

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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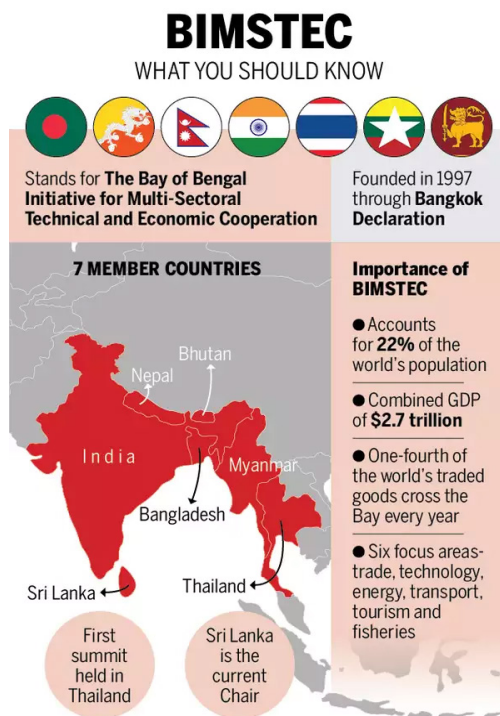
BIMSTEC FOREIGN MINISTERS' RETREAT

Context

- Recently, **India** hosted the first **BIMSTEC Foreign Ministers' Retreat** held in New Delhi, carrying particular weight given the major developments unfolding in neighbouring Myanmar.

About the BIMSTEC

- The Bay of **Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)** is a multilateral regional organisation that was established with the aim of accelerating shared growth and cooperation between littoral and adjacent countries in the Bay of Bengal region.
- It was founded as BIST-EC, in 1997, with the adoption of the **Bangkok Declaration**, with Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand as members.
- It became **BIMST-EC (Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand Economic Cooperation)** with the entry of Myanmar in late 1997, and eventually, it was named in its current form, when Nepal and Bhutan became members in 2004.



- It focuses on **Trade & Investment** (facilitating commerce and economic ties); **Transport & Communication** (enhancing connectivity across borders); **Energy** (collaborating on energy

security and sustainability); **Tourism** (promoting cultural exchange and tourism); **Technology** (sharing knowledge and innovation); **Fisheries & Agriculture** (ensuring food security); **Public Health** (addressing health challenges together); **Poverty Alleviation** (lifting communities out of poverty); **Counter-Terrorism & Transnational Crime** (strengthening security); **Environment & Disaster Management and Climate Change** (protecting our planet); **People-to-People Contact**; and **Cultural Cooperation**.

BIMSTEC's Regional Challenges

- India emphasised that the seven-member BIMSTEC should seek solutions to regional challenges from within the organisation itself, and highlighted that BIMSTEC's complementary and congenial membership should aspire to higher goals.
- The organisation faces long standing goals such as capacity building and economic cooperation, which have now acquired renewed urgency.

Myanmar's Instability and Regional Instability

- The **ongoing crisis in Myanmar** poses significant challenges for BIMSTEC. Instability in Myanmar has raised questions about developmental and connectivity projects aimed at strengthening ties among member countries.
- The **military Junta** in Myanmar recently lost control of **Naungcho, a major town along a trade highway to China** in the northern Shan State. This development directly affects connectivity and trade routes in the region.
- BIMSTEC's discussions focused on crucial connectivity projects and border stability, while maintaining the cautious stance regarding the Myanmar crisis.

Other Challenges and Related Solutions

- Sluggish Progress and Efficiency:** One of the major challenges BIMSTEC encounters is the perceived lack of efficiency and slow progress. Critics often highlight that the organisation hasn't moved as swiftly as desired in achieving its objectives.
- The inconsistency in policy-making and implementation across member countries contributes to this sluggishness. Harmonising diverse national interests and priorities can be quite the jigsaw puzzle.

- **Political Commitment:** BIMSTEC's advancement is hindered by varying levels of political commitment from member countries' leaders. Larger nations sometimes fail to consistently demonstrate strong dedication to driving the organisation's agenda forward.
 - ♦ Simultaneously, smaller countries may not always prioritise BIMSTEC on their own national agendas, leading to uneven commitment levels.
- **Resource Constraints and Capacity Building:** BIMSTEC operates with limited resources, which affects its ability to implement projects effectively. Enhancing institutional capacity and resource allocation is crucial.
 - ♦ Strengthening technical expertise, promoting research, and building human capital within the organisation are essential steps.
- **Connectivity and Infrastructure Gaps:** Despite being a regional grouping, BIMSTEC faces challenges related to physical connectivity. Improving transport links, energy grids, and digital infrastructure remains a priority.
 - ♦ Bridging gaps in connectivity will enhance trade, investment, and people-to-people exchanges.
- **Harmonising Diverse Interests:** BIMSTEC comprises countries with varying economic sizes, political systems, and development levels. Balancing these diverse interests while pursuing common goals requires adept diplomacy.
 - ♦ Finding consensus on issues like trade facilitation, counterterrorism, and disaster management can be intricate.

Conclusion

- The BIMSTEC Foreign Ministers' retreat provided an opportunity for member countries to address regional challenges, especially in light of Myanmar's ongoing crisis. As the organisation seeks solutions, it remains crucial to balance economic cooperation, stability, and humanitarian concerns.

Source: TH

SHARING OF LOCATION IN RETURN FOR BAIL VIOLATES PRIVACY:SC

Context

- The Supreme Court held that courts cannot impose bail conditions that require accused persons to share their location on Google Maps.

Background

- The verdict came in an appeal filed by a Nigerian national, Frank Vitus, who is an accused in a drugs case, challenging a Delhi High Court order of 2022, mandating him to share his Google Map location with the probe officer as a condition for his bail.

Supreme Court Verdict

- The court also held that "any bail condition which enables the Police/ Investigation Agency to track every movement of the accused by using any technology or otherwise would undoubtedly violate the **right to privacy guaranteed under Article 21**".
- On the subject of the "**certificate of assurance**", the court held that the grant of such a certificate is beyond the control of the accused, and ordered the removal of this condition as well.
- It stated that if the Embassy does not grant such a certificate within a reasonable time, the accused cannot be denied bail.

Right to Privacy: Indian Scenario

- In **2017 the K.S. Puttaswamy vs. Union of India** judgment declared that the right to privacy a fundamental right as part of the right to life and liberty under Article 21 of the Constitution.
- To protect the personal data the data protection Bill has been in the works since 2018 when a panel led by Justice B N Srikrishna had prepared a draft version of the Bill.

Right to Privacy: Global scenario

- **Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948** and **Article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 1966**, legally protect persons against "arbitrary interference" with one's privacy, family, home, correspondence, honor and reputation.
 - ♦ India signed and ratified the ICCPR in 1979, without reservation.
- **Article 7 and 8 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, 2012**, recognises the respect for private and family life, home and communications.
 - ♦ **Article 8** mandates protection of personal data and its collection for a specified legitimate purpose.
- **The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) of the European Union** focuses on a

comprehensive data protection law for processing of personal data.

Source: IE

WEST BENGAL SUIT AGAINST CBI PROBES MAINTAINABLE

Context

- The Supreme Court upheld the maintainability of a suit filed by the State of West Bengal accusing the Union Government of **constitutional overreach** and violation of federalism by unilaterally employing the **Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)** without the State's prior consent.

Background

- In **2018** the West Bengal government withdrew its consent that allowed the CBI to conduct investigations of cases in the states.
- In its suit, the State contended that despite the revocation of its consent for the central agency under the **Delhi Special Police Establishment Act of 1946**, the CBI continued to register FIRs concerning offenses that took place within the State.
- The Centre said that a state government cannot claim a right to issue omnibus, sweeping, and overarching directions to withdraw consent for a CBI probe into any matter.

Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)

- CBI, functioning under the **Ministry of Personnel, Pension & Public Grievances**, Government of India, is the premier investigating police agency in India.
- **History:** The CBI came into being during World War II, when the colonial government felt the need to probe cases of corruption in the War and Supply Department. A law came in 1941. It became the DSPE Act in 1946.
 - ♦ It was established by a resolution of the **Ministry of Home Affairs**, Government of India, in **1963**.
 - ♦ **The Santhanam Committee** on Prevention of Corruption recommended the establishment of the CBI.
- **Functions:** CBI was established with a view to investigate serious crimes related to the defense of India, corruption in high places, serious fraud, cheating, and embezzlement and social crime, particularly hoarding, black marketing, and

profiteering in essential commodities, having all-India and inter-state ramifications.

- ♦ It is also the nodal police agency in India that coordinates investigations on behalf of Interpol member countries.
- **Jurisdiction:** CBI derives power to investigate from the **Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946**.
 - ♦ **Section 2** of the Act vests DSPE with jurisdiction to investigate offenses in the Union Territories only.
 - ♦ The jurisdiction can be extended by the Central Government to other areas including Railway areas and States under **Section 5(1)** of the Act, provided the State Government accords consent under Section 6 of the Act.

How many types of consent are there for the CBI?

- **There are two types of consent** for a probe by the CBI. These are: **general and specific**.
- **When a state gives a general consent** to the CBI for probing a case, the agency is not required to seek fresh permission every time it enters that state in connection with investigation or for every case.
- **Specific Consent:** When a general consent is withdrawn, CBI needs to seek case-wise consent for investigation from the concerned state government.
 - ♦ If specific consent is not granted, the CBI officials will not have the power of police personnel when they enter that state.

Issues in functioning of CBI

- **Legislative Problems:** The conduct or continuance of investigation into offenses committed within the territory of a state, consent of the state is required which most of the time is delayed or even denied.
- **Political Issues:** In 2013, the Supreme Court described the CBI as "a caged parrot speaking in its master's voice" (Politicization of CBI).
 - ♦ The observation was made in the context of government interference in the functioning of the CBI in its investigation of the coal blocks allocation cases.
- **Transparency Issues:** The CBI is exempted from the purview of the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005.

- **Overlapping Functions:** There is an overlap in jurisdictions of Central Vigilance Commission (CVC), CBI and Lokpal in certain cases leading to problems.

Way Ahead

- The role, jurisdiction and legal powers of the CBI need to be clearly laid down. It will give it goal clarity, role clarity, autonomy in all spheres and an image makeover as an independent autonomous statutory body.
- **The Second Administrative Reforms Commission (2007)** also suggested that “a new law should be enacted to govern the working of the CBI”.
- **The 19th and 24th reports of the parliamentary standing committees** (2007 and 2008) recommended that “the need of the hour is to strengthen the CBI in terms of legal mandate, infrastructure and resources”.

Source: TH

SPECIAL FINANCIAL PACKAGES FOR STATES

Context

- In the run-up to the Union Budget, the Chief Ministers of Bihar and Andhra Pradesh have demanded **special financial packages for their respective States**.

Financial Grants to States

- The central government provides financial assistance to states through various grants such as:
 - ♦ **Finance Commission Grants:** These are awarded based on the recommendations of the Finance Commission of India, which allocates a share of central taxes to states.
 - ♦ **Plan Grants:** These are funds allocated under various central government plans for specific sectors like health, education, infrastructure, etc.
 - ♦ **Discretionary Grants:** These grants are provided at the discretion of the central government for specific projects or emergencies.

Constitutional Provisions Related to Centre State Financial Relations:

- **Articles 202 to 206** deal with the financial administration of states, including provisions

related to their budget, expenditure, borrowing, and taxation powers.

- **Articles 268 to 272** outline the distribution of revenues between the Union and the states.
- **Article 280** provides for the establishment of a Finance Commission every five years (or as specified by the President).
- **Article 282** allows the Union government to provide financial assistance to states for any public purpose.

What is the Special Category Status?

- It was introduced in **1969** when the **fifth Finance Commission** sought to provide certain disadvantaged states with **preferential treatment**.
- It was named **Gadgil Formula** after the name of then **Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, Dr Gadgil Mukherjee**.
- Initially, **three states; Assam, Nagaland and Jammu & Kashmir** were granted special status. From **1974-1979 Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Sikkim and Tripura** were added under the category. In **1990, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram** and in **2001 Uttarakhand** were given special category status.
- On the recommendations of the **14th Finance Commission** Gadgil formula-based **grants were discontinued**.

Current Share of the States

- The government accepted the recommendations of the **14th Finance Commission** and from 2015, it hiked the tax devolution to states from Centre, **to 42 percent from 32 percent earlier**, and also added a new provision of **revenue deficit grants** to states facing any resource gap.
- States' share is **decided by a formula** meant to incentivize demographic performance and each states effort to mobilize its own tax revenue.
 - ♦ The formula also takes into account geographic area, forest cover and the state's per capita income.
- The **15th finance commission**, under the chairmanship of N K Singh has revised tax devolution and **brought it down to 41 percent from 42 percent**.
 - ♦ So the current tax devolution to states stands at **41 percent till 2026**.

- The **90:10 rule** is still applicable to the **northeastern and hill states**, although there is no special status category.
- All the other states receive **Central funding in a 60:40 ratio**, 60 percent being the Central government's contribution and 40 percent states.

Way Ahead

- If the coalition government decides to revisit the status and meet the demands of Bihar and Andhra Pradesh for a special category status, the proposal has to be **referred to the 16th Finance Commission**.
- In addition to Bihar and Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, and Rajasthan have also been demanding special category status.
- This clarifies that under the current provisions **special category status for states does not exist**.
- But, central government has the option to grant additional financial aid packages to states **having revenue deficit and facing resource gaps**.

Source: TH

INDIA'S E-VEHICLE (EV) POLICY

In News

The government plans to expand its **Electric vehicles (EVs)** policy to include retrospective benefits for prior investors.

- Previously, incentives were available only for new local facilities established within three years of approval.

About Electric vehicles (EVs)

- Electric vehicles (EVs) have gained significant traction in recent years as a cleaner and more efficient alternative to traditional gasoline-powered cars.
- With advancements in battery technology, a growing network of charging infrastructure, and increasing consumer demand, EVs have become a viable option for many drivers around the world.
- Significant investor support is essential to tap into the \$100 billion-plus EV opportunity in India.
- India, being the third-largest automotive market in the world, could potentially "lead the global transition" from internal combustion engine (ICE) to decarbonised electric counterparts.

E-Vehicle policy

- The government in March 2024 approved the **E-Vehicle policy** to promote India as a manufacturing destination for EVs and attract investment from reputed global EV manufacturers.
- **Focus** : Enhance access to latest technology, strengthen the EV ecosystem, and promote competition among players.
 - ♦ Aim to lower production costs and improve EV economics for Indian consumers.
 - ♦ Mandated 50% value addition in manufacturing to occur domestically within five years.
 - ♦ Reduced import duty on completely built units (CBUs) with a cost, insurance, and freight (CIF) value of \$35,000 from 70%-100% to 15%.

Challenges and Issues

- India faces structural cost disadvantages in certain components.
- After-sales service is a major concern for EV customers, impacting the scalability of business models.
- Foreign investments may not always deliver desired outcomes

Comparison at Global

- India's EV policy aligns with incentives provided in the U.S., China, and Europe for EV manufacturing.
 - ♦ Electric cars in Europe and the U.S. remain 10%-50% more expensive than combustion engine vehicles.
 - ♦ Both regions import 20%-30% of their EV battery demands, highlighting the need for integrated production.

Other related steps

- The Indian government has set a target to achieve **30 percent electrification of the country's vehicle fleet by 2030**, and has introduced several incentives and policies to support the growth of the EV industry.
- The industry was given a major boost in the FY24 Union Budget for the production of electric vehicles, adoption of hydrogen fuel, and embracing changing technologies.
- **In the 2023-24 Union Budget**, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a budget allocation of INR 35,000 crore for crucial capital

investments aimed at achieving energy transition and **net-zero targets by 2070**.

- The government has already launched initiatives such as the **Faster Adoption of Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles Scheme – II (FAME – II)** and the **Production Linked Incentive Scheme (PLI)**.

Conclusion and Way Forward

- India's electric vehicle market is poised for significant growth in the coming years.
- With supportive government policies, increasing consumer awareness, and advancements in technology, the country is well positioned to transition towards a more sustainable and eco-friendly mode of transportation.
- As the demand for EVs increases, it presents a tremendous opportunity for both local and international companies to invest in and contribute to the growth of India's EV ecosystem.
- Investors should evaluate potential assets based on competitive advantages, market capabilities, customer feedback, talent, and supply chain strategies.
- There is a need to strengthen domestic players to create capabilities for critical components and encourage foreign automakers to utilize local suppliers.

Source: TH

NEWS IN SHORT

HEAT DOMES PHENOMENON

Context

- The entire western United States has come under the grip of a sweltering heat wave due to 'heat domes' phenomenon.

About the Heat Dome

- A heat dome is like nature's version of a pressure cooker lid. Imagine a high-pressure system in the atmosphere acting as that lid, trapping warm air underneath it for an extended period.
- As a result, the **air near the surface** doesn't get a chance to rise upward.

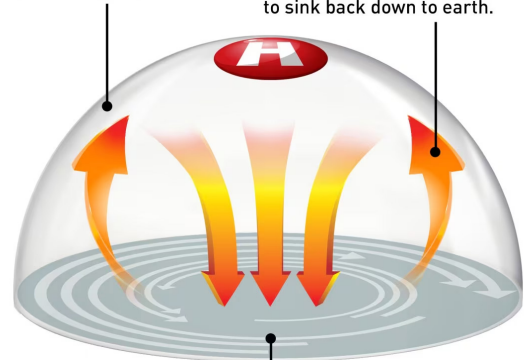
Effects

- **Clear Skies:** Since the **warm air doesn't ascend**, the **sky remains clear**.

Heat Dome

High-pressure atmospheric conditions combine to **act as a lid** on the atmosphere.

In a process known as **convection**, warm air attempts to escape but the high-pressure dome causes it to sink back down to earth.



As winds move the hot air east, the jet stream traps the air where it sinks, resulting in **heat waves**.

- ♦ **Clouds** typically form when **rising warm air** cools down and its water content condenses. But under a heat dome, the lack of upward movement means fewer clouds.
- **Intense Heating:** With the high-pressure system in place, more sunlight reaches the Earth's surface. It leads to significant warming and drying of the soil. **Less evaporation occurs**, reducing the chances of rain cloud formation.
- **Persistent Heat:** The longer the heat dome lingers, the hotter it gets. It's like leaving a lid on a simmering pot—each day adds a little more heat.
 - ♦ Heat domes are responsible for heatwaves, but interestingly, they can occur even without a heat dome being present.

Role of the Jet Stream

- Jet stream is a fast-moving ribbon of air high in the atmosphere that usually helps move weather systems around. When the jet stream forms elongated waves (like a snake slithering across the sky), it can slow down and even stall.
- **Stuck High-Pressure Systems:** If the jet stream's waves become big and elongated, they can trap a high-pressure system in place. This stationary high-pressure area creates a heat dome.
- **El Niño Connection:** The jet stream's behaviour is linked to larger climate patterns. For instance, during **La Niña years (when cooler waters spread across the equatorial Pacific)**, heat waves can extend further south into peninsular India.
 - ♦ And when La Niña transitions to El Niño (warmer waters spreading west-east), heat waves tend to concentrate over northwest India.

Climate Change and Heat Domes

- Climate change is making heat domes more intense, frequent, and longer-lasting.
- As our planet warms, extreme weather events become more pronounced.
- So, while heat domes have always been part of Earth's weather repertoire, they're now cranking up the heat.

Source: IE

FORUM FOR INDIA-PACIFIC ISLANDS COOPERATION (FIPIC) PARTNERSHIP

Context

- Recently, India sent humanitarian aid to landslide-hit Papua New Guinea, showcasing FIPIC partnership.

About the Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC)

- FIPIC includes 14 of the island countries – Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.
- Though these countries are relatively small in land area and distant from India, many have large exclusive economic zones (EEZs), and offer promising possibilities for fruitful cooperation.
- It is a testament to India's strategic engagement with the Pacific Island countries, scattered across the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean. They hold immense significance from both an **economic and geostrategic standpoint**.
- The **Prime Minister of India**, in 2014, convened the inaugural FIPIC gathering in Fiji, which marked a pivotal moment in **India's Act East Policy** — a vision that extends beyond the Asian continent to embrace the Indo-Pacific region.
- India unveiled the **12-Step Initiative** at the **third FIPIC Summit**, held in Papua New Guinea, which includes:
 - ♦ **FIPIC SME Development Project:** Supporting small and medium-sized enterprises in the region.
 - ♦ **Solar Projects for Government Buildings:** Harnessing renewable energy.
 - ♦ **Desalination Units for Drinking Water:** Addressing water scarcity.
 - ♦ **Supply of Sea Ambulances:** Enhancing healthcare access.

- ♦ **24x7 Emergency Helpline:** Strengthening emergency response.
- ♦ **Jan Aushadi Kendras:** Affordable healthcare solutions.
- ♦ **Yoga Centres:** Promoting holistic well-being.
- ♦ **Beyond Infrastructure:** Education, Health, and Culture
- India's development partnership with Pacific Island Countries (PICs) extends beyond infrastructure. Education, health, and culture are key areas of focus.
- **Advocacy for India's UN Security Council Seat:** Support for India's bid for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council has been high on the FIPIC agenda.

Source: TH

UPPER SIANG HYDROPOWER PROJECT

Context

- Local communities are protesting against the proposed **11,000 megawatt** hydropower project on the Siang River in Arunachal Pradesh.

The Upper Siang project

- Set to be built by the NHPC, the **Upper Siang hydropower project** would entail the construction of a **300-meter high dam**, the largest in the subcontinent, when completed.
- This hydropower project is being projected as a strategic imperative to counter China's hydel projects on the **Tsangpo**.

Siang River

- The Siang originates near **Mount Kailash in Tibet**, where it goes by the name of Tsangpo.
- It traverses more than **1,000 km** eastward, before forming a horseshoe bend around the **Namcha Barwa peak**, and enters **Arunachal Pradesh** as the Siang.
 - ♦ The river becomes the **Brahmaputra in Assam**.

Concerns of the Project

- The proposed project **threatens the delicate ecosystems**, wildlife habitats, and biodiversity.
- The project will submerge more than 300 villages belonging to the **Adi tribe**, including the Upper Siang district headquarters of Yingkiang.

Source: IE

KARTARPUR CORRIDOR

Context

- Pakistan has completed the 420-meter-long bridge at the Kartarpur Corridor zero line after a delay of two-and-a-half years.

Kartarpur corridor

- The Kartarpur Corridor is a **visa-free border crossing and religious corridor**, connecting the Gurdwara Darbar Sahib, in Pakistan to Gurudwara Dera Baba Nanak, Gurdaspur, Punjab, India.
 - ♦ It was opened in November **2019**, which allows Sikh devotees in India to visit Gurdwara Darbar Sahib.
- **Village Kartarpur** is located at the west bank of **river Ravi** where Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji spent the last 18 years of his life.
- **Gurdwara Dera Baba Nanak** is about 1 km from the Indo- Pakistan border and on the east bank of River Ravi.

Source: The Print

ZIKA VIRUS

Context

- Cases of Zika virus infection reported in Pune city.

About ZIKA virus

- It is an **Arbovirus** belonging to the **Flaviviridae Family**. It is a single stranded, Positive sense RNA virus.
- It is a **mosquito-borne virus** first identified in **Uganda in 1947** in a Rhesus macaque monkey, and was found in humans in African countries in the **1950s**.
- **Spread:** It occurs through the bite of **infected Aedes mosquitoes**, mainly *Aedes aegypti*, which also transmits dengue and chikungunya.
- **Symptoms:** Symptoms start 3–14 days after infection and are generally mild, including rash, fever, conjunctivitis, muscle and joint pain.
 - ♦ Zika virus in pregnant women can cause **congenital microcephaly, Guillain-Barre syndrome**.
 - ♦ **Microcephaly** is a condition in which an infant's head is smaller than what is typical for their age and can be caused by the brain not developing properly.

- ♦ **Guillain-Barré syndrome** is a rare condition that causes a person's immune system to attack the peripheral nerves.
- **Vaccination:** No vaccine is as yet available for the prevention or treatment of Zika virus infection.

Source: TH

MARITIME ORGANISATION (IMO) 2024 AWARD

Context

- Indian Seafarers to be Honored for Exceptional Bravery at Sea by The **International Maritime Organization (IMO)** in its **2024 awards for Bravery at Sea**.

About

- The IMO Council has honoured Captain Avhilash Rawat and the crew of the oil tanker Marlin Luanda for their extraordinary bravery, leadership, and determination.
- **Three categories of honour** are the Award, Certificates of Commendation and Letters of Commendation.
- The honours are **awarded annually** and were established by the Organization to provide international recognition for those who, at the risk of losing their own life, perform acts of exceptional bravery.
- **IMO:** It is a **specialised agency of the United Nations** responsible for regulating maritime transport.
 - ♦ The IMO was established following agreement at a UN conference held in Geneva in **1948** and the IMO came into existence ten years later, meeting for the first time in **1958**.

Source: PIB

EXERCISE PITCH BLACK

Context

- An Indian Air Force (IAF) contingent reached at the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Base Darwin, Australia for participating in **Exercise Pitch Black 2024**.

Exercise 'Pitch Black'

- It is a biennial, multi- national exercise hosted by the RAAF.

- The name 'Pitch Black' was derived from the emphasis on night time flying over large unpopulated areas.
- The 2024 edition is slated to be the largest in the 43 year long history of Ex Pitch Black, which includes participation by 20 countries, with over 140 aircraft and 4400 military personnel of various air forces.
- The exercise would provide IAF with an opportunity towards force integration with participating nations and mutual exchange of best practices.
- The IAF has previously participated in the 2018 and 2022 editions of this exercise.

Source: PIB

KENYA

In News

- Kenya's recent downgrade by a leading global credit rating agency is likely to significantly impact the East African nation's ability to secure favourable loan terms, including climate finance.

About Kenya

- It is named after Mount Kenya and located in Eastern Africa.
- **Bordering countries** : It shares common borders with five countries namely: Tanzania in the South, Uganda in the West, South Sudan in the North West, Ethiopia in the North and Somalia in the East.



- The Indian Ocean coastline which forms the Eastern border stretches some 480 kilometers from the Somali border to the Tanzania border.
- It is bisected lengthwise by the Great Rift Valley that runs from Jordan in the North to Mozambique in the South.
- **Capital:** Nairobi
- It is strategically located and a gateway to East and Central Africa with great regional and international connectivity.

Geographical features

- ♦ **Major Rivers** : Tana and Athi
- ♦ Lake Victoria is shared by Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania.
- ♦ **Lake Turkana is the largest permanent desert lake in the world** and it is the largest alkaline lake in the world
- Kenya was admitted to **United Nations membership on 16 December 1963**.
- The highest point is on Mt. Kenya

Source: DTE

AUSTRIA

In News

- Prime Minister Shri. Narendra Modi paid an official visit to Austria

About Austria

- Austria is situated in Central Europe.
- **Capital** :Vienna



- **Border Areas** : Austria borders eight countries: Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Italy, Switzerland and Lichtenstein.
- **Geographical Features** : Austria's geographical position has long made it a crossroads for trade routes between the major European economic and cultural areas.
 - ♦ **Highest mountain:** Grossglockner
 - ♦ **Biggest lake:** Lake Constance
 - ♦ **Longest river:** Danube (2,848 km, 350 km of which are in Austria).
- **India and Austria** : They have enjoyed traditionally close and very friendly relations since 1949 and celebrate 70 years of bilateral relationships in 2019.

Source: PIB