

7. Short News

1. Mangrove Clam Breeding Success

The ICAR-CMFRI has successfully induced the breeding of the Mangrove Clam (*Geloina erosa*) in captivity for the first time.

About the Species – Also known as Mud Clams or *Kandal Kakka* (in Kerala).

Habitat – Found in organic-rich muddy areas of mangroves and estuaries in South/Southeast Asia.

Ecological Role – They are filter feeders that clean water, recycle nutrients, and stabilize soil sediment.

The Breakthrough – Scientists achieved the complete larval cycle (from spawning to spat settlement) in a hatchery.

Significance – Helps restore declining wild stocks due to overharvesting and pollution.

Promotes sustainable aquaculture and mangrove conservation.

2. Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs)

Natco Pharma's Chennai facility received a Voluntary Action Indicated (VAI) status from the USFDA.

VAI Meaning – Issues were found, but they do not stop operations; the company must make voluntary corrections.

An API – The biologically active component in a drug that produces the intended health effect (e.g., Paracetamol in a painkiller tablet).

Types of APIs

Chemical Synthesis – Small molecules (e.g., Ibuprofen).

Fermentation – Using microorganisms (e.g., Antibiotics like Penicillin).

Natural – Extracted from plants/animals (e.g., Morphine).

India's Position –

Largest supplier of generic medicines globally.

Challenge – Imports ~70% of APIs (mainly from China), creating a dependency risk.

Solution – Government has launched PLI Schemes to boost domestic production of critical APIs and Key Starting Materials (KSMs).

3. Combined Maritime Forces (CMF)

The Indian Navy has assumed command of Combined Task Force 154 (CTF 154) in Bahrain.

About CMF – A 47-nation naval partnership led by the US, headquartered in Bahrain.

Goal – Uphold the rules-based order, fight piracy/smuggling, and ensure maritime security in the Arabian Gulf and Red Sea.

Structure – It operates through five task forces (CTF 150, 151, 152, 153, and 154).

CTF 154 Role – Specifically focuses on Maritime Security Training and building partner capacity.

India's Role – Joined as an Associate Partner in 2022; commanding a task force signals growing leadership in the Indian Ocean Region.

4. India–Thailand Air Exercise

A bilateral air combat exercise held in the Indian Ocean Region.

Participants –

India – Su-30MKI fighters, IL-78 Tankers, and AWACS operating from Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

Thailand – SAAB Gripen jets operating from Thai bases.

Focus Areas – Air combat maneuvers, maritime surveillance, and interoperability.

Significance – Strengthens the Act East Policy and demonstrates India's strategic reach in the Indo-Pacific.

6th India–ROK Foreign Policy and Security Dialogue

Held in Seoul between India and the Republic of Korea (South Korea).

Framework – Part of the Special Strategic Partnership (established in 2015).

Key Discussions – Cooperation in Critical Technologies (Semiconductors, AI, Green Hydrogen).

Regional security in the Indo-Pacific and the Korean Peninsula. Strengthening supply chain resilience.

Revised Guidelines for Lead Bank Scheme (LBS)

The RBI has proposed new guidelines to streamline the LBS structure.

LBS

Launched in 1969 (based on Gadgil/Nariman Committee recommendations).

Core Concept – A specific bank is designated as the "Lead Bank" for a district to coordinate credit and development.

New Guidelines – Reinforce the role of the State Level Bankers' Committee (SLBC).

Clarify the **3-Tier Structure**

1. **State** – SLBC (State Level Bankers' Committee).
2. **District** – DCC (District Consultative Committee).
3. **Block** – BLBC (Block Level Banker's Committee).

Target – Banks must aim for a 60% Credit-Deposit Ratio in rural and semi-urban branches to ensure local funds are used for local development.

