

Pangong Tso Lake

❖ Context

➤ China is constructing a bridge in eastern Ladakh connecting the north and south banks of Pangong Tso (lake).

❖ Key Highlights

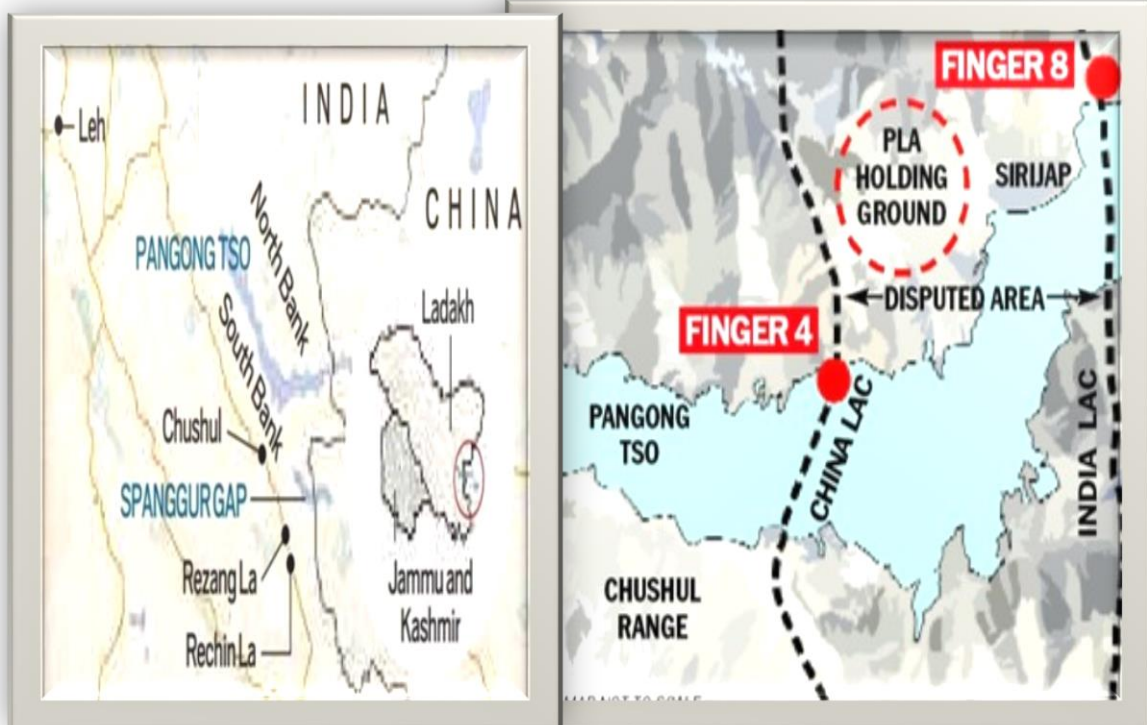
- It will significantly bring down the time for the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to move troops and equipment between the two sectors from around 12 hours to three or four hours.
- On the north bank, there is a PLA garrison at Kurnak fort and on the south bank at Moldo, and the distance between the two is around 200 km.
- The bridge is located around 25 km ahead of the Line of Actual Control (LAC), the source stated.

❖ About Lake

- Pangong Lake is located in the Union Territory of Ladakh.
- It is situated at a height of almost 4,350m and is the world's highest saltwater lake.
- India holds one-third of the 135-km-long boomerang-shaped lake.
- The lake, a glacial melt, has mountain spurs of the Chang Chenmo range jutting down, referred to as finger.
- The north bank, which has much higher differences in perception of the LAC than the south bank, was the initial site of the clashes in early May 2020, while tensions on the south bank flared up later in August.
- The Indian Army got a tactical advantage over the PLA on the south bank in August-end by occupying several peaks lying vacant since 1962, gaining a dominating view of the Moldo area.
- On the north bank too, the Indian troops set up posts facing PLA positions on the ridge-lines of Finger 4.

❖ New Border Law

- On January 1, 2021, China implemented its new border law.
- The new law calls to strengthen its border defence infrastructure near the borders and development of villages.
- It also lays down conditions, under which emergency measures can be imposed across the border areas.



RCEP

❖ Context

➤ The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, a mega trade agreement signed by 15 countries, is in force.

❖ About RCEP

- RCEP negotiations were formally launched in 2012 at the ASEAN Summit in Cambodia.
- **Members:-** It is a trade deal between sixteen countries namely 10 countries of ASEAN (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam) and China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand.

❖ Aims and Objectives

- To lower tariffs, open up trade in services and promote investment to help emerging economies catch up with the rest of the world.
- To help reduce costs and time for companies by allowing them to export a product anywhere within the bloc without meeting separate requirements for each country.
- It also touches on intellectual property, but will not cover environmental protections and labour rights.
- ❖ **Significance:** RCEP will cover about 30% of global gross domestic product (GDP), worth \$26.2 trillion and nearly a third of the world's population, some 2.2 billion people.
- Under RCEP, around 90% of trade tariffs within the bloc will eventually be eliminated.

❖ China's Role in RCEP

- RCEP was pushed by Beijing in 2012 in order to counter another FTA that was in the works at the time: The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).
- The US-led TPP excludes China. However, in 2016 US President Donald Trump withdrew his country from the TPP. Since then, the RCEP has become a major tool for China to counter the US efforts to prevent trade with Beijing.

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❖ India's Take on RCEP

- On November 4, 2019 India decided against joining the RCEP trade deal, saying it was not shying away from opening up to global competition across sectors.
- The Government said that the present form of the RCEP agreement does not fully reflect the basic spirit and the agreed guiding principles of RCEP.
- There was a fear in India that its industries would be unable to compete with China and Chinese goods would flood Indian markets. India's farmers were also worried given that they would be unable to compete on a global scale.



WTO & TRIPS

❖ Context

- An emergency meeting of the General Council to happen this month in Geneva to discuss the pandemic response package including the proposal of waiver of implementation of certain provisions of TRIPS

❖ Key Highlights

- India & South Africa had submitted the first proposal in Oct - 2020 suggesting for waiver of TRIPS provisions for all WTO members

❖ World Trade Organization (WTO)

- An intergovernmental organization of **164 member states (covering 98% of global trade & GDP)** that regulates and facilitates international trade between nations
- It is a **rule-based member driven organization with decisions taken by consensus among all member governments.**
- Replaced GATT (General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs) which was established in 1948
- Commenced operation since 1 Jan 1995, pursuant to the **Marrakesh Agreement**
- Ministerial Conference** meets every two years
- The General Council is the top day-to-day decision making body** which meets a number of times a year. It consists of **representatives** from the member governments and **has the authority to act on behalf of ministerial conference**
- The General Council meets as both the **Dispute Settlement body & Trade policy review body** of the WTO

❖ Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS)

- Negotiated during the Uruguay Round of GATT (1986-1994) and is administered by the TRIPS council of WTO
- "**Intellectual property**" refers to **creations of the mind** and can take many different forms, such as artistic expressions, signs, symbols and names used in commerce, designs and inventions.
- Governments grant creators the right to prevent others from using** their inventions, designs or other creations — and to use that **right to negotiate payment in return for others using them.** These are "intellectual property rights".
- Before WTO, international intellectual property rights were governed by the following main conventions of **WIPO (a specialized agency of UN established in 1967)**

1883 – Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property	Deals with patents, trademarks, utility models, industrial designs, trade names, service marks, geographical indications as well as the "repression of unfair competition".
1886 – Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works	Deals with copyright, the protection of works and rights of authors and rights holders.

- But some areas were not covered by these agreements and the standards of protection were also inadequate
- TRIPS adding significantly to these agreements established minimum standards of protection and enforcement that each government has to give to the intellectual property held by nationals of fellow WTO members.
- However, WTO members have considerable scope to tailor their approaches to IP protection and enforcement in order to suit their needs and achieve public policy goals, such as exclusions or exceptions to intellectual property rights.
- Basic principles: national treatment, MFN, and balanced protection (both producers and users should benefit)**

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GST Compensation Scheme

❖ Context

- Several states have demanded to extend the compensation scheme beyond June 2022 in the light of the state's financial resources taking a severe hit owing to the outbreak of COVID-19.

❖ Key Highlights

- GST mechanism was created vide **Constitution's 101st amendment 2016**
- **States had agreed to cede their power to impose local level indirect taxes on the condition that revenue shortfalls on account of transition to the new regime (GST) would be made good.**
- The computation of the shortfall is done annually by projecting a revenue assumption based on 14% compounded growth from the base year's (2015-2016) revenue and calculating the difference between that figure and the actual GST collections in that year.

For ex - To calculate GST shortfall for 2017-18 (figures are assumed for illustrative purpose)

Indirect tax collection of states under pre-GST regime in 2015-16	1,00,000 crores
Indirect tax collection of states that would have been under pre-GST regime in 2017-18 with compound rate of growth @14%	1,29,960 crores
Actual GST collection in 2017-18 (states share)	1,15,500 crores
Shortfall for the year 2017-18	14,460 crores

- To finance the shortfall, a **pooled fund (GST compensation fund)** was created for a period of **five years** which is set to end in June 2022
- This corpus will be **funded through a compensation cess** levied on '**demerit goods**' - **high end cars, pan masala, aerated drinks and tobacco products**. A merit good or service is something that adds to the welfare and well-being of society when it is produced and consumed.
- **Due to the economic impact of COVID-19 pandemic, both actual GST collections & compensation cess has been inadequate** which has **increased the amount of shortfalls due** to the states. In order to finance this, the Centre has **borrowed funds in 2020-21 & 2021-22 (back-to-back loan)** and tried to meet the shortfall. This loan will be repaid by extending the compensation cess till **March 2026**.
- But as the deadline for GST compensation was set in the original legislation, GST law would have to be amended with the recommendation of GST council

News in Between the Lines

Ayush Aahar



❖ Context

- Recently, the **Ministry of Ayush** made a new beginning by making '**Ayush Aahar**' available at its canteen at Ayush Bhawan for Promoting **nutritional diet and a healthy living**.

❖ Key Highlights

- Started as a pilot project.
- The 'Ayush Aahar' includes **Vegetable Poha, Bhajani Vada, Gajar Ka Halwa and Kokum Drink**.
- All the dishes are very popular among the masses and have high nutritional value.

Offline Digital Payment

❖ Context

- RBI approved the framework to facilitate small-value digital payments in offline mode

❖ Key Highlights

- It will not require internet/digital connectivity
- Instead, it will be carried out **face-to-face (proximity mode)** using any channel or instrument like cards, wallets and mobile devices

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- Such transactions would **not require an Additional factor of Authentication.**
- **Alerts (SMS/e-mail)** will be received by the customer after a **time lag.**
- **Limit of Rs. 200 per transaction** and **overall limit of Rs. 2,000** until the balance in account is replenished.
- The move will promote digital payments in semi-urban and rural areas.

Indian Peacock Soft-shell Turtle



❖ Context

- Indian Peacock Soft-Shell Turtle has been sighted for the first time in Nagaland

❖ About the turtle

- They have a **large head, downturned snout with a low and oval carapace of dark olive green to nearly black**, sometimes with a yellow rim.
- The **head and limbs are olive green**; the forehead has dark reticulations and large yellow or orange patches or spots, especially behind the eyes and across the snout.
- **Males possess relatively longer and thicker tails than females.**
- **Habitat:-** Found in rivers, streams, lakes and ponds with mud or sand bottoms of **India, Bangladesh and Pakistan.**
- **Protection Status:**
 - **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972: Schedule I**
 - **IUCN Red List: Vulnerable**
 - **CITES: Appendix I**

GitHub



❖ Context

- The **open-source software repository service GitHub** is in the news after it was used to create and share an offensively named app that **sexually harassed Muslim women in India.**

❖ Key Highlights

- The app used pictures of the women stolen from their social media handles and **invited “users” to bid for them.**
- Govt. that GitHub has blocked the user, and the **Indian Computer Emergency Response System (Cert-In)**, the nodal agency for monitoring cyber security incidents, has been **asked to form “a high-level committee” to investigate.**

❖ About GitHub

- GitHub is the **world’s largest open-source developer community platform** where users upload their projects and code for others to **view, edit, and tweak.**
- The platform uses the **software Git, which was created in 2005 by Linus Trovalds**, the developer of the open-source operating system Linux, **to track changes in a set of files and for coordination in software.**
- **Any developer can upload whatever software code or app code or software idea they have on the platform**, and have others collaborate with them to help improve it, find errors, and fix problems.

Automatic Generation Control

❖ Context

- Union Minister of Power and New & Renewable energy dedicates AGC to the nation

❖ Key Highlights

- It is operated by **National Load Dispatch centre of Power system Operation Corporation (POSOCO)**

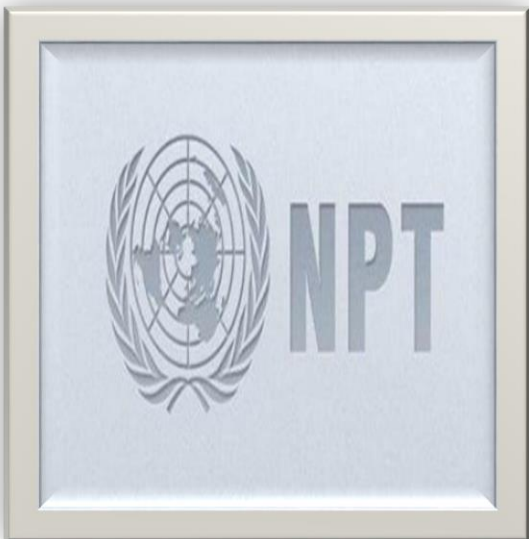
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- POSOCO is a subsidiary organization of **POWERGRID** separated from it in 2017
- It is responsible to ensure **integrated operation of Grid** in a reliable, efficient and secure manner
- **AGC** is a system for adjusting the power output of multiple generators at different power plants, in response to the change in load
- It is necessary in powergrid that load and output closely balance each other
- The balance is judged by measuring **system frequency**. If frequency is **increasing**, that means, **output is greater than the load** while if frequency is **decreasing**, it means **load is greater than the output**
- AGC sends **signals to power plants every 4 seconds to maintain system frequency**
- Since, India is preparing for integration of large-scale variable & intermittent renewable sources, it will facilitate government's target to achieve 500 GW non-fossil fuel based generation capacity by 2030

NPT



❖ Context

- Review of **Treaty of Non-proliferation of Nuclear weapons (NPT)** postponed from its scheduled date to later this year due to COVID-19 pandemic

❖ Key Highlights

- The multilateral binding treaty opened for signature in 1968 and **entered into force in 1970**. **191 countries are signatory to the treaty except India, Pakistan, Israel & South Sudan**
- Based on **three 'pillars'** - **Non-proliferation, Disarmament, Right to peaceful use of nuclear technology**
- Originally, conceived for 25 years only, **extended indefinitely in 1995**
- It defines **nuclear weapon states** as those that have built and tested a nuclear explosive device **before 1 Jan 1967** - **China, USA, Russia, France, UK**
- **NPT non-nuclear weapon states** agree never to acquire nuclear weapons while **nuclear weapon states** in exchange agree to share the benefits of peaceful use of nuclear technology under **IAEA's safeguard system**
- The treaty is **reviewed every five years** in meetings called **Review conferences**

CCRAS launches:- eOffice



❖ Context :

- Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (**CCRAS**), launches **eOffice**

❖ Key Highlights:

- The **eOffice platform** is a **digital workplace solution** comprising a suite of products and features that support **efficient and transparent governance** by streamlining all workflow and making all procedures paperless
- CCRAS the largest Research Council under **the Ministry of Ayush, Government of India** has initiated the use of **eOffice** for its official purposes.
- The Council in its quest for becoming a paperless organisation, has launched the application developed by **National Informatics Centre (NIC), Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology** on 3rd January, 2022.
- CCRAS processed an e-file through the application to formally launch the platform for the Council. The Council has already been taking many IT based initiatives including the **NAMASTE Portal**, Ayush Research Portal and many other for the welfare and use of Ayush stakeholders. Implemented and initiated the use of **eOffice** for employees and staff. with the integrated software **SPARROW**

