

PLUTUS IAS



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1. Radio burst spotted by NASA for the first time in Milky Way

NASA recently reported that it observed a mix of radio signals and X-ray in Milky Way in April 2020. This has never been observed earlier in the galaxy. NASA has also reported the spotting of Fast Radio Bursts.

Key Highlights

The Fast Radio Bursts were discovered in 2007. However, this is the first time the radio bursts were spotted in Milky Way Galaxy. Though, the radio bursts were discovered, their source of origin couldn't be located.

What are Fast Radio Bursts?

Fast Radio Bursts are bright bursts of radio waves produced by astronomical objects with changing magnetic fields. The duration of these bursts last only for milli-second. Due to this short duration of occurrence, it is highly difficult to spot Fast Radio Bursts.

Origin of Milky Way Radio Burst

The Fast Radio Burst spotted in the Milky Way Galaxy in April 2020 was from a powerful neutron star. It is referred to as Magnetar. It is located in the constellation Vulpecula.

The X-ray burst from the star lasted for less than a second. On the other hand, the radio burst from the star lasted for one-thousandth of a second. This was the brightest of any other radio transmissions from magnetars.

2. Indian Army Chief General Manoj Mukund Navarne conferred with rank of "General of Nepal Army"

Indian Army Chief Manoj Mukund Navarne was conferred with the rank of honorary General of Nepal Army. The President of Nepal Bidya Devi Bhandari presented him with a scroll and a sword during the honouring ceremony.

Key Highlights

Chief Navarne is on a three day visit to Nepal. He is in Nepal to discuss "Army-to-Army relations and bilateral defence cooperation" with his counterpart.

The tradition of bestowing honorary title to the army chief of other countries has been in practice since 1950. Earlier, the Nepali Army Chief Chandra Thapa was honoured with similar rank by President Ram Nath Kovind.

The Commander in Chief Cariappa was the first Indian Army Chief to receive the honorary title in 1950.

3. India-OPEC Energy Dialogue held virtually

The fourth high level meeting of India-OPEC Energy Dialogue was held virtually. India was represented by the Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. The dialogue is being held since 2015.

Key Highlights

During the dialogue, India pressed for assessing COVID-19 induced disruptions of oil supply. India during the meet urged OPEC to address the anomalies prevalent in differential crude oil prices fixed by the OPEC members for different regions.

India-OPEC

In 2019-20, India imported 92.8 billion USD worth Hydrocarbons from OPEC countries.

Way Forward

The World Oil Outlook, 2020 of OPEC has projected that India will account for 16% of the global economy by 2045. Also, per day oil demand of India is to increase from 4.7 million barrels per day to 10.7 million barrels per day by 2045.

4.India-Indonesia 5th Joint Working Group on Coal held virtually

The India-Indonesia fifth joint working group on coal was held. The meeting of the working group was held through a video conference.

Key Highlights

During the meeting, the countries discussed on Indian Coal Policy reforms, commercial mining of coal in India and coking coal exploration.

Background

India is currently looking for opportunities to import more coal from Indonesia. This is because the coal prices in world market is declining at rapid rate. The plan is to replace coal imports destinations with Indonesia and not increase coal imports.

Why Indonesia?

India is to increase its coal imports from Indonesia because the Indonesian coal prices have fallen greatly in September 2020 due to the pandemic. The prices have been declining since March 2020.

Indonesia is the third largest coal producer in the world. The Indonesian coal accounted to 40% of world coal exports. China is one of the main coal customers of Indonesia. Indonesia has been suffering from the economic slow down of China and India has so far failed to fill the gap. This was because India is currently planning to increase its domestic coal production.

Current Scenario in India

India holds fourth largest coal reserves in the world. Still, India imports more than 250 million tonnes of coal from other countries. The GoI recently opened the coal mines to the private sector to increase the domestic production.

South Africa is the largest coal supplier to India followed by Australia. Till 2020, India imported 128.7 million tonnes of coal from Indonesia. Of these, 50.4 million tonnes were imported from Indonesia.

Coal Sector Reforms

The Indian Government recently introduced several measures to increase domestic coal production. The coal mines are to be offered to private companies based on revenue sharing. Also, commercial mining is being permitted, coal bed methane extraction rights have been auctioned and coal gasification has been incentivised.

5.India-Italy Bilateral Summit: Key Facts

PM Modi is to hold a virtual bilateral summit with his Italian counterpart Giuseppe Conte. The leaders are to sign 15 pacts in the field of energy, trade, ship building and culture.

Highlights

The summit is to explore possibilities of Italian investments in India especially in defence. Also, the leaders will discuss hosting the G20 summit. Italy agreed to host the G20 summit in 2021 on India's request. India is to host the G20 summit in 2022.

Indo Italian High-Level Dialogue

The summit was preceded by the Indo Italian High-Level Dialogue. During the dialogue, the Italian firm Fincantieri enhanced its presence in India. The long-standing partnership of the firm with the CSL (Cochin Shipyard Limited) of GoI was further deepened. The firm had signed contracts with CSL under which it delivered the tankers Shakti and Deepak to the Indian Navy. Fincantieri along with the National Institute of Ocean Technology

built the research vessel “Sagar Nidhi”. The understanding between Fincantieri and CSL is based on the following cooperation

- Naval Automation
- Ship Repair
- Training Indian Personnel
- Design, procure and local construction of new vessels.

India-Italy

Italy is the fifth largest trading partner of India in the European Union after Germany, Belgium, UK and France. In 2019, the bilateral trade between India and Italy stood at 9.52 billion Euros. More than 600 large Italian companies are active in India. It covers varied sectors such as textiles, fashion garments, infrastructure, automotive components, chemicals, infrastructure, insurance and energy confectionery.

6.First India-Nordic-Baltic Conclave held

The first India-Nordic-Baltic Conclave was held virtually. India was represented by External Affairs Minister S Jai Shankar.

Key Highlights

The Conclave was jointly hosted by Ministry of External Affairs and Confederation of Indian Industry. The Conclave focused on clean technologies and renewable energies, Artificial Intelligence, supply chain logistics and block chain led transformation.

Nordic Baltic Eight

The Nordic Baltic Eight includes Estonia, Denmark, Finland, Latvia, Iceland, Norway, Lithuania and Sweden. The Baltic States are Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. These three countries are located in the Baltic sea and are fast growing economies.

Why are Baltic Countries important to India?

Lithuania has high expertise in LASER technology. The LASER related products have become the most important part of Lithuania’s trade with India.

Latvia is geopolitically important to India. Latvia is linked by an ancient route called “The Amber Way”. It is called the Amber Way as the route was earlier used to transport amber from the coastal regions of Baltic Sea and North Sea to the Mediterranean Sea. Also, Latvia connects the Baltic region with the rest of Europe, Russia and Central Asia. Thus, it helps Indian exports reach these markets easily.

Estonia is home to NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence. Thus, India can benefit largely in cyber security areas from the country.

Nordic Region

The countries such as Norway, Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Iceland are the Nordic countries. The first India-Nordic Summit was held in 2018. The summit focused on security, climate change and economic growth.

Nordic Council

It was established in 1952. The headquarters of the council is located in Copenhagen, Denmark. It provides a link between governments, parliaments of Nordic states. The members of Nordic council members are Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Iceland and Finland. Finland joined in 1955.

7.India-Bangladesh sign MoU on COVID-19 Vaccine

The Government of Bangladesh signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Serum Institute of India for priority delivery of 3 crore COVID-19 vaccine doses. This COVISHIELD Vaccines was developed by AstraZeneca and University of Oxford.

Highlights

According to the agreement, initially 1.5 crore people will be vaccinated as each person requires two vaccine doses.

COVID-19 Vaccine in India

Currently there are three COVID-19 vaccines under trial in India. They are the Russian Vaccine called Sputnik V, Oxford University Vaccine called

COVISHIED and the COVAXIN jointly developed by Indian Council of Medical Research and Bharat Biotech.

COVAX

India is a part of the COVAX Facility of the GAVI Alliance. The facility aims to avail COVID-19 vaccines to all countries. The main objective of the facility is to prevent vaccine nationalism. GAVI is Global Alliance for Vaccines.

What are the issues related to COVID-19 Vaccines Distribution?

The COVID-19 vaccine distribution is to be influenced by three factors namely convenience, confidence and complacency.

Convenience is the physical availability or proximity of the vaccine. According to Lancet study, wealthy nations have secured more than 2 billion doses using advance purchase agreements. This will create scarcity in developing countries like India. The COVAX of GAVI alliance aims to prevent this.

Complacency is optimism bias. Several people are of the opinion that their personal risk is low. They feel that vaccination is unnecessary to them.

The public trust is crucial whenever a new vaccine is launched.

eVIN

The Government of India has planned to store COVID-19 vaccine using the Electronic Vaccine Intelligence Network. The GoI is to use real time tracking through EVIN. EVIN was an indigenously developed system. The system digitises vaccines stocks. It also monitors the temperature of the cold chain and strengthens the immunization supply chain system.