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INTERNAL SECURITY

31 killed as rain, landslips wreak havoc in northeast

CONTEXT: Mizoram is the worst affected with 27 deaths in four incidents of landslips, more than 30 are feared dead, say officials; parts of Assam, Meghalaya, and Mizoram continue to be without power

BACKGROUND: Storms and rainfall-induced landslips in the aftermath of cyclone Remal killed at least 31 people and injured several others across three northeastern States on Tuesday.

Mizoram was the worst affected with 27 confirmed deaths in four incidents of landslips. Officials in the State said the death toll could be more than 30 as an "uncertain number" of people have been reported missing, some buried under debris.



Landslides and its significance

A **landslide** is a geological phenomenon involving the downward **movement of a mass of rock, soil, and debris on a slope**. This movement can vary in scale from small, localized shifts to massive and destructive events.

Landslides can occur on both natural and man-made slopes, and they are often triggered by a combination of factors such as heavy rainfall, **earthquakes**, volcanic activity, human activities (such as construction or mining), and changes in groundwater levels.

What are the reasons behind Landslides ?

Fragile Ecosystem: Tectonic or neo-tectonic activities, associated with numerous subsurface processes like rock deformation, exhumation and reworking of rocks and surface processes such as erosion, weathering and rain/snow precipitation make the ecosystem inherently fragile.

Climate Induced Excessive Events: Climate-induced excessive events like freezing/thawing and heavy rain/snow precipitation lead to avalanches, landslides, debris flow, glacial lakes outburst floods, landslide lakes outburst floods and flash floods.

Anthropogenic Factors: Human activities such as road construction, tunneling, mining, quarrying, deforestation,

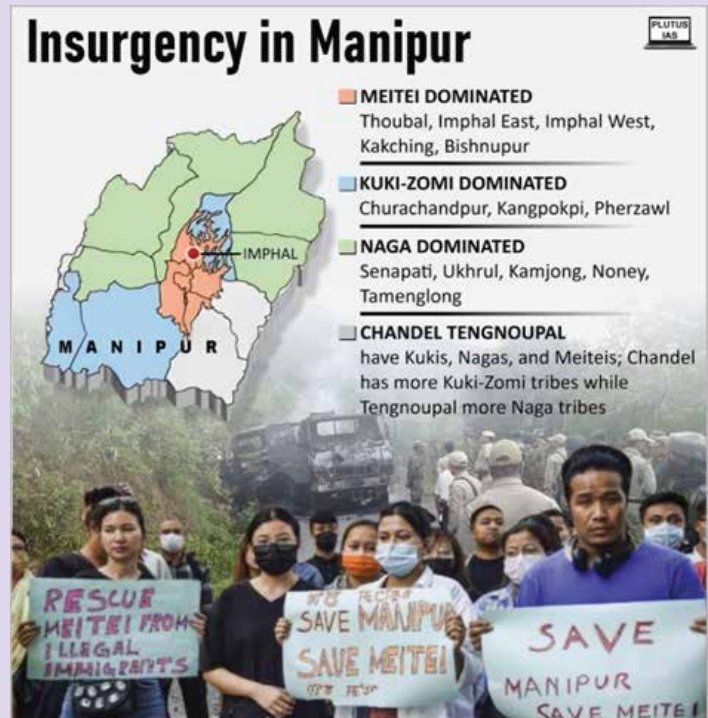
urbanization, agriculture, excessive tourism and hydroelectric projects can also cause or worsen landslides.

INTERNAL SECURITY

Meitei civil society organisations raise questions over 'targeted attacks' in Manipur

CONTEXT: Civil society organisations representing the Meitei community on Tuesday raised questions about alleged targeted attacks against the community during the ongoing ethnic conflict in Manipur.

Background: The Delhi Meitei Coordinating Committee (DMCC), along with allied civil society organisations from the Manipur capital Imphal that included groups of Meira Paibis (women activists), held a press conference at the Press Club of India in New Delhi. The ethnic conflict between the majority Meitei community and the tribal Kuki-Zo communities began on May 3 last year. More than 220 people have been killed in the conflict so far, thousands injured, and at least 50,000 people internally displaced.



Why does the Meitei Community want ST Status?

Meiteis are the largest community in Manipur and there are 34 recognized tribes broadly classified as 'Any Kuki Tribes' and 'Any Naga Tribes'.

The Imphal valley in the state, at the centre of Manipur, accounts for about 10% of its landmass and is home primarily to the Meitei and Meitei Pangals who constitute roughly 64.6% of the state's population.

The remaining 90% of the state's geographical area comprises hills surrounding the valley, which are home to the recognized tribes, making up about 35.4% of the state's population.

While a majority of the Meiteis are Hindus followed by Muslims (8%), the 33 recognised tribes, broadly classified into 'Any Naga tribes' and 'Any Kuki tribes' are largely Christians.

Manipur, along with Dimapur district of Nagaland, was brought under the purview of the ILP System in December 2019. ILP is a special permit obligatorily required by "outsiders" from other regions of the country to enter the notified states.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

India offers \$1-million aid to disaster-hit Papua New Guinea

CONTEXT: The Government of India has granted \$1 million as immediate assistance for Papua New Guinea, which has been hit by a devastating flood and landslide that has so far killed 2,000 people.



BACKGROUND: India announces immediate relief assistance worth US\$ 1 million to Papua New Guinea in the wake of devastating landslide. A massive landslide occurred on 24 May 2024 in Enga Province, Papua New Guinea which buried hundreds of people and caused major destruction and loss of life.

The situation in Papua New Guinea became serious on May 24 when a massive landslip buried nearly 2,000 people. Rescue operations are currently under way. India had earlier supported Papua New Guinea in 2018 when the country was rocked by an earthquake and subsequently in 2019 and 2023 when volcanic eruptions hit the country.

Forum for India Pacific Islands Cooperation

FIPIIC is a multinational grouping developed for cooperation between India and 14 PICs, namely Cook

Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

It was launched in November 2014 and the first FIPIIC summit was held in Suva, Fiji in 2014 and the second one was held in Jaipur, India in 2015.

OBJECTIVE:

To enhance India's relations with the PICs in various fields such as trade, investment, tourism, education, health, agriculture, renewable energy, disaster management and climate change.

FIPIIC also provides a platform for dialogue and consultation on regional and global issues of mutual interest.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Norway, Ireland and Spain recognise Palestinian state

CONTEXT: Spain, Norway and Ireland formally recognised a Palestinian state on Tuesday in a coordinated effort by the three Western Euro- pean nations to add inter- national pressure on Israel to soften its devastating response to last year's Ha- mas-led attack.



BACKGROUND: The Palestinian flag was raised in Dublin outside Leinster House, the seat of the Irish parliament.

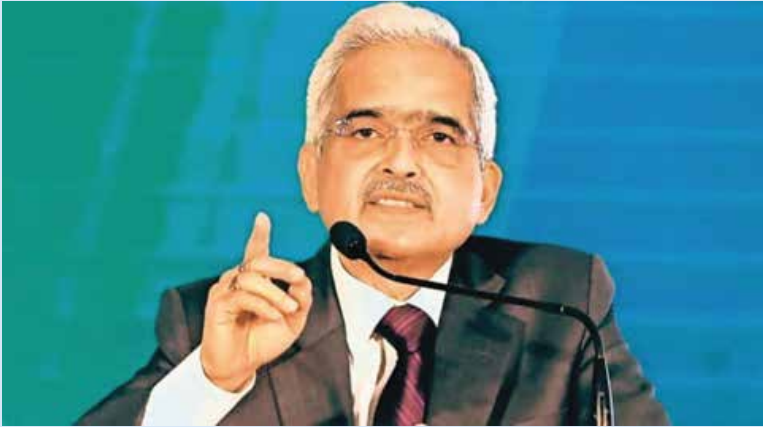
While some 140 countries have recognised a Palestinian state — more than two-thirds of the United Nations — none of the major Western powers has done so. Still, the adherence of three European countries to the group re- presents a victory for Palestinian efforts in the world of public opinion, and will likely put pressure on European Union heavy- weights France and Ger- many to rethink their position.

Previously only seven member of the 27-nation EU officially recognized a Palestinian state. Five of them are former East bloc countries who announced recognition in 1988, as did Cyprus, before joining the EU. Sweden's recognition came in 2014.

ECONOMY

RBI unveils Pravaah portal for approvals

CONTEXT: Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das on Tuesday unveiled three major initiatives of the Reserve Bank of India, namely the Pravaah portal, Retail Direct Mobile App and a FinTech Repository.



BACKGROUND: The Pravaah portal will make it convenient for any individual or entity to apply online for various regulatory approvals in a seamless manner, the RBI said.

The Retail Direct Mobile App will provide retail investors ease of transacting in G-Secs, it added. The Fintech Repository will contain information on data of Indian FinTech firms

Reserve Bank of India will launch a secured web-based centralised portal named 'PRAVAAH' (Platform for Regulatory Application, Validation And Authorisation) to simplify and streamline application processes. The portal will show time limits for deciding on the applications/approvals sought.

The retail direct mobile app will provide retail investors a seamless and convenient access to the retail direct platform and provide ease of transacting in government securities (G-Secs). The RBI launched the retail direct portal in November 2021 to facilitate investment in government securities by individual investors. With the launch of the retail direct mobile app, retail investors can now transact in G-Secs using the mobile app on their smartphones, the regulator said in a release.

regulator said the fintech repository will contain information on Indian fintech firms for a better understanding of the sector from a regulatory perspective and facilitate in designing appropriate policy approaches.

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ECONOMY

Commerce Department fine tuning terms of free trade agreements

CONTEXT: The Commerce Department is working on fine tuning the strategy and position to be adopted for negotiating free trade agreements (FTAs), including tackling of contemporary issues such as labour, environment and gender, to have optimum results.



BACKGROUND: Ways to leverage India's FTAs to address emerging areas such as the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, supply chain disruptions, accessing critical minerals and benefiting from Artificial Intelligence was also discussed at the recent 'Chintan Shivir' on 'FTA Strategy and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for Trade Negotiations' organised by the Commerce Department, per an official statement issued on Tuesday.

A session with former Secretaries and Ambassadors on 'FTA strategy' highlighted how Indian FTAs must be driven by balancing geopolitics and geo economics and focused on how regionalism (regional trade agreements) should complement multilateralism (global trade agreements).

India and Free Trade Agreements

FTA is a pact between two or more nations to reduce barriers to imports and exports among them. Under a free trade policy, goods and services can be bought and sold across international borders with little or no government tariffs, quotas, subsidies, or prohibitions to inhibit their exchange. The concept of free trade is the opposite of trade protectionism or economic isolationism.

Important trade agreements of India

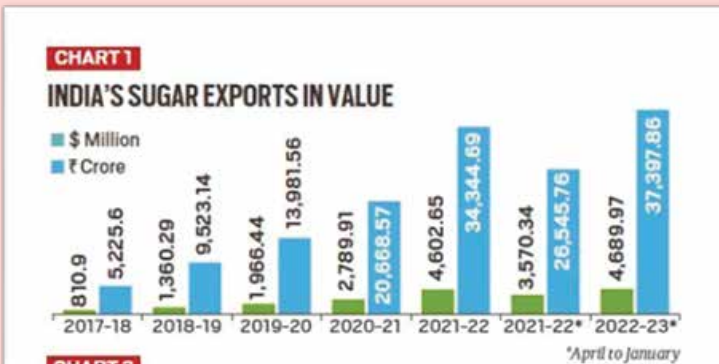
- Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA) between India and Mauritius.
- South Asia Preferential Trading Agreement (SAPTA): It is for promoting trade amongst the member countries came into effect in 1995.
- South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA): A Free Trade Agreement confined to goods, but excluding all services like information technology. Agreement was signed to reduce customs duties of all traded goods to zero by the year 2016.
- Asia Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA):
- Previously the Bangkok Agreement, it's a preferential

tariff arrangement that aimed at promoting intra-regional trade through the exchange of mutually agreed concessions by member countries.

ECONOMY

Sugar exports said to hinge on monsoon, cane sowing

CONTEXT: India may allow sugar exports after assessing the final sugarcane sowing and output in the 2024-25 season, as the world's biggest producer after Brazil is expecting a lower sugar output of 30 million tonne next season, sources said.



| Sugar Year | Raw Sugar | White Sugar*** | Total |
|------------|-----------|----------------|-------|
| 2016-17 | 0 | 0.46 | 0.46 |
| 2017-18 | 0.47 | 5.73 | 6.2 |
| 2018-19 | 13.13 | 24.87 | 38 |
| 2019-20 | 17.84 | 41.56 | 59.4 |
| 2020-21 | 28.16 | 43.74 | 71.9 |
| 2021-22 | 56.29 | 53.71 | 110 |
| 2022-23** | 19.13 | 30.91 | 50.04 |

Note: Sugar Year is from Oct-Sept. **As on March 15; ***Includes refined sugar

BACKGROUND: For the current 2023-24 season ending September, sugar production has reached 31.5 million tonne so far, with the final output likely to touch 31.8 million tonnes as mills in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka wrap up crushing, the sources added. Last year, India produced 32.8 million tonne.

Sugar industry in India

Sugar industry is an important agro-based industry that impacts the rural livelihood of about 50 million sugarcane farmers and around 5 lakh workers directly employed in sugar mills.

The sugar industry is the second largest agro-based industry in India after cotton.

India is the world's top Producer, User, and Second-largest Exporter of sugar.

According to the Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA), the sugar production of India rose by 3.69% to 12.07 million tonnes during the October-December quarter of 2022.

In the same period last year, it stood at 11.64 million tonnes.

Total sugar production, after diversion for ethanol manufacturing, has increased to 193.5 lakh tonnes till January 2023 from 187.1 lakh tonnes in the year-ago period.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Taiwan's legislature passes Bills favouring China, curtailing powers of President

CONTEXT: Taiwan's Opposition-controlled legislature passed changes on Tuesday that are seen as favouring China and diminishing the power of the island's President, sparking protests by thousands of people.

BACKGROUND: It remains unclear whether the Bills will become law. The Executive Yuan, the executive branch of government headed by the Premier, may veto legislation or pass it on to the President, who has to proclaim Bills into law within 10 days. If the Executive Yuan or the President does not comply, the Bills will not become law.

Taiwan was governed under martial law for 40 years under the Nationalists, who have lost three consecutive presidential elections but still hold power on the local level through well-entwined networks of business and social interests. Pro-China business groups have also captured a major share of Taiwan's media market, even as the younger generation turns to social media for its information.



Strategic significance of Taiwan

- Taiwan is situated in a strategically important location in the western Pacific Ocean, adjacent to China, Japan, and the Philippines. Its location provides a natural gateway to Southeast Asia and the South China Sea, which are critical for global trade and security.
- Taiwan's proximity to mainland China makes it a critical factor in military planning for both China and other regional powers. Control over Taiwan would enhance China's ability to project power into the western Pacific and potentially threaten key US allies such as Japan and South Korea
- Taiwan is a major economic player in the global market, particularly in the semiconductor and electronics industries. Its economy is closely integrated with regional and global supply chains, making it strategically important for regional stability and economic security. Taiwan produces over 60% of the world's semiconductors and over 90% of the most advanced ones.

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