

# IMPORTANT NEWS

## Prime Minister Modi's Trip to Greece

### Inside Story of the News:

After participating in the 15th BRICS summit in South Africa, Prime Minister Modi conducted an official trip to Greece on August 25, 2023. Remarkably, this visit marked the initial visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Greece in four decades.

- At the gracious invitation of Prime Minister H.E. Kyriakos Mitsotakis, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi recently undertook an official visit to the Hellenic Republic.
- India and Greece share deep-rooted cultural ties, which have grown stronger in recent years through collaboration in various sectors such as maritime transport, defence, trade and investments, as well as people-to-people connections.
- India's historical connections with Greece date back more than 2,500 years, with evidence of trade between the Mauryan Kings and Greece found in ancient coinage and writings.
- Diplomatic relations between the two countries were formally established in May 1950, with Greece establishing its Embassy in Delhi in 1950 and India reciprocating by opening its Embassy in Athens in 1978.
- Greece's stance on the Jammu and Kashmir issue aligns with India's concerns, and Greece has refrained from making any statements regarding recent developments in Kashmir.
- Bilateral trade has witnessed significant growth, surging from \$507 million in 2016-17 to \$1.94 billion in 2022-23.
- India's primary exports to Greece include items such as aluminium, organic chemicals, fish and crustaceans, iron and steel, plastic, and textile articles, among others.
- Key imports from Greece consist of aluminium foil, mineral fuels, mineral oils and their byproducts, sulphur, lime, and cement, among others.
- Bilateral defence cooperation received a boost following the visit of India's Defence Minister to Greece in 1994.
- In July 2023, the Indian Navy's INS Chennai naval ship visited Souda Bay, Crete, and conducted a Passage Exercise with a Hellenic Naval Ship in the Aegean Sea.
- The leaders of both nations resolved to elevate Greek-Indian bilateral relations to the status of a "Strategic Partnership" and committed to further expanding collaboration in political, security, and economic domains.
- Acknowledging the substantial growth in bilateral trade and economic engagement in recent years, the leaders directed efforts to double bilateral trade by 2030.
- Both sides also concurred on establishing an institutional dialogue framework involving National Security Advisers and strengthening defence industrial cooperation.
- This initiative included the creation of a Hellenic-Indian Joint Sub-committee on Agriculture to facilitate sectoral cooperation for mutual benefit.
- The leaders shared a consensus on expeditiously finalizing a Mobility and Migration Partnership Agreement (MMPA), which would be mutually advantageous, particularly in facilitating the free movement of the workforce between the two countries.

- Describing the ties between India and Greece as a "natural reunion," PM Modi emphasized that this agreement would ease skilled migration between the two nations.

## Assigning Names to Lunar Sites: A Celestial Cartography Endeavor

### Inside Story of the News:

During his address at the ISRO headquarters in Bengaluru, Prime Minister Modi declared that the location where the Chandrayaan-3 lander made contact with the lunar surface would be designated as "Shiv Shakti." Subsequently, ISRO's chief, K Somnath, asserted that the nation possesses the full authority to assign a name to the landing site.

- According to the 1966 Outer Space Treaty, the Moon is not subject to national appropriation or claims of sovereignty.
- Naming lunar sites does not violate the terms of this treaty.
- It's worth noting that the treaty itself does not specifically address the issue of naming celestial bodies.
- Following the 2008 Chandrayaan-1 mission, a location where the probe intentionally crashed, as part of the mission objectives, was named "Jawahar Sthal" in honor of India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru.
- Subsequently, the International Astronomical Union (IAU) officially recognized and accepted this naming, making it an established designation.
- The IAU serves as the primary organization responsible for the formal naming of celestial bodies and their surface features, including those on the Moon.
- The IAU consists of 92 member countries, India being one of them.
- The organization's mission is to promote and safeguard the field of astronomy across all its facets, including research, communication, education, and international collaboration.
- Typically, the naming process is managed by IAU Working Groups, comprised of experts in planetary science, lunar geology, and related fields.
- These working groups propose and evaluate names for lunar features.
- Once a proposed name successfully passes review and receives a vote of approval from the members of the Working Group, it becomes officially recognized as part of the IAU's nomenclature.
- These approved names can then be used on maps and in scientific publications.
- Any objections arise regarding these names, individuals can address their concerns by contacting the IAU General-Secretary within a three-month period from the time the name is published on the IAU website.

## The Aditya-L1 Mission: Exploring the Sun's Mysteries

### Inside Story of the News:

ISRO has disclosed that the **Aditya-L1 mission is scheduled for launch on September 2 from Sriharikota**. This mission marks India's inaugural space-based observatory dedicated to studying the Sun.

- Aditya, which means "Sun" in Sanskrit, is a planned spacecraft designed for coronagraph purposes, focusing on the study of the Sun's outermost region known as the solar corona.
- This spacecraft has been meticulously developed by ISRO in collaboration with various Indian research institutes.
- It represents India's maiden dedicated mission aimed at observing the Sun and is slated to be launched using a PSLV-XL launch vehicle.
- As outlined by ISRO, the spacecraft will be **positioned in a halo orbit around Lagrange point 1 (L1) within the Sun-Earth system.**
- Placing a satellite in a halo orbit around the L1 point offers a significant advantage.
  - It enables uninterrupted and continuous observation of the Sun, free from any occultation or eclipses.
- This positioning grants the spacecraft a distinct advantage in monitoring solar activities and their impact on space weather in real-time.
- L1 is situated approximately 1.5 million kilometers from Earth, and the journey for the spacecraft to reach this point is expected to take more than 120 days.
- Lagrange points, named in honor of Italian French mathematician Joseph-Louis Lagrange, are unique positions in space where the gravitational forces of two massive objects precisely balance the centripetal force required for a smaller object to move in concert with them.
- These Lagrange points leverage the gravitational interactions between celestial bodies to enable objects placed there to maintain their relative positions while traveling with those celestial bodies.
- In total, there are five Lagrange points: L1, L2, L3, L4, and L5, each having its own distinct characteristics and applications in space exploration and research.

## China's Inclusion of Arunachal Pradesh and Aksai Chin Area in New Map

### Inside Story of the News:

China has unveiled its "**standard map**" for the year 2023, asserting territorial claims over Arunachal Pradesh, **the Aksai Chin region, Taiwan, and the contested South China Sea**. Shortly after the map's release, India expressed a robust objection through diplomatic means.

- The western sector encompasses the Aksai Chin region, which was originally a part of the state of Jammu and Kashmir but is currently claimed by China as part of its autonomous Xinjiang region.
- Following the 1962 war, China has been administering this region, making it the second-largest border area between India and China, spanning over 38,000 square kilometers.
- However, it is worth noting that this area is largely uninhabited.
- The contentious boundary in the Eastern Sector of the India-China border centers around the McMahon Line.
  - In the years 1913-1914, delegates from China, India, and Tibet convened in Shimla to negotiate the border demarcation between Tibet and India, as well as Tibet and China.
  - Within the context of the Shimla conference, Sir Henry McMahon, who was the foreign secretary of British India at that time, delineated the McMahon Line, extending for 550 miles (approximately 890 kilometers).
  - This line served as the proposed border separating British India from Tibet.
- The disputed region of Arunachal Pradesh, which China claims as its own territory, is the largest contested area, encompassing approximately 90,000 square kilometers.
- During the 1962 war, the People's Liberation Army initially occupied this area but subsequently declared a unilateral ceasefire and withdrew, respecting the McMahon Line.
- As part of China's strategy to assert territorial claims over Indian land, Beijing, in January 2022, officially assigned Chinese names to 15 locations within Arunachal Pradesh.
- In October 2021, China's national legislature passed a new law pertaining to the protection and utilization of land border areas, which became effective on January 1, 2022.
- This law formalizes certain actions China has taken in disputed territories involving both India and Bhutan.
- India is actively ensuring complete operational readiness to address any potential contingencies.
- Efforts are underway to mitigate the vulnerability of the Chicken's Neck area, also known as the Siliguri Corridor, which is the narrow strip of land connecting the northeastern region of India with the rest of the country.
- In 2021, India established a new aviation brigade in the eastern sector, situated in Missamari, Assam.
- This brigade is tasked with enhancing surveillance along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the eastern sector.

## Comprehending Restrictions on Rice Exports: Implications and Analysis

### Inside Story of the News:

In an effort to stabilize domestic rice prices and safeguard domestic food security, the federal government has implemented specific limitations on the export of rice.

- According to the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, rice production during the Rabi season 2022-2023 declined by 13.8%, amounting to 158.95 lakh tons, compared to 184.71 lakh tons in the previous Rabi season of 2021-2022.
- Kharif sowing data indicates that rice cultivation has covered 384.05 lakh hectares this year as of August 25, exceeding the 367.83 lakh hectares recorded during the same period last year.
- Traders and rice millers anticipate that the arrival of the new season's crop will commence after the first week of September, with potential impacts on arrivals due to El Niño effects.
- India holds the position of the world's largest rice exporter, commanding a 45% share in the global rice market.
- Rice exports in April-May 2023 registered a notable increase, up by 21.1% compared to the same period in the previous fiscal year.
- In May alone, Basmati rice exports surged by 10.86% compared to May 2022.
- Non-Basmati rice shipments have been steadily rising over the past three years, and Basmati rice exports in 2022-2023 surpassed the previous year's figures.
- Government data reveals that as of August 17 this year, total rice exports (excluding broken rice) reached 7.3 million tons, marking a 15% increase compared to the 6.3 million tons during the corresponding period last year.
- Several countries, including Thailand, Myanmar, Iraq, and Iran, are grappling with reduced rice production or export constraints.
- To stabilize domestic rice prices and ensure food security, the central government has imposed restrictions on the export of white (non-basmati) rice and implemented a 20% export duty on par-boiled rice until October 15.
- The export of broken rice has been prohibited since September of the previous year, although exceptions may be granted based on government permissions to meet the food security needs of other countries, as requested by their respective governments.
- Despite the 20% export duty, Indian par-boiled rice remains competitively priced in the international market.
- Rice exporters suggest that the government consider classifying rice into common and specialty categories for export policy decisions, rather than simply as Basmati and non-Basmati.
- Additionally, they emphasize the importance of protecting the 12 varieties of rice with Geographical Indication (GI) recognition from general market interventions.
- In the case of Basmati rice, exporters recommend that the government either continue permitting exports or establish a minimum export value of \$900 per ton.

- Given that Basmati is a specialty rice and with new crop arrivals on the horizon, they argue that restrictions are unnecessary.

## Rice Export Restrictions: A Comprehensive Overview

### Inside Story of the News:

According to a report, the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) has, up to this point, established treatment facilities with the capacity to treat only 20% of the estimated sewage produced in the five major states located along the river.

- Established in 2014, the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) is an integrated conservation initiative designated as a '**Flagship Program**' by the Indian government with a budget allocation of Rs. 20,000 Crores.
- It falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Jal Shakti's Department of Water Resources, River Development, and Ganga Rejuvenation, with the primary objectives of effectively reducing pollution and conserving and revitalizing the National River Ganga.
- NMCG, in collaboration with State Program Management Groups (SPMGs), is responsible for implementing the program at the state level.
- NMCG serves as the operational arm of the National Ganga Council (NGC), which succeeded the National Ganga River Basin Authority.
- It established in 2016 under the river Ganga (Rejuvenation, Protection, and Management) Authorities Order, 2016. The NGC is chaired by the Prime Minister.
- Notable achievements under the Namami Gange program include:
  - Development of sewage treatment capacity through ongoing and completed projects in multiple states.
  - Initiatives for riverfront development and the renovation of ghats/crematoria. River surface cleaning efforts to remove floating solid waste.
  - Biodiversity conservation with the training and mobilization of Ganga Praharis.
  - Public awareness campaigns involving Ganga Praharis and Ganga Doots.
  - Monitoring and enforcement of environmental norms for Grossly Polluting Industries (GPIs).
  - Collaboration with international experts and resources for river rejuvenation.
- Currently, NMCG has established treatment plants capable of treating only 20% of the estimated sewage generated in the five major states along the Ganga.
- The plan is to increase this treatment capacity to 60% by December 2026.
- Projects related to sewage treatment plants (STPs) and sewerage networks are central to the Namami Ganga mission, constituting approximately 80% of the total project expenditure.

- The water quality of the river now complies with prescribed limits for primary bathing water quality, reflecting significant improvements.
- Additionally, the Ganga has witnessed an increase in the dolphin population, both adult and juvenile, from 2,000 to around 4,000.
- NMCG is currently working on developing a water quality index, akin to the air quality index, to better communicate information about river-water quality.
- Although NMCG's mission is budgeted at Rs. 20,000 crores, the government has given in-principal approval for projects totaling Rs. 37,396 crores.
  - As of June 2023, only Rs. 14,745 crores have been disbursed to states for infrastructure projects under this initiative.