

UPSC CURRENT AFFAIRS NOTES 29-10-2023

PARTHENON SCULPTURES



A diplomatic row sparked between Greece and the UK after British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak cancelled a meeting with his Greek counterpart Kyriakos Mitsotakis over the status of the Parthenon Sculptures housed at the British Museum.

Details

The Parthenon Sculptures, also known as the Elgin Marbles, are a collection of ancient marble sculptures and architectural elements that were originally part of the Parthenon temple on the Acropolis in Athens, Greece.

Historical Context

Parthenon Construction: The Parthenon, a magnificent temple dedicated to the goddess Athena, was built in the 5th century BC during Athens' Golden Age under the direction of the sculptor Phidias.

Sculptural Decoration: The Parthenon was adorned with exquisite sculptural friezes, metopes, and pedimental sculptures depicting mythological narratives, religious ceremonies, and heroic figures.

Acquisition and Controversy

Lord Elgin's Role: In the early 19th century, Thomas Bruce, the 7th Earl of Elgin and then-British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, acquired the sculptures from the Parthenon, allegedly with permission from the Ottoman authorities who controlled Athens at that time.

Removal and Transport: Lord Elgin's team removed a significant portion of the sculptures, including metopes, friezes, and statues, and transported them to Britain.

Display and Ownership

British Museum Acquisition: The Parthenon Sculptures were acquired by the British government in 1816 and subsequently housed in the British Museum in London, where they remain on display to this day.

Ownership Dispute: Greece has persistently demanded the return of the sculptures since gaining independence in the 19th century. Athens considers the removal of the marbles as an act of cultural theft.

Significance and Cultural Impact

Artistic and Historical Importance: The Parthenon Sculptures are renowned for their exceptional artistic quality, depicting ancient Greek mythology and history. They are considered a symbol of classical art and civilization.

Global Debate: The ownership dispute between Greece and the UK over the sculptures has sparked worldwide debate regarding the repatriation of cultural artifacts and the ethical considerations of retaining heritage objects in foreign museums.

Legal and Ethical Perspectives

- **Ownership Claims:** Greece argues that the sculptures were removed without proper authorization and under conditions of occupation, thus advocating for their return to their place of origin.
- **British Museum's Position:** The British Museum maintains that Lord Elgin legally acquired the sculptures and that their display in London contributes to global cultural heritage and allows wider access to the artworks.

- **Diplomatic Negotiations:** Over the years, discussions and negotiations between Greece and the UK have continued, with Greece persistently seeking the permanent return of the Parthenon Sculptures to Athens.
- **Cultural Restitution Movements:** The debate surrounding the Parthenon Sculptures has fueled broader conversations about the repatriation of cultural artifacts to their countries of origin, influencing international laws and museum ethics.

UNSEASONAL RAINS AND LIGHTNING IN GUJARAT



Unseasonal heavy rainfall accompanied by thunderstorms, hailstorms, and lightning strikes recently occurred in Gujarat, leading to the unfortunate loss of lives.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) identified multiple weather systems contributing to this unexpected weather event.

Geographic Location

Gujarat: Located on the western coast of India, Gujarat shares its northern border with the state of Rajasthan, eastern border with Madhya Pradesh, southern border with Maharashtra, and western border with the Arabian Sea. The state encompasses diverse geographical features ranging from plains, plateaus, to coastline.



Weather Systems' Influence

Cyclonic Circulation:

Northeast Arabian Sea, Saurashtra, and Kutch: The cyclonic circulation over these regions significantly impacted the weather conditions in Gujarat, leading to unexpected rainfall and thunderstorms.

Western Disturbances:

Mediterranean Sea and Northwestern India: Western Disturbances originating from the Mediterranean Sea region travel across northwestern India, including Gujarat. These disturbances bring winter rainfall and weather changes to the region.

Easterly Trough:

Equatorial Region, Arabian Sea: An Easterly trough, characterized by eastward-flowing winds near the equatorial region and the Arabian Sea, contributed to the atmospheric changes affecting Gujarat's weather patterns.

Regional Impact

- **Topography:** Gujarat's topography varies from arid and semi-arid regions in the northwestern parts of Kutch and Saurashtra to fertile plains in the central and southern regions. The state also hosts the Gir Forest National Park, the only natural habitat of Asiatic lions.
- **Coastline:** The state boasts a long coastline along the Arabian Sea, impacting its climate with influences from the sea, leading to specific weather patterns and occasional cyclonic activities during the monsoon season.

Atmospheric Conditions

- **Moisture Interaction:** The convergence of moisture-laden air masses from the Arabian Sea and adjoining regions, influenced by multiple weather systems, contributed to the sudden increase in moisture levels in the atmosphere, intensifying rainfall and thunderstorm activities.

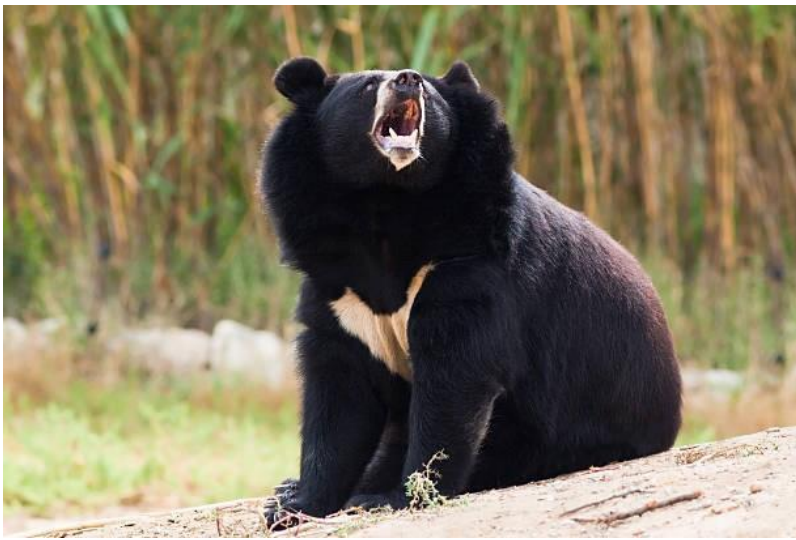
Disaster Management and Geographic Vulnerabilities

- **Disaster-prone Areas:** Gujarat, particularly regions like Kutch and Saurashtra, is susceptible to natural calamities such as earthquakes,

cyclones, and, as evidenced recently, unseasonal heavy rainfall and lightning strikes.

- **Geographic Vulnerabilities:** The lack of a specific warning mechanism for lightning strikes in the disaster management plan highlights the need for geographic-specific risk assessment and preparedness measures to mitigate the impact of various natural calamities in the region.

HIMALAYAN BLACK BEAR



An animal keeper died after being attacked by a Himalayan Black Bear in Indira Gandhi Zoological Park (IGZP).

Himalayan black bear

About

The Himalayan Black Bear (*Ursus thibetanus laniger*) is a subspecies of the Asian black bear.

Unique position

The species is considered an ecological indicator and a keystone species of the environment.

Role

The species plays a vital role as a primary seed disperser in maintaining the stability of the ecosystem.



Nature

- The Himalayan black bear is **typically nocturnal and elusive**.
- It **hibernates throughout the winter in the northwestern Himalayas**, while it is usually active during the entire year in the eastern Himalayas.

Diet

- They are omnivorous creatures (like most bears) and will eat just about anything.

Distribution

- Currently, it only exists in Asia, mainly confined in the Himalayas of India, Bhutan, Nepal, China, and Pakistan.

Conservation Status in IUCN Red List

- This subspecies is listed as 'vulnerable' due to encroachment of human population, forest fires and the timber industries; these have all reduced the bear's habitat.

Threats

- Habitat fragmentation, habitat loss and destruction, conversion of bear habitat into agricultural land as well as other anthropogenic pressures are significantly influencing the black bear population and its habitat

Habitat

- The species prefers moist temperate forest mixed with deciduous broad-leaved forest, and mixture of oak, and thick dense under layer of shrubby vegetation between 1500 m to 3000 m elevation, and subtropical pine forest between 900 m to 1700 m elevation.

India at COPs over the years

India is an influential voice for developing countries at the annual COP events.

Over the years, India has become more assertive and proposed some key measures.



India at COPs historically

Right from the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit, which gave rise to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), India has been trying to ensure that the burden of climate action does not disproportionately fall on developing countries.

Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC)

Indian negotiators played a lead role in the Kyoto Protocol at COP3 in 1997, which was based strongly on the principle Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC).

Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC)

One of the foundations of UNFCCC has been the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC), which emphasizes the point that while fighting climate change is everyone's job, the rich and developed countries must bear the bulk of that responsibility, not just because they have caused most of the emissions but also because they have greater resources and capacity to act.

Paris Agreement

The Kyoto Protocol was inherently unstable because of the restrictions placed on the rich countries.

The CBDR-RC principle was gradually eroded in every COP decision.

In this period — between 2008 and 2015, when the Paris Agreement was finalised — India's main effort at the COPs was to prevent this erosion as much as possible.

Paris Agreement

The Paris Agreement allows every country, including those developed, to decide and implement its climate actions. Everyone is supposed to have a climate action plan (called Nationally Determined Contributions, or NDCs), but no mandatory targets. Only a marginal distinction between the developed and developing countries has been retained, that too informally.



India at the recent COPs

In the past, India played its role largely in the background. This has changed in recent years, and New Delhi has become more assertive and more forthcoming in offering its own narrative.

Also, after the Paris Agreement, as one of the fastest-growing economies, India's conduct is tracked much more keenly.

At the 2021 Glasgow meeting, India blocked the final draft outcome at the last minute and got the “phase-out” of coal changed to “phase-down”.

At the Sharm el-Shaikh meeting last year, India campaigned for a phase-down of all fossil fuels, not just coal, a proposal that is still too hot to handle for many countries.

India has also been energetically talking about the need for lifestyle changes to bring down energy consumption and emissions.

India's Climate Commitments

New Delhi has submitted two NDCs till now. The first NDC contained three targeted promises: India will reduce its emissions intensity, or emissions per unit of GDP, by 33 to 35% from 2005 levels by 2030; it will ensure that at least 40% of its installed electricity capacity in 2030 comprises of non-fossil-fuel sources; it will create at least 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of additional carbon sink through tree and forest cover.

In its updated NDC, announced last year, India raised the targets of the first two promises, having already achieved the previous targets eight years in advance. It raised the emission intensity reduction target to 4 %, and the non-fossil fuel-based electricity target to 50%.

Indian Initiatives

India has also launched some global initiatives on climate change that have received the backing of many countries. These initiatives are not part of the formal COP discussions but have been an important input.



International Solar Alliance (ISA)

The International Solar Alliance (ISA), which seeks to promote the installation of solar energy across the world, was launched at the 2015 Paris meeting.

The ISA has now evolved into a full-fledged UN-affiliated multilateral agency.

Coalition of Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)

A similar model is being followed for the Coalition of Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), which seeks to become the global knowledge centre for creation of more resilient infrastructure.

The CDRI has been receiving a lot of interest from developing countries, especially the small island states at maximum risk from climate disasters.

International Energy Agency (IEA)

India also got the International Energy Agency (IEA) to do an analysis of its proposals.

The IEA analysis shows that simple lifestyle changes had the capability to reduce annual global carbon dioxide emissions by about 2 billion tonnes by 2030.

It also said that nearly 60% of these savings could be directly mandated by the governments.

LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment) Mission

India's LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment) Mission is now much more acceptable to other countries, and found its way in the final outcome of the G20 summit in New Delhi earlier this year.

India's Groups

Since it is difficult to have all 190-plus countries present their individual points of view, negotiations at COPs happen mostly through formal and informal negotiating groups.

Members of these groups finalize their common positions on different items, and these are presented at the formal negotiations.

India has been one of the original members of what is known as the G77 group, of the developing countries.

The name is a misnomer because the group has over 130 members now, almost the entire developing world.

In more recent times, Brazil, South Africa, India and China formed the BASIC group, which has emerged as a powerful voice. India is also part of what is known as the Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDC) bloc, which has about 20 large developing countries.

India, like other countries, also becomes part of tactical groups that get together on specific issues from time to time.

FACTORS OF TECHNOLOGY



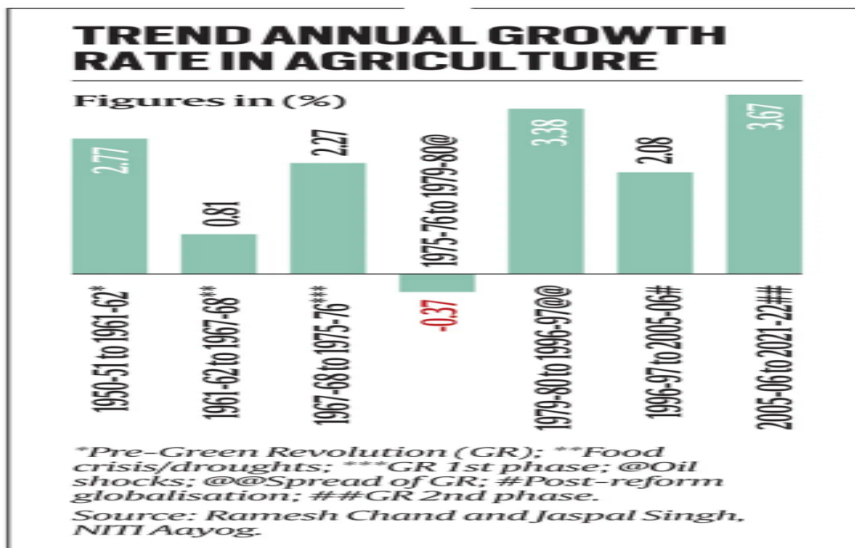
Advancements in technology have played a crucial role in Indian agriculture, enabling increased productivity despite limitations in traditional factors of production like land, water, labour, and energy.

Details

- The dynamics of productivity have significantly changed over time. Initially, agricultural growth relied heavily on factors like land expansion and labour. However, the scenario has transformed remarkably due to the influence of technological advancements.
- **In the past, the growth of agriculture was primarily driven by the extension of cultivated land.** Yet, the advent of technological factors such as genetics, crop nutrition, crop protection, and agronomic interventions has shifted the focus towards enhancing productivity rather than merely increasing inputs.
- **The development of high-yielding crop varieties, the introduction of fertilizers with enriched nutrient content,** and innovations in crop

protection methods have all played pivotal roles in amplifying agricultural output. These advancements have enabled greater yields without a proportional increase in land, labour, or water resources.

- The **contemporary phase of agricultural development owes much to the widespread adoption of productivity-boosting technologies**. This adoption has been accompanied by the simultaneous advancement of essential infrastructure like rural roads, electricity supply, irrigation systems, and communication networks.



Factors of Production

- **Land:** Historically, agricultural growth was tied to the expansion of cultivable land. However, the increase in agricultural land has been limited over time.
- **Water:** Agricultural productivity heavily relies on water availability, both through rainfall and irrigation systems.
- **Labour and Energy:** Traditionally, human labour and bullocks were essential for farming activities. Before modern machinery, bullocks powered tasks like ploughing and irrigation.

Factors of Technology

- **Genetics:** The development of high-yielding varieties, particularly in wheat and rice during the Green Revolution, significantly boosted



production. Dwarf varieties were engineered to be more responsive to fertilizers and resistant to lodging.

- **Crop Nutrition:** Chemical fertilizers with higher nitrogen-phosphorus-potassium content revolutionized crop nutrition, enhancing yields significantly.
- **Crop Protection:** Technologies like pesticides and herbicides helped protect crops from pests, diseases, and weeds, ensuring higher yield gains.
- **Agronomic Interventions:** Mechanization, including tractors and various implements, not only replaced bullocks but also introduced advanced techniques like deep tillage and precision farming. Innovations like drip irrigation and intercropping optimize water usage and land productivity.

Impact of Technological Factors

- **Increased Productivity:** Technological advancements have elevated the aggregate production function in agriculture. Instead of merely increasing inputs for higher outputs, these advancements have led to increased productivity per unit of input.
- **Efficiency Gains:** The trend shows a remarkable rise in agricultural productivity despite marginal growth in the net sown area, indicating technology's role in maximizing output from limited resources.
- **Growth Rates:** Estimates suggest that the growth in agricultural production in recent years has been primarily due to technological factors rather than traditional inputs like land expansion or increased labour.

Recent Trends

- The upward trend in agricultural growth rates, especially since the early 2000s, highlights the sustained impact of technological advancements. Improved infrastructure and increased adoption of modern technologies have further propelled this growth.