

WHAT ARE ZONAL COUNCILS?

Union Home Minister will chair the 26th meeting of the Western Zonal Council at Gandhinagar.



About Zonal Councils:

- The idea of the creation of Zonal Councils was mooted by the first Prime Minister of India, **Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, in 1956.**
- In the light of the vision of Pandit Nehru, five Zonal Councils were set up vide Part-III of the **States Re-organisation Act, 1956.** Hence, they are statutory bodies.
- The act divided the country into five zones (**Northern, Central, Eastern, Western and Southern**) and provided a zonal council for each zone.
- The Zonal Councils provide an excellent forum where irritants between the Centre and States and amongst States can be resolved through free and frank discussions and consultations.

The main objectives of setting up Zonal Councils are to-

- Bring out national integration;
- Arrest the growth of acute State consciousness, regionalism, linguism and particularistic tendencies;
- Enable the Centre and the States to cooperate and exchange ideas and experiences;
- Establish a climate of cooperation amongst the States for successful and speedy execution of development projects.
- Each Zonal Council is an **advisory body** and may discuss any matter in which some or all of the States represented in that Council, or the Union and one or more of the States represented in that Council, have a common interest and advise the Central Government and the Government of each State concerned as to the action to be taken on any such matter.
- In particular, a Zonal Council may discuss and make **recommendations with regard to:**
 - any matter of common interest in the field of economic and social planning;
 - any matter concerning border disputes, linguistic minorities or inter-state transport;

- any matter connected with or arising out of the reorganisation of the States under the States Reorganization Act;
- **Organisational Structure:**
 - **Chairman:** The Union Home Minister is the Chairman of each of these Councils.
 - **Vice Chairman:** The Chief Ministers of the States included in each zone act as Vice-Chairman of the Zonal Council for that zone by rotation, each holding office for a period of one year at a time.
 - **Members:** Chief Minister and two other Ministers as nominated by the Governor from each of the States and two members from Union Territories included in the zone.
 - **Advisers:** One person nominated by the Planning Commission for each of the Zonal Councils, Chief Secretaries and another officer/Development Commissioner nominated by each of the States included in the Zone.
 - The Chief Secretaries of the States represented in such Zonal Councils act as the Secretary of the respective Council by rotation, holding office for a period of one year at a time.
 - The Joint Secretary of Zonal Councils is a Director Level officer from All India Services or Central Secretariat Services.
- **North Eastern Council:**
 - **The North Eastern States,**e. (i) Assam, (ii) Arunachal Pradesh, (iii) Manipur, (iv) Tripura, (v) Mizoram, (vi) Meghalaya, and (vii) Nagaland, are not included in the Zonal Councils and their special problems are looked after by the North Eastern Council, set up under the **North Eastern Council Act, 1972.**
 - The North Eastern Council (Amendment) Act of 2002 also added the state of **Sikkim** to the North Eastern Council.

NABHMITRA DEVICE



Recently, the ISRO-Space Applications Centre (Ahmedabad) successfully tested the Nabhmitra device at Neendakara.

About Nabhmitra device:

- It is a satellite-based communication system developed for the safety of fishermen.
- It enables two-way messaging services from and to the sea.
- The weather and cyclone warnings will be communicated in the local language, the boats can also send distress messages to the authorities.
- In emergency situations like capsizing and fire, fishers can press a button on the device and get in touch with the control centre.
- While the control centre will receive the alert, including the location of the boat, the crew on the boat will get a response message from the control centre.
- Apart from providing information about shipping channels and maritime boundaries, the device will also help to identify fishing fields.
- It was developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).

CHOKUWA RICE

Chokuwa rice recently earned a GI (Geographical Indication) tag for its exquisiteness.



About Chokuwa rice:

- It is also known as Magic rice cultivated in Assam.
- It is a part of Assam's culinary heritage; this unique rice has been a staple of the troops of the mighty Ahom dynasty.
- This unique and healthy rice is cultivated around the Brahmaputra River area.(In several parts of Assam like Tinsukia, Dhemaji, Dibrugarh, etc.)
- It is basically semi-glutinous winter rice, known as Sali rice.
- The sticky and glutinous variety is categorised as Bora and Chokuwa based on their amylose concentration.
- The low amylase Chokuwa rice variants are used to make soft rice, which is known as Komal Chaul or soft rice.
- This whole grain can be consumed after soaking the rice in cold or lukewarm water. This rice variety is widely consumed for its convenience of preparation and nutritional value.
- This unique rice variety is consumed with curd, sugar, jaggery, and bananas to name a few.

- This rice is also used in making several Assamese delights like Pithe and other local dishes.

What is a Geographical Indication Tag?

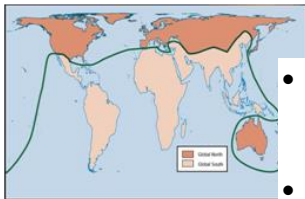
- It is a sign used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin.
- This is typically used for agricultural products, foodstuffs, wine and spirit drinks, handicrafts and industrial products.
- The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999 seeks to provide for the registration and better protection of geographical indications relating to goods in India.
- This GI tag is valid for 10 years, following which it can be renewed.

GLOBAL SOUTH | SIGNIFICANCE, CHALLENGES & INDIA'S ROLE

Why in News?

- Recently, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said that the disruptions caused by the corona virus pandemic and recent geopolitical conflicts call for a realignment of the world order.
- He said that the “**Global South**” can no longer be at the mercy of a few suppliers.

What is the Global South?



- The term ‘Global South’ began by loosely referring to those **countries that were left out of the industrialisation era.**
- These countries had a conflict of ideology with the capitalist and communist countries, accentuated by the Cold War.
- It includes countries that are in **Asia, Africa and South America.**
- ‘Global South’ is just the opposite of ‘Global North’, defined essentially by an economic division between the rich and poorer countries.

What are the Challenges before the Global South?

- The status-quo nature of global geopolitics got disrupted following the outbreak of coronavirus pandemic and the subsequent Ukraine-Russia War that is now in its second year.

- These paved the way for new challenges, including supply securitisation of food and energy, technology transfer, energy transition, and climate change issues and their impact on the global community.
- **Securing Supply Chain –**
 - The rise in energy costs and fertilizer prices also pose a substantial challenge to the Global South.
 - Hence there is a need to relook at how essential commodities can reach the Global South and there is a need for securitisation of the supply chain for the Global South is paramount.
- **Adequate Energy Supply –**
 - The second most important problem confronting the Global South in the context of energy security is ensuring a sustainable energy transition.
 - Since energy transition is a costly affair involving technology and finance, the countries of the Global South are the hardest hit in this regard.
 - The need of the hour is to ensure a sustainable energy transition which can bring overall socio-economic development to the countries of the Global South.
- **Climate Change –**
 - It is a fact that the countries of the Global South are facing the adversarial consequences of climate change largely due to the historical polluters of the Global North.
 - Hence there is a need to look at the process of climate change repercussions on the Global South from a broader perspective.
- **Multilateralism –**
 - The other important challenge in global geopolitics is in the form of the need for “**genuine multilateralism**” of the institutions of global governance, which will provide an equitable voice to all the countries.
 - There is a need to reform the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) along with other multilateral bodies to ensure equitable representation from the Global South.

WHAT IS SMISHING?

The Indian government recently warned against a new scam called ‘Smishing’.



About Smishing:

- The term "smishing" is a combination of "SMS" (Short Message Service) and "**phishing.**"
- **What is it?**
 - A type of phishing attack, smishing, often involves sending fraudulent text messages to individuals with the aim of tricking them into divulging sensitive personal information, such as passwords, credit card numbers, or other confidential data.
 - When cybercriminals "phish," they send fraudulent emails that seek to trick the recipient into clicking on a malicious link.
 - Smishing simply uses **text messages instead of email.**
 - Smishing attacks often involve messages that appear to be from legitimate sources, such as banks, government agencies, or well-known companies.

How it works?

- Smishing messages typically contain urgent or enticing content to persuade recipients to take immediate action, such as clicking on a malicious link, calling a phone number, or providing sensitive information.
- Once the victim opens and clicks on the link or dials the phone number listed in the message, they're taken to a fraudulent website or a mobile phone line that's designed to resemble a legitimate source.
- The victim might be asked to enter sensitive information, such as login credentials, social security numbers, credit card information or personal identification numbers (PINs).
- Once the victim's sensitive information is divulged, the attacker might steal it to commit fraud for personal gain or to compromise the victim's device by installing malware on it.

[NASA, SPACEX LAUNCH SENDS FOUR ASTRONAUTS FROM FOUR COUNTRIES TO ISS](#)

Why in news?

- NASA and SpaceX's Dragon spacecraft has blasted off carrying four astronauts to the International Space Station (ISS).
- Known as Crew-7, the mission includes four astronauts from four countries - the US, Denmark, Japan, and Russia.
 - This was the first US take-off in which all the astronauts atop the spacecraft belonged to a different country.
 - Until now, NASA had always included two or three of its own on its SpaceX flights.

International Space Station (ISS)

- ISS is a large spacecraft in **low Earth orbit** largely by the United States and Russia, with assistance and components from a multinational consortium.
- It is habitable spacecraft that orbits Earth at an average altitude of approximately 420 kilometers (260 miles).
- It serves as a unique and collaborative space laboratory, research facility, and living space for astronauts and cosmonauts from various countries.

Features of ISS

- **Construction and Ownership**
 - The ISS is a joint project involving space agencies from multiple countries.
 - The major partners include NASA (United States), Roscosmos (Russia), ESA (European Space Agency), JAXA (Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency), and CSA (Canadian Space Agency).
 - In 2022, Russia announced that **it will pull out of ISS after 2024** and focus on building its own orbiting outpost.
 - These agencies have contributed modules, components, and resources to construct and maintain the station.

Size and Structure

- The ISS is quite large, with a mass of around 460 tons and a habitable volume roughly equivalent to the interior of a Boeing 747 aircraft.

- It consists of various interconnected modules and components, including laboratories, living quarters, and docking ports.
- **Orbit and Duration**
 - It travels at 17,500 mph. This means it orbits Earth every 90 minutes.
 - This means that crew members on board experience multiple sunrises and sunsets each day.
 - Missions typically last six months, although some crew members may stay for shorter or longer durations.
- **International Crew**
 - The ISS is continuously inhabited by a rotating crew of astronauts and cosmonauts from different nations.
 - These crew members live and work on the station for several months at a time, conducting experiments, maintaining systems, and performing various tasks necessary to keep the station operational.

Why Is the Space Station Important?

- One of the primary purposes of the ISS is to conduct scientific research and experiments in the unique microgravity environment of space.
- Microgravity is often referred to as **near zero gravity or weightlessness**.
- Researchers from around the world use the station to study a wide range of fields, including biology, physics, astronomy, and Earth sciences.
- The ISS has contributed to our understanding of topics such as human health in space, materials science, and climate change.
- The space station has made it possible for people to have an ongoing presence in space. Human beings have been living in space every day since the first crew arrived.

EXERCISE BRIGHT STAR-23

Recently, an Indian Air Force (IAF) contingent departed to participate in Exercise BRIGHT STAR-23, scheduled to be held at Cairo (West) Air Base, Egypt, from 27 August to 16 September 2023.



About EXERCISE BRIGHT STAR-23:

- It is a **biennial multilateral tri-service exercise**.
- This multinational **exercise was launched in 1980** as part of the US-brokered peace treaty between Egypt and Israel.
- This is **the first time** that IAF is participating in Ex BRIGHT STAR-23.

Participating countries: United States of America, Saudi Arabia, Greece and Qatar.

- The Indian Air Force contingent will consist of five MiG-29, two IL-78, two C-130 and two C-17 aircraft.
- Personnel from the IAF's Garud Special Forces, as well as those from the Numbers 28, 77, 78 and 81 Squadrons, will be participating in the exercise.

Objective: To practice planning and execution of joint operations. Besides leading to the formation of bonding across borders, such interactions also provide a means to further strategic relations between participating nations.

- India and Egypt have had an exceptional relationship and deep cooperation wherein the two jointly undertook the development of aero-engine and aircraft in the 1960s, and training of Egyptian pilots was done by Indian counterparts.