

### 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.

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