

### SIPRI: INDIA REMAINS BIGGEST ARMS IMPORTER BETWEEN 2018-22 DESPITE DROP IN OVERALL IMPORTS

#### Why in News?

- According to the SIPRI, India remained the world's largest arms importer for the five-year period between 2018-22 even though its arms imports dropped by 11% between 2013-17 and 2018-22.

#### What is Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)?

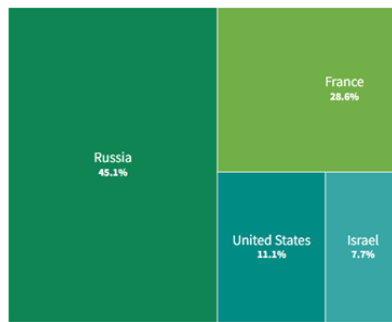
- SIPRI is an **independent** international institute **dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament**.
- Established in **1966** and based in Stockholm (Sweden), SIPRI provides data, analysis and recommendations, to **policymakers, researchers, media and the interested public**.
- It is regularly ranked among the most respected **think tanks**

#### What are the Key Findings of the SIPRI's latest data?

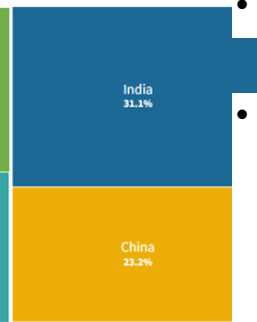
##### India as the world's top importer of arms:

- **India** continues to be the **world's largest arms importer** (a position it has held for the period 1993-2022) followed by Saudi Arabia. India accounted for **11%** of the total global imports in 2018-2022.
- **Russia** was the largest supplier of arms to India in both 2013-17 and 2018-22, but its share of total Indian arms imports fell from 64% to 45% while **France** (29%) and the **US** (11%) emerged as the 2nd and 3rd largest supplier between 2018-22.
  - However, Russia's position is under pressure due to strong competition, increased Indian arms production and constraints on Russia's arms exports due to **invasion of Ukraine**.
- Among the top 10 arms exporters for the period 2018-22, **India was the biggest arms export market to three countries** - Russia, France and Israel and the second largest export market to South Korea.
- India was also the third largest market for **South Africa** which was ranked 21 in the list of arms exporters.

India's arms imports (2018 - 2022)



Russia's arms exports (2018 - 2022)



## India's arms imports from France:

- Increased by **489%** between 2013–17 and 2018–22, India's arms imports from France included 62 combat aircraft and four submarines.
- France therefore **displaced the USA** to

become the second largest supplier to India in 2018–22.

**India's imports dropped by 11% between 2013–17 and 2018–22:** The decrease can be attributed to several factors including -

- India's slow and complex arms procurement process,
- Efforts to diversify its arms suppliers, and
- Attempts to replace imports with major arms that are designed and produced domestically.

**What drives India's Demand for Arms?** India's tensions with Pakistan and China largely drive its demand for arms imports.

**India as an arms exporter:** India was the third largest arms supplier to Myanmar after Russia and China accounting for 14% of its imports.

**Overall:** The U.S. share of global arms exports increased from 33% to 40% while Russia's fell from 22% to 16%.

## DRAGON FRUIT (KAMALAM)

Recently, the Union Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare approved a Centre of Excellence (CoE) for Dragon Fruit (Kamalam Fruit) to be established by the Indian Institute of Horticultural Research (IIHR), Bengaluru, Karnataka.



### About Dragon Fruit:

- Dragon Fruit is a **herbaceous perennial climbing** cactus widely known as Pitaya, has its origin in Southern Mexico, Central America and South America.

- Its flowers are **hermaphrodites** (male and female organs in the same flower) in nature and open at night.
- It grows in **all kinds of soil and does not require much water**.
- The plant sustains yield for more than 20 years, is high in **nutraceutical properties** (medicinal effects) and good for value-added processing industries.
- It is widely **cultivated in South-East Asia, India, the USA, The Caribbean Islands, and Australia** throughout the tropical and sub-tropical world.
- The world's **largest producer and exporter of dragon fruit is Vietnam**, where the plant was brought by the French in the 19th century.
- In India, the cultivation of Kamalam Fruit is done in **Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Mizoram and Nagaland**.
- In this endeavor under the **Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH)**, a roadmap is being prepared for the cultivation of this crop.

### **Key facts about the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) Mission**

- It is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** for the holistic **growth of the horticulture sector** covering fruits, vegetables, root & tuber crops, mushrooms, spices, flowers, aromatic plants, coconut, cashew, cocoa and bamboo.
- Under MIDH, the Government of India (GOI) **contributes 60%, of the total outlay** for developmental programmes **in all the states except states in the North East and the Himalayas**, and 40% share is contributed by State Governments.
- In the case of North Eastern States and Himalayan States, **GOI contributes 90%**.

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## **ANTIQUITIES ABROAD: WHAT INDIAN, INTERNATIONAL LAWS SAY?**

### **What is an Antiquity?**

- The **Antiquities and Art Treasures Act (1972)**, defines “antiquity” as –
  - any coin, sculpture, painting, epigraph or other work of art or craftsmanship;
  - any article, object or thing detached from a building or cave;

- any article, object or thing illustrative of science, art, crafts, literature, religion, customs, morals or politics in bygone ages;
- any article, object or thing of historical interest.
- The **minimum time for any of the above mentioned items to be considered as antique is 100 years.**
- For “manuscript, record or other document which is of scientific, historical, literary or aesthetic value”, this duration is “**not less than 75 years.**”

### **International Conventions w.r.t. Antiquities:**

- The **UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property** is an international treaty.
- The **convention urges States Parties to take measures to prohibit and prevent the illicit trafficking of cultural property.**
- It provides a common framework for the States Parties on the measures to be taken to prohibit and prevent the import, export and transfer of cultural property.
- To date, **the Convention has been ratified by 143 states (including India).**
- In 2000, the General Assembly of the UN and the UN Security Council in 2015 and 2016 also raised concerns on the issue.
- An INTERPOL report in 2019 said that almost 50 years after the UNESCO convention, “the illicit international traffic of cultural items and related offences is sadly increasingly prolific.”

### **Indian Laws w.r.t. Antiquities:**

- In India, **Item-67 of the Union List, Item-12 of the State List, and Item-40 of the Concurrent List of the Constitution deal with the country’s heritage.**
- Before Independence, an Antiquities (Export Control) Act had been passed in 1947 to ensure that “no antiquity could be exported without license.”
- Post-independence, the **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958** was enacted.
- Further, the **Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972 (AATA)** was implemented in 1976.

- Under the AATA, no person carry on the business of selling or offering to sell any antiquity except in accordance with the terms and conditions of a licence.
- This licence is granted by the **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)**.

## What is ‘Provenance’ and How is the Ownership of an Antiquity Checked?

- Provenance includes the list of all owners from the time the object left its maker’s possession to the time it was acquired by the current owner.
- The **first thing in order to prove the ownership is the complaint (FIR) filed with the police.**
- Under the UNESCO 1970 Convention, a requesting party has to furnish the documentation and other evidence necessary to establish its claim for recovery and return.

## How to Check for Fake Antiquities?

- Under section 14(3) of the AATA, **“Every person who owns controls or is in possession of any antiquity” shall register such antiquity before the registering officer “and obtain a certificate in token of such registration.”**
- So far, the **National Mission on Monuments and Antiquities**, launched in March 2007, has **registered 3.52 lakh antiquities among the 16.70 lakh it has documented, to help in “effective check” of illegal activities.**
- This is a very small portion of the total number of antiquities in the country (estimated to be **around 58 lakh**).

## Can India bring back Antiquities?

- There are three categories –
  - **Antiquities taken out of India pre-independence;**
  - Those which were **taken out since independence until March 1976**, i.e. before the implementation of AATA; and
  - **Antiquities taken out of the country since April 1976.**
- For items in the first two categories, requests have to be raised bilaterally or on international fora.
- Antiquities in the second and third categories can be retrieved easily by raising an issue bilaterally with proof of ownership and with the help of the UNESCO convention.



## INDIA'S FIRST BEHAVIOURAL LAB

The Rajasthan government recently approved the setting up of India's first Behavioural lab at Jaipur.



### About India's first Behavioural Lab:

- It will be set up at the Patel Bhawan at Harish Chandra Mathur Rajasthan Institute of Public Administration (HCM-RIPA), Jaipur.
- The lab to be set up in about 2665.04 square feet area will be **managed and operated by IIM Udaipur**.
- The **faculty of the IIM** will **impart training** on applied methods, and **certificate courses of Ph.D level** will be conducted here.
- **International experts** will also be involved in **conducting experiments and workshops**.
- **Human behavior will be studied** with the help of innovative technology, including ultra-modern software and hardware.
- **Training programs will be organized in various colleges and universities** in the field of **experiential studies** through this laboratory, along with imparting **training to teachers and programs for practical training**.

## BUMCHU FESTIVAL

Recently, the Bumchu Festival was celebrated in the Tashiding Monastery, located in the state of Sikkim.



### About Bumchu Festival:

- Bumchu Festival is the Tashiding **holy water vase ritual** which is a unique and important occasion that draws travellers from all over the world.
- Annual performances of this ancient ceremony are held at the **Tashiding Monastery**, located in the **western part of Sikkim**.

- The Bumchu festival commemorates a supernatural occurrence that took place in the **18th century under Chogyal Chakdor Namgyal.**
- Bumchu means “**pot of sacred water**” in **Tibetan**. The vase is opened during the event, and the water inside is shared among the worshippers.
- The water is thought to have healing qualities and to grant luck and riches to those who drink it.
- The celebration takes place on the **14th and 15th of the first lunar month**, which often **falls in February or March.**
- In Sikkim, the Bumchu festival is a time of intense delight and celebration. At the event, pilgrims travel to Tashiding from all around India as well as from close by nations like Bhutan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

### Key facts about the Tashiding Monastery

- It is one of the most sacred Buddhist pilgrimage sites, located on a hilltop overlooking the **Rangee River in Sikkim.**
- **Guru Padmasambhava**, better known as Guru Rinpoche, the great Buddhist guru who brought Buddhism to Tibet, blessed the location of the monastery.
- A Nyingma teacher named Ngadak Sempa Chempo Phunshok Rigzing later founded the monastery in the **17th century.**

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### WHAT IS DOHA POLITICAL DECLARATION?

Doha Political Declaration was adopted by the head of the states at the recently concluded Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC5).



#### About Doha Political Declaration:

- It is a key outcome of the second part of the LDC5 conference held under the theme “From Potential to Prosperity” in Qatar.
- The declaration welcomed the Doha Programme of Action (DPoA) and strongly committed to its implementation throughout the coming decade.

- The declaration also requested the **United Nations (UN) Secretary-General** to ensure the **full mobilization and coordination** of all parts of the UN system to facilitate coordinated implementation of the **Doha Programme of Action**

## **What is the Doha Programme of Action (DPoA)?**

- The DPoA for the **Least Developed Countries** was adopted at the first part of the **LDC5 conference** held in **New York** in
- It is a **10-year plan** to put the world's **46 most vulnerable countries** back on track to achieving the UN-mandated **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)**.
- DPoA (2022-2031) consisted of **six key focus areas**:
  - eradicating poverty;
  - leveraging the potential of science and technology;
  - addressing climate change;
  - environmental degradation;
  - recovering from COVID-19 pandemic;
  - building resilience against future shocks for risk-informed sustainable development;

## **Least developed countries (LDCs):**

- They are **low-income countries** confronting severe structural impediments to sustainable development.
- They are highly **vulnerable to economic and environmental shocks**.
- There are currently **46 countries on the list** of LDCs which is **reviewed every three years** by the **Committee for Development Policy (CDP)** of the UN.
- LDCs have **exclusive access to certain international support measures**, particularly in the areas of development assistance and trade.

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## **WHAT IS THE BLACK SEA GRAIN INITIATIVE?**

Russia recently agreed to extend the Black Sea grain deal following talks with the United Nations for an additional 60 days.







# CROSS & CLIMB ROHTAK



## About Black Sea Grain Initiative:

- It was set up to **resume vital food and fertilizer exports from Ukraine** to the rest of the world.
- It was **brokered between Russia and Ukraine by the United Nations and Turkey**.
- The Initiative allowed **exports of grain, other foodstuffs, and fertilizer**, including ammonia, to resume **through a safe maritime humanitarian corridor** from three key **Ukrainian ports: Chornomorsk, Odesa, and Yuzhny/Pivdennyi**, to the rest of the world.
- **Joint Coordination Centre (JCC):**
  - A JCC was established to **monitor the implementation of the Initiative**.
  - JCC Centre is **hosted in Istanbul** and includes **representatives from Russia, Turkiye, Ukraine, and the United Nations**.
  - The UN acts as the **Secretariat for the Centre**.
- **Procedure:**
  - **Vessels wishing to participate** in the Initiative will **undergo inspection off Istanbul** to ensure they are empty of cargo.
  - **They then sail** through the maritime humanitarian corridor to **Ukrainian ports to load**.
  - The corridor is **monitored 24/7** to ensure the safe passage of vessels.
  - **Vessels on the return journey will also be inspected** at the inspection area off Istanbul.

## Key Facts about Black Sea:

- It is an **inland sea between Eastern Europe and Western Asia**.
- It is **bound by Ukraine to the north and northwest, Russia and Georgia to the east, Turkey to the south, and Bulgaria and Romania to the west**.
- It links to the **Sea of Marmara through the Strait of Bosphorus** and then to the **Aegean through the Strait of Dardanelles**.

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## [WAGNER GROUP OF MERCENARIES](#)

### Why in news?

- Tensions are escalating between the US President Joe Biden's administration and the US Congress as they debate over designating the Wagner Group as a terrorist organisation.

- Wagner Group is a shadowy private militia, believed to be fighting for Russia against Ukraine in the ongoing battle between the two countries.

### **News Summary: Wagner Group of mercenaries**

- A fight is brewing between US Congress and President Biden over whether to designate the private Russian military company Wagner as a terrorist organization.
  - Wagner is on the front lines of aggression against Ukraine and accused of heinous atrocities there and across the world.
  - The Biden administration has sanctioned the Wagner group as a global criminal organization.
  - However, lawmakers are pushing the State Department to go further by imposing the foreign terrorist designation.
    - A group of lawmakers are trying to pass legislation known as the Holding Accountable Russian Mercenaries (HARM) Act.
    - This act would require the US State Department to label the Wagner Group as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO).

### **What is the Wagner Group?**

- The Wagner Group first surfaced during Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014.
- Essentially a network of contractors that supply soldiers for hire, the group isn't registered anywhere and its source of funding remains unknown.
- Apart from Ukraine, Wagner Group is reportedly also active in West Asia and several countries in Africa.
- Most recently, the organisation was accused of being involved in the massacres, rape, and torture of civilians in Ukraine's Bucha that took place in March 2022.

### **Why is the Biden administration not designating the Wagner Group as FTO?**

- The Biden administration believes that the move could impede US efforts to convince and work with African nations to end their associations with or dependency on Wagner.