

BIODIVERSITY AND ENVIRONMENT

TAPI-PAR-NARMADA LINK PROJECT

Recently, Tribals protested against the Centre's Tapi-Par-Narmada link Project.

Tapi-Par-Narmada Link Project

- It was envisioned under the 1980 National Perspective Plan under the former Union Ministry of Irrigation and the Central Water Commission (CWC).
- It is one of the 16 link proposals under the Peninsular Rivers Development Component.
- It proposes to link three rivers:
 - ❖ Par: Originating from Nashik in Maharashtra and flowing through Valsad.
 - ❖ Tapi: From Saputara that flows through Maharashtra and Surat in Gujarat.
 - ❖ Narmada: Originating in Madhya Pradesh and flowing through Maharashtra and Bharuch and Narmada districts in Gujarat.
- The project proposes to transfer water from the water surplus regions of Western Ghats to the water deficit regions of Saurashtra and Kutch.

Issues and Concerns

- **Displacement of Tribals:**
 - ❖ Tribals are opposing the project because they will lose their land leading to their displacement.
 - ❖ In case of displacement, they will have to work from scratch to make that barren land into a cultivable one.
- **Income loss:**
 - ❖ With the construction of the reservoirs, tribals' farmland will be submerged and they will lose their income.
- **Federal Challenges:**
 - ❖ Even if tribal problems are resolved and the project is completed, there still will be issues among the states for water sharing and other benefits arising from the Project.
- **Affecting Biodiversity:**
 - ❖ The ecology of every river is unique, and let the waters of two rivers mix may affect biodiversity.
- **Impact of Climate Change:**
 - ❖ Rainfall patterns are changing due to climate change, so the basins now supposed to be surplus might cease to be so in a few years.

Significance of the Project

- **Irrigation Facilities:**
 - ❖ Providing irrigation benefits to the enroute command and Narmada command.
 - ❖ This would save Sardar Sarovar water which will be used to extend irrigation in Saurashtra and Kutch region.
- **Generation of Energy:**
 - ❖ The estimated annual energy to be generated from these powerhouses is of the order of 93 Mkw.
 - ❖ The annual benefits from power generation are estimated to be Rs.5,523 lakhs.
- **Flood Relief/ Disaster Mitigation:**
 - ❖ The reservoirs will provide flood relief to the people residing in downstream areas.

Origin and initiatives of river-linking in India

Background:

- ❖ The idea of interlinking of rivers in the Indian subcontinent is at least 150 years old.
- ❖ During the British Raj in India, Sir Arthur Cotton, a British general and irrigation engineer, first suggested linking the Ganga and the Cauvery for navigational purposes.
- ❖ In the 1970s, the idea of transferring surplus water from a river to a water-deficit area was proposed by the then Union Irrigation Minister (earlier the Jal Shakti Ministry was known as the Ministry of Irrigation).

Creation of National Perspective Plan (NPP):

- It was prepared by the then Ministry of Irrigation (now Ministry of Jal Shakti) in August 1980 for water resources development through the inter-basin transfer of water, for transferring water from water surplus basins to water-deficit basins.
- The NPP comprised **two components**:
 - ❖ **Himalayan Rivers Development:** It envisages the construction of storage reservoirs on the main Ganga and Brahmaputra Rivers and their principal tributaries in India and Nepal

so as to conserve monsoon flows for irrigation and hydro-power generation, besides flood control. Links will transfer surplus flows of the Kosi, Gandak and Ghagra to the west.

- The Brahmaputra-Ganga Link will augment the dry-weather flow of the Ganga.
- Surplus flows that will become available on account of inter-linking of the Ganga and the Yamuna are proposed to be transferred to the drought-prone areas of Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat.

- **Peninsular Rivers Development:** The main component of Peninsular Rivers Development is the “Southern Water Grid” which is envisaged to link Mahanadi, Godavari, Krishna, Pennar, and Cauvery rivers.

- ❖ **The Peninsular component comprises the following four parts:** Diversion of surplus flows of Mahanadi and Godavari to Krishna, Pennar, Cauvery and Vaigai. Diversion of west-flowing rivers of Kerala and Karnataka to the east.

- Under the NPP, the National Water Development Agency (NWDA) has identified 30 links (16 under Peninsular Component and 14 under Himalayan Component) for preparation of Feasibility Reports (FRs).
- The Ken-Betwa Link Project is the first project under the National Perspective Plan (NPP) for the interlinking of rivers.
 - ❖ The project involves the transfer of surplus water from the Ken river in Panna district in Madhya Pradesh to the Betwa river in Uttar Pradesh.
 - ❖ Both these rivers are tributaries of the river Yamuna.

What is the National Interlinking of Rivers Authority (NIRA)?

- It is an independent autonomous body for planning, investigation, financing and the implementation of river interlinking projects in the country.
- It will replace the existing National Water Development Agency (NWDA) and will function as an umbrella body for all river linking projects.
- It is to be headed by a Government of India Secretary-rank officer.

Functions:

- Coordinate with neighbouring countries and concerned states and departments and will also have powers on issues related to the environment, wildlife and forest clearances under river linking projects and their legal aspects.
- It will have the power to raise funds and act as a repository of borrowed funds or money received on deposit or loan given on interest.
- It will also have the power to set up a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) for individual link projects.

INTERNATIONAL RELATION

2ND INDIA-AUSTRALIA VIRTUAL SUMMIT

Recently, the Prime Minister of India and Australia held the 2nd India-Australia Virtual Summit.

Key Highlights

- They reviewed the multi-faceted relationship between the two countries and exchanged views on regional and global developments.
- Both the leaders expressed satisfaction at the progress made under the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership established during the 1st Virtual Summit in June 2020.
- Both sides also agreed to establish annual summits between the Prime Ministers under the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, thus adding a special dimension to the bilateral relationship.
- They expressed their satisfaction at the enhanced scope of the relationship which now covers diverse areas such as trade and investments, defence and security, education and innovation, science and technology, critical minerals, water management, new and renewable energy technology, Covid-19 related research, etc.
- **India thanked Australia for the special gesture in returning 29 ancient artefacts to India.**
 - ❖ These artefacts comprise sculptures, paintings and photographs, across centuries, some dating back to the 9th-10th century, from different parts of India.
 - ❖ The artefacts include 12th century Chola bronzes, 11th-12th century Jain sculptures from Rajasthan, 12th-13th century sandstone Goddess Mahishasura Mardini from Gujarat, 18th-19th century paintings and early gelatin silver photographs.
- Both the leaders also appreciated the increasing strategic convergence between the two countries as fellow democracies with shared values and common interests, which include a free, open, inclusive, and prosperous Indo-Pacific.

- The Australian Prime Minister expressed his understanding of India's position on the crisis in Ukraine and he and PM Narendra Modi felt that the conflict should not be a reason for diverting attention from the Indo-Pacific.
- The two leaders also discussed the situation along the India-China Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh.

India-Australia Relations

Historical

- The historical ties between India and Australia started immediately following European settlement in Australia from 1788.
- All trade to and from the penal colony of New South Wales was controlled by the British East India Company through Kolkata.
- India and Australia established diplomatic relations in the pre-Independence period, with the establishment of India Trade Office in Sydney in 1941.
- The end of the Cold War and simultaneously India's decision to launch major economic reforms in 1991 provided the first positive move towards development of closer ties between the two nations.

Strategic partnership:

- The India-Australia bilateral relationship has undergone evolution in recent years, developing along a positive track, into a strategic partnership.
- Australia looks at India as an important partner in promoting regional security and stability.
- This led to upgradation of the bilateral relationship to a Strategic Partnership, including a Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation in 2009.
- The two nations have much in common, underpinned by shared values of a pluralistic, Westminster-style democracies, Commonwealth traditions, expanding economic engagement and increasing high level interaction.
- The long-standing people-to-people ties, ever increasing Indian students coming to Australia for higher education, growing tourism and sporting links have played a significant role in further strengthening bilateral relations between the two countries.

Bilateral Engagement:

- Bilateral mechanisms include high-level visits, Annual Meetings of Prime Ministers, Foreign Ministers' Framework Dialogue, Joint Trade and Commerce Ministerial Commission, India-Australia '2+2' Foreign Secretaries and Defence Secretaries Dialogue, Defence Policy Talks, Australia-India Education Council, Defence Services Staff Talks, etc.

Multilateral Engagement:

- Both countries have close cooperation in multilateral fora like Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and G20.
- The Quadrilateral Framework (QUAD) of India and Australia along with the US and Japan emphasize the collective resolve to maintain a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region.

Bilateral Trade:

- India is the 5th largest trade partner of Australia with trade in goods and services at A\$ 29 billion representing 3.6% share of the total Australian trade in 2017-18, with export at A\$ 8 billion and import at A\$ 21 billion.
- Overall trade increased 13.1% on a yoy basis. While imports increased 9.7% on a yoy basis, export increased by an impressive 23.3% although on a lower base.
- India's main exports to Australia are Refined Petroleum, medicaments, Railway vehicles including hover-trains, Pearls & Gems, Jewellery, made up textile articles, while our major imports are Coal, copper ores & concentrates, Gold, vegetables, wool & other animal hair, fruits and nuts, lentils and education related services.
- The two countries are also discussing a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA)
- India Australia Circular Economy (I-ACE) Hackathon 2021 was an effort to strengthen bilateral innovations in Circular Economy.

S&T:

- An Australia-India Strategic Research Fund (AISRF), which was established in 2006, supports scientists in India and Australia to collaborate on leading-edge research.
- AISRF consists of India Australia Biotechnology Fund; India-Australia Science & Technology Fund; Grand Challenge Fund and Fellowship Schemes.

Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement:

- It was signed between the two countries in September 2014 during the visit of the Australian Prime Minister to India.
- The Australian Parliament passed the Civil Nuclear Transfer to India Bill 2016 which ensures that Uranium mining companies in Australia may fulfil contracts to supply Australian uranium to India for civil use.

Defence:

- In 2014, both sides decided to extend defence cooperation to cover research, development and industry engagement and agreed to hold regular meetings at the level of the Defence Minister conduct regular maritime exercises and convene regular service-to-service talks
- The first-ever Bilateral Maritime Exercise, AUSINDEX, was conducted in Visakhapatnam (Bay of Bengal) in September 2015.
- In 2018, the Indian Air Force participated for the first time in the Exercise Pitch Black in Australia.
- INS Sahyadri participated in Kakadu, the biennial exercise of the Australian Navy held in 2018, in which 27 nations participated.
- The 4th edition of AUSTRAHIND (Special Forces of Army Exercise) was held in September 2019.

Environment:

- It is an area where there is great opportunity for India and Australia to work together since both countries had similar commitments.
- The flagship program of National Innovation for Climate Resilient Agriculture and collaboration with the research organisations of Australia.

Indian Community:

- The Indian community in Australia continues to grow in size and importance, with a population of nearly half seven lakhs.
- India is now the third-largest source of immigrants to Australia, after the UK and New Zealand and the largest source of skilled professionals for Australia.
- There is a constant flow of students and tourists from India.
- The growing significance of the community is reflected in the large-scale celebration of Indian festivals in Australia, especially Deepawali.

IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM

NEW INDIA LITERACY PROGRAMME (NILP)

Recently, the Union of India has approved a "New India Literacy Programme (NILP)".

About NILP

- It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme with the aim to support the States and Union Territories in promoting literacy among non-literates in the age group of 15 and above, across the country covering 5 crore non-literates during the implementation period from 2022-23 to 2026-27.
- The scheme has been approved with a financial outlay of Rs.1037.90 crore including Central share of Rs.700.00 crore and State share of Rs.337.90 crore.
- The scheme has five components namely, Foundational Literacy and Numeracy, Critical Life Skills, Vocational Skills Development, Basic Education and Continuing Education.

The salient features of the NILP are

- Involvement of school students**, pre-service students of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), school teachers, Anganwadi and ASHA workers, NYKS, NSS, NCC volunteers
- School to be unit for implementation of the scheme
- Use of ICT and online implementation** of the scheme through 'Online Teaching Learning and Assessment System' (OTLAS)
- Material and resources through digital modes, viz, TV, radio, cell phone-based free/open-source Apps/portals, etc.
- Assessment tests** to be conducted in schools by State/UTs and evaluation of learners by NIOS/SIOS; assessment on demand through OTLAS and generation of e-certificates
- Sample achievement survey
- Online MIS.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Q1. Reviving the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is essential to avoid nuclear weapons and proliferation risks as well as promote west Asian geopolitical security and boost global economic considerations. Analyse. (250 words)

Introduction

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was the result of prolonged negotiations from 2013 and 2015 between Iran and P5+1 (China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States). It happened due to the backchannel talks between the US (President Barack Obama) and Iran, quietly brokered by Oman, in an attempt to repair the accumulated mistrust since the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Post Trump presidency, USA pulled out of the deal and made it dysfunctional. Recently, the US has restored sanctions waivers to Iran to allow international nuclear cooperation projects, as indirect American-Iranian talks on reviving the 2015 international nuclear deal. Once again, Russia-Ukraine war spells doom on the entire exercise of Vienna talks.

Body

About JCPOA and present status

- Under its terms, Iran agreed to dismantle much of its nuclear program and open its facilities to more extensive international inspections in exchange for billions of dollars' worth of sanctions relief.
- The JCPOA went into effect in January 2016. It imposes restrictions on Iran's civilian nuclear enrichment program.
- The deal was proposed so that it would help prevent a revival of Iran's nuclear weapons program and thereby reduce the prospects for conflict between Iran and its regional rivals, including Israel and Saudi Arabia.
- However, the deal has been in trouble since President Donald Trump withdrew the United States from it in 2018.
- In retaliation for the U.S. departure and deadly attacks on prominent Iranians in 2020, including one by the United States, Iran has resumed some of its nuclear activities.

Need for revival of JCPOA

- After the U.S.'s withdrawal, Iran started enriching uranium to a higher purity and installing advanced centrifuges at its nuclear plants.
- Preventing nuclear weapon proliferation:** Now, nuclear experts believe Iran is just months away from having enough high purity uranium to make a nuclear bomb, though the Iranian leadership has repeatedly claimed that it has no plan to make one.
- Easing rising fuel prices:** Removing sanctions on Iran and letting Iran's oil enter the global market could also ease oil and gas prices, which shot up after the Russian attack on Ukraine.
- Boost to Regional Connectivity:** Removing sanctions may revive India's interest in the Chabahar option, Bandar Abbas port, and other plans for regional connectivity.
- This would further help India to neutralize the Chinese presence in Gwadar port, Pakistan.
- Apart from Chabahar, India's interest in the International North-South Transit Corridor (INSTC), which runs through Iran, which will improve connectivity with five Central Asian republics, may also get a boost.
- Energy Security:** Due to the pressure linked to the US' Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), India has to bring down oil imports to zero.

Conclusion

Nations must ensure that one nation such as Russia to not jeopardize the whole nuclear deal which has global repercussions especially in times of low economic growth and post pandemic price stability. Antagonistic relations in middle east may ease due to lifting of severe sanctions against Iran. This will also have a direct impact on India-Iran relations. Hence, success of Vienna talks has lot of leverage for India as well as the whole world.the other.

DAILY QUIZ

Q1. With reference to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), consider the following statements:

- It was established by the First Islamic Summit Conference held in Saudi Arabia in September 1969.
- It is the world's second-largest inter-governmental organization after the United Nations.
- Russia, US and India have been given observer status.

Which of the given above statements are not correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only
(b) 2 only
(c) 1 and 2 only
(d) only 1

Q2. With reference to Himalayan Griffon Vulture, consider the following statements:

- It lives mainly in the higher regions of the Himalayas and the Tibetan Plateau at the elevation of above 1500 metres.

2. It is listed as vulnerable by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Q3. Consider the following countries:

- 1. Denmark
- 2. Japan
- 3. Russian Federation
- 4. United Kingdom
- 5. United States of America

Which of the above are the members of the 'Arctic Council'?

- (a) 1 and 4 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) **1, 3 and 5**
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA):

- 1. It ensures unskilled manual work as guaranteed employment in a financial year.
- 2. It is implemented in all rural districts of the country.
- 3. The Act provides a legal right to employment for adult members of rural households.

Which of the following statements is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) **1, 2 and 3**

Q5. What are the factors that determine Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)

- 1. Pre-agriculture level of technology
- 2. Stagnant or declining population
- 3. Extremely low literacy
- 4. Subsistence level of the economy.

Which of the following options is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 4 only
- (c) 1 and 2 only
- (d) **1, 2, 3 and 4**