



## Current Affairs of the Day

### PAPER 1:

#### ➤ History & Culture:

1. Amarnath Yatra to skip traditional route
2. What is the significance of Amaranth yatra?

### PAPER 2:

#### ➤ International Relations:

1. China doubles down on claims on eastern Bhutan boundary
2. FAO issues locust alert for India
3. Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)
4. #Boycott China: economic measures aimed at Chinese firms

### PAPER 3:

#### ➤ Economy:

1. Foodgrain offtake by States rises sharply



## China doubles down on claims on eastern Bhutan boundary

### Key Points:

- Days after Bhutan sent China a demarche protesting against Chinese claims to the Sakteng wildlife sanctuary in

### Dividing line

A brief overview of the boundary dispute between China and Bhutan

- Bhutan and China have no formal diplomatic relations but have held 24 rounds of boundary talks between 1984 and 2016
- Talks concentrated on north and west Bhutan regions
- Eastern Bhutan not part of the talks
- so far, say officials
- Sakteng sanctuary is situated close to the border with Arunachal Pradesh
- In June 2020, China attempted to stop UNDP-GEF funding for Sakteng by claiming it was disputed, but was overruled



eastern Bhutan, Beijing has doubled down, including Bhutan's "eastern sectors" to the boundary dispute between the two countries for the first time.

- According to written records, there has been no mention of eastern Bhutan, or Trashigang Dzongkhag (district), where Sakteng is based, that borders Arunachal Pradesh, in 24 previous rounds of boundary negotiations held between the two countries, between 1984 and 2016. So far, the talks have been about three specific areas, including Jakarlung and Pasamlung in the north, and the Chumbi Valley, where Doklam is situated, in west Bhutan.
- The negotiations have not been held since the Doklam stand-off between Indian and Chinese troops in 2017. In July 2018, Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister Kong Xuanyou visited Bhutan and met with the Bhutanese King, Prime Minister and other officials, but the 25th round of talks has not yet taken place. Sources said the talks could not be held in 2019 due to scheduling difficulties, and the coronavirus pandemic has delayed them further this year.
- Bhutan has always maintained a discreet silence on its boundary negotiations with China, and it does not have any formal diplomatic relations with Beijing.



## Foodgrain offtake by States rises sharply

- Relief measures being implemented in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic have paved the way for States and Union Territories in the country to draw more than double the quantity of rice for distribution during April to June this year, compared to the corresponding period last year.
- In the corresponding three months of 2019, the total amount of rice lifted by the States and Union Territories from the Food Corporation of India (FCI) under the Centre's various schemes was 90.71 lakh tonnes. This year the figure was 192.34 lakh tonnes.

### Increased entitlement:

- The reason is obvious. After the breakout of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Central government had announced that Priority Household (PHH) and Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) cardholders in the country, regarded as the poor, would receive free additional entitlement of 5 kg per person per month, initially for three months (April to June) and now up to November. This was in addition to their entitlement under the National Food Security Act (NFSA).
- The Centre also came up with a scheme for providing wheat and rice to ration cardholders not covered under the NFSA or non-priority household (NPHH) cardholders at the rate of ₹21 per kg and ₹22 per kg respectively. This has been used by Tamil Nadu to provide additional entitlement of rice to about 85.99 lakh such cardholders.

### Migrant labourers' needs:

- In addition, aimed at addressing the requirements of migrant labourers who were not covered under the NFSA or any scheme of the States, the Union government announced one more scheme — distribution of free food grains at 5 kg per person per month for May and June.
- The post-pandemic measures coupled with existing schemes have made a difference to the off-take position of rice.
- A perusal of FCI data reveals that seven States availed over 60% of the total quantity of rice during the three-month period. These are Uttar Pradesh (30.8 lakh tonnes), Bihar (20.94 lakh tonnes), West Bengal (14.04 lakh tonnes),



Maharashtra (13.84 lakh tonnes), Andhra Pradesh (13.6 lakh tonnes), Tamil Nadu (13.5 lakh tonnes) and Karnataka (13.44 lakh tonnes).

- As for wheat, the rate of increase was not as high and stood at around 30%. Compared to 59.45 lakh tonnes lifted in the three months of 2019, the amount this year was 78.16 lakh tonnes. Rajasthan had drawn the highest quantity of 14.84 lakh tonnes of wheat followed by Uttar Pradesh (14.01 lakh tonnes).

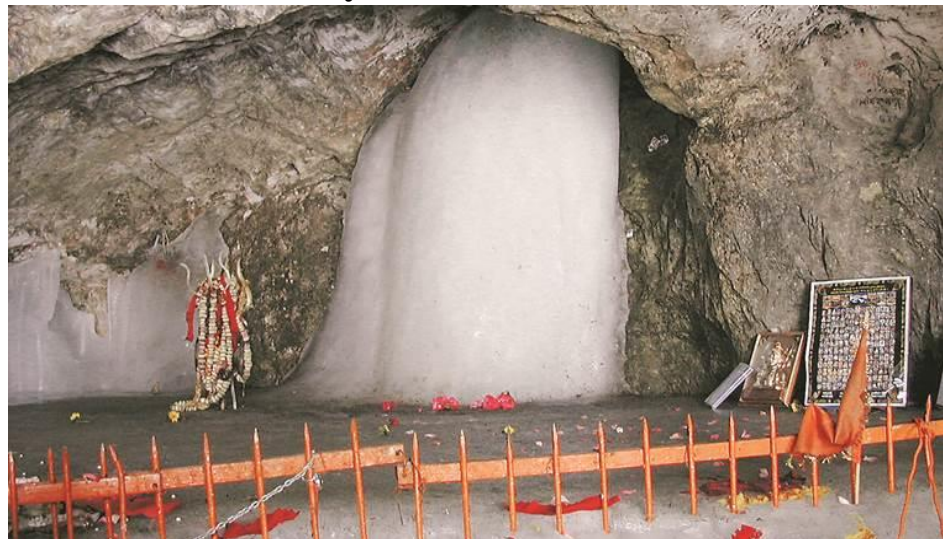
## Amarnath Yatra to skip traditional route

- The J&K administration on Sunday performed the rituals to start the annual **Amarnath pilgrimage**, where only 500 pilgrims will be allowed to trek to the holy shrine from the Baltal area of central Kashmir.
- Due to the pandemic, the pilgrimage is likely to be held from July 23 to August 3 only from the Baltal track and not the traditional route of Pahalgam in south Kashmir.

### Value Added Information

#### What is the significance of Amaranth yatra?

- The Amaranth cave deep is in the Himalayas in south Kashmir.
- The cave is 3,888 m above sea level, can be reached only on foot or by pony.

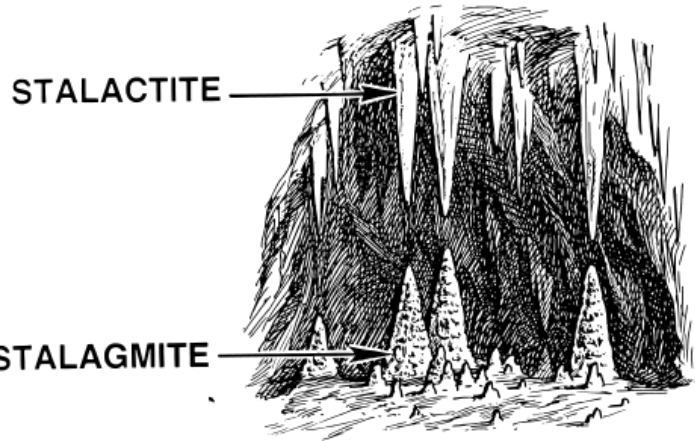


- Each year, hundreds of thousands of pilgrims make the trek up to the shrine.



## How the deity in the shrine is formed?

- The ice lingam is formed by a trickle of water from a cleft in the cave's roof.
- The Shiva lingam gets its full shape in May, after which it begins to melt by August.
- The water freezes as it drips, forming, over time, a tall, smooth ice stalagmite.
- A stalactite is an icicle-shaped formation that hangs from the ceiling of a cave, and is produced by precipitation of minerals from water dripping through the cave ceiling.
- Most stalactites have pointed tips.
- A stalagmite is an upward-growing that have precipitated from water dripping onto the floor of a cave.
- Most stalagmites have rounded or flattened tips.



## What are the other pilgrimages in Jammu and Kashmir?

### Vaishno Devi:

- Vaishno Devi Mandir is a very popular Hindu temple dedicated to the Hindu Goddess
- It is located in the Trikuta Mountains of Jammu and Kashmir.
- It is at an altitude of 5200 ft above the sea level.
- The Temple is 13.5 km from Katra.
- Various modes of transportation are available from katra including Ponies, Electric vehicles.
- People who visits Amarnath also visits this shrine.

### Shankracharya Temple:

- Situated on the Zabarwan Mountain in Srinagar, Kashmir.
- Shankracharya Temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva.



- Visiting this temple involves the devotees to trek to the top of the hill on which it stands, about 1100 feet above the plains.
- Built in 371 BC, the great saint Shankracharya is said to have stayed there during his visit to Kashmir.

### **Raghunath Temple:**

- Raghunath Temple is one of the largest temple in North India and is located in Jammu.
- It was built by Maharaja Gulab Singh (founder of the kingdom of Jammu and Kashmir) and his son Ranbir Singh.
- There are seven shrines, each having its own Shikhara, present at the site of the temple.
- Raghunath Temple enshrines many idols of the Hindu gods and goddesses but its presiding deity is Lord Rama.

### **FAO issues locust alert for India**

- India, which is tackling the worst locust attack in 26 years for the last three months, should remain on “high alert” during the next four weeks, says the UN’s **Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)**.
- Meanwhile, the Indian government has stepped up efforts and is using equipment such as drones and Bell helicopters to control the menace. Rajasthan is the most affected State in the country. The other affected States are Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Haryana and Bihar.

### **Value Added Information**

#### **Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO):**

- It is a UN body
- It leads international efforts to defeat hunger
- Established : 1945
- HQ: Rome, Italy



- In theory, acts as a neutral forum where all nations meet as equals to negotiate agreements and debate policy
- FAO is also a source of knowledge and information, and helps developing countries and countries in transition modernize and improve agriculture, forestry and fisheries practices, ensuring good nutrition and food security for all.
- India is a member of FAO.

## #Boycott China: economic measures aimed at Chinese firms

- India to consider a range of economic measures aimed at Chinese firms amid the border tensions.
- 59 Chinese apps were banned and Union Power Minister said India would not import power equipment from China.
- The State power distribution companies would not place orders with Pakistan and Chinese firms for equipment as the sector is strategic and essential, and was vulnerable to cyberattacks.
- Minister for Road Transport and Highways said Chinese companies would not be allowed to take part in road projects.
- The government is also considering trade and procurement curbs targeting China.
- The government is also increasing scrutiny of Chinese investments in many sectors, and weighing a decision to keep out Chinese companies from 5G trials.

### Significance:

- The above moves could potentially cost Chinese companies billions of dollars.
- It is a clear message from India that it cannot continue trade and investment relations as normal, if China does not agree to return to the status quo of April before its incursions along the LAC began.
- However, China is far less dependent on India's market than India is on Chinese imports.
- India relies on China for crucial imports for many of its industries, from auto components to active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs). Between 70% to 90% of APIs come from China.
- India should focus on self-reliance in many of the above sectors.