

INDIAN HERITAGE**Konark Sun Temple to Run on Solar Energy**

Konark is going to be the first model town in Odisha to shift from grid dependency to green energy. The Odisha government has issued a policy guideline in this regard.

- In May 2020, the central government launched a scheme for solarisation of Konark Sun Temple and Konark town in Odisha.

What are the Guidelines of the Policy?

- Under the guidelines, the state has targeted to generate 2,750 megawatt (MW) from renewable energy sources like the sun, wind, biomass, small hydro and waste-to-energy (WTE), etc. by 2022-end.
- The state also targets to generate 2,200 MW from solar energy and a part of it will be utilised to run the Sun Temple and Konark town on solar energy.
- Konark's transition to renewable energy is part of an ambitious plan by the Union Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE).

How is this step a significant Step and what are related Challenges?

- The shifting from grid to solar energy will help reduce the electricity consumption of the Sun Temple.
- The financial benefit from solar energy will help divert spending on other developmental work of the temple.
- Odisha faces many challenges in setting up huge solar power plants. The state has 480 km of coastline and is prone to regular cyclones. It has so far encountered 10 cyclones including Super Cyclone, Phailin, Hudhud, Titli, Amphan and Fani in 22 years.
- Besides this, land acquisition is another major challenge in setting up solar power plants. While coastal areas are cyclone-prone, some parts of Odisha have dense forests whereas land is expensive in densely-populated areas.

What do we Know about Konark Temple?

- Konark Sun Temple, located in the East Odisha near the sacred city of Puri.
- Built in the 13th century by King Narasimhadeva I (AD 1238-1264). Its scale, refinement and conception represent the strength and stability of the Eastern Ganga Empire as well as the value systems of the historic milieu.
 1. The Eastern Ganga dynasty also known as Rudhi Ganga or Prachya Ganga.
 2. It was the large Indian royal dynasty in the medieval era that reigned from Kalinga from as early as the 5th century to the early 15th century.
 3. The beginnings of what became the Eastern Ganga dynasty came about when Indravarma I defeated the Vishnukundin king.
- The temple is designed in the shape of a colossal chariot.
- It is dedicated to the sun God.
- The Konark temple is widely known not only for its architectural grandeur but also for the intricacy and profusion of sculptural work. It marks the highest point of achievement of Kalinga architecture depicting the grace, the joy and the rhythm of life in all its wondrous variety.
- It was declared a UNESCO world heritage site in 1984.
- There are two rows of 12 wheels on each side of the Konark sun temple. Some say the wheels represent the 24 hours in a day and others say the 12 months.
- The seven horses are said to symbolise the seven days of the week.
- Sailors once called this Sun Temple of Konark, the Black Pagoda because it was supposed to draw ships into the shore and cause shipwrecks.
- Konark is the invaluable link in the history of the diffusion of the cult of Surya, which originating in Kashmir during the 8th century, finally reached the shores of Eastern India.

INTERNATIONAL RELATION**UNGA Resolution on Russia-Ukraine**

Recently, India has abstained at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The resolution called Russia to unconditionally withdraw its troops. The General Assembly session was convened after a similar resolution had failed to pass the U.N. Security Council (UNSC) when Russia exercised its veto.

What are the Key Points of the resolution?

- The resolution, co-sponsored by 96 countries, needed two thirds of those present and voting to support it, for it to pass.
- It condemns the 24th February 2022 ‘special military operation’ by Russia over Ukraine.
- It says no territories acquired through force will be recognised and calls for Russia to “immediately, completely and unconditionally” withdraw from Ukraine.

How much of Ukraine does Russia control?



What is India’s Stand and Concerns?

- India’s Permanent Representative to the UN, T. S. Tirumurti, said that the “safe and uninterrupted passage” of Indian nationals, especially students, was India’s “foremost priority”.
 1. India also called for an “immediate ceasefire” and humanitarian access to conflict areas.
 2. India hoped that the second round of talks between Russia and Ukraine would yield positive results.
- Russia’s actions have left India in an uncomfortable position as it attempts to balance its interests with both Russia and the Western Countries.
- Given its experiences in its own neighbourhood, with China and Pakistan, India is also wary of the implications of not condemning one country unilaterally attempting to change the borders it shares with another.
- India urges that all Member States demonstrate their commitment to the principles of the UN Charter, to international law and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states.
- A number of countries in India’s neighbourhood supported the resolution — Bhutan, Nepal, and the Maldives, for instance. Afghanistan, currently run by a militant organisation (the Taliban), and Myanmar, currently ruled by a junta (military), also voted in favour of it. Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, like India, abstained. China also abstained.

Are UN resolutions binding?

- Resolutions and decisions are formal expressions of the opinion or will of UN organs.
- The nature of the resolution determines if it is considered binding on States.
- Articles 10 and 14 of the UN Charter refer to General Assembly resolutions as "recommendations".
 1. The recommendatory nature of General Assembly resolutions has repeatedly been stressed by the International Court of Justice.
 2. However, some General Assembly resolutions dealing with matters internal to the United Nations, such as budgetary decisions or instructions to lower-ranking organs, are clearly binding.
- In general, resolutions adopted by the Security Council acting under Chapter VII of the Charter, are considered binding, in accordance with Article 25 of the Charter. However, they are subject to veto exercised by permanent members of UNSC.

2.Montreux Convention

Turkey is set to activate the Montreux Convention in response to Russia's War over Ukraine. The declaration that situation in Ukraine had become a war, authorizes Turkey to activate the Montreux Convention and ban Russian war vessels from entering the Black Sea through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits.

What is the Location of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits?

- The Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits, also known as the Turkish Straits or the Black Sea Straits, connect the Aegean Sea and the Black Sea via the Sea of Marmara.
- It is the only passage through which the Black Sea ports can access the Mediterranean and beyond.
- Over three million barrels of oil, about 3% of the daily global supply, mostly produced in Russia, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan, pass through this waterway every day.
- The route also ships large amounts of iron, steel, and agricultural products from the Black Sea coast to Europe and the rest of the world.

What is the Montreux Convention?

- The international agreement was signed by Australia, Bulgaria, France, Greece, Japan, Romania, Yugoslavia, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union and Turkey and has been in effect since November 1936.
- The Montreux Convention Regarding the Regime of the Straits gives Turkey control over the water route between the Black Sea.
 1. Russia has a major navy base at Sevastopol, on the Crimean Peninsula.
 2. However, for ships to move to and from the Mediterranean – and beyond – they have to pass through two straits controlled by Turkey under the Montreux Convention.
- It sets limits on the passage of civilian vessels and military warships through the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus straits. The key elements in the Montreux Convention are:
 1. In the event of a war, the pact gives Turkey the right to regulate the transit of naval warships and to block the straits to warships belonging to the countries involved in the conflict.
 2. Any country with coastline on the Black Sea – Romania, Bulgaria, Georgia, Russia or Ukraine – must notify Turkey eight days in advance of its intention to send vessels of war through the straits. Other countries, the ones that don't border the Black Sea, must give Turkey 15 days' advance notice.
- Turkey has used the convention's powers before. During World War II, Turkey prevented the Axis powers from sending their warships to attack the Soviet Union – and blocked the Soviet navy from participating in combat in the Mediterranean.

What is the Role of Turkey in the Present Crisis?

- In the current situation, the Turkish government finds itself in a difficult position, as both Ukraine and Russia are important partners in critical energy and military trade agreements.
- Turkey, a NATO member since 1952, wants to strengthen its ties with the West while not upsetting Russia. Its control over these key straits may test its balancing act.
- In this context, Turkey has held that it cannot block all Russian warships accessing the Black Sea due to a clause in the pact exempting those returning to their registered base.
- Article 19 of the treaty contains an exception for the countries on the Black Sea that can effectively undermine Turkey's power in blocking the Russian warships entering or exiting the Black Sea. Vessels of war belonging to belligerent powers, whether they are Black Sea Powers or not, which have become separated from their bases, may return thereto.
- This exception provides Russia with an alternate way to exploit the Montreux Convention, which would be to reassign some of its vessels to the Black Sea.

PRELIMS FACT

Dugong Conservation Reserve in Palk Bay

Recently, the Tamil Nadu government has decided to go ahead with the establishment of India's first conservation reserve for the Dugong in Gulf of Mannar, Palk Bay. It facilitates India to act as the leading nation in the South Asia Sub-region with respect to dugong conservation.

What are Dugongs?

About:

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- Dugong (Dugong dugon) also called ‘Sea Cow’ is one of the four surviving species in the Order Sirenia and it is the only existing species of herbivorous mammal that lives exclusively in the sea including in India.
- Dugongs are an important part of the marine ecosystem and their depletion will have effects all the way up the food chain.

Distribution and Habitat: They are found in over 30 countries and in India are seen in the Gulf of Mannar, Gulf of Kutch, Palk Bay, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Conservation Status:

- IUCN Red List status: Vulnerable
- Wild (Life) Protection Act, 1972: Schedule I
- CITES: Appendix I

Threats:

- Dugongs graze on seagrass and the loss of seagrass beds due to ocean floor trawling is one of the most important factors behind decreasing dugong populations in many parts of the world.
 1. Trawling is a method of fishing that involves pulling a fishing net through the water behind one or more boats.
 2. It is harmful to the environment because it damages the seafloor, coral reefs and other marine animals.
- Human activities such as the destruction and modification of habitat, pollution, rampant illegal fishing activities, vessel strikes, unsustainable hunting or poaching and unplanned tourism are the main threats to dugongs. Dugong meat is consumed under the wrong impression that it cools down human body temperature.

Steps Taken for Conservation:

- In February 2020, India hosted the 13th Conference of Parties (CoP) of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), an environmental treaty under the aegis of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
 1. The Government of India has been a signatory to the CMS since 1983.
 2. India has signed non-legally binding Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) with CMS on the conservation and management of Siberian Cranes (1998), Marine Turtles (2007), Dugongs (2008) and Raptors (2016).
- The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change constituted a ‘Task Force for Conservation of Dugongs’ to look into issues related to conservation of dugongs and implementation of the ‘UNEP/CMS Dugong MoU’ in India. It also facilitates India to act as the leading nation in the South Asia Sub-region with respect to dugong conservation.

What are Conservation Reserves?

- Conservation reserves and community reserves are terms denoting protected areas of the country which typically act as buffer zones to or connectors and migration corridors between established national parks, wildlife sanctuaries and reserved and protected forests.
- Such areas are designated as conservation areas if they are uninhabited and completely owned by the Government of India but used for subsistence by communities and community areas if part of the lands are privately owned.
- These protected area categories were first introduced in the Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Act of 2002 – the amendment to the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972.
- These categories were added because of reduced protection in and around existing or proposed protected areas due to private ownership of land and land use.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. As war clouds gather over Ukraine, India faces a dilemma over its diplomatic balancing act, its unwillingness to publicly caution Russia against invading Ukraine, and above all its reluctance to defend Ukraine’s sovereignty. Examine the impact this can have on India. (250 words)

Introduction

As India abstained on a US-sponsored UN Security Council resolution that “deplores in the strongest terms” Russia’s “aggression” against Ukraine, one must look at the reasons behind India’s decision to be quiet on the international forum of security council. India’s statement at the UNSC that appealed for diplomacy and de-escalation, while making no critical comment about Mr. Putin’s announcement is not

just an assertion of India's traditional principled position, or a study in pragmatism but also a reflection of the difficult position New Delhi finds itself in over the conflict, which appears to have now entered a new phase.

Body

Background

- The increasing aggression on part of Russia started with news of eastward expansion of NATO, especially Ukraine's membership to NATO. This would mean deployment of western missiles and weapons in Russia backyard and its borders.
- Russian President Vladimir Putin has played a major move by announcing formal recognition for the Donbas region enclaves (Oblasts) of Donetsk and Luhansk in Eastern Ukraine, one which changes the course of the present diplomatic efforts.
- Post this, Russian troops have started full scale invasion and have reached the capital city Kyiv.
- The recognition of the two separatist groups that control parts of the Donbas region as governments signals that Russia is no longer interested in talks on the basis of the "Minsk accords". The agreements — negotiated in 2014 and 2015, but never fully implemented — had secured a "special status" for the Donbas enclaves.

India's dilemma in strategic balancing

- India did not endorse the harsh language used in the resolution condemning Russia's actions. It wants to maintain a balance between the Western bloc led by the US, and Russia, since it has strategic partners on both sides.
- India's past record has been maintaining balance between the West and Russia. On January 31, India abstained on a procedural vote on whether to discuss the issue of Ukraine.
- New Delhi had then articulated its position on "legitimate security interests" that echoed with a nuanced tilt towards the Russian position, and had abstained along with Kenya and Gabon.
- Despite abstention, India has reiterated and has called for cessation of violence in no ambiguous terms.
- India has also quoted the international charter on sovereignty, highlighting that all nations must respect the same, intended towards Russia.
- For India, Russian ties are important. It must be recalled that Ukraine was against India during 1998 nuclear tests and had spoken against India with issue of Kashmir.

Impact on India

- Food and oil prices: A war in Ukraine will bear down on two important areas—higher food and energy prices.
- Impact on the poor: On both these segments, it is the poor that spend a disproportionately high percentage of their income. Russia produces about 13% of the world's crude and the prices have already reached \$100 per barrel.
- Investment climate: For investors, the world markets are already taking a knocking, and an all-out war will freeze investment and growth.
- India's defence requirements: Though India has cut back on Russian arms imports, Moscow is still at the top

Conclusion

Dialogue is the only answer to settling differences and disputes, however daunting that may appear at this moment. India maintained its "consistent, steadfast and balanced position on the matter". India has been in touch with all sides, urging the parties concerned to return to the negotiating table. By abstaining, India retained the option of reaching out to relevant sides in an effort to bridge the gap and find a middle ground with an aim to foster dialogue and diplomacy.

DAILY QUIZ

Q1. Consider the following statements about PM-CARES Fund :

1. It was set up as a public charitable trust.
2. It can avail donations from the foreign contribution.
3. Prime Minister is the ex-officio Chairman of the PM CARES Fund.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 2 and 3 only

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

Q2. The quadrilateral security dialogue includes

- 1. Japan
- 2. United States
- 3. Australia

Select the correct answer using the code below:

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

Q3. Consider the following statements about Parvatmala Scheme:

- 1. It was announced in the Union Budget for 2022-23 to improve connectivity in hilly areas.
- 2. The scheme is being presently started in regions like Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh.

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

Q4. Consider the following statements about Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary:

- 1. It is part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve.
- 2. It is the only sanctuary of Kerala where sightings of four-horned antelopes have been reported.

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. The Kabini River is one of the major tributaries of the

- a. River Cauvery**
- b. River Krishna
- c. River Godavari
- d. River Pampa