

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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14TH BRICS TRADE MINISTERS' MEETING

Context

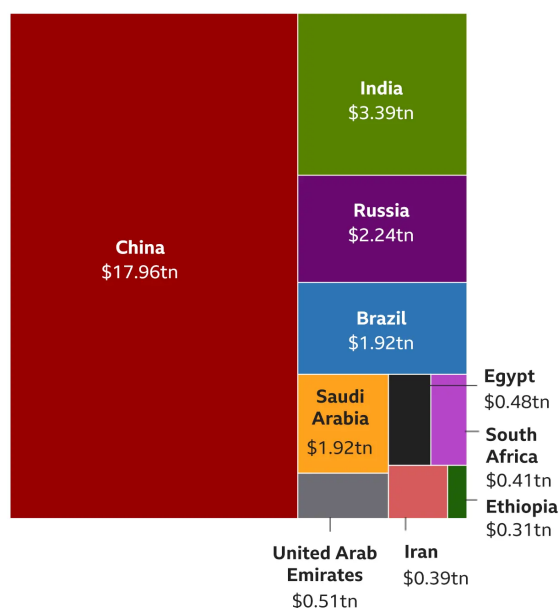
- Recently, the Commerce Secretary of India has attended the 14th BRICS Trade Ministers' Meeting held under the BRICS Presidency of the Russian Federation.
 - Theme for this year's BRICS engagement titled as '**Strengthening Multilateralism for Just Global Development**'.

Background: About BRICS

- It is an acronym that refers to a group of five major emerging national economies: **Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa**.
- It started after the meeting of the Leaders of Russia, India and China in St. Petersburg on the margins of the **G8 Outreach Summit in 2006**, as a formal grouping, and was formalised during the **1st meeting of BRIC Foreign Ministers** on the margins of **UNGA in New York in 2006**.
 - Initially, the grouping was termed BRIC as South Africa was inducted in 2010 and from there on it has been referred to as BRICS.
 - The governments of the **BRICS states** have met annually at **formal summits since 2009**.
- Over a period of time, BRICS countries have come together to deliberate on important issues under the **three pillars of political and security, economic and financial and cultural and people-to-people exchanges**

Brics countries and their GDPs

GDP in trillions of US dollars



Source: World Bank/OECD

B B C

- It brings together five of the largest developing countries of the world, representing around 41% of the global population, around 24% of the global GDP and around 16% of global trade.

Importance BRICS

- Economic Cooperation:** BRICS facilitates economic collaboration through initiatives such as the **New Development Bank (NDB)**, aimed at funding infrastructure projects in member countries.
 - Economic collaboration within BRICS facilitates trade diversification, technology transfer, and infrastructure development, which are crucial for India's economic growth and development aspirations.
- Global Governance Reform:** India uses BRICS as a platform to advocate for reforms in international financial institutions like the IMF and World Bank, aiming to increase the voice and representation of emerging economies in global economic governance.
- Cultural and Academic Exchange:** BRICS fosters cultural and academic exchanges, promoting people-to-people ties and enhancing mutual understanding among member countries.

Expansion of BRICS

- It was done as per the decision adopted by the 15th BRICS Summit in 2022. **Argentina, Ethiopia, Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE** are the six new additions to the BRICS.
 - Significance of Expansion** of BRICS likely to focus on the **strengthening of the group** with the inclusion of countries from the **Middle East and the Representative of Developing Countries and strengthening the Voice for Global Governance**.

Recent Trade Ministers' Meeting Focus Areas

- WTO Development Aspect:** The Commerce Secretary emphasised the need to strengthen the multilateral trading system with the World Trade Organization (WTO) at its core, including addressing long-pending issues related to development and special and differential treatment.

- **Global Value Chains (GVCs):** Effective functioning of joint value chains was discussed, recognizing their critical role in international trade.
- **MSMEs and Digitalisation:** Interaction among Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) was highlighted, along with India's success story in digitalization and e-commerce.
- **Special Economic Zones (SEZs):** Cooperation among SEZs was deemed relevant for fostering economic growth.

Multilateralism and Urgent Reforms

- **Permanent Solution to Public Stock Holding:** Addressing food security concerns.
- **Two-Tier Dispute Settlement System:** Enhancing the effectiveness of dispute resolution.
- **WTO Reform:** Making the organisation more responsive to the needs of emerging economies.
- **'30 for 30' Initiative:** Proposing at least 30 operational improvements to the WTO by its 30th anniversary in 2025.
- **Resilient Supply Chains:** Decentralisation and diversification were advocated to enhance supply chain resilience.
- **Paperless Trade:** The Commerce Secretary emphasised digitalization of trade documents, such as the Bill of Lading.
- **Affordable Emerging Technologies:** Collaboration for green transition and climate resilience was highlighted.
- **Climate-Related Measures and MSMEs:** Concerns were raised about climate-related unilateral measures impacting trade.
 - ♦ Such measures were seen as conflicting with Multilateral Environmental Agreements and ignoring the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR).
 - ♦ The importance of MSMEs in global value chains was reiterated.

Conclusion

- The 14th BRICS Trade Ministers' Meeting provided a platform for dialogue on critical trade-related issues, emphasising cooperation, inclusiveness, and the pursuit of just global development.
- As we continue to navigate the complexities of international trade, BRICS remains committed to strengthening multilateralism and fostering equitable growth.

Source: PIB

TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR LARGE CITIES

In Context

- The government proposed a transit-oriented development plan for 14 large cities with a population of over 30 lakh.

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)

- It is a planning and design strategy aimed at creating sustainable urban environments. It focuses on compact, mixed-use communities centered around high-quality public transportation systems.
- TOD focuses on creation of high density mixed land use development in the influence zone of transit stations.

Need for a National TOD Policy

- As the cities are experiencing rapid growth, transit systems like metro rail, BRTS, etc. are being implemented to cater to the growing travel demand.
- National TOD policy would serve as guidelines and play a catalytic role in formulating state/ city level policies for promotion of transit oriented development.
- National TOD policy shall be a guiding document for the Central Government ministries/ departments/ agencies to ensure that their schemes, policies, etc. encourage TOD in cities, especially those with upcoming mass transit systems.

Significance of Transit-oriented Development

- Promoting higher densities and the concentration of jobs within relatively small areas, TOD creates agglomeration effects proven to boost a city's competitiveness.
- Compact urban development and high-quality public transit also mutually reinforce each other: mass transit can support the large passenger flows that come with high density development, while the concentration of jobs.
- Proximity to mass transit improves access to TOD neighborhoods, boosting their attractiveness and increasing real estate value.
- When located in areas that are less exposed to natural hazards, the TOD approach can enhance resilience to disaster risks by supporting high-density housing and activities in lower-risk zones.

- By concentrating jobs, services, and housing within the catchment area of transit stations, TOD makes public transport a more attractive and efficient option, while reducing dependence on private cars and promoting shorter commutes.

Three Values (3V) Framework

- A new report by the World Bank proposes the “**three values**” (3V) Framework for TOD, which allows decision makers to better understand the linkages between connectivity, accessibility, place quality, and market potential values around a given station.
- The **node value** describes the importance of a station in the public transit network based on passenger traffic, connections with other transport modes, and centrality within the network.
- The **place value** reflects the quality and attractiveness of the area around the station. Factors include the diversity of land use; the availability of essential services such as schools and healthcare; the proportion of everyday amenities that can be accessed by walking or cycling; pedestrian accessibility and also the size of urban blocks around the station.
- The **market potential value** refers to the unrealized market value of station areas. It is measured by looking at the major variables that can influence the demand for land (current and future number of jobs in the vicinity of the station, number of jobs accessible by transit within 30 minutes, current and future housing densities) as well as the supply (amount of developable land, possible changes in zoning policy, market vibrancy, etc.).

Steps Taken for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) in India

- **National TOD Policy (2017):** Issued by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, this policy provides guidelines for implementing TOD across Indian cities.
- **Smart Cities Mission:** Emphasizes the integration of land use and transport planning in selected cities to promote TOD principles.
- **Delhi TOD Policy:** Focuses on developing high-density, mixed-use areas around metro stations, encouraging walkability and reducing car dependency.

Challenges and Way Forward

- **Funding and Financing:** Securing adequate funds for infrastructure development remains a challenge.

- **Coordination Among Agencies:** Effective collaboration between various government agencies, developers, and stakeholders is crucial.
- **Public Awareness:** Raising awareness about the benefits of TOD among citizens and encouraging their participation in the planning process.

Source: TH

INDIA'S ETHANOL PRODUCTION SHIFT FROM SUGAR TO MAIZE

Context

- Cereal Grains have overtaken sugarcane as the primary feedstock for the production of ethanol used in blending with petrol.

About

- In the current supply year **2023- 2024**, sugar mills and distilleries supplied **401 crore liters of ethanol** to oil marketing companies.
- Of that, **211 crore liters or 52.7%** was ethanol produced using maize and damaged foodgrains (mainly broken/ old rice not fit for human consumption), while **sugarcane-based feedstocks** (molasses and whole juice/ syrup) accounted for the remaining **190 crore liters**.
- This is the first time that the contribution of grains to India's ethanol production has surpassed **50%**.

What is Ethanol?

- Ethanol is **99.9%** pure alcohol that can be blended with petrol.
- Alcohol production involves **fermentation of sugar** using yeast. In cane juice or molasses, sugar is present in the form of **sucrose** that is **broken down into glucose and fructose**.
- Also grains contain starch, a carbohydrate that has to **first be extracted and converted** into sucrose and simpler sugars, before their further fermentation, distillation and dehydration to ethanol.

Ethanol blending

- The ‘**National Policy on Biofuels**’ notified by the government in 2018 envisaged an indicative target of 20% ethanol blending in petrol by 2030.
 - ♦ **In 2014 only 1.5 per cent** ethanol was blended in petrol in India.
- Given the encouraging performance and various interventions made by the government since 2014, **the 20% target was advanced to 2025-26**.

Why is maize being promoted to produce ethanol ?

- Till 2017-18, ethanol was being produced only from **molasses**, the dense dark brown liquid byproduct containing sucrose that mills cannot economically recover and crystallize into sugar.
- However Sugarcane is a **water-guzzling crop**. A NITI Aayog report says that just **one liter of ethanol produced** from sugarcane consumes at least **2,860 liters of water**.
- India will require **1320 million tons of sugarcane, 19 million hectares of additional land and 348 billion cubic meters of extra water** to produce enough ethanol to meet the 20% ethanol blending target of 2025.
- Further the **Food Corporation of India's (FCI)** has restricted the use of rice on concerns over cereal inflation and hence maize has emerged as the top ethanol feedstock.

Source: IE

SUPREME COURT UPHOLDS STATES' POWER TO TAX MINERALS

Context

- A nine-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court in, **Mineral Area Development Authority v M/s Steel Authority of India**, held that states have the power to levy tax on mines and minerals.

Background

- The dispute originated from the enactment of the **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act**, also known as **MMDR Act** by the Union Government in **1957**, which brought the control of mines and minerals under the Union government's jurisdiction.
- **Section 9 of the Act**, requires those who obtain leases to conduct mining activities to "pay royalty in respect of any mineral removed" to the individual or corporation who leased the land to them.

What is Royalty?

- Royalties refer to the **fees paid to the owner of a product** in exchange for the right to use that product.
- **For example**, if a movie studio wants to use an existing piece of music by a specific artist in their new film, they will have to pay a royalty fee that goes to the artist.

Supreme Court Verdict

- The Supreme Court held that the "royalty" collected by state governments under **Section 9 of the Mines and Minerals (Development & Regulation) Act, 1957 (MMDRA)** is not a tax.
- The obligation to pay royalty arises from **contractual agreements between the lessor and lessee** and is not intended for public purposes; rather, it serves as compensation for the exclusive use of mineral resources.
- Contractual payments made to the government cannot be equated to taxes.
- The judgment overruled the decision of the case in **India Cement Ltd. v State of Tamil Nadu (1989)**, which had declared that royalty is a tax.

Source: IE

SOUTH AFRICA'S CLIMATE CHANGE BILL

Context

- Recently, **The Climate Change Bill** was approved by South Africa's National Assembly.

About

- The bill will impose **mandatory curbs on the emissions** from large, fossil-fuel heavy industries and require climate-adaptation plans from towns and villages.
- This would enable **South Africa to meet its emissions reduction commitments under the Paris agreement**.

Need for the new Law

- **South Africa relies on coal** as its primary fuel source for electricity generation and is one of the **world's top 15 greenhouse gas (GHG) emitters**.
 - ♦ The energy sector represents roughly **80% of gross emissions**, with energy industries (~60%) and transport (~12%).
- Being an economy which is dependent on agriculture and tourism, South Africa has faced increasing **Western pressure to accelerate its transition away from fossil fuel**.

Scenario in India

- India **does not have comprehensive legislation** on climate change. A Private Member's Bill, called the Council on Climate Change Bill was moved in 2022, but there has been no significant movement on this so far.

- However, climate change features in **multiple Acts and subordinate legislation**.
 - ♦ These include the Environmental Protection Act, Forest Conservation Act, Energy Conservation Act, Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act among others.
- **SC Verdict:** The Supreme Court ruled that citizens have a **“right against the adverse effects of climate change,”**.
 - ♦ “Despite Constitutional guarantees that give the citizens equality before the law and right to life and personal liberty, it was now necessary, in the Court’s view, to explicitly link the impact of climate change as something which impedes these rights of liberty, life and equality.”
- **India’s Efforts and Commitments:** India has communicated that the intensity of its energy emissions had reduced **by 33% from 2005-2019**, 11 years ahead of target.
 - ♦ It also committed to revising its emissions intensity to **45% by 2030** in the updated set of NDC.
 - ♦ Emission intensity refers to the **total amount of GHG emitted for every unit increase of GDP**. It is different from absolute emissions.
 - ♦ India has also committed to **source 50% of its electricity in 2030** from non-fossil fuel resources.

Source: TH

CALLER ID SPOOFING

Context

- **Caller ID spoofing technique** is being used by the **fraudsters** nowadays.

Caller ID spoofing

- It is a **technique** with which the **phone number** that a call appears to originate from can be falsified.
- **Spoofing techniques** have been honed by enthusiasts, telemarketers, and fraudsters alike, over the years.
- They use **caller ID spoofing** primarily to shield their identity when engaging in illicit activity.
 - ♦ At times, caller ID spoofing is used by these individuals to carry out social engineering attacks, where the spoofed caller ID is

abused for the implicit trust that the receiving party associates with it.

- ♦ Caller ID spoofing can also be used to circumvent standard call blocking systems, and even for exploiting vulnerabilities in insecure Interactive Voice Response (IVR) systems.
- **Concern:** Telecommunication service providers lose revenue, users that are defrauded due to a scam call abusing a spoofed caller ID lose money, and law enforcement has a harder time investigating crimes where spoofed caller IDs are used.

Tackling Scam Calls

- **The International Telecommunications Union (ITU)** is a special UN agency focused on improving and standardising global information and communication technologies.
 - ♦ The ITU was originally established as the International Telegraph Union in 1865, much before the UN existed, and of which India has been a member since 1869 onward.
 - ♦ In 2021, the ITU published a technical report on countering caller ID spoofing.
 - ♦ While this report does not have any mandatory provisions, it does provide a reference using **Public Key Infrastructure (PKI)** based authentication which could be implemented by Indian telecom operators to fix caller ID spoofing for good.
- The Telecommunications Act, 2023 allows the Union Government to take over control and operation of any telecommunication service or network **during times of “emergency.”**

Conclusion

- **Fixing** the technical and implementation problem of caller ID spoofing will have an outweighed impact for all stakeholders.
- For consumers, fixing caller ID spoofing will **reduce spam and fraud calls**, and will completely eliminate fraud that relies on false representation of one’s identity via phone number.
- For telecommunications providers, it will **save revenue** that would otherwise be lost, and for the Government and therefore the public, it would **result in revenue that would contribute to the Indian economy**.

Source: TH

NEWS IN SHORT

AUSTRALIA BANNED URANIUM MINING AT JABILUKA SITE

Context

- Australia Banned Uranium Mining at **Jabiluka site**, which is home to one of the **world's largest deposits of high-grade uranium**.

About

- The Jabiluka site is surrounded by **Kakadu National Park**.
- Archaeologists discovered a **buried trove of stone axes and tools** near the Jabiluka site in 2017, which they dated at tens of thousands of years old.
- The Jabiluka site became the focus of intense legal wrangling between the **Mirarr people** and mining companies after the uranium deposit was discovered there in the early 1970s.

Source: IE

DRAFT BROADCASTING SERVICES (REGULATION) BILL, 2023

Context

- The Internet Freedom Foundation decried secret changes to the draft Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill, which expands regulatory requirements on online news and entertainment media.

Key features of the Draft Bill

- The Bill is an attempt to replace the **Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995**.
- Multiple types of broadcasters and broadcast network operators will be regulated under the draft Bill.
 - ♦ Television broadcasting networks will have to register with the central government, while OTT platforms must provide an intimation after meeting a certain threshold of subscribers.
- The draft Bill also seeks to **regulate broadcast of news and current affairs programmes** (excluding print news). Such programmes will have to comply with the prescribed programme code and advertisement code.
- The draft Bill provides for a **self-regulatory structure** to ensure compliance with the programme and advertising codes. This includes;

- ♦ Self-regulation,
- ♦ Constituting self-regulatory organizations, and
- ♦ Establishing a Broadcast Advisory Council.
- Each broadcaster will have to also set up an internal **Content Evaluation Committee (CEC)**. All broadcast content must be certified by the CEC.
- The Bill also provides for the constitution of a **Broadcast Advisory Council**, with government membership, that would hear complaints against broadcasters.

Source: TH

SAINT HILARION MONASTERY

Context

- Recently, the UNESCO tag for **Tell Umm Amer heritage site in Gaza** was announced during the ongoing 46th session of the World Heritage Committee at New Delhi.

About Tell Umm Amer (aka Saint Hilarion Monastery)

- It stands and nestled amidst the **coastal dunes in Nuseirat Municipality, Palestine**, this remarkable site dates back to the 4th century as a testament to centuries of devotion and cultural exchange.
- The monastery owes its existence to **Saint Hilarion, a visionary ascetic who sought solitude in the wilderness**.
- Initially, it served as a haven for solitary hermits, but over time, it evolved into a vibrant coenobitic community—a place where monks lived together, sharing their spiritual journeys.
- It was inscribed on **both the 'World Heritage List' and the 'List of World Heritage in Danger'**.
 - ♦ This **dual recognition** underscores both its historical value and the urgent need to protect it from the ongoing conflict in Gaza.

Significance and Influence

- **First Monastic Community:** Saint Hilarion Monastery holds the distinction of being the first monastic community in the Holy Land. Its establishment laid the groundwork for the spread of monastic practices throughout the region.
- **Strategic Location:** Positioned at the **crossroads of major trade and communication routes between Asia and Africa**, the monastery became a hub of **religious, cultural, and economic interchange** during the **Byzantine period**.

Source: UNESCO

NIPUN BHARAT MISSION

Context

- Recently, the union government launched the **NIPUN (National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy) Bharat Mission**.

About the NIPUN Bharat Mission

- It is, **launched by the Ministry of Education**, a crucial step toward ensuring that every child in India acquires **foundational literacy**—such as reading, writing, and numeracy skills that are essential for a child's overall development and future success.
- The **mission's primary goal** is to achieve universal **Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN)** among children in the **age group of 3 to 9 years**.
- By the end of **Grade 3 (approximately age 8-9)**, every child should possess the necessary competencies in reading, writing, and basic maths.

Significance

- National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 Emphasis:** NEP places foundational literacy and numeracy as the highest priority.
 - It recognises that without these fundamental skills, further learning becomes challenging.
- Universal Access:** NIPUN Bharat aims to ensure that no child is left behind. Regardless of socio-economic background or geographical location, every young learner should have access to quality education.
- Holistic Development:** Strong foundational skills not only enable academic success but also contribute to a child's overall cognitive, emotional, and social development.

Implementation and Key Components

- National Steering Committee:** It was set up by the Ministry of Education to oversee the progress of NIPUN Bharat. It includes education secretaries from various states and other key stakeholders.
- Monitoring and Tracking:** State and union territories are preparing implementation plans to achieve universal FLN in primary schools. Regular monitoring ensures progress toward the 2026-27 goal.

Collaborative Efforts

- NCERT:** It plays a pivotal role in designing curriculum frameworks, teacher training, and assessment tools for NIPUN Bharat.
- CBSE:** It actively supports the mission by integrating FLN competencies into its curriculum.

Source: IE

PROPOSAL BY PARAKH ON STUDENT ASSESSMENT

In News

- The Performance Assessment Review and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development (PARAKH) suggested to Include Class 9-11 performance for Class 12 results

About PARAKH

- National Assessment Centre- PARAKH was set up in NCERT as an independent constituent unit in 2023, to fulfil the basic objectives of setting norms, standards, guidelines and implement activities related to student assessment along with other tasks as mandated by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.
- There are four major areas of focus for PARAKH:
 - Capacity Development in Competency Based Assessment
 - Large-Scale Achievement Survey
 - Equivalence of School Boards
 - Holistic Progress Cards for the Foundational, Preparational, Middle and Secondary Stages.

Recent Recommendations

- Integration of Performance:** Performance from Classes 9, 10, and 11 should be included in the final Class 12 report card, with weighted contributions of 15% from Class 9, 20% from Class 10, 25% from Class 11, and 40% from Class 12.
- Assessment Types:** Class 9: 70% formative assessments, 30% summative assessments.
 - Class 10: 50% formative assessments, 50% summative assessments.
 - Class 11: 40% formative assessments, 60% summative assessments.
 - Class 12: 30% formative assessments, 70% summative assessments.
- Holistic Progress Card:** Includes self-evaluation, teacher assessments of group work, and peer feedback.

- **Credit System:** Classes 9 and 10: 40 credits each.
 - ♦ Classes 11 and 12: 44 credits each.
 - ♦ Subject-specific credits include 32 for Classes 9 and 10 (e.g., 12 for languages, 4 each for mathematics, science, social science).
- **National Credit Framework:** Boards are recommended to develop a credit transfer system aligned with the National Credit Framework.
- The credit system aligns with the NEP 2020's concept of the Academic Bank of Credits.

Do you know?

- The **Perseverance Mars rover** is part of NASA's Mars Exploration Program
- It is a long-term effort of robotic exploration of the Red Planet.
- Perseverance is investigating Jezero Crater – a region of Mars where the ancient environment may have been favorable for microbial life – probing the Martian rocks for evidence of past life.

Source:IE

COMBINED EVALUATION

Weight	Class 9	Class 10	Class 11	Class 12
Formative	70%	50%	40%	30%
Summative	30%	50%	60%	70%

■ Formative are classroom assessments through holistic progress cards, projects, group discussions, etc; summative are end-term examinations

■ Each class will have two terms for assessment

Weighted marks at the end of higher secondary stage

Class 9	Class 10	Class 11	Class 12
15%	20%	25%	40%

Source:IE

CHEYAVA FALLS OF MARS

About

- NASA's Perseverance rover found a rock named Cheyava Falls on Mars

About Cheyava Falls of Mars

- Cheyava Falls measures 3.2 feet by 2 feet (1 metre by 0.6 metres).
- It is named after a waterfall in the Grand Canyon.
- It is situated at the northern edge of Neretva Vallis, an ancient river valley that is 400 metres wide, formed by ancient water flow into Jezero Crater.
- It shows signs of **organic material** and evidence of past water flow.
- It contains organic compounds, which are the building blocks of life, though these can also form through non-biological processes.
- It has large white veins of calcium phosphate and reddish bands of haematite.
 - ♦ "leopard spots" were also discovered

INDIA- SAUDI ARABIA: FIRST MEETING OF THE HIGH-LEVEL TASK FORCE ON INVESTMENTS

In News

- The inaugural meeting of the India-Saudi Arabia High Level Task Force on Investments was held virtually.

Key Outcomes

- The meeting reviewed prior discussions by the technical teams of the Task Force.
- Constructive discussions took place on bilateral investment opportunities in sectors including refining and petrochemical plants, new and renewable energy, power, telecom, and innovation.
- The Principal Secretary to the PM affirmed India's commitment to support Saudi investments worth US\$ 100 billion.

Source: PIB

AQUILARIA MALACCENSIS (AGARWOOD)

Context

- India has successfully **prevented inclusion of Aquilaria malaccensis (agarwood)** in the **Review of Significant Trade (RST)** of the **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)**.

About

- The CITES also notified a **new export quota** of highly valuable and aromatic resinous wood and oil of Aquilaria malaccensis (agarwood) from India from April 2024.
- It is currently listed as **Critically Endangered** in the IUCN Red List and in Appendix II of the CITES.

- ◆ **Unscientific extraction and extensive exploitation** have decimated the species.
- India is home to only two species of **Aquilaria** namely **A. malaccensis** and **A. khasiana**.
- **Uses:** It is highly valued for its traditional uses as incense, the extracts (agarwood oil) of plants are also used in water-based perfumes.
 - ◆ It is used in the aroma industry, in medicine preparations, preparations of air fresheners and purifiers.
 - ◆ The essential oil extracted from agarwood has anti-inflammatory, anti-rheumatic, analgesic and antioxidant properties.
- **Aquilaria malaccensis** was listed in **Appendix II of CITES** for the first time in **1995** based on India's proposal at **CoP9 in 1994**.
 - ◆ **The removal of India** from the RST for *Aquilaria malaccensis* was achieved based on a **non-detriment findings (NDFs)** study of the plant species by the Botanical Survey of India (BSI),
- **Significance:** Since agarwood is cultivated in different parts of India, especially in the northeast, the **development is going to benefit lakhs of farmers** in certain districts of **Assam, Manipur, Nagaland, and Tripura**.

Source: TH

NATIONAL METALLURGIST AWARDS -2024

Context

- The Ministry of Steel, Government of India has conferred **National Metallurgist Awards**.

About

- It recognizes the **contributions in the metallurgical field**, covering Operations, Research & Development, Waste Management and Energy Conservation.
- Applications are invited from **Individuals from Industry, Research & Academia**.
- The Awards are given in the following four categories:-
 - ◆ Lifetime Achievement Award
 - ◆ National Metallurgist Award
 - ◆ Young Metallurgist Award
 - Environment
 - Metal Science
 - ◆ Award for R&D in Iron & Steel Sector.

Source: PIB

