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Malwan – Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft Delivered to Indian Navy

Why in News?

- **Malwan**, the second of eight **Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (ASW SWC)**, has been delivered to the Indian Navy. Built indigenously by **Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL)**, Kochi, it strengthens coastal defence capabilities with advanced anti-submarine warfare systems in shallow waters.

About Malwan – ASW Shallow Water Craft

- **Project Details**
 - Second ship of eight ASW SWC vessels being built under an indigenous project.
 - Designed and constructed by **Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL)**.
- **Naming**
 - Named after the historic coastal town of **Malwan** in Maharashtra.
 - Carries forward the legacy of the earlier **INS Malwan**, an Indian Naval Minesweeper that served till 2003.
- **Key Features**
 - **Displacement:** 1,100 tons
 - **Propulsion:** Waterjet propulsion system
 - **Armament:** Torpedoes, multi-functional anti-submarine rockets
 - **Sensors:** Advanced radars and sonar systems for underwater surveillance
 - **Capabilities:** Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) in coastal/shallow waters, Low Intensity Maritime Operations (LIMO), and mine warfare
 - **Indigenous Content:** Over 80%



Significance

- **Atmanirbhar Bharat in Defence**
 - High indigenous content showcases self-reliance in warship design and construction.
- **Coastal Defence**
 - Enhances the Navy's ability to detect and neutralise submarine threats in shallow coastal waters.
 - Strengthens overall maritime security along India's extensive coastline.
- **Strategic Importance**
 - Complements larger surface combatants and submarines in layered defence architecture.
 - Supports 'Make in India' and 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' vision in naval shipbuilding.

UPSC CSE & State PCS Relevance

Prelims

- Key terms: Malwan ASW SWC, Cochin Shipyard Limited, Anti-Submarine Warfare, Waterjet Propulsion, Indigenous Content
- Facts: Second of eight ships; Displacement 1,100 tons; Over 80% indigenous content

GS-3 (Defence & Security)

- Indigenous warship building, coastal defence, and naval modernisation.

GS-3 (Science & Technology)

- Role of public sector shipyards in advanced defence platforms.

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Essay / Interview

- “Aatmanirbhar Bharat in Defence: Progress in Indigenous Warship Construction”
- “Shallow Water ASW Capabilities: Critical for India’s Coastal and Maritime Security.”

MCQs

1. Malwan is the second ship of which class/project?

- (a) Nilgiri Class (P17A)
- (b) Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (ASW SWC)
- (c) Kamorta Class
- (d) Visakhapatnam Class

Answer: (b)

2. Malwan ASW SWC has been built by:

- (a) Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd
- (b) Cochin Shipyard Limited
- (c) Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers
- (d) Hindustan Shipyard Ltd

Answer: (b)

3. Which of the following is NOT a capability of Malwan ASW SWC?

- (a) Anti-Submarine Warfare in shallow waters
- (b) Low Intensity Maritime Operations
- (c) Strategic ballistic missile launch



(d) Mine warfare

Answer: (c)

4. The ship Malwan draws its name from a historic coastal town located in:

(a) Gujarat

(b) Maharashtra

(c) Karnataka

(d) Odisha

Answer: (b)

Mains Questions

1. "Indigenous warship construction is a cornerstone of India's maritime security and self-reliance." Discuss with special reference to the delivery of Malwan ASW Shallow Water Craft. (15 marks / 250 words)
2. Examine the strategic importance of Anti-Submarine Warfare capabilities in shallow waters for the Indian Navy. (10 marks / 150 words)
3. "Public sector shipyards like Cochin Shipyard Limited are playing a pivotal role in Atmanirbhar Bharat." Analyse this statement in the context of recent naval deliveries. (15 marks / 250 words)
4. **Essay (250 marks)** "From Design to Delivery: India's Journey Towards Self-Reliance in Naval Shipbuilding."



Rare White Albino Himalayan Tahr

Why in News?

- A rare **white female albino Himalayan Tahr** has been recorded in the **Kugti Wildlife Sanctuary** at Bharmour in Chamba district, Himachal Pradesh.
- This sighting highlights the rich biodiversity of high-altitude sanctuaries and raises awareness about genetic variations and conservation needs in the fragile Himalayan ecosystem.

About Kugti Wildlife Sanctuary

- **Location & Significance**
 - Second largest wildlife sanctuary in **Himachal Pradesh**.
 - Located in the high-altitude zone between the **Ravi** and **Chenab** rivers.
 - Houses the famous **Manimahesh Temple**, attracting thousands of pilgrims despite difficult terrain and extreme cold.
- **Geographical Features**
 - Surrounded by **Dhauladhar Wildlife Sanctuary** (south-east) and **Tundah Wildlife Sanctuary** (north-west).
 - Altitude range: **2,195 m to 5,040 m**.
- **Vegetation**
 - Alpine Pasture, Western Mixed Coniferous Forest, and Moist Deodar Forest.
 - Major flora: Deodar (*Cedrus deodara*), Kail (*Pinus wallichiana*), Spruce (*Picea smithiana*), Silver Fir (*Abies pindrow*), Ban Oak (*Quercus semicarpifolia*), Pink Burans (*Rhododendron campanulatum*), etc.
- **Fauna**



- Home to endangered species including **Ibex, Musk Deer, Himalayan Tahr, Monal**, Snow Cock, Pheasants, Red-vented Bulbul, White-cheeked Bulbul, etc.

Significance of the Sighting

• Biodiversity Value

- Albino Himalayan Tahr is a rare genetic variation, indicating a healthy but fragile high-altitude ecosystem.
- Highlights the need for continuous monitoring and protection of endemic species.

• Conservation Implications

- Reinforces the importance of protecting high-altitude sanctuaries from climate change, habitat fragmentation, and human interference.
- Supports Himachal Pradesh's efforts in wildlife conservation and eco-tourism.

UPSC CSE & State PCS Relevance

Prelims

- Key terms: Kugti Wildlife Sanctuary, Himalayan Tahr, Albino Variation, High-Altitude Sanctuary
- Facts: Second largest sanctuary in Himachal Pradesh; Altitude 2,195-5,040 m; Located between Ravi and Chenab rivers

GS-3 (Environment & Biodiversity)

- Wildlife conservation, protected areas in Himalayas, rare species sighting.

GS-1 (Geography)

- Physical geography of Himachal Pradesh and high-altitude ecosystems.



Essay / Interview

- “Rare Sightings and Fragile Ecosystems: The Need for Stronger Himalayan Conservation”
- “Biodiversity Hotspots in the Himalayas: Challenges of Climate Change and Habitat Protection.”

MCQs

1. Kugti Wildlife Sanctuary is located in which state?

- (a) Uttarakhand
- (b) Himachal Pradesh
- (c) Jammu & Kashmir
- (d) Sikkim

Answer: (b)

2. With reference to Kugti Wildlife Sanctuary, consider the following statements:

- 3. It is the second largest sanctuary in Himachal Pradesh.
- 4. It lies between the Ravi and Chenab rivers.
- 5. It houses the famous Manimahesh Temple.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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



Answer: (d)

3. The rare white albino Himalayan Tahr belongs to which category of animal?

- (a) Bird
- (b) Mammal
- (c) Reptile
- (d) Amphibian

Answer: (b)

4. Which of the following is NOT found in Kugti Wildlife Sanctuary?

- (a) Himalayan Tahr
- (b) Musk Deer
- (c) Snow Leopard
- (d) Ibex

Answer: (c)

(Note: Snow Leopard is more associated with higher sanctuaries like Pin Valley; Kugti is known for Ibex, Musk Deer, Tahr, etc.)

Mains Questions

1. "High-altitude wildlife sanctuaries like Kugti are vital for conserving rare Himalayan species." Discuss the ecological significance of Kugti Wildlife Sanctuary and the threats it faces. (15 marks / 250 words)
2. Examine the importance of protecting genetic diversity, including rare variations like albino Himalayan Tahr, in Himalayan ecosystems. (10 marks / 150 words)



3. "Climate change and habitat fragmentation pose serious challenges to high-altitude biodiversity." Analyse this statement with reference to sanctuaries in Himachal Pradesh. (15 marks / 250 words)
4. **Essay (250 marks)** "Fragile Himalayan Ecosystems: Balancing Conservation, Pilgrimage and Climate Resilience."

Iran War & Food Inflation Risks

Why in News?

- The ongoing **Iran conflict** and disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz have raised concerns over India's fertiliser and pesticide imports, which could affect the upcoming **kharif season** and future food inflation.
- However, **immediate food inflation risks remain limited** due to strong buffer stocks (23.6 mt wheat and 36.5 mt rice as of March 1) and promising **rabi crop prospects**.

Current Food Security Position

- **Strong Buffer Stocks**
 - Wheat: 23.6 million tonnes (much higher than previous two years)
 - Rice: 36.5 million tonnes
- **Promising Rabi Harvest**
 - Good monsoon 2025 led to increased acreage under wheat, mustard, maize, chana, masoor, potato, and onion.
 - Favourable weather (cooler temperatures from western disturbances) supports better yields.
 - Mustard harvest completed with minimal damage; potato production up 8-10%; wheat harvesting underway.



- **Sugar & Other Crops**

- Sugar stocks slightly lower for 2025-26, but prices remain stable.

Emerging Risks from Iran Conflict

- **Fertiliser Supply Pressure**

- India has comfortable stocks for the first half of kharif (urea 6.1 mt, DAP 2.4 mt, complex 5.7 mt, SSP 2.5 mt).
- Gulf countries are key suppliers of LNG, ammonia, and sulphur.
- Global prices have surged: Ammonia \$725-750/tonne, Sulphur >\$700/tonne, DAP ~\$825/tonne.
- Annual demand: ~40 mt urea, 10 mt DAP, 14 mt complex fertilisers.

- **Pesticide & Agrochemical Risks**

- 55% of global naphtha (key raw material) comes from or passes through West Asia.
- Higher prices of intermediates like isopropylamine (used in glyphosate).
- Packaging costs (HDPE, PET) up 30-40%.

Government & Expert Response

- Recalibrate subsidy rates to reflect rising global prices and weaker rupee.
- Push for increased domestic production and shift towards nutrient-efficient complex fertilisers and SSP instead of urea/DAP.
- Opportunity to promote balanced fertilisation for better soil health.

Significance

- **Short-term:** Strong stocks and good rabi output provide a cushion against immediate food inflation.



- **Medium-term:** Disruptions in fertiliser and pesticide supply could raise input costs for kharif, potentially affecting yields and prices later in 2026-27.
- **Long-term:** Highlights India's dependence on West Asian imports and the need for diversified sources, domestic manufacturing, and efficient nutrient management.

UPSC CSE & State PCS Relevance

Prelims

- Key terms: Rabi & Kharif crops, Fertiliser subsidy, Naphtha, Balanced fertilisation
- Data: Wheat stocks 23.6 mt, Rice 36.5 mt; Annual urea demand ~40 mt

GS-3 (Economy & Agriculture)

- Food security, fertiliser subsidy, input cost inflation, and agricultural supply chain vulnerabilities.

GS-2 (IR)

- Impact of West Asia conflict on India's energy and agricultural imports.

Essay / Interview

- "Geopolitical Conflicts and Food Security: Lessons for India from the Iran War"
- "From Buffer Stocks to Input Security: Strengthening India's Agricultural Resilience."

MCQs

1. According to recent data, India's wheat stock on March 1 was approximately:
 - (a) 10 million tonnes
 - (b) 23.6 million tonnes
 - (c) 36.5 million tonnes



(d) 50 million tonnes

Answer: (b)

2. Which of the following is a key raw material for agrochemicals whose supply is affected by the West Asia conflict?

(a) Urea

(b) Naphtha

(c) Potash

(d) Bentonite

Answer: (b)

3. With reference to fertiliser stocks, which nutrient is currently slightly lower in availability?

(a) Urea

(b) DAP

(c) Potash

(d) SSP

Answer: (c)

4. The current comfortable food stock position in India is mainly due to:

1. High buffer stocks of wheat and rice

2. Promising rabi crop prospects

Select the correct answer:

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

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(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither

Answer: (c)

Mains Questions

1. "The Iran conflict has limited immediate impact on food inflation but poses rising risks for the kharif season." Discuss the current food security position and emerging challenges for India. (15 marks / 250 words)
2. Examine the implications of rising global fertiliser and pesticide prices on Indian agriculture and suggest policy measures. (10 marks / 150 words)
3. "Turning crisis into opportunity - how can India use the current fertiliser supply challenges to promote balanced and sustainable nutrient management?" Analyse. (15 marks / 250 words)
4. **Essay (250 marks)** "Geopolitics, Fertiliser Security and Food Inflation: Strengthening India's Agricultural Resilience in an Uncertain World."

Artemis II Mission: NASA's First Crewed Lunar Flyby in Over 50 Years

Why in News?

- NASA's **Artemis II mission** will send four astronauts on a **10-day journey** around the Moon – the first human mission to lunar vicinity since Apollo 17 in 1972.
- It is a **flyby mission** (no landing). A crewed lunar landing is planned for **2028**. NASA has also unveiled a long-term roadmap for a **permanent human presence** on the Moon with missions every six months.

Key Features of Artemis II Mission

- **Mission Profile**

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- Crew: 4 astronauts
- Duration: ~10 days
- Trajectory: Will orbit Earth twice, then fly around the Moon, reaching up to **6,500 km** beyond the far side – the farthest humans have ever travelled from Earth.
- **Launch Vehicle & Spacecraft**
 - **Space Launch System (SLS)** – NASA’s most powerful rocket.
 - **Orion spacecraft** – Crew module (first crewed flight after uncrewed Artemis I in 2022).
- **Travel Time**
 - Fast route: 3-4 days to Moon vicinity (similar to Apollo).
 - Contrast: Slower, fuel-efficient routes (e.g., Chandrayaan-3) take weeks/months.

NASA’s Long-Term Lunar Vision

- Shift from short Apollo-style visits to **sustained exploration** and **permanent base**.
- Artemis programme roadmap:
 - Artemis I (2022): Uncrewed test
 - Artemis II (2026): Crewed flyby
 - Artemis III (2028): Planned crewed landing
 - Regular missions every six months thereafter.
- Involves international partners and private companies.



India's Role in the New Lunar Race

- India signed the **Artemis Accords**, aligning with NASA's framework for peaceful lunar exploration.
- ISRO-NASA collaboration already visible in **NISAR** Earth observation mission.
- India aims for **human landing on the Moon by 2040** (China targets 2030).
- Positions India as both collaborator and emerging player in lunar exploration.

Significance

- **Technological** – Tests SLS and Orion with crew for the first time.
- **Strategic** – Marks return of humans to deep space after 50+ years.
- **For India** – Opens opportunities for deeper ISRO-NASA cooperation in future lunar and deep-space missions.

UPSC CSE & State PCS Relevance

Prelims

- Key terms: Artemis II, SLS Rocket, Orion Spacecraft, Artemis Accords, Lunar Flyby
- Facts: First crewed lunar mission since 1972; Planned landing 2028; Farthest distance ~6,500 km beyond Moon

GS-3 (Science & Technology)

- Space exploration programmes, international cooperation in space.

GS-2 (IR)

- India's participation in Artemis Accords and growing space diplomacy.

Essay / Interview

- "From Apollo to Artemis: The Return of Humans to the Moon and India's Emerging Role"

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- “Space as the Next Frontier of Geopolitical Competition and Cooperation.”

MCQs

1. Artemis II mission is:

- (a) A crewed landing on the Moon
- (b) A crewed flyby around the Moon
- (c) An uncrewed Mars mission
- (d) A space station resupply mission

Answer: (b)

2. The Artemis II mission will be launched using:

- (a) Saturn V
- (b) Space Launch System (SLS)
- (c) GSLV Mk III
- (d) Falcon Heavy

Answer: (b)

3. India has signed which international agreement related to lunar exploration?

- (a) Outer Space Treaty
- (b) Artemis Accords
- (c) Moon Agreement
- (d) ISS Agreement

Answer: (b)

4. Artemis II is scheduled to be the first crewed mission to lunar vicinity since:

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- (a) 1969
- (b) 1972
- (c) 2004
- (d) 2012

Answer: (b)

Mains Questions

1. “Artemis II marks humanity’s return to deep space after more than five decades.” Discuss the significance of the mission and its implications for future lunar exploration. (15 marks / 250 words)
2. Examine India’s growing role in lunar exploration through the Artemis Accords and its own planned human mission by 2040. (10 marks / 150 words)
3. “The new space race is shifting from competition to cooperative exploration.” Analyse this statement with reference to the Artemis programme and India’s space ambitions. (15 marks / 250 words)
4. **Essay (250 marks)** “From Moon Landing to Moon Base: The Evolution of Human Space Exploration in the 21st Century.”

Global Tensions and India’s Economy

Why in News?

- Rising **geopolitical instability in West Asia** (Iran conflict and Strait of Hormuz disruptions) is transmitting shocks to India’s economy through higher oil prices, rupee depreciation, widening current account deficit, and fiscal stress.



- India imports over **85%** of its crude oil, making it highly vulnerable. The Indian crude basket recently touched **\$156.29 per barrel**, while the rupee hit a record low of **Rs. 95 per dollar**.

Channels of Transmission

- **Energy Prices**
 - A \$10 rise in crude prices can significantly increase inflation and widen the current account deficit.
 - Higher oil prices raise transport costs, production expenses, and overall inflation.
- **Exchange Rate Pressure**
 - Rupee depreciated to **Rs. 95 per dollar**.
 - RBI intervened using foreign exchange reserves to curb volatility.
 - Depreciation increases the cost of all imports and adds to inflationary pressure.
- **External Sector Stress**
 - Foreign exchange reserves declined to around **\$709 billion**.
 - Intensified foreign portfolio outflows due to global uncertainty.
- **Fiscal Impact**
 - Higher subsidies on fertilisers and LPG.
 - Possible reduction in fuel taxes to control inflation, leading to revenue loss.
 - GST collections (Rs. 22.8 lakh crore) are increasingly transaction-based, making revenue vulnerable to reduced consumption.



Impact on Households & Economy

- **Households**
 - Private consumption is ~61.4% of GDP.
 - Household liabilities have risen to over 41% of GDP.
 - Higher energy and LPG costs reduce disposable income and weaken consumption demand.
- **Industry & Investment**
 - Manufacturing growth remains strong in capital-intensive sectors, but labour-intensive sectors are weak.
 - Private investment continues to lag despite higher government capex.
 - Small businesses and informal sector are more vulnerable.

Way Forward

- Diversify energy sources and reduce dependence on West Asian crude oil.
- Strengthen income-led demand through employment generation and wage growth.
- Broaden the tax base to reduce reliance on transaction-based revenues like GST.
- Maintain adequate fiscal buffers for crisis management.
- Promote balanced fertilisation and nutrient-efficient practices to manage rising input costs.

UPSC CSE & State PCS Relevance

Prelims

- Key terms: Current Account Deficit, Fiscal Deficit, Rupee Depreciation, Indian Crude Basket, GST Collections
- Data: Oil imports >85%; Reserves ~\$709 billion; Rupee at Rs. 95/\$

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GS-3 (Economy)

- Impact of global shocks on macroeconomic stability, inflation, fiscal health, and external sector.

GS-2 (IR)

- Geopolitical tensions in West Asia and their transmission to India's economy.

Essay / Interview

- "Geopolitics and Economic Resilience: Managing Global Shocks in an Interconnected World"
- "From Oil Shock to Fiscal Stress: India's Vulnerabilities and the Road to Economic Resilience."

MCQs

1. India imports what percentage of its crude oil requirements?

- (a) 60-65%
- (b) Over 85%
- (c) 40-50%
- (d) Less than 30%

Answer: (b)

2. With reference to the impact of global tensions on India's economy, consider the following statements:

1. A rise in crude oil prices widens the current account deficit.
2. Rupee depreciation increases the cost of imports and adds to inflation.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither

Answer: (c)

3. Which of the following is NOT a direct channel of transmission of global geopolitical shocks to India's economy?

- (a) Oil price volatility
- (b) Rupee depreciation
- (c) Increase in GST collections
- (d) Foreign portfolio outflows

Answer: (c)

4. Private consumption accounts for approximately what percentage of India's GDP?

- (a) 40%
- (b) 61.4%
- (c) 75%
- (d) 25%

Answer: (b)

Mains Questions

1. "Geopolitical tensions in West Asia pose significant risks to India's macroeconomic stability." Discuss the channels of transmission and suggest measures to enhance economic resilience. (15 marks / 250 words)

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2. Examine the fiscal implications of rising global oil prices on India's subsidies, revenue, and overall budget management. (10 marks / 150 words)
3. "Strong buffer stocks provide short-term cushion, but structural vulnerabilities remain." Analyse India's current economic position in the context of global tensions. (15 marks / 250 words)
4. **Essay (250 marks)** "Global Shocks and National Resilience: Navigating Geopolitical Uncertainty in India's Economic Journey."

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