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MK Yadav Sir

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CPEC
(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – IR)

Pakistan, China to ink deals under CPEC during Kakar's visit

Press Trust of India
ISLAMABAD

A Highway Research and Training Centre in Pakistan built with China's assistance is on the cards

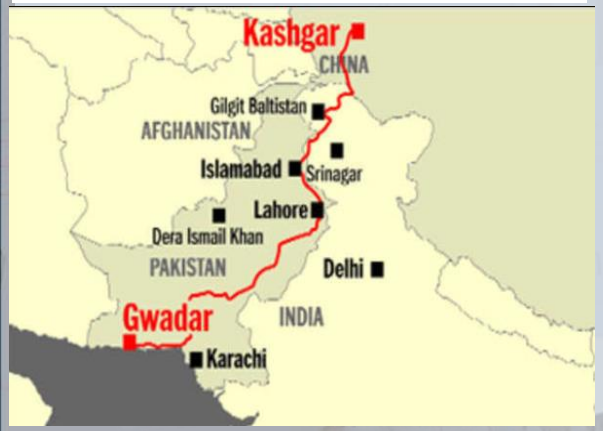
China and Pakistan will ink significant agreements regarding motorways and highways during caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul haq Kakar's four-day visit to Beijing starting on Monday, according to a media report on October 15.

The agreements would be signed under the $60 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) programme, *Dawn* newspaper reported.

BRF meet

Mr. Kakar would travel to Beijing on October 16 to participate in the 'Third Belt and Road Forum (BRF) for International Cooperation' from October 17 to 18.

A significant Memorandum of Understanding scheduled to be signed is related to the establishment of a modern Highway Research and Training Centre (HRTC) with China's assistance, the PM's office said. The project will prominently take centre stage during the Prime Minister's discussion with the Chinese authorities, it added.



Context: China and Pakistan recently **signed significant agreements** regarding motorways and highways during the caretaker Prime Minister of Pakistan's four-day **visit to Beijing**, according to a media report.

- The agreements would be signed under the $60 billion **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) program**, a recently **established initiative aimed at enhancing economic cooperation** between the two nations.

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

- **About**: The CPEC is a bilateral project **between Pakistan and China.**
- **Objective**: To enhance connectivity across Pakistan with a network of highways, railways, and pipelines accompanied by other infrastructure development projects.
- **Under the CPEC Plan**: China will invest in **industrial power stations, roads, and railways** from Kashgar in Xinjiang (China) to Gwadar port (Pakistan) in the 3000 km long belt.
- **Financed by**: Heavily-subsidised Chinese loans, **disbursed to the Pakistan Government** by Chinese banking giants such as China Development Bank, **Exim Bank of China** and Industrial and Commercial Bank of China.
- CPEC is a **component of the OBOR** (One Belt One Road) initiative of China.

OBOR

- OBOR or **Belt and Road (BRI)** is the new Silk Road initiative, both by land and sea, announced by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013.
- It's the **most ambitious infrastructure and connectivity project** in history, aiming to connect China with Europe by land and rail, and to Africa and Asia by sea.

PIB

Oct 14

SETU BANDHAN SCHEME

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy - Infrastructure)

Shri Nitin Gadkari approves 7 bridge projects worth Rs 118.50 Crore in Arunachal Pradesh under the Setu Bandhan Scheme

Context: Recently, the **Ministry of Road Transport & Highways** has disclosed the approval of seven crucial bridge **projects in Arunachal Pradesh** under the **Setu Bandhan Scheme** under Central Road and Infrastructure Fund (CRIF).

Setu Bandhan Scheme

- **About**: This scheme was introduced **to enhance inter-state connectivity**, particularly in rural border areas that often lack adequate attention from state road authorities.
- **Nodal Ministry**: Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH).
  - It's important to note that the Setu Bandhan scheme is distinct from the **"Setu Bharatam"** program.
- **Objective**: To eliminate all Railway Level Crossings on national highways by 2019.

Central Road and Infrastructure Fund (CRIF)

- **Establishment**: In the year 2000, It was established through the enactment of the Central Road Fund Act, 2000.
- **Formerly known as**: The Central Road Fund.
  - This fund is constituted by a cess that is levied in addition to excise duty on both petrol and diesel.
- **Held by**: The Ministry of Finance.

DFCC

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy - Infrastructure)



Railways, DFCC on parallel tracks over GST

Ministry of railways, DFCC planning revenue model for latter as current apparatus has put an 18% GST on the corporation

DHRUVAKSH SAHA
New Delhi, 15 October

The Ministry of Railways and its undertaking Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India (DFCC) are considering a different revenue model for the latter because its current apparatus has put an 18 per cent goods and services tax (GST) obligation on the corporation, multiple sources said.

The corporation's consultants have prepared a report and submitted it to the Railway Board.

Under the present revenue model between the ministry and DFCC, the railways pays the public sector undertaking (PSU) for its services of maintaining and operating freight corridors through a track access charge (TAC). It is through this revenue, among other allocations from the government, that the corporation undertakes projects and repays its foreign debt.

TACs cover part of DFCC's fixed costs, variables (fuel charges, staff cost), and finance (depreciation, cost of capital, and interest) costs.

A GST of 18 per cent is applicable on the TAC, which has essentially increased the outgo from the ministry for the DFCC. While taxes on such transactions have always been in place, the current model is not the most tax-efficient one for the PSU, according to sources familiar with the matter.

While DFCC is a special purpose vehicle, it is considered a zonal rail body for administrative purposes. The TAC setup is different from how a zonal railway operates. However, the similarity is that DFCC also cannot generate any revenue from actual transportation of goods, and all freight income is directly credited to the Railway Board. This is then redistributed in the form of TACs and other provisions.

The matter has become important because TACs are what DFCC will use to service its debt to multilateral agencies such as the World Bank and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), which have provided roughly ₹52,000 crore for the eastern and western freight corridors.

"The discussion on this issue is going on with the Ministries of Railways and Finance and the final decision is awaited. We are awaiting clarity on the tax implications. What we know as of now is that if an item has not been accorded a GST slab, it is automatically taxed at 18 per cent," DFCC Managing Director R K Jain said on Friday.

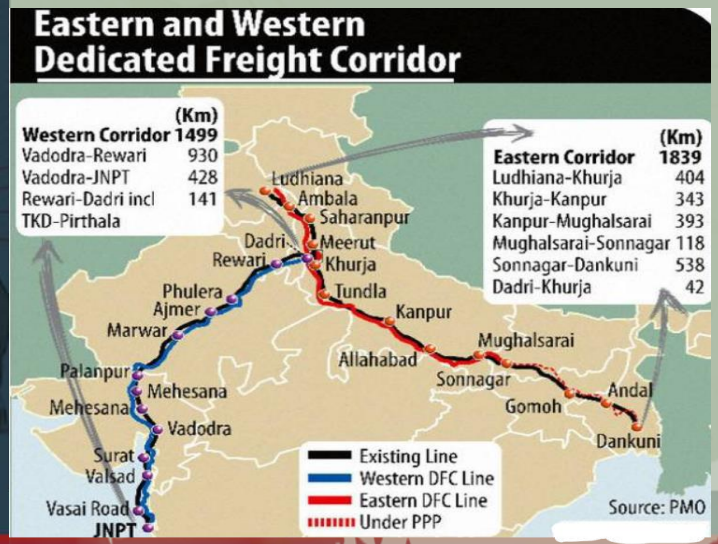
"The current TACs towards DFCC are about ₹5,000 crore," another top executive of the corporation told *Business Standard*. The corporation will pay around ₹800 crore as GST in this scenario.

TIGHT SPOT

Current revenue model means rail funds worth ₹5,000 crore taxed at 18% GST

- Under the present revenue model, the national transporter pays the public sector undertaking for its services of maintaining and operating freight corridors through a Track Access Charge (TAC)
- A GST of 18 per cent is applicable on the TAC, which has increased the outgo from the ministry of railways for the DFCC
- While taxes on such transactions have always been in place, the current model is not the most tax efficient one for the PSU
- DFCC will use TACs to service its debt obligations to multilateral agencies such as the World Bank and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), which have provided roughly ₹52,000 crore of funds for the Eastern and Western freight corridors
- The current model of TAC has also created problems for the corporation in claiming input tax credit on the GST it pays

ILLUSTRATION: AJAY MOHANTY



Context: The Ministry of Railways and its undertaking, **Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India (DFCC)**, have recently been exploring a different revenue model for the latter due to the **burdensome 18% goods and services tax** (GST) obligation on the corporation's current operations.

Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India (DFCC)

- **About**: This railway corridor is designed with a primary focus on high-speed and high-capacity freight transportation.
- **Nodal Ministry**: Ministry of Railways
- **Reduced Passenger Train Interference**: Unlike conventional rail lanes, where goods trains often have to yield to passenger trains, this corridor eliminates such delays in freight movement.

Freight Corridors

Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC)

- The **distance from** Ludhiana, Punjab, to Dankuni, West Bengal, spans 1,760 km.
- **EDFC Route**: Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, and West Bengal.
- **Funding**: Provided by the World Bank.

Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (WDFC)

- **Distance:** Dadri, U.P, and Jawaharlal Nehru Port, Mumbai, is 1,468 kms.
- **Route**: Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh.
- **Funding:** Provided by the Japan International Cooperation Agency.

Other Corridors

- **North-South (Delhi-Tamil Nadu),**
- **East-West (West Bengal-Maharashtra),**
- **East-South (West Bengal-Andhra Pradesh)&**
- **South-South (Tamil Nadu-Goa).**

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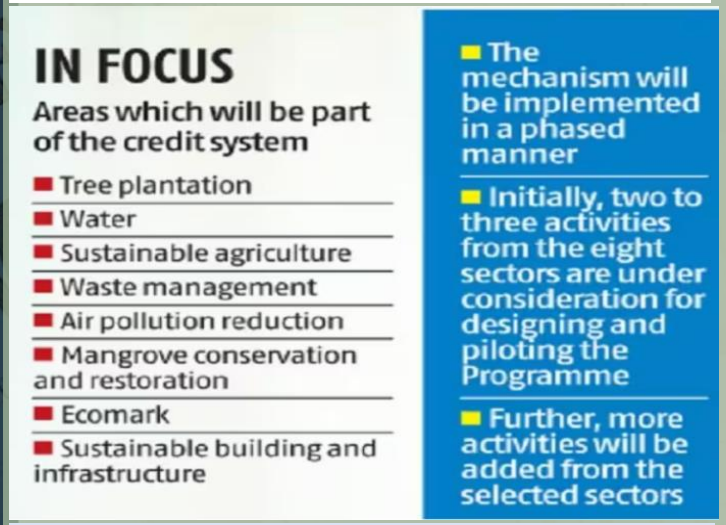
Oct 14

GREEN CREDIT PROGRAMME

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Env & Eco)

Centre notifies green credit programme

To incentivise eco-friendly actions; focus on water conservation and afforestation in initial phase



Green Credit

- Green credit" represents an **individual unit of incentive awarded** for a designated environmentally beneficial activity.
- **This form of credit is attainable by various entities**, including individuals, farmer-producer organizations (FPOs), industries, as well as rural and urban local bodies, among other stakeholders.

Context: Recently, the Union Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change notified the **'green credit' program**, marking a significant step towards incentivising environmental actions across various sectors.

Green Credit Programme (GCP)

- **Launched**: During the 2023-24 budget as part of Mission LiFE.
- **Implementation by**: The Ministry of Environment has released the **draft 'Green Credit Programme Implementation Rules 2023'** under the purview of the Environment Protection Act of 1986.
- **8 Sectors**
  - Tree plantation-based green credit
  - Water-based green credit
  - Sustainable agriculture-based green credit
  - Waste management-based green credit
  - Air pollution reduction-based green credit
  - Mangrove conservation and restoration-based green credit
  - Eco-mark-based green credit
  - Sustainable building and infrastructure-based green credit
- **Objective**: Establish a market-driven system that **promotes voluntary environmental actions and individual or community** behaviours by aligning supply and demand.
  - Motivate the private sector and other entities to fulfil their pre-existing obligations under various legal frameworks.

MINIMUM EXPORT PRICE

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy)



Basmati Exporters Stop Buying to Protest Pricing Curbs

MEP AT $1,200 PER TONNE Several exporters and millers from Haryana, Punjab and UP stay away from 300 mandis

Sutanuka Ghosal
@timesgroup.com

Kolkata: Basmati exporters and millers in Haryana, Punjab and western Uttar Pradesh stopped buying rice from 300 mandis (wholesale markets) across these states from Saturday evening, following the government's decision to retain the minimum export price (MEP) at $1,200 per tonne. The MEP is too high for India's basmati exporters to compete in the global markets, said industry executives.

"A number of exporters and millers have stopped purchase of paddy/rice as the government has not lowered the MEP. This is despite the government promising us at the last meeting held on September 25 that the MEP will be lowered to $900 per tonne," said Vijay Setia, former president of the All India Rice Exporters Association. "The meeting, which happened virtually, was presided over by Union commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal."

Exporters said only 20% of the new crop - 1509 variety - has been procured till now and the rest 80% is lying with the farmers or at the mandis.

Farmers of the three states are staring at a huge loss as they do not know where to sell the newly harvested basmati rice, which is mostly exported and is hardly consumed domestically. On August 25, the government prohibited the exports of basmati rice below $1,200 per tonne to prevent potential instances of "illicit" shipment of regular white non-basmati rice disguised as high-quality basmati rice. It also kept the sub-$1,200 per tonne rice contracts in abeyance and asked the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority to set up a committee to evaluate the contracts. Rajbir Singh, an agitated farmer from Karnal, said, "The government's decision not to lower the MEP will result in agitation from the farmers and will have an impact on the upcoming state elections." "It should be monitored fortnightly to curb inflation," he said.

THE GRAIN STORY

Aug 25: Govt prohibits exports of basmati rice below $1,200 per tonne to prevent 'illicit' shipment

Sept 25: Govt promises that MEP will be lowered to $900 per tonne

Exports of basmati rice in 2022-23 stood at 4.5 million, valued at ₹38,524.11 crore

Exporters say only 20% of the new crop - 1509 variety - has been procured till now

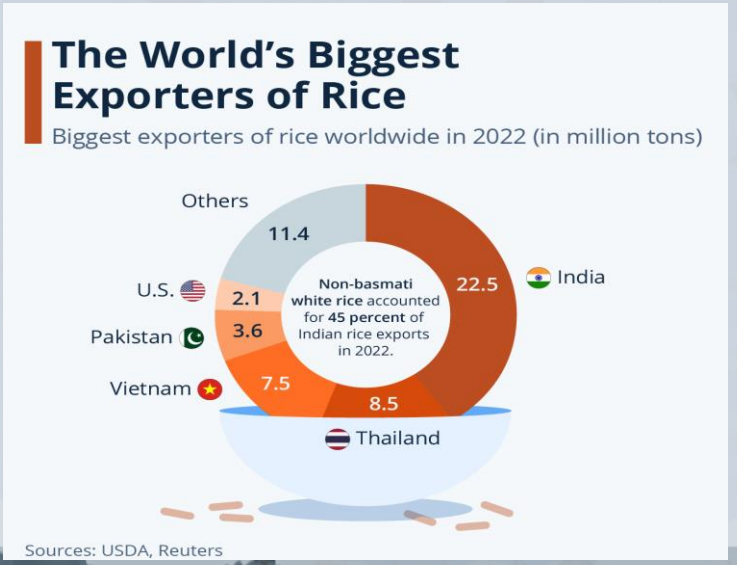
80% still is lying with the farmers or at the mandis

More than 80% of basmati rice produced in India is exported

Govt: Considering review of MEP

New Delhi: The government on Sunday said it is actively considering the review of the minimum export price of $1,200 per tonne of basmati rice, amid the industry's concern that outward shipments have been affected due to high value.

Rice exporters associations have been demanding that this rate should be brought down to around $850 per tonne. -PTI



Context: Recently, **Basmati exporters and millers in Haryana, Punjab, and western Uttar Pradesh** halted their rice purchases from 300 mandis (wholesale markets) across these states **due to the government's recent decision** to maintain the minimum export price (MEP) at $1,200 per tonne.

- The **MEP is too high for India's basmati exporters** to compete in the global markets

Minimum Export Price

- **About:** It is the price below which an exporter is not allowed to export the commodity from India.
- **Reason of its imposition**: Rising domestic retail/ wholesale price or production disruptions in the country.
- **MEP involves: "Fixing a floor price"** below which an exporter shall not sell the product to an overseas customer.
  - While the government **stipulates a MEP from time to time**, in market parleys it is largely seen as an outdated concept as it gets easily circumvented.
  - The system is duped **easily by invoicing at or above** MEP for the record but actually pricing and selling the good at prevailing market price.
  - **Depending on the pre-agreed arrangements**, the price differential is later adjusted through future transactions or quality claims.
  - With exporters having mastered this route, **MEP has become an ineffective** instrument to restrict commodity export or contain domestic price.
- **Legal backing:** As per section 5 of the Foreign Trade (Development And Regulation) Act, 1992, the Central Government may, from time to time, formulate and announce, by notification in the Official Gazette, the export and import policy and may also, in the like manner, amend that policy.

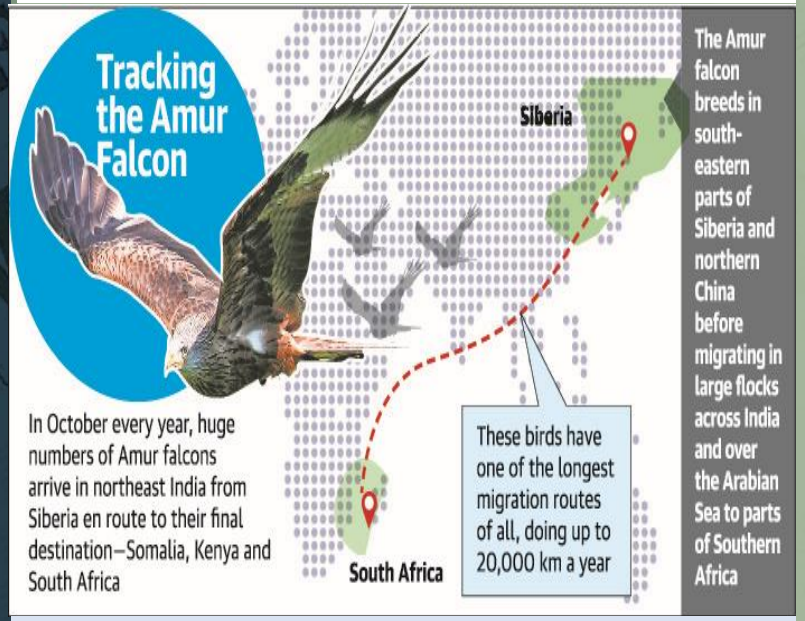
HINDUSTAN TIMES

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AMUR FALCON

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Env and Eco)

Manipur to conduct census of Amur falcon, world's longest travelling raptors



Context: The **Manipur Forest Department** will carry out a **head count of Amur falcons**-the world's longest-travelling raptors- in Tamenglong district.

Amur Falcon

- **Local Name and Habitat**: Locally known as **Akhuipuina**, these birds primarily arrive in the Indian states of Manipur and Nagaland.
- **Long-Distance Migration**: They breed in **south-eastern Siberia and Northern China** and embark on long-distance migrations in large flocks to spend winters in Southern and East Africa.
- Their one-way journey via **India spans approximately 20,000 km**, which they undertake twice a year.

Conservation Efforts

- **Legal Protection**: The Amur Falcon is safeguarded under the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972 and is listed under Schedule IV.
- **Strict Penalties**: Hunting these birds or possessing their meat is a punishable offense, with potential imprisonment of up to three years, a fine of up to 25,000 rupees, or the imposition of bonds.
- **Conservation Initiatives**: In 2018, the forest department initiated a conservation program that involved radio-tagging the birds to facilitate the study of their migratory routes.
- **IUCN Status**: Least Concern.
- **Threats**: Illegal trapping and killing during migration, habitat loss from agricultural practices and land reclamation.

INDIAN EXPRESS Page 11

GOAN CASHEW

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy)

WHAT THE GI TAG CAN MEAN FOR THE CASHEW INDUSTRY IN GOA

PAVNEET SINGH CHADHA
PANAJI, OCTOBER 15

RECENTLY, GOAN cashew (kernel) got the geographical indication (GI) tag. Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant hailed the recognition as a great opportunity for the cashew industry in the state and "a milestone towards Swayampurna Goa mission".

A GI tag is conferred upon products originating from a specific geographical region, signifying unique characteristics and qualities. Essentially, it serves as a trademark in the international market.



Cashew apples being squashed in Chorao, Goa. *Wikimedia Commons*

Challenges industry is facing

Cashew manufacturers and processors in Goa said they hoped the GI tag would help consumers differentiate between authentic Goan cashews and cashews sourced from outside the state, often marketed as 'Goan cashews'.

The application for the GI tag for the Goan cashew — derived from the Portuguese name *caju* or *kaju* in Konkani — was filed by the Goa Cashew Manufacturers' Association (GCMA), with the Department of Science, Technology and Waste Management, Government of Goa, acting as facilitator. Deepak Parab, nodal officer, patent facilitation centre at the State Council for Science and Technology, said, "Goan cashew will come with the GI logo. Traders won't be able to use Goa cashew logo on the packets without registration. The government will promote it."

Rohit Zantye, GCMA president, said Goa cashew nuts are an integral part of Goan identity and "over the years have become synonymous with Goa." Zantye said in the past few years, a chunk of the cashew market has been captured by small traders from other states, who sell cheaper imported cashews by labelling them as 'Goan cashew' for profiteering.

"There are about 300 shops in Calangute alone selling cashews from Benin, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Tanzania, and from other Indian states, marketing them as Goan cashew. These traders and processors do not comply with the norms of quality, packaging, weighing, etc. and products are often of inferior quality. We had received complaints from tourists. All this affects 'brand Goa'," he said.

manufacturers in Goa have been unable to sell all their produce within the state, and have had to find markets outside, curtail production, or shut factories. Higher minimum wages and compliance norms than in states like Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh have also contributed to the decline in sales for traditional Goan cashew processors.

Zantye said the processing units have dwindled down from 40 in 2005 to over 15 at present.

A cashew processor in Goa, requesting anonymity, said, "Earlier, 80 per cent of our sale was in Goa. But now it is difficult to compete on the price front. These smaller traders do not have a permanent labour force. They can avoid fixed input costs of larger factories and labour welfare, and evade compliance. From the naked eye, the consumer cannot tell the difference between Goan cashew or imported cashew. The difference in colour is marginal. The Goan cashew is sweeter in taste."

Madhav Sahkari, GCMA member and president, Goa Cashew Producers Association, said unless there was strict action against illegal marketing practices, the GI tag would not have much of an impact.

How cashew came to Goa

Cashew was native to northeast Brazil and was introduced to Goa by the Portuguese in 1570, mainly as a crop for afforestation and soil conservation.

The story goes that the edible value of cashew nut was discovered by Goan prisoners exiled to the Portuguese territory of Africa (Mozambique) during Goa's freedom movement in the mid-18th century.

Context: Recently, **Goan cashew (kernel)** got the geographical indication (GI) tag.

Goan Cashew

- **About**: Cashew, native to northeast Brazil in Latin America, was introduced to Goa by the Portuguese in the 16th century, precisely in 1570.
- **Initial Purpose in India**: Upon its introduction on the Indian coasts, cashew was primarily recognized as a crop for afforestation and soil conservation.
- **Prominence in Goa**: In the state of Goa, cashew occupies the largest area among horticultural crops.
- **Soil and Climate**: Well-drained deep sandy loam soils are the most suitable for cashew cultivation. Generally, all soil types, from sandy to laterite, are well-suited for this crop.
- It thrives in the hot, humid conditions of the Indian coastal areas.
- **Temperature**: Range of 20 to 38 degrees Celsius, with a relative humidity between 60 to 95%.
- Extreme low temperatures and frost are not conducive for successful cashew plantations.
- **Cultivation**: Plains of Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, and certain parts of the North East hill region.

GI Tag

- **About**: It is a symbol used on items that come from a particular geographical area and have qualities or a reputation linked to that place of origin.
- **Nodal Ministry**: Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- **Tenure**: 10 Years
- **Regulated By**: Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration & Protection) Act, 1999.
- **India's First GI Product**: Darjeeling Tea (2004-05)

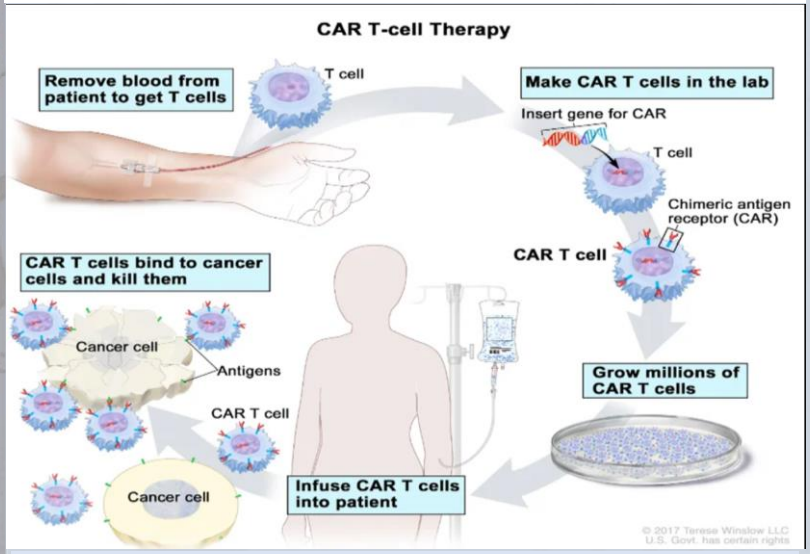
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Oct 14

CAR-T CELL THERAPY

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Sci and Tech)

Cancer treatment breakthrough: India's homegrown CAR-T cell therapy, a form of immunotherapy, gets market authorisation



Leukemia

- Leukemia is a **form of cancer affecting the blood and bone marrow**, responsible for blood cell production.
- Individuals with leukemia **experience an irregular generation** of blood cells.
- **White blood cells undergo various stages** of maturation during their lifespan.

Context: Recently, Mumbai-based Immunoadoptive Cell Therapy Private Limited (ImmunoACT) celebrated the approval of **India's first chimeric antigen receptor (CAR) T-cell therapy** by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) for treating **relapsed-refractory B-cell lymphoma and leukemia**.

CART-T Cell Therapy

- **About**: CAR-T therapy represents an innovative and highly intricate form of immune therapy. It reprograms the **patient's immune system** to combat cancer.
- Referred to as **'the living drug,' CAR-T cells** actively seek out and target cancerous cells, effectively distinguishing them from healthy ones.
- This approach utilizes **T-cells, a type of immune cell harvested** from patients' blood. These T-cells are genetically modified to recognize specific surface proteins present in cancer cells.
- **India's inaugural domestically** developed Chimeric Antigen Receptor (CAR) T-cell therapy is NexCAR19.
- It is designed to target relapsed-refractory **B-cell lymphoma and leukemia**, signifying a notable advancement in cancer treatment.

B-cell lymphoma

- It refers to a group of cancers that affect your immune system.
- It frequently a**ffects your lymphatic system**, which is a network of **lymph nodes, lymph vessels** and tissues that move fluid around your body.

TIMES OF INDIA Oct 14

INTER PARLIAMENTARY UNION

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – International Organization)

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar interacts with President of Inter-Parliamentary Union on P20 sidelines

Structure of the IPU

- **IPU Assembly**: The principal statutory body expressing IPU's views on political matters.
  - Convenes parliamentarians to examine global issues and provide action recommendations.
- **Governing Council**: The primary policymaking body of the IPU.
  - Comprises three representatives from each member of parliament.
  - **The president of the IPU** also serves as the President of the Governing Council.
  - The **Council establishes the IPU's** annual program and budget.
- **Executive Committees:** In accordance with the IPU statutes, this 17-member body oversees the administration of the IPU and provides advice to the Governing Council.

Context: The **Vice President of India** recently interacted with the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union on the sidelines of the **G20 Parliamentary Speakers' Summit (P20)**.

Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

- **About:** IPU serves as the international organisation for Parliaments.
- **Established in: 1889** in Paris.
- **Headquarters**: Geneva, Switzerland.
- **Aim**: To promote representative democracy and global peace.
- The IPU facilitates **parliamentary diplomacy, empowering parliament**s and parliamentarians to advance peace, democracy, and sustainable development worldwide.
- It was the **world's first multilateral political organisation**, fostering cooperation and dialogue among all nations.
- **Slogan:** "For democracy. For everyone."
- **Members**: 179 member parliaments and 13 associate members.
- It **actively promotes democracy and works to strengthen** parliaments, making them more youthful, gender-balanced, and diverse.
- A **dedicated committee, composed of MPs** from around the world, defends the human rights of parliamentarians.

HINDUSTAN TIMES

Oct 14

PALK STRAIT
(Syllabus: GS Paper 1 – Geography)



Context: India and Sri Lanka recently launched a ferry service across the Palk Strait under a new roadmap for greater connectivity.

Palk Strait

- **Located:** Between India's Tamil Nadu state and the island nation of Sri Lanka.
- **Named after Robert Palk**: The strait derives its name from Robert Palk, who served as the **governor of the Madras Presidency** from 1755 to 1763 during the British Raj era.
- **Geographic Boundaries**: Palk Strait is bordered on the **south by Pamban Island** (India), **Adam's (Rama's) Bridge**, a chain of shoals, the Gulf of Mannar, and Mannar Island (Sri Lanka).
- **Connects Bay of Bengal and Gulf of Mannar**: This strait serves as a crucial connection between the Bay of Bengal in the northeast and the Gulf of Mannar in the southwest.
- **The Southwest Section**: The southwestern part of Palk Strait is often referred to as Palk Bay.
- **Dimensions**: Palk Strait has dimensions that range from 40 to 85 miles (64 to 137 km) in width, extending to a length of 85 miles. Its depth is less than 330 feet (100 meters).
- **River Inflow**: The **Vaigai River of Tamil Nadu** flows into the strait, enriching its ecosystem.
- **Port of Jaffna**: The strategic Port of Jaffna, which serves as the **commercial hub** for northern Sri Lanka, is located along the shores of the Palk Strait.

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