

**The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE****Saturday, 27 July, 2024****Edition: International | Table of Contents**

<b>Page 03</b> <b>Syllabus : GS 2 : Indian Polity</b>	<b>219 proposals for High Court judges' appointment are being processed Centre</b>
<b>Page 04</b> <b>Syllabus : GS 2 : International Relations</b>	<b>ASEAN cornerstone of India's Act East Policy : Jaishankar</b>
<b>Page 05</b> <b>Syllabus : Prelims Fact</b>	<b>Royal burial mounds of Assam now on UNESCO World Heritage List</b>
<b>Page 14</b> <b>Syllabus : Prelims Fact</b>	<b>Paris unveils the ultimate spectacle with pomp, fervour and splendour</b>
<b>Term In News</b>	<b>Dark Oxygen</b>
<b>Page 06 : Editorial Analysis:</b> <b>Syllabus</b> <b>GS: 02 : International Relations : India &amp; Its Neighborhood</b>	<b>A new push in the Bay of Bengal</b>
<b>Mapping</b>	<b>Topic:</b> <b>Tiger Reserves of India</b>

The Union government has said that 219 proposals for the appointment of High Court judges by the Collegium are in various stages of processing.

## 219 proposals for High Court judges' appointment are being processed: Centre

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Union government said 219 proposals for the appointment of High Court judges across the country are in various stages of processing.

Union Law Minister Arjun Meghwal, responding to questions raised by Rajya Sabha Member Haris Beeran, said the Supreme Court Collegium (SCC), as of July 19, has processed 82 of the 90 proposals sent to it by the government for advice.

"One hundred and twenty-nine fresh proposals received recently are being processed for seeking the advice of the SCC," the reply said.

High Courts have still not sent recommendations on the remaining 138 vacancies.

Against the total sanctioned strength of 1,114 judges in various High

**Against the total sanctioned strength of 1,114 judges, 357 posts are vacant**

Courts, 357 posts are lying vacant.

Chief Justices of the High Courts are required to initiate the proposal to fill up a vacancy of a High Court judge six months prior to the occurrence of the vacancy. "However, this timeline is often not adhered to by the High Courts," the government complained. Names recommended by the High Court Collegium are sent with the views of the government to the SCC for advice. Recommendation of the SCC is mandatory for appointment.

"Appointment of Judges in the High Courts is a continuous, integrated and collaborative process, involving approval from va-

rious constitutional authorities," the government assured.

### Collegium inputs

The process of finalising a revised Memorandum of Procedure for Appointment of Judges to the Supreme Court and High Courts to bring in more transparency and accountability in the appointment process has not seen the light of the day. The government claims it is waiting for the Collegium's inputs on a draft while the latter maintained that it has already given its final views about the draft in March 2017, and has nothing more to add.

Meanwhile, the government said it is considering a proposal for the transfer of five High Court judges.

"No timeline has been prescribed in the MoP for transfer of judges from one High Court to another," it explained.

### Qualifications for Appointment as a Supreme Court Judge:

- ✚ According to Article 124(3) of the Constitution, a person can be appointed as a judge of the Supreme Court if he or she:
  - Is a citizen of India.
  - Has served as a judge of a High Court for at least five years or in two such courts in succession.
  - Alternatively, has been an advocate of a High Court for at least ten years or in two or more such courts in succession.
  - Is a distinguished jurist in the opinion of the President.

## Daily News Analysis

### ✚ **Qualifications for Appointment as a High Court Judge:**

- The person must have held a judicial office for at least 10 years in India, or
- Must have been a practising advocate in a High Court for at least 10 years.
- The person must be enrolled under the Bar Council of India.

### **The procedure followed by the Collegium:**

#### ✚ **Appointment of CJI**

- The President of India appoints the CJI and the other SC judges.
- As far as the CJI is concerned, the outgoing CJI recommends his successor.
- In practice, it has been strictly by seniority ever since the supersession controversy of the 1970s.
- The Union Law Minister forwards the recommendation to the PM who, in turn, advises the President.

#### ✚ **Other SC Judges:**

- For other judges of the top court, the proposal is initiated by the CJI.
- The CJI consults the rest of the Collegium members, as well as the senior-most judge of the court hailing from the High Court to which the recommended person belongs.
- The consultees must record their opinions in writing and it should form part of the file.
- The Collegium sends the recommendation to the Law Minister, who forwards it to the Prime Minister to advise the President.

#### ✚ **For High Courts:**

- The CJs of High Courts are appointed as per the policy of having Chief Justices from outside the respective States. The Collegium takes the call on the elevation.
- High Court judges are recommended by a Collegium comprising the CJI and two senior-most judges.
- The proposal, however, is initiated by the Chief Justice of the High Court concerned in consultation with two senior-most colleagues.
- The recommendation is sent to the Chief Minister, who advises the Governor to send the proposal to the Union Law Minister.

### **What is Collegium System?**

- ✚ The collegium system is the method used for the appointment and transfer of judges in the Supreme Court and High Courts of India.
- ✚ It is the Indian Supreme Court's invention.
- ✚ The term 'Collegium' does not find mention in the Constitution.

### **Constitutional Provisions:**

- ✚ **Article 124:** The President appoints the Chief Justice and other judges of the Supreme Court after consultations with judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts as deemed necessary.
- ✚ **Article 217:** The President appoints High Court judges after consultations with the Chief Justice of India, the Governor of the state, and the Chief Justice of the High Court concerned
- ✚ **Composition:**
  - **Supreme Court Collegium:**

## Daily News Analysis

- A five-member body.
- Headed by the Chief Justice of India (CJI).
- Includes the four other senior most judges of the Supreme Court at that time.

### + **High Court Collegium:**

- Led by the Chief Justice of the respective High Court.
- Includes the two senior most judges of that High Court.
- Recommendations for appointments by a High Court collegium are sent to the government only after approval by the CJI and the Supreme Court collegium.

## UPSC Prelims PYQ : 2012

**Ques : What is the provision to safeguard the autonomy of the Supreme Court of India?**

1. While appointing the Supreme Court Judges, the President of India has to consult the Chief Justice of India.
2. The Supreme Court Judges can be removed by the Chief Justice of India only.
3. The salaries of the Judges are charged on the Consolidated Fund of India to which the legislature does not have to vote.
4. All appointments of officers and staffs of the Supreme Court of India are made by the Government only after consulting the Chief Justice of India.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 3 and 4 only
- (c) 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

**Ans : a)**

**Page 04 : International Relations**

The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) revamped the 'model skill loan scheme' for skill development courses, with a fresh maximum loan limit of ₹7.5 lakh.

**INBRIEF****ASEAN cornerstone of India's Act East Policy: Jaishankar**

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was the cornerstone of India's Act East Policy and its Indo-Pacific vision, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said on Friday, as he sought to expand cooperation with the bloc. Mr. Jaishankar was in the Laotian capital of Vientiane to participate in the meetings of ASEAN members. In his remarks at the opening session of the ASEAN-India Foreign Ministers Meeting, he said, "The current political, economic and security cooperation with ASEAN is of the utmost priority so is the people-to-people linkages, that we are constantly seeking to expand." Mr. Jaishankar's visit to Laos was of particular significance as this year marked a decade of India's Act East Policy, which was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2014, the Ministry of External Affairs said. PTI

**About ASEAN:**

- ✚ The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a regional intergovernmental organisation comprising ten Southeast Asian countries.
- ✚ Founded on August 8, 1967, in Bangkok, Thailand, its members include Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar (Burma), and Cambodia.

## Daily News Analysis

- ✦ ASEAN aims to promote regional peace, stability, economic growth, and socio-cultural development through cooperation and dialogue.
- ✦ Its key principles include mutual respect, non-interference in internal affairs, peaceful dispute resolution, and cooperation for mutual benefit.
- ✦ ASEAN has established various frameworks and mechanisms such as the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC), and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) to enhance regional integration and cooperation.
- ✦ The ASEAN Summit is the organization's highest decision-making body, where member states discuss and coordinate regional policies and initiatives.
- ✦ ASEAN has developed partnerships and dialogue mechanisms with major powers and regional organizations, contributing to regional stability and prosperity.
- ✦ The organization addresses various regional challenges, including territorial disputes, transnational crime, terrorism, natural disasters, and environmental issues.
- ✦ ASEAN promotes intra-regional trade and economic cooperation through initiatives such as the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) and regional economic integration efforts.
- ✦ It plays a crucial role in shaping the geopolitical landscape of Southeast Asia and fostering regional cooperation in various fields.

### India – ASEAN Relations:

#### Significance for India:

- ✦ India's Act East Policy emphasizes deepening engagement with ASEAN, given its strategic location and economic potential.
- ✦ ASEAN is India's one of the most significant trading partner, with bilateral trade reaching billions of dollars annually.
- ✦ Strengthening ties with ASEAN enhances India's regional influence and provides access to Southeast Asian markets.
- ✦ Cooperation with ASEAN nations fosters connectivity, promotes economic growth, and facilitates people-to-people exchanges.
- ✦ India's membership in ASEAN-led forums like the East Asia Summit and ASEAN Regional Forum strengthens its regional security architecture.

#### Challenges:

- ✦ Limited physical connectivity and infrastructure pose barriers to trade and investment flows between India and ASEAN.
- ✦ Non-tariff barriers and bureaucratic hurdles hinder seamless economic integration.
- ✦ Competition from other regional powers like China and Japan challenges India's influence in ASEAN.
- ✦ Historical and territorial disputes among ASEAN members complicate regional cooperation and unity.
- ✦ Socio-cultural differences and language barriers impede closer people-to-people ties.

#### Way Forward:

## Daily News Analysis

- ✚ Enhance physical and digital connectivity through infrastructure development and the promotion of digital initiatives.
- ✚ Negotiate comprehensive free trade agreements to reduce trade barriers and promote economic integration.
- ✚ Strengthen maritime cooperation to ensure security and freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific region.
- ✚ Increase cultural exchanges and educational programs to deepen mutual understanding and trust.
- ✚ Leverage ASEAN-led platforms to address regional challenges and promote multilateral cooperation.
- ✚ Diversify and deepen engagement with ASEAN countries beyond economic ties to include strategic, security, and socio-cultural dimensions.

### UPSC Prelims PYQ : 2018

**Ques : Consider the following countries:**

1. Australia
2. Canada
3. China
4. India
5. Japan
6. USA

**Which of the above are among the 'free-trade partners' of ASEAN?**

- (a) 1, 2, 4 and 5
- (b) 3, 4, 5 and 6
- (c) 1, 3, 4 and 5
- (d) 2, 3, 4 and 6

**Ans: (c)**

The Charaideo Moidams, a unique 700-year-old mound-burial system of the Ahom dynasty from Assam, has been added to the UNESCO World Heritage List.

**Location**

- While Charaideo exclusively contains moidams of Ahom royals, other moidams of aristocrats and chiefs can be found scattered across Eastern Assam, in the region between the towns of Jorhat and Dibrugarh.

# Royal burial mounds of Assam now on UNESCO World Heritage List

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI/GUWAHATI

The Charaideo Moidams, a 700-year-old mound-burial system of the Ahom dynasty from Assam, were added to the UNESCO World Heritage List on Friday, making them the 43rd property from India to be included in the prestigious index.

The announcement was made at the 46th session of the World Heritage Committee being held in Delhi.

“This historic recognition brings global attention to the unique 700-year-old mound burial system of the Ahom kings at Charaideo, highlighting the rich cultural heritage of Assam and Bharat,” Union Minister for Culture and Tourism Gajendra Singh Shekhawat told the media after the announcement.

Similar to the pyramids



An aerial view of the royal burial mounds built by the Ahom dynasty in Charaideo in eastern Assam. AP

of Egypt, the Moidams are earthen burial mounds of the members of the Ahom royalty whose 600-year rule was ended by the British takeover of the region.

The Ahoms adopted the Hindu method of cremation after the 18th century and began entombing the cremated bones and ashes in Moidams at Charaideo.

The highly venerated

Moidams make the Charaideo district a tourist destination.

The Moidams are the first from the northeastern States to be recognised as a World Heritage Site in the cultural category. Assam has two other such sites in the natural category - Kaziranga National Park and Manas National Park, both upgraded to tiger reserves.

“THIS IS HUGE. The Moidams make it to the #UNESCO World Heritage list under the category Cultural Property - a great win for Assam. Thank You Hon’ble Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi ji, Members of the @UNESCO World Heritage Committee and to the people of Assam,” Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma wrote on X.

He said the Charaideo Moidam embodies the deep spiritual belief, rich civilisational heritage, and architectural prowess of Assam’s Tai-Ahom community.

The Moidams were nominated as India’s official entry in 2023.

Of the 386 Moidams explored so far, 90 at Charaideo are the best preserved, representative, and most complete examples of this tradition.



### About Charaideo Moidams

- ✚ The Charaideo moidams represents the late medieval (13th-19th century CE) mound burial tradition of the Tai Ahom community in Assam.
- ✚ Charaideo, more than 400 km east of Guwahati, was the first capital of the Ahom dynasty founded by Chao Lung Sukaphaa in 1253.
- ✚ The Ahoms preferred to place the deceased family members at Charaideo where the first king Sukapha was laid to rest.
- ✚ The historical chronicles inform that wives, attendants, pet animals and huge quantity of valuables were buried with the departed kings.
- ✚ After 18th century, the Ahom rulers adopted the Hindu method of cremation and began entombing the cremated bones and ashes in a Maidam at Charaideo.
- ✚ Out of 386 Maidams explored so far, 90 royal burials at Charaideo are the best preserved, representative of and the most complete examples of mound burial tradition of the Ahoms.

### Significance of Charaideo

- ✚ The name "Charaideo" comes from the Tai Ahom words "Che-Rai-Doi," meaning "a shining town situated on a hilltop."
- ✚ It was the first capital of the Ahom kingdom, established in 1253 AD by King Sukaphaa.
- ✚ Sukaphaa was buried there in 1856, and it became the chosen resting place for subsequent Ahom royals.
- ✚ Though the Ahoms changed capitals several times over their 600-year rule, Charaideo remained a symbolic and ritual center due to its historical significance.
- ✚ Today, the moidams of Charaideo are major tourist attractions.

### About Ahoms

- ✚ The Ahom, also known as the Tai-Ahom, are an ethnic group from Assam and Arunachal Pradesh in India.
- ✚ This ethnic group is made up of interbred descendants of the Tai people, who first came to Assam's Brahmaputra valley in 1228, and indigenous people who later joined them.
- ✚ The current Ahom people and culture are a mix of the ancient Tai people and culture, as well as indigenous Tibeto-Burman people and cultures that they assimilated in Assam.
- ✚ Sukaphaa, the Tai group's leader, and his 9000 supporters founded the Ahom empire (1228–1826 CE), which ruled over part of modern-day Assam's Brahmaputra Valley until 1826.
- ✚ It retained sovereignty for 600 years until annexed by British India in 1826 (Treaty of Yandaboo).
- ✚ Lachit Borphukan (1622-1672) is the most celebrated ruler of Ahom Dynasty.

**UPSC Prelims PYQ : 2021**

**Ques : Which one of the following statements is correct?**

- (a) Ajanta Caves lie in the gorge of Waghora river.**
- (b) Sanchi Stupa lies in the gorge of Chambal river.**
- (c) Pandu-lena Cave Shrines lie in the gorge of Narmada river.**
- (d) Amaravati Stupa lies in the gorge of Godavari river.**

**Ans: a)**

**Page 14 : Prelims Fact : Paris Olympics**

The Paris Olympics has begun and will run from July 26 to August 11, 2024.

**About Paris Olympics**

- ✚ The Paris Olympics, officially known as the Games of the XXXIII Olympiad, will be held in Paris, France.
- ✚ This event, commonly referred to as the 2024 Summer Olympics, is an international multi-sport competition featuring athletes from around the world.
- ✚ **Sports include:** Athletics, Aquatics, Archery, Badminton, Basketball, Boxing, Canoeing, Cycling, Equestrian, Fencing, Football, Golf, Gymnastics, Handball, Hockey, Judo, Modern Pentathlon, Rowing, Rugby Sevens, Sailing, Shooting, Skateboarding, Sport Climbing, Surfing, Table Tennis, Taekwondo, Tennis, Triathlon, Volleyball, Weightlifting, and Wrestling.

## Paris unveils the ultimate spectacle with pomp, fervour and splendour

There has never been a celebration this grand during the 128-year history of the modern Olympiad as the Opening Ceremony, along the Seine, features iconic landmarks before culminating at Eiffel Tower; 78 athletes and officials from 12 disciplines take part from the Indian contingent



Y.B. Sarangi  
PARIS

The magnificent City of Light, dotted with the spectacular Eiffel Tower and scores of majestic buildings featuring admirable architecture, welcomed the 33rd Olympic Games in a unique way, with the much-awaited Opening Ceremony on the Seine involving a stretch of Paris' rich heritage, here on Friday.

The riot of colours and lights turned the Seine and the pastel city into a surreal place, amalgamating history and contemporariness in a spellbinding show conceptualised by Thierry Reboul and directed by Thomas Jolly, to celebrate the return of the Olympics to the city after a century.

Contrast this to the eighth edition of the Games which were held inside the Yves-du-Manoir Stadium in 1924. The Eiffel



**Vibrant start:** Sharath and Sindhu lead India's contingent at the Opening Ceremony. GETTY IMAGES

Tower was as young as only 35 years and the Roland Garros, the home of French Open for close to a century now, was only 33 and was still a year away from hosting its first Major. Paris' Olympic reincarnation exactly after a century tells a story of the world's evolution as well.

The novel parade, over

six kilometres on Seine, took off from the Austerlitz bridge beside the Jardin des Plantes in the evening before passing under several bridges and gateways. It provided the athletes a nice view of some of the Games venues, such as Parc Urbain La Concorde, the Esplanade des Invalides, the Grand Palais and

the Iena bridge, where the parade ended before the finale took place at the Trocadero.

Greece, the first host of the Games, led the flotilla of 85 boats carrying 6800 athletes with water fountains adding to the beauty of the setting. A Refugee Olympic Team followed, underlining the times we

live in as 205 delegates from different countries and hundreds of thousands of people, including several who watched it free, witnessed the amazing show.

With helicopters keeping a watch overhead, 12 cultural tableaux, a cabaret show by Lady Gaga and stunning musical perfor-

mances by leading French artists, including Aya Nakamura, broke the monotony of the parade.

71 giant screens, beaming the live action from 170 cameras, and strategically placed speakers allowed everyone to enjoy the magical atmosphere of this show reverberating throughout Paris.

Dressed in their tricolour-themed ceremonial attire, the designer kurta bundi sets for men and sarees for women, the Indians stood out.

78 athletes and officials from 12 disciplines took part in athletes' parade, led by double Olympic medallist shuttler P.V. Sindhu and five-time Olympian Sharath Kamal.

The Indian athletes who took part in the grand event included some prominent names such as four-time Olympian archers Deepika Kumari and Tarundeep Rai, Tokyo Games bronze medallist boxer Lovlina Borgohain, shooters Anjum Moudgil, Sift Kaur Samra, Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar and Anish Bhanwala, paddler Manika Batra and tennis player Rohan Bopanna.

At twilight, the bridges on the Seine lit up and set the stage for the Olympic flame to take its pride of place.

**Some about Olympics:**

- ✚ The Olympic Games originated in ancient Greece in 776 BC in Olympia.
- ✚ Held every 4 years, they featured athletic competitions among representatives of various city-states.
- ✚ The modern Olympics were revived by Baron Pierre de Coubertin of France.

## Daily News Analysis

- ✚ The first modern Olympic Games were held in Athens, Greece, in 1896.
- ✚ The Olympic Rings represent the union of the 5 inhabited continents (Africa, Americas, Asia, Europe, and Oceania).
- ✚ The Winter Olympics were introduced in 1924 in Chamonix, France and it features sports practiced on snow and ice, like skiing, ice skating, and ice hockey.
- ✚ The Olympic Torch Relay was introduced in the 1936 Berlin Games.
- ✚ The number of participating countries has grown from 14 in the 1896 Games to over 200 in recent editions.
- ✚ Women were first allowed to compete in the 1900 Paris Olympics.
- ✚ The Paralympics, for athletes with disabilities, were first held in Rome in 1960.

### India's Participation:

India is set to participate in various sports at the Paris Olympics 2024, with several medal prospects across disciplines.

1. <b>Athletics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ <b>Neeraj Chopra (Javelin Throw):</b> Defending Olympic gold medallist, aiming for another podium finish.</li> <li>✚ <b>Key Events:</b> Track and field events with several athletes competing in sprints, long jump, and discus throw.</li> </ul>
2. <b>Badminton</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ <b>PV Sindhu (Singles):</b> Two-time Olympic medallist, aiming for her third medal.</li> <li>✚ <b>Satwiksairaj Rankireddy/Chirag Shetty (Doubles):</b> Top doubles pair, strong medal contenders.</li> <li>✚ <b>Ashwini Ponnappa/Satwiksairaj Rankireddy:</b> Promising mixed doubles pair with several international wins.</li> </ul>
3. <b>Boxing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ <b>Mary Kom (Flyweight):</b> Veteran boxer and former Olympic medallist.</li> <li>✚ <b>Amit Panghal (Flyweight):</b> Strong contender in the men's category.</li> <li>✚ <b>Lovlina Borgohain (Welterweight):</b> Bronze medallist from Tokyo, aiming for a higher podium finish.</li> </ul>
4. <b>Shooting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ <b>Manu Bhaker (10m Air Pistol, 25m Pistol):</b> Young and promising shooter with several international accolades.</li> <li>✚ <b>Saurabh Chaudhary (10m Air Pistol):</b> Consistent performer and medal hopeful.</li> </ul>
5. <b>Wrestling</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ <b>Vinesh Phogat (50kg):</b> Experienced wrestler and strong medal prospect.</li> <li>✚ <b>Antim Panghal (53kg):</b> Young talent with significant potential.</li> </ul>

## Daily News Analysis

6. <b>Weightlifting</b>	✚ <b>Mirabai Chanu (49kg):</b> Silver medallist from Tokyo, aiming for gold in Paris.
7. <b>Hockey</b>	✚ <b>Men's Team:</b> After winning bronze in Tokyo, the team aims for gold. ✚ <b>Women's Team:</b> Strong contenders with improving performance over recent years.
8. <b>Table Tennis</b>	✚ <b>Manika Batra:</b> Leading Indian player with potential for a breakthrough performance. ✚ <b>Sharath Kamal:</b> Veteran player with considerable international experience.
9. <b>Archery</b>	✚ <b>Deepika Kumari:</b> Leading female archer with multiple international medals. ✚ <b>Atanu Das:</b> Strong contender in men's archery events.
10. <b>Gymnastics</b>	✚ <b>Dipa Karmakar:</b> Known for her Produnova vault, aiming for a comeback and podium finish.

### UPSC Prelims PYQ : 2021

**Ques: Consider the following statements in respect of the Laureus World Sports Award which was instituted in the year 2000 :**

1. American golfer Tiger Woods was the first winner of this award.
2. The award was received mostly by 'Formula One' players so far.
3. Roger Federer received this award maximum number of times compared to others.

**Which of the above statements are correct?**

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Ans: c)**

## Term In News : Dark Oxygen

Scientists have recently discovered a strange phenomenon, dubbed "dark oxygen" in the deep sea.



### About Dark Oxygen:

- ✚ Oxygen that is being produced in complete darkness thousands of feet below the ocean surface is termed dark oxygen.
- ✚ **Why is the discovery important?**
  - Until now, it was thought that oxygen was created only through photosynthesis, a process that requires sunlight.
  - Oceanic plankton, drifting plants, algae, and some bacteria are the primary elements attributed to the production of oxygen in the ocean. All these organisms are capable of photosynthesis.
  - The production of oxygen at such depths is thought to be impossible because there isn't enough sunlight for plants to do photosynthesis.
  - However, in this case, oxygen is not being produced by plants.
  - The oxygen comes out of Polymetallic nodules that are similar in resemblance to lumps of coal.

## Daily News Analysis

- These nodules, made up of metals like manganese, iron, cobalt, nickel, copper, and lithium, can generate oxygen through electrochemical activity even in the absence of light.
- They are splitting H<sub>2</sub>O molecules into Hydrogen and Oxygen.

### Key Facts about Polymetallic Nodules:

- ✚ Polymetallic nodules, also known as manganese nodules, are small, rounded accretions found on the seabed of the deep ocean floor.
- ✚ These nodules are composed of a mixture of metals and minerals, including manganese, iron, nickel, copper, cobalt, and traces of other valuable elements such as platinum, rare earth elements, and lithium.
- ✚ They form through a slow and gradual process over millions of years.
- ✚ They develop as concentric layers around a central nucleus, which can be a shell fragment, a shark tooth, or a piece of basaltic rock.
- ✚ The layers are primarily composed of manganese and iron oxides, with other metals being deposited along with them.
- ✚ These metals are really important for the production of lithium-ion batteries used in electric vehicle batteries, mobile phones, wind turbines, solar panels, etc.
- ✚ They are mainly found in the north-central Pacific Ocean, the southeastern Pacific Ocean and the northern Indian Ocean.
- ✚ It is said that there may be enough polymetallic nodules in an area of the Pacific Ocean called the Clarion-Clipperton Zone to meet global energy demands for decades after.

## UPSC Prelims PYQ : 2018

### Ques : Consider the following statements:

1. The Earth's magnetic field has reversed every few hundred thousand years.
2. When the Earth was created more than 4000 million years ago, there was 54% oxygen and no carbon dioxide.
3. When living organisms originated, they modified the early atmosphere of the Earth.

### Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans : c)

## *A new push in the Bay of Bengal*

India hosted the 2nd BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) Foreign Ministers' Retreat in New Delhi earlier this month with a focus on providing an "informal platform to discuss ways and means of cooperating and accelerating action in security, connectivity, trade, and investment within the Bay of Bengal." The retreat was held in preparation for the sixth summit meeting, scheduled for September, in which the BIMSTEC leaders will meet in person for the first time in the post-pandemic era. They are also expected to sign the BIMSTEC Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation to improve regional connectivity – a foundational aim of this grouping.

**Strengthening ties with eastern neighbours**  
BIMSTEC is the regional organisation devoted to the Bay of Bengal, with a membership of five South Asian and two Southeast Asian countries, cooperating across seven diverse sectors. It allows New Delhi to engage multilaterally with the other countries of the Bay of Bengal region, which are its eastern neighbours and therefore vital for its economic development, security, and foreign policy imperatives. India also remains intent on solidifying relations with its eastern neighbours as China's growing presence in the Bay of Bengal poses a potential threat to regional stability and New Delhi's position as a preferred security partner in these waters.

Strengthening ties with Bangladesh and Myanmar accords India the advantage of providing its landlocked north-eastern region with access to the sea. Improved ties with Myanmar and Thailand will also lend India the opportunity to have a more profound presence in the Indo-Pacific, as it holds the ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations), in which these two countries are members, to be of



**Harsh V. Pant**

Professor at King's College London and is Vice President for Studies and Foreign Policy at Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi



**Sohini Bose**

Associate Fellow, Neighbourhood Studies at ORF

The intent of BIMSTEC member states to push forth with a bold vision for the region was evident at the 2nd Foreign Ministers' Retreat

central importance in its vision of the Indo-Pacific. Thailand reinforced this idea at the retreat by identifying itself as a bridge between BIMSTEC and ASEAN. These priorities were reflected in the opening address by the Minister for External Affairs, S. Jaishankar, when he stated that BIMSTEC represents the intersection of India's 'Neighbourhood First' outlook, the 'Act East Policy', and the SAGAR (Security And Growth for All in the Region) vision.

### **Two parts of the retreat**

The retreat was divided into two parts. In the first segment, participants assessed the current state of regional cooperation within BIMSTEC, building on a presentation by India on the implementation of key outcomes of the 1st Retreat. Multiple ideas were shared by the member states including the establishment of Centers of Excellence in member states, focusing on Agriculture, Disaster Management, and Maritime Transport. India announced support for cancer research, treatment, and issuance of e-visas for patients of all BIMSTEC states, while Sri Lanka proposed the inclusion of kidney disease. The need for involving the private sector in trade and promoting young entrepreneurs was also highlighted, as was the importance of connectivity, cyber-security, and countering the trafficking of narcotics and illegal arms.

In the second session, the expectations of each country from the forthcoming summit were discussed. Sri Lanka underscored the need to map mineral resources found in abundance in the BIMSTEC countries and create opportunities for the vertical integration of stages of production within specific sectors in the economies of the countries, enabling them to diversify their production structure. Bangladesh highlighted the need for cooperation in the Blue Economy and urged member states to ban fishing during the

breeding season to address the problem of depleting catch in the Bay. Bhutan expounded on the need for collaboration in tourism and cultural exchanges, while Nepal highlighted its 'whole of the region' approach to leverage synergies among member states and transform BIMSTEC into a results-oriented regional forum. Thailand underscored the need for cooperation in non-traditional security domains, and Myanmar added the need to combat online scamming to the list. These proposals will be presented to the heads of state before the September summit.

### **Bilateral merits**

While the retreat was a multilateral milestone for India, it had its bilateral merits too. Mr. Jaishankar met several of his counterparts on the sidelines. He shared with Myanmar India's concerns over the flow of displaced persons, narcotics, and arms across the border and urged for the return of unlawfully detained Indians. He also held a meeting with the Bangladesh Foreign Minister, who requested him to ensure the smooth supply of daily essentials and send a technical team for the Teesta project, signifying another step towards easing this long-pending concern. At the end of the retreat, the Foreign Ministers called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

This year marks a decade of India's Act East and Neighbourhood First policies, and the thrust on BIMSTEC is a manifestation of New Delhi's efforts to continue nurturing collaborative growth for national and regional well-being. Thus, Mr. Jaishankar encouraged future collaborations through new energies, resources, and a renewed commitment to cooperation.

It remains to be seen how many of these proposals find culmination at the forthcoming Summit but the intent of the member states to push forth with a bold vision for the region was clearly evident at the retreat.

**GS Paper 02 : International Relations : India & Its Neighborhood**

**PYQ : (UPSC CSE (M) GS-2 2022): Do you think that BIMSTEC is a parallel organisation like the SAARC? What are the similarities and dissimilarities between the two? How are Indian foreign policy objectives realized by forming this new organisation? (250 w/15m)**

**UPSC Mains Practice Question :** Shared values, histories, and interests of the members enable BIMSTEC to provide a common space for peace and development; however, its role as a platform for regional integration should be seen with cautious optimism. Analyze. (250 w/15m)



## Context :

- ✚ India hosted the 2nd BIMSTEC Foreign Ministers' Retreat in New Delhi, creating an informal forum to enhance regional cooperation in security, connectivity, trade, and investment in the Bay of Bengal.

## Strengthening ties with eastern neighbours

- ✚ BIMSTEC is the regional organisation devoted to the Bay of Bengal, with a membership of five South Asian and two Southeast Asian countries, cooperating across seven diverse sectors.
- ✚ **Regional Stability and Security:** The growing presence of China in the Bay of Bengal is perceived as a potential threat to regional stability. By strengthening ties with countries like Bangladesh and Myanmar, India aims to reinforce its position as a preferred security partner in the region.
- ✚ **Economic Development:** Enhanced relations with eastern neighbors facilitate India's access to essential maritime routes, particularly for its landlocked northeastern states.
- ✚ **Indo-Pacific Strategy:** Improved relations with Myanmar and Thailand are integral to India's broader Indo-Pacific strategy. These countries are key members of ASEAN, which India considers central to its vision for the region.
- ✚ These priorities were reflected in the opening address by the Minister for External Affairs, S. Jaishankar, when he stated that BIMSTEC represents the intersection of India's 'Neighbourhood First' outlook, the 'Act East Policy', and the SAGAR (Security And Growth for All in the Region) vision.

## Two parts of the retreat

- ✚ The retreat was divided into two parts.
- ✚ In the first segment, participants assessed the current state of regional cooperation within BIMSTEC, building on a presentation by India on the implementation of key outcomes of the 1st Retreat.
- ✚ Multiple ideas were shared by the member states including the establishment of Centers of Excellence in member states, focusing on Agriculture, Disaster Management, and Maritime Transport.
- ✚ India announced support for cancer research, treatment, and issuance of e-visas for patients of all BIMSTEC states, while Sri Lanka proposed the inclusion of kidney disease.
- ✚ The need for involving the private sector in trade and promoting young entrepreneurs was also highlighted, as was the importance of connectivity, cyber-security, and countering the trafficking of narcotics and illegal arms.

## Daily News Analysis

- ✚ In the second session, the expectations of each country from the forthcoming summit were discussed.
- ✚ Sri Lanka underscored the need to map mineral resources found in abundance in the BIMSTEC countries and create opportunities for the vertical integration of stages of production within specific sectors in the economies of the countries, enabling them to diversify their production structure.
- ✚ Bangladesh highlighted the need for cooperation in the Blue Economy and urged member states to ban fishing during the breeding season to address the problem of depleting catch in the Bay.
- ✚ Bhutan expounded on the need for collaboration in tourism and cultural exchanges, while Nepal highlighted its 'whole of the region' approach to leverage synergies among member states and transform BIMSTEC into a results-oriented regional forum.
- ✚ Thailand underscored the need for cooperation in non-traditional security domains, and Myanmar added the need to combat online scamming to the list.

### Bilateral merits

- ✚ **India-Myanmar Concerns:** Mr. Jaishankar addressed issues with Myanmar regarding the flow of displaced persons, narcotics, and arms across the border, and urged the return of unlawfully detained Indian nationals.
- ✚ **India-Bangladesh Cooperation:** In his meeting with the Bangladesh Foreign Minister, Mr. Jaishankar was requested to ensure the smooth supply of daily essentials and send a technical team for the Teesta project, signifying efforts towards resolving long-pending concerns.

### Way forward:

- ✚ **Enhance Security Collaboration:** Need to prioritize discussions on security cooperation among BIMSTEC members, particularly in countering transnational crimes such as narcotics and arms trafficking.
- ✚ **Develop Connectivity Projects:** Indian government should expedite the implementation of connectivity projects, such as the India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway, to facilitate trade and movement. This will not only enhance economic ties but also improve regional stability.

### About BIMSTEC

- ✚ **Full Name:** Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation.
- ✚ **Established:** 1997.
- ✚ **Member Countries:** Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.

## Daily News Analysis

- ✚ **Objective:** Promote regional cooperation, economic growth, and development.
- ✚ **Headquarters:** Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- ✚ **Key Sectors of Cooperation:** Trade and investment, technology, energy, transport and communication, tourism, fisheries, agriculture, public health, poverty alleviation, counter-terrorism, environment, culture, and people-to-people contact.
- ✚ **Significance:**
  - Bridges South and Southeast Asia.
  - Enhances regional connectivity.
  - Facilitates economic integration and cooperation.
- ✚ **Principles of BIMSTEC**
  - Sovereign Equality
  - Territorial Integrity
  - Political Independence
  - No-interference in Internal Affairs
  - Peaceful Co- existence
  - Mutual Benefit
  - Constitute an addition to and not be a substitute for bilateral, regional or multilateral cooperation involving the Member States.
- ✚ **Recent Focus:**
  - Combating terrorism and transnational crime.
  - Enhancing connectivity and trade.
  - Addressing climate change and disaster management.
- ✚ **Strategic Importance of BIMSTEC for India**
  - **Allows India to pursue three core policies:**
    - **Neighborhood First** - primacy to the country's immediate periphery;
    - **Act East** - connect India with Southeast Asia; and
    - **Economic development of India's northeastern states** – by linking them to the Bay of Bengal region via Bangladesh and Myanmar.
  - Allows India to counter China's creeping influence in countries around the Bay of Bengal due to the spread of its Belt and Road Initiative.
  - A new platform for India to engage with its neighbors with South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) becoming dysfunctional because of differences between India and Pakistan.
- ✚ **How BIMSTEC is Different from SAARC?**

## Daily News Analysis

SAARC	BIMSTEC
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. A regional organisation looking into South Asia</li><li>2. Established in 1985 during the cold war era.</li><li>3. Member countries suffer for mistrust and suspicion.</li><li>4. Suffers from regional politics.</li><li>5. Asymmetric power balance.</li><li>6. Intra-regional trade only 5 percent.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Interregional organisation connecting South Asia and South East Asia.</li><li>2. Established in 1997 in the post-Cold War.</li><li>3. Members maintain reasonably friendly relations.</li><li>4. Core objective is the improvement of economic cooperation among countries.</li><li>5. Balancing of power with the presence of Thailand and India on the bloc.</li><li>6. Intra-regional trade has increased around 6 percent in a decade.</li></ol>

### Act East Policy

#### About:

- The 'Act East Policy' announced in November, 2014 is the upgrade of the "Look East Policy".
- It is a diplomatic initiative to promote economic, strategic and cultural relations with the vast Asia-Pacific region at different levels.
- It involves intensive and continuous engagement with Southeast Asian countries in the field of connectivity, trade, culture, defence and people-to-people-contact at bilateral, regional and multilateral levels.

#### Aim:

- To promote economic cooperation, cultural ties and developing a strategic relationship with countries in Indo-pacific region with a proactive and pragmatic approach and thereby improving the economic development of the North Eastern Region (NER) which is a gateway to the South East Asia Region.

### SAGAR

## Daily News Analysis

- ✦ Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) was launched in 2015. It is India's strategic vision for the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
  - ✦ Through SAGAR, India seeks to deepen economic and security cooperation with its maritime neighbours and assist in building their maritime security capabilities.
  - ✦ Further, India seeks to safeguard its national interests and ensure Indian Ocean region to become inclusive, collaborative and respect international law.
  - ✦ The key relevance of SAGAR emerges when seen in conjunction with India's other policies impacting the maritime domain like Act East Policy, Project Sagarmala, Project Mausam, India as 'net security provider', focus on Blue Economy etc.
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## Daily News Analysis

- ✚ There are a total of 54 tiger reserves in India, safeguarding a total area of 75,796.83 square kilometers.
- ✚ This constitutes over 2.3% of the country's total land, a significant increase from the original nine reserves covering 18,278 square kilometers in 1973.
- ✚ First tiger reserve was set up in 1973 as Palamau Tiger Reserve in Jharkhand.
- ✚ Most recently declared tiger reserve is Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh. These reserves are important for protecting the tigers that live in India.

### State Wise Tiger Reserves in India

Tiger Reserves	State	Year
<b>Andhra Pradesh</b>	Nagarjunsagar Srisailam Tiger Reserve	1982-1983
<b>Arunachal pradesh</b>	Pakke Tiger Reserve	1999-2000
	Namdapha Tiger Reserve	1982- 1983
	Kamlang Tiger Reserve	2016-2017
<b>Assam</b>	Orang Tiger Reserve	2016
	Nameri Tiger Reserve	1999-2000
	Manas Tiger Reserve	1973-1974
	Kaziranga Tiger Reserve	2008-2009
<b>Bihar</b>	Valmiki Tiger Reserve	1989-1990
<b>Chhattisgarh</b>	Udanti-Sitanadi Tiger Reserve	2008-2009
	Indravati Tiger Reserve	1982-1983
	Achanakmar Tiger Reserve	2008-2009
<b>Jharkhand</b>	Palamau Tiger Reserve	1973-1974
<b>Karnataka</b>	Nagarahole Tiger Reserve	2008-2009
	Dandeli-Anshi (Kali) Tiger Reserve	2008-2009

Will be continue.....