

### 2ND NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF CHIEF SECRETARIES

#### Why in news?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the second National Conference of Chief Secretaries in Delhi.

#### 2nd National Conference of Chief Secretaries

- The second national conference of chief secretaries was organised in Delhi.
- Organised by the NITI Aayog, the meeting was attended by senior officials from the Centre and state governments.
- The conference was held with a focus on job creation and inclusive human development in order to meet the goal of 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047.
- The three-day conference, which began on January 5, hosted discussions on **six themes**: encompassing MSMEs, infrastructure and investments, minimising compliances, women's empowerment, health and nutrition and skill development.
- The conference also aimed at strengthening coordination between the Centre and the states with a focus on achieving rapid and sustained economic growth in partnership with the states.

#### News Summary:

##### Key highlights of the speech delivered by PM Modi

- **Recalled the development milestones achieved by the country**
  - Prime Minister recalled the development milestones achieved by the country since the last conference held in June 2022. These were:
    - India attained Presidency of G20,
    - became fifth biggest economy of the world,
    - saw rapid registration of new startups,
    - foray of private players in space sector,
    - launch of National Logistics Policy,
    - approval of National Green Hydrogen Mission.

- **Highlighted four pillars to build a developed India**

- In order to build a developed India, the country is focussing on four pillars of **infrastructure, investment, innovation and inclusion.**
- Today, entire world is reposing its faith in India and it is being looked up as a country that can bring stability to the global supply chain.
- In order to take full advantage of this, states should focus on pro-development governance, ease of doing business, ease of living and provision of robust infrastructure.

- **Discussed MSMEs**

- Discussing MSMEs, Prime Minister said that states must act proactively towards formalisation of MSMEs.
- He said that to make these MSMEs globally competitive, we need to make available finance, technology, market and access for skilling.
- He also discussed bringing more MSMEs on board the GeM portal.
- PM said that the linkage of MSME clusters and Self help groups (SHGs) can be explored for promoting unique local products and getting GI tags registration for them, associating it with the endeavour of ‘one district one product’.
- It will give fillip to the clarion call of vocal for local.
- States should identify their best local products and help them attain national and international stature.

- **Highlighted the burden of over-regulation and restrictions**

- Prime Minister recalled the burden of over-regulation and restrictions once faced by the country.
- He spoke about the need to end old laws, some of which have persisted since independence.
- The need of the hour is to move towards self-certification, deemed approvals and standardisation of forms.

- **Highlighted importance of millets**

- PM said that millets are not only smart food but are also environmentally friendly and may turn out to be a sustainable future food.
- On India’s initiative, the United Nations has declared 2023 as the International Year of Millets.

- He said that states should work on research related to millet products such that processing, packaging, marketing, branding etc.
  - He also discussed establishing 'Millet Cafes' at prominent public places and state government offices across the country.
  - **For the preparations related to G20 meetings in the states**
  - For this, Prime Minister stressed on the importance of involving the common citizens.
  - He said that creative solutions should be envisaged for achieving such 'Citizen Connect'.
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## WHAT ARE FLOATOVOLTAICS?

Covering 10% of the world's hydropower reservoirs with 'floatovoltaics' would install electrical capacity equivalent to that provided by all electricity-generating fossil fuel plants in operation worldwide.



### About:

- **Floatovoltaics, floating solar plants, or FSPV (floating solar photovoltaic) are panel structures that are installed on water bodies**

**like lakes, basins, and reservoirs instead of on solid structures like a roof or terraces.**

- The biggest impetus behind the rise of large-scale FSPV has been that it doesn't take up any land space, which could be then used for construction and agriculture.
- **The world's first large-scale FSPV system was installed in 2011, in Napa Valley, California.**

### India:

- In recent years, floating solar power plants have become part of India's plans of solar expansion.
- According to a 2020 study by TERI (The Energy and Resources Institute) reservoirs cover **18000 square Kilometer in India and can generate 280 GW through floating solar panels.**
- **Currently less than 1% of solar installations are floating.**
- The largest floating solar power plant in India is currently the **Ramagundam in Peddapalli district of Telangana, with a capacity of 100 MW.**

- Currently a plant is being built on the Narmada’ Omkareshwar Dam in Khandwa, Madhya Pradesh is being built with a capacity of 600 MW, which will soon be the **largest floating solar power plant in the world.**
  - The project is touted to be worth Rs 3000 crore.
  - **What are the benefits of floating solar panels?**
    - the water’s cooling effect makes them more efficient than land-based ones;
    - they don’t interfere with desert ecosystems; and
    - they keep precious water from evaporating.
    - Even though reservoirs are artificial ecosystems, they provide habitats for wildlife.
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## WHAT IS MEGHALAYA’S LIVING ROOT BRIDGE?

A farmer recently takes forward the State’s traditional practice of building root bridges and connects two areas across Umkar river in Cherrapunjee.



### About Meghalaya’s Living Root Bridge:

- Meghalaya is known for its living root bridges, locally known as **jingkieng jri.**
  - They are on the **tentative list of UNESCO’s World Heritage sites.**
  - Many bridges across the State are over a century old.
  - A living root bridge is like a suspension bridge formed by guiding the pliable roots of the **rubber fig tree (Ficus elastica)** across a stream or river and allowing the roots to grow and strengthen over time.
  - They are common in the **southern part of the Northeast Indian state of Meghalaya.**
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## 'VEER GUARDIAN-2023'

India and Japan are all set to hold the joint Air Exercise, 'Veer Guardian-2023' involving the Indian Air Force and Japan Air Self Defence Force (JASDF) at Hyakuri Air Base, Japan from 12th of January.

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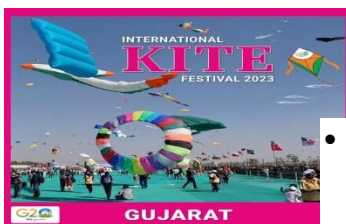


## About 'Veer Guardian-2023':

- The Joint Exercise which will continue **till 26th January** aims at **promoting Air Defence cooperation between the countries.**
- The Indian contingent participating in the air exercise will include four Su-30 MKI, two C-17 and one IL-78 aircraft, while the JASDF will be participating with four F-2 and four F-15 aircraft.
- It will include the conduct of various aerial combat drills between the two Air Forces.
- They will undertake multi-domain air combat missions in a complex environment and will exchange best practices.
- Exercise 'Veer Guardian' will fortify the long-standing bond of friendship and enhance the avenues of defence cooperation between the two Air Forces.

## INTERNATIONAL KITE FESTIVAL 2023

**The International Kite Festival 2023 will begin in Ahmedabad, Gujarat on January 8.**



## About International Kite Festival 2023:

- The festival is being organized by **Gujarat Tourism on the G20 theme of 'One Earth, One Family, One Future.'**
- **Ahmedabad** first hosted the International Kite Festival on the occasion of **Uttarayan in 1989.**
- Apart from Ahmedabad, the International Kite festival will also be organized in Surat, Vadodara, Rajkot, Dwarka, Somnath, Dhordo, and Kevadia.
- After a gap of 2 years, skies over the Sabarmati River in Ahmedabad will be adorned with colorful unique Kites.
- More than 800 kite flyers from across India and the world will participate and display their unique creations in this Festival.
- This year, kite enthusiasts from different countries will fly Kites at the same time attempting to create a Guinness World Record for the maximum number of kite flyers.

- A special Parade by international and national kite flyers, a theme pavilion displaying the history of kites, and workshops on making and flying kites are among the major attractions of the festival this year.
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## BIO-ETHANOL PLANTS TO BOOST INDIA'S DRIVE TO MEET CLEAN ENERGY

### TARGET

#### Why in News?

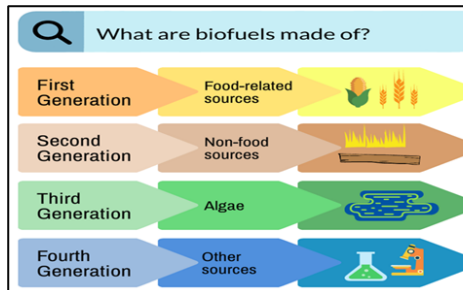
- In order to move faster towards its clean energy goal, India will set-up many bio-ethanol plants across the country under the cooperative sector.

#### About Biofuel:

- Biofuel is a fuel that is produced over a short time span from biomass, rather than by the very slow natural processes involved in the formation of fossil fuels, such as oil.
- Since biomass can be used as a fuel directly (e.g., wood logs), some people use the words biomass and biofuel interchangeably.
- However, the **word biofuel is usually reserved for liquid or gaseous fuels**, used for transportation.
- Most of biofuel consumption occurs as a blend with refined petroleum products such as gasoline, diesel fuel, heating oil, and kerosene-type jet fuel.
  - However, some biofuels do not require blending with their petroleum counterparts and are referred to as drop-in biofuels.
- The most common biofuels now are –
  - **Bioalcohols** such as ethanol, propanol, and butanol (a substitute for petrol/gasoline);
  - **Biodiesel** (a substitute for diesel);
  - **Bio-oils** (substitutes for kerosene).

#### Generations of Biofuel:

- Biofuels are also divided into four categories depending on their origin and production technologies.



- **First generation –**
  - **1G** biofuels are produced from **consumable food items** containing starch (rice and wheat) and sugar (beets and sugarcane) for bio-alcohols, or vegetable oils for biodiesel.
  - However, the yields of 1G biofuels are low and can have negative impacts on food security.
- **Second generation –**
  - **2G** biofuels are mainly obtained from **non-food feedstocks** such as forest/industry/agricultural wastes and waste or used vegetable oils.
- **Third generation –**
  - **3G** biofuels, known as ‘algae fuel’, are **derived from algae** in the form of both, biodiesel and bioalcohols.
  - Although the yield of 3G biofuels is approximately 10 times higher than 2G biofuels, producing adequate algal biomass and scaling up extraction techniques are as yet unresolved challenges.
- **Fourth generation –**
  - Like the third generation, **4G** biofuels are **made using non-arable land**.
  - However, unlike the third, they do not need the destruction of biomass.
  - This class of biofuels includes electro fuels and photo-biological solar fuels.

### What is Ethanol Blending?

- Ethanol is a biofuel, naturally produced by the fermentation of sugars by yeasts or by petrochemical processes like ethylene hydration.
- Ethanol is high in oxygen content, allowing an engine to more thoroughly combust fuel.
- In ethanol blending, a blended motor fuel containing ethyl alcohol derived from agricultural products is blended with petrol specifically.

## How is Ethanol produced?

- In India, the nodal department for the promotion of fuel-grade ethanol-producing distilleries is the **Department of Food and Public Distribution (DFPD)**.
- Ethanol is produced or procured from sugarcane-based raw materials which are – C & B heavy molasses, sugarcane juice, sugar syrup, surplus rice with Food Corporation of India (FCI) and maize.
- A paper released by the NITI Aayog stated, that in 2019, over 110 billion liters of ethanol fuel was produced globally.
  - The US and Brazil account for 84% of the global production followed by the European Union, China, India, Canada and Thailand.

## What are the benefits of Ethanol Blending?

- Presently, India imports over 85 per cent of its oil requirement and ethanol blending could help in reducing dependency on petroleum.
- In 2020-21, the net import of petroleum in India was 185 million tones at **USD 551 billion**.
- Thus, ethanol blending can help in saving billions of dollars for the country and reduce import dependency.
- Also, ethanol is a less polluting fuel and equally efficient at a lower cost than petrol.

## India's Biofuel Policy:

- In 2021-22, the **Central government amended the Biofuel Policy (2018) to set a target of country-wide blending rates of 20% ethanol and 5% biodiesel by 2025.**
- According to the Roadmap for ethanol blending in India 2020-2025 report from NITI Aayog, India will need to increase ethanol production capacity from the expected 3.3 billion liters (in 2020–2021) to at least 10.2 billion liters (5.5 billion liters from sugarcane and 4.7 billion liters from grains) by 2025.

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## [ECONOMIC CRISIS IN PAKISTAN](#)



## Why in news?

- Recently, Pakistan announced a series of measures, including closing all malls and markets by 8.30 pm, in an attempt to conserve energy amid an economic crisis.
- Also, the Pakistani administration is engaged in negotiations over the delayed release of \$1.1 billion from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).
- In 2019, Islamabad had secured a \$6 billion bailout from the IMF.

## Economic Crisis in Pakistan

- In 2022, the country's foreign exchange reserves dwindled to a little over \$9 billion, the rough equivalent of the country being able to pay for six weeks of imports.
- They hit a low of \$5.56 billion in January 2023.

## Key factors behind Pakistan's worsening economic crisis

- **Pakistan's short-sighted policy decision**
  - The present crisis is primarily attributed to Pakistan's policy decision leading to extensive spending on non-developmental and economically unviable projects.
  - The infrastructure projects like Gwadar-Kashgar Railway line were financed through long-term debt instruments.
  - Pakistan relied massively on external borrowing rather than from domestic institutions which added to its troubles.
- **CPEC Projects**
  - Roll out of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) increased the debt burden opening the doors of the ever-increasing external loans.
  - Notably, CPEC created a Chinese debt of US\$ 64 billion on Pakistan which was originally valued at US\$47 billion during 2014.
- **Role of International Institutions**
  - Low ranking by international rating agencies and grey listing of Pakistan in Financial Action Task Force (FATF) kept foreign investors away.
  - In October 2022, Pakistan has been removed from the grey list after four years

- The State Bank of Pakistan data suggests that in the past 10 years, FDI inflows into Pakistan never exceeded 1 percent of GDP.
- The vicious cycle of seeking fresh loans and repaying old ones has led Pakistan into the notorious ‘debt trap’.
- **Other reasons**
- Pakistan has been struggling with mounting trade deficit driven by its ever-increasing import bills and falling exports.
- In February 2022, ADB reported that Pakistan has one of the lowest trade-to-GDP ratios in the world.
- The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic further deteriorated the situation.
- Inflation in Pakistan touched its highest level in November 2021. This is primarily because of the global rise in crude oil prices.
- A devastating flood that hit the nation in 2022 from June to October is another factor that has worsened the economic situation in Pakistan.
- The flood, which affected nearly 33 million people, is believed to have led to damages worth over \$30 billion.

## Impact of this crisis on India

- **On Trade volume**
- Bilateral trade between these two countries had been abysmally low in the past. It was around \$2.3 billion in 2016-17.
- After the Pulwama terror attack, India withdrew the MFN status to Pakistan. India also raised customs duties on goods being imported from Pakistan up to the bound level duty rates.
- Hence, given the low trade volume between two countries, the present crisis will not have any noticeable impact on bilateral trade.
- **Increased presence of China**
- The present crisis in Pakistan will give space to increased presence of China in the India’s neighbouring country.



# CROSS & CLIMB ROHTAK



- As per the Pakistani Finance Minister, Saudi Arabia and China are all set to shore up Pakistan’s foreign exchange reserves before the end of January 2023.
  - **Threat to internal security**
    - The economic crisis in Pakistan will provide a fertile ground for terrorism and radicalism to flourish. It will also embolden the military of Pakistan.
    - The relationship between New Delhi and Islamabad has particularly deteriorated after India abrogated Article 370
    - Hence, the present crisis might create challenges for India’s internal security.
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