



P.L.RAJ IAS & IPS ACADEMY

Building Bureaucrats Since 2006

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1. China Cannot Claim Sovereignty over the South China Sea: US, EU, UK, and West Asian Countries Reaffirm Position

- i. The United States, the European Union, the United Kingdom, and several West Asian countries have once again reaffirmed that China cannot claim sovereignty over the South China Sea. The Permanent Court of Arbitration, constituted under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) at The Hague, Netherlands, ruled on July 12, 2016, that China's claims over the South China Sea were illegal. The tribunal also stated that its ruling was final and legally binding.
- ii. As ten years have now passed since the historic verdict, the United States, the United Kingdom, the 27-member European Union, and several West Asian countries described the ruling as historic and reiterated their rejection of China's dominance in the South China Sea.
- iii. China, however, rejected the ruling, calling it illegal and maintaining that it is not bound by the tribunal's decision.
- iv. Earlier, following repeated confrontations in the South China Sea, the Philippines had sought arbitration in 2013. China refused to participate in the proceedings. Subsequently, the tribunal delivered its ruling against China in 2016.
- v. China Rejects the US Position
 - The United States has consistently insisted that China must comply with the tribunal's ruling.
 - Ignoring these calls, China has intensified military patrols and naval exercises in the South China Sea.
 - The region is one of the world's busiest maritime trade routes, and China has frequently been involved in disputes with Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, Taiwan, and the Philippines over competing territorial claims.
- vi. 170 Countries Have Signed UNCLOS

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which came into force in

1994, has been signed by around 170 countries, including India, Japan, the United States, China, Canada, Germany, Italy, and Australia.

2. Iran Closes the Strait of Hormuz Again; Risk of Disruption to Global Oil and Gas Shipments

- i. Iran has once again closed the Strait of Hormuz, raising concerns over disruptions to global crude oil and Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) transportation.
- ii. The Strait of Hormuz, located between Iran and Oman, is one of the world's busiest shipping lanes for crude oil and natural gas.
- iii. During the conflict involving Iran, the United States, and Israel, Iran had closed the strait for nearly four months, leaving numerous oil and gas tankers stranded at sea for months. This led to shortages of petroleum products, diesel, and natural gas in many countries, resulting in a sharp rise in global energy prices.
- iv. Subsequently, with the mediation of Pakistan and Qatar, Iran and the United States signed an interim peace agreement last month. Following the agreement, Iran reopened the Strait of Hormuz for international shipping, leading to a decline in global crude oil prices.
- v. However, last week, three ships that allegedly deviated from the designated route approved by Iran were attacked. Although the perpetrators remain unidentified, the United States accused Iran of being behind the attacks and launched fresh strikes against military targets inside Iran. Iran retaliated, leading to renewed hostilities between the two countries.

3. Linda Nosková Wins Women's Singles Title at Wimbledon

- i. Linda Nosková of the Czech Republic won the Women's Singles title at the Wimbledon Championships, the Grand Slam tennis tournament held in England.
 - ii. Ranked No. 9 in the tournament seedings, Nosková defeated her fellow Czech player Karolína Muchová, who was seeded No. 10, to capture her first-ever Grand Slam singles title.
4. For the first time in FIFA World Cup history, the teams occupying the top four positions in the FIFA World Rankings have all advanced to the semi-finals.

The current top four ranked teams are:

- Argentina – Rank 1
- Spain – Rank 2
- France – Rank 3
- England – Rank 4

5. Centre Convenes All-Party Meeting Ahead of Parliament's Monsoon Session

- i. The Central Government has invited all political parties to an all-party meeting on July 19 ahead of the Monsoon Session of Parliament, which is scheduled to be held from July 20 to August 13.
- ii. During the meeting, the Government is expected to brief political parties on its legislative agenda, proposed Bills, and major policy initiatives for the upcoming session. Opposition parties are also expected to outline the issues they intend to raise during the session.
- iii. The Government has an extensive legislative agenda for the Monsoon Session. Among the key Bills expected to be taken up for discussion is the 130th Constitutional Amendment Bill, which proposes provisions relating to the removal of the Prime Minister, Union Ministers, and Chief Ministers if they are arrested on charges involving serious criminal offences and remain in prison for 30 consecutive days.

6. Vice President Pays Tribute to Mannathu Padmanabhan

- i. Vice President C. P. Radhakrishnan paid tribute to Mannathu Padmanabhan, freedom fighter, social reformer, and founder of the Nair Service Society (NSS), describing him as a leader who dedicated his entire life to the upliftment of society.
 - ii. The Vice President inaugurated Mannathu Padmanabhan's statue and memorial hall in New Delhi and praised his lifelong contributions to social reform and nation-building.
7. Chinese Geologists Raise Concerns Over Safety of China's Brahmaputra Mega Dam in Tibet
- i. Chinese geologists have expressed concerns over the safety of the massive dam being constructed by China on the Brahmaputra River in Tibet, about 50 km from the border with India's Arunachal Pradesh.
 - ii. The geologists have found that the geological fault zone beneath the site of what is

expected to become the world's largest hydropower project could threaten the structural stability of the dam.

- iii. According to a research article published on Thursday by the South China Morning Post of Hong Kong, even a minor fracture in the Earth's crust in the Himalayan region could severely damage the infrastructure of the hydropower project.
- iv. Earlier, a paper published in the Chinese-language journals Sedimentary Geology and Tethyan Geology identified the fault as the Baijin Fault. The study stated that the fault has existed since the Pleistocene era, approximately 9,500 years ago.
- v. China began construction of the dam in Tibet in July last year at a cost of ₹15.9 lakh crore (US\$167.8 billion), aiming to generate 300 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity annually, benefiting nearly 300 million people.
- vi. The dam is being built amid significant engineering challenges in the Himalayan mountain range near the famous "U-bend" of the Brahmaputra River before it enters Arunachal Pradesh and later flows into Bangladesh.
- vii. The Tibetan Plateau, often referred to as the "Roof of the World," lies over active tectonic plates and is highly prone to earthquakes. Despite objections from Chinese geologists warning of possible risks associated with constructing the dam in such a seismically active region, the Chinese Government has continued with the project.
- viii. Instead, the Chinese Government maintains that the new dam will improve Disaster Management and emergency response in regions through which the Brahmaputra River flows.

8. India imported over ₹59,900 crore worth of crude oil from Russia in June, the highest level ever recorded, according to a report released by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA).

- i. China remained the largest importer of Russian crude oil, purchasing oil worth ₹79,500 crore in June. India ranked second, importing ₹59,900 crore worth of crude oil, coal, and petroleum products, representing a 34% increase compared to May and setting a new all-time record.
- ii. India's increased purchases contributed to a 14% rise in Russia's crude oil exports during June. However, because Russia continued to sell crude at discounted prices, its monthly

revenue from crude oil sales declined by 8%. Overall, although Russia's global crude oil exports increased by 7%, its total revenue from crude oil exports fell by 1%.

- iii. Russian crude oil imported into India is refined by companies such as Reliance Industries, Indian Oil Corporation, Nayara Energy, and Bharat Petroleum before being exported to other countries, including the European Union, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, despite these countries having imposed economic sanctions on Russia. India exported refined petroleum products worth ₹4,019 crore through this route.
- iv. CREA also reported that countries such as Turkey, Brunei, and Georgia similarly refine Russian crude oil and export petroleum products to the European Union, the United States, and other countries.

9. The sale of medicines containing high levels of ethyl alcohol has been brought under stricter regulations. Such medicines can no longer be sold without a valid prescription from a registered medical practitioner.

- i. The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) has issued a Gazette notification after amending the relevant rules to enable legal action against those violating these regulations.
- ii. Medicines containing more than 12% alcohol, which were previously allowed to be sold under relaxed provisions of Schedule K, have now been reclassified under Schedule H1. All oral medicines containing such alcohol concentrations fall under the new regulations.
- iii. Pharmacies selling these medicines must now maintain proper sales records. Medicines used to treat cough, cold, and certain other ailments often contain limited amounts of ethyl alcohol to enhance their effectiveness. However, authorities found that some manufacturers were using excessive quantities of ethyl alcohol, leading to misuse of these medicines for intoxication.
- iv. Consequently, the Government decided to tighten regulations governing the use and sale of alcohol-containing medicines. Public comments were invited before introducing the legal amendments.
- v. Under the revised rules, medicines containing more than 12% alcohol cannot be purchased or sold freely. The notification has already been published in the Gazette, and

the new regulations will come into force within the next six months.

- vi. Accordingly, the new restrictions are expected to take effect from January 2027. Officials have clarified that the rules will not create difficulties for genuine patients in obtaining essential medicines while effectively preventing misuse.

10. The Parliamentary Joint Committee examining the 130th Constitutional Amendment Bill has recommended that the Prime Minister, Union Ministers, Chief Ministers, and State Ministers who remain in jail for 30 consecutive days on charges involving serious criminal offences should be temporarily suspended from office, rather than permanently removed, until the final outcome of the court proceedings.

- i. The original Bill provides that if the Prime Minister, Union Ministers, Chief Ministers, or State Ministers are arrested on charges of serious offences and remain in prison for 30 days without obtaining bail, they would automatically lose their office on the 31st day, unless they resign voluntarily.
- ii. The Central Government introduced the Bill in the Lok Sabha last year. A 31-member Parliamentary Joint Committee, headed by BJP MP Aparajita Sarangi, was constituted to examine the legislation.
- iii. Opposition parties alleged that the Bill could be misused to destabilize State Governments ruled by non-BJP parties. Consequently, most opposition members withdrew from the Joint Committee reviewing the Bill.
- iv. The Committee has now prepared a draft report recommending several amendments to the proposed legislation.
- v. The Committee's key recommendations include:
- If the Prime Minister, Union Ministers, Chief Ministers, or State Ministers remain in prison for 30 consecutive days on charges involving serious criminal offences, they should be temporarily suspended from office until the court delivers its final judgment, rather than being permanently removed.
 - "Serious offences" should be specifically defined as offences carrying a punishment of five years' imprisonment or more.
 - The law should include a separate schedule clearly listing the offences that would attract temporary suspension from office.

- If the accused is acquitted or if the prosecution fails to proceed with legal action within the prescribed time, the temporary suspension should automatically cease.
- In accordance with Supreme Court directions, cases involving persons holding high constitutional offices should be heard by fast-track or special courts.
- If these recommendations are accepted, the Central Government is expected to introduce the necessary official amendments to the Bill in the Lok Sabha.

11. India's rapid progress in indigenous shipbuilding and the urgent need to expand its naval strength to become a global maritime power.

i. Historical Milestones in Naval Defence

- Historically, India's defense forces relied heavily on foreign nations for equipment, making India a primary market for international arms.
- A major turning point occurred a few years ago with the dedication of the aircraft carrier INS Vikrant, which signaled a shift toward Atmanirbharta (self-reliance) in naval technology.
- Over the last 10 years, the Indian Navy has added 33 warships and seven submarines to its fleet.
- Out of these 40 new vessels, a significant historical fact is that only one was obtained from a foreign country; the rest were built domestically.
- India's technological growth is highlighted by the development of nuclear-powered submarines, specifically INS Arihant and INS Arighat.

ii. Geographical Hubs and Manufacturing Centers

- Kolkata (West Bengal): The Public Sector Undertaking Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE), based in Kolkata, recently completed and delivered three modern vessels: INS Agray, INS Dunagiri (warships), and INS Sandhayak (research ship).
- Mumbai (Maharashtra): Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) in Mumbai designed and built the massive INS Mahendragiri. MDL is responsible for 39 of the Navy's current 135 warships.
- Visakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh): Defense Minister Rajnath Singh officially dedicated INS Mahendragiri to the Navy's Special Force at a ceremony in Visakhapatnam.

- Port Modernization: The "Sagarmala" project has been launched to modernize and develop infrastructure across 12 Government-run ports in India.

iii. Scientific and Technical Specifications

- INS Mahendragiri: This vessel weighs 6,670 tons and can reach a maximum speed of 28 maritime miles (knots) per hour.
- Stealth and Radar: It is designed with specialized stealth technology making it difficult for enemy radar to detect.
- Weaponry: The ship is equipped with high-speed attack missiles, including the BrahMos.
- Multi-Dimensional Defense: It possesses the scientific capability to defend against and launch attacks from the air, land, and underwater.
- Indigenous Composition: The three newest ships dedicated to the fleet were built using 75% domestic materials.

iv. Global Standing and Economic Statistics

- India currently accounts for only 1.2% of the global shipbuilding market. In contrast, China ranks first (47%), followed by South Korea (29%) and Japan (17%).
- While nations like Greece (17.8%), China (12.8%), and Japan (10.8%) lead in maritime trade volume, India's share stands at 1.8%.
- Only 0.77% of ships globally sail under the Indian flag.
- Currently, approximately 60 large ships, valued at ₹1.5 lakh crore, are under construction within India.

v. Future Goals and Policy Shifts

- India currently operates 135 warships; Prime Minister Narendra Modi has set a target to increase this to 250 warships by 2035.
- For the 2025–26 period, the Government initially allocated ₹25,000 crore to strengthen domestic shipbuilding, with plans to hike this to ₹70,000 crore.
- Domestic shipbuilding drives growth and employment in multiple sectors, including steel, electronics, sensors, software, and heavy equipment.
- India must not delay in attracting further investment to its shipbuilding yards to realize its potential as a leading maritime power and a developed nation.

12. India's historic journey to the lunar surface.**i. Historical Evolution of India's Space Program**

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) was founded in 1962.
- India's first rocket was launched the following year. Historically, the components for these early rockets were transported via bicycle, a fact that was mocked by other nations at the time.
- In 1999, the Indian Academy of Sciences and in 2000, the Astronautical Society of India put forward recommendations for a lunar mission.
- On August 15, 2003 (India's 56th Independence Day), then-Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee officially announced the commencement of the "Chandrayaan" (meaning "Moon Vehicle" in Sanskrit) mission.

ii. Timeline of Chandrayaan Missions

- Chandrayaan-1 (2008): Launched on October 22, 2008, from Sriharikota, this mission was a landmark success as it discovered water molecules on the lunar surface.
- Chandrayaan-2 (2019): While the orbiter was successful, the Vikram lander lost communication and failed to make a soft landing in its final moments.
- Chandrayaan-3 Breakthrough: Building on the lessons of the previous failure, Chandrayaan-3 was launched on July 14, 2023, and successfully landed on the moon after a 41-day journey.

iii. Geographical Facts: Target and Launch Site

- The mission was launched from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota using the LVM3 rocket.
- Chandrayaan-3 landed near the Lunar South Pole on August 23, 2023.
- This geographical region is highly significant because it contains deep craters where sunlight never reaches. Scientists believe these areas house frozen ice, which is essential for future human settlements and research.
- With this achievement, India became the fourth nation to land on the moon (after Russia, USA, and China) and the first nation in history to land near the lunar South Pole.

iv. Scientific Components and Findings

- The mission utilized the Vikram Lander and the Pragyan Rover.

- ISRO scientists modified the lander based on Chandrayaan-2's difficulties, enabling it to measure lunar temperatures, seismic activity, and plasma.
- The Pragyan Rover confirmed the presence of Sulphur on the moon. It also detected elements like Aluminum, Calcium, Iron, and Silicon.
- The entire mission was completed at a cost of approximately ₹600 crore, which is considered highly cost-effective by global standards.

v. Future Horizons in Space Research

The success of Chandrayaan-3 has paved the way for several ambitious future projects mentioned in the sources:

- Gaganyaan: India's first manned space flight.
- Chandrayaan-4: A mission aimed at bringing lunar soil samples back to Earth.
- Shukrayaan & Aditya-L1: Missions to explore Venus and the Sun, respectively.
- Samudrayaan: A deep-sea exploration mission to send humans into the ocean depths.

July 14 is not just a date marking a launch, but a symbol of India's scientific progress, self-reliance, and national pride.