IMPORTANT NEWS

Maldivian President Muizzu Asked India to Withdraw Its Troops from the Island Nation by 15 March

Inside Story of the News:

- Amidst growing tensions in Indo-Maldives relations and as a step towards the 'India Out' campaign, President Mohamed Muizzu asked India to withdraw its military personnel from the Maldives by 15 March.
- The demand has come after the president's five-day state visit to China.
- During the visit, the president agreed to strengthen ties with China.

China-Maldives Relations:

- China and the Maldives are elevating their ties by expanding their cooperation and partnership in multiple areas, such as the following:
  - Belt and Road Initiative
  - Tourism cooperation
  - Disaster and risk mitigation
  - Blue economy or the sustainable use of ocean resources
  - Strengthening of investments in the digital economy
  - Bilateral trade agreements
  - Economic assistance to the Maldives
  - News cooperation
- The two countries signed 20 key agreements during the Maldivian President's visit to China between 8 and 12 January.

India's Response:

- The tension between India and the Maldives began with the election of President Muizzu. The call for independent foreign and security policy, improving ties with China, the social media controversy, and the announcement of the withdrawal of Indian troops from the island nation reflect the strained ties between the two nations.
- Nevertheless, the Ministry of External Affairs made no mention of the withdrawal request by the Maldivian government. It noted that the officials discussed a mutually workable solution to continue the operation of Indian aviation platforms that provide humanitarian and medical evacuation services to the Maldivian citizens.

India Signs an Agreement with Argentina for Lithium Exploration in Argentina

Inside Story of the News:
- The government-owned entity Khanij Bidesh India Ltd. (KABIL) signed its first-ever lithium exploration and mining project agreement with Argentina's state-owned CAMYEN.
- The agreement has granted KABIL the exclusive right to—
  - evaluate, prospect, and explore five lithium brine blocks.
  - use the discovered lithium minerals for commercial production.
- The lithium brine blocks are in the Catamarca province of Argentina.
- The project cost is about 200 crores.

Role of KABIL:
Established in 2019, KABIL's role is to identify, acquire, develop, and process strategic minerals essential for various industries.

Significance of Argentina:
- Argentina is part of the Lithium Triangle, a region in Andes Mountain, that also includes Bolivia and Chile.
- The Lithium Triangle is considered to contain the world's largest lithium reserves—75% of existing known lithium reserves.
- Australia, China, and the US are the other notable players in this domain.

Significance of the Agreement:
- The agreement is expected to achieve the following:
  - Strengthened bilateral ties between India and Argentina
  - Sustainable development of the mining sector
  - A resilient and diversified supply chain for critical and strategic minerals for various industries
  - Technical and operational experience in brine-type lithium exploration, exploitation, and extraction
  - Reduction in India's dependence on other nations for lithium
- In India, 5.9 million tonnes of lithium resources were discovered in J&K's Reasi district.

Telangana Made an Agreement with the World Economic Forum to Set Up a Center for Fourth Industrial Revolution in Hyderabad

Inside Story of the News:
- Telangana signed an agreement with the World Economic Forum to set up a Centre for Fourth Industrial Revolution (C4IR) in its capital, Hyderabad.
- The said agreement was made during Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's visit to the World Economic Forum at Davos, Switzerland.
- The centre will focus on improving healthcare and life sciences in the state.

Implications for Telangana:
- It has the potential to—
  - make the state a health tech hub;
  - make the state a global destination for healthcare services; and
  - increase employment in the state.

About the Centre for Fourth Industrial Revolution (C4IR):
- It is an initiative by the World Economic Forum (WEF).
- It is aimed at harnessing the potential of technologies to drive collaboration between governments, businesses, and academia to deal with global challenges and opportunities.

About the Fourth Industrial Revolution:
- It is also known as the digital revolution.
- It seeks to increase productivity and efficiency and ensure economic growth and better governance with the help of technological advancement.
- It includes technologies like Internet of Things (IoT), robotics, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and 3D printing.

About World Economic Forum:
- It is an international NGO that works for public-private sector collaboration.
- It is based in Switzerland and was founded by Klaus Schwab.

MoSPI Rao Inderjit Singh Launched the e-SAKSHI Mobile Application for MPs

Inside Story of the News:
- Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) Rao Inderjit Singh launched the e-SAKSHI mobile application.
- The application was launched under the Members of Parliament Local Area Development (MPLAD) scheme.

Benefits of the e-SAKSHI Mobile Application:
- The application is set to offer the following benefits to the Members of Parliament:
  - Ability to propose, track, and oversee the development projects in their constituencies in real-time
  - Enhanced decision-making process with quick responses to emerging needs and issues
  - Streamlined communication between MPs and relevant authorities
  - Transparency related to the updates on the progress of the proposed projects
  - Ability to monitor expenditures to ensure effective budget management

About the MPLAD Scheme:
- Introduced in 1993 and funded by the Government of India, it is aimed at enabling the MPs to recommend developmental projects to create durable community assets for addressing local needs.
- Under the scheme, funds are released in the form of grant-in-aid to district authorities.
- Released funds are non-lapsable—that is, non-released funds can be carried forward to the next year, subject to eligibility.
- MPs may only propose development projects. The elected LS members may recommend projects for their constituencies. The elected RS members may recommend projects for their state.
- District authorities sanction, execute, and allocate funds for the recommended projects.
- MPLAD projects can be executed in areas affected by natural calamities, fire, biological, chemical, and radiological hazards.

PM Announced Two Landmark Boeing Initiatives to Advance India's Future in the Aviation Sector

Inside Story of the News:
- PM Narendra Modi led the following Boeing Initiatives:
  - Launched the Boeing Sukanya Program to encourage the entry of girls into the country's aviation sector
  - Inaugurated Boeing India Engineering and Technology Centre (BIETC) campus in Bengaluru

Significance of the Sukanya Program:
- It will provide support to girls and women who are keen on pursuing their careers in aviation.
- 150 Science and Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) labs will be set up in girls' schools to engage girls students and support them with flight training curriculum.
- It will provide scholarships, fund simulators, and develop career development courses for female students pursuing training to become pilots.
- Overall, the program is expected to increase diversity in the workforce and drive the economic growth of the country.

Significance of the BIETC Campus:
- It is said to be Boeing's largest such investment outside the US.
- It will serve as the hub for Boeing's partnerships with Indian startups and universities.
- It will allow the development of next-generation products and services for the global aerospace and defence industry.

- It will strengthen the 'Make in India, Make for the World' resolution.

IIL Launched India's First Indigenous Vaccine for Hepatitis A

Inside Story of the News:
- Havisure is the country's first indigenous vaccine for Hepatitis A.
- It has been developed by Indian Immunologicals Ltd (IIL), a wholly-owned subsidiary of the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB).

About Havisure:
- It is a two-dose vaccine priced at INR 2,150 per dose.
- It is recommended for children in routine immunization—the first dose to be given at above 12 months and the second dose to be given after at least 6 months of the first dose.
- It is also recommended for—
    - individuals who travel to regions where hepatitis A is prevalent;
    - individuals with occupational risk of infection; and
    - individuals suffering from chronic liver disease.

About Hepatitis A:
- It is a contagious liver viral infection.
- It spreads when one comes in contact with infected body fluids, such as blood and saliva.
- The use of unsafe injections or exposure to sharp instruments are also considered other causes of Hepatitis.

Ministry of Education Directed Schools and Higher Education Institutions to Provide Digital Study Material in Indian Languages

Inside Story of the News:
- The Ministry of Education has directed all educational institutions in the country to provide digital study material in Indian languages within the next three years.
- The directions have come in the wake of NEP 2020 recommendations to promote multilingualism in education.

Significance of Multilingualism in Education:
- When students study in their own language, they achieve conceptual understanding and learning outcomes more effectively.
- It allows the students to think innovatively.
- It helps the students express themselves freely, which leads to increased classroom participation and reduced chances of grade repetition and dropouts.
- It promotes linguistic diversity and cultural tolerance.

Some Initiatives that Promote Multilingualism:
- **School education**: Study material available on the DIKSHA portal in more than 30 Indian regional languages
- **Higher education**:
    - Engineering, medical, law, UG, PG, and skill books are being translated through the AI

app called Anuvadini.
- o JEE, NEET, CUET and other competitive exams in the country are being conducted in 13 regional languages of India.

World's Largest Deep-Sea Coral Reef Mapped Off the US Atlantic Coast

Inside Story of the News:
- Scientists have mapped the world's largest deep-sea coral reef.
- It stretches hundreds of miles off the US Atlantic Coast.
- Scientists were able to map coral reefs at depths 200 metres to 1,000 metres through new underwater mapping technology that helps construct 3D images of the ocean floor.
- Deep sea corals are home to sharks, swordfish, shrimp fish, and so on.
- Until now scientists have been more familiar with tropical reefs. The world's largest tropical coral reef is the Great Barrier Reef in Australia.
- In India, coral reefs are found in the Gulf of Kutch, the Gulf of Mannar, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep Islands, and Maharashtra.
- A large size of the world's population is dependent on reefs for—
  - o food and medicines;
  - o income as fishing, diving, and other activities, add to the income of local businesses; and
  - o protection as they protect the coastlines from storms and erosion.
- Some of the challenges to the existence of coral reefs are as follows:
  - o Disturbance from oil and gas drilling
  - o Ocean acidification
  - o Unsustainable fishing practices
  - o Coral harvesting

Free Movement Regime (FMR) Between India and Myanmar Is Being Reconsidered

Inside Story of the News:
- Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced the Centre's decision to fence the India-Myanmar border to stop the free movement of the people.
- The two nations share an unfenced border, which goes through Manipur, Mizoram, Assam, Nagaland, and Arunachal Pradesh.

About Free Movement Agreement (FMR):
- It was signed in 2018 as part of India's Act East policy.
- It allows the visa- and passport-free movement of people living within a 16 km radius of the border.

Reasons Behind Reconsidering the Free Movement Agreement (FMR):
- Illegal immigration of Chins from Myanmar
- Entry of Myanmar soldiers into India (junta soldiers sought sanctuary in Mizoram)
- Ethnicity-based violence
- Increased drug production and political instability in Myanmar which may lead to security issues in India