

28th Jan, 2025

1. India-China's Strengthened Ties GS 2 (International Relations)

- Why in News:** India and China have made significant progress in their diplomatic relations by agreeing to resume the **Kailash Mansarovar Yatra**, **restore direct flights**, and **ease visa restrictions**. The two countries also agreed to restart discussions on **cooperation related to trans-border rivers** and the sharing of **hydrological data**, which China had previously withheld. The upcoming year will also see enhanced efforts in public diplomacy as both nations commemorate the 75th anniversary of diplomatic ties.
- Key-Points of Agreement**
 - Kailash Mansarovar Yatra to Resume:** India and China have agreed to restart the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, which is a pilgrimage that Indian devotees undertake to visit the sacred site in Tibet. This is an important decision for the Hindu community in India.
 - Restoration of Direct Flights and Easing Visa Restrictions:** Both sides also decided to restore direct flights between India and China, which were disrupted due to the pandemic and other issues. Additionally, visa restrictions will be eased, facilitating travel between the two countries.
 - Hydrological Data Sharing Resumed:** China had previously withheld important hydrological data about rivers that flow across the border into India, notably data on the **Brahmaputra River**. The two countries have now agreed to resume sharing this data, addressing concerns in India about China's construction of a hydropower project on the **Brahmaputra in South Tibet**.
 - India and China do not have an agreement for sharing of water of transboundary rivers.
 - The two nations had in 2002 and 2005 inked two MoUs, creating frameworks for China to share with India hydrological information during monsoon seasons on **Yarlung Tsangpo (Brahmaputra/Siang) and Langqên Tsangpo (Sutlej) respectively**.
 - The two MoUs could not be renewed after they expired – one on Sutlej in 2020 and the other on Brahmaputra in 2023 – due to the strains in ties over the military stand-off along the LAC.
- Background (Border Tensions and Clashes in Galwan Valley (2020))**
 - In June 2020, the relationship between India and China escalated when **violent clashes occurred between Indian and Chinese soldiers in Galwan Valley**, located along the **Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh**.
 - This resulted in the deaths of 20 Indian soldiers, and China reported the deaths of four of its soldiers. Following these clashes, both countries deployed thousands of troops and heavy artillery along the LAC
 - Since the Galwan clash, India and China have held multiple rounds of military and diplomatic talks to ease the tension along their shared border
 - In October 2023, the two countries reached an agreement on a patrolling arrangement, which led to disengagement in certain areas of eastern Ladakh.
 - Recent Developments and Stability:** India and China have reached a significant agreement to restore patrolling rights to each in the **Depsang Plains and Demchok region**, these are areas where the problems are called **legacy issues**, predating the **2020 Chinese incursions**.
- India-China Dispute**
 - India and China have disputed border in the Himalayan region.
 - The root cause is an ill-defined, 3,440km (2,100-mile)-long disputed border.
 - The LAC has never been demarcated.
 - The India-China border is divided into three sectors

AFTER MISRI-WANG MEETING IN BEIJING

Thaw in India-China chill: Direct flights, Mansarovar Yatra and easing of visas



Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri and China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Beijing on Monday. #1

To work on sharing trans-border river data, facilitate people-to-people exchanges of media, think-tanks

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 27

MARKING A major diplomatic breakthrough after the disengagement process between India and China was completed last November, New Delhi and Beijing decided on a slew of measures to improve bilateral exchanges: re-summing Kailash Mansarovar Yatra in the summer this year; working to restore direct flights between the two capitals; issuing visas for journalists and think tanks; and sharing trans-border river data, an official statement from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Monday.

These decisions were arrived at after Foreign Secretary Vikram

DETAILS
A tale of 3 mutuals

WANG Yi flagged three mutuals to avoid "misgivings, estrangement, and exhaustion." This comes after Jishankar had outlined India's approach in terms of "the three mutuals—mutual respect, mutual sensitivity and mutual interest."

Misri met Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong, Foreign Minister Wang Yi, and Minister of International Department of the

Communist Party of China Liu Jianchao in Beijing. Recalling the agreement between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping at their meeting in Kazan in October, the MEA said that the two sides "reviewed the state of India-China bilateral relations comprehensively" and "agreed to take certain people-centric steps to stabilise and rebuild ties." While there was no mention of the border situation in the Indian statement, it said: "It was agreed to ensure these dialogues step by step and to utilise them to address each other's priority areas of interest and concern." This is an oblique reference to the border situation, with no

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- **What is AI and its Regulation?**
 - Artificial intelligence (AI) is technology that enables computers and machines to simulate human learning, comprehension, problem solving, decision making, creativity and autonomy.
 - **Machine Learning** involves creating models by training an algorithm to make predictions or decisions based on data.
 - **Deep learning** is a subset of machine learning that uses **multilayered neural networks**, called **deep neural networks** that more closely simulate the complex decision-making power of the human brain.
 - **Generative AI**, sometimes called "gen AI", refers to deep learning models that can create complex original content—such as long-form text, high-quality images, realistic video or audio and more—in response to a user's prompt or request.
- **Different regions are adopting various approaches to regulate AI:**
 - **The European Union** has proposed strict regulations on AI based on risk levels, separating AI use cases by their potential danger.
 - **The United Kingdom** has taken a "light-touch" approach to regulation, focusing more on fostering innovation than on heavy regulation.
 - **The United States** is somewhere in between, balancing regulation with the need to encourage innovation.
 - **China** is also working on its own regulatory framework to control AI development.
 - **India** has emphasized that **AI should be safe and trustworthy**, ensuring it doesn't contribute to harm (like social media misuse) while also recognizing the potential opportunities AI brings.
- **Concerns About AI:** The summit will address three major concerns about AI:
 - **Privacy:** Ensuring AI does not misuse personal data.
 - **Bias:** Preventing AI systems from making biased or discriminatory decisions.
 - **Intellectual Property:** Protecting creative works produced by AI systems.

3. Enhanced Certificates of Origin 2.0 System GS 2 (Governance)

- **Why in News:** Recently, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) has launched the enhanced Certificate of Origin (eCoO) 2.0 System.
- **About Enhanced Certificates of Origin 2.0 System:**
 - It is an upgrade designed to simplify the **certification process for exporters** and enhance **trade efficiency**.
 - It offers several user-friendly features, such as **multi-user access**, which enables exporters to authorize multiple users under a **single Importer Exporter Code (IEC)**.
 - Additionally, the system now supports **Aadhaar-based e-signing** alongside digital signature tokens, providing greater flexibility
 - An integrated dashboard offers exporters seamless access to enhanced Certificate of Origin (**eCoO**) **services, Free Trade Agreement (FTA) information**, trade events, and other resources.
 - The platform also introduces an **in-lieu Certificate of Origin feature**, allowing exporters to request corrections to previously issued certificates through an easy online application process.
 - The platform processes **over 7,000 eCoOs daily**, including both preferential and non-preferential certificates, connecting 125 issuing agencies which includes 110 national and regional chambers of commerce & industry
 - Certificates of Origin is a **single access point for all exporters**, for all FTAs/PTAs and for all agencies concerned.
 - The **electronic filing of Non-Preferential Certificates of Origin** has become mandatory via the eCoO 2.0 platform, and is available to exporters at [https:// trade.gov.in](https://trade.gov.in) under the "Get Certificate of Origin" section.
 - The platform has been designed and developed by **DGFT and Regional & Multilateral Trade Relations (RMTR)** Division, Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

4. Wetland Accredited Cities GS 3 (Environment)

- **Why in News:** Recently, Indore and Udaipur have become the first two Indian cities to join the global list of wetland accredited cities.
- **About Wetland Accredited Cities (WCA)**
 - It is a **voluntary accreditation scheme**, which provides an opportunity for cities that value their **natural or human-made wetlands to gain international recognition** and positive publicity for their efforts.
 - It was approved during the Ramsar Convention COP12 held in **the year 2015**.
 - It **aims to further promote the conservation** and wise **use of urban and peri-urban wetlands**, as well as sustainable socio-economic benefits for local populations.
 - It recognizes cities that have taken exceptional **steps to safeguard their urban wetlands**.
 - To be formally accredited, a candidate for WCA should satisfy the standards used to implement each of the six international criteria mentioned in **Operational Guidance for WCA of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands**
 - The accreditation is **valid for 6 years**, after which it **must be renewed**, providing that it continues to fill each of the 6 criteria.
 - Since Ramsar COP13, 74 cities from **17 countries** have been officially recognized as “Wetland Cities”.

5. Namdapha Tiger Reserve GS 3 (Environment)

- **Why in News:** Recently, an elephant has been camera-trapped in Namdapha Tiger Reserve after 12 years, fuelling conservation hopes.
- **About Namdapha Tiger Reserve:**
 - It is located in the Changlang District of **Arunachal Pradesh**, surrounded by Myanmar on the South East.
 - It has a common boundary with **Kamlang Wildlife Sanctuary**.
 - It is nestled between the **Dapha Bum ridge of Mishmi Hills** and the **Patkai Ranges**.
 - It consists of **Tropical Evergreen Forest, Tropical Moist Deciduous Forests, Moist Temperate Forests** and **Moist Alpine Scrub Forests**.
 - **Namdapha River** flows right across in a north-south direction of the reserve and hence the name Namdapha has been given.
 - **Flora:**
 - It consists of species like **Pinus merkusi** and **Abies delavayi** being exclusive to the park.
 - It is home to **Blue Vanda**, which is a rare and endangered **orchid**. Many other species of orchids are found here.
 - It also consists of medicinal plants like **Mishmi Teeta (Coptis teeta)**, which is used by the local tribes to treat different types of diseases.
 - **Fauna:**
 - The **Namdapha flying squirrel** (*Biswamoyopterus biswasi*) is endemic to the park and is critically endangered.
 - Four big cats, found in the park, are **leopard, snow leopard, tiger and clouded leopard**.
 - Others: Elephants, Himalayan Black Bear, Himalayan Sun Bear, Hoolock Gibbon (only Ape in India), Slow Loris, Rare birds and butterflies, etc.

6. Fentanyl

GS 2 (International Relations)

- **Why in News:** Recently, the US President Donald Trump said his administration was discussing a 10% punitive duty on Chinese imports as fentanyl is being sent from China to the US via Mexico and Canada.
- **About Fentanyl:**
 - It is a potent **synthetic opioid drug** approved by the Food and Drug Administration for use as an **analgesic (for pain relief) and anesthetic (for surgery)**.
 - It is approximately 100 times more potent than **morphine** and 50 times more potent than **heroin** as an analgesic.
 - Its overdoses can cause **stupor, changes in pupil size, clammy skin, cyanosis (blue skin), coma and respiratory failure leading to death**.
- **What are Opioids?**
 - These are a class of drugs that **derive from, or mimic, natural substances** found in the opium poppy plant.
 - **Impacts on human body:**
 - They activate an **area of nerve cells** in the brain and body called **opioid receptors** that block pain signals between the brain and the body.
 - They produce a variety of effects, including **pain relief and euphoria** and are highly addictive.
 - Some common opioids include **oxycodone, morphine, codeine, heroin and fentanyl**.
 - An opioid overdose can be identified by a combination of three signs and symptoms: **pinpoint pupils, unconsciousness and difficulties with breathing**.
 - Their overuse **can lead to death** due to the effects of opioids on the part of the brain which regulates breathing.

7. Etikoppaka Toys

GS 1 (Art and Culture)

- **Why in News:** Recently, Andhra Pradesh's eco-friendly wooden Etikoppaka Toys earn accolades at Republic Day parade.
- **About Etikoppaka Toys:**
 - Known as **Etikoppaka Bommalu**, they are the exquisite wooden toys rooted in a 400-year-old tradition of craftsmanship.
 - They **originated in Etikoppaka village in Andhra**
 - The toys are renowned for their **smooth contours and vibrant colours**, coloured with **natural dyes** derived from seeds, lacquer, bark, roots and leaves.
 - The artisans mainly use the wood from **trees known as 'ankudu'** (Wrightia tinctoria) that is soft in nature.
 - These toys have **no sharp edges**. They are rounded on all sides.
 - In 2017, the toys received the **Geographical Indication (GI) tag**, a hallmark of their authenticity and cultural significance.
- **GI tag:**
 - It is a sign used on products that have a **specific geographical origin** and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin.
 - In India, GI registration is administered by the **Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999**.
 - The first product in India to be accorded with GI tag was Darjeeling tea in the year 2004-05.