNESCO designated it as the **World Heritage Site in 2007**.

- **Jama Masjid:**

Built by **Shah Jahan** in Delhi. The construction was completed in **1656**.

- **Badshahi Mosque:**

Built during the reign of Aurangzeb. At the time of **completion in 1673**, it was the **largest mosque in the world**. It is located in **Lahore**, capital of the Pakistani province of Punjab.

Jal Shakti Abhiyan - II

Why in News

The Minister of Jal Shakti has urged all MPs to support the ongoing “**Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch The Rain**” campaign in their respective constituencies and states.

Such interventions would ensure water source sustainability in rural areas and would strengthen the ongoing **Jal Jeevan Mission** being implemented by the Ministry.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - The Abhiyan with the **theme- “Catch the Rain where it falls, when it falls’** was launched on the occasion of **world water day** (22nd March 2021).
 - It covers **all rural and urban areas** of all districts of the country.
 - **Jal Shakti Abhiyan-I of 2019**, covered **only 1592 water stressed blocks** out of 2836 blocks **in 256 districts** of the country.
 - **National Water Mission**, under the **Ministry of Jal Shakti**, is the nodal agency for its implementation.
 - A total of almost **Rs. 14,000 Cr worth of water conservation related work** is completed/ongoing **under the MGNREGS** (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme) of Dept of Rural Development.
- **Aim:**
 - The campaign aims **at tapping rainwater** by constructing artificial recharge structures, revitalizing existing ponds and water bodies, creating new water bodies, provisioning check dams, rejuvenating wetlands and rivers before the onset of monsoon.
 - It is also planned to create **a data-base of all water bodies** in the country by **geo tagging** them and using this data to create scientific and data-based district level water conservation plans.

- **Other Initiatives to Conserve Water:**

- **Jal Jeevan Mission:**

- An initiative under the **Ministry of Jal Shakti**, aims to ensure access to **piped water for every household in rural India**.
- Government of India has restructured and subsumed the **National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP)** into Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) to provide **Functional Household Tap Connection (FHTC)** to every rural household i.e., Har Ghar Nal Se Jal (HGNSJ).

- **Jal Jeevan Mission (Urban):**

In the **Budget 2021-22**, Jal Jeevan Mission (Urban) was announced under the **Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry** to provide universal coverage of water supply to all households through functional taps in all statutory towns in accordance with **Sustainable Development Goal- 6** (clean water and sanitation).

- **National Water Mission:**

It was launched with the objective of conservation of water, minimising wastage and ensuring more equitable distribution both across and within states through integrated water resources development and management.

- **NITI Aayog's Composite Water Management Index:**

With the objective of achieving effective utilization of water, NITI Aayog has developed the Composite Water Management Index.

- **Atal Bhujal Yojana:**

- It is a central sector scheme worth Rs. 6,000 crore for sustainable management of groundwater with community participation.
- It envisages people's participation through the formation of 'Water User Associations', water budgeting, preparation and implementation of Gram-panchayat-wise water security plans, etc.

Source: PIB

MoU for Seaplane Services in India

Why in News

The **Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways** and the **Ministry of Civil Aviation** signed **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** for **Development of Seaplane Services** in India.

India's **first seaplane service started** operation between Kevadia and Sabarmati Riverfront in Ahmedabad in October 2020, under **Sagarmala Seaplane Services**.

Key Points

- **About MoU:**
 - This MoU envisages **developing non-scheduled and scheduled operation of seaplane services** within territorial jurisdiction of India.
 - Seaplane services will be **developed as a part of the RCS-UDAN** (Regional Connectivity Scheme-Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik) **initiative of the Civil Aviation Ministry.**
 - The **Shipping Ministry** would **identify and develop waterfront aerodromes and other required infrastructure.**
 - The **Civil Aviation Ministry** will **select potential airline operators** through a bidding process. It will **also incorporate the location and routes** as identified by the Shipping Ministry.
- **Benefits:**
 - This MoU will help in **expediting the development of new water aerodromes** and also **operationalisation of new seaplane routes** in India.
 - It will not only **enhance seamless connectivity** across the nation by promoting eco-friendly transportation through seaplanes but also give a boost to the tourism industry.
 - It will **lead to an increase in tourism and hotel business** at the local level. It will also serve **employment to local people.**
 - Establishment of water airports will contribute to an increase in the level of current **social infrastructural facilities** (healthcare, education, community housing, etc.) at the proposed sites.
- **About UDAN Scheme:**
 - **Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN)** was launched as a regional connectivity scheme under the **Ministry of Civil Aviation in 2016.**
 - The **objective of the scheme** is to create affordable yet economically viable and profitable flights on regional routes so that flying becomes affordable to the common man even in small towns.
 - The **scheme envisages providing** connectivity to **un-served and underserved** airports of the country through the revival of existing air-strips and airports. The scheme is operational for **a period of 10 years.**
 - Under-served airports are those **which do not have more than one flight** a day, while unserved airports are those where there are no operations.
 - **Financial incentives** from the Centre, state governments and airport operators are extended to selected airlines to encourage operations from unserved and under-served airports, and keep airfares affordable.
- **About UDAN 4.1:**
 - The UDAN 4.1 focuses on connecting **smaller airports, along with special helicopter and seaplane routes.**
 - Some new routes have been proposed under the **Sagarmala Seaplane services.**

- **Sagarmala Seaplane Services:**

- It is an **ambitious project** under the **Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways**.
- The project is being initiated under a **Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV)** framework through **prospective airline operators**.
- The project execution and implementation would be through **Sagarmala Development Company Ltd (SDCL)**, which is under the administrative control of the Ministry.
- To provide connectivity and easier accessibility to remote locations, SDCL is exploring plans to **leverage the potential of the vast coastline and numerous water bodies/ivers** across India by commencing seaplane operations.

Several destinations are envisaged for seaplane operations. Seaplanes will utilise the nearby water bodies for take-off and landing and thus connect those places in an economical way as conventional airport infrastructure like a runway and terminal buildings are not required for seaplane operations.
- The **routes** may be operated under the **government's subsidised UDAN scheme**.

Source: PIB

Indo-Thai CORPAT

Why in News

Recently, the 31st edition of **India-Thailand Coordinated Patrol** (Indo-Thai CORPAT) between the Indian Navy and the Royal Thai Navy was conducted **in the Andaman sea** close to the **Strait of Malacca**.



Key Points

- **Naval Exercise:**
 - India and Thailand have been carrying out CORPAT along their **International Maritime Boundary Line twice a year since 2005.**
 - **Indian Naval Ship (INS) Saryu**, an indigenously built Naval Offshore Patrol Vessel and Thailand's Ship **HTMS-Krabi**, an **Offshore Patrol Vessel**, along with **Dornier Maritime Patrol Aircraft** from both navies participated in the CORPAT 31st edition.
- **Aims:**
 - To keep part of the Indian Ocean **safe and secure for commercial shipping and international trade.**
 - To ensure effective implementation of the **United Nations Conventions on Laws of the Sea (UNCLOS)**.

UNCLOS specify **regulations regarding protection and conservation of natural resources**, conservation of marine environment, prevention and suppression of illegal, unregulated fishing activity, drug trafficking, piracy, exchange of information in prevention of smuggling, illegal immigration and conduct of search and rescue operations at sea.
- **In line with India's SAGAR Vision:**

As part of Indian Government's vision of **Security And Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)**, the Indian Navy has been involved in assisting countries in the Indian Ocean Region with **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) Surveillance, Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR)**, and other capacity building and capability-enhancement activities, on their request.
- **Other Military Exercises between India and Thailand:**
 - **Exercise MAITREE** (Army).
 - Exercise SIAM BHARAT (Air Force).

Source: PIB
