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World's Largest Dam over Brahmaputra river

Context: Recently, China has approved the construction of the world's largest hydropower dam on the Brahmaputra River, known as the Yarlung Zangbo River in Tibet. The project, with a total investment of USD 137 billion, is part of China's 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) and is located near the Indian border.

Capacity and features of dam:

- The dam is expected to generate more than 300 billion kWh of electricity annually, which is enough to meet the needs of over 300 million people.
- The hydropower project is part of China's strategy for carbon peaking and carbon neutrality. It is considered a "green project" that promotes low-carbon development. In addition to hydropower, it will encourage the development of solar and wind energy resources in the surrounding areas, contributing to clean energy production.

Key Concern for India and Bangladesh:

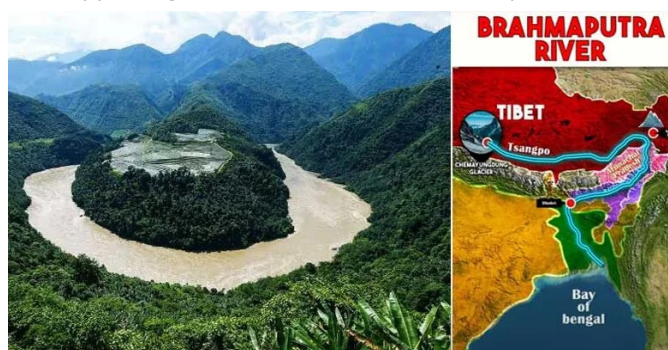
- The construction of the dam has sparked concerns in India and Bangladesh due to its location on the Brahmaputra River, which flows through both countries. There are fears that China could manipulate the water flow, potentially causing floods or water shortages, especially during periods of conflict. The size and scale of the dam could also increase China's control over the water resources.
- The location of the dam is in a seismically active region, which raises concerns about the safety of the project. However, China has stated that the project prioritizes ecological protection and has conducted extensive geological surveys to ensure its safety, focusing on minimizing the impact of earthquakes and environmental damage.

Impact of the dam:

- The project is expected to contribute significantly to the economy, generating income for the Tibet Autonomous Region, estimated at 20 billion yuan (USD 3 billion) annually. It will also boost the growth of industries such as engineering, logistics, trade services, and create new job opportunities in the region.
- Once completed, the dam will stimulate the

development of electricity, water conservancy, and transportation infrastructure in Tibet. It will also strengthen economic synergy between Tibet and other regions of China, enhancing the development of Tibet's economy.

- The project is seen as crucial for China's national security, including water resources management. It is also viewed as a way to improve relations with South Asian countries, especially in terms of energy cooperation. The hydropower station will also play a strategic role in supporting China's infrastructure development in Tibet.



About Brahmaputra River Overview:

- The Brahmaputra River, originating from the Kailash ranges, flows through Tibet, India, and Bangladesh. It plays a vital role in shaping the landscapes and livelihoods of millions across its path.

Basin and Catchment Area

- **Basin:** Spread across Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, West Bengal, Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Sikkim.
- **Catchment Area:** Tibet (2,93,000 sq. km), India & Bhutan (2,40,000 sq. km), Bangladesh (47,000 sq. km), total basin area 5,80,000 sq. km.
- **Delta:** Forms the world's largest and fastest-growing delta.

Post Office Rules, 2024 and Post Office Regulations, 2024

Context: Recently, The Department of Posts (DoP) has introduced Post Office Rules, 2024, and Post Office Regulations, 2024 under post office act, 2023, which came into effect on December 16, 2024. These reforms aim to modernize and streamline postal services across the nation.

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Key Features of the Post Office Rules, 2024:

- The Post Office Rules, 2024, simplify the operation of postal services, enabling better service delivery in remote areas through collaborations with both public and private entities. The rules introduce futuristic concepts such as digital address identifiers and digital payment systems for postage, facilitating greater ease of living.

About Post Office Regulations, 2024:

- The Post Office Regulations, 2024, cover operational aspects of postal products and services. They rationalize mail and parcel categories into simplified products, such as merging various book packet types into one umbrella "Book Post". The regulations also increase the money order remittance limit from Rs 5,000 to Rs 10,000 to enhance social welfare disbursements.

About Indian Post Office Act 2023:

- The Indian Post Office Act 2023 is a legislative update that replaced the Indian Post Office Act of 1898. This new law aims to streamline postal services, citizen services, banking, and access to government schemes, ensuring greater efficiency and clarity in operations.

Key provisions of the Post Office Act 2023:

- **Postal Stamp Issuance:** India Post has the exclusive authority to issue postage stamps.
- **Services:** India Post will offer services prescribed by the central government.
- **Authority to Intercept:** Authorized officers can intercept postal articles for reasons such as state security, public safety, and emergencies.
- **Parcel Examination:** Postal articles may be examined or forwarded to customs or another designated authority if there is suspicion.
- **Regulation of Private Courier Services:** For the first time, the Act regulates private courier services within its framework.
- **Liability Exemption:** The Act exempts the post office from liability for loss, delay, or damage unless specified by government regulations.
- **Recovery of Unpaid Charges:** Unpaid postal charges can be recovered as land revenue.
- **Appointment of Director General:** A Director General is appointed to oversee postal services and create related regulations.

Gross Non-Performing Assets (GNPA) ratio

Context: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) reported that the Gross NPA ratio of scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) declined to 2.5% at the end of September 2024, the lowest in over 13 years. This is an improvement compared to 2.7% at the end of March 2024.

What is the Gross NPA ratio and Net NPAs (NNPAs) ?

- The Gross Non-Performing Assets (GNPA) ratio refers to the percentage of total loans given by banks that are not being repaid as per the agreed terms. These loans are classified as non-performing because the borrowers are unable to repay the principal or interest for a specific period, usually 90 days or more.
- Net Non-Performing Assets (NNPAs) refer to the portion of non-performing assets after accounting for the provisions (reserves) that banks have set aside for bad loans. The NNPA ratio has decreased to 0.62% at the end of March 2024 and improved further to 0.57% by September 2024.



Reason for Gross NPA ratio improved:

- The decline in the GNPA ratio is attributed to better asset quality, improved recoveries, and upgrades of loans that were previously classified as non-performing. Additionally, the overall balance sheet of commercial banks remained strong with sustained credit and deposit expansion.

Which sectors have the highest and lowest Gross

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NPA ratios?

- At the end of September 2024, the agricultural sector had the highest GNPA ratio at 6.2%, while the retail loan sector had the lowest at 1.2%. Education loans saw a significant reduction in their GNPA ratio from 5.8% in March 2023 to 2.7% by September 2024.

What is the Slippage Ratio?

- The slippage ratio measures new accretions to NPAs as a share of standard advances at the beginning of the year. It indicates how many loans are turning bad during a given period. The RBI report highlights an improvement in the slippage ratio during 2023-24.

How has the asset quality of banks improved?

- The asset quality of banks has improved as reflected in the decrease in GNPA and NNPA (Net NPA) ratios. The share of standard assets in total advances has increased, and the decline in non-standard advances (sub-standard, doubtful, and loss advances) indicates better asset management.
- Improvement in GNPA ratios was observed across various loan categories, especially in education loans, where the ratio fell significantly from 5.8% in March 2023 to 2.7% by September 2024. Similarly, retail loans like credit card receivables and consumer durables saw a reduction in NPAs.

Significance of the decline in NPAs:

- The decline in NPAs signifies that the banking sector's financial health is improving, leading to better profitability and stability. This also boosts the confidence of depositors and investors in the banking system.
- A lower GNPA ratio generally indicates better asset quality and more efficient banking operations. It suggests that banks are managing their credit risk well, leading to fewer defaults and reduced provisioning needs, which improves their financial strength.

Comparison of Gross NPA ratio over the years:

- Here's a comparison of the Gross NPA ratio for the last few years:
 - » 2010-11: 2.35%
 - » 2015-16: 7.48%
 - » 2020-21: 7.33%
 - » 2023-24: 2.7%
 - » 2024-25 (Sep 2024): 2.5%

UN Regular Budget

Context: The UN General Assembly has indeed approved a regular budget of \$3.72 billion for 2025, marking a \$1 million increase from the initial proposal by the Secretary-General. This budget approval is a significant development, as it will enable the UN to continue its vital work in promoting peace, security, and cooperation among its member states.

- In addition to the budget approval, the General Assembly also adopted the Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) for the Decade 2024-2034. This program aims to support LLDCs in overcoming their unique development challenges, such as limited access to markets, high transportation costs, and limited economic diversification.

Is this budget the only financial allocation for the UN?

- No, the \$3.72 billion budget is for the regular budget (RB), which operates on a calendar year cycle. The UN also has a separate budget for peacekeeping operations, which follows a fiscal year cycle (July 1 to June 30).

About United Nations (UN):

- The United Nations (UN) is an intergovernmental organization established in 1945 to promote international cooperation, maintain peace and security, and address global challenges through its various specialized agencies and programs. As of now, 193 independent states are members of the United Nations. Additionally, the Holy See and Palestine are non-member observer states.

What are the main objectives of the United Nations?

- The main objectives of the UN are:
 - » To develop friendly relations among nations.
 - » To promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.
 - » To achieve international cooperation in solving economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian problems.
 - » To serve as a center for harmonizing the actions of nations.

What events led to the creation of the United

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Nations?

- Key events leading to the creation of the UN include:
 - » **1920:** Formation of the League of Nations after World War I.
 - » **1941:** Signing of the Atlantic Charter during World War II, calling for a post-war international organization.
 - » **1945:** The signing of the UN Charter by 51 countries on June 26, marking the official creation of the UN on October 24, 1945.

What is the organizational structure of the UN?

- The UN has six principal organs:
 - » General Assembly (UNGA)
 - » Security Council (UNSC)
 - » International Court of Justice (ICJ)
 - » Secretariat
 - » Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)
 - » Trusteeship Council (inactive since 1994)
- Additionally, the UN works with specialized agencies, funds, and programmes like WHO, UNICEF, and UNDP.

Power Packed News

M.T. Vasudevan Nair: Star of Malayalam Literature and Cinema

- Renowned Malayalam writer and filmmaker M.T. Vasudevan Nair passed away at the age of 91. Vasudevan Nair, popularly known as M.T., was a versatile personality. He was not only a great author but also an acclaimed film director and screenwriter. His three seminal novels - Nalukettu, Asuravithu and Kalam are invaluable treasures of Malayalam literature.
- He was the recipient of several prestigious awards, including the Jnanpith Award and the Padma Bhushan. His contribution to the literary world was also recognised with honours such as the Kendra Sahitya Akademi Award, Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award, Vayalar Award, and Vallathol Award.
- His contribution to the film world was also remarkable. His screenplays and directed films took Malayalam cinema to new heights. In 2022, he was awarded the Kerala Jyothi Puraskar, the highest civilian honour of the Kerala government.
- M.T. Vasudevan Nair's works offer a deep insight into the complexities of a matriarchal society and social issues. His demise is an irreparable loss to the literary and cinema world.

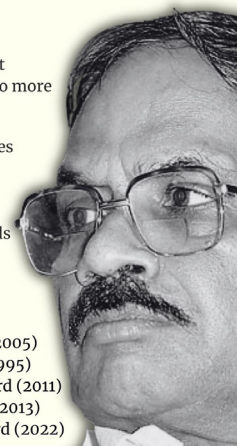
M.T. Vasudevan Nair bids adieu

One of India's greatest writers of all time is no more

9 Novels
19 Collections of stories
6 Directorial films
54 Screenplays
21 State Film Awards
7 National Film Awards
Several collections of essays and memoirs

Major awards

- Padma Bhushan (2005)
- Jnanpith Award (1995)
- Ezhuthachan Award (2011)
- J.C. Daniel Award (2013)
- Kerala Jyothi Award (2022)



Bald Eagle: National Bird of America

- After 250 years, the Bald Eagle has been declared the official national bird of the United States. This glorious bird has been a symbol of American strength, courage, freedom, and immortality for years. The bald eagle is protected under the National Emblem Act of 1940, making it illegal to hunt or trade.
- The bird was once on the verge of extinction, but thanks to conservation efforts and laws, its numbers have increased significantly since 2009. The Bald Eagle is native to North America and is used as a national symbol in official documents, treaties, and commissions.
- The Bald Eagle has always held a special place in the hearts of the American public due to its historical and cultural significance. Its huge wingspan and fearless personality make it an icon of strength and freedom. Today, the Bald Eagle is not just a bird, but a symbol of American history and national identity.



SLINEX 24: India-Sri Lanka Naval Exercise

- The bilateral naval exercise SLINEX 24 between India and Sri Lanka was conducted in Visakhapatnam from 17 to 20

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Current affairs summary for prelims

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December 2024. The exercise was conducted in two phases: the port phase on 17-18 December and the sea phase on 19-20 December.

- The exercise was participated by INS Sumitra from India and SLNS Sayura from Sri Lanka. The opening ceremony was held on 17 December and the sea exercise began on 19 December.
- The SLINEX series was started in 2005 with the aim of promoting cooperation between the navies of the two countries. The exercise was conducted under the Eastern Naval Command, with an emphasis on strengthening naval combat skills, communication and synergy.
- The exercise reinforces the defense partnership of the two countries and contributes to regional maritime security. SLINEX 24 has further deepened the strategic relations between India and Sri Lanka.



Communist Party of India (CPI)

- December 26, 2024, marked 100 years since the foundation of the Communist Party of India (CPI), one of the oldest political parties in the country. The CPI was officially formed at the Kanpur (then Cawnpore) Conference in December 1925, under the leadership of Singaravelu Chettier. Its creation was driven by widespread dissatisfaction with British colonial rule and the global ideological wave sparked by the Russian Revolution of 1917.
- Prominent leaders like M.N. Roy and Abani Mukherji were instrumental in shaping the CPI. M.N. Roy, in particular, made a historic contribution by being the first to propose the idea of a constituent assembly in 1934, laying the groundwork for India's eventual democratic framework.
- During the freedom struggle, the CPI played a vital role in organizing workers' and farmers' movements. It was a driving force behind groups like the All India Kisan Sabha, which worked to address the exploitation of the agrarian community and champion their rights.
- As the CPI celebrated its centenary, it stood as a reminder of its enduring contributions to India's fight for independence and its efforts to promote social justice and equality in the nation.

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COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA

100% piped water supply in Punjab

- Punjab has become the fifth state in India to achieve 100% piped water supply to rural households. This feat has been achieved under the Central Government's 'Har Ghar Jal' scheme. The scheme aims to ensure access to clean water in rural and remote areas.
- 15 major water projects are underway in Punjab at a cost of Rs 2174 crore to address the problem of water quality and scarcity. These will benefit about 25 lakh people and 4 lakh families in 1706 villages.
- With this, all the villages in the state have been declared Open Defecation Free (ODF). More than 10435 villages in Punjab have now become ODF Plus (desirable), while 1289 villages have achieved ODF Plus (ideal) status. This achievement is an important step towards improving sanitation and living standards in rural areas.

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