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(Useful for UPSC/WBPSC/SSC Exams.)

➤ Vision, adopted in Dec 2023, proposes a **comprehensive framework of regional security** which promotes negotiation and dialogue to overcome disagreements, violence, and conflict.

➤ **Key highlights of the Vision**

Based on the principles of **shared destiny and indivisible security** of the member states and **any threat to one is a threat to all**.

Emphasises joint efforts to **avoid use of force and prioritise dialogue and negotiation to resolve their differences**.

Urges member states to **combat terrorism, extremism, and money laundering**.

Urges member states to support international and regional efforts on non-proliferation and **make the region free of weapons of mass destruction**.

Activate Arab Peace Initiative to reach a **just resolution of Palestinian cause** in accordance with 2-state solution.

Climate change, water and food security, energy security, defending economic resources, and creating investment opportunities have also been prioritised.

➤ **Significance of the 'Vision for Regional Security'**

Represents a call to action for all parties to collaborate towards a **secure and prosperous future**.

Offers an **opportunity to member states to resolve historical regional conflicts** such as Palestinian problem, etc.

About GCC

Established: In 1981.

Members: 6 Gulf states (UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, and Kuwait)

Objectives: To have coordination, integration and inter-connection between Member States in all fields.

Organisational Structure

Supreme Council comprising of the head of the states is the highest authority.

Ministerial Council consisting of foreign ministers.

➤ Clean air refers to the **low levels of aerosols in the atmosphere**.

Aerosol is the **suspension of fine solid particles or liquid droplets** in air.

➤ **Reasons for the low level of aerosols in Southern Ocean region**

Reduced Human activity in the region, resulting in minimal emissions and fossil fuel usage.

Phytoplankton that are a source of airborne sulfate particles are **fewer in winter, resulting in fewer sulfate particles during winter**.

Role of Clouds and Rain

◆ **Honeycomb-structured clouds** play a crucial role in the region's climate.

◆ Open honeycomb clouds **allow sunlight to pass and tend to produce more intense, sporadic rainfall**, which "washes" the aerosols out.

» These clouds are **more common in the winter**.

◆ Closed honeycomb clouds **reflect sunlight** leading to low rainfall and thus less effective at removing aerosols.

➤ **About Southern Ocean (Antarctic Ocean)**

⊕ **Geologically the youngest** of the world's oceans.

⊕ Dominated by the clockwise circulating **Antarctic Circumpolar Current**.

⊕ **Known for its strong winds, intense storms, dramatic seasonal changes**, and cold temperatures.

98% of Urban Women involved in Household Financial Decisions: Report by AMFi-CRISIL

AMFi-CRISIL released a report titled 'Mutual Growth' which states that **financial decision-making and labour force participation** rate (LFPR) of women are rising in India.

Key highlights of the report

- ⊕ **Female LFPR rose to 41.5%** (PLFS of Oct 2023) against 24.6% five years back.
- ⊕ **47% of women take financial decisions** on their own.
- ⊕ **Autonomy of women in taking financial decisions depends on income source, age, and stage of affluence.** Significance of

increasing role of women in financial decision-making

Social: Women's overall empowerment by addressing gender disparities, reduced domestic violence and conflict, etc.

- ◆ **Intergenerational impact** such as greater proportion of resources allocated towards children's education, healthcare, etc.

Economic: Financial literacy and inclusion resulting in better financial planning and wealth management for families and communities.

- ◆ Increased financial intermediation and market depth, tapping into talents and skills of women to help drive entrepreneurship and innovation, etc.

Challenges in women's financial autonomy

Socio-cultural: Deep-rooted patriarchy, gender stereotypes, etc.

Economic disparities: Lower participation in formal workforce, gender pay gap [share of female labour income was just 18% (World Inequality Report, 2023)], etc.

- ◆ **'Dual-burden' of work, unpaid and unrecognized domestic and care work by women, etc.**

Steps Taken for Women's Financial Autonomy

Financial Inclusion: PM Jan Dhan Yojana, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Business Correspondent (BC) Sakhi program, etc.

Self-Help Groups (SHGs): Promotion of SHGs by NABARD to promote collective credit decisions and microfinance among women.

Entrepreneurial Support: Schemes like Stand-up India, MUDRA Yojana, etc.

Military areas within cantonments will be converted into "exclusive military stations" with complete army control.

Reasons for Move:

Undo the colonial legacy, and **usher in governance reforms.**

Civilians living in cantonments will get access to more **welfare schemes of the respective state governments.**

Help defence forces focus on **strengthening their security, simplifying their land management, and preventing encroachments.**

Reduce the strain on the **annual defence budget.**

About Cantonments

An area where military troops are garrisoned and is **primarily dedicated to housing soldiers.** However, civilian populations are also present.

Genesis: Established by East India Company after the **battle of Plassey in 1757.**

- ◆ **Barrackpore (Calcutta)** was first Cantonment established in 1765.

Currently, there are 61 **cantonments in India** (6 established after independence).

Administration: Local self-government of the cantonments is the subject matter of the **Union Government** (Entry 3 of Union List).

Cantonments are administered under the **Cantonments Act, 2006** in accordance with the **74th Constitutional Amendment Act.**

⊕ **Cantonments are administered by Cantonment Boards,** which perform civic duties such as providing public health, water supply, primary education, etc.

- ◆ Under administrative control of the **Ministry of Defence.**
- ◆ **Cantonment's Station Commander** is the Board's ex-officio President.

Categories of Cantonment Board			
Category I: Population more than 50,000	Category II: Population between 10,000-50,000	Category III: Population between 2,500-10,000	Category IV: Population less than 2,500

Microsoft released a report about the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to disrupt elections

Key observations

- China had attempted an **AI-generated disinformation campaign** in the Taiwan presidential election.
- Methods used were **AI-generated audio, AI-generated anchors, AI-enhanced videos, AI-generated memes, etc** to influence various aspects of the elections.

Threats of AI in Election

Manipulation of electoral behaviour: political advertisements can be made deceptive, and with false content, AI is capable of making them individual-specific.

Misleading public opinion: regarding candidates' statements, stances on various issues, and even the authenticity of certain events.

◆ Make it easier to **create and disseminate fake news.**

Cybersecurity threats: can be used to target election infrastructure, voter databases, and other critical systems.

Foreign influence: could increase the scale and persuasiveness of foreign countries.

Steps required to reduce the threat of AI in election

The Election Commission of India **may consider roping in outside experts** with a deep understanding of the latest AI technologies.

The government may bring regulations that **require transparency in the usage of AI** for political purposes. Technological companies should **place measures to stop misinformation** like Meta fact-checking helpline in India.

The government can enhance **public awareness about deceptive AI.**

Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ)

- Centre has recently issued a draft notification demarcating an ESZ around Sukhna Wildlife Sanctuary.

About ESZ

They are **ecologically important and fragile areas around protected areas.**

Notified by central government under the **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.**

ESZ Guidelines classify activities under three categories:

- ◆ **Prohibited:** Commercial Mining, Setting of industries causing pollution, etc.
- ◆ **Regulated:** Felling of Trees, Establishment of hotels and resorts, etc.
- ◆ **Permitted:** Ongoing agriculture and horticulture practices by local communities, dairy farming, etc

Right against adverse effects of Climate Change part of Right to Life and Equality: Supreme Court (SC)

- A 3-Judge bench of the SC was hearing an **application for modification** by the Union MoEFCC, Ministry of Power, and Ministry of New and Renewable Energy **against an order issued by the SC in April 2021.**
- April 2021 order of the SC **imposed restrictions on setting up of overhead transmission lines** in certain areas of Rajasthan for conservation of Great Indian Bustard (GIB).

Key highlights of the SC judgment

Articles 14 (Right to Equality) and **Article 21** (Right to Life and Personal Liberty) are important sources of **right to a clean environment and right against adverse effects of climate change.**

Inability of underserved communities to adapt to climate change or cope with its effects violates the rights granted under Article 14 and 21.

◆ e.g., **Food and water shortages** due to climate change and environmental degradation **affects poorer communities more**, affecting right to equality.

Important SC judgments regarding constitutionalization of environmental problems

M.C. Mehta v. Kamal Nath (1996): Any disturbance of basic environment elements, namely air, water and soil, would be hazardous to "life" within meaning of Article 21.

Virender Gaur v. State of Haryana (1994): Right to clean environment is an integral facet of right to a healthy life.

Constitutional Provisions related to Environment

Article 48A: State shall endeavour to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wild life.

Article 51A (g): Duty of every citizen of India to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wild life, and to have compassion for living creatures.

Chital (Spotted Deer)

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Island (formerly Ross Island) is facing an invasion of chital deer.

About Chital

Distribution: Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka up to the geographical barrier of the Himalayas.

◆ Native to the Indian subcontinent

Habitats: Riverine forest during the hot dry season while Sal forest during the monsoon season.

Features:

◆ **Gestation period:** Around 231 - 235 days.

◆ **Food and Feeding:** Grasses, but also forbs, leaves, flowers, and fruits.

◆ **Antlers** are present only in males.

Status: Least Concern (IUCN)

◆ **Threats:** Illegal hunting, habitat loss and degradation due to human encroachment and spread of invasive alien plant species.



Polar Vortex

- Scientists have discovered the sudden reversal in the direction of the Arctic Polar Vortex spin
 - ➡ **Sudden Stratospheric Warming events** which caused more ozone from lower latitudes to move around the Arctic could have led to the change in the direction.
- About Polar Vortex**
 - ➡ It refers to the **low pressure and cold air surrounding the Earth's poles.**
 - ➡ It is held by strong wind currents that flow anti-clockwise around the polar region. It is weaker in the summer and stronger during the winter.

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)

- A study by IIT Madras reveals the pervasive presence of PFAS (also known as 'Forever Chemicals') in Buckingham Canal, Adyar River, and Chembarambakkam Lake.
- About PFAS**
 - PFAS are a vast family of synthetic chemicals found in everyday products such as non-stick cookware, upholstery, food packaging, water or stain resistant coatings, and industrial materials.
 - They **do not degrade easily** in the environment.
 - Concerns:** Could lead to adverse health effects such as liver damage, low infant birth weights, hormonal imbalance, fertility issues, immune system effects, and even cancer.

Changpa

- The events of climate change have disrupted the normal life of the Changpa tribe.
- About Changpa Tribe**
 - They are **Semi-nomadic tribes of Tibetan origin** living in the plains of eastern Ladakh.
 - The majority of them are pastoralists and rear **Changra goats** that yield the **Pashmina (Cashmere) fibre** and also **yaks**.
 - They profess **Tibetan Buddhism** and live in conical yak-skin tents called **reboo**.

Ecuador (Capital: Quito)

- Mexico suspends diplomatic ties with Ecuador after police raid in Mexican embassy in Quito.
- Political Features**
 - Located in **North-western South America.**
 - Neighboring countries:** Colombia (North) and Peru (East and South), Situated on the Equator
 - Galápagos Islands**, west of the mainland of Ecuador, are part of Ecuador. Bounded to the West by **Pacific Ocean**.
- Geographical Features**
 - Equator passes through Ecuador.
 - ➡ **Andes mountain range** crosses through Ecuador. ➡
 - Major Rivers:** Amazon, Guayas, Putumayo, etc. ➡
 - Active Volcanoes:** Cotopaxi, Tungurahua, etc.
 - ➡ **Highest Peak:** Mount Chimborazo.



Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)

- Enrolment under PMFBY in FY 2023-24 saw an increase of 27% as compared to previous FY.
- About PMFBY**
 - ➡ **Launched in 2016.**
 - ➡ **Type: Central Sector Scheme** conceptualized and administered by the Central Government and implemented by concerned State/ UT Governments.
 - ➡ **Objective:** To provide insurance coverage and financial support to the farmers in the event of failure of any of the notified crop as a result of natural calamities, pests & diseases.
- Features**
 - ◆ **Covers all the stages of the crop production cycle.**
 - ◆ **Uniform premium of 2% (Kharif), 1.5% (Rabi), and 5% (Horticultural crops).**

Damodar River

The state of Jharkhand is taking many steps for the restoration and conservation of River Damodar.

Damodar River:

Origin: Khamarpat Hill on Chotanagpur Plateau in Palamau district of Jharkhand. It is a sub-basin and part of the **Ganges River System. Tributaries:** Barakar, Konar, Bokaro, Haharo, Jamnia, Ghari, etc. It was earlier known as the "**River of Sorrows**". As it flows through the **mineral-rich areas**, it is severely affected by the pollution due to industries.

Sittwe Port, Myanmar

India has secured the right to operate its second overseas port (after Chabahar in Iran), Sittwe, after approval by Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

About Sittwe Port

Deep water port located at the estuary of **Kaladan River in Rakhine State of Myanmar.** Developed as a part of **Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project (KMTTP)** funded under **grant in aid assistance** from GoI. **Significance:** Will open new opportunities for **India's Northeast for trade and transit, enhance trade and commerce** between India and Myanmar, etc.