Prelim Bits 24-03-2022 | Daily UPSC Current Affairs

Mariupol

An official from Ukraine has said that the Russian offensive against Mariupol has turned the city into "ashes of a dead land".

- Geographically, Mariupol forms a land bridge between Crimea (Annexed by Russia in 2014) and Dobass (the separatist-held regions of Ukraine).
- Mariupol has been a key fighting ground as Russia looks to overturn its 2014 loss when the Russia-backed separatists failed to capture the city in the Donetsk oblast region.
- As of now, the Sea of Azov falls between the Donetsk-Luhansk region and Crimea.
- In 2014, the then Ukrainian President had declared Mariupol the regional capital of the oblast after Donetsk fell to rebel forces.
- In 2016, it also became a 'city of solidarity' - as termed by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees - welcoming internally displaced people from the contested territories.
- **Advantage** - Not just land, capturing Mariupol also gives Russia a maritime advantage, and also economic advantage.

Novorossiya

- In 2014, Russian President Vladimir Putin invoked 'Novorossiya' (New Russia) while talking to reporters.
- Novorossiya is a **historical term for territories** considered to be part of Russia **under tsarist rule.**
- Tsarist Rule included large parts of southern and eastern Ukraine, such as Odessa, Kharkiv, Kherson, Donetsk and Luhansk.
- The region's history as part of Russia created an obligation on Moscow to protect its present-day inhabitant.
- Effectively, controlling Mariupol will put Putin closer to the imagined Novorossiya.

Reference

1. https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-why-mariupol-is-key-to-russian-offence-7833405/
2. https://www.dw.com/en/what-do-we-know-about-the-situation-in-mariupol/a-61125638

Lapsus$ Attack

Microsoft has confirmed that its systems were breached by the hacker group Lapsus$.

- Other prominent companies such as NVIDIA, Samsung, Ubisoft, Okta, etc have been targeted by the same group.
- The Okta hack is particularly worrisome because the San Francisco-based company provides online authentication services to prominent players such as FedEx Corp, Coinbase Global, T-

Mobile, Cloudflare, etc.

- Lapsus$ is a South America-based group.
- It is known for publicly posting details about their hacks and sharing screenshots of stolen data on platforms such as Telegram and Twitter.
- **Targets** - The group started by targeting organisations in the United Kingdom and South America but has expanded globally.
- Their targets are across a range of sectors: government, technology telecom, media, retail and healthcare. It is also attacking cryptocurrency exchanges to steal cryptocurrency holdings.
- **Methods** - The hackers of Lapsus$ relied on large-scale social engineering and extortion campaigns against multiple organizations.
- The group relies on a pure extortion and destruction model without deploying ransomware payloads.
- The group is also relying on some tactics that are less frequently used by other threat actors.
- These include methods such as SIM-swapping to take over accounts, accessing personal email accounts of employees at target organisations.

Social Engineering Attacks

- In social engineering attacks, cybercriminals try to lure individuals into revealing critical personal information via phishing attacks.
- All of this information might be used to either guess passwords or even answers to security questions for an account.

Safety Measures

- For now, Microsoft has recommended that businesses rely on Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) to protect themselves from such attacks.
- It also recommends against weak MFA factors such as text messages, since these are susceptible to SIM swapping.
- It has also cautioned against simple voice approvals, push notifications, or even “secondary email” based MFA methods.
- It also recommends increasing awareness among employees and IT help desks around social engineering attacks.

Reference

https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-lapsus-hacker-group-targeted-microsoft-samsung-okta-nvidia-7833203/

SARTHAQ

- ‘Students’ and Teachers’ Holistic Advancement through Quality Education (SARTHAQ)’ is an indicative and suggestive National Education Policy (NEP) Implementation Plan for School Education.
- This is an implementation plan developed in pursuance of the goals and objectives of the NEP 2020 issued in 2020 and to assist States and UTs in this task.
- SARTHAQ was developed by the **Department of School Education and Literacy**, Ministry of Education.
- It has been developed as an evolving and working document through wide and intensive consultative process with States and UTs, Autonomous bodies and suggestions received from all stakeholders.
- The **major focus** of SARTHAQ is to define activities in such a manner which it links

recommendation with 297 Tasks along with responsible agencies, timelines and 304 outputs of these Tasks.
- The plan keeps in mind the **concurrent nature of education** and adheres to the spirit of federalism.
- States and UTs are given the **flexibility to adapt** this plan with local contextualization and also modify as per their needs and requirements.
- This plan delineates the roadmap and way forward for implementation of NEP, 2020 for the **next 10 years**.
- **Similar Links** - SARTHAK

Reference

1. https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1808761
2. https://www.hindustantimes.com/education/news/education-minister-launches-implementation-plan-sarthaq-for-school-education-101617938395323.html

Reasonable Accommodation

The Karnataka High Court has rejected an argument in support of permitting Muslim girls wearing head-scarves that was based on the principle of 'reasonable accommodation'.

- 'Reasonable accommodation' is a principle that **promotes equality**, enables the **grant of positive rights** and **prevents discrimination** based on disability, health condition or personal belief.
- Its use is primarily in the disability rights sector.

- The general principle is that reasonable accommodation should be provided, **unless some undue hardship** is caused by such accommodation.
- **Legality in India** - In India, the Rights of People with Disabilities Act, 2016, defines 'reasonable accommodation'.
- It is necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments, without imposing a disproportionate or undue burden in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise of rights equally with others.
- The definition of 'discrimination' in Section 2(h) includes 'denial of reasonable accommodation'.
- In Section 3, which deals with equality and non-discrimination, sub-section (5) says: "The appropriate Government shall take necessary steps to ensure reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities."
- In Jeeja Ghosh and Another v. Union of India and Others (2016), the Supreme Court talks about embracing the notion of positive rights, affirmative action and reasonable accommodation.
- The Supreme Court elaborated on the concept in Vikash Kumar v. UPSC (2021). In this case, the court allowed the use of a scribe in the UPSC exam for a candidate with dysgraphia, or writer's cramp.

Reference

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/explained-did-the-karnataka-high-courts-hijab-verdict-overlook-reasonable-accommodation/article65240144.ece

ExoMars

There will be a delay in the ExoMars 2022 Mission that was to be launched in September 2022 as

the European Space Agency (ESA) suspended all its cooperation with Russian space agency Roscosmos.

- Once a joint space venture between ESA and Roscosmos, ExoMars is now ESA's mission to Mars.
- It aims to look for whether life has ever existed in Mars.
- The ExoMars programme comprises 2 missions.
    1. The first mission was launched in 2016 and consists of the Trace Gas Orbiter (TGO) and Schiaparelli, an entry, descent and landing demonstrator module.
    2. The second mission is planned to be launched in 2022 and comprises a rover and surface science platform.
- The rover that will carry a drill and a suite of instruments dedicated to search for possible existence of life beyond earth and geochemistry research.
- It is likely to land on Mars' equator called Oxia Planum, which had housed a massive pool of water in the prehistoric era.

Reference

https://indianexpress.com/article/technology/science/esa-stops-exomars-2022-roscosmos-russia-ukraine-7827880/

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