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Institute of Civil Services



Daily Current Affairs

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Remittances in India may take a hit

News: According to the **World Bank's latest Migration and Development Brief**, India, which saw a record-high of **USD 111 billion** in remittances in 2022, is expected to experience minimal growth of just **0.2% in remittance inflows** in 2023.

What are remittances?

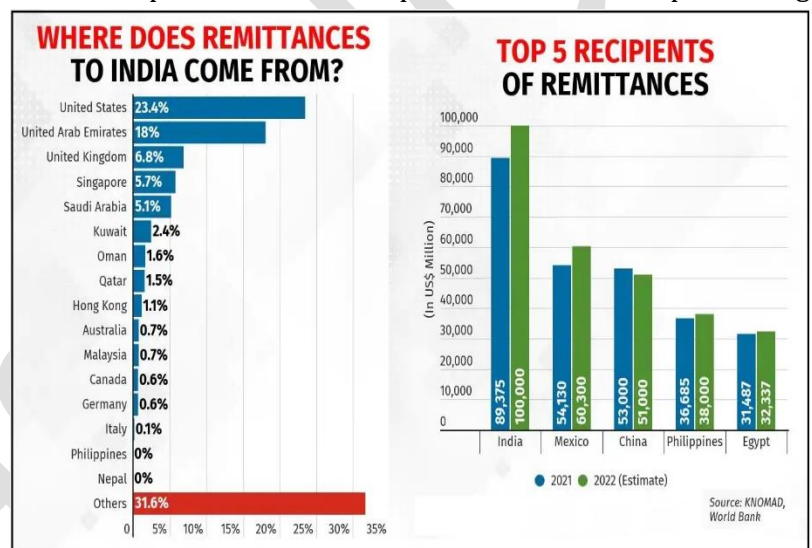
- Remittances are **money transfers** that migrants send to **their families and friends** in their home countries. They are an important **source of income** and **foreign exchange** for many developing countries.

What are the main reasons attributed to the minimal growth of remittances in 2023?

- Slower growth** in OECD economies, especially in the high-tech sector, and the **lower demand** for migrants in the GCC countries.

What are the other factors that impact remittance inflow in India?

- Exchange rate fluctuations** - The value of the Indian rupee against the US dollar or other currencies can affect the amount and frequency of remittances. A depreciation of the rupee can increase the purchasing power of remittances and encourage more transfers, while an appreciation can have the opposite effect.
- Oil price shocks** - Many Indian migrants work in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, which are major oil exporters. A **fall in oil prices can reduce the income and employment opportunities of these migrants**, and consequently lower their remittance flows to India.
- Domestic economic conditions** - The level of income, consumption, investment, and savings in India can influence the demand and supply of remittances. A higher domestic GDP can reduce the need for remittances as a source of income or finance, while a lower GDP can increase it.
- Other factors** such as political stability, and technological innovations can also affect remittance behaviour.



What are the ways to enhance remittances in India?

- Reducing the cost of remittance transfers**
- Offering incentives for remittance senders and recipients** – Tax credits, subsidies, financial literacy programs, insurance products etc.
- Strengthening the cooperation and coordination among stakeholders
- Unified Payment Interface** can enable real-time fund transfers, allowing remittances to be sent and received instantly. This eliminates the need for lengthy processing times associated with traditional remittance methods, providing recipients with quicker access to funds.
- Collaboration with e-commerce platforms** to integrate remittance services directly into their platforms.

Source – The Indian Express

India-US: Trade and Strategy

News: PM Narendra Modi is in the USA for an official state visit at the invitation of US President Joe Biden.

Background:

- The visit is significant and historic as PM Modi will address a joint meeting of Congress for a second time.
- The US is having its economic crisis and a deal with India across sectors is critical for their growth.

- There is the possibility of an important defence deal which is likely to involve a technological transfer.

How has economic engagement evolved in recent years?

- At the heart of the Indo-US strategic partnership is deepening economic engagement and resolve on both sides to elevate the bilateral relationship to a “**global strategic partnership**”
- The value of trade between the two countries has touched a record **\$191 billion**, making the **US India’s largest trading partner**.
- **American companies** have invested around **\$60 billion in India** in sectors ranging from manufacturing to telecommunications and consumer goods to aerospace. While **Indian companies** have put in more than **\$40 billion** in sectors such as IT, pharmaceuticals, and green energy, supporting.
- **Air India** announced the purchase of more than 200 Boeing aircraft — a historic deal that President Biden said would “support **over one million American jobs** across 44 states.

What are the strategic underpinnings?

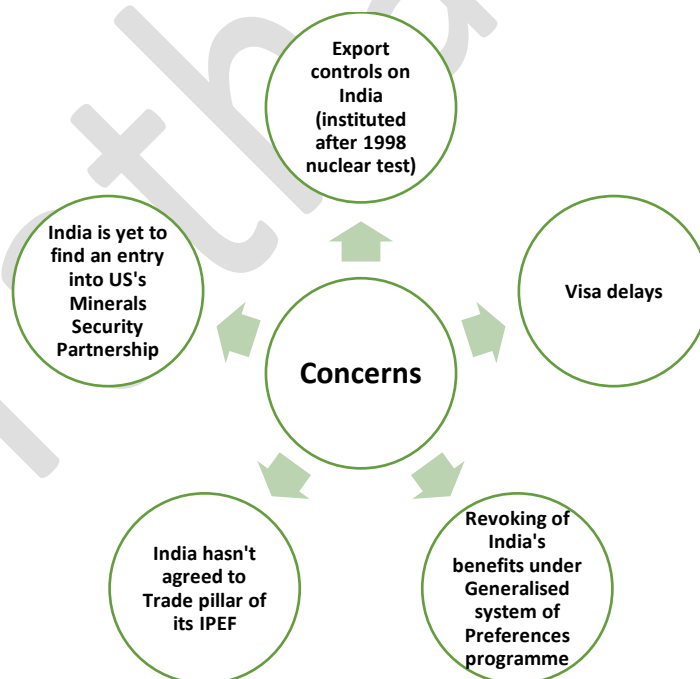
Much of the relationship’s broader subtext is strategic, with both nations developing deeper relations keeping an eye on China and looking to secure diverse supply chains and reducing dependency on China.

- The flagbearer of the strategic engagement is the **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue**.
- The **I2U2**, a grouping of **India, Israel, the US and the United Arab Emirates**, is focused on joint investments and new initiatives in water, energy, transportation, space, health, and food security.
- Earlier, The NSAs of two countries launched a new US-India initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET).
- The two countries established a **partnership to make the semiconductor supply chain more resilient** through private-sector cooperation. It is likely to give India a central role in the global electronics supply chain.

What is in there for the Defence sector?

- The US is likely to share technology about the **GE-F414 fighter Jet engine** with India which will power our indigenous Tejas Mk2 Light combat aircraft.
- Deal to acquire 31 MQ-9B armed drones. Also called as predator drones these are the world’s most advanced armed drones.

What are some concerns that need to be addressed?



News: World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought was observed on **17th June**.

Background:

- The theme for this year is “**Her Land. Her Rights**” which focuses on **women’s land rights**, essential for achieving the interconnected global goals of **gender equality** and **land degradation neutrality** by 2030.

What were the issues addressed?

- Women's control over land is important but they lack rights and face barriers worldwide. This limits their well-being and prosperity, especially when land degradation and water scarcity occur.
- Desertification, land degradation and drought **disproportionately impact women and girls**, as they often do not have access to and control of land resources. They are most affected by reduced agricultural yields and increased water scarcity.
- In most countries, women have unequal and limited access and control to land. In many regions, they remain subject to discriminatory laws and practices that impede their right to inherit, as well as their access to services and resources.

What is Desertification?

- Desertification is the process by which **fertile land becomes desert**, typically as a result of **drought, deforestation, or inappropriate agriculture**. It is caused by variations in climate and by unsustainable land-management practices in dryland environments.
- Some of the factors responsible for Desertification are Population growth, Deforestation, Overgrazing, Unsustainable farming practices (mono-cropping, excessive tillage), urbanization and climate change.

What are the impacts of Desertification?

- Reduced crop yields and food production
- Increased water scarcity and pollution
- **Loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services** - Desertification and land degradation can reduce the diversity and abundance of plants and animals in drylands. They can alter the structure and functioning of ecosystems, affecting their ability to provide essential services such as carbon sequestration, nutrient cycling, soil formation, pollination, pest control, and climate regulation.
- Increased vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters
- Desertification can affect the **livelihoods and income of millions of people** who depend on drylands for agriculture, livestock, forestry, fisheries, tourism, and other activities.
- Desertification can **worsen the poverty and inequality** in drylands. They can force people to migrate to more fertile areas or urban centres in search of better opportunities or resources.

What are steps taken by the Government to combat Desertification in India?



What are the Global initiatives?

- **United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD):** India is a party to this convention since 1996, and has submitted six national reports on its actions and achievements in combating desertification. India hosted the 14th session of the Conference of Parties (COP 14) of UNCCD in 2019, where it committed to **restoring 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030.**
- The **Bonn Challenge** is a global effort to bring 150 million hectares of the world's deforested and degraded land into restoration by 2020, and 350 million hectares by 2030.

Three years since the Galwan Clash

News: Three years after the infamous Galwan clash, the India-China border dispute remains a significant geopolitical issue.

What was the Galwan Valley clash?

- The Galwan Valley clash was a violent confrontation between Indian and Chinese troops in the disputed border area of Ladakh on June 15-16, 2020. It was the first deadly clash between the two sides in 45 years and resulted in the deaths of 20 Indian and several Chinese soldiers.
- The clash involved hand-to-hand combat with stones, clubs, and iron rods, as no firearms were used due to previous protocols.

What is the current status of the conflict?

- The conflict between India and China following the Galwan Valley clash in 2020 remains unresolved, with **both sides maintaining a significant military presence** along the disputed Line of Actual Control.
- **18 rounds of high-level military talks** have been conducted so far, focusing on disengagement and restoring peace along the LAC in eastern Ladakh. Some success has been achieved, with disengagement in several areas following extensive diplomatic and military discussions.
- India continues to demand the restoration of the status quo of April 2020 at Ladakh which China has refused.
- However, as a result of the ongoing diplomatic, political, and military conversations, **troops have successfully disengaged** from multiple areas including **Galwan Valley**, the north and south banks of **Pangong Tso**, and the **Gogra Post-Hot Springs area**. This indicates that despite the friction, both sides are willing to engage in dialogue to resolve conflicts.

What are the underlying concerns?

- China has been resistant to discussing the strategic **Depsang Plains** and **Demchok areas**, stating that these are “**legacy issues**” that predate April 2020.
- China wants India to have a separate look at border issues and bilateral trade relationships. India sees peace and clarity at the border front as a prerequisite for any normalization of Bilateral relations.

What are the challenges in resolving border disputes?

- The India-China border dispute has a long and complex history that dates back to the 1962 border war.
- China’s attempts to unilaterally alter the status quo along the LAC, including military incursions into Indian territory, have significantly escalated tensions and complicated resolution efforts.
- Both sides have been strengthening their military presence and infrastructure along the LAC which dims the likelihood of peace anytime sooner.
- The establishment of buffer zones during the disengagement process has resulted in India losing more territory than China.
- The border dispute has aroused strong nationalist sentiments and emotions in both countries, which can constrain or influence their policy choices and actions.

Way Forward

- Building trust, resolving legacy issues and continuing dialogue and diplomacy at the highest level is the need of the hour.

Facts for Prelims

Solar Ultraviolet Imaging Telescope

News: The Solar Ultraviolet Imaging Telescope (SUIT), developed by **Pune's Inter-University Center for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA)**, has been delivered to the ISRO.

About:

- It aims to study the **Sun’s ultraviolet (UV) emissions** and **capture high-resolution images** of the Sun’s atmosphere, known as the corona, in various UV wavelengths.
- It will observe the hotter and more dynamic regions of the Sun’s atmosphere, such as the transition region and the corona.
- It will be integrated with **ISRO's ADITYA-L1 mission**, set to launch in mid-August 2023.
- It will monitor the Sun’s activity and provide **early warning of potential solar flares** and **coronal mass ejections (CMEs)**, which can affect satellites, communication systems, power grids and human health on Earth.

TAPAS UAV

News: The indigenously developed TAPAS 201 UAV has achieved a major milestone as the Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO) and the Indian Navy have successfully demonstrated transferring of command-and-control capabilities of the UAV.

About:

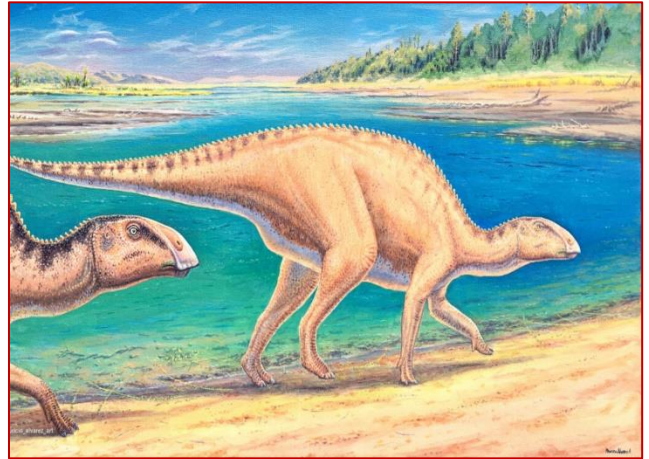
- The indigenously developed TAPAS 201 **Medium Altitude Long Endurance (MALE) UAV** has been designed and developed by the Bengaluru-based **Aeronautical Development Establishment (ADE)**
- TAPAS 201, a multi-mission UAV is being developed to carry out the **Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance roles** for the three Armed Forces with an endurance of **24 to 30 hours**.
- Dubbed the Indian version of the U.S. Predator drones, TAPAS 201 is capable to carry different combinations of payloads like Medium Range Electro Optic, Long Range Electro Optic, Synthetic Aperture Radar, Electronic Intelligence, Communication Intelligence and Situational Awareness Payloads to perform missions during day and night.
- The MALE UAV was earlier referred to as RUSTOM.

Gonkoken Nanoi

News: Gonkoken nanoi is the name of a new species of **duck-billed dinosaur** that was discovered in Chile recently.

About:

- Gonkoken nano I was a **herbivorous dinosaur** that lived 72 million years ago in what is now Chilean Patagonia. It was about four meters long and weighed a ton. It could walk on **both two and four legs** and had a flattened, waterfowl-like snout.
- It is the **first species** of this kind of dinosaur to be found in the **southern hemisphere**, and it challenges the previous beliefs about their geographic distribution and evolution.



How do duck-billed dinosaurs differ from other ones?

- As their name suggests, duck-billed dinosaurs had broad, flat, and elongated snouts that ended in toothless beaks. These beaks were useful for nipping at low-lying vegetation, such as ferns, horsetails, and cycads.
- Duck-billed dinosaurs had hundreds of teeth arranged in complex structures called dental batteries. These teeth were constantly replaced as they wore out, and they formed effective grinding surfaces for chewing tough plant matter.
- Some duck-billed dinosaurs, especially those belonging to the subfamily Lambeosaurinae, had hollow crests or tubes on top of their heads. These crests varied in shape and size among different species, and they may have been used for display, communication, or thermoregulation. Some examples of crested duck-billed dinosaurs are **Parasaurolophus, Corythosaurus, and Lambeosaurus**.