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Current affairs summary for prelims

07 October 2024

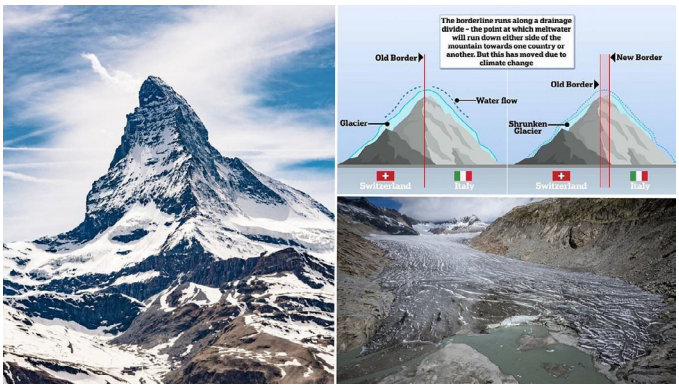
Redrawing Borders Due to Glacier Melting

Context: Italy and Switzerland are redrawing their national borders due to alarming glacier melting in the Alps, particularly around the Matterhorn Peak.

- **Cause:** The shift is primarily driven by climate change, causing natural landmarks and borders to evolve.
- **Impact on Borders:** The melting glaciers have significantly changed the definition of the border, leading to an agreement on a new boundary between the two countries.

Glacier Volume Loss:

- Switzerland lost 4% of its glacier volume last year, following a record 6% loss in 2022.
- This trend is expected to continue, with scientists predicting that up to half of the world's glaciers could disappear by 2100.



Commission Formation:

- In 2023, a commission was established to study the impact of climate change on glaciers and the resulting effects on national borders.
- The commission recommended the border modifications in May 2023.

Agreement Status:

- Switzerland signed the agreement for the new border on September 27, 2024.
- Italy is expected to give its official approval soon.

Consequences Beyond Borders:

- The impacts of glacier melting extend beyond border changes, including increased landslides and dangerous collapses of unstable terrain.
- There are also concerns about water shortages during heatwaves.

Wider Climate Impact:

- Europe is the fastest-warming continent, with climate risks affecting energy and food security, ecosystems, and public health.
- The European Environment Agency warns of worsening extreme weather events like heatwaves, droughts, wildfires and floods.

Significance of the Agreement:

- The agreement to redraw the border highlights the effects of climate change on national boundaries.
- While the changes may seem minor, they serve as a reminder of the importance of addressing climate change and its far-reaching consequences.

Italy:

- **Location:** Southern Europe, bordering the Mediterranean Sea
- **Capital:** Rome
- **Population:** 60.4 million
- **Language:** Italian
- **Currency:** Euro

Switzerland:

- **Location:** Western-Central Europe, bordering Alps
- **Capital:** Bern
- **Population:** 8.5 million
- **Languages:** German, French, Italian, Romansh
- **Currency:** Swiss Franc (CHF)

Shared Border:

- **Length:** Approximately 759 km (472 mi)
- **Border regions:** Lombardy, Piedmont, and Aosta Valley (Italy); Ticino, Grisons, and Valais (Switzerland)
- **Mountain passes:** Simplon Pass, St. Gotthard Pass, and Great St. Bernard Pass

National Mission on Edible Oils – Oilseeds (NMEO-Oilseeds)

Context: The Union Cabinet, led by Prime Minister

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Narendra Modi, has approved the National Mission on Edible Oils – Oilseeds (NMEO-Oilseeds).

- NMEO is a significant initiative aimed at enhancing domestic oilseed production and achieving self-reliance in edible oils. With a financial outlay of ₹10,103 crore, the Mission will be implemented over seven years, from 2024-25 to 2030-31.

Objectives and Implementation:

- NMEO-Oilseeds aims to boost the production of key oilseed crops such as rapeseed-mustard, groundnut, soybean, sunflower, and sesamum, increasing primary oilseed production from 39 million tonnes (2022-23) to 69.7 million tonnes by 2030-31.
- The initiative, alongside the National Mission on Edible Oils – Oil Palm (NMEO-OP), targets a domestic edible oil production of 25.45 million tonnes by 2030-31, which would meet approximately 72% of India's projected demand.

Key Strategies:

To achieve its goals, the Mission will:

- Promote the adoption of high-yielding seed varieties and extend cultivation into rice fallow areas.
- Establish an Online 5-year rolling seed plan via the 'Seed Authentication, Traceability & Holistic Inventory (SATHI)' Portal.
- Develop 65 new seed hubs and 50 seed storage units to enhance seed production infrastructure.
- Create over 600 Value Chain Clusters across 347 districts, offering farmers access to quality seeds, training in Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), and pest management advisory services.

Supporting Farmers and Reducing Import Dependency

- The initiative aims to expand oilseed cultivation by 4 million hectares, particularly targeting rice and potato fallow lands.
- Support will be provided to Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) and cooperatives to upgrade post-harvest units, thereby improving recovery rates from various oil sources.
- Moreover, the Mission will implement an Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) campaign to promote recommended dietary guidelines for edible oils.

Background:

- India currently imports 57% of its edible oil requirements, prompting the government to implement various measures for self-sufficiency, including the introduction of NMEO-OP in 2021 and increasing the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for oilseeds.
- These measures aim to bolster local production, protect domestic farmers from cheap imports through a 20% import duty, and ensure sustainable agricultural practices.
- The NMEO-Oilseeds represents a vital step towards enhancing India's agricultural landscape, reducing foreign exchange outflows and improving farmer incomes, while also contributing positively to environmental sustainability.

India-Jamaica Relationship

Context: Prime Minister of Jamaica, Dr. Andrew Holness, recently concluded a landmark official visit to India from September 30 to October 3, 2024, at the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Key Outcomes of the Visit:

- India has renamed the road in front of the Jamaica High Commission in New Delhi as 'Jamaica Marg', symbolising the growing friendship between the two nations.
- One of the major highlights of Dr. Holness's trip was the signing of several Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) aimed at bolstering bilateral cooperation.

Important MoUs:

- **Memorandum of Understanding on Digital Public Infrastructure:** Both countries agreed to collaborate on sharing successful digital public infrastructure initiatives aimed at promoting financial inclusion and driving social and economic transformation.
- **Memorandum of Understanding on Cultural Exchange:** An MoU was signed for cultural exchange between India and Jamaica for the years 2024-2029, fostering deeper cultural ties and mutual understanding.
- **Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in Sports:** The two nations committed to enhancing cooperation in the field of sports, recognizing the shared passion for athletic pursuits, particularly cricket.
- **Memorandum of Understanding on UPI:** A Memorandum of Understanding between India's NPCI International Payments Limited and Jamaica's Egov was signed, providing a platform to explore integration between UPI and Jamaica's existing digital payment systems.

About India-Jamaica Relationship:

- The diplomatic ties between Jamaica and India were formally established on August 12, 1962, and were strengthened when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi visited Jamaica in 1975, leading to the opening of India's resident mission in Kingston in 1976.
- **Trade:** India ranks as Jamaica's fourth-largest trading partner, with bilateral trade valued at approximately $82.40 million in the 2020-2021 fiscal year.
- **Education:** India has a robust educational exchange program, offering scholarships to Jamaican students through the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR).
- **Healthcare:** India has been instrumental in supporting Jamaica's healthcare sector through capacity building and medical tourism initiatives.
- **Cultural and Historical Ties:** India and Jamaica share a rich tapestry of cultural and historical ties, rooted in their shared colonial past and a commitment to democratic values. The mutual love for cricket, a sport that unites both nations, adds another layer to their relationship, fostering goodwill and camaraderie.
- **Diaspora:** The Indian diaspora in Jamaica, numbering around 70,000, serves as a living bridge between the two nations, fostering people-to-people ties

Power Packed News

Maritime Exercise Malabar 2024

- Maritime Exercise Malabar 2024 is scheduled from 8 to 18 October 2024, hosted by India, with participation from Australia, Japan, and the United States.
- Beginning with the Harbour Phase in Visakhapatnam and followed by the Sea Phase, the exercise aims to enhance naval interoperability and address shared maritime challenges in the Indo-Pacific region. Originally a bilateral

exercise between India and the U.S. in 1992, Malabar has expanded into a key multilateral event.

- The Indian Navy will deploy guided missile destroyers, submarines, and aircraft, while Australia, the U.S., and Japan will contribute vessels such as HMAS Stuart, USS Dewey, and JS Ariake, along with their respective naval aircraft. Special forces from all four nations will also participate.
- Malabar 2024 will focus on anti-submarine warfare, air defense, and surface warfare, facilitated by expert exchanges and maritime domain awareness activities. It is expected to be the most comprehensive iteration to date.

10th International Science Festival (IISF) to be held at IIT Guwahati

- The 10th International Science Festival (IISF) will be held in Guwahati. Northeast India will host its first International Science Festival (IISF), which will be held from November 30 to December 3, 2024 at IIT Guwahati.
- The 10th edition of IISF is a key step in the region's transformation into a hub for scientific and technological innovation, showcasing the government's commitment to the Northeast as a central player in India's development.
- The festival's theme, "Transforming India into an S&T driven Global Manufacturing Hub," supports national initiatives like 'Make in India' and 'Atmanirbhar Bharat,' highlighting the role of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, robotics, and biotechnology.
- These innovations aim to boost industrial growth and strengthen India's self-reliance in manufacturing.
- IISF-2024 will provide a platform for scientists, industry leaders, students, and the public to engage in discussions on science-driven economic progress, with a focus on positioning India as a global leader in science, technology, and industrial manufacturing.

DoT Unveils System to Block Fraudulent International Calls

भारत दूरसंचार
DOT
INDIA TELECOM

- The Department of Telecommunications (DoT), in collaboration with Telecom Service Providers (TSPs), has launched a system to identify and block incoming international spoofed calls.
- This system is being rolled out in two phases: initially at the TSP level to block calls spoofed with their own subscribers' numbers, and subsequently at a central level for calls spoofed with numbers from other TSPs.
- Currently, around 4.5 million spoofed calls have been intercepted.
- The DoT encourages citizens to report suspicious communications through the Chakshu facility on the Sanchar Saathi platform, helping to combat cyber fraud and enhance the security of telecom services.

WHO Approves First Mpox Diagnostic Test Under Emergency Use Listing (EUL)

- The World Health Organisation (WHO) has approved the first diagnostic test for mpox(formerly known as monkeypox) under its Emergency Use Listing (EUL). The test, named Alinity m MPXV assay, was developed by Abbott Molecular Inc. and is a crucial step in enhancing testing capabilities in countries facing mpox outbreaks.
- Mpox is a viral disease that causes flu-like symptoms, skin rashes, and blisters, with significant outbreaks reported in Africa, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Burundi, and Nigeria.

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- Over 30,000 suspected cases have been reported in Africa in 2024, but testing has been limited, with only 37% of cases tested in the DRC.
- The Alinity m MPXV assay is a real-time PCR test that detects the monkeypox virus (clades I/II) from skin lesion samples, providing faster and more accurate diagnosis.
- WHO's EUL procedure accelerates the availability of critical health products during global health emergencies, with more test applications under review. This approval is expected to improve early detection, treatment, and outbreak management.

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