

WORLD MILITARY SPENDING

Total global military expenditure rose to \$1981 billion last year, an increase of 2.6 per cent in real terms from 2019, according to new data published today by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

About:

- The five biggest spenders in 2020, which together accounted for 62 per cent of global military expenditure, were the United States, China, India, Russia and the United Kingdom.
- The 2.6 per cent increase in world military spending came in a year when global gross domestic product (GDP) shrank by 4.4 per cent (October 2020 projection by the International Monetary Fund), largely due to the economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- In 2020 US military expenditure reached an estimated \$778 billion, representing an increase of 4.4 per cent over 2019. As the world's largest military spender, the USA accounted for 39 per cent of total military expenditure in 2020.

DADUDAN GADHVI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has condoled the demise of famous Gujarati poet Dadudan Gadhvi.

About:

- Dadudan Pratapdan Gadhvi, also known as Kavi Dad, was a Gujarati poet and folk singer from Gujarat.
- His complete works are collected in Terva (2015) and Lachhanayan (2015).
- He was awarded the Padma Shri in 2021.

ARTICLE 223 OF THE CONSTITUTION

The President of India in exercise of the powers conferred by Article 223 of the Constitution of India, appointed Justice Rajesh Bindal, senior-most Judge of Calcutta High Court, to perform the duties of the office of the Chief Justice of that High Court with effect from 29th April, 2021.

About:

- This follows the retirement of Shri Justice Thottathil Bhaskaran Nair Radhakrishnan, Chief Justice, Calcutta High Court. A notification in this regard has been issued by Department of Justice, Ministry of Law & Justice.
- Article 223 in The Constitution Of India deals with Appointment of acting Chief Justice.
- According to it, when the office of Chief Justice of High Court is vacant or when any such Chief Justice is, by reason of absence or otherwise, unable to perform the duties of his office, the duties of the office shall be performed by such one of the other Judges of the Court as the President may appoint for the purposes.

SUPPLY CHAIN RESILIENCE INITIATIVE (SCRI)

India, Japan and Australia formally launched the Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI) to build resilient supply chains in the Indo-Pacific region as they seek to reduce dependence on China.

About:

- The SCRI aims to create a virtuous cycle of enhancing supply chain resilience with a view to eventually attaining strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth in the region.
- Expansion of the SCRI may be considered based on consensus, if needed, in due course.

LARGE AREA CERTIFICATION' SCHEME

14,491 ha area of UT of A&N Islands becomes the first large contiguous territory to be conferred with organic certification under 'Large Area Certification' scheme.

About:

- Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare (DAC&FW) is working to identify Traditional Organic Areas to transform them into certified organic production hubs.
- The Government of India has certified 14,491 ha of such area under Car Nicobar and Nancowry group of islands in UT of A&N Islands.
- This area becomes the first large contiguous territory to be conferred with organic certification under the 'Large Area Certification' (LAC) scheme of the PGS-India (Participatory Guarantee System) certification programme.

"Large Area Certification" (LAC) programme

- Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare under its flagship scheme of Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojna (PKVY) has launched a unique quick certification programme "Large Area Certification" (LAC) to harness these potential areas.
- LAC is a Quick certification process that is cost-effective and farmers do not have to wait for 2-3 years for marketing PGS organic certified products.
- Under LAC, each village in the area is considered as one cluster/group. Documentations are simple and maintained village-wise.
- All farmers with their farmland and livestock need to adhere to the standard requirements and on being verified get certified en-mass without the need to go under conversion period.
- Certification is renewed on annual basis through annual verification by a process of peer appraisals as per the process of PGS-India.

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH (HRW)

Human Rights Watch said that Israel is committing the crime of "apartheid" by seeking to maintain Jewish "domination" over Palestinians and its own Arab population.

About:

- Human Rights Watch (HRW) is an international non-governmental organization, headquartered in New York City, that conducts research and advocacy on human rights. The group pressures governments, policy makers, companies, and individual human rights abusers to denounce abuse and respect human rights, and the group

often works on behalf of refugees, children, migrants, and political prisoners.

- Human Rights Watch in 1997 shared in the Nobel Peace Prize as a founding member of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and it played a leading role in the 2008 treaty banning cluster munitions.
- Human Rights Watch was co-founded by Robert L. Bernstein and Aryeh Neier as a private American NGO in 1978, under the name Helsinki Watch, to monitor the then-Soviet Union's compliance with the Helsinki Accords.

Ct VALUE

Among various scientific terms that the Covid-19 pandemic has made part of the public vocabulary, one is the 'Ct value' in RT-PCR tests for determining whether a patient is positive for Covid-19.

About:

- Short for cycle threshold, Ct is a value that emerges during RT-PCR tests, the gold standard for detection of the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus.
- According to the ICMR advisory, the Ct value of an RT-PCR reaction is the number of cycles at which fluorescence of the PCR product is detectable over and above the background signal.
- The Ct value refers to the number of cycles after which the virus can be detected. If a higher number of cycles is required, it implies that the virus went undetected when the number of cycles was lower.
- The lower the Ct value, the higher the viral load — because the virus has been spotted after fewer cycles.
- According to the ICMR, a patient is considered Covid-positive if the Ct value is below 35. In other words, if the virus is detectable after 35 cycles or earlier, then the patient is considered positive.

STERLITE COPPER PLANT

The Supreme Court allowed Vedanta Limited to operate its oxygen production units at the Sterlite Copper plant in Thoothukudi in Tamil Nadu.

About:

- The Sterlite Copper plant has been shut for three years following public protests and police firing that killed 13 protesters in May 2018.
- The Supreme Court decision follows a submission by Vedanta Limited, which cited the ongoing crisis for medical oxygen triggered by a surge in Covid-19 cases across the country.
- Vedanta Limited, citing the medical oxygen crisis, asserted that it could produce 1,000 tonnes of oxygen if the plant was allowed to reopen.
- Sterlite Copper had been facing protests ever since its inception in 1994. The local community's concerns include hazardous industrial operations that produce toxins such as lead, arsenic and sulphur oxides, pollution of the environment, and their impact on public health.

- Following a gas leak in March 2013, the state government ordered shutting down of the plant, and the Supreme Court fined Sterlite Rs 100 crore for flouting environmental norms the following month, but the plant was in operation in June again. It was shut down again following the violent protests and police firing in May 2018.

INFLIXIMAB

People who take a commonly-prescribed drug for inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) should not assume they are protected after a first dose of Covid-19 vaccine, say the authors of a large-scale study that found many had poor antibody responses.

About:

- The research measured antibody responses after vaccination with the Pfizer-BioNTech or the Oxford-AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine in 865 people treated with infliximab, an anti-tumour necrosis factor (anti-TNF) biologic drug, prescribed to around two million people worldwide.
- One of the brand names under which infliximab is marketed is Remicade, which has got regulatory clearance in India.
- Anti-TNF drugs are effective treatments for immune-mediated inflammatory diseases, but by suppressing the immune system, they can reduce vaccine effectiveness and increase risk of serious infection, the researchers have suggested.

PYRASOL

The foundation stone of the Integrated Solar Dryer and Pyrolysis pilot was laid by Dr. K J Sreeram, Director, CSIR- Central Leather Research Institute (CLRI), Chennai.

About:

- The pilot is part of the Indo-German project 'Pyrasol' launched to transform urban organic waste into biochar and energy in smart cities. It was awarded to CSIR-CLRI by the Indo-German Science & Technology Centre.
- The project will ultimately lead to technology development for the joint processing of Fibrous Organic Waste (FOW) and Sewage Sludge (SS) of Indian smart cities into hygienic and highly valuable biochar associated with energy recovery, carbon sequestration and environmental improvement.
- Indo-German Science & Technology Centre (IGSTC) was established by the Department of Science & Technology (DST), Govt. of India & Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), Govt. of Germany to facilitate Indo-German R&D networking with emphasis on industry participation, applied research and technology development.
- IGSTC through its flagship program '2+2 Projects', catalyses innovation centric R&D projects by synergising the strength of research and academic institutions and public/private industries from India and Germany.