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INDIA – CHINA BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP

- On **October 23, 2024**, **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** and **Chinese President Xi Jinping** held their first formal talks in five years on the side-lines of the **BRICS summit** in **Kazan, Russia**.
- This meeting signals an important step toward recovery in India-China relations, which were severely damaged by the **2020 military clash** in Ladakh.
- Both leaders emphasized the need for **maturity**, **mutual respect**, and efforts to ensure **peace and stability** in their ties.
- Prime Minister Modi highlighted the importance of not allowing **border-related differences** to disturb peace and tranquility at the borders, while both sides welcomed the recent border agreements that resulted from sustained dialogues over the past few weeks.
- Modi and Xi stressed that a stable bilateral relationship between India and China would have a positive impact on **regional and global peace**.
- Diplomatic efforts have gained momentum in recent months, with talks focused on easing the border tensions.
- The discussions may also pave the way for potential **Chinese investments** in India, as India had made improving business ties contingent on resolving the border stand-off.

Historical Background:

- The relationship between **India and China** dates back over two millennia, with deep-rooted cultural and economic ties through the **Silk Road**.
- However, their modern diplomatic relationship began post-independence, with India becoming one of the first non-communist countries to recognize the **People's Republic of China (PRC)** in 1950.
- The relationship faced a significant setback due to the **Sino-Indian War of 1962**, which created a long-lasting border dispute, particularly in the **Ladakh** and **Arunachal Pradesh**



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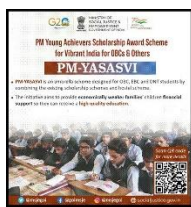
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Challenges in Relationship:

- Despite strong economic and multilateral engagements, the **India-China relationship** faces several challenges:
 - **Border Disputes:** The primary challenge remains the **Line of Actual Control (LAC)**. Tensions escalated in **2020** with the **Galwan Valley clash**, leading to casualties on both sides.
 - Even though there have been multiple rounds of military and diplomatic talks, the situation remains fragile, and **troop standoffs** continue in parts of the LAC.
 - **China-Pakistan Nexus:** China's close strategic and economic ties with **Pakistan**, particularly through the **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)**, which passes through the **Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK)** region, is a significant point of contention for India.
 - **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI):** India has raised concerns over China's **BRI** project, which it perceives as undermining its sovereignty, especially given the CPEC's route through disputed territories.
 - **Trade Imbalance:** The growing trade deficit continues to be a major challenge for India, along with concerns over China's trade practices and its impact on domestic industries.

PM-YASASVI SCHEME



- It is a **comprehensive umbrella scheme** aimed at uplifting students from Other Backward Classes (OBC), Economically Backward Classes (EBC), and Denotified Tribes (DNT) by providing them with access to quality education during their formative years.



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- It has consolidated and enhanced several earlier initiatives, including the Dr. Ambedkar Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme for EBCs and the Ambedkar Pre-Matric and Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme for DNTs, which were subsumed under this program starting from 2021-22.
- By integrating these schemes, PM YASASVI aims to ensure a more streamlined and impactful approach to supporting the educational needs of socially and economically disadvantaged students.
- **Objective:** The overarching goal of the scheme is to **promote educational empowerment** among these vulnerable groups, helping them overcome financial barriers and complete their education.
- Under this Scheme students can avail **Pre-Matric Scholarship from Class 9 to 10** and Post Matric Scholarship for their higher studies at post-matriculation or post-secondary stage.
- **Eligibility:**
 - The Pre-Matric Scholarship is designed for **students in classes IX and X** attending government schools,
 - Family income **below Rs. 2.5 lakh.**
- **Implementing Agency:** Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

LISA MISSION



- The **Laser Interferometer Space Antenna (LISA)** mission is a collaborative effort between **NASA and the European Space Agency (ESA)** set to launch in the mid-2030s.
- The main objective of the mission is to **detect and study gravitational waves** by putting three spacecraft into the Earth's orbit and positioning them in a triangular format with 1.6 million miles on each side.

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- It will be the "first gravitational wave detector in space" and will "explore the fundamental nature of gravity and black holes". It will also probe the rate of **expansion of the Universe**.
 - All three spacecraft will have **two telescopes each**. The LISA mission will use lasers to detect gravitational waves.
 - The LISA mission will comprise three spacecraft. These three spacecraft will fly in a triangular formation behind the Earth as our planet orbits the Sun.
 - The spacecraft will sit in a **heliocentric orbit**, about 50 million km from Earth, with a distance of around 2.5 million km between each spacecraft.
 - LISA will **detect ripples in spacetime** through subtle changes in the distances between free-floating cubes nestled within each spacecraft.
 - Changes in the relative distances between these golden cubes will be tracked with extreme accuracy using laser interferometry.
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UDAN (UDE DESH KA AAM NAGRIK) SCHEME



The Indian Government recently announced an extension of the regional air connectivity scheme UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik) for another 10 years.

- It is a **regional airport development** and "**Regional Connectivity Scheme**" (RCS) of the Union Government of India.
- It was initially launched on October 21, 2016, for a 10-year period.
- The primary objective of the scheme is to **provide affordable** and efficient **air travel options to residents of tier-2 and tier-3 cities, remote areas**, and regions with limited or no air connectivity.
- The scheme envisages providing connectivity **to unserved and underserved airports** of the country through the **revival of existing airstrips and airports**.

Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Civil Aviation



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- Under the UDAN Scheme, the **government** works in partnership with airlines to **provide subsidies and incentives to operate flights** on underserved and unserved routes.
- The government **provides financial support to airlines through a Viability Gap Funding (VGF) model**, which covers the difference between the cost of operations and the expected revenue on the identified routes.
- Aviation companies bid for air routes. The company that asks for the lowest subsidy is awarded the contract. Under this fare for each flight, the airline has to book half, or a minimum of 9, or a maximum of 40 seats.
- Under the scheme, the **airfare for a one-hour journey by a 'fixed wing aircraft' or half an hour's journey by a helicopter** for about 500 km has been **fixed at Rs.2500/-**.

PONG DAM



- The Pong Dam, also known as the **Beas Dam**, is an **earth-fill embankment dam** constructed on the **river Beas** in the wetland of Shivalik hills in the Kangra district of **Himachal Pradesh**.
- The purpose of the dam is water storage for irrigation and hydroelectric power generation.
- The construction of the dam began in the year 1961 and was completed in 1974, and at that time it was known as the tallest of its type in the country.
- The raised water level thus invariably **created an artificial lake** called the **Maharana Pratap Sagar**, after the great ruler of Mewar.
 - It was **declared a bird sanctuary** in 1983 due to its waterfowl diversity. It received the designation of **Ramsar Wetland** in 2002.
 - It is home to several species of avifauna, some of which include Bar Headed Geese, Red-necked Grebe, northern lapwing, common teal, spot-billed duck, Eurasian coot, black stork, egrets, etc.

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- It is the most important **fish reservoir** in the foothills of the Himalayas in Himachal Pradesh.
 - **Features of Dam:**
 - The Pong Dam is a 133 m tall and 1,951 m long earth-fill embankment dam with a gravel shell.
 - It is 13.72 m wide at its crest, which sits at an elevation of about 435.86 m above sea level.
 - The base of the Pong Dam is about 610 m wide and has a total volume of 35,500,000 metre cube.
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WHAT IS BIOACOUSTICS?



- It is a cross-disciplinary science that **combines biology and acoustics**.
 - Usually, it refers to the **investigation of sound production, dispersion, and reception in animals**.
 - Bioacoustics research can include approaches whereby scientists focus on specific species and conduct fieldwork to record their vocalisations at close range.
 - Alternatively, it may involve the **placement of passive acoustic monitors** in a set location to record audio data over a longer period of time.
 - **In terms of conservation research, bioacoustics:**
 - Allows us to quickly **gather in-depth information about ecosystems**, including **species' presence** (determined by their vocalisations), rain patterns, and human activity.
 - Helps us **monitor threatened species**, examine **habitat use** and **migration patterns**, and understand how ecosystems recover from disturbance events like logging or forest fires.
 - **Provides data to guide conservation planning** and support the development of new conservation strategies.
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WORLD ECONOMIC OUTLOOK (WEO)



- It is a comprehensive report **published twice a year** by the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)**.
- The WEO is usually published in **April and October**, followed by the less comprehensive WEO updates in July and January.
- It includes the IMF's estimates and **forecasts for global output growth and inflation** as well as **for real gross domestic product (GDP) growth**, consumer prices, current account balances, and unemployment **in the IMF's 190 member countries**, grouped by region and development status.
- The WEO also includes several chapters on selected pressing economic issues.
- The data is drawn from IMF representatives' consultations with member countries, and is included in the WEO database.

Highlights of the recent report:

- **Global growth is expected to remain stable**, yet underwhelming, at **2% in 2024 and 2025**.
- **For India**, the IMF has maintained its GDP growth estimate at **7% for 2024**, followed by **5% next year**, but linked the moderation in growth from last year to the exhaustion of “pent-up demand accumulated during the pandemic.
- The world's largest economy, the United States, is poised to grow at 2.8% in 2024 and 2.2% in 2025. Meanwhile, the IMF expects China's economy to grow at 4.8% in 2024 and 4.5% in 2025.
- The IMF's overall forecast for emerging markets and developing economies remained stable for the next two years in its latest outlook, hovering around 4.2% and steadying at 3.9% by 2029.

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STUBBLE-BURNING VIOLATES RIGHT TO LIVE IN A POLLUTION-FREE ENVIRONMENT

Right to environment in India constitution

- **Right to life under Article 21**
 - The Supreme Court in **Subhash Kumar v. State of Bihar, 1991** held that Article 21 includes the right to a wholesome environment.
 - This position was again reaffirmed in **Virender Gaur v. State of Haryana, 1994**.
- **Directive Principle of State Policy**
 - **Article 48A** puts a duty on the State to protect and improve the environment and further to safeguard the forests and wildlife.
 - In **Sher Singh vs State of H.P. 2014**, the National Green Tribunal held that the State is under a constitutional obligation to protect and improve the environment.
 - In **M.C. Mehta vs Union of India, 2002**, the court held that Article 39(e), 47 and 48A collectively cast a duty on State to secure public health and environment protection.
- **Fundamental Duties**
 - Article 51A(g) puts a fundamental duty on the citizens to protect and preserve the environment.

Stubble Burning

- Rice and wheat straws left in the field, after combine harvesting, are generally burnt by the farmers to facilitate seed bed preparation and seeding.
- Farmers find this method as quick and cheap compared to other practices for crop residue management. Since input costs of farming is going up day by day, farmers are not willing to further invest in equipments useful for crop residue management.
 - Happy Seeder (a tractor-operated machine for in-situ management of paddy stubble) continues to be an expensive method for farmers.

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- **Harmful to the health of soil**
 - Burning of crop residues removes huge amount of nutrient from the soil.
 - Practices like residue burning has further reduced the organic carbon content in soil.

Steps Taken by the government to tackle the issue of farm fires

Taken by Centre

- A Central Sector Scheme on 'Promotion of Agricultural Mechanisation for In-Situ Management of Crop Residue in the States of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and NCT of Delhi' was approved.
- Farmers are being provided 50 percent of the cost of machinery/equipment as financial assistance for the purchase of such machinery.

Pusa Decomposer by Indian Agricultural research Institute (IARI)

- The Pusa decomposer is a bio-enzyme developed by IARI to decompose crop residue.
- It decomposes stubble within 20-25 days after spraying and turn it into manure, improving the soil quality.

Taken by State Governments and Other agencies

- States governments and other agencies are sensitising farmers on healthier practices.
 - The Punjab government had proposed to provide cash incentives to farmers for not burning stubble.
 - It also decided to provide non-fiscal incentives to these industries in terms of availability of Panchayat land for storage of paddy straw with lease agreement upto 33 years.
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