Prelim Bits 08-12-2023 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

Article 99 of the UN Charter

Amid Israel's ongoing military attacks on the Gaza Strip, United Nations (UN) has invoked Article 99 of the UN Charter in a bid to establish a ceasefire.

- It has been invoked for the *1st time in decades* as Israel attacks Gaza.
- **Article 99** - "The ***Secretary-General*** may bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the ***maintenance of international peace and security***."
- It is seen as a ***discretionary power*** of the Secretary-General.

*The **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)** comprises 5 permanent and 10 non-permanent members appointed for specific periods. On a rotational basis, each of these 15 countries holds the presidency for a month. The South American country of Ecuador is the President for December 2023.*

- **Impact** – The President of the UNSC is under the obligation to call a meeting of the Council.
- **Earlier Invocations**
  - During the upheaval in the ***Republic of the Congo in 1960*** following the end of Belgium's colonial rule.
  - During a complaint by ***Tunisia in 1961 against France's*** naval and air forces launching an attack.

UN Charter
• It is the *founding document of the United Nations*. • **Launched in** – June 1945 and came into force on October 1945. • It has been *amended 3 times* in 1963, 1965, and 1973. • **Legality** – It is an instrument of international law, and UN *Member States are bound* by it but in practice, there is little that member countries can be forced to do. • It consists of a *preamble and 111 articles* grouped into *19 chapters*. • The International Court of Justice (ICJ) functions in accordance with the Statute of the International Court of Justice, which is annexed to the UN Charter.

For a UN resolution to be adopted, it needs at least 9 votes in favour and no vetoes by the 5 permanent members (US, UK, France, China and Russia).

References

1. The Indian Express| UN Secretary General invoked Article 99
2. UN.ORG| United Nations Charter

Essequibo region

Recently, the U.N. Security Council scheduled an emergency closed meeting at the request of Guyana following Venezuela's weekend referendum claiming Essequibo region.

- **Geography –** It a *61,600-square-mile area* located in the heart of the ***Guiana Shield***, a geographical region in the northeast of South America.
- It accounts for *two-thirds of Guyana.*
- The area is one of the 4 last pristine tropical forests in the world.
- **Economical value –** It has vast oil and mineral resources.
    - With these resources, Guyana is set to surpass the oil production of Venezuela, and by 2025, it would become the world's largest per-capita crude producer.

Currently, Venezuela has the world's largest proven oil reserves.

- **History of contention –** It is a disputed territory between ***Guyana and Venezuela.***
- *1899 arbitration* demarcated their boundaries which was formally accepted in *1905 agreement*.
- While Venezuela challenged the 1899 arbitration in 1962, the ***1966 Geneva Agreement*** aimed at maintaining the status quo.
- **Recent contention** – Through referendum, Venezuelans approved the claim of sovereignty over Essequibo and were about to immediately begin exploration in the disputed region.
- **International response** – Guyana approached the *International Court of Justice (ICJ)* which refused to ban the referendum but ***urged Venezuela not to alter the status quo***.

*Under **Article 94 of the U.N. Charter**, if any party to a case fails to perform its required obligations, the other party (in this case Guyana) may take the issue to the Security Council.*

References

1. The Hindu| Dispute over Essequibo region
2. Aljazeera | Guyana's territorial dispute with Venezuela

Global Climate 2011-2020: A Decade of Acceleration

According to a report from the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), the decade from 2011-2020 was the warmest ever in history.

- The report provides a longer-term perspective and transcends year-to-year variability in our climate.
- It reports how extreme events undermines sustainable development and how improvements in early warnings and disaster management reduced the number of casualties.
- **Released by** – ***World Meteorological Organisation (WMO)*** at the UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC), COP28.
- It complements WMO's annual ***State of the Global Climate report.***
- **Data source** – Physical data analyses and impact assessments from National Meteorological and Hydrological Services, Regional Climate Centres, National Statistics Offices and UN partners.
- **Key messages of the report**
  - 2011-2020 was ***warmest decade*** on record
  - It recorded the *lowest number of deaths* from extreme events
  - *Heatwaves* caused the highest number of human casualties
  - *Tropical cyclones* caused the most economic damage
  - Glaciers around the world thinned by approximately *1 metre per year* on average between 2011 and 2020
  - Ocean heat and *acidification damaged marine ecosystems*
  - This was the 1st decade that the depleted *ozone hole visibly showed recovery*
  - Public and private *climate finance almost doubled*
- **Recommendations** – It emphasizes the need to try to limit global temperature rise to no more than 1.5°C above the pre-industrial era.
- Climate ***finance needs to increase at least 7 times*** by the end of this decade to achieve climate objectives.

References

1. The Hindu| Warmest decade in the history
2. WMO.INT| The Global Climate 2011-2020: A decade of acceleration

Global Initiative for Academic Networks (GIAN) in Higher Education

After COVID break, Centre approves 4th phase roll-out of GIAN scheme as recommended by the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA).

- It was launched in ***2015-16 by Ministry of Education (MoE)***.
- **Objectives** –
  - To increase the footfalls of ***international faculty in the Indian academic institutes*** and to create avenue for possible collaborative research.
  - To develop *high quality course material* in niche areas, both through video and

print mediums.

- **GIAN Implementation Committee** – It is *headed by* ***Secretary (HE), MoE*** to finalize and approve courses and also decide on budget allocation.
- **Coverage** – Initially, it will include all IITs, IIMs, Central Universities, IISc Bangalore, IISERs, NITs and IIITs subsequently cover good State Universities.
    - So far *39% of courses were delivered in IIT* campuses followed by NITs (24.6%).
- **Activities** – Initially, foreign faculty be involved in delivering Short or Semester-long Courses.
    - In total 1,612 faculties visited, *41.4% were from U.S.* and up to 72,000 Indian students directly benefitted.
- **Future prospects** – Experts allowing ***video recording and optional web-casting*** of their course will be given preference.
- There is a plan to make the ***repository of GIAN lectures*** available to universities across India through an online consortium.

References

1. The Hindu| Rollout of 4th phase of GIAN
2. GIAN| Global Initiatives for Academic Networks

Almora Fault

Data indicates an increase in earthquake activity in 2023 was mainly attributed to the activation of the Almora fault.

- **Almora Fault** – It is located in *Western Nepal.*
- It is a high angle west-northwest-east-southeast to northwest-southeast trending tectonic plane.
- It separates the inner lesser Himalayas in the north from outer lesser Himalayas in the south.

A fault
• It is a *fracture* or zone of fractures between two blocks of rock. • **Movement** – It allow the blocks to *move relative to each other* which may occur *rapidly, in the form of an earthquake* or may occur slowly, in the form of creep. • **Range** - Few *millimetres to thousands of kilometers*.

- **Activation of Almora fault-** ***3 significant earthquakes above 5.8 magnitude*** occurred in 2023 leading to an *increased frequency of earthquakes in 2023*.

  There have been 97 earthquakes in 2023 of magnitude 3.0 to 3,9 compared to 41 in 2022.

- **Agency responsible** - The ***National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)*** is

responsible for taking precautionary measures and response to earthquake related incidents.

Nepal and the adjoining northern part of India, located near the active faults of the Himalayan region, are highly seismically active areas prone to frequent earthquakes due to ***collision tectonics****, where the Indian plate subducts beneath the Eurasian Plate.*

References

1. Down To Earth| Activation of Almora Fault
2. Live Mint| Almora Fault

Other Important News	
Railway Protection Force (RPF)'s Operations	
Operation Jeevan Raksha	To protect the lives of passengers, who had accidently fallen while deboarding or boarding.
Operation Yatri Suraksha	To improve the security of passengers traveling by Indian Railways.
Operation NARCOS	It is pan-India drive against smuggling of Narcotics through Rail.
Operation Uplabdh	To curb the illegal sale of railway tickets.
Operation Sanraksha	To enhance the safety of passengers.
Operation Seva	To assist those who (elderly citizens, women, physically disabled and sick/injured persons) in need in their travel.
Operation Satark	To stop the transportation of illegal items through railway networks.
Operation AAHT	To curb Anti-Human Trafficking Efforts.

Pompe Disease

• It is also known as ***Glycogen Storage Disease Type II.***
• It is a *rare genetic disorder* caused by a deficiency of the enzyme acid ***alpha-glucosidase (GAA)*** (crucial for breaking down glycogen into glucose within the lysosomes of cells).
• Its prevalence estimates range from 1 in 40,000 to 1 in 300,000 births.
• Currently, there is no cure for Pompe disease and to improve quality of life ***Enzyme Replacement Therapy (ERT)*** is a standard treatment.

Bandipur Tiger Reserve

• The Bandipur Tiger Reserve is situated in Karnataka which holds the 2nd highest Tiger population in India.
• It was established in the year 1974 as a forest tiger reserve under the Project Tiger.
• It is part of the ***Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve***.
• 3 rivers flow through the main area of the Bandipur Tiger Reserve - Nugu River, Moyar River and Kabini River.

Total Fertility Rate (TFR) in Kerala

• Kerala breaks the general assumption that educated women have fewer children than uneducated women.
• The Total Fertility Rate (TFR) among educated women is remarkably higher than that among the illiterate women.
• Kerala is the only State in the country with high Total Fertility Rate among educated women.
• The ***Total Fertility Rate (TFR)*** is the average number of children born to a woman during her reproductive years (15-49 years).

Asola Bhatti Wild Life Sanctuary

• Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary is a protected area in ***New Delhi*** and is a part of the Aravalli Mountain Range.
• It was established in the year 1986.
• It is a part of the ***Sariska-Delhi Wildlife Corridor***, which runs from the Sariska Tiger Reserve in Rajasthan to Delhi Ridge.

Armenia-Azerbaijan Peace Treaty

• Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed recently to exchange prisoners of war and work toward signing a peace treaty.
• As part of the deal, Armenia agreed to lift its objections to Azerbaijan hosting next year's international conference on climate change.

Elephant Endotheliotropic Herpes Virus (EEHV)

• A new study assessed the circulation of the elephant Endotheliotropic Herpesvirus Subtypes (EEHV) responsible for the recent rise in the disease, as well as its pathogenesis.
• Elephant endotheliotropic herpesvirus (EEHV) is a ***double-stranded DNA herpesvirus***.
• It can cause a fatal hemorrhagic disease in ***young Asian elephants***.
• The disease has a mortality rate of up to 85%.

Africa's Green Industrialisation Initiative

• The Africa Green Industrialisation Initiative (AGII) aims to accelerate and scale up green industries and businesses across Africa.
• The initiative builds upon the existing $4.5 billion Africa green investment from the United Arab Emirates (UAE).
• Africa has 40% of the world's critical minerals necessary for energy transition and has the world's largest natural carbon sink.

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