

12– 09 – 2022

News: India stays out of ‘trade pillar’ at Indo Pacific meet

- India stayed out of the joint declaration on the trade pillar of the U.S.-led Indo Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) ministerial meet in Los Angeles, with Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal citing concerns over possible discrimination against developing economies.
- India was the only one of the 14 IPEF countries, which includes South East Asian countries, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea and Japan, not to join the declaration on trade.
- India, however agreed on the other three key factors discussed: supply chains, clean economy (clean energy) and fair economy (tax and anticorruption).

News: Kerala rubber plantations in crisis

- The wide belt of rubber plantations that has taken over the tropical hills of Kerala are now giving nightmares to growers.
- With the price of natural rubber in a free fall, about 12 lakh small scale farmers in Kerala, the country’s rubber heartland, are counting their losses for the last couple of months.

Rubber

- Rubber is made from the latex of a tree called *Hevea Brasiliensis*.
- The rubber tree is a fast-growing tall tree acquiring a height of about 20 to 30 meters.
- The British established the first rubber plantation in India in 1902 on the banks of the river Periyar in Kerala.
- Rubber grows in a hot and humid climate with a temperature range between 25 °C and 35 °C and the annual rainfall requirement is about 300 cm.
- The rainfall should be well-distributed throughout the year.
- Deep, rich and well-drained loamy soil, at an elevation of about 400 meters above the sea level, provides ideal conditions for the growth of rubber trees.
- It is labour-intensive cropping and requires skilled labour for plantation, harvesting and processing.
- India is the fifth largest rubber-producing country in the world, after Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and Brazil.
- It produces about 7 lakh tons of rubber, which is about 4 per cent of the total world's production.

- Kerala is the leading producer of natural rubber in India which produces around 6 lakh tons of rubber. Kottayam, Kollam, Ernakulam and Kozhikode districts of Kerala account for the majority of the produce.
- Other producer states are Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andaman and the Nicobar Islands.
- Major consumers of Rubber are China, India, USA, Japan, Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia.