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1. 400 people were killed and 250 were injured in an airstrike conducted by Pakistan on a hospital in Afghanistan.

(i) In Pakistan, a terrorist organization known as Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has been continuously carrying out terrorist attacks. This organization is a splinter group of the Taliban movement currently in power in Afghanistan.

(ii) Although Pakistan repeatedly urged the Taliban Government in Afghanistan to take action against this organization, the Taliban Government failed to do so.

(iii) Amidst Pakistan's accusation that the Taliban Government was providing safe haven to terrorists, retaliatory cross-border attacks were being exchanged between Pakistani and Afghan forces.

(iv) Consequently, Pakistan decided to engage in direct warfare with Afghanistan. Following this, the Pakistani military and Afghanistan's Taliban forces have been engaged in intense mutual attacks. While the Pakistani military and Afghan Taliban forces continue to clash along the shared border, Pakistan has been conducting airstrikes against Afghanistan.

(v) In this context, during an airstrike conducted by Pakistan on a hospital located in the Afghan capital, Kabul, bombs struck the facility, causing severe damage.

2. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has granted approval to undertake excavation activities at eight sites across Tamil Nadu, including Keeladi in the Sivaganga district.

(i) It has been stated that this permission was granted in accordance with the 'Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Rules, 1959', following the acceptance of recommendations made by an expert committee.

(ii) Excavations at 8 Sites:

- Consequently, based on the approval granted by the Central Government, the 11th phase of excavations is set to be conducted at Keeladi in the Sivaganga district and its surrounding areas.
- In addition to this, excavation activities will also be undertaken at key historical sites located in the following districts: Pattinamaruthur (Thoothukudi district), Karivalamvandanallur (Tenkasi district), Manikkollai (Cuddalore district), Adichanur (Villupuram district), Vellalore (Coimbatore district), Teluganur-Mangadu (Salem district), and Nagapattinam.
- It is anticipated that these comprehensive studies will significantly aid in gaining a holistic understanding of the lifestyles and living patterns of the ancient Tamils who inhabited the diverse landscapes of Tamil Nadu.

3. 'Torpedo' jar-shaped pottery shreds were discovered during the archaeological excavations at Vembakottai. Minister Thangam Thennarasu posted on the social media platform X, stating that this serves as significant evidence regarding the history of maritime trade conducted by ancient Tamils.

(i) Archaeological excavations were conducted in three phases by the Department of Archaeology, Government of Tamil Nadu, in the Vijayakarisalkulam area of Vembakottai, located in the Virudhunagar district.

(ii) These excavations yielded a variety of rare artifacts, including terracotta seals, glass beads, conch shell bangles, gold beads, rectangular gaming pieces, microlithic tools, ornamental beads, terracotta earrings, figurines, rings, pottery discs, iron smelting slag, and objects crafted from elephant ivory.

(iii) During the process of classifying and categorizing the artifacts and pottery shreds recovered across the three phases of excavation, fragments of the jar-shaped vessels known as 'Torpedo' jars were identified. Historians state that these vessels were utilized to transport liquid commodities—such as olive oil and wine—from the Roman and Middle Eastern regions. The discovery of these 'Torpedo' jar shreds at Vembakottai now conclusively demonstrates that maritime trade was actively conducted along the banks of the Vaippar River.

(iv) This constitutes crucial evidence that corroborates the maritime trading prowess of the ancient Tamils. In this context, Minister Thangam Thennarasu remarked that the discovery of these 'Torpedo' jar-shaped pottery shreds—serving as tangible proof of maritime trade—adds yet another layer of historical evidence regarding the ancient Tamil merchants.

4. Sadhana Ravi, a student at the SRM IST Vadapalani campus in Chennai, has achieved a remarkable feat by securing the top spot at the Asian level in the U20 Triple Jump event.

(i) Sadhana Ravi, a first-year B.Sc. Psychology student, is a talented track and field athlete. Excelling in both the Triple Jump and Long Jump disciplines, she has secured the first position at both the Asian and Indian levels in the U20 Triple Jump category.

(ii) Furthermore, it is noteworthy that she has also attained a global ranking of 12th place.

5. Union Minister of Home Affairs and Cooperation, Amit Shah, stated that 21.34 lakh users and 2.31 lakh drivers have registered on the Bharat Taxi platform.

(i) The Bharat Taxi service was launched on February 5th of this year by eight cooperative societies. Currently, it is operational only in select urban areas, including Delhi, Gurugram, Noida, Faridabad, Ghaziabad, as well as Ahmedabad, Rajkot, Somnath, and Dwarka.

(ii) In a written reply submitted to the Lok Sabha regarding this matter, Amit Shah stated: "No commission is collected from drivers utilizing the Bharat Taxi service. The entire profit generated is passed on directly to the drivers."

- Bharat Taxi operates with a host of features and amenities, including standardized and transparent fare structures, easy booking via mobile phones, real-time vehicle tracking, multilingual information support, and 24-hour customer service.
- Female drivers have also been appointed specifically to cater to women passengers.
- Currently introduced in only a few major cities, this service is set to be expanded soon to Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities as well. As of March 1, 2026, 21.34 lakh users and 2.31 lakh drivers have registered on the Bharat Taxi platform.

6. Amidst a looming crisis in the supply of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) cylinders—triggered by the impact of the conflict in West Asia—the Central Government has urged State Governments to expedite the approval process for Piped Natural Gas (PNG) distribution projects in urban areas.

(i) This directive was issued to the states at a juncture where there appears to be no immediate end in sight to the conflict. The Central Government has also initiated efforts to promote alternative cooking methods, including the use of electric stoves.

(ii) Bookings Surge Amidst Panic:-

- While the average number of LPG bookings stood at 5.5 million prior to the West Asian conflict, panic among the public caused this figure to peak at 8.77 million on March 13. By last Monday, this number had declined to 7 million.
- On March 13, 6.25 million cylinders were distributed, followed by 6 million cylinders on March 14. Prior to the conflict, the daily distribution volume stood at 5 million cylinders.
- Despite the Government's assurance that there is an adequate supply of LPG to meet domestic demand, the public continues to engage in panic-booking.
- Domestic LPG production has been ramped up by 38 percent. Furthermore, to alleviate the pressure on LPG distribution, both commercial and domestic consumers are being encouraged to switch to Piped Natural Gas (PNG).

(iii) Inspections at 12,000 locations:-

- Efforts to expand the urban infrastructure for piped gas distribution have been accelerated. All State Governments have been instructed to grant expedited approvals for such projects.
- Requests have been made to implement measures such as granting automatic approval for pending piped gas distribution projects, approving new projects within a 24-hour timeframe, waiving road restoration charges, and relaxing operational restrictions.
- He stated that, to prevent the hoarding of LPG cylinders and their sale in the black market, inspections were conducted at 12,000 locations across the country, resulting in the seizure of 15,000 cylinders.
- It is noteworthy that, a few days ago, the Central Government issued an order prohibiting individuals who have obtained a piped gas connection from using LPG cylinders.

7. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has stated that, by the year 2033, everyone in the country will be brought under Insurance coverage.

(i) Her response to supplementary questions raised in the Rajya Sabha during Question Hour regarding this matter:

- The insurance sector in the country is expanding rapidly. During the 2024-25 fiscal year, 58 crore people were brought under the ambit of insurance coverage. The Central Government accords priority to health insurance. The Central Government is confident that, by the year 2033, every individual in the country can be brought under the coverage of medical insurance.
- Over the past three years, fines ranging from ₹1 crore to ₹2 crore have been imposed on private insurance companies—including Reliance General Insurance, HDFC, and SBI Life Insurance—for operating in violation of the law.

(ii) Mudra Loans totaling ₹39.48 Lakh Crore:

- From April 2022 to March of the previous year, loans amounting to ₹15.50 lakh crore were sanctioned under the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY). Of this sanctioned loan amount, 65 percent was disbursed to women entrepreneurs.
- Since the inception of this scheme in 2015, a total of ₹39.48 lakh crore in loans has been sanctioned

to date. Approximately 2 percent of this sanctioned loan amount currently constitutes Non-Performing Assets (NPAs). Banks are actively taking measures to recover these outstanding loans. As one of the largest bank credit schemes in existence, the Mudra Loan Scheme has successfully reached out to individuals who are unable to provide collateral against their loan applications.

(iii) Fines of up to ₹20 Crore Imposed on Companies:

- Under the Companies Act, certain categories of profitable companies are required to spend a minimum of 2 percent of their average net profits over the preceding three financial years on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities within a given financial year. Every decision regarding CSR expenditure rests with the company's Board of Directors.
- It is the company and its Board that determine how much CSR funding is to be spent and where it is to be utilized; the Central Government cannot intervene in this matter. Action is initiated under the provisions of the Companies Act, 2013, against companies that fail to comply with CSR regulations. Accordingly, for violations of CSR norms, fines were imposed as follows: ₹2.97 crore on 6 companies in the financial year 2022-23; ₹3.32 crore on 11 companies in 2023-24; and ₹13.65 crore on 13 companies in 2024-25.

8. Evolution of India's foreign investment policies, specifically focusing on the shifting stance toward Chinese investments.

(i) Initial Restrictions (April 2020)

- Press Note 3: In April 2020, during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Union Cabinet issued a directive known as "Press Note 3".
- The Land Border Policy: This order mandated that any investment from countries sharing a land border with India (including China, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, Myanmar, Bhutan, and Afghanistan) required mandatory Government approval.
- The primary intent behind this move was to prevent Chinese companies from taking advantage of the pandemic-induced economic downturn to perform hostile takeovers of Indian businesses.

(ii) Economic Observations (2023–2024)

- The 2023-24 Economic Survey highlighted a concerning increase in India's trade deficit with China.
- Chief Economic Advisor Anantha Nageswaran observed that the only way to reduce this deficit was to allow Chinese companies to set up manufacturing units within India. He warned that if India did not allow local production, it would eventually fall into a state of economic debt to China.

(iii) Recent Policy Shift (March 2026)

- Last week, the Central Government announced a significant change to the 2020 policy.
- Under the revised rules, up to 10% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from border-sharing countries is now permitted.
- The Government has committed to granting approvals for investments in infrastructure, machinery, and electronic components within 60 days.

(iv) Key Arguments and Strategic Facts

- As China is the world's production hub and the second-largest economy, India cannot achieve its goal of becoming an economic superpower while completely excluding Chinese trade and technology.

- China possesses advanced manufacturing technologies and a highly skilled workforce in electronics and rare minerals that India currently needs.
- Given the unpredictable political climate in Western nations (specifically citing the "Trump approach"), India can no longer rely solely on the US or Europe for economic growth.
- It is nearly impossible to fully block Chinese capital, as it often enters the Indian market indirectly through companies based in Singapore, South Korea, or the European Union.
- Major missed opportunities, such as:
    - Great Wall Motors: An expected investment of $1 billion that was stalled.
    - BYD: Major global manufacturers of electric vehicles and batteries were deterred from operating in India.

(v) Conclusion and Outlook

- The fear that Chinese investment automatically compromises national security is "unnecessary" and "meaningless." The Government should identify truly sensitive sectors and keep them restricted while opening other sectors to boost production, exports, and employment.
- While advocating for the "opening of doors" to investment, India must remain vigilant to ensure it attracts investments rather than falling into a "debt trap".