



## 1. Australia-India Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (AI-ECTA)



### Topic: International Relations

**In News:** The Australian Parliament ratified the Australia-India Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (AI-ECTA), adding another pillar in the already growing strategic relationship.

#### More on the Topic

- The AI-ECTA is an initial trade agreement which will finally culminate into a much bigger pact — Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA), which is under negotiations.
- Under the AI-ECTA, which will come into effect by December, India intends to tap into **Australia's vast and rich mineral resources** enabling it to reduce dependence on China.
- India will be able to now import coking coal and uranium from Australia for zero duty.
- The agreement, once implemented, will provide **duty-free access to the Australian market for over 6,000 broad sectors of India**, including textiles, leather, furniture, jewellery and machinery.
- The Agreement inter-alia covers areas like **Trade in Goods, Rules of Origin, Trade in Services, Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures**.

#### India Australia Relations:

- Australia and India established diplomatic relations in the pre-Independence period, when the Consulate General of India was first opened as a Trade Office in Sydney in 1941.

#### Political Relations:

- India and Australia co-operate in various multilateral fora. **Australia supports India's candidature in an expanded UN Security Council.**
- Both India and Australia are **members of the G-20, Commonwealth, IOR-ARC, ASEAN Regional Forum, Asia Pacific Partnership on Climate and Clean Development, and have participated in the East Asia Summits.**

- Both countries have also been cooperating as members of the **Five Interested Parties (FIP) in the WTO context.**
- Australia is an important player in **APEC and supports India's membership of the organisation.** In 2008, it became an Observer in SAARC.

#### Defence Relations:

- The first-ever Bilateral Maritime Exercise, **AUSINDEX 15**, was conducted in Visakhapatnam in 2015.
- 4th edition of **AUSTRAHIND** (Special Forces of Army Exercise) was held in 2019.

#### Economic And Trade Relationship:

- India is the 5th largest trade partner of Australia with trade in goods and services.
- The two countries are also discussing a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA).
- Indian investment in Australia is growing.

#### Indian Diaspora:

- The Indian community in Australia continues to grow in size and importance, with the **population of nearly half seven lakhs.**
- India is one of the top sources of skilled immigrants to Australia.
- India is now the third largest source of immigrants to Australia, after UK and New Zealand and the largest source of skilled professionals for Australia.

Source: Indian Express

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## 2. Unnati project



### PROJECT UNNATI

Skilling of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA Workers

Rural Skills Division, MoRD

**Topic: Government Policies**

**In News:** Project Unnati is lagging to deliver the intended results.

**More on the Topic:**

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- The 'Unnati' project was launched to provide skill training to existing workers of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), to reduce their dependency on the scheme.
- Since 2020, just a little over 25,000 persons have been trained under the 'Unnati' project, falling short of its target of 2 lakh.

#### Significance of the Scheme:

- A family member in the 18-35 age group from the household will be eligible for training under the **Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY)**.
- Candidates undergoing training are **paid a stipend for a maximum period of 100 days** and for one program per household as per the wage rate prevailing.
- The selected candidates are skilled through three established training programmes;
- **The Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushal Yojana (DDU-GKY)**: It is a placement-linked programme.
- **The Rural Self Training Institute (RSETI)**: It is for entrepreneurial skills where persons in the age group of 18-45 get short-term residential training with long-term hand-holding support for up to two years.
- **The Krishi Vigyan Kendra** trains candidates in trades related to the agricultural sectors.

Source: PIB

### 3. Shisham export



#### Topic: Environment and Ecology

**In News:** CITES RULES FOR EXPORT OF SHISHAM (DALBERGIA SISSOO) BASED PRODUCTS EASED ON INDIA'S INITIATIVE.

#### More on the Topic:

- It was agreed upon that any number of Dalbergia sissoo timber-based items can be exported as a single consignment in a shipment **without CITES permits if the weight of each individual item of this consignment is less than 10 kg.**



- This is a great relief for the Indian artisans and furniture industry.
- As earlier, due to the restriction, exports saw a continuous fall from an estimated Rs. 1000 crore per annum before the listing to Rs. 500-600 crore per annum after the CITES listing.
- It led to a decrease in exports of Shisham products and affected the livelihoods of around 50,000 artisans who work with the species.

#### **Dalbergia sissoo Tree:**

- Dalbergia sissoo is commonly known as **North Indian Rosewood or Shisham**. It is a fast-growing, hardy, deciduous rosewood tree native to the Indian subcontinent and southern Iran.
- It is **native to the foothills of the Himalayas**. It is primarily found growing along river banks.
- It is used as **firewood, timber, poles, posts, tool handles, fodder, erosion control and as a windbreak**. Oil is extracted from the seed and tannin from the bark.

#### **CITES Listing:**

- CITES ensures that **international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival**.
- **CITES is a multilateral treaty** to protect endangered plants and animals from the threats of international trade.
- It was drafted as a result of a resolution adopted in 1963 at a meeting of members of the **International Union for Conservation of Nature**.
- For the effective protection of biodiversity, countries have agreed upon the categorization of species as per their level of extinction. There are 3 appendices categorising different species.
- **Appendix I lists species that are the most endangered** among CITES-listed animals and plants. Examples include gorillas, sea turtles, most lady slipper orchids and giant pandas. Around 1082 species are listed in it.
- **Appendix II lists species that are not necessarily now threatened with extinction but that may become so unless trade is closely controlled**.
- **Appendix III:** It is a list of species included at the request of a Party that already regulates trade in the species and that needs the cooperation of other countries to prevent unsustainable or illegal exploitation.

**Source: Hindu**

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## 4. Biodiversity Heritage Site

**Topic: Environment and Ecology**

**In News:** Tamil Nadu Government declared Arittapatti village in Madurai district as first BHS in State.

**More on the Topic:**

- **The declaration has been done based on** Section 37 of the Biological Diversity Act, 2002.
- The Arittapatti village is surrounded by a chain of seven barren granite hillocks that act as a watershed and support close to 72 lakes, 200 natural spring pools and three check dams.
- The Anaikondan lake built during the reign of the Pandiyas in the 16th century is one among them.
- The village has a rich biological and historical significance with the presence of around 250 bird species, including three flagship raptor species – **Laggar Falcon (Falco jugger)**, **Shaheen Falcon (Falco peregrinus)** and **Bonelli's Eagle (Aquila fasciata)** and wildlife such as **Indian Pangolin (Manis crassicaudata)**, **Python (Python molurus)** and **Slender Loris (Loris spp)**.
- The site also features various **megalithic structures, Tamil Brahmi Inscriptions, Jain Beds and 2200-year-old rock-cut temples** adding to its historical value.

**Significance:**

- The notification **will strengthen the biodiversity and conservation efforts with the participation of local communities.**
- It was added that the initiatives will also help preserve the rich biological and historical repository of the area.

**Source: Indian Express**



## 5. India-ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting

**Topic: International Relations**



**In News:** Maiden India-ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting was held recently.

### **More on the Topic:**

- The meeting was convened to commemorate the 30th Anniversary of India-ASEAN relations in 2022.
- This year has been designated as ASEAN-India Friendship Year.
- India shares historic, robust, and Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with ASEAN.
- During the meeting, India has proposed two major initiatives for further expanding the scope and the depth of the India-ASEAN defence relations.
- One of the initiatives proposed by Rajnath Singh was the **India-ASEAN Initiative for Women in UN Peace Keeping Operations**.
- The second initiative was **India-ASEAN Initiative on Marine Plastic Pollution** which includes channelising of the energy of the youth towards addressing the critical issue of marine pollution.
- India also proposed **establishment of an India-ASEAN Marine Pollution Response Centre** at Chennai to address and supplement regional efforts to deal with marine pollution incidents.

**Source: Business Standard**

## 6. “GHAR - Go Home and Re-Unite” Portal



### Topic: e-Governance

**In News:** The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has launched the GHAR – GO Home and Re-Unite (Portal for Restoration and Repatriation of Child) on the occasion of World Children’s Day (20th November).

#### More on the Topic:

- The portal will provide **information on children from every district to smoothen the process of their repatriation and restoration.**
- NCPCR also released a detailed protocol for the “restoration and repatriation of children” and training modules for the child welfare committees (CWCs).
- **Child Welfare Committees are the guardian of children** who are vulnerable at the district level and they have the responsibility to ensure their care and protection.

**Source: Business Standard**

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## 7. Shadani Darbar

### Topic: International Relations

**In News:** Pakistan on Monday issued 100 visas to Indian pilgrims to allow them to participate in the 314th birth anniversary celebrations of Shiv Avtari Satguru Sant Shadaram Sahib, in Sindh province.

#### More on the Topic:

- Under the Pakistan-India Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines of 1974, pilgrims from both countries are allowed to travel to some shrines across the border every year.
- Located in Hayat Pitafi, Ghotki district, Shadani Darbar is believed to be **the biggest Hindu temple in Pakistan's Sindh province**.
- It was founded in 1786 by Sant Shadaram Sahib, whose anniversary the pilgrims have travelled to celebrate.
- Sant Shadaram was born in **a Lohana khatri family in Lahore** in October 1708.
- He is believed to be the **descendent of Lord Ram's son, Lav, and also an avatar of Lord Shiva**.

**Source: Business Standard**

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