



Current Affairs of the Day

GS Paper - I

- Forest rights claims of 1,200 tribals rejected

GS Paper - II

- Arunachal records best sex ratio, Manipur the worst
- Mega trade bloc RCEP takes off

Prelims

- 25,000 Ethiopians flee to Sudan



Mega trade bloc RCEP takes off

GS II: Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Landmark pact

A look at some features of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which was signed on Sunday



Virtual signing: A screen grab showing Philippines' Secretary of Trade and Industry Ramon Lopez holding up the agreement on Sunday. • AFP

- Members of the RCEP include all ASEAN countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia) along with China, Japan, South Korea and Australia
- The members account for nearly 30% of the global GDP
- The RCEP

includes provisions on trade in goods and services, intellectual property, e-commerce, telecommunications, small and medium enterprises, and other issues

▪ The three largest economies in the pact, China, Japan and South Korea, are part of a free trade agreement for the first time

▪ On November 4, 2019, India walked out of the agreement as negotiations failed to address the country's issues and concerns

The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), a mega trade bloc comprising 15 countries led by China, that came into existence on Sunday said India would have to write expressing "intention" to join the organisation to restart negotiations for membership.

The RCEP

The RCEP, which comprises the 10 ASEAN members and Australia, China, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand. The China-backed group is expected to represent at least 30% of the global GDP and will emerge as the largest free trade agreement in the world. The mega trade bloc is a landmark initiative, which is expected to boost commerce among the member-countries spread across the Asia-Pacific region.

Highlights:

1. Experts are interpreting the beginning of RCEP as a major development that will help China and trade in the Asia-Pacific region in the post-COVID-19 scenario.



2. The agreement means a lot for China as it will give it access to Japanese and South Korean markets in a big way, as the three countries haven't yet agreed on their FTA.
3. The fact that this happened, despite the pandemic, is certainly leverage for China and shows the idea of decoupling from China is not a substantive issue in a regional sense.
4. India did not return to the negotiations despite requests from the RCEP members, who have discussed the trade pact for nearly eight years.
5. It is understood that staying out of RCEP may interfere with India's bilateral trading with the RCEP member-countries.

Conclusion:

India will also have to consider if the new U.S. administration revives the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal in some form and brings in all of its partners in the region, if India can afford to stay out of a template that excludes China, at the same time as it is looking to move out supply chains from China in the next 5 or 10 years (meaning RCEP).

Mains:

1. Keeping itself outside of RCEP does not match with Indian aim of integration into global value chains. For how long will it be reasonable? Discuss.

Forest rights claims of 1,200 tribals rejected

GS I: Social Empowerment

Over 1,200 tribals in Hunsur taluk of Mysore district stare at an uncertain future as their review petition for recognition of their claims over forest land under the Scheduled Tribes and Other Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, has been rejected by the local authorities.

Highlights:

1. NGOs fear more applications may be rejected and are bracing for a showdown with the authorities on the grounds that the review was done cursorily.
2. The Supreme Court in 2019 ordered the eviction of nearly a million people across India, whose claims under the forest rights acts had been rejected. But



the court stayed its earlier order and directed all state governments to file a review petition and submit a report.

3. The FRA was enacted 13 years ago to recognise the rights of the tribals over the forests, apart from community rights over common property resources.
4. Instead of taking steps to correct historical injustice, the authorities have discarded their pleas without application of mind.
5. NGO's said that in a country where maintaining records of evidence and documents were recent phenomena, expecting tribals to provide records to substantiate claims that they lived inside the forest before their eviction in 1972 was ridiculous and was in contravention of the concept of natural justice.
6. Many of the applications were rejected on the grounds that their individual claims under the FRA lay within the tiger reserve (Nagarahole) and hence could not be maintained.
7. The NGOs argued that in such cases the authorities should first recognise the rights and subsequently provide alternative solutions by way of rehabilitation instead of rejecting the claims.

Mains:

1. Non-fulfilment of FRA promise will automatically leave India missing SDGs for 100 million people. Elaborate and suggest a way forward.

Arunachal records best sex ratio, Manipur the worst

GS II: Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Arunachal Pradesh recorded the best sex ratio at birth in the country, while Manipur recorded the worst, according to the 2018 report on "Vital statistics of India based on the Civil Registration System" published by the Registrar-General of India. Sex ratio at birth is the number of females born per 1,000 males.

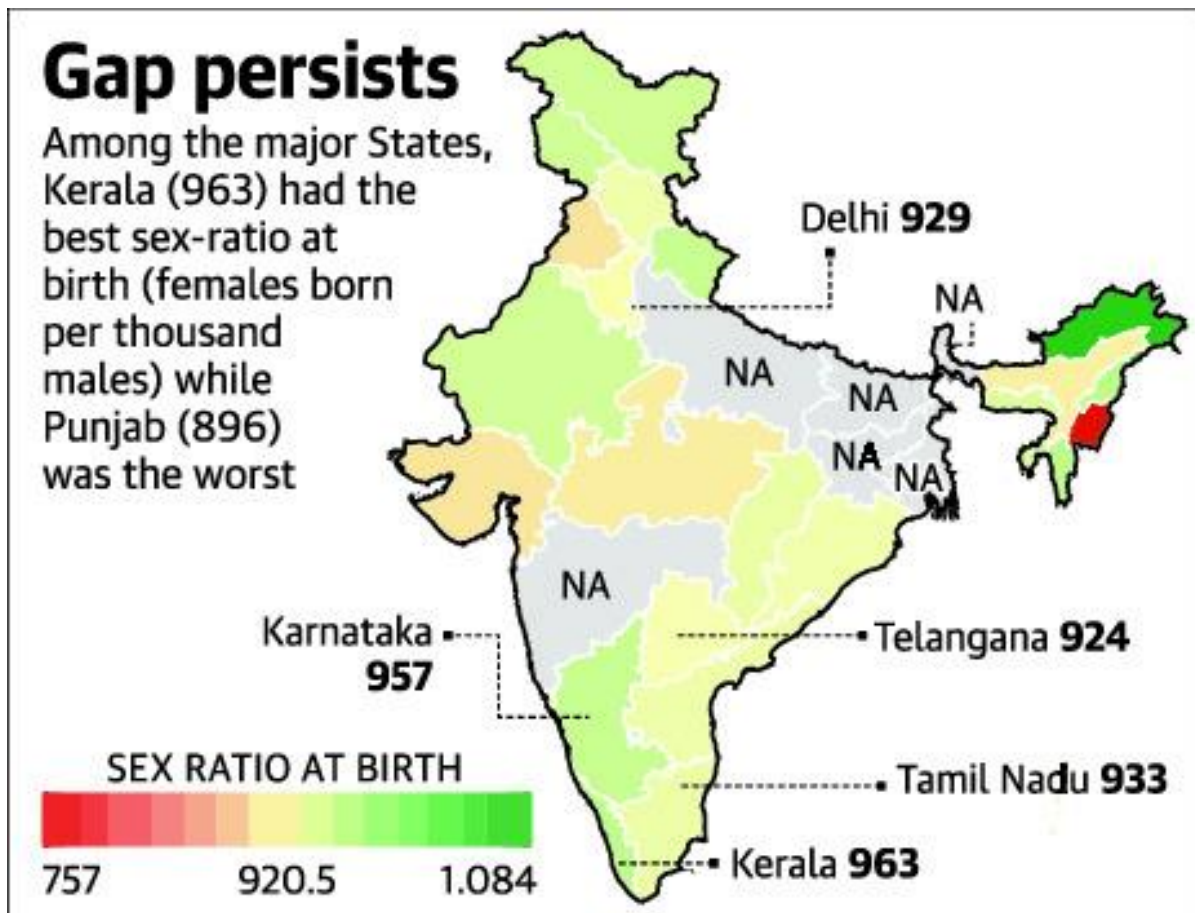
Highlights:

1. Arunachal Pradesh recorded 1,084 females born per thousand males, followed by Nagaland (965) Mizoram (964), Kerala (963) and Karnataka (957). The



worst was reported in Manipur (757), Lakshadweep (839) and Daman & Diu (877), Punjab (896) and Gujarat (897).

2. Delhi recorded a sex ratio of 929, Haryana 914 and Jammu and Kashmir 952.
3. The number of registered births increased to 2.33 crore in 2018 from 2.21 crore registered births the previous year. "The level of registration of births has increased to 89.3% in 2018 from 81.3% in 2009," the report said.



Mains:

1. Sex ratio at birth is a real contemporary indicator of the success of policies Women Protection and Empowerment. Discuss. Give reasons why some states and regions are lagging.



25,000 Ethiopians flee to Sudan

Prelims Only



AP

Around 25,000 Ethiopians fleeing conflict in the Tigray region have crossed into neighbouring Sudan, state news agency SUNA reported, as the UN said it was working to find them shelter.

Highlights:

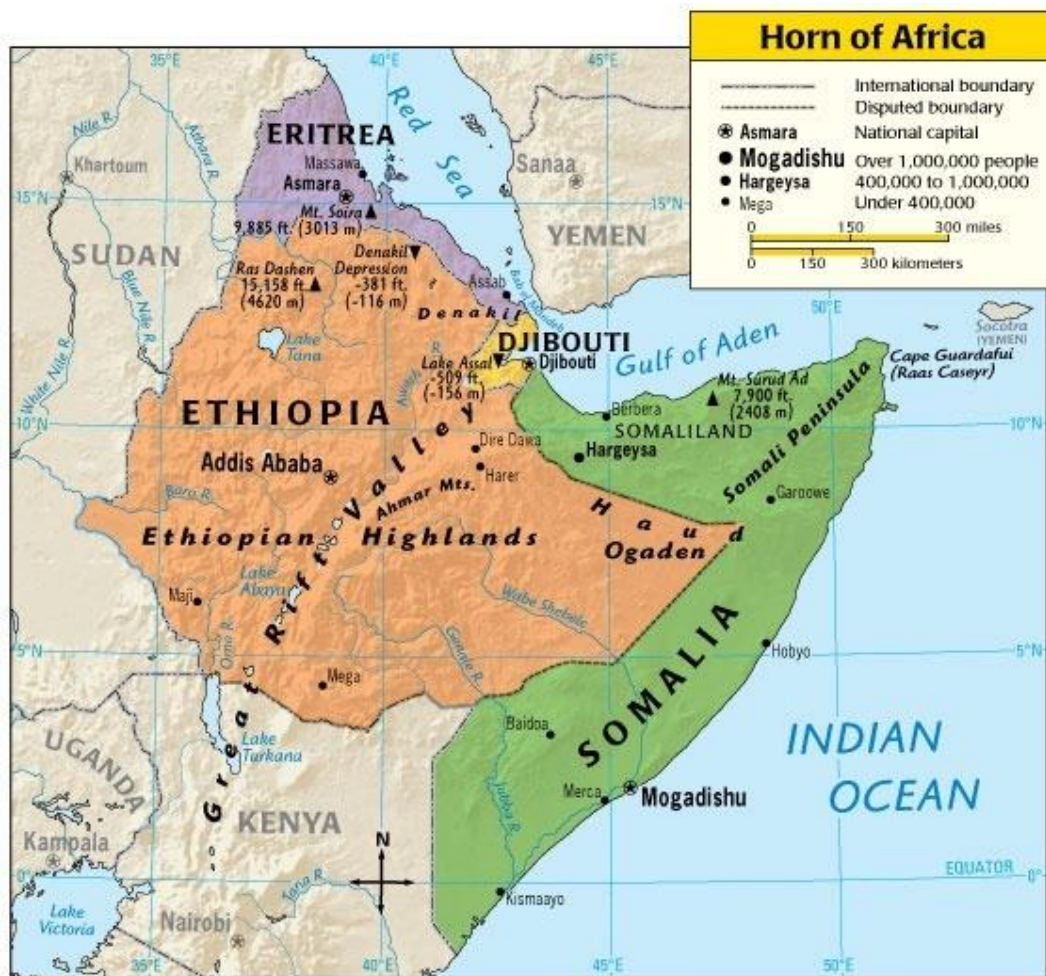
1. The priority of the UNHCR was to provide the refugees with shelter, food and water and then to transfer them to regions far from the border “for security reasons.
2. He said the UN refugee agency was working to establish new camps in Sudan for the Ethiopians.



3. Meanwhile, the leader of the Tigray region on Sunday claimed responsibility for rocket strikes on the airport in neighbouring Asmara (Eritrea's capital), a move that ratcheted up fears of a wider conflict in the Horn of Africa region.
4. UNHCR said it expected the number of refugees to grow if the conflict in neighbouring Ethiopia worsens.

Prelims:

The Horn of Africa is a peninsula in Africa. It lies along the southern side of the Red Sea and extends hundreds of km into the Gulf of Aden, Somali Sea and Guardafui Channel. The area is the easternmost projection of the African continent. The Horn of Africa denotes the region containing the countries of Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia.



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