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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

HRW says Israel used white phosphorous in Lebanon

CONTEXT: The Human Rights Watch (HRW), in a report published on Wednesday, accused Israel of using white phosphorus incendiary shells on residential buildings in at least five towns and villages in conflict-hit southern Lebanon, possibly harming civilians and violating international law.

HRW said that there was no evidence of burn injuries due to white phosphorus in Lebanon, but that researchers had “heard accounts indicating possible respiratory damage.”

The white-hot chemical substance can set buildings on fire and burn human flesh down to the bone. The Israeli military said that it upholds international law regarding the use of white phosphorus, using the chemical only as a smokescreen. “IDF procedures require that such shells are not used in densely populated areas, subject to certain exceptions,” the statement added.

What are white phosphorus bombs?

White phosphorus is a lethal chemical capable of burning human skin and disintegrating tissues deep inside the body. It ignites when exposed to oxygen and continues to burn until it is deprived of oxygen or exhausted.



Airbursts of artillery-fired white phosphorus fall over the Gaza City port on October 11, 2023. (Mohammed Adleh/AFP)

-  **EYES**
Flash burns can lead to vision impairment
-  **INHALATION**
Inhaling the smoke can lead to respiratory distress
-  **SKIN**
Burns through its victims' bodies

The use of white phosphorus as an incendiary weapon in areas with civilian populations is banned by the United Nations Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

About White Phosphorous Bombs:

White phosphorus is a waxy, yellowish-to-clear chemical with a pungent, garlic-like odour.

It is a highly combustible chemical that burns quickly and brightly when exposed to air.

It is used in incendiary weapons by militaries around the world for a variety of purposes, such as illuminating targets at night or to inflicting damage on enemies.

It burns at a temperature of 800°C and spontaneously ignites at up to 1,300 degrees Celsius when it is exposed to

oxygen, and producing white, dense smoke, which is used by armies to create smokescreens in sensitive zones.

White phosphorus can cause fast-moving and widespread fires on the ground.

Once ignited, the substance is very difficult to put out, as it clings to many surfaces, including skin and clothing.

Since it is a wax-like substance, it is very hard to remove and often lights up again when the bandages are removed.

White phosphorus munitions are not banned under international law, but because of their incendiary effects, their use is supposed to be tightly regulated.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Children grow up traumatised by war in Burkina Faso with waning care

CONTEXT: Mass killings of villagers have become common in northern Burkina Faso as fighters linked to the Islamic State group and al-Qaeda attack the army and volunteer forces. Those forces often turn on villages accused of cooperating with the enemy. More than 20,000 people have been killed since the fighting began a decade ago, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project, a U.S.-based non-profit group.

The country's military leader, Capt. Ibrahim Traoré, seized power in 2022 amid frustrations with the government over the deadly attacks. He is expected to remain in office for another five years, delaying the junta's promises of a democratic transition.



What is the History of Burkina Faso?

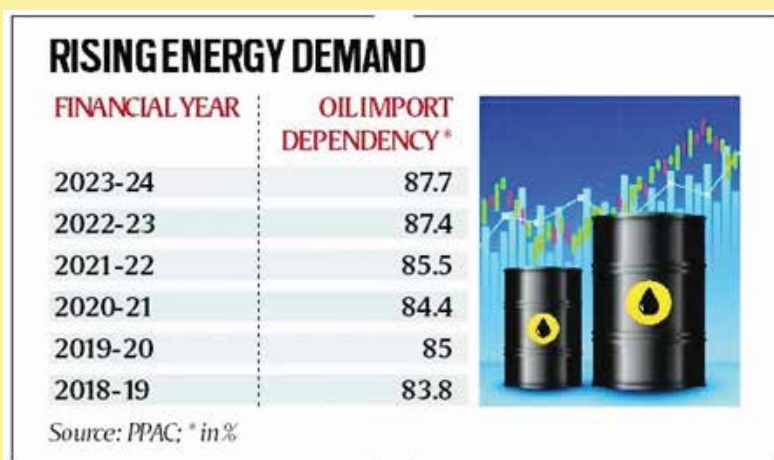
- A former French colony, Burkina Faso has suffered chronic instability since gaining independence in 1960, including several coups.
- The country's name, meaning "land of the honest men", was picked by revolutionary military officer Thomas Sankara who took power in 1983. He was toppled and killed in 1987.
- Since 2015, the country has been fighting an Islamist insurgency that spilled over from neighbouring Mali. This has fuelled anger in the military and damaged the once important tourist industry.
- Landlocked Burkina Faso, one of West Africa's poorest countries despite being a gold producer, has experienced numerous coups since independence from France in 1960.
- Islamist militants control swathes of Burkina Faso's territory and have forced residents in some areas to abide by their harsh version of Islamic law, while the military's struggle to quell the insurgency has drained scarce national resources.

ECONOMY

India refiners' continued to buy Russia, Iraq crude in May

CONTEXT: Indian refiners continued to purchase momentum for medium sour grades from its two largest trading partners, Russia and Iraq, during May as crude oil flows from another top supplier, Saudi Arabia, declined due to higher prices.

Analysts and trade sources indicated price arbitrage favoured Russia against Saudi Arabia by around \$5 per barrel. The world's largest crude oil exporter has been raising the official selling price (OSP) of its medium sour grade, Arab Light, to Asia for three consecutive months running into June as it attempts to tighten the oil market. According to energy intelligence firm Vortexa, India imported higher volumes from Russia, Iraq, the UAE and the U.S. last month compared with April.



Oil and Gas industry in India

The oil and gas sector is among the eight core industries in India which has a significant impact on all other significant economic sectors. India is the world's third-largest oil consumer and the oil demand is steadily growing each year at 3-4 %.

The Government has adopted several policies to fulfill the increasing demand. It has allowed 100% foreign direct investment (FDI) in many segments of the sector, including natural gas, petroleum products, and refineries, among others.

For 2022-23, the oil import dependence was around 86.4% against 85.9% in the corresponding year-ago period.

Russia has for the second month in a row remained India's top oil supplier in November 2022 surpassing traditional sellers Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Russia now makes up for 22% of India's total crude imports, ahead of Iraq's 20.5% and Saudi Arabia's 16%. The European Union ban on imports of Russia's seaborne oil from 5th December has driven Russia to seek alternative markets, mainly in Asia, for about 1 million barrels per day.

What can be Done to Reduce India's Oil Import Dependence?

- **Encouraging Domestic Production:** The only way India can reduce its dependence on imports is to increase the size of India-owned exploration and production assets overseas. That is what China has done.

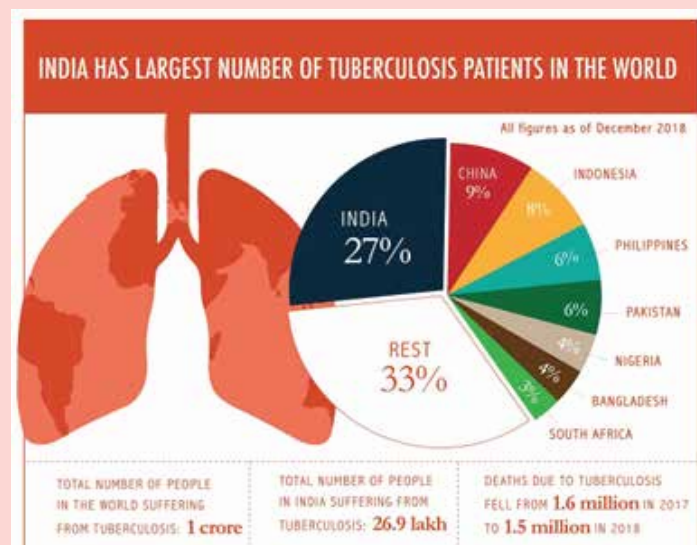
The public sector oil giant Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) is also taking various steps to increase the production by redevelopment of existing matured fields and development of new/marginal fields.

- **Alternate Green Sources:** Another way out for India is to expand its basket and focus on green energy. With the economy gaining momentum, demand for power is on the upswing. With the CoP26 commitments in place, the demand for Renewable Energy is at an all-time high, which calls for substantial capacity addition.

GOVERNMENT SCHEME

Health Ministry reworks protocol as country's TB elimination drive plateaus

CONTEXT: India's goal to achieve rapid decline in the burden of tuberculosis (TB) morbidity and mortality, while working towards the elimination of TB in the country by 2025, has plateaued, a senior Health Ministry official said.



The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) is looking at reworking the protocol, the official added, specifically TB medication and its duration, to reboot the TB-free initiative for eliminating deaths, disease, and poverty resulting from the infection.

According to the Health Ministry, India has been engaged in TB control activities for more than 50 years, yet the disease continues to be the country's severest health crisis. TB kills an estimated 4,80,000 Indians every year or over 1,400 patients every day.

What is Tuberculosis?

About:

Tuberculosis is a bacterial infection caused by *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. It can practically affect any organ of the body. The most common ones are the lungs, pleura (lining around the lungs), lymph nodes, intestines, spine, and brain.

Transmission:

It is an airborne infection that spreads through close contact with the infected, especially in densely populated spaces with poor ventilation.

Symptoms:

Common symptoms of active lung TB are cough with sputum and blood at times, chest pains, weakness, weight loss, fever and night sweats.

Drugs for TB:

Isoniazid (INH): This drug is a cornerstone of TB treatment and is highly effective against *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*.

It works by inhibiting the synthesis of mycolic acids in the bacterial cell wall.

Rifampicin (RIF): Another essential drug in TB treatment, rifampicin works by inhibiting the synthesis of RNA in the bacteria.

It is often used in combination with other drugs to treat TB and is crucial for preventing the development of drug resistance.

What Pradhan Mantri TB Mukh Bharat Abhiyan?

About:

It's an initiative of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW) to accelerate the country's progress towards TB elimination by 2025.

Objectives:

Provide additional patient support to improve treatment outcomes of TB patients Augment community involvement in meeting India's commitment to end TB by 2025. Leverage Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities.

Components:

Ni-kshay Mitra Initiative: It is to ensure additional diagnostic, nutritional, and vocational support to those on TB treatment.

Ni-kshay Mitra (Donor) are those who can support by adopting health facilities (for individual donor), blocks/urban wards/districts/states for accelerating response against TB to complement government efforts.

Ni-kshay Digital Portal: It will provide a platform for community support for persons with TB.

GOVERNMENT SCHEME

Health, Defence Ministries to set up Tele MANAS cell

CONTEXT: A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between the Ministries of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) and Defence to facilitate collaboration between them in operating a special cell of Tele MANAS, the National Telemental Health Helpline of the former, as a pilot project for a period of two years at the Armed Forces Medical College in Pune.

Tele MANAS is the digital extension of the District Mental Health Programme (DMHP), offering comprehensive, integrated, and inclusive 24/7 tele-mental health services. The initiative provides a toll-free number, 14416, in each State and Union Territory for easy access to mental health support.



National Tele Mental Health Programme

Tele Mental Health Assistance and Networking Across States (Tele MANAS) has been launched during October 2022.

Aims: It aims to provide free tele-mental health services all over the country round the clock, particularly catering to people in remote or under-served areas.

There are 42 active Tele Manas cells across 31 states and Union Territories. The service is accessible through the toll-free numbers with options choose preferred languages (20 languages included till now).

Tele-MANAS will be organised in two tier system:

- **Tier 1:** It comprises of state Tele-MANAS cells which include trained counsellors and mental health specialists.
- **Tier 2:** It will comprise of specialists at District Mental Health Programme (DMHP)/Medical College resources for physical consultation and/or e-Sanjeevani for audio visual consultation.

Services offered by Tele MANAS:

- Tele counselling by trained counsellors.
- Tele Consultation by Mental Health professionals when required.
- Referral Services to other Mental Health Establishments such as Medical Colleges, District Mental Health Program (DMHP) services and speciality institutes.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

China accuses U.S. of interfering after Tiananmen remarks

CONTEXT: China lashed out at the United States on Wednesday after Washington's top diplomat Antony Blinken vowed never to forget the crackdown in Tiananmen Square 35 years ago.

"The move of the U.S. seriously interferes with China's internal affairs," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said. "China is strongly dissatisfied and firmly opposes it," she added. She called upon the United States to "stop provoking ideological confrontation, and stop interfering in China's internal affairs under the pretext of human rights".



Tiananmen Square Massacre

About:

The Tiananmen Square protests were student-led demonstrations held in Tiananmen Square in Beijing during 1989 calling for democracy, free speech and a free press in China.

Background to protests:

The protests were set off by the death of pro-reform Communist general secretary Hu Yaobang in April 1989, amid the backdrop of rapid economic development and social changes in post-Mao China.

Common grievances at the time included inflation, corruption, limited preparedness of graduates for the new economy, and restrictions on political participation.

Tiananmen Square Massacre:

The protests started on April 15 and were forcibly suppressed in a bloody crackdown, known as the Tiananmen Square Massacre, by the Chinese government on June 4 and 5, 1989.

On June 4, the government declared martial law and sent the military to occupy central parts of Beijing. Troops with assault rifles and tanks fired at the demonstrators.

Estimates of the death toll vary from several hundred to several thousand, with thousands more wounded.



"If you invest more in your education, then you are likely to get more interest in it."

—Benjamin Franklin

GEOGRAPHY

Parts of the Rhine River in southern Germany were closed after heavy rains raised water levels.

CONTEXT: Parts of the river Rhine in south Germany were still closed to cargo shipping on Wednesday after heavy rain in the region increased water levels, navigation authorities said.

Rhine river shipping stopped around Maxau and Mainz in south Germany, the German inland waterways navigation agency said. The river had been closed to freight shipping over the weekend after heavy rain caused extensive flooding.



About Rhine river

- It is the 12th longest river in Europe and the longest in Western and Central Europe. It is called different names depending on the country it flows through. It is called Rhein in Germany, Rhine in France, and Rijn in Netherlands.
- It runs for over 1,232 km (766 miles) from its source in the Swiss Alps (in Switzerland). It flows through six countries—Switzerland, Principality of Liechtenstein, Austria, Germany, France and the Netherlands before flowing into the North Sea at Rotterdam, Netherlands.
- The Rhine forms a natural border between Germany and France. The river drains an area of about 185,000 square kilometres.
- Tributaries: Some of the notable tributaries of the Rhine River include Aare, Tamina, Moselle, Erft, Rein da Tuma, Plessur, Rotach, and Wiese.
- It is Europe's most important commercial waterway, channeling the flow of trade among Switzerland, France, Germany, and the Netherlands.



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