



For success in a changing world

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 22-07-2024

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GS-2

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4. Exercise Pitch Black

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Upper Siang hydropower project

Syllabus: GS-1; Geography, GS-3; Environmental Protests

Context

- Two anti-dam activists from Arunachal Pradesh were put in preventive detention.

Origin

- The Siang originates near Mount Kailash in Tibet, where it goes by the name of Tsangpo.
- It traverses more than 1,000 km eastward, before forming a horseshoe bend around the towering Namcha Barwa peak, and enters Arunachal Pradesh as the Siang.
- Further downstream, in Assam, the river becomes the mighty Brahmaputra.



The Upper Siang project

- The Upper Siang project is a proposed **11,000 megawatt hydropower project** on the **Siang river** in the Upper Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh.
- **Goal:** Construct a series of hydroelectric dams on the Siang River to generate clean power.
- **Capacity:** Upon completion, it's expected to be the largest hydroelectric dam in India, generating between 10,000 and 12,000 MW of power.
- **Developer:** The National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) of India is undertaking the project.

- **Current Status:** Construction began in 2009, but as of July 2024, it's still in the announced stage. Construction is expected to commence around 2029 and be operational by 2033.

Significance

- **Power Generation:** A significant boost to India's clean energy goals. This massive project could provide electricity to millions of homes.
- **Economic Benefits:** Expected to generate significant economic activity in Arunachal Pradesh through job creation and infrastructure development.
- **Strategic Importance:** Seen as a counter to China's large dam projects on the Brahmaputra River upstream, particularly a proposed 60,000 MW "super dam" [civildaily.com]. This project could give India more control over water resources in the region.

Concerns and Challenges

- **Environmental Impact:** Large dams can disrupt ecosystems and displace local communities. Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) are underway to address these concerns [environmentclearance.nic.in].
- **Social Impact:** The project could displace indigenous communities and impact their livelihoods. Careful planning and social impact assessments are crucial.
- **Technical Challenges:** Building such a large dam in a geologically active region presents significant engineering challenges.
- **Financial Viability:** The estimated cost of ₹1.13 lakh crore (\$13.13 billion) is a major hurdle. Funding and cost management will be critical factors.

Immunity of Governor under article 361

Syllabus: GS-2: Indian Polity – Governor

Context:

- THE SUPREME Court on 19th July 2024 agreed to examine the question of immunity to Governors from any kind of criminal prosecution, granted under Article 361 of the Constitution.

Background

- **Supreme Court's Examination:** *The Supreme Court agreed to examine the question of immunity granted to Governors from criminal prosecution under Article 361 of the Constitution.*
- **Bench Composition:** *Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud, Justices J B Pardiwala, and Manoj Misra.*
- **Case Origin:** *A contractual woman employee of West Bengal Raj Bhavan alleged sexual harassment by Governor C V Ananda Bose.*

Key Issues

- **Article 361(2):** *States, "No criminal proceedings whatsoever shall be instituted or continued against the President, or the Governor of a State, in any court during his term of office".*
- **Interpretation Challenge:** *Whether criminal proceedings can be initiated or continued against a sitting Governor.*
- **Protection Ambit:** *The court will interpret the scope of protection under Article 361(2).*

Petitioner's Arguments

- **Necessity for Investigation:** *Senior Advocate Shyam Divan argued that evidence must be gathered immediately and not deferred until the Governor demits office.*
- **Remedy for Victims:** *The petitioner argued that the immunity under Article 361 should not leave victims without remedy, forcing them to wait for the Governor to leave office.*
- **Guidelines Request:** *The petitioner urged the court to frame guidelines on the extent of immunity under Article 361.*

Court's Actions

- **Union of India Party Addition:** *The woman was asked to make the Union of India a party to the petition.*
- **Assistance Sought:** *The court sought the assistance of Attorney General R Venkataramani for this constitutional issue.*
- **Notice to West Bengal Government:** *Issued a notice seeking the state's response.*

Constitutional Considerations

- **Objective of Immunity:** *To protect the head of state from malicious publicity during the term of office.*
- **Scope of Duties:** *Supreme Court to decide if sexual harassment and molestation are part of "discharging or performing duties by the Governor".*

International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)

Syllabus: GS-2: International Organisations.

Context:

- *India to host 2nd Asia Pacific ministerial conference on civil aviation in September 11 and 12, 2024.*

Significance of the Asia-Pacific Region in Global Aviation

- *Represents 33.41% of global departures*
- *Key center for international aviation*
- *Importance for ongoing technological advancements and safety regulations*

Goals of the Upcoming Conference

- *Enhance cooperation and coordination in the region*
- *Provide a vision for the future of aviation*
- *Promote a culture of innovation*
- *Emphasize the importance of maintaining aircraft safety*
- *Facilitate meeting future air travel needs*

Projected Growth and Opportunities

- *Significant growth expected in the Asia-Pacific region*
- *Passenger numbers projected to increase from 4.5 billion in 2023 to 11.5 billion by 2050*
- *India identified as one of the fastest-growing aviation markets*
- *Aim to discuss making aviation more sustainable and resilient*

Foundation and Future Directions

- *Build on the outcomes of the 2018 Beijing Declaration*
- *Foster closer collaboration among airlines in the Asia-Pacific region*

- Focus on creating a sustainable and responsive aviation environment
- Ensure long-term viability and adaptability of the aviation sector

International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)

Overview

- **Established:** 1944, under the Convention on International Civil Aviation (Chicago Convention).
- **Headquarters:** Montreal, Canada.
- **Type:** Specialized agency of the United Nations.
- **Objective:** To manage the administration and governance of the Convention on International Civil Aviation.

Functions and Responsibilities

- **Establishing Standards:** Develops and codifies international standards and recommended practices (SARPs) for aviation safety, security, efficiency, and environmental protection.
- **Monitoring Compliance:** Ensures member states adhere to the established SARPs and audits their civil aviation authorities through the Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP) and the Universal Security Audit Programme (USAP).
- **Facilitating Air Navigation:** Provides guidelines and procedures for air navigation, including the global air traffic management system and satellite-based communication, navigation, surveillance, and air traffic management (CNS/ATM) systems.
- **Promoting Development:** Supports the development of infrastructure and the implementation of new technologies in the aviation sector.
- **Environmental Protection:** Implements policies to reduce the environmental impact of aviation, such as the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA).
- **Capacity Building:** Offers training and assistance to member states to enhance their aviation capabilities and infrastructure.

Key Initiatives

- **CORSIA:** A market-based mechanism aimed at stabilizing CO2 emissions from international aviation from 2021 onwards.

- **No Country Left Behind (NCLB):** *Initiative to assist states in implementing ICAO standards to ensure a safe, efficient, and sustainable global aviation system.*

Governance

- **Assembly:** *The sovereign body of ICAO, composed of representatives from all member states, meets every three years.*
- **Council:** *The governing body elected by the Assembly, consists of 36 member states, and is responsible for adopting SARPs and coordinating global aviation activities.*
- **Secretariat:** *Headed by the Secretary General, provides administrative and technical support to the Assembly and Council.*

Membership

- **Member States:** *193 member states (as of 2023), comprising almost all UN member states.*

Exercise Pitch Black

Syllabus: GS-2; International Relations

Context

- *Recently, An Indian Air Force (IAF) contingent has reached the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Base Darwin to participate in the largest edition so far of the biennial Exercise Pitch Black.*
- *This edition, from 12 July to 2 August 2024, will see participation by 20 countries, with over 140 aircraft and 4,400 military personnel of various air forces.*

Hosted by

- *The multinational exercise hosted is by the RAAF. The name "Pitch Black" was derived from the emphasis on night-time flying over large unpopulated areas.*

Aim

- *The exercise, which will be focusing on 'Large Force Employment' warfare is aimed at strengthening international cooperation and shall facilitate experience enhancement with the IAF Su-30 MKI operating alongside the F-35, F-22, F-18, F-15, Gripen and Typhoon fighter aircraft.*

Frequency

- Biennial (once every two years)



Participants

- Australia (Host)
- Canada
- France
- Germany
- India
- Indonesia
- Japan
- Malaysia
- New Zealand
- Singapore
- South Korea
- Thailand
- United Kingdom
- United States

Significance

The scale of Exercise Pitch Black 2024 holds several significant aspects:

- **Enhanced International Collaboration:** *With a record number of nations participating, the exercise fosters stronger relationships and improves communication between air forces from all over the world.*
- **Improved Interoperability:** *By training together, air forces can develop a better understanding of each other's tactics and procedures, allowing for smoother cooperation in real-world scenarios.*
- **Exposure to Advanced Capabilities:** *The participation of over 140 aircraft, including some of the most advanced fighter jets in the world, allows aircrew to gain experience operating alongside these sophisticated platforms.*
- **Testing in a Challenging Environment:** *The vast and sparsely populated airspace of Northern Territory provides a realistic training ground for complex air combat missions.*
- **Largest Pitch Black Ever:** *This year's exercise signifies a growing importance placed on international airpower cooperation and readiness.*

Chromium pollution

Syllabus: GS-3; Environmental Concern

Context

- *The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Odisha state government to supply safe potable drinking water in the different regions where the joint inspection committee had detected contamination of ground water due to chromium pollution.*

About

- *Chromium is a naturally occurring element that is found in rocks, soil, plants, animals, and even dust.*
- *It can exist in several different forms, but the two most common are trivalent chromium (Cr(III)) and hexavalent chromium (Cr(VI)).*
- *Cr(III) is the more stable and less toxic form, while Cr(VI) is more mobile and soluble in water, making it more harmful to human health and the environment.*

Sources of Chromium Pollution

- **Industrial activities:** Chromium is used in a variety of industrial processes, including stainless steel production, chrome plating, leather tanning, wood preservation, and textile dyeing. These industries can release chromium into the air and water through emissions and wastewater discharges.
- **Natural sources:** Chromium can also be released into the environment from natural sources, such as the weathering of rocks and volcanic eruptions. However, human activities are the main source of chromium pollution.
- **Improper waste disposal:** Solid wastes from chromate-processing facilities, when disposed of improperly in landfills, can be sources of contamination for groundwater.

Effects of Chromium Pollution

- **Human health:** Exposure to chromium can cause a variety of health problems, including respiratory problems, skin irritation, and cancer. The risk of these effects depends on the form of chromium, the level of exposure, and the duration of exposure.
- **Environment:** Chromium pollution can also harm the environment. It can be toxic to fish and other aquatic life, and it can damage plants. Chromium can also accumulate in the food chain, posing a risk to wildlife and humans.

Control and Prevention of Chromium Pollution

- **Regulations:** There are a number of regulations in place to control chromium pollution. These regulations limit the amount of chromium that can be released into the air and water from industrial facilities.
- **Pollution prevention:** Industrial facilities can also take steps to prevent chromium pollution. These steps include using chromium-free or low-chromium alternatives, recycling chromium-containing wastes, and treating wastewater to remove chromium.
- **Improved waste disposal:** Proper disposal of chromium-containing wastes is essential to prevent chromium pollution. This includes properly treating and disposing of wastewater from industrial facilities and avoiding the disposal of chromium-containing wastes in landfills.

Conclusion

- Chromium pollution is a serious environmental problem that can harm human health and the environment.
- By controlling chromium pollution through regulations and pollution prevention practices, we can protect our health and the environment.

