BRICS SUMMIT 2023

Why in news?

- The 15th BRICS summit was held from the 22nd to 24th August at the Sandton Convention Centre in South Africa.
- A major outcome of the BRICS Summit was the decision of the BRICS leaders to expand its membership to include six new members.
- BRICS decisions are unanimous, that is, all members have to agree for any move to go ahead.

- **Host**
- This year's summit was hosted by South Africa.
- South Africa became Chair of BRICS on 1 January 2023.
- **Theme**
- BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth, Sustainable Development and Inclusive Multilateralism
- **Five priorities for 2023**
- Developing a partnership towards an equitable Just Transition
- Transforming education and skills development for the future
- Unlocking opportunities through the African Continental Free Trade Area
- Strengthening post-pandemic socio-economic recovery and the attainment of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development
- Strengthening multilateralism, including working towards real reform of global governance institutions and strengthening the meaningful participation of women in peace processes
- **Outcome Document**
- At the end of summit, member countries adopted **Johannesburg II Declaration**.
- The outcome document called upon member countries to work on following themes
- Partnership for Inclusive Multilateralism
- Fostering an Environment of Peace and Development
- Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth

- Partnership for Sustainable Development
- Deepening People-to-People Exchanges
- Institutional Development

Expansion of BRICS

- The 15th BRICS Summit, held in South Africa, invited **six countries to join the alliance**.
- This is significant as this move can strengthen BRICS' claim of being a 'voice of the Global South'.
- These countries are - Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Argentina, Egypt, and Ethiopia. Their membership will begin in **January 2024**.

Need for expansion of BRICS

- **Anti-US sentiment and support for multipolarity**
- As per experts, there is considerable anti-US sentiment in the world, and all these countries are looking for a grouping where they can use that sentiment to gather together.
- Also, there is a lot of appetite for multipolarity, for a platform where countries of the Global South can express their solidarity.
- **Aspiring bloc that can challenge the western geopolitical view**
- The war in Ukraine has brought the West together on the one hand and strengthened the China-Russia partnership on the other.
- This war has turned BRICS into an aspiring bloc that can challenge the western geopolitical view, and emerge as a counterweight to Western-led fora like the Group of 7 and the World Bank.

LINE OF ACTUAL CONTROL (LAC): INDIA-CHINA PLANS TO DE-ESCALATE IN EASTERN LADAKH

- The Indian PM and Chinese President agreed on the sidelines of the 15th BRICS Summit to intensify efforts for expeditious disengagement and de-escalation along the LAC in eastern Ladakh.

- With this, the spotlight is now on the exact contours of plans being drawn up by military commanders on the ground to pull back troops.

What is the Line of Actual Control (LAC)?

- The LAC is the **demarcation** that separates Indian-controlled territory from Chinese-controlled territory.

- **It is divided into three sectors:** the eastern sector which spans Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim, the middle sector in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, and the western sector in Ladakh.

- **India** considers the LAC to be 3,488 km long, while the **Chinese** consider it to be only around 2,000 km.

- **India's claim line** is the line seen in the official boundary marked on the maps as released by the Survey of India, including both Aksai Chin and Gilgit-Baltistan. **This means LAC is not the claim line for India.**

- **In China's case**, **LAC is the claim line except in the eastern sector**, where it claims the entire Arunachal Pradesh as South Tibet.

LAC vs Line of Control (LoC) with Pakistan:

- **The LoC emerged from the 1948 ceasefire** line negotiated by the UN after the Kashmir War.

- **It was designated as the LoC in 1972**, following the **Shimla** Agreement between the two countries (India and Pakistan).

- **It is delineated on a map signed by DGMOs** of both armies and has the international sanctity of a legal agreement.

- **On the other hand, the LAC is only a concept**. It is not agreed upon by the two countries, neither delineated on a map nor demarcated on the ground.

Disagreement over the LAC:

- **The major disagreements** are in the **western** sector where the LAC emerged from two letters written by Chinese PM Zhou Enlai to PM Jawaharlal Nehru in 1959, after he had first mentioned such a 'line' in 1956.

- **After the 1962 War**, the Chinese claimed they had withdrawn to 20 km behind the LAC of 1959, which coincides with the so-called **McMahon Line** in the eastern sector.

- **India's Response to China's Designation of the LAC:**

  o India rejected the concept of LAC in both 1959 and 1962, as it is the line China has created.

  o The Chinese line **was a disconnected series of points on a map that could be joined up in many ways**.

  o **The line should omit gains from aggression in 1962** and therefore should be based on the actual position on September 8, 1962 before the Chinese attack.

  o **This vagueness** of the Chinese definition left it open for China to continue its creeping attempt to change facts on the ground by military force.

  o **During the Doklam crisis in 2017**, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson urged India to abide by the "1959 LAC".

WHAT IS GEOSPATIAL ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE?

Recently, ISRO chair professor at the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), Bengaluru, informed that NIAS has launched a pilot project involving geospatial artificial intelligence (GeoAI) and random forest technology to monitor and predict the city's air quality.

About Geospatial Artificial Intelligence:

- It is the application **of artificial intelligence** (AI) fused with **geospatial data, science, and technology.**

- It accelerates real-world understanding of business opportunities, environmental impacts, and operational risks.

- It is transforming the speed at which we extract meaning from complex datasets, thereby aiding us in addressing the earth's most pressing challenges.

- **How does it work?**

o With the help of simple smartphone applications, **people can give real-time feedback about the conditions in their surroundings**, for example, traffic congestion, the details of it, the peak hours, their experience, and their rating: low, moderate, or dense.

o The data is **then collated, sorted, and analysed, enhancing** its accuracy and precision because thousands of users contribute to the database.

Why is GeoAI important?

- **Improve data quality, consistency, and accuracy:** Streamline manual data generation workflows by using the power of automation to **increase efficiency and reduce costs.**

- **Accelerate the time to situational awareness:** Monitor and analyse events, assets, and entities from sensors and sources such as video to enable quicker response times and proactive decisions.

- **Bring location intelligence to decision-making:** Make data-driven decisions with real-world awareness. Improve business outcomes with insight from spatial patterns and accurate predictions.

What is random forest technology?

- It is a **commonly used machine learning algorithm** that combines multiple data outputs to arrive at a result.

- Researchers use historical **data collected from various air quality monitoring stations** in a city and apply the random forest algorithm to predict the Air Quality Index.

ZIKA VIRUS

Mumbai has recently reported the first case of Zika Virus, confirmed by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC).

About Zika Virus:

- It is a **mosquito-borne virus** that was first identified in the Zika Forest of Uganda in 1947.

- **Transmission**
  - It is primarily **transmitted to humans** through the bite of **infected Aedes mosquitoes**, particularly Aedes aegypti and Aedes albopictus.
  - It can also **spread through sexual contact**, **blood transfusion**, and from an infected mother to her baby during pregnancy or childbirth.
- **Symptoms**
  - Many people infected with this virus do not experience any symptoms (asymptomatic).
  - When symptoms do occur, they are **often mild and include fever, rash, joint** pain, muscle pain, headache, and **red eyes (conjunctivitis)**.
  - Symptoms typically **appear two to seven days after being bitten** by an infected mosquito and can last several days to a week.

  What are the complications?
  - This virus infection is usually mild, but it can have **severe consequences** for **pregnant women and their babies.**
  - Infection during pregnancy can lead to **birth defects such as microcephaly** and other neurological disorders in the baby.
  - It has also **been linked to Guillain-Barré syndrome**, a rare **autoimmune disorder** that can lead to muscle weakness and paralysis.
- **Treatment:** No specific treatment is available for Zika virus infection or disease.

NATIONAL MEDICAL COMMISSION

About National Medical Commission:

- The National Medical Commission is a **statutory body** established under the **National Medical Commission Act, 2019**.
- The NMC replaced the erstwhile Medical Council of India (MCI) which was established in 1934.
- **Objectives of NMC –**
  - Improve access to quality and affordable medical education;
  - Ensure availability of adequate and high-quality medical professionals in all parts of the country;

o Promote equitable and universal healthcare that encourages community health perspective and makes services of medical professionals accessible to all the citizens;

o Encourages medical professionals to adopt latest medical research in their work and to contribute to research;

o Objectively assess medical institutions periodically in a transparent manner;

o Maintain a medical register for India;

o Enforce high ethical standards in all aspects of medical services;

o Have an effective grievance redressal mechanism.

Composition of NMC –

	Medical Council of India	National Medical Commission
Members	100+	25
Tenure	5 yrs	4 yrs (part-time members 2
Appointment	70% Elected	Majority nominated
Extension	Could be renominated/ reelected	Those nominated by Centre cannot be renominated
Quorum	15 of 100+ members	13 of 25 members
Meeting mandate	At least once a year	Every quarter

o NMC is a 25-member body, majority of them being nominated by the Central government.

o Tenure of NMC members is four years (except for part-time members whose tenure is two years).

▪ The NMC has 11 part-time members representing states or state medical councils.

o The NMC chairpersons and other members, nominated by the Central government, cannot be renominated.

o Any decision requires approval of the majority (minimum 13 out of 25) of the Commission.

News Summary:

• In light of the criticism received by the Indian Medical Association (IMA) as well as the as the Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance (IPA), the National Medical Commission put on hold the Medical Practitioner (Professional Conduct) Regulations, 2023.

• Even the country's apex drug regulator, the Central Drugs Standard Drug Control Organisation (CDSCO), questioned the language in the notification.

• The participants said that prescribing only generic drugs will prompt pharmacies to sell generic drugs at high-profit margins, disincentivising firms that manufacture quality branded generics.

KHANAN PRAHARI APP

The mobile app Khanan Prahari is a significant step taken by the Ministry of Coal towards curbing illegal coal mining activities.

About Khanan Prahari App:

- It allows citizens to report incidents of illegal coal mining through **geo-tagged photographs and textual information.**

- The corresponding web portal, called as Coal Mine Surveillance & Management System (CMSMS), has been developed in association with the Bhaskaracharya Institute of Space Application & Geoinformatics, Gandhinagar, and CMPDI, Ranchi.

- **Objective:** To encourage public participation through **reporting about illegal coal mining.**

- The government aims to take transparent action against illegal mining, using space technology as an e-governance initiative.

Key features of the app include:

- **Reporting Incidents:** Users can easily report incidents of illegal mining by taking photographs and providing comments on the incident. The app allows for the geotagging of photographs by enabling the GPS location feature.

- **Confidentiality:** The user's identity is kept confidential, ensuring privacy and security.

- **Complaint Tracking:** Complainants receive a complaint number, which they can use to **easily track the status of their reported complaints** on the Khanan Prahari mobile app.

- This is available for download on Google's Play Store for Android-based mobile phones and the Apple Store for iOS-supported iPhones.

PROJECT AMBER

The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), in collaboration with Generation India Foundation (GIF) and Amazon Web Services India Private Limited (AWS India), is providing 'cloud' skills training to 1,500 under project AMBER.

About Project AMBER:

- The Accelerated Mission for Better Employment and Retention (**AMBER) project** is a joint initiative of the **National Skill Development Corporation** (NSDC) – under the aegis of the **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship** (MSDE) - and GIF to create the necessary avenues.

- The initiative has been undertaken **under the SANKALP programme of MSDE** with a focus on women to improve gender diversification in the tech industry and underprivileged groups.

- This project aims to **train 30,000 youth**, 50% of whom will be women.

- **Significance**

o It will bring entry-level talent into the workforce and **help individuals to launch successful cloud careers,** organisations to increase their competitive edge with in-demand talent, and communities.

Key Facts about the SANKALP Programme

- The **Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion** (SANKALP) programme was launched in 2018.

- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE)

- It is a **World Bank loan-assisted project** and is aligned with the overall objectives of the National Skill Development Mission (NSDM).

- The project focuses on **transforming the overall skilling ecosystem of India**, covering both central and state-level agencies for improved outcomes.