

NEWS TODAY

INAUGURAL LEADERS SESSION OF THE VOICE OF GLOBAL SOUTH SUMMIT 2023 HELD

- Amidst increasing global volatility and uncertainty, the summit is conceived by India as a platform for developing countries to share their concerns, perspectives, and priorities.

➤ E.g. concerns over COVID-19 pandemic impact, climate change, terrorism, fragile supply chains, ongoing conflicts and debt crises.

- Global South' largely refers to countries in Asia, Africa and South America and these countries have certain common attributes like a history of colonization, lacking role in governance of multilateral institutions etc.

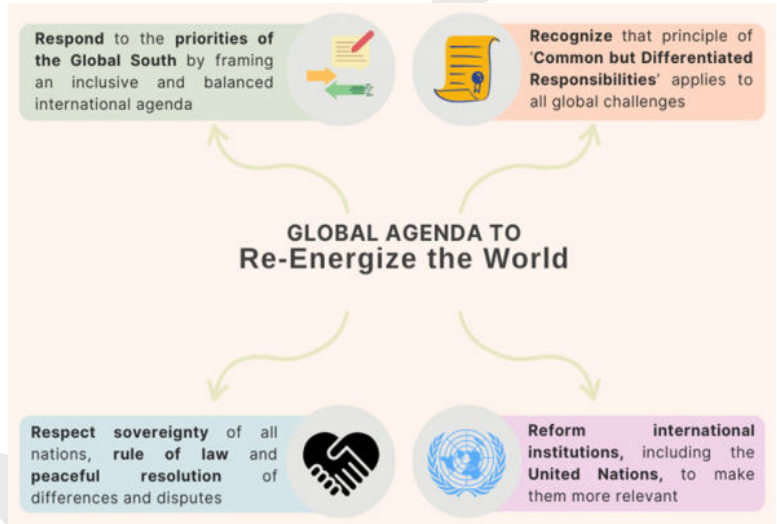
➤ Redesigning global political and financial governance can help them to remove inequalities, enlarge opportunities, support growth and spread progress and prosperity.

- During the session India called for:

➤ A 'Global agenda to Re-energize the world' (refer image).

➤ A 'Global South Sensitive' model of globalization with three fundamentals shifts for it:

- **Globalization:** From self-centered globalization to human-centered globalization.
- **Innovation and Technology:** From being on the receiving end of technological patronage, to deploying Global South-led innovations for societal transformation.
- **Development Cooperation:** From debt creating projects to a demand-driven and sustainable development cooperation.



SUPREME COURT (SC) TO HEAR PLEA SEEKING NATIONAL HERITAGE STATUS FOR RAM SETU

- Ram Setu, also known as Adam's bridge, is a chain of limestone shoals between Pamban Island or Rameswaram Island, off the south-eastern coast of Tamil Nadu, and Mannar Island, off the north-western coast of Sri Lanka.

➤ Recently, Tamil Nadu assembly also passed a resolution urging Centre to resume work on Sethusamudram Ship Canal project (SSCP).

- National heritage status is sought in the backdrop of SSCP that envisages dredging of a ship channel across the Palk Straits between India and Sri Lanka.

➤ Two channels were suggested - one across Adam's Bridge and another through Palk Bay.

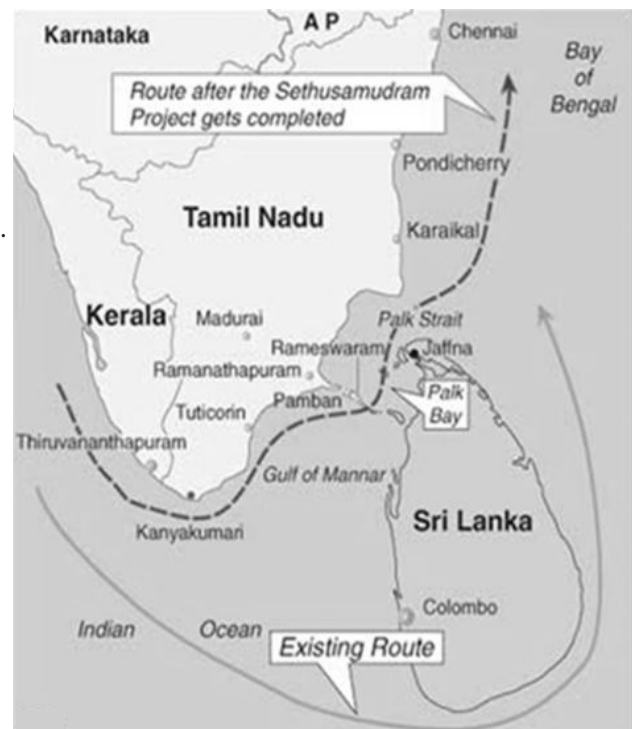
➤ SC, in 2007, had stayed the work for project and Centre was also willing to explore another route to SSCP without damaging Ram Setu.

- Significance of SSCP

- Reduce steaming distances between east and west coasts of India.
- Strengthen national security by improving navigation for Indian coast guards and naval ships.

- Concerns raised against SSCP

- Would destroy natural barrier between Bay of Bengal and Palk Bay.
- Oil and marine pollution associated with shipping traffic will aggravate ecological stress in region.
- Adam's bridge hold religious sentiments for the people.
- Threats to coral reef platforms in Gulf of Mannar.



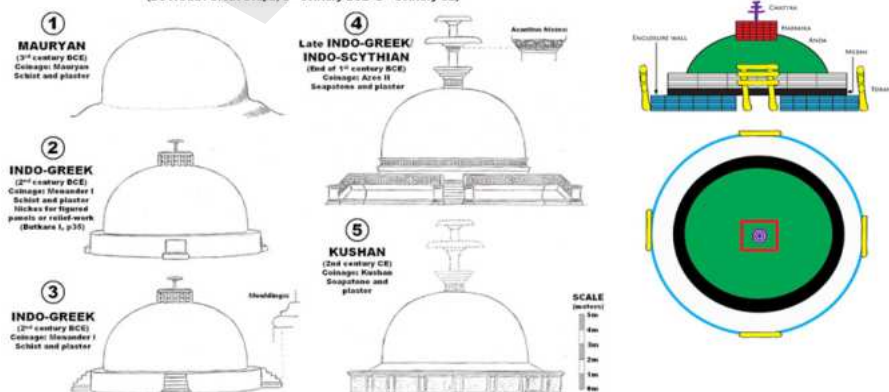
CENTRAL ELECTRICITY AUTHORITY RELEASED DISASTER MANAGEMENT PLAN (DMP) FOR POWER SECTOR

- DMP provides a **framework to utilities** in power sector to **evolve a proactive and integrated approach** to strengthen **disaster mitigation, preparedness, emergency response, and recovery** efforts.
 - Growth of power sector is **directly correlated with economic growth** of the country and **any disruption** due to disaster **creates severe hardship** to human beings.
- Under **Section 37 of Disaster Management (DM) Act, 2005** every Ministry/ Department of Government of India shall prepare a DMP.
 - DMP is also consistent with **Sendai Framework** for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), **COP21** and **PM's Ten Point Agenda** for DRR.
- Key features of DMP**
 - A **four-tier structure at Central, Regional, State and Local Unit Levels**, with intervention and response depending on severity of disaster /calamity.
 - Risk assessment of power infrastructure**, i.e. electric power generation stations, transmission distribution etc. to evolve methods for finding quantitative risk involved.
 - While **uncertainty caused by climate change** is unavoidable, electric utilities **can manage risks by considering different climate scenarios and potential impacts** on their assets.
 - Use of social media** for emergencies and disasters on an organizational level to **disseminate information as well as for emergency communications** and issuing warnings etc.

ARCHEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA DISCOVERED TWO 1200-YEAR-OLD MINIATURE VOTIVE STUPAS AT NALADA

- Votive stupas (offered in fulfillment of a vow) **were discovered near Sarai Tila mound** within premises of **Nalanda Mahavihara in Bihar**.
- Stupa**, Sanskrit for heap, is a mound-like (hemispherical) **burial structure** containing **relics of Buddhist monks**.
 - E.g. **Sanchi Stupa** built over Buddha relics.
- Architectural features of Stupa** (refer image):
 - A **hemispherical mound or anda's shaped dome**
 - A **square railing or harmika**
 - Central pillar supporting a triple-umbrella form (chattr)**, representing three jewels of Buddhism.
 - Enclosure wall with **decorated gateways (toranas)** at cardinal directions.
 - A **circular terrace (medhi)** for ritual circumambulation.
- About Nalanda Mahavihara**
 - It is a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** with archaeological remains of a monastic and scholastic institution **from 3rd century BCE to 13th century CE**.
 - Gautam Buddha** as well as **Mahavira** stayed at Nalanda.
 - Other famous scholars at Nalanda** Nagarjuna, Dharmapala, Dinnaga, Jinamitra Santaraksita etc.
 - Imminent **pilgrim monks like Hiuen Tsang and I-tsing** also visited.
 - It prospered under **Gupta Dynasty, Harsha of Kannauj and Pala Dynasty**.
 - It includes **stupas, shrines, viharas** (residential and educational buildings) and important **art works in stucco, stone and metal**.

EARLY EVOLUTION OF THE STUPA
(BUTKARA Great Stupa, 3rd century BCE- 2nd century CE)



INDIA AIMS TO SEND THREE PERSONS TO 6000 METERS BELOW SEA LEVEL, SAYS MINISTRY OF EARTH SCIENCES (MoES)

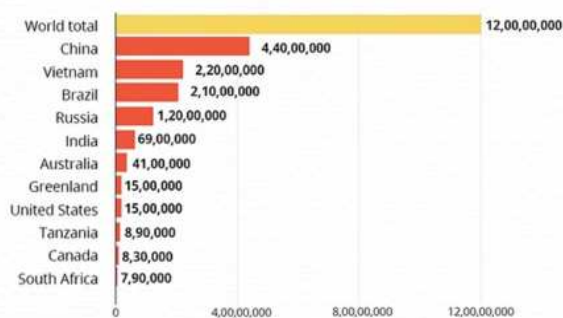
- As part of **Samudrayaan Mission**, under MoES, a **self-propelled manned submersible** (MATSYA 6000) will carry three persons to a depth of 6000 meters for exploration of deep-sea resources.
 - MATSYA 6000 is being **developed by National Institute of Ocean Technology, Chennai**.
 - It has an **endurance of 12 hours** under normal operation and **96 hours in case of emergency**.
 - It is **being developed under Deep Ocean Mission (DOM)**.
- DOM aims to **explore deep ocean for resources and develop deep sea technologies** for sustainable use of ocean resources. It will be a **mission mode project to support Blue Economy** initiatives.
 - Blue Economy is **sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods etc.** Its size in India is about **4% of the GDP**.
- DOM (MoES as nodal ministry) was **approved in 2021** and will be implemented **over a period of 5 years**.
- Major components of DOM**
 - Development of Technologies** for Deep Sea Mining, and Manned Submersible.
 - Development of Ocean **Climate Change Advisory Services**.
 - Technological innovations** for exploration and conservation of deep-sea biodiversity.
 - Deep Ocean **Survey and Exploration**.
 - Energy and freshwater** from Ocean.
 - Advanced Marine Station for **Ocean Biology**.

SWEDEN DISCOVERS BIGGEST RARE EARTH ELEMENTS (REE) DEPOSIT IN EUROPE

- REE deposits were **discovered in Arctic region of Kiruna, Sweden** (home to world's largest underground iron-ore mine).
- REE are a **set of seventeen metallic elements - fifteen lanthanides** on periodic table plus **scandium and yttrium**.
 - They are **necessary components for critical sectors**, like, cellular telephones, electric vehicles, defense applications like guidance systems, lasers, etc.
- REE **shares some common properties** such as **high luster, high electrical conductivity** etc. as well as some **distinguishing properties**, present in few REE, such as **luminescence, magnetism** etc.
 - Also, **Heavy REE** (higher atomic weights) **are less common** as compared to **Light REE**.
- Although REE are fairly distributed across different geographies, the **extraction of REE is most challenging part**, because of complex processing and intensive environmental effects.
 - At present **more than 80% of the world's rare earths processing capacity is in China**.
- India produces only **1% of global output** despite having around **6% of world's reserves**.
 - Steps taken by India:** Set up Khanij Bidesh India Ltd. (KABIL), Bilateral agreements like Australia-India Critical Minerals Investment Partnership.

WHERE ARE THE WORLD'S LARGEST RARE EARTH RESERVES

Reserves in metric tonnes of REO (rare earth oxides) as of 2020



Source: U.S. Geological Survey

ALSO IN NEWS



Credit Default Swaps (CDS)

- SEBI has allowed **Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs) to participate in CDS**.
 - AIF refers to any **privately pooled investment fund**, (whether from Indian or foreign sources), in form of a trust or a company or a body corporate or a Limited Liability Partnership (LLP).
- CDS is a **financial derivative** that allows an investor to **swap or offset their credit risk with** that of another investor.
 - In this **buyer pays an ongoing premium**. In exchange, **seller agrees to pay security's value** and interest payments **if a default occurs**.
 - CDS is **used for speculation, hedging or as a form of arbitrage**.



MAARG (Mentorship, Advisory, Assistance, Resilience, and Growth)

- MAARG Mentor Masterclass was **organised during Startup India Innovation Week**.
- MAARG, the **National Mentorship Platform by Startup India**, is a **one-stop platform to facilitate mentorship for startups** across diverse sectors, functions, stages, geographies, and domains.
- Objectives of MAARG portal:**
 - Provide guidance, handholding, and support to startups** throughout their lifecycle.
 - Facilitates intelligent matchmaking and an outcome-oriented mechanism** between mentors and their respective mentees.



Basmati Rice

- For the first time, **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has specified identity standards for Basmati Rice**.
- Basmati rice is a **premium variety of rice cultivated in Himalayan foothills** of Indian sub-continent.
 - India accounts for **two thirds** of its **global supply**.
- It is universally known for its **long grain size, fluffy texture and unique inherent aroma and flavour**.
- Uniqueness is attributed to **agro-climatic conditions** as well as **method of harvesting, processing and ageing** of rice.



White tufted royal butterfly

- It is a **rare butterfly species** that was **spotted recently at Kalliyad (Kerala)**.
 - It was earlier **spotted in Agasthyakoodam and Shendurney Wildlife Sanctuary**.
 - It is protected under **Schedule 2 of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**.
- Butterflies**, along with the moths and the skippers, **make up the insect order Lepidoptera**.
 - Lepidopteran life cycle has four stages:** egg, larva (caterpillar), pupa (chrysalis), and adult (imago).



Uranium contamination in ground water

- A recent report by Central Ground Water Board highlighted that 12 states have uranium levels **beyond permissible limits** in their groundwater.
 - **Safe levels prescribed** by World Health Organization is **30 parts per billion (ppb)**.
- **Punjab is worst-affected state** followed by Haryana.
- **Causes of uranium contamination:** Natural uranium content in aquifer rocks, overexploitation of groundwater, bicarbonates used to bring uranium out of source rocks etc.
- **Adverse health Effects of uranium contamination:** Impaired renal function and kidney disease, bone toxicity etc.



Rejuvenating Watershed for Agricultural Resilience through Innovative Development (REWARD) Project

- Officers from **Sub-Saharan countries will visit Karnataka to learn from its experience** of REWARD Project.
- REWARD Project was **launched to help national and state institutions adopt improved watershed management practices**.
 - It a **World Bank supported multi-State project**.
- Watershed is **geographical area drained by a watercourse** and is considered an useful planning unit **for integrated water and land resource management**.
- Effective watershed management **can help enhance livelihoods in rainfed areas**, while building a **more resilient food system**.



Indian skimmer

- **Godavari estuary** in Andhra Pradesh has become **prime habitat for Indian Skimmer**.
- Indian Skimmer is **water bird found in coastal estuaries of western and eastern India**.
 - **Major Threats:** Degradation of rivers and lakes through fishing, predation by stray and domestic dogs etc.
 - **IUCN status:** Endangered.



Places in News

Guyana (Capital: Georgetown)

- India and Guyana agreed to cooperate in oil and gas sector.
- **Boundaries**
 - Guyana is **located on the north-eastern coast of South America**.
 - It is **part of Guianas**, a region in north-eastern South America on Guiana Shield, an old **stable geological formation** that forms a portion of the northern coast.
 - Guianas includes **Guyana, Suriname, and French Guiana**.
 - It is **bordered by Venezuela, Brazil and Suriname**.
- **Geographical features**
 - **Terrain:** Mostly rolling highlands; low coastal plain; savanna in south.
 - **Highest point:** Mount Roraima.
 - **Lowest point:** Atlantic Ocean.



Uganda (Capital: Kampala)

- Uganda declares end to deadly Ebola outbreak.
- **Boundaries**
 - **World's second most populous landlocked country**, located in **east-central Africa**.
 - Bordered by **Kenya, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Tanzania**.
- **Geographical features**
 - **Highest point:** Margherita Peak on Mount Stanley of Ruwenzori Range.
 - Uganda is in **African Great Lakes region** and includes a **portion of Lake Victoria**.
 - **Other Lakes:** Lake Edward, Lake George, Lake Albert, Lake Kyoga.
 - **Rivers:** Albert Nile, Victoria Nile.

