

INTERNATIONAL RELATION**COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT (CEPA) BETWEEN INDIA AND THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE)**

The Union Minister of Commerce and Industry announced the unveiling of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) at a press conference held during his visit to the United Arab Emirates.

What is CEPA?

- It is a kind of free trade pact that covers negotiation on the trade in services and investment, and other areas of economic partnership.
- India has signed CEPAs with South Korea and Japan.

India-UAE CEPA trade deal

- The new strategic economic agreement will increase bilateral trade in goods to \$100 billion in five years (2022-27) of the signed agreement and increase trade in services to \$15 billion.
- The Agreement is a comprehensive agreement which will cover:
 - ❖ Trade in Goods, Rules of Origin,
 - ❖ Trade in Services,
 - ❖ Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT),
 - ❖ Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures,
 - ❖ Dispute Settlement,
 - ❖ Movement of Natural Persons,
 - ❖ Telecom,
 - ❖ Customs Procedures,
 - ❖ Pharmaceutical products,
 - ❖ Government Procurement,
 - ❖ IPR, Investment,
 - ❖ Digital Trade and Cooperation in other Areas.
- It will include a digital trade element, which is a first of its kind for both countries.
- The United Arab Emirates is India's third largest trading partner and second largest export destination.
 - ❖ The UAE is also the eight largest investor in India with an estimated investment of US\$ 18 billion.
- Bilateral trade between India and the UAE stood at \$43.3 billion in 2020-21.
 - ❖ Exports were \$16.7 billion, and imports, driven by oil, pushed the balance in favor of the UAE at \$26.7 billion in 2020-21.

Issues/ Challenges**Lack of negotiations:**

- A free trade agreement with the GCC comprising Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE, Oman, Qatar and Bahrain as its members was first envisaged in 2007, but got stuck after a couple of rounds of negotiations.

Lacking Global Giant Experience:

- Despite being a US \$2.5 trillion economy, Indian businesses are small in size. In fact, none of the Indian business giants come close to the big global conglomerates that have the capacity, infrastructure and experience to handle huge investments.

Procedural Issues:

- Including lack of planning, lack of complete information, bureaucratic bottlenecks continue to remain a challenge for foreign investors despite significant efforts by the government in this direction to make investments easy and convenient.

Legal Issues:

- Legal problems have in the past dampened foreign investments from coming to India. For example, the investments from UAE's Etisalat and Etihad had got stuck in legal problems, thus dampening investor enthusiasm. While checks and regulations are needed, better streamlining of the procedures and processes help in avoiding such problems.

Political Will:

- There are challenges pertaining to political diversions, especially when an election year is approaching.
- India has a tendency to become focused inward and in the process, ignore foreign policy.
- The UAE with an appetite for large-scale investments needs to be continuously engaged.

Significance of the deal

- **Enhanced market access:** The agreement will provide significant benefits to Indian and UAE businesses, including enhanced market access and reduced tariffs.
- The CEPA will boost bilateral trade from the current \$60 billion to \$100 billion in the next 5 years.
- India welcomed investment from the Gulf country into Jammu and Kashmir that would open new routes for regional trade and connectivity and advance the collective interests of India, Israel, the UAE and the United States.
- The deepening of the relationship with the UAE would also help Indian exporters gain access to other West Asian countries, Africa and some parts of Europe.
- **Digital trade:** Early harvest agreement would likely include a chapter on digital trade which would be aimed at enhancing cooperation between the two countries on digital trade in the future.
 - ❖ Digital trade is likely to include frameworks on paperless trading, digital payments and online consumer protection, as well as address issues such as intellectual property rights in digital trade, and challenges to small and medium enterprises.
- The UAE hopes to get enhanced market access in India for its petrochemicals, metals and dates.
- Indian goods will flow to the other GCC countries as the UAE has no customs barriers.
- Energy ties: UAE is India's third largest supplier of crude oil and second largest supplier of LPG and LNG. Renewable energy is the next stop for bilateral energy ties.
- It may also give a boost to India's jewellery exports.
- It is expected to create new jobs, raise living standards, and provide wider social and economic opportunities in both nations.

Way Ahead

The India-UAE CEPA will further cement the already deep, close and strategic relations between the two countries and will create new employment opportunities, raise living standards, and improve the general welfare of the peoples of the two countries. Further, both countries need to identify clear areas of focus and establish ways of working together to resolve trade remedy cases.

BIODIVERSITY AND ENVIRONMENT**NSAIDS THREAT TO VULTURE POPULATION**

Recently, the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) wrote a letter urging the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) to ban the use of three veterinary drugs known to kill vultures in the country.

Major Issues highlighted by Letter

- The letter warns that the rampant use of the three non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS) threatens to undo the Centre's two decades of work to arrest the dwindling vulture population in the wild.
- Surprisingly, the three drugs—aceclofenac, ketoprofen and nimesulide—were introduced as alternatives to diclofenac
 - ❖ India banned it in 2006 for animal use because it caused widespread vulture deaths.
- India has slowed down vulture mortality rate, but not stabilised the population.
 - ❖ Vultures were quite common till the 1980s. Currently, eight species in the country face extinction.
- The country's vulture population crashed from over 40,000 in 2003 to 18,645 in 2015, as per the last vulture census conducted by intergovernmental body Bird Life International.

About Vultures

- Vultures are one of the 22 species of large carrion-eating birds that live predominantly in the tropics and subtropics.
- India is home to nine species of vultures

Vulture Population in India

- The decline in vulture populations came into limelight in the mid-90s.
- India has lost 99 per cent of the population of the three species — Oriental White-Backed Vulture, Long-billed Vulture and Slender-billed Vulture.
- The Red-headed and the Egyptian Vulture populations have also crashed by 91 percent and 80 per cent respectively.

VANISHING VULTURES

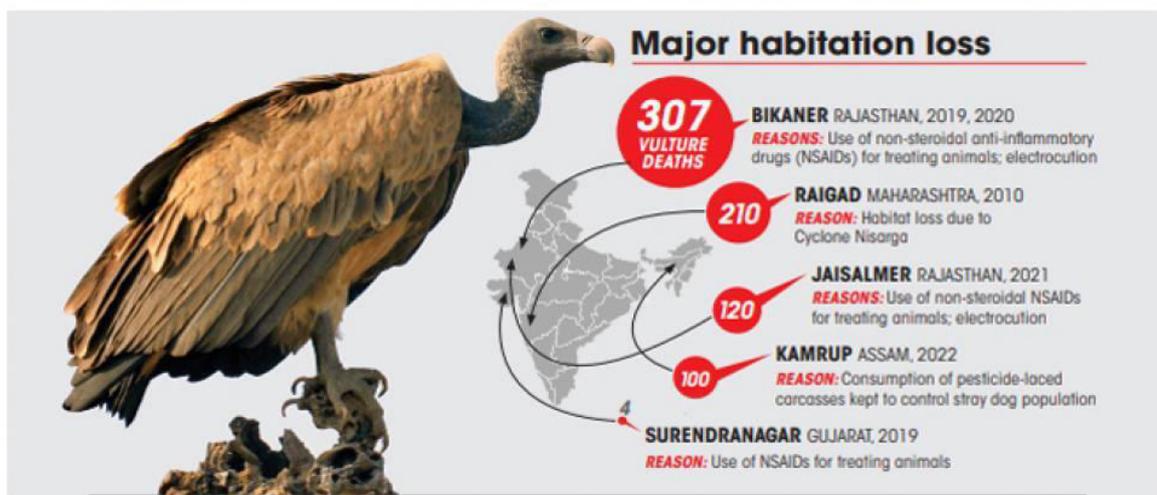
High mortality hinders India's plans of stabilising its vulture population

53% drop in India's vulture population since 2003



The fatal four

DICLOFENAC	ACECLOFENAC	NIMESULIDE	KETOPROFEN
was banned for veterinary use in 2006 to arrest the shrinking vulture population	gets converted into diclofenac within hours of administration to cattle	causes visceral gout and renal failure in vultures within 30 hours of ingestion	causes death in vultures within 48 hour after ingestion due to heightened toxicity levels



Importance of Vultures

- They act an important function as nature's garbage collectors and help to keep the environment clean of waste.
- Vultures are carcass feeders & play a significant role in the natural mechanism of infection control.
- Despite feeding on infected carcasses, vultures do not get infected. The acids in their stomach are potent enough to kill the pathogen.
- They remove bacteria and other poisons in the environment quickly, consuming carcasses before they decay.
- The birds also prevent the contamination of water sources, especially in the wild.
 - When animals die near watering holes, there is an imminent danger of contamination resulting in a quick spread of infections and mass death.
- Vultures are critically important to the Parsi community. The community leaves its dead atop the Towers of Silence to be consumed by vultures.
 - The Parsis may have turned to other methods, including solar accelerators to hasten the decomposition of the dead, but none has proved as efficient or as hygienic as vultures.

Threats Faced by them

- Use of Diclofenac: It was found that vultures, which are exposed to diclofenac after feeding on the carcass of dead farm animals, died of kidney failure.
- Lack of Nesting Trees : Cutting down trees for agriculture, urbanisation and firewood purposes, a cause of habitat degradation is a threat to the nesting sites of vultures.
 - Fire and grazing also decrease the safe roosting and nesting sites of vultures.
- Electrocution by power lines
- Food Dearth and Contaminated Food
- Pesticide poisoning also threatens vultures across the country.
- Train collision was a major reason for vulture deaths in Jaisalmer and Bikaner.
 - Stray cows would often forage near the railway tracks and get hit by trains. Then vultures would come to eat the carcasses and get run over by trains

- Human activities and traffic on the roads is a cause of concern as vultures may feed on roads making them prone to accidents

Conservation efforts

- The Centre in 2020 launched a Vulture Action Plan 2020-25 for the conservation of vultures in the country.
- The Drugs Controller General of India has banned the veterinary use of diclofenac.
- The Central Zoo Authority (CZA) and Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) also established the Vulture Conservation Breeding Programme.
- The MoEFCC released the Action Plan for Vulture Conservation 2006 with the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) banning the veterinary use of diclofenac in the same year.
- The country is also a signatory to the Convention on Migratory Species' Multi-species Action Plan to Conserve African-Eurasian Vultures, which recognises NSAIDS as a major threat to vultures in India. Still, little seems to have moved on the ground.
- In 2015, Tamil Nadu became the first state to ban the veterinary use of ketoprofen in Nilgiri, Erode and Coimbatore districts.

Way Ahead

- Cowsheds should maintain medical records and note down the time of death of their animals. The treatment should decide whether the body is to be cremated or sent to a dumping ground.
- Creating awareness among the cattle owners is the only way to prevent deliberate poisoning aimed towards eliminating problematic large carnivores.
- There is a need for the strict implementation of the Insecticide Act 1968 to regulate the use of pesticides.

IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM

Q1. MEDIUM RANGE SURFACE TO AIR MISSILE (MRSAM)

- Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) conducted two successful flight tests of the Indian Army version of Medium Range Surface to Air Missile (MRSAM) at Integrated Test Range, Chandipur off the coast of Odisha .

About

- The flight tests were carried out as part of the live firing trials against high-speed aerial targets.
- The missiles intercepted the aerial targets and destroyed them completely, registering direct hits at both the ranges.
- The first launch was to intercept a medium altitude long range target and second launch was for proving the capability of a low altitude short range target.

About MRSAM

- This MRSAM version is a Surface-to-Air Missile developed jointly by DRDO and Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI), Israel for use by the Indian Army.
- The MRSAM Army weapon system comprises multi-function radar, mobile launcher system and other vehicles.
- The flight tests were carried out with the weapon system in deliverable configuration.
- The performance of the weapon system was validated through the flight data captured by range instruments like radars, electro-optical tracking systems and telemetry deployed by ITR, Chandipur.

Q2. World Earth Hour

- Every year on March 26, is observed as the World Earth Hour. The topic for Earth Hour 2022 will be "Shape Our Future."

What is Earth Hour?

About:

- It is a global grassroots movement uniting people to take action on environmental issues and protect the planet.
- It is organized by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF).
- It was started as a lights out event in Sydney, Australia in 2007.
- The annual Earth Hour lights out event is held worldwide toward the end of March to encourage individuals, households, communities and businesses to turn off their non-essential lights for one hour.

Aim:

- To increase awareness and spark global conversations on protecting nature not only to combat the climate crisis but to ensure human health, happiness, prosperity and even survival.
- Difference between Earth Hour and Earth Day

- Earth Hour stands as a climate change initiative where people reduce their electricity usage. Earth Day (April 22) celebrates our natural environment by inspiring people to plant trees, recycle regularly and keep the planet tidy.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Q1. 2. A permanent and sustainable solution which is mutually acceptable to both sides is needed to resolve decades long fishing issue between India and Sri Lanka. Comment. (150 words)

Introduction

- In line with the “Neighborhood First” approach and the “Sagar” doctrine, New Delhi attaches “a special priority” to its relations with Colombo. However, fishermen issues are persisting since a long time. Palk Bay, a narrow strip of water separating the State of Tamil Nadu from the Northern Province of Sri Lanka is a rich fishing ground for both countries and continues to be the disputed space. The major issue is the ongoing disagreement over the territorial rights of the island of Katchatheevu.

Body

Fishermen issues: Major concerns

- Sri Lanka has accused Indian fishermen of frequent poaching in the island nation’s waters, and damaging the marine environment through frequent trawling.
 - ❖ As in the past, fishermen from Rameswaram and nearby coasts continue to sail towards Talaimannar and Katchatheevu coasts, a region famous for rich maritime resources in Sri Lanka.
 - ❖ Plenty of catch in this oceanic region had triggered a proliferation of fishing trawlers in Tamil Nadu coast in the past three decades.
 - ❖ There were many favourable reasons too for Indian fishermen as their access to Sri Lankan waters was easier at the time of Sri Lankan civil war.
- **Bottom trawling:** In July 2017, Sri Lanka became the first Asian country to ban the aggressive method of fishing and declared it an offence by unanimously passing an amendment to the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Act, attracting a fine of LKR 50,000 with two years of imprisonment. Since then, many Indians were jailed.
- **Political issue:** While the conflict is multi-layered, its political dimension has tended to overshadow other important factors.
- It has been often a sensitive political issue in Tamil Nadu in the past one decade.
- **Indians jailed:** In particular, Indian analysts say, the trauma faced by the families of fishermen detained in foreign jails hasn’t received much attention.
 - ❖ It is pertinent that in most cases, the arrested fisher-folk have been the sole earners for their families.
 - ❖ Their incarceration in Sri Lankan jails has inflicted trauma and suffering on their families.
- **Katchatheevu issue:** While the unpopular truth in the entire conflict is accusations about Tamil fishermen entering Sri Lankan waters, ownership of Katchatheevu island, where Tamil fishermen had traditional fishing rights for centuries, also remains an unresolved issue.

Resolution of fishermen issues

- The department of ocean development and ministry of agriculture have to ensure assistance to the states so that fishermen are able to find alternative livelihood to fishing in Palk Bay.
- The Sri Lankan Fisheries and Aquatic Resource Minister appointed a three-member committee to find a lasting solution to the issue.
- According to the minister, India had accepted a draft solution submitted by Sri Lanka in January last year, but further progress was halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Sri Lanka had suggested joint patrols and operations between the two countries to guarantee effective results on illegal fishing and trespassing. There is an immediate need to sign a protocol for joint patrolling.
- If both countries are unable to settle the dispute, then they could seek assistance from international maritime experts.
- The Indian government has renewed the thrust on ocean economy in recent times with the PM signing MoU on ocean economy with Sri Lanka, Mauritius and Maldives in 2015.
- Both countries have agreed on certain practical arrangements to deal with the issue of bona fide fishermen of either side crossing the International Maritime Boundary Line. Through these arrangements, it has been possible to deal with the issue of detention of fishermen in a humane manner.
- India and Sri Lanka have agreed to set up a Joint Working Group (JWG) on Fisheries between the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers’ Welfare of India and Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development of Sri Lanka as the mechanism to help find a permanent solution to the fishermen issue.

Conclusion

Despite having met more than once since 2016, a solution is yet to be finalized. Irrespective of the circumstances, a potential solution to the dispute relies on the response from the respective governments of India and Sri Lanka. There is a glaring need for institutionalisation of fishing in Indian waters by the government of India so that alternative means of livelihood are provided. Government will have to mark up a comprehensive plan to reduce the dependence of Indian fishermen on catch from Palk Bay.

DAILY QUIZ

Q1. With reference to T cells, consider the following statements:

1. They are a diverse and important group of lymphocytes.
2. They play a vital role in both components of active immunity.
3. They cannot recognize soluble, free antigens.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) 1, 2 and 3

(b) 2 only

(c) 1 and 2 only

(d) only 3

Q2. With reference to India's Space Economy, consider the following statements

1. The estimated size of India's space economy as a percentage of the GDP has shown a growth in 2020-21 as compared to 2011-12.
2. In relation to GDP, India's spending is more than that of China, Germany, Italy and Japan, but less than the U.S. and Russia.

Which of the following statements is/are correct?

(a) None of these

(b) 2 only

(c) 1 and 2 only

(d) only 1

Q3. Which of the following organisations has released the Export Preparedness Index 2021?

(a) NITI Aayog

(b) Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry

(c) Ministry of Commerce and Industry

(d) Federation of Indian Export Organisations

Q4. With reference to VRR (variable refresh rate), consider the following statements

1. Refresh rate is the number of times a display is capable of refreshing in a minute.
2. The Lower the refresh rate, the better the quality of the viewing experience.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

(a) Neither 1 nor 2

(b) 2 only

(c) 1 and 2 only

(d) only 1

Q5. With reference to MRSAM, sometimes seen in the news, consider the following statements:

1. It is a Surface-to-Air Missile.
2. It is developed jointly by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and Dassault Aviation of France.
3. It comprises a multi-function radar and mobile launcher system.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) 1, 2 and 3

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) only 3