

PLUTUS IAS



Argasia Education PVT. Ltd. (GST NO-09AAPCA1478E1ZH)
Address: Basement C59 Noida, opposite to
Priyagold Building gate, Sector 2, Pocket I, Noida,
Uttar Pradesh 201301, CONTACT NO- 8448440231

CONTENT BY -JITHIN LAL (GENERAL STUDIES FACULTY UPSC)
DEBARUN ROY (ANALYTICS HEAD)
NEETU KUMARI (RESEARCH HEAD)

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1. India-European Union Counter Terrorism Dialogue held

India and European Union held Counter Terrorism Dialogue. During the dialogue, the strategic partners condemned terrorism in all forms.

Highlights

The dialogue also reviewed threats posed by UN-sanctioned terrorist entities. India and European Union are to soon conclude the Free Trade Agreement. During the dialogue, European Union stressed to increase India's investments in the field of Green Energy. This is because, EU has set a targets of becoming carbon neutrality. Carbon Neutrality is achieving net zero carbon dioxide emission.

India-European Union

European Union is the largest trading partner of India. The EU accounts to 12.5% of overall trade between India and European Union.

Free Trade Negotiations

India and European Union were working on Free Trade negotiations since 2007. Around seven rounds of negotiations have been completed. The signing of the agreement is getting delayed mainly due to differences between the partners on greenhouse gas emissions, FDI and market access, civil nuclear energy, cooperation on tax evasion, trade controls, technology transfer restrictions, manufacture of genetic drugs.

ERIC under Indo-European Union Partnership

ERIC is Euro-India Research Centre that was established under the FP-7 research programme of European Union. FP-7 is the largest funding programme of European Union.

Space Cooperation

In 2018, India and European Union signed pacts to share satellite data. Under the agreement, European Union will allow full access to its Copernicus satellite system.

About Copernicus space Programme of EU

It is an Earth Observation Programme of the European Union. Under the programme, European Union provides data and information free of cost.

European Union Contribution to LIGO

LIGO is the Laser Interferometer Gravitational Wave Observatory. The European Union is a huge contributor of the project. It has granted 14 million Euros in the beginning stages of the project.

2. Defence Minister launched portal for Land Management System

The Defence Minister Shri Rajnath Singh launched a portal for defence land management system. The system will bring in transparency, speed and efficiency in dealing land management. The portal has been integrated with GIS (Geographical Information System) based tools. This will improve the decision-making process by removing unnecessary communication between the stakeholders.

Defence Land encroachment is the major issue in defence land management.

Encroachments on Defence lands

Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Maharashtra are the three states that have reported highest encroachments on defence lands in the three years (2017-20). These states are followed by Assam, Sikkim and Andhra Pradesh.

The Defence lands are managed by the Directorate General Defence Estates.

Impacts of Encroachments of Defence Lands

The encroachments of defence lands are more common near airfields of Indian Air force. Such encroachments have contributed to 10% fighter jet accidents.

Reasons of encroachments of Defence Lands

Increased urbanization, abandoned airfields and airfields in the vicinity of civil pockets and increase in population are the major reasons of encroachment of defence lands.

What are the steps taken to check encroachment?

The Government of India is strengthening defence land management system through digitisation of land records, demarcation, survey, land audit, verification and inspection under the Cantonment Executive Officers.

Legislation

The Encroachment of Defence lands is checked under Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorised Occupants) Act, 1971 and Cantonment Act, 2006.

Defence Lands in India

Around 80% of the Defence lands are owned by Indian Army. The other defence land managers are Air Force, Navy, Ordnance Factory Board, DRDO.

Bhuvan Application

It was developed by ISRO. It allows users to explore the maps in 2D/3D on satellite images. The application is of great help to survey lands in India.

Raksha Bhoomi

It is a software used to register defence lands. Defence Ministry stores two different types of land details. They are General Lands Register (for lands within the cantonments) and Military Land Register (for lands outside cantonments). The software stores details of both the registers.

3.Wind-Solar Hybrid Park: Gol introduces new Scheme

The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy has proposed a new scheme to develop Wind-Solar Hybrid Parks. The scheme aims to address the key issues faced by renewable energy projects.

Key Features of the Scheme

The Wind-Solar Hybrid park will be a concentrated zone of power projects. It will provide an area with the required infrastructure. This will include evacuation facilities as well. The evacuation areas are important to minimise the risks of the projects. The sites to develop the wind-solar hybrid parks are to be selected by National Institute of wind Energy

About the parks

The capacity of each park is expected to be 500 MW and more. However, there are no restrictions to develop lower capacity park. In case of lower capacity parks, the capacity of the park should not be less than 50 MW.

Background

Wind energy and Solar Energy are emerging as alternative sources of energy to conventional energy sources in India. The estimated wind power potential of India is 695 GW and that of solar power is 749 GW. Wind power is mainly concentrated in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan.

Benefits

The park will help to fasten the development of wind power in the country. The scheme will help to minimise uncertainties faced by the developer such as clearances, land, transmission, etc. The development of wind power is scarce as it requires scattered land and thus the transmission cost is high. The scheme will help the DISCOMs to fulfil their non-solar Renewable Purchase Obligation (RPO).

What are RPO?

It is a mechanism under which the Open Access consumers, Discoms and Captive power producers are obliged to purchase certain quantity of

power from renewable sources. They are categorized as solar RPO and Non-solar RPO.

4.India-World Bank sign 120 million USD agreement to implement Meghalaya Integrated Transport Project

India and the World Bank signed 120 million USD to modernise the transport sector in the state of Meghalaya. The project aims to improve 300 km of strategic road segment through climate resilient and nature-based solutions.

About Meghalaya Integrated Transport Project

The project will help Meghalaya to emerge as the major connecting hub of trade with border countries such as Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh. The project will cater small scale industries, agriculture areas, tourism, health and education centres. Currently, around 5,362 habitations in Meghalaya lack transport connectivity. It will increase access to health facilities. More than 500,00 inhabitants of the state will benefit in the state. The project is expected to generate direct employment of 8 million person days.

The project will act as a boost to “Restart Meghalaya Mission”.

Restart Meghalaya Mission

The Restart Meghalaya Mission was launched in August 2020 on the occasion of the 74th independence day. Around six projects were announced under the mission. A total investment of Rs 8,753 crores is to be used for infrastructure projects. The mission will construct 13 major roads at a cost of Rs 850 crores. Under the mission, 400 agricultural entrepreneurs are to be provided with power tillers at subsidised rates. The mission will also develop tourism.

North East road Development Projects

The Government of India has been keen in improving connectivity in the NorthEast Region to increase its trade. In 2018, Rs 1.9 lakh crores were sanctioned to build 14,000 km of roads in the North East region. The

speed of development activities in the NorthEast Region was increased by Gol after the standoff with China in Siliguri Corridor. It is a very narrow region between Bhutan and Bangladesh in the Indian soil. If this region is cut off, then the land connectivity with North East will get cut off. India has opened its inland waterways as well to increase the connectivity with the North East.

5.India-Luxembourg Virtual Summit: Key Facts

India and Luxembourg held the first stand alone summit in two decades.

Key takeaways

The countries appreciated the launch of four Luxembourg satellites by Indian Space Research Organization in 2019. India welcomed Luxembourg's decision to join the International Solar Alliance. Luxembourg has agreed to extend its full support to India during its term in the United Nations Security Council (2021-22).

Why is Luxembourg important to India?

- Luxembourg is the third largest source of Foreign Portfolios after US and Mauritius. The country accounts to 8.5% of FPI of India.
- Luxembourg is the world's most important financial centres of the world. Indian companies are raising huge capital through the Global Depository Receipts on Luxembourg Stock Exchange.

About Luxembourg

Luxembourg is the second richest country in the world. The average GDP per capita of Luxembourg is 79,593 USD. The country is rich because the majority of the population is working in Germany, France and Belgium but living in Luxembourg. Therefore, France, Germany and Belgium are the major trading partners of the country. Also, the financial sector of Luxembourg is huge.

Why is the financial sector in Luxembourg big?

Luxembourg attracts as much FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) as that of the United States in spite of holding just 6 lakh citizens. Around 4 trillion USD of FDI comes into the country. This is mainly because the country is a big tax haven. (Tax Haven is a country where taxes are levied at very low rates).

Luxembourg is one of three major Tax Havens of the European Union. The other two are Ireland and the Netherlands.

India-Luxembourg

The diplomatic relations between the countries was established in 1947. The bilateral trade between India and Luxembourg between 2000 and 2015 was at 1,383 million USD. Luxembourg has invested in software, chemicals and automobiles in India.

6. TRACE Bribery Risk Matrix: India ranks 77

The Global Bribery Risk Matrix was released by TRACE. India ranked 77 with a score of 45 in the global list.

India in the Global Bribery Risk Matrix

In 2019, India was at 78th position with a score of 48. In 2020, India has performed better than that of China, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. Bhutan was the only neighbour that was ranked better than India. Bhutan secured 48th rank on the list.

About the ranking

The ranking is prepared by TRACE International. It is the world leading anti-bribery standard setting organisation. The TRACE Bribery Risk Matrix, 2020 measured bribery in 194 jurisdictions. The jurisdictions were ranked based on score. The score is calculated based on four parameters. They are Government and civil service transparency, business interactions with government, capacity for civil society oversight and anti bribery deterrents and enforcement. Though jurisdictions are weighed based on these four parameters, the role of media is also considered while scoring them. When a country gets the highest score, it means that the country is at higher risk of business bribery. Lesser the score, lesser is the bribery in the country.

Individual Scores of India

The overall score of India was 45. Under the domain Interactions with Government, India scored 50. Under the domain, Anti-bribery deterrence and enforcement, India scored 53. Under the domain Government and Civil Service Transparency India scored 36. Under the domain capacity for civil oversight India scored 40.

This says that civil service transparency of India is strong as compared to the other major parameters. The Civil Services are always considered as the backbone of Indian Governance.

Other Countries in the ranking

Denmark topped the list followed by Norway, Finland, Sweden and New Zealand. The bottom most ranks were occupied by North Korea, Turkmenistan, South Sudan, Venezuela, Eritrea.