

Topics



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By saurabh Pandey



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Target Mains -2024/25 -

Q "Changes in indian ocean region will impact human centric civilisational context especially in south asia" Discuss

प्रश्न "हिंद महासागर क्षेत्र में परिवर्तन विशेष रूप से दक्षिण एशिया में मानव केंद्रित सभ्यतागत संदर्भ को प्रभावित करेगा" चर्चा करें

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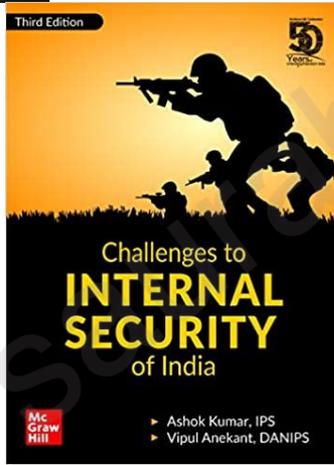
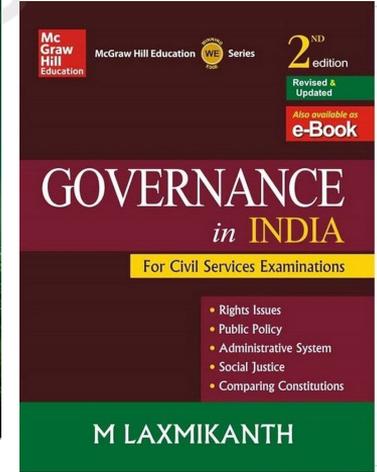
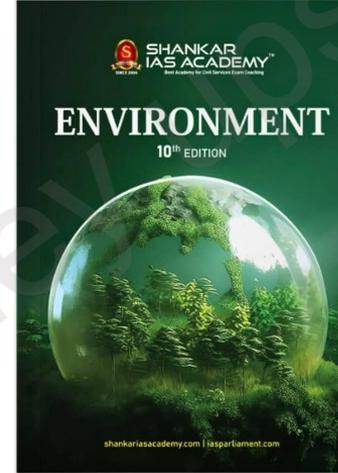
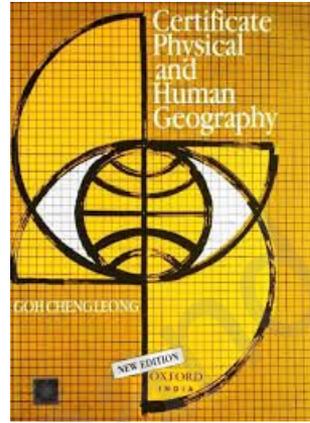
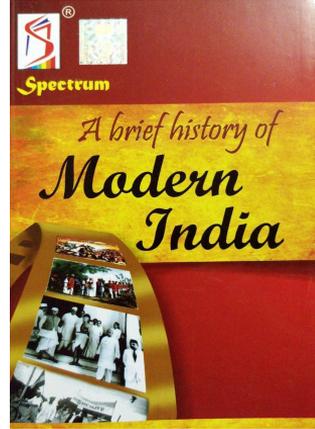
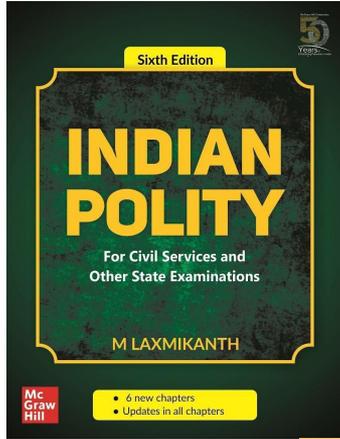
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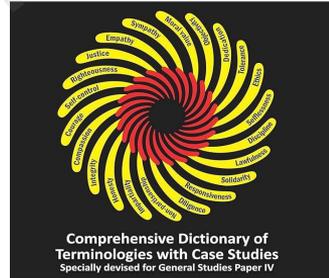


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Understand the Indian Ocean and you'll understand much about earth

The Indian Ocean is among the fastest warming oceans, with dire consequences for heatwaves and rain over the subcontinent. Marine heatwaves are also a concern now for corals and fisheries. The Indian Ocean is also playing a role in how well the Pacific Ocean can control global warming

Raghu Murtugudde

World Oceans Day was on June 8. For the occasion, let's take in the wonders of the smallest of the three major oceans right in our front yard. The Indian Ocean has been getting a lot of attention recently for its rapid warming and the outsized influence it continues to have on its peers.

As it happens, the Indian Ocean is critical today to understand the earth's overall ocean response to increasing greenhouse gases and global warming.

Home to the deadliest storms

The Indian Ocean is famous for its dramatic monsoon winds and the bountiful rain it brings to the Indian subcontinent. The winds and the rain have evoked prose and poetry for millennia. More than a billion people depend on the moisture it supplies to quench their thirst, to replenish fisheries, and to produce food and energy.

The warm summer months are characterised by the rapid warming of the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal as well as the southern tropical Indian Ocean. The winds begin to turn around from a land-to-ocean direction during winter to an ocean-to-land direction as summer commences.

The scorching heat on the subcontinent also comes with the threat of pre-monsoon cyclones. The North Indian Ocean doesn't generate as many cyclones as the Pacific or the Atlantic Oceans, but the numbers and their rapid intensification have been growing ominously. The relatively small North Indian Ocean ensures cyclones don't grow into the sort of hot powerhouses hurricanes and typhoons can be, but also the developing countries along the rim of South Asia, East Africa, and West Asia are sitting ducks in their path. Thus, cyclones tend to be the deadliest storms by mortality.

The warm ocean supports fisheries, big and small, and fish such as anchovies, mackerel, sardines, and tuna. Dolphins are a tourist attraction; some whales have also been sighted in the Arabian Sea. Tourists also flock to popular beaches and the corals from Lakshadweep to the Andaman Nicobar Islands, all the way down to Reunion Island off Madagascar.

A unique configuration

The northern boundary of the Indian Ocean is closed off by the Asian landmass, minus tiny connections to the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea.

The southern Indian Ocean is also different from the other oceans thanks to two oceanic tunnels that connect it to the Pacific and the Southern Oceans.

Through the first tunnel – the Indonesian seas – the Pacific Ocean dumps up to 20 million cubic metres of water every second into the eastern Indian Ocean. These waters also transport a substantial amount of heat. They stay mostly in the top 500 m and move through the Indian Ocean towards Madagascar. The Pacific waters, called the Indonesian Throughflow, wander around the Indian Ocean and affect the circulation, temperature, and salinities.

The other tunnel connects the Indian Ocean to the Southern Ocean with two-way traffic. Colder, saltier and thus



The Indian Ocean is famous for its dramatic monsoon winds and the bountiful rain it brings to the Indian subcontinent. JOHN CAMERON/UNPLASH

heavier waters flow into the Indian Ocean from the Southern Ocean below a depth of about 1 km. Due to the closed northern boundary, the waters slowly mix upward, and with the waters coming from the Pacific. The waters in the top 1 km eventually exit to the south.

The mix of heat and water masses in the Indian Ocean confer some mighty abilities to affect the uptake of heat in the world's oceans.

The little ocean that could

The Indian Ocean is a warm bathtub despite the underwater tunnels because it is heavily influenced by the Pacific Ocean through an atmospheric bridge as well. The atmospheric circulation, dominated by a massive centre of rainfall over the Maritime Continent, creates mostly sinking air over the Indian Ocean. The atmosphere also warms the Indian Ocean year after year.

The Indian Ocean thus gains heat that it must get rid of via the waters moving south. With global warming, the Pacific has been dumping some additional heat in the Indian Ocean. The cold water coming in from the Southern Ocean is also not as cold as before.

The net result: the Indian Ocean is among the fastest warming oceans, with dire consequences for heat waves and extreme rain over the Indian subcontinent. Marine heat waves are also a major concern now for corals and fisheries.

The warming Indian Ocean is affecting the wind circulation in a way that's also affecting the amount of heat the Pacific is able to take up. The Pacific Ocean takes



Despite being the smallest tropical ocean, the Indian Ocean's influence has become impossible to underestimate. Oceans take up over 90% of the additional heat more greenhouse gases in the atmosphere are trapping

up heat in its cold, eastern tropical region, and this is crucial to determine the rate of global warming. The Indian Ocean is thus playing a role in how well the Pacific can control global warming.

The other region where the ocean can draw down the heat and lock it away in deeper waters is in the North Atlantic. This is where surface waters become so dense that they sink like a rock into the depths. If the sinking of the water slows due to global warming – which seems to be the case – the heat doesn't sink away from the surface as quickly as it used to.

Indeed, researchers have found that the Indian Ocean's warming is actually helping accelerate the sinking of the heat, thus modulating global warming directly! This is why, despite being the smallest tropical ocean, the Indian Ocean's influence has become impossible to underestimate. Recall that the oceans take up over 90% of the additional heat more greenhouse gases in the atmosphere are trapping.

A hand in human evolution

If this isn't wondrous enough, the reconfiguration of the Indian Ocean may

have played a role in the evolution of our ancestors as well.

Until about three million years ago, Australia and New Guinea were well south of the equator and the Indian Ocean was directly connected to the Pacific Ocean. And this Indo-Pacific Ocean was in a warm state known as a 'permanent El Niño' – a state that was associated with permanently plentiful rain and lush green forests over East Africa. Today, this part of Africa is arid.

The northward drift of Australia and New Guinea, which is still ongoing, separated the Indian and the Pacific Oceans around three million years ago. As a result, the eastern Pacific Ocean became cooler and the El Niño went from a permanent state to an episodic one, like the ones we've been seeing.

This transition aridified East Africa, turning its rainforests into grasslands and savannas. Researchers have also hypothesised that these changes forced our ancestors, such as chimpanzees and gorillas, to move farther and run faster. In the rainforests, they had an abundance of food and cool places and didn't have to.

If these hypotheses are borne out, it's possible the transformation also had a hand in the birth of bipedal movement – the ability to walk on two legs – which is much more efficient than moving on all four across larger distances.

The storied history of our neighbourhood ocean is thus a worthy thing to celebrate – and study – on World Oceans Day.

(The author is a Professor, IIT Bombay, and Emeritus Professor, University of Maryland.)





Indian ocean

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- **They stay mostly in the top 500 m and move through the Indian Ocean towards Madagascar.**
- **The Pacific waters, called the Indonesian Throughflow, wander around the Indian Ocean and affect the circulation, temperature, and salinities.**
- **The other tunnel connects the Indian Ocean to the Southern Ocean with two-way traffic. Colder, saltier and thus heavier waters flow into the Indian Ocean from the Southern Ocean below a depth of about 1 km.**
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- **The warming Indian Ocean is affecting the wind circulation in a way that's also affecting the amount of heat the Pacific is able to take up.**
- **The Pacific Ocean takes up heat in its cold, eastern tropical region, and this is crucial to determine the rate of global warming.**
- **The Indian Ocean is thus playing a role in how well the Pacific can control global warming.**



Role in human evolution

- **Until about three million years ago, Australia and New Guinea were well south of the equator and the Indian Ocean was directly connected to the Pacific Ocean. And this Indo-Pacific Ocean was in a warm state known as a ‘permanent El Niño’ — a state that was associated with permanently plentiful rain and lush green forests over East Africa.**
- **Today, this part of Africa is arid.**
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- **This transition aridified East Africa, turning its rainforests into grasslands and savannahs.**
- **Researchers have also hypothesised that these changes forced our ancestors, such as chimpanzees and gorillas, to move farther and run faster**



A Przewalski mare (right) and a foal after being released at the Khovim Tal reservation in Western Mongolia. AP

Wild horse species is returned to the Kazakh steppes

Agence France Presse

After a few hesitant steps following a long flight from Prague, three Przewalski horses galloped off for the first time into the Kazakh steppe – the native habitat of this endangered species.

The horses emerged after being locked in containers for 20 hours and are the first of 40 which are to be released into the wild in this vast Central Asian country over the next five years.

"We have been waiting for this moment for a very long time," Albert Salemgaryev from the Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity in Kazakhstan told AFP.

"A lot of work has been carried out in recent months in order for the Przewalski horses to come to Kazakhstan."

The project run by the Prague and Berlin zoos is aimed at preserving this species of stocky bulk horse with large heads which share a common ancestry with modern domestic horses but are genetically different.

Przewalski horses are commonly referred to as one of the world's last breeds of wild horse.

"We know that the Przewalski horses are suited to this steppe," Mr. Salemgaryev said.

The horses are capable of resisting harsh winters like the ones in Kazakhstan

There are now 2,000 Przewalski horses around the world, mainly in China and Mongolia but also in France, Russia and living wild in the Chernobyl exclusion zone between Belarus and Ukraine

where temperatures can drop below minus 30 degrees C and food runs scarce.

The three first specimens – Zorja, Yulfozka, and Zeta II – arrived earlier this month. Four more landed in Kazakhstan from Berlin on Thursday morning and were released in the afternoon.

They will initially be under observation in the Golden Steppe nature reserve before being left in the wild.

"This year we will follow their health and see how they acclimatise," Salemgaryev said.

The 5,000 km, first by plane to the town of Aqsalyk and then by truck along bumpy roads into the heart of the steppe, was not without risks.

Despite monitoring by experts, one of the horses sat down in his container even before taking off, raising the risk of stopping the blood flow to his legs.

"The journey could have been dangerous so we decided to leave him alone," said Miroslav Jelska, the director of Prague Zoo.

There are now 2,000 Przewalski horses around the world, mainly in China and Mongolia but also in France, Russia and even living in the wild in the Chernobyl exclusion zone between Belarus and Ukraine.

Following the April 1986 Chernobyl disaster, 30 specimens were introduced there in 1998. The population has flourished and is now at 210.

In Kazakhstan, the Przewalski horse is not the only endangered species to have received special attention.

The round-eared Saiga antelope, once on the brink of extinction, has also seen its population grow to about two million thanks to conservation policies by



Przewalski



- **Przewalski horses are commonly referred to as one of the world's last breeds of wild horse.**
- **The horses are capable of resisting harsh winters like the ones in Kazakhstan where temperatures can drop below minus 30 degrees C and food runs scarce.**
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- **Przewalski's horses are often described as small and stocky.**
- **They are heavily built, with a large head, thick neck and short legs.**
- **They are dun-colored with a dark zebra-like erect mane and no forelock. A dark stripe continues from the mane along the backbone to a dark, plumed tail.**
- **They have a yellowish-white belly and dark lower legs and zebra-like stripes behind their knees.**



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A push for more climate action



International climate change litigation reached a milestone on May 21, 2024 when the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) delivered an advisory opinion (the Opinion) sought by the Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law (COSIS) concerning the specific obligations of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on climate change mitigation. The COSIS is an association of small island states set up in 2021. The ITLOS advisory opinion generates more attention in the context of the advisory proceedings to be decided by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the near future on the “Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change”.

New elements

The ITLOS took a radical step by accepting the request of COSIS with the aim of identifying the obligations of states that are not parties to the COSIS Agreement. That is when the request touches principally upon the obligations of states that are not party to the agreement authorising the request. The Tribunal, in its Opinion, laid down very clearly that under Article 194(1) of the UNCLOS, “the Parties have specific obligations to take all necessary measures to prevent, reduce and control marine pollution from anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions (GHG)”.

The Opinion has also removed doubts whether the release of carbon dioxide by man, directly or indirectly, into the marine environment qualifies to be in the category of substance or energy having potential deleterious effects on the marine environment within the meaning of Article 1(0)(4) of the UNCLOS.

The ITLOS clarification on carbon as pollutant bolsters the position taken by the scientific community that the surface ocean absorbs around a quarter of the CO₂ emitted into the atmosphere, at increasingly rapid rates, resulting



Anwar Sadat

teaches International Environmental Law at the Indian Society of International Law, New Delhi

The advisory opinion by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea is a high point in international climate change litigation

in the progressive acidification of sea water. Other greenhouse gases (GHGs) do not have this effect. In addition, the sea also absorbs over 90% of the excess heat (‘energy’) generated by global warming, resulting in higher ocean temperatures and, ultimately, in sea-level rise.

Understanding its legal importance

The principle of prevention or no harm rule which governs state behaviour towards regulation of shared natural resources (between two or more states) so as to avoid transboundary harm of a significant nature in another state has its two main limitations when the rule is sought to be applied to regulate climate crisis: its anchoring in a bilateral frame, and, the principle is not helped due to obstacles relating to attribution and standing in establishing a breach of obligation to climate change.

The Opinion, by siding with the principle for climate change (which is a collective interest as compared to bilateral ones), adds a new chapter. The necessary measures are to be decided in the light of the best available science and the relevant international rules and standards contained in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Paris Climate Change Agreement 2015, and also 1.5° Celsius rather than 2° C as the global average temperature goal.

The Opinion describes the obligation relating to the taking of necessary measures as due diligence obligation but the standard of it in the eyes of the Opinion is stringent one given the high risks of serious and irreversible harm to the marine environment from such emissions. But the Parties’ obligations in terms of taking all necessary measures to reduce anthropogenic GHG emissions within Article 194 (1) are very general in nature. This can be interpreted to mean that neither the release of all pollution (GHGs) must be prevented nor that anthropogenic GHG emissions must cease

immediately or even eventually.

Measures that gradually reduce marine pollution by lowering GHG emissions over a period of time would be sufficient. Still, the identification of a general obligation by the ITLOS underlines one thing – that states do not have unfettered discretion in addressing climate change. Mere identification of general obligation will be of symbolic value and is inadequate.

Christina Voigt, an expert on environmental law, says as “most states are already implementing some action on climate change mitigation, the crux of the matter is not the existence of an obligation to mitigate climate change, but rather its content, in particular the standard of conduct applicable in relation to this obligation”. The example to substantiate this point is the decision of the Netherlands Supreme Court, in *Urgenda Foundation vs The Netherlands*, where the court held that to comply with a general mitigation obligation inferred from the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) in light of the standard of due care, the Netherlands had to reduce GHG emissions to 25% below 1990 levels by 2020 (as opposed to the government’s insufficient existing pledge of 17%).

The court identified this target largely by relying on scientific estimates and the least cost method of achieving the 2° C temperature goal in the Paris Agreement. The Opinion has not been able to identify the methodology concretely that can be used to assess a state’s requisite level of mitigation action – as in the *Urgenda* judgment. Moreover, the necessary measures to be taken, as per the Opinion, are to be subject to the means available to the states and their capabilities, which means that the principle of equity cannot be ignored in deciding the requisite level of mitigation action, if any.

Though advisory opinion lacks legal force, it does not necessarily affect its political pull as authoritative judicial pronouncements.



The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS)

- The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) is an independent judicial body established by the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.
- It has jurisdiction over any dispute concerning the interpretation or application of the Convention, and over all matters specifically provided for in any other agreement which confers jurisdiction on the Tribunal.
- Disputes relating to the Convention may concern the delimitation of maritime zones, navigation, conservation and management of the living resources of the sea, protection and preservation of the marine environment and marine scientific research.



- **The Tribunal is composed of 21 independent members, elected from among persons enjoying the highest reputation for fairness and integrity and of recognized competence in the field of the law of the sea.**
- **The Tribunal has jurisdiction over any dispute concerning the interpretation or application of the Convention, and over all matters specifically provided for in any other agreement which confers jurisdiction on the Tribunal (Statute, article 21).**
- **The Tribunal is open to States Parties to the Convention (i.e. States and international organisations which are parties to the Convention)**

UNCLOS



- **The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea was opened for signature at Montego Bay, Jamaica, on 10 December 1982 and entered into force on 28 July 1996. A subsequent Agreement relating to the implementation of Part XI of the Convention was adopted on 28 July 1994 and entered into force on 28 July 1996. This Agreement and Part XI of the Convention are to be interpreted and applied together as a single instrument.**
- **The Convention establishes a comprehensive legal framework to regulate all ocean space, its uses and resources. It contains, among other things, provisions relating to the territorial sea, the contiguous zone, the continental shelf, the exclusive economic zone and the high seas.**



- **It also provides for the protection and preservation of the marine environment for marine scientific research and for the development and transfer of marine technology.**
- **One of the most important parts of the Convention concerns the exploration for and exploitation of the resources of the seabed and ocean floor and subsoil thereof, beyond the limits of national jurisdiction (the Area).**
- **The Convention declares the Area and its resources to be "the common heritage of mankind".**
- **The International Seabed Authority, established by the Convention, administers the resources of the Area.**

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Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law (COSIS)



- States who are least responsible for climate change, Small Island Developing States (SIDS), will be the most likely to bear the worst brunt of its effects in the short- as well as the long-term.
- Over the coming decades, SIDS will encounter "rising sea levels, extreme weather events, coral bleaching, loss of fisheries and marine biodiversity", as well as the risk of total submersion.
- Facing this existential threat, as well as inaction on the international stage, the Prime Ministers of Antigua and Barbuda and Tuvalu signed the Agreement for the Establishment of the Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law (COSIS) on the eve of COP26.



- **The Agreement was registered with the United Nations in accordance with Article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations.**
- **The Republic of Palau acceded to the Agreement in November 2021, Niue in September 2022, Vanuatu in December 2022, and St. Lucia in December 2022. Membership is open to any member of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS).**



"The mandate of the Commission shall be to promote and contribute to the definition, implementation, and progressive development of rules and principles of international law concerning climate change, including, but not limited to, the obligations of States relating to the protection and preservation of the marine environment and their responsibility for injuries arising from internationally wrongful acts in respect of the breach of such obligations."

From warp speed to reset, the state of India-U.S. ties

This month marks a year since Prime Minister Narendra Modi's state visit to the United States, where U.S. President Joseph Biden rolled out the red carpet and the U.S. agreed to restart the decade-old plan to transfer technology for jet engines to India. The visit was marked by many such announcements of strategic and high-tech cooperation, with the U.S.-India initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET) considered a major success for bilateral relations that would set the stage for a whole new phase in ties.

However, one year later, the pace of the relationship has not matched those ambitions for a number of external and internal reasons. As the newly sworn-in Indian Prime Minister will engage once again with the U.S. President this week at the G-7 outreach summit in Italy, and senior U.S. officials are set to arrive in Delhi, the "good, the not-so-good, and what could-become ugly" (to paraphrase the Hollywood western) in the relationship must be studied closely.

The crests

It is clear where the 'good' and even 'great' in the India-U.S. relationship lies. Last September marked 25 years of the turnaround in ties post-Pokhran, that was heralded by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's famous Asia Society speech in New York, on September 28, 1998, where he called India and the U.S. "natural allies in the quest for a better future" for the world in the 21st century. Since then, Delhi and Washington have built up strategic ties year on year, with dialogues in a growing number of spheres – from climate change and green energy to critical and emerging technologies and outer space.

Over the past decade, the growth is seen in strategic trust in particular, with the conclusion of all foundational agreements, a plethora of military exercises, growing inter-operability and coordination on maritime operations, not to mention the considerable purchases in the pipeline of military hardware. A broader mutual understanding has been sparked by many of the old irritants going away from relations: the de-hyphenation of U.S.-India ties with Pakistan, silence over old concerns on Jammu-Kashmir that once roiled ties, India's increased engagement with the Quad (India, Australia, Japan and the U.S.) and the U.S.'s Indo-Pacific strategy, and shared concerns over China's aggression have brought Delhi and DC increasingly on the "same page", internationally.

While the bilateral engagement has been thriving, much of it due to dozens of official-level conversations that continue, some of the "not-so-good" or work-in-progress areas lie in the areas of multilateral cooperation on global conflicts. Russia's war in Ukraine has been one major area of difference, especially as the U.S. has framed the war purely in terms of the



Suhasini Haidar

A close look at the 'good, the not-so-good, and what could-become ugly' in the relationship

international rule of law and humanitarian principles. India has chosen a more historical frame that also considers the disruption to other players like the Global South on issues such as food, fertilizer and energy security. There have been some compromises: the U.S. has withdrawn its objections to India's continued purchase of oil and other Russian exports and held off any talk of sanctions, while India has put over the annual India-Russia summit for two years now. It remains to be seen how the newly-elected Prime Minister manages engagements with Russian President Vladimir Putin in the next few months, with a possible meeting at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit in Kazakhstan in July and the BRICS Summit in Russia's Kazan in October. Some of the edge of the U.S.'s moralistic posture has also been taken off by its support of Israel's bombardment of Gaza and the continued killing of civilians despite calls from the United Nations, the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice to stop.

The China factor

On the other multilateral front and growing concerns over China's threats against Taiwan, with the latest conflagration over the Philippines in the South China Sea too, India-U.S. cooperation at the Quad has flagged somewhat. This has mainly been a factor of logistics. Mr. Biden's decision to decline the invitation for India's Republic Day in 2024 meant that the Quad Summit was foregone, and the U.S. has indicated that it will not be rescheduled until after the U.S. elections in November. Planned visits by U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan were cancelled twice this year, at the last moment, due to the Gaza crisis, in turn affecting the iCET review. As a result, so has the visit by the U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, Kurt Campbell (nicknamed 'Quadfather' or 'Asia Czar' for his role as Biden's Indo-Pacific Coordinator), who has instead focused on "Quad-Plus" meetings with the Republic of Korea and the Philippines over the past few months. All eyes are also on the Quad Foreign Minister's meeting to be scheduled in Japan this year, but much will depend on U.S. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken being available for it.

There has been no Indian Ambassador in Washington for months, and South Block's ties with the U.S. Ambassador in India Eric Garcetti have been somewhat strained after his comments on Manipur and human rights. The State Department's comments on the state of democracy in India before the general election 2024 as well as consistent bad reviews for India in the State Department's Religious Freedom report enraged India's Ministry of External Affairs leading to the summoning of a senior US diplomat, and in turn widening the gap. Washington has been sounding excessively offensive and interfering and New Delhi prickly

and reactive. The decision by the U.S. to wait for the "final results" of the general election before congratulating Mr. Modi, and then issue a statement commending civil society and journalists for their "their commitment and vital contributions to India's democratic processes and institutions", will no doubt chafe the South Block-State Department equation.

Tensions over 'plots'

Amid this discourse, the elephant in the room remains the attempted assassination of Khalistani separatist and U.S. citizen Gurpatwant Singh Pannun in New York, allegedly ordered by Indian security officials. June 2024 also marks a year since the plot in the U.S. was unearthed, along with transcripts linking the plot to the killing of Canadian citizen Hardeep Singh Nijjar outside Toronto, the same month (June 2023). Although details of the allegations became public only in November last year, it is clear that the discomfort over the perception that India is behind the killing of foreign citizens in friendly countries had begun to seep into the relationship even as Prime Minister Modi touched down in the U.S. last year. During a visit to Washington this summer, this writer saw signs that those concerns have broadened, particularly with U.S. intelligence agencies, the Department of Justice, and at the U.S. Congress, where lawmakers now routinely raise concerns from that section of the diaspora that feels most targeted by India, including those accused of terrorism by India. While the U.S.'s demand that India bring senior officials "to account" publicly for the alleged plot is a non-starter, the Government of India must realise that its theory of "rogue actors" being responsible for such a high profile plot will not wash either. It should proceed more quickly with its high-level investigation. Either way, one can expect the issue to come to a slow boil over the next few months as the trial in New York brings forth more details of what the U.S. believes, and passes on to the Canadian authorities too for the trial set to begin there.

Given the government's need to adjust to new coalition realities after the shock of the results of the general election as well as the fast-closing window of engagement with the U.S. government as Washington heads into "lame-duck" season, officials and leaders have their task cut out for them. While a possible Trump presidency in November might resolve many of the problems between them, it will most certainly introduce much more uncertainty to their ties as well. The opportunity for a Biden-Modi meeting this week then, followed by the visit by Mr. Sullivan to Delhi soon to complete the iCET review, as decided by the leaders during their phone call, is both desired and necessary for the restart they require, a year after it seemed that the relationship had reached "warp speed".



India -US



- **U.S.-India initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET) considered a major success for bilateral relations that would set the stage for a whole new phase in ties.**
- **, with the conclusion of all foundational agreements, a plethora of military exercises, growing inter-operability and coordination on maritime operations, not to mention the considerable purchases in the pipeline of military hardware.**



- **A broader mutual understanding has been sparked by many of the old irritants going away from relations: the de-hyphenation of U.S.-India ties with Pakistan, silence over old concerns on Jammu-Kashmir that once roiled ties, India's increased engagement with the Quad (India, Australia, Japan and the U.S.) and the U.S.'s Indo-Pacific strategy, and shared concerns over China's aggression have brought Delhi and DC increasingly on the "same page", internationally.**



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China Factor

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On Special Category Status for Andhra

Why is the demand for special status for Andhra Pradesh back in the political limelight? Why did Chandrababu Naidu, back in 2018, settle for a special package? Is the State qualified to be granted special status? What did the 14th Finance Commission state?

EXPLAINER

Sumit Bhattacharjee

The story so far:

The Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014, which bifurcated unified Andhra Pradesh into two States, was notified on March 1, 2014 and had come into force from June 2, 2014. While the Act had specified many things, there was no mention of giving a Special Category Status (SCS) to Andhra Pradesh. Now with the completion of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the demand for SCS to Andhra is again gaining attention.

What is the history?

Shortly after the reorganisation, in a debate in the Rajya Sabha on February 20, 2014, the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had said that "SCS would be extended to the State of Andhra Pradesh for a period of five years". This was appreciated and seconded by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader M. Venkaiah Naidu.

But after Prime Minister Narendra Modi took over the reigns of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA)-led Union Government, the SCS was put on the back burner. When it was raised in both Houses by the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and opposition MPs, it was said that Andhra Pradesh does not qualify for the SCS, firstly as per norms and secondly due to the dissolution of the Planning Commission in August 2014. The 14th Finance Commission had equated SCS with the general category status and had annulled SCS for new States.

Why does AP not qualify for the SCS?

The concept of SCS was first brought into existence through the recommendations made by the Fifth Finance Commission in 1969. It was done to benefit a few States through special grants from the Centre. The focus was on States that had socio-economic issues and geographical



In progress: Ongoing construction of the bridge at Amaravathi, Andhra Pradesh on June 10. RAO G.N.

disadvantages, such as hilly States.

Five factors stood as the qualifying benchmark for the granting of SCS – States that comprise a majority tribal population, low density of population, hilly States and close to international borders, States that have socio-economic and industrial backwardness, and lack of adequate State finances. At present, the States that have the SCS include Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura, and Uttarakhand.

It was debated that Andhra Pradesh, based on the above strictures, does not

qualify for the SCS and that the Finance Commission had already annulled it. However, the Centre offered Andhra Pradesh a special package (SP).

What did the special package entail?

Having been convinced that the SCS was ruled out by the Union Government, the first Chief Minister of residual Andhra Pradesh (2014-2019), Chandrababu Naidu of the TDP, who was then part of the NDA alliance, agreed for the SP. The SP included the recognition of the Polavaram irrigation project as a national project with full funding from the Union Government, tax concessions and special

assistance. Though Mr. Naidu accepted the SP, it was termed as a betrayal by the Opposition parties, including the Yuvajana Sramika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP).

In 2018, Mr. Naidu walked out of the alliance and also moved a no-confidence motion which failed. Political analysts say that Mr. Naidu had succumbed to pressure from the opposition, who were building up a strong campaign against the TDP, based on the SCS issue. His volte-face from SCS to SP was being publicised as a 'betrayal of the State'.

Does Andhra still qualify for SCS?

N.K. Singh, Chairman of the 15th Finance Commission, in his book *Portraits of Power*, stated that the 14th Finance Commission had never said that SCS cannot be given and that it was up to the Union Government to take a call.

The 14th Finance Commission instead of SCS had increased tax devolution to the State to 42% and also introduced revenue deficit grants for States facing a revenue gap, which Andhra had already received.

SCS, which has an arrangement of funding States in a ratio of 90:10 (90% the Centre and 10% the State), may not be a ruled out chapter for Andhra Pradesh. The Union Government can take a call and refer it to the 16th Finance Commission and the NITI Aayog, and can get back to the arrangement.

Why is SCS in the limelight again?

Ever since the bifurcation of the State, it has been facing a revenue deficit. Additionally, the debts of the State have shot up enormously. Most of its projects and development have come to a standstill and on top of that the building for a new greenfield capital at Amaravati is pending and needs funding.

People are hopeful that since the TDP is again part of the NDA alliance which does not have a clear majority in the Centre, and is dependent on the MPs from Andhra Pradesh, it would be the right time to press for the SCS, for the overall development of the State.

THE GIST

▼ The concept of SCS was first brought into existence through the recommendations made by the Fifth Finance Commission in 1969. It was done to benefit a few States through special grants from the Centre.

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Special category states



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- **Ever since the bifurcation of unified Andhra Pradesh, the residual State has been facing a revenue deficit. Additionally, the debts of the State have shot up enormously.**

What is special category status?



Special category status is a classification of regions or states by the central government to provide special assistance in the form of tax benefits and financial support for development of the region.

It was first introduced in 1969 based on the recommendations of the Fifth Finance Commission.



What are the criteria to provide special status to a state?

The criteria listed by the government include: (1) hilly and difficult terrain (2) low population density (3) strategic location along the borders with neighbouring countries (4) economic and infrastructural backwardness and (5) non-viable nature of state finances.



Which states have special category status?

- In 1969, three states – Jammu & Kashmir (now a Union Territory after revocation of Article 370), Assam and Nagaland – were granted the special category status. Subsequently, 8 more states have been granted such a status.
- It includes Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Sikkim, Tripura, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Telangana was granted the special category status. Subsequently, 8 more states have been granted such a status.
- It includes Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Sikkim, Tripura, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Telangana was granted a special status tag after it was carved out of Andhra Pradesh in 2014

What are the benefits of special category status?



- States that come under special category status get preferential treatment getting central assistance and tax breaks.
- For the implementation of the centrally-sponsored scheme, the special category status states are required to contribute just 10% while the central government provides 90% of the fund.
- For other states the centre provides 60%-70% of the fund. Allotted money if not spent, lapse for the normal states, but in the case of special category states it is carried forward. Special category states are provided tax breaks to attract investments.
- Special category states are provided tax breaks to attract investments. They are also given preferential treatment in allocation of central funds assistance.

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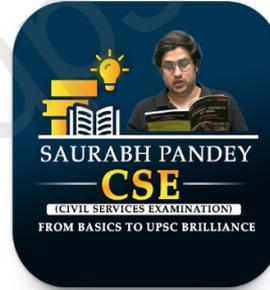
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What is happening in French territory of New Caledonia?

What does the new amendment bill on voters' list stipulate? Why are Kanaks against it?

Padmashree Anandhan
Neha Tresa George

The story so far:

On June 3, the Socialist Kanak National Liberation Front (FLNKS) of the south pacific French territory of New Caledonia called for French President Emmanuel Macron to abandon the plan to modify the electoral reform.

What happened?

Widespread protests and riots erupted in New Caledonia in response to the French parliament's decision to amend the voters' list. The new amendment bill will pave the way for incorporating citizens who were either born or lived in the territory for at least 10 years. Kanaks, the indigenous community of the territory, opposed this on claims that it diluted their electoral power thus marginalising them. The Kanaks comprise 43% of the 1,45,000 population, while the European (French loyalists), Wallisians and

Futunians comprise 37%. The new voting amendment will give majority to the loyalists undermining the Kanaks' future towards decolonisation. This would also mean an alteration of the internal political environment towards French settlers.

What is history of the archipelago?

New Caledonia had Kanaks as the original inhabitants. France gained control of the territory in 1853 and governed the Kanaks with reservations. After the Second World War, colonial laws were abolished and the Kanaks were granted French citizenship. In the 1960s, increased migration from France turned the Kanaks into a minority in New Caledonia. Angered by their deteriorating socio-economic status and lack of economic and political involvement, an independence movement grew along with the emergence of the FLNKS in 1984. Thus, tensions soared between the Kanaks and loyalists between from 1984 to 1988 which ended with the signing of the Matignon agreements in 1988 and the Nouméa

Accord in 1998 between the Kanaks and the French government. This allowed the transfer of powers from Paris to local authorities along with three referendums to decide the territory's independence.

The independence referendums held in 2018 and 2020 were in favour of France, and against an independent New Caledonia. Kanaks requested to postpone the third and final referendum due to COVID-19 in 2021, but the French disregarded the request. A lower turnout ensured a 96% result against an independent state. This infuriated the Kanaks who then opposed talks with the French government.

Why do Kanaks want independence?

Post World War II, after the granting of French citizenship and transforming the French colonies into overseas territories, New Caledonia's migration pattern increasingly reflected that, of what the Kanaks call, "settler colonialism."

Under this new model, social inequalities widened leading to the

exploitation of the indigenous community. This was observed in the steel and nickel mining sectors, where indigenous people remained as labour while the non-indigenous people reaped economic and political benefits. And despite France's promise to reverse social inequalities and better Kanaks' political participation, the 2019 census showcased the poverty rate among Kanaks to be 32.5%, while only nine per cent of non-Kanaks experienced poverty. The scope of economic progress being stalled and the vote by the French Parliament to alter the electoral composition is seen as a move to end Kanak independence.

What is the French endgame?

First, achieving tactical peace. More violence would mean an increased threat to overseas French citizens and a risk to Mr. Macron's party's reputation.

Second, integration is key to France's Indo-Pacific strategy. France considers itself an Indo-Pacific power through its overseas territories which combined makes it the second largest Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Additionally, the large number of French citizens authenticates French governance. The Islands represent a strategic position for France in the Indo-Pacific, especially against China. Therefore, to seal its presence in these territories, integration becomes necessary which is difficult as Kanaks demand independence.

The authors are researchers at NIAS, Bengaluru.

THE GIST

▼
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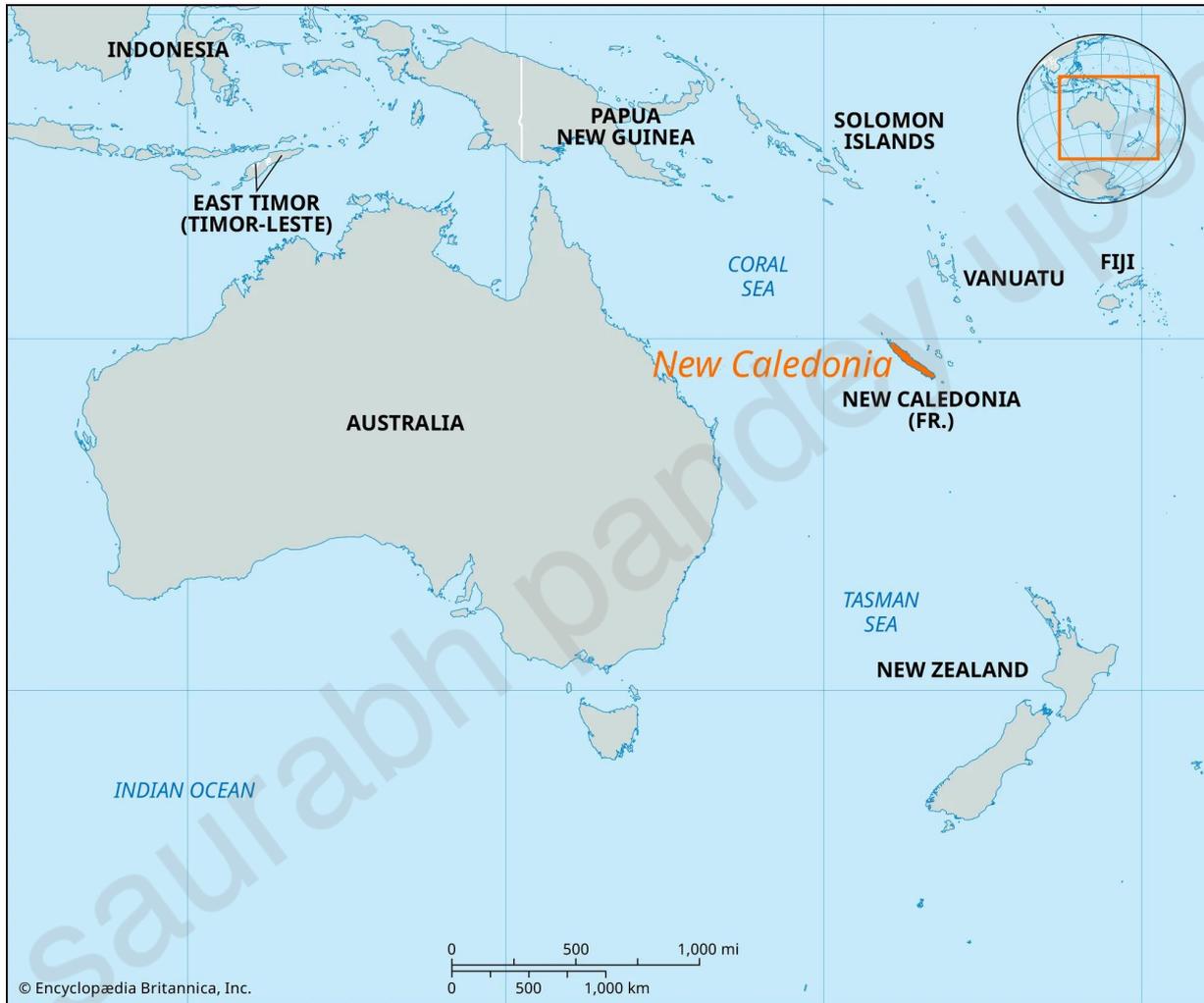
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New Caledonia

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'Slow-burn'



A view of the eruption site of the volcano near Grindavik in Iceland on Monday. A volcano in southwestern Iceland has been erupting and spewing red lava close to the coastal town of Grindavik. AP







- Lava poured from a volcanic fissure near the town of Grindavík, Iceland, in spring 2024.
- The eruption, which began on March 16 and remained active over two weeks later, was the largest in a string of four **volcanic events** on the Reykjanes peninsula starting in December 2023.



-  Erupting volcano
-  Active volcano

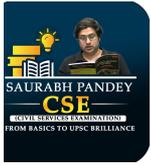
Fagradalsfjall





- **Iceland** experiences frequent **volcanic** activity, due to its location both on the **Mid-Atlantic Ridge**, a divergent **tectonic plate boundary**, and being over a **hotspot**.
- Nearly thirty volcanoes are known to have erupted in the **Holocene epoch**; these include **Eldgjá**, source of the largest lava eruption in human history.

India welcomes Egypt, Iran, UAE, Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia joining BRICS



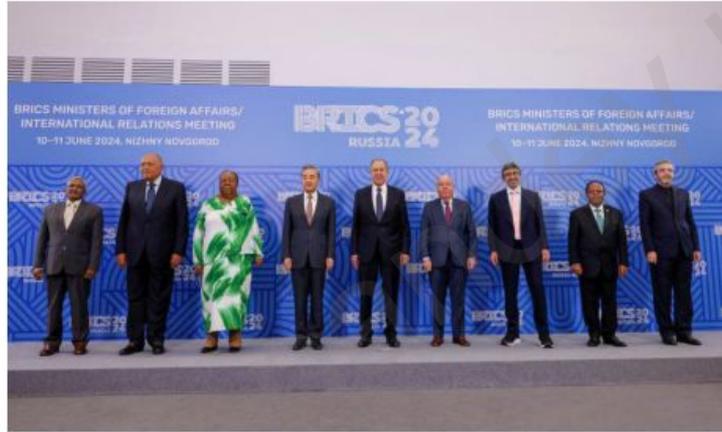
Press Trust of India

MOSCOW

India on Monday welcomed Egypt, Iran, UAE, Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia joining the BRICS as their representatives attended for the first time a key meeting of the grouping hosted by Russia.

Senior diplomat Dammu Ravi led the Indian delegation at the BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Nizhny Novgorod, in western Russia.

"A significant meeting in the format of expanded BRICS family. India wholeheartedly welcomes the new membership," the spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs Randhir Jaiswal said.



United front: India's BRICS Sherpa Dammu Ravi, left, and Foreign Ministers of member countries at the meeting in Russia. REUTERS

The meeting on Monday was the first ministerial meeting following BRICS expansion in 2023 when Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE joined Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa as full-fledged BRICS

members.

Ravi, Secretary (Economic Relations) in MEA, led the Indian delegation at the BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Nizhny Novgorod, it said.

The ministers reiterated their commitment to mul-

tilateralism and upholding the international law, including the Purposes and Principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations (UN) as its indispensable cornerstone, and the central role of the UN in an international system in which sovereign states cooperate to maintain international peace and security, advance sustainable development, ensure the promotion and protection of democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. They voiced their support for a comprehensive reform of the UN, including its Security Council, with a view to making it more democratic, representative, effective and efficient.



BRICS EXPANSION

- The idea of the BRICS was formulated by Chief Economist at Goldman Sachs, Jim O'Neill, in a 2001 study entitled "Building Better Global Economic BRICs". It became an analytical category in economic, financial, business, academic and media circles.
- In 2006, the concept, itself, gave rise to the grouping, incorporated into Brazil, Russia, India and China's foreign policy. In 2011, on the occasion of the Third Summit, South Africa became part of the group, who adopted the acronym BRICS.



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WHAT?

Established in 2009, BRICS represents the collective voice of the Global South.

MEMBERS

Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa as its members.

WHY IN NEWS?

The chair of BRICS 2021 is India. The theme of the 13th BRICS Summit is, 'BRICS @ 15: Intra-BRICS Cooperation for Continuity, Consolidation and Consensus.'

OTHERS

There are two components that make up the financial architecture of BRICS:

- New Development Bank (NDB) (BRICS Development Bank)
- Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA).

ALL YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT THE BRICS BANK

What is it?

It is a bank set up by the world's leading emerging economies aimed at funding infrastructure projects in developing nations

What is the contingent reserve arrangement (CRA)?

The five countries will set up a \$100-bn pool of currency reserves to help countries forestall short-term liquidity pressures

How will the CRA be funded?

China, the region's largest economy, will contribute \$41 bn to the CRA. Russia, India and Brazil will contribute \$18 bn each, while South Africa will contribute \$5 bn

Where will the bank be based?

The New Development Bank will be based in Shanghai, China

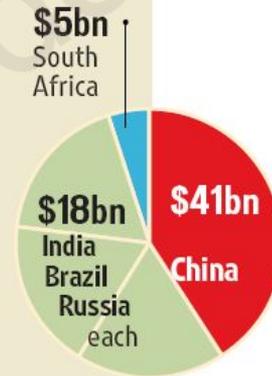
How will it be governed?

India will preside over its operations for the first five years, followed by Brazil and then Russia. It is scheduled to start lending in 2016

How will it be funded?

The bank will begin with \$50 bn divided equally between its five founder members. Another \$50 bn will come from new members

\$100bn
Currency reserves to help countries



CRA funding



Particulate air pollution linked to 135 million premature deaths over 4 decades, finds study

Agence France-Presse
SINGAPORE

Pollution from man-made emissions and other sources like wildfires have been linked to around 135 million premature deaths worldwide between 1980 and 2020, a Singapore university said on Monday.

Weather phenomena like *El Nino* and the Indian Ocean Dipole worsened the effects of these pollutants by intensifying their concentration in the air, Singapore's Nanyang Technological University (NTU) said, unveiling the results of a study led by its researchers.

The tiny particles called particulate matter 2.5 (PM 2.5), are harmful to human health when inhaled because they are small enough to enter the bloodstream. They come from vehicle and industrial



The harmful particulate matters come from vehicle and industrial emissions and natural sources such as fires and dust storms. AP

emissions as well as natural sources like fires and dust storms.

The fine particulate matter "was associated with approximately 135 million premature deaths globally" from 1980 to 2020, the university said in a statement on the study, published in *Environment International*.

It found that people were dying younger than the average life expectancy

from diseases or conditions that could have been treated or prevented, including stroke, heart and lung disease, and cancer.

Weather patterns increased the deaths by 14%, the study found.

Asia had the "highest number of premature deaths attributable to PM 2.5 pollution" at more than 98 million people, mostly in China and India, the university said. Pakistan, Ban-

gladesh, Indonesia and Japan also had significant numbers of premature deaths, ranging from 2 to 5 million people, it added.

The big picture

The study is one of the most expansive to date on air quality and climate, using 40 years of data to give a big-picture view of the effects of particulate matter on health.

"Our findings show that changes in climate patterns can make air pollution worse," said Steve Yim, an associate professor at NTU's Asian School of the Environment, who led the study.

"When certain climate events happen, like *El Nino*, pollution levels can go up, which means more people might die prematurely because of PM 2.5 pollution," Mr. Yim added.

"This highlights the

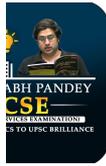
need to understand and account for these climate patterns when tackling air pollution to protect the health of the global population," he added.

The Singapore researchers studied satellite data from the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) on the levels of particulate matter in the earth's atmosphere.

They analysed statistics on deaths from diseases linked to pollution from the U.S.-based Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, an independent research centre.

Information on weather patterns during the period was taken from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in the United States.

Researchers from universities in Hong Kong, Britain and China were also involved in the study.





Report on pollutants

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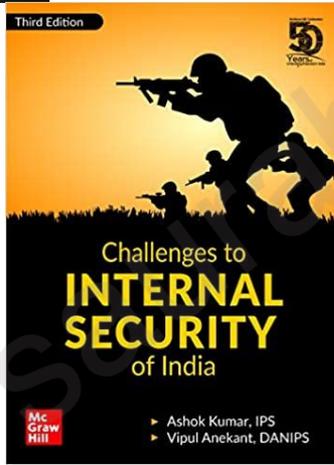
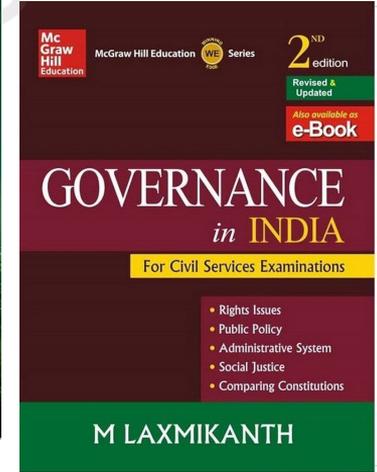
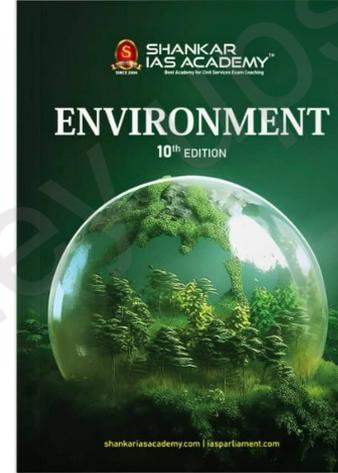
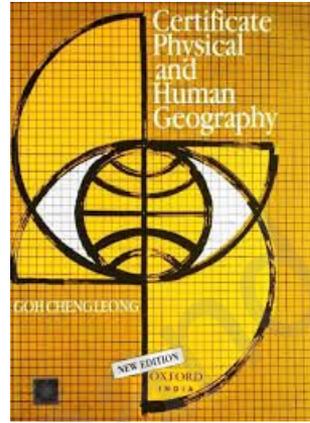
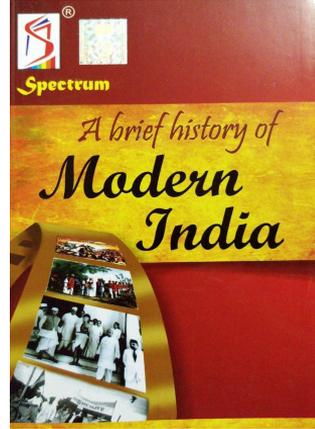
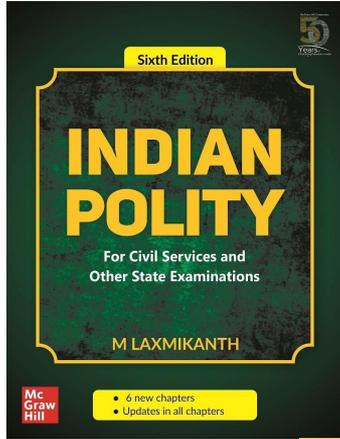


- **It found that people were dying younger than the average life expectancy from diseases or conditions that could have been treated or prevented, including stroke, heart and lung disease, and cancer.**
- **Weather patterns increased the deaths by 14%, the study found. Asia had the “highest number of premature deaths attributable to PM 2.5 pollution” at more than 98 million people, mostly in China and India, the university said.**
- **Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Japan also had significant numbers of premature deaths, ranging from 2 to 5 million people, it added.**

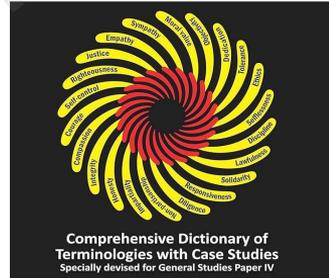
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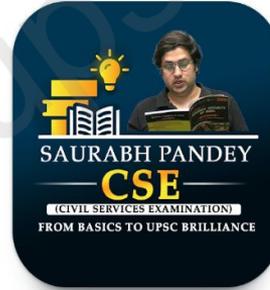
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