Prelim Bits 02-08-2022 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

Hambantota Port

India has raised its concern about the scheduled visit of a Chinese satellite vessel to the Hambantota port, Sri Lanka to the Sri Lankan President.

- Hambantota port is also known as the Magampura Mahinda Rajapaksha port.
- It is a **deep-water port** situated in the southern part of **Sri Lanka**.
- It is close to the Asian and European maritime trade routes, the Suez Canal and Malacca Strait.
- It was constructed in 2008 with Chinese financial aid, and **given to China on a 99-year lease**.
- The growing congestion at Colombo port was the primary reason for constructing Hambantota.
- It was also envisaged to solve the country's logistical problems and offer quick access to the international shipping lanes.
- The port has led to the emergence of conflict between the Asian powers, India and China since,
    1. China seeks to establish its paramountcy in the Indian Ocean and,
    2. India strives to maintain a natural defence area.

Disadvantages to India

- India is apprehensive that the port is part of **Chinese 'string of pearls'** with an objective to surround India and dock its military vessels.
- The String of pearls is a geopolitical theory on potential Chinese intentions in the Indian Ocean region.
- It refers to the network of Chinese military and commercial facilities and relationships along its sea lines of communication extending from the Chinese mainland to Port Sudan.
- These sea lines run through several major maritime choke points such as
    1. The Strait of Mandeb,
    2. The Strait of Hormuz,
    3. The Strait of Malacca,
    4. The Lombok Strait, and
    5. Other strategic maritime centres in Pakistan, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Somalia.

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Odesa Port

The first shipment of Ukrainian grain since the Russian invasion in February 2022 left the port of Odesa under a landmark deal to lift Moscow's naval blockade in the Black Sea.

> *The milestone comes after the United Nations and Turkey signed agreements with Russia and Ukraine to re-open Ukraine's Black Sea ports and resume exports of grain, cooking oil and fertilizer.*

- Odessa Sea Port (UAODS Port) is the largest **Ukrainian seaport** and one of the largest ports in the **Black Sea** basin.
- Its total annual traffic capacity is 40 million tonnes.
- The types of vessels regularly calling at Odessa are Bulk Carrier (100%).
- Along with its younger satellite ports of Chornomorsk (1958) and Yuzhne (1973), port of Odessa is a major freight and passenger transportation hub of Ukraine.
- Odesa is the base of a fishing fleet as well as the chief operational hub of the Ukrainian Navy. Odesa is also an important cultural and educational centre.

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School Innovation Council

The School Innovation Council was launched and has been introduced to all schools of all the states.

- The School Innovation Council (SIC) is an initiative taken by
    1. The Ministry of Education's Innovation Cell (MIC) and
    2. The All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE).
- SIC is a **council of teachers, students, and experts** from industry and academia to conduct year-round activities for students and teachers on Innovation and Entrepreneurship.
- SIC will enable mindset change, awareness, and training on Ideation, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, design thinking, Intellectual Property Rights, start-up finance, and

HR among School teachers and students.
- SIC will promote out of box thinking in school education as envisioned in National Innovation and National Education Policy 2020.
- It will also enable the **ranking system for schools** on the level of **innovation**-oriented activities.
- To implement the SIC council in all schools across the nation, SIC portal has been developed where schools can register themselves.
- SIC will link schools with Innovation Councils established by MIC at Higher Education Level to further provide exposure to school students.

School Innovation Ambassador Training Program

- School Innovation Ambassador Training program (SIATP) was launched to **strengthen the mentoring capacity of teachers** for cultivating and handholding innovative and ingenious ideas from students.
- The SIATP program has been conceptualised by MIC and AICTE to train the school teachers across country.
- Under SIATP, teachers undergo 72 hours of training, and those who qualify all the following five modules with a minimum 50% as passing marks are recognized as "Innovation Ambassadors".
    1. Design Thinking & Innovation;
    2. Idea generation & Idea hand-holding;
    3. Finance/Sales/HR;
    4. Intellectual Property Rights (IPR);
    5. Entrepreneurship and Prototype/ Product Development.
- The "Innovation Ambassadors" are competent to nurture the young school students on Ideation, IPR, product development, design thinking, problem-solving, critical thinking and skills of entrepreneurship.

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Pyrene Remediation

Researchers at the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research-Indian Institute of Petroleum (CSIR-IIP), Dehradun have identified white-rot fungus Trametes maxima IIPLC-32 to be capable of pyrene remediation.

- **Pyrene**, possessing four fused benzene rings, is a parent class of Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs).
- Pyrene is a highly toxic, recalcitrant, and carcinogenic PAHs found in the environment.
- Rapid pace of economic development and industrialisation has resulted in the release of several PAHs into the environment.
- The PAHs are ubiquitous environmental pollutants originating from multiple sources, including combustion of petrogenic fossil fuels, and incomplete incineration of

municipal wastes and biomass.
- It gets lodged into the environmental matrices like soil, water and atmosphere.
- This results in widespread environmental pollution, necessitating adequate remediation of contaminated environmental matrices.
- **Remediation** is the action of remedying something, in particular of reversing or stopping environmental damage.
- Pyrene Remediation is the action of remedying the environment by removing pyrene from the environment.
- **The fungus Trametes maxima IIPLC-32** has the potential to cause microbial degradation of pyrene using special enzymes.
- Growing on dead plants, this fungus can remove pyrene from the environment.
- This fungus acts to decrease the pollution level of the soil, thereby improving the soil quality.
- In the future, T.*maxima* IIPLC-32 can be tried for the bioremediation of PAH-contaminated aquatic environments.

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Arab Spring

- Arab Spring is a wave of pro-democracy protests and uprisings that took place in the Middle East and North Africa beginning in 2010 and 2011.
- This **pro-democracy wave** challenged some of the region's entrenched authoritarian regimes.
- It began when protests in Tunisia and Egypt toppled their regimes in quick succession, inspiring similar attempts in other Arab countries.
- However, not every country saw success in the protest movement.

Jasmine Revolution of Tunisia

- In 2010, deadly protests began, and spread from the town of Sidi Bouzid across the country.
- The then President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali fled in January 2011, inspiring revolts elsewhere.
- Tunisia held a first democratic election in October 2011, which was won by the once-banned moderate Islamist Ennahda.
- A new constitution establishing a parliamentary system was agreed in 2014, and Tunisians choose their lawmakers and president in free and fair elections, most recently in 2019.
- **Issues** - Economic troubles caused hardship and disillusionment.
- Illegal emigration to Europe increased.

- The economy, heavily dependent on tourism, was hit particularly hard by COVID-19.
- In 2021, President Kais Saied froze parliament and sacked the government.
- In 2022, he called a referendum on a new constitution that strengthened the presidency, capping what his opponents called a march to one-man rule.

Egypt Uprising of 2011

- President Hosni Mubarak had been in power since 1981, but massive anti-government protests began in 2011, inspired by Tunisia.
- As hundreds of thousands of protesters massed after Friday prayers, Mubarak deployed the military.
- Protests gathered momentum, police were pulled from the streets and the army stood back until Mubarak stepped down - to be tried on charges of abusing power and killing demonstrators.
- The once-banned Muslim Brotherhood won the 2012 election.
- However, a year later the military, which was encouraged by anti-Brotherhood protests toppled the new president Mohamed Mursi.
- Army chief Abdel Fattah el-Sisi replaced him as president.
- Rights groups documented abuses in a crackdown on dissent and the military faced a long-running insurgency from Islamist militants in Sinai.

Yemen Uprising of 2011-2012

- Crowds took to the streets against President Ali Abdullah Saleh in 2011, aggravating splits in the army and between political blocs.
- As Saleh was hurt in an assassination attempt, he sought treatment in Saudi Arabia.
- Gulf States brokered a transition deal including a “national dialogue” aimed at resolving Yemen’s problems, with Saleh’s old deputy Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi to be president until elections.
- With an al Qaeda insurgency raging in the east, Sanaa faced new problems in the north from the Iran-allied Houthi group and from a revived southern secessionist movement.
- In 2015, after the Houthis seized Sanaa, Saudi Arabia and its allies began a military campaign to keep Hadi in power.
- This war soon reached bloody stalemate, aggravating food shortages and cholera outbreaks.
- Ex-president Saleh was killed in a roadside attack in 2017 after switching sides, abandoning the Iran-aligned Houthis for the Saudi-led coalition.
- A U.N.-backed ceasefire took effect in 2022 and Hadi was replaced by a presidential council.

Libya Revolt of 2011

- In 2011, protests broke out in Benghazi and Misrata, which soon turned to armed revolt against Muammar Gaddafi’s 42-year rule.
- The UN Security Council declared a no-fly zone to protect civilians from Gaddafi’s forces and NATO started air strikes to halt their advance on Benghazi.
- Soon, the rebels had seized Tripoli, and Gaddafi was killed in his hometown of Sirte.
- Local militias seized hold of territory and, the country split in 2014 between western

and eastern factions.

- The UN helped broker a political agreement in 2015, but in practice the country stayed divided and Islamic State seized control of Sirte for more than a year.
- In 2019, eastern commander Khalifa Haftar launched a new war. This war led to an international conflict involving Russia, the UAE and Egypt backing Haftar and Turkey backing the Tripoli government.
- A U.N.-backed election - part of a peace process aimed at knitting Libya back together - was cancelled in 2021.
- In 2022, the Sirte-based parliament appointed a new prime minister but the government based in Tripoli refused to step down, leaving Libya split between rival administrations.

Syrian Civil War

- When the first protests began to spread through Syria in 2011, President Bashar al-Assad sent in security forces.
- Protesters were taking up arms and army units were joining the gathering revolt, later backed by Gulf monarchies and Turkey, as Assad hit back with air strikes. Full-blown war erupted.
- In 2014, the Islamic State group seized a swathe of territory, drawing a U.S.-led coalition to back Kurdish fighters in the northeast.
- Support from Russia, Iran and Lebanon’s Shi’ite Hezbollah movement helped Assad claw back control over much of the country.
- By the end of the decade, more than half the country’s pre-war population was displaced with the country partitioned between Assad, Turkey-backed rebels and Kurdish-led groups.

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