

UPSC CURRENT AFFAIRS NOTES 06-11-2023

OPERATION CACTUS

‘India Out’ was a campaign slogan for Maldives president-elect Mohamed Muizzu, who will take over the country’s reins on November 17.



Over the past decade or so, anti-India sentiments have been rising in the island nation — and many Maldivians have a long list of grievances.

Yet, 35 years after the fact, India’s intervention in the 1988 coup attempt in Malé codenamed Operation Cactus — continues to be remembered with gratitude and fondness.

The 1988 Maldives coup d’état attempt was led by Maldivian businessman Abdullah Luthufi, with armed mercenaries from the People’s Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) attempting to overthrow President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom’s government.

The coup attempt, involving the hijacking of a Sri Lankan freighter and the invasion of Malé, the capital city, brought the nation to the brink of a political crisis.



Execution of Operation Cactus

With external powers unable to provide immediate assistance, President Gayoom sought India's intervention, leading to the rapid mobilization of Indian forces and the launch of "Operation Cactus" within hours of the distress call.

Indian Air Force's Ilyushin Il-76 aircraft airlifted elements of the 50th Independent Parachute Brigade, the 6th Battalion of the Parachute Regiment, and the 17th Parachute Field Regiment, deploying them to secure Malé and restore order.

Successful Restoration of Order

The Indian paratroopers, with swift and accurate intelligence, secured the Malé International Airport, rescued President Gayoom, and swiftly regained control of the capital, effectively quelling the attempted coup d'état and restoring the government's authority.

The operation resulted in the capture of the mercenaries and the repatriation of the captured individuals for trial in the Maldives.

International Recognition and Repercussions

India's prompt and decisive action received international praise, with U.S. President Ronald Reagan acknowledging India's significant contribution to regional stability, and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher expressing gratitude for India's role in saving President Gayoom's government.

While the operation strengthened Indo-Maldivian relations, it also led to some unease among India's neighboring countries in the South Asian region.

Aftermath and Impact

President Gayoom commuted the death sentences of the captured mercenaries to life imprisonment, reflecting India's pressure on the Maldivian government.

The successful restoration of the Gayoom government strengthened Indo-Maldivian relations and underscored India's commitment to preserving regional stability and safeguarding the sovereignty of neighboring nations.

Bulava Ballistic Missile

Russia recently carried out a successful test launch of the Bulava ballistic missile, designed to carry nuclear warheads.

It is a new Russian submarine-launched Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM).



Development of this missile commenced in 1998. The first powered flight test of the Bulava missile occurred in September 2005. It's first submerged test launch followed in December.

It was designed to be deployed onto Russia's Borey-class ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs).

Features:

It was designed to be the backbone of Moscow's nuclear triad and has a range of over 8,000 kilometres (close to 5,000 miles).

It is 12-13.5 m in length and has a diameter of approximately 2.0 m.

Launch Weight: 36,800 kg

It is a three-stage solid-fuel missile.

It is designed to carry multiple warheads. Each warhead will strike a different target.

It can carry six Multiple Independent Re-entry Vehicles (MIRVs). These MIRVs are capable of manoeuvring in-flight and re-targeting, in order to outmanoeuvre hostile air defences.

It is stated that this missile has an accuracy of 350 m.

What is a Ballistic Missile?

It is a rocket-propelled self-guided strategic weapon system that follows a ballistic trajectory to deliver a payload from its launch site to a predetermined target.

Ballistic missiles are initially powered by a rocket or series of rockets in stages, but then follow an unpowered trajectory that arches upwards before descending to reach their intended target.

Alycaeus himalayae

A new snail species named *Alycaeus himalayae* was recently discovered from a cave in Arunachal Pradesh.





It is a new snail species belonging to the genus *Alycaeus*.

Alycaeus is a genus of small land snails.

The genus is the first to be reported in India, as this genus is restricted to Southeast Asia and not known in the Indian region.

This new species differs from all other Himalayan alycaeid species due to its yellowish, conical shell.

The most similar shell in the vicinity is *Stomacosmethis spratti* from the Shan States, Myanmar.

It differs from all other *Alycaeus* species by the characteristic trumpet-like projection on the outer side of the operculum.

It is, so far, the only *Alycaeus* species inhabiting the Himalayas.

All other known *Alycaeus* species are reported from Laos, Vietnam, southern Thailand, and Peninsular Malaysia.

GST Amnesty Scheme

The finance ministry has come out with an amnesty scheme for filing appeals against Goods and Services Tax (GST) demand orders.

The scheme will be open till January 31, 2024.

It will be available for entities that were unable to submit their appeals against orders issued by the tax officer on or before March 31,

The scheme aims to help those who missed the deadline for filing appeals due to various reasons, including administrative errors or unforeseen circumstances.

The entities willing to avail of the scheme will have to pre-deposit 12.5 percent of the tax demand, against 10 percent



Significance

This initiative can also promote enhanced compliance among taxpayers.

A fair and lenient approach to appeal filing encourages better cooperation with tax authorities and a willingness to resolve disputes or clarify tax matters.

Additionally, by allowing disputes to be resolved more efficiently, the scheme may reduce the burden on the legal system.

This benefits both taxpayers and the tax administration by streamlining the appeal process and potentially reducing the need.

What is the Goods and Services Tax (GST)?

It is a single indirect tax which has replaced multiple indirect taxes in India such as the excise duty, VAT, services tax, etc.

It is levied on the supply of goods and services in India.

It came into effect from July 2017.

Objective: To remove ambiguity and bring equality in the prices of products across the country.

Tribal Youth Exchange Programme

Recently, a youth delegation from Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh who are attending the Tribal Youth Exchange Programme (TYEP) called on the President of India.



Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan organises the Tribal Youth Exchange Programme for the development of tribal youth with the support of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.

Objectives

To provide tribal youth from 30 selected districts in 7 states the opportunity to travel to 10 different parts of the country to learn about the cultural ethos, language, and lifestyles of the people, thereby illustrating the socioeconomic and cultural development process of unity in the diversity aspect of our national life.

To expose tribal youth to the technological and industrial advancements that have taken place in different states of the country with a focus on various developmental activities, skill development, educational & employment opportunities available there.

To sensitise the tribal youth about their rich traditional & cultural heritage and enable them to preserve it for future generations.

To help the tribal youth develop emotional linkages with their peer groups in other parts of the country and enhance their self-esteem.

To provide opportunities to the participants for interactions with the Hon'ble President of India, PM & CM, Governor & other VIPs, the local communities, Panchayati Raj Institutions and the youths affiliated with the NYKS Youth Clubs so as to understand development issues, seek guidance for their involvement in the process of development.



To develop personality of the tribal youth by enhancing their understanding of Ten Core Life Skills, identify their skill development oriented training needs and fulfilment of their legitimate career aspirations through Employable Skills, Scheme of Government of India and State Govt and provide them necessary guidance and career counselling.

To provide exposure to industry and Skill Development programme which can facilitate the provision of employment to tribal youth.

To provide literature on developmental schemes of the Centre & State pertaining to tribals.

United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL)

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Three Mauritius-based investors were awarded \$111 million in compensation by the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) tribunal over the failed Devas-Antrix satellite deal.

United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL)

The United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) commercial international (CNUDCI) is a subsidiary body of the U.N. General Assembly (UNGA) responsible for helping to facilitate international trade and investment.

Establishment and Mandate

Established by the UNGA in 1966, UNCITRAL's official mandate is "to promote the progressive harmonization and unification of international trade law" through conventions, model laws, and other instruments that address key areas of commerce, from dispute resolution to the procurement and sale of goods.



Headquarter

UNCITRAL carries out its work at annual sessions held alternately in New York City and Vienna, where it is headquartered.

Members

UNCITRAL is made up of 70 elected Member States representing different geographic regions.

The Commission member States are elected by the General Assembly.

Membership is structured so as to be representative of the world's various geographic regions and its principal economic and legal systems.

Members of the commission are elected for terms of six years, the terms of half the members expiring every three years.

UNCITRAL's Activities

Coordinating the work of active organizations and encouraging cooperation among them.

Promoting wider participation in existing international conventions and wider acceptance of existing models and uniform laws.

Preparing or promoting the adoption of new international conventions, model laws, and uniform laws and promoting the codification and wider acceptance of international trade terms, provisions, customs, and practice, in collaboration, where appropriate, with the organizations operating in this field.

Promoting ways and means of ensuring a uniform interpretation and application of international conventions and uniform laws in the field of the law of international trade.

Collecting and disseminating information on national legislation and modern legal developments, including case law, in the field of the law of international trade.

Establishing and maintaining a close collaboration with the UN Conference on Trade and Development.

Maintaining liaison with other UN organs and specialized agencies concerned with international trade.

INDIA BHUTAN RELATIONS



INDIA-BHUTAN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

- India opened an office of a Special Representative in Thimphu in 1968, Bhutan reciprocated in 1971.
- The two offices of special representatives were upgraded to full-fledged embassies in 1978.
- India and Bhutan are founding members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) that deals with the economic, social, and cultural development of the South Asian Region.
- Both of them also share other multilateral forums such as BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal), BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation).

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The Chief of the Army Staff, General Manoj Pande, has met Bhutanese King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck and other top civil and military leaders of Bhutan, with a focus on further boosting strategic ties.

More on the news:

- Pande's visit is in the backdrop of growing concerns in India over China's relentless attempts to expand military infrastructure around Bhutanese territory on the Doklam plateau.



- Days earlier, new satellite images emerged showing China constructing a village east of the plateau on the Bhutanese side, a region that is considered important for India's strategic interest.
- Regional defence and security challenges, Chinese activities on the plateau and adjoining areas, and ways to further enhance bilateral defence cooperation figured in his talks in Thimphu, said people familiar with his engagements.
- The Army chief's visit to Bhutan coincided with the decision of India to authorise the export of 5,000 tonnes of wheat and 10,000 tonnes of sugar to Bhutan, as per Thimphu's requirements.

Background of relations:

- India and Bhutan share unique and exemplary bilateral relations, which are based on mutual trust, goodwill and understanding. Formal diplomatic relations between India and Bhutan were established in 1968.
- The basic framework of India-Bhutan relations is the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation signed in 1949 between the two countries, which was renewed in February 2007.
- The bilateral ties have been advanced by regular high-level exchanges between the two countries.
- Trade and Economic Ties:
 - India is Bhutan's largest trading partner.
 - In 2020, bilateral trade accounted for 82.6% of Bhutan's total trade.
 - Imports from India accounting for more than 77.1% of Bhutan's total imports.
 - Bhutan's exports to India constituted 90.2 % of its total exports.
- The revised Bilateral Agreement on Trade, Commerce and Transit between India and Bhutan came into effect in 2017, and would be valid for ten years.



- In line with our 'Neighbourhood First Policy', new market access has been opened for five agri-commodities from Bhutan to India (Areca nut, Mandarin, Apple, Potato, and Ginger), and three commodities from India to Bhutan (Tomato, Onion, and Okra).

Development Partnership:

- India has been extending economic assistance to Bhutan's socio-economic development since the early 1960s when Bhutan launched its Five Year Plans.
- India continues to be the principal development partner of Bhutan.
- For the 12th Five Year Plan, India's contribution of Rs. 4500 cr. will constitute 73% of Bhutan's total external grant component.
- At present over 82 large and intermediate projects and 524 Small Development Projects/HICDPs are at various stages of implementation in Bhutan.
- **Hydropower Cooperation:**
- The ongoing cooperation between India and Bhutan in the hydropower sector is covered under the 2006 bilateral agreement for cooperation and its Protocol signed in 2009.
- Four hydro-electric projects (HEPs) totaling 2136 MW are already operational in Bhutan and are supplying electricity to India.
- The 720 MW Mangdechhu, 1200 MW Punatsangchhu-I, 1020 MW Punatsangchhu-II in Inter-Governmental mode are under various stages of implementation.
- The Concession Agreement for the first Joint Venture Hydro Electric Power Project, 600 MW Kholongchhu, was signed in 2020
- Educational, Cultural Cooperation and People-to-People Exchanges:
- Over 950 scholarships are being provided annually by GoI for Bhutanese students to study in India in a wide range of disciplines including medicine, engineering, etc.



- It is estimated that approximately 4,000 Bhutanese are studying in undergraduate courses in Indian Universities on a self-finance basis.
- Under the ITEC program, about 300 slots have been utilized annually by Bhutan for upgrading administrative and technical skills of government officials and private sector employees in Bhutan.
- Cultural and Buddhist Links: A number of Bhutanese pilgrims travel to Bodh Gaya, Rajgir, Nalanda, Sikkim, Udayagiri, and other Buddhist sites in India.

New Areas of Cooperation:

- Apart from hydro-power cooperation and development partnership has moved into new and emerging areas with full interoperability of the flagship digital project RuPay, which has been successfully completed.
- Bhutan became the second country to launch the BHIM app, further deepening the financial linkages between our two countries.
- Space cooperation has continued with the two countries collaborating on the development of a small satellite for Bhutan.
- COVID-19 Assistance: In line with India-Bhutan unique and special relations, GoI ensured continuous supply of trade and essential items to Bhutan, despite COVID-19 related lock-downs.
- Indian Community: About 60,000 Indian nationals live in Bhutan, employed mostly in the hydro-electric power construction and road industry.
- Multilateral Partnership: Both India and Bhutan are founding members of SAARC that deals with economic, social and cultural development of South Asian Region. Both of them also share other multilateral forums such as BBIN, BIMSTEC etc.

Bhutan's Significance to India:

- Bhutan shares border with four Indian States: Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, West Bengal and Sikkim.



- Nestled in the Himalayas, Bhutan serves as a buffer between India and China.
- Security of Bhutan's present borders, especially its western border is very important for India.
- Bhutan provides a market for Indian commodities and is a destination for Indian investment.
- Also for India, Bhutan is a rich source of hydropower.
- A politically stable Bhutan is important to India. An unstable and restive Bhutan can provide a safe haven to anti-India activities and anti-India militant groups.

Challenges:

- There have been instances when India has muddled in Bhutan's internal affairs. This has led to negative perception of India in the minds of Bhutanese.
- There is a growing feeling in Bhutan that India's development of Bhutan's hydropower production is driven by self-interest as it is getting Bhutan's surplus power at relatively cheap rates.
- From internal security perspective, illicit establishment of camps by militant outfits in the dense jungles of south-east Bhutan is a cause of concern for both the nations.
- China's continuous claims to important border areas such as Chumbi valley and Doklam and its continuous efforts for establishing strong diplomatic and economic relations with Bhutan have been continuous source of concern for India.



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