

UPSC CURRENT AFFAIRS NOTES 27-10-23

Global Declaration for River Dolphins

In a ground-breaking development, 11 Asian and South American countries recently signed a global declaration, the "Global Declaration for River Dolphins," aimed at preserving the world's six remaining river dolphin species.



This declaration is designed to guide 14 nations where river dolphins inhabit, with a focus on responsible freshwater dolphin conservation.

It aims to halt the decline of all river dolphin species and increase the most vulnerable populations.

The declaration will escalate collaborative endeavours to safeguard the surviving river dolphin species.

Countries that adopted the declaration include Bangladesh, Bolivia, Brazil, Cambodia, Colombia, Ecuador, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Peru, and Venezuela.

The countries involved agreed to improve water quality in the dolphins' habitat, create protected areas, tackle overfishing, and involve Indigenous communities in the affected regions in protecting the animals.



Key facts about river dolphins:

River dolphins are any of six species of small, usually freshwater aquatic mammals that are related to whales (Order Cetacea).

A seventh river dolphin species, the Chinese river dolphin, or baiji, was declared extinct in 2007.

Distribution:

These dolphins are found in rivers of south-central Asia, China, and South America and in the coastal waters of Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay.

Common Features:

They have slender beaks lined with lots of teeth, small eyes, flexible necks and bodies, pronounced forehead melons, large flippers, and small dorsal fins.

The six surviving species of river dolphins are the Amazon, Indus, Ganges, Irrawaddy, Tucuxi, and Yangtze finless porpoises.

All six species of river dolphins are classified as Endangered or Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

The largest is the Amazon River dolphin (*Inia geoffrensis*).

They are important indicators of the health of rivers. Where freshwater dolphin populations are thriving, it is likely that the overall river systems are flourishing.

Management & Entrepreneurship and Professional Skills Council (MEPSC)

Management & Entrepreneurship and Professional Skills Council (MEPSC) recently entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Magic Bus India Foundation, a leading non-profit organisation in the education and skilling space.



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About the Management & Entrepreneurship and Professional Skills Council (MEPSC):

MEPSC is a horizontal Sector Skill Council (SSC) incorporated as a Section-8 (Not for Profit Company) under the Companies Act, 2013, in a one of its kind, Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model.



The Council has been working under the tutelage of the Ministry of Skill Development.

It is being promoted by All India Management Association (AIMA), the apex body of management profession in India, as its sole promoter.

MEPSC is recognised as an awarding body by the skills regulator, the National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET), and is supported by the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC).

MEPSC is targeting to train and certify approximately 4.75 lakh trainees, develop and frame 50 Qualifications Packs (QPs)/National Occupational Standards (NOS), and train more than 550 trainers over the next 10 years.

MEPSC shall lead skill development initiatives in five key segments, namely

The MEPSC Board is composed of several equally renowned and experienced business leaders, academicians, NSDC, AIMA, and Ministry officials.



Key Facts about the All India Management Association (AIMA):

AIMA was created as an apex body of the management profession with the active support of the Government of India and Industry in 1957.

AIMA is a not-for-profit, non-lobbying organisation, working closely with industry, government, academia, and students to further the cause of the management profession in India.

AIMA has a membership base of over 38,000 members and close to 6,000 corporate /institutional members through 67 local management Associations affiliated with AIMA.

It is represented in a number of policy-making bodies of the Government of India and national associations.

AIMA offers various services in the areas of testing, distance education, skill development & training, research, publications, executive education, and management development programmes.

Apart from its flagship Post Graduate Diploma in Management, AIMA offers topical and industry-oriented programmes and initiatives to help management professionals and students keep in step with the times while offering state of the art business solutions for organisations and institutions.

AIMA is frequently co-opted by the government on specialised committees.

AIMA is an active member of the Asian Association of Management Organisations (AAMO), which is the Asia-Pacific regional body of the World Management Council (CIOS).

37th NATIONAL GAMES



The 37th National Games will take place from 26 October to 9 November 2023 in Goa.

The Prime Minister inaugurated the 37th National Games at Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Margao, Goa. The Games are scheduled from 26th October to 9th November.

Over 10,000 athletes from across India are participating in the 37th National Games, competing in over 43 sports disciplines at 28 venues.

In 2021, the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) finally confirmed that Goa would host the 37th National Games in 2023.

The 37th National Games are the first to be held in Goa.

The National Games were first held in 1924, and they have been held regularly since then, with the exception of a few years during World War II and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The National Games are governed by the IOA, and the event is funded by the central government and the state government of the host state.

Reference Fuels

Recently, the Union Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas launched the 'Reference Gasoline and Diesel Fuels' produced by IndianOil for the first time in India.



Reference fuels (Gasoline and Diesel) are premium, high-value products used for calibration and testing of vehicles by auto OEMs and organisations involved in testing and certification in the automotive field.

Indian Oil has successfully commenced the production of Reference Gasoline and Diesel Fuels for the first time in India.

These fuels are used for calibration and testing of vehicles by automobile manufacturers and testing agencies like ICAT (International Centre for Automotive Technology) and ARAI (Automotive Research Association of India).

These indigenously developed products will lead to import substitution at better price and a shorter lead time for the vehicle manufacturers.

Reference Gasoline fuels will be available in E0, E5, E10, E20, E85, and E100 from Flagship Paradip Refinery.

Reference diesel fuel shall be available in B7 grade from Panipat Refinery.

The demand for Reference Fuels in India is currently met by imports from other countries.

The indigenously developed product by IndianOil meets Automotive Industry Standard (AIS) specifications, substitutes imports, and is available at better price with reduced lead time.

Indian Oil Corporation Limited has established facilities for the production of Reference Gasoline Fuels (E-5, E-10 and E-20) at its Paradip Refinery and Reference Diesel Fuel (B-7) at its Panipat refinery.

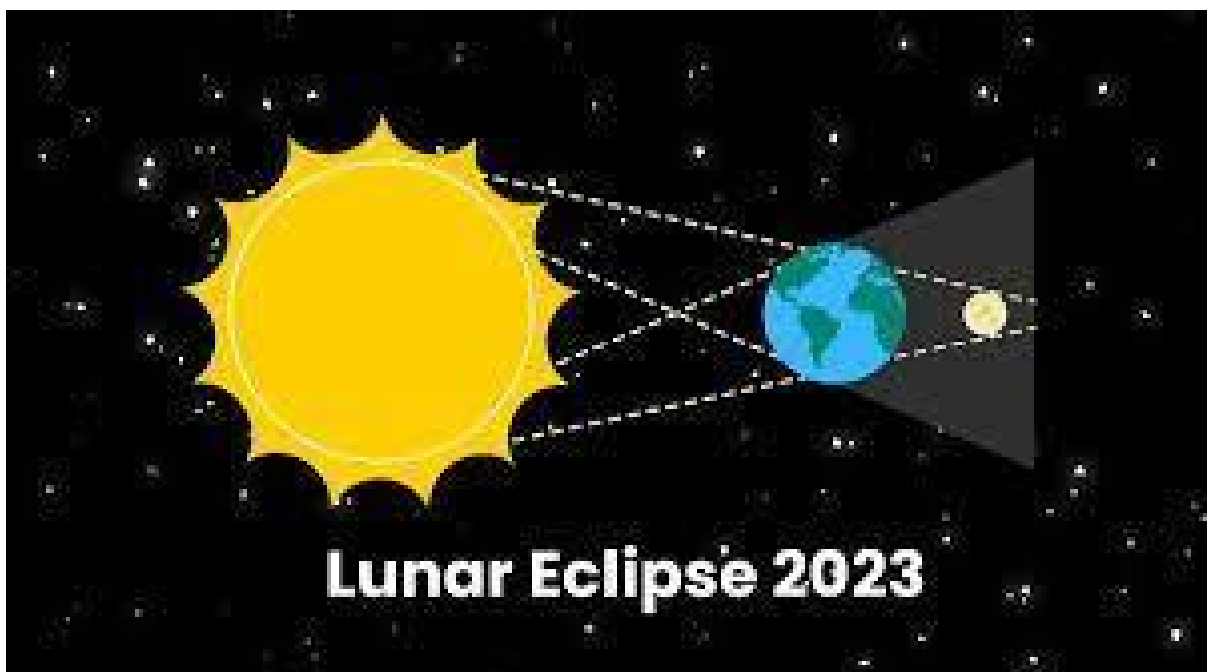
Why do we need reference fuels?

Reference fuels are required by automobile manufacturers for developing engines and assessing vehicles' performance to ensure operability in all global climatic conditions.

Currently, these reference fuels are being imported by India from select companies in Europe and the US.

Lunar Eclipse

A Lunar Eclipse (Chandra Grahan) will be occurring on October 28, which will be visible across many parts of the world, including India. A lunar eclipse (Chandra Grahan) is an astronomical event in which the Moon darkens as it passes into the Earth's shadow.



The event normally happens during the full moon phase, when the Moon's orbital plane is closest to the Earth's orbital plane.



Occurrence: Lunar eclipses are a rather common occurrence, with approximately three lunar eclipses (Chandra Grahan) occurring each year. On average, a total lunar eclipse occurs once every 2.5 years.

Shadow

The umbra (shadow): The dark center of the Earth's shadow is known as the Umbra.

The Penumbra: The Penumbra is the Earth's outermost shadow.

Mechanism of Occurrence: The phenomena happen when the Earth passes between the Sun and the Moon.

Earth throws a shadow on the Moon's surface during this time, making it less visible.

Types of Lunar Eclipse

Total Lunar Eclipse (Chandra Grahan): During this event, the Moon moves into the inner section of Earth's shadow or the umbra. Some sunlight weakly travels through the Earth's atmosphere and illuminates the Moon's surface.

Partial Lunar Eclipse (Chandra Grahan): Because the Sun, Earth, and Moon are not perfectly aligned, only a portion of the Earth's umbra falls on the Moon. This shadow rises and falls, never entirely covering the Moon's surface.

Penumbral Eclipse: The Moon passes through the Earth's penumbra, or the light outer section of its shadow, during a penumbral eclipse. The Moon's fading is so subtle that it can be overlooked.

The Scientific Explanation Behind the Lunar Eclipse

Why Does a Total Lunar Eclipse Cause the Moon to Turn Red (Chandra Grahan)?

When the Moon enters the umbra or the inner part of Earth's shadow. Some sunlight weakly travels through the Earth's atmosphere and illuminates the Moon's surface.

During this event, the Moon appears reddish. Because of the Rayleigh scattering of blue light, the moon appears reddish.

The redder the Moon appears, the higher the dust or clouds in the Earth's atmosphere during the occurrence.

Effects of Lunar Eclipse (Chandra Grahan):

Tidal Effect: Tidal impacts on Earth are greatest during full moons and lunar eclipses because the Sun and Moon are in line with Earth.

Wildlife Behavior: Studies have shown that during a moon eclipse, animals behave differently. An owl monkey study revealed a significant change in activity during a lunar eclipse (Chandra Grahan).

Cultural Belief: Lunar eclipses were thought to be a terrible omen by ancient human cultures. During this event, they engaged in human and animal sacrifice.

The Scientific Significance of Lunar Eclipses

Scientific Significance

Shape of Earth: Earth's shadow projected on the Moon allowed ancient people to deduce that Earth was spherical.

Lunar Diameter: Calculation of lunar diameter was possible using lunar eclipse timing.

Longitude Determination: Previously, the chief use of total lunar eclipse was for the determination of longitude as the moment of total eclipse is the same for every station on that half of the globe.

Star Observations: Stars that are present behind the Moon can be observed only during an eclipse as the surroundings get dimmed.

Spectroscopic Examination: The lunar eclipse provides the opportunity of making a spectroscopic examination of the Earth's atmosphere.

Lunar Surface: The study of lunar eclipse (Chandra Grahan) helped astronomers determine the nature of the surface they would be stepping on during the Apollo Moon mission.

Lunar Materials: Measurements of the heat radiation of the moon as it cools down helps determine the nature of lunar materials.

Dust in Earth's Atmosphere: The amount of dust in Earth's atmosphere can be determined by studying how bright or how dark each lunar eclipse is.



Neolithic Age

A rock art dating back to the Neolithic period was recently found in the Palnadu district of Andhra Pradesh.

The Neolithic Age, also called the New Stone Age, is the final stage of cultural evolution or technological development among prehistoric humans.

The term Neolithic is most frequently used in connection with agriculture, which is the time when cereal cultivation and animal domestication were introduced.

Because agriculture developed at different times in different regions of the world, there is no single date for the beginning of the Neolithic age. In India, the starting point of the Neolithic is generally thought to have occurred sometime around 7000 BCE.

The Neolithic followed the Mesolithic Period and preceded the Chalcolithic Age, or the early period of metal tools.

Features of the Neolithic Age:

It was characterised by stone tools shaped by polishing or grinding, dependence on domesticated plants or animals, settlement in permanent villages, and the appearance of such crafts as pottery and weaving.

The houses were built of mud and reed in rectangular or circular shapes.

End of the Neolithic Age:

Towards the end of the Neolithic era, copper metallurgy is introduced, which marks a transition period to the Bronze Age, sometimes referred to as the Chalcolithic or Eneolithic Era.

In time, bronze became the primary material for tools and weapons, and a good part of the stone technology became obsolete, signalling the end of the Neolithic and thus of the Stone Age.

Some of the important Neolithic sites in India include Burzahom in Kashmir, Chirand in Bihar and Edakkal caves in Kerala.

AYURVEDA FOR ONE HEALTH' CAMPAIGN

Context: The 'Ayurveda for One Health' campaign and the 8th Ayurveda Day on November 10, 2023, aim to promote Ayurveda and its benefits, with a special focus on empowering and educating farmers in India.



The 'Ayurveda for One Health' campaign is an initiative to promote Ayurveda and its holistic health benefits. Farmers from across the country are actively participating in this campaign.

Organizations like RCFCs (Regional Cum Facilitation Centres) and SMPBs (State Medicinal Plant Boards) are playing a crucial role in creating awareness among farmers about the medicinal and economic value of plants, especially medicinal plants.

The National Medicinal Plants Board (NMPB) is running a nationwide campaign to connect farmers with 'Ayurveda Day.' It focuses on educating farmers about the cultivation and economic importance of medicinal plants.

The primary theme of the 8th Ayurveda Day event on November 10, 2023, is 'Ayurveda for Farmers.' The event aims to empower farmers by encouraging the cultivation of Ayurvedic herbs and plants as a part of their livelihood.

Special emphasis is being placed on making farmers aware of the economic significance of medicinal plants. Farmers are being educated about special cultivation techniques through the NMPB.

The main event for 'Ayurveda Day' is scheduled to be held in Panchkula, Chandigarh, Haryana, on November 10, 2023. Farmers from across the country

are invited to participate and gain information about the cultivation of medicinal plants.

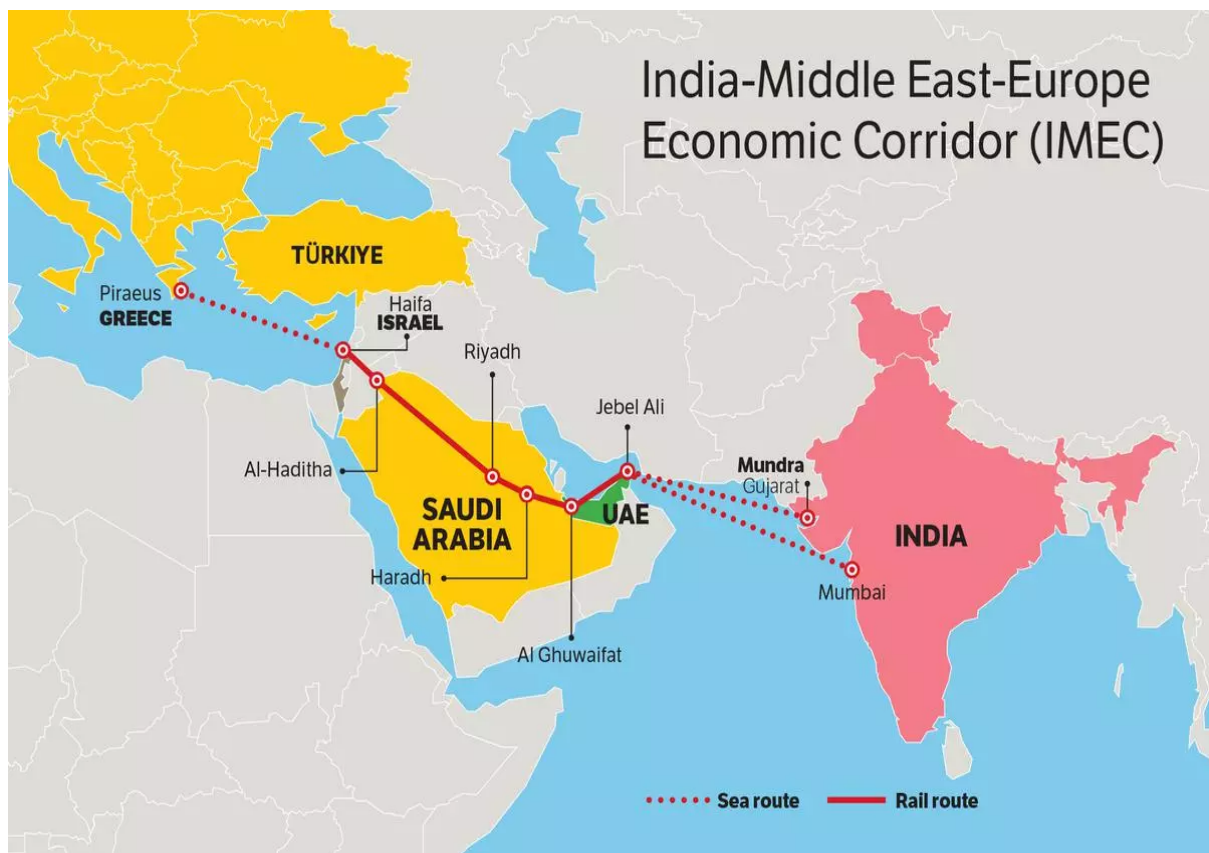
Efforts are being made to celebrate 'Ayurveda Day' as a global event, with teams from various ministries and institutions associated with the Ministry of AYUSH actively preparing for the event.

India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor

US President Joe Biden has hinted that one of the reasons behind Hamas' October 7 attack on Israel was the recent announcement of the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor.

The corridor integrates the entire region with a network of rail, road, and ports.

Corridor to Boost connectivity





The proposed project comprises two separate corridors, one is the east corridor connecting India to the Arabian Gulf and the other one is the northern corridor connecting the Arabian Gulf to Europe.

This corridor is all set to include a rail link with an electricity cable, a hydrogen pipeline, and a high-speed data cable laid out over it.

The rail link is said to connect India, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel and Europe.

It will provide a reliable and cost-effective cross-border ship-to-rail transit network to supplement the existing maritime and road transport routes that enable goods and services to transit through this area.

So, there will be a movement of goods through standardized containers from India to Fujairah port on the east coast of UAE and then to the port of Haifa in Israel through 2650 km of railroad that will pass through Saudi Arabia and Jordan.

Goods will reach the Haifa port and from there the goods from India, Nepal, and Bangladesh will be shipped to various ports in Europe including Italy, Germany, and France.

The present Haifa port in Israel is being operated and upgraded by an Indian company. This corridor would also act as a rail bridge to send goods from Vietnam to India via Myanmar and Bangladesh and ensure that the Indian goods reach European destinations within three days.

Economic Benefits of India-Middle East-Europe Corridor

The corridor is envisioned to secure regional supply chains, increase trade accessibility, improve trade facilitation, and increase the focus on environmental, social, and governmental impacts.

Further Looking at the economic prospects, the corridor is set to increase efficiency, reduce costs, enhance economic unity, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and generate jobs across Asia, Europe, and the Middle East region.

There was a need for the development of this corridor, not only as an alternative to China's Belt and Road initiative but also to increase the flow of energy and digital communication between the strategically important nations.



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The project will also help build infrastructure that is needed for growth in the lower and middle-income nations.

The intent of this project to link continents to commercial hubs and facilitate the development and export of clean energy is a big step towards India's vision of being the third largest economy in the world.