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Current Affairs - 20 October 2025

EMERGENCY CARE NEEDS TO BE PRIORITISED



- Modern emergency medicine evolved from **wartime trauma management** during the World Wars, where organised triage and rapid evacuation became critical.

- The **industrial revolution** and advances in **trauma and cardiovascular medicine** led to structured ambulance systems with life-support capability.

Constitutional Imperative:

- The **Right to Life under Article 21** of the Indian Constitution inherently guarantees **access to timely emergency medical care**.
- The State is ethically bound to ensure **unobstructed emergency access** during mass gatherings and disasters.

Science of Timely Intervention:

- **Acute illnesses and trauma** cause rapid circulatory collapse; immediate diagnosis and treatment can reverse these life-threatening disturbances.
- The **“Golden Hour”** represents the crucial 60 minutes post-injury when intervention can prevent irreversible organ damage.
- The evolved **“Platinum Ten Minutes”** standard stresses that medical help—not just transport—should reach the victim within 10 minutes.

Existing Initiatives:

- The **108 Ambulance Service**, a public-private partnership, operates over **10,000 ambulances**, serving **7–9 million patients annually**.
- Tamil Nadu leads with an **average response time of 10 minutes 14 seconds**, close to the Platinum Ten benchmark.
- The **National Ambulance Code (AIS-125)** sets standards for design, safety, and equipment across vehicle categories.



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- The **Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019**, mandates right of way for ambulances and penalises obstruction.
- **NHM support** enables State-level flexibility in managing emergency systems and training first responders.

Challenges in Emergency Systems:

- **Fragmented services:** Wide disparities exist between States and private providers, leading to uneven quality.
- **Skill shortage:** Lack of certified emergency medical technicians and high attrition rates weaken continuity.
- **Infrastructure gaps:** Many ambulances lack advanced life support systems and telemedicine integration.
- **Poor coordination:** Weak linkages between call centres, hospitals, and ambulance teams delay response.
- **Accountability vacuum:** Absence of a **National Emergency Regulatory Authority** results in inconsistent standards and oversight.

Policy Reforms and Recommendations:

- **Constitute a National Emergency Services Regulatory Authority** to standardise training, operations, and equipment across States.
- **Integrate technology** through AI-based dispatch systems, GPS tracking, and real-time data sharing with hospitals.
- **Introduce national certification and pay parity** for paramedics to improve retention and professionalism.
- **Expand air and drone ambulances** for remote access and organ transport logistics.
- **Mandate emergency access protocols** for public gatherings and urban infrastructure planning.
- **Promote PPP models** for integrated emergency networks linking urban and rural areas.



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GOVT. SEEKS TO BOOST DEFENCE EXPORTS



○ It refers to India's strategic roadmap to enhance domestic defence production capacity and increase global export competitiveness, making India a major arms manufacturing hub.

- **Aim:** The target is to achieve **₹50,000 crore in defence exports by 2029**, alongside a total **annual defence production value of ₹3 lakh crore**—driven by private participation, technology transfer, and innovation.
- **Key Features:**
 - **Private sector integration:** Encouraging domestic firms to collaborate with DRDO, DPSUs, and foreign OEMs.
 - **Skill development:** Promoting defence education and R&D through institutions like Symbiosis Skills University.
 - **Indigenisation:** Expanding production of platforms such as **Tejas aircraft, Akash missiles, and Pinaka rockets**.
 - **Policy push:** Simplified procurement norms, export authorisation, and Make-in-India incentives.
 - **Operational validation:** Missions like **Operation Sindoor** showcase the success of indigenous technology in real-time operations.

GRADED RESPONSE ACTION PLAN (GRAP)



- The **Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP)** is a statutory framework that specifies **stage-wise measures** to be implemented to combat deteriorating air quality in the National Capital Region. It provides predefined actions based on the severity of pollution.



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Established in: GRAP was first introduced in 2017 under the directives of the **Supreme Court of India** and the **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986**.

- Later revised by the **CAQM in December 2024** to include predictive action based on IMD and IITM forecasts.

Aim: The plan aims to create a **graded and preemptive response system** for air quality management by identifying specific interventions to be taken as the AQI worsens in Delhi-NCR.

Criteria / Stages: GRAP classifies air quality into four categories based on AQI levels and corresponding actions:

Stage	Category	AQI Range	Actions
Stage I	Poor	201–300	Dust control, waste removal, enforcement of vehicle norms
Stage II	Very Poor	301–400	Mechanical sweeping, C&D monitoring, DG set regulations
Stage III	Severe	401–450	Restrictions on BS-III/IV vehicles, construction limits
Stage IV	Severe+	Above 450	Ban on truck entry, WFH orders, halting C&D projects

Key Features of GRAP:

- **Dynamic implementation:** Actions are activated dynamically based on real-time AQI data and IMD/IITM forecasts, allowing authorities to respond before pollution peaks.
- **Inter-agency coordination:** Implementation involves coordinated efforts among CAQM, CPCB, SPCBs, Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), and Traffic Police, ensuring accountability at every level.
- **Predictive enforcement:** Measures are invoked in advance when forecasts show a likely rise in AQI, promoting preventive rather than reactive air quality management.



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RAKCHHAM-CHITKUL WILDLIFE SANCTUARY



○ Rakchham–Chitkul Wildlife Sanctuary is a high-altitude protected area known for its unique cold-desert ecosystem and rich Himalayan biodiversity.

○ It serves as a critical habitat for several endangered alpine fauna and migratory bird species, making it a vital ecological zone in North India.

• **Located in:**

- Situated in Kinnaur district, Himachal Pradesh, the sanctuary covers an area of 30.98 sq. km.
- It lies at an altitude ranging from 3,200 to 5,486 metres above sea level within the Western Himalayan range.

• **Key Features:**

- The sanctuary is surrounded by **snow-clad peaks, glacial streams, and rugged valleys**, offering spectacular trekking routes such as the **Lamkhanga Pass**, connecting Kinnaur to Gangotri in Uttarakhand.
- It falls within a **dry trans-Himalayan zone**, unlike other sanctuaries of Himachal Pradesh that receive monsoon rainfall.
- The region supports **ecotourism, mountaineering, and birding**, making it a hotspot for conservation-linked adventure tourism.

• **Flora:**

- Dominated by rhododendrons, pine, oak, and juniper forests, the sanctuary also harbours rare medicinal herbs adapted to alpine climates.

• **Fauna:**

- Home to snow leopards, Himalayan black bears, musk deer, red foxes, and a variety of Himalayan pheasants.



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- The bird species observed include Plumbeous Water Redstart, Blue-fronted Redstart, Rock Bunting, and Yellow-breasted Greenfinch, reflecting high avian diversity.

OPERATION FIRE TRAIL



- Operation Fire Trail is a nationwide anti-smuggling initiative launched to detect and prevent the illegal import of foreign-origin firecrackers into India.
- It focuses on curbing the entry of hazardous and environmentally unsafe pyrotechnic materials that violate India's trade and safety regulations.
- **Launched by:**
 - Implemented by the **Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI)** under the Ministry of Finance, Government of India.
- **Aim:**
 - To crack down on organised smuggling syndicates importing Chinese firecrackers under false declarations.
 - To ensure compliance with DGFT and PESO licensing norms under the Explosives Rules, 2008, and protect public safety and national security.

Significance:

- Prevents inflow of non-compliant, hazardous fireworks that threaten human safety, port infrastructure, and environmental standards.
- Strengthens India's supply chain integrity and customs enforcement capacity through intelligence-led operations.
- Supports India's self-reliance in domestic manufacturing and discourages cheap, unsafe imports harmful to the environment.



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INDIA'S EVOLVING ROLE IN UN PEACEKEEPING



- The **United Nations Peacekeeping Force (UNPKF)** was established in **1948** to help countries torn by conflict transition to peace and stability. It operates under **Chapters VI and VII of the UN Charter**, focusing on monitoring ceasefires, protecting civilians, and rebuilding institutions.
- **India** has been one of the **largest and most consistent troop contributors**, deploying **over 3,00,000 personnel** across **50 missions**. Indian peacekeepers have served in **Congo, Lebanon, South Sudan, and Liberia**, earning **UN medals for valour**.
- India also pioneered the **first all-women police contingent in Liberia (2007)**, symbolising its commitment to gender inclusion and humanitarian service.

India's Moral and Strategic Vision:

- India sees peacekeeping as **“Seva” (service)**, grounded in **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam** (the world is one family) and **Ahimsa** (non-violence).
- Its policy of **“No National Caveats”** ensures impartial action without prioritising national interest.
- Defence Minister **Rajnath Singh's “4 Cs”—Consultation, Cooperation, Coordination, and Capacity Building**—represent India's model for collective, equitable peace operations.
- Strategically, India advocates for **democratisation within the UN**, ensuring **troop-contributing countries (TCCs)** have a decisive say in mission planning.
- The vision merges **moral legitimacy with operational realism**, positioning India as a **reformer, not just a responder**.

Role of Technology in Peacekeeping:



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- India promotes **technology as a moral multiplier**, using innovation to **save lives, enhance transparency, and reduce casualties**.
- Introduced the concept of a **UAS/C-UAS doctrine**—layered drone systems for reconnaissance, convoy safety, and casualty evacuation.
- Advocates **AI-enabled logistics, data analytics, and real-time surveillance** for situational awareness.
- The **Defence Expo 2025** showcased **41 indigenous systems** under Aatmanirbhar Bharat, highlighting India's push for **self-reliant yet globally shared security tools**.
- Proposed creation of a **“BlueSky Peacekeeping Commons”**—a shared platform for telemetry data, drone feeds, and TCC interoperability standards.

Limitations of UN Peacekeeping Forces

- **Vague Mandates:** Missions often suffer from **ambiguous goals and political interference**, reducing operational clarity.
- **Resource Constraints:** Many missions face **inadequate funding, outdated equipment, and personnel shortages**.
- **Erosion of Neutrality:** Increasing engagement in **counterterrorism or political roles** undermines traditional neutrality.
- **Accountability Gaps:** Crimes against peacekeepers and abuse allegations remain weakly prosecuted, eroding credibility.
- **Evolving Warfare:** Hybrid, cyber, and drone-based threats have outpaced the adaptation of traditional peacekeeping frameworks.

UDAN SCHEME



- UDAN (“Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik”) is the **flagship Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS)** launched to make air travel affordable and accessible for the common citizen by linking remote and regional areas to major cities.



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Launched in: Introduced on **21 October 2016** under the **National Civil Aviation Policy (NCAP)**, with the first flight taking off on **27 April 2017** between **Shimla and Delhi**.

Aim:

- The scheme aims to democratise aviation, enhance regional connectivity, and promote balanced economic development by linking Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities through affordable flights.

Key Features:

- **Viability Gap Funding (VGF):** Financial support to airlines to keep fares affordable.
- **Airfare Cap:** Ensures that ticket prices remain within reach of the common citizen.
- **Incentivised Framework:** Waivers on airport charges and tax concessions on Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF).
- **Multi-Stakeholder Governance:** Involves **MoCA, State Governments, AAI, and private operators** for coordinated implementation.
- **UDAN 5.5 & Seaplane Guidelines (2024):** Expanded coverage to **water aerodromes and heliports**, boosting last-mile connectivity.

Success So Far:

- **649 routes** operational across **93 airports, 15 heliports, and 2 water aerodromes**.
- **1.56 crore passengers** served through **3.23 lakh UDAN flights**.
- Over **₹4,300 crore** disbursed as **VGF** and **₹4,638 crore** invested in regional airport development.
- **India's airport network doubled** from **74 airports (2014)** to **159 (2024)**.
- Initiatives like **Krishi UDAN** and **UDAN Yatri Cafes** further promote rural air logistics and inclusivity.