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LOTHAL: A GLOBAL HUB FOR MARITIME HERITAGE

- Lothal, an ancient city of the **Indus Valley Civilization**, is poised to become a global centre for maritime heritage with the development of the **National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC)** in Gujarat.
- This initiative, spearheaded by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways under the **Sagarmala Programme**, aims to showcase India's rich maritime history while contributing to the nation's economic and cultural development.

Historical Significance of Lothal:

- **Ancient Maritime Legacy:**
 - Lothal, dating back to **2400 BCE**, was a key centre of the Harappan Civilization.
 - It was renowned for its **advanced dockyard**, thriving **trade networks**, and expertise in **bead-making**.
 - Archaeological findings, including seals, tools, and pottery, highlight its vibrant cultural and economic history.
- **A Strategic Maritime Hub:**
 - Lothal served as a vital trade and commerce centre, connecting regions through its maritime infrastructure.

National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC):

- The NMHC is envisioned as a **world-class facility** combining education, tourism, and cultural preservation. **Key Features Include:**
- **Economic and Social Benefits:**
 - **Tourism Boost:** Expected to attract both domestic and international tourists.
 - **Employment Generation:** Will create jobs and empower the youth through skill development.
 - **Maritime Education:** Provides a platform for learning and collaboration within the global maritime community.

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Government Initiatives and Collaboration:

- **Sagarmala Programme:**
 - A flagship project of the **Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways** aimed at modernizing India's maritime infrastructure.
 - Enhances economic growth through port-led development and connectivity.
- **Stakeholders:**
 - Collaboration with the **Ministry of Defence (Navy and Coast Guard), Government of Gujarat** to ensure a high-quality outcome.
- **Community Integration:**
 - Emphasis on involving local communities in the development process to foster inclusivity and shared benefits.

Significance:

- **Tourism and Education:**
 - The NMHC will transform Lothal into a centre for **maritime education** and **tourism**, preserving India's maritime legacy.
- **Economic Development:**
 - The project aligns with India's broader goal of enhancing its global economic presence through cultural and infrastructural advancements.
- **Global Collaboration:**
 - Provides a platform for collaboration between India's maritime industry and international stakeholders.

Conclusion:

- The National Maritime Heritage Complex at Lothal is a monumental step in preserving India's maritime heritage while fostering economic, educational, and cultural growth.
 - This project underscores the historical importance of Lothal and reaffirms India's commitment to becoming a global leader in maritime excellence.
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WHY INFLATION WILL BE A KEY CONCERN IN 2025

2024 has been a bittersweet year for India's economy, with strong growth in the first half that surprised many, including the government.

However, the latter half proved challenging, with growth slowing, inflation remaining high, and ongoing tensions between the RBI and Finance Ministry over policy responses.

Clamour for a Rate Cut

- Top government officials have been advocating for an RBI rate cut since November, urging it to prioritize growth and investments over volatile food prices.
- This push intensified after Q2 GDP growth slowed to a 7-quarter low of 5.4%, with weak urban demand and disappointing corporate results affecting market sentiment.

Economic Outlook: A Year Ago

- This time last year, India's stock markets were at record highs, and GDP growth was 7.7% in the first half of 2023-24.
- The Finance Ministry expected growth to exceed 6.5% for the full year and anticipated an interest rate cut cycle by the RBI, which had projected inflation to average 4% through Q2 2024.

Economic Performance in 2023-24

- Despite challenges, India's economy performed better than expected in 2023-24, with the NSO growth estimates revised upwards.
- The first half saw 8.1% growth, followed by a strong 8.6% in Q3.
- The year ended with a remarkable 8.2% growth, boosted by election-related activities and political continuity post-elections.

Post-Poll Budget: Focus on Employment and Consumption

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- In the 2024-25 Union Budget, Finance Minister emphasized employment, middle-class welfare, and schemes to boost skilling and job creation, along with some token income tax cuts.
- The government aimed to boost consumption to stimulate private investments while acknowledging the need for continued public infrastructure spending, with an ₹11.11 lakh crore capex plan to support growth.

Early Signs of Growth Slowdown

- The first GDP data for 2024-25 showed a 6.7% rise, marking a five-quarter low, due to the extended election period affecting capital spending.
- While the mood remained positive initially, growth concerns grew as high interest rates affected urban demand. Growth projections were revised down to around 6.5%, signaling potential cyclical slowdown.

Inflation and Rate Cut Hopes

- Although consumer inflation remained below 6% for most of the year, it spiked in September due to rising food prices, halting rate cut expectations.
- The RBI did not lower rates despite initial hopes, revising its 2024-25 growth forecast down to 6.6%.
- The ongoing inflationary pressures and high interest rates continue to strain consumption and investment.

The Road Ahead: Growth vs. Inflation

- With slowing growth and persistent inflation, the government faces challenges in balancing the two.
 - While interest rate cuts could help boost demand and investments, inflation remains a barrier.
 - The RBI and Finance Ministry's differing views on how to handle this growth-inflation flux will be crucial in shaping economic policy for 2025.
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EXERCISE SURYA KIRAN



The Indian Army contingent, comprising 334 personnel, departed for Nepal recently to participate in the eighteenth edition of the Joint Military Exercise Surya Kiran.

- It is a **joint military exercise** between the **Indian army and Nepal army**.
 - It is an annual event, conducted alternately in both countries.
 - It aims to enhance interoperability in **forest warfare, counter-terrorism** operations in mountains, and **Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief** under the United Nations Charter.
 - Through various war games, both sides seek to improve their operational capabilities, refine their combat skills, and **strengthen their coordination** to operate together in challenging scenarios.
 - The exercise will provide a platform for soldiers from India and Nepal to exchange ideas and experiences, share best practices, and foster a deeper understanding of each other's operational procedures.
 - **18th Edition:**
 - It is scheduled to take place in Saljhandi, **Nepal**.
 - The **Indian Army contingent** is being **led** by a battalion from the **11th Gorkha Rifles**, while the Nepal Army will be represented by the Srijung Battalion.
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INTERNATIONAL DAY OF EPIDEMIC PREPAREDNESS



In a message commemorating the International Day of Epidemic Preparedness, UN Secretary-General António Guterres urged all nations to invest in resilience and equity to make a healthier and safer world for all.



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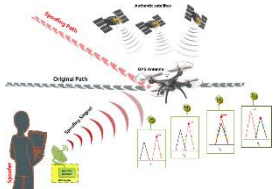
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- It is annually observed on **December 27** to advocate the importance of prevention of, preparedness for, and partnership against epidemics.
- It highlights the urgent need to invest in systems that can prevent, detect, and respond to infectious disease outbreaks.
- The **first-ever** International Day of Epidemic Preparedness, **held on 27 December 2020**, was called for by the **United Nations General Assembly** to advocate the importance of the prevention of, preparedness for, and partnership against epidemics.

What is an Epidemic?

- An epidemic is a **sudden disease outbreak** that affects a **large number of people** in a **particular region**, community, or population.
 - In an epidemic, the **number of people affected** by the disease is **larger than** what is **normally expected**.
 - **Yellow fever, smallpox, measles, and polio** are prime examples of epidemics.
 - An epidemic disease **doesn't necessarily have to be contagious**. For example, **West Nile fever** and the **rapid increase in obesity rates**, both are considered epidemics.
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WHAT IS GPS SPOOFING?



- GPS spoofing, also known as **GPS simulation**, refers to the practice of **manipulating** or **tricking a GPS receiver by broadcasting false GPS signals**.
- Essentially, it **misleads the GPS receiver** into believing it is located somewhere it is not, **resulting in the device providing inaccurate location data**.
- This form of cyberattack undermines the reliability of GPS data, which is vital for a variety of applications, from navigation to time synchronization and more.

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- **How Does GPS Spoofing Work?**
 - It exploits the **inherent vulnerabilities in the GPS infrastructure** – the **weak signal strength of GPS satellites**.
 - The Global Positioning System (GPS) functions by sending signals from satellites to GPS receivers on Earth.
 - These receivers then calculate their position based on the time it takes for these signals to arrive.
 - However, due to the weak signal strength of the GPS satellites, **these signals can be easily overwhelmed by fake signals, resulting in inaccurate location data** on the receiving device.
 - Typically, a GPS spoofer begins by acquiring a basic understanding of the victim's GPS setup, including the types of signals it uses and how they are processed.
 - With that information, the **attacker then sends counterfeit GPS signals** that mimic the real ones.
 - These **fake signals are stronger**, causing the receiver to recognize them as authentic signals.
 - As a result, the victim's GPS receiver ends up processing these counterfeit signals, leading to erroneous location information.
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PM- AYUSHMAN BHARAT HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE MISSION (PM-ABHIM) SCHEME



- It is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS)** with some **Central Sector (CS) Components** which has an outlay of Rs. 64,180 Crores for the scheme **period (2021-22 to 2025-26)**.
- It is the largest pan-India scheme for strengthening healthcare infrastructure across the country.



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- The measures under the scheme focus on developing **capacities of health systems** and institutions across the continuum of care at **all levels viz. primary, secondary and tertiary level** and on preparing health systems in responding effectively to the current and future pandemics/disasters.
- The objective of the scheme is to **fill critical gaps in health infrastructure, surveillance and health research** – spanning both the urban and rural areas.
- The following are the **components under CS Component** of the scheme:
 - 12 Central Institutions as training and mentoring sites with **150 bedded Critical Care Hospital Blocks (CCBs)**;
 - **Strengthening of the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC)**, 5 New Regional NCDCs and 20 metropolitan health surveillance units;
 - Expansion of the Integrated Health Information Portal to all States/UTs to connect all public health labs;
 - Operationalization of 17 new Public Health Units and strengthening of 33 existing Public Health Units at Points of Entry, that is at 32 Airports, 11 Seaports and 7 land crossings;
 - Setting up of **15 Health Emergency Operation Centres** and 2 container based mobile hospitals; and
 - Setting up of a **national institution for One Health**, **4 New National Institutes for Virology**, a Regional Research Platform for WHO South East Asia Region and 9 Biosafety Level III laboratories.

KEY FACTS ABOUT TEESTA RIVER



- It is a **Himalayan River** flowing through **Sikkim and West Bengal** in India and Rangpur in Bangladesh.
- It is a **tributary of Brahmaputra**
- This river **forms a boundary between Sikkim and West Bengal**.



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- **Course:**
 - It rises in the **Himalayas near Chunthang in Sikkim**, flows to the south, **cutting a deep gorge through the Siwalik Hills** east of Darjiling in **West Bengal**, and turns southeast to run through the Sivok Khola pass onto the plains of West Bengal.
 - Originally, the river continued southward to empty directly into the upper Padma River (Ganges River).
 - About 1787, however, the river changed its course to flow eastward, **crossing the Rangpur region of Bangladesh to join the Jamuna River** near Chilmari after a total course of about **200 miles (320 km)**.
- The **flow** of the Tista is **greatest during the summer** (June to September), when the **monsoon rains are heaviest and glaciers** supply abundant meltwater.
- Its **lower reaches** are **marked by flooding** and frequent, **violent course changes**; navigation is impaired by shoals and quicksand near the junction with the Jamuna.

Major tributaries:

- **Left-bank:** Lachung Chhu, Chakung Chhu, Dik Chhu, Rani Khola, Rangpo Chhu.
 - **Right-bank:** Zemu Chhu, Rangyong Chhu, Rangit River.
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