



Current Affairs of the Day

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- India, Britain to discuss the upgrade of ties

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- CII urges Centre to disinvest aggressively, monetise assets

Prelims

- Stealth frigate Himgiri is ready
- Small but significant

Interview: Hobby Bites, Thriller Fiction

- British spy thriller author John le Carre dies aged 89



India, Britain to discuss the upgrade of ties

Agenda: “Comprehensive Strategic Partnership”, to be signed in the post-Brexit scene

The Opportunity and Deliverables

1. India and the United Kingdom enjoy a *strategic partnership since 2004*
2. India and the U.K. will discuss the framework of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, which will include defence and strategic relationship, Indo-Pacific policy, trade, and cooperation on renewable energy
3. India and the U.K. would begin talks for Free Trade Agreement (FTA)
4. A mutual defence logistics support agreement and government-to-government (G2G) mechanism for defence deals are also in the works.
5. In addition, the two sides may conclude a defence technology and industrial capability cooperation (DTICC) agreement
6. The two countries are close to signing a G2G agreement on jet engine technology development and for joint technology development of sixth-generation fighter technologies

CII urges Centre to disinvest aggressively, monetise assets

Crux: The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has urged the government to look at fiscal management from a three-year perspective, as complete recovery was expected only in FY22.

Recommendation from the private sector

1. It has suggested aggressive disinvestment, including bringing down stake in majority public sector banks (PSBs) to below 50%, as well as monetisation of assets which can augment government revenues at a time when tax revenues have fallen sharply.
2. He added that the Centre should prioritise expenditure in three areas — infrastructure, healthcare and sustainability. CII has suggested that healthcare expenditure be increased to 3% of the GDP over three years.



3. The Budget proposals should address critical areas of boosting private investments and providing support for employment generation.
4. There is a need to create government-owned, professionally managed Development Finance Institutions to finance key sectors of the economy.
5. To boost private investments, he has sought a stable tax regime, the stability of long-term interest rates at current levels and ensuring the sanctity of contracts for government entities.

Stealth frigate Himgiri is ready

Highlights:

1. Himgiri, the first of the three stealth frigates being built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata, under Project 17A (Nilgiri-class frigate) for the Navy, was launched into water on Monday.
2. P17A ships will be the most advanced state-of-the-art guided missile frigates once inducted

Background:

Frigates and destroyers are two of the most common warships in a navy's fleet. Both are designed for quick manoeuvrability and can be used to escort and protect larger vessels from air, surface and underwater threats. The similarities between frigates and destroyers have led to some European navies using the terms interchangeably.

On the other hand, frigates (smaller in size) are more common, with almost every navy in the world in possession of a frigate as part of its navy fleet, while only 13 nations possess destroyers, according to the Global Fire Power Index 2019.

Small but significant

The Habitats Trust awards conservation grants to revive the population of the iconic Mahseer fish and the Malabar Tree Toad. The trust focuses on lesser-known species for conservation awards.



Species Mentioned:

1. The Malabar Tree Toad spends all its life on trees. It is found only in the evergreen forests of the Western Ghats and nowhere else in the world. They can be sighted only when they descend to the ground at the beginning of the Southwest monsoon to breed in forest streams.
2. Mahseer is a large freshwater fish distributed in Indian rivers. Once an abundant game and food fish in India, it has now become endangered and with an extremely limited range. Overfishing, habitat loss, pollution, dam construction etc. are leading to a decline in the mahseer population. There are 3 types of Mahseer, but lack of understanding is lacking in wrong conservation moves.

Golden Mahseer	It is an endangered mahseer fish found in the Himalayan Rivers (Indus, Ganga and Brahmaputra).
Blind Mahseer	The blind mahseer fish is currently the largest cave-dwelling freshwater fish in the world. It was recently discovered in the caves of Meghalaya.
Humpback Mahseer	Humpback mahseer is the largest mahseer fish. It is an endangered species endemic to the Western Ghats region in South India. It has been recorded in Rivers Krishna, Godavari and Cauvery.

3. Indian Pangolin and Chinese Pangolin occur in India. Pangolins are anteaters. Major threats to pangolins in India are hunting and poaching for local consumptive use (e.g. as a protein source and traditional medicine) and international trade, for its meat and scales in East and South-East Asian countries, particularly China and Vietnam.



British spy thriller author John le Carre dies aged 89

Highlights:

1. John le Carre, the British writer best known for his Cold War espionage novels Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy and The Spy Who Came In From The Cold, has died aged 89, his agent and family said on Sunday.
2. The author, a former British intelligence officer whose real name was David Cornwell, wrote 25 novels and one memoir in a career spanning six decades, selling 60 million books worldwide.
3. He was one of those writers who really was not only a brilliant writer but he also penetrated popular culture —and that's a great rarity.
4. He later transferred to the overseas spy agency MI6. It was as an MI6 officer that he had his first success with The Spy Who Came in from the Cold in 1963. For obvious reasons, he had to use a pseudonym.