



Mediterranean Sea



Key Points

Physical Geography:

- A sea of the Atlantic Ocean, lies between the continents of Eurasia and Africa enclosed almost completely by land.
- **Bordering Countries** (21 countries): Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Slovenia, Spain, Syria, Tunisia, and Turkey.
- To the west **it is connected to the Atlantic Ocean through the Strait of Gibraltar**, to the east **with the Black Sea through the Dardanelles Straits**, and to the south **with the Red Sea through Suez Canal**.
- **Nile river (Africa)** drains into the Mediterranean Sea.

Recent Related Events:

- [Western Disturbances](#)
- [Bomb Cyclone](#)
- [Maiden Navy Exercise: India-Algeria](#)
- [Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam's \(GERD\) on Nile](#)

Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences 2022

Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences 2022



Winner

Ben S. Bernanke, Douglas W. Diamond and Philip H. Dybvig for “Research on Banks and Financial Crises”.

Basis of Research

- Reason behind bank's instability and long-term consequences of a banking crisis
- Damage following bank collapse
- Failure to establish new banks after fall in economy

Significance

- The research reduces the risk of financial crisis developing into long-term depressions with severe consequences for society.

Contribution

Ben S. Bernanke:

- Analysed the Great Depression of the 1930s, and demonstrated how failing banks played a decisive role in the depression. Showed how bank runs were a decisive factor in the crisis becoming so deep and prolonged.
- Was the head of the US central bank, the Federal Reserve, when the 2008 crisis hit, put knowledge from research into policy.

Douglas W. Diamond and Philip H. Dybvig:

- Diamond showed how banks are better suited to assessing borrowers' creditworthiness and ensuring that loans are used for good investments.
- Worked together to develop theoretical models explaining why banks exist, how their role in society makes them vulnerable to rumors about their impending collapse, and how society can lessen this vulnerability.
- Presented a solution to bank vulnerability, in the form of deposit insurance from the government.

Indian Nobel Prize Laureates

- In 1998, Amartya Sen was awarded the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences “for his contributions to welfare economics”.
- In 2019, Abhijit Banerjee was awarded the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences with his wife Esther Duflo and Harvard University's Michel Kremer, for his experimental work in order to alleviate global poverty.

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Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences 2022

For Prelims: Nobel Prize 2022, Banking System

For Mains: Nobel Prize 2022, Significance of Banking System in Economy

Why in News?

The **Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences** has decided to award the **2022 Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences** in Memory of [Alfred Nobel](#) to **Ben S. Bernanke, Douglas W. Diamond** and **Philip H. Dybvig** “for research on banks and financial crises.”

- [The 2021 Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences](#) was awarded in one half to **Canadian-born David Card** (labor economics) and the other half jointly to **Israeli-American Joshua D Angrist and Dutch-American Guido W Imbens** (analysis of causal relationships).
- Other 2022 Nobel Prizes for [Literature](#), [Chemistry](#), [Physics](#), [Medicine](#) and [Peace](#) have already been announced.

Note

Unlike the other prizes, the **economics award wasn't established in Alfred Nobel's will of 1895** but by the **Swedish central bank** in his memory. The first winner was selected in **1969**.

What Contribution have these Laureates made in the Banking System?

- **Ben S. Bernanke:**
 - Ben Bernanke analysed the [Great Depression of the 1930s](#), the worst **economic crisis** in modern history.
 - Through statistical analysis, Bernanke demonstrated **how failing banks played a decisive role** in the global depression of the 1930s.
 - He showed **how bank runs were a decisive factor in the crisis becoming so deep and prolonged.**
 - It also helped in understanding the **importance of well-functioning bank regulation.**
 - Bernanke was the head of the US central bank, the [Federal Reserve](#), when the [2008 crisis hit](#), and was able to “**put knowledge from research into policy**”.
- **Douglas W. Diamond and Philip H. Dybvig:**
 - Both Diamond and Dybvig worked together to develop **theoretical models** explaining why banks exist, how their role in society makes them vulnerable to rumors about their impending collapse, and how society can lessen this vulnerability. These insights form the foundation of modern bank regulation.
 - They presented a **solution to bank vulnerability**, in the form of [deposit insurance from the government](#). When depositors know that the state has guaranteed their money, **they no longer need to rush to the bank** as soon as rumors start about a bank run.

- Diamond also showed **how banks perform a societally important function**. As intermediaries between **savers and borrowers**, banks are better suited to **assessing borrowers' creditworthiness** and ensuring that **loans are used for good investments**.

[Infographics](#)

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Mains

Q. What policy instruments were deployed to contain the Great Economic Depression? **(2013)**.

Source: [IE](#)

Decline in Forex Reserves

For Prelims: Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Foreign exchange reserves, FPIs, Special Drawing Rights

For Mains: Impacts of Low Forex reserves on Indian Economy

Why in News?

According to the [Reserve Bank of India \(RBI\)](#), India's [forex reserves](#) have fallen by USD 110 billion in the last 13 months.

What are Forex Reserves?

- **About: Forex reserves** are assets held on reserve by a central bank in foreign currencies, which can include **bonds, treasury bills** and other government securities.
 - Most foreign exchange reserves are held in US dollars.
- **Components:**
 - Foreign Currency Assets
 - Gold reserves
 - [Special Drawing Rights](#)
 - Reserve position with the [International Monetary Fund \(IMF\)](#).
- **Significance of Forex Reserves:**
 - Supporting and maintaining confidence in the policies for monetary and [exchange rate](#) management.
 - Provides the capacity to intervene in support of the national or union currency.
 - Limits external vulnerability by maintaining foreign currency liquidity to absorb shocks during times of crisis or when access to borrowing is curtailed.

What are Special Drawings Rights?

- The SDR is an **international reserve asset**, created by the IMF in 1969 to supplement its member countries' official reserves.

- The SDR is neither a currency nor a claim on the IMF. Rather, it is a **potential claim on the freely usable currencies of IMF members**. SDRs can be exchanged for these currencies.
- The value of the **SDR is calculated** from a weighted basket of major currencies, **including the US dollar, the euro, the Japanese yen, the Chinese yuan, and the British pound**.
- The interest rate on SDRs or (SDRi) is the interest **paid to members on their SDR holdings**.

What are the Reasons for the Decline in India's Forex Reserves?

- **Current Scenario:**
 - India's forex reserves have fallen by USD 110 billion since September 2021 where it stood at a record high of USD 642.45 billion.
 - It needs to be noted that **Indian rupee is a freely floating currency**, and its **exchange rate is market determined**. The RBI does not have any fixed exchange rate.
 - Despite this drastic decline, **India has been faring much better than several reserve currencies, EMEs (emerging market economies) and its Asian peers**.
- **Causes of Declining Forex Reserves:**
 - **Defending Rupee:** The central bank has been selling dollars from the forex reserves to support the rupee amid pressures caused majorly by global developments.
 - The intervention is needed to curb the free fall of the rupee and reduce volatility in the market.
 - **Aggressive Policy of the US Fed:**
 - **Capital Outflows:** Capital outflows by [foreign portfolio investors \(FPIs\)](#) as the US Federal Reserve started the **monetary policy tightening and interest rate hikes**.
 - FPIs have begun to withdraw from the Indian markets. These FPIs were **sellers in financial and IT services and buyers in telecom and capital goods**.
 - **Valuation Loss:** The valuation loss, reflecting the **appreciation of the US dollar** against major currencies and the **decline in gold prices** also played a part in the decrease in foreign exchange reserves.
 - About 67% of the decline in reserves during the current financial year was due to valuation changes arising from an appreciating US dollar and higher US bond yields.

What are the Factors Affecting Exchange Rates?

- **Inflation Rates:** Changes in [market inflation](#) cause changes in currency exchange rates. For e.g., a country with a **lower inflation rate than another will see an appreciation in the value of its currency**.
- **Balance of Payments:** It consists of a total number of transactions including exports, imports, debt, etc.
 - A deficit in the current account due to spending more of its Forex on importing products than it is earning through the sale of exports causes depreciation, and it further **fluctuates the exchange rate of its domestic currency**.
- **Government Debt:** Government debt is a debt owned by the central government. A country with large government debt is less likely to acquire foreign capital, leading to inflation.
 - In this case, foreign investors will sell their bonds in the open market if the market predicts government debt within a certain country. As a result, a decrease in the value of its exchange rate will follow.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. With reference to Balance of Payments, which of the following constitutes/constitute the Current Account? (2014)

1. Balance of trade
2. Foreign assets
3. Balance of invisibles
4. Special Drawing Rights

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 and 3
(c) 1 and 3
(d) 1, 2 and 4

Ans: (c)

Exp:

- **The Balance of Payments (BoP) is composed of two main aspects: Current Account and Capital Account.**
- The Current Account of BoP measures the inflow and outflow of goods, services, investment incomes and transfer payments. Trade in services (invisibles); trade in goods (visibles); unilateral transfers; remittances from abroad; and international aid are some of the main components of the Current Account. When all the goods and services are combined, together they make up the Balance of Trade (BoT) of a country. **Hence, 1 and 3 are correct.**
- Capital Account of BoP records all those transactions, between the residents of a country and the rest of the world, which cause a change in the assets or liabilities of the residents of the country or its government.
- Loans and borrowing by private or public sectors; **investments; and changes in the forex reserves** are some of the examples of the components of the Capital Account. **Hence, 2 and 4 are not correct. Therefore, option (c) is the correct answer.**

Mains

Q. Justify the need for FDI for the development of the Indian economy. Why there is gap between MoUs signed and actual FDIs? Suggest remedial steps to be taken for increasing actual FDIs in India. **(2016)**

Source: IE

International Girl Child Day

For Prelims: International Girl Child Day, United Nations General Assembly, Sustainable Development Goals

For Mains: Issues Related to Children, Women's Issues

Why in News?

Every year, International Girl Child Day is observed on 11th October 2022.

Why do We celebrate International Girl Child Day?

- **History:**
 - First time in history, the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action** in 1995, proposed an action plan to advance the rights of girls.
 - In 2011, the [United Nations General Assembly](#) adopted **Resolution 66/170** to declare 11th October as the International Day of the Girl Child.
- **Theme for 2022:** “Our time is now—our rights, our future”
- **Significance:**
 - The day is observed to **recognise girls' rights and the unique challenges girls face around the world.**
 - The International Day of the Girl Child **focuses attention on the need to address the challenges girls face and to promote girls' empowerment** and the fulfilment of their human rights.
 - **Also, [Women's empowerment and gender equality](#)** are integral to all 17 [Sustainable Development Goals](#).
 - The achievement of gender equality is the fifth of 17 **SDGs** laid out in the Sustainable Development Agenda.
 - Justice, inclusion, economic growth, and a sustainable environment can only be achieved by ensuring the rights of women and girls across all the goals.

What is the State of Girl Child in India?

- **About:**
 - According to the recently released report [“Accidental Deaths & Suicides in India Report 2021”](#) by [National Crime Records Bureau \(NCRB\)](#):
 - Crime against children surpassed the **pre-pandemic levels after declining in 2020 due to Covid-related restriction.**
 - In 2021, **1.49 lakh such cases were recorded**, higher than 1.48 lakh in 2019.
 - The data published by the NCRB is specifically grim for the eastern states of India:
 - **Sikkim has the highest rate of sexual offences** against children followed by Kerala, Meghalaya, Haryana and Mizoram.
 - **West Bengal and Odisha are among the top five states** (along with Maharashtra, MP and UP) which account for **47.1% of the total crimes committed against children** across the country.
 - There were 9,523 cases of crimes against children recorded alone in West Bengal in 2021.
- **Issues related to Girl Child:**
 - **Female Infanticide and Foeticide:**
 - India has one of the highest rates of female foeticide in the world.
 - The **Census of 2011** has recorded the **lowest ever sex ratio of 914 in the age group 0-6 years** with 3 million missing girls; from 78.8 million in 2001 to 75.8 million in 2011.
 - **Child Marriage:**
 - Each year, at least 1.5 million girls under 18 get married in India. Nearly 16% of adolescent girls aged 15-19 are currently married.
 - While child marriage has declined, it has been marginal: from 27% in 2015-16 to 23% in 2019-20, according to [National Family Health Survey \(NFHS\) 5](#).
 - **Devoid of Education:**
 - Girls are encouraged and also engaged more in household work and drop out of school at an early age.
 - A study by the International Centre for Research on Women has found that **girls out of school are 3.4 times more likely to be married** or have their marriage already fixed than girls who are still in school.

▪ Related Initiatives:

- **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao:**
 - Launched in 2015 with the aim to **address sex selective abortion** and the **declining child sex ratio** which was at 918 girls for every 1,000 boys in 2011.
- **Sukanya Samridhi Yojana:**
 - Launched in 2015, in order to **promote the welfare of girl children**. It encourages parents to invest and build funds for the future studies and marriage expenses of the girl's children.
- **CBSE Udaan Scheme:**
 - UDAAN is a project launched by the CBSE to **address the low enrolment of girl students in prestigious engineering institutions** and the **teaching gap** between school education and engineering entrance examinations.
- **National Scheme of Incentive to Girls for Secondary Education (NSIGSE):**
 - It is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** launched in 2008, which aims to **promote enrollment of girl children in the age group of 14-18** at secondary stage, especially those who passed Class VIII and to encourage the secondary education of such girls.
- **Scheme for Adolescent Girls:** Government is also implementing **Scheme for Adolescent Girls**, which aims to facilitate, educate and empower Adolescent Girls (AGs) so as to enable them to become self-reliant and aware citizens.

Way Forward

- **Strengthening the Child Protection System:**
 - **Urgent measures are needed to strengthen the country's child protection system** and to make the police, judicial and legal systems more proactive.
- **Community-based Child Protection Mechanisms:**
 - The **offenses related to children have a low conviction rate** and a high pendency rate hence, **boosting community-based child protection mechanisms**, such as village-level child protection committees can play a critical role.
- **Raising Social Awareness:**
 - **Patriarchal social attitudes and prejudices need to be addressed** by including sensitisation on gender issues in school education.

[Source: DTE](#)

World Mental Health Day 2022

For Prelims: World Mental Health Day, Covid-19, Indian Initiatives for Mental Health, Manodarpan, National Mental Health Program, Mental HealthCare Act 2017

For Mains: Issue of Mental Health

Why in News?

On the occasion of **World Mental Health Day (10th October)**, the Lancet released a report titled **“Ending Stigma and Discrimination in Mental Health”** and called for **radical action to end stigma and discrimination associated with mental health**.

What are the Findings of the Report?

- **Prevalence of Mental Health Condition:**
 - Nearly one billion people globally are living with a mental health condition.
 - One out of seven in the age bracket of **10-19-year-olds suffers from a mental condition.**
 - These people experience a **double threat** – the impact of the condition itself and the damaging social consequences of **stigma and discrimination.**
 - The [Covid-19 pandemic](#) helped highlight the **urgent mental health situation across the world.**
 - There was an estimated 25 % rise in the **prevalence of depression and anxiety in the first year of the pandemic.**
- **Impact:**
 - 90% of people living with mental health conditions feel negatively impacted by stigma and discrimination.
 - Stigma can **“cause social exclusion and disempowerment of people with mental health conditions** leading to **discrimination and human rights violations**, including problems in accessing healthcare, challenges in securing employment, and increased likelihood of health complications leading to early death.
- **Indian Scenario:**
 - Though there is a gradual reduction of stigma in India, it continues to be a **real and present problem.**
 - Women with a diagnosis of severe mental disorder and their family members do face more stigma which has **ramifications for marriage and employment preventing social inclusion.**
 - The Indian media, especially the visual media like television serials continue to portray mental illness negatively.
- **Suggestions:**
 - There should be **immediate action from governments**, international organisations, employers, healthcare provider and media organisations, along with **active contributions from people with lived experience**, to work together to eliminate mental health stigma and discrimination.
 - Employers are to **promote full access to educational opportunities**, work participation and return-to-work programmes for people with mental health conditions and the school curriculum **should include sessions for students to improve understanding of mental health conditions.**
 - There is a need to empower and support **people with lived experience of mental health conditions to play active roles in stigma reduction efforts.**

Why is World Mental Health Day Celebrated?

- **About:**
 - World Mental Health Day is marked on 10th October every year to spread awareness and education about mental health issues across the world.
 - The first time World Mental Health Day was observed was on 10th October, 1992.
 - The day was started as an **annual activity of the World Federation for Mental Health** by the then Deputy Secretary-General Richard Hunter.
- **Theme for Year 2022:**
 - Making mental health for all a global priority.

What Initiatives are Taken by India to Promote Mental Health?

- **National Mental Health Program:**
 - To **address the huge burden of mental disorders and shortage of qualified professionals** in the field of mental health, the government has been implementing the National Mental Health Program (NMHP) since 1982.
- **[Mental HealthCare Act 2017:](#)**
 - The Mental Health Care Act (MHCA) 2017 came into force in 2018 to meet the **requirements of the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)** which India ratified in 2007.
- **[Kiran Helpline:](#)**

- It offers **mental health rehabilitation services** with the objective of early screening, first-aid, psychological support, distress management, promoting positive behaviours, etc.
- **Manodarpan:**
 - The Ministry of Human Resources Development (MHRD) (**now Ministry of Education**) launched it under **Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan**. It is aimed to provide psychosocial support to students, family members and teachers for their mental health and well-being during the times of Covid-19.
- **Mental Health and Normalcy Augmentation System (MANAS):**
 - In 2021, the government of India launched MANAS (Mental Health and Normalcy Augmentation System) mobile App to promote mental wellbeing across age different groups.

Way Forward

- Mental health situation in India demands **active policy interventions and resource allocation** by the government. To reduce the stigma around mental health, **we need measures to train and sensitize the community/society.**
- India also needs **a constant stream of funds for educating and creating awareness** about mental health and chronic issues around it.
- The need of the **hour is to provoke masses to learn about mental health through campaigns like Swachh Mansikta Abhiyan.**

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Mains

Q. What does this quotation mean to you - "We can never obtain peace in the outer world until and unless we obtain peace within ourselves." - Dalai Lama **(2021)**

Source: [TH](#)

Revenue Deficit Grants

For Prelims: Revenue Deficit Grants, Grants-in-Aid, Finance Commission, Consolidated Fund of India, Article 269, Article 268, Article 275

For Mains: Centre-State Relations, Government Policies & Interventions

Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Finance released the monthly installment of revenue deficit grant of Rs.7,183 crore to 14 States.

What is the Post Devolution Revenue Deficit (PDRD)?

▪ About:

- The Centre provides the [Post Devolution Revenue Deficit \(PDRD\) Grant](#) to the States under **Article 275 of the Indian Constitution**.
 - Article 275 provides for the payment of the sums as Parliament may by law provide as grants-in aid to the States in need of assistance.
- The grants are paid out of the [Consolidated Fund of India](#) **in each year**, and different sums may be fixed for different States.
 - These grants are to be of the nature of capital and recurring sums as may be necessary.

▪ Objective:

- These grants aim to enable the states to meet the cost of state level welfare schemes or to improve the level of administration of scheduled areas.
- Grants are **primarily intended to correct Inter-State disparities in financial resources** and to coordinate the maintenance and expansion of the welfare schemes of the State Governments on a uniform national level.

▪ Recommendation for Grants:

- The grants are released as per the [recommendations of the Finance Commission](#) in monthly installments **to meet the gap in Revenue Accounts of the States post-devolution** (of the divisible tax pool of the Centre).
- The **15th Finance Commission (FC) has recommended post devolution revenue deficit grants** amounting to about Rs. 3 trillion over the five-year period ending FY26.
 - The eligibility of States to receive this grant and the quantum of grant was **decided by the Commission** based on the gap between assessment of revenue and expenditure of the State.
 - The States who have been recommended for PDRD Grant by the 15th FC during 2022-23 are: Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tripura, Uttarakhand and West Bengal.

How are Center State Financial Relations governed by the Constitution?

▪ Constitutional Provisions:

- The Indian Constitution has **made elaborate provisions, relating to the distribution of the taxes as well as non-tax revenues** and the power of borrowing, supplemented by provisions for grants-in-aid by the Union to the States.
- **Article 268 to 293 in Part XII deals** with the provisions of financial relations between Centre and States.

▪ Taxing Powers: The Constitution divides the taxing powers between the Centre and the states as follows:

- The **Parliament has exclusive power to levy taxes on subjects enumerated in the Union List**, the state legislature has exclusive power to levy taxes on subjects enumerated in the State List.
- **Both can levy taxes on the subjects enumerated in Concurrent List** whereas residuary power of taxation lies with Parliament only.

▪ Distribution of the Tax Revenue:

- **Article 268:**
 - It provides for the duties **levied by the union but collected and appropriated by the states**.
 - It includes stamp duties on bills of exchange, cheques, etc.
- **Article 269:**
 - It includes taxes **Levied as well as Collected by the Union but Assigned to the States**.
 - These include taxes on the sale and purchase of goods (other than newspapers) in the course of inter-state trade or commerce or the taxes on the consignment of goods in the course of inter-state trade or commerce.
- **Article 269-A:**
 - It provides for **Levy and Collection of Goods and Services Tax (GST)** in the course

of inter-state trade or commerce.

- The GST on supplies during such trade is **levied and collected by the Centre**.
 - But this tax is divided between the Centre and the States in the manner provided by Parliament on the recommendations of the GST Council.
- **Article 270:**
 - It includes **Taxes Levied and Collected by the Union but Distributed between the Union and the States**.
 - It includes all taxes and duties referred to in the Union List except the following:
 - Duties and taxes referred to in Articles 268, 269 and 269-A.
 - Surcharge on taxes and duties referred to in Article 271 (this goes to the Centre exclusively).
 - Any cess levied for specific purposes.
- **Grants-in-Aid:** Besides sharing of taxes between the Centre and the States, the Constitution provides for Grants-in-aid to the States from the Central resources. There are two types of grants:
 - **Statutory Grants (Article 275):** These grants are **given by the Parliament out of the Consolidated Fund of India** to the states in need of assistance. Different States may be granted different sums.
 - **Discretionary Grants (Article 282):** It empowers both the Centre and the states to make any grants for any public purpose, even if it is not within their respective legislative competence.
 - Under this provision, the Centre makes grants to the states. These grants are known as discretionary grants, the reason being that the Centre is under no obligation to give these grants and the matter lies within its discretion.
 - **These grants have a two-fold purpose:** to help the state financially to fulfil plan targets; and to give some leverage to the Centre to influence and coordinate state action to effectuate the national plan.

[Source: TH](#)

Conflict in the Korean Peninsula

For Prelims: Conflict in the Korean Peninsula, North Korean missile launches, 38th parallel, Korean Armistice Agreement, NPT, THAAD

For Mains: Korean War, Cold War, Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 2003, THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense)

Why in News?

Recently, North Korea flew 12 warplanes near its border with South Korea, prompting the latter to scramble 30 military aircraft in response.

- Tensions have risen sharply on the **Korean Peninsula** as North Korea's recent barrage of missile tests prompted **South Korea, the United States and Japan** to conduct joint drills in response.



What is the Conflict in the Korean Peninsula?

▪ Origin:

- The root of the conflict lies in the **Japanese occupation of Korea between 1910- 1945**.
- When Japan was defeated in the [Second World War](#), the Allied forces agreed to establish a **“four-power trusteeship over Korea”** at the **Yalta Conference (1945)**.
- However, the [USSR \(Union of Soviet Socialist Republics\)](#) **invaded Korea and took control of the north while the south remained under the rest of the allies, mainly the USA.**
 - The division of the two regions was along the **38th parallel north**, which still **continues to be the official border** dividing the **two Koreas**.
- **In 1948**, the Republic of Korea (South Korea) and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea) were established.
 - As both tried to enhance their reach, territorially and ideologically, the **Korean Conflict emerged** between the two nations.

▪ The Korean War:

- On 25th June 1950, North Korea, backed by the USSR, launched **an attack on South Korea** and occupied most of the country.
 - In response, the United Nations force **led by the US retaliated**.
- In 1951, the US forces led by Douglas MacArthur crossed the **38th parallel and triggered the entry of China** in support of North Korea.
 - To prevent further escalation, peace **talks began later in 1951**.
- **India was actively involved in negotiating peace in the Korean peninsula** by engaging all the major stakeholders - **US, USSR and China**.
 - In 1952, the Indian resolution on Korea was adopted at the [United Nations \(UN\)](#).
- On 27th July 1953, the [Korean Armistice Agreement](#) was signed between the UN Command, the Korean People’s Army and the Chinese People’s Volunteer Army.
 - It led to an official ceasefire without a Peace treaty. Thus, the war officially never ended.

- This also led to the establishment of the **Korean Demilitarised Zone (DMZ)** – a strip of land running across the Korean Peninsula to serve as a **buffer zone between North Korea and South Korea**.
- In **December 1991, North and South Korea signed a pact** agreeing to refrain from aggression.

What is the US-North Korea Conflict?

- During the **Cold War era**, the US extended its **Nuclear Umbrella** (guarantee of support during a nuclear attack) to its allies i.e. South Korea and Japan.
- North Korea withdrew from the **Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)** in **2003** and afterwards, under present leader Kim Jong-un, it increased nuclear missile testing.
- In response to this, the US started deploying **THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defence)** in South Korea in March 2017.
- The territorial conflict which started between North and South Korea has transformed into a tussle between the US and North Korea.

What are the Recent Acts of Aggression by North Korea?

- In recent years **North Korea has accelerated its nuclear programme** by **increasing its nuclear stockpile**, withdrawn from the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and has tested nuclear explosives multiple times.
- USA has deployed **THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defence)** in South Korea to counter increasing missile adventurism of North Korea.
- North Korea recently **demolished the Inter-Korean Liaison Office in Kaesong**, which was **established in 2018**. In the absence of formal diplomatic relations, the building functioned as a de facto embassy and provided a direct communication channel for the two nations.
- Most recently in 2022, North Korea conducted **a record number of missile tests**.
 - It may further raise tensions by testing an **intercontinental ballistic missile or conducting its first nuclear test explosion** since 2017, following an old pattern of heightening tensions.

What about India's Position in Korean Conflict?

- **Indian's Stand:**
 - India has consistently **voiced its opposition to North Korean nuclear and missile tests**. However, it has **maintained a neutral stance** regarding sanctions.
 - Earlier, during the Korean War (1950- 53), India played **a major role in a cease-fire agreement signed between both the warring sides**.
- **India's Relations with North and South Korea:**
 - In May 2015, the bilateral relationship with South Korea was upgraded to '**special strategic partnership**'.
 - India has a major role to play in **South Korea's Southern Policy** under which the latter is looking at expanding relations beyond its immediate region.
 - Similarly, South Korea is a major player in **India's Act East Policy** under which India aims to promote economic cooperation, cultural ties and develop strategic relationships with countries in the Asia-Pacific.
 - India has diplomatic relations with **North Korea** for over 47 years, which reflects the legacy of India's commitment to the **Non-Alignment Movement**.

Way Forward

- With the post-Covid geopolitical order undergoing major changes and global economic conditions deteriorating, North Korea will want to focus on strengthening its already weak economy, especially when the country has hit hard by the pandemic.
- Furthermore, at some point, **dialogue between North Korea, the United States, South Korea, Japan and other stakeholders on the Korean Peninsula will reopen**.
 - At that juncture, India would be poised to play a constructive role in promoting peace and

- security on the Korean Peninsula.
- Continuing India's engagement with North Korean leadership may **pay off in these foreseeable situations.**

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. What is "Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD)", sometimes seen in the news? (2018)

- (a) An Israeli radar system
- (b) India's indigenous anti-missile programme
- (c) An American anti-missile system
- (d) A defence collaboration between Japan and South Korea.

Ans: (c)

Mains

Q. Evaluate the economic and strategic dimensions of India's Look East Policy in the context of the post-Cold War international scenario. (2016)

[Source: TH](#)

UN Peacekeeping Forces Fatalities

For Prelims: UN Peacekeeping Forces, UN Security Council, Blue helmets.

For Mains: UN Peacekeeping forces and related issues like rise in the number of fatalities of soldiers in UN Peacekeeping Forces.

Why in News?

According to the **United Nations Undersecretary General**, the number of fatalities among [United Nations Peacekeeping Forces \(UNPKF\)](#) in direct attacks is growing.

- Strong requirements for better **training, technology, and equipment** were highlighted.

What are UN Peacekeeping Forces?

- **About:**
 - When the [UN Security Council](#) approved the deployment of UN military observers to the **Middle East in 1948**, the **UN Peacekeeping Forces** were established.
 - UN peacekeeping forces aid nations in negotiating the perilous transition from **war to peace.**

- To carry out several missions approved by the **UN Security Council (UNSC)** and the **UN General Assembly**, it deploys soldiers and police from all over the world and combines them with civilian peacekeepers.
- **International Day of UN Peacekeepers** is celebrated on date **29th May** every year.
 - **2022 Theme:** People. Peace. Progress. The Power of Partnerships.
- **India and UNPKF:**
 - India is among the nations that send the most troops to the **United Nations Peacekeeping Forces**.
 - Example: India is the **second-highest military** and **fifth-highest police** contributing country to the **United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO)**.
 - Over **2,60,000 Indians** have served in **49 U.N. Peacekeeping missions since 1948**.
 - In 2007, India became the first country to deploy an **all-women contingent** to a UN Peacekeeping mission.
 - In the last six decades, **179 Indian soldiers** have died in **UN Peacekeeping operations**.
 - Among **"blue helmets"** it has the greatest death toll of any nation.
 - **Blue Helmets** are the **military personnel of the UN** that work alongside the UN Police and civilian colleagues to promote **"stability, security, and peace processes"**.

What are the most probable reasons for Fatalities?

- The **atmosphere** in which **peacekeeping operations** are taking place is getting worse from both a political and a **security point of view**.
- Many operations, especially large operations like those in **Africa**, engage soldiers against **criminal or terrorist organization** who prefer turmoil over peace and stability.

How can these fatalities be controlled?

- **Geographical equilibrium** and **evenness** must be maintained in **peacekeeping operations**.
- It will necessitate a great deal of effort to increase the **geographical diversification** of the nations providing police and peacekeeping forces.
- India has presented a **10-point formula** to address **security** and **operational challenges** faced by **United Nations peacekeeping missions** around the world.
 - To accomplish the objectives of operations, the leadership of a **peacekeeping force** must build **confidence** and ensure **efficient cooperation** with the host state.
 - **Countries participating** in peacekeeping missions must **determine the agenda**, not the Security Council.
 - With a thorough **understanding of their limits**, peacekeeping missions should be deployed sensibly.
 - **Clearly defined objectives** that are supported by **adequate resources**.
 - **"All-out efforts"** should be made to prosecute those responsible for **atrocities against peacekeepers**.
 - It is essential for ending violent conflicts and constructing global security against external threats.
 - Using **cutting-edge technology** in peacekeeping operations can help overcome security issues.
 - The **military, civilians, and mission leadership** should all be considered while evaluating a mission.
 - An **"exit strategy"** should be considered for peacekeeping deployments from the beginning.
 - The primary duty to safeguard people against non-state groups operating on their soil shall rest with the host government.

Source: TH

Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Forestry Report: FAO

For Prelims: Food and Agriculture Organization, India State of Forest Report, 2021, National Afforestation Programme, Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, Environment Protection Act of 1986, Biodiversity Diversity Act of 2002

For Mains: Forest Conservation and its importance, Forest Resources

Why in News?

According to the [Food and Agriculture Organization's](#) recently released report titled "**Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Forestry Report**", **integrating biodiversity into such 'production forests' is paramount.**

- Mainstreaming Biodiversity is the **process of embedding biodiversity considerations into policies, strategies, and practices of key public and private actors** to promote the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.

What are the Threats to Mainstreaming Biodiversity?

- **Deforestation:** Deforestation continues at an alarming rate of 10 million ha per year (mainly for agricultural expansion) especially in lower income tropical countries.
- **Illegal Forest Activities:** Illegal timber harvesting is estimated to account for 15–30% of global timber production.
- **Low Conservation Profile:** Low profile of conservation outside protected areas.
- **Insufficient Capacity:** Developing countries struggle to enforce forest and biodiversity regulations.
- **Lack of Participation:** Lack of Indigenous People and local community participation.
- **Weak Governance:** Weak governance and law enforcement are the biggest stumbling blocks behind biodiversity conservation in protected areas.

Why is Forest Conservation Important?

- Forests that are **managed primarily for economic benefits** are critical for biodiversity conservation.
- **Forests cover 31% of the world's land surface**, store an estimated 296 gigatonnes of carbon and are home to most of the world's terrestrial biodiversity.
- The world's forests provide habitats for about 80% of amphibian species, 75% of bird species and 68% of mammal species. In addition, about 60% of all vascular plants occur in tropical forests.
- The **role of forests in maintaining biodiversity** is explicitly recognised by the **United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030**.
 - In 2019, FAO adopted the Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors.

What is the State of Forest and Biodiversity Conservation in India?

- **Forest:**
 - According to [India State of Forest Report, 2021](#), the Total Forest and Tree cover is now 7,13,789 square kilometres, 21.71% of the country's geographical area, an increase from 21.67% in 2019.
 - **Largest Forest Cover (Area-wise):** Madhya Pradesh > Arunachal Pradesh > Chhattisgarh > Odisha > Maharashtra.

- **Constitutional Provisions:**
 - Through the **42nd Amendment Act**, 1976 Forests and Protection of Wild Animals and Birds were transferred from State to Concurrent List along with Education, Weights & Measures and Administration of Justice.
 - Article 48 A in the **Directive Principles of State policy**, mandates that the State shall endeavour to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the **forests and wildlife** of the country.
 - Article 51 A (g) of the Constitution states that it shall be the **Fundamental Duty** of every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment including forests and Wildlife.
- **Policies Governing India's Forests and Biodiversity:**
 - **[Indian Forest Policy, 1952](#)**
 - **[Forest Conservation Act, 1980](#)**
 - National Forest Policy, 1988
 - **[National Afforestation Programme](#)**
 - **[Wildlife Protection Act of 1972](#)**
 - **[Environment Protection Act of 1986](#)**
 - **[Biodiversity Diversity Act of 2002](#)**
 - **[Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers \(Recognition of Forest Rights\) Act, 2006](#)**
 - **[Forest \(Conservation\) Rules, 2022](#)**

What are the Recommendations of the Report?

- Recognizing the **forest tenure of Indigenous Peoples** and local communities, with emphasis on **enhancing the equitable sharing of benefits**.
- **Preventing the conversion of natural forests** into monospecific forest plantations.
- Ensuring the **sustainable management of harvested species** to control overharvesting of plants and wildlife.
- Adopting a multisectoral perspective by mainstreaming biodiversity across other land use sectors.
- Providing **economic incentives**, like compensation for reduced production **to promote biodiversity benefits** and **investing in knowledge and capacity development**.
- Facilitating market-based instruments like engaging in **public-private partnerships** to leverage **corporate social responsibility** commitments.
- **Leveraging global momentum** on restoration to enhance biodiversity conservation.

Way Forward

- Biodiversity mainstreaming in the forest sector requires **integrated multi-stakeholder approaches that cross sectoral boundaries**.
- Mainstreaming biodiversity in forestry involves **prioritising forest policies, plans, programmes, projects and investments** that have a positive impact on biodiversity at the ecosystem, species and genetic levels.

[Source: DTE](#)

World Migratory Bird Day 2022

Why in News?

World Migratory Bird Day was recently celebrated on 08 October 2022.

What is World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD)?

- **About:** It is a **bi-annual global campaign** organised to raise awareness about migratory birds, the need for their conservation, and the importance of the preservation of their habitat.
 - It is celebrated on the second Saturday in May and then in October. This year it was celebrated on 14 May and 8 October 2022.
 - WMBD is **organized by** a collaborative partnership among **two UN treaties** - the [Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals \(CMS\)](#) and the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (**AEWA**), and the non-profit organization, Environment for the Americas (**EFTA**).
 - The 2022 global campaign is also being actively supported by other dedicated organizations, including the [Fast Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership \(EAAFP\)](#) and Bird Life International (BLI).
- **Theme:**
 - The theme of World Migratory Bird Day 2022 is **“Light Pollution”**
 - WMBD 2022 is addressing the growing issue of light pollution on these birds and actions on a global scale to help migrate these birds safely.
 - **Artificial lights are the cause of significant threats to migratory birds such as:**
 - Distortion while flying at night
 - Collisions with buildings
 - Disruptions - in their ability to migrate long distances and in their internal clock.

What is Light Pollution?

- **About:**
 - As per CMS, **“light pollution refers to artificial light that alters the natural patterns of light and dark in ecosystems”**.
 - The use of artificial light at night is increasing all over the world. **From 2012 to 2016, artificially lit outdoor areas increased by 2.2% per year**, in 2022, this number could be much greater.
 - Today, **more than 80% of the world's population lives under a “lit sky”**, a figure closer to 99% in Europe and North America.
- **Impact of Light Pollution on Birds:**
 - It can **alter birds' behaviours**, including migration, foraging and vocal communication.
 - It also **affects their activity levels and their energy expenditure**, especially those which migrate at night.
 - It attracts and **disorients nocturnally migrating birds**, which may end up circling in illuminated areas.
 - This unnatural light-induced behaviour can mean they end up **depleting their energy reserves** and puts them at **risk of exhaustion, predation and lethal collision**.
 - **Long distance migratory birds**, such as the blackpoll warbler, the Asian stubtail and the oriental plover may start and end their migrations in areas with relatively low levels of light pollution, but **during migration they may fly over areas of intense urban development where they experience high levels of artificial light**.

What is the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) or the Bonn Convention?

- It is an international agreement that aims to conserve migratory species throughout their ranges. The agreement was signed under the auspices of the **United Nations Environment Program (UNEP)** and is concerned with conservation of wildlife and habitats on a global scale.
 - It was signed in 1979 in Bonn, West Germany and entered into force in 1983.
- As an environmental treaty of the United Nations, CMS provides a global platform for the conservation and **sustainable use of migratory animals and their habitats**.
- India is a signatory to the CMS.
 - India hosted the CMS CoP-13 (in 2020) at Gandhi Nagar, Gujarat.

- India has also launched the National Action Plan for the conservation of migratory species under the Central Asian Flyway.
- India is a temporary home to several migratory animals and birds.
 - The important among these include [Amur Falcons](#), [Bar-headed Geese](#), [Black-necked cranes](#), [Marine turtles](#), [Dugongs](#), [Humpback Whales](#), etc.
 - The Indian sub-continent is also part of the major bird flyway network, i.e, the [Central Asian Flyway \(CAF\)](#) that covers areas between the Arctic and Indian Oceans.

[Source: CMS](#)

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