

1. Russia Ukraine Conflict

Topic: International Affairs



In News: The tension between Russia and Ukraine represents a major security crisis for the region.

More on the Topic:

- Tensions between Ukraine and Russia, both former Soviet states, escalated in late 2013 over a landmark political and trade deal with the European Union. After the pro-Russian then-President, Viktor Yanukovich, suspended the talks, weeks of protests in Kiev erupted into violence.
- Then, in March 2014, Russia annexed Crimea, an autonomous peninsula in southern Ukraine with strong Russian loyalties, on the pretext that it was defending its interests and those of Russian-speaking citizens.
- Shortly afterwards, pro-Russian separatists in Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk regions declared their independence from Kiev, prompting months of heavy fighting. Despite Kiev and Moscow signing a peace deal in Minsk in 2015, brokered by France and Germany, there have been repeated ceasefire violations.
- In December 2021, Russia published an 8-point draft security agreement for the West. The draft was aimed at resolving tensions in Europe including the Ukrainian crisis.
- But it had controversial provisions including banning Ukraine from joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), curtailing the further expansion of NATO, blocking drills in the region, etc.



- Talks on the draft failed continuously and tensions escalated with the Russian troop buildup in the Russia-Ukraine border.

What led to present Escalation:

- The newly elected President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, has been harsh on Russian supporters in Ukraine and has been going against Moscow's interests.
- Perceivably undecisive administration in the US under the new President Joe Biden and Washington's chaotic exit from Afghanistan.
- Russian President Vladimir Putin's immense interest in Ukraine. Putin maintains that Ukraine is the "red line" the West must not cross.

Russian Demands:

- Talks to discuss implementation of previous commitments on NATO expansion.
- NATO troops moving out of Post-Soviet States.
- A commitment that Ukraine will not be given NATO members.
- Security guarantees for the future.

US and European states Demand:

- Russian troops to pull back from borders.
- Russia to stop war games in neighbouring countries like Belarus.
- Willing to discuss security guarantees, but no commitment on independent states joining NATO
- Wants guarantees that Russia will not invade neighbour states.

India's Concerns:

- A conflict- where the U.S. and its European allies are united against Russia will impact the whole world in different dimensions.
- **World economic and security landscape would change** and India, as a partner to both Moscow and Washington will either have to take sides, or be prepared to deal with hostilities from both sides.
- India's purchase of the **Russian S-400 missile system** is under way. A waiver of U.S. sanctions on this deal is necessary. Conflict will complicate both the delivery of the system, and the possibility of a waiver.
- Chinese aggression and land-grab at the Line of Actual Control, and 100,000 troops along the boundary on both sides, global attention is needed for sanction against China. The world's attention is diverted from China to Russia as of now and it will hamper effective dealing of Chinese aggression.
- The Crisis makes Moscow more dependent on friends like China, and build a regional bloc without India.
- With war scenario going for longer, Russia may turn down gas and oil supplies. This move would drive energy prices up. Already tensions have pushed oil prices up by 14%.

Source: Hindu, Indian Express and BBC

2. Operation Ganga

Topic: Environment and Ecology

In News: ‘Operation Ganga’ is the initiative launched by the government of India to bring back Indians stranded in Ukraine.



More on the Topic:

- Under this, India has already successfully brought back more than a 1,000 of its nationals from the country.
- It has also set up 24×7 control centres to assist in the evacuation of Indians through the border crossing points with Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovak Republic.
- A Twitter handle, ‘OpGanga Helpline’, has also been dedicated to the mission, where all information regarding evacuation process and advisories of embassies are shared to keep everyone up-to-date.
- Thousands of Indians, especially students studying medicine in Ukraine, have been stuck in the country since it closed its airspace as a security measure after Russia launched “special military operations”.
- The Indian evacuation flights are operating from neighbouring countries like Romania and Hungary.
- The government is also facilitating evacuation of stranded Indians from its borders crossing Romania, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia.

Source: Indian Express

3. The ‘Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Rights Act)’

Topic: Social Justice

In News: The Himachal Pradesh government has said that it settled 164 claims filed under Section 3(1) and 1,811 cases filed under Section 3(2) of the Forests Rights Act (FRA), 2006.

More on the Topic:

- The Forest Resources Act of 2006 (FRA) recognises **the rights of forest-dwelling tribal tribes and other**



traditional forest dwellers to forest resources on which they rely for a range of purposes, including subsistence, housing, and other sociocultural needs.

- It acknowledges and vests forest rights and occupation in Forest Dwelling Scheduled Tribes (FDST) and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFD) who have lived in such woods for centuries.
- It **reinforces the forest conservation regime** while preserving the FDST and OTFD's livelihood and food security.
- **The Gram Sabha has the power to begin the process** of establishing the type and scope of Individual Forest Rights (IFR), Community Forest Rights (CFR), or both, that may be granted to FDST and OTFD.

About the Rights under Forest Rights Act:

- **Title rights:** it is the ownership to land that is being farmed by tribals or forest dwellers as on 13 December 2005, subject to a maximum of 4 hectares. ownership is only for land that is actually being cultivated by the concerned family as on that date, meaning that no new lands are granted.
- **Use rights:** It is **to minor forest produce** (also including ownership), to grazing areas, to pastoralist routes, etc.
- **Relief and development rights:** It is **to rehabilitation in case of illegal eviction or forced displacement** and to basic amenities, subject to restrictions for forest protection.
- **Forest management rights:** It is the right of by tribal or forest dwellers to protect forests and wildlife.

Source: Indian Express

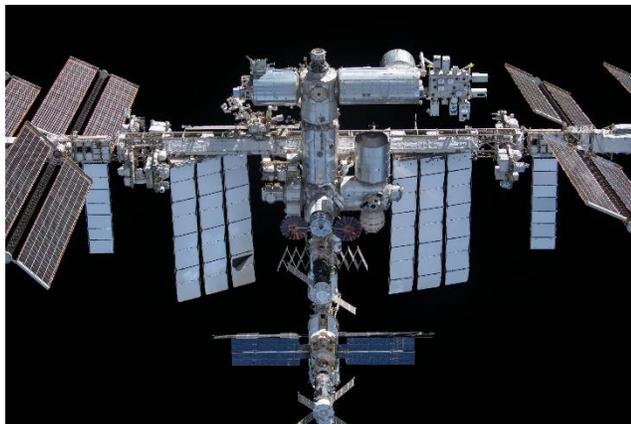
4. International Space Station

Topic: Science and Technology

In News: The tension following Russia's invasion of Ukraine could have consequences for the International Space Station (ISS).

More on the Topic:

- The International Space Station (ISS) is a habitable artificial satellite, in low Earth orbit.
- Its first component launched into orbit in 1998, and the ISS is now the largest human-made body in low Earth orbit.
- It circles the Earth in roughly 92 minutes and completes 15.5 orbits per day.



- The Intergovernmental Agreement **allows the Space Station Partners States to extend their national jurisdiction in outer space**, so the elements they provide (e.g. laboratories) are assimilated to the territories of the Partners States.
- **The United States, Russia, the European Partner, Japan and Canada** – are legally responsible for the respective elements they provide.

Significance:

- Space stations are **essential for collecting meaningful scientific data**, especially for biological experiments.
- Provide platforms for greater number and length of **scientific studies than available on other space vehicles**.
- Space stations are used to study the effects of long-term space flight on the human body. Each crew member stays aboard the station for weeks or months, but rarely more than a year.

Source: The Hindu

5. India's First Dugong Reserve in Palk Bay

Topic: Environment and Ecology

In News: The Tamil Nadu government has commenced work for the country's first dugong conservation reserve in the Palk Bay region.

More on the Topic:

- The size of the Dugong reserve will be tentatively spread over 500 sq km and will be located in the northern part of the Palk of Bay from Adiramapattinam to Amapattinam.
- Dugongs are **endangered species that are protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**.
- The Wildlife Institute of India (WII), in a study, reported that only 200-250 dugongs are left in the wild of which 150 are found in the Palk Bay and Gulf of Mannar off Tamil Nadu.
- In India, dugongs, apart from Palk Bay, and the Gulf of Mannar, are found in the Gulf of Kutch (Gujarat), and Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- However, the presence of dugongs is **maximum in Palk Bay and the Gulf of Mannar**.



About Dugong:

- Dugong (Dugong dugon) also called **'Sea Cow'** is one of the four surviving species in the Order Sirenia and it is the **only existing species of herbivorous mammal that lives exclusively in the sea**.

- Dugongs are generally found in **shallow waters** at the depth of 10 metres but occasionally they dive down for feeding on seagrass.
- Dugongs are **an important part of the marine ecosystem and their depletion will have effects all the way up the food chain**. Proper conservation is the only way to save dugongs from extinction.
- Dugongs **graze on seagrass** and the loss of seagrass beds due to ocean floor trawling is one of the most important factors behind decreasing dugong populations in many parts of the world.

Source: PIB

6. Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission

Topic: Government

Programmes

In News: Union Cabinet has approved Nationwide Roll-Out Of Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission.

More on the Topic:

- Under the ABDM, citizens will be able to create their Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA) numbers, to which their digital health records can be linked. These ABHA numbers will enable the creation of longitudinal health records for citizens across various healthcare providers and improve clinical decision making by healthcare providers.
- The Central Sector Scheme will be implemented by the National Health Authority (NHA).
- The mission will enhance equitable access to quality healthcare by encouraging the usage of technologies such as telemedicine and enabling national portability of health services.
- The mission will also facilitate innovation and generate employment across the healthcare ecosystem.

Source: Indian Express



7. Hermetic Wiper Malware

Topic: Science and Technology

In News: Ukraine is being targeted by large-scale cyber-attacks named Hermetic Wiper malware targeting government websites, banks, and other users.

More on the Topic:

- The **data-wiper malware**, when downloaded, can erase all the data on a device it targets, in a manner that renders the data irretrievable.
- The malware **makes use of the disc or storage management software to corrupt the local data on the device**, after which it reboots the computer.
- It is also **capable of attacking data recovery tools** on a system and the rebooting system of a hard drive, making it difficult for the device to reboot into its operating system, essentially making it inoperable.
- This malware **may also access full control of its target's internal networks**, exposing multiple programs to it.
- In one of the organisations that the wiper targeted, it was dropped into the system using the default Group Policy Object (GPO), meaning it could then access the main server to spread the malware into other devices and programs.

Source: Indian Express

