

Current Affairs search results for tag: international-news

1. Water shortage officially in Netherlands due to drought (Aug. 5, 2022)

The Netherlands government has officially declared a water shortage due to the ongoing drought in the country, national water levels at an all-time low.

Important facts

- According to the Water Shortage Management Team of the country, continuous drought in the country has led to 'water shortage'.
- The scarcity of water is so bad that the waters of the Rhine River are supplying 50% less water than normal.
- The water shortage is already having a negative effect on shipping and agriculture in particular.
- Water used for irrigation of crops is banned in some parts of the country.
- Prolonged water scarcity can lead to salinization of the soil, affecting the agricultural industry.
- Despite the fact that the Netherlands is known for its abundance of water, it has declared a water shortage for the fifth time in the last 22 years.
- The water scarcity situation has now escalated to the third level threat in 2003. Threat of the third level means a specified national crisis.
- Drought means that the supply of fresh water must be comparatively less, but it can also affect the quality of drinking water.

2. Minerals Security Partnership (Aug. 5, 2022)

India is to join an 11-member US-led partnership for critical mineral supply chains called the 'Mineral Security Partnership (MSP)'.

Important facts

- A group of Western countries are collaborating to develop alternatives to China to ensure key industrial supplies.
- The Mineral Security Partnership is a new ambitious US-led partnership to secure the supply chain of rare minerals with the aim of reducing dependence on China.
- India is not a part of this arrangement but is working to gain entry through diplomatic efforts.
- Demand for rare minerals, which are essential for clean energy and other technologies, is projected to increase significantly in the coming decades.

What is the Minerals Security Partnership (MSP)?

- It is an initiative by the United States to strengthen rare mineral supply chains.
- Partner countries - Australia, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, Republic of Korea, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States and European Commission.
- Its purpose is to ensure that rare minerals are produced, processed and recycled in such a way that countries benefit from the full economic development of their geological management.
- This new group will focus on the supply chains of cobalt, nickel, lithium and the 17 "rare minerals" found on Earth.

Rare Earth Elements

- The 17 rare earth elements (REE) include the 15 Lanthanides (atomic numbers 57 — which is Lanthanum — to 71 in the periodic table) plus Scandium (atomic number 21) and Yttrium (39).
- REEs are classified as light RE elements (LREE) and heavy RE elements (HREE).
- Some REs are available in India such as Lanthanum, Cerium, Neodymium, Praseodymium and Samarium, while others such as Dysprosium, Terbium, Europium that are classified as HREE are not available in India.
- Hence, there is a dependence on countries such as China for HREE.

Importance of these minerals

- The batteries used in electric vehicles require minerals such as cobalt, nickel and lithium.
- REE is an essential component for over 200 consumer products such as mobile phones, computer hard drives, electric and hybrid vehicles, semiconductors, etc.

3. New Zealand introduced Bill on Tobacco Endgame (Aug. 4, 2022)

New Zealand's parliament recently introduced the Smoke-Free Environment and Regulated Products (Smoked Tobacco) Amendment Bill to fulfil its plan to be smoke-free by the year 2025.

About New Zealand Bill on Tobacco Endgame

- The 'tobacco endgame' refers to a policy approach that focuses on ending tobacco-related disease with the aim of a 'tobacco-free future'.
- The bill calls for three strategies to significantly reduce or eliminate smoking.
- If implemented, the bill would be the first law in the world to prevent the next generation from buying cigarettes legally.

Proposed Strategies

- To significantly reduce the amount of nicotine (known as "denicotinization" or "very low nicotine cigarettes - VLNC") in tobacco so as not to become addictive.
- 90% to 95% reduction in the number of shops selling tobacco.
- Selling tobacco to people born on or after January 1, 2009, is illegal (thus making the "smoke-free generation").

Current status of tobacco use

Global

- One in four people around the world use tobacco
- Cigarette smoking is the most common form of tobacco use worldwide.
- Other tobacco products include waterpipe tobacco, various smokeless tobacco products, cigars, cigarillos, roll-your-own tobacco, pipe tobacco, bidis and kreteks.
- According to the World Health Organisation, the tobacco epidemic is one of the world's biggest public health threats to date, killing more than 8 million people every year.

Status in india

- According to the National Family Health Survey-5 (Year 2019-21), 38% of men and 9% of women above the age of 15 use tobacco products.
- Women (19%) and men (51%) belonging to Scheduled Tribes are more likely to use tobacco than those belonging to any other caste/tribe group.
- Among men as well as women, tobacco consumption is higher in rural areas (43 percent for men and 11 percent for women) than in urban areas.
- It is one of the leading causes of death and disease in India and causes about 1.35 million deaths every year.
- India is also the second largest consumer and producer of tobacco.

4. US Senate approves Finland and Sweden's accession to NATO (Aug. 4, 2022)

The United States Senate on 3 August approved Finland and Sweden's accession to NATO.

Important facts

- The US Senate voted 95 to one in favour of both Western European countries joining NATO.
- This historic vote provides an important indication of the continued, bipartisan US commitment to NATO.

- The Nordic countries, which had long maintained neutrality, had united to join a 30-member coalition in light of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.
- Earlier the National Assembly of France voted in favor of Finland and Sweden's NATO membership.
- Several countries, including Germany, Canada and Italy, have already approved the ratification.

NATO membership process

- First a country must formally apply for NATO membership.
- The joining country must meet the criteria set out in NATO's 1995 "Study on Expansion". These criteria include a functioning democratic political system based on a market economy, the ability to make a military contribution to NATO, etc.
- A country can join NATO only if all its 30 member countries support its membership.
- A country can become a member of NATO after ratification of accession protocols, which may take 8 to 12 months.
- At present, Turkey has not agreed to give NATO membership to Finland and Sweden.

About North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)

- NATO is an intergovernmental military alliance consisting of 30 member states belonging to Europe and North America (28 European states, the US and Canada).
- NATO aims to guarantee the security of its members through political and military means.
- According to Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, an armed attack against any NATO member in Europe or North America shall be deemed an attack against all NATO members.
- Article 5 has been invoked only once so far after the 9/11 terrorist attacks against the US.
- The last country to join NATO was North Macedonia in 2020.
- Headquarters- Brussels, Belgium

5. IAF to participate in multilateral exercise 'Pitch Black' in Australia (Aug. 3, 2022)

The Indian Air Force (IAF) will join 16 other countries, including the Quad partner countries, for the biennial Exercise Pitch Black to be conducted by the Australian Air Force later this month.

Important facts

- About 100 aircraft and 2,500 military personnel from 17 countries will reach the northern region later this month for the Pitch Black 2022 exercise.

- This year's Pitch Black participants include Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Indonesia, India, Japan, Malaysia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Philippines, South Korea, Singapore, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, UK and US.
- The 2020 edition of this exercise was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

About Exercise Pitch Black

- It is a biennial warfare exercise hosted by the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF).
- It enhances interoperability and strengthens relationships among participants.
- This will provide the Indian Air Force with a unique opportunity to exchange knowledge and experience with these countries in a dynamic combat environment.
- Its last edition was held in 2018.
- Its aim is to practice Offensive Counter Air (OCA) and Defensive Counter Air (DCA) combat in a simulated war environment.

Other exercise between India and Australia

- AUSINDEX - It is a biennial bilateral maritime exercise between the Indian Navy and the Royal Australian Navy (RAN).
- The first edition of the exercise was held in 2015.

6. Six agreements signed between India and Maldives (Aug. 2, 2022)

Maldives signed 6 agreements with India on 2 August, with both sides reaffirming their desire to strengthen ties to combat "international crimes and terrorism" in the Indian Ocean region.

Important facts

- The six agreements signed between the two sides will facilitate cooperation in capacity building, cyber security, housing, disaster management and infrastructure development in the Maldives.
- After talks with Maldivian President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, Modi announced a line of credit of USD 100 million (one million = 10 lakh) for Maldives to complete development projects in a time-bound manner.
- The first part of the Greater Male Connectivity Project (GMCP) will include a 6.74 km bridge and a bridge connecting the capital Male to neighboring islands.
- The Prime Minister said that the threat of international crime, terrorism and drug trafficking in the Indian Ocean is serious and close India-Maldives ties are vital for peace in the region.
- The MoU signed on Cyber Security aims to promote the exchange of information related to cyber security on the basis of equality and mutual benefit in accordance with domestic laws, rules and regulations.

Second landing assault craft

- To strengthen Maldives' maritime capability, India has announced the gifting of the second Landing Assault Craft to the Maldives National Defence Force.
- Maldives was one of the first recipients of the Covishield vaccine manufactured by the Serum Institute of India (SII).
- President Solih visited Delhi in 2018 and this is his first visit in the backdrop of the end of the pandemic and the ongoing crisis in Sri Lanka.

About Maldives

- It is also called Maldivian Islands, an independent island country in the north-central Indian Ocean.
- It extends more than 510 miles (820 km) from north to south and 80 miles (130 km) from east to west.
- Basis of economy - fisheries, tourism
- Industries - handicraft or cottage including the making of coir (coconut-husk fibre) and coir products, fish canning, and boatbuilding.
- Capital - Male
- President - Ibrahim Mohamed Solih
- Official Language - Dhivehi (Maldivian)
- Official Religion - Islam
- Currency - Rufiyaa

7. Al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri killed in US drone strike (Aug. 2, 2022)

U. S. President Joe Biden said on August 1 that the United States killed al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in a drone air strike in Kabul.

Important facts

- The killing of Zawahiri is seen as the biggest blow to the terrorist group since its founder Osama bin Laden was killed in 2011.
- Al-Qaeda chief Ayman al-Zawahiri, an Egyptian surgeon who later became one of the world's most wanted terrorists.
- He was considered as the mastermind of the attacks on the United States of America on September 11, 2001.
- About 3 thousand people died in that terrorist attack.
- The US had placed a \$25 million bounty on Zawahiri.

- The drone strike is the first known US attack inside Afghanistan since US troops and diplomats left the country in August 2021.
- Zawahiri was earlier hiding in Pakistan but after the Taliban government came to power, he reached Kabul.

Who was Ayman al-Zawahiri?

- Born into a middle-class family in Egypt, Zawahiri grew up to become a doctor.
- He graduated from Cairo University's Al Qasr Al Ain Medical School in 1974.
- Ideologically he opposed secular governments, and was arrested in 1981 after the assassination of former Egyptian President Mohamed Anwar al-Saadat for carrying weapons without a license.
- He served three years as a surgeon in the Egyptian Army.
- In 1993, he took over the leadership of Islamic Jihad in Egypt and became a key figure in the mid-1990s campaign to overthrow the government and establish a pure Islamic state.
- He was found to be involved in the murder of more than 1,200 Egyptians.
- In 2011 he took on al-Qaeda when a team of Navy SEALs killed Osama bin Laden in Pakistan.
- He and bin Laden co-opted the 9/11 attacks and was one of America's "Most Wanted Terrorists".
- He was listed as one of the FBI's Most Wanted Terrorists, and had a \$25 million reward for his capture.

8. Ex- Philippines President Fidel Ramos dies at 94 (Aug. 1, 2022)

Former Philippine President Fidel Ramos died on 31 July at the age of 94 due to complications of COVID-19.

Important facts

- Ramos, the 12th President of the Republic of the Philippines from 1992 to 1998, was said to be the driving force behind investor confidence in the country.
- It was during his time that the Philippines was recognized as an emerging economy.
- It was during his time that the Philippines was identified as a booming "tiger economy", The Manila Times reported.
- Prior to becoming president, Fidel Ramos also served as Chief-of-Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines in the government of then-President Corazon Aquino.
- Apart from this, he was also the Defence Secretary.
- Ramos, a former military general, trained in the US, also participated in the Korea and Vietnam Wars.

- Ramos led a national police force and was instrumental in bringing down the notorious Marcos regime.

About Philippines

- The Philippines is a country located in Southeast Asia.
- It got complete independence on 4 July 1946 after the Second World War.
- It is the country with the fifth longest coastline in the world.
- The Philippines is the second largest producer of geothermal energy in the world, after the United States.
- Capital - Manila
- Currency - peso

9. India, Vietnam 3rd edition army exercise “Ex VINBAX 2022” begin at Chandimandir in Haryana (Aug. 1, 2022)

The third edition of the Vietnam-India bilateral military exercise "EX WINBEX 2022" is being held at Chandimandir from August 1 to 20, 2022.

Important facts

- It is a sequel to the bilateral exercise conducted earlier in Vietnam in 2019 and marks a major milestone in the strengthening of bilateral ties between India and Vietnam.
- Both the countries share a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and defence cooperation is a key pillar of this partnership.
- Vietnam is an important partner in India's Act East policy and Indo-Pacific vision.
- India has a rich legacy of deploying troops in UN missions and has excellent capabilities to provide UN peacekeeping training, including best practices for training potential UN peacekeepers at tactical, operational and strategic levels.
- The joint exercise will also provide an opportunity to the soldiers of both the countries to learn about each other's social and cultural heritage.
- The Indian Army is represented by soldiers from 105 Engineer Regiment.
- **The theme of Ex VINBAX - 2022** - employment and deployment of an Engineer Company and a Medical Team as part of United Nations Contingent for Peacekeeping Operations.

India and Vietnam

- The two countries signed a "Joint Vision" document to "significantly increase the scope and scale" of bilateral ties by 2030 during the recent visit of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to Vietnam.

- Both countries are listed among the fastest growing economies in Asia and both aim to enhance peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region through multi-faceted cooperation.
- As emerging economies and important countries, there is a broad convergence of interests with regard to creating alternative supply chains in Asia.
- They are equally concerned about China's aggressive and expansionist policies in the Indo-Pacific.
- The two countries have also shared a comprehensive strategic partnership since 2016 and defence cooperation is a key pillar of this partnership.
- The two countries have also cooperated in UN peacekeeping, ship visits and bilateral exercises.
- The two countries have signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Mutual Logistics Support, the first of its kind that Vietnam has signed with any country.

10. UN declares access to clean and healthy environment a universal human right (July 30, 2022)

The United Nations General Assembly in a historic resolution declared on 29 July that everyone on the planet has a right to live in a clean and healthy environment.

Important facts

- The General Assembly said that climate change and environmental degradation are the most serious threats to humanity in the future.
- It called on states to step up efforts to ensure that their people have access to a "clean, healthy and sustainable environment".
- The resolution recognizes the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right, which must be essential for the full enjoyment of all human rights.
- Member States can unite in a collective fight against the scourge of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.
- This declaration highlights almost all the rights related to the health of our environment.
- The resolution is not legally binding on the 193 UN Member States including India.

Historic resolution after 50 years

- 50 years ago, the United Nations Conference on the Environment in Stockholm concluded with a resolution that put environmental issues at the forefront of the global stage.
- Today, more than 176 countries have adopted laws related to the environment on its basis.
- After the Stockholm Declaration of 1972, these rights have been integrated into constitutions, national laws and regional agreements.
- In October 2021, it was recognized by the United Nations Human Rights Council.

- This Healthy environment right was not included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948.
- It is a historic resolution that will change the nature of international human rights law.

Other steps by UN general assembly

- On 28 July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly recognized the right to water and sanitation through its resolution.
- The Assembly stated that clean drinking water and sanitation “are essential to the realisation of all human rights”.
- In response, governments around the world have changed their laws and regulations regarding water and sanitation.