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INSTITUTE FOR IAS EXAMINATION

(IAS, IFS, IPS, IRS, IRMS, IFoS & Other Civil Services)

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DAILY NEWS DIARY

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FOR PRELIMS AND MAINS

Warm Greetings.

- DnD aims to provide every day news analysis in sync with the UPSC pattern.
- It is targeted at UPSC – Prelims & Mains.
- Daily articles are provided in the form of Question and Answers
- To have a bank of mains questions.
- And interesting to read.
- Providing precise information that can be carried straight to the exam, rather than over dumping.

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GS 2**❖ INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS****Q) Assess the progress of the China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).****Context:**

China has felt a need to re-visit the various projects under the BRI in different South Asian countries.

At the recently concluded summit of G-7 leaders in Germany, US and his allies unveiled their \$600 billion plan called the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Intelligence. This is being seen as a counter to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), valued at a trillion U.S. dollars by some experts.

**China's Belt and Road Initiative:**

- In 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping, during his visits to Kazakhstan and Indonesia, expressed his vision to build a Silk Road Economic Belt and a 21st Century Maritime Silk Road.
- He then aimed to break the “bottleneck” in Asian connectivity. This vision led to the birth of the BRI.
- The initiative envisioned a Chinese-led investment of over \$1 trillion in partner countries by 2025.
- More than 60 countries have now joined BRI agreements with China, with infrastructure projects under the initiative being planned or under construction in Asia, Africa, Europe, and Latin America.

BRI work:

- ✓ To finance BRI projects, China offers huge loans at commercial interest rates that countries have to pay within a fixed number of years.
- ✓ The west has accused China of debt-trapping by extending “predatory loans” that force countries to cede key assets to China.

- ✓ However, research indicates that low and middle-income countries are often the ones to approach China after not being able to secure loans from elsewhere.
- ✓ In recent years, the BRI seems to have experienced a slowing down as annual Chinese lending to countries slimmed from its peak of \$125 billion in 2015 to around \$50 to 55 billion in 2021.

BRI's investments in Pakistan:

- On his 2015 visit to Pakistan, Xi unveiled the BRI's flagship project and its biggest one in a single country — the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).
- The CPEC envisioned multiple projects involving energy, transport and communication systems.
- At the centre of the CPEC was the \$700 million development of the city of Gwadar into a smart port city that would become the "Singapore of Pakistan".
- Other major projects are the orange line metro, coal power plants to tackle energy shortages and the Main Line 1 rail project from Peshawar to Karachi.

Pace of progress in Pakistan:

- Multiple reports have shown that shipping activities at the Gwadar Port is almost negligible so far, with only some trade to Afghanistan.
- Gwadar residents have also protested against the large security force deployed to protect Chinese nationals involved in projects.
- Chinese nations have also become the target of multiple deadly attacks by Baloch freedom fighters.
- Coal plants were set up and managed by Chinese firms to improve the power situation in Pakistan.
- Chinese power firms closing down their operations as the latter did not pay dues worth 300 billion in Pakistani rupees (approximately \$1.5 billion).

Sri Lanka:

- In Sri Lanka, multiple infrastructure projects that were being financed by China came under the fold of the BRI after it was launched in 2013.
- In 2021, Colombo ejected India and Japan out of a deal to develop the East Container Terminal at the Colombo port and got China to take up the project.
- Some BRI projects in Sri Lanka have been described as white elephants — such as the Hambantota port.
- The port had always been secondary to the busy Colombo port until the latter ran out of capacity.
- Other key projects under BRI include the development of the Colombo International Container Terminal, the Central Expressway and the Hambantota International Airport among others.

Projects in Afghanistan:

- ✓ Afghanistan has not comprehensively been brought into the BRI, despite a MoU being signed with China in 2016.
- ✓ China had promised investments worth \$100 million in Afghanistan which is small in comparison to what it shelled out in other South Asian countries.

- ✓ The projects have not materialized so far and uncertainties have deepened after the Taliban takeover last year.

Projects in Maldives:

- ✓ Situated in the middle of the Indian Ocean, Maldives comprises two hundred islands, and both India and China have strategic interests there.
- ✓ One of the most prominent BRI projects undertaken in the Maldives is the two km long China-Maldives Friendship Bridge — a \$200 million four lane bridge.
- ✓ Most of China's investment in the Maldives happened under former President Abdullah Yameen, seen as pro-China.

Projects in Bangladesh:

- ✓ Bangladesh, which joined the BRI in 2016, has been promised the second-highest investment (about \$40 billion) in South Asia after Pakistan.
- ✓ It has been able to benefit from the BRI while maintaining diplomatic and strategic ties with both India and China.
- ✓ It has managed to not upset India by getting India to build infrastructure projects similar to BRI in the country.
- ✓ BRI projects include Friendship Bridges, special economic zones, the \$689.35 million-Karnaphuli River tunnel project, upgradation of the Chittagong port, and a rail line between the port and China's Yunnan province.
- ✓ However, multiple projects have been delayed owing to the slow release of funds by China.

Source: The Hindu

GS 3

❖ ECONOMY

Q) What are critical minerals? Explain the significance of the India and Australia partnership in the projects of critical minerals.

Context:

India and Australia have decided to strengthen their partnership in the field of projects and supply chains for critical minerals.

Australia has confirmed that it would commit A\$5.8 million to the three-year India-Australia Critical Minerals Investment Partnership".

Critical Minerals:

- Critical minerals are elements that are the building blocks of essential modern-day technologies, and are at risk of supply chain disruptions.
- These minerals are now used everywhere from making mobile phones, computers to batteries, electric vehicles and green technologies like solar panels and wind turbines.
- Based on their individual needs and strategic considerations, different countries create their own lists.

- However, such lists mostly include graphite, lithium, cobalt, rare earths and silicon which is a key mineral for making computer chips, solar panels and batteries.
- Aerospace, communications and defence industries also rely on several such minerals as they are used in manufacturing fighter jets, drones, radio sets and other critical equipment.

CRITICAL MINERALS

OUR GROWING DEPENDENCE ON CRITICAL MINERALS

WHAT ARE CRITICAL MINERALS? Minerals deemed critical vary by country. The United States classifies **35 minerals** as critical because they are:

- essential to economic and national security,
- from vulnerable supply chains, or
- a key part of the manufacturing of a product.

TOP INDUSTRIES THAT RELY ON CRITICAL MINERALS

- 1 Telecommunications and electronics
- 2 Energy
- 3 Defence
- 4 Aerospace
- 5 Transportation

CRITICAL MINERALS ARE EVERYWHERE

- Lithium is used to create batteries.
- Potash is used in fertilizer.
- Helium is used in MRIs.
- Indium is used to make LCD screens.
- Uranium is used in radiation therapy.
- Strontium is used in fireworks.

Why is this resource critical?

- ✓ As countries around the world scale up their transition towards clean energy and digital economy, these critical resources are key to the ecosystem that fuels this change.
- ✓ Any supply shock can severely imperil the economy and strategic autonomy of a country over-dependent on others to procure critical minerals.
- ✓ But these supply risks exist due to rare availability, growing demand and complex processing value chain.
- ✓ Many times the complex supply chain can be disrupted by hostile regimes, or due to politically unstable regions.
- ✓ They are critical as the world is fast shifting from a fossil fuel-intensive to a mineral-intensive energy system.

What is China 'threat'?

- China is the world's largest producer of 16 critical minerals.
- China alone is responsible for some 70% and 60% of global production of cobalt and rare earth elements, respectively, in 2019.
- The level of concentration is even higher for processing operations, where China has a strong presence across the board.
- China's share of refining is around 35% for nickel, 50-70% for lithium and cobalt, and nearly 90% for rare earth elements.
- It also controls cobalt mines in the Democratic Republic of Congo, from where 70% of this mineral is sourced.
- In 2010, China suspended rare earth exports to Japan for two months over a territorial dispute.

What are countries around the world doing about it?

- ✓ US has shifted its focus on expanding domestic mining, production, processing, and recycling of critical minerals and materials.
- ✓ India has set up KABIL or the Khanij Bidesh India Limited to ensure mineral security of the nation.
- ✓ Australia's Critical Minerals Facilitation Office (CMFO) and KABIL had recently signed an MoU aimed at ensuring reliable supply of critical minerals to India.
- ✓ The UK has unveiled its new Critical Minerals Intelligence Centre to study the future demand for and supply of these minerals.

Source: Indian Express

SNIPPETS**GS 3****❖ ENVIRONMENT & BIODIVERSITY****Q) What are the key provisions of the Environment Protection Act (EPA), 1986?****Context:**

The Union Environment Ministry proposes to soften the provisions of the EP Act (EPA) by replacing a clause that provides for imprisoning violators with one that only requires them to pay a fine.

Environment Protection Act (EPA), 1986:

- EP Act was passed under Article 253 of the Constitution, which empowers the Centre to enact laws to give effect to international agreements signed by the country.
- The purpose of the Act is to implement the decisions of the UN Conference on the Human Environment.
- They relate to the protection and improvement of the human environment and the prevention of hazards to human beings, other living creatures, plants and property.
- It was enacted in 1986 on the backdrop of Bhopal Gas Tragedy.
- The Act was last amended in 1991.

Why this Act?

- ✓ The Act is an “umbrella” legislation that has provided a framework for the environmental regulation regime in India.
- ✓ It covers all major industrial and infrastructure activities and prohibits and regulates specific activities in coastal areas and eco-sensitive areas.
- ✓ The Act also provides for coordination of the activities of various central and state authorities established under other environment-related laws, such as the Water Act and the Air Act.

Key provisions:

- The Environment (Protection) Rules lay down procedures for setting standards of emission or discharge of environmental pollutants.
- The objective of Hazardous Waste (Management and Handling) Rules, 1989 is to control the generation, collection, treatment, import, storage, and handling of hazardous waste.
- The Manufacture, Storage, and Import of Hazardous Rules define the terms used in this context, and sets up an authority to inspect, once a year.
- The Cells Rules, 1989 were introduced with a view to protect the environment, nature, and health in connection with the application of gene technology and micro-organisms.

Source: The Hindu

❖ ECONOMY**Q) Explain the implications of the Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) on Indian Economy.****Context:**

India's services firms saw growth in new business and output accelerate to a 11-year high in June, as per the survey-based S&P Global India Services Purchasing Managers Index (PMI).

The index rose to 59.2 last month, from 58.9 in May, signalling a strengthening in demand across the services sector, which had borne the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI):

- PMI is an indicator of business activity — both in the manufacturing and services sectors.
- It is a survey-based measure that asks the respondents about changes in their perception of some key business variables from the month before.
- It is calculated separately for the manufacturing and services sectors and then a composite index is constructed.
- The PMI is compiled by IHS Markit based on responses to questionnaires sent to purchasing managers in a panel of around 400 manufacturers.

How is the PMI derived?

The PMI is derived from a series of qualitative questions. Executives from a reasonably big sample, running into hundreds of firms, are asked whether key indicators such as output, new orders, business expectations and employment were stronger than the month before and are asked to rate them.

How does one read the PMI?

- A figure above 50 denotes expansion in business activity. Anything below 50 denotes contraction.
- Higher the difference from this mid-point greater the expansion or contraction. The rate of expansion can also be judged by comparing the PMI with that of the previous month data.
- If the figure is higher than the previous month's then the economy is expanding at a faster rate.

- If it is lower than the previous month then it is growing at a lower rate.

Its implications for the economy:

- ✓ The PMI is usually released at the start of the month, much before most of the official data on industrial output, manufacturing and GDP growth becomes available.
- ✓ It is, therefore, considered a good leading indicator of economic activity.
- ✓ Economists consider the manufacturing growth measured by the PMI as a good indicator of industrial output, for which official statistics are released later.
- ✓ Central banks of many countries also use the index to help make decisions on interest rates.

Source: The Hindu

❖ SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Q) What are quarks? Explain the outcomes of the Large Hadron Collider beauty experiment.

Context:

The Large Hadron Collider beauty (LHCb) experiment has observed three never-before-seen particles.

Discovery:

- CERN was investigating the slight differences between matter and antimatter by studying a type of particle called the “beauty quark”, or “b quark”.
- The three “exotic” additions — a new kind of “pentaquark” and the first-ever pair of “tetraquarks” — to the growing list of new hadrons were found.
- This discovery will help physicists better understand how quarks bind together into these composite particles.

Quarks:

- Quarks are elementary particles that come in six “flavours”: up, down, charm, strange, top, and bottom.
- They usually combine together in groups of twos and threes to form hadrons such as the protons and neutrons that make up atomic nuclei.
- But they can also combine into four-quark and five-quark particles, called tetraquarks and pentaquarks.
- These exotic hadrons were predicted by theorists about six decades ago — around the same time as conventional hadrons — but they have been observed by LHCb and other experiments only in the past 20 years.

Tetraquarks and pentaquarks:

Most exotic hadrons discovered in the past two decades are tetraquarks or pentaquarks. They contain a charm quark and a charm antiquark — with the remaining two or three quarks being an up, down or strange quark or their antiquarks.

Source: Indian Express

Q) Which of the following statements with regard to the Donbas is incorrect?

1. Donetsk and Luhansk are two states located in eastern Ukraine which are referred as Donbas.
2. Ukraine government recognised Donbas as independent nations.

Options:

- a) Only 1
- b) Only 2
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

 **Hey from Yesterday –**

Q) Which of the following statements with respect to 'Ant chutney (Kai Chutney)' is incorrect?

1. It is a much sought after food in Odisha's Mayurbhanj district.
2. It has got the Geographical Indication (GI) tag

Options:

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both
- d) None

Answer: a

Explanation:

- The Kai chutney is made mostly by the tribes of Mayurbhanj district in Odisha using the weaver ants.
- Weaver ants, *Oecophylla smaragdina*, are abundantly found in Mayurbhanj throughout the year. They make nests with leaves of host trees. Kais feed on small insects and other invertebrates, their prey being mainly beetles, flies and hymenopterans.
- This dish is a rich source of essential nutrients and is known to boost the immune system and is also used a remedial cure to many diseases.
- In Odisha, research is underway to make a presentation for the Geographical Indications (GI) registry of Kai chutney under the food category. Currently, it does not have a GI tag.

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