

ARC OF INDIA'S TIES WITH ISRAEL

Context

- The Islamist organisation, Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip, **recently launched one of the most brazen attacks against Israel** since the Jewish state was founded (in 1948).
- **The India PM expressed outrage**, referring the event as terrorist attack, **and voiced solidarity with Israel.**

Development of India-Israel-Palestine Relations in Post Independence Years

- **Rejection of Two-Nation Solution and Support for Palestine Cause**
 - India's political attitude towards Israel was set quite firmly shortly after independence in 1947.
 - The first PM of India Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi **gave support to the Palestinian cause and rejected the idea of two nations based on religion.**
 - While they had sympathy for the Jews, both were of the view that **any State based on religious exclusivity could not sustain on moral and political grounds.** This was in line with their opposition to the partition of India.
- **Vote Against Israel at the UN**
 - India's position about Palestine was also **guided by the general consensus in the Arab world, the Non-Aligned Movement, and the United Nations.**
 - When the partition of Palestine plan was put to vote at the UN, **India voted against, along with the Arab countries.**
 - When Israel applied for admission to the UN, India again voted against.
- **Recognition of Isarel as a Nation**
 - **India recognised Israel on September 17, 1950**, after two Muslim-majority countries, Turkey and Iran, did so.
 - **In 1953, Israel was allowed to open a consulate in Mumbai**, but no diplomatic presence was granted in New Delhi.
- **Engagement with Palestine Leadership Under Yasser Arafat**

- In the late 1960s and early 70s, the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) emerged as the representative of the people of Palestine under Yasser Arafat.
- **India developed its engagement with the largest political grouping under PLO, Al Fatah.**
- **Recognition of PLO as the Legitimate Representation of Palestinian People**
- On January 10, 1975, India recognised PLO as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and permitted it an independent office at New Delhi.
- While India was one of the last non-Muslim states to recognise Israel, **it became the first non-Arab state to recognise the PLO.**

India-Israel Relations Under the Current Indian Leadership

- **Much More Visible Relationship**
- After the PM Modi came to power, **there has been much more visibility to the India-Israel relationship.**
- During Modi's visit to Israel in 2017 — the first Prime Ministerial visit — he skipped the **customary stop at Palestine**, which was the norm with previous ministerial visits.
- **A Balanced Foreign Policy**
- The government had been quite careful about setting up Israel's visit.
- **Foreign Ministry made sure that the PM visited Saudi Arabia, Iran, Qatar, UAE all regional rivals of Israel between 2014 and 2017, before the trip to Israel.**
- **A Complete Dehyphenation of India-Israel-Palestine Ties**
- India hosted Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in May 2017. In all public pronouncements, foreign ministry officials-maintained India's position on its support towards the Palestinian cause.
- The PM later visited Palestine in February 2018, but did not visit Israel and **it achieved a complete dehyphenation of the ties.**

ACCREDITED SOCIAL HEALTH ACTIVIST (ASHA)

The government is planning to give incentives to ASHA health activists for mobilising eligible individuals for sickle cell disease screening and distribution of sickle cell cards.



About Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA):

- ASHA is a **trained female community health activist**.
- ASHA workers are a **core part of the National Rural Health Mission** launched by the Government of India.
- **Selected from the community itself** and accountable to it, the ASHA will be **trained to work as an interface between the community and the public health system**.

Functions:

- Act as a **care provider at the community level**.
- **Facilitating access to healthcare**, medicine, and sanitation services.
- **Raising the level of awareness** of health issues among the marginalised sections within the community.
- **Advocate for female health** and hygiene standards.
- **Advocate for a health-conscious behaviour** and approach to livelihood.
- The ASHA scheme is **presently in place in all States/UTs (except Goa)**.
- The states are **mandated to employ at least one ASHA worker per every 1000 people**.
- They are **chosen through a rigorous process of selection involving various community groups, self-help groups, Anganwadi Institutions, Block Nodal officer, District Nodal officer, the village Health Committee and the Gram Sabha**.
- The States have been given the **flexibility to relax the population norms** as well as the **educational qualifications** on a case to case basis, **depending on the local conditions** as far as her recruitment is concerned.
- **Selection Criteria:**
 - In rural areas, ASHA must primarily be a **woman resident of the village married/ widowed/ divorced**, preferably in the **age group of 25 to 45 years** and **literate preferably qualified up to 10th standard** (formal education up to Class 8).
 - In urban areas, ASHA must be a **woman resident of the “slum/vulnerable clusters”** and **belong to that particular vulnerable group** which have been identified by

City/District Health Society for selection of ASHA, and must have **good communication and leadership skills.**

Compensation for ASHA:

- An ASHA worker is primarily an “**honorary volunteer**” but is **compensated for her time in specific situations** (such as training attendance, monthly reviews, and other meetings).
- On an average, an ASHA worker's **monthly income varies from Rs 2,000 per month to Rs 7,000 per month, depending on the state.**
- In addition, she is **eligible for incentives offered under various national health programmes.**
- She would also have **income from the social marketing of certain healthcare products** like condoms, contraceptive pills, sanitary napkins, etc.

RUDDY SHELDUK

The first batch of about 50 members of the Ruddy Shelduk, popularly known as ‘Surkhab’ birds, arrived in Uttarakhand for a six month winter stay.



About Ruddy Shelduk:

- It (*Tadorna ferruginea*) belongs to the **family Anatidae** under the order Anseriformes.
- In India it is known as the **Brahminy duck.**
- It is **distributed in Europe, Asia, Indian Subcontinent** and a few pockets in Africa. These ducks are migratory birds.
- They winter in the Indian Subcontinent, South India and Southeast Asia.
- They inhabit large **wetlands, salt lakes, crater lakes, rivers** with mud flats and shingle banks.
- It is a mainly **nocturnal bird.**
- It is **omnivorous** and feeds on grasses, the young shoots of plants, grain and water plants as well as both aquatic and terrestrial invertebrates.
- They are no sitting ducks; they **scale the mighty Himalayas** when flying to India from the north attaining heights of 6,800 metres.

- Conservation status
 - IUCN : Least Concern
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UDANGUDI PANANGARUPATTI

Recently, Udangudi ‘Panangkarupatti’ (palm jaggery/ gur) from Tamil Nadu has received a Geographical Indication (GI) tag.



About Udangudi Panangarupatti:

- The palm jaggery preparation procedure in this area is traditional till date **without inclusion of any additional modern strategies.**
- **Uniqueness:**
 - The karupatti prepared from the palm sap from the region around Udangudi in Tiruchendur taluk in Thoothukudi district has some uniqueness.
 - This is due to the presence of **red sand dune soil found in the region.**
 - This **soil holds less groundwater.** The moisture content in the atmosphere is less because of the dry climatic condition, which leads to high sucrose content, in turn adding taste.
 - The region’s dry climate is also suitable for storage of karupatti for a longer duration.
 - **No chemical additives** like Triple super phosphate and phosphoric acid are used in its preparation.

Key facts about Geographical Indication (GI) tag

- It is a sign used on products that have a **specific geographical origin** and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin.
 - This is typically used for **agricultural products, foodstuffs, wine and spirit drinks**, handicrafts and industrial products.
 - The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999 seeks to provide for the registration and better protection of geographical indications relating to goods in India.
 - This GI tag is **valid for 10 years** following which it can be renewed.
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INDIAN AIR FORCE (IAF) ENSIGN

Indian Air Force (IAF) Chief Air Chief recently unveiled a new Ensign for the force.



About Indian Air Force (IAF) Ensign:

- Only the IAF Crest will be incorporated into the new IAF Ensign.
- This crest prominently features the national symbol, the Ashoka Lion, at the top, with the words "Satyamev Jayate" in Devanagari script below it.
- Beneath the Ashoka Lion is a Himalayan eagle with outstretched wings, symbolising the fighting spirit of the IAF.
- A ring in light blue colour encircles the Himalayan eagle with the words "Indian Air Force".
- The IAF motto, derived from the Bhagavad Gita, "Nabha Sparsham Deeptam", meaning "touching the sky with glory," is inscribed below the Himalayan eagle in golden Devanagari.
- IAF crest symbolises the source of inspiration and encouragement.
- IAF has adopted various crests for commands, squadrons and the other establishments.
- However, all the crests follow a standard frame that contains the individual formation sign with a motto shown in the scroll at the foot of the frame.

History:

- During the British era, the Indian Air Force was known as the Royal Indian Air Force.
- Its ensign consisted of the Union Jack in the upper left canton and the RIAF roundel (Red, White & Blue) on the fly side.
- Post-Independence, the Indian Air Force ensign was created by replacing the Union Jack with the Indian tricolour and the RAF roundels with the IAF tri-colour roundel in the lower right canton.

DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF GST INTELLIGENCE (DGGI)

Reliance General Insurance Company (RGIC), a subsidiary of Reliance Capital, recently received show cause notices amounting to nearly Rs 923 crore from the Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI).



About Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI):

- **Erstwhile Directorate General of Central Excise Intelligence (DGCEI)**, now renamed as Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI), is an **apex intelligence organization** functioning under the **Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs, Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance**.
- It is entrusted with the **task of collection, collation, and dissemination of intelligence relating to the evasion of Goods and Services Tax (GST) and the duties of Central Excise and Service Tax** on an all India basis.

History:

- It was **earlier known as the Directorate General of Anti-Evasion (DGAE)**.
- It was established in **1979 as an independent wing** under the control of **Directorate of Revenue Intelligence**, New Delhi with the Regional Units located at Chennai, Delhi, Kolkata and Mumbai.
- It became a **full-fledged Directorate in 1983**, headed by a Director.
- **In 1988, the Directorate was upgraded to Directorate General** under a Director General.
- DGGI has been **expanded since**, and now it comprises **04 offices of Director General** (East, West, North, and South), **26 Zonal Units**, and 40 Regional Units.
- The **main responsibilities** of the DGGI are:
 - **Intelligence gathering:** The DGGI is responsible for gathering intelligence **about potential violations of the GST law**. This includes collecting information from various sources, such as GST returns, financial statements, and other documents.
 - **Investigation:** The DGGI has the power to conduct investigations **into suspected cases of GST evasion** or non-compliance. This may **involve summoning persons, examining records**, and carrying out searches and seizures.

- **Enforcement:** The DGGI is responsible for enforcing the provisions of the GST law. This includes **taking legal action against offenders, imposing penalties, and recovering any taxes or duties due.**

Other Functions:

- The DGGI **works closely with other agencies**, such as the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) and the State GST authorities, **to ensure effective implementation of the GST law.**
- It also plays a key role in **creating awareness about GST compliance and educating taxpayers** about their obligations under the law.
- It is also responsible for **providing technical and legal assistance** to field officers and other government agencies involved **in the administration of the GST.**

MONT BLANC

New research has revealed that Mont Blanc, France's highest mountain has witnessed a **reduction in its height over the past two years.**



About Mont Blanc:

- It is the highest peak (4,807 metres) in **Europe.**
- It is **located in the Alps** and lies along the French-Italian border and reaches into Switzerland.
- It is nicknamed as "**the roof of Europe**".
- Its name comes from the perennial snow cap that covers it, meaning literally "**the white mountain**".
- The mountain stands in a **range called the Graian Alps**, between the regions of Aosta Valley, Italy, and Savoie and Haute-Savoie, France.

Key facts about Alps

- The Alps emerged during **the Alpine orogeny** an event that began about 65 million years ago as **the Mesozoic Era** was drawing to a close.



CROSS & CLIMB ROHTAK



- They are **young fold mountains** with rugged relief and high conical peaks.
 - The Alps arose as a **result of the collision of the African and Eurasian tectonic plates** in which the Alpine Tethys which was formerly in between these continents disappeared.
 - The Alps extend north from the **subtropical Mediterranean** coast near Nice, France, to Lake Geneva before trending east-northeast to Vienna (at the Vienna Woods).
 - There they touch the Danube River and meld with the adjacent plain.
 - The Alps form part of France, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, and Albania.
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