

**21– 08 – 2024**

**News: Asian Development Bank (ADB)**

- Recently, Government of India and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed a USD 170 million policy-based loan to strengthen India's health system preparedness and response capacity to future pandemics.
- The loan will help strengthen India's pandemic preparedness and response capabilities through.
- Strengthened disease surveillance and multisectoral response.
- Strengthened human resources for health.
- Expanded climate-resilient public health infrastructure and innovative service delivery.
- The ADB's program will be aligned with India's National Health Policy 2017, Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM), National One Health Mission, and efforts to strengthen human resources for health.
- It will set up laboratory networks for infectious disease surveillance at state, union, and metropolitan levels.
- It will build robust data systems to monitor and coordinate national health programs for the poor, women, and other vulnerable groups.

- It will regulate and maintain standards of education, services, and professional conduct of nurses, midwives, allied workers, and doctors.

## **Asian Development Bank (ADB)**

- Asian Development Bank is a regional development bank established in 19<sup>th</sup> December 1966 with 31 members. Currently, there are 68 members in ADB.
- Headquarters of ADB is located in Ortigas Center, Manila, Philippines.
- ADB is also serves as the secretariat of South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC).
- ADB aims to reduce poverty in Asia and the Pacific through Inclusive economic growth, environmentally sustainable growth and regional cooperation
- It aims to promote social and economic development in Asia.
- Although the name implies Asian Development, membership is not confined to Asian countries.
- ADB was modeled closely on World Bank, and has a similar weighted voting system where votes are distributed in proportion with members' capital subscription.
- 80% of ADB loans are concentrated on 5 areas: Education; Environment, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management; Finance Sector Development; Infrastructure and Regional Cooperation and Integration.

- As of December 2016, Japan holds the largest proportion of shares, followed by US, China, India and Australia.
- The bank admits the members of United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), a regional arm of ECOSOC and non-regional developed countries. It is an official observer of United Nations.
- India is the second largest borrower from ADB after China.
- Global Wildlife Programme (GWP) is an initiative led by World Bank and funded by Global Environment Facility (GEF) and Asian Development bank (ADB) that promotes wildlife conservation and sustainable development by combating illicit trafficking in wildlife.
- Securing Livelihoods, Conservation, Sustainable Use and Restoration of High Range Himalayan Ecosystems project (SECURE Himalayas), launched by MoEFCC and UNDP, is a project under Global Wildlife Programme (GWP).
- ADB releases the Annual report Asian Development Outlook.
- Asian Development Bank publishes the Social Protection Index (SPI), which summarizes the extent of social protection in Asia and Pacific countries.

The Asian Development Bank's development assistance is financed via 4 main channels:

- **Ordinary Capital Resources (OCR):** Loans offered at near-market terms to better-off borrowing countries.
- **The Asian Development Fund (ADF):** Offering Loans at very low interest rates and grants to ADB's poorest countries.
- **Technical Assistance** (mostly grants), and;
- **Innovation and Efficiency Initiative (IEI)** which are new financing instruments intended to provide ADB clients and operational teams with additional alternatives to help finance development projects.

### News: Gharial

- A lone female gharial in Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, Assam has sparked hopes for the species' revival in the Brahmaputra River System (BRS).

## **Gharial**

- Gharial is found in the **fresh waters of northern part of India** mainly in Chambal and Ghaghara rivers.
- Gharials, sometimes called gavials, are a **type of Asian crocodilian distinguished by their long, thin snouts which resembles a pot** (ghara in Hindi).

- Gharial **prefers deep fast flowing rivers**, however adult gharial have also been **observed in still water branches** (jheel) of rivers and in comparatively velocity-free aquatic environments of deep holes (kunds) at river bends and confluences.
- Population of Gharials **indicates the presence of clean river water**.
- Unlike other crocodiles, the **gharials feed on warm-blooded species** and even the largest gharial adults feed exclusively on fish, which they catch between the pointed interlocking teeth of their long jaws.
- It is also the **most aquatic of all crocodylians**, for it never moves far from the water.
- Females lay their eggs in steep, sandy river-banks.
- Historically, gharials were found in the river system of **India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and southern part of Bhutan and Nepal**. Today **they survive only in the waters of India and Nepal**.
- The surviving population can be found within the **tributaries of the Ganges river** system: Girwa (Uttar Pradesh), Son (Madhya Pradesh), Ramganga (Uttarakhand), Gandak (Bihar), Chambal (Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan) and **Mahanadi** (Orissa).
- The **Rapti – Naryani River in Nepal** also hosts the Gharials.
- IUCN Status of Gharials is **Critically Endangered**.

- It is also enlisted in Schedule I of Wildlife Protection act and Appendix I of CITES Convention.
- A list of animals including Gharials are included in the 'list of priority species to be secured' under the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG).
- Gharials are included in the Indian Crocodile Conservation Project as a target species along with Saltwater and Mugger Crocodiles.
- In comparison to Crocodiles, Gharials are very shy and unarmful species.
- Gharial eggs need incubation for 70 days, and the hatchlings stay with their mothers for several weeks or even months.
- With the introduction of gharials in 1975, Odisha had become the only state to have all the three species of the reptile —freshwater gharials, muggers and saltwater crocodiles. The first hatching of Gharial eggs was seen after 45 years from introduction in 2021.
- Breeding Centres of Kukrail Gharial Rehabilitation Centre in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, National Chambal Sanctuary (Gharial Eco Park, Madhya Pradesh) are constituted to conserve the Gharials.

### **Threats faced by Gharials**

- Gharials prefer sandbanks as suitable habitats. Wild animals as well as humans often destroy their eggs.

- Increased river pollution, dam construction, massive-scale fishing operations and floods.
- Illegal sand mining and poaching.

### News: Smart Cities Mission

- Recently, the Central Government has decided to extend the deadline for Smart Cities Mission till 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025.
- Initially planned for completion by 2020, the mission had already been extended twice.

## National Smart Cities Mission

- National Smart Cities Mission is an urban renewal and retrofitting program by the Government of India with the mission to develop smart cities across the country, making them citizen friendly and sustainable.
- It was launched in 2015 with a deadline of March 2020, which was further extended thrice to June 2023, June 2024 and March 2025 respectively.
- The Union Ministry of Urban Development is responsible for implementing the Centrally Sponsored Scheme in collaboration with the state governments of the respective cities. The mission initially included 100 cities, with the deadline for completion of the projects set between 2019 and 2023.

- Key focus areas of the scheme include construction of walkways, pedestrian crossings, cycling tracks, efficient waste-management systems, integrated traffic management and assessment.
- The scheme also assesses various indices to track urban development such as the Ease of Living Index, Municipal Performance Index, City GDP framework, Climate Smart Cities assessment framework, etc.

### **Financing of Smart Cities**

- The SCM receives Rs. 48,000 crores over 5 years from the Central Government, averaging Rs. 100 crore per city per year.
- States and Urban Local Bodies (ULB) are required to contribute an equal amount, resulting in a total of nearly Rs. 1 lakh crore for Smart Cities development.

### **Convergence with Other Government Schemes**

- The SCM can be strategically converged with other Central and State Government programs to utilise its full potential.



## Benefits of Convergence

- Combining resources and objectives of SCM with schemes like AMRUT (urban transformation), Swachh Bharat Mission (cleanliness), HRIDAY (heritage city development), Digital India, Skill Development, and Housing for All leads to a more comprehensive approach.
- Existing funds and infrastructure from various schemes can be leveraged to achieve common goals within the SCM framework.
- Convergence ensures social infrastructure (health, education, and culture) is addressed alongside physical infrastructure development in smart cities.

## Smart City

- There is no standard definition or template of a smart city. In the context of our country, the six fundamental principles on which the concept of Smart Cities is based are: Community at the Core (Considering communities at every level of planning and implementation), More from Less (Effective utilization of limited resources), Corporative and Competitive Federalism (Cities selected through healthy competition competing with each other along with supporting each other), Integration, Innovation and Sustainability (Innovative methods used), Technology as means, not the goal (careful selection of apt technology) and Convergence (Sectorial and Financial Convergence).

- Recently, the 10,000 acre Aurangabad Industrial City in Aurangabad, Maharashtra was inaugurated as the first Greenfield industrial smart city of India.
- The Integrated Command and Control Centres (ICCCs) set up under the Mission are meant to coordinate traffic management, surveillance, utilities and grievance redressal.
- As on date, 69 smart cities have developed and operationalised their Integrated Command and Control Centres (ICCCs) in the country.
- Recently, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has decided that the rest 31 cities will also have the Integrated Command and Control Centers (ICCC).

## News: BIMSTEC

- The Indian Minister of Commerce & Industry called for faster negotiations of the BIMSTEC Free Trade Agreement (FTA) at the BIMSTEC Business Summit in New Delhi.

## **Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)**

- Former name – BIST–EC (Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand Economic Cooperation) when it was formed on 06<sup>th</sup> June 1997 as a result of Bangkok declaration.
- Following the inclusion of Myanmar on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1997, it was renamed as BIMST –EC (Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand Economic Cooperation. Myanmar and Thailand are the only two ASEAN countries to be included in the BIMSTEC.
- In February 2004, Nepal & Bhutan became its full members.
- 31<sup>st</sup> July 2004: 1<sup>st</sup> Summit of the grouping renamed as BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation).
- BIMSTEC not only connects South and Southeast Asia, but also the ecologies of the Great Himalayas and the Bay of Bengal.

- It mainly aims to create an enabling environment for rapid economic development; accelerate social progress; and promote collaboration on matters of common interest in the region.
- Secretariat of BIMSTEC is located in Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- Combined population of BIMSTEC countries is 1.5 billion that constitute around 22% of global population and a combined Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of USD 3.8 trillion, BIMSTEC has emerged as an influential engine of economic growth.
- Recently, Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) has recently achieved an important milestone with the charter of the grouping coming into force on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2024.

### **Sectors of Co-operation**

- Trade & Investment, Transport & Communication, Energy, Tourism, Technology, Fisheries, Agriculture, Public Health, Poverty Alleviation, Counter-Terrorism & Transnational Crime, Environment & Disaster Management, People-to-People Contact, Cultural Cooperation and Climate Change.

## Summit

- 4<sup>th</sup> BIMSTEC summit- 30<sup>th</sup> & 31<sup>st</sup> August 2018, Kathmandu, Nepal.
- 5<sup>th</sup> BIMSTEC Summit 2022 was held in hybrid format which adopted a new BIMSTEC charter which aims at providing greater coordination among the members.

## India's Importance

- **Kaladan Multi-Model Project-** Links North Eastern States with Port of Kolkata through Sittwe Port in Myanmar.
- **Asian Trilateral Highway** connecting India and Thailand through Myanmar (Moreh in Manipur to Mae Sot in Thailand). It is funded by **Asian Development Bank**.
- **Bangladesh Bhutan India Nepal (BBIN) Initiative** has signed a pact for the **movement of goods and vehicles among them**. Trial runs between Bangladesh and India have begun. It has been ratified by Bangladesh, India and Nepal.
- The project is expected to be **merged with the port and infrastructure projects like the Sittwe port of Myanmar and Payra port of Bangladesh and Colombo of Sri Lanka**.
- India's **total trade with BIMSTEC countries amounted to USD 44.32 billion in 2023-24**.

- Thailand was India's largest trading partner within the bloc, with exports worth USD 5.04 billion and imports at USD 9.91 billion.
- Bangladesh followed, with exports of USD 11.06 billion and imports of USD 1.84 billion, creating a trade balance of USD 9.22 billion in India's favour.

### **BIMSTEC Master Plan for Transport Connectivity**

- The BIMSTEC Master Plan for Transport Connectivity seeks to connect several major transport projects in India, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Thailand and establish a shipping network across the Bay of Bengal that will benefit the littoral states as well as the Bay of Bengal dependent states like Nepal and Bhutan.

### **BIMSTEC Free Trade Agreement (FTA)**

- BIMSTEC Free Trade Agreement (FTA) was signed in February 2004.
- It includes provision for negotiation of FTA on goods, services, investment and economic cooperation amongst the member countries.
- BIMSTEC countries constituted the Trade Negotiating Committee to carry forward the negotiations in accordance with the Framework Agreement.