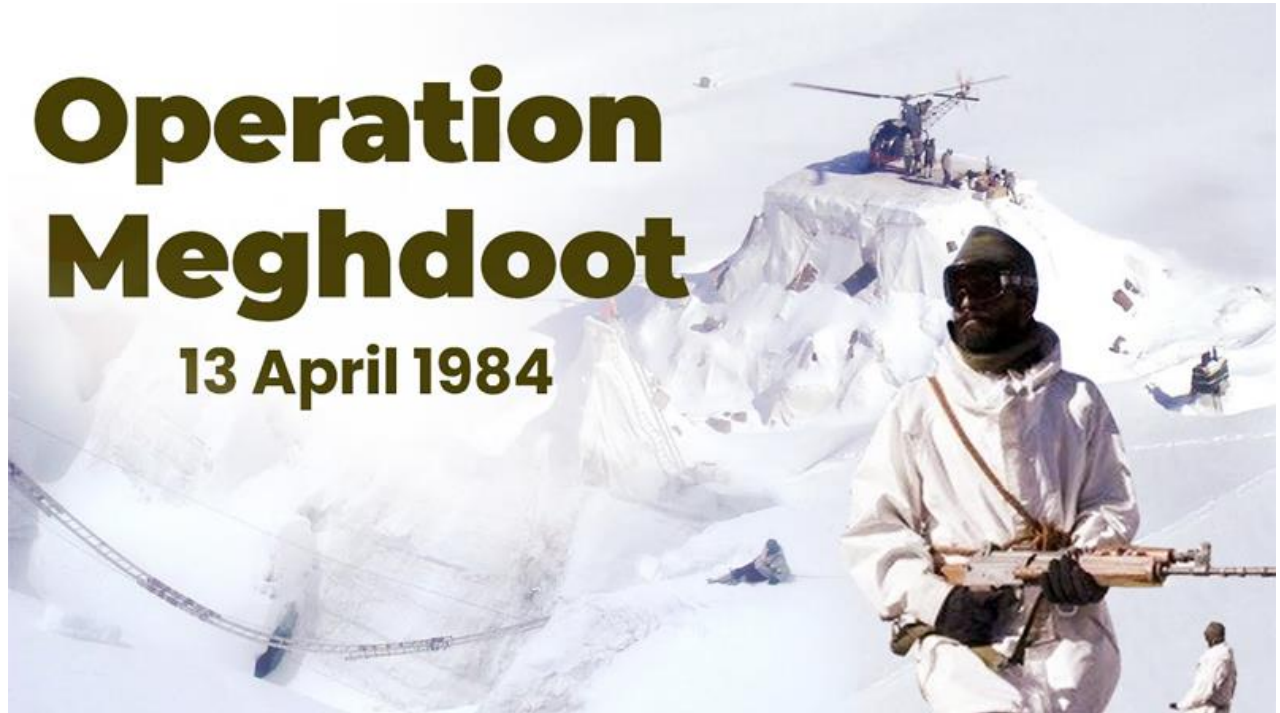


UPSC CURRENT AFFAIRS NOTES 15-04-2024

40 Years of Operation Meghdoot

The Indian Army recently commemorated 40 years since 'Operation Meghdoot' began, securing the Siachen Glacier.

About Operation Meghdoot



It was the code-name for the Indian Armed Forces operation to capture the Siachen Glacier, a strategically crucial region dominating Northern Ladakh.

Siachen has been a bone of contention between India and Pakistan ever since the Karachi Agreement of 1949, when the area was left undivided due to the hostile terrain and extremely rough weather.

Operation Meghdoot was India's bold military response to what New Delhi calls Pakistan's "cartographic aggression" in the uncharted territory of Ladakh, north of map reference NJ9842, where New Delhi and Islamabad had agreed the Line of Control (LoC) ran up to.

Intelligence inputs about impending Pakistani military action prompted India to secure strategic heights on Siachen, deploying troops via airlifts and air-dropping supplies to high-altitude airfields.



The primary objective behind this operation was to pre-empt the seizure of Sia La and Bilafond La passes by the Pakistan Army.

Launched on April 13, 1984, this military operation was unique as the first assault launched on the world's highest battlefield.

It was launched under the leadership of Lieutenant General Manohar Lal Chibber, Lieutenant General PN Hoon, and Major General Shiv Sharma.

It is distinguished by being one of the greatest examples of seamless coordination and synergy between the Indian Army and the Air Force.

The military action resulted in Indian troops gaining control of the entire Siachen Glacier.

Strategic Importance of the Siachen:

Located at a height of around 20,000 feet in the **Karakoram Mountain range**, the Siachen Glacier is known as the highest **militarised zone around the world**.

It is located so strategically that while it dominates **Shaksgam Valley** (ceded to China by Pakistan in 1963) in the north, controls the routes coming from Gilgit Baltistan to Leh from the west, and at the same time, it dominates the ancient Karakoram Pass in the eastern side too.

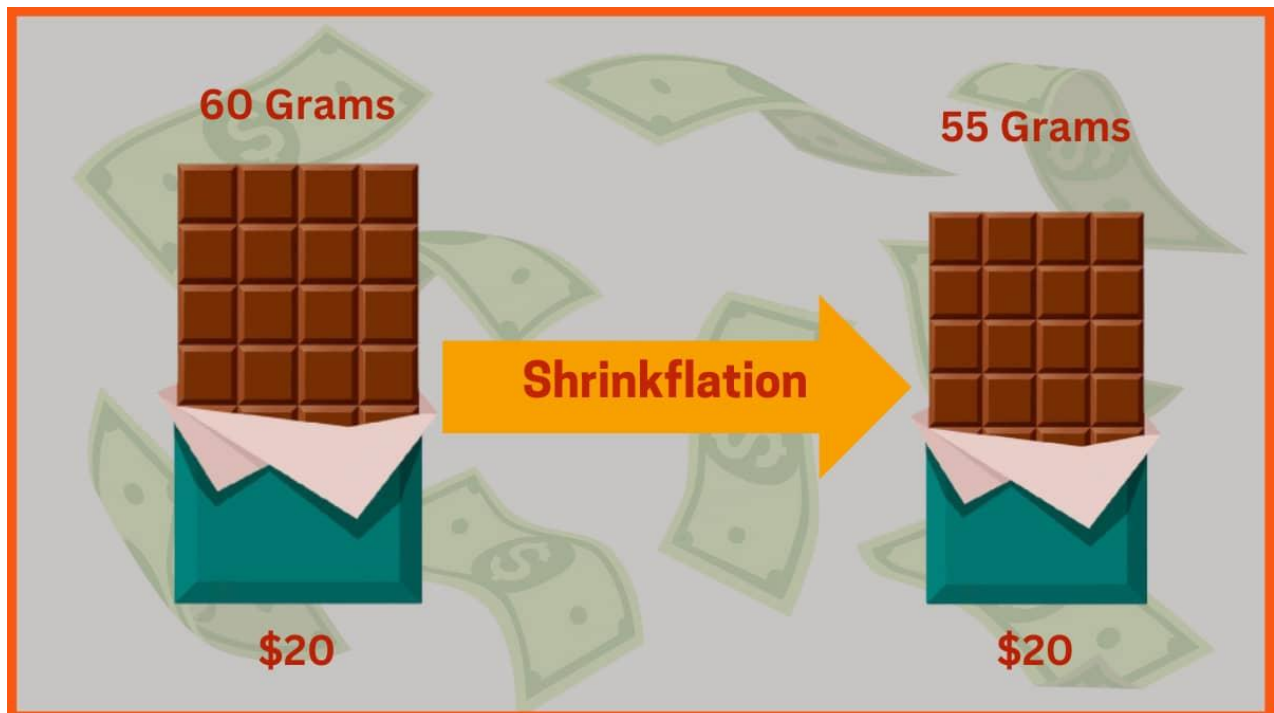
Further, towards the west, it observes nearly the entire of the Gilgit Baltistan, which too is an Indian territory illegally occupied by Pakistan in 1948.

Shrinkflation

As input prices, which were benign for a few quarters, turn inflationary, the spectre of shrinkflation looms large within the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) segment.

About Shrinkflation

It occurs when goods shrink in size but consumers pay the same price. It occurs when manufacturers downsize products to offset higher production costs but keep retail prices the same.



It is basically a form of hidden inflation.

Instead of increasing the price of a product, producers reduce the size of the product while maintaining the same price.

The absolute price of the product doesn't go up, but the price per unit of weight or volume has increased.

Reasons: The reasons for shrinkflation are rising production costs and market competition.



Impacts:

These are products sold quickly and at a relatively low cost. The FMCG industry is characterized by high-volume sales, quick inventory turnover, and various products catering to consumer needs.

These goods include essential everyday items such as food and beverages, toiletries, cleaning supplies, and other low-cost household items.

Jallianwala Bagh massacre

Exactly 105 years ago, on April 13, 1919, Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer ordered his troops to open fire on a large gathering of people in Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar.

Backdrop of Unrest:

The draconian Rowlatt Act, passed in March 1919, triggered widespread discontent not only in Punjab but throughout India.

Punjab, being a significant province, witnessed a surge in protests against the oppressive act.

Michael O'Dwyer, the Lieutenant Governor of Punjab at the time, feared that the situation could escalate into a large-scale uprising akin to the events of 1857.

Trigger:

The spark igniting the powder keg occurred on April 10 when the police opened fire on a crowd of protestors in Amritsar.

This violent act resulted in several casualties and set off a chain reaction of riots and mob violence in the city.

British residents, both men and women, were targeted by the enraged mobs, exacerbating O'Dwyer's apprehensions regarding the situation.

Jallianwala Bagh Tragedy:

In the tense atmosphere following the Amritsar riots, Reginald Dyer ordered troops to open fire on a gathering in Jallianwala Bagh on April 13.

The venue was packed with thousands of people who had assembled for the annual Baisakhi fair, unaware of the impending horror.



Dyer's action resulted in a horrific massacre, likened to shooting fish in a barrel due to the confined space and indiscriminate shooting.

British Response:

Initially, the British administration in Punjab supported Dyer's actions and intensified its crackdown on dissent.

Viceroy Chelmsford declared martial law in Punjab, leading to the detention of thousands of individuals suspected of involvement in anti-government activities.

However, as details of the brutality of the massacre emerged, dissenting voices began to emerge within the British government, culminating in Winston Churchill's condemnation of Dyer's actions in Parliament.

Dyer's Fate:

Despite being hailed as a hero by some British individuals, Dyer faced criticism from within the British government and was eventually relieved of his command in 1920.

However, opinions regarding Dyer remained divided among Britons, with some viewing him as a scapegoat rather than acknowledging the systemic issues within the British administration.

Impact on Indians:

The massacre at Jallianwala Bagh sent shockwaves across India, with people outraged by the senseless brutality unleashed upon unarmed civilians.

Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore's decision to renounce his knighthood in protest symbolized the depth of Indian indignation and defiance against British oppression.

The incident served as a rallying cry for Indian nationalists, prompting Mahatma Gandhi to launch the Non-Cooperation Movement, marking a significant escalation in the struggle for independence.

Legacy:

The Jallianwala Bagh massacre dealt a severe blow to the moral legitimacy of the British Empire in India, tarnishing its image irreparably in the eyes of many Indians.

It led to a loss of faith among even moderate Indian nationalists in the benevolence of British rule, pushing them towards more radical forms of resistance.

The victims of the massacre were transformed into martyrs of the Indian nationalist cause, galvanizing the movement for independence and hastening the eventual downfall of British colonial rule in India.

Special Olympics Bharat

Special Olympics Bharat (SOB), a National Sports Federation of India is forming district units across Tamil Nadu through elections on April 22.

About Special Olympics Bharat

It is a National Sports Federation registered under the Indian Trust Act 1882 in 2001 and is accredited by Special Olympics International to conduct Special Olympics Programs in India.

It is recognized by the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, Government of India as a National Sports Federation in the Priority Category, for development of Sports for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities.

It is a designated Nodal Agency for all disabilities on account of its national presence and experience, especially in rural areas which account for nearly 75 per cent of the disabled population in India.



It is a social inclusion movement using sports, health, and education and leadership programs to empower people with intellectual disabilities.



It is a program to provide individuals with intellectual disabilities who are eight years of age or older with year-round sports training and athletic competition in more than 20 Olympic-type summer and winter sports.

It was inaugurated in 1968 and was officially recognized by the International Olympic Committee on February 15, 1988.

Headquarters : Washington, D.C. USA

QUEQIAO-2

China's National Space Administration (CNSA) has declared the launch of Queqiao-2 a "complete success," underscoring its importance in China's space exploration program.

Queqiao-2 was launched along with two miniature satellites, Tiandu-1 and Tiandu-2.

About Queqiao-2 Relay Satellite

Queqiao-2, the second of two communication relay and radio astronomy satellites, supports China's Lunar Exploration Program by providing communication capabilities to the far side of the Moon.

Named after the mythological magpie bridge.

Mission Planning:

Queqiao-2 acts as the primary communication switch for China's fourth phase of lunar missions.

As part of the International Lunar Research Station (ILRS), Queqiao-2 supports upcoming Chang'e missions, including Chang'e 6, 7, and 8, planned for the lunar south pole.

It addresses the need for a complex communication network to accommodate multiple lunar probes, with the goal of supporting up to ten active robots during the ILRS phase.

Mission Tasks: The satellite's primary task is to relay signals to and from the upcoming Chang'e-6 mission, slated for launch in May. This mission aims to retrieve samples from an ancient lunar basin on the far side of the Moon.



Future Support: Queqiao-2 will continue to support upcoming lunar missions, including Chang'e-7 in 2026 and Chang'e-8 in 2028, by providing essential relay communication services.

Communication Achievements: The satellite has already established communication with Chang'e 4, the pioneering spacecraft that performed a soft landing on the far side of the Moon, as well as the Chang'e-6 probe while it is still on the ground.

Design:

Queqiao-2 is based on the CAST 2000 bus and operates with a frozen elliptic orbit around the Moon.

Its design includes advanced propulsion systems, solar panels, and a large parabolic antenna for communication with lunar surface probes.

The satellite's orbit allows for approximately eight hours of visual contact with the Moon during each 12-hour orbit, ensuring stable communication.

Scientific Payloads:

The spacecraft carries three scientific payloads, including a particle imager, an extreme ultraviolet camera, and a lunar orbit VLBI experiment.

These instruments enable observation of the terrestrial magnetosphere, lunar surface, and radio sources outside the Milky Way.

Comparison with Queqiao:

Queqiao-2 represents an upgrade over the original Queqiao satellite, with enhancements in mass, power supply, and communication capabilities.

Its elliptical lunar orbit allows for improved line of sight with surface probes and communication with Earth.

Notable differences between Queqiao and Queqiao-2 include orbit type, antenna configuration, communication speeds, and operational timelines.

India's stakes in the Iran-Israel conflict and its stand

South Block expressed "serious concern" at the escalation of hostilities and called for immediate de-escalation, emphasizing the importance of maintaining peace and security in the Middle East region after Iran launched a retaliatory attack on Israel using drones and missiles on April 14.



Concerns for India:

India is concerned about the potential escalation of conflict, particularly due to its strategic ties with both Iran and Israel.

A wider conflict in the region would pose challenges to India's strategic interests, including economic ties and the safety of Indian nationals residing in the Gulf and West Asia.

India's stance advocating for immediate de-escalation and a return to diplomacy is crucial for safeguarding its national interests and maintaining stability in the region



India's stake in Israel:

Strategic Partnership: India and Israel share a robust strategic partnership, characterized by cooperation in defense, counter-terrorism, intelligence sharing, and cybersecurity. Both countries face common security threats and have developed strong defense ties to address them.

Defense Cooperation: The two sides have strong concerns about extremism and terrorism, as both have suffered during the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks. Israel has also emerged as a major defense supplier, along with the US, France, and Russia, and New Delhi remembers that it has stepped up to help during times of crisis, including the Kargil war in 1999. Israel provides India with advanced defense technologies, including missiles, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), radar systems, and electronic warfare systems. Joint military exercises and defense collaboration contribute to enhancing India's defense capabilities.

Counter-terrorism Collaboration: India and Israel collaborate closely in counter-terrorism efforts, sharing intelligence and expertise to combat terrorism and extremism. Both countries face similar security challenges and have cooperated in areas such as border security, intelligence gathering, and counter-insurgency operations.

Technological Partnership: Israel is known for its innovation and technological prowess, and India seeks to leverage Israel's expertise in various fields such as agriculture, water management, healthcare, and renewable energy. Bilateral cooperation in technology transfer, research and development, and innovation hubs fosters mutual growth and development.

Economic Relations: India and Israel have witnessed significant growth in bilateral trade and investment in recent years. Both countries explore opportunities for collaboration in sectors like agriculture, IT, pharmaceuticals, and startups. Strengthening economic ties contributes to fostering prosperity and development in both nations.

Diplomatic Engagement: India's diplomatic engagement with Israel has evolved over the years, with both countries establishing full diplomatic relations in 1992. High-level visits, diplomatic dialogues, and exchanges reinforce bilateral relations and enhance cooperation in various domains.

People-to-People Contacts: People-to-people contacts play a crucial role in fostering India-Israel relations, with cultural exchanges, academic



collaborations, and tourism contributing to greater understanding and friendship between the two nations.

Overall, India's stake in Israel is multifaceted, encompassing defense cooperation, technological partnerships, economic relations, diplomatic engagement, and people-to-people contacts. For these reasons, any conflicts involving Israel would affect the relations of India with Israel.

India's stake in Iran

Energy Security: Iran is a crucial source of energy for India, particularly oil imports. India relies on Iran to meet its energy needs and reduce dependency on other oil-producing countries. The Chabahar Port in Iran also provides India with access to Afghanistan and Central Asia, enhancing its energy security and trade routes diversification.

Strategic Location: Iran's strategic location in the Persian Gulf and its proximity to key shipping lanes makes it geopolitically important for India. Stable relations with Iran contribute to India's maritime security and strategic interests in the region.

Infrastructure Development: India has invested in infrastructure projects in Iran, including the development of the Chabahar Port and associated road and rail networks. These projects aim to enhance connectivity between India, Iran, and Afghanistan, boost regional trade, and counter China's influence in the region.

Trade and Economic Cooperation: Despite international sanctions on Iran, India maintains trade and economic ties with the country. Both nations explore opportunities for cooperation in sectors such as agriculture, pharmaceuticals, infrastructure, and manufacturing. India seeks to expand bilateral trade and investment with Iran, leveraging its market potential and natural resources.

Cultural and Historical Ties: India and Iran share deep-rooted cultural and historical ties, dating back centuries. Cultural exchanges, academic collaborations, and people-to-people contacts strengthen bilateral relations and foster mutual understanding and friendship between the two nations.

Security Cooperation: India and Iran collaborate on security issues, particularly in combating terrorism and extremism in the region. Both countries share concerns about stability in Afghanistan and work together to promote peace and security in the region.



Diplomatic Engagement: India maintains diplomatic relations with Iran and engages in high-level dialogues and exchanges to enhance bilateral cooperation. Diplomatic engagement reinforces mutual trust, promotes dialogue, and addresses shared challenges and opportunities.

These stakes in Iran for India make Iran an important country. Any wars involving Iran would thus impact India Iran relations and projects of India.

Other impacts of the war on India

Firstly, while there are about 18,000 Indians in Israel and about 5,000-10,000 Indians in Iran, about 90 lakh people are living and working in the Gulf and West Asia region. Any conflict that expands will end up posing a risk to the Indian community that is based in the region.

Secondly, India's economic interests are tied to energy security — the West Asia region contributes to India's 80 percent of oil supplies, which a potential conflict will impact. India has been able to minimise the impact of oil prices due to the Russia-Ukraine war by buying Russian oil at discounted prices, but this conflict will hurt energy prices.

Thirdly, India has invested in a strategic relationship with major Arab countries, **Iran, and Israel**. New Delhi sees the region as its extended neighborhood, and it has been working with all sides in the turbulent region to push for the India-Middle-East-Europe Economic corridor, which has strategic as well as economic benefits for Delhi. A conflict has the potential to unravel the consensus that has been built around the peace in the otherwise combustible region.

India has strategic ties with both **Iran and Israel** and has traditionally maintained a balanced position between the two. However, if the conflict escalates, it would be challenging for India to maintain neutrality. India's position that there should be "immediate de-escalation" and "step back from violence" and "return to the path of diplomacy" is, therefore, crucial to its national interest.



Easementary Right

The Supreme Court, in a dispute in connection with easementary rights over a 20 ft. wide road situated over a land, reiterated that the power of attorney holder can only depose about the facts within his personal knowledge.

About Easementary Right

The concept of easement has been defined under Section 4 of the Indian Easements Act, 1882.

According to the provisions of Section 4, an easementary right is a right possessed by the owner or occupier of the land on some other land, not his own, the purpose of which is to provide the beneficial enjoyment of the land.

This right is granted because, without the existence of this right an occupier or owner cannot fully enjoy his own property.

It includes the right to do or continue to do something or to prevent or to continue to prevent something in connection with or in respect of some other land, which is not his own, for the enjoyment of his own land.

The word 'land' refers to everything permanently attached to the earth, and the word 'beneficial enjoyment' denotes convenience, advantage or any amenity, or any necessity.

The owner or occupier referred to in the provision is known as the Dominant Owner and the land for the benefit of which the easementary right exists is called Dominant Heritage.

Whereas the owner upon whose land the liability is imposed is known as the Servient Owner and the land on which such a liability is imposed to do or prevent something is known as the Servient Heritage.

Eg: 'P', being the owner of certain land or house, has a right of way over Q's house, adjacent to his house, to move out of the street. This is known as right of easement.

An easement is, in no way, a transfer of property. It could be made, altered, or released as well, and should always be in written form, except when it has been enjoyed for a very long time without restrictions. A written document helps either party to challenge it in a court of law.