

SAMAR ASSESSMENT CERTIFICATES

Recently, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) handed over SAMAR assessment certificates to nine Industry Partners.



About SAMAR Assessment Certificates:

- **System for Advance Manufacturing Assessment and Rating (SAMAR)** certificate is a benchmark to measure the competency of defence manufacturing enterprises.
- It is an outcome of the collaboration between **DRDO and the Quality Council of India (QCI)** to strengthen the defence manufacturing ecosystem in the country to further the vision of making India self-reliant in defence manufacturing.

Objective:

- Provide an objective **assessment of the manufacturing capability** of Defence Manufacturing Enterprises
- Enable enterprises to benchmark their performance across a range of business capabilities to enhance quality, reliability and competitiveness
- Create a **credible database** of Defence manufacturers for ease in vendor selection and development
- Strengthen the Defence manufacturing ecosystem in the country with an objective to realise the vision of making India self-reliant in Defence manufacturing
- **Eligibility:** All defence manufacturing enterprises, **both MSME and Large enterprises**, are eligible to apply for this certification.

Validity: It is **valid for a period of 2 years** from the date of issuance of the certificate.

- The certification is based on a **maturity assessment model** developed by QCI and is applicable to all defence manufacturing enterprises i.e., micro, small, medium and large enterprises.

EXERCISE DHARMA GUARDIAN 2024

Recently, India and Japan kicked off a two-week military exercise 'Dharma Guardian' in Rajasthan's Mahajan field firing range to foster deeper cooperation in confronting common security challenges.



About Exercise Dharma Guardian:

- It is an annual exercise and is conducted **alternatively in India and Japan.**
- It is the **5th edition** of **joint military exercise** between **India and Japan.**
- The aim of the Exercise is to **foster Military Cooperation** and enhance combined capabilities to execute joint operations in the **semi-urban environment** under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.
- The Exercise would focus on a high degree of physical fitness, joint planning, joint tactical drills and basics of special arms skills.

Significance

- It will enable the two sides to share their best practices in Tactics, Techniques and Procedures for conducting tactical operations.
- The Exercise will also facilitate developing interoperability, bonhomie and camaraderie between troops of both sides.
- This will **enhance the level of defence cooperation**, further fostering bilateral relations between the two friendly nations.

Other Exercises between India and Japan:

- **Malabar:** It is a multinational naval exercise in which India, Japan, the United States and Australia participate.
- **JIMEX**(naval)
- **SHINYUU Maitri** (Air Force)

WHAT IS G-33?

Ahead of the 13th ministerial conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO), a majority of the G-33 countries have called for a permanent solution to public stockholding for food security.



- The G33 (or the **Friends of Special Products in Agriculture**) is a **coalition of developing and least-developed countries**.
- Despite the name, there are **currently 47 member nations**. Some of the main countries include **India, China, Indonesia, Pakistan, Nigeria, Philippines, Turkey, Tanzania, Kenya, and South Korea**.
- It was established prior to the **2003 Cancun ministerial conference** that was coordinated during the **Doha Round of World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations, specifically in regard to agriculture**.
- **Dominated by India**, the group has "defensive" concerns regarding agriculture in relation to WTO negotiations, and seeks to **limit the degree of market opening** required of developing countries.
- The group has **advocated the creation of a "special products" exemption**, which would allow developing countries to exempt certain products from tariff exemptions, and also a "special safeguard mechanism" which would permit tariff increases in response to import surges.

'SUDARSHAN SETU' BRIDGE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently inaugurated the 'Sudarshan Setu' bridge connecting Beyt Dwarka island to mainland Okha in Gujarat's Devbhumi Dwarka district.



About 'Sudarshan Setu' Bridge:

- It is India's longest cable-stayed bridge, at 2.32 km, on the Arabian Sea, connecting Beyt Dwarka island to mainland Okha in Gujarat's Devbhumi Dwarka district.

- It boasts a **unique design**, featuring a **footpath adorned with verses from the Bhagavad Gita and images of Lord Krishna** on both sides.
- It also has **solar panels** installed on **the upper portions of the footpath**, generating one megawatt of electricity.
- The 2.32 km bridge, including 900 metres of a central double-span cable-stayed portion and a 2.45 km long approach road, has been constructed at a cost of Rs 979 crore.

Key Facts about Beyt Dwarka:

- Beyt Island (also called Bet Dwarka or Shankodhar) is a small island **off the coast of Dwarka, Gujarat**.
- Located at the **mouth of the Gulf of Kutch**, the island is enclosed by a few **temples, white sand beaches, and coral reefs**.

History:

- It is believed to be the **home of Lord Krishna when he was the king of Dwarka**.
- It derives its name from the word 'bet', which translates to 'gift', and it is believed that Lord Krishna received it from his friend Sudama.
- **Explorations and excavations** carried out under the sea **have revealed** the presence of **settlements whose age can be traced back to the era of the Harappan civilisation and that of the Mauryan rule**.
- **In the later years**, the region was **under the administration of the Gaekwad clan of the state of Baroda**.

Shri Keshavraj Ji Temple:

- It is a **Lord Krishna temple** located on the island. **It is an important site for Hindu pilgrimage**.
- The temple is **500 years old** and was **built by Vallabhacharya**.

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT (UNCTAD)

UNCTAD recently raised an alarm over escalating disruptions in shipping routes for global trade in a new report.



About the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD):

- It is the UN's leading institution dealing with trade and development.
- It is a permanent intergovernmental body established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1964.
- Its objective is to assist developing countries, especially the least developed countries, and countries with economies in transition, to integrate beneficially into the global economy.
- It also seeks to help the international community promote a global partnership for development, increase coherence in global economic policy-making, and assure development gains for all from trade.
- It provides economic and trade analysis, facilitates consensus-building, and offers technical assistance to help developing countries use trade, investment, finance, and technology for inclusive and sustainable development.

Headquarters: Geneva, Switzerland.

- UNCTAD membership consists of 195 states.
- Its activities are advisory by nature.

Reports published by UNCTAD:

- Trade and Development Report
- World Investment Report
- The Least Developed Countries Report

DO POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE TO PAY INCOME TAX

- **The Income Tax Act 1961 exempts** political parties registered by the Election Commission (EC) under the Representation of the People Act 1951 from paying income tax, **with some conditions.**
- **Section 13-A of the Act** (special provision relating to incomes of political parties): It says that any income under the heads of
 - Income from house property,
 - Income from other sources,
 - Capital gains and
 - Income from voluntary contributions **shall not be included in the total income of the previous year of the party.**

The above exemption is valid as long as -

- The political party **maintains books of account** that would enable the Assessing Officer to “properly deduce its income”;
- Maintains a record of all contributions above **20,000** each;
- Has its accounts audited by an accountant and does not accept any donation above **2,000** each in cash; and
- The treasurer of the party or any other person authorised by the party submits a declaration of its donations to the EC before the due date of filing IT returns.

Are Political Parties Required to File IT Returns?

- Parties are required to file their returns **if their total income**, before taking into account the exemptions under Section 13A, **is higher than the IT exemption limit.**
- **Section 139 (4B)** says that the chief executive officer of every political party furnishes a return of such income of the previous year in the prescribed form, if,
 - The total income exceeds the maximum amount which is not chargeable to IT.

INDIA-MIDDLE EAST EUROPE ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (IMEC)



- At the sidelines of the **G20 Summit** held in New Delhi in Sept. 2023, an MoU was signed to develop a rail and shipping corridor connecting India to Europe via Middle East between India, United States, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, France, Germany, Italy, and the European Union.
- The proposed IMEC will involve:
 - **Rail connectivity,**
 - **Shipping lines,**
 - **High-speed data cables,** and
 - **Energy pipelines.**
- These will complement the existing maritime and road networks that will enhance movement of trade and services “**to transit to, from, and between India, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel, and Europe.**”

Significance of IMEC Project:

- IMEC is significant from an infrastructure and connectivity perspective as well as from a geopolitical angle.
- The project involves two separate corridors –
 - **East Corridor:** connects India to the Arabian Gulf, and
 - **Northern Corridor:** connects the Arabian Gulf to Europe.
- According to the MoU, IMEC is “expected to stimulate economic development through enhanced connectivity and economic integration between Asia, the Arabian Gulf, and Europe.”
- The new corridor has other important dimensions, including reliable and secure regional supply chains, better trade accessibility, and trade facilitation.
- In geopolitical terms, IMEC is touted as a counter to China’s Belt & Road Initiative (BRI).
 - India, from very early days, had objected to it because the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a key component of the BRI, runs through territories claimed by India.

About Red Sea:



- The Red Sea is a seawater inlet of the Indian Ocean, lying between **Africa** and **Asia**.
- The Red Sea owes its strategic importance for global trade to the **Bab el-Mandab Strait** which lies between **Yemen** and **Djibouti**.
- It is **one of the world's busiest cargo and oil transit points** with almost 12% of international merchandise trade passing through it.
- An immediate consequence of the Red Sea conflict has been that major container and oil carriers have been forced to re-route shipments via the **Cape of Good Hope**.
- The re-routing has led to rising ocean freight, inflated insurance costs, and longer voyage times leading to delays and shortage of products.
- It has also driven up transportation costs. The higher shipping costs will be passed onto consumers in the form of increased commodity prices.

Impact of Israel-Palestine Conflict on IMEC Project:

- With the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict intensifying, there is a growing realization that the calculations on the kind of diplomatic cooperation that the project of the scale of the IMEC would have warranted as a prerequisite, is far more complicated now.
- The Saudi Arabia – Israel peace deal might not be a possibility in the near future now as mounting anger in the Arab world about the scale of Israel's offensive in northern Gaza.
- US President Joe Biden's planned visit in Jordan this week had to be cancelled after an attack on a Gaza hospital.
- A rocket launched near Iraq's Baghdad International Airport added to a rising number of attacks targeting US forces in the Middle East.
- While the war's direct impact remains regional, the geopolitical consequences reverberate far beyond, with potential consequences for the proposed IMEC corridor.

EDWARDS SYNDROME

Researchers have reported chromosomal disorders discovered from prehistoric skeletal remains, dating up to approximately 5,500 years old — including six cases of Down syndrome and one case of Edwards syndrome.



Edwards syndrome is also known as **trisomy 18**.

- It is an **autosomal chromosomal disorder** due to an **extra copy of chromosome 18**.
- It is a very **severe genetic condition** that affects a child's body development and growth.
- **Symptoms:** Children diagnosed with trisomy 18 have a low birth weight, multiple birth defects and defining physical characteristics.

There are **three types** of Edwards syndrome

- **Complete trisomy 18:**
 - It is the **most common form** (94%).
 - In this type, every cell contains three **complete copies of chromosome 18**.
 - The extra chromosome is **most often of maternal origin**.
- **Mosaic trisomy 18:**
 - It is the second most common type (less than 5%).
 - In this type, both a complete trisomy 18 and a normal cell line exist.
- **Partial trisomy 18:**
 - In this type, only a partial segment of chromosome 18 is present in triplicate.
 - The partial triplicate often results from a balanced translocation or inversion carried by one of the parents.

Treatment: There are no specific treatments for trisomy 18. Treatment will focus on the symptoms of the condition, such as heart conditions, breathing difficulties and infections.
