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Time: 45 Min

Date: 02-12-2024

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KHWAJA MOINUDDIN CHISHTI AND SUFISM

In News

- A Hindu Sena petition was admitted in an Ajmer court, claiming a Shiva temple lies beneath the Ajmer Sharif dargah, and calling for an archaeological survey.

- The dargah is the mausoleum of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, a key figure in the spread of Sufism in the subcontinent.

- The shrine was built by Mughal Emperor Humayun in his honor.

Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti

- **Early Life:** He was born in 1141 CE in Persia (modern-day Iran) and was orphaned at 14. He embarked on a spiritual journey after meeting Ibrahim Qandozi, a mystic.

  - Moin-ud-din, believed to be a descendant of Muhammad.

- **Spiritual Training**: Moinuddin studied various subjects in Bukhara and Samarkand before being initiated into the Chishti Sufi order by Khwaja Usman Harooni near Herat.

- **Arrival in Ajmer**: in 1192 CE, Moinuddin arrived in Ajmer, during the decline of the Chauhan dynasty following its defeat by Muhammad of Ghor.

  - He chose to stay and help the suffering population.

- **Title "Garib Nawaz":** Moinuddin earned the title **"Garib Nawaz"** (friend of the poor) for his selfless service, including building a refuge and langarkhana (community kitchen) for the homeless and needy.

- **Contributions and Teachings :** Moinuddin interacted with **Hindu mystics and sages, sharing common values of devotion** and rejecting religious orthodoxy, focusing on equality and divine love.

  - **Sufism emerged as a devotiona**l and ascetic form of Islam, and the Chishti order, founded in the 10th century, was spread by Moinuddin and his disciples.

- **Disciples :** Prominent disciples like Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki, Baba Fariduddin, Nizamuddin Auliya, and Chirag Dehalvi helped spread Moinuddin's teachings.

  - His influence extended across regions and cultures.

- **Mughal Patronage**: Emperor Akbar revered Moinuddin, made pilgrimages to his shrine, and helped beautify Ajmer, contributing to the city's revival.

- **Legacy:** Moinuddin's teachings of love, compassion, and inclusivity continue to resonate in India's religiously diverse landscape, bridging cultural gaps between communities.

About Sufism

Sufism and *tasawwuf*

Sufism is an English word coined in the nineteenth century. The word used for Sufism in Islamic texts is *tasawwuf*. Historians have understood this term in several ways. According to some scholars, it is derived from *suf,* meaning wool, referring to the coarse woollen clothes worn by sufis. Others derive it from *safa,* meaning purity. It may also have been derived from *suffa,* the platform outside the Prophet's mosque, where a group of close followers assembled to learn about the faith.

- Sufis were **Muslim mystics**, rejected formal rituals and emphasized love, devotion to God, and compassion for humanity.

- They sought union with God, much like a lover seeks their beloved, and often composed poems expressing these feelings.

- Sufis, like the **Nathpanthis and Yogis,** used methods such as chanting, contemplation, dancing, and breath control under the guidance of a master to train the heart to see the world differently.

- **From the 11th centur**y, many Sufis from Central Asia settled in **Hindustan,** especially after the establishment of the **Delhi Sultanate, where major Sufi centers flourished.**

  - They **emphasized salvation** through **intense devotion and love for God,** following the example of **Prophet Muhammad.**

- The **Chishti order, with prominent figures like Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti and Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Kaki**, became highly influential.

- **Sufi masters held assemblie**s in their **khanqahs (hospices)**, where devotees from all walks of life, including royalty and commoners, gathered for spiritual discussions, blessings, and music.

- Many attributed miraculous powers to Sufi masters, and their tombs (dargahs) became major pilgrimage sites, drawing people from all faiths.

Source: IE

CYCLONE FENGAL

Context

- **Cyclone Fengal**, a tropical cyclone, **made landfall over Puducherry.**

About

- **Landfall** is the event of a tropical cyclone coming onto land after being over water.
    - As per the India Meteorological Department (IMD), a tropical cyclone is said to have made landfall when the centre of the storm – or its eye – moves over the coast.
    - Landfalls can last for a few hours, with their exact duration depending on the speed of the winds and the size of the storm system.
- A landfall is different from the direct hit of a tropical cyclone.
    - **A 'direct hit'** refers to a situation where the core of high winds (or eyewall) comes ashore but the centre of the storm may remain offshore.

What are Cyclones?

- The word Cyclone is derived from the **Greek word Cyclos** meaning the **coils of a snake.**
    - It was coined by **Henry Peddington** because the tropical storms in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea appear like coiled serpents of the sea.
- Cyclones are **powerful, rotating storms** that form over warm ocean waters, characterized by low pressure at the center and high winds.
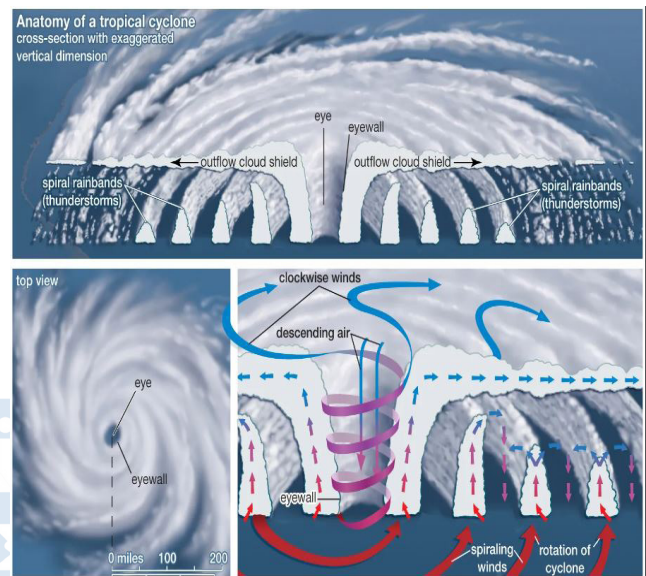
Type of Disturbances	Wind Speed in Km/h	Wind Speed in Knots
Low Pressure	Less than 31	Less than 17
Depression	31-49	17-27
Deep Depression	49-61	27-33
Cyclonic Storm	61-88	33-47
Severe Cyclonic Storm	88-117	47-63
Super Cyclone	More than 221	More than 120

- **Worldwide terminology:** Cyclones are given many names in different regions of the world:
    - They are known as **typhoons** in the China Sea and Pacific Ocean; **hurricanes** in the West Indian islands in the Caribbean Sea and Atlantic Ocean; **tornados** in the Guinea lands of West Africa and southern USA.; **willy-willies** in north-western Australia and **tropical cyclones** in the Indian Ocean.

How a Cyclone is formed?

- **Conditions:** Cyclones typically form over **warm ocean waters**, the warmth provides the necessary **heat and moisture** to fuel the cyclone.
    - Warm water causes the ocean to **evaporate**, creating warm, moist air. This moist air rises from the ocean surface, leading to a **decrease in air pressure at the surface.**

- **Formation of a Low-Pressure System:** When the air rises up and away from the ocean surface, it creates an **area of lower air pressure below.**
    - It causes the air from surrounding areas with higher pressure to move towards the low-pressure area which further leads to **warming up of the air and causes it to rise above.**
- **Cyclonic Circulation:** The rotation of the Earth (Coriolis effect) causes the rising air to start spinning around the low-pressure center. This spinning motion leads to the development of cyclonic circulation.

- **As the wind system rotates with increasing speed, an eye gets formed in the middle.**
    - The centre of a cyclone is very calm and clear with very low air pressure. The difference of temperature between the warm, rising and the cooler environment causes the air to rise and become buoyant.
- **Dissipation:** A cyclone will eventually weaken and dissipate when it moves over cooler waters, encounters dry air, or interacts with land, which disrupts the system's supply of warm, moist air.

Nomenclature

- The names are maintained and updated by an **international committee of the World Meteorological Organization.**
- Cyclones in the North Indian Ocean region are named by the **regional specialized meteorological centers (RSMCs)** in India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Oman, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.
    - Each country contributes names to a list used on a **rotating basis.**
- The primary reason for naming cyclones is to **make communication easier and more efficient.**

India Meteorological Department (IMD)
- It was established in 1875.
- It is the principal government agency in all matters relating to meteorology and allied subjects.
- It is under the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES).

Source: TH

ELECTRONIC TRACKING OF UNDERTRIALS ON BAIL

Context
- President Droupadi Murmu released a report titled **"Prisons in India: Mapping Prison Manuals and Measures for Reformation and Decongestion".**
  - It suggested a variety of measures to **address overcrowding in prisons,** including a section titled **"Electronic Tracking of Prisoners".**

About
- According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), prisons in India suffer from significant overpopulation with a **131.4% occupancy rate in 2022.**
- In addition, **75.8% of prisoners in India are undertrials.**
- The electronic monitoring could prove to be a **cost-effective method to decongest jails in India.**

Advantages of Electronic Tracking of Undertrial Prisoners
- **Reduction in Overcrowding:** By allowing low and moderate-risk undertrials to be monitored electronically, prisons can free up space.
- **Cost-Effective:** It reduces the need for additional prison infrastructure and the associated costs of housing and feeding inmates.
- **Protection of Rights:** Undertrials are presumed innocent until proven guilty. Electronic tracking ensures that their rights are respected by allowing them to stay at home or in a less restrictive environment while still being monitored.
- **Improved Rehabilitation:** Undertrials who are released with electronic tracking can continue their education, work, and maintain family ties, which are crucial for their rehabilitation and reintegration into society.
- **Efficient Monitoring:** Electronic devices such as GPS trackers allow for continuous and real-time monitoring of undertrials, ensuring compliance with bail conditions and reducing the risk of flight.

Challenges
- **Privacy Issues:** Constant surveillance through electronic devices raises concerns about the violation of personal privacy.
- **Technical Challenges:** Issues such as device malfunctions, signal loss, and tampering can undermine the system's effectiveness.
- **Stigmatisation:** There is also the possibility of stigma that comes with visible ankle or bracelet devices.
  - Some individuals may resist wearing tracking devices due to concerns about social stigma or a perception of invasive surveillance.

Way Ahead
- **The 268th Law Commission report** acknowledges the grave and significant impact on constitutional rights that such a measure might have.
  - It suggests that such monitoring must be used only in grave and heinous crimes, where the accused person has a prior conviction in similar offences and states that criminal legislations should be amended accordingly.
- There is a need for careful planning, adequate resources, and legal safeguards to ensure that electronic tracking systems are implemented effectively and ethically in India.

Source: IE

59TH ALL INDIA CONFERENCE OF DIRECTOR GENERALS/ INSPECTOR GENERALS OF POLICE

Context
- Recently, the Prime Minister of India attended the **'59th All India Conference of Director Generals/ Inspector Generals of Police'**, held in Bhubaneswar, **Odisha** to discuss and deliberate on national security issues and policing strategies.

Key Highlights of the Conference
- **National Security Discussions:** The conference included in-depth discussions on various national security issues, including counter-terrorism, left-wing extremism, coastal security, economic security, immigration, and narco-trafficking.
  - These aimed to develop effective counter-strategies and enhance the overall security framework of the country.
- **SMART Policing Initiative:** The Prime Minister has expanded on the concept of SMART policing, urging the police force to become more Strategic, Meticulous, Adaptable, Reliable, and Transparent.

- He emphasized the need for modernization and realignment with the **vision of 'Viksit Bharat' (Developed India).**
- **Technological Integration:** The conference highlighted the importance of leveraging technology to tackle challenges such as digital fraud, cyber-crimes, and the potential threats posed by AI, including deep fakes.
  - It called for the police to harness **India's dual strengths in Artificial Intelligence and 'Aspirational India'** to turn these challenges into opportunities.
- **Urban Policing Initiatives:** The Prime Minister appreciated the initiatives taken in urban policing and suggested that these be **implemented comprehensively in 100 cities across the country.**
  - He stressed the importance of using technology to reduce the workload of constables and making police stations the focal point for resource allocation.
- **Police Hackathons:** PM Modi proposed the idea of **organizing National Police Hackathons** to solve key problems through innovative solutions.

Needs For Police Reform in India

- In India, police and public order are designated as **State Subjects under the Seventh Schedule** of the Constitution.
  - It means that it is **primarily the responsibility of state governments** to maintain law and order, prevent and investigate crimes, and prosecute offenders.
- The need for a more efficient, transparent, and accountable police force has been recognised by various stakeholders, including the government, judiciary, and civil society.

Key Concerns/Challenges With the Current Policing in India

- **Inadequate Infrastructure and Resources:** Many police stations across the country are under-equipped, lacking basic facilities and modern technology.
  - It hampers the efficiency and effectiveness of police operations.
- **Training and Modernization**: With the rise of cybercrime, terrorism, and other sophisticated criminal activities, the police need to be equipped with modern tools and training to tackle these challenges.
  - However, the current training programs are often outdated and insufficient.
- **Technological Challenges:** While technology can aid in crime detection and prevention, the police force often lacks the necessary skills and resources to effectively utilize these technologies.
  - Cybersecurity threats, in particular, require specialized knowledge and tools.
- **Legal and Judicial Constraints:** Outdated laws and lengthy judicial processes can impede swift and effective law enforcement.
  - Reforms in the legal system are necessary to support the police in their duties.
- **Understaffing and Overburdening:** According to recent reports, the police-to-population ratio in India is **far below the United Nations recommended standard.**
  - It leads to overburdening of the existing personnel, affecting their performance and morale.
- **Political Interference:** It undermines the autonomy of the police force and often leads to biased and ineffective law enforcement.
  - It can also result in the misuse of police for political gains.
- **Corruption:** It erodes public trust and confidence in the police, making it difficult for them to perform their duties effectively.
  - Efforts to combat corruption within the force have been ongoing, but significant challenges remain.
- **Human Rights Violations:** Instances of human rights violations by the police have been reported, which tarnish the image of the police force and lead to public outcry.
  - Ensuring accountability and adherence to human rights standards is essential for improving the relationship between the police and the community.

Key Policy Recommendations

- **National Police Commission Recommendations (1978-82):** These have made significant recommendations for police reforms which include measures to *depoliticize the police force, improve accountability, and enhance the working conditions of police personnel.*
- **Padmanabhaiah Committee (2000):** It focused on **restructuring** the police force. It recommended *modernizing police infrastructure, improving training programs, and enhancing the recruitment process.*
- **Malimath Committee (2002-03):** This committee **on criminal justice system** reforms suggested measures to improve the efficiency of the police and the judiciary.
  - It emphasized the need for better investigation techniques and coordination between different law enforcement agencies.

- **Ribeiro Committee (1998):** Formed on the **directions of the Supreme Court**, it **reviewed the implementation of previous recommendations** and suggested ways to expedite police reforms.

- **Mooshahary Committee:** It reviewed the recommendations of the National Police Commission and other committees, focusing on their implementation and suggesting further improvements.

Supreme Court of India on Prakash Singh Case (2006)

- **State Security Commissions (SSC):** Establish SSCs to lay down broad policy guidelines and evaluate the performance of the state police.

- **Fixed Tenure and Merit-Based Selection:** Ensure a minimum tenure of two years for the DGP and other key police officers, with a transparent and merit-based selection process.

- **Separation of Functions:** Separate the investigation and law and order functions of the police to improve efficiency and accountability.

- **Police Establishment Boards:** Set up boards to decide on transfers, postings, promotions, and other service-related matters of police officers.

- **Police Complaints Authority:** Create authorities at the district and state levels to inquire into public complaints against police officers.

- **National Security Commission:** Form a commission at the union level to prepare panels for the selection and placement of Chiefs of Central Police Organisations (CPOs) with a minimum tenure of two years.

Other Related Steps

- **Criminal Justice System Reforms:** It involves updating outdated laws, improving investigation techniques, and ensuring better coordination between different agencies.

- **Community Policing:** Initiatives to promote community policing are being encouraged to build trust between the police and the public.

  - It focuses on involving the community in maintaining law and order and addressing local issues collaboratively.

- **Training and Capacity Building:** Continuous training and capacity-building programs are being implemented to ensure that police personnel are well-equipped to handle modern-day challenges.

  - It includes specialized training in cybercrime, human trafficking, and other emerging threats.

Conclusion

- The 59th All India Conference of Director Generals/ Inspector Generals of Police provided a valuable opportunity for senior police officials to share their perspectives and suggestions on critical policing and internal security matters.

- PM's participation and his emphasis on SMART policing, technological integration, and innovative solutions underscored the government's commitment to enhancing the capabilities and professionalism of the Indian police force.

Source: PIB

HYBRID WARFARE

Context

- Western intelligence agencies have been accusing **Russia** of increasingly engaging in hybrid warfare since invading Ukraine.

What is Hybrid Warfare?

- It means **broadening military operations** to include espionage, sabotage and cyberattacks, as well as engaging in election interference, propaganda or disinformation campaigns to weaken and destabilise the enemy from within.

- **Aim:** To create confusion, disrupt the enemy's decision-making, and exploit vulnerabilities, without relying on a full-scale traditional war.

- **Instances of Use of Hybrid Warfare:**

  - Both the United States and the Soviet Union employed hybrid warfare during the Cold War, through clandestine sabotage operations among several other tactics.

  - Russia's association with hybrid warfare was solidified in 2013 after military chief Valery Gerasimov published an article noting that the rules of war have changed.

  - China has also publicly adopted a "Three Warfares" concept referring to psychological operations, media manipulation and legal warfare.

Why is Hybrid Warfare on the Rise?

- **To Avoid Direct Confrontation:** In the Cold War, the US and the Soviet Union engaged in hybrid warfare as the two nuclear powers wanted to avoid outright confrontation.

- **To maintain Military Might:** After the Soviet Union broke up, Russia found its military might diminished, which only encouraged the further use of hybrid warfare to avoid direct military confrontation with the West.

- **Inexpensive War:** As the costs of conventional conflict in a nuclear era continues to grow, it is much more feasible to sponsor a hybrid warfare.

- **Increased Cyber Networks:** The increasing reliance on digital infrastructure and communication systems has opened new avenues for conflict.

- ◆ Cyberattacks allow adversaries to disrupt critical infrastructure, steal sensitive data, or manipulate information.
- **Rise of Social Media:** The proliferation of social media and digital platforms has made it easier to spread disinformation, influence public opinion, and destabilize governments.

Preparedness for Hybrid warfare is crucial for several reasons

- **Evolving Threat Landscape:** As technology advances, adversaries increasingly use cyber and information warfare tactics. India must adapt to these evolving threats.
- **Deterrence:** A robust hybrid warfare defense can deter potential aggressors by demonstrating the ability to counteract their strategies, thereby reducing the likelihood of conflict.
- **Protection of Critical Infrastructure: Hybrid warfare** attacks often target vital systems, such as power grids and communication networks.
  - ◆ Preparedness ensures resilience and rapid recovery from potential disruptions.

India's Preparedness for Hybrid Warfare

- **Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and Theaterisation:** The creation of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) in 2019 was a major reform aimed at integrating the three armed forces—Army, Navy, and Air Force.
  - ◆ The CDS is tasked with overseeing the integration and modernization of military strategies and operations.
  - ◆ This will enhance coordination and improve the efficiency of India's military response to multi-domain threats.
- **Integrated Battle Groups (IBGs):** India has restructured its military formations into IBGs, which are fast-response units capable of dealing with both conventional and hybrid threats.
- **Defence Cyber Agency:** India operationlised the Defence Cyber Agency in 2021 to specifically address cyber threats to national security.
- **'Make in India' in Defense:** The government has heavily promoted the 'Make in India' initiative, encouraging domestic manufacturing of defense equipment.
  - ◆ This self sufficiency is significant for countering security concerns.
- **Intelligence Agencies:** India's intelligence agencies like the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), Intelligence Bureau (IB), and National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO) play a crucial role in gathering intelligence to identify and neutralize hybrid threats.

- **Countering Financing of Terrorism:** This includes stricter anti-money laundering laws and cooperation with international organizations such as the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).
- **International Cooperation:** India works with the United States, Australia, and Japan within the Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) framework to address issues like cybersecurity, maritime security, and counterterrorism.
- **Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence 2024: Indian armed forces' preparedness to deal with "hybrid warfare"** is one of the 17 subjects that the **Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence** has narrowed down for **deliberations for the year.**

Way Ahead

- With modern warfare changing in terms of its core facets, conflicts are much more than the employment of direct, physical force.
- **India can focus on following areas to prepare for the Hybrid warfare:**
  - ◆ Invest in advanced cybersecurity infrastructure and train specialized personnel.
  - ◆ Develop capabilities for cyber retaliation and offensive cyber operations.
  - ◆ Promote strategic communication and public diplomacy to defend against external narratives.
  - ◆ Develop training programs for military and intelligence personnel in hybrid warfare tactics.
  - ◆ Collaborate with like-minded nations to share intelligence and counter hybrid threats.

Source: IE

EARTH'S DESERTIFICATION EMERGENCY

In News

- The 16th session of the **UNCCD Conference of Parties (COP16)** is going to be held from December 2-13, 2024, marking the convention's **30th anniversary.**
- The theme is **"Our Land and Our Future.**

> **About the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).**
> - In 1994, 196 countries and the European Union signed the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).
> - The **Conference of the Parties (COP)** is the decision-making body of the UNCCD, bringing together governments, businesses, and civil society to address land challenges and promote sustainability.

◆ UNCCD is one of the three "Rio Conventions," along with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), all stemming from the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro.

- COP16 takes place in West Asia, a region heavily impacted by desertification, drought, and land degradation.

About the Desertification

- Desertification is a type of land degradation in which an already relatively dry land area becomes increasingly arid, degrading productive soil and losing its bodies of water, biodiversity and vegetation cover.

Causes

- Every year, **100 million hectares** of healthy land are degraded due to drought and **desertification**, largely driven by climate change and poor land management.

- **Desertification** occurs mainly in dry areas due to **climate variations and human activities like over-farming and deforestation**.

- **Extreme weather** events, including droughts and floods, worsen land degradation.

  ◆ Agriculture contributes to 23% of greenhouse gas emissions, 80% of deforestation, and 70% of freshwater use.

Impacts

- **Healthy land** is crucial for life, providing food, shelter, jobs, regulating climate, and supporting biodiversity.

  ◆ Up to 40% of the world's land is degraded, affecting 3.2 billion people.

- **Desertification and droughts** are worsening, contributing to forced migration. By 2050, 216 million people will be displaced by climate change, with droughts increasing by 29% since 2000.

  ◆ Desertification affects **3.2 billion people and leads to $11 trillio**n in losses. Immediate action is required to restore 1.5 billion hectares of land by 2030.

- **Impact on Agriculture:** Groundwater depletion due to poor rainfall and land management forces farmers to migrate to cities, threatening food security and livelihoods.

- **Land degradation** impacts several other planetary boundaries, including **climate change, biosphere integrity, and freshwater systems, worsening environmental pressures.**

- **Land degradation undermines Earth's ability to sustain human life**, and failing to reverse it will create challenges for future generations.

- Deforestation and degraded soils drive hunger, migration, and conflicts.

Steps of India

- The **National Action Plan to Combat Desertification, 2023** aims to restore 26 million hectares of degraded land in India by 2030, in line with the country's commitments under the UNCCD.

- It focuses on **South-South Cooperation** to share sustainable land management strategies and create additional carbon sinks of **2.5-3 billion tonnes** of CO2 equivalent through enhanced forest and tree cover by **2030**.

- It outlines remedial and preventive models for combating land degradation and desertification.

Solutions

- It is possible to **restore land by implementing sustainable practices**. UNCCD aims to restore **1.5 billion hectares** of **degraded land by 2030**, with ongoing efforts in places like **Burkina Faso and the Philippines.**

- UNCCD stresses the need for urgent action to prevent further land degradation, as failure to do so will create long-term consequences for future generations.

- **COP16 Goals in Riyadh:**

- Accelerate land restoration by 2030

- Build resilience to droughts, sand, and dust storms

- Restore soil health and increase nature-positive food production

- Secure land rights and promote equity in land stewardship

- Ensure land continues to provide climate and biodiversity solutions

- Unlock economic opportunities, including decent land-based jobs for youth.

Source :DTE

40 YEARS OF BHOPAL GAS TRAGEDY & INDIA'S PREPAREDNESSS

In Context

- **Forty years** after the disaster, significant toxic waste from the **Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL) factory** continues to jeopardize **public health and environmental safety.**

- The **leak contaminated the soil and water in Bhopal**, leading to long-term **environmental damage** and impacting the health of the ecosystem.

Issues Still Prevalent

- Despite the devastating Bhopal Gas Tragedy in 1984, **India's chemical industry has expanded significantly**, becoming the **sixth largest in the world.**

- Even during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2023), India witnessed **29 major chemical accidents, major ones like the Ammonia Gas Leak at Chennai (2024), Vizag Gas Leak (2020) etc** resulting in significant casualties.

- The **methyl isocyanate (MIC)**, the gas responsible for the Bhopal disaster, is **still in use in India.**

  - **Methyl Isocyanate (MIC)** is a **highly toxic and reactive chemical**, even brief exposure can lead to severe respiratory distress, eye and skin damage, and long-term health complications.

  - Meanwhile, many dangerous agricultural chemicals remain unregulated, such as the **synthetic pesticide dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT)**, which is hazardous to human health and the environment.

Impacts of Chemical Disasters

Human Health Risks

Pesticides can cause reproductive issues, respiratory problems, cancer, and genetic damage.

Environmental Degradation

Pesticide use contaminates soil, water, and air, harming ecosystems and biodiversity.

Crop Damage

Pesticide residues damage plants, reduce growth, and lower crop yields.

Bioaccumulation and Food Chain

Pesticides build up in the food chain, reaching humans and causing long-term health issues.

- India's **existing regulations are fragmented** and lack the comprehensiveness of laws like the US Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) or the EU's REACH regulation.

Reasons For These Disasters

- **Prioritizing Economic Growth:** The focus on rapid industrial expansion may have overshadowed safety concerns.

- **Weak Regulatory Oversight**: Lack of resources, expertise, and political will contribute to inadequate enforcement of safety standards.

- **Industry Lobbying:** Powerful industry lobbies may influence policy decisions, hindering stricter regulations.

- **Lack of Public Awareness:** Limited public awareness about the dangers of hazardous chemicals can lead to less pressure on industries and the government to prioritize safety.

Initiatives to Prevent Future Disasters

- **Strengthening Regulations:** India has enacted legislation such as the Explosives Act, 1884, the Chemical Accidents (Emergency Planning, Preparedness, and Response) Rules 1996, and the Environment Protection Act, 1986 to regulate hazardous industries and prevent accidents.

- **National Green Tribunal (NGT):** This body addresses environmental violations, including those related to industrial accidents, and provides a platform for affected communities to seek redress.

- **National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) Guidelines:** These guidelines emphasize the importance of inspection systems, emergency preparedness, and community awareness.

Way Ahead

- **Comprehensive Chemical Policy:** India urgently needs a comprehensive chemical policy with strong regulations.

- **Corporate Responsibility:** Ensuring strict safety measures in industrial operations.

- **Justice and Rehabilitation:** Long-term healthcare and compensation for victims and affected communities.

- **Environmental Safeguards:** Proper disposal of toxic waste to prevent enduring environmental damage.

Source: DTE

═══ NEWS IN SHORT ═══

SNAKE BITE AS A NOTIFIABLE DISEASE

In News

- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) has declared snakebite envenoming a notifiable disease.

About Notifiable Disease

- Notifiable diseases are those that healthcare providers are **legally obligated to report to public health authorities.** This allows for surveillance, outbreak detection, and timely

intervention. Other **notifiable diseases in India include: AIDS, Hepatitis, Dengue, Cholera etc**

- The World Health Organization's International Health Regulations (IHR) require countries to report certain disease outbreaks and public health events to the WHO.

National Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Snakebite Envenoming (NAPSE)

- Aims to halve snakebite-related deaths and disabilities by 2030 and making Snakebite a Notifiable disease is a good step in this regard.

Source: TH

WORLD AIDS DAY

In News

- World AIDS Day 2024 highlights the ongoing fight against HIV/AIDS, emphasizing progress, challenges, and the need for continued action.

About World AIDS Day,

- It has been observed annually on December 1 since 1988.
- It is a global event to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS and show solidarity against the pandemic.
- It provides an opportunity for reflection on progress in prevention, treatment, and care, while also addressing ongoing challenges.
- It emphasizes the link between combating HIV/AIDS and achieving Universal Health Coverage and the Right to Health.

About HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus)

- It attacks the immune system by targeting white blood cells, making the body more vulnerable to infections and diseases.
- AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome) is the most advanced stage of HIV infection.
- HIV is transmitted through body fluids such as blood, breast milk, semen, and vaginal fluids, but not through casual contact like kisses or hugs. It can also be passed from mother to child.
  - HIV can be prevented and managed with antiretroviral therapy (ART).

Steps by India

- India, as a key player, has made significant strides in combating HIV/AIDS, with over 2.5 million people living with HIV, but a 44% reduction in new infections since 2010.
- The country's efforts have been aided by the **National AIDS and STD Control Programme (NACP)**, launched in 1992, which has evolved over the years to tackle prevention, treatment, and care.

- The **NACP Phase-V (2021-2026)** focuses on reducing new infections and AIDS-related deaths by 80% by 2025-26.

- India's rights-based approach and legal reforms, like the **HIV and AIDS (Prevention and Control) Act, 2017**, along with initiatives like **Mission Sampark and the 'Test and Treat' policy**, have contributed to the success of the HIV/AIDS response.

Source: TH

INDIA RE-ELECTED TO U.N. PEACEBUILDING COMMISSION

In News

- India has secured its re-election to the **United Nations Peacebuilding Commission (PBC)** for the **2025-2026 term**, reaffirming its commitment to global peace initiatives.

About UN Peacebuilding Commission

- **Established in 2005**, the UNPBC is an intergovernmental advisory body that supports peace efforts in conflict-affected countries.
- It brings together key stakeholders, including UN agencies, regional organizations, and civil society, to develop comprehensive strategies for post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding.

India's Contributions to UN Peacekeeping

- India is **one of the largest contributors of troops** to UN peacekeeping missions, with thousands of Indian peacekeepers deployed in various conflict zones.
- India is a significant financial contributor to the UN peacekeeping budget.
- India actively engages in diplomatic efforts to promote peace and stability, particularly in its regional neighborhood.

Source: AIR

BORDER SECURITY FORCE (BSF)

Context

- The Border Security Force (BSF), often referred to as India's First Line of Defence, celebrates its Raising Day every year on December 1.

About

- **Establishment:** On **December 1, 1965**, in the wake of the **1965 India-Pakistan war**.
- **Administrative Control:** Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).

- **Deployment:** Deployed at Indo-Pakistan International Border, Indo-Bangladesh International Border and Line of Control (LoC), along with Indian Army and in Anti-Naxal Operations.

- **Officials:** Although, the BSF has its own cadre of officers but its head, designated as a **Director-General (DG)**, since its raising has been an officer from the **Indian Police Service** (IPS).

- **Logo and motto:** The Logo of BSF has **two spikes of grains**, embracing the National Emblem of India and the typeface BSF. The motto of BSF "DUTY UNTO DEATH" is placed at the bottom.

Do you know?

- The BSF does **not have police powers**; after apprehending a suspect it can only conduct "preliminary questioning" and has to hand over a seized consignment or the suspect to the local police within **24 hours**.

- It **does not have powers** to prosecute crime suspects.

Source: PIB

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