

IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

- ❖ **The violent chaos in Myanmar, a rapidly escalating crisis on India's doorstep**
- ❖ **CONTEXT:** ASEAN foreign ministers were meeting in Jakarta recently to discuss their options in Myanmar, where the military is using increasingly violent methods to suppress the armed resistance against its February 2021 takeover.
- Many of Myanmar's ethnic armed organisations (EAOs) have joined armed civilian groups called People's Defence Force (PDF), which are allied to the self-declared National Unity Government (NUG) in exile.
- The meet is being held ahead of the ASEAN and East Asia Summits in Cambodia from November 10 to 13, amid unprecedented differences among members of the grouping on how to deal with the regional crisis that has affected all of them in one way or another.
- ❖ **What is happening inside Myanmar**
- Much of the resistance by the civilian PDFs is in the Chin State and Sagaing Region, which share borders with Mizoram and Manipur. A fragile truce between some EAOs and the military dating back to 2018 has broken down. Many EAOs support the civilian rebellion, and the junta is fighting separate armed groups as well as the PDFs across the country. According to a recent report from Myanmar, over 60 people were killed in an airstrike by the Myanmar military in Kachin State, in an area famous for its jade mines.
- The strike targeted an open air concert to celebrate the 62nd anniversary of the founding of the Kachin Independence Organisation, whose military wing, the Kachin Independence Army, has been fighting a protracted battle against Myanmar's rulers. The military has said all casualties were combatants.
- While the Myanmar army has routinely used air power against the EAOs, in the months since the coup, it has not hesitated to strike at civilians as well. Attack helicopters have been deployed against PDFs in the Sagaing and Magway Regions.
- In Rakhine State, the military is fighting the Arakkan Army (AA), with the violence sometimes spilling over to Bangladesh. The AA, which is fighting for the independence of Rakhine, has kept its distance from the PDFs and the NUG. While the AA is anti-Rohingya, the NUG, comprising parliamentarians who were elected in 2020, has appeared to take a more progressive view on the Rohingya people, officially declaring that they are entitled to citizenship in Myanmar.
- On the political front, Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League for Democracy who was jailed after the coup, has been convicted in multiple cases and sentenced to 20 years in prison.
- ❖ **The fallout in India**
- India has walked a fine line between expressing concern at the "interruption" of democracy and brutal steps such as the gunning down of protesters and execution of four democracy activists in August 2022, and engaging with the junta to protect its "vital interests".
- India may have to consider if those vital interests are indeed being served. India's main justification for engaging with the Myanmar military is that it ensures the security of India's Northeast — it has persuaded the generals to deny safe havens to insurgent groups. But there are reports that some Northeastern groups, notably the Manipur PLA, have been roped in to put down the civilian uprising in Sagaing Region.
- For India, the main concern is the influx of refugees into Mizoram. India's 1,643-km border with Myanmar stretches from the India-Myanmar-China trijunction in Arunachal Pradesh to the India-Myanmar-Bangladesh trijunction in Mizoram.
- Border regulations have been formulated keeping in view ethnic and family ties across the international boundary. Under a Free Movement Regime (FMR), citizens of the two countries living within 16 km on their sides of the border, can cross over with a permit and stay up to two weeks at a time.
- The official number of registered refugees in Mizoram from Chin State is now 30,000, but many thousands have not been registered. The government of Mizoram has openly differed with the Centre on the issue of refugees. India is not a signatory to the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention or its 1962 Protocol, and does not have a domestic policy on refugees.
- When people began pouring in from Chin State, the Home Ministry asked states in the region to act against "the illegal influx". Mizoram declared solidarity with the people of Myanmar, and has continued to welcome the refugees. Their increasing numbers have, however, put strain on the state's resources, and several NGOs, the church, and youth organisations have joined the effort. The Centre has so far not prevented the Mizoram government from helping the refugees.
- The coup and resultant unrest have upended Indian projects in Myanmar such as the trilateral highway to Thailand, and the Kaladan waterway project. These projects were already well behind their deadlines, and their completion looks farther away now.
- ❖ **Russia, China, the West**
- Australia, Canada, the US, the UK and the EU have imposed sanctions against the junta, but with international attention divided between the war in Ukraine, the US-China standoff, and the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan, no further ideas have emanated from the West on how to recover Myanmar from the military.

- Despite ASEAN's obvious failure, a "regional" solution is still believed to be the best bet. At recent meeting, the grouping's foreign ministers called for "concrete, practical and time-bound actions" to strengthen the implementation of a five-point consensus reached in April 2021 to bring Myanmar back to the democratic path.
- The consensus called for cessation of violence; dialogue among concerned parties; mediation by an ASEAN special envoy; provision of humanitarian aid; and a visit by the special envoy to meet all concerned parties.
- The junta agreed, but ultimately ignored all points except for seeking humanitarian aid and allowing Cambodian Foreign Minister and ASEAN special envoy Prak Sokhonn to visit. But he did not meet Suu Kyi.
- Meanwhile, Myanmar continues to depend on China and Russia for military hardware and oil supplies. The regime visited Russia in July 2022 and then in September for the Moscow-led Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok, where he met President Vladimir Putin. Myanmar is awaiting the delivery of four Sukhoi-30 combat aircraft (two were delivered earlier this year) from Russia.
- The regime has also set up a Russian Oil Purchasing Committee to oversee the buying, importing, and transport of fuel "at reasonable prices based on Myanmar's needs". During visit, Myanmar and the Russian state-owned nuclear corporation Rosatom signed a roadmap for "further atomic energy cooperation".
- China has also stepped into the economic vacuum left by the west. During his visit to Myanmar in July 2022, Foreign Minister said Beijing was ready to work with Myanmar to "cement the four pillars of mutual political trust, mutually beneficial cooperation, people-to-people bonds and mutual learning in culture and people-to-people exchanges, and continuously elevate the building of a China-Myanmar community with a shared future to new heights".
- The China-Myanmar Economic Corridor is going ahead despite local pushback at places. China is now a major cross-border supplier of electricity to Myanmar. Earlier October 2022, a Chinese-Myanmar joint venture 135 MW power plant was inaugurated in Kyaukphyu in Rakhine State, where a Chinese port project is underway.
- A new train service connecting western China to the Myanmar border is expected to speed up Beijing's path to the Indian Ocean. China has also supplied JF-Thunder fighter aircraft to Myanmar and, according to The Irrawaddy, the junta has placed orders for Chinese FTC-2000G jets.
- ❖ **Turkey's latest 'disinformation' law**
- ❖ **CONTEXT: Recently, Turkey's parliament adopted the much-critiqued 'disinformation law' that accords jail terms of up to three years to social media users and journalists for spreading 'disinformation'. President Recep Erdogan's ruling AK Party along with its nationalist ally MHP voted for the bill that has drawn concerns about potential curtailment of social media and journalistic freedom in the country.**
- ❖ **What does the law entail?**
 - Cumulatively known as 'the disinformation law', it comprises about 40 articles that would amend about 23 different laws. Of the 40, the most contentious is Article 29. It designates it an offence to publicly disseminate misleading information about the country's internal and external security, public order and general well-being for the purpose of causing fear or panic among the populace.
 - The Turkish government has argued that the law would combat cases where the internet is used to share illegal content under false names and where anonymous accounts slander and defame individuals of differing political thought, religion or ethnicity.
 - The article introduces a jail term between one and three years for any violation with the extension of an additional half of the initially stipulated term if the actions are done in anonymity. To implement this law, social media platforms could now be asked to hand over user data to Turkish courts.
- ❖ **What are the concerns?**
 - Critics, including the Venice Commission which is the advisory body to the Council of Europe on constitutional matters, have pointed to the unclear interpretation of certain crucial terminologies, especially 'disinformation'. The legislation accords the responsibility of determining the same to prosecutors.
 - Critics here argue that Turkey being a heavily polarised country and the courts having previously turned against journalists and other social-scientists does not lend a confident picture.
 - For example, writing for Brookings, Asli Aydintasbas, Visiting Fellow at the Center on the U.S. and Europe points to how watchdogs challenged the official government statistic for September inflation (83.45%). An independent watchdog, ENAG pegged it at 186%.
 - With the latest set of legislations, content of this kind might qualify as 'disinformation'. The Commission also highlighted concerns on assertions about what should constitute disturbance to 'public peace'. "Following the meeting with the authorities, what seems to be the most alarming is that a public protest may be considered in itself a disturbance of public peace,".
 - This also triggers questions on 'dissemination' of the alleged 'disinformation' especially when the boundaries between physical and online spaces are blurred. Thus, the legislation lacks clarity on how the entity shall be deemed guilty, that is, for sharing or manufacturing the information (especially in an offline space). It is for the above-mentioned reasons that a jail term appears to be a stretched penal provision.
- ❖ **Why are journalists concerned?**
 - The law would now recognise news websites as part of mainstream media and they would thus have to comply with the same regulations as those for newspapers. This includes taking down reports when flagged by a regulatory authority and publishing a refutation on the same hyperlink.

- Turkey already has an unimpressive record pertaining to press freedom. It ranks 149 out of 180 in the Press Freedom Index (2022).
- Additionally, as per a report of the Journalists' Union of Turkey, more than 270 journalists were put on trial in 2021, while 57 others were physically assaulted and 54 news websites and 1,355 articles were blocked.

PRELIMS

1. India's first indigenous Overhauser Magnetometer

❖ **CONTEXT: Indian scientists have developed an Overhauser Magnetometer.**

- Indian scientists have developed an Overhauser Magnetometer one of the most accurate magnetometers extensively used by all magnetic observatories around the world, making way for reducing the cost of sampling and sensing experiments essential for geomagnetic sampling.
- The sensor installed at Alibag Magnetic Observatory (MO) can absolve India's dependence on commercial OVH magnetometers for performing geomagnetic field measurements.
- OVH magnetometers are known for their higher accuracy, higher sensitivity, and efficient power consumption and hence find applications in all magnetic observatories worldwide as well as in international space programs. It has so far been imported for such purposes in India.
- In order to reduce dependence on imports, the Indian Institute of Geomagnetism (IIG), has developed the magnetometer as part of its technology development program.
- A team from IIG's instrumentation division used various spectroscopic tools and theoretical simulations to understand the working of the OVH sensor.
- They further performed various control experiments, such as varying the sensor composition and examined the sensor's performance. This helped them to optimize the sensor parameters and its associated electronics, which finally led to a very efficient and stable OVH sensor.
- Experiments with the sensor installed at the Alibag Magnetic Observatory (MO) for geomagnetic sampling found that the sensor reproduced the geomagnetic diurnal variations accurately and precisely showed the signatures of various space weather events such as geomagnetic storms, sudden impulses, etc.
- The performance of this indigenously made magnetometer is at par with a commercial OVH sensor that is currently installed at the magnetic observatories of IIG.
- The sensor is currently being tested for its long-term stability. The group is working on to adapt the sensor for the outer space environment to support the existing Indian space research program.
- In addition, the group feels that the understanding of this project, specifically the underlying mechanism of Dynamic Nuclear Polarization (DNP), would also be of potential help to develop a sensitive magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) instrument.

2. Two more Indian beaches get 'Blue Flag'

❖ **CONTEXT: Two more beaches, both in Lakshadweep, have been accorded the 'Blue Flag' tag, putting them in an elite list of the world's cleanest and most eco-friendly "beaches, marinas and sustainable boating tourism operators". India now has 12 "blue beaches."**

❖ **The Blue Flag**

- The Blue Flag is an exclusive eco-label or certification that is given to coastal locations around the world as a badge of environmental honour. The Blue Flag programme is run by the Copenhagen, Denmark-headquartered Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE), a nonprofit which, through its work, contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations.
- According to the FEE, "the iconic Blue Flag is one of the world's most recognised voluntary awards for beaches, marinas, and sustainable boating tourism operators. In order to qualify for the Blue Flag, a series of stringent environmental, educational, safety, and accessibility criteria must be met and maintained."
- The Blue Flag programme started in 1987, initially in Europe. Certification is awarded annually. A total 5,042 beaches, marinas, and tourism boats in 48 countries have been awarded the label so far. A marina is a small harbour where mainly pleasure boats and yachts dock.
- The certification is given by an international jury comprising members of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), and International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), besides FEE.
- Central to the ideals of the Blue Flag programme is the aim of connecting the public with their surroundings and encouraging them to learn more about their environment.

❖ **Beaches in India**

- The two new beaches to have been awarded the eco-label are Minicoy Thundi beach and Kadmat beach, both in Lakshadweep.
- The other 10 Indian beaches on the list, according to the FEE site, are Shivrajpur in Gujarat's Devbhumi Dwarka district; Ghogla beach in Diu; Kasarkod (Uttara Kannada) and Padubidri (Udupi) in Karnataka; Kappad (Kozhikode) in Kerala; Eden beach in Puducherry; Kovalam (Chennai) in Tamil Nadu; Rushikonda (Visakhapatnam) in Andhra Pradesh; Golden beach in Puri, Odisha; and Radhanagar Swarajdeep in Andaman and Nicobar.

- Kovalam and Eden got the Blue Flag last year. The other eight beaches received the certification in 2020, and were re-certified last year.
- In October 2020, India awarded Blue Flag for 8 beaches in a single attempt no nation has ever been awarded like this. India had achieved an “outstanding feat”, and the award was a “global recognition of India’s conservation and sustainable development efforts.
- ❖ **Do’s and Don’ts**
- In January 2020, an Gazette Notification gave a list of permissible activities and facilities in the CRZ of the beaches, including islands, subject to maintaining a minimum distance of 10 metres from the High Tide Line (HTL), for the purposes of Blue Flag certification.
- These included portable toilet blocks, change rooms and shower panels; solid waste management plant; solar power plant; purified drinking water facility; beach access pathways; landscaping lighting; seating benches and sit-out umbrellas; cloak room facility; safety watch towers and beach safety equipment; information boards and other signages; fencing; and parking facilities.
- These activities and facilities would be exempt from prior clearance under the provisions of CRZ Notification, Island Protection Zone Notification and Island Coastal Regulation Zone Notifications.
- 3. **HAWK air defence equipment**
- ❖ **CONTEXT: The United States is considering retrieving older HAWK air defence equipment from storage to send to Ukraine which is facing a heavy barrage of Russian drone-fired and cruise missiles.**
- ❖ **HAWK after Stinger**
- The HAWK interceptor missiles would be an upgrade to the Stinger missile system, which is a smaller, shorter-range air defence system. The US sent the shoulder-fired anti-aircraft Stingers to Ukraine early on in the war, and then placed orders for more stocks of the missiles with Raytheon Technologies Corp. after they demonstrated great success in stopping Russian air assaults.
- The US would likely initially send interceptor missiles for the HAWK system to Ukraine because it was unclear if enough US launchers (in storage for decades) were in good repair.
- NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has said that Spain intends to send four HAWK launchers.
- ❖ **PATRIOT predecessor**
- HAWK, short for ‘Homing All the Way Killer’, entered service with the US Army in 1959, during the Vietnam war. It underwent upgrades over the decades that followed, including a major one in 1971 that produced the so-called I-HAWK (or improved HAWK), with a kill probability of 85%.
- The HAWK system was the predecessor to the PATRIOT missile defence system that Raytheon built in the 1990s. US forces largely stopped using HAWK from the early years of the new century. PATRIOT remains off the table for Ukraine.
- ❖ **Presidential authority**
- The Biden administration would use the Presidential Drawdown Authority (PDA) to transfer the HAWK equipment. PDA allows for the “speedy delivery of defence articles and services from Department of Defence stocks to foreign countries and international organisations to respond to unforeseen emergencies.
- Military assistance under PDA does not require Congressional approval, and could “begin arriving within days or even hours of approval”.
- Following the waves of aerial attacks that targeted civilians and knocked out vital infrastructure in Ukraine earlier October, President Joe Biden pledged to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy that the US would provide his country with advanced air systems. The US has provided almost \$17 billion worth of security assistance to Ukraine since the launch of Russia’s invasion on February 24.
- 4. **News Broadcasting & Digital Standards Authority**
- ❖ **Context: The News Broadcasting & Digital Standards Authority (NBDSA), a self-regulatory agency set up by news and digital broadcasters, has fined a news channel for turning a news debate on hijab into a “communal issue” and not adhering to guidelines.**
- The NBDSA is an independent body set up by the News Broadcasters & Digital Association (NBDA), which serves as a representative of private television news, current affairs and digital broadcasters.
- Funded entirely by its members, the NBDA has 26 news and current affairs broadcasters (comprising 119 news and current affairs channels) as its members. Various senior members of Indian media organisations serve on its Board of Directors.
- Apart from presenting a unified front, it carries out activities to promote, protect and secure the interests including the right of freedom of speech and expression of the news broadcasters, digital news media and other related entities.
- **Functions and Powers:**
- It’s standards mention a focus on objectivity, impartiality, maintaining discretion when reporting on crime against women and children, not endangering national security, etc.
- The body includes a Chairperson who is to be an eminent jurist, and other members such as news editors, and those experienced in the field of law, education, literature, public administration, etc. nominated by a majority of the Board.

- The Authority may initiate proceedings on its own and issue notice or take action in respect to any matter which falls within its regulations.
- This can also be through complaints referred to the Authority by the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting or any other governmental body, or by anyone else via its website
- A “two-tier” procedure is in place for redressing grievances, where any person aggrieved by the content of any broadcast is required to first make a complaint to the concerned broadcaster and if they are not satisfied by the redress, a complaint can be filed before the Authority.
- Within 14 days from the date of receipt of a complaint, the Authority will issue notice to the concerned broadcaster to show cause why action should not be taken under the regulations.
- An inquiry is held in which proof, documents, and people can be called in by the authority.
- If the complainant or the respondent does not get back to the Authority, the complaint can be set aside.
- It can also recommend to the concerned authority for suspension/revocation of the license of such broadcaster.
- The fine imposed by the Authority shall not exceed Rs. 1 lakh and such fine shall be recovered from the concerned broadcaster.

ANSWER WRITTING

Q. The most significant achievement of modern law in India is the constitutionalization of environmental problems by the Supreme Court." Discuss this statement with the help of relevant case laws.

Constitutionalisation of Environmental problem means aligning environmental problem to violation of fundamental rights of individual or community or abrogation of responsibility by government to enforce directive principles so as to impart meaningful decency to environmental problem.

Judicial pronouncement that led to constitutionalisation of environmental problems are:

- **Right to Pollution Free Environment** - In Subhash Kumar vs. State. of Bihar (1991) the Supreme Court held that right to life is a fundamental right under Art. 21 of the Constitution and it include the right to pollution free environment. Thus, SC imparted constitutionality to right to pollution free environment.
- **Polluters Pay Principle**- In M. C. Mehta vs. Union of India (1986) The Supreme Court introduced the “principle of absolute liability”. This enabled that now hazardous industries will be liable for environmental damage.
- **Right to Clean Air**- To ensure right of citizens to have clean air, SC introduced Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) in Delhi and NCR region in M. C. Mehta case vs Union of India (2020) which ensured gradually curbing the industrial activities as pollution level peaks.
- **Right to Compensatory Afforestation**- The SC under it established Compensatory Afforestation Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) to prevent the misuse of funds raised for afforestation, which inevitably resulted in legislation on the CAMPA Act 2016.

Thus, SC as guardian of fundamental rights has effectively employed the provision of laws and judicial pronouncement to protect citizens right to environment as fundamental right under Right to dignified life.

MCQs

1. With reference to Magnetometer consider the following statements
 1. A magnetometer is a device that measures magnetic field or magnetic dipole moment.
 2. Some magnetometers measure the direction, strength, or relative change of a magnetic field at a particular location.
 3. A compass is one such device, one that measures the direction of an ambient magnetic field, in this case, the Earth's magnetic field.

Choose the correct statement/s using the codes given below

a) 1 only b) 1 and 3 only c) 2 and 3 only **d) 1,2 and 3**
2. With reference to News Broadcasting & Digital Standards Authority (NBDSA) consider the following statements
 1. News Broadcasting Standards Authority is a statutory independent body.
 2. The decision of NBDSA is final and binding.
 3. The NBDA can fine a broadcaster maximum up to 1 lakh

Choose the correct statement/s using the codes given below

a) 1 and 2 only **b) 3 only** c) 2 and 3 only d) 2 only
3. With reference to HAWK air defence system consider the following statements
 1. It is an Israel Air defence system
 2. It is a mobile air defense system.
 3. It is a medium-range surface to air missile.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

a) 1 and 2 only **b) 2 and 3 only** c) 1 and 3 only d) 1,2 and 3
4. With reference to “Blue Flag” certification consider the followings
 1. A waving “Blue Flag” is an indication of 100% compliance to the 33 stringent criteria and sound health of the beach.
 2. It is accorded by UNDP.

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

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

5. Consider the following statements
- Each coastal state of India has a Blue flag certification beach.
 - Odisha has two Blue flag beach namely Puri (Golden beach) and Chandrabhaga beach.
 - Andhra Pradesh has highest number of blue flag certification beach
- Which of the above statement/s is/are not correct?
- 1 and 2 only
 - 2 and 3 only
 - 1 and 3 only
 - All of the above**
6. Consider the following statements with reference to India's own eco-label Beach Environment & Aesthetics Management Services (BEAMS) Initiative.
- The objective of BEAMS program is to abate pollution in coastal waters, promote sustainable development of beach facilities, protect & conserve coastal ecosystems & natural resources.
 - This is launched by the Society of Integrated Coastal Management (SICOM) and the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).
- Choose the correct statement using the codes given below
- 1 only
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 and 2**
 - Neither 1 nor 2
7. With respect to reserve bank of India's (RBI) monetary policy consider the following statements and choose the correct statement/s
- RBI has responsibility to maintain the inflation target within the bandwidth of 4+/-2 percentage of consumer price index.
 - In case of failure to maintain the target for any quarters, RBI has to send report to central government immediately.
- Select the correct answer using the code given below:
- 1 only**
 - 2 only
 - Both correct
 - Neither correct
8. Consider the following pairs:
- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| Community sometimes mentioned in the news | In the affairs of |
| 1. Kurd | Bangladesh |
| 2. Madhesi | Nepal |
| 3. Rohingya | Myanmar |
- Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?
- 1 and 2
 - 2 only
 - 2 and 3**
 - 3 only
9. Consider the following statements about India and Myanmar
- India and Myanmar share a long border over 1640 km and a maritime boundary in the Bay of Bengal.
 - Myanmar is the only ASEAN country having border with India.
 - Myanmar shares a common border with Laos, Thailand and Malaysia.
 - Htin Kyaw was the 1st democratically elected president of Myanmar.
- Which of the statement/s given above is/are correct?
- 1,2 and 3 only
 - 2,3 and 4 only
 - 1,2 and 4 only**
 - 1,2 and 4 only
10. Consider the following statements
- The Sea of Marmara, is an inland sea located entirely within the borders of Turkey
 - The Sea of Marmara connects Black sea with Mediterranean Sea
 - The Black sea connects to the Sea of Marmara through Bosphorus strait.
- Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?
- 1 and 2 only
 - 2 and 3 only
 - 1 and 3 only
 - 1,2 and 3**