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MK Yadav Sir

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CHIEF GUEST FOR REPUBLIC DAY

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 - IR)

How India chooses the Chief Guest for Republic Day

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 22

FRENCH PRESIDENT Emmanuel Macron will be the Chief Guest at India's Republic Day celebrations next year, his office said on Friday.

What does an invitation mean?

Invitation to be Republic Day Chief Guest is the highest honour accorded by India, in terms of protocol.

They are given a ceremonial guard of honour at Rashtrapati Bhavan, followed by a reception hosted by the President of India in the evening. They also lay a wreath at Rajghat, to honour Mahatma Gandhi. There is a banquet in their honour, a lunch hosted by the Prime Minister, and calls by the Vice-President and the External Affairs Minister.

Ambassador Manbir Singh, a former Indian Foreign Service officer who served as Chief of Protocol between 1999 and 2002, had previously told *The Indian Express* that the visit of the Chief Guest is full of symbolism. "It portrays the Chief Guest as participating in India's pride and happiness, and reflects the friendship between the two peoples represented by the President of India and the Chief Guest," he had said.

This symbolism serves as a powerful tool to forge and renew ties between India and the nation of its invitee, and thus has great political and diplomatic significance.

How are potential candidates selected?

The process of choosing the Chief Guest begins nearly six months prior to the event.

According to Ambassador Singh, numerous considerations are kept in mind before extending an invitation.

The most important is the nature of the relationship between India and the country of the invitee. Invitation to be the Chief Guest of the Republic Day parade is the ultimate sign of friendship between India and the country of the invitee. Political, commercial, military and economic interests of India are crucial drivers of the decision.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris in July. *AP*

What happens after the Ministry of External Affairs zeroes in on options?

After due consideration, the MEA seeks the approval of the PM and the President on the matter. Once the MEA gets approval, the Indian ambassador in the concerned country try to discreetly ascertain the availability of the potential Chief Guest. This is crucial as it isn't uncommon for heads of state to have packed schedules and unavoidable prior commitments. This is also why the MEA has a list of several potential candidates.

After a candidate is finalised, more official communications take place between India and the country of the invitee. Territorial divisions in the MEA work towards meaningful talks and agreements. The Chief of Protocol works on the details of the programme and logistics. A detailed programme for the trip and the Republic Day ceremonies is shared by the Protocol Chief with his counterpart from the visiting nation.

The planning of the visit involves the Government of India, state governments which the foreign dignitary might visit, and the government of the concerned country.

What can go wrong in the process?

There is always the possibility of things not going to plan, something that the organisers have to prepare for beforehand. Health issues with the VIP can cause delays. Untimely rain can spoil things. Organisers prepare and rehearse contingencies for all kinds of situations so that on the big day, things go smoothly.

Ambassador Singh recounted an incident where the *aide-de-camp* of the Chief Guest attempted to accompany the Guest for the inspection of the guard of honour. "But in our practice, only the commander of the Tri-Services Guard accompanies the visitor. The insistent ADC had to be physically restrained by officials present at the spot," he recalled.

What do organisers keep in mind while planning the visit?

India is mindful that the media party accompanying the Guest would be reporting in their country on every aspect of the visit. To foster good relations, it is necessary that the Chief Guests and their accompaniers are shown all courtesies and given due honour.

In the modern world, visual coverage is of utmost importance, and the programmes and protocol keep this in view. Various Chief Guests and their Ambassadors in New Delhi have been profuse in their praise for India's ceremonies in the past. India's hospitality reflects its traditions, culture, and history.

Context: France's President Emmanuel Macron will be **India's chief guest for its 2024 Republic Day celebrations.**

How India Chooses its Republic Day Chief Guest?

- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). After due consideration, the MEA seeks the approval of the PM and the President on the matter.
- **Chief Guest Selection**: The paramount factor revolves around the diplomatic relationship between India and the invited country.
  - Being invited as the **Chief Guest for the Republic Day parade signifies the pinnacle of friendship** between the two nations.
- **Multifaceted Interests**: The political, commercial, military, and economic interests of India play a pivotal role in the decision-making process.
  - The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) aims to leverage the occasion to bolster ties with the invited country across these vital domains.
- **Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Legacy**: Historically, an additional influence on the choice of the Chief Guest is the association with the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which originated in the late 1950s and early 1960s.
  - This international political movement, aimed at staying neutral in the Cold War conflicts, holds historical significance.
- **First Chief Guest in 1950**: President Sukarno of Indonesia, exemplifies the early ties with NAM, being one of its founding members.

THE HINDU

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PM-DevINE

Syllabus GS Paper 2 – Govt Scheme)

Ministry holds meet with CMs of northeast States over lag in DevINE scheme

Vijaita Singh
Nistula Hebbar
NEW DELHI

With a little over 10% of funds under the Prime Minister's Development Initiative for North East Region (PM-DevINE) sanctioned so far, the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) convened a meeting with the Chief Ministers of the States in the region on Friday, asking for "feasible concept notes".

The meeting comes in the wake of a review by the Prime Ministers Office (PMO) that found that the scheme was yet to take off despite adequate funds.

Huge losses

On Friday, Union Minister G. Kishan Reddy held a virtual meeting with the Chief Ministers of all the northeast States to discuss the implementation of all projects including those under DevINE.

Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh is said to have apprised the Minister about huge losses suffered by the State due to law and order issues and Internet shutdowns after the May 3 ethnic violence that has claimed the lives of at least 175 people.

Out of ₹561 crore allocated to Manipur under the DevINE scheme, DPR has only been approved for projects worth ₹175.04 crore

He is said to have expressed helplessness in sending fresh proposals and detailed project reports (DPRs) owing to the sustained unrest in the State.

Mr. Singh posted on X that various ongoing projects were reviewed in the meeting. "Also discussed new proposals aimed at enhancing connectivity, boosting travel and tourism and charted a path forward to fortify our State's economy," he said.

Out of ₹561 crore allocated to Manipur under the DevINE scheme, DPR has only been approved for projects worth ₹175.04 crore. No money has been spent so far and concept notes for projects worth ₹214.31 crore were yet to be submitted.

Arunachal Pradesh CM Pema Khandu posted on X that the meeting was held to review the projects and "to resolve issues arising out of implementation of these projects".

On December 7, DoNER Ministry informed the Rajya Sabha in a written reply that the total approved outlay for PM-DevINE scheme for the period 2022-23 to 2025-26 is ₹6,600 crore. It said that nine projects worth ₹855.85 crore had been approved so far.

The scheme was announced in the 2022-23 Union Budget with an initial allocation of ₹1,500 crore.

The scheme is "aimed at rapid and holistic development" of the northeast region by "funding infrastructure and social development projects, based on felt needs of the States." It will strive to fill the gaps in various sectors and will not be a substitute for existing Central and State Schemes".

Context: Recently, the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) held a meeting with Chief Ministers, seeking "feasible concept notes" as just over 10% of funds under the Prime Minister's Development Initiative for North East Region (PM-DevINE) have been sanctioned.

PM-DevINE

- **About**: It is a new scheme for the Northeastern states which was announced in the Union Budget.
- **Implementation**: PM-DevINE will be implemented by the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), through the North Eastern Council or central ministries and agencies.
- **Time constraints**: Efforts will be made to complete the PM-DevINE projects by 2025-26 so that there are no committed liabilities beyond this year.
- **Significance**: The parameters of N-E states in respect of Basic Minimum Services (BMS) are well below the national average and there are critical development gaps as per the NER District Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Index 2021-22 prepared by NITI Aayog, UNDP and MDoNER.
- **Objectives:**
  - Fund infrastructure convergently, in the spirit of PM GatiShakti.
  - Support social development projects based on felt needs of the NER.
  - Enable livelihood activities for youth and women.
  - Fill the development gaps in various sectors.

PIB Dec 22

COMPETITION COMMISSION OF INDIA

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Polity)

CCI seeks comments on draft of Competition Commission of India (Determination of Turnover or Income) Regulations, 2023

Context: The Competition Commission of India (CCI) seeks comments on the draft of Competition Commission of India (Determination of Turnover or Income) Regulations, 2023.

- The CCI proposes the draft CCI (Determination of Turnover or Income) Regulations, 2023 which provide for the determination of turnover or income for the purposes of Section 27(b) and Section 48 of the Act.

Competition Commission of India (CCI)

- **About**: It is a quasi-judicial body which gives opinions to statutory authorities and also deals with other cases.
- **Establishment**: March 2009 by the Government of India under the Competition Act, 2002for the administration, implementation, and enforcement of the Act.
- **Composition of the CCI**: One Chairperson and six Members who shall be appointed by the Central Government.
  - The Chairperson and other Members shall be whole-time Members
- **Objectives**
  - It will eliminate practices having adverse effects on competition.
  - To Promote and sustain competition.
- **Functions**
  - The role of the CCI involves eradicating practices that negatively impact competition, safeguarding consumer interests, and ensuring the freedom of trade within Indian markets.
  - The CCI provides opinions on competition issues upon receiving references from statutory authorities.
  - The CCI engages in competition advocacy, raises public awareness, and provides training on competition issues.

ALL INDIA RADIO

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GRADED RESPONSE ACTION PLAN

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Environment)

Govt re-invoked GRAP stage-III curbs in Delhi and NCR to prevent further deterioration of air quality

Context: The Government has re-invoked the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) stage-III curbs in Delhi and NCR

Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP)

- **About** : A set of emergency measures that kick in to prevent further deterioration of air quality once it reaches a certain threshold in the Delhi-NCR region.
- **Origin**: Approved by the Supreme Court in 2016 and notified in 2017, the plan was formulated.
- **Basis**: It is based on a plan that was submitted by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) in November 2016.
- **Implementation**: The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has constituted a sub-committee for the operationalization of the GRAP.
- This body includes officials from the CAQM, member secretaries of pollution control boards of **Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan,** the Central Pollution Control Board, a scientist from the IMD and one from the IITM and Health Advisor.

Various Stages

- **Stage I (Poor Air Quality - AQI 201-300):** Enforce NGT / Hon'ble SC's order on over aged diesel / petrol vehicles.
- **Stage II (Very Poor- AQI 301-400)**: Implement targeted measures to address air pollution at identified hotspots in the region.
  - Enforce controlled operations of Diesel Generators (DG) across all sectors in the NCR.
- **Stage III ('Severe'- AQI 401-450)**: Impose stringent restrictions on BS III petrol and BS IV diesel four-wheelers in specific areas.
  - Consider suspending physical classes in schools for primary grade children up to Class 5.
- **Stage IV (Severe Plus- AQI greater than 450)**: Restrict the entry of four-wheelers registered outside Delhi, with exceptions for electric vehicles, CNG vehicles, BS-VI diesel vehicles, and vehicles transporting essential commodities when the AQI surpasses 450.

BUSINESS STANDARD

Page 1

DEBT TO GDP RATIO

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy)

100% general debt-to-GDP ratio 'not fait accompli', says FinMin

RUCHIKA CHITRAVANSHI
New Delhi, 22 December

The Union finance ministry on Friday noted that the general government debt, comprising both central and state debt, as a share of gross domestic product declined from about 88 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2020-21 to 81 per cent in 2022-23. Stating its position on the International Monetary Fund's (IMF's) latest Article IV consultations, the ministry asserted that the Centre was on track to achieve its stated fiscal consolidation target.

The IMF earlier had warned that India's general government debt could exceed 100 per cent of GDP in the medium term. The Fund also cautioned that long-term debt sustainability risks were high due to the significant investment required to meet India's climate change mitigation targets.

The finance ministry in a press statement noted that among the various favourable and unfavourable scenarios presented by the IMF, under one extreme possibility, like the once-in-a-century Covid-19 pandemic, it stated that the general government debt could be "100 per cent of debt-to-GDP ratio" under adverse shocks by FY28. Turn to Page 6

Context: The Union finance ministry noted that the general government debt, comprising both central and state debt, as a share of gross domestic product declined from about 88 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2020-21 to 81 per cent in 2022-23.

Debt to GDP Ratio

- **About:** It represents the relationship between a country's government debt and its gross domestic product (GDP).
  - This metric serves as an indicator of the extent of a nation's indebtedness relative to its economic output and its capacity to generate income for servicing the debt.
- **Formula:** Debt to GDP Ratio = Total Debt of the Nation / Total GDP of the Nation

How Does the Debt to GDP Ratio Work?

- **Calculation of the Debt-to-GDP Ratio:** It involves dividing a nation's total debt by its gross domestic product (GDP).
- **Lower Debt-to-GDP Ratio:** It signifies that the country is generating sufficient income through its economic activities to meet its debt obligations.
- **High Debt-to-GDP Ratio**: It suggests that the country may encounter challenges in repaying its debts and covering the associated interest payments.
- **According to the World Bank and IMF**, a sustainable debt-to-GDP ratio falls within the range of about 150-250% of a country's exports or revenues.
- The **optimal debt-to-GDP ratio varies across countries**, taking into account factors such as their economic growth rate, revenue generation capacity, and other relevant considerations.

The Hindu

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RARE EARTH ELEMENTS

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy)

China bans export of rare earth technologies

Reuters
BEIJING



China, the world's top processor of rare earths, on Thursday banned the export of technology to extract and separate the strategic metals, as it overhauled a list of technologies deemed key to national security.

The commerce ministry sought public opinion last December on the potential move to add the technology to its "Catalogue of Technologies Prohibited and Restricted from Export". It also banned the export of production technology for rare earth metals and alloy materials as well as technology to prepare some rare earth magnets. The move comes as Europe and the U.S. scramble to wean themselves off rare earths from China, which accounts for 90% of global refined output.

Rare earths are a group of 17 metals used to make magnets for use in EVs and other electronics.

Context: China, the world's top processor of rare earths, on Thursday banned the export of technology to extract and separate the strategic m etals, as it overhauled a list of technologies deemed key to national security.

Rare Earth Minerals

- **About:** Rare earth elements or metals comprise a group of 17 chemical elements in the periodic table used to make magnets for use in EVs and other electronics.
  - These **elements include the 15 lanthanides, along with scandium and yttrium**, which are often found in the same ore deposits as the lanthanides and share similar chemical properties.
- **Reserves and Production:** China is the leading contributor to rare earth production, followed by Brazil and Vietnam (18% each) and Russia (15%).
- **India's Scenario**: India has 6% of the world's rare earth reserves. It only produces 1% of global output
- **Classification of REEs:** Light RE elements (LREE) and heavy RE elements (HREE).
- **Significance of Rare Earth Minerals**
  - Essential minerals such as **Cobalt, Nickel, and Lithium are necessary for the production of batteries** used in electric vehicles.
  - **India, with its ambitious plan** to transition a significant portion of its **transportation to electric,** will have an increased demand for these minerals.
  - **Cerium, utilized for glass polishing, and lanthanum**, employed in **car catalysts or optical lenses,** represent traditional applications of these minerals.

8th edition of Indian Ocean Naval Symposium Conclave of Chiefs concludes in Bangkok, Thailand

Context: Recently, the 8th edition of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) Conclave of Chiefs (CoC) concluded in Bangkok, Thailand.

Indian Ocean Naval Symposium Conclave (IONS)

- **About**: The IONS is a voluntary initiative that unites navies from littoral states in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- **Objective**: To boost maritime cooperation and bolster regional security.
- **Response Mechanism**: The initiative aims to create an effective response mechanism for crises and enhance capabilities for Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) during natural disasters.
- **Composition:** 24 member nations situated in or touching the IOR, along with 8 observer nations.
    - Member **nations are grouped into four sub-regions** based on geographical proximity.
- **South Asian Littorals**: Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, and the United Kingdom (British Indian Ocean Territory).
- **West Asian Littorals**: Iran, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.
- **East African Littorals**: France (Reunion), Kenya, Mauritius, Mozambique, South Africa, and Tanzania.
- **South East Asian and Australian Littorals**: Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, and Timor-Leste.
- **7th Edition Held**: France

Significance for India

- IONS aligns with India's strategic goals in the region.
- It supports India's ambitions of strengthening ties with IOR littoral states, establishing leadership, and fulfilling the vision of a rules-based and stable maritime order in the IOR.

PIB Dec 21

PAAT-MITRO
(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy)

Ministry of Textiles launches "Paat-Mitro" application to facilitate jute farmers

Context: The Ministry of Textiles recently launched the "Paat-Mitro" mobile application to provide important information about MSP and agronomy to jute farmers.

Paat-Mitro

- **Developed by**: Jute Corporation of India Limited (JCI).
- **Purpose:** To furnish essential information related to Minimum Support Prices (MSP) and agronomy to jute farmers.
- **Features**
- The application is available in six different languages to cater to a diverse user base.
- Free Functionality
- All the features and functionalities within the app are accessible to users without any cost.
- Farmers using the app can conveniently track the status of payments for the raw jute they sell to JCI under the MSP Operation.
- The app incorporates advanced technology features, including a Chatbot, to address user queries effectively.

Jute Corporation of India Limited (JCI)

- **Establishment**: In 1971 as an official agency by the Government of India.
- **Objective**: To provide minimum support price (MSP) to jute cultivators.
- **Focus**: It focuses on enhancing the Jute crop and improving the lives of Jute growers.
- **Administrative Control:** Under the administrative purview of the Ministry of Textiles, it operates as a vital entity in the jute sector.
- **Geographical Presence**: Operating across seven states known for jute cultivation in India—West Bengal, Bihar, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Orissa, and Andhra Pradesh—it plays a crucial role in the jute industry's development.

LIVEMINT

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OMICRON

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Sci and Tech)

‘Covid sweep may subside in 2 months like Omicron wave’

Covid-19 task force member says it’s hard to say JN.1 is causing hospitalization and deaths

Priyanka Sharma & Somrita Ghosh

NEW DELHI

The new strain of coronavirus may peak in the next two months as in the case of the previous Omicron wave, a top government scientist said, as the country keeps a wary eye on the spreading infection that has claimed six lives so far.

There is no clear information to state that JN.1 is causing hospitalization and deaths, said Raman Gangakhedkar, senior epidemiologist and a member of the government’s covid-19 task force.

“JN.1 was first reported in the US in September and did not show any severity. Now, it is in India and the trend looks the same. In India, even if cases are rising right now, it is in absolute numbers. People have been facing flu symptoms and not going for testing because it is mild. JN.1’s peak is expected in the coming days, and looks similar to Omicron which settled down within two months. Hence, we need to monitor it. The new virus varies from BA.2.86 by only a single mutation in its spike protein, and has the ability for higher transmission,” Gangakhedkar said. Limited testing is posing challenges for the Indian Sars-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) to determine the extent of spread of the new sub-variant. A scientist at the consortium said intensified covid-19 testing and genome sequencing is required across the country to understand the virulence of the new virus and expected number of hospitalizations.

“The government has already held meetings with all state health ministers. Right now, we are vigilant as the strain has already been circulating in other countries. We are right now looking at whether there are increased hospitalizations and deaths. With the present data, there is nothing to worry about; however, we do not have a large number of samples to conduct genome sequencing. Those who have symptoms should be isolated immediately and go for testing,” a senior INSACOG scientist said on condition of anonymity.



India’s active coronavirus cases are nearing 3,000. One death was reported from Kerala in the last 24 hours. PTI

640 New coronavirus infections were reported on Friday

India on Friday reported 640 new coronavirus infections, with active cases nearing 3,000. One death was reported from Kerala in the last 24 hours.

Kerala recorded 265 new covid cases in the previous 24 hours.

“It is because the state has a higher number of sample tests than other states. The situation is absolutely under control,” state health minister Veena George said.

Mohammed Hanish, principal secretary of the state’s health department, said that most patients are in home isolation and the hospitalization figure is below 200. “Also, the number of deaths that has been reported is owing to co-morbidities and there is little connection to covid-19. But of course, they were all positive. JN.1 has been found in only one case, and there is dominance of other variant BA.2.86,” he added. Kerala’s leading private hospital Amrita said it has noticed a rise in respiratory cases at its outpatient department over the past two weeks.

265 Fresh covid cases were recorded in Kerala in last 24 hrs

“We are prioritizing high-risk individuals—those with malignancies, on immunosuppressants, uncontrolled diabetes, chronic kidney, and liver diseases—due to their vulnerability to disease worsening. Fortunately, the variant causing these cases doesn’t typically lead to severe forms of illness, resulting in minimal ICU care and ventilation needs,” said Kiran G Kulkarnkal, Assistant professor, Division of infectious diseases, Amrita hospital, Kochi.

Goa has reported at least 19 cases of the new strain.

“On Thursday, we tested 24 cases and there was not a single positive case. The intensity of the strain is low; even WHO had said that it is less infectious. We haven’t observed any major threat from the virus yet. The cases are all under home isolation, only one 80-year-old lady had to be admitted in hospital, but she has been discharged,” state health secretary Arun Kumar said.

Queries sent to a health ministry spokesperson remained unanswered.

priyanka.sharma@livemint.com

Context: A scientist recently stated that the new strain of coronavirus may peak in the next two months, akin to the previous Omicron wave, as the country closely monitors the spreading infection, which has already claimed six lives.

Omicron

- **About:** It is a variant of SARS-CoV-2 first reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) by the Network for Genomics Surveillance in South Africa.
- **First Detected**: In Botswana and has spread to become the predominant variant in circulation around the world.
- **Sub Variants**: BA.1, BA.2, BA.3, BA.4, and BA.5
- **Spike Protien**: The spike protein of the new variant harbors an alarming 32 mutations, posing a greater concern than the Delta variant.
- The **WHO currently lists 5 variants** of concern:
  - Omicron (B.1.1.529)
  - Delta (B.1.617.2)
  - Gamma (P.1)
  - Beta (B.1.351)
  - Alpha (B.1.1.7)

INDIAN EXPRESS

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LCA AND LCH

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Sci and Tech)

India-made LCA, LCH can boost clout in Global South: IAF Chief



Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal V R Chaudhari at an event in New Delhi on Friday. PTI

AMRITA NAYAK DUTTA
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 22

INDIGENOUS AEROSPACE platforms such as the Light Combat Aircraft, Light Combat Helicopter, Akash Missile systems and radars offer competitive and reliable options for air forces of the Global South, boosting India's economic and technological clout, Air Chief Marshal V R Chaudhari said Friday.

Highlighting that these platforms have export potential, he said setting up joint ventures with these countries can be mutually beneficial. He added this could include jointly developing components, sharing production facilities, creation of regional maintenance and support hubs.

He said there is a need to focus on capability development in global supply chains, manufacturing hubs and establishing maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) facilities, along with joint research and development projects, defence innovation and technological exchange.

Speaking on the relevance of air power and the need for the IAF to act as a catalyst for progress, fostering strategic partnerships and contributing to the collective advancement of the Global South, he said the IAF's increased footprint during regular training engagements with partner nations has resulted in sharing of best practices in operations and maintenance.

Speaking about the role played by Indian Military Advisory Teams and courses offered through Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation programme, which had paved the way for increased cooperation by conducting training for more than 200,000 officials in both the civil and defence sector, he said in the past 9 years, IAF had trained more than 5,000 foreign trainees from countries of the Global South.

"We have increased the footprint of training and cooperation with these nations," he said.

Highlighting the IAF's long tradition of training air force cadets from Global South nations, he said India's rise in the Global South marks a pivotal point in international affairs and India has given a voice to the countries. He said India had championed their concerns during its G20 presidency.

He said it is important to identify contemporary security challenges faced by India and the Global South, and terrorism, cyber threats, regional conflict and other shared concerns should be discussed on a common platform.

He said the landscape of international relations is constantly shifting and traditional power structures are increasingly being challenged by new players.

"The threat of global conflict looms large, fuelled by ideological divisions, resource scarcity and climate change. This has created interconnected challenges like economic disparity and resource exploitation," he said.

The IAF chief observed that black swan events like Covid-19, and other global conflicts have aggravated the situation.

The event also included the launch of two books: *Indian Air Power: Contemporary and Future Dynamics* by Air Marshal (Dr) Diptendu Choudhury (retd) and *Aeroengine Fundamentals and Landscape in India: A Way Forward* by Air Vice Marshal Suresh Singh.

Context: Indigenous aerospace platforms such as the Light Combat Aircraft, Light Combat Helicopter, Akash Missile systems and radars offer competitive and reliable options for air forces of the Global South, boosting India's economic and technological clout

Light Combat Aircraft (LCA)

- **About:** It is a light, multirole jet/turboprop military aircraft, commonly derived from advanced trainer designs, designed for engaging in light combat.
- **Origins of the LCA**: The Government of India initiated the LCA (Light Combat Aircraft) program in 1984, establishing the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) to oversee its management.
- **Features**: The LCA is meticulously designed to accommodate a variety of weapons, including air-to-air, air-to-surface, and precision-guided munitions.
- **Air-to-Air Refueling Capability**: An integral feature of the LCA is its capability for air-to-air refueling, enhancing its operational flexibility and endurance.
- **Example**: LCA Tejas.

Light Combat Helicopter

- **About**: The LCH, recently integrated into Hindustan Aeronautics Limited's (HAL) helicopter division, stands as a twin-engine combat helicopter within the 5 to 8-tonne class.
- **Advanced Capabilities**: Equipped with cutting-edge technologies and stealth features, the LCH is specifically designed for efficient combat roles.
    - Its **functionalities encompass diverse missions, including the destruction of enemy air defense**, counterinsurgency, search and rescue, anti-tank operations, and Counter Surface Force Operations.
- **Unique Altitude Performance**: Notably, the LCH distinguishes itself as the world's only attack helicopter capable of both landing and taking off at an altitude of 5,000 meters.
- This capability holds, even when carrying a substantial payload of weapons and fuel.

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