



India-Central Asia Summit

For Prelims: India-Central Asia Summit, China-Central Asia Conference, Delhi Declaration, Ashgabat Agreement, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, India-Central Asia Dialogue

For mains: Global Groupings, India and its Neighbourhood, Significance of Central Asia for India, Geopolitical Dynamics of the Region.

Why in News

Recently, the Prime Minister of **India hosted the first India-Central Asia Summit** in virtual format.

- It was attended by Presidents of the **Republic of [Kazakhstan](#), [Kyrgyz Republic](#), Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Republic of Uzbekistan.**
- This first India-Central Asia **coincided with the 30th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Central Asian countries.**
- The summit came two days after a **similar China-Central Asia Conference** was held where China offered USD 500 million in assistance and pledged to ramp up trade to USD 70 billion from the present levels of about USD 40 billion a year.

Key Points

- **Institutionalisation of the Summit:**
 - Discussed the **next steps in taking India-Central Asia relations to new heights.** In a historic decision, the Leaders agreed to institutionalise the Summit mechanism by deciding to **hold it every 2 years.**
 - They also **agreed on regular meetings** of Foreign Ministers, Trade Ministers, Culture Ministers and Secretaries of the Security Council to prepare the groundwork for the Summit meetings.
 - An **India-Central Asia Secretariat in New Delhi** would be set up to support the new mechanism.
- **India-Central Asia Cooperation:**
 - The Leaders discussed far-reaching proposals to **further cooperation in areas of trade and connectivity, development cooperation, defence and security** and, in particular, on cultural and people to people contacts. These included:
 - **Round-Table** on Energy and Connectivity.
 - **Joint Working Groups** at senior official level on [Afghanistan](#) and use of [Chabahar Port](#).
 - **Showcasing of [Buddhist](#) exhibitions** in Central Asian countries and commissioning of an India-Central Asia dictionary of common words.
 - Joint **counter-terrorism exercises.**
 - Visit of 100 member **youth delegation** annually from Central Asian countries to India and special courses for Central Asian diplomats.
 - A **comprehensive Joint Declaration was adopted** by the leaders that enumerates their common vision for an enduring and comprehensive India-Central Asia partnership.
- **Afghanistan:**

- The leaders reiterated their **strong support for a peaceful, secure and stable Afghanistan** with a truly representative and inclusive government.
- India conveyed its **continued commitment to provide humanitarian assistance** to the Afghan people.
- **India's Stand on:**
 - **Kazakhstan:** It has become a vital partner for India's energy security. India also expressed condolences for the recent **loss of life and property in Kazakhstan**.
 - **Uzbekistan:** India's state governments are also **active partners in its growing cooperation with Uzbekistan**.
 - **Tajikistan:** Both the countries have a **longstanding cooperation in the field of security**.
 - **Turkmenistan:** It is an important part of Indian vision in the field of regional connectivity, which is evident from participation in the **Ashgabat Agreement**.
 - **Regional connectivity in Central Asia is a key arm** of the 2018 Ashgabat Agreement.

Significance of the Summit for India

- **Geo-Political Dynamics:**
 - The summit is symbolic of the importance attached by the leaders of India and the Central Asian countries to a comprehensive and enduring India-Central Asia partnership.
 - It is being held at a critical juncture when **tensions between the West and Russia** and the **United States (US) and China** are rising. India too has faced geopolitical setbacks: Border tensions with China and the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan.
 - It follows **President Vladimir Putin's visit to India**, which may have allowed **India to push Russia to moderately balance China** in Eurasia and to contain the threats from Afghanistan.
 - The **recent unrest in Kazakhstan** also showed that **"new actors"** are vying for influence in the region though their motives are still not clear.
- **Trade:**
 - India has always maintained excellent diplomatic ties with all the five Central Asian states, Indian PMs including Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2015, have visited them. Yet, **India's trade with them has been only at USD 1.4 billion in 2019**.
 - In 2017, India joined the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)** to engage with the region. But SCO is only a sluice gate to regulate the Russian and Chinese subliminal rivalry to prevent either power from dominating the region.
 - **Russia tends to use SCO for regulating India-China tensions.**
- **Security:**
 - The summit is a **massive stride for India's diplomacy**. Since the region is a critical lynchpin to India's security policy, the summit will have a waterfall impact to facilitate India's multifaceted approach towards the region.

India-Central Asia Dialogue //



- It is a ministerial-level **dialogue** between India and the Central Asian countries namely Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.
- **All five nations became independent states** after the collapse of the USSR in 1991, post-**Cold**

war.

- All the countries participating in the dialogue, except for Turkmenistan, are also members of the SCO.
- The dialogue **focuses on a number of issues including ways to improve connectivity and stabilise war-ravaged Afghanistan.**

Way Forward

- India first **needs to get its big-picture imagination of the region correct.** Central Asia is undoubtedly a zone of India's civilisational influence.
 - The **Ferghana Valley** was India's crossing-point of the **Great Silk Road.** Buddhism spread to the rest of Asia from here.
 - The Valley still connects India with three countries: Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.
- When others engage with the region from the own perspectives --- China from economic (**Belt and Road Initiative**), Russia from strategic (**Collective Security Treaty Organisation**), Turkey from ethnic (Turkic Council), and the Islamic world from religious (**Organisation of Islamic Cooperation**) --- **it would be befitting for India to give a cultural and historical perspective to the region** through a summit-level annual meet.
- Central Asia **carries no specific stance towards any country,** with the exception of Russia. While their strategic visions are often opaque, they are wary of China.
- However, they have **strong economic ties with China** compared to little or no economic dependency on India.
- The region's **negative attitude towards Pakistan is waning,** either due to the gradual Islamization of the population or perhaps due to Russia's changed attitude towards Pakistan.
- The **notion of "Hindustan"** in the popular imagination of the people and their traditional fondness for **Bollywood could be critical factors in burnishing the relationship.** But with generational change, **India's soft power is fading. This needs to be arrested. Apart from commerce, only a value-driven cultural policy can replace the current ill-defined goals** of rebuilding India-Central Asia bonds.

[Source: PIB](#)

RBI's Approval Pending for the Bad Bank

For Prelims: Reserve Bank of India, Bad Bank, National Asset Reconstruction Company Limited, India Debt Resolution Company Limited, Asset Reconstruction Company, Indian Banks' Association, Non-performing loans.

For Mains: Monetary Policy, Banking Sector & NBFCs, Bad Bank, National Asset Reconstruction Company Limited, India Debt Resolution Company Limited, Asset Reconstruction Company, Non-performing loans and Related Issues.

Why in News

The [Reserve Bank of India's \(RBI's\)](#) approval for the implementation of the proposal for setting up a '**Bad Bank**' is still pending.

- In **September 2021**, the Union Cabinet approved the Rs. 30,600 crore guarantee to back Security Receipts issued by [National Asset Reconstruction Company Limited \(NARCL\) for acquiring stressed loan assets](#).

Key Points

▪ NARCL & IDRCL:

- The NARCL has been set up and issued a license by the RBI to conduct business as an [Asset Reconstruction Company \(ARC\)](#).
 - NARCL will acquire stressed assets worth about Rs 2 lakh crore from various commercial banks in different phases.
 - Public Sector Banks (PSBs) will maintain 51% ownership in NARCL.
- Simultaneously, a separate company has been set up to function as an Asset Management Company, named **India Debt Resolution Company Limited (IDRCL), which will provide management and resolution of assets** and also help in the operational aspects, relating to price discovery and aim at evolving the best possible recovery and the resolution process.
 - PSBs and Public Financial Institutes (FIs) will hold a maximum of 49% stake in IDRCL. The remaining 51% stake will be with private-sector lenders.
- The **NARCL is majorly owned by public sector banks with 51% ownership** but in the case of the **IDRCL, 51% shares are in private hands**.

▪ Functioning of the Dual Structure:

- The **NARCL will first purchase bad loans from banks**.
- It will pay **15% of the agreed price in cash** and the remaining **85% will be in the form of “Security Receipts”**.
- When the assets are sold, with the help of IDRCL, the **commercial banks will be paid back the rest**.
- If the bad bank is unable to sell the bad loan, or has to sell it at a loss, **then the government guarantee will be invoked**.
 - The difference between what the commercial bank was supposed to get and what the bad bank was able to raise will be paid from the Rs 30,600 crore that has been provided by the government.
- This **guarantee is extended for a period of five years**.

▪ Demand of Indian Banks:

- Normally, a **single entity to be held accountable as owner, and for recovery of the assets**, is the practice followed across geographies.
- Possibly a ‘Principal and Agent mechanism’ or similar arrangement may evolve to resolve this issue.
- The [Indian Banks’ Association](#) is learnt to have wanted a dual structure, with the AMC as a privately held entity, to be out of the purview of the regulatory entities.

▪ RBI’s Reservation:

- RBI is **not inclined to permit a dual structure** in which one entity acquires [non-performing loans](#) and another reaches a **resolution**. It has now indicated that **both the acquisition and resolution should be housed under the same legal entity**.
- The impediments include **issues arising from the ownership structure and operational mechanism**, with the proposed setting up of two separate entities — the **NARCL and the IDRCL**.

Bad Bank

▪ About:

- The bad bank **is an ARC or an Asset Management Company (AMC)** that takes over the bad loans of commercial banks, manages them and finally recovers the money over a period of time.
- The bad bank **is not involved in lending and taking deposits**, but helps commercial banks clean up their balance sheets and resolve bad loans.
- The takeover of bad loans is normally below the book value of the loan and the **bad bank tries to recover as much as possible subsequently**.

▪ Effect of Bad Bank:

- **Commercial Banks' Perspective:** Commercial banks are saddled with high NPA (Non-Performing Assets/loans) levels, setting up of the Bad bank will help.
 - That's because **such a bank will get rid of all its toxic assets**, which were reducing its profits, in one quick move.
 - When the recovery money is paid back, it will further **improve the bank's position**. Meanwhile, it can start lending again.
- **Government and Taxpayer Perspective:** Whether it is recapitalising PSBs laden with bad loans or giving guarantees for security receipts, the money is coming from the taxpayers' pocket.
 - While recapitalisation and such guarantees are often designated as "reforms", they are band aids at best.
 - The only **sustainable solution is to improve the lending operation in PSBs**.
 - The plan of bailing out commercial banks will collapse if the bad bank is unable to sell such impaired assets in the market. **The burden indeed will fall upon the taxpayer.**

Way Forward

- So long as Public Sector Banks' managements remain beholden to politicians and bureaucrats, their deficit in professionalism will remain and subsequently, prudential norms in lending will continue to suffer.
- Therefore, a **bad bank is a good idea, but the main challenge lies with tackling the underlying structural problems** in the banking system and announcing reforms accordingly.

[Source: IE](#)

Chakmas and Hajongs Communities

For Prelims: Chakmas and Hajongs Community

For Mains: Challenges faced by Chakmas and Hajongs communities and ways to address them, Laws, Institutions and Bodies constituted for the Protection and Betterment of these Vulnerable Sections.

Why in News

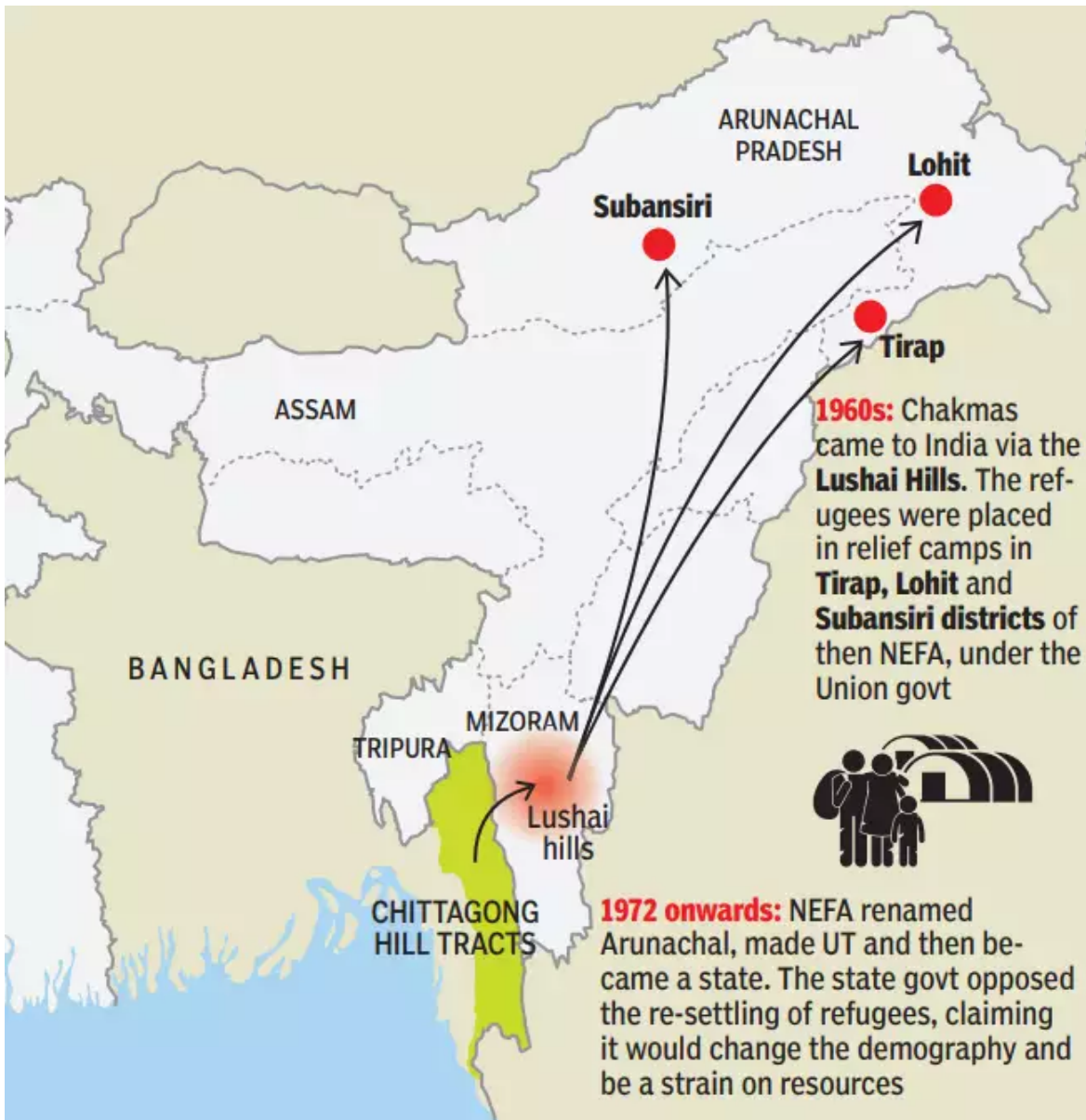
Recently, the [National Human Rights Commission \(NHRC\)](#) in its order directed Ministry of Home Affairs and Arunachal Pradesh to submit action taken report within six weeks against alleged **racial profiling and relocation of the Chakmas and Hajongs from the State**.

- Also both the authorities were directed to "**ensure that human rights of the Chakmas and Hajongs are protected by all the ways**".
- Members of the two communities have allegedly been victims of [hate crime](#), **police atrocities and denial of rights and beneficiary programmes**.

Key Points

- **Background:**
 - In 2015, the **Supreme Court directed the State to grant them citizenship**, but this had not yet been implemented.

- In a judgment in 1996, the Court had stated that the **“life and personal liberty of every Chakma residing within the State shall be protected”**.
- In light of these orders and given that **most of the Chakma/Hajong community members were born in the State** and have been living peacefully, the Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister’s announcement, in August 2021, that they would be **relocated outside the State** and that steps would be taken for a “census” of the communities was clearly unwarranted.
- After that **Chakma Development Foundation of India (CDFI)** requested urgent intervention of the NHRC against racial profiling of 65,000 Chakma and Hajong tribals of Arunachal Pradesh through illegal census which was scheduled to commence from **31st December, 2021** (later plan of census was dropped) for their **deportation / expulsion/ relocation from the State**.
 - **Racial profiling** is government or police activity that involves using people's racial and cultural characteristics to identify people to investigate.
- **Issues with the Special Census:**
 - Chakma organisations said the census was nothing but **racial profiling of the two communities** because of their ethnic origin and **violated Article 14 of the Constitution of India and Article 1** of the [International Convention on Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#) **ratified by India**.
 - Article 14 says that no person shall be denied treatment of equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.
 - The [United Nation General Assembly](#) in October 1966 proclaimed 21st March as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, to be commemorated annually.
- **Chakmas and Hajongs:**
 - Mizoram and Tripura have a sizeable population of the **Buddhist Chakmas** while the **Hindu Hajongs mostly inhabit the Garo Hills of Meghalaya** and adjoining areas of Assam.
 - The Chakmas and Hajongs of Arunachal Pradesh are migrants from the Chittagong Hill Tracts of erstwhile **East Pakistan, now Bangladesh**.
 - Displaced by the Kaptai dam on the Karnaphuli River in the 1960s, they sought asylum in India and were settled in relief camps in the southern and south-eastern parts of Arunachal Pradesh from 1964 to 1969.
 - A majority of them live in the **Changlang district** of the State (**Arunachal Pradesh**) today.



▪ **Citizenship Status:**

- Out of the 65,000 Chakmas and Hajongs, about 60,500 are citizens by birth under Section 3 of the [Citizenship Act, 1955](#), after having been born before 1st July 1987, or as descendants of those who were born before this date.
 - The applications of the remaining 4,500 surviving migrants following the 1996 **Supreme Court order have not been processed to date.**
- The **Citizenship (Amendment) Act of 2019**, which amended two sections of the 1955 Act, has nothing to do with the Chakma-Hajongs since they were permanently settled by the Union of India in the 1960s.
- And since 95% of the migrants were born in the **North-East Frontier Agency or Arunachal Pradesh**, the [Inner Line Permit](#) mandatory under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873 for outsiders seeking to visit the State, also does not apply to them.

Way Forward

- The solution to the decades-old issue lies in the **State respecting the rule of law and the judgements of the Supreme Court.**
- There has to be an **end to politicians and political aspirants** deriving mileage from the Chakma-Hajong issue.

[Source: TH](#)

Tipu Sultan

For Prelims: History of India and Indian National Movement, Tipu Sultan and Anglo-Mysore Wars.

For Mains: Modern Indian History, The Freedom Struggle, Tipu Sultan and his contribution to freedom struggle.

Why in News

Recently, naming a playground on Tipu Sultan in Mumbai sparked a controversy.



Key Points

▪ Brief Profile:

- Born in November 1750, Tipu Sultan was **Haidar Ali's son** and a great warrior, also known as the **Tiger of Mysore**.
- He was a **well educated man** fluent in Arabic, Persian, Kanarese and Urdu.
- Mysore had grown in strength under the leadership of powerful rulers like **Haidar Ali (ruled from 1761 to 1782)** and his famous son **Tipu Sultan (ruled from 1782 to 1799)**.
 - Tipu introduced a **number of administrative innovations** during his rule, including his **coinage, a new Mauludi lunisolar calendar, and a new land revenue system** which initiated the growth of Mysore silk industry.
- Embracing **western military methods** like artillery and rockets alongside traditional Indian weapons including war elephants, he ensured his forces could overwhelm his Indian rivals and match the British armies sent against him.

▪ Maintenance of Armed Forces:

- He organised his army on the **European model** with Persian words of command.
 - Though he took the **help of the French officers to train his soldiers**, he never allowed them (French) to develop into a pressure group.
- He was well aware of the importance of a naval force.
 - In 1796, he set up a **Board of Admiralty** and planned for a fleet of 22 battleships and 20 large frigates.
 - He **established three dockyards** at Mangalore, Wajedabad and Molidabad. However, his plans did not fructify.

▪ Fought Against Marathas:

- In 1767, Tipu **commanded a corps of cavalry against the Marathas** in the Carnatic (Karnataka) region of western India, and he fought against the Marathas on several

occasions between 1775 and 1779.

▪ **Role in Anglo-Mysore Wars:**

- The British saw **Haidar and Tipu as ambitious, arrogant and dangerous** – rulers who had to be controlled and crushed.
- **Four wars** were fought with Mysore.
 - **1767-69**: Treaty of Madras.
 - **1780-84**: Treaty of Mangalore.
 - **1790-92**: Treaty of Seringapatam.
 - **1799**: Subsidiary Alliance.
- Only in the last – the **Battle of Seringapatam** – did the Company ultimately win a victory. **Tipu Sultan was killed** defending his capital Seringapatam.
- Mysore was placed under the **former ruling dynasty of the Wodeyars** and a **subsidiary alliance was imposed** on the state.

▪ **Other Related Points:**

- He was also a **patron of science and technology** and is credited as the '**pioneer of rocket technology**' in India.
 - He wrote a **military manual (Fathul Mujahidin)** explaining the operation of rockets.
- Tipu was a **great lover of democracy and a great diplomat** who gave his support to the French soldiers at Seringapatam in setting up a Jacobin Club in 1797.
 - Tipu himself became a **member of the Jacobin Club** and allowed himself to be called **Citizen Tipu**.
 - He planted the Tree of Liberty at Seringapatam.

Subsidiary Alliance

- In 1798, it was introduced by **Wellesley in India**, the ruler of the allying Indian state was compelled to pay a subsidy for the maintenance of the British army in return for getting protection from the British against their enemies.
- Those native princes or rulers who would enter into the **Subsidiary Alliance were not free to declare war against any other power** or enter into negotiations without the consent of the British.
- The Subsidiary Alliance was a **policy of non-interference in the internal affairs** of the allied state, but this was a **promise seldom kept by the British**.
- The payment of the arbitrarily-fixed and artificially-bloated subsidy invariably disrupted the economy of the state and impoverished its people.
- On the other hand, the **British could now maintain a large army** at the cost of the Indian states.
 - They controlled the **defence and foreign relations of the protected ally**, and had a powerful force stationed at the very heart of his lands.
- Lord Wellesley signed his **first Subsidiary Treaty with the Nizam of Hyderabad in 1798**.
- The Nawab of Avadh was forced to sign a **Subsidiary Treaty in 1801**.
- **Peshwa Baji Rao II (Maratha)** signed the Subsidiary Treaty at Bassein in 1802.

[Source: IE](#)

Unusually Colder and Wetter Winter

For Prelims: Western Disturbances, La Nina.

For Mains: Weather Patterns such as La Nina and their impact on India's weather.

Why in News

In India, especially in North India, the winter of 2021-22 has been unusually cold and unusually long. The days, in particular, have **felt colder and chillier than normal**.

Key Points

▪ About:

◦ Colder:

- Since December 2021, maximum temperatures across the North, Northwest and Central India regions have persistently remained below normal, resulting in “cold day” conditions. Technically, this means more than just a day that is cold.
 - A cold day is one in which **the maximum temperature falls below 16 degrees Celsius**, a phenomenon that is commonly seen during the winter months in the northern plains of India.

◦ Wetter:

- Light to moderate intensity rainfall is also commonly seen during winters in neighboring regions of North India.
- This January, however, has seen **widespread rain across the central, northwestern, northern, eastern, and northeastern** regions of India.
- As many as 24 states or Union Territories have recorded **rainfall varying from excess to large excess this month**.

◦ Less Fog than Normal:

- December and January are known for the formation of dense fog across North India.
 - In January 2022, the national capital remained affected by fog for 252 hours against a normal of 292 hours.
- IMD officials said the ongoing winter has recorded the **lowest fog hours since 1991-92 over Delhi**.

▪ Causes:

◦ Western Disturbances:

- Until 25th January 2022, **seven western disturbances had passed over India** — nearly all of them **strong enough to cause widespread rain, snowfall, and turbulent weather across large geographical areas** between Pakistan and Northeast India.
 - These systems caused hailstorms in northern Maharashtra, and heavy rainfall in Tamil Nadu.

◦ La Niña:

- Frequent and higher numbers of **western disturbances are associated with La Niña**.
- **At present, moderate intensity La Niña conditions** — which manifests itself as cooler than normal sea surface temperatures in the equatorial Pacific Ocean — are prevailing.

◦ Cold Winds from Far North:

- After a western disturbance crosses India, **cold winds from the far north of the country penetrate to lower latitudes**, and can reach up to even Telangana and Maharashtra, leading to colder weather, and sometimes to cold wave conditions.

◦ Low-lying Clouds and Moisture:

- The presence of low-lying clouds and the availability of moisture along the Indo-Gangetic plains made it favorable for cold day conditions and the additional chill factor experienced during the day time.
- This was the longest and most intense spell of the season so far.

Western Disturbance

- **Western Disturbance (WD)**, labeled as an **extra-tropical storm** originating in the Mediterranean, is **an area of low pressure that brings sudden showers, snow and fog** in

northwest India.

- The disturbance **travels from the “western” to the eastern direction.**
 - These travel **eastwards on high-altitude westerly jet streams** - massive ribbons of fast winds traversing the earth from west to east.
- **Disturbance means** an area of “disturbed” or reduced air pressure.
 - Equilibrium exists in nature due to which the air in a region tries to normalise its pressure.
- In the term “extra-tropical storm”, storm refers to low pressure. “Extra-tropical” means outside the tropics. As the WD originates outside the tropical region, the word “extra-tropical” has been associated with them.

La Niña

- **La Niña** events represent **periods of below-average sea surface temperatures across the east-central Equatorial Pacific.**
 - It is indicated by sea-surface temperature decreased by more than 0.9°F for at least five successive three-month seasons.
- The La Nina event is observed when the **water temperature in the Eastern Pacific gets comparatively colder than normal**, as a consequence of which, there is a strong high pressure over the eastern equatorial Pacific.
- In India, the La Nina is generally **responsible for cooler than normal winters and more than normal rainfall.**

[Source: IE](#)

Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS)

Why in News

Recently, the officials of **Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS)** estimated that RRTS **will reduce CO₂ emissions by taking around 1.5 lakh private vehicles off the road.**

- The corridor will **start from Sarai Kale Khan in Delhi, pass through Ghaziabad, and reach Modipuram in Meerut (Uttar Pradesh).**
- The RRTS, the first of its kind in the national capital, will run **at a speed of 100 km per hour** and commuters will reach Meerut in 50-60 minutes.

Key Points

- **Background:**
 - The **Planning Commission** formed a Task Force in 2005 under the **Chairmanship of Secretary, Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD)** to develop a multi modal transit system for **Delhi National Capital Region (NCR).**
 - This was included in the Integrated Transport Plan for **NCR 2032** with special emphasis on **Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS)** connecting regional centres.
 - The Task Force identified **8 corridors** and **prioritised three corridors** namely Delhi-Meerut, Delhi-Panipat and Delhi- Alwar for implementation.
- **About RRTS:**

- RRTS is a **new, dedicated, high speed, high capacity, comfortable commuter service** connecting regional nodes in NCR.
- RRTS is **different from conventional Railway** as it will provide reliable, high frequency, point to point regional travel at high speed along dedicated path way.
- RRTS is **different from metro** as it caters to passengers looking to travel a relatively longer distance with fewer stops and at higher speed.

▪ **Intended Benefits:**

- **Environment Friendly:** The corridor is estimated to reduce **2.5 lakh CO₂ tonnes/year** of total annual greenhouse gas emissions, making the city a cleaner and a much better place to live.
- **Economic Development:** It is estimated to increase the **share of public transportation usage** along the corridor from **37% to 63%**.
 - High-speed connectivity will result in **balanced economic development** across the region, leading to economic benefits to all strata of society and many nodes of development rather than all economic activity happening at one place.
- **Sustainable Urbanization:** The project will serve as a **demonstration for developing high-capacity rapid urban transit corridors in other urban areas of India.**
 - It will help in reducing traffic congestion and total emissions from the transport sector in NCR.

— 3 Times faster than Metro

RRTS	Design Speed 180 Km/hr	Ops Speed 160 Km/hr	Average Speed 100 Km/hr 150 Km/hr for Non Stop	Time to Travel 100 Km – 1 Hour
-------------	---------------------------	------------------------	---	-----------------------------------

Metro	Speed 90 Km/hr	Ops Speed 80 Km/hr	Average Speed 32 Km/hr	Time to Travel 100 Km – 3 hours
--------------	-------------------	-----------------------	---------------------------	------------------------------------

[Source: IE](#)

Swachhata Start-Up Challenge

Why in News

Recently, the **Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs (MoHUA)**, in partnership with the Department of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) and Agence Française de Développement (AFD) launched the **Swachhata Start-Up Challenge** under [Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban 2.0](#).

Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban 2.0

- SBM-U 2.0 was launched on 1st October 2021 to achieve the vision of **‘Garbage Free Cities’** over

the next five years.

- It focuses on source segregation of garbage, reduction in single-use plastic and air pollution, by effectively managing waste from construction and demolition activities and [bioremediation of all legacy dump sites](#).
- Under this mission, **all wastewater will be treated properly before it is discharged into water bodies**, and the government is trying to make maximum reuse a priority.

Key Points

▪ About:

- It has been launched **to provide an impetus to innovative start-ups to come forward and drive catalytic transformation in the sanitation and waste management sector**.
 - The Challenge **invites solutions across four thematic areas** viz. (i) social inclusion, (ii) zero dump (solid waste management), (iii) plastic waste management and (iv) transparency through digital enablement.
- It seeks **to promote an enabling environment for enterprise development under SBM-U 2.0**.
- The **French Development Agency (AFD) will provide seed funding** to the tune of 25 lakh rupees and one year of customised support to each of the 10 selected start-ups.
- With the appetite for risk and spirit of innovation at its core, the start-up space **holds immense potential to revolutionise India's waste management sector**.
 - It is **in line with** [Atmanirbhar Bharat](#) and [Make in India](#).

▪ Objectives:

- It aims to capitalise on the start-up movement by providing opportunities for entrepreneurship to young innovators to create socially impactful and market ready business solutions.

▪ Significance:

- This initiative comes at a time when France and the [EU \(European Union\)](#) are looking to work closely with India on the international stage **to negotiate a global treaty on plastic pollution**.
- It is also significant because today, the start-up space is evolving rapidly with India leading the world with over 70 unicorns (crossing the valuation of USD 1 billion).

Initiatives to Tackle Plastic Pollution

- On [World Environment Day \(5th June\), 2018](#) the world leaders vowed to **“Beat Plastic Pollution”** & eliminate its use completely.
- The [Group of 20 \(G20\)](#) environment ministers, agreed to adopt a **new implementation framework** for actions to tackle the issue of [marine plastic waste](#) on a global scale.
- India's [Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016](#) state that every local body has to be responsible for setting up infrastructure for [segregation](#), collection, processing, and disposal of plastic waste.
 - **Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules 2018** introduced the concept of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR).
 - **A new national framework on plastic waste management** is in the works, which will introduce third-party audits as part of the monitoring mechanism.
- [India Plastics Pact](#), the first in Asia, was launched in September 2021 in [collaboration with Confederation of Indian Industries \(CII\) and World Wide Fund for Nature \(WWF\)](#) to set time-bound commitments to reduce plastics from their value chains.

Gallantry Awards

Why in News

On the eve of the [73rd Republic Day](#), six personnel of the Indian Army were awarded the **Shaurya Chakra**, the **third-highest peacetime Gallantry Award** in the country, in recognition of their distinguished service.

- Of them, five were awarded posthumously.
- The gallantry awards are **announced twice in a year** — first on the occasion of the Republic Day and then on the occasion of the Independence Day.



Key Points

- **Gallantry Awards in India:**
 - Post-Independence, first three gallantry awards namely **Param Vir Chakra, Maha Vir Chakra and Vir Chakra were instituted** by the government of India on 26th January, 1950 which were deemed to have **effect from 15th August, 1947**.
 - Thereafter, **other three** gallantry awards — the **Ashoka Chakra Class-I, the Ashoka Chakra Class-II and the Ashoka Chakra Class-III** — were instituted in 1952, which were deemed to have effect from 15th August, 1947.
 - These awards were renamed as **Ashoka Chakra, Kirti Chakra and Shaurya Chakra** respectively in January 1967.
 - **Order of precedence** of these awards is the Param Vir Chakra, the Ashoka Chakra, the Mahavir Chakra, the Kirti Chakra, the Vir Chakra and the Shaurya Chakra.
- **People Eligible for the Awards:**
 - **All officers of all ranks of the [Army](#), [Navy](#) and the [Air Force](#) or of any of the reserve forces**, territorial army and any other lawfully constituted armed forces.
 - In addition to the above-mentioned personnel, **matrons, sisters, nurses, alongside the staff of the nursing services and other services** pertaining to hospitals and nursing and civilians, both male and females, serving regularly or temporarily under the orders, directions or supervision of any of the above-mentioned forces.
- **Wartime Highest Gallantry Awards:**

- **Param Vir Chakra:**
 - It is **India's highest military decoration awarded** for displaying distinguished acts of valor during wartime whether on land, at sea or in the air.
- **Maha Vir Chakra:**
 - It is the **second highest gallantry award** for acts of conspicuous gallantry in the presence of the enemy whether on land, at sea or in the air.
- **Vir Chakra:**
 - It is the country's **third-highest wartime gallantry award** after Param Vir Chakra and Maha Vir Chakra.
- **Peacetime Highest Gallantry Awards:**
 - **Ashoka Chakra:**
 - It is the **highest military award during peacetime** for valor, courageous action or sacrifice.
 - It is awarded for **most conspicuous bravery** or some act of daring or pre-eminent act of valor or self-sacrifice otherwise than in the face of the enemy.
 - **Kirti Chakra:**
 - It is the **second highest peacetime gallantry award** and is awarded for valor, courageous action or self-sacrifice away from the field of battle.
 - **Shaurya Chakra:**
 - It is awarded to the personnel of the armed forces for instances of **extraordinary gallantry**.
- **Other Awards:**
 - **Sena Medal:**
 - It is awarded for **acts of exceptional devotion** to duty or courage **in the Army**.
 - **Nao Sena Medal:**
 - It is awarded for individual acts of **exceptional devotion to duty or courage in the Navy**.
 - **Vayu Sena Medal:**
 - It is awarded for individual acts of exceptional devotion to duty or **courage in the Air Force**.

[Source: TH](#)

Bangladesh top Destination for Indian Pomegranates

Why in News

Bangladesh has emerged as the top destination for exported Indian pomegranates over the last few years.

- Last fiscal (2020-21), India had exported 68,502.9 tonnes of the fruit, of which 36,906.77 tonnes (more than 50%) had gone to Bangladesh.

Key Points

▪ About:

- Pomegranate (*Punica granatum*) **is grown in tropical and subtropical regions of the world.**
 - It **grows well under semi-arid conditions** and can be grown upto an altitude of 500 m. above mean sea level. It **thrives well under hot, dry summer and cold winters** provided irrigation facilities are available.
- **Grown mostly in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Gujarat**, pomegranate has emerged as **a major export crop for drought-prone areas of the state.**
- Over the years, Indian exports have become stagnant at around 50,000-60,000 tonnes as **concerns over the quality of the fruit eclipsed the growth potential.**
- **While the European Union is a major market** where the fruit fetches premium prices, the standards governing quality are higher there.
 - **Non-availability of export-ready fruit** has, over the years, seen European markets slipping slowly out of Indian exporters' hands.

▪ Reasons for Export Growth in Bangladesh:

- **Ease of transportation and relatively relaxed import norms** have helped Indian growers take their fruit to Bangladesh even as the share of export to European countries has dropped.
- The fruit **can be exported to Bangladesh round the year** and thus the produce can be sent even when the European season is over.

[Source: IE](#)
