

INTERNATIONAL RELATION

Report on Military Balance 2021

According to the Military Balance 2021, India's present military arsenal is heavily stocked with Russian-made or Russian-designed equipment. The Military Balance is the International Institute for Strategic Studies' (global think tank) annual assessment of the military capabilities and defence economics of 171 countries worldwide.

Key Points

About the Report:

- There has been a considerable drop in India's dependence on arms and equipment from Russia. However, the Indian military cannot operate effectively without Russian-supplied equipment and will continue to rely on its weapons systems in the near and middle terms.
- The report is crucial in the pretext of the US administration's review of Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA). The CAATSA seeks to impose sanctions against the country buying military arms from Russia. India's plan to purchase Russian-made S-400 air defense systems, which could trigger US sanctions under Section 231 of CAATSA.

India-Russia's Military Relations:

Indian Dependence: According to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), since 2010, Russia has been the source of nearly two-thirds (62%) of all Indian arms imports. Further, India has been the largest Russian arms importer, accounting for nearly one-third (32%) of all Russian arms exports.

Favourable Russian Military Exports to India: Much of Russia's influence in India comes through its willingness to provide weapons systems and technologies that no other country will export to India.

The US only provides non-lethal defence technology like C-130j Super Hercules, C-13 Globemaster, P-8i Poseidon etc, while Russia provides high-end technology like Brahmos supersonic missile, S-400 anti-missile system. Russia also continues to offer advanced weapons platforms at relatively attractive rates.

Army Cooperation: Around 10,000 pieces of military hardware are procured from Russia.

The Indian Army's main battle tank force is composed predominantly of Russian T-72M1 (66%) and T-90S (30%). India is negotiating on the price of AK103 rifles for Make in India.

Naval Cooperation: Indian Navy's sole operational aircraft carrier is a refurbished Soviet-era ship (INS Vikramaditya). The Navy's fighter fleet comprises 43 MiG-29K. Four of the Navy's 10 guided-missile destroyers are Russian Kashin class, and six of its 17 frigates are Russian Talwar class. The Navy's sole nuclear-powered submarine is on lease from Russia, and eight of the service's 14 other submarines are Russian-origin Kilo class.

Air Force Cooperation: The Indian Air Force's 667-plane FGA (Fighter Ground Attack) fleet is 71% Russian-origin (39% Su-30s (Sukhoi), 22% MiG-21s, 9% MiG-29s). All six of the service's air tankers are Russian-made Il-78s.

Missile Cooperation: The country's only nuclear-capable supersonic cruise missile, BrahMos, is produced by a joint venture with Russia. The S-400 Air Defence Missile Systems is expected to be delivered by 2021.

Military Exercises: India and Russia conduct the INDRA series of military exercises, which began in 2003. However, the first joint Tri-Services Exercise was conducted in 2017.



GEOGRAPHY

SUPREME COURT HAS DIRECTED WATER LEVELS IN MULLAPERIYAR DAM

Recently, the Supreme Court has directed the Supervisory Committee to take an immediate and firm decision on the maximum water level that can be maintained at Mullaperiyar dam amidst torrential rains in Kerala. The Ministry of Jal Shakti has constituted a three-member Supervisory Committee to settle the issue of Mullaperiyar dam between Kerala and Tamil Nadu.



Key Points

Centre of a Decades-old Dispute:

- For Kerala, where it is situated, the dam presents a threat to lakhs living downstream,
- For Tamil Nadu, which controls the dam, the water it provides is the lifeline of people in five districts.

Reasons for Recent Revival of the Dispute:

- Recently, heavy rains have increased water flow in Mullaperiyar dam. The excess water from Mullaperiyar can flow to downstream Idukki reservoir, which can lead to floods.
- The SC in 2018 had agreed that the water level in the Mullaperiyar reservoir should be maintained two or three feet below the permissible limit of 142 feet as an immediate precaution to guard against floods or other disasters.

Mullaperiyar Dam:

- It is located on the confluence of the Mullayar and Periyar rivers in Kerala's Idukki district. The reservoir is within the Periyar Tiger Reserve.
- It is operated and maintained by Tamil Nadu for meeting the drinking water and irrigation requirements of five of its southern districts. According to a 999-year lease agreement made during British rule the operational rights were handed over to Tamil Nadu.
- The water diverted from the reservoir is first used for power generation in lower Periyar (by Tamil Nadu) before flowing into the Suruliyar, a tributary of Vaigai river, and then for irrigating nearly 2.08 lakh hectares in Theni and four other districts farther away.

Periyar River

- The Periyar River is the longest river in the state of Kerala with a length of 244 km.
- It is also known as 'Lifeline of Kerala' as it is one of the few perennial rivers in the state.
- Periyar River originates from Sivagiri hills of Western Ghats, in Tamil Nadu and flows through the Periyar National Park.
- The main tributaries of Periyar are Muthirapuzha, Mullayar, Cheruthoni, Perinjankutti.

Idukki Dam

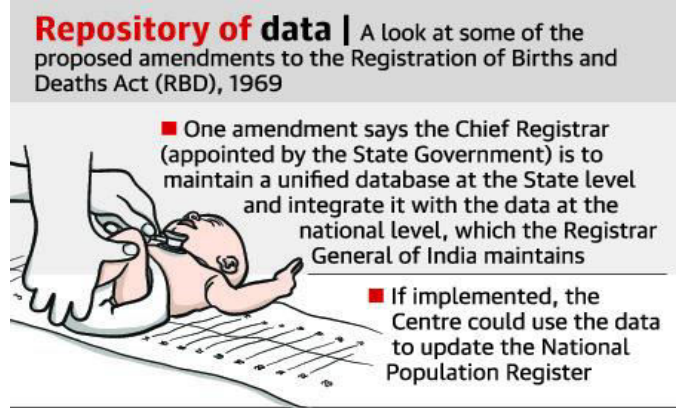
- It is located in Kerala (168.91 m). The dam stands between the two mountains – Kuravanmala (839 m) and Kurathimala (925 m).
- It is one of the highest arch dams in Asia and third tallest arch dam.

- It is built on the Periyar River, in the ravine between the Kuravan and Kurathi Hills in Kerala.
- It was constructed and is owned by the Kerala State Electricity Board. It supports a 780 MW hydroelectric power station.

INDIAN SOCIETY

Amendments to the Registration of Births and Deaths Act (RBD), 1969

Recently, the Centre has proposed amendments to the Registration of Births and Deaths Act (RBD), 1969. It will enable it to “maintain the database of registered birth and deaths at the national level”.



Key Points

Registration of Birth and Death:

- Registration of Births and Deaths in India is mandatory with the enactment of Registration of Births and Deaths (RBD), Act 1969 and is done as per the place of occurrence of the event. With a view to simplify the provisions of various sections of the existing RBD Act, 1969 and to make it people friendly, the amendment has been proposed.

Proposed Amendments:

Chief Registrar to maintain Unified Data:

- The Chief Registrar (appointed by the States) would maintain a unified database at the State level and integrate it with the data at the “national level,” maintained by the Registrar General of India (RGI) (under the Ministry of Home Affairs). Presently, the registration of births and deaths is done by the local registrar appointed by States.

Special Sub-Registrars:

- The appointment of “Special Sub-Registrars, in the event of disaster, with any or all of his powers and duties for on the spot registration of deaths and issuance of extract thereof, as may be prescribed.”

Expected Use of the Data:

- To update the National Population Register (Citizenship Act, 1955) and the electoral register (Registration of Electors Rules, 1960), and Aadhaar (Aadhaar Act, 2016), ration card (National Food Security Act, 2013), passport (Passport Act) and driving licence databases (Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019). The NPR already has a database of 119 crore residents and under the Citizenship Rules, 2003, it is the first step towards the creation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC).

IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM

1. Centre notified the Indian Telegraph Right of Way (Amendment) Rules, 2021.

Recently, the Central Government has notified the Indian Telegraph Right of Way (Amendment) Rules, 2021. The rule aims to incorporate the provisions related to nominal one-time compensation and uniform procedure for establishment of Overground Telegraph Line in the Indian Telegraph Right of Way Rules, 2016.

Key Points

- **Compensation:** The amount of one-time compensation for establishment of an overground telegraph line will be a maximum one thousand rupees per kilometre.
- **Right of Way (RoW):** These amendments will ease RoW related permission procedures for establishment and augmentation of digital communications infrastructure across the country. Earlier, the RoW Rules had covered only underground Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) and mobile towers.

- **Fees:** There will be no fee other than Administrative fee and Restoration charges for establishing, maintaining, transferring or shifting the underground and overground telegraph infrastructure.

Significance:

- The digital divide between rural-urban and rich-poor will be bridged, in line with the Digital India mission and BharatNet project.
- E-governance and financial inclusion will be strengthened.
- Doing business will be easy.
- Information and communication needs of citizens and enterprises will be fulfilled (including 5G).
- The dream of India's transition to a digitally empowered economy and society will be translated into reality.

2. Indian Coast Guard Ship (ICGS) Sarthak

Recently, an Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV), Indian Coast Guard Ship (ICGS) Sarthak has been commissioned and dedicated to the nation at Goa by the Indian Coast Guard.

Key Points

- It is a 105-meter-long ship displacing 2,450 tons and is propelled by two 9,100 kilowatt diesel engines designed to attain a maximum speed of 26 knots.
- It is 4th in the series of five OPVs. And will significantly boost the maritime safety and security of the nation.
 - OPVs are long-range surface ships, capable of operation in maritime zones of India, including island territories with helicopter operation capabilities.
 - Their roles include coastal and offshore patrolling, policing maritime zones of India, control and surveillance, anti-smuggling and anti-piracy operations with limited wartime roles.

Development:

- It has been designed & built indigenously by M/s Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL) in line with the government's vision of 'Make in India'. It has about 70% indigenous content, thus providing the necessary fillip to the Indian shipbuilding industry and a giant leap towards achieving 'Atmanirbar Bharat'.

Features:

- It has state-of-the-art Navigation and Communication equipment, sensors and machinery.
- It is capable of carrying a twin-engine helicopter, four high speed boats and one inflatable boat for swift boarding and Search & Rescue operations.
- It is also capable of carrying limited pollution response equipment to undertake oil spill pollution response at sea.

Utility:

- It will be deployed extensively for Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) surveillance, Coastal Security and other duties as enshrined in the Coast Guard charter of duties, to safeguard the maritime interests of the Nation.

Other OPVs:

- Sajag
- Vigraha
- Yard 45006 VAJRA
- Varaha

Indian Coast Guard

- It is an Armed Force, Search and Rescue and Maritime Law Enforcement agency under the Ministry of Defence. It is headquartered in New Delhi.
- It was established in August 1978 by the Coast Guard Act, 1978 as an independent Armed force of India. The concept of forming ICG came into being after the 1971 war. The blueprint for a multidimensional Coast Guard was conceived by the visionary Rustamji Committee.
- It has jurisdiction over the territorial waters of India including contiguous zone and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).
- It is responsible for marine environment protection in maritime zones of India and is coordinating authority for response to oil spills in Indian waters.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. The COVID-19 pandemic has again stressed on the importance of the role of parents in supporting the early learning of young children which is well captured in National Early Childhood Care & Education (ECCE) Curriculum framework. Discuss the need and benefits of the same. (250 words)

Introduction

According to UNICEF, early childhood is defined as the period from conception through eight years of age. Early childhood care and education (ECCE) is more than preparation for primary school. It aims at the holistic development of a child's social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs in order to build a solid and broad foundation for lifelong learning and wellbeing. Target 4.2 of SDG 4 aims that by 2030, to ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education.

Body

Need for ECCE

- Early childhood is a time of remarkable growth with brain development at its peak.
- It is crucial to the overall development of children, with impacts on their learning and even earning capabilities throughout their lifetimes.
- Over 85% of a child's cumulative brain development occurs prior to the age of 6, indicating the critical importance of appropriate care and stimulation of the brain in a child's early years for healthy brain development and growth.
- In a recent study by the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy, 45% of the 650+ households surveyed in urban Maharashtra reported that they prioritise their older child's education over ECE.
- Studies have found that the act of making conversation with your child in the early years has significant gains on language skills they develop.
- It is, therefore of the utmost importance that every child has access to quality early childhood care and education (ECCE).

Benefits of ECCE

- The overall aim of ECCE will be to attain optimal outcomes in the domains of physical and motor development, cognitive development, socio-emotional-ethical development, cultural/artistic development, and the development of communication and early language, literacy, and numeracy.
- It also includes a focus on developing social capacities, sensitivity, good behaviour, courtesy, ethics, personal and public cleanliness, teamwork and cooperation.
- These years lay the foundations for her/ his learning and holistic development.
- Children will be better prepared for primary school and will reach better education outcomes.
- Quality ECCE also helps reduce repetition and drop-out rates.
- Positive outcomes are even more pronounced among children from vulnerable groups.
- It helps promote human resource development, gender equality and social cohesion, and to reduce the costs for later remedial programmes.
- An overview of 56 studies across 23 countries found impacts on health, education, cognitive ability, and emotional development.

CONCLUSION

For universal access to Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), the Anganwadi Centres will be strengthened with high quality infrastructure, play equipment and well-trained Anganwadi workers/teachers. Every Anganwadi must have a well-ventilated, well-designed, child-friendly and well-constructed building with an enriched learning Funds for this programme will be provided by the Central and State governments. ECCE teacher trainings should be added as a skill gap in the list of National Skill Development Corporation to ensure that easy investment is available to produce efficient ECCE teachers. Universal access to quality early childhood education is perhaps the best investment that India can make for our children's and our nation's future. ECCE can also be introduced in Ashrams shalas in tribal-dominated areas in a phased manner.

DAILY QUIZ

Q1. Consider the following statements about Information Fusion Centre for Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR):

1. It was set up in 2018 to coordinate with regional countries on maritime issues and act as a regional repository of maritime data.
2. It is located in Ernakulam, Kerala.

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

Q2. With reference to China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), consider the following statements:

- 1.It consists of highways, railways, and pipelines.
- 2.It aims at linking the city of Gwadar in North Western Pakistan to China's South Western region Xinjiang.

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

Q3. The 'Bishkek Declaration' was in news recently, is related to which of the following?

- (a) Women empowerment
- (b) The climate crisis, migration, and refugees
- (c) Wildlife management and conservation
- (d) **Conservation of snow leopards**

Q4. Consider the following statements about the Panthera uncia:

- 1.It is a common herb of the Himalayas.
- 2.It was declared 'endangered' by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

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 statements about the National Fund to Control Drug Abuse:

- 1.It was created in accordance with a provision of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985.
- 2.It had a nominal corpus of ₹3000 crore.

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