

INTERNATIONAL RELATION**INDIA-CENTRAL ASIA SUMMIT**

Recently, the Prime Minister of India hosted the first India-Central Asia Summit in virtual format.

- It was attended by Presidents of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Republic of Uzbekistan.
- This first India-Central Asia coincided with the 30th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Central Asian countries.
- The summit came two days after a similar China-Central Asia Conference was held where China offered USD 500 million in assistance and pledged to ramp up trade to USD 70 billion from the present levels of about USD 40 billion a year.

Important Points**Institutionalisation of the Summit:**

- Discussed the next steps in taking India-Central Asia relations to new heights. In a historic decision, the Leaders agreed to institutionalise the Summit mechanism by deciding to hold it every 2 years.
- They also agreed on regular meetings of Foreign Ministers, Trade Ministers, Culture Ministers and Secretaries of the Security Council to prepare the groundwork for the Summit meetings.
- An India-Central Asia Secretariat in New Delhi would be set up to support the new mechanism.

India-Central Asia Cooperation:

- The Leaders discussed far-reaching proposals to further cooperation in areas of trade and connectivity, development cooperation, defence and security and, in particular, on cultural and people to people contacts. These included:
 - Round-Table on Energy and Connectivity.
 - Joint Working Groups at senior official level on Afghanistan and use of Chabahar Port.
 - Showcasing of Buddhist exhibitions in Central Asian countries and commissioning of an India-Central Asia dictionary of common words.
 - Joint counter-terrorism exercises.
 - Visit of 100 member youth delegation annually from Central Asian countries to India and special courses for Central Asian diplomats.
- A comprehensive Joint Declaration was adopted by the leaders that enumerates their common vision for an enduring and comprehensive India-Central Asia partnership.

Afghanistan:

- The leaders reiterated their strong support for a peaceful, secure and stable Afghanistan with a truly representative and inclusive government.
- India conveyed its continued commitment to provide humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people.

India's Stand on:

- Kazakhstan: It has become a vital partner for India's energy security. India also expressed condolences for the recent loss of life and property in Kazakhstan.
- Uzbekistan: India's state governments are also active partners in its growing cooperation with Uzbekistan.
- Tajikistan: Both the countries have a longstanding cooperation in the field of security.
- Turkmenistan: It is an important part of Indian vision in the field of regional connectivity, which is evident from participation in the Ashgabat Agreement.
 - Regional connectivity in Central Asia is a key arm of the 2018 Ashgabat Agreement.

Significance of the Summit for India**Geo-Political Dynamics:**

- The summit is symbolic of the importance attached by the leaders of India and the Central Asian countries to a comprehensive and enduring India-Central Asia partnership.
- It is being held at a critical juncture when tensions between the West and Russia and the United States (US) and China are rising. India too has faced geopolitical setbacks: Border tensions with China and the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan.
- It follows President Vladimir Putin's visit to India, which may have allowed India to push Russia to moderately balance China in Eurasia and to contain the threats from Afghanistan.

- The recent unrest in Kazakhstan also showed that “new actors” are vying for influence in the region though their motives are still not clear.

Trade:

- India has always maintained excellent diplomatic ties with all the five Central Asian states, Indian PMs including Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2015, have visited them. Yet, India’s trade with them has been only at USD 1.4 billion in 2019.
- In 2017, India joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) to engage with the region. But SCO is only a sluice gate to regulate the Russian and Chinese subliminal rivalry to prevent either power from dominating the region.
 - Russia tends to use SCO for regulating India-China tensions.

Security:

- The summit is a massive stride for India’s diplomacy. Since the region is a critical lynchpin to India’s security policy, the summit will have a waterfall impact to facilitate India’s multifaceted approach towards the region.

India-Central Asia Dialogue

- It is a ministerial-level dialogue between India and the Central Asian countries namely Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.
- All five nations became independent states after the collapse of the USSR in 1991, post-Cold war.
- All the countries participating in the dialogue, except for Turkmenistan, are also members of the SCO.
- The dialogue focuses on a number of issues including ways to improve connectivity and stabilise war-ravaged Afghanistan.

Governance

RACIAL PROFILING AND RELOCATION OF THE CHAKMAS AND HAJONGS

Recently, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in its order directed Ministry of Home Affairs and Arunachal Pradesh to submit action taken report within six weeks against alleged racial profiling and relocation of the Chakmas and Hajongs from the State.

- Also both the authorities were directed to "ensure that human rights of the Chakmas and Hajongs are protected by all the ways".
- Members of the two communities have allegedly been victims of hate crime, police atrocities and denial of rights and beneficiary programmes.

Important Points

- In 2015, the Supreme Court directed the State to grant them citizenship, but this had not yet been implemented.
 - In a judgment in 1996, the Court had stated that the “life and personal liberty of every Chakma residing within the State shall be protected”.
- In light of these orders and given that most of the Chakma/Hajong community members were born in the State and have been living peacefully, the Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister’s announcement, in August 2021, that they would be relocated outside the State and that steps would be taken for a “census” of the communities was clearly unwarranted.
- After that Chakma Development Foundation of India (CDFI) requested urgent intervention of the NHRC against racial profiling of 65,000 Chakma and Hajong tribals of Arunachal Pradesh through illegal census which was scheduled to commence from 31st December, 2021 (later plan of census was dropped) for their deportation / expulsion/ relocation from the State.
 - Racial profiling is government or police activity that involves using people’s racial and cultural characteristics to identify people to investigate.

Issues with the Special Census:

- Chakma organisations said the census was nothing but racial profiling of the two communities because of their ethnic origin and violated Article 14 of the Constitution of India and Article 1 of the International Convention on Elimination of Racial Discrimination ratified by India.
 - Article 14 says that no person shall be denied treatment of equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.
 - The United Nation General Assembly in October 1966 proclaimed 21st March as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, to be commemorated annually.

Chakmas and Hajongs:

- Mizoram and Tripura have a sizeable population of the Buddhist Chakmas while the Hindu Hajongs mostly inhabit the Garo Hills of Meghalaya and adjoining areas of Assam.
- The Chakmas and Hajongs of Arunachal Pradesh are migrants from the Chittagong Hill Tracts of erstwhile East Pakistan, now Bangladesh.
- Displaced by the Kaptai dam on the Karnaphuli River in the 1960s, they sought asylum in India and were settled in relief camps in the southern and south-eastern parts of Arunachal Pradesh from 1964 to 1969.
 - A majority of them live in the Changlang district of the State (Arunachal Pradesh) today.

Citizenship Status:

- Out of the 65,000 Chakmas and Hajongs, about 60,500 are citizens by birth under Section 3 of the Citizenship Act, 1955, after having been born before 1st July 1987, or as descendants of those who were born before this date.
 - The applications of the remaining 4,500 surviving migrants following the 1996 Supreme Court order have not been processed to date.
- The Citizenship (Amendment) Act of 2019, which amended two sections of the 1955 Act, has nothing to do with the Chakma-Hajongs since they were permanently settled by the Union of India in the 1960s.
- And since 95% of the migrants were born in the North-East Frontier Agency or Arunachal Pradesh, the Inner Line Permit mandatory under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873 for outsiders seeking to visit the State, also does not apply to them.

International Relation

UNUSUALLY COLDER AND WETTER WINTER

In India, especially in North India, the winter of 2021-22 has been unusually cold and unusually long. The days, in particular, have felt colder and chillier than normal.

Important Points

Colder:

- Since December 2021, maximum temperatures across the North, Northwest and Central India regions have persistently remained below normal, resulting in “cold day” conditions. Technically, this means more than just a day that is cold.
 - A cold day is one in which the maximum temperature falls below 16 degrees Celsius, a phenomenon that is commonly seen during the winter months in the northern plains of India.

Wetter:

- Light to moderate intensity rainfall is also commonly seen during winters in neighboring regions of North India.
- This January, however, has seen widespread rain across the central, northwestern, northern, eastern, and northeastern regions of India.
- As many as 24 states or Union Territories have recorded rainfall varying from excess to large excess this month.

Less Fog than Normal:

- December and January are known for the formation of dense fog across North India. In January 2022, the national capital remained affected by fog for 252 hours against a normal of 292 hours.
- IMD officials said the ongoing winter has recorded the lowest fog hours since 1991-92 over Delhi.

Causes:

Western Disturbances:

- Until 25th January 2022, seven western disturbances had passed over India — nearly all of them strong enough to cause widespread rain, snowfall, and turbulent weather across large geographical areas between Pakistan and Northeast India. These systems caused hailstorms in northern Maharashtra, and heavy rainfall in Tamil Nadu.

La Niña:

- Frequent and higher numbers of western disturbances are associated with La Niña.
- At present, moderate intensity La Niña conditions — which manifests itself as cooler than normal sea surface temperatures in the equatorial Pacific Ocean — are prevailing.

Cold Winds from Far North:

- After a western disturbance crosses India, cold winds from the far north of the country penetrate to lower latitudes, and can reach up to even Telangana and Maharashtra, leading to colder weather, and sometimes to cold wave conditions.

Low-lying Clouds and Moisture:

- The presence of low-lying clouds and the availability of moisture along the Indo-Gangetic plains made it favorable for cold day conditions and the additional chill factor experienced during the day time.
- This was the longest and most intense spell of the season so far.

Western Disturbance

- Western Disturbance (WD), labeled as an extra-tropical storm originating in the Mediterranean, is an area of low pressure that brings sudden showers, snow and fog in northwest India.
- The disturbance travels from the “western” to the eastern direction.
 - These travel eastwards on high-altitude westerly jet streams - massive ribbons of fast winds traversing the earth from west to east.
- Disturbance means an area of “disturbed” or reduced air pressure.
 - Equilibrium exists in nature due to which the air in a region tries to normalise its pressure.
- In the term “extra-tropical storm”, storm refers to low pressure. “Extra-tropical” means outside the tropics. As the WD originates outside the tropical region, the word “extra-tropical” has been associated with them.

La Niña

- La Niña events represent periods of below-average sea surface temperatures across the east-central Equatorial Pacific.
 - It is indicated by sea-surface temperature decreased by more than 0.9°F for at least five successive three-month seasons.
- The La Nina event is observed when the water temperature in the Eastern Pacific gets comparatively colder than normal, as a consequence of which, there is a strong high pressure over the eastern equatorial Pacific.
- In India, the La Nina is generally responsible for cooler than normal winters and more than normal rainfall.

IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM

REGIONAL RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM (RRTS)

Recently, the officials of Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) estimated that RRTS will reduce CO2 emissions by taking around 1.5 lakh private vehicles off the road.

- The corridor will start from Sarai Kale Khan in Delhi, pass through Ghaziabad, and reach Modipuram in Meerut (Uttar Pradesh).
- The RRTS, the first of its kind in the national capital, will run at a speed of 100 km per hour and commuters will reach Meerut in 50-60 minutes.

Important Points

- The Planning Commission formed a Task Force in 2005 under the Chairmanship of Secretary, Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD) to develop a multi modal transit system for Delhi National Capital Region (NCR).
- This was included in the Integrated Transport Plan for NCR 2032 with special emphasis on Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) connecting regional centres.
- The Task Force identified 8 corridors and prioritised three corridors namely Delhi-Meerut, Delhi-Panipat and Delhi- Alwar for implementation.

About RRTS:

- RRTS is a new, dedicated, high speed, high capacity, comfortable commuter service connecting regional nodes in NCR.
- RRTS is different from conventional Railway as it will provide reliable, high frequency, point to point regional travel at high speed along dedicated path way.
- RRTS is different from metro as it caters to passengers looking to travel a relatively longer distance with fewer stops and at higher speed.

Intended Benefits:

- **Environment Friendly:** The corridor is estimated to reduce 2.5 lakh CO2 tonnes/year of total annual greenhouse gas emissions, making the city a cleaner and a much better place to live.

- **Economic Development:** It is estimated to increase the share of public transportation usage along the corridor from 37% to 63%.
 - High-speed connectivity will result in balanced economic development across the region, leading to economic benefits to all strata of society and many nodes of development rather than all economic activity happening at one place.
- **Sustainable Urbanization:** The project will serve as a demonstration for developing high-capacity rapid urban transit corridors in other urban areas of India.
 - It will help in reducing traffic congestion and total emissions from the transport sector in NCR.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Q1. Start-ups can play a key role to socialise and democratise the availability of healthcare in India. Elucidate (250Words)

Introduction

As the healthcare industry is poised to confront many challenges, even in the face of COVID, startups become a valid and vital part of the industry conversations and movements.

Body

Role of start-ups to socialise and democratise availability of healthcare

- **Access to affordable diagnostics:** Pharmeasy has reduced the cost of medical tests and reached out to even remote locations to take samples.
- **Telemedicine & Telenursing:** With revolutionized use of technology, Telemedicine & Telenursing is growing at a rapid pace.
 - This has increased the accessibility of healthcare to the customers at the finger tips by saving the energy and time in visiting the doctors at their office.
 - Also, this is a strategy in delivering accessible healthcare to rural public.
- **Medical equipment:** A year ago, covid tests costed nearly 2000 while today it is possible to get hold of a Rapid Antigen Test kit for 500 rupees.
- **Low-cost nutritionist:** AI based recommendations on nutrition and calorie intake to consumers on smart phone. Eg: HealthifyMe, tracks calorie intake and provides suitable healthy recipes and tips.
- **Interpreting diagnostic results:** Specialists such as Radiologists or Nuclear medicine experts are rare in tier 2 cities and rural areas. Image processing based has interpretations have become common these days using AI and Machine Learning. Eg: Tricog has InstaECG, the flagship product is a cloud-connected device that helps interpret and analyse ECG reports within just 10 minutes.

Findings

- There is a drastic need of providing low-cost health care delivery to the public, considering the socio-economic status, geographical landmark, skilled man-power.
- The government has taken several steps to encourage start-ups, including reduction in patent filing fees, relaxation in the public procurement norms, fund of funds, and seed fund scheme. This must be further improvised.
- Make in India and Startup India can have healthcare component with better incentives to encourage more innovation and progress.

Conclusion

Startups have been part of healthcare innovations for decades. It's important that they remain part of the conversation, and that we encourage smaller, nimbler organizations to continue to innovate in the ways that they do best. The spirit of the startup is to re-think and embrace their disruptive nature to challenge norms and seek more efficient and higher quality outcomes. This needs to be nurtured through government policies.

DAILY QUIZ

Q1. Consider the following statements.

1. BrahMos is joint collaboration between India and Russia and is capable of being launched from land, sea, sub-sea and air against surface and sea-based targets.
2. Following India's entry into Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), the range of the BrahMos missile is restricted to 300 km.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Q2. Consider the following statements.

1. Henley Passport Index ranks a country's passport according to the number of destinations their holders can access without prior visa and is based on data from International Air Transport Association (IATA).
2. India now has visa-free access to more than 100 countries worldwide.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Q3. Consider the following statements regarding Pangong Lake.

1. Pangong Lake is disputed region between India and China.
2. It is an endorheic lake located in the Western Ladakh.
3. The lake is identified under the Ramsar Convention as a wetland of international importance.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 1, 2
- c) 1, 3
- d) 1, 2, 3

Q4. The government introduced amendments to which of the following laws to introduce electoral bonds?

1. Representation of the People Act of 1951
2. Income Tax Act of 1961
3. Companies Act of 2013

Select the correct answer code:

- a) 1, 2
- b) 1, 3
- c) 2, 3
- d) 1, 2, 3

Q5. While still in their infancy, how are DNA computers better than the conventional silicon-based computers?

1. DNA computer will be capable of storing billions of times more data than a conventional computer.
2. DNA computer will have very powerful computational power than a conventional computer.
3. DNA computer will be many times smaller than a conventional computer.

Select the correct answer code:

- a) 1, 2
- b) 1, 3
- c) 1, 2, 3
- d) 2, 3