

IUUF in the Indo-Pacific Region

❖ Context

- **Quad leaders** at the group's **Tokyo summit**, may announce a key initiative to counter China's IUUF activity in the Indo-Pacific region.

❖ Background

- Chinese trawler fleets are seen as responsible for most of the **IUUF (Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing)** in the Indo-Pacific region, with **95 % of illegal fishing activities**, to meet its population's huge demand for protein.
- According to ODI, a global affairs think-tank, China's **distant-water fishing (DWF) fleet has almost 17,000 vessels** which is the **largest in the world**, for which China provides generous subsidies.
- The vessel **ownership is highly fragmented** among many small companies and the fleet includes **vessels registered in other jurisdictions**. In recent years, **IUUF has been seen as a bigger threat than piracy**. Studies have said that **unreported and unregulated fishing are bigger challenges than illegal fishing** as they deplete stocks and deprive vulnerable regional economies of an important food source.



- In a January 2021 paper, the American think tank Brookings, called the IUUF as “a national security concern”.

❖ IFC-IOR

- **Indian Navy's Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR)** may play a key role in the Quad's initiative.
- The initiative will bring together existing surveillance centres to create a tracking system for IUUF. The two other data fusion centres are:
 - **Singapore Navy's Information Fusion Centre.**
 - **Australia sponsored Pacific Fusion Centre**, set up in 2019 in **Port Vila** in Vanuatu.
- The initiative is likely to be viewed as a Quad pressure point against China.
- IFC-IOR was established in **2018** for regional collaboration on maritime security issues, IUUF, piracy, armed robbery on high seas, and human & contraband trafficking. Based in **Gurgaon**, the centre has **information sharing links with 50 nations and multinational/maritime centres**.
- It was established as **part of the government's SAGAR framework** for maritime cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region.
- It also **hosts international liaison officers** from partner countries, which include India's **immediate neighbours** in the IOR and further afield - **Australia, France, Japan, Singapore, UK & US.**

Discovery of a Primitive Forest at the Bottom of a Giant Sinkhole

❖ Context:

- A cave exploration team has discovered an ancient forest at the bottom of a **giant karst sinkhole in Leye County in south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.**

❖ Key Highlights:

- The sinkhole measures **306 metres in length**, is **150 metres in width** and **192 metres in depth**, with its volume exceeding 5 million cubic meters.
- Given these dimensions, the sinkhole can be categorised as a **large sinkhole**. In Mandarin, giant sinkholes are called **Tiankeng** or “**heavenly pit**”. The sinkhole has three big caves in the walls and its bottom has a well-preserved primitive forest with trees nearly 40 metres high.



❖ Formation of Sinkholes:

- Sinkholes are depressions formed in the ground when layers of the **Earth's surface start collapsing into caverns**. They can occur suddenly and without warning, because the land under the surface of the Earth can

stay intact for a period of time until the spaces get too big.

- **Due to Natural Processes** : sinkholes form in areas of “**karst**” terrains, where the rock below the surface of the Earth can be easily dissolved **by groundwater**.
- **Due to Human activity:** Sinkholes can also be formed due to **human activity**. This can happen due to **broken land drains, water mains and sewerage pipes, increased rainfall, storm events, underlying limestone and diverted surface water, among other reasons.**
- ❖ **Karst Terrains:**
 - Karst terrain is created from the **dissolution of soluble rocks**, mostly limestone and dolomite and is characterised by distinctive landforms such as caves, sinkholes & springs. As per NASA, karst geology covers about **13 per cent of eastern & SE-Asia.**

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Trimeresurus Mayaae

❖ Context

- A team of herpetologists have discovered a new species of venomous snake - Trimeresurus mayaae or Maya's Pit viper from Umroi Military station in Ri-Bhoi district of Meghalaya.



❖ About

- Recorded simultaneously in **Mizoram**, the snake has been named **Maya's pit viper** after the **deceased mother of an Army officer**, one of seven authors of a study on it. The name of the **pit viper** is **recognised as Trimeresurus mayaae**.
- A new **cryptic species** of a **green pit viper** is described from northeast India, based on **specimens collected from the state of Mizoram, Meghalaya and even in Guwahati (Assam)**.
- The new species is a **member of the subgenus Viridovipera** and is **sister to Trimeresurus medoensis** based on molecular data for **mitochondrial cytochrome b gene**, whereas resembles **Trimeresurus Gumprecht**.

❖ Diagnosis: A species of the genus Trimeresurus, characterized by:

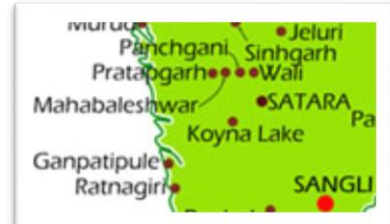
- Hemipenes are short** and strongly spinose.

- Body green** in both males and females, **Interstitial skin black**, Moderate **size**, with a maximum total **length** of 750mm, Conspicuous **bicoloured postocular** stripe in males, thin and white below, wide and bright red above, faint white or no postocular stripe present in female, Vivid, wide **bicoloured ventrolateral stripe**, deep red below/white above in males, extending along the lower **half of the tail, white in females. Eyes rust** coloured in males, green in females.
- Tail** mostly rusty or reddish-brown, First **supralabial distinct** from nasal, 19 or 21 **dorsal scale rows** at midbody, moderately keeled, Snout covered with rather **enlarged juxtaposed** scales
- Internasals** never in contact, separated by 1–2 scale.
- Supraoculars narrower** than internasals, separated by 9–10 smooth cephalic scales.
- Significance:** The new species will help in the understanding of its venom and its impact on human life and perhaps will help save lives.

GoMahabaleshwar

❖ Context:

- Recently Tech **start-up Bizzo** launched **GoMahabaleshwar** to empower small businesses across the **travel-tourism and hospitality in the region**.



❖ Key Highlights:

- Designed especially for **business owners in Mahabaleshwar's travel-tourism** and hospitality value chain.
- GoMahabaleshwar is a one-of-its-kind initiative that will bring together local service providers and businesses on one single site that is collectively **owned and operated by the community**.
- It will enable the entire town's travel-tourism ecosystem to be **on one single QR code**, the press statement issued by the Bizzo added.



- For consumers and travellers, the GoMahabaleshwar microsite will be a **one-stop destination** to book all their travel requirements and allied services in the bustling tourist town.
- For small and independent service businesses, it presents a **unique opportunity** to gain visibility and garner bookings via a platform that is aggregator-free.
- Bizzo's microsite will create a positive digital impact** resulting in customers connecting directly with the local businesses.
- Aim:** Through GoMahabaleshwar, Bizzo aims to foster a **confident and atmanirbhar community** where local businesses are competing and collaborating.

International Migration Review Forum

❖ Context:

- Recently the first International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) has taken place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The goal:** To review the progress made at the local, national, regional and global levels in implementing the **Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM)**.



- The Forum is an important moment for the **international community** to reflect upon the achievements to date in the implementation of the GCM and the commitment made nearly four years ago in **Marrakech** to ensure the **rights of migrants are respected**.
- Each edition of the IMRF will result in the adoption of the Progress Declaration. IMRF will be chaired by the **President of the UN General Assembly (UNGA)**.

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News in Between the Lines

Investment Incentive Agreement



❖ Context

➤ India signed an **Investment Incentive Agreement with the USA in Tokyo.**

❖ Key Highlights

- This IIA **supersedes** the Investment Incentive Agreement **signed** between India and the USA in the year **1997**.
- Significant developments have taken place since the signing of the earlier IIA including the creation of a new agency called **DFC (US International Development Finance Cooperation)**, a development finance agency of the **Government of USA**.
- It is the successor agency of the erstwhile **Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC)** after the enactment of a recent legislation of the USA, the **BUILD Act 2018**.
- The **Agreement is the legal requirement for DFC, to continue providing investment support in India.**
- DFC or their predecessor agencies have been **active in India since 1974** and have so far provided investment support worth **\$5.8 billion**.
- DFC has provided investment support in sectors that matter for development such as COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing, healthcare financing, renewable energy, SME financing, financial inclusion, infrastructure etc.

Pension Advisory Committee



❖ Context

➤ Pension regulator, **Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)** has **reconstituted** the Pension Advisory Committee (PAC).

❖ Key Highlights

- The reconstituted Panel has **18 members** besides the **PFRDA Chairman as its ex-officio Chairman** and **six PFRDA Board members** as the ex-officio members of the PAC.
- According to **section 45 of PFRDA Act, PFRDA can establish PAC by notification.**
- It also stipulates that **PAC cannot have more than twenty-five members, excluding ex officio members,** to represent the interests of employees' associations, subscribers, commerce and industry, intermediaries, and organisations engaged in pension research.
- The **objective of PAC should be to advise the Authority** on matters relating to the **making of regulations under section 52.**
- Further, **PAC can advise PFRDA** on matters referred to it, and on such matters as the committee may deem fit.
- The committee is required to **meet at least twice a year.** Every meeting of the PAC has to be presided over by the Chairperson (PFRDA Chairman).

Smart Manufacturing Competency Centre



❖ Context

➤ **NASSCOM Centre of Excellence-IoT & AI**, in collaboration with the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** and the **Department of Science and Technology (DST)**, the government of Gujarat, launched **SMCC in Gujarat.**

❖ Key Highlights

- **India's 90 per cent manufacturing companies are SMEs** that account for **33 per cent of manufacturing GVA** and **45-50 per cent of exports**, but they lag in tech adoption due to scale, financing, and leadership challenges.
- With the vision to **make the Indian Industry 4.0 ready**, the Centre will help create a **collaborative ecosystem.**
- It will bring together solution seekers and providers, enterprises, government, researchers, and innovators, under one virtual roof with an opportunity to **understand the manufacturing challenges and co-create solutions** using emerging technologies such as **IoT, data analytics, AI, and AR/VR.**

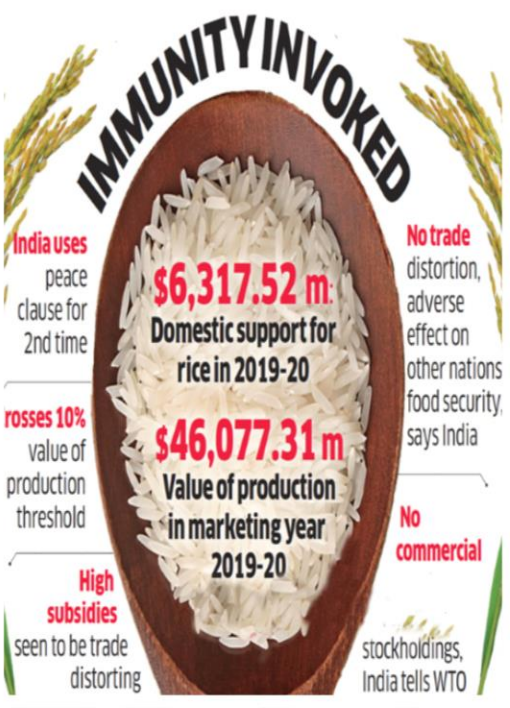
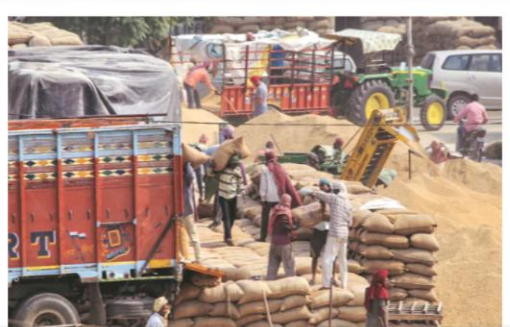
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- **SMCC platform** will enable every **MSME** in Gujarat to connect with the start-ups in the ecosystem for digitisation solutions.
- Manufacturers will be able to **experience demos and success stories of large tech enterprises and start-ups**. It will also create awareness and opportunities to network for technology adoption.
- MSMEs will benefit in terms of productivity, product innovation and market access, thereby making them more competitive.

Peace Clause



❖ Context

- India may seek a **permanent solution to the issue of public stockholding** for food security during the **12th World Trade Organisation (WTO) ministerial conference** starting on 12 June in **Geneva**.

❖ Background

- **WTO rules do not allow export of commodities from public stock** because it distorts prices, which affects other countries. According to current WTO rules, a **member country's food subsidy bill should not breach 10% of the value of production based on the base price of 1986-88**.
- India is facing pressure from other countries to reduce the subsidy given to its farmers. Other countries argue that **India gives subsidies on the production as well as at the distribution end**.
- But the subsidy given by India is far less than what the US and EU give. **Indian government subsidy to farmers comes in at \$300 per farmer, compared to \$40,000 per farmer in the US**.
- Thus, India is seeking **amendments in the formula to calculate the food subsidy limit**. India is also seeking to **add government programmes that were started after 2013 in the peace clause** agreed in the Bali ministerial meeting.
- India is not the only country. **Developing nations such as China and African nations part of the G33 group have also raised this issue at WTO**.

❖ About the Clause

- Under this clause, **WTO members agreed to refrain from challenging any breach of the prescribed ceiling of 10% by a developing nation**.
- In essence, **developing countries cannot be taken to arbitration** as they are protected under the peace clause. However, the clause is applicable till a permanent solution is reached.
- **Currently, the peace clause only includes the government programmes started before 2013**. India wants government programmes started after 2013 to be included in the calculation.
- **Last year, India invoked the peace clause** at the WTO for exceeding the 10% ceiling on the support it offered to its rice farmers.
- India had informed WTO that the value of its **rice production in 2019-20 stood at \$46.07 billion** and that **subsidies worth \$6.31 billion, or 13.7%**, were given, above the 10% limit.

Battery-like device that captures carbon dioxide while charging



Daily Current Affairs

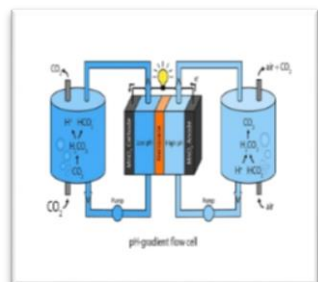
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❖ Context:

- Researchers have developed a low-cost device that can selectively capture **carbon dioxide gas** while it charges.
- Then, when it discharges, the carbon dioxide can be released in a controlled way and collected to be reused or disposed of responsibly.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The supercapacitor device, which is similar to a rechargeable battery, is the size of a coin, and is made in part from **sustainable materials including coconut shells and seawater**.
- The supercapacitor could help **power carbon capture and storage technologies** at much lower cost.
- The most advanced carbon capture technologies currently require large amounts of energy and are expensive.
- The supercapacitor consists of **two electrodes of positive & negative charge**.



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Raja Ram Mohan Roy Birth Anniversary

❖ Context

➤ Recently, the **250th birth anniversary** of Raja Ram Mohan Roy was celebrated.

❖ About:

1. Raja Ram Mohan Roy who was born on **22 May 1772** was one of the **founders of Brahma Samaj**.
2. He knew many languages sanskrit, Arabic, English, Greek Hebrew, French, Persian and Latin. He **made a deep study not only of Hinduism but also of Islam, Christianity and Judaism**.



3. He was given the **title of Raja by Akbar II**, the Mughal emperor.
4. Raja Ram Mohan Roy is considered to be the **"Father of the Bengal Renaissance"** by many historians. Roy was **born in Radhanagar, Hooghly District, Bengal Presidency**.
5. He sought to integrate Western Culture with the best features of his own country's traditions. He established a number of schools to popularize **a modern system of education in India** replacing Sanskrit based education with English based education.
6. During the early rule of the **East India Company**, Ram Mohan Roy acted as a **political agitator** whilst employed by the **East India company**.
7. **In 1797**, Raja Ram Mohan Roy reached Calcutta and became a moneylender mainly to lend to the Englishmen of the Company living beyond their means.
8. He was one of the first to try to estimate how much money was being taken out of India and to where it was disappearing.
9. **In 1830**, Raja Ram Mohan Roy travelled to the **United Kingdom** as an ambassador of the Mughal Empire to ensure that **Lord William Bentinck's Bengal Sati Regulation, 1829** banning the practice of Sati was not overturned.
10. He passed away at Stapleton on **27 September 1833** of meningitis and was buried in the Arnos Vale Cemetery in **Southern Bristol**.

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❖ Social Reforms:

- He **opposed superstitious practices, customs** such as **Sati, polygamy, child marriage, the rigidity of the caste system and its excesses, and sought property inheritance rights for women**.
- He was in favour of **inter-caste marriages, women's education and widow remarriages**.
- **In 1814**, he formed **Atmiya Sabha** (Friendly Society).
- Atmiya Sabha tried to **initiate social and religious reforms in the society**.
- **In 1828**, he set up the **Brahmo Samaj**, a reformist movement of the Hindu religion that aimed at fighting social evils that were prevalent in society..

❖ Educational Reform:

- He advocated the **study of English, Science, Western Medicine and Technology**.
- He established a number of schools to popularise a **modern education system in India**.
- He was instrumental in setting up several institutions including the **Hindu College in Calcutta in 1817**, in collaboration with **David Hare**; the **Anglo-Hindu School in 1822**; and the **Vedanta College** to spread his **teachings of Hindu monotheism**.
- He also helped **establish the Scottish Church College in 1830**.

Remembering Raja Ram Mohan Roy

Founder of the Brahma Sabha, the precursor of the Brahma Samaj, which played a major role in reforming & modernizing the Indian society

Quick Facts

- Used his influence to get the practice of Sati abolished in 1829 & launched campaigns against child marriage, purdah system, the dowry system, & polygamy
- Was a polyglot who had mastered various languages such as Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, English, Bengali & Hindi
- Was against idol worship and orthodox Hindu rituals & denounced the caste system
- Formed the Atmiya Sabha as a philosophical discussion circle to debate monotheistic Hindu Vedantism & similar subjects



(22 May 1772 – 27 September 1833)

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