

THE IDEAL TRACK TO RUN INDIA'S LOGISTICS SYSTEM

Context

- The PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan holds significant potential to boost railway infrastructure, speeding and expanding cargo transport, thereby reducing freight cost.

Background

- The Union Budget 2023 has doubled the PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan to States from ₹5,000 crore to ₹10,000 crore.
- It has also announced an outlay of ₹2.4 lakh crore for the Indian Railways, compared to ₹1.40 lakh crore in the FY22-23 and nine times the amount provided in 2013-2014.
- This is in line with target of **increasing the share of the railways in freight** movement from **27% to 45%** and increasing **freight movement** from **2 billion tonnes** to **3.3 billion tonnes** by 2030.
- The PM Gati Shakti hence provides the right platform to address the infrastructural challenges that have hampered the movement of freight by rail.

PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan (PMGS-NMP)

- It is a **central government project** with an initial outlay of **Rs 100 lakh-crore** aimed to revolutionize infrastructure in India holistically.
- Launched in 2021, the plan is a **transformative approach** for economic growth and sustainable development.
- The approach is driven by **7 engines** namely Railways, Roads, Ports, Waterways, Airports, Mass Transport, and Logistics Infrastructure.

Critical Importance of Railways in Logistics

- The Railways offer an **efficient and economic mode of logistics movement** given their **pan-India network**, and can play an important role in enabling a **coordinated and integrated** logistics system.
- The increased adoption of the railways as a mode for cargo movement is thus crucial to improve **India's logistics competitiveness**.

Significance of PMGS-NMP in Railways

- Globally, railway systems are heavily investing in advanced rail infrastructure for quick and low-cost container movement.
- For example, **China** uses **special trains** to carry containers that connect significant ports to the inland.
 - It also has **dedicated rail lines** to move container traffic and planned double-decker container carriages for greater efficiency.
- While the Indian Railways are upgrading their infrastructure, the PM Gati Shakti will help in **continuous monitoring of existing projects** along with identification of new priority areas.
 - This will help in achieving the targets of rail freight movement.

Way Forward

- The Indian Railways need to improve infrastructure that is backed by **adequate policy tools**.
- It should also **encourage private participation** in the operation and management of terminals, containers, and warehouses to efficiently utilise resources.
- A **special entity** under the railways to **handle intermodal logistics** in partnership with the private sector should be established.
 - The entity could function as a **single window** for customers for cargo movement and payment transactions.
 - This will help in addressing the first and last-mile issue faced by the railways.
- Since there are two **cargo wagons** in each passenger train, one of these can be booked by the customer using an online application.
 - This introduction of an **Uber-like model** for one of the two cargo wagons could help in increasing the utilisation rate of these wagons.
 - The Indian Railways may keep operating the other wagon (the way it is done currently), until the success of the proposed model is established.
 - This could directly increase freight traffic without any additional investment in infrastructure.

BIMSTEC MINISTERIAL MEETING

Recently, the Minister of State for External Affairs participated in the 19th The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) Ministerial Meeting virtually from Bangkok.



About BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting:

- During the meeting, the Ministers approved several documents including rules of Procedure for Core BIMSTEC Mechanisms, **Sectoral BIMSTEC Mechanisms** and BIMSTEC's External Relations for submission to the 6th

BIMSTEC Summit.

- The meeting also approved the draft Host Country Agreement between India and the BIMSTEC Secretariat for **establishing BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate in India**.
- The Meeting also approved the **Terms of Reference for an Eminent Person's Group** on the Future Directions of BIMSTEC.
- The Terms of Reference were finalized under the special scheme for institution building.
- Besides **BIMSTEC Bangkok Vision 2030** was also approved and will be launched at the 6th BIMSTEC Summit.
- The Meeting also gave its nod to the Administrative and Disciplinary Rules of the Secretariat and amended Financial Rules and Regulations of the BIMSTEC Secretariat.

Key facts about BIMSTEC

- It is a regional organization that was established on 06 June 1997 with the signing of the **Bangkok Declaration**.
- **Member countries:** Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bhutan and Nepal
- The **Chairmanship of BIMSTEC rotates according to the alphabetical order** of the English names of the Member States.
- During the Third BIMSTEC Summit, the **Secretariat** was established in **Dhaka, Bangladesh**.

[RULES ON MONEY LAUNDERING TWEAKED](#)

Why in news?

- The Union government tweaked rules under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), putting non-government organisations (NGOs) and “politically exposed persons” under tighter scrutiny.
- These amendments are in line with the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA)

- PMLA is a criminal law of the Parliament of India passed in **2002** to prevent money laundering and confiscate property derived from the laundered money.
 - PMLA became law and came into force on July 1, 2005.
- The act has undergone various critical changes from time to time in order to give itself more strength and meaning.
 - Eg., the definition of Money Laundering under the act was broadened via amendments done in 2012 and again in 2019.
- The act gives blanket powers to the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for seizing, investing, searching and attaching assets.

Objectives of the PMLA act

- Prevention and controlling money laundering
- Confiscation and seizing of property involved in or derived from money laundering
- Providing punishment to offenders
- Appointment of adjudicating authority and appellate tribunal concerning money laundering matters
- Maintaining records and putting obligations on financial institutions, banking companies and institutions
- Dealing with every issue related to money laundering

Financial Action Task Force (FATF)

- The Financial Action Task Force is an intergovernmental institution established in 1989 in the endeavour of the G7 to create policies to battle money laundering.
- In 2001, its directive was expanded to include terrorism financing.
- FATF releases grey and black lists, in which few countries are mentioned.
- A grey list is created to check its nation's progress on measures against money laundering and terrorism financing activities.
- A black list includes non-cooperative countries against battling money laundering and terror financing.

News Summary: Rules on Money Laundering tweaked

- The Department of Revenue under the Ministry of Finance brought in The Prevention of Money Laundering (Maintenance of Records) Amendment Rules, 2023.
- This has widened the ambit of reporting entities under money laundering provisions.

INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (ICC)

The New York Times recently reported that the Pentagon — United States Ministry of Defence — is blocking any evidence-sharing with the International Criminal Court (ICC) to punish Russia for the alleged atrocities in Ukraine.



About International Criminal Court (ICC):

- It is the **only permanent international criminal tribunal**.
- **Background:** It was created by the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (its founding and governing document), and began functioning on 1 July 2002 when the Statute came into force.
- **Mandate:** It investigates and, where warranted, tries individuals charged with the gravest crimes of concern to the international community: genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and the crime of aggression.
- **HQ:** Hague, Netherlands.
- **Members:** 123 nations are States Parties to the Rome Statute and recognize the ICC's authority; the notable exceptions being the US, China, Russia, and India.

- **Funding:** The Court is funded by **contributions from the States Parties** and by **voluntary contributions** from Governments, international organizations, individuals, corporations, and other entities.
- **Composition:**
 - **Judges:** The court has **eighteen judges**, each from a **different member country**, elected to **nonrenewable nine-year terms**.
 - **The Presidency:** Consists of **three judges** (the **President and two Vice-Presidents**) elected from among the judges. It **represents the Court to the outside world** and helps with the **organization of the work of the judges**.
 - **Judicial Divisions:** **18 judges in 3 divisions**, the Pre-Trial Division, the Trial Division, and the Appeals Division.
 - **Office of the Prosecutor (OTP):** OTP is responsible for **receiving referrals** and any **substantiated information on crimes** within the jurisdiction of the Court. OTP **examines these referrals and information, conducts investigations, and conducts prosecutions** before the Court.
 - **Registry:** The core function of the Registry is to **provide administrative and operational support** to the Chambers and the Office of the Prosecutor.
- **Jurisdiction of ICC:**
 - Unlike the International Court of Justice, which hears disputes between states, the **ICC handles prosecutions of individuals**.
 - The ICC is only **competent to hear a case if:**
 - the **country where the offence was committed is a party** to the Rome Statute; or
 - the **perpetrator's country of origin is a party** to the Rome Statute
 - The ICC may **only exercise its jurisdiction** if the **national court is unable or unwilling to do so**.
 - The ICC **only has jurisdiction over offences committed after** the Statute's entry into force on **1 July 2002**.
- **Relation with UN:**

- While not a United Nations organization, the **Court has a cooperation agreement with the United Nations.**
 - When a situation is not within the Court's jurisdiction, the **United Nations Security Council can refer the situation to the ICC, granting it jurisdiction.**
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MADHAV NATIONAL PARK

Three Tigers, as part of a tiger reintroduction project, will soon be released in Madhav National Park.



About Madhav National Park:

- **Location:**
 - It is situated near Shivpuri town in **Shivpuri District**, which lies in the northwest region of **Madhya Pradesh**.
- It lies on the **northern fringe of the Central Highlands** of India, forming a part of the **Upper Vindhyan Hills** intermixed with plateaus and valley sections.
- It was **named after Madho Rao Scindia**, the **Maharaja of Gwalior** belonging to the Scindia dynasty of the Marathas.
- The Park was the **hunting ground of Mughal emperors and Maharaja of Gwalior.**
- It got the **status of a National Park in 1958.**
- The **Sakhya and Madhav Sagar lakes** are two of the most **critical zones of the park** and are always surrounded by animals and birds seeking relief from the heat.
- The Park is gifted with a **diverse ecosystem comprising lakes, forests, and grasslands.**
- **Vegetation:** The Park represents the **Northern Tropical dry deciduous mixed forest** as well as **dry thorn forest.**
- **Flora:** Some of the main tree species found inside the park include **Khair** (Acacia catechu), **Salai, Kerdhai, Dhawda, Tendu, Palash,** and others alike.
- **Fauna:**
 - It is home to **antelopes like Nilgai, Chinkara, Chowsinga,** and Deer, including Chital, Sambar, and Barking Deer.

- Animals like the **Leopard, Wolf, Jackal, Fox, Wild Dog**, Wild Pig, Porcupine, Python etc., are also sighted in the park.
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DEPUTY SPEAKER OF LOK SABHA

Constitutional experts and opposition parties have termed the ‘non-election for the post of deputy speaker’ as unprecedented and unconstitutional.



Why in News?

- Parliament has been functioning without a deputy speaker, a post usually held by the main Opposition party, for nearly four years.

About Deputy Speaker:

- **History:**
 - The institutions of Speaker and Deputy Speaker **originated in India in 1921** under the provisions of the **Government of India Act of 1919** (Montague-Chelmsford Reforms).
 - In **1921, Frederick Whyte and Sachidanand Sinha** were **appointed** by the Governor-General of India as the **first Speaker** and the **first Deputy Speaker** (respectively) of the **Central Legislative Assembly**.
 - At that time, the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker were **called the President and Deputy President**, respectively, and the same **nomenclature continued till 1947**.
 - **Mavalankar and Ananthasayanam Ayyangar** had the distinction of being the **first Speaker and the first Deputy Speaker** (respectively) of the **Lok Sabha**.
- **Constitutional Provision w.r.t. Office of Deputy Speaker:**
 - **Article 93** of the Constitution says that the **House of the People (Lok Sabha) shall choose two members of the House to be, respectively, Speaker and Deputy Speaker**.
 - **The article also says that when the office of Speaker/Deputy Speaker becomes vacant, the House shall choose another member to be Speaker or Deputy Speaker**.
- **Election of Deputy Speaker:**

- Like the Speaker, the **Deputy Speaker is also elected by the Lok Sabha itself from amongst its members.**
 - He is elected **after the election of the Speaker** has taken place.
 - **The date of election** of the Deputy Speaker is **fixed by the Speaker.**
 - **Term of Office:**
 - Like the Speaker, the **Deputy Speaker remains in the office usually during the life of the Lok Sabha.** However, **he may vacate his office earlier** in any of the following **three cases** –
 - if **he ceases to be a member** of the Lok Sabha;
 - if **he resigns by writing to the Speaker;** and
 - if **he is removed by a resolution** passed by a **majority of all the then members** of the Lok Sabha. Such a resolution can be moved only after giving **14 days' advance notice.**
 - **Role/Power of Deputy Speaker:**
 - The Deputy Speaker **performs the duties of the Speaker's office when it is vacant.**
 - He also **acts as the Speaker** when the **latter is absent** from the sitting of the House. In both cases, **he assumes all the powers of the Speaker.**
 - **Deputy Speaker is not subordinate to the Speaker.** He is directly **responsible to the House.**
 - He also **presides over the joint sitting** of both Houses of Parliament **in case the Speaker is absent** from such a sitting.
 - The Deputy Speaker has one special privilege, that is, **whenever he is appointed as a member of a parliamentary committee, he automatically becomes its chairman.**
 - **When the Speaker presides** over the House, the **Deputy Speaker is like any other ordinary member** of the House. **He can speak** in the House, **participate** in its proceedings, and **vote on any question** before the House.
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