

MANTHAN

NOVEMBER 2024 : WEEK-3

Registered / Corporate Office:

CL Educate Limited, A – 45, Mohan Co-operative Industrial Estate, New Delhi – 110044

Contact No. 011-41280800 / 1100

www.careerlauncher.com www.cleducate.com



Contents

1.	Brazil President Lula launches alliance to combat world hunger as Brazil hosts G20	3
2.	Pollution in Delhi hits record high, cloaking city in smog	7
3.	Israeli parliament votes to ban UNRWA from Israel within 90 days.....	11
4.	The \$3.6 billion Chinese-funded Chancay port project in Peru	13
5.	PM Modi receives Nigeria's second-highest national award	16
6.	The China emissions paradox	19
7.	South Asia's Largest Maritime Thought Leadership Forum – Sagarmanthan	22
8.	Inauguration of first trilateral power transaction – from Nepal to Bangladesh through the Indian Grid	24
9.	Privatization of Argentina's Key Waterway	27
10.	56th Tiger Reserve of the country notified in Chhattisgarh	31

1. Brazil President Lula launches alliance to combat world hunger as Brazil hosts G20

- The president of Brazil, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, has opened the G20 meeting in Rio de Janeiro with the launch of an alliance to combat hunger, which he described as the “ultimate symbol of our collective tragedy”.
- Brazil holds the rotating presidency of the group and is hosting the meeting attended by all but two – Russia and Saudi Arabia – of the 19 member countries.
- Eighty-one countries have backed the plan, but initially it seemed that only 18 of the 19 G20 members had signed up. Argentina, whose far-right president, Javier Milei, has previously described Lula as a communist, did not initially back the plan but later came around after negotiations.
- Earlier, Lula had welcomed all the leaders at the Museum of Modern Art, where the summit is being held. It was the first time Lula and Milei had met face to face, and the coldness of their handshake drew attention.
- Argentina was the only country to vote against a non-binding UN resolution condemning violence against women. Iran, North Korea and Russia abstained.
- The Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty has a total of 148 signatories, including 82 countries, 26 international organisations, 9 financial institutions, and 31 philanthropic foundations and non-governmental organisations.

Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty

- The Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty is an initiative aimed at uniting governments, international organizations, private sectors, and civil society to address hunger and poverty worldwide.
- It focuses on achieving Sustainable Development Goal 2 (Zero Hunger) and alleviating extreme poverty in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Origins and Purpose

- **Establishment:** Launched in 2003 by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations along with other international partners.
- **Goal:** To promote coordinated actions and partnerships to address the root causes of hunger and poverty while building sustainable food systems.

Key Objectives

- **Eliminating Hunger:** Addressing immediate needs through food security initiatives, emergency responses, and nutritional programs.
- **Reducing Poverty:** Promoting income-generating opportunities, education, and empowerment of marginalized communities.
- **Building Resilience:** Supporting initiatives for sustainable agriculture, climate adaptation, and disaster preparedness.
- **Fostering Partnerships:** Encouraging cooperation among governments, non-profits, academic institutions, and private sectors.

Approach

- **Integrated Actions:** Combines food security with poverty reduction through comprehensive strategies.

- **Localized Implementation:** Supports country-level alliances to address region-specific challenges.
- **Capacity Building:** Strengthens the abilities of communities and governments to implement long-term solutions.

Major Contributors

- United Nations agencies like FAO, WFP (World Food Programme), and IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development).
- International NGOs and private sector partners.
- National governments that integrate alliance goals into their policies.

Impact and Progress

- **Programs:** The alliance supports projects like school meal programs, smallholder farmer empowerment, and nutrition-sensitive interventions.
- **Challenges:** Despite progress, conflicts, economic inequality, and climate change remain significant barriers to its goals.

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a global framework adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015.
- It serves as a comprehensive roadmap for achieving sustainable development by 2030, emphasizing social inclusion, economic growth, and environmental protection.
- Central to this agenda are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which address a range of global challenges, including poverty, inequality, climate change, and peace.

Key Features of the 2030 Agenda

- **Universality:** The agenda applies to all countries, irrespective of their development status, emphasizing collective responsibility.
- **Inclusivity:** It ensures no one is left behind, targeting vulnerable and marginalized communities.
- **Interconnection:** The goals are integrated and indivisible, recognizing the interdependence of economic, social, and environmental dimensions.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals

- **No Poverty:** Eradicate extreme poverty globally.
- **Zero Hunger:** Achieve food security and improved nutrition.
- **Good Health and Well-being:** Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being.
- **Quality Education:** Provide inclusive and equitable quality education.
- **Gender Equality:** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
- **Clean Water and Sanitation:** Ensure availability and sustainable management of water.
- **Affordable and Clean Energy:** Access to reliable and sustainable energy for all.
- **Decent Work and Economic Growth:** Promote sustainable economic growth and employment.
- **Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure:** Build resilient infrastructure and foster innovation.
- **Reduced Inequalities:** Reduce inequality within and among countries.
- **Sustainable Cities and Communities:** Make urban areas inclusive, safe, and sustainable.
- **Responsible Consumption and Production:** Ensure sustainable consumption patterns.

- Climate Action: Urgently combat climate change and its impacts.
- Life Below Water: Conserve and sustainably use marine resources.
- Life on Land: Protect terrestrial ecosystems and biodiversity.
- Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies.
- Partnerships for the Goals: Strengthen global partnerships to achieve the goals.

Implementation

- The agenda relies on partnerships between governments, private sectors, civil society, and individuals. It emphasizes:
- Financing: Mobilizing financial resources from public and private sectors.
- Technology: Leveraging innovations for sustainable solutions.
- Capacity Building: Strengthening institutions and systems for effective implementation.

Monitoring and Review

- Progress is assessed through global indicators developed by the UN Statistical Commission. Regular reviews are conducted through:
- Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs): Presented by countries during the annual High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF).
- Global Reports: Tracking overall progress toward achieving the SDGs.

Global Hunger Index for 2024

- The Global Hunger Index for 2024 states that a ‘serious’ level of hunger is prevalent in India.
- It ranks India 105th among 127 countries, giving it a score of 27.3. A score below 9.9 indicates low levels of hunger, 10-19.9 moderate, 35-49.9 alarming and above 50 extremely alarming.

What does it state about India?

- The score is based on four broad parameters, that is, child stunting (share of children under five with lower height proportional to their age, reflecting chronic undernutrition), undernourishment (share of population with insufficient caloric intake), child wasting (share of children under five with lower weight proportional to their height) and child mortality (share of children who die before their fifth birthday).
- The report traced 13.7% of the population to be undernourished, 35.5% of children as stunted, 18.7% of children wasted and 2.9% of children dying before their fifth birthday.
- As per the survey, India has the highest child wasting rate globally.
- However, the analysis states that India has demonstrated “significant political will” to transform the food and nutrition landscape — pointing to the National Food Security Act, Poshan Abhiyan (National Nutrition Mission), PM Garib Kalyan Yojna (PMGKAY) and National Mission for Natural Farming. But the report argues there exists room for improvement.
- To illustrate a solution, the report points to the co-relation between the poor nutritional status of mothers being transferred onto their children.
- There exists an ‘intergenerational pattern of undernutrition’ where the factors driving India’s high child wasting rate entail mothers inflicted with insufficient weight gain during pregnancy and low birth weight among infants.

What about India's GDP growth?

- The report states that the relationship between per capita GDP growth and low levels of hunger is “not always direct or guaranteed”.
- In other words, GDP growth alone does not result in improved food and nutritional security for the entire populace.
- Thus, the report puts forth the imperative for policies to emphasise pro-poor development alongside addressing social/economic inequalities.

What solutions does it propose?

- Broadly, the report proposes a multifaceted approach such as improved access to social safety nets, addressing complementary factors relating to well-being and nutrition, alongside dedicated approaches to assessing and provisioning nutritional needs.
- The first of the proposed measures entail improved access to safety nets and cash transfers.
- These, the report states, involve improving access to programs such as the Public Distribution Scheme (PDS), PMGKAY and Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS).
- Other than this, it proposes investments in agriculture and a holistic food systems approach which promotes diversified, nutritious and ecological food production including nutri-cereals such as millets.
- Other dedicated approaches include making effective investments in mother and child health.
- It recommends a set of factors such as improved water, sanitation and hygiene, among other things.
- Finally, the report also seeks interventions to consider links between food and nutrition, gender and climate change.

What is the debate about data collection methodology?

- The previous year, the Ministry of Women and Child Development had expressed concerns about the data not being accessed from their ICT application ‘Poshan Tracker’.
- The Ministry pointed out that UNICEF, WHO and the World Bank have acknowledged the tracker as a “game-changer”.
- It observed child wasting being consistently below 7.2% on a month-on-month basis as compared to the 18.7% stated in the 2023 index.
- However, researchers have maintained that they use survey estimates that have been vetted for inclusion in the Joint Malnutrition Estimates and/or the WHO Global Database on Child Growth and Malnutrition.
- It argues that using the same data source ensures that the numbers are produced using comparable methodologies.
- “Introducing exceptions to this process for any country would compromise the comparability of the results and the ranking,” it states.

QUESTIONS

Fill in the Blank:

1. The Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, launched in 2003, was established by the _____ along with other international partners.
2. The Global Hunger Index 2024 ranks India _____ among 127 countries with a score of 27.3.
3. In the Global Hunger Index, a score between 35 and 49.9 is considered _____.
4. The report on global hunger highlights that India has the highest child _____ rate globally.

5. According to the Global Hunger Index, _____ % of India's population is undernourished.
6. One of the proposed solutions for addressing hunger in India includes improving access to social safety nets such as the Public Distribution Scheme (PDS) and _____.
7. Brazil holds the rotating presidency of the G20 and is hosting the meeting in _____.
8. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes _____ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
9. The Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty focuses on achieving Sustainable Development Goal _____, which aims to achieve food security and improved nutrition.
10. The Global Hunger Index ranks India as having _____ % of children stunted, a sign of chronic undernutrition.

2. Pollution in Delhi hits record high, cloaking city in smog

- India's capital, Delhi, is grappling with its worst air pollution levels this year, forcing schools and offices to close and leaving the city shrouded in thick brown smog.
- According to IQAir, some parts of Delhi recorded pollution levels over 30 times the maximum considered healthy, while the Central Pollution Control Board reported a 24-hour air quality index (AQI) of 484, classified as "severe plus." This level is the highest in 2024, far exceeding the "good" AQI range of 0-50.
- The alarming situation has triggered emergency measures to mitigate the crisis.
- Most schools have shifted to online learning, non-essential construction activities have been halted, and heavy vehicles have been barred from entering the city.
- However, these interventions have done little to alleviate the suffocating smog affecting over 30 million residents.
- Experts estimate that the toxic air quality is reducing life expectancy in Delhi by an average of seven years.
- The smog is an annual phenomenon linked to the cooler weather in northern India, which traps pollutants from vehicular emissions, construction dust, and industrial activity.
- The problem is exacerbated by stubble burning, a practice where farmers burn leftover crop residue to prepare fields for the next planting season.
- Despite being illegal and punishable by heavy fines, this practice remains widespread, contributing up to 40% of Delhi's pollution in recent days. Satellite imagery recently detected 1,334 stubble-burning incidents across six Indian states.
- Delhi's air pollution crisis underscores the deep inequalities within the city. While wealthier residents can afford air purifiers and better living conditions, millions of laborers work outdoors in hazardous conditions and return to poorly ventilated homes.
- These disparities highlight how access to clean air has become a dividing line between the rich and poor.

- India's Supreme Court has declared clean air a fundamental human right and has directed central and state governments to act. However, existing measures have largely failed to curb pollution to safe levels. Despite the health risks, the government's efforts to address the root causes of air pollution—such as transitioning to sustainable agricultural practices or reducing vehicular emissions—have proven inadequate.
- The gravity of the situation was highlighted at a press conference during COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan, where experts emphasized the urgency of addressing India's air pollution crisis. The smog not only threatens public health but also hampers economic productivity and exacerbates social inequalities. Delhi's pollution has become a recurring issue that demands a comprehensive and collaborative approach from policymakers, industries, and citizens alike.
- In summary, Delhi's severe air pollution crisis stems from a combination of weather patterns, agricultural practices, and unchecked industrial emissions. While emergency measures provide temporary relief, the city needs long-term solutions to ensure clean air for its residents and address the underlying causes of this annual environmental disaster.

Smog

- Smog is a term derived from combining "smoke" and "fog." It refers to air pollution that reduces visibility and has harmful effects on health and the environment. There are two main types of smog:

Photochemical Smog:

- Forms in urban areas with high levels of vehicle emissions and sunlight.
- Contains ground-level ozone, nitrogen oxides (NO_x), and volatile organic compounds (VOCs).
- Common in warm, sunny climates.

Example: Smog in cities like Los Angeles.

Industrial Smog:

- Caused by the burning of fossil fuels, such as coal.
- Contains sulfur dioxide (SO₂), particulate matter, and water vapor.
- Common in cooler, industrial areas.

Example: Smog from factories during the Industrial Revolution in cities like London.

Effects of Smog

Health Impact:

- Irritates eyes, throat, and lungs.
- Worsens respiratory conditions like asthma and bronchitis.
- Long-term exposure can cause cardiovascular and lung diseases.

Environmental Impact:

- Reduces sunlight penetration, affecting plant growth.
- Acid rain formation from sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides.
- Decreases visibility, causing transportation hazards.

Prevention and Control

Reduce emissions:

- Use cleaner fuels and renewable energy sources.
- Implement vehicle emission standards.

Regulation and monitoring:

- Enforce air quality standards.
- Encourage public transportation and carpooling.

Awareness and initiatives:

- Promote energy-efficient practices.
- Conduct afforestation programs to improve air quality.

Right against climate change a distinct fundamental and human right, SC judgment

- The Supreme Court has recognised a much-felt, but less articulated right against the adverse effects of climate change as a distinct fundamental right in the Constitution.
- “It is yet to be articulated that the people have a right against the adverse effects of climate change.
- This is perhaps because this right and the right to a clean environment are two sides of the same coin.
- As the havoc caused by climate change increases year-by-year, it becomes necessary to articulate this as a distinct right.
- It is recognised by Articles 14 (right to equality) and 21 (right to life),” the Supreme Court observed in a judgment released.
- The judgment came in a case connected with the survival of the endangered Great Indian Bustard species.
- An order was pronounced in open court, constituting an expert committee to examine the problem faced by the bird species whose natural habitat and flight routes collide with power transmission lines in Gujarat and Rajasthan.
- The case had been posted for further hearing in August 2024. However, the court, unannounced, uploaded a judgment during the weekend. The text of the judgment mainly focuses several paragraphs on climate change and its adversities.

Climate change and human rights

- The judgment by then Chief Justice Chandrachud emphasized the interconnection between climate change and fundamental rights under Articles 21 (right to life) and 14 (right to equality) of the Indian Constitution. It highlighted that the right to life includes the right to health, which is adversely affected by environmental issues like air pollution, rising temperatures, and food and water shortages caused by climate change. Underserved communities are disproportionately affected, exacerbating inequality.
- The court recognized the right to a healthy environment as a "fundamental human right," linking its violation to broader impacts on rights such as health, housing, and water, as well as procedural rights like access to information and participation. It also noted that unequal energy access particularly burdens women and girls due to gendered responsibilities.
- The judgment stressed the critical role of solar power in combating climate change and its effects.

India's solar potential

- India urgently needed to shift to solar power due to three issues - One, the country is likely to account for 25% of global energy demand growth over the next two decades; Two, rampant air pollution

emphasises the need for cleaner energy sources; Three declining groundwater levels and decreasing annual rainfall.

- The court noted that the country was endowed with vast solar energy potential and received about 5,000 trillion kWh per year of solar energy.
- Solar photovoltaic power offered immense scalability in India, allowing for effective harnessing of solar energy.
- India's goal to achieve 500 GW of non-fossil-based electricity generation capacity by 2030 aligned with its efforts to be net zero by 2070.
- India's commitment to transitioning to non-fossil fuels is not just a strategic energy goal but a fundamental necessity for environmental preservation.
- Investing in renewable energy not only addresses these urgent environmental concerns but also yields a plethora of socio-economic benefits.
- By shifting towards renewable energy sources, India enhances its energy security, reducing reliance on volatile fossil fuel markets and mitigating the risks associated with energy scarcity.
- Additionally, the adoption of renewable energy technologies helps in curbing air pollution, thereby improving public health and reducing healthcare costs
- Despite governmental policy and rules and regulations recognising the adverse effects of climate change and seeking to combat it, there is no single or umbrella legislation in India which relates to climate change and the attendant concerns.
- However, this does not mean that the people of India do not have a right against the adverse effects of climate change.
- In 2023-24, out of the total generation capacity of 9,943 MW added, 8,269 is from non-fossil fuel sources. According to the Renewable Energy Statistics 2023 released by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), India has the 4th largest installed capacity of renewable energy.

QUESTIONS

Fill in the Blank:

1. Delhi's air pollution levels in 2024 have reached the highest levels this year, with the Central Pollution Control Board reporting an AQI of _____.
2. The toxic air quality in Delhi is estimated to reduce life expectancy by an average of _____ years.
3. The primary cause of Delhi's air pollution includes vehicular emissions, construction dust, and _____ burning.
4. The Supreme Court of India has declared _____ a fundamental human right, highlighting its connection to environmental and health impacts.
5. Smog is a combination of "smoke" and _____, and it is harmful to both human health and the environment.
6. Photochemical smog, which forms in urban areas, contains substances like nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds, and _____.
7. India's solar energy potential is vast, with the country receiving about _____ trillion kWh per year of solar energy.
8. In 2023-24, India added 9,943 MW to its total generation capacity, with _____ MW coming from non-fossil fuel sources.

9. Despite being illegal, _____ burning remains widespread and contributes up to 40% of Delhi's air pollution in recent days.
10. India's goal is to achieve _____ GW of non-fossil-based electricity generation capacity by 2030 as part of its efforts to transition to clean energy.

3. Israeli parliament votes to ban UNRWA from Israel within 90 days

- The Israeli parliament has approved two controversial bills to ban the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) from operating on Israeli territory and areas under Israel's control.
- The legislation, passed risks collapsing the already fragile aid distribution process at a moment when the humanitarian crisis in Gaza is worsening and Israel is under increased pressure to allow in aid supplies.
- The ban is set to take effect in 90 days and lead to the closure of UNRWA's premises in the occupied Palestinian territory – the West Bank, including occupied East Jerusalem – and Gaza, effectively paralysing the agency's ability to fulfil its mandate as set out by the UN General Assembly in 1949.
- UNRWA is the leading agency running humanitarian aid in Gaza, which has been devastated by more than a year of Israel's war. Hundreds of UNRWA workers have been killed in Israeli strikes, making it the deadliest conflict for UN workers.
- The first law, which bans UNRWA from conducting "any activity" or providing any service inside Israel, passed 92-10 following a fiery debate between supporters of the bill and its opponents, primarily members of Arab parliamentary parties.

'A dangerous precedent'

- The UNRWA head said the ban set "a dangerous precedent" and would "only deepen the suffering of Palestinians".
- The UN agency has provided essential aid and assistance across Palestinian territory – including the West Bank and occupied East Jerusalem, as well as to Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria – for more than seven decades.
- It has for years been subject to harsh Israeli criticism, which escalated after the start of Israel's ongoing deadly assault on the besieged Gaza Strip.
- The Palestinian presidency condemned the ban, saying it would not allow such a move.
- "UNRWA provides education, health services and vocational training for Palestinian refugees. It's a gigantic operation in the Palestinian territory and employs 13,000 people just in Gaza,".
- Israel has alleged that some of UNRWA's thousands of staff members participated in the October 7, 2023, Hamas attacks. It also has said that hundreds of its staff had ties to the group and that the Israeli army has found Hamas assets near or under UNRWA facilities.
- The agency denies that it knowingly aids armed groups and says it acts quickly to purge any suspected fighters from its ranks.
- The bills, which do not include provisions for alternative organisations to oversee its work, have been strongly criticised by international aid groups and a handful of Israel's Western allies.

UNRWA

- The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is a specialized agency established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1949.
- Its primary mandate is to provide support, protection, and advocacy for Palestinian refugees in the aftermath of the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict.

UNRWA operates in five key areas:

- Education
- Health care
- Social services
- Infrastructure and camp improvement
- Microfinance

Facts About UNRWA:

- **Mandate:** UNRWA focuses on Palestinian refugees in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. Unlike the UNHCR, which deals with refugees globally, UNRWA's mandate is specific to Palestinian refugees.

Services:

- **Education:** Runs one of the largest educational systems in the Middle East, with schools serving over half a million children.
- **Healthcare:** Provides primary health care and support for maternal and child health.
- **Emergency Assistance:** Offers support during crises, such as during conflicts in Gaza or Syria.
- **Funding:** UNRWA relies on voluntary contributions from UN member states, organizations, and private donors. Funding shortfalls have increasingly posed challenges to its operations.

Current Issues:

- It faces political challenges and funding crises, with some countries reducing or halting contributions.
- Its role is often debated in international forums due to the protracted nature of the Palestinian refugee crisis.

Norway to ask ICJ for advisory opinion condemning Israel's stance on UNRWA

- Norway is to seek an international court of justice (ICJ) advisory opinion condemning the Israeli government for ending cooperation with the UN Palestinian relief agency Unrwa.
- The Israeli Knesset passed two bills last month banning Unrwa from Israeli territory and prohibiting Israeli state contact with the agency, moves that would prevent it from delivering aid to Gaza, after allegations by Israel that members of Unrwa staff in Gaza were involved in the 7 October attacks by Hamas.
- The UN launched an investigation into the Israeli claims and fired nine Unrwa staff as a result.
- The UN agency has said Israel has destroyed or damaged two-thirds of its premises in Gaza, and 243 of its personnel have been killed.
- The law passed on 28 October is due to be enforced within three months and is likely to be backed by the incoming Trump administration in the US.

QUESTIONS

Fill in the Blank:

1. The Israeli parliament recently approved two controversial bills banning the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) from operating on _____ territory.
2. The legislation will take effect in _____ days and lead to the closure of UNRWA's premises in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza.
3. UNRWA was established by the United Nations General Assembly in the year _____.
4. The UNRWA head described the Israeli ban as setting "a dangerous _____ " and worsening the suffering of Palestinians.
5. UNRWA employs _____ people in Gaza alone, providing vital services like education and health care.
6. Norway plans to seek an advisory opinion from the _____ regarding Israel's stance on UNRWA.
7. UNRWA operates in five key areas: education, health care, social services, infrastructure and camp improvement, and _____.
8. UNRWA has denied allegations of knowingly aiding _____ groups and says it acts to remove suspected fighters from its ranks.
9. The bills banning UNRWA from operating in Israel and Gaza were passed with a vote of _____ in the Israeli parliament.
10. UNRWA provides education, health services, and vocational training for _____ refugees across multiple regions.

4. The \$3.6 billion Chinese-funded Chancay port project in Peru

- Chinese President Xi Jinping inaugurated Peru's Chancay Port describing it as the starting point for a "new land-sea corridor between China and Latin America".
- Funded under China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the massive \$3.6 billion project has also raised concerns in US policymaking circles over Chinese influence in a region traditionally seen as its backyard.
- Apart from its geopolitical implications, the deep-sea port has been billed as a game-changer for South America.
- "One of the most outstanding features of the Chancay New Multipurpose Port Terminal is its capacity to receive vessels of up to 18,000 TEUs (Twenty Foot Equivalent Units), the largest shipping vessels in the world. To date, no vessel of this size has not arrived in Latin America.
- This capacity will position Chancay as a strategic port on a global scale."

What is the Chancay Port project?

- Located about 78 km north of the Peruvian capital of Lima, Chancay is a small fishing town with a population of around 60,000.
- It is a natural deep-water port, however, previous feasibility studies on building up infrastructure pointed out heavy construction costs.

- China began construction in 2019 and the China Ocean Shipping (Group) Company or COSCO now owns 60 per cent of the port, with a local company owning the rest.
- “Currently, most of Peru’s cargo to Asia and Oceania needs to transit through Central America or North America, and the throughput cannot meet the needs of foreign trade upgrades.”
- In order to reach South America, bigger cargo ships first go to ports in the United States or Mexico and their goods are offloaded onto smaller ships.
- The port will reduce the transportation time of goods exported from Latin America to the Asian market from 35 days to 25 days, greatly reducing logistics costs and generating jobs.
- “The port is expected to generate \$4.5 billion in annual economic benefit for Peru, equivalent to 1.8 percent of the country’s GDP.”
- Key trade items here include copper, blueberries and soybeans.
- Crucially, Bolivia, Chile and Argentina also form the “lithium triangle” together.
- The element is in great demand over the lithium-ion batteries used to power the growing numbers of Electric Vehicles worldwide.
- A report from the International Energy Agency noted that more than one in three new car registrations in China was electric in 2023, compared to over one in five in Europe and one in 10 in the United States.

Larger BRI concerns

- Critics have questioned the ambitious economic benefits projected from BRI works undertaken across the global south.
- For instance, China-funded several train connectivity projects in Southeast Asia have seen revisions made to their original high costs and have been delayed.
- Then there is the case of the Hambantota port in Sri Lanka.
- Its 99-year lease was given to a Chinese company after Sri Lanka failed to pay back Chinese loans for the project.
- It led further credence to accusations of “debt-trap diplomacy” by China.
- With the Chinese economy also slowing down in recent years, there are further questions about the viability of BRI projects.

Lithium Triangle

- The Lithium Triangle is a region in South America that encompasses parts of Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile, known for its rich lithium deposits.
- These three countries together hold about 50-60% of the world’s known lithium reserves, primarily in the form of lithium-rich salt flats, also called salares.

Features of the Lithium Triangle:

Major Salt Flats:

- **Salar de Uyuni (Bolivia):** The world's largest salt flat, a primary lithium source.
- **Salar de Atacama (Chile):** One of the richest sources of lithium brine globally.
- **Salar del Hombre Muerto (Argentina):** An emerging lithium extraction site.

Importance of Lithium:

- Lithium is a critical component in lithium-ion batteries, used in electric vehicles (EVs), renewable energy storage systems, and consumer electronics.
- The global push for sustainable energy and the transition to EVs have significantly increased demand for lithium, making this region geopolitically and economically vital.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- **Economic Potential:** The lithium industry offers a chance for economic growth and industrialization in the region.
- **Environmental Concerns:** Lithium extraction processes can harm local ecosystems, including water scarcity and soil degradation.
- **Social Issues:** Tensions exist between mining companies and indigenous communities regarding land use and resource sharing.
- **Geopolitical Dynamics:** The region is a focal point for competition among countries like the United States, China, and others seeking to secure lithium supplies.
- **China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI):** China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), launched in 2013 by President Xi Jinping, is a global development strategy aimed at enhancing connectivity and cooperation across Asia, Europe, Africa, and beyond. Often described as a 21st-century Silk Road, the BRI involves infrastructure projects, trade routes, and cultural exchange to foster economic growth and geopolitical influence.

Components of the BRI

Silk Road Economic Belt:

- A land-based network connecting China to Central Asia, Europe, and the Middle East through railways, highways, and pipelines.

21st Century Maritime Silk Road:

- A sea-based network linking China's coastal regions to Southeast Asia, South Asia, Africa, and Europe via major ports and shipping lanes.

Objectives

- **Infrastructure Development:** Building transportation networks (roads, railways, ports) and energy corridors (pipelines, power plants).
- **Trade Expansion:** Facilitating cross-border commerce by reducing logistical barriers.
- **Cultural Exchange:** Promoting people-to-people connectivity through educational and cultural programs.
- **Economic Growth:** Stimulating development in underdeveloped regions and fostering international markets for Chinese goods.
- **Strategic Influence:** Enhancing China's geopolitical clout by forging closer ties with participating nations.

Funding

Primarily financed by Chinese banks, including:

- Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)

- Silk Road Fund
- Chinese policy banks like the China Development Bank and Export-Import Bank of China.

Challenges

- **Debt Sustainability:** Critics argue that some nations risk debt distress due to large-scale borrowing for BRI projects.
- **Environmental Concerns:** Infrastructure projects may have significant ecological impacts.
- **Geopolitical Criticism:** The BRI is viewed by some countries as a tool for expanding China's influence, raising concerns over sovereignty.
- **Implementation Hurdles:** Delays and cost overruns have occurred in various projects due to logistical and political challenges.

Impact

- Over 150 countries and international organizations have signed agreements to participate.
- Successful projects like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) have showcased its transformative potential.
- At the same time, controversies like the Hambantota Port deal in Sri Lanka highlight risks associated with debt-trap diplomacy.
- The BRI remains a central element of China's foreign policy and global economic strategy, shaping international relations and the economic landscape of participating regions.

QUESTIONS

Fill in the Blank:

1. The \$3.6 billion Chancay Port project in Peru is funded under China's _____ Initiative.
2. Chinese President Xi Jinping described the Chancay Port as the starting point for a "new _____ corridor between China and Latin America."
3. One of the most outstanding features of the Chancay Port is its capacity to receive vessels of up to _____ TEUs.
4. The Chancay Port is located about 78 km north of the Peruvian capital, _____.
5. The port is expected to generate \$ _____ billion in annual economic benefit for Peru, equivalent to 1.8 percent of the country's GDP.
6. The Lithium Triangle, encompassing parts of Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile, holds about _____ % of the world's known lithium reserves.
7. China Ocean Shipping (Group) Company, or _____, owns 60% of the Chancay Port.
8. The Belt and Road Initiative was launched in 2013 by Chinese President _____.
9. Critics of China's BRI often cite cases like the _____ port in Sri Lanka as examples of "debt-trap diplomacy."
10. Lithium is a critical component used in _____ batteries, essential for powering electric vehicles and renewable energy storage.

5. PM Modi receives Nigeria's second-highest national award

- In November 2024, Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Tinubu awarded Prime Minister Narendra Modi the Grand Commander of the Order of the Niger (GCON), Nigeria's second-highest national honor.
- This distinction, received by PM Modi during his visit to Nigeria, underscores the strengthening ties between India and Nigeria.
- He is the second foreign dignitary to receive this honor, with Queen Elizabeth being the first in 1969.
- In his acceptance remarks, PM Modi highlighted the shared values and mutual respect that characterize India-Nigeria relations.
- As two vibrant democracies with dynamic economies, both nations have been collaborating in diverse areas to improve the well-being of their people.
- His discussions with Nigerian leaders covered a range of sectors, including the economy, energy, agriculture, security, fintech, small and medium enterprises, and culture.
- PM Modi also emphasized the broader goal of fostering prosperity across the African continent through strengthened ties with Nigeria, which plays a significant role in Africa.
- He reiterated India's commitment to the interests and priorities of the Global South, with a vision for mutual cooperation and shared growth.
- This recognition marks the 17th international award conferred on PM Modi by various countries, showcasing his growing stature on the global stage.
- The visit also signifies the first by an Indian Prime Minister to Nigeria in 17 years, reflecting the renewed focus on enhancing bilateral ties.
- Upon his arrival in Abuja, PM Modi was warmly welcomed by Minister for Federal Capital Territory Nyesom Ezenwo Wike, who presented him with the "Key to the City."
- This gesture symbolizes the trust and honor bestowed upon him by the Nigerian people, according to the Ministry of External Affairs.
- The visit is part of PM Modi's three-nation tour, with Brazil and Guyana as his next destinations.
- In Brazil, he will attend the G20 Summit, where India continues to play a pivotal role in shaping the global agenda.
- The inclusion of Nigeria in this itinerary highlights its importance in India's Africa policy and its emerging role as a strategic partner.
- PM Modi underscored the importance of deepening collaboration with Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation, and a critical player in regional and continental affairs.
- He highlighted the potential for cooperation in areas such as economic development, energy security, agricultural advancement, and cultural exchanges.
- This visit reinforces India's broader outreach to Africa and its emphasis on promoting sustainable development and shared prosperity.

- Through this visit and the conferment of the GCON award, India and Nigeria have opened new avenues for partnership, paving the way for a closer and more dynamic relationship that benefits not only the two nations but also the African continent as a whole.

In 2023 and 2024, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi received several prestigious civilian awards from different countries:

- Order of Fiji (May 2023) - Highest civilian honor of Fiji.
- Order of Logohu (May 2023) - Highest civilian honor of Papua New Guinea.
- Order of the Nile (June 2023) - Highest civilian honor of Egypt.
- Legion of Honour (July 2023) - Highest civilian honor of France.
- Order of Honour (August 2023) - Second-highest civilian honor of Greece.
- Order of the Dragon King (March 2024) - Highest civilian honor of Bhutan.
- Order of St. Andrew (July 2024) - Highest civilian honor of Russia

Nigeria

- Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, is located in West Africa and is known for its diverse culture, vibrant economy, and natural resources.

Geography

- **Location:** Bordered by Benin to the west, Chad and Cameroon to the east, Niger to the north, and the Gulf of Guinea to the south.
- **Major Cities:** Abuja (capital), Lagos (largest city and commercial hub), Kano, Port Harcourt, and Ibadan.
- **Landscape:** Varied terrain including savannas, tropical rainforests, mountains, and the Niger River Delta.

Economy

- **GDP:** Nigeria has one of Africa's largest economies, driven by its oil and gas industry.
- **Natural Resources:** Rich in oil, gas, coal, and solid minerals.
- **Agriculture:** A significant sector employing a large portion of the population; key crops include cassava, yams, and palm oil.

Culture

- **Ethnic Groups:** Over 250 ethnic groups, with the major ones being Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo.
- **Languages:** English (official), Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, and over 500 indigenous languages.
- **Festivals:** Celebrations like the Durbar Festival, Eyo Festival, and Osun-Osogbo Festival highlight Nigeria's cultural richness.

History

- **Colonial Past:** Nigeria was a British colony until it gained independence on October 1, 1960.
- **Civil War:** Experienced a civil war (1967–1970), largely over the secession of Biafra.
- **Democracy:** Transitioned to democracy in 1999 after years of military rule.

Politics

- **Government:** Federal Republic with 36 states and a Federal Capital Territory.
- **Leadership:** Headed by a President; current (as of 2024) is Bola Ahmed Tinubu.
- **International Role:** A key player in African Union (AU), ECOWAS, and OPEC.

Challenges

- **Security Issues:** Includes conflicts with insurgent groups like Boko Haram and banditry in some regions.
- **Economic Inequality:** Despite oil wealth, poverty and unemployment remain significant issues.
- **Infrastructure:** Needs development in areas like electricity, roads, and healthcare.

Achievements

- **Entertainment Industry:** Nigeria's Nollywood is one of the largest film industries globally.
- **Sports:** Renowned for its success in football and athletics.
- **Youth and Innovation:** A hub for tech start-ups and innovation in Africa.

Grand Commander of the Order of the Niger (GCON)

- The Grand Commander of the Order of the Niger (GCON) is one of the highest honors in the Nigerian National Honours system, awarded by the Federal Republic of Nigeria.
- It is the second-highest rank in the Order of the Niger, below the Grand Commander of the Order of the Federal Republic (GCFR) and equivalent to the GCON in terms of prestige.

Key Facts:

- **Purpose:** The GCON is conferred on individuals in recognition of their exceptional contributions to Nigeria's development, either in public service, business, sports, arts, or other fields of national importance.
- **Recipients:** Traditionally, the GCON is awarded to high-ranking public officials and distinguished citizens. Notable recipients include:
 - Vice Presidents of Nigeria (often by virtue of their office)
 - Chief Justices of Nigeria
 - Exceptional individuals in various domains of public service and achievement.
- **Eligibility:** Both Nigerians and non-Nigerians can be honored with the GCON for their outstanding contributions to the nation.
- **Design:** The decoration typically consists of a medallion and sash, often worn during formal state occasions.

QUESTIONS

Fill in the Blank:

1. In November 2024, Nigerian President _____ awarded Prime Minister Narendra Modi the Grand Commander of the Order of the Niger (GCON).
2. The Grand Commander of the Order of the Niger (GCON) is Nigeria's _____ highest national honor.
3. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is the second foreign dignitary to receive the GCON award, after _____ in 1969.
4. Nigeria is the most populous country in _____, known for its diverse culture and natural resources.
5. The GCON award recognizes individuals for their exceptional contributions to _____'s development.
6. During his visit, PM Modi was welcomed in Abuja by Minister for Federal Capital Territory _____, who presented him with the "Key to the City."
7. Nigeria is bordered by _____ to the west, Chad and Cameroon to the east, Niger to the north, and the Gulf of Guinea to the south.
8. PM Modi's visit to Nigeria was the first by an Indian Prime Minister in _____ years.

9. In 2023, PM Modi was conferred the _____ of Fiji, the country's highest civilian honor.
10. Nigeria's entertainment industry, _____, is one of the largest film industries globally.

6. The China emissions paradox

- Despite being the world's second largest economy, China is considered a “developing” country by the United Nations, and is not mandated by the international climate change architecture to cut its greenhouse gas emissions in the short term.
- However, China has been the world's biggest emitter for more than 15 years, and now accounts for well over 30% of annual global emissions.
- If China does not reduce its emissions, the world is unlikely to meet its emission reduction targets.
- As things stand, the world is nowhere close to the minimum emission cuts required for 2030 – at least 43% over 2019 levels. Estimates suggest that annual global emissions in 2030 would be barely 2% below 2019 levels.

Why China is crucial

- The need for Chinese emission cuts is almost never discussed.
- Now, a first-of-its-kind analysis has suggested that China needs to reduce its emissions by 66% from current levels by 2030, and by 78% by 2035 to become 1.5-degree compliant.
- The modelling has been done by Climate Action Tracker (CAT), an independent scientific project that measures progress towards the 1.5-degree and 2-degree Celsius temperature targets mentioned in the Paris Agreement adopted in 2015.
- The overarching goal of the agreement, which entered into force in 2016, is to hold “the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels”, and pursue efforts “to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels”.
- The international climate framework applies a differentiated approach, demanding higher climate actions, including emission cuts, from the rich and developed world, while allowing developing countries greater flexibility to plan their energy transitions.
- So, China is not expected to make the required deep emission cuts in the 2030 or 2035 timeframes. In fact, China's emissions are still increasing, and are expected to be about 0.2% higher this year than in 2023, according to the latest estimate of the Global Carbon Project, which seeks to quantify GHG emissions and their causes.

Double-edged weapon

- But paradoxically, the hypothetical situation in which China does manage to make these very deep emission cuts in the short term, may not be in the best interests of the world.
- This is because, ironically enough, it can have the effect of slowing down the deployment of renewable energy — not just within China, but in the rest of the world as well.
- Despite very rapid deployment of renewable energy like wind or solar — it added more than 300 GW of renewables just last year — China remains heavily dependent on fossil fuels.
- The share of renewable energy in its primary energy supply is still in single digits, and coal continues to generate more than half the country's electricity.

- As of now, renewables are only adding new capacities in the country — they are not replacing fossil fuels. Emissions reductions would require the rapid phasing out of coal and other fossil fuels. This can have a negative impact on industrial production.
- Importantly, the manufacture of solar panels and wind turbines that are used to harness renewables like solar or wind, involves the liberal use of fossil fuels.
- And the global production of solar panels and wind turbines, as well as their supply chains, are heavily concentrated in China.
- China controls more than 80% of the global manufacturing of solar panels, dominating every step of the process, and about 60% of the global wind turbine production.
- Supplies of other clean energy technologies such as batteries, hydrogen electrolyzers, and critical minerals — all of which are crucial to effect the global energy transition — are also concentrated in China.
- Deep emission cuts in the short term could thus constrain the global supplies of renewable energy equipment, and slow down energy transitions everywhere. It would surely jeopardise the global renewable energy tripling target for 2030.

For world, it's Catch-22

- If China does not reduce its emissions quickly, the global emission targets for achieving the 1.5-degree threshold are likely to be missed. But if it does so, that might disrupt supplies of renewable energy across the world, making it difficult for countries to phase out fossil fuels, and thus reduce emissions.
- Several countries are now realising this danger of over-dependence on China for critical technologies and resources related to clean energy. The disruption of supply chains during the Covid-19 pandemic exposed the vulnerabilities of over-concentrated production processes. At least a part of United States President-elect Donald Trump's anxieties related to China seem to stem from these concerns.
- The diversification of renewable energy supply chains, particularly solar photovoltaic manufacturing, is now a central theme of most discussions on energy transitions. It is not that other countries cannot manufacture these products — but competing against the Chinese on costs could be difficult. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), China is the most cost-competitive location for manufacture of all components of the solar PV supply chain.
- “Costs in China are 10 per cent lower than in India, 20 per cent lower than in the United States, and 35 per cent lower than in Europe,” the IEA said in an assessment published in 2022.

Beijing's unique advantage

- No country has benefited from the international climate framework as much as China has.
- China happened to be at the right place at the right time — but it also made full use of the opportunities that came its way.
- Even at the time the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was finalised in the 1990s, China's emissions were not insignificant.
- It accounted for more than 10% of global emissions at the time — much more than India's share currently.
- But because China did not have historical emissions, it was not mandated to control or reduce its emissions.
- China's emissions have grown almost four times since then, even as its economic indicators have become comparable to or better than many developed countries.
- Its share in historical emissions has also grown to about 11.5%, equivalent to the contribution of the European Union.

- China's meteoric rise to become the second largest economy and one of the two superpowers in the world can at least partly be attributed to the fact that it has not had to worry about imposing tough emissions standards, which its competitors like the US, Japan, or Germany had to.
- It is not as though China is not contributing to the global fight against climate change. Indeed, it is at the centre of the renewable energy transition.
- By the end of this year, it will have almost certainly achieved its target of reaching 1,200 GW of renewable energy capacity, six years ahead of deadline.
- Possibly its most important contribution has been to ensure cheap manufacturing of renewable energy, which has made solar and wind energy affordable.
- In most countries, solar is now the cheapest source of power when the Sun is available.

QUESTIONS

Fill in the Blank:

1. Despite being the world's second-largest economy, China is considered a _____ country by the United Nations and is not mandated to cut its greenhouse gas emissions in the short term.
2. China has been the world's biggest emitter for over _____ years, accounting for more than 30% of annual global emissions.
3. To meet the 1.5-degree target, China needs to reduce its emissions by _____ % from current levels by 2030 and by _____ % by 2035.
4. The Paris Agreement aims to limit the global average temperature rise to well below _____ °C above pre-industrial levels, with efforts to restrict it to _____ °C.
5. China added more than _____ GW of renewable energy in the past year, but its reliance on _____ for electricity generation remains significant.
6. China controls over _____ % of the global manufacturing of solar panels and about _____ % of wind turbine production.
7. The global dependence on China for renewable energy technologies like solar panels and batteries was highlighted during the supply chain disruptions caused by the _____ pandemic.
8. According to the International Energy Agency, manufacturing costs in China are _____ % lower than in India, _____ % lower than in the United States, and 35% lower than in Europe.
9. China's emissions have grown nearly _____ times since the 1990s, even as its share in historical emissions has risen to _____ %.
10. By the end of this year, China is expected to achieve its target of _____ GW of renewable energy capacity, _____ years ahead of schedule.

7. South Asia's Largest Maritime Thought Leadership Forum - Sagarmathan

- New Delhi hosted the inaugural edition of South Asia's largest maritime thought leadership summit, which brought together delegates from over 60 countries to discuss the future of maritime trade and sustainable ocean practices.

- The two-day event, **The Sagarmathan: The Great Oceans Dialogue**, is organised by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW) in collaboration with the Observer Research Foundation (ORF), a Delhi-based global think tank.
- Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, stressed India's Maritime Vision 2047, a comprehensive roadmap aimed at transforming the maritime sector through sustainability, connectivity, and technology.
- He emphasised the government's initiatives under the cental movement, such as Sagarmala and the Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision, to establish India as a global maritime trade leader and achieve a developed nation status by 2047.
- "Our vision aims to revolutionise India's maritime sector with an investment of Rs 80 lakh crores to enhance port capacity, shipping, ship building inland waterways.
- Key projects include the Vizhinjam International Seaport in Kerala, new mega ports at Vadhavan in Maharashtra, and Galathea Bay in Nicobar," the minister said.
- According to him, By 2047, India targets a port handling capacity of 10,000 million metric tons per annum, leveraging strategic trade routes through initiatives like the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEEC) and the International North-South Transport Corridor.
- The two-day forum's agenda focused on maritime connectivity, sustainable development, technological innovation, and global maritime governance.
- The Ministry also highlighted India's progress in port digitisation, renewable energy integration, and decarbonised shipping, aligned with its vision of becoming a global maritime hub.
- The Dialogue hosted over 1,700 participants from 60 countries, including ministers, former heads of state and experts.

Vizhinjam International Seaport

- The Vizhinjam International Seaport is a major port project located near the town of Vizhinjam in the Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala, India.
- The port is being developed to handle large container vessels and serve as a hub for international maritime trade, aimed at boosting the region's economic growth and positioning India as a key player in global shipping.

Features:

- **Strategic Location:** Vizhinjam is located along India's southern coast and is strategically positioned for connecting international shipping routes between Europe, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia.
- **Modern Infrastructure:** The port will feature state-of-the-art infrastructure, including deep-draft berths capable of handling large vessels, modern container terminals, and storage facilities. The deep-draft facilities will allow it to handle large Panamax and even post-Panamax ships.
- **Development Plans:** The project is being developed in phases, with the first phase focusing on the construction of container terminals and other essential infrastructure. It aims to enhance the port's capacity to handle increasing trade volumes, particularly in containerized cargo.
- **Economic Impact:** The Vizhinjam port is expected to boost Kerala's economy by creating jobs, increasing trade, and fostering the growth of related sectors like logistics, manufacturing, and tourism. It is anticipated to reduce India's dependence on ports like Colombo (Sri Lanka), which currently handles a significant portion of India's container traffic.
- **Environmental Concerns:** The construction of the port has faced opposition from local communities and environmental groups due to concerns over the impact on coastal ecosystems and fishing.

communities. These concerns include the effects of dredging, sand mining, and changes to local tidal patterns.

- **International Collaboration:** The port is being built with international expertise, with construction being led by a consortium that includes foreign investment and technical know-how. The project is part of India's larger strategy to improve port infrastructure and maritime connectivity.
- The project faced several delays but is expected to begin operations in phases, with full completion slated for the near future.
- The first phase has been planned to enhance the port's handling capacity substantially.
- Overall, the Vizhinjam International Seaport is set to become a key maritime infrastructure project, enhancing India's global trade links while contributing to regional economic development.

Galathea Bay

- Galathea Bay is a bay located on the southern coast of Great Nicobar Island in the Nicobar Islands of India.
- It is part of the Nicobar archipelago in the Bay of Bengal. Galathea Bay is well-known for its stunning natural beauty, with crystal-clear waters, lush forests, and diverse wildlife, including species of marine life and birds.
- The area is also home to the Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve, which is a protected area established to conserve the unique flora and fauna of the region.
- One of the prominent attractions in the bay is the Galathea River, which flows into the bay and adds to its ecological significance.
- The bay is also known for its importance in marine research, particularly in studying coral reefs, sea turtles, and other marine ecosystems.
- In addition to its ecological value, Galathea Bay has been a focus for environmental conservation efforts due to its pristine state and rich biodiversity. It is a vital site for the study of climate change and its impact on the marine and terrestrial environments of the island.

QUESTIONS

Fill in the Blank:

1. The inaugural edition of South Asia's largest maritime thought leadership summit, The Sagarmanthan: The Great Oceans Dialogue, was hosted in _____.
2. The two-day summit was organised by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW) in collaboration with _____, a Delhi-based global think tank.
3. Union Minister _____ highlighted India's Maritime Vision 2047, aiming to transform the maritime sector through sustainability, connectivity, and technology.
4. Key initiatives under the central movement include _____ and the Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision, focused on making India a global maritime trade leader.
5. The government's vision for India's maritime sector includes an investment of _____ to enhance port capacity, shipping, shipbuilding, and inland waterways.
6. The _____ International Seaport in Kerala is a major project aimed at boosting India's international maritime trade.
7. By 2047, India targets a port handling capacity of _____ million metric tons per annum, leveraging strategic trade routes.
8. The Galathea Bay project, located in the _____ Islands, is noted for its ecological significance and pristine marine biodiversity.

9. The two-day forum's agenda included discussions on maritime connectivity, sustainable development, _____ innovation, and global maritime governance.
10. The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways has prioritised _____ integration and decarbonised shipping to achieve its global maritime hub vision.

8. Inauguration of first trilateral power transaction – from Nepal to Bangladesh through the Indian Grid

- A historic milestone in regional energy cooperation was achieved with the inauguration of the first trilateral power transaction, where Nepal began exporting electricity to Bangladesh through the Indian grid.
- This initiative, celebrated in a virtual event, underscores the growing energy collaboration between Nepal, India, and Bangladesh, and strengthens sub-regional connectivity.
- The power transmission relies on India's infrastructure, marking India's pivotal role in facilitating energy exchanges in South Asia.
- This landmark development follows an agreement reached during Nepalese Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda's visit to India in June 2023.
- During the visit, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved the power export plan, and both nations emphasized enhancing cooperation in energy and other sectors to foster greater regional integration. Subsequently, a tripartite power sales contract was signed between the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA), the Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB), and NTPC Vidyut Vyapar Nigam (NVVN), the Indian entity overseeing cross-border power trade.
- The agreement marks Nepal's first power export to Bangladesh, with an initial capacity of 40 MW, making Bangladesh the first third-country recipient of Nepalese electricity.
- While Nepal has been exporting electricity to India since November 2021, this new development broadens the scope of regional energy collaboration.
- For Bangladesh, this transaction provides a reliable electricity source to meet its growing energy demands.
- For Nepal, it creates an opportunity to monetize its vast hydropower resources, which have been underutilized. India, acting as a central energy hub, facilitates this exchange, further strengthening its role in regional energy cooperation.
- The power transaction operates under India's open access rules, with Bangladesh paying transmission charges and a service fee to NVVN for managing cross-border transactions and regulatory approvals.
- These arrangements ensure a seamless flow of electricity through India's existing transmission infrastructure, which indirectly connects Nepal and Bangladesh.
- The trilateral power trade agreement sets a significant precedent for future energy exchanges in South Asia.

- It demonstrates the potential for enhanced sub-regional energy integration, contributing to mutual benefits for all stakeholders.
- The initiative also reflects the commitment of Nepal and Bangladesh, as highlighted during their joint meeting in Patuakhali, Bangladesh, in May 2023, to expedite power trade and realize their energy cooperation goals.
- This collaboration aligns with broader sustainable development objectives, fostering economic ties, and promoting regional energy security.
- Nepal benefits from the economic utilization of its hydropower, while Bangladesh gains a stable energy supply to support its growth. India's facilitation role underscores its strategic position as a linchpin in regional energy cooperation.
- As the region's energy sector evolves, this trilateral power transaction serves as a promising model for future collaborations.
- It highlights the potential for innovative partnerships to address energy needs, foster economic growth, and ensure sustainability across South Asia.
- The success of this initiative underscores the importance of cooperative frameworks in achieving shared energy and development goals.

BBIN

- BBIN stands for the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal Initiative.
- It is a sub-regional grouping that promotes regional integration and cooperation among these four South Asian countries.
- The initiative focuses on areas such as connectivity, trade, transport, energy, and infrastructure development.

Key Features of BBIN:

BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA):

- Signed in June 2015, this agreement aims to facilitate the seamless movement of passenger, personal, and cargo vehicles across borders among the BBIN nations.
- While Bhutan has not ratified the agreement due to environmental concerns, it supports the initiative and can participate as an observer.

Connectivity Goals:

- Improving road, rail, and waterways to enhance regional trade and accessibility.
- Developing cross-border energy grids and tourism circuits.

Economic Integration:

- Enhancing trade and investment opportunities by reducing transportation costs and improving logistics.

Environmental and Sustainable Development:

- Addressing environmental challenges and promoting sustainable practices in transport and energy cooperation.

Challenges:

- Bhutan's non-ratification of the MVA due to concerns over environmental impacts from increased traffic.

- Infrastructure gaps in certain regions that hinder seamless connectivity.
- Geopolitical and economic challenges among member countries.

Significance:

- BBIN is considered a practical step toward regional cooperation, complementing broader initiatives like the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), which has been less effective in recent years due to political differences.
- It is part of India's "Neighborhood First" policy, emphasizing collaboration with its immediate neighbors for mutual benefit.

SAARC

- The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is an organization of South Asian nations established in 1985 to promote regional cooperation and development in various areas, such as economics, social development, education, culture, and regional security.

The founding members of SAARC are:

- Afghanistan
- Bangladesh
- Bhutan
- India
- Maldives
- Nepal
- Pakistan
- Sri Lanka

The primary objectives of SAARC include:

- Promoting welfare and quality of life in the region.
- Enhancing regional cooperation and collaboration on issues like economic development, education, and health.
- Creating a platform for member states to discuss and resolve common issues.
- SAARC Summits are held every year to discuss issues affecting the region, and various specialized bodies and organizations under the SAARC umbrella work on specific issues such as trade, environment, and poverty alleviation.
- However, the effectiveness of SAARC has often been challenged by political tensions, especially between India and Pakistan.
- Over time, SAARC has made progress in fostering economic cooperation through initiatives like the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA), but political disputes, particularly between India and Pakistan, have often hampered its full potential.

QUESTIONS

Fill in the Blank:

1. Nepal began exporting electricity to _____ through the Indian grid, marking the first trilateral power transaction in South Asia.
2. The agreement for Nepal's power export to Bangladesh was facilitated by a tripartite power sales contract involving the Nepal Electricity Authority, the Bangladesh Power Development Board, and _____.

3. The initial capacity of Nepal's power export to Bangladesh is _____ MW, making Bangladesh the first third-country recipient of Nepalese electricity.
4. The power transaction operates under India's _____ rules, ensuring seamless flow through its existing transmission infrastructure.
5. BBIN stands for _____, Bhutan, India, and Nepal Initiative, promoting regional integration and cooperation.
6. The BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA), signed in _____, facilitates cross-border movement of vehicles among the BBIN nations.
7. SAARC, established in 1985, aims to promote regional cooperation and development among _____ South Asian countries.
8. The _____ Agreement under SAARC focuses on fostering economic cooperation by reducing trade barriers among member nations.
9. The success of the Nepal-India-Bangladesh power transaction highlights India's pivotal role as a _____ in regional energy cooperation.
10. Bhutan has not ratified the BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement due to concerns over _____, though it supports the initiative as an observer.

9. Privatization of Argentina's Key Waterway

- Javier Milei, Argentina's president and a self-proclaimed “anarcho-capitalist,” has announced plans to privatize the management and maintenance of the Paraguay-Paraná waterway.
- This strategic shipping route, spanning over 3,400 km and connecting Paraguay, Bolivia, and southern Brazil to the sea, is crucial for Argentina's economy, handling nearly 80% of its foreign trade.
- The decision, framed as part of Milei's broader agenda to reduce the state's role in the economy, has sparked concern among riverine communities and environmental advocates who fear ecological degradation and loss of livelihoods.

Strategic Importance of the Waterway

- The Paraguay-Paraná waterway is a lifeline for transporting agricultural commodities, particularly soybeans and grains, to international markets.
- The Argentine government argues that privatizing the waterway will modernize its management, reduce logistics costs, and enhance trade efficiency.
- Cabinet Chief Guillermo Francos announced a 30-year concession plan, emphasizing that the move will strengthen Argentina's foreign trade capabilities.
- The modernization effort is expected to provide inland countries like Paraguay and Bolivia with continued access to the sea, boosting regional economic activity.

Environmental and Community Concerns

- The Paraná River delta, a critical ecological zone, is home to diverse flora and fauna, serves as a migratory bird corridor, and contributes to climate regulation.
- Its wetlands act as carbon sinks and water reservoirs. Critics argue that privatization could lead to overexploitation, neglect of environmental protections, and irreversible damage to these ecosystems.

- Communities living along the river fear that increased commercial activity might undermine their traditional ways of life.

Historical Context and Security Risks

- The waterway was previously privatized in the 1990s but returned to state control in recent years.
- During state management, efforts were made to balance economic and environmental priorities.
- However, the route has also become a major corridor for drug trafficking in recent years.
- Cocaine from Peru and Bolivia is frequently transported through ports such as Rosario, destined for Africa and Europe.
- The privatization plan raises concerns about whether private operators will effectively address security challenges, including drug smuggling.

Broader Privatization Agenda

- Milei's move is part of his larger plan to overhaul Argentina's economy.
- He took office in December 2023, pledging to slash state spending, address the fiscal deficit, and curb the country's triple-digit inflation.
- His administration has pursued privatization in various sectors, including Aerolíneas Argentinas, the state airline, and Trenes Argentinos Cargas, the primary state-run rail cargo operator.
- These initiatives have drawn widespread criticism from labor unions, opposition parties, and civil society groups who fear the loss of public assets and social protections.

Looking Ahead

- While the government touts the economic benefits of privatizing the Paraguay-Paraná waterway, the decision remains deeply polarizing.
- Proponents highlight the potential for increased trade and reduced costs, while opponents warn of environmental destruction and heightened inequality.
- The privatization plan underscores the challenges of balancing economic reform with social and ecological sustainability in a deeply divided Argentina.

Argentina

- Argentina, officially known as the Argentine Republic (República Argentina), is a country located in the southern part of South America.

Geography

- **Location:** Argentina is the eighth-largest country in the world by land area and the second-largest in South America after Brazil.
- **Capital:** Buenos Aires, a vibrant city known for its rich culture, tango music, and European-inspired architecture.
- **Borders:** It shares borders with Chile to the west, Bolivia and Paraguay to the north, Brazil to the northeast, and Uruguay to the east. To the south, it has extensive coastlines along the Atlantic Ocean.

Population and Language

- **Population:** Over 45 million people, with the majority living in urban areas.
- **Language:** Spanish is the official language, and Argentina is known for its distinctive Rioplatense Spanish accent.

Government and Economy

- **Government:** A federal presidential constitutional republic.
- **Currency:** Argentine peso (ARS).
- **Economy:** Known for agriculture (soybeans, corn, beef), wine production, and natural resources. It also has a diverse industrial base. However, Argentina faces economic challenges, including inflation and debt crises.

Culture

- **Tango:** Originating in Buenos Aires, tango is a defining element of Argentine culture.
- **Football:** Argentina is passionate about football and has produced legendary players like Diego Maradona and Lionel Messi. The national team has won multiple FIFA World Cups, including in 2022.
- **Cuisine:** Famous for its asados (barbecues), empanadas, and wine, particularly Malbec from the Mendoza region.

History

- **Colonial Period:** Originally inhabited by indigenous peoples, it was colonized by Spain in the 16th century.
- **Independence:** Declared independence from Spain on July 9, 1816.
- **Modern Era:** Has experienced political and economic ups and downs, including periods of dictatorship and democracy.

Tourism Highlights

- **Iguazu Falls:** One of the most spectacular waterfalls in the world, located on the border with Brazil.
- **Patagonia:** Known for its glaciers, mountains, and unique wildlife.
- **Andes Mountains:** A hub for adventure sports like skiing and mountaineering.
- **Cultural Cities:** Buenos Aires, Córdoba, and Mendoza offer rich cultural experiences

Paraguay-Parana Waterway System

- Although landlocked, Paraguay's location at the confluence of the Paraguay and Parana Rivers places the country at an advantageous position along many of the continent's principal trade routes.
- The Paraguay and Parana Rivers jointly form a 3,302-kilometer waterway system connecting Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay.
- It is a major transportation route between the continent's interior and the Atlantic Ocean through the Rio de la Plata and carries nearly 80 percent of Paraguay's trade.
- At present, the movement of goods on the waterway includes manufactured products, grains, oilseeds, oils and by-products, ore, minerals, steel, and petroleum.
- However, Paraguay needs infrastructure investments to improve its portion of the waterway and better leverage its strategic location.

Opportunities

- The Government of Paraguay considers the improvement of the country's waterway infrastructure a top priority.
- Improvement projects along the Paraguay-Parana waterway could include multiple sub-projects, such as deepening riverbeds, dredging, constructing ports, improving navigability and safety, and increasing capacity in terms of vessels, maintenance and services.
- These tenders are advertised on the Ministry of Public Work's website and the government's public contracting office (DNCP) website. In addition, unsolicited bids for river infrastructure projects under Paraguay's Public-Private Partnership model are welcome by the Ministry of Public works.

QUESTIONS

Fill in the Blank:

1. The Paraguay-Paraná waterway spans over _____ kilometers, connecting Paraguay, Bolivia, and southern Brazil to the sea.
2. Nearly _____ percent of Argentina's foreign trade is handled by the Paraguay-Paraná waterway.
3. Javier Milei, Argentina's president, describes himself as an _____, advocating for minimal state intervention in the economy.
4. The privatization plan for the waterway includes a _____ -year concession to modernize its management.
5. Critics argue that privatizing the waterway could lead to _____ degradation and loss of livelihoods for riverine communities.
6. The Paraná River delta serves as a critical ecological zone and acts as a _____ sink and water reservoir.
7. During state control, the waterway management focused on balancing economic development with _____ priorities.
8. The Paraguay-Paraná waterway is a vital route for transporting _____ commodities, especially soybeans and grains.
9. Concerns about security risks include the waterway being a major corridor for _____ trafficking to Africa and Europe.
10. Paraguay's government prioritizes infrastructure improvements, including deepening _____ and enhancing port facilities, to optimize its use of the waterway.

10. 56th Tiger Reserve of the country notified in Chhattisgarh

- Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Shri Bhupender Yadav, informed the Nation about the Guru Ghasidas-Tamor Pingla Tiger Reserve, Chhattisgarh, as the 56th Tiger Reserve of the country.
- Guru Ghasidas-Tamor Pingla Tiger Reserve is spread over 2,829 sq km.”
- The Government of Chhattisgarh, on advice of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), notified the Guru Ghasidas - Tamor Pingla Tiger Reserve across Manendragarh-Chirmiri-Bharatpur, Korea, Surajpur and Balrampur districts of Chhattisgarh.
- The tiger reserve, encompassing a total area of 2829.38 sq.kms, includes a core/critical tiger habitat of 2049.2 sq.kms, comprising the Guru Ghasidas National Park and Tamor Pingla Wildlife Sanctuary, and has a buffer of 780.15 sq.kms.
- This makes it the third largest tiger reserve in the country after Nagarjunasagar-Srisailem Tiger Reserve in Andhra Pradesh and Manas Tiger Reserve in Assam. The Guru Ghasidas- Tamor Pingla Tiger Reserve becomes the 56th Tiger Reserve to be notified in the country.

- Keeping in view the landscape approach to conservation as envisaged in India's National Wildlife Plan, the newly notified tiger reserve is contiguous with the Sanjay Dubri Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh forming a landscape complex of nearly 4500 sq.kms.
- Further, the tiger reserve is connected to the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh to the West and Palamau Tiger Reserve in Jharkhand to the East.
- The National Tiger Conservation Authority had accorded final approval for notifying the Guru Ghasidas- Tamor Pingla Tiger Reserve in October, 2021.
- Nestled in the Chota Nagpur plateau and partly in Baghelkhand plateau, the tiger reserve is blessed with varied terrains, dense forests, streams and rivers favourable for harbouring a rich faunal diversity and contains critical habitats for the tiger.
- A total of 753 species, including 365 invertebrates and 388 vertebrates, have been documented from Guru Ghasidas-Tamor Pingla Tiger Reserve by the Zoological Survey of India.
- The invertebrate fauna is represented mostly by the class insecta.
- The vertebrate fauna includes 230 species of birds and 55 species of mammals comprising several threatened species from both the groups.
- With this notification, Chhattisgarh is now home to 4 Tiger Reserves, which is bound to strengthen conservation of the species with ongoing technical and financial assistance from the National Tiger Conservation Authority under Project Tiger.

Tiger Reserves in India

- India is home to a significant portion of the world's tiger population, with numerous tiger reserves spread across the country to conserve and protect these majestic creatures. As of now, India has 53 tiger reserves, covering a vast area of more than 70,000 square kilometers. These reserves are part of the Project Tiger, a wildlife conservation initiative launched by the Government of India in 1973.

Some notable tiger reserves in India:

Jim Corbett National Park (Uttarakhand)

- The first and oldest tiger reserve in India, established in 1973, it is famous for its large tiger population and scenic landscapes.

Kaziranga National Park (Assam)

- While renowned for its one-horned rhinoceros, Kaziranga is also home to a significant number of tigers. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Sundarbans National Park (West Bengal)

- Known for its mangrove forests, Sundarbans is home to the Bengal tiger and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site as well.

Bandhavgarh National Park (Madhya Pradesh)

- Known for having one of the highest densities of tigers in India, Bandhavgarh is a popular reserve for wildlife enthusiasts.

Kanha National Park (Madhya Pradesh)

- A picturesque reserve that inspired Rudyard Kipling's The Jungle Book, Kanha has a thriving tiger population.

Ranthambore National Park (Rajasthan)

- This park is famous for its ancient ruins and tiger sightings, with a growing population of tigers.

Periyar Tiger Reserve (Kerala)

- Set amidst the Western Ghats, Periyar is known for its picturesque lake and diverse wildlife, including tigers.

Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (Maharashtra)

- One of Maharashtra's largest reserves, Tadoba is known for its dense tiger population and is often referred to as the "Jewel of Vidarbha."

Satpura Tiger Reserve (Madhya Pradesh)

- This reserve is characterized by its rugged terrain and diverse ecosystems, offering a habitat for tigers and other wildlife.

Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (Tamil Nadu/Kerala)

- The Nilgiri reserve is home to a population of tigers and supports a rich diversity of flora and fauna across the Western Ghats.
- Other tiger reserves include Bandipur (Karnataka), Dudhwa (Uttar Pradesh), Manas (Assam), Buxa (West Bengal), Simlipal (Odisha), and Sariska (Rajasthan), among many others.

Tiger Census

- In 1973, the Government of India launched Project Tiger, an ambitious, holistic conservation project, aimed at safeguarding the nation's tiger population and preserving biodiversity.
- Over the past fifty years, Project Tiger has achieved commendable success, making significant strides in tiger conservation.
- Initially covering nine tiger reserves spanning 18,278 km², the project has flourished into a remarkable accomplishment with 53 reserves spread across 75,796 km², effectively covering 2.3% of India's total land area.
- India currently harbors almost 75% of the world's wild tiger population.
- The number of tigers in India has increased from 2,967 in 2018 to 3,682 in 2022, an annual rise of 6 per cent.
- With this, India has become home to approximately 75 per cent of the world's tiger population, Union Minister of State for Forest, Environment and Climate Change Ashwini Kumar Choubey said in Ramnagar while releasing the data for 2022.
- When Prime Minister Narendra Modi released the "Status of Tigers 2022" to mark the completion of 50 years of "Project Tiger" in April, the government had said there are at least 3167 tigers in India. Tiger census is held every four years in the country.
- "There are a maximum of 3925 tigers in the country."
- The average number is 3,682.
- With a 50 per cent increase in the last four years, Madhya Pradesh has the maximum number (785) of tigers in the country, followed by Karnataka (563), Uttarakhand (560), and Maharashtra (444), according to the data.

- According to data analysis done by the Wildlife Institute of India, the upper limit of the tiger population is estimated to be 3925 and the average number is 3682 tigers, reflecting a commendable annual growth rate of 6.1 percent per annum.

International Tiger Day

- International Tiger Day is observed annually on July 29 to raise awareness about the conservation of tigers and to encourage the preservation of their natural habitats.
- The day highlights the threats tigers face, including poaching, habitat loss, and illegal wildlife trade.
- It also promotes efforts to protect these majestic creatures and their ecosystems.
- The day was first celebrated in 2010, when the St. Petersburg Tiger Summit in Russia brought together governments, conservation organizations, and stakeholders to commit to "TX2," a global goal to double the world's tiger population by 2022.
- Though the target year has passed, efforts to conserve tigers remain ongoing, with many countries taking steps to protect tiger habitats and combat illegal wildlife trade.
- Countries that are home to tiger populations, such as India, Russia, and several Southeast Asian nations, observe the day with various activities, including awareness campaigns, wildlife protection measures, and educational programs.

QUESTIONS

Fill in the Blank:

1. The Guru Ghasidas-Tamor Pingla Tiger Reserve is located in the state of _____.
2. The total area of the Guru Ghasidas-Tamor Pingla Tiger Reserve is _____ square kilometers.
3. The Guru Ghasidas-Tamor Pingla Tiger Reserve is the _____ largest tiger reserve in India.
4. The newly notified Guru Ghasidas-Tamor Pingla Tiger Reserve is contiguous with the _____ Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh.
5. As of the latest data, India is home to nearly _____ percent of the world's wild tiger population.
6. The _____ gave its final approval for the Guru Ghasidas-Tamor Pingla Tiger Reserve.
7. The tiger reserve is connected to the _____ Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh to the west.
8. The _____ Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh has the maximum number of tigers in India, with 785 individuals.
9. The _____ National Park in Uttarakhand is India's first and oldest tiger reserve, established in 1973.
10. International Tiger Day is observed annually on _____ to raise awareness about tiger conservation.