

## India's New Projects in Srilanka

### ❖ Context

- India's External Affairs Minister visit to Srilanka to attend BIMSTEC ministerial meeting hosted by the current chair, Srilanka, was marked by the launch and announcement of a number of new projects.

### ❖ Key Highlights

#### ❖ Power Projects (Solar and Wind Farms) :

- MoU signed for setting up **hybrid power projects** by India in **three islands off Jaffna in Palk bay - Nainativu, Delft or Neduntheevu, and Analaitivu islands** - barely 50 km off Tamil Nadu.
- It will **replace the Chinese venture** cleared by Colombo last year. **India offered** to execute the same project with a **grant rather than a loan** as in case of China
- It is the **third Indian energy project** coming up in Sri Lanka's north and east, after the recent agreements for :
  - National Thermal Power Corporation's solar venture in the eastern **Sampur town**,
  - The Adani Group's renewable energy projects in **Mannar and Pooneryn** in the north.

#### ❖ Jaffna Cultural Centre:

- A "reconciliation" project, to be run by local municipality, built with an **Indian grant of \$11 million**.
- The building with facilities including a 600-capacity auditorium, a conference hall, an amphitheatre and a digital library was completed in early 2020.
- It will serve as a **public space for sharing art and culture in the war-affected area**.

#### ❖ Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC):

- MoU signed to be set up at the **Srilanka Naval headquarters, Colombo**, by **Bharat Electronics Ltd** with an **Indian grant of \$ 6MN**.
- It will also include:
  - setting up a **network of seven sub-units** in naval bases **along the Srilankan coast** - Galle (South); Argam Bay, Batticaloa, Trincomalee, Kallawa (East) and Mullikalam, Point Pedro (North).
  - A **rescue sub-centre at Hambantota**, where Chinese shipping and logistic company, China Merchants Port Holdings, runs largest Srilankan port after Colombo.

- The MRCC network is meant to give Sri Lanka's present search and rescue operations more capacity and depth, and improve direct communications in case India's help is required.

#### ❖ Srilanka Unique Digital Identity (SL-UDI)

- MoU signed for implementation of the programme with **Indian grant** which will be **modelled on India's Aadhar**.

#### ❖ Defence Agreements

- Earlier this month, during the visit of Srilankan Finance Minister to India, both sides finalised the **defence agreement** under which India is to provide:
  - **Dornier Aircraft to Srilankan Airforce** - for maritime surveillance, search and rescue operations and to deliver information to various required platforms.
  - **4,000 m floating dock facility at no cost to Srilankan Navy** - to reduce the annual outlay of LKR. 600 million for outsourced docking repairs

#### ❖ Other Initiatives:

- India will provide **grant of \$15 MN for maintenance of Buddhist sites** in Srilanka.
- Agreement for collaboration between Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service and the Colombo-based Bandaranaike International Diplomatic Training Institute.
- MoU for setting up **computer labs in 200 schools** in Galle district.
- India will also help develop **fisheries harbours in Point Pedro, Pesalai and Gurunagar** in the Northern Province, and **Balapitiya**, south of Colombo.

#### ❖ Srilanka's Outreach for Additional Economic Assistance:

- India has extended **\$2.4 billion support** to Sri Lanka since the beginning of this year, to help the island nation cope with a severe economic meltdown.
- Srilanka has reached out to India to **provide an additional \$1 BN assistance**.

## Minorities Status in the State

### ❖ Context

- A plea challenging the **Centre's power to notify minorities** under the National Minorities Commission Act, 1992, and seeking minority status for Hindus in states where their numbers have gone below that of others, has been filed in SC.
- The Ministry of Minority Affairs had said that States also have the power to declare a group as minority within their jurisdiction. The SC has given the Centre more time to officially place its stand.

### Face to Face Centres



## ❖ Key Highlights

- According to the **2011 census** showed Hindus have become a minority in Lakshadweep (2.5%), Mizoram (2.75%), Nagaland (8.75%), Meghalaya (11.53%), J&K (28.44%), Arunachal Pradesh (29%), Manipur (31.39%), and Punjab (38.40%).

## ❖ The Constitutional Position

- The Constitution refers to “minorities” in some Articles, but **does not define the term**.
- **Article 29** - Any section of citizen having distinct language, script or culture have right to conserve the same.
- **Article 30** - Right of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions.
- **Article 350(A)** - Special Officer for linguistic minorities.

## ❖ National Commission of Minorities Act 1992

- The act also **does not define minorities**.
- For the purpose of the act, the communities notified under **Section 2(c)** by the Centre are regarded as minorities.
- Under the Act, the centre notified five groups - Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Parsis - in 1993.
- Jains were added to the list in 2014.

## ❖ Previous SC Judgements

- **DAV college vs State of Punjab (1971)** - Arya Samajis who were Hindus are a religious minority in the state of Punjab, even though they may not have been so in relation to entire country.
- **TMA Pai Foundation & Ors vs State Of Karnataka & Ors (2002)** - dealt with scope of rights of minorities to run education institutions of their choice under constitution.
  - It laid down that in the absence of any special definition of minorities, any community, religious or linguistic, which is numerically less than 50% of the population of a state is entitled to the protection of minority rights and the **unit to determine a religious and linguistic minority can only be state**.
- **Bal Patil & Anr vs Union Of India & Ors (2005)** - A linguistic minority will have to be determined in relation to the state in which the education institution is to be established. The position with regard to religious minority is similar since both have been put on par under Article 30.

## Annual Frontier Report 2022 by UNEP

### ❖ Context

- Recently, the **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)** has released its Annual Frontiers Report named **Noise, Blazes and Mismatches**, Dhaka has been ranked as the noisiest city in the world which is followed by Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh.

### ❖ About The Report

- **Released by-** UN Environment Programme (UNEP).
- The report **measured noise levels in 61 cities** of the world.
- According to the **WHO's recommendations**, the permissible noise level **limits are 55 dB for outdoor residential areas and 70 dB for commercial areas** and where there's traffic.
- WHO says that a sound with noise above 70 dB over a prolonged period of time can increase the risk of hearing loss.

### ❖ Key Findings of The Report

- **Five Indian cities have been ranked** in this list of being among the **noisiest cities** of the world which are **Asansol, Jaipur, Kolkata, New Delhi, and Moradabad**.
- Dhaka has been ranked as the world's noisiest city with **Islamabad of Pakistan ranked third**.
- **Irbid (Jordan) has been ranked as the world's quietest city** and it is followed by **Lyon (France) and Madrid (Spain)**.
- The Frontier Report 2022 has ranked a total of 61 cities which include **13 from South Asia, 10 from West Asia, 10 from Europe, 11 from South East Asia, East Asia, and the Pacific, 6 from North America, 7 from Africa, and 4 from Latin America**.

### ❖ United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

- UNEP is an **agency of the United Nations**. It coordinates the UN's environmental activities.
- It was **founded as a result of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment 1972**.
- It works to identify and draw attention to emerging issues of environmental concern.
- **Functions:**
  - It **sets the global environmental agenda, promotes sustainable development** within the United Nations system, and serves as an authoritative advocate for global environment protection.
- **Secretariats hosted by UNEP:**
  - The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD),
  - The Minamata Convention on Mercury.
  - The Convention on Migratory Species.
  - The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).
- In 1988, the **World Meteorological Organization** and **UNEP established** the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

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- **Headquarters:**
  - Nairobi, Kenya.
- **Publications:**
  - Global Environment Outlook.
  - Adaptation Gap Report.
  - Emission Gap Report.
  - Frontiers, Invest into Healthy Planet.
- **Major Campaigns:**
  - Clean up the World, Billion Tree Campaign, Beat Pollution, UN75, World Environment Day, Wild for Life.



## Moscow Insists on Payment in Rouble

### ❖ Context

- Recently, Russia reiterated that it will only be accepting payment for gas deliveries to the EU in rouble.
- G7 Ministers called this arrangement “unacceptable”.

### ❖ Key Highlights

- Western countries have piled crippling **sanctions on Moscow** since it moved troops into Ukraine.
- The United States banned the import of Russia oil and gas among other measures.
- However, the European Union — which received around 40% of its gas supplies from Russia in 2021 - has retained deliveries from Moscow.

### ❖ About Rouble

- Rouble, also spelled rouble, the **monetary unit of Russia** (and the former Soviet Union) and **Belarus (spelled rubel)**.
- However, today **only Russia, Belarus and Transnistria use currencies with the same name.**
- The Russian rouble is also **unofficially used** in the four partially recognised republics of **Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Donetsk and Luhansk.**
- As of April 2019, the rouble is the **seventeenth most traded currency in the world**, and a free-floating currency.

### ❖ About G7

- The G7 (Group of Seven) is an **organization of the world's seven largest so-called "advanced" economies.**
- They dominate global trade and the international financial system.
- Together the member countries represent **40% of global GDP and 10% of the world's population.**
- They are Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK and the United States.
- **Russia joined in 1998**, creating the G8, but **was excluded in 2014** for its takeover of Crimea.
- The **EU is not a member of the G7** but attends the annual summit.
- The G7 has **no legal existence, permanent secretariat or official members.**
- It also has no binding impact on policy and all decisions and commitments made at G7 meetings need to be ratified independently by governing bodies of member states.

## News in Between the Lines

### Vinaya Samarasya Yojana



#### ❖ Context

- The **Karnataka government** has announced a new scheme to create awareness to **eradicate untouchability in all gram panchayats** across the state.

#### ❖ Key Highlights

- The scheme was included in the recently announced in the state budget 2022-23.
- The scheme has been named after a three year old Dalit boy , Vinay, whose family, was socially boycotted and slapped a fine of Rs. 25000 by the residents of the village dominated by Ganigas community, for boy's straying into a local temple. **Article 17** of the Constitution abolishes "Untouchability" and forbids its practice in any form.

### Articulated All-Terrain Vehicles

#### ❖ Context

- The **Indian Army** has issued a Request for Information (RFI) for the supply of Articulated All-Terrain Vehicles to be deployed in Ladakh and Kutch.

#### ❖ Key Highlights

- several Western manufacturers of Articulated All-Terrain Vehicles.
- It is a **twin-cabin, tracked, amphibious** carrier for **off-road mobility.**

## Face to Face Centres





- The special design exerts **low ground pressure**, and a pull-push mode of locomotion between cabin facilitates movement over varied terrains like snow, desert, and slush.
- A **ballistic protection** in the cabin protects from small arms fire.
- These vehicles are useful to move supply or troops for patrolling or rapid deployment in operational situations. According to the RFI, the vehicle should have a **life of 15 years** and operating **range of not less than 150 kms**.

## Article 342(A)



### ❖ Context

- MPs in Parliament demanded that the government may bring a law to break the constitutional deadlock in the enforcement of OBC reservations in local body elections.

### ❖ Key Highlights

- Article 342A was inserted vide **102nd Constitution Amendment Act 2018**
- Under clause 1 of the Article - the **Centre has the power to notify** socially and educationally backward classes, with respect to any state or UT, after consultation with the Governor, in case of state.
- **Parliament has the power to include in or exclude from the list** a socially and educationally backward class.
- With **105th Constitution Amendment Act, 2021**, the list referred to in aforesaid clauses (1) and (2) was defined as **central list**.
- Further, a **new clause (3)** was inserted vide which the **states legislatures** have been given the **power to notify a state list** of the socially and educationally backward classes for its own purpose.
- The SC in its recent judgement strayed Maharashtra government order providing 27% reservation in local bodies with direction to first comply with the triple test laid down by the SC in *K. Krishna Murthy case*.

## Indian Rhinocero



### ❖ Context

- The latest census of the World Heritage Sites flagship animal has revealed that the **population** of the greater one-horned or Indian rhinoceros in the **Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve has increased by 200 in four years**.

### ❖ Key Highlights

- The last rhino census conducted in 2018 had put the number at 2,413.
- This year's census had a first — the **use of drones** for the recheck of 26 park compartments where the sample survey was done.

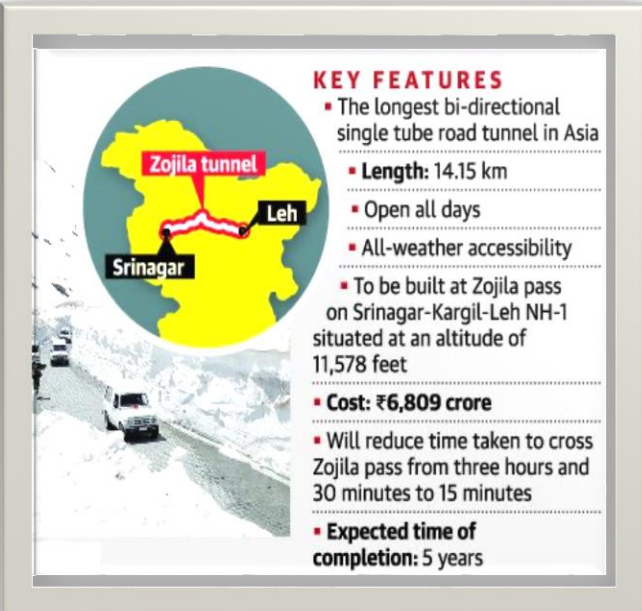
### ❖ About Indian Rhinoceros

- The Indian rhinoceros is the **biggest of the three rhinos of Asia**, and, along with the **African white rhino**, is the biggest of all rhino species.
- Its **single black horn** identifies it, along with its gray-brown hide and skin folds, giving it an armor-plated look. **Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary** in Assam has the highest density of Indian rhinos in the world.
- **Habitat:** Tropical and Subtropical Grasslands, Savannas, and Shrublands
- **Distribution and Threat:**
  - Indian rhinos once ranged throughout the entire stretch of the **Indo-Gangetic Plain**, but **excessive hunting** and **agricultural development** reduced its range drastically to 11 sites in northern India and southern Nepal.
  - In India, rhinos are mainly found in Kaziranga NP, Pobitora WLS, Orang NP, Manas NP in Assam, Jaldapara NP and Gorumara NP in West Bengal, Dudhwa TR in Uttar Pradesh.
- **Conservation Status:**
  - **IUCN Red List-** Vulnerable.
  - **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972-** Schedule I
  - **CITES-** Appendix I

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## Zojila Tunnel



### ❖ Context

- The final phase of the strategic Zojila tunnel project on Srinagar-Leh highway is likely to **be completed in September 2025**, a year before the deadline set.
- In 2018, the Zojila tunnel project was launched. The tunnel is **Asia's longest and strategic bi-directional tunnel**.

### ❖ Key Highlights

- Zoji La is a **high mountain pass** (3,528 meters above sea level) located in the **Kargil district of Ladakh**. The pass **links Leh and Srinagar** and provides an important link between UT of Ladakh and Kashmir.
- The tunnel will **reduce the distance between Baltal to Minamarg from 40 km to 13 km**. The Zoji La project consists of **18-km tunnels and 17-km roads**, three vertical shafts, and four bridges.
- Zoji la is known as the **“Mountain Pass of Blizzards”**.
- **Significance:**
  - It will **allow the movement of essential supplies**, artillery, arms and ammunition towards the Line of Actual Control in Ladakh, where India and China are engaged in a face-off since May 2020.
  - It will **provide an all-weather connectivity to Ladakh**, which remains cut off from the rest of the country for four to six winter months every year.

## Condors



### ❖ Context

- Recently, **Indian Naval Air Squadron (INAS) 316** was commissioned at the INS Hansa, a naval air station near Dabolim in Goa.

### ❖ Key Highlights

- The Indian Naval Air Squadron (INAS) 316, will **operate four P-8I aircraft**.
- The squadron has been **named ‘Condors’**, one of the largest flying land birds with a massive wingspan.
- The ‘Game Changer’ aircraft is a potent platform for maritime surveillance and strike, electronic warfare missions, search and rescue, providing targeting data to weapon platforms, time-critical surveillance information to the Army and the Air Force.
- **Significance:**
  - INAS 316 will certainly **enhance operational capabilities** across the three domains of maritime operations — sea, air and subsurface.
  - The new squadron has been raised amid growing concerns over **China’s increasing forays into the Indian Ocean**.

## Minamata Convention on Mercury



### ❖ Context

- **Mercury (Hg)** is a global pollutant that affects **human, harms wildlife and ecosystem health**. Exposure to mercury threatens our health, with many often **irreversible toxic effects**.

### ❖ Key Highlights

- Mercury occurs naturally in the **earth’s crust**, but **human activities**, such as **mining and fossil fuel combustion**, have led to widespread **global mercury pollution**. Mercury emitted into the air eventually settles into water or onto land, where it can be washed into water.
- **The Minamata Convention on Mercury is a global treaty to protect human health and the environment** from the adverse effects of mercury and its compounds. It was agreed at the fifth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating **Committee in Geneva, Switzerland 2013**.
- Countries that have ratified the Convention are bound by international law to put these controls in place. India has ratified the Convention.
- Indonesia is hosting the fourth Conference of Parties (COP4).
- The conference was held from 21 to 25 March 2022.

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