

NATIONAL ISSUES**Col. Chewang Rinchen Setu**

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated Col. Chewang Rinchen Setu in Ladakh.

About:

- Chewang Rinchen Setu which has been constructed at an altitude of 14650 feet in the forward area of Ladakh region.
- This bridge has been built by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO).
- Colonel Chewang Rinchen (1931 – 1997) was a highly decorated officer in the Indian Army from the Ladakh region. He was one of only six Indian service personnel to have twice won the Maha Vir Chakra (MVC), the second highest Indian gallantry decoration.

GEOGRAPHY**Bhashan Char Island**

The Rohingya refugees living in Bangladesh camps have agreed to move to Bhashan Char Island in the Bay of Bengal.

- The island is also known as Thengar Char Island.
- Bhashan Char island was formed about two decades ago on the mouth of river Meghna.
- The uninhabited island is located around 30 kilometres east of Hatiya island in South-East Bangladesh.
- Bangladesh wanted to move 100,000 Rohingya refugees to the muddy silt island to take the pressure off the overcrowded border camps.
- The Bhashan Char falls in an ecologically fragile area prone to floods, erosion and cyclone.
- Though the Bangladesh government has built a three-metre-high embankment along its perimeter to keep out tidal surges during cyclones.

INDIAN HERITAGE AND CULTURE**Petta Thullal**

The chemical-based colours used during the Petta Thullal ritual are proposed to be banned by the Kerala State Pollution Board recently.

- The presence of hazardous metals, including lead, arsenic and cadmium in the colours used during the ritual, causes skin troubles as well as pollution of water and soil.
- The usage of an organic vermilion has been suggested to minimize the environmental impact
- Vermilion is a red colour pigment, originally made from the powdered mineral cinnabar.
- Petta Thullal is the ritualistic sacred dance to celebrate the victory of good over evil in the legend of Lord Ayyappa.
- It also denotes the beginning of the last leg of the annual Sabarimala pilgrimage season in Kerala.

INDIAN CONSTITUTION**Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860**

The Home Ministry has constituted two committees comprising legal luminaries to overhaul the Indian Penal Code (IPC) introduced by the British in 1860.

About:

- The Indian Penal Code (IPC) is the official criminal code of India. It is a comprehensive code intended to cover all substantive aspects of criminal law.
- History: The code was drafted in 1860 on the recommendations of first Law Commission of India established in 1834 under the Charter Act of 1833 under the Chairmanship of Lord Macaulay. It was passed into law in 1860. The Code came into operation in 1862.

Need of reforms:

- Rebooting the code introduced by the British in 1860 was necessary as it is primarily based on the spirit of “master and servant”.
- After it was framed, the IPC has never been amended in totality. Some additions and deletions have been made.
- There are uneven punishment for crimes of grievous nature. E.g. snatching of chains could be life-threatening in some cases but the punishment is not commensurate with the gravity of the crime. Depending on the whims of the police, it is booked under robbery or theft.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONSIndia-US Defence Technologies And Trade Initiative (DTTI)

The ninth India-US Defence Technologies and Trade Initiative (DTTI) group meeting is scheduled to happen in New Delhi this week.

About:

- While DTTI is not a treaty or law, it is a flexible mechanism to make sure that senior leaders from both countries are engaged consistently to strengthen the opportunities in the field of defence.
- Its central aims include strengthening India's defence industrial base, exploring new areas of technological development and expanding U.S.-India business ties.
- The DTTI initiative is led by Undersecretary of Defence for Acquisition and Sustainment from the United States and Secretary for Defence Protection from India.
- DTTI came about to expedite the scope of cooperation on defence technology that become narrow due to the presence of differing bureaucratic processes and legal requirements.

Strategic Trade Authority Tier 1 (STA-1):

- In August 2018, the US granted to India the designation of Strategic Trade Authority Tier 1 or STA-1.
- This provides India with greater supply-chain efficiency by allowing US companies to export a greater range of dual-use and high-technology items to India under streamlined processes.
- This authorisation is the equivalent of NATO allying with Japan, South Korea and Australia.

Letwin Amendment

The former Tory minister Oliver Letwin's amendment passed 322 to 306.

About:

- This means Boris Johnson did not get the clean yes or no vote on his Brexit deal that he had hoped for and must by law request an extension. In short, it pushes the focus of Brexit decision-making into next week.
- The Letwin amendment says parliament will withhold approval of the prime minister's Brexit deal until the withdrawal bill implementing Brexit has been passed.
- Essentially, this meant that Johnson was legally obliged to request the EU under the Benn Act to extend the date the votes on Brexit will be cast.

Benn Act:

The Benn Act is formally called the European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 2 Act) 2019 and is an act of the UK Parliament, which legally mandates seeking an extension for the negotiating period under certain circumstances.

Project Sunrise

Australia's flag carrier Qantas completed the world's longest commercial airplane journey from New York to Sydney, researching how the world's longest potential commercial airplane journey of nearly 20 hours would impact pilots, crew and passengers.

About:

- QF7879, a Qantas Airways aircraft flying from New York to Sydney, landed after a historic non-stop test flight that lasted 19 hours and 16 minutes.
- The world's longest commercial airplane journey had 50 passengers and crew on a Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner for the 16,200-kilometre (10,066-mile) journey.
- Qantas has announced three long-haul flights as part of its Project Sunrise that aims to fulfil its goal of running non-stop commercial flights on a regular basis from the east coast of Australia to London and New York.
- A final approval for this project is subject to aircraft economics, regulatory approvals and industrial agreements, for which certainty is expected by December this year.

Lira

The lira has long been involved in geopolitics between Turkey and its Western allies, specifically United States.

About:

- The Turkish lira is the currency of Turkey and the self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.
- Turkey's ability to sustain its military campaign in Syria may depend in part on what happens in the foreign exchange market.
- Renewed pressure on the currency and attempts to stabilise it could further endanger Turkey's lean foreign currency reserves, leaving the country potentially with little room to defend the lira if sanctions tightened.
- That in turn could hurt the already fragile economy and undermine President Tayyip Erdogan's ability to stand up to international pressure against his offensive in Syria.
- Last year, a standoff with the United States was an aggravating factor in a 30% fall in the lira, prompting an economic recession in the country which is heavily dependent on imports as well as foreign investors flows.

ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES

Anthrax

Veterinarians have confirmed anthrax as the cause of death of two Asiatic water buffaloes in central Assam's Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary.

About:

- Anthrax is a serious infectious disease caused by gram-positive, rod-shaped bacteria known as *Bacillus anthracis* which can be found naturally in soil.
- It can occur in four forms: skin, lungs, intestinal, and injection.
- It is characterised by blisters around swellings on the skin, chest pain, vomiting, diarrhoea and fever.
- It commonly affects domestic and wild animals around the world. Cattle, sheep, goats, antelope, and deer can become infected when they breathe in or ingest spores in contaminated soil, plants, or water.
- People can get sick with anthrax if they come in contact with infected animals or contaminated animal products. Contact with anthrax can cause severe illness in both humans and animals.
- Anthrax is not contagious, which means you can't catch it like the cold or flu.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**Uterine Transplants**

Radha — India's first uterine transplant baby and also the world's 12th uterine transplant baby — celebrated her first birthday. The first birth after a transplant, in 2014, happened in Sweden.

About:

- The uterine transplant is the surgical procedure whereby a healthy uterus is transplanted into an organism of which the uterus is absent or diseased.
- Reasons: For women whose uterus is not healthy, or who do not have one, a transplant is the newest form of infertility treatment.

Concerns:

- Uterine transplants are still extremely rare, complicated and expensive. A uterine transplant, like that for other organs, requires clearances at several levels.
- Concerns have been raised about the welfare of living donors who may end up regretting their choice to donate. A living donation is justified only after informed consent by the donor, and this after counselling by physicians and psychologists.

Montreal criteria:

- The Montreal Criteria are following set of criteria developed in 2012 which are deemed to be required for the ethical execution of the uterine transplant in humans:
- The recipient is a cisgender female with no medical contraindications to transplantation, has uterine disease that has failed other therapy, and has "a personal or legal contraindication" to other options (surrogacy, adoption).
- The donor is a female of reproductive age who has concluded her childbearing or consented donating her uterus after her death. There is no coercion and the donor is responsible and capable of making informed decisions.
- The health care team belongs to an institution that meets Moore's third criterion regarding institutional stability and has provided informed consent to both parties. There is no conflict of interests, and anonymity can be protected unless recipient or donor waive this right.

Liver Transplant Registry

India's first voluntary liver transplant registry that started on August 15, 2019 has picked up pace. In a span of two months, it has received data of 74 transplants carried out by 11 hospitals across six States.

About:

- Initiated by the Liver Transplantation Society of India, the registry aims to collate national data of the procedures and their outcomes.
- Nearly 2,000 liver transplants are carried out in the country annually, highest in the world, yet there is no India-specific data. This leaves doctors to take help from the evolved U.S. and the U.K. registries.
- Hospitals from Delhi NCR, Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu have voluntarily reported their transplants to the registry. More hospitals are in various stages of signing up by December.

QUOTES FOR ESSAY- Governance/Corruption

“Dharma is the foundation stone of good governance” – Budhha

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns: Contemporary geopolitics presses the need for strategic convergence between India and the US, but it should not come at the expense of neglect of Russia by India. Comment.

The Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation, 1971 marked India's inclination towards Soviet Russia during the cold war era. On the other hand, India US relations were marked with distrust and estrangement over India's nuclear program in the 1970s. However, Indo-US relations have warmed in recent years and cooperation has strengthened across a range of economic and political areas.

Contemporary geopolitics forces India and US to come closer. This can be attributed to the following reasons:

- Rise of revisionist China: US considers India to be a chief security provider to counter the rise of China in the Indo-Pacific. Chinese adventurism in South China Sea gave momentum to the formation of the Quadrilateral grouping between India, USA, Japan and Australia.
- Terrorism: US President Donald Trump's policies are aligned with India's strong campaign against global terrorism. Designating Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar as global terrorist by UNSC signifies a new level of diplomatic cooperation between India and the USA.

Defence cooperation:

- Aggregate worth of defence acquisition from US has crossed over \$13bn.
- Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) for co-production and co-development of weapon systems and platforms.
- New defence agreements like Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA), Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), etc.

Hence, cooperation with the US is in India's strategic interests. However, there are certain contentious issues between India and the US, which forces India to look beyond US. For example:

- US law CAATSA which imposes sanctions on India for buying S-400 Triumph anti-missile system which is critical for India's defence. India's Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with Russia in March 2019 to lease another of its Akula-Class attack nuclear submarine (SSN) drew heavy criticism from the USA.
- US protectionist trade policies like ending Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) scheme for India has affected Indian exports to the USA. India-US conflict at WTO platform is another case in point.
- Energy Security: US sanctions on Iran which led India to stop oil imports from Iran threatening India's energy security and economic stability.

Hence, US leadership's unpredictable foreign policies forces India to reach out to its oldest ally Russia. Russia's importance for India can be understood from the following heads:

- Russia's support is very critical for the success of the International North-South Corridor and India's access to Central Asia.
- Russia lead Afghanistan peace process is crucial for India since Afghanistan's geopolitics is linked with stability of the region.
- Russia has been India's oldest military ally and exporter of defence equipment. Russia's support is critical for the maintenance and upgradation of Indian military equipment.
- India can gain from Russia's coordination in the fields of critical technology like artificial intelligence, robotics, biotechnology, nanotechnology, outer space, energy sector, etc.
- Also, it can be said that Russia's closeness with China and Pakistan is tactical, mainly induced due to western sanctions, whereas Russia-India partnership is strategic. Russia has always seen India as a balancer against China, this is reflected in India's inclusion into SCO, facilitated by Russia.

Conclusion

Therefore, Indian diplomats need to maintain a fine balance between USA and Russia and work for India's national interests without undermining its strategic autonomy. In the words of Henry Kissinger "In international politics, there are no permanent friends or enemies, only permanent interests."

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS MCQS

1. Lira is the current currency of which one of the following countries?
 (a) Turkey
 (b) Germany
 (c) Spain
 (d) Ireland
2. Colonel Chewang Rinchen Setu, recently in news, is in
 (a) Andaman and Nicobar Island
 (b) Ladakh
 (c) Arunachal Pradesh
 (d) Sikkim
3. Project Sunrise, recently seen in news, is related to
 (a) **The world's longest commercial airplane journey from New York to Sydney.**
 (b) It is a coordinated operation by armies of India and Myanmar targeting several militant groups operating in Manipur, Nagaland and Assam.
 (c) It is a strategy to tackle stress in the banking sector.
 (d) None of the above
4. Benn Act, often mentioned in news, is an act of which of the following Parliament?
 (a) U.S.A
 (b) U.K
 (c) France
 (d) Italy
5. With reference to the India-US Defence Technologies and Trade Initiative (DTTI), consider the following statements:
 1. It is a treaty to make sure that senior leaders from both countries are engaged consistently to strengthen the opportunities in the field of defence.
 2. In 2018, the US granted to India the designation of Strategic Trade Authority Tier 1 or STA-1 which is the equivalent of NATO allying with Japan, South Korea and Australia.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only
 (b) 2 only
6. (c) Both 1 and 2
 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
7. With reference to Indian Penal Code (IPC), consider the following statements:
 1. It was drafted in 1860 on the recommendations of first law commission of India established in 1834 under the Charter Act of 1833 under the Chairmanship of Robert Clive.
 2. It is the official criminal code of India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only
 (b) 2 only
 (c) Both 1 and 2
 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
8. With reference to the uterine transplant, consider the following statements:
 1. It is the surgical procedure whereby a healthy uterus is transplanted into an organism of which the uterus is absent or diseased.
 2. The Yogyakarta Principles are a set of criteria developed in 2012 which are deemed to be required for the ethical execution of the uterine transplant in humans.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only
 (b) 2 only
 (c) Both 1 and 2
 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
9. With reference to anthrax, consider the following statements:
 1. It is a serious infectious disease caused by gram-positive, rod-shaped bacteria known as Bacillus anthracis which can be found naturally in soil.
 2. It is a highly contagious disease.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only
 (b) 2 only
 (c) Both 1 and 2
 (d) Neither 1 nor 2