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1. Cabinet Nod for Ken-Betwa River Linking Project (Dec. 9, 2021)

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the funding and implementation of the Ken-Betwa river interlinking project. It is the **first out of the 30 projects of the National Perspective Plan for interlinking of rivers.**

Highlights-

- Benefit **Water Starved Districts of the Bundelkhand region of MP and UP** like Panna, Tikamgarh, Chhatarpur, Sagar, Damoh, Datia, Vidisha, Shivpuri and Raisen of Madhya Pradesh, and Banda, Mahoba, Jhansi and Lalitpur of Uttar Pradesh,
- The total cost of the project **Rs 44,605 crore at the 2020-21 price level**. The Centre would fund Rs 39,317 crore for the project, with Rs 36,290 crore as a **grant** and Rs 3,027 crore as a **loan**.
- The project involves **transferring surplus water from the Ken river to the Betwa river** through the construction of the **Daudhan dam** and a canal linking the two rivers, **the Lower Orr Project, Kotha Barrage, and the Bina Complex Multipurpose Project**
- The project is slated to irrigate 10.62 lakh hectares annually, provide drinking water supply to 62 lakh people and generate 103 MW of hydropower and 27 MW of solar power.
- The project is proposed to be completed in eight years.
- The project is expected to boost socio-economic prosperity in the backward Bundelkhand region on account of increased agricultural activities and employment generation.
- It would also help in arresting distress migration from this region
- The project will partly submerge the **Panna Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh** and **affect the habitat of vultures and jackals, which is the major environmental and wildlife concern hindering the progress of the project for all these years.**
- The two states signed a **tripartite agreement with the Centre on World Water Day (22nd March)** to finally implement this ambitious project.
- After years of protests, it was finally **cleared by the apex wildlife regulator, the National Board for Wildlife, in 2016**

Ken and Betwa Rivers

- Ken and Betwa rivers **originate in MP and are the tributaries of Yamuna.**
- Ken river originates at Ahirgawan, **Kaimur range near Jabalpur district** and meets with Yamuna in Banda district of UP
- Betwa River **arises in the Vindhya Range just north of Hoshangabad**, Madhya Pradesh. and meets with Yamuna in the Hamirpur district of UP.
- **Rajghat, Paricha, and Matatila dams are over Betwa river, whereas Gangau Dam is over Ken river.**
- **Ken River passes through Panna tiger reserve.**

Benefits of river interlinking:

- Enhances water and food security.
- Proper utilization of water.
- Boost to agriculture.
- Disaster mitigation.
- Boost transportation.
- Rejuvenate Bio-diversity

National Perspective Plan for interlinking of rivers:

- **The National River Linking Project (NRLP) formally known as the National Perspective Plan**, envisages the transfer of water from water 'surplus' basins where there is flooding, to water 'deficit' basins where there is drought/scarcity, through inter-basin water transfer projects.
- Under the National Perspective Plan (NPP), the National Water Development Agency (NWDA) **has identified 30 links (16 under the Peninsular Component and 14 under the Himalayan Component)** for the preparation of feasibility reports (FRs).
- **The NPP for transferring water from water surplus basins to water-deficit basins was prepared in August 1980.**

2. Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and 12 others killed in Chopper Crash (Dec. 9, 2021)**Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and 12 others killed in Chopper Crash**

India's first Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Laxman Singh Rawat, his wife Madhulika Rawat, an army Brigadier, Lieutenant, Wing Commander, Squadron Leader and 7 others were killed in a chopper crash in Coonoor, Tamil Nadu.

The helicopter Mi-17-V5 had taken off from **Sulur Air Force base in Coimbatore**, Tamil Nadu to the **Defence Services Staff College, Wellington, Tamil Nadu** to address the faculty and student officers of the 'Staff Course'.

Sulur Airforce Station Base

It is the second largest Air base in India after Hindon Airbase in Uttar Pradesh .

It is located near Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu.

It was set up a Naval base in 1940 as **HMS Vairi**. In 1955 the base was transferred to the Indian Air Force .

The airbase is home to:

109 Helicopter Unit nicknamed “Knights” that operates the Russia-made chopper,

33 squadron “Himalayan Geese” that flies Antonov-32 fixed wing transport aircraft,

two squadrons of the indigenous light combat aircraft “Tejas” and

the 151 Helicopter Unit of the popular air display team “Sarang” that flies the advanced light helicopters, Dhruv, built by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited.

Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)

The Chief Of Defence Staff (**CDS**) was set up by the Government of India in 2020 on the recommendation of the Kargil Committee headed by K.Subramanyam in 2000.

The first CDS was Gen. Bipin Rawat who joined the office on 1 January 2020.

The Chief of Defence Staff is described as the '**first among equals**' among the service chiefs. The CDS is a **four-star General/Officer who will act as the Principal Military Advisor to the Defence Minister on all tri-services (Army, Navy, and Indian Air Force) matters.**

Roles and Functions-

- CDS will **head Department of Military Affairs (Latest department of Defence Ministry)**
- He will be the **permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC)**
- He will **act as the military adviser to the Nuclear Command Authority (chaired by the Prime Minister)**, which handles India's nuclear arsenal.
- He will ensure the integration of land-air-sea operations through the eventual setting up of theatre commands.
- Promoting the use of indigenous equipment by the Services.
- **Implement the five-year Defence Capital Acquisition Plan (DCAP) and the two-year roll-on Annual Acquisition Plans.**
- **CDS will administer the tri-services organizations/agencies related to Cyber and Space.**
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Service Conditions-

- Can serve up to a **maximum age of 65 years**
- He **will not be eligible to hold any government office after demitting (resigning) as the CDS.**
- No private employment without prior approval for a period of five years after demitting the office of CDS.
- He will have the **salary and perquisites equivalent to a service chief**

Coonoor

Located in the **Nilgiris District of Tamil Nadu**.

It has an average elevation of 1,850 meters (6,070 feet) above sea level.

Nilgiri Mountains are **part of the Western Ghats. (Highest Peak - Doddabetta, at 2,637 metres (8,652 ft))**.

The Nilgiri Hills are part of the **Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (itself part of the UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves)** and form a part of the protected bio reserves in India.

Nilgiri mountains are also known as Blue mountains due to the bluish flowers of kurinji shrubs endemic to that area.

The Nilgiri Hills are **separated from the Mysore Plateau to the north by the Moyar River**

Nilgiri is surrounded by 3 national parks -

- **Mudumalai National Park (in the northern part of the range where Kerala, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu meet)**
- **Mukurthi National Park** lies in the southwest part of the range, in Kerala, and
- **Silent Valley National Park** lies just to the south

Tribal people of the Nilgiri hills include Badagas, Todas, Kotas, Irullas and Kurumbas. They mainly depend on forests for their day-to-day life.

In July 2005 UNESCO recognized Nilgiri Mountain Railway as a World Heritage Site

MI-17-V5 Helicopter

The Mi-17 (**NATO reporting name: Hip**) is a Soviet-designed **Russian military helicopter** family produced by **Kazan Helicopters**. It is known as the **Mi-8M series in Russian service**. The helicopter is mostly used as a **transport helicopter** for various humanitarian and disaster relief missions, troop and arms transport, fire support, convoy escort, patrol, and search-and-rescue (SAR) missions as well as an **armed gunship version**.

Indian Air Force is using this since 2012

The Defence Services Staff College (DSSC)

It is a defense service training institution of the Ministry of Defence located in **Wellington, Tamil Nadu**

It trains officers of all three services of the Indian Armed Forces - (Indian Military Service, Indian Naval Service, Indian Airforce Service), selected officers from the Paramilitary forces and the Civil Services, and Officers from friendly foreign countries for command and staff appointments.

3. US to diplomatic boycott Beijing winter olympics (Dec. 8, 2021)

The US has announced a diplomatic boycott of the 2022 Winter Olympics in China, a move that has been heavily criticised by Beijing.

The White House said no official delegation would be sent to the Games because of concerns about China's human rights record especially its treatment of Uighur muslim in Xinjinag provinces.

However American sports persons will participate in the winter olympic games.

Following the US announcement, **New Zealand and Australia** also announced a diplomatic boycott of the games though their athletes be participating in the games.

Winter Olympics Games

The winter olympics games are organised every fours by the International Olympic Committee .

The games include sports which are played on snow and ice.

The Summer and Winter olympics were organised by the International Olympics Committee in the same year but in 1986 it was decided to hold the two games separately on separate four-year cycles in alternating even-numbered years.

So after the 1992 winter games next was the Winter games held in 1994 while the Summer Olympics was held in 1996 after 1992.

The first Winter Olympic Games was held in 1924 at Chamonix, France.

24th Games will be held in Beijing, China 2022.

25th games will be held in Milan-Cortina d'Ampezzo , Italy.

4. India adds Ghana and Tanzania in the list of “at-risk” countries (Dec. 8, 2021)

India has added Ghana and Tanzania to the list of “at risk” countries, passengers from where have to follow additional COVID-19 testing and quarantine measures. **Countries in Europe, including the U.K., and South Africa, Brazil, Botswana, China, Ghana, Mauritius, New Zealand, Zimbabwe, Hong Kong, Singapore, Tanzania and Israel** have been placed in the “at risk” category.

Last week, the Government announced stricter protocols for passengers arriving from “at-risk” countries which require mandatory testing on arrival in India. Passengers have to wait for their test results, which can take up to six hours, before they exit the airport or take a connecting flight.

5. Government has constituted Tribal Advisory Council in all states having Scheduled Areas (Dec. 7, 2021)

Tribes Advisory Council (TAC) have been constituted in 10(Ten) states having Scheduled Areas there in namely **Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha and Rajasthan.**

According to the provisions of Paragraph 4, under Article 244(1) of Fifth Schedule of the Constitution of India, the Tribes Advisory Councils (TAC) shall be established in each State having Scheduled Areas therein and, if the President so directs, also in any State having Scheduled Tribes but not Scheduled Areas therein.

Tribes Advisory Council shall consist of not more than 20 members of whom, as nearly as may be, three-fourths shall be representatives of Scheduled Tribes in State Legislative Assembly provided that if number of representatives of STs in State Assembly is less than number of seats in TAC to be filled by such representatives, remaining seats shall be filled by other members of those tribes.

The main function of the Tribes Advisory Council is to advise on such matters pertaining to the welfare and advancement of the Scheduled Tribes in the State as may be referred to them by the Governor.

6. Suu Kyi sentenced to four years in prison (Dec. 7, 2021)

The military junta ruling Myanmar has sentenced the deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi for four years for incitement against the military and breaching COVID-19 rules,

Ms. Suu Kyi, 76, has been detained since the Generals staged a coup and ousted her Government on February 1, ending the Southeast Asian country's brief period of democracy.

U.N. human rights chief Michelle Bachelet on Monday denounced a four-year jail term handed down to Myanmar's ousted leader Suu Kyi after a “sham trial” and called for her immediate release.

Western countries have demanded Ms. Suu Kyi's release and condemned the violence since the coup in which some 1,300 people have been killed,

Myanmar was earlier called **Burma.**

Capital : **Naypyidaw**

Currency : **Myanmar Kyat**

President : **Military leader Min Aung Hlaing**

Aung San Suu Kyi

She is the youngest daughter of the Burmese Father of the Nation Aung Sang.

She studied in Delhi University and she rose to prominence for leading a democracy movement against the army rule in Myanmar.

Her Party **National League for Democracy(NLD)** won the 1990 election but she was jailed and put in house arrest for almost 15 years

She became the face of the Pro democracy movement in the world

She got the Nobel Peace Prize 1991.

Her Party won the 2015 General election and she became the State Counsellor(Prime Minister).

On 1 February 2021, Aung San Suu Kyi was arrested and deposed by the Myanmar military, along with other leaders of her National League for Democracy (NLD) party, after the Myanmar military declared the November 2020 general election results fraudulent.

7. India Crosses Covid Vaccination Milestone (Dec. 7, 2021)

- Half of the eligible population(18 Years and above) in the country is now fully vaccinated against COVID.
- In total, 85% of the eligible adult population has now received the first dose, while 50.35% are fully vaccinated.
- The milestone was achieved in 11 months since the drive began on 16 January 2021.
- Himachal Pradesh is the first state in India to achieve 100% vaccination in India.
- The first person to receive the Covid vaccine was Manish Kumar, an employee of AIIMS, Delhi.

8. Maitri Diwas (Dec. 7, 2021)

India and Bangladesh **celebrate 6 December as Maitri diwas** to commemorate the recognition of the day when India recognised Bangladesh as an Independent country.

The war to liberate Bangladesh began on December 3, 1971 and ended with the signing of the Instrument of Surrender by Pakistani General A.A.K. Niazi on December 16.

Three days after the beginning of the war on 6 December , the Government of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi recognised Bangladesh as an independent nation.

9. Russian President Visit to India (Dec. 7, 2021)

Russian President Vladimir Putin visited India for the **21st India - Russia Annual summit with Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi.**

This will be the first in-person meeting between Putin and Prime Minister Narendra Modi after their meeting on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in Brasilia in November 2019.

Since the outbreak of the COVID Pandemic this is the second time that the Russian President has left Russia. Once to meet the U.S president Joe Biden on 16 June 2021 in Geneva ,Switzerland and he came to Delhi to meet P.M modi . This reflects the importance Russia attaches to its ties with India .

After their meeting in New Delhi both the country issued a Joint Declaration titled **“India-Russia: Partnership for Peace, Progress and Prosperity”**

The two countries signed 28 agreements, including 9 government-to-government agreements and those that spanned areas of defence, space, finance, power, culture, scientific research, education and health among others.

At the 20th India Russia Intergovernmental Commission on Military and Military-Technical Cooperation (IRIGC-MTC) meeting between the Indian defence minister Rajnath Singh and Russian Defence minister Gen. Sergey Shoigu four agreements. Important agreement are as follows:

- The India Russia Intergovernmental Commission on Military and Military-Technical Cooperation (IRIGC-MTC) was extended by 10 years till 2031.
- The deal for 6.1 lakh Ak-203 assault rifles is estimated at over ₹5,000 crore and will be manufactured by a joint venture, Indo-Russian Rifles Private Ltd (IRRPL) at Korwa, Amethi in Uttar Pradesh. IRRPL was set up jointly between the erstwhile OFB [now Advanced Weapons and Equipment India Ltd.] and Munitions India Ltd. of India and Rosoboronexport (RoE) and Kalashnikov of Russia.
- The two sides also signed a pact on amending the agreement on cooperation in the field of manufacturing of the Kalashnikov series of small arms that was originally sealed in February 2019.

Trade and Business deal

- Both countries have set a target to boost their bilateral trade to \$30 billion by 2025 . Last Year the bilateral trade was \$ 9.1billion.
- Russian oil company Rosneft said it signed a contract with Indian Oil to supply up to 2 million tonnes of oil to India by the end of 2022.
- The countries also signed a memorandum of understanding for Russia to send an uninterrupted supply of coal to India to support its steel production,

Russia will continue to supply the S-400 missile systems under the 2018 agreement

The next India -Russia annual meeting 2022 will be held in Russia .

First India-Russia 2+2 meeting

India and Russia held first 2+2 meeting during the visit of Russian President Putin Visit

2+2 refers to the meeting of the Defence and Foreign affairs ministers of both the countries to deepen and strengthen strategic ties between two countries .

The Russian Defence minister Gen. Sergey Shoigu held a meeting with his Indian counterpart, Defence minister Rajnath Singh and the Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov held talks with Indian External Affairs Minister S.Jaishankar.

At present India has 2+2 meetings with Japan, Australia and the United States.

10. Mount Semeru erupted in Indonesia (Dec. 6, 2021)

- **Mt Semeru (3676 m above sea level) is the biggest mountain on the island of Java.**
- Semeru is one of the most active volcanoes in Indonesia
- The volcano is part of a chain of volcanic mountains stretching from northern Sumatra to the Lesser Sunda Islands.
- **Volcanism in Indonesia is mainly associated with the offshore subduction of the Australian Plate beneath the Sunda Plate.**
- The oldest record of an eruption of Mt Semeru was from 1818
- **Indonesia has more active volcanoes than any other country in the world..** Indonesia is one of many places located within the world's most volcanically, and seismically, active zone, known as the Pacific Ring of Fire.
- **The Only active volcano in India is found at Barren Island in the Andaman and Nicobar islands.**

Volcano

A volcano is an opening in the earth's crust through which gases, molten rocks materials (lava), ash, steam etc. are emitted outward in the course of an eruption. Such vents or openings occur in those parts of the earth's crust where the rock strata are relatively weak. Volcanic activity is an example of an **endogenic** process.