

Current Affairs : 21 July 2022

THE SWELTERING HEAT WAVE ACROSS EUROPE

Context

- Large swathes of Europe, the U.K. and the U.S. are sweltering under extreme heat wave conditions which have been described as a “**heat apocalypse**”.
- Devastation due to extreme weather has been particularly acute in Western Europe, which has been hit by raging wildfires, drought, and hundreds of heat-related deaths, ringing alarm bells about a looming **climate emergency**.
- K. posted its **highest temperature ever** recording 40.3C in July, 2022, breaking its earlier record of highest temperature of 38.7C registered in 2019. This resulted in the government issuing its **first ever red alert** for extreme heat.

Concerns behind spike in summer temperature

- **Simultaneous event:** While Europe has witnessed some hot summers in recent years, rarely have temperatures risen so high across so many regions at the same time. From Spain, Portugal to France, Europe has been reeling under the impact of extreme heat as witnessing record temperatures between **42 and 46 degrees**.
- **Loss of forested land:** Wildfires caused by a combination of **extreme heat and dry weather** have destroyed **19,000 hectares of forest** in southwestern France. Portugal also reported more than 250 blazes over a period of two days and Spain lost 14,000 hectares of land to fires.
- **Droughts and food security:** Italy has been reeling under a drought, with the Po river basin, one of Europe’s ‘food bowls’, not having received rains in more than 200 days.
- **Alarming casualties:** Across the Atlantic, with temperatures touching 43°C in some regions, **around 69 million Americans** were reported to be at risk of exposure to dangerous levels of heat and heat-related illnesses. Portugal also reported more than **650 deaths** due to heat-related illnesses in a span of one week.
- **Future risks:** Global temperatures have already risen by more than 1°C , and studies in the U.K. had shown that a one degree rise in temperature raises the probability of the country witnessing 40°C by ten times.

About Heatwave

- Experts define heatwave as an **extended period of hot weather** where temperatures **are above the historical average** in an area for two or more days.
- It is a weather phenomenon that occurs when **high pressure** in the atmosphere moves in and **pushes warm air downwards**. That air warms up further as it is compressed and people begin to feel a lot hotter.

What next?

- The heat wave in Europe has renewed calls for determined action on climate mitigation measures. While Europe has been more vocal about **cutting down emissions** and has sought to **invest heavily in renewables**, this shift has been **disrupted by the Ukraine war** and an impending energy crisis sparked by the **self-imposed withdrawal** from cheap Russian gas.
- The United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres has issued a grim warning recently pointing out that world leaders faced a clear choice of either “**collective action or collective suicide**”.

GOVT TO LS: MAOIST VIOLENCE DOWN 77% SINCE 2009, BUT SECURITY PERSONNEL DEATHS ON THE RISE IN RECENT YEARS

In News:

- According the data provided by the Ministry of Home Affairs in Lok Sabha, Left Wing Extremism (LWE) violence has decreased from 2258 in 2009 to 509 in 2021.

Left Wing Extremism (LWE)

- Left-wing extremism is the single internal security threat that affects the largest number of States in India.
- LWE aims to overthrow the existing democratic state structure with violence as their primary weapon, and mass mobilization and strategic united fronts as complementary components.
- They plan to usher in So-called ‘New Democratic Revolution’ in India.

- Left-wing extremists are popularly known as Maoists worldwide and as Naxalites in India.

Causes for spread of LWE

- **Land Related Factors:**

- Encroachment of Government and Community lands (even the water-bodies) by powerful sections of society.
- Lack of title to public land cultivated by the landless poor.
- Poor implementation of laws prohibiting the transfer of tribal land to non-tribals in the Fifth Schedule areas.
- Non-regularisation of traditional land rights.

- **Displacement and Forced Evictions:**

- Eviction from lands traditionally used by tribals.
- Displacements caused by irrigation and power projects without adequate arrangements for rehabilitation.
- Large scale land acquisition for ‘public purposes’ without appropriate compensation or rehabilitation.

- **Livelihood Related Causes:**

- Lack of food security – corruption in the Public Distribution System
- Disruption of traditional occupations and lack of alternative work opportunities.
- Deprivation of traditional rights in common property resources.

- **Social Exclusion:**

- Denial of dignity.
- Continued practice, in some areas, of untouchability in various forms.
- Poor implementation of special laws on prevention of atrocities, protection of civil rights and the abolition of bonded labour etc.

- **Governance Related Factors:**

- Corruption and inadequate provision/non-provision of essential public services including primary health care and education.
- Misuse of powers by the police and violations of the norms of law.
- Unsatisfactory working of local government institutions.

Steps Taken by the Govt.

- Though primarily a State subject, MHA has promulgated a 'National Policy and Action Plan' since 2015 to address the menace of LWE.
 - The significant features of the policy are zero tolerance towards violence coupled with a big push to developmental activities.
- MHA is supporting the State Governments for Capacity Building and strengthening of Security Apparatus by deployment of CAPF Battalions, provision of helicopters and UAVs etc.
- Funds are also provided for modernization and training of State Police under
 - Modernization of Police Force (MPF),
 - Security Related Expenditure (SRE) Scheme and
 - Special Infrastructure Scheme (SIS).
- For development of LWE Affected States, Government has taken several developmental initiatives which include
 - sanction of 17,600 kms of road
 - installation of mobile tower in LWE affected districts
 - financial inclusion through opening of banks, ATMs etc.
 - imparting quality education to the youth with special focus on opening of Eklavya Model Residential Schools
- a total of 234 EMRSs have been sanctioned for LWE affected districts, of these 119 are functional
- Under Special Central Assistance (SCA) Scheme for further impetus to development in the most affected districts, more than 10000 projects have been taken.

RANIL WICKREMESINGHE ELECTED PRESIDENT OF CRISIS-HIT SRI LANKA

In News:

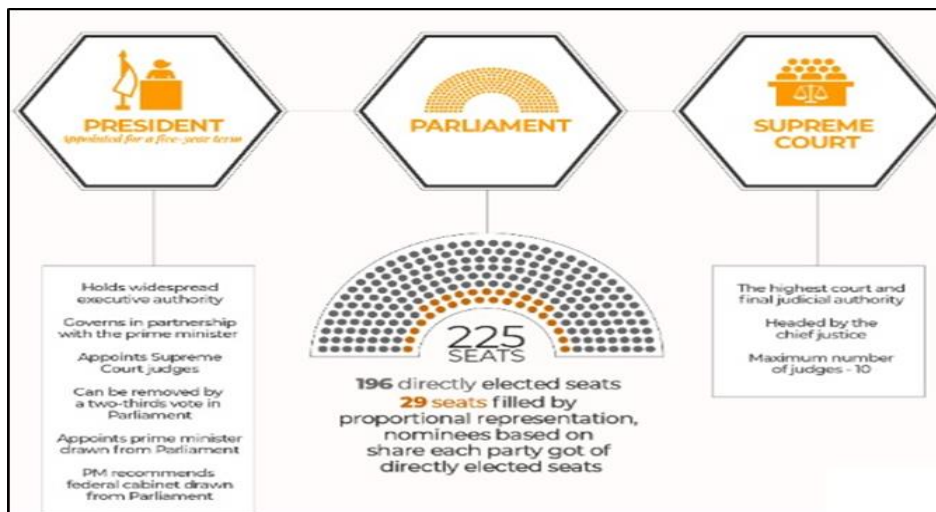
- Six-time Prime Minister and Acting President Ranil Wickremesinghe has been elected as the President of Sri Lanka.

Presidential election in Sri Lanka

- As President Gotabaya tendered his resignation to the Speaker of Sri Lankan Parliament, the office of President became vacant.
- The procedure in such scenario is governed by the Constitution of Sri Lanka and the Presidential Elections (Special Provisions) 1981 Act.

Government Structure

- Similar to French model, Sri Lanka follows the semi-presidential system wherein both the PM and President enjoy executive power.
- Though the President of Sri Lanka is directly elected at the end of the term of five years, the process is different when a vacancy arises.



Electing a President when the office of President is vacant

- Before the succeeding President occupies office, the constitution mandates that the sitting PM (or Speaker of Parliament if the office of PM is vacant) shall become the actine President.
- New President shall be elected by the Parliament and the voting for this will be conducted using a secret ballot.
 - The Members of Parliament can also give their second and third preferences in their ballot paper.
- If a candidate receives more than one-half of the valid votes cast, such candidate will be declared president.

- The new President, thus elected, shall occupy office only upto the unexpired term of the resigned President.

Background:

- In 2019 Sri Lankan Presidential election, Gotabaya Rajapaksa was elected as President.
- Later, the newly-elected President Gotabaya Rajapaksa named his brother, Mahinda Rajapaksa (a two-term president himself), as prime minister.
- Mahinda Rajapaksa had resigned in May 2022 amid mass protests at the government's handling of a deepening economic crisis.
- Following his resignation, Ranil Wickremesinghe was appointed as PM by Gotabaya.
- The unprecedented economic crisis in the country and subsequent widespread protests had also forced Gotabaya Rajapaksa to resign.
- He left the country in disgrace, after thousands of protesters stormed his official residence.
- The current election was held to find the successor of Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

India's reaction:

- Aware of the mood on the street and Parliament, India reacted with a degree of caution.
- Without congratulating Wickremesinghe, India said it will remain supportive of the quest of the people of Sri Lanka for stability and economic recovery.

NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS

The Government of India informed that Unit 3 of Kakrapar atomic plant is expected to commence commercial operation by December 2022, after obtaining stage-wise regulatory clearances.



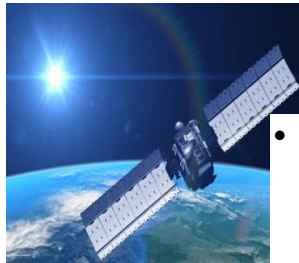
About:

- Unit-4 of Kakrapar Atomic Power Project (KAPP-4) has achieved a physical progress of 93.65% as of June-2022. Kakrapar Atomic Power Station is a nuclear power station in India, which lies in the proximity of Surat and Tapi river in the state of Gujarat.

- Among the other 700 MW PHWRs under construction, RAPP 7&8 at Rawatbhata, Rajasthan have achieved physical progress of 95% and 80.8% respectively. In respect of GHAVP 1&2 at Gorakhpur, Haryana, various buildings and structures are under construction.
- In the ten PHWRs viz., Kaiga 5&6 at Kaiga in Karnataka, GHAVP 3&4 at Gorakhpur in Haryana, Mahi Banswara 1 to 4 at Mahi Banswara in Rajasthan and Chutka 1&2 at Chutka in Madhya Pradesh, pre-project activities at sites and procurement of long delivery equipment have been undertaken. Excavation has also commenced at Kaiga-5&6.

SPACE REFORMS

Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh said, 10 (Ten) in-orbit operational communication satellites have been transferred from Government of India to M/s. New Space India Ltd (NSIL), a CPSE under Department of Space.



About:

- Communication satellites viz. GSAT-8, GSAT-10, GSAT-12R (CMS-01), GSAT-14, GSAT-15, GSAT-16, GSAT-17, GSAT-18, GSAT-30 and GSAT-31 have been transferred at a written down value of Rs 4697.60 crores against issue of equity to Government of India, with 01.04.2021 as the effective date of transfer.
- The Board of NSIL is authorized to price the transponder capacity as per the global trends. NSIL shall carry out the activities related to offering and allocation of capacity, as per the guidelines to be adopted by its Board.
- The transfer of operational satellites is part of the Space Sector reforms, aimed at strengthening the role of NSIL in order to enhance the nation's share in global space economy.
- The Minister also informed that the Government has taken several steps to increase India's share in global space market, through the reforms undertaken in 2020, which seek to augment the space sector in the country with greater participation of Non-Governmental Entities (NGEs).

- The Indian National Space Promotion & Authorization Centre [IN-SPACe] has been created as a single window agency to promote, handhold and authorize the activities of NGEs in the sector, thus providing them with a level playing field.
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CENTRAL BANK DIGITAL CURRENCY (CBDC)

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is in the process of implementing the Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) in a phased manner for wholesale and retail segments, an official said.



About:

- The introduction of CBDC was announced in the Union Budget 2022-23, by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and necessary amendments to the relevant section of the RBI Act, 1934 have been made with the passage of the Finance Bill 2022.
 - The passage of the bill has enabled the RBI to conduct a pilot and subsequent issuance of CBDC.
 - The RBI is also working on phased implementation of a central bank digital currency (CBDC) in both wholesale and retail segment.
 - CBDC is a digital or virtual currency but it is not comparable with private virtual currencies or cryptocurrency that have mushroomed over the last decade. Private virtual currencies do not represent any person's debt or liabilities as there is no issuer.
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REINTRODUCTION OF CHEETAHS



India and Namibia signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for reintroduction of cheetahs into the historical range in India.

About:



CROSS & CLIMB ROHTAK



- First batch of eight cheetahs comprising four male and as many female cheetahs are expected to arrive in India before Independence Day.
 - The cheetahs will be released in Kuno National Park, Madhya Pradesh.
 - India plans to introduce 8-10 cheetahs every year with a total 50 from Namibia, South Africa and other African countries over the next five years.
 - Under the MoU, both the countries will also collaborate in areas of climate change, environmental governance, environmental impact assessments, pollution and waste management.
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