



DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 18-11-2024

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Sutlej River

Syllabus: GS-1; Geography- Rivers systems

Context

- Anger mounts in Rajasthan district over pollution in river Sutlej, local leaders say Punjab's industries to blame.



Origin and Course

- **Origin:** The Sutlej River originates from the **Rakas Tal** lake in Tibet, near the **Nanda Devi** mountain in the **Himalayas**.
- **Course:** It flows westward through the **Himachal Pradesh** region of India, then enters Pakistan, where it joins the **Chenab River** to form the **Indus River system**.
- It is the **longest of the five rivers of Punjab**, often referred to as one of the **Punjab Rivers**, which is historically significant for its role in the naming of the region "Punjab" (meaning "Land of Five Rivers").

Length and Tributaries

- **Length:** The Sutlej is approximately **1,450 kilometers** long.
- **Tributaries:** Some of the important tributaries of the Sutlej include:
 - **Beas River**
 - **Spiti River**
 - **Markanda River**
 - **Baspa River**

Flow Through India

- In India, the Sutlej flows through the states of **Himachal Pradesh** and **Punjab**.
- It is a major source of irrigation in Punjab, where its water is diverted for agricultural purposes through a network of canals.

Importance in India-Pakistan Relations

- The Sutlej River is part of the **Indus Water Treaty** (1960) between India and Pakistan. The treaty allocates the Sutlej, Beas, and Ravi rivers to India, while the Chenab, Jhelum, and Indus rivers are assigned to Pakistan.
- The management of its waters has been a point of discussion in bilateral talks, particularly due to water scarcity issues in both nations.

Hydroelectric Potential

- The Sutlej River holds significant potential for **hydroelectric power generation**. It is home to several **hydropower projects**, including:
 - **Bhakra Nangal Dam** (in Himachal Pradesh), one of the largest dams in India, providing both irrigation and electricity.
 - **Nadaun Hydroelectric Project** and **Chamera Hydroelectric Project**.
- These projects play a crucial role in meeting the electricity and irrigation needs of Punjab, Haryana, and Himachal Pradesh.

Environmental and Ecological Significance

- The Sutlej River Basin is ecologically rich, supporting a variety of flora and fauna. However, like many other rivers, it faces challenges such as **pollution**, particularly from industrial discharge, agricultural runoff, and domestic waste.
- The river's flow has also been affected by water extraction for irrigation and hydropower projects, impacting the downstream ecosystems.

Cultural and Historical Significance

- Historically, the Sutlej has been a major trade route for centuries. It was central to the **Indus Valley Civilization** and remains important for local communities along its course.
- The river is also important in the context of **Sikhism**, as it flows near historical Sikh sites in Punjab, such as **Nanakiana Sahib**.

G20

Syllabus: GS-2; International Relations

Context

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to participate in the 19th G20 Leaders' Summit, scheduled for November 18 and 19 2024.

About

- **Establishment:** Formed in 1999 in response to global financial crises.
- **Purpose:** Acts as a platform for international economic cooperation and policy coordination among major economies.
- **Members:** 19 countries and the European Union (EU).
 - **Countries:** Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, UK, USA.

Key Objectives

- Promote international financial stability.
- Address global challenges, such as climate change, sustainable development, and public health.
- Facilitate policy dialogue among member countries.

Structure

- **Summits:**
 - Held annually, attended by heads of state/government.
 - Presidency rotates among members.
- **Ministerial Meetings:**
 - Focus on specific areas, e.g., finance, health, education.
- **Working Groups:**
 - Address issues like trade, agriculture, digital economy, and energy.
- **Engagement Groups:**
 - Include business (B20), civil society (C20), labor (L20), and youth (Y20), among others.

India and G20

- **Significance for India:**
 - Opportunity to showcase its leadership on global issues.
 - Platform to advocate for developing nations.
 - Strengthen its position as a key global economic power.
- **Indian Presidency 2023:**
 - Theme: **“Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” (One Earth, One Family, One Future).**
 - Key Priorities:
 - Green Development and Climate Finance.
 - Accelerated inclusive and resilient growth.
 - Technological transformation and digital public infrastructure.
 - Reforming multilateral institutions.

Achievements of G20

- Coordinated response to the 2008 Global Financial Crisis.
- Implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.
- Establishment of frameworks for debt restructuring and sustainable development.
- Advocacy for pandemic preparedness and global vaccine access.

Challenges

- Lack of enforcement mechanisms for decisions.
- Conflicting interests among developed and developing nations.
- Geopolitical tensions among member countries.
- Criticism for being limited to economic issues, neglecting broader societal impacts.

More to know

- **Outcomes of the 2023 G20 Summit in India:**
 - Adoption of the New Delhi Declaration.
 - Inclusion of the **African Union** as a permanent member.
 - Focus on Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI).
 - Commitment to sustainable development goals (SDGs).
 - Climate action: Promotion of green technologies and climate finance.

Unicorn Companies

Syllabus: GS-3; Economic growth

Context

- Focus on 'unicornism' in India overhyped, says Wipro's Rishad Premji

About

- **Unicorn** is a term used in the business world to describe a privately held startup company valued at over **\$1 billion**.
- The term was first coined by venture capitalist **Aileen Lee** in 2013 to represent the rarity of such successful ventures.

Characteristics of Unicorn Companies:

- **Innovative Business Models:**
 - Often driven by disruptive technologies or services (e.g., AI, fintech, health tech, edtech).
- **High Growth Potential:**
 - Exhibit rapid scaling and expansion, often targeting global markets.
- **Technology-Driven:**
 - Most unicorns leverage cutting-edge technologies to solve complex problems efficiently.
- **Privately Funded:**
 - Backed by venture capitalists, private equity firms, and angel investors.

Examples of Unicorn Companies in India:

India is the third-largest startup ecosystem globally, following the USA and China. Some prominent unicorns in India include:

- **PhonePe** (FinTech): A leader in digital payments and financial services, enabling users to send money, pay bills, and make online transactions.
- **Paytm** (FinTech): A major player in digital payments and financial services.
- **Ola** (Mobility): Transforming ride-sharing and electric mobility.
- **Zomato** (Food Tech): A pioneer in food delivery services.
- **Nykaa** (E-commerce): Specializes in beauty and wellness products.

Importance of Unicorn Companies:

- **Economic Contribution:**
 - Boost GDP and job creation.
- **Innovation and Technology:**
 - Encourage advancements in AI, IoT, and other technologies.
- **Startup Ecosystem Development:**
 - Promote a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation.
- **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI):**
 - Attract global investors to India's emerging sectors.

Government Initiatives Supporting Unicorns in India:

- **Startup India (2016):**
 - Promotes entrepreneurship by providing tax benefits, incubation support, and funding assistance.
- **Fund of Funds for Startups (FFS):**
 - A corpus of INR 10,000 crore to support startups.
- **Digital India Mission:**
 - Enhances technological adoption across startups.
- **Ease of Doing Business:**
 - Simplifies regulations and processes for startups.

Challenges Faced by Unicorns:

- **Valuation Bubble:**
 - Overvaluation without sustainable revenue models.
- **Regulatory Hurdles:**
 - Compliance issues in multiple sectors.
- **High Burn Rate:**
 - Rapid spending without profitability.
- **Global Competition:**
 - Competing with international giants in similar domains.

Global Impact of Unicorns:

- **Transformative Business Models:**
 - From AI-driven platforms to green energy solutions, unicorns have revolutionized industries.
- **Job Creation:**

- Contribute significantly to employment, especially in tech and digital sectors.
- **Inspiration for Innovation:**
 - Motivate small startups to aim for higher growth and valuation.

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)

Syllabus: GS-3; Economic Development

Context

- India will not be able to reap greater benefits from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement due to widening trade deficits with member countries and China's opaque trade practices, **think tank GTRI** said in its report.

About

- The **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)** is a trade agreement that involves the ten ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries along with five major economies from the Asia-Pacific region: China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand.



Background and Formation

- **Signed:** November 15, 2020, after 8 years of negotiations.
- **Members:** The 10 ASEAN countries—Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam—along with China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand.
- **Objective:** To create a modern, comprehensive, high-quality, and mutually beneficial economic partnership among the member countries.

Key Features of RCEP

- **Trade Liberalization:** RCEP aims to eliminate tariffs on goods and services, making it easier for businesses to trade across borders.
- **Investment and Trade Facilitation:** It simplifies rules for trade, making it easier for companies to enter markets in RCEP countries.
- **Market Access:** Includes improved market access for goods and services, especially for areas like agriculture, textiles, electronics, and chemicals.
- **Services and Investment:** RCEP offers increased cooperation in services and investment, making it easier for foreign companies to establish businesses in the region.
- **E-commerce:** Includes provisions for digital trade, including measures to support cross-border data flows and electronic payments.
- **Intellectual Property Rights:** The agreement includes stronger intellectual property protections and a commitment to harmonizing standards.

Economic Impact

- **Global Economic Block:** RCEP forms the world's largest trading bloc, covering around 30% of the global population and GDP.
- **Increased Trade Flow:** It's expected to boost trade by reducing trade barriers, creating more competitive markets, and lowering transaction costs.
- **Supply Chain Integration:** It strengthens regional supply chains, especially in sectors like manufacturing and agriculture.

India's Withdrawal from RCEP

- India initially participated in the RCEP negotiations but decided to **withdraw** in November 2019.
- **Reasons for Withdrawal:**
 - Concerns over **trade imbalances** with countries like China.

- Fears over the impact on local industries, particularly in agriculture and manufacturing.
- Lack of safeguard mechanisms to protect Indian industries from an influx of cheaper goods.
- Pressure from domestic stakeholders who feared competition from cheaper imports.

Despite India's withdrawal, the agreement continued to move forward, with other members proceeding to sign the pact in 2020.

Benefits for India if Rejoined

- **Market Access:** India could benefit from improved market access in ASEAN countries and other RCEP members.
- **Investment:** RCEP would offer more foreign investment opportunities, especially in sectors such as technology, infrastructure, and manufacturing.
- **Export Growth:** India could see growth in exports, especially in sectors like textiles, pharmaceuticals, and IT services.

Challenges for India

- **Competitive Disadvantage:** Indian industries, particularly agriculture, could struggle with an influx of cheaper goods from countries like China.
- **Structural Reforms Needed:** India would need to make substantial structural reforms in areas like trade facilitation, infrastructure, and intellectual property to fully benefit from the agreement.

Strategic Significance

- **Geopolitical Implications:** RCEP enhances China's influence in the region, potentially leaving India on the sidelines of regional trade dynamics.
- **Regional Stability:** The agreement aims to enhance regional economic stability, reducing the likelihood of economic disruptions.

Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act - New rules

Syllabus: GS-3; Environmental Policies

Context

- The **Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974**, is a significant environmental law in India aimed at preventing and controlling water pollution.
- It is designed to ensure the maintenance of water quality for sustainable development and the protection of aquatic ecosystems.

Recent Developments

- The **Union Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change** has recently notified new rules to streamline the inquiry process and impose penalties for violations of the **Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974**.
- These new rules, titled **Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) (Manner of Holding Inquiry and Imposition of Penalty) Rules, 2024**, came into effect immediately as per the government notification.

Context of the New Rules:

- The new rules are introduced following amendments made earlier in the year, which decriminalized certain offences under the Water Act, replacing the criminal penalties with monetary penalties for violations.
- In addition to these new rules, the **Union Environment Ministry** had also notified regulations in July 2024 exempting non-polluting '**white**' category industries from obtaining prior permissions to establish and operate under the Act, to ease the regulatory burden for industries that pose minimal environmental risk.

Appointment of Adjudicating Officers:

- The amendments to the Water Act also allow the Centre to appoint officers to adjudicate offences, violations, and determine penalties.
- This change aims to make the process of handling pollution-related cases more efficient and responsive.
- **Adjudicating Officers** will have the authority to assess complaints related to water pollution, ensuring that the penalties are imposed in a transparent and consistent manner.

- The rules clarify that these adjudicating officers must be persons holding a rank not below **Joint Secretary or Secretary** to the state government, underlining the importance and seniority of the officers handling these cases.

Role of Pollution Control Authorities:

- The **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)**, **State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs)**, and other pollution control committees and offices have been empowered to file complaints regarding violations of the Water Act in their respective jurisdictions.
- These authorities, through their authorized officers, are responsible for identifying and reporting contraventions related to the release of industrial effluents and pollutants into water bodies, as specified in Sections 41, 41A, 42, 43, 44, 45A, and 48 of the Act.

Procedure for Inquiry:

- Once a complaint is filed, the **adjudicating officer** issues a notice to the person or entity against whom the complaint has been filed, detailing the alleged contravention.
- The officer then considers the explanation provided and may hold an inquiry to determine the nature and extent of the violation.
- This process is designed to ensure fairness and transparency in the imposition of penalties.

Key Sections Related to Water Pollution Violations:

- **Sections 41 to 48:** These sections of the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act deal with various violations related to the discharge of pollutants and industrial effluents into water bodies.
- Under these sections, industries and other entities are obligated to comply with water quality standards and obtain necessary permissions for discharging effluents.