

DISASTER MANAGEMENT**DROUGHT IN NUMBERS 2022: UN REPORT**

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) recently presented the Drought in Numbers, 2022 report at the ongoing 15th Conference of Parties (CoP15) which highlighted India's vulnerability to droughts.

- The report assessment analysed droughts and their impacts on life and livelihood over 122 years covering 196 countries.

Highlights of the Report**Indian scenario:**

- India has featured in the assessment as one of severely drought-impacted countries.
 - Nearly two-thirds of the country suffered drought during 2020-2022.
 - India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) reduced by 2 to 5 percent between 1998 and 2017 due to severe droughts in the country.
- Many parts of India fall under the list of regions that are vulnerable to drought globally.
- Geographically, India's drought vulnerability compares with that of sub-Saharan Africa.
- India features on the Global Drought Vulnerability Index, which is part of the assessment.

Global scenario:

- Droughts in between 1998 and 2017 caused economic losses of approximately \$124 billion.
- The number and duration of droughts around the world have increased by an alarming 29% since 2000.
- An entire new generation is growing up being "water scarce".
- Climate change alone will cause 129 countries to experience an increase in drought exposure in the next few decades.
- The report notes that women and girls in emerging and developing countries may spend up to 40 per cent of their caloric intake fetching water.

COP15 of UNCCD

- 15th Conference of Parties (COP15) is currently underway in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.
 - The UNCCD's 197 parties, which include 196 member States as well as the European Union are the part of the conference.
- The COP15 theme, 'Land. Life. Legacy: From scarcity to prosperity', is a call to action to ensure land, the lifeline on this planet, continues to benefit present and future generations. ?
- Drought, land restoration, and related aspects such as land rights, gender equality and youth empowerment are among the top considerations at COP15.
- A major point of discussion of the conference is to chalk out a plan to restore a billion hectares of degraded land by 2030.
 - Some 128 countries have pledged to UNCCD to achieve land degradation neutrality.

What is Drought?

- Drought is a prolonged dry period in the natural climate cycle that can occur anywhere in the world.
- It is a slow-onset disaster characterized by the lack of precipitation, resulting in a water shortage.
- In recent decades, drought has emerged as one of the biggest drivers of human life loss and economic loss among weather-related disasters.
- By 2030, or in the next eight years, drought will potentially displace an estimated 700 million people worldwide.

Effects of the increasing droughts**Environmental Impacts:**

- Losses or destruction of fish and wildlife habitat
- Lack of food and drinking water for wild animals
- Increased stress on endangered species or even extinction.
- Increase in disease in wild animals.
- Migration of wildlife.
- Lower water levels in reservoirs, lakes, and ponds; loss of wetlands
- More wildfires
- Wind and water erosion of soils
- Poor soil quality

Social impacts:

- Health problems because of low water flows, poor water quality and dust
- Threat to public safety and loss of human life due to an increased number of forest and range fires
- Reduced incomes
- Human migrations

Economic impacts:

- Most affected would be agriculture and allied industries.
- Rise in the prices of foodstuffs and overall inflation.

Way Forward

- The Ministry of Water Resources is involved in drought management mainly on policy guidelines, monitoring and technical and financial assistance.
- Integrated farming systems and non-agricultural developments may also be considered for livelihood support and poverty alleviation.
- Policy intervention is also made facilitating relaxation in project clearances, funding etc. for drought-prone areas.
- The Integrated Drought Management Programme (IDMP) and its partners have adopted three pillars of drought management:
 - Drought monitoring and early warning systems to determine drought status.
 - Vulnerability and impact assessment to determine who and what are at risk and why.
 - Mitigation, drought preparedness, and response to set out actions and measures to mitigate drought impacts and to prepare to respond to drought emergencies.

IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM

1. Kanheri Caves

Recently, the Union Minister for Tourism inaugurated a group of tourist amenities at Kanheri Caves.

About Kanheri Caves

Meaning:

- Kanhagiri in ancient inscriptions literally means Black Mountain.

Location:

- The Kanheri Caves are a group of caves and rock-cut monuments in the forests of the Sanjay Gandhi National Park in Mumbai.
- This establishment was also connected with many trade centres, such as the ports of Sopara, Kalyan, Nasik, Paithan and Ujjain.

Buddhist sculptures:

- They contain Buddhist sculptures and relief carvings, paintings and inscriptions, dating from the 1st century to the 10th century CE.
- Most of the caves were Buddhist viharas, meant for living, studying, and meditating.

Sanjay Gandhi National Park:

- It is a protected area in Mumbai.
- The park is also home to a small population of leopards.
- The karvi shrub as it is locally called only blooms once in eight years in a mass flowering covering the forest floor in lavender blush.

2. What is the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework?

- United States President Joe Biden, embarked on an East Asia trip that will see him touch down first in Seoul and in Tokyo on Sunday ahead of the May 24 Quad summit, is expected to launch his Administration's much discussed Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) in the Japanese capital along with Prime Minister Kishida Fumio.
- According to an "insight" paper on IPEF put out by the US Congressional Research Service in February, the IPEF is not a traditional trade agreement. Rather, it would include different modules covering "fair and resilient trade, supply chain resilience, infrastructure and decarbonization, and tax and anticorruption".
- Countries would have to sign up to all of the components within a module, but do not have to participate in all modules.
- The "fair and resilient trade" module will be led by the US Trade Representative and include digital, labor, and environment issues, with some binding commitments. The IPEF will not include market access commitments such as lowering tariff barriers, as the agreement is "more of an

Administrative arrangement”, and Congressional approval, which is a must for trade agreements, is not mandatory for this.

- The IPEF is also seen as a means by which the US is trying to regain credibility in the region after former President Donald Trump pulled out of the Trans Pacific Partnership TPP). Since then, there has been concern over the absence of a credible US economic and trade strategy to counter China’s economic influence in the region.
- China is an influential member of the TPP, and has sought membership of its successor agreement Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement on Trans Pacific Partnership. It is also in the 14-member Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, of which the US is not a member (India withdrew from RCEP). The Biden Administration is projecting IPEF as the new US vehicle for re-engagement with East Asia and South East Asia.
- Japan has welcomed the IPEF, and Thailand announced earlier to join the negotiations
- Australia and New Zealand may also join. South Korea, Philippines and Singapore have expressed cautious interest.
- Biden is expected to invite India to join negotiations for the IPEF when he meets Prime Minister on the sidelines of the Quad summit. India is the only member of the grouping that has said nothing about it.
- India is yet to decide on the proposal.

Some areas proposed in the IPEF do not appear to serve India’s interests. For example, the IPEF talks about digital governance but the IPEF formulation contains issues that directly conflict with India’s stated position. Amongst these are the prohibition / restrictions on cross-border data flows and data localization requirements, including for financial services; the prohibition of the levying of customs duties on digital products distributed electronically; promotion of the interoperability of privacy rules and related enforcement regimes, such as the APEC Cross-Border Privacy Rule, while respecting U.S. federal and state privacy laws and regulations.

3. How Joe Biden is countering the US baby formula shortage

- Amid a major nationwide shortage of **baby formula**, US President Joe Biden **invoked a Korean War-era law** to ramp up domestic production, and announced that he will be deploying commercial planes to import supplies as part of a mission dubbed ‘Operation Fly Formula’.
- For the last few months, the US has been gripped by a shortage of baby formula that has left thousands of parents across the country scrambling to find the product they rely on to feed their infants. While the production of formula was already affected by pandemic-related supply chain blockages, the crisis was exacerbated when one of the country’s biggest baby formula producers recalled its products after several babies began falling ill.

What is the law Joe Biden invoked to address the baby formula shortage?

- The Biden administration responded to the shortage by invoking the Defense Production Act, which was first implemented during the Korean War to help meet the growing demand for defence equipment.
- Enacted in 1950, it allows the president to direct companies to prioritise supplying products for the nation’s defense. It also prevents price gouging in times of shortage and inflation, and gives the president the power to incentivise the expansion of production.
- With the Biden administration’s latest move, suppliers of key formula ingredients will have to prioritise the delivery of these resources to formula manufacturers.
- Previously, both Biden and former president Donald Trump invoked the law during the Covid-19 pandemic to ramp up the production of crucial medical supplies and vaccines.

Baby formula shortage: What is ‘Operation Fly Formula’?

- To speed up the import of baby formula, Biden also announced a new operation, dubbed ‘Operation Fly Formula’, under which cargo aircraft under contracts with the Defence department will be authorised to fly formula supplies that meet federal standards from overseas to the US.
- “Bypassing regular air freighting routes will speed up the importation and distribution of formula and serve as an immediate support as manufacturers continue to ramp up production.

What led to the baby formula shortage in the US?

- While the impact of the Covid pandemic on supply chains slowed down the production of baby formula, the situation snowballed into a full-blown crisis when top formula manufacturer Abbott

Laboratories announced it was recalling its formula amid reports of babies falling ill after consuming powdered formula from one of its plants.

- Abbott is one of four manufacturers that together meet about 90 per cent of the US' supply of baby formula.
- In February, Abbott announced it was shutting down one of its manufacturing facilities in Michigan after a federal investigation was launched to assess why four babies who were fed the formula developed bacterial infections, two of whom died. Abbott maintains there is no link between the formula and the illnesses.
- States like Tennessee, Texas and Iowa are experiencing the shortage more acutely, with over 50 per cent of the product out of stock.
- Low-income households are being affected disproportionately hard. Almost half of the baby formula in the US is bought under the US government's WIC programme, a supplemental nutrition programme for women, infants and children. Abbott provides for about half the babies registered under this programme.

How long is the baby formula shortage expected to last?

- Recently, the US government began working closely with Abbott to reopen its Michigan plant safely. According to the company, it will take more than a month before its products are available once again at grocery stores.
- To increase the supply of baby formula in the country, the FDA has introduced a series of measures to make it easier for foreign baby formula manufacturers to sell their products in the US.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Q1. The Strong bilateral ties between like-minded nations such as India and Australia will remain critical to shaping the Indo-Pacific security architecture. Analyse. (250 words)

Introduction

India and Australia have several commonalities, which serve as a foundation for closer cooperation and multifaceted interaction, on lines similar to what India has developed with other Western countries. Both are strong, vibrant, secular and multicultural democracies.

The relationship has grown in strength and importance since India's economic reforms in the nineties and has made rapid strides in all areas – trade, energy and mining, science & technology, information technology, education and defence.

Body

Background: Indo-Australia relations

- India and Australia enjoy excellent bilateral relations that have undergone transformational evolution in recent years, developing along a positive track, into a friendly partnership.
- This is a special partnership characterised by shared values of pluralistic, parliamentary democracies, Commonwealth traditions, expanding economic engagement, long standing people-to-people ties and increasing high level interaction.
- The India-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership initiated during the India-Australia Leaders' Virtual Summit held in June 2020 is the cornerstone of India-Australia multi-faceted bilateral relations.
- Growing India-Australia economic and commercial relations contribute to the stability and strength of a rapidly diversifying and deepening bilateral relationship between the two countries

India-Australia cooperation for Indo-Pacific region and its security

- **QUAD:** QUAD is already cooperating on sharing intelligence on threats in the Indo-Pacific region. They have called on all countries to ensure that territory under their control is not used to launch terror attacks and to expeditiously bring to justice the perpetrators of such attacks.
- **Australia's India Economic Strategy:** To implement the plan, Australia is investing over \$280 million (Rs 1,500 crore) – towards new programmes and initiatives across technology, space, critical minerals, strategic research and people-to-people links to boost cooperation with India.
- **Technology and Research:** The two nations are working on a new and renewable energy partnership, to support the development of technologies such as green hydrogen and ultra-low cost solar.
 - Australia is also supporting research and investment to unlock Australian critical minerals for Indian advanced manufacturing.

- **Defence and security cooperation:** Both signed Strategic Partnership, including a Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation in 2009.
 - Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement was signed 2014 between two, enabling India to secure uranium from Australia.
- **On China:** Chinese aggression and assertive foreign policy are common concerns and has brought both the democracies closer.
 - Both have shared interests in vision of a free, open, inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific region.
 - Both are part of QUAD, and also proposed Supply Chain Resilience Initiative.
 - Australia's Pacific Step Up and India's Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC) reaffirm their cooperation in the South Pacific region.

Conclusion

India and Australia share common values, complementary economies and strong people to people links that make them ideal partners in terms of security, trade and culture. Shared values, shared interests, shared geography and shared objectives are the bedrock of deepening India-Australia ties and the cooperation and coordination between the two countries have picked up momentum in recent years.

Both India and Australia share a vision of a free, open, inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific region and cooperative use of the seas by adherence to international law including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and peaceful resolution of disputes rather than through unilateral or coercive actions.

DAILY QUIZ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Drought in Numbers 2022 report was launched by the Integrated Drylands Development Programme (IDDP).
2. The theme of 15th Conference of Parties (COP15) was 'Land. Life. Legacy: From scarcity to prosperity'.

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. Denisovans recently seen in the news, are related to

- (a) Tropical Disease
- (b) Archaic humans**
- (c) Mountain Peak
- (d) Nuclear Submarine

Q3. Recently, which organisation released the World Inequality Report, 2022?

- (a) Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
- (b) International Economic Development Council
- (c) World Inequality Lab**
- (d) World Economic Forum

Q4. In context of National Biofuel Policy, 2018, consider the following statements:

1. The government has amended the provision of the policy to increase the target of ethanol blending level in petrol to 30 percent by 2025 from 20 percent.
2. The new amendment will result in increased burden on the forex reserve of India.

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. With reference to Filament barb, consider the following statements:

1. It is a common fish found inhabiting a whole array of habitats.
2. It is widely distributed across peninsular India including Cauvery and Krishna river.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only

c) Both 1 and 2

d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q6. Examine the following statement about International Methane Emission Observatory

1. It was launched by UN Environment Programme (UNEP) with support from the European Union
2. It will focus on methane emissions from the major emitting sectors like agriculture and waste only
3. It will also monitor commitments made by countries in the Global Methane Pledge.

Which of the above statement/s is /are correct

a) 1 and 2 only

b) 2 and 3 only

c) All of the above

d) 1 and 3 only

Q7. Consider the following statements

1. Survey Of India (SOI) is functions under the Ministry Of Earth science
2. The primary responsibility of SOI is to maintain topographical map coverage on various scales like 1:250K, 1:50K and 1:25K etc.

Choose the correct statement/s using the codes

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 and 2

Q8. A report called 'Banking on Electric Vehicles in India' released recently by which of the following

- a) NITI Aayog
- b) Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI)
- c) RMI India
- d) Jointly by all of the above

Q9. Consider the following statements with reference to citizenship (amendment) act 2019

1. The amendment act makes foreign migrants of six religious community from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Pakistan.
2. The act does not apply to 6th schedule states of the constitution

Select the correct statement/s using the codes given below

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q10. Consider the following statements with reference to census 2011

1. A person aged twelve and above who can read and write with understanding in any language is treated as literate.
2. A person who can only read but cannot write is not literate

Which of the above statement/s is /are not correct

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both

(d) Neither 1 nor 2