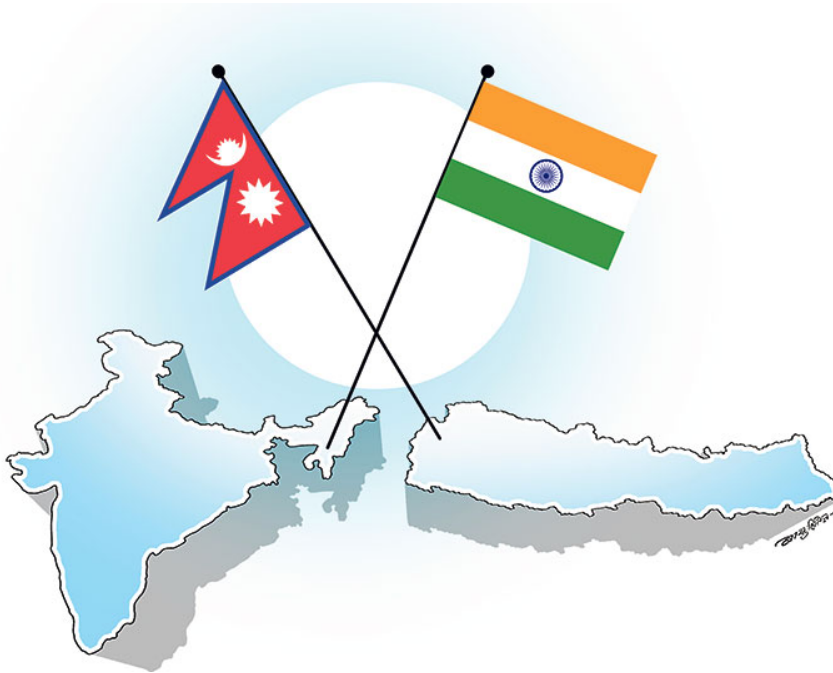


## 1. India Nepal Relations

**Topic: International Relations**



**In News:** India and Nepal has announced a slew of projects with the HIT formula of Highways, I-ways and Trans-ways during PM Prachanda's first official visit in this tenure to India.

**More on the Topic:**

**About India Nepal Relations:**

- For land-locked Nepal, **India joins Nepal on three sides.**
- India is **more than 20 times Nepal's size, yet no country including India has attempted to occupy Nepal**, along a largely peaceful border of 1770 kms.
- India and Nepal have **an open boundary, given each other's citizens near national treatment**- with Nepalis allowed to work in India and Indian rupees freely used in Nepal. They also honour each other's Army Chiefs and have a special military relationship.
- **India is Nepal's largest trade partner, highest source of FDI** and provides transit for almost entire third country trade of Nepal and **almost 100% of petroleum supplies, and third highest source of inward remittances** after Saudi Arabia and Malaysia.

**Concerns in the India Nepal Relations:**

- **Boundary Issue:** India and Nepal have a boundary issue- particularly over the areas of Kalapani and Susta. Despite an agreement in 2014 to resolve these, officials have barely met on the issue.



- **1950 Friendship treaty between India and Nepal:** Nepal has long demanded a revision of the 1950 Friendship treaty between India and Nepal, which it sees as an unequal treaty- but despite many promises, India has so far not moved towards talks on this.
- **The China Issue:** In recent years, since **Nepal signed an 8-point infrastructure agreement with China and joined the Belt and Road Initiative in 2019** with a number of Chinese projects, and an increased presence of China in its political sphere. India has countered these with a slew of its own projects, and completing existing plans.
- **Air Connectivity:** While the two sides have discussed rail and road connectivity, Nepal has been upset because of **a lack of air connectivity-** it wants India to allow air access.
- Nepal has built two new international airports in Bhairahawa and Pokhara- both of which were built by Chinese companies, and are unviable without Indian permission.

#### Way Ahead:

- While tradition, religion, cross-border marriages powered India-Nepal ties of the past, today's relationship must be powered by **trade, infrastructure, power and energy agreements as well as working together to built Nepal's capacities in IT R&D and the future.**
- Rather than simply blocking engagement with Chinese projects in Nepal, India can find more inclusive ways to bring about a new generational change in one of its closest relationship.
- There is utmost importance to have **Talks on revising the 1950 treaty with Nepal**, in a manner India was able to do with Bhutan in 2008, would be a first step in showing that commitment.

**Source: Indian Express**

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## 2. International Criminal Court

**Topic: International Relations**



**In News:** South Africa is looking in to options if Vladimir Putin, the subject of a war crimes arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC), came to the planned BRICS summit in Johannesburg.

### More on the Topic:

- As a member of the ICC, South Africa would theoretically be required to arrest Putin if he comes to S.Africa to attend the summit.
- States Parties to the Rome Statute have a legal obligation to cooperate with ICC decisions.

### About ICC:

- In 1998, 60 countries signed the Rome Statute after it was opened for signature by the United Nations.
- The Statute laid the foundation for the establishment of the International Criminal Court in 2002. Its purpose is to investigate and prosecute war criminals.
- There are **123 countries party to the Rome Statute**.
- **Countries that never signed the treaty** include India, China, Iraq, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, etc
- **Countries signed but not ratified the treaty** include Egypt, Iran, Israel, Russia, the United States, etc.

### Crimes within the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court:

- **War crimes** : War crimes include torture, mutilation, corporal punishment, hostage taking and acts of terrorism. This category also covers violations of human dignity such as rape and forced prostitution, looting and execution without trial. War crimes, unlike crimes against humanity, are always committed in times of war.
- **Genocide** : This includes all acts committed with the intent to destroy a national, ethnic or religious group.

- **Crimes against humanity** : Crimes against humanity are acts committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, such as murder, deportation, torture and rape. The ICC prosecutes the perpetrators even if the crimes were not committed in times of war.

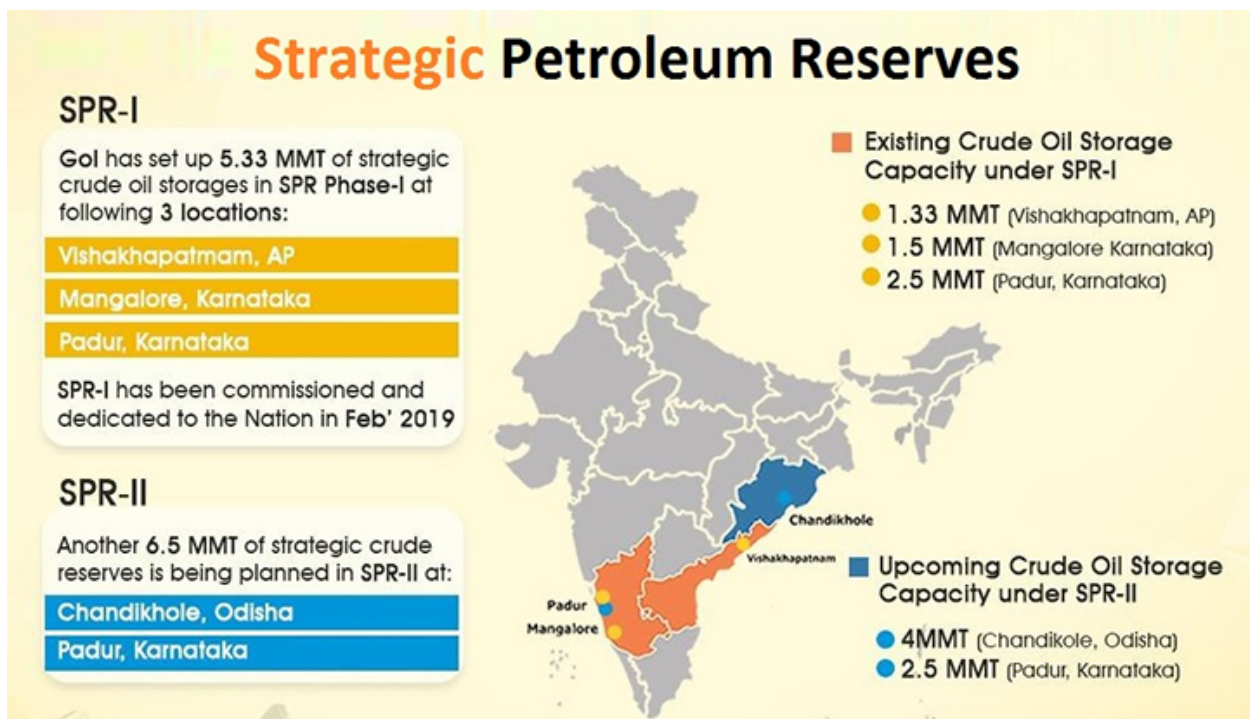
#### The powers of the ICC:

- The ICC is only competent to hear a case if:
- the country where the offence was committed is a party to the Rome Statute; or
- the perpetrator's country of origin is a party to the Rome Statute.
- The ICC may only exercise its jurisdiction if the national court is unable or unwilling to do so. The ICC only has jurisdiction over offences committed after the Statute's entry into force on 1 July 2002.

Source: Hindu

### 3. Strategic Petroleum Reserves

Topic: Economy



**In News:** The Government-owned engineering consultancy firm Engineers India (EIL) is studying the prospects and feasibility of developing salt cavern-based strategic oil reserves in Rajasthan.

#### More on the Topic:

- Unlike underground rock caverns, which are developed through excavation, **salt caverns are developed by the process of solution mining**, which involves pumping water into geological formations with large salt deposits to dissolve the salt.



- After the brine (water with dissolved salt) is pumped out of the formation, the space can be used to store crude oil.
- **The process is simpler, faster, and less cost-intensive than developing excavated rock caverns.**
- Salt cavern-based oil storage facilities are also **naturally well-sealed, and engineered for rapid injection and extraction of oil.** This makes them a more attractive option than storing oil in other geological formations.
- The **salt that lines the inside of these caverns has extremely low oil absorbency**, which creates a natural impermeable barrier against liquid and gaseous hydrocarbons, making the caverns apt for storage. Also, unlike rock caverns, **salt cavern-based storages can be created and operated almost entirely from the surface.**
- The entire SPR programme of the United States has so far been based on salt cavern-based storage facilities.
- Salt caverns are also used **to store liquid fuels and natural gas in various parts of the world.** They are also considered suitable for storing compressed air and hydrogen.

#### About Strategic Petroleum Reserves:

- Countries build strategic crude oil reserves **to mitigate major supply disruptions in the global supply chain.**
- India, the world's third-largest consumer of crude, **depends on imports for more than 85% of its requirement** — and strategic petroleum reserves (SPR) could help ensure energy security and availability during global supply shocks and other emergencies.
- India currently has **an SPR capacity of 5.33 million tonnes, or around 39 million barrels of crude, that can meet around 9.5 days of demand.**
- The country is in the process of expanding its SPR capacity by a cumulative 6.5 million tonnes at two locations — Chandikhol in Odisha (4 million tonnes) and Padur (2.5 million tonnes).
- India's strategic oil reserves come under the Petroleum Ministry's special purpose vehicle Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserve (ISPRL).
- EIL was instrumental in setting up the country's existing SPR as the project management consultant.
- If the idea comes to fruition, India could get its first salt cavern-based oil storage facility. The country's **three existing strategic oil storage facilities — at Mangaluru and Padur in Karnataka, and Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh** — are made up of excavated rock caverns.
- Rajasthan, which has the bulk of requisite salt formations in India, is seen as the most conducive for developing salt cavern-based strategic storage facilities.

Source: Hindu

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## 4. Mahakaleshwar Temple in Ujjain

**Topic: Art and Culture**



**In News:** Nepal Prime Minister has offered prayers at the famous Mahakaleshwar temple in Ujjain, city of Madhya Pradesh.

**More on the Topic:**

- The temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva. It holds great religious significance and is considered one of the twelve Jyotirlingas, which are believed to be the most sacred abodes of Lord Shiva.
- It was built in Bhumiya style of architecture. (Bhumiya is a variety of north Indian temple architecture marked by **how the rotating square-circle principle is applied to construct the shikhara (superstructure or spire) on top of the sanctum.**)
- Temple finds its mention in Kalidasa's Raghuvansam and Meghadutam. Also, in Harsacharit and Kadambari of Banabhatta, Naisadhacharit of Sri Harsa, and Navasahasamkacharit of Padmagupta.
- After Gaznavid attack and destruction, it was re-built during the reign of Udayaditya and Naravarman (Parmara Dynasty).

**Source: Indian Express**

## 5.Environmental Information, Awareness, Capacity Building and Livelihood Programme (EIACP)

**Topic: Government Schemes**



**In News:** The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), envisages to celebrate the World Environment Day 2023 with a thrust on the Mission LiFE through EIACP.

### **More on the Topic:**

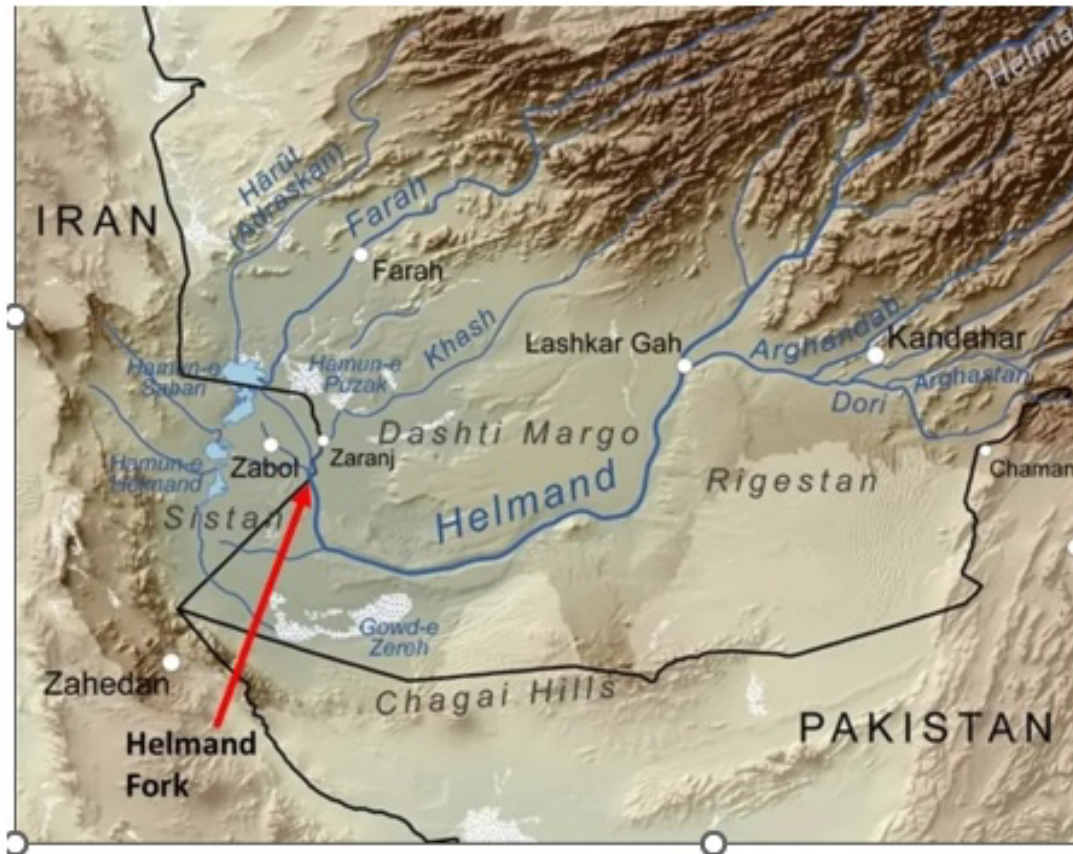
- The Environmental Information, Awareness, Capacity Building and Livelihood Programme (EIACP) is a **Central Sector sub-scheme aligned with the Mission LiFE initiative.**
- The program is dedicated to raising awareness, building capacity, and promoting sustainable actions **among individuals and communities across India.**
- By focusing on education and empowerment, the EIACP aims to drive positive change and foster **a sustainable future for all.**
- EIACP conducts Environmental Awareness Programs to School Children, Colleges and Universities on Environmental Important Days like, World Environment Day, World Earth Day, etc.
- EIACP serves as a **one stop platform for dissemination of environmental information, policy formulation on environment and facilitation of alternate livelihoods** through green skilling.

**Source: PIB**



## 6. Iran-Taliban Water Conflict

**Topic: International Relations**



**In News:** Iran and Afghanistan are locked in a long-standing dispute over the sharing of water from the Helmand River.

**More on the Topic:**

- **The Helmand is Afghanistan's longest river.**
- It originates near Kabul in the **western Hindu Kush mountain range** and flows in a southwesterly direction through desert areas for a total of about 1,150 kilometers (715 miles) before emptying into Lake Hamun, which straddles the Afghanistan-Iran border.
- **Lake Hamun is the largest freshwater lake in Iran.**
- It used to be one of the world's largest wetlands, straddling 4,000 square kilometers (1,600 square miles) between Iran and Afghanistan, **fed** by the Helmand. But it has since dried up, a trend experts blame on drought and the impact of dams and water controls. The lake is of great importance for the regional environment and economy.

**Source: Business Standard**



## 7. Desiccation-tolerant vascular plant species

**Topic: Environment and Ecology**



**In News:** India's biodiversity hotspot, the Western Ghats, is home to 62 Desiccation-Tolerant Vascular Plant Species which could have applications in agriculture, particularly in areas with scarcity of water.

### More on the Topic:

- Desiccation-tolerant vascular (DT) plants are able to withstand extreme dehydration, losing up to 95% of their water content, and they revive themselves once water is available again.
- This unique ability allows them to survive in harsh, arid environments that would be uninhabitable for most other plants.
- DT plants have been studied for their possible applications in agriculture, particularly in areas with limited water resources.
- In tropical regions, they are the predominant occupants of rock outcrops.
- **Desiccation-tolerant plants have special adaptations:** mechanisms to prevent cellular damage during dehydration, thick cuticle on leaves, which reduces water loss through evaporation etc., )

**What are Vascular plants?**



- Vascular plants, also known as tracheophytes, are a group of plants that have specialized tissues for conducting water, nutrients, and sugars throughout their structures.
- These tissues are called vascular tissues and include the xylem and phloem.

**Source: Business Standard**

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