



Current Affairs of the Day

GS Paper II

- Afghan violence has risen: Jaishankar

GS Paper III

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Afghan violence has risen: Jaishankar

1. Talks between the Afghanistan government and the Taliban have not resulted in any reduction in violence.
2. Reports from the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) showed a major increase in violence despite the talks and a U.S.-Taliban agreement last year.
3. However, he said India is 'supportive' of the Intra-Afghan negotiations, and called for the United Nations to play a "leading role" in the reconciliation process.
4. The country has been witnessing targeted attacks on religious and ethnic minorities, girl students, Afghan security forces, Ulemas [clerics], women occupying positions of responsibility, journalists, civil rights activists and youth.
5. Without making any direct references to Pakistan or any particular terror group, Mr Jaishankar called for an end to "terrorist safe havens" and "terrorist supply chains" as well as cross-border terror and said the international community must ensure that transit trade from Afghanistan to the "high seas" is allowed.

World's first GM rubber sapling planted in Assam

1. A Rubber Board research farm in Guwahati has the world's first genetically modified (GM) rubber plant tailored for the climatic conditions in the Northeast.
2. The GM rubber has additional copies of the gene MnSOD, or manganese-containing superoxide dismutase, inserted in the plant, which is expected to tide over the severe cold conditions during winter — a major factor affecting the growth of young rubber plants in the region.
3. The plant was developed at the Kerala-based Rubber Research Institute of India (RRII).
4. This is the first time any GM crop has been developed exclusively for this region after years of painstaking research in RRII's biotechnology laboratory.



5. Natural rubber is a native of warm humid Amazon forests and is not naturally suited for the colder conditions in the Northeast, which is one of the largest producers of rubber in India.
6. Laboratory studies conducted at the RRII showed the GM rubber plants overexpressed the MnSOD gene as expected.

Plea for 100% procurement by Centre

1. An application has been filed in the Supreme Court challenging the Central government's policy to allow 25% of the domestically manufactured COVID-19 vaccines to be procured by private hospitals.
2. The new policy will cause a reservation for the rich and urban people. The application has urged the top court to direct the Centre to take over 100% of procurement.
3. The plea has cited statistics from the past vaccination drives, including tuberculosis, DPT3 and polio, where the contribution of the private sector was negligible. Already, the application argues, there is a massive under-utilisation of vaccines by private hospitals.

4 theatre commands likely this year

1. Amid discussions to evolve a consensus on the creation of integrated theatre commands, it is expected that Prime Minister will make an announcement on it soon.
2. There is a better understanding that if the three services integrate, bring about jointness and carry out the transformation, it will ensure better efficiency and utilisation of our existing services.
3. An air defence command, maritime theatre command, integrated eastern theatre command and integrated western theatre command are on the anvil.
4. The need was integrated joint planning and not coordinated or syncing of operations as was done now. Single service operations were not efficient or made the best use of the resources, the official said.



Delta plus is a variant of concern: govt.

1. The Centre termed the emerging delta-plus variant a 'variant of concern'.
2. A variant of concern (VoC) carries the highest threat perception of a coronavirus variant, which is characterised by increased infectivity, transmissibility or resistance to vaccines and treatment. A VoI is a degree lower.
3. The World Health Organisation had classified the variant 'delta' (B.1.617.2) as well as offshoots — AY.1 and AY.2 — as VoC.
4. AY.1 or Delta plus, as the variant is sometimes referred to, is an informal name.
5. So far there are only four international VoC (alpha, beta, gamma and delta) with the off-shoots, AY.1 and AY.2 classified as off-shoots of Delta.

Why is China targeting cryptocurrencies?

The price of the world's most prominent cryptocurrency Bitcoin has more than halved in the last two months after hitting a peak in mid-April. The second-most valuable cryptocurrency, Ether, has seen a similar fall from its peak last month. China's crackdown against cryptocurrencies, which are those that aren't sanctioned by a centralised authority and are secured by cryptography, is said to have a lot to do with the crashing of the value of cryptocurrencies.

What has China done?

1. In recent weeks, China has reportedly cracked down on crypto mining operations. The country has over the years accounted for a large percentage of the total crypto mining activity that takes place.
2. In purpose, Bitcoin miners play a similar role to gold miners — they bring new Bitcoins into circulation. They get these as a reward for validating transactions, which require the successful computation of a mathematical puzzle.
3. And these computations have become ever-increasingly complex, and therefore energy-intensive in recent years. Huge mining operations are now inevitable if one is to mine Bitcoins.



4. Access to cheap electricity has made mining lucrative in China. According to the Cambridge Bitcoin Electricity Consumption Index, China accounted for nearly two-thirds of the total computational power last year.
5. Xinjiang and Sichuan provinces accounted for nearly half of this. Now, provincial governments one by one have acted against these mining operations. The latest to do so is Sichuan, which was a hydroelectric-based crypto mining hub.

What does China want?

1. The fact that cryptocurrencies bypass official institutions has been a reason for unease in many governments. Not just that. The anonymity that it offers aids in the flourishing of dark trades online.
2. According to observers, the latest set of measures are to strengthen its monetary hold and also project its new official digital currency.
3. China launched tests for a digital yuan recently. Its aim is to allow Beijing to conduct transactions in its own currency around the world, reducing dependency on the dollar which remains dominant internationally.

Offshore platforms

This time, its focus is on what has been a loophole all along — of offshore platforms enabling those in China to trade in cryptocurrencies. A Reuters report said the People's Bank of China asked banks and payment firms to identify those involved in cryptocurrency transactions and promptly cut their payment channels.