



1. India's Great Power Ambitions

Topic: International Relations



In News: With the present dynamics India's power ambitions in the international arena are reassessed.

More on the Topic:

Background:

- In 1991, India was a weak and economically struggling country with a foreign exchange reserve of \$5.8 billion and a nominal GDP of \$270.11 billion.
- **The collapse of its trusted partner, the Soviet Union**, and strained relations with the US added to its challenges.
- Additionally, **the persistent risk of an India-Pakistan conflict** and the escalating violence in Kashmir heightened security concerns.
- Fast forward to 2023, India has undergone significant transformations.
- **The economic reforms initiated after the 1991 crisis**, known as the LPG reforms (Liberalization, Privatization, and Globalization), resulted in substantial GDP growth, making India the world's fifth-largest economy with a projected nominal GDP close to \$4 trillion.
- These reforms have also contributed to a significant reduction in poverty.

Present Scenario:

Military and Strategic Capabilities:

- India has witnessed significant growth in its military capabilities, including the possession of a substantial number of **nuclear weapons**.
- This has allowed the country to establish strong alliances with influential nations worldwide, most notably with the United States.
- Its strategic location and adeptness in navigating global politics have earned India the recognition of being a pivotal "swing power" in today's international system, attracting attention from major players such as the U.S., the West, and Russia.



The Mediation Role:

- India is increasingly adopting a mediation role in global crises, positioning itself as a **bridge between different regions and asserting its significance as a major player in world politics.**
- There have been suggestions for India to mediate between Ukraine and Russia amid the ongoing Ukraine war.

Challenges in front of India:

- Despite making remarkable progress in areas such as national power and international reputation, India still grapples with **persistent challenges related to poverty**, with tens of millions of people living in impoverished conditions.
- In 2021, **India's GDP per capita stood at \$1,947, while neighbouring Bangladesh had a slightly higher figure of \$2,227**, and it ranked as the 40th largest military globally.
- India faces challenges stemming from **infrastructural and governance issues**, which are evident when even a few days of rain can bring the national capital to a complete halt.
- Furthermore, the country grapples with **regional, caste, ethnic, and religious divisions**, posing additional complexities to its social fabric.
- A weak domestic economy hampers **India's ability to allocate adequate resources for its foreign policy objectives.**
- **The Ministry of External Affairs receives a relatively small percentage of the overall budget**, which may not align with the country's growing global stature and aspirations.

Way Ahead:

- Despite the persistent domestic limitations that may constrain India's ability to influence the world order, it is imperative for the country to **actively engage and contribute to shaping the global landscape.**
- By doing so, India can effectively pursue its foreign policy objectives, which in turn will have a **substantial impact on various critical aspects such as economic growth, security environment, and geopolitical and geo-economic interests.**
- India's influence in world politics must be viewed in light of its domestic situation, and its **involvement in international affairs should be driven by the welfare and needs of its citizens.**

Source: The Hindu



2. Issues Associated with Quick-fix Solutions to Address India's Growing Water Woes

Topic: Environment and Ecology



In News: Non-profits and civil society organisations are increasingly opting for quick-fix solutions to all issues including water stress, a tendency that needs to be moderated.

More on the Topic:

- There is a mindset change in our approaches, evident in the past two decades. Compared to the 1980s and 1990s, many of civil society organisations, states and central governments are now after quick-fix solutions.
- Initiatives like **Jalyukt Shivar Abhiyan**, a Maharashtra government initiative of 2014 that targeted river widening, deepening and straightening to make the state drought-free by 2019; **Water Cups**, a competition initiated by non-profits in 2016 to incentivise Maharashtra villages to harvest water for drought-proofing the state; and planting trees along the banks to rejuvenate rivers are all examples of such quick-fix solutions.
- Watershed-based development, which involves the management of land and vegetation to conserve the quality and supply of water, is no more actively pursued because it takes seven-eight years to complete, stabilise and show results.
- Non-profits known for their good watershed development projects, which would earlier have argued for longer watershed projects, are now queuing up for quick-fix solutions like the Jalyukt Shivar Abhiyan.



- This is also aided by **access to quick and easy money through the corporate social responsibility (CSR)** route for such works.

Concerns Associated with Quick Fix Solutions:

- **Sustainability:** Quick fixes may not address the root causes of water stress, such as over-extraction, pollution, or inefficient water management.
- **Environmental Impact:** Some quick-fix solutions might involve exploiting water resources in ways that could harm the environment, such as drilling deeper wells or diverting water from sensitive ecosystems.
- **Social Inequity:** Quick fixes may not always consider the needs and rights of all stakeholders. Certain communities or vulnerable groups might be disproportionately affected by the implementation of such solutions, leading to social conflicts and inequities.
- **Cost:** Rapid solutions might be expensive to implement, especially if they involve large-scale infrastructural projects.
- **Lack of Planning:** Hasty solutions might not be part of a comprehensive water management plan. Without proper planning, they may lead to unintended consequences, including further exacerbation of water stress issues or inefficient use of resources.
- **Neglect of Conservation:** Focusing on quick fixes may divert attention from essential water conservation efforts. Long-term solutions often involve sustainable water management practices, water conservation, and promoting responsible water usage behaviours.

Some of the Government Schemes to Mitigate Water Stress:

- **Jal Shakti Abhiyan:** Launched in 2019, the Jal Shakti Abhiyan is a flagship program aimed at water conservation and water resource management.
- It focuses on rainwater harvesting, rejuvenation of traditional water bodies, watershed development, and water conservation practices.
- **National Water Mission:** As part of India's National Action Plan on Climate Change, the National Water Mission aims to enhance water security by promoting water use efficiency, sustainable water management, and increasing water storage capacity.
- **Atal Bhujal Yojana:** This scheme was launched in 2020 with the objective of sustainable management of groundwater resources.
- It focuses on community-based groundwater management and encourages the adoption of efficient water-use practices.
- **Namami Gange Mission:** One of the most well-known initiatives, the Namami Gange Mission, aims to clean and rejuvenate the River Ganges and its tributaries. It focuses on reducing pollution and promoting sustainable use of water resources along the river.
- **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Mission):** While this program primarily focuses on sanitation, it indirectly impacts water resources by reducing pollution and improving water quality in rivers and water bodies.

- **Smart Cities Mission:** The government's Smart Cities Mission includes provisions for the development of efficient water supply and management systems in selected cities, promoting sustainable urban water practices.
- **Per Drop More Crop:** This initiative is part of the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY) and focuses on optimizing water use in agriculture through improved irrigation practices and technologies.

Source: Down to Earth

3. Ludwigia peruviana

Topic: Environment and Ecology



In News: Ludwigia peruviana, the weed native to some countries in Central and South America, including Peru, is threatening elephant habitats and foraging areas in Valparai, a Tamil Nadu.

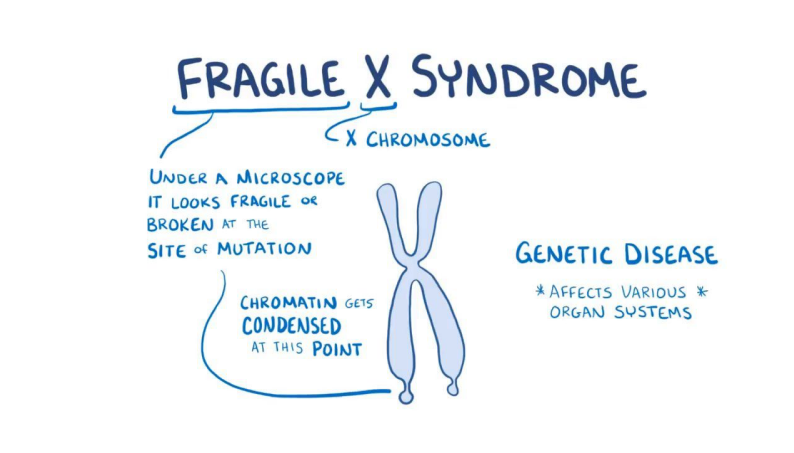
More on the Topic:

- Ludwigia peruviana, which grows fast along water bodies, has infested the majority of the hill station's swamps, locally known as vayals, where elephants used to find lush grass even in the summer.
- Most of these swamps are located in private estates, which are responsible for the tricky process of removing the weed; if not done correctly, trying to pull it out will simply help it spread even more.
- Ludwigia Peruviana is listed as one of the **22 priority invasive plants in Tamil Nadu**, emphasizing the urgency of containment and control measures.
- The elimination of Ludwigia presents a unique challenge compared to other invasive plants because it **grows in swamps, limiting the use of machinery** to tackle the problem **without damaging the ecosystem further**.

Source: Hindu

4. Fragile X Syndrome

Topic: Health



In News: World Fragile X Day was observed recently.

More on the Topic:

- Fragile X or Martin-Bell syndrome causes **intellectual disability and autism**.
- The condition is caused by a **mutation in the FMR1 gene**, located on the X chromosome.
- Fragile X syndrome is diagnosed through **genetic testing, typically through a blood test that looks for changes in the FMR1 gene**.
- There is currently no cure for Fragile X syndrome, but various interventions, therapies, and educational support can help manage the symptoms and improve the quality of life for individuals with the condition and their families.

Source: The Hindu

5. Akira Ransomware

Topic: Science and Technology



In News: The Computer Emergency Response Team of India (CERT-In) has released a warning about Akira Ransomware.

More on the Topic:

- Ransomware is a **type of malicious software (malware) that encrypts or locks the victim's files, making them inaccessible.**
- The attackers then demand a ransom payment from the victim, typically in cryptocurrency, in exchange for providing the decryption key or tool to unlock the files and restore access.
- The primary goal of ransomware is to extort money from individuals, businesses, or organizations by exploiting their need to regain access to important data.

Source: Hindu



6. PM WANI

Topic: Science and Technology



Prime Minister's Wi-Fi Access Network Interface

In News: PM WANI can be a game changer in digital connectivity.

More on the Topic:

- "PM WANI" stands for "**Prime Minister's Wi-Fi Access Network Interface.**" It is an initiative launched by the Government of India to provide affordable and widespread internet connectivity across the country.
- The program aims **to promote the growth of public Wi-Fi networks** by allowing small shop owners, Kirana stores, and other businesses to set up and operate public Wi-Fi hotspots.
- Under the PM WANI scheme, eligible small-scale entrepreneurs and individuals are encouraged to become **Public Data Office Aggregators (PDOAs) and Public Data Offices (PDOs).**
- A PDOA acts as an aggregator that can provide bandwidth from internet service providers to multiple PDOs.
- On the other hand, PDOs are entities that establish and operate public Wi-Fi hotspots at their premises.
- The initiative is intended to create **a collaborative and scalable ecosystem of public Wi-Fi networks, expanding internet access to rural and remote areas and empowering millions of Indians with affordable connectivity.**
- By facilitating the growth of public Wi-Fi, the government aims **to bridge the digital divide** and enhance digital inclusion in the country.

Source: The Indian Express



7. Zero FIR

Topic: Polity and Governance



In News: Zero FIR is in the news in association with Manipur violence.

More on the Topic:

- A "Zero FIR" (First Information Report) is a concept in the Indian criminal justice system.
- It refers to the practice of **registering a criminal complaint (FIR) at any police station, regardless of the location where the incident occurred or jurisdictional constraints.**
- This provision was introduced to ensure that victims or witnesses of a crime can easily report it to the police without being turned away due to jurisdictional issues.
- The term "Zero FIR" is used because, upon receiving a complaint, **the police assign a unique serial number to the FIR** (starting from "Zero") and forward it to the appropriate police station having jurisdiction over the incident for further investigation.
- In cases where the exact location of the crime is not known, or if it is related to multiple jurisdictions, the police can register a Zero FIR immediately to initiate the investigation process.
- Once the investigation starts, **the case can be transferred to the appropriate police station for further action and jurisdictional proceedings.**
- This system helps in **expediting the filing and investigation of criminal cases, particularly those involving immediate attention or where time is critical for collecting evidence.**
- The provision of Zero FIR came up after the recommendation of **the Justice Verma Committee, constituted after the 2012 Nirbhaya gang rape case** to suggest a Criminal Law amendment.

Related Supreme Court Verdict:

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- The Apex court in **Lalita Kumari v. Government of U.P.** observed that it is **mandatory to register an FIR under Section 154** if the complaint is related to a cognizable offence.

Source: Hindu

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