Prelim Bits 01-09-2021 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

China-Myanmar New Passage

China opens its 1st sea-road-rail transport link to Indian Ocean, called the China-Myanmar New Passage.

- It is a transport corridor that connects the logistics lines of Singapore, Myanmar and China.
- This route, which is the 1st to link western China with the Indian Ocean, is a **sea-road-rail link**.
- This passage is currently the most convenient land and sea channel linking the Indian Ocean with southwest China.
- The railway line of the route currently ends in Lincang on the Chinese side opposite the Myanmar border trade town of Chin Shwe Haw.

Belt and Road Initiative

- It is often described as a '21st Century Silk Road' or 'One Belt One Road (OBOR)'.

  Silk Road is an ancient network of trade routes that connected China to the Mediterranean via Eurasia for centuries.

- It seeks to connect Asia with Africa and Europe via **land and maritime networks** to improve regional integration, increasing trade and stimulating economic growth.
- BRI is made up of
  1. **Belt** (Land-based 'Silk Road Economic Belt') - Trans-continental passage that links China with Central and South Asia, the Middle East, and Europe
  2. **Road** (Sea-based '21st century Maritime Silk Road') - Route that connects China to Southeast Asia, Middle East, Africa, and Europe.
- The initiative defines 5 major priorities,
  1. Policy coordination;
  2. Infrastructure connectivity;
  3. Unimpeded trade;
  4. Financial integration; and
  5. Connecting people.

China Pakistan Economic Corridor

Gwadar port in Pakistan is being developed by China as another key outlet to the Indian Ocean that will bypass the Malacca Straits.

- It is being developed as part of the CPEC.

- Announced in 2013, the CPEC, a part of BRI, is a **developmental project** between Pakistan and China that consists of highways, railways, and pipelines.
- The goal of 3,000 km-long CPEC is,
    1. To transform Pakistan's economy by modernizing its road, rail, air, and energy transportation systems and
    2. To connect the deep-sea Pakistani ports of Gwadar and Karachi to China's Xinjiang province and beyond by overland routes.
- It aims to circumvent the Straits of Malacca and the South China Sea.
- CPEC has been compared to the Marshall Plan for the rebuilding of post-World War II Europe in its potential impact on the region.

24% Rain Shortfall

According to IMD, India ended August with a 24% shortfall from the predicted amount of rainfall.

- August normally receives the 2nd highest rainfall in the four monsoon months.
- So even a substantial rainfall in September would not wipe out the deficit.
- This brings India's overall monsoon rainfall deficit to 9%, meaning "below normal" rainfall.



- In June, the IMD forecast rainfall in northwest, south, east and central India would be "normal" or within an 8% error window of their historical average.
- This forecast too has been significantly off the mark, with Northwest India and Central India registering a 14% shortfall.

Reasons for the August monsoon failure

- The key reason has been an extended break in rainfall from August 8-18.
- Wind-bearing depressions in the Bay of Bengal, coupled with moisture from the Arabian Sea, usually inject surges of rain over central India.
- But this did not happen increasing the break-like conditions.
- Effects of global warming were also impacting monsoon rainfall.
- The number of rain-bearing depressions in the Bay of Bengal was declining and pre-monsoon cyclones, such as Tauktae possibly altered heat distribution patterns over the landmass.
- They influenced moisture distribution and thereby causing erratic rainfall.

New Zealand Zero Covid Strategy

New Zealand announced a strict, level-4 nationwide lockdown to contain the spread of the Covid-19.

- Zero Covid Strategy is an elimination strategy that aims to drive down the number of Covid-19 cases by imposing very strict lockdowns, closing borders and imposing travel bans at the **very early stages**.
- During the initial stages of the pandemic, New Zealand adopted this strategy.
- Though initially it was seen as a success story, experts are increasingly advising against this.
- On August 17, the country discovered one case of covid in the community.
- But one of the strictest nationwide lockdowns was announced.
- Under level-4 lockdown, people will only be permitted to travel outside for essential reasons and are expected to remain in their bubbles.
- This strategy is discouraged as it is not very sustainable

1. With new variants mutating, residents would be “indefinitely trapped”.
2. Citizens are stuck in foreign countries, unable to come back for over a year.
3. Tourism industry has also been hit hard.

- The main reason for the inability to impart other strategy is because the country’s vaccination drive is very slow.
- With vaccine drives all over the world, more sustainable ways of learning to live with the pandemic should be developed instead of strict lockdowns.

Meghalaya Community-Led Landscape Management Project

This specialized project of the Meghalaya government empowers its communities to take informed action pertaining to their environment.

- This World Bank-supported project was launched in 2018.
- It aims to strengthen rural communities and traditional institutions to take charge of their natural resources.
- This is done by implementing community-led sustainable community natural resource management plans.
- Through this project, the government gives,

    1. Free access to knowledge on a natural resource management issue,
    2. Solutions to local problems, and even implement these solutions by the community members, with facilitation support.

- Facilitators - The government set up a cross-functional expert team, which empowers village community facilitators (3 from each village) with digital infrastructure..
- They would take informed action pertaining to their environment, and create their own natural resource management plans.
- Centre of Excellence was launched in Meghalaya as a one-stop centre for natural resources management.

Source: PIB, The Hindu, The Indian Express, Live Mint, The Guardian, The Diplomat, Britannica

SHANKAR IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering