

CURRENTLY - FROM NEWS TO NOTES

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

The Hindu & The Indian express

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Ready for talks with Pak., but options open: Muttaqi

Taliban say 58 Pakistani soldiers killed in operations by Afghan forces across Durand Line; Foreign Minister says women journalists left out of Friday's press meet in Delhi due to a 'technical error'

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

Afghanistan is open to dialogue and diplomacy for a peaceful resolution of its conflict with Pakistan, but if the efforts do not succeed, it has "other means", the acting Foreign Minister of the Taliban administration, Amir Khan Muttaqi, said here on Sunday in response to the border clashes between the two countries.

"There are some special groups in Pakistan that are trying to disturb our relation. After they initiated hostile activities last week, we responded to defend our territory, and after that, our friends Saudi Arabia and Qatar intervened. Our doors are open for dialogue, but if Pakistan does



Talking tough: Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi, left, addressing a press conference in New Delhi on Sunday. PTI

not take this opportunity, then we have other means," he said.

Second press meet

Mr. Muttaqi was holding a second press conference in the Embassy of Afghanistan here after facing a backlash for not including

women media professionals in his Friday interaction with the media. He said the previous interaction was organised at a "short notice" and the exclusion of women journalists happened from a "technical error".

Pakistan carried out air-

strikes against targets in Kabul on Thursday and in response, the Afghan Defence Forces conducted operations across the Durand Line in which 58 Pakistani soldiers were killed, said Zabiullah Mujahid, spokesperson of the Taliban administration.

Mr. Mujahid accused Pakistan of sheltering IS fighters from multiple countries in West Asia, and said Pakistan-based IS elements were behind the attacks in Russia and Iran.

Following heavy clashes of Sunday, Pakistan has captured 19 Afghan border posts, and the border crossings between the two countries have been shut temporarily in view of the prevailing tension.

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Ready for talks with Pak., but options open: Muttaqi

Source: The Hindu; Page: 1

GS Paper: 2 – International Relations (India's Neighborhood – Afghanistan-Pakistan Relations)

Current Issues on the Durand Line (Afghanistan-Pakistan Border)

Why in News:

1. Border Clashes: Frequent armed skirmishes occur as both sides accuse each other of violating the Durand Line (2,640 km border drawn in 1893 by British India).

2. Legitimacy Dispute:

- Pakistan considers the Durand Line as the official international boundary.
- Afghanistan (Taliban government) has never formally recognized it, claiming it unjustly divides Pashtun tribal areas.

3. Recent Trigger:

- Afghan Defence Forces conducted strikes across the Durand Line, killing 58 Pakistani soldiers (as per Taliban claims).
- Pakistan retaliated after alleging that IS fighters sheltered in Afghanistan carried out attacks in Pakistan and beyond.



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4. Impact: Closure of border crossings and capture of posts on both sides have increased regional instability and disrupted trade and people movement.

Embassy as Foreign Territory

Legal Principle: Under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961), an embassy is not sovereign foreign territory, but it is inviolable.

Meaning:

- * The host country's authorities cannot enter the embassy premises without consent.**
- * However, the land legally remains part of the host country, not the sending country.**

Email accounts of 12 lakh Central govt. employees now run on Zoho's platform

Vijaita Singh
Aroon Deep
NEW DELHI

Over the past one year, all 12 lakh email addresses of Union government employees, including those of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), have migrated from a National Informatics Centre-based system to a platform developed by Zoho, officials told *The Hindu*. Zoho is a multinational firm based in Tamil Nadu.

A senior official said Zoho's suite had also been activated to ensure that government employees did not use open source applications to create text files, spreadsheets and presentations.

Though the suite was



Threat to data: A senior official says use of open source tools could compromise security of files. Representative photo. GETTY IMAGES

available earlier, not many employees were using it.

"It was found that many government employees were using open source tools, which could compromise security of files, and it was decided to make them aware of, and dis-

play, the suite's features prominently on the internal mail platform," the official said.

On October 3, the Union Education Ministry issued an order to its officials to use the Zoho suite "in alignment with the Go-

vernment of India's broader vision of transforming the nation from a service economy into a product nation, and in pursuit of building a self-reliant ecosystem in technology, hardware, and software solutions".

It said the Zoho Office Suite was already incorporated in the NIC mail system and "by embracing Zoho's indigenous office productivity tools, we take a bold step in the Swadeshi movement, empowering India to lead with home-grown innovation, strengthen digital sovereignty, and secure our data for a self-reliant future."

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Email accounts of 12 lakh Central govt. employees now run on Zoho's platform

Source: The Hindu Page: 1

GS Paper: 3 – Science & Technology

Why in News

All 12 lakh email accounts of Union government employees, including those in the PMO, have migrated from the NIC-based system to Zoho's indigenous platform. Aim: Strengthen data security and promote self-reliance in technology under the "Digital Sovereignty" and Swadeshi Tech initiative.

What is "Open Source"

- **Definition:** Software whose source code is publicly available and can be modified or redistributed freely.
- **Examples:** Thunderbird, Mozilla Firefox, Linux OS
- **Risk in context:** Open-source tools used by govt. employees could compromise data security, as external or unverified modifications may expose sensitive files to cyber threats.

Great Nicobar revives the issue of nature's legal rights

From an ecological point of view, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands can be easily rated as one of the world's most major biological diversity hotspots, acting as a **global carbon reservoir and climate regulator**. Unfortunately, the development trajectory of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands has been largely influenced by mainland India which has often been far removed from the needs of an island ecology. The issue in focus now is the Government of India's multi-crore mega-plan for the Great Nicobar Island – the construction of a power plant, township, transshipment port and airport, which will also affect 13,000 hectares of pristine forests.

Essential judicial precedent

A landmark judgment relating to the issue of diversion of forests that could come to the rescue of the Great Nicobar Island is the **Niyamgiri Hills case**, pursuant to the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006.

In its 2013 judgment, in *Orissa Mining Corporation Ltd. vs Ministry Of Environment & Forest and Ors.*, the Supreme Court of India addressed the concerns of the Dongoria Kondh tribe who resisted plans for bauxite mining in the sacred Niyamgiri Hills of Odisha. Following protests by the tribes in the region against mining which threatened their culture, religion and environment, the Court ordered a referendum in the affected *gram sabhas*, which unanimously voted against the project. The Court upheld the competence of the *gram sabha* to safeguard and preserve the traditions of the community, their cultural identity, community resources and community modes of dispute resolution.

In light of this judgment, the pertinent questions with respect to the proposed project on the Great Nicobar Island include **whether the Tribal Council of Little and Great Nicobar has been allowed to exercise its competence in certifying the settlement of forest rights under**



Anwar Sadat

teaches international environmental law at the Indian Society of International Law, New Delhi

There are examples in the legal world that offer guidance on the protection of territories and natural resources

the Forest Rights Act before the decision to divert forest land. A report in this daily, "Forest rights of tribal people were not settled for Nicobar project: council" (August 23, 2025), has highlighted how the Tribal Council had said that the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Administration had made a false representation to the Centre by claiming that rights of the tribal people under the Forest Rights Act had been identified and settled before diverting the required forest land for the project.

Granting rights to nature in India

What is being witnessed in the Great Nicobar is not new but one more example of how big multipurpose projects are on track to be planned disasters. The examples are many – from Tehri in the north to Koel Karo in the east to Sardar Sarovar in the west. To respond to a consistent failure of environmental law in protecting ecology, several countries (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and New Zealand) have adopted a new legal approach called 'earth jurisprudence' or 'rights of nature' which grants rights to non-human natural entities (rivers, forests, mountains, and various ecosystems), recognising them as subjects of rights holders.

This approach drew inspiration from an influential article written by Christopher Stone in 1972 – 'Should Trees Have Standing? - Toward Legal Rights For Natural Objects'. He argued that the current approach did not consider damages to the environment, but only environment-related damages to humans in granting relief.

Second, such relief did not go to the natural entity but only to affected human beings. He said that making natural entities as right holders, by vesting them with legal standing in court and making them the direct beneficiaries of legal redress, would improve the environment. But the question arises whether natural entities, like human adults, be held legally responsible and exercise legal competences by entering into contracts or whether they can sue and be sued by

an aggrieved party. Stone suggested the creation of a guardianship body which could initiate legal action and also collect funds to preserve and restore its condition.

The groundbreaking turn towards recognising the rights of natural entities happened in India in 2017 when the Uttarakhand High Court granted legal personhood to the Ganges and Yamuna rivers, as well as the Gangotri and Yamunotri glaciers. The judgment, in *Mohd. Salim vs State of Uttarakhand and Others*, conferred these entities with rights and obligations but only through a designated person. Although the Supreme Court stayed the ruling of the High Court, some of the elements in the High Court judgment, especially the idea of conferring guardianship responsibilities on behalf of those natural entities, could be a signpost for designing legal personhood.

The case in Colombia as guidance

Pushing the boundary of the Forest Rights Act further to incorporate the idea of granting legal personhood is one such option. Still, the idea of granting legal personhood to natural entities will require the building of greater clarity on the specific legal rights and the responsibility of individuals charged with upholding them. An in-depth study of important normative questions such as how to define rights bearing nature, what rights to recognise, who can speak for nature, and whether someone should be responsible for protecting nature, is required.

In finding answers to these normative questions, there is guidance from Colombia's **Atrato River case (2016)**, which recognised **bio-cultural rights – a reference to the right of ethnic communities to autonomously administer and protect their territories as well as the natural resources that constitute their habitat**. The formation of a commission of guardians requires the inclusion of representatives from the indigenous people facing the destruction of their habitat.

Great Nicobar revives the issue of nature's legal rights

Source: The Hindu (Editorial) Page: 6

GS Paper: 3 – Environment & Ecology/ GS 4

Why in News

The article is written in the context of the Government's multi-crore development project on Great Nicobar Island – involving a port, power plant, township, and airport – which will divert 13,000 hectares of pristine forest.

It raises concerns over:

- Violation of tribal forest rights under the Forest Rights Act, 2006
- Destruction of ecological balance
- And the need to recognize "legal rights of nature" (granting personhood to natural entities).

Supreme Court Precedent – Niyamgiri Hills Case (2013)

- Case: Orissa Mining Corporation vs MoEF & Ors.

- **Essence:** The Gram Sabha of Dongria Kondh tribe was given the final say on mining in sacred forests.
- **Significance:** Strengthened community and tribal rights to protect forests and culture under the Forest Rights Act, 2006.

Global Practice – Colombia’s Atrato River Case (2016):

- The Atrato River was granted legal personhood by Colombia’s Constitutional Court.
- Recognized “biocultural rights” of indigenous communities to protect and manage natural resources.
- Serves as a model for India to frame a guardianship system giving legal identity and protection to nature (similar to India’s Ganga-Yamuna personhood concept).

India sends Minister to Egypt for Gaza summit

New Delhi will be represented by Minister of State for External Affairs Kirtivardhan Singh in place of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who declined the invitation from Egypt due to the short notice

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

India will send Minister of State for External Affairs Kirtivardhan Singh to represent the country at the **Peace Summit on Gaza** in Sharm el-Sheikh to be co-hosted by Egypt and the United States on Monday, officials confirmed to *The Hindu*.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was among more than 20 world leaders invited over the weekend to attend the summit, which will be co-hosted by Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and U.S. President Donald Trump, to discuss the ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas, brokered mainly by negotiators from the U.S., Egypt, and Qatar.

However, given the short notice, Mr. Modi, whose invitation was delivered by Egyptian Ambassador Kamel Galal, declined the invitation. Mr. Modi had also met U.S. special envoy and Ambassador-designate Sergio Gorrin in Delhi on Saturday.

Egypt's FM to visit Delhi
Mr. Singh left for Cairo on Sunday and will travel to Sharm el-Sheikh on Monday, the officials said. Mr. Modi is, however, expected to meet Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty later this week, who is travelling to Delhi to hold the India-Egypt Strategic Dialogue.



Key gathering: More than 20 world leaders are expected at the Sharm el-Sheikh Summit for Peace on Monday. REUTERS

According to sources, Mr. Abdelatty's visit is part of the Sisi-Modi Strategic Partnership Agreement signed in January 2023, and this is his first visit to India since taking over in 2024. Mr. Abdelatty has been in frequent contact with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, including during Operation Sindoor in May, and Egypt had strongly condemned the Pahalgam terror attacks.

Mr. Abdelatty is also expected to brief the government on the plans for the reconstruction of Gaza. Although Egypt is not a member of the **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)**, it has been keen to discuss alternative route alignments

through Sharm el-Sheikh with India, given the security issues with Israel's Haifa port, where the current alignment lies.

Among those who have confirmed their participation at Monday's event in Sharm el-Sheikh are UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and the leaders of France, Italy, Spain, and the U.K. A number of leaders from Europe, the Gulf region, and other parts of Asia are expected to be there as well.

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will attend. Iran's leadership, which received a surprise invitation, has declined it, as has Hamas.

It is still unclear whether Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu or the Palestinian Authority President, Mahmoud Abbas, would attend.

On Monday morning, Mr. Trump will be in Jerusalem to address the Israeli parliament as he and Mr. Netanyahu await the release of 20 Israeli hostages still alive and the return of remaining bodies of those who have died since they were abducted by Hamas during the 2023 terror attacks. Israel will release about 2,000 Palestinian prisoners.

Finalise truce deal
Mr. Abdelatty spoke by telephone to his counterparts in a number of countries, said the Egyptian Foreign Ministry on Sunday, and conveyed the invitation from President Sisi and President Trump to witness the signing of a peace agreement.

"During the calls, Minister Abdelatty discussed the substantive arrangements of the summit, which is a historic summit aimed at ending the war on the Gaza Strip," said the statement. "The summit seeks to help restore regional stability and alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people in Gaza, in line with U.S. President Donald Trump's vision for peace in the region," it added.

Mr. Modi had welcomed the Gaza ceasefire agreement last week and spoke to Mr. Trump over the telephone to congratulate him.

India sends Minister to Egypt for Gaza Summit

Source: The Hindu, Page 10

GS Paper: 2 – International Relations

Why in News:

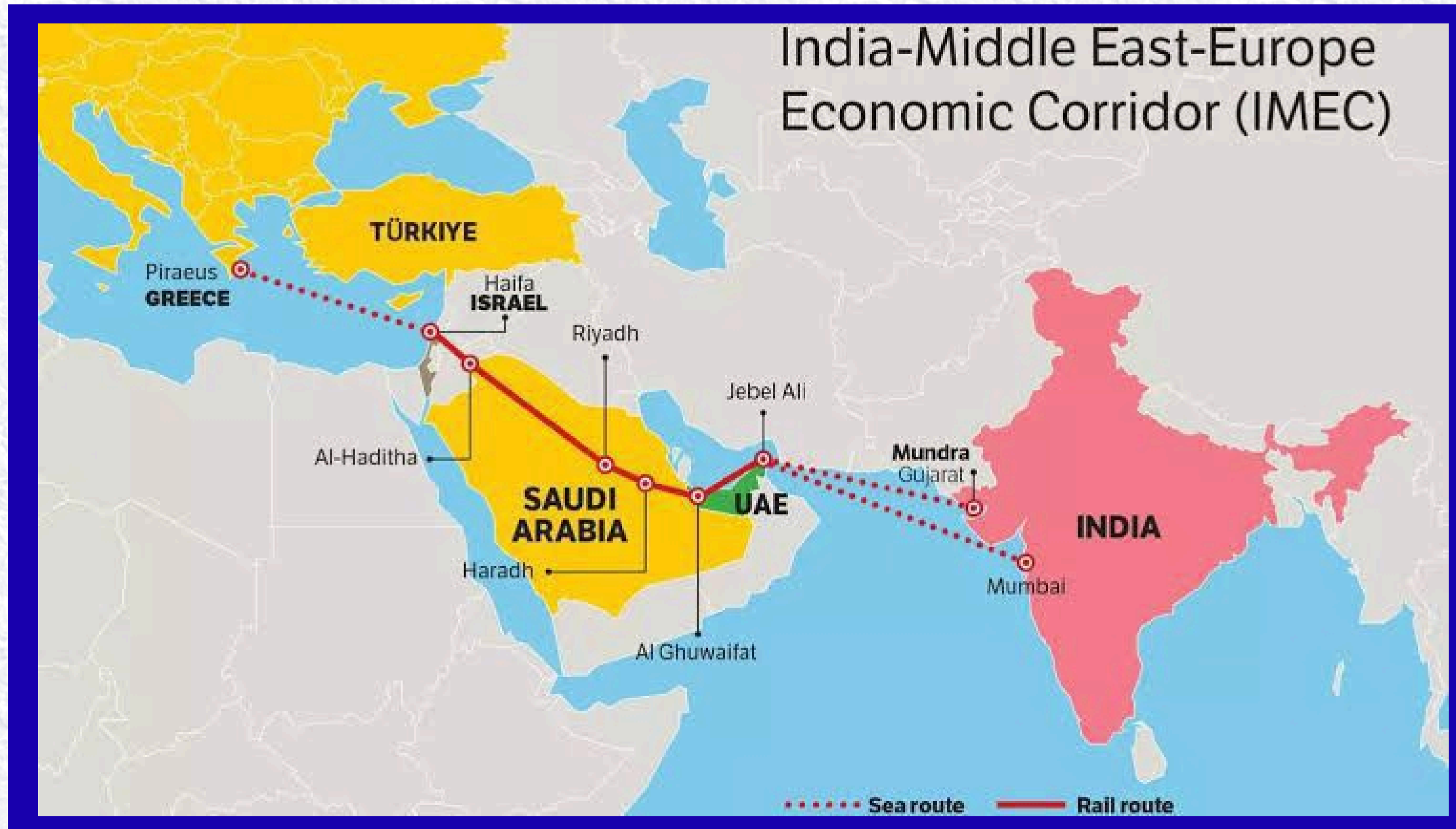
India's MoS for External Affairs Kirtivardhan Singh will attend the Gaza Peace Summit at Sharm el-Sheikh (Egypt), co-hosted by Egypt & the U.S., to discuss Israel-Hamas ceasefire, hostage release, and Gaza reconstruction.

India-Egypt Strategic Partnership (2023):

- Launched during Sisi's India visit (Jan 2023).
- Focus: Defence cooperation, trade, counter-terrorism, maritime security, and multilateral coordination.
- Strengthens South-South ties and multipolar global vision.

IMEC (India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor):

- Announced at G20 Summit 2023 (New Delhi).
- Links India → Gulf → Europe via ports, rail & digital routes.
- Members: India, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel, EU.
- Aims to counter China's BRI and enhance secure trade links.
- Egypt exploring alternate alignments via Sharm el-Sheikh due to security issues at Israel's Haifa port.



Natural farming gains traction in Himachal

The hill State's flagship Prakritik Kheti Khushhal Kisan Yojana and MSPs have helped farmers to steadily shift away from chemical-based agriculture toward sustainable, non-chemical practices

Vikas Vasudeva
CHANDIGARH

Amid a national push for natural farming, farmers in Himachal Pradesh are gradually adopting chemical-free agricultural practices. Supported by State policies aligned with sustainable farming, the hill State is witnessing a quiet transformation that seeks to balance farmer welfare with environmental conservation.

Sunil Kumar, 42, a farmer from Balakrupi village in Kangra district, expressed satisfaction after receiving a payment of ₹2.25 lakh for 25 quintals of turmeric this year. "Earlier, I used to sell naturally grown raw turmeric at ₹60 a kilogram locally. This time, the State government procured it at ₹90 a kg," he said.

"Natural farming has not only improved soil and plant health on my farm, but has also helped me reap better yields and profits than chemical-based farming," he added. Mr. Kumar shifted to non-



Organic produce: Rishu Kumari is seen engaged in natural farming at her field in her village in Himachal Pradesh. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

chemical natural farming three years ago after receiving training under the State government's flagship Prakritik Kheti Khushhal Kisan Yojana (PK3Y).

Launched seven years ago, PK3Y promotes non-chemical farming practices. So far, 3.06 lakh farmers have been trained under the scheme, and 2.22 lakh farmers are practising it partially or fully on 38,437 hectares across the State. Over two lakh farmers are certified under CET-ARA-NF (Certified Evalua-

tion Tool for Agriculture Resource Analysis), a self-assessment tool devised under PK3Y to certify natural farming practitioners.

Rishu Kumari, 37, a master trainer and natural farmer from Jamanabad village in Kangra district, said she sold 10 quintals of naturally grown wheat to a government agency at ₹60 a kg compared with ₹22 a kg in the local market earlier. Ms. Kumari and other women farmers now plan to increase the area under wheat cultivation.

"The farmers are far more independent now with natural farming, as it has reduced our dependence on the market. We can produce all inputs on our farms," she said.

The State government has been promoting natural farming by introducing a minimum support price (MSP) for naturally grown crops such as maize (₹40 a kg), wheat (₹60 a kg), and raw turmeric (₹90 a kg) under PK3Y.

"With the government now supporting us through MSP, it will build up a market for such crops. Until now, natural and chemical-grown produce were treated alike for pricing in local mandis," said Ramesh Chand, a farmer from Mandi district.

Chief Minister Sukhvir Singh Sukhu said, "We want people to take up natural farming as it is sustainable. It is not only healthy for farmers, who often fell ill due to chemical sprays, but also environmentally friendly and yields chemical-free, nutrition-rich crops."

Natural farming gains traction in Himachal

Source: The Hindu, Page 12

GS Paper: 3 – Agriculture & Environment

Why in News:

Himachal farmers are increasingly adopting chemical-free farming under the Prakritik Kheti Khushhal Kisan Yojana (PK3Y). The State offers MSP for natural crops like maize, wheat, and

Advantages of Natural Farming:

- Improves soil health and fertility
- Cuts input costs, boosts profitability
- Reduces chemical pollution
- Makes farming climate-resilient
- Produces safe, nutritious food
- Supported by MSP & government incentives

China and the Philippines trade blame over boat collision in disputed sea

Agence France-Presse
MANILA

The Philippines said a Chinese ship deliberately rammed one of its government vessels in the disputed South China Sea on Sunday, although Beijing blamed Manila for the incident.

Confrontations between Philippine and Chinese vessels occur frequently in the contested waterway, which Beijing claims nearly in its entirety despite an international ruling that its assertion has no legal basis.

The Philippines said a Chinese coast guard ship "fired its water cannon" at the *BRP Datu Pagbuaya*, a vessel belonging to Manila's fisheries bureau, at 9:15 a.m. on Sunday.

"Just three minutes later... the same (Chinese) vessel deliberately rammed the stern" of the Philippine boat, "causing minor structural damage but no injuries to the crew", the Philippine coast guard said in a statement. It said the incident took place near Thitu Island, part of the Spratly Islands



Face off: A Chinese Coast Guard vessel, right, fires its water cannon at the Philippines' *BRP Datu Pagbuaya* in the South China Sea. AP

where Beijing has sought to assert its sovereignty claims for years.

The Philippine National Maritime Council, a body in charge of strengthening maritime governance, condemned the incident and vowed to pursue "appropriate diplomatic action to convey its strong objections to the aggressive and illegal actions of China".

A spokeswoman for the foreign affairs department in Manila, also told reporters that a diplomatic protest would be filed over the incident.

Earlier, China's coast guard said the incident occurred after a Philippine vessel entered waters near

Sandy Cay, "ignored repeated stern warnings from the Chinese side, and dangerously approached" the Chinese ship. "Full responsibility lies with the Philippine side," a spokesman said.

'Bullying tactics'

"Despite these bullying tactics and aggressive actions... we will not be intimidated or driven away," the Philippine Coast Guard said.

The incident was the latest in a string of flare-ups between Beijing and Manila in the South China Sea, a waterway through which more than 60% of global maritime trade passes.

South China Sea

Source: The Hindu, Page 14

GS Paper: 2 – International Relations

Why in News:

Fresh tensions between China and the Philippines in the South China Sea (Spratly Islands area) after new maritime clashes. The issue revives focus on the 2016 international tribunal ruling that rejected China's sweeping claims.

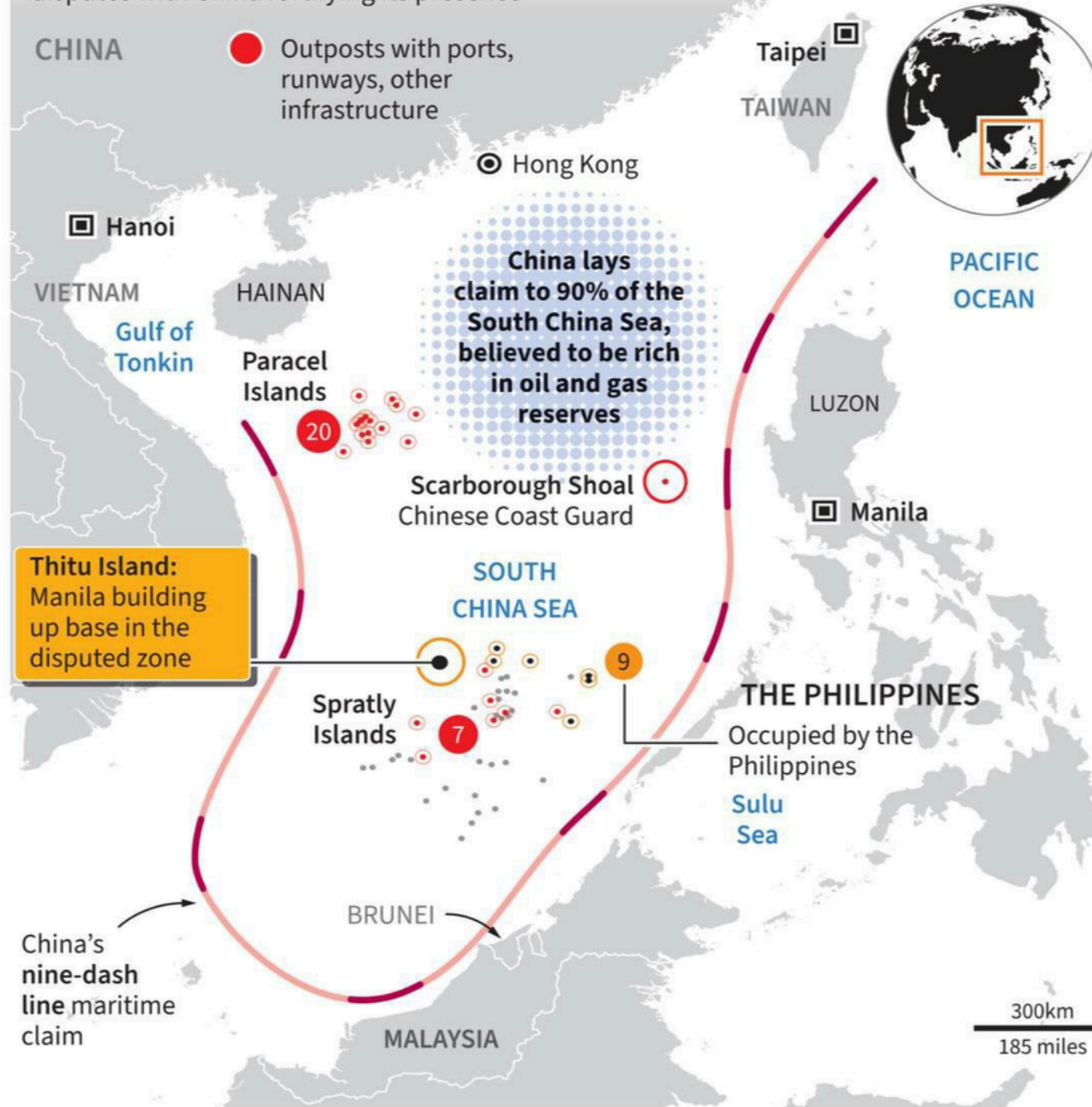
2016 PCA Ruling (Philippines vs China):

- **Court:** Permanent Court of Arbitration (The Hague)
- **Under:** UNCLOS (UN Convention on the Law of the Sea)
- **Verdict:**
 1. **China's "Nine-Dash Line" has no legal basis.**
 2. **Spratly – no EEZ rights.**
 3. **China violated Philippine sovereignty by blocking fishing and oil exploration.**
 4. **Environmental damage caused by Chinese land reclamation condemned.**
- **Status:** Ruling is legally binding, but China refuses to accept it.



Conflict in the waves

The South China Sea has become a focal point of geopolitical tensions amid territorial disputes with China fortifying its presence



Sources: Bloomberg, Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative

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