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DAILY pre PARE
Current affairs summary for prelims

7 September, 2024

India-Maldives Relations

Context: *India and Maldives discussed speeding up defence projects after S. Jaishankar's recent Male visit.*

➢ **Overview:**

- India and Maldives discussed speeding up defence projects soon after S. Jaishankar's visit amid strained ties.
- The 5th defence dialogue, led by Indian Defense Secretary Aramane and Maldives' Chief of National Defense Force General Hilmy, reviewed bilateral matters extensively.

➢ **Historical Background:**

- **Recognition :** India recognized the Maldives after its independence in 1965 and established diplomatic relations.
- **Diplomatic Relations:**India set up a mission in 1972 and a resident High Commissioner in 1980. The Maldives opened its High Commission in New Delhi in 2004.
- **1988 Coup Attempt**: Armed militants from the PLOTE attempted a coup in Maldives, seeking a safe haven.India's swift military response, Operation Cactus, quelled the coup and restored order.

➢ **Strategic Importance:**

- **Security:** Crucial for regional stability and safeguarding Indian commerce. India supports Maldives' alignment with Quad's Pacific strategy.
- **Economic:** Maldives' strategic location impacts key international shipping lanes. India values sustainable marine resource management.
- **Global Support:** Maldives supports India's candidacies in global forums.
- **Anti-terror Operations:** Joint efforts in counterterrorism; Maldives supports India's anti-terrorism initiatives.

➢ **Trade and Economic Relations**

- In June 2024, India shared $32.8 million and invested $1.14 million, resulting in a positive trade balance of $31.7 million. Between June 2023 and June 2024, India's value per capita has fallen by $-3.16 million (-8.79%) from $36 million to $32.8 million, while valuation has fallen by $-4.56 million (-79.9%) from $5.71 million to $1.14 million. Exceeded $300 million for the first time, totaling $323.29 million.
- **Imports**: Maldives primarily imports scrap metals from India.
- **Exports**: India exports engineering and industrial goods, including medications, pharmaceuticals, radar equipment, rock boulders, aggregates, cement, as well as agricultural products such as rice, spices, fruits, vegetables and chicken.
- **Tourism**: As of May 4, 2024, the Maldives welcomed 43,991 Indian tourists. From January to April, 42,638 Indians visited, compared to 73,785 arrivals in 2023. In January 2024 alone, 12,792 Indians visited the Maldives.

➢ **Developmental and Disaster-relief Assistance By India:**

- **Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital (IGMH):** Established in 1995 with Indian assistance.
- **Faculty of Engineering Technology (FET):** Established in 1996 to train students in technical/vocational disciplines.
- **Disaster-relief:** India provided significant aid following the 2004 tsunami, including relief materials, medical assistance and financial support.
- **Greater Male Connectivity Project (GMCP):**Largest civilian infrastructure project in Maldives connecting Male with Villingili, Gulhifalhu and Thilafushi.
- **India's Contribution:** 500 million USD package including a 100 million USD grant and a 400 million USD line of credit.

➢ **India and the Maldives military exercises:**

- **Ekuverin**: First held in 2009,An annual exercise between the Indian Army and Maldives National Defence Force, focusing on counter-terrorism, counter-insurgency, and medical evacuations.
- **Dosti**: A biennial trilateral exercise between India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. The Indian and Maldives Coast Guards first conducted the exercise in 1991 and Sri Lanka joined in 2012. The last exercise was held in 2021.
- **Ekatha**: An annual exercise between the navies of India and the Maldives.

➢ **China's Concern:**

- The Maldives is a key "pearl" in China's "String of Pearls" strategy in South Asia.
- Speculation exists that China may establish strategic outposts in the Maldives due to its crucial location in the Indian Ocean.

Transgender persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019

Context: *The recent NMC syllabus, which classified sodomy, lesbianism and transvestism as crimes, has been withdrawn by the government on grounds of violating the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019.*

➢ **Overview:**

- The government's withdrawal of the NMC's Competency-Based Medical Education Curriculum, which misclassified sodomy, lesbianism and transvestism, corrects a serious error.
- Published on August 31, the curriculum's categorizations of sodomy, lesbianism and cross-dressing as sexual offences and perversions were widely criticised.

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- **Transgender Definition:** Persons whose gender does not match their assigned gender at birth, including those with intersex variations and socio-cultural identities like kinnar, hijra, aaravani and jogta.
- **2011 Census:** First to include the transgender population, estimating 4.8 million individuals in India.

➢ **Challenges Faced:**

- **Legal Protection:** Lack of protection leads to violence, neglect and marginalisation in education, employment and healthcare.
- **Poverty:** High unemployment and housing insecurity due to discrimination and lack of legal protection.
- **Harassment and Stigma:** Societal ridicule and wrongful perceptions of mental illness and deviance.
- **Anti-Transgender Violence:** Forced conformity, abuse and prostitution, often perpetrated by families.
- **Healthcare Barriers:** Minimal access to healthcare and lack of competency among medical professionals.

➢ **Timeline of Reforms:**

- **2009:** Election Commission amended registration forms to include "others" for gender identity.
- **2014:** Supreme Court recognized transgender as the "Third Gender" in National Legal Services Authority vs. Union of India case.
- **2014:** Rights of Transgender Persons Bill introduced and passed by Rajya Sabha in April 2015.
- **2019:** Enactment of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act.

➢ **Key Provisions of the Act:**

- **Non-Discrimination:** Prohibits discrimination in education, jobs, healthcare and services.
- **Recognition:** Transgender persons can obtain a certificate of identity from the District Magistrate.
- **National Council:** Establishes a National Council for Transgender Persons (NCT).
- **Right of Residence:** Ensures no forced separation from family due to gender identity.
- **Healthcare Rights:** Includes provisions for separate HIV centres and sex reassignment surgeries.
- **Penal Provisions:** Criminalizes begging, forced labour, denial of public place use and various forms of abuse.

➢ **Challenges with the Act:**

- **Definition Issues:** Lacks proper definition and self-determination of gender.
- **Reservation:** No provision for reservations, contrary to Supreme Court verdict.
- **Criminalization of Begging:** Fails to provide alternative support for transgender individuals who rely on begging.
- **Discrimination Penalties:** Lighter consequences for discrimination compared to cis-gender individuals.
- **Victimisation:** Treats transgender people as victims rather than empowered individuals.
- **Marital Rights:** Unaddressed issues of marriage, divorce and adoption rights.
- **Freedom of Residence:** Restricts freedom of residence, conflicting with constitutional rights.

➢ **Government Initiatives:**

- **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020:** Provides a framework for non-discrimination and identity recognition.
- **National Portal for Transgender Persons:** Allows digital application for certificates and identity cards, improving transparency.
- **Garima Greh:** Shelter homes providing various support services for transgender individuals.
- **Prison Recognition:** Advisory issued for ensuring dignity and privacy of transgender inmates.

Civil Services Conduct Rules

Context: *The DC of Upper Siang warned employees over Siang SUMP protests, citing potential violations of Civil Services (Conduct) Rules, 1964.*

➢ **Overview:**

- The National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) is pursuing the project, which local people belonging primarily to the Adi community are against.
- The demonstration followed a complaint to Siang's SP on August 30, accusing NHPC of forceful PFR implementation.
- They must show cause why they shouldn't face disciplinary action for insubordination under the Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules, 1964.

➢ **What are Civil Services?**

- The civil service is a group of government officials who work in civil roles that are not political or judicial.
- All India Services are governed by Article 312 of the Constitution of India.
- **Conduct Rules for Civil Servants:**Conduct rules for civil servants are the set of rules for the standards of behaviour of people working in the civil services.
- **Governing Rules:**
  - **All India Services (AIS) Conduct Rules, 1968**
  - **Central Civil Services (CCS) Conduct Rules, 1964**
  - Based on recommendations from the **K. Santhanam Committee,** established by Lal Bahadur Shastri in 1962.
- **Restrictions:**
  - **Vague Rules:** Rule 3(1) requires actions to be "**becoming of a member of the Service**," which is broadly defined.

- **Political Neutrality:** Rule 5(1) prohibits involvement with political parties; personal beliefs are allowed but activism is restricted.
- **Personal Opinion:** Rule 7 restricts adverse public criticism of government activities through media.
- **Dowry:** Strictly prohibited under Rule 11(1-A) of AIS Rules.
- **Gifts:** Rule 11(1) requires reporting any gift exceeding Rs. 25,000 to the Government.

- **Newly Added Rules:**
  - **1979:** Directions from superiors should be in writing.
  - **1998:** Employment of children below 14 years is prohibited.
  - **2014:** Additional requirements for ethical standards, political neutrality, integrity, accountability, responsiveness and courtesy.
  - **2015:** The threshold for reporting gifts is fixed at Rs. 25,000.
- **The Second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC)**
  - Constituted in 2005 under Shri Veerappa Moily, the Commission of Inquiry aimed to revamp the public administrative system**.**
  - It submitted 15 reports to the Government covering areas like RTI, ethics in governance, local governance, terrorism, public administration, e-governance, financial management and so on.
- **Penalties:**
  - Non-compliance can result in major or minor penalties.
  - Major penalties may include dismissal from service.

NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement

Recently, the Indian Business and Professional Council Dubai in Coordination with the Consulate General of India hosted a celebratory event marking the second anniversary of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

About Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement:

- The Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) is a **free trade pact** between India and other countries that covers a variety of economic areas.
- The India-UAE CEPA was **signed in February 2022** and **came into effect in May 2022**.
- CEPA facilitates **technology transfer**, **promotes skill development** and strengthens cooperation in emerging sectors, such as renewable energy.
- The agreement gives India preferential market access in the UAE, particularly in labor-intensive sectors like **textiles**, **gems** and **jewelry** and **medical devices**.
- Since the implementation of CEPA, bilateral trade between India and the UAE has increased by **15%,** this includes a significant shift from energy-focused trade to non-**oil sectors**, with **non-oil trade increasing by 20%** during the 2023-2024 financial year.
- India has also signed CEPAs with **South Korea** and **Japan**

Agni-4 Ballistic Missile

Recently, India has carried out a successful launch of an Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile, Agni-4, from the Integrated Test Range at Chandipur in Odisha.

About Agni-4 Ballistic Missile:

- Agni-4 Ballistic Missile is an **Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile** (IRBM).
- The launch was **conducted under the aegis of the Strategic Forces Command** (SFC) and validated all operational and technical parameters.
- The Agni series consists of **long-range**, **nuclear-capable surface-to-surface ballistic missiles** developed by India, with varying ranges to target strategic goals.
- These missiles are a critical component of India's nuclear deterrence strategy and are designed to strengthen its strategic security.

Agni-Prime Missile Test:

- In April **2024**, India successfully tested the **Agni-Prime**, a new-generation nuclear-capable ballistic missile, from the **Abdul Kalam Island** off the coast of Odisha.
- The missile **met all the trial objectives**, validating its reliable performance and showcasing advancements in India's missile technology.
- The test was jointly **conducted by the Strategic Forces Command (SFC) and the Defence Research and Development Organisation** (DRDO).

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Yettinahole Project

Recently, the first stage of the Yettinahole drinking water supply project was inaugurated at Hebbanahalli in Hassan district of Karnataka.

About the Yettinahole Project:

- The Yettinahole Integrated Drinking Water Supply Project is a **large-scale water supply initiative** undertaken by the Karnataka government
- It aims to provide drinking water to **drought-prone areas of Karnataka**, primarily benefiting Kolar and Chickballapur districts.
- The project also aims to utilize **24.01 tmcft of water**, with **14.056 tmcft** specifically allocated for drinking water purposes.
- Water is sourced by tapping streams from the **Western Ghats**, including **Yettinahole** and other streams, with an average of **19 tmcft of water** available **annually over the last 10 years.**
- The project will benefit seven districts including Hassan, Chikkamagaluru, Tumakuru, Chickballapur, Kolar, Bengaluru Rural, and Ramanagara.
- The total cost of the **project is ₹23,251 crore** and it is expected to be **completed by 2027**.
- The project is being implemented by **Visvesaraya Jala Nigam Ltd.** (VJNL), which is responsible for ensuring the water supply.

INS Tabar

The Indian Navy's frontline warship INS Tabar participated in the 22nd edition of India-France Bilateral Exercise VARUNA in the Mediterranean Sea.

About the INS Tabar:

- INS Tabar is a Talwar-class stealth frigate of the Indian Navy, commissioned into service on **April 19, 2004**.
- INS Tabar is designed for anti-submarine, anti-aircraft, and anti-surface warfare.
- The frigate was built by Russia at the **Baltiysky Zavod shipyard** in St. Petersburg, under a contract between India and Russia.
- The frigate has a deck for operating helicopters like the **Kamov Ka-31 or HAL Dhruv**, which aids in reconnaissance and anti-submarine warfare.
- It is equipped with **stealth technology**, which helps in minimizing its detection by radar and other surveillance systems.
- It is equipped with advanced weaponry, including **BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles**, **Shtil-1 surface-to-air missiles**, **the AK-630** close-in weapon system and a 130mm main gun for surface targets.

POINTS TO PONDER

- What is the name of the newly identified spider species found in the lower Palani Hills of Tamil Nadu? **– Carrhotus piperus**
- What is the name of the scheme whose 2nd Cohort was recently launched by the Union Ministry of Electronics & IT Secretary to support startups in product innovation, development, and growth? **– SAMRIDH Scheme**
- What is the name of India's first fashion forecasting initiative recently launched by the Union Textile Minister? **– VisioNxt**
- Which country in the Arab world successfully completed its first nuclear power plant? **– United Arab Emirates**
- In which districts of Bihar will the Union Health Minister inaugurate two new super-speciality hospitals? **– Darbhanga and Muzaffarpur**

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