

DAILY PT POINTERS

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Indian Express-GS1(Geography)/GS2(IR)-Page9

China approves world's largest dam on Brahmaputra river near border with India at a cost of \$137 billion

K J M VARMA
BEIJING, DECEMBER 26

CHINA HAS approved construction of the world's largest dam, stated to be the biggest infra project costing USD 137 billion, on the Brahmaputra river in Tibet close to the Indian border, raising concerns in riparian states India and Bangladesh.

The Chinese government has approved the construction of a hydropower project in the lower reaches of the Yarlung Zangbo river, the Tibetan name for the Brahmaputra, according to an official statement quoted by state-run Xinhua news agency Wednesday.

The dam is to be built at a huge gorge in the Himalayan reaches where the Brahmaputra river makes a huge U-turn to flow into Arunachal Pradesh and then to Bangladesh.

The total investment in the dam could exceed one trillion

Kong-based South China Morning Post reported Thursday.

China has already operationalised the USD 1.5 billion Zam hydropower station, the largest in Tibet in 2015.

The Brahmaputra dam was part of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) and National Economic and Social Development and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035 adopted by Plenum, a key policy body of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) in 2020.

Concerns arose in India as the dam besides empowering China to control the water flow, the size and scale of it could also enable Beijing to release large amounts of water flooding border areas in times of hostilities.

India too is building a dam over Brahmaputra in Arunachal Pradesh.

India and China established the Expert Level Mechanism (ELM) in 2006 to discuss various issues related to trans-border

India, China agreement to end Ladakh standoff being implemented 'comprehensively': Chinese military

Beijing: China's Defence Ministry on Thursday said that the Chinese and Indian militaries are "comprehensively and effectively" implementing the agreement to end the standoff at eastern Ladakh and "steady progress" has been made.

Chinese Defence Spokesperson Senior Colonel Zhang Xiaogang made the remarks during a media briefing here while answering a question on the December 18 Special Representatives talks.

"At present, the Chinese

and Indian militaries are comprehensively and effectively implementing the border-related solutions reached between the two sides, and steady progress has been made," he said.

He said that in recent times, based on the important consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries, China and India have maintained close communication on the border situation through diplomatic and military channels and achieved great progress. PTI

rivers figured in the talks between India, China Special Representatives (SRs) for border question. NSA Ajit Doval and

of the rainiest parts of mainland China bringing bountiful flows of water.

According to a 2023 report, the hydropower station is expected to generate more than 300 billion kWh of electricity each year - enough to meet the annual needs of over 300 million people.

In 2020, Yan Zhiyong, then chairman of the state-owned Power Construction Corporation of China, was quoted in the media as saying the location on the Yarlung Tsangpo was one of the most hydropower-rich areas in the world.

"The lower reaches area features a vertical drop of 2,000 metres over a 50-km distance, representing nearly 70 million kilowatts of resources that could be developed - that is more than three Three Gorges Dams with an installed capacity of 22.5 million kilowatts," the Post quoted him as saying.

cubic metres per second, according to the report.

Yan said that the hydropower exploitation of the Yarlung Zangbo river downstream is more than a hydropower project.

It is also meaningful for the environment, national security, living standards, energy and international cooperation.

"It is a project for national security, including water resources and domestic security," he said, noting that the project will also smooth cooperation with South Asia.

The hydropower station could generate income of 20 billion yuan (USD three billion) annually for the Tibet Autonomous Region, he said.

An official statement on Wednesday defended the project, saying it will play a positive role in accelerating the country's efforts to create a new development pattern and pursue high-quality development.

China approved construction of the world's largest hydropower dam on the lower reaches of the Yarlung Zangbo River.

Estimated to produce 300 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity annually, triple the capacity of the current largest, the Three Gorges Dam.

Purpose and Impact:

Aims to meet China's carbon peaking and neutrality goals, stimulate related industries, and create jobs in Tibet.

Located in an area with significant hydropower potential due to dramatic altitude drops.

India and Bangladesh raised concerns about the dam's potential to alter local ecology and river flow downstream.

The Yarlung Zangbo becomes the Brahmaputra River as it flows into India and Bangladesh.

Indian Express-GS3(Economy)-Page23

FINANCIAL HEALTH IMPROVES

Banks' bad loans ratio at 13-year low, highest for farm sector: RBI

Gross non-performing assets ratio falls to 2.5% in Sept-end this year

HITESH VYAS
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 26

THE GROSS non-performing assets (GNPAs) ratio of scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) declined to a more than 13-year low of 2.5 per cent at the end of September 2024, a Reserve Bank of India report stated Thursday.

In fiscal 2024, the consolidated balance sheet of commercial banks in the country remained robust, marked by sustained expansion in both credit and deposits, the report stated.

"Asset quality improved, with the gross non-performing assets

EXPLAINED
E Higher recoveries

THE IMPROVEMENT in asset quality of banks can be attributed to higher recoveries and upgradations. Banks have also seen moderation in incremental slippages — fresh loans that have become NPAs in a year.

also declined to a decadal low of

- Gross non-performing assets (GNPAs) ratio of scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) declined to 2.5% at end-September 2024, the lowest in over 13 years.
- GNPAs reduced by 15.9% year-on-year to ₹4.8 lakh crore as on March 31, 2024.

Improvement in Asset Quality:

GNPA ratio fell to 2.7% at end-March 2024 and further to 2.5% at end-September 2024.

GNPA ratio for agricultural sector highest at 6.2%, retail loans lowest at 1.2%.

GNPA ratio of education loans fell to 2.7% at end-September 2024.

Industrial sector GNPA ratio declined to 2.9% at end-September 2024.

Indian Express-GS3(Economy)-Page23

RBI forms committee for ethical enablement of AI in financial sector

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 26

THE RESERVE Bank of India (RBI) has constituted an eight-member committee of experts to develop a framework for responsible and ethical enablement of artificial intelligence (FREE-AI) in the financial sector. The committee, to be headed by Pushpak Bhattacharyya, professor (Department of Computer Science and Engineering), IIT Bombay, will recommend a robust, comprehensive, and adaptable AI framework for the financial sector.

The committee will assess the current level of adoption of AI in financial services, globally and in India, and review regulatory and supervisory approaches on AI with focus on the financial sector globally.

As part of the terms of reference, the committee will identify

potential risks associated with AI, if any and recommend an evaluation, mitigation and monitoring framework and consequent compliance requirements for financial institutions, including banks, non-bank finance companies (NBFCs), fintechs and payment system operators (PSOs).

It will also recommend a framework including governance aspects for responsible, ethical adoption of AI models / applications in the domestic financial sector, the RBI said.

Besides Bhattacharyya, the other members of the committee are Debjani Ghosh, independent director, Reserve Bank Innovation Hub; Balaraman Ravindran, professor and head (Wadhvani School of Data Science and AI), IIT Madras; Abhishek Singh, additional secretary, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology; Rahul Matthan, partner, Trilegal among others.

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Committee Head: Chaired by Pushpak Bhattacharyya, professor at IIT Bombay.

Objectives: Recommend a robust, comprehensive, and adaptable AI framework for the financial sector.

Assess current AI adoption levels in financial services globally and in India.

Review regulatory and supervisory approaches on AI with a focus on the financial sector.

Suggest compliance requirements for banks, NBFCs, fintechs, and payment system operators.

Recommend a framework for responsible and ethical adoption of AI models/applications in the domestic financial sector.

The Hindu-Economy (GSIII)-Page1

Nation mourns former PM Manmohan Singh, the economist-ruler credited with liberalisation

He passed away at AIIMS on Thursday night after falling unconscious at home

President Droupadi Murmu describes Singh as 'one of the greatest sons of Bharat'

Modi says as PM, Singh made extensive efforts to improve people's lives

Government functions cancelled and seven-day national mourning declared

Sandeep Phukan
NEW DELHI

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, 92, passed away at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences here on Thursday evening. Dr. Singh was admitted to the hospital in the emergency ward around 8 p.m. in a critical condition. "He was treated for age-related medical conditions and had sudden loss of consciousness at home. Resuscitative measures were started immediately at home. He was brought to

for two terms in the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance government from 2004 to 2014, had been in poor health for the past few months. As Finance Minister under former Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, he was the architect of reforms in 1991 that changed the course of India's economic trajectory.

As a mark of respect to the former Prime Minister, all Union government functions were cancelled and a seven-day national mourning was declared. The Union Cabinet will

A lasting imprint on India's external relations

NEW DELHI

Although he was sometimes criticised by the Opposition for being "mum" or silent, Manmohan Singh was a prolific communicator when it came to his foreign policy. His engagement with the Quad made way for two of his biggest foreign policy breakthroughs: with Japan, that ended India's isolation over the nuclear tests of 1998, and with the United States, which allowed for the deal



Manmohan Singh (1932-2024)

A forthright FM who effected social change

NEW DELHI

It is well known that Manmohan Singh made way for foreign investments in myriad sectors. Yet, few would remember his maiden Budget also set the foundations of India's modern stock market boom with the creation of SEBI. Or that he passionately battled for consumer interests as well as wealth creators, even as he held reservations against "mindless and

humility were always visible. "Dr. Manmohan Singh Ji. Rising from humble origins, he rose to become a respected economist. He served in various government positions as well, including as Finance Minister, leaving a strong imprint on our economic policy over the years. His interventions in Parliament were also insightful. As our Prime Minister, he made extensive efforts to improve people's lives," Mr. Modi said on X.

Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi and her daughter

meeting of the Congress Working Committee, rushed back to Delhi.

In a post on X, Mr. Kharge said India has lost a visionary statesman, a leader of unimpeachable integrity, and an economist of unparalleled stature, and asserted that "history will undoubtedly judge him kindly". "A man of action rather than words, his immense contribution to nation-building will be etched in the annals of Indian history."

"Manmohan Singh Ji led India with immense wisdom and integrity. His hu-

- Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, aged 92, passed away at AIIMS, Delhi,
- Served as Prime Minister for two terms (2004-2014) under the Congress-led UPA government. Architect of the 1991 economic reforms as Finance Minister under P.V. Narasimha Rao.

The Hindu-Governance(GSII)-Page10

Should assisted dying be legalised?

What concerns do opponents of the assisted dying Bill in the U.K. raise? What changes does the proposed law seek to introduce? How does India's legal stance on euthanasia compare to the U.K.'s position?

EXPLAINER

Garimella Subramaniam

The story so far:

Britain's House of Commons on November 29 voted by a majority to legalise assisted dying – a less controversial synonym for assisted suicide in England and Wales. The step signals a seismic social shift on an emotive issue. Advocates regard the new Bill as a humane and compassionate intervention that should – bring closure to a painful, debilitating and degrading dependence on the immediate family. Opponents, who



with the rights of two incurably suffering but not terminally ill petitioners, it was for parliament to modify the law. In 2015, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that the U.K. Supreme Court was under no obligation to examine the merits of a challenge to primary legislation and that Britain's government was open to concluding that this was a matter for parliament to arrive at a suitable determination. It is thus crystal clear that only new legislation can alter the *status quo* in this matter.

What is the position in India?

In *Common Cause vs. Union of India* (2018), the Supreme Court affirmed that the “right to die with dignity” is integral to the right to life and personal liberty under Article 21 of the Constitution. The

THE GIST

▼ The U.K. House of Commons recently voted to legalise assisted dying, marking a significant shift. Supporters view it as compassionate, while opponents worry about vulnerable patients feeling pressured to end their lives.

▼ Current law criminalises assisting suicide, but the proposed Bill allows terminally ill patients with less than six months to live to choose assisted death, with strict

- The U.K. House of Commons recently voted to legalise assisted dying, marking a significant shift. Supporters view it as compassionate, while opponents worry about vulnerable patients feeling pressured to end their lives.
- Current law criminalises assisting suicide, but the proposed Bill allows terminally ill patients with less than six months to live to choose assisted death, with strict safeguards involving doctors and a High Court judge.
- India has legalised passive euthanasia (withdrawing life support for terminally ill patients) through the Supreme Court's ruling.

The Hindu-Economy(GSIII)-Page10

Why is strengthening fisheries extension services crucial?

What support do Matsya Seva Kendras provide to fish farmers?

Abhilaksh Likhli

The story so far:

India possesses diverse fisheries resources that provide livelihood opportunities to approximately three crore fishers and fish farmers. The country has witnessed an 83% increase in the national fish production since 2013-14, that stands at a record 175 lakh tons in 2022-23. With 75% of this coming from inland fisheries, India is the second-largest fish and aquaculture producer globally. In this backdrop, strengthening last-mile fisheries and aquaculture extension services is of paramount importance. Experts contend that such extension should provide request-based services to fishers/fish farmers on the life cycle of increased

training to promote sustainable practices and fisheries-based activities that have the potential to be viable business models.

What is the role of Matsya Seva Kendras?

Under the flagship Pradhan Mantri Matsya Samapada Yojana, 'Matsya Seva Kendras' (MSK) has been envisioned as one-stop solution to provide a range of extension services by trained aquaculture professionals. The governmental assistance to set up such Kendras for women and weaker sections is available to the extent of 60%. Funds have been provided to State governments and Union Territories for operationalising 102 such Kendras. For example, the MSK in Thrissur, Kerala has a well-equipped lab for water, soil and microbial analysis to

on varied seed/feed inputs backed with the required technology infusion.

Fostering a 'whole of government approach,' the Government of India advises MSKs to mobilise start-ups, cooperatives, fish farmers' producer organisations, joint liability groups, and self-help groups to share best practices. The latter includes regenerative and conservation management practises for both inland and marine fisheries in view of the effects of climate change.

How do Sagar Mitras support fishers?

Another innovative extension initiative by the government is the deployment of "Sagar Mitras" in coastal States and U.T.s as a vital interface between the government and sea-borne fishers. They compile information and data on daily

regulations, weather forecasts, natural calamities, hygienic fish handling, and potential fishing zones in the seas.

How can extension services be improved?

To make the extension and advisory services in fisheries and aquaculture more robust the need of the hour is twofold. First, the above initiatives should be institutionally converged with the already networked field extension machinery of over 700 Indian Council of Agricultural Research-driven Krishi Vigyan Kendras and the State governments and U.T.s extension services. Second, promoting digital outreach. The National Fisheries Development Board has initiated a nationwide virtual learning platform, 'AquaBazaar,' that enables experts to clarify basic concepts and provide practical demonstrations to fishers on breeding/seed production of commercially important fish.

In this context, the World Bank-assisted Government of India project to formalise the fisheries and aquaculture sector is a boon indeed. It aims to create work-based digital identities for all fishers and fish farmers in the country, thereby strengthening their extension, capacity building and awareness generation

THE GIST

Strengthening fisheries extension services is essential for supporting fishers and promoting sustainable practices, with initiatives like Matsya Seva Kendras and Sagar Mitras playing key roles.

Matsya Seva Kendras and Sagar Mitras help fishers by providing critical support, training, and information to improve productivity and sustainability.

- **Fisheries Resources and Production:**
 - India provides livelihood opportunities to approximately three crore fishers and fish farmers. 83% increase in national fish production since 2013-14, reaching a record 175 lakh tons in 2022-23.
 - India is the second-largest fish and aquaculture producer globally, with 75% of production from inland fisheries.
- Importance of Extension Services:**
- Extension services should provide request-based support on species cultivation, water quality, disease, rearing technologies, and address issues for seed growers and hatcheries.
- Role of Matsya Seva Kendras (MSK):**
- Part of Pradhan Mantri Matsya Samapada Yojana, offering a range of extension services by trained aquaculture professionals.

HEADLINES OF THE DAY

PIB-Defense(GSIII)



- The **bilateral** Naval exercise between India and Sri Lanka, *SLINEX 24* (Sri Lanka - India Exercise 2024) was conducted from **17 - 20 Dec 24 at Visakhapatnam** under the aegis of the Eastern Naval Command in two phases. The harbour phase was held from 17 - 18 Dec 24 and the sea phase from 19 - 20 Dec 24.
- *SLINEX* series of bilateral exercises were **initiated in 2005** and since then regular exercises have been conducted. The current edition of the exercise has further strengthened the ties between the two maritime neighbours and contributed towards creating a safe and rule-based Maritime domain thereby taking forward the *Gol's* resolve and vision of ***Security And Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)***.

HEADLINES OF THE DAY

Air: History

Nation Remembers Shaheed Udham Singh On His 125th Birth Anniversary



The nation is remembering Shaheed Udham Singh on his 125th Birth Anniversary, today. Born in 1899 on this day in the village Sunam of Punjab in undivided India, this revolutionary avenged the Jallianwala Bagh massacre by assassinating Michael O'Dwyer, the then Lieutenant Governor of Punjab.

While in the custody of the Britishers, he used the name 'Ram Mohammad Singh Azad', representing the three major religions in India and his anti-colonial sentiments.

HEADLINES OF THE DAY

Air: Species(GS3)

Bald Eagle Officially Designated As The United States National Bird After 240 Years



- The bald eagle, a symbol of the power and strength of the United States for more than 240 years, earned an overdue honor. It officially became the country's national bird. President Joe Biden signed into law legislation sent to him by Congress that amends the United States Code to correct what had long gone unnoticed and designate the bald eagle – familiar to many because of its white head, yellow beak and brown body – as the national bird.
- The bald eagle has appeared on the Great Seal of the United States, which is used in official documents, since 1782, when the design was finalized. The seal is made up of the eagle, an olive branch, arrows, a flag-like shield, the motto “E Pluribus Unum” and a constellation of stars.
- It is listed as Least Concern.