



INNOVATIVE IAS

Daily News Analysis

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General Studies-2

China, U.S. sign initial trade agreement

Why in news?

- China will boost purchases of U.S. goods and services by \$200 billion over two years in exchange for the rolling back of some tariffs under an initial trade deal signed by the world's two largest economies, defusing an 18-month row that has hit global growth.

Details:

- China has pledged to purchase at least an additional \$200 billion worth of U.S. farm products and other goods and services over two years, above a baseline of \$186 billion in purchases in 2017.
- Commitments include \$54 billion in additional energy purchases, \$78 billion in additional manufacturing purchases, \$32 billion more in farm products, and \$38 billion in services.
- Chinese companies would buy \$40 billion in U.S. agricultural products annually over the next two years “based on market conditions” which may dictate the timing of purchases in any given year.
- The Phase 1 deal cancelled planned U.S. tariffs on Chinese-made cellphones, toys and laptop computers and halved the tariff rate to 7.5% on about \$120 billion worth of other Chinese goods, including flat-panel televisions, Bluetooth headphones and footwear.

CPEC

- China's President Xi Jinping will be visiting Myanmar to mark the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Myanmar.
- President's visit will focus on the three pillars of the China Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC)— the Kyaukpyu Special Economic Zone, the China-Myanmar Border Economic Cooperation Zone and the New Yangon City. CMEC is a branch of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in the Indian Ocean.
- The CMEC to the Bay of Bengal is the replica of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) that connects Beijing's western province of Xinjiang to Karachi and Gwadar on the Arabian Sea.

Historical Background of CMEC

- The East India Company and the British Raj were eager to develop connectivity into Yunnan through Burma to promote trade between India and western China.
- In the late 19th century, the Indian Railways surveyed the route for a railway line from the Arakan coast (Myanmar) to Yunnan (China), but could not implement it.
- Thus, China will be implementing the vision of the East India Company.



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Key Highlights of Visit:

Connectivity and Infrastructure:

- The visit is likely to pave the way for greater connectivity between China's southwestern province of Yunnan and the eastern Indian Ocean.
- The major infrastructure projects like the development of a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) and a deep-sea port at Kyaukpyu and the construction of a railway line from the China border to Mandalay in central Myanmar will be discussed.
- The railway will connect Kyaukpyu on the western seaboard of Myanmar and Yangon in the south where the Irrawaddy River flows into the Bay of Bengal.
- The visit is also expected to revive the hydel dam at Myitsone and the copper mining project that had to be suspended a decade ago.

Economic Relations:

- It will reinforce China's status as the most important economic partner of Myanmar, and rejuvenate the historic special relationship between the two countries.

Diplomatic Relations:

- The US and the West that have been critical of Myanmar's handling of the Rohingya problem. China, in contrast, has played the role of mediator between Myanmar and Bangladesh.
- China is making the case that some of its BRI projects can help alleviate the Rohingya conflict by accelerating the development of the Arakan region.
- By developing ports such as the Gwadar and Kyaukpyu, China aims to lower its strategic dependence on the Malacca straits — the vital trade link between the Indian and the Pacific oceans, which is the Indo-Pacific Command of the U.S.

Impact on India

- China's economic stakes in the Bay of Bengal will signify larger maritime presence and naval engagement in the region which in turn reinforces the string of pearls policy by China.
- The String of pearls is a geopolitical theory referring to the network of Chinese military and commercial facilities extended from the Chinese mainland to Port Sudan in the Horn of Africa.
- But this theory is denied by China and it views its actions as their efforts to strengthen a new maritime Silk Road.
- Like CMEC and CPEC, China is also developing the China-Nepal Economic Corridor (CNEC) which will link Tibet to Nepal. The endpoints of the project will touch the boundaries of the Gangetic plain. Thus three corridors signify the economic as well as strategic rise of China in the Indian subcontinent.



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Steps to be Taken by India

- India should focus on making a more effective contribution to Myanmar's development and security.
- India needs to focus on quickly completing its own infrastructure projects in Myanmar and develop a new strategy for commercial partnership that is in tune with India's own capabilities and strengths.
- India needs to strengthen its collaboration with like-minded partners like Japan which has a growing economic presence in Myanmar. Thus, India's Act East Policy and Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy needs to combine.
- India also needs to revive the dormant dialogue with China on the BCIM corridor involving Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar.

World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

Why in news?

- According to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the year 2019 was the second-hottest year since records began in 1880.
- It has also warned that heat is likely to lead to more extreme weather events like the Australian bushfires in 2020 and beyond.

Status in India

- The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has declared the 2010-19 decade to have been India's hottest since records began in 1901, with the average temperature 0.36 degrees Celsius higher than the 30-year 1981-2010 average.
- 2019 was India's seventh hottest year on record.

Key Points:

Hottest Decade

- United States government agencies has said that the decade 2010 - 2019 was the hottest on record.
- Trend: Since the 1960s, each decade has been significantly warmer than the previous one. This trend continued in the 2010s, and five of the hottest years ever were experienced in the second half of the decade.
- Reason: The warming is caused to a large extent by the emissions of carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gases emitted from the burning of fossil fuels.
- Implication: This pace of warming means the world will almost certainly fail to meet the goals set to combat catastrophic climate change.

Hottest Years

- The hottest year on record was in 2016 due to the warming impact of a strong El Nino event.
- The global average surface temperatures in 2019 were nearly 1 degree Celsius higher than

the average from the middle of last century, making 2019 the second hottest year.

- Climate hotspots of 2019 include Australia, Alaska and southern Africa whereas Central Canada and the northern US were among the few places that experienced cooler-than-average conditions.

Case of Australia

- In Australia, 2019 was the hottest year on record, with the average temperature 1.5 degrees Celsius higher than the mid-20th century average.
- 2019 was also the driest (in terms of rainfall difference from average) ever.
- Most of the country has been in the grip of a severe drought since 2017, and New South Wales (south-eastern Australian state) is currently seeing its most devastating bushfire season in at least 20 years.

General studies-3

First biotechnology park and incubation centre

Why in news?

- Rajasthan government will be signing a memorandum of understanding with the Centre's Department of Biotechnology to set up its first biotechnology park and incubation centre in the state.
- The biotechnology park and incubation centre would be set up in the State with the support of the Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC).

Objectives:

- This will enable the State government to take up research in the field of biotechnology and provide employment to the youths.
- It would also help to promote interdisciplinary field research such as bioinformatics, biomedical engineering and nano-medicine.
- Further, it will also help to promote biotechnology on the lines of health, agriculture, industry and food which will intensify the science-based manufacturing in industrialisation.

Biotechnology Parks and Incubators

- The Department of Biotechnology has established Biotechnology Parks/Incubators across the country to translate research into products and services by providing the necessary infrastructure support.
- These Biotechnology Parks offer facilities to Scientists, and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) for technology incubation, technology demonstration and pilot plant studies for accelerated commercial development of Biotechnology.
- The Department so far has supported 9 Biotechnology Parks in various States.
- The Department has also come up with 'National Biotechnology Parks Scheme'.
- The scheme aims to create an ecosystem to absorb the start-ups which have graduated from

incubators and give them a platform for further scaling up their R&D activities in collaboration with the state government and industry.

TRAI

Why in news?

- Recently, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has directed telecom service providers to put all unclaimed subscriber money in consumer protection fund.

Key Points:

- TRAI has notified the amendment to the Telecommunication Consumers Education and Protection Fund (TCEPF) regulations to remove any kind of ambiguity and facilitate deposit of any unclaimed money of the consumer.
- With this amendment service provider will deposit any unclaimed consumer money of any form such as excess charges, security deposit, plan charges of failed activations, or any amount belonging to a consumer, which service providers are unable to refund to consumers.
- It provides a time of 12 months or period of limitation specified under law whichever is later, after which unclaimed consumer money should be deposited to the fund.
- Ambiguity before the amendment: While some service providers were depositing money only on account of excess billing, others were depositing unclaimed money such as security deposits and plan charges of failed activations.
- Telecommunication Consumers Education and Protection Fund Regulations were notified in 2007
- The income from the fund is utilised for programmes and activities relating to consumer education and protection.

K9 VAJRA-T Gun

Why in news?

- Recently, the defence minister flagged off 51st K9 VAJRA-T Gun from Larsen & Toubro (L&T) Armoured System Complex at Hazira in Gujarat.

Key Points:

- The K9 VAJRA-T 155mm/ 52 is a tracked self-propelled howitzer (a short gun for firing shells on high trajectories at low velocities), which has its roots in the K9 Thunder, the mainstay of the South Korean Army.
- It offers a high rate of fire at long-range and is compatible with Indian and standard North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) ammunition.
- The K9 Thunder platform is made of all-welded steel armour protection material.
- The K9 gun has been developed under the 'Buy Global' programme of the Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP) where foreign companies are allowed to participate.
- In this case, Hanwha Techwin of South Korea is the technology partner of L&T.



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- The first 10 K9 Vajra guns have been imported from South Korea and assembled by L&T in India. The balance 90 guns will be largely manufactured in the country.
- L&T Defence is currently executing the 'K9 VAJRA-T' Tracked, Self-Propelled Howitzer Guns program - the contract awarded to the company by the Ministry of Defence through global competitive bidding

Myeloma

- Multiple myeloma is a type of cancer that forms in a type of white blood cell called a plasma cell.
- Plasma cells help the body fight infections by making antibodies that recognize and attack germs.
- Multiple myeloma causes cancer cells to accumulate in the bone marrow, where they crowd out healthy blood cells.
- A cancerous or malignant plasma cell is called a myeloma cell. Myeloma is called “multiple” because there are frequently multiple patches or areas in the bone where it grows.
- It is a type of blood cancer that affects the bones, most of the cases reaching tertiary care centres are in the advanced stage in which complications in kidney failure set in and bone marrow function gets completely affected.
- Many factors have been implicated in the development of multiple myeloma.
- Exposure to toxic chemicals, atomic radiation, anything that interferes with the immune system, or infection with cancer-causing viruses have all been implicated as causes or triggers of myeloma.
- Toxic chemicals that have been identified include: benzene, dioxins (such as those found in Agent Orange), agricultural chemicals (such as defoliants and pesticides), solvents, fuels, engine exhausts and cleansing materials.
- Myeloma can also be hereditary.
- But it will leave in place 25% tariffs on a \$250-billion array of Chinese industrial goods and components used by U.S. manufacturers, and China's retaliatory tariffs on \$100 billion in U.S. goods.
- The trade deal includes Intellectual Property (IP) Protection and Enforcement, ending forced technology transfer, a dramatic expansion of American agriculture, removing barriers to American financial services, ending currency manipulation, rebalancing the US-China trade relationship and effective dispute resolution.

Global reactions:

- Key world stock market indices climbed to record highs after the deal was signed on, but later stalled on concerns over unresolved thorny issues.
- President Donald Trump hailed the agreement as a win for the U.S. economy and his administration's trade policies.