Daily Current Affairs : 15 December 2023

Countervailing Duty (CVD)



- Recently, the U.S. and the European Union have imposed countervailing duties (CVDs) on four Indian products.
- It was seen as a retaliation against the Remission of Duties and Taxes on Export Products (RoDTEP) scheme introduced for outbound shipments in January 2021.

❖ About CVD

- Countervailing duties or CVDs are **tariffs on imported goods.**
- They are **imposed to offset subsidies given** by the exporting country's government.
- CVDs **help offset any negative domestic impacts** that producers of the same good might experience due to foreign competition, who in this case, would receive a subsidy to export the same good.
- The **WTO only permits countervailing duties** to be charged after the importing nation has conducted an in-depth investigation into the subsidized exports.

❖ About RoDTEP Scheme

- In January 2021, Center launched the Remission of Duties or Taxes on Export Products (RoDTEP) Scheme to replace the export subsidy MEIS Scheme in order to be WTO compliant.
- **Background**
  - The main purpose of RoDTEP is to provide a level playing field to Indian exporters and to make their products competitive in the global market.
  - America challenged India's key export subsidy schemes in the WTO (World Trade Organisation) by claiming them to harm American workers.
  - A dispute panel of the World Trade Organization has ruled against India by saying that the export subsidy program provided by the Indian government violates provisions of the trade body's norms.
  - The panel recommended that the export subsidy program be withdrawn.
  - To ensure that India remains WTO compliant, the government launched the RoDTEP scheme.
- **Features of the RoDTEP Scheme**
  - Mandi tax, Value-Added Tax, Coal cess, Central Excise duty on fuel, etc. will now be refunded under this RoDTEP scheme.
  - All the items under the MEIS(Merchandise Exports from India) and the RoSTCL (Rebate of State and Central Taxes and Levies) are now under the purview of this Scheme.
  - The objective of the RoDTEP scheme is to provide a boost to Indian exports by reimbursing the taxes and duties that are currently not being refunded under any other existing export incentive scheme.
  - The rebate rate under the RoDTEP scheme is determined based on the rates of taxes and duties that are not being refunded currently.
  - The rebate rates range from 0.5% to 4.3% of the FOB (Free on Board) value of exports.
- The RoDTEP Committee operates within the Department of Revenue.
  - Its primary responsibility is to review and recommend ceiling rates for different export sectors under the RoDTEP Scheme.

GPAI New Delhi Declaration on AI



- Recently, the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI), an alliance of 29 members, has unanimously adopted the New Delhi declaration.

❖ Key Highlights

- The declaration emphasized on
  - The need to mitigate risks arising from the development and deployment of artificial intelligence (AI) systems.
  - Promoting equitable access to critical resources for AI innovation, including computing and high-quality diverse datasets.
- The declaration also agreed to support AI innovation in the agriculture sector as a new "thematic priority".
- The New Delhi declaration has attempted to find a balance between innovation and the risks associated with AI systems.

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- Senegal, a current member of the grouping, was elevated to the steering committee of the GPAI.
- The declaration stands out as a contrast from the agreement signed at the United Kingdom AI Safety Summit at Bletchley Park, Buckinghamshire, a month ago.
  - In this declaration countries had committed to first tackle the risks emanating from AI systems.

Vyommitra



- Recently, the Minister of Science & Technology, announced that India is set to launch Vyommitra, a female robot astronaut, into space as part of the ambitious Gaganyaan project.

About Vyommitra

- Vyommitra is a **half-humanoid lacking lower limbs.**
- **Designed by**
  - IISU was responsible for the design, development, and integration of the robot.
  - Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) at Thumba developed its fingers
- **Objective**
  - To fly **aboard unmanned test missions** ahead of the Gaganyaan human space-flight mission.
  - Besides going on uncrewed Gaganyaan missions, she will accompany astronauts on manned missions too.
- **Features**
  - IISU has successfully integrated it with a computer 'brain'.
    - This brain enables it to **'read' control panels aboard** the unmanned test flights and communicate with the ISRO ground stations.
  - It has been **designed to resemble a human** with facial expressions and speech and sight capabilities.
  - This AI-enabled robot can **withstand vibrations and shock during flight.**
  - It can perform tasks such as operating switch panels, and serving as a companion to astronauts, engaging in conversations, recognising them, and responding to their inquiries.

New Marine Amphipod Species Found in Chillika Lake

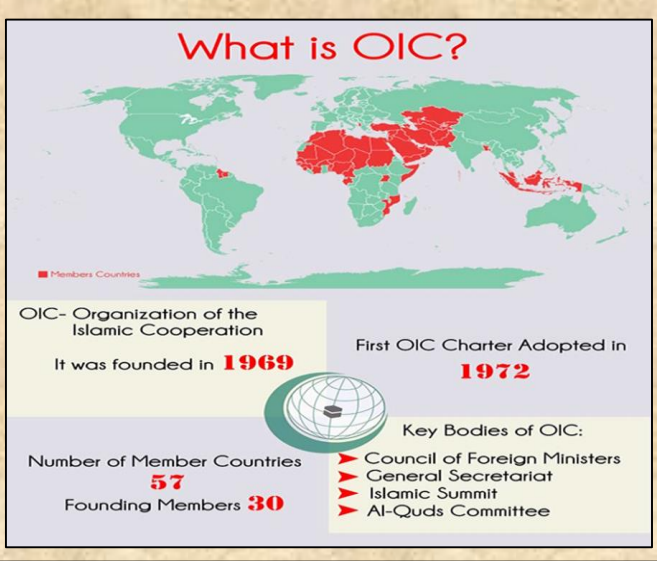


- Recently, researchers at Berhampur University, Odisha have discovered a new species of marine amphipod — a shrimp-like crustacea of genus Demaorchestia— in the state's Chilika lake on the east coast of India.

Key Highlights

- The new species was named Demaorchestia alanensis after global expert professor Alan Myers of University College Cork, Ireland, who has made a significant contribution to global marine amphipod studies.
- The new species is white in colour and less than 15 millimetres in length.
- It has 13 pairs of legs. While three pairs are used for swimming in the water, eight pairs are used for walking on land. The other two pairs are used for capturing prey and feeding.
- The species can be distinguished from the other members of the genus by two to three strong, hair-like structures or setae on the anterior margin of the propodus of the gnathopod.
- It belongs to the subfamily Platorchestiinae found along the Indian coast.
- Amphipods are a significant group in the marine ecosystem and play a vital role in the marine food chain.
- They also serve as indicators for studying the impact of climate change and health of coastal ecosystems.

Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)



- Recently, India on December 13, rejected the General Secretariat of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)'s statement on the Supreme Court of India's decision to uphold the stripping of Jammu and Kashmir's autonomy.

About OIC

- **Date of Establishment**: 25 September 1969
- **Headquarters**: Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
- **Secretary General:** Hissein Brahim Taha
- **Member Countries:** The OIC has 57 members.

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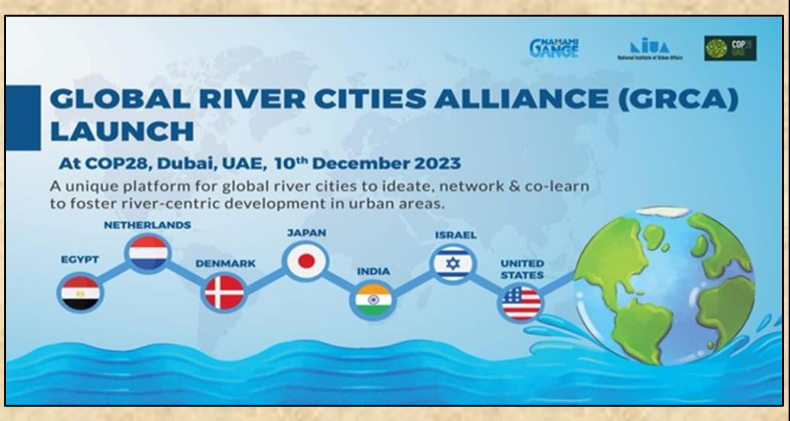
- Syria's membership was suspended at the Fourth Extraordinary Islamic Summit Conference of OIC held in Makkah on 14-15 August 2012.
- **Observer Countries:** The Organization has 5 Observer Countries.
  - Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (by the name of Turkish Cypriot State), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Central African Republic, Russia, Thailand.

❑ **Objective of the Organization**
- To strengthen cooperation and solidarity between the Member States, to protect the rights and interests of the Islamic World.

❑ Official languages- Arabic, English, and French.

❑ Side Note
- It is the second-largest organisation in the world after the United Nations, with a collective population reaching over 1.8 billion.

Global River Cities Alliance (GRCA)



➢ Recently, The Global River Cities Alliance (GRCA), was officially launched at COP28, the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Dubai.

❖ **Key Highlights**

❑ It was initiated by the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) under the Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India

❑ This alliance brings together countries, river-cities, international funding agencies, and knowledge management partners to enhance the existing River Cities Alliance (RCA) formed by NMCG in collaboration with the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) in 2021.

❑ Following the launch, partner countries are set to coordinate post-COP activities, shaping the architecture of GRCA for effective implementation.

❑ It stands out as a unique alliance covering 275+ global river-cities across 11 countries.

❑ International funding agencies such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB), Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), and knowledge management institution KPMG have entered into a partnership, marking a significant expansion of the alliance.

❑ This alliance is the first of its kind globally, signifying a commitment to collaborative action for the well-being of rivers and their ecosystems.

ENACT Partnership



➢ Six new countries and a United Nations agency are joining the ENACT Partnership.

➢ The new partners include France, the United States of America, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Pakistan & the UN Environment Programme, including its World Conservation Monitoring Centre.

❖ **ENACT Partnership**

❑ ENACT (Enhancing Nature-based Solutions for an Accelerated Climate Transformation) was launched at COP27, which took place at Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt in December 2022.

❑ The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) hosts its secretariat.

❑ Canada, the European Union, Spain, Malawi, Norway, South Korea, Japan and Slovenia were also founding members of the partnership.

❑ It is an ambitious global initiative that seeks to coordinate global efforts to address climate change, land and ecosystem degradation, and biodiversity loss through Nature-based Solutions.

❑ Nature-based Solutions involve working with and for, rather than against nature, which is critical to deliver the climate, biodiversity, and land restoration action necessary to steward human well-being for all.

❑ **Objectives of the Partnership**
- The protection from and resilience to climate impacts of at least 1 billion vulnerable people,
- Secure up to 2.4 billion hectares of healthy natural and sustainable ecosystems.
- Significantly increase global mitigation efforts through protecting and restoring carbon-rich ecosystems.

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