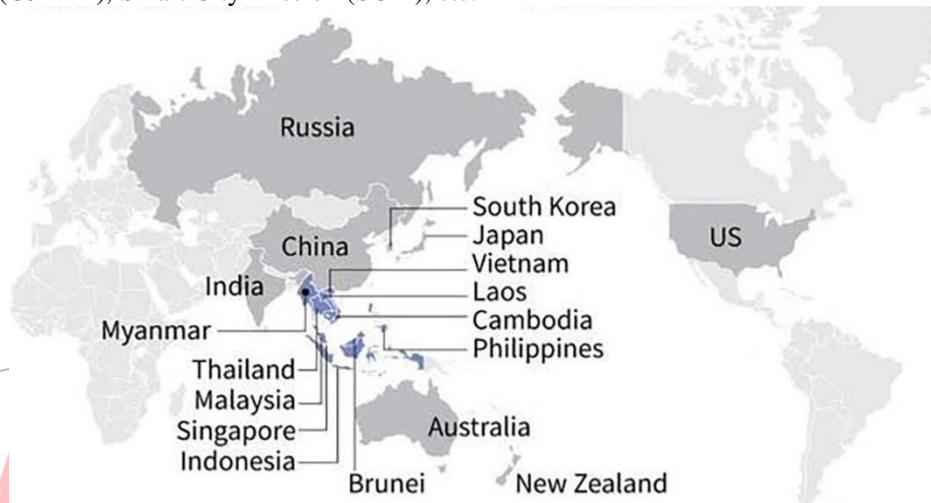


INTERNATIONAL RELATION
15th East Asia Summit Energy Ministers Meeting

Recently, the Union Minister of State for Power attended the 15th East Asia Summit Energy Ministers Meeting. The theme of the meeting was “We Care, We Prepare, We Prosper”.

Key Points
About the Meeting:

- The meeting was aimed at coordinating efforts of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries in pursuing the goal of energy security and energy transition that will benefit the people of the region.
- India confirmed that ASEAN is a region of great importance and engagement with ASEAN has been, and will remain, a critical element of India’s ‘Act East’ policy and strategy. Acting East is now a central element in India’s Indo-Pacific vision.
- A brief status of the Indian energy transition plans, policies, challenges and efforts towards decarbonisation was also provided. Some of India’s initiatives include National Solar Mission (NSM), Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY), Unnat Jyoti by Affordable LEDs for All (UJALA), Smart City Mission (SCM), etc.



EAS
C/OPSC

East Asia Summit:
• About:

1. Established in 2005, it is a forum of 18 regional leaders for strategic dialogue and cooperation on the key political, security, and economic challenges facing the Indo-Pacific region.
2. The concept of an East Asia Grouping was first promoted in 1991 by the then Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir bin Mohamad.
3. There are six priority areas of regional cooperation within the framework of the EAS. These are – Environment and Energy, Education, Finance, Global Health Issues and Pandemic Diseases, Natural Disaster Management, and ASEAN Connectivity.

• Membership:

1. It comprises the ten member states of the ASEAN which are Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam, along with 8 other countries namely Australia, China, Japan, India, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Russia and the USA.
2. It is an ASEAN-centred forum so it can only be chaired by an ASEAN member. Brunei Darussalam is the chair for 2021.

• EAS Meetings and Processes:

1. The EAS calendar culminates in the annual Leaders' Summit, which is usually held alongside ASEAN Leaders' meetings in the fourth quarter of every year.
2. Meetings of EAS Foreign Ministers and Economic Ministers are also held annually.

• India and EAS:

1. India is one of the founding members of the East Asia Summit.
2. At the East Asia Summit in Bangkok in November 2019, India had unveiled India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI), which is aimed at forging partnerships to create a secure and stable maritime domain.

Other Related Groupings:**• ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) Plus:**

1. It is an annual meeting of Defence Ministers of 10 ASEAN countries and eight dialogue partner countries.
2. The ADMM-Plus countries include ten ASEAN Member States and eight Plus countries, namely Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, and the United States (same as in the EAS).

• ASEAN Regional Forum:

1. Established in 1994, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) is an important platform for security dialogue in the Indo-Pacific.
2. It comprises 27 members: the 10 ASEAN member states, the 10 ASEAN dialogue partners (Australia, Canada, China, the European Union, India, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea (ROK), Russia and the United States); Bangladesh, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Mongolia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Timor-Leste; and one ASEAN observer (Papua New Guinea).

ECONOMY**PLI Scheme for Auto & Drone Sector**

Recently, the Union Cabinet approved a Rs. 26,058 crore Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for auto, auto-components and Drone industries to enhance India's manufacturing capabilities. The scheme for the sector is part of the overall production-linked incentives announced for 13 sectors in the Union Budget 2021-22 with an outlay of Rs 1.97 lakh crore.

Key Points**PLI Scheme:**

- PLI scheme, introduced in March 2020, aims to give companies incentives on incremental sales from products manufactured in domestic units.
- Apart from inviting foreign companies to set shop in India, it also aims to encourage local companies to set up or expand existing manufacturing units.
- It has also been approved for sectors such as automobiles, pharmaceuticals, IT hardware including laptops, mobile phones & telecom equipment, white goods, chemical cells, food processing, Textile Sector etc.

PLI for Auto Sector:**• About:**

1. It excludes conventional petrol, diesel and CNG segments (Internal Combustion Engine) since it has sufficient capacity in India.
2. It is incentivizing only advanced automotive technologies or auto components whose supply chains are weak, dormant, or non-existing.
3. It is aimed at boosting new technology and the economy of clean fuels.

• Components:

1. **Champion OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturers) Scheme:** It is a sales value linked plan, applicable to Battery Electric and Hydrogen Fuel Cell Vehicles of all segments.
2. **Champion Incentive Scheme:** It is a Sales Value Linked plan for advanced technology components, Complete and Semi-Knocked Down (CKD/SKD) kits, vehicle aggregates of 2-wheelers, 3-wheelers, passenger vehicles, commercial vehicles and tractors.

• Significance:

1. This scheme along with the already launched PLI for Advanced Chemistry Cell and Faster Adoption of Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles (FAME) Scheme will give a big boost to the manufacture of Electric Vehicles.
2. It will contribute towards reducing carbon emissions and oil imports.
3. It will encourage production of auto components using advanced technologies that will boost localisation, domestic manufacturing and also attract foreign investments.
4. It will help setting up new facilities and create more jobs. It is expected to generate 7.5 lakh jobs for the auto sector.

PLI for Drone Sector:**• About:**

1. It covers a wide variety of drone components, including airframe, propulsion systems, power systems, batteries, inertial measurement unit, flight control module, ground control station,

- communication systems, cameras, sensors, spraying systems, emergency recovery system, and trackers.
2. It is expected to bring fresh investments of over Rs 5,000 crore and incremental production of over Rs 1,500 crore and create additional employment of about 10,000 jobs.
- **Significance:**
 - 1. It will encourage entrepreneurs to strive towards building drones, components, and software for the global market. It will also open many more verticals for the utilisation of drones.
 - 2. It will help reduce imports. At present 90 % of the drones in India are imported. The government intends to make India into a global drone hub by 2030.

2. New Bad Bank Structure

Recently, the Union Cabinet approved the Rs 30,600 crore guarantee to back Security Receipts issued by National Asset Reconstruction Company Limited (NARCL) for acquiring stressed loan assets. The NARCL is a part of a new Bad bank structure that was announced in the Budget 2021.

Key Points

About the New Bad Bank Structure:

- For resolution of huge NPAs (Non-Performing Assets) in the Indian Banking sector, the government of India has set up two new entities to acquire stressed assets from banks and then sell them in the market. NPA refers to a classification for loans or advances that are in default or in arrears.
- **NARCL:** NARCL has been incorporated under the Companies Act and has applied to the Reserve Bank of India for a license as an Asset Reconstruction Company (ARC).
- 1. NARCL will acquire stressed assets worth about Rs 2 lakh crore from various commercial banks in different phases.
- 2. Public Sector Banks (PSBs) will maintain 51% ownership in NARCL.
- **IDRCL:** Another entity, India Debt Resolution Company Ltd (IDRCL), will then try to sell the stressed assets in the market. PSBs and Public Financial Institutes (FIs) will hold a maximum of 49% stake in IDRCL. The remaining 51% stake will be with private-sector lenders.
- The NARCL-IDRCL structure is the new bad bank structure.

Need for NARCL-IDRCL Structure:

- Existing ARCs have been helpful in the resolution of stressed assets, especially for smaller value loans.
- Various available resolution mechanisms, including Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), have proved to be useful.
- However, considering the large stock of legacy NPAs, additional options/alternatives are needed and thus, the NARCL-IDRCL structure was announced in the Union Budget 2021.

Working of NARCL-IDRCL and Guarantee Offered:

- The NARCL will first purchase bad loans from banks.
- It will pay 15% of the agreed price in cash and the remaining 85% will be in the form of "Security Receipts".
- When the assets are sold, with the help of IDRCL, the commercial banks will be paid back the rest.
- If the bad bank is unable to sell the bad loan, or has to sell it at a loss, then the government guarantee will be invoked. The difference between what the commercial bank was supposed to get and what the bad bank was able to raise will be paid from the Rs 30,600 crore that has been provided by the government.
- This guarantee is extended for a period of five years.

Bad Bank

About:

- The bad bank is an Asset Reconstruction Company (ARC) or an Asset Management Company (AMC) that takes over the bad loans of commercial banks, manages them and finally recovers the money over a period of time.
- The bad bank is not involved in lending and taking deposits, but helps commercial banks clean up their balance sheets and resolve bad loans.
- The takeover of bad loans is normally below the book value of the loan and the bad bank tries to recover as much as possible subsequently.

Effect of Bad Bank:

- **Commercial Banks' Perspective:** Commercial banks are saddled with high NPA levels, setting up of the Bad bank will help.
 1. That's because such a bank will get rid of all its toxic assets, which were reducing its profits, in one quick move.
 2. When the recovery money is paid back, it will further improve the bank's position. Meanwhile, it can start lending again.
- **Government and Taxpayer Perspective:** Whether it is recapitalising PSBs laden with bad loans or giving guarantees for security receipts, the money is coming from the taxpayers' pocket.
 1. While recapitalisation and such guarantees are often designated as "reforms", they are band aids at best.
 2. The only sustainable solution is to improve the lending operation in PSBs.
 3. The plan of bailing out commercial banks will collapse if the bad bank is unable to sell such impaired assets in the market. The burden indeed will fall upon the taxpayer.

Way Forward

So long as Public Sector Banks' managements remain beholden to politicians and bureaucrats, their deficit in professionalism will remain and subsequently, prudential norms in lending will continue to suffer. Therefore, a bad bank is a good idea, but the main challenge lies with tackling the underlying structural problems in the banking system and announcing reforms accordingly.

INTERNAL SECURITY**NCRB**

Recently, National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) released the Crime in India Report 2020. While 2020, a year marked by months of a national lockdown due to the pandemic saw fewer traditional crimes such as those committed against women and children, among others, it witnessed a big spike in civil conflicts.

Key Points**Riots (Civil Conflicts):**

- Communal riots registered an increase of 96% in 2020 over the previous year. Delhi Police alone registered the highest i.e. 520 cases of communal riots in the year and Uttar Pradesh (UP) did not record a single case of communal violence in 2020.
- Caste riots saw an increase of close to 50%, agrarian riots 38% and riots during 'andolan/morcha' increased by 33%.

Traditional Crimes:

- The number of cases registered for crimes against women, children and senior citizens, theft, burglary, robbery and dacoity, among others, dropped by about 2 lakh.
- Murder registered a marginal increase of 1% even as offences falling under the category of "violent crimes" decreased by 0.5%.
- Delhi is the most unsafe city for women. More than 10,093 cases of crimes against women were registered in the capital in 2020.

Environment Related Offences:

- Cases under the 'environment-related offences' category increased by 78.1% in the country in 2020.

Cyber Crime:

- The rate of cyber crime (incidents per lakh population) also increased from 3.3% in 2019 to 3.7% in 2020.

Offences Against State:

- The year also saw a significant drop in cases related to Offences against the State, with a drop of 27% over 2019.
- UP, however, was the only major state to record an increase in this category, mostly due to the large number of 'Damage to Public Property' cases registered by the state, many of them during the anti-CAA (Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019) protests.
- Offences against the State' include cases related to sedition and waging war against the nation, those falling under provisions of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) 1967, Official Secrets Act 1923 and Damage to Public Property Act 1954.

State Wise Data:

National Crime Records Bureau

- NCRB, headquartered in New Delhi, was set-up in 1986 under the Ministry of Home Affairs to function as a repository of information on crime and criminals so as to assist the investigators in linking crime to the perpetrators.
- It was set up based on the recommendations of the National Police Commission (1977-1981) and the MHA's Task Force (1985).
- NCRB brings out the annual comprehensive statistics of crime across the country ('Crime in India' report). Having been published since 1953, the report serves as a crucial tool in understanding the law and order situation across the country.
- The inaugural function of the 2nd CCTNS Hackathon and Cyber Challenge 2020-21 of NCRB was held in New Delhi.

BIODIVERSITY & ENVIRONMENT
World's First 'Five-Country Biosphere Reserve'

Recently, Mura-Drava-Danube (MDD) was declared as the world's first 'five-country biosphere reserve' by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Key Points
About MDD:

- The biosphere reserve covers 700 kilometres of the Mura, Drava and Danube rivers and stretches across Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary and Serbia.
- The total area of the reserve is a million hectares - in the so-called 'Amazon of Europe', which is now the largest riverine protected area in Europe.
- The biosphere "represented an important contribution to the European Green Deal (climate action plan) and contributed to the implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy in the Mura-Drava-Danube region." The strategy's aim is to revitalise 25,000 km of rivers and protect 30% of the European Union's land area by 2030.

Importance of the MDD:

- The area is one of the richest in Europe in terms of species diversity.
- It is home to floodplain forests, gravel and sand banks, river islands, oxbows and meadows.
- The area is home to the highest density in Europe of breeding pairs of white-tailed eagle and endangered species such as the little tern, black stork, otters, beavers and sturgeons.
- It is also an important stepping stone for more than 2,50,000 migratory waterfowls every year.

Biosphere Reserve (BR)
About:

- BR is an international designation by (UNESCO) for representative parts of natural and cultural landscapes extending over large areas of terrestrial or coastal/marine ecosystems or a combination of both.
- BR tries to balance economic and social development and maintenance of associated cultural values along with the preservation of nature.

- BRs are nominated by national governments and remain under the sovereign jurisdiction of the states where they are located.
- These are designated under the intergovernmental MAB Programme by the Director-General of UNESCO following the decisions of the MAB International Coordinating Council (MAB ICC). The Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme is an intergovernmental scientific programme that aims to establish a scientific basis for enhancing the relationship between people and their environments.
- Their status is internationally recognized.
- There are 727 biosphere reserves in 131 countries, including 22 transboundary sites.

Three Main Zones:

- **Core Areas:** It comprises a strictly protected zone that contributes to the conservation of landscapes, ecosystems, species and genetic variation.
- **Buffer Zones:** It surrounds or adjoins the core area(s), and is used for activities compatible with sound ecological practices that can reinforce scientific research, monitoring, training and education.
- **Transition Area:** The transition area is where communities foster socio-culturally and ecologically sustainable economic and human activities.

Biosphere Reserves in India:

Presently, there are 18 Biosphere Reserves in India, among which 12 Biosphere reserves in India find their place in UNESCO's List of Man & Biosphere Reserves Programme.

The latest included under the MAB was 'Panna Biosphere Reserve' (Madhya Pradesh).

IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM**Mammoth Cave: US**

Recently, the official length of Mammoth Cave has been extended to 420 miles.

Key Points

- The additional mileage (8 miles) was mapped and documented by the Cave Research Foundation.
- Mammoth Cave National Park, located in the state of Kentucky (US), has the world's largest network of natural caves and underground passageways, which are characteristic examples of limestone formations (karst topography).
 1. It is a World Heritage Site (designated in 1981).
 2. It became an International Biosphere Reserve in 1990.

Karst Topography

- It is a type of landscape where the dissolving of the bedrock has created sinkholes, sinking streams, caves, springs, and other characteristic features.
- Karst is associated with soluble rock types such as limestone, marble, and gypsum.
- In general, a typical karst landscape forms when much of the water falling on the surface interacts with and enters the subsurface through cracks, fractures, and holes that have been dissolved into the bedrock. After traveling underground, sometimes for long distances, this water is then discharged from springs, many of which are cave entrances.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. What is Biofortification? Examine the potential of Biofortification with respect to India's push towards achieving targets of Sustainable Development Goal-2 (SDG-2). (150 words, 10 marks)

Ans:

Introduction

WHO defines Biofortification as the process by which the nutritional quality of food crops is improved through agronomic practices, conventional plant breeding, or modern biotechnology. Biofortification differs from conventional fortification in that biofortification aims to increase nutrient levels in crops during plant growth rather than through manual means during processing of the crops. Biofortification may therefore present a way to reach populations where supplementation and conventional fortification activities may be difficult to implement and/or limited.

Body**Need for Biofortification in India:**

1. India faces a development paradox—of being one of the fastest-growing global economies in the world and contrast—of having an estimated 189.2 million people i.e., 14% of the population as undernourished.

2. Further, the percentage of children under the age of five who are stunted, wasted and are underweight are 38.4, 21.0 and 42.5 respectively.
3. Also, 53.1% of women of reproductive age between 15 to 49 years are anemic.
4. These metrics highlight the prevalence of chronic malnourishment of women, girls and children in India.

Potential of Biofortification with respect to India:

- Biofortification, an agriculture-based approach to the development and dissemination of micronutrient-rich crops, offers a viable option to mitigate malnutrition and hidden hunger.
- The solution majorly targets poor and rural people who grow and consume staple crops significantly and supply their surplus produce majorly within their community.
- The method enriches staple crops with required micronutrients that reduces people's nutritional vulnerability because, during economic shocks, the poor tend to reduce their consumption of higher-value food commodities that are naturally rich in micronutrients.
- With a one-time research and development investment, biofortified seeds can spread through the existing seed distribution systems in the country.
- Farmers, even with limited resources and market access, can grow biofortified crops since they do not need repeated purchases of seeds year after year—they can use a part of their produce as the seeds for the next year.
- Moreover, an increase in the adoption of seeds through efficient seed distribution channels will ensure it is economically remunerative for the growers.
- For consumers, awareness has to be created about subsequent health benefits while ensuring easy access and affordability of the produce.
- Currently, there is sufficient evidence available to say that biofortification can improve nutritional outcomes, improvement in hemoglobin and total body iron in Rwanda women after consumption of biofortified iron bean, enhancement in serum ferritin and total body iron observed in iron-deficient adolescent boys and girls in Maharashtra, India after consuming biofortified pearl millet flatbread twice daily for four months etc.
- Biological fortification of food has proven to be simple, cost-effective and sustainable.
- Thus, bio-fortified crops can be directly fed into India's ambitious POSHAN Abhiyaan targeting over 10 crore people with the aim to reduce stunting, undernutrition, anemia, and low birth weight.

Way forward:**• Focus on mother's education**

1. There is a direct correlation between mother's education and the wellbeing of children.
2. Targeted programmes for improving the educational status of girls and reducing the school dropout rates need to be promoted.
3. The Global Nutrition Report (2014) estimates that every dollar invested in a proven nutrition programme offers benefits worth 16 dollars.

• Scale-up innovation in biofortified food by supporting policies

1. Innovations in biofortified food can alleviate malnutrition only when they are scaled up with supporting policies.
2. This would require increasing expenditure on agri-R&D and incentivising farmers by linking their produce to lucrative markets through sustainable value chains and distribution channels.
3. The government can also rope in the private sector to create a market segment for premium-quality biofortified foods.
4. For instance, trusts run by the TATA group are supporting different states to initiate fortification of milk with Vitamin A and D.

• National awareness drive

1. A national awareness drive on the lines of the "Salt Iodisation Programme" launched by the government in 1962 can play an important role at the individual and community levels to achieve the desired goals of poshan for all.
2. Branding, awareness campaigns, social and behavioural change initiatives, can promote consumption of locally-available, nutrient-dense affordable foods among the poor and children.

Conclusion

The emphasis on bio-fortification is a step forward for India's transition from food availability and access to nutrition security and eradicating hidden hunger. Leveraging science to attack the complex challenge of malnutrition, particularly for low-income and vulnerable sections of society, can be a good intervention.

DAILY QUIZ

Q1. With reference to India's Chandrayaan-2 Mission, which of the following statement(s) is/are correct?

1. It is India's first interplanetary mission.
2. It comprised an Orbiter, Lander and Rover to explore the unexplored North Pole of the Moon.
3. The spacecraft was launched on its mission to the Moon by the ISRO's GSLV Mark III-M1 launch vehicle.

Select the correct answer using the code below:

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. **3 only**
- c. 2 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

Q2. Bibek Debroy committee report is related to which of the following?

- a. enhancing the military's combat potential
- b. plastic waste management
- c. setting up Development Finance Institution (DFI)
- d. restructuring the railways**

Q3. Consider the following statements about the UDAN (Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik) Scheme:

1. It is aimed at enhancing regional connectivity through fiscal support and infrastructure development.
2. It is funded jointly by the Central Government and State Governments.
3. It is a key component of Centre's Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a. 1 and 2 only**
- b. 1 only
- c. 2 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

Q4. With reference to present status of Cryptocurrencies in India, consider the following statements:

1. Cryptocurrencies are not illegal in India but, they are not regulated.
2. In India, the cryptocurrencies are regulated by both RBI (the Reserve bank of India) and SEBI (the Security and Exchange Board 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

Q5. Consider the following rivers:

1. Seonath
2. Pravara
3. Hasdeo

Which of the river(s) given above is/are tributaries of river Mahanadi?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 and 3 only
- c. 1 and 3 only**
- d. 1, 2 and 3