

CURRENT AFFAIRS= 18/21-09-2020

India joins Djibouti Code of Conduct/ Jeddah Amendment (DCOC/JA)

- India has joined the Djibouti Code of Conduct/ Jeddah Amendment, DCOC/JA, as an Observer.

Important value additions

Djibouti Code of Conduct/ Jeddah Amendment

- DCOC/JA is a grouping on maritime matters comprising 18 member states adjoining the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, the East Coast of Africa and Island countries in the Indian Ocean Region.
- The DCOC was established in January 2009.
- **Aim:** Repression of piracy and armed robbery against ships in the Western Indian Ocean Region, the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea.
- Japan, Norway, the UK and the US are also the Observers to the DCOC/JA.

Aircraft (Amendment) Bill 2020

- Recently, Indian Parliament has passed the Aircraft (Amendment) Bill, 2020 in the Rajya Sabha approving it. The Bill has already been passed by the Lok Sabha.
- It seeks to amend the Aircraft Act, 1934.

Key takeaways

- It has provisions to convert three existing bodies under the Ministry of Civil Aviation into statutory bodies.
- These three authorities are – (1) Directorate General of Civil Aviation; (2) the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security; (3) Aircraft Accidents Investigation Bureau.
- Under the bill, each of these bodies will be headed by a Director General who will be appointed by the centre.
- The Bill raises the maximum limit on fines from 10 lakh rupees to one crore rupees.
- These fines are related to carrying arms, explosives and other dangerous goods aboard aircraft and constructing building or structures within the specified radius around an aerodrome reference point.

Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020

- Lok Sabha passed the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020.
- The Bill will replace the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Ordinance which was promulgated in June, 2020.

Key takeaways

- The Bill seeks to amend the Essential Commodities Act, 1955.
- It empowers the central government in terms of production, supply, distribution, trade, and commerce of certain commodities under extraordinary circumstances.
- The Central government will be able to designate certain commodities including food items, fertilizers, and petroleum products as essential commodities.
- The Bill empowers the central government to regulate the stock of an essential commodity that a person can hold.

India-Japan Logistics Agreement

- Recently Logistics Agreement was signed between [India and Japan](#).

Key takeaways

- It is aimed at greater maritime cooperation.
- It can upgrade India-Japan naval exercises.
- It establishes the enabling framework for closer cooperation between the armed forces of both countries in reciprocal provision of supplies and services.
- It will also enhance the interoperability, assistance in maintaining regional security and further increase the bilateral defence engagements.
- It will remain in force for 10 years and will be automatically extended for periods of 10 years unless one of the parties decides to end it.

Low Ozone Over Brahmaputra River Valley observed

- Recently, scientists at the Aryabhata Research Institute of Observational Sciences (ARIES), Nainital, have evaluated the near surface ozone in the [Brahmaputra River](#) Valley (BRV).

- They assessed seasonal characteristics of ozone to identify the emission source of ozone and its precursors, especially methane (CH₄) and non-methane hydrocarbons (NMHCs).

Key takeaways

- Scientists have found relatively low concentration of ozone over BRV (Guwahati – Assam) compared to the other urban locations in India.
- The pattern of ozone concentrations in the BRV indicated that it was strongly influenced by local oxides of nitrogen (NO_x) sources with an adjacent national highway being the likely major source.
- High ozone winter concentrations were observed.
- This could be due to local biomass burning providing reactive volatile organic compounds (VOCs) that contributed to ozone formation.
- In the pre-monsoon season, an impact of solar radiation (SR) on the photochemical formation of O₃ was observed.

Five Star Villages Scheme launched

- Five Star Villages scheme has been launched recently.
- **Ministry:** The Department of Posts, Ministry of Communications.

Key takeaways

- **Aim:** To bridge the gaps in public awareness and reach of postal products and services, especially in interior villages.
- **Objective:** To ensure universal coverage of flagship postal schemes in rural areas of the country.
- It has three components: (1) Product and Service Availability; (2) Product and Service Publicity; (3) Product and Service Marketing.
- Branch offices will function as one-stop shops to cater all post office related needs of the villagers.
- **Implemented by:** A team of five Gramin Dak Sevaks. They will be assigned a village for marketing of all products, savings and insurance schemes.
- **Team will be headed by:** Branch Post Master of the concerned Branch Office.
- The scheme is being launched on pilot basis in Maharashtra. Based on the experience, it will be implemented nation-wide.

Indo-Pacific Trilateral Dialogue held

- Recently, India, Australia and France held a dialogue for the first time under a trilateral framework.

- The three sides have agreed to hold the dialogue on an annual basis.

Key takeaways

- **Focus:** Enhancing cooperation in the [Indo-Pacific Region](#).
- India also has logistics agreements with both countries which provide for easier access to supplies of goods and services.
- The trilateral cooperation will help to take on China's aggressive behaviour in the Indo-Pacific region. E.g in South China Sea.
- It is an addition to the [Quad](#) which comprises the USA, Japan, Australia and India.
- Possibility of enhancing maritime security cooperation between the three countries.
- Cooperation on marine global commons shall also take place. It includes blue economy, marine biodiversity and environmental challenges such as marine pollution.

New FDI Policy in Defence Sector approved

- Recently, the Union Cabinet approved a [new Foreign Direct Investment \(FDI\) policy](#) in the defence sector.
- It allows the FDI through automatic approval to be increased from 49% to 74%.
- However, the new policy has a 'National Security' clause as a condition which has been proposed by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Key takeaways

- Through more liberalised FDI policy the government is seeking to attract foreign players to set up manufacturing units in India.
- It has been focusing on the defence sector to act as an engine for boosting manufacturing.
- It is aiming to achieve a turnover of Rs 1.75 lakh crore, including exports worth Rs 35,000 crore, by 2025.

Kosi Rail Mahasetu

- The historic Kosi Rail Mahasetu (Mega Bridge) was recently inaugurated.
- The Kosi Rail Mahasetu is 1.9 KM long.
- It cuts an otherwise 300-km long journey between Samastipur and Jaynagar on Indo-Nepal border to just 22 km.
- It strengthens Bihar's rail network and West Bengal and Eastern India's rail connectivity.

- Indian Prime Minister also inaugurated 12 rail projects related to passenger facilities.
- These include a new railway bridge on the Kiul River, two new railway lines, 5 Electrification projects, one Electric Locomotive Shed and 3rd Line Project between Barh-Bakhtiyarpur.
- This bridge is of strategic importance along the India-Nepal border.



Solar Cycle 25 predictions announced

- Scientists from NASA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) announced their predictions about the new solar cycle, called Solar Cycle 25.
- The Scientists believe that the cycle has begun.

Important value additions

Solar cycle

- Sun's surface is a very active space.
- Electrically charged gases on its surface generate areas of powerful magnetic forces, which are called magnetic fields.
- These gases are constantly moving.
- Thus, these magnetic fields can get stretched, twisted and tangled creating motion on the surface known as solar activity.
- Solar activity varied with the stages of the solar cycle, which lasts on average for a period of 11 years.
- Solar cycles have implications for life and technology on Earth as well as astronauts in space.

Sunspots

- Scientists track a solar cycle by using sunspots.
- These are the dark blotches on the Sun that are associated with solar activity.
- Sunspots are associated with the origins for giant explosions such as solar flares that can spew light, energy and solar material into space.
- A Sunspot is an area on the Sun that appears dark on the surface and is relatively cooler than the surrounding parts.
- These spots are the visible markers of the Sun's magnetic field.
- Some spots are as large as 50,000 km in diameter.