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The Hindu & The Indian express

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India-ASEAN ties making steady progress, says PM

Modi says strong partnership is emerging as robust foundation for global stability, development; he announces further deepening of cooperation in the domain of maritime security in 2026

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

India-ASEAN strategic partnership has continued to prosper despite the prevailing “era of uncertainties”, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday.

Delivering his opening remarks virtually at the 22nd ASEAN-India summit being held in the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur, Mr. Modi described ASEAN as a “cultural partner” of India, and announced further deepening of India-ASEAN cooperation in the domain of maritime security in 2026.

“Even in this era of uncertainties, India-ASEAN comprehensive strategic partnership has continued to make steady progress. And this strong partner-



Even in this era of uncertainties, India-ASEAN Comprehensive Strategic Partnership has continued to make steady progress. This strong partnership of ours is emerging as a robust foundation for global stability and development

NARENDRA MODI
Prime Minister



ship of ours is emerging as a robust foundation for global stability and development,” the Prime Minister said in his remarks that were telecast to the summit.

‘Shared values’

Mr. Modi welcomed Timor-Leste as the newest mem-

ber of ASEAN, and said India and ASEAN together represented nearly one-fourth of the global population and the two sides were connected by “historical ties and shared values”.

“The 21st century is our century, the century of India and ASEAN,” he said.

Cong. targets PM as Trump repeats oil imports claim

NEW DELHI

Hours after U.S. President Donald Trump reiterated that India will cut down its imports of Russian oil “completely”, the Congress criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying his “hugplomacy” was not visible in Kuala Lumpur. » **PAGE 10**

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, who co-chaired the ASEAN-India summit, said India-ASEAN relationship was rooted in the “values of friendship, trust, and shared interests”.

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India-ASEAN ties making steady progress, says PM

Source: The Hindu | Page Number: 1

Why in News:

- PM Modi addressed the 22nd ASEAN-India Summit virtually from New Delhi, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- He said the India-ASEAN Comprehensive Strategic Partnership continues to strengthen despite global uncertainties.
- Announced plans to deepen cooperation in maritime security by 2026.
- Described ASEAN as a “cultural partner” of India and stressed on shared values and historical ties.

Newest Member of ASEAN:

- Timor-Leste (East Timor) – welcomed as the newest member (11th) of ASEAN.





A.P. braces for cyclone as IMD issues high alert for 23 districts

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA/CHENNAI

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Sunday put the entire administrative machinery on high alert as the India Meteorological Department issued red and orange alerts for 23 of the 26 districts in the State for Monday in view of **Cyclone Montha**.

The IMD said the **deep depression over southeast Bay of Bengal** was likely to intensify into a cyclonic storm by Monday morning. Thereafter, it was likely to intensify into a severe cyclonic storm by Tuesday morning and was very likely to cross the Andhra Pradesh coast between Machilipatnam and Kalingapatnam around Kakinada in the evening or night.

A.P. braces for cyclone as IMD issues high alert for 23 districts

Source: The Hindu Page Number: 1 Subject: Geography – Tropical Cyclones

Why in News :

- The India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued red and orange alerts for 23 districts of Andhra Pradesh.
- The deep depression over southeast Bay of Bengal is expected to intensify into Cyclone 'Montha' by Monday morning.
- It may further strengthen into a severe cyclonic storm by Tuesday.
- Cyclone likely to cross the Andhra Pradesh coast between Machilipatnam and Kalingapatnam, around Kakinada, by evening or night.



Why has IUCN red-flagged the Western Ghats?

What has the International Union for Conservation of Nature's World Heritage Outlook 4 report said? What are the four main threats to the loss of habitats and species in South Asia? Are the Western Ghats highly endangered? What are the factors threatening the Sundarbans mangroves?

EXPLAINER

Divya Gandhi

The story so far:

The expansive Western Ghats and two national parks in India — Assam's Manas national park and West Bengal's Sundarbans national park — have been categorised as being of "significant concern" in the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) list of natural World Heritage sites across Asia.

Why did the IUCN state?

The IUCN's World Heritage Outlook 4 report released earlier this month attributes four threats to the loss of habitats and species in South Asia: climate change, tourism activities, invasive alien species, and roads. The report categorises the natural sites as "good", "good with some concerns", "significant concern", and "critical". The report uses four cycles of conservation assessments undertaken since 2014.

"Each of these categories not only shows the potential for a site to preserve its values and underlying attributes but also indicates the urgency of measures that need to be taken to improve the conservation outlook and ensure the long-term conservation of all sites," says the report. The IUCN assessment of over 200 natural and mixed World Heritage sites "offers the most in-depth analyses of threats facing natural World Heritage around the world and their protection and management status," says Gretel Aguilar, IUCN director general, in the introduction to the report.

The report points out that the percentage of sites with "a positive conservation outlook has, for the first time, decreased significantly."

Do we have 'good' protected areas? Protected areas in South Asia are being usurped rapidly, obliterating natural habitats. Of the 228 sites assessed since



Flourishing fauna: A flock of hornbills in the Western Ghats. M. SATHYAMOORTHY

2014, some 63% of sites had a positive outlook in 2014, 2017 and 2020, however, 'the IUCN World Heritage Outlook 4 shows that in 2025 only 57% of these sites have a positive conservation outlook.'

The threats are also shapeshifting, "it is ...notable that roads and railroads are now among the top five greatest threats to natural World Heritage in Asia, while in 2020 this was not the case." The other threats include: forest fires, hunting, roadkill, waste disposal, encroachment, illegal logging etc.

Of the 32 Asian sites categorised as "good with some concerns," four happen to be in India — The Great Himalayan National Park Conservation Area, Kaziranga National Park, Keoladeo National Park, and Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Parks. Khangchendzonga National Park in Sikkim has been rated "good" in its

which involves constructing dams across River Sillahalla and River Kundah, with an aim to generate 1,000 MW of power for Tamil Nadu's plains.

Moreover, tourism is creating problems of garbage, often consumed by wild animals such as elephants and exacerbating conflict. Plantations are replacing natural ecosystems. And climate change has forced fauna to adapt by redistributing themselves from fast-warming lower altitudes to higher reaches, such as in the case of the Nilgiri flycatcher and the black and orange flycatcher. Exotic species are colonising natural forests, such as eucalyptus and acacia (both originally from Australia), which were introduced here during the colonial era. As for the Sundarbans mangroves where tigers swim, salinity, heavy metal contamination, and unsustainable resource extraction threatens the ecosystem. Sea level rise and frequent storm surges reduce mangrove biodiversity, says the report.

Is there hope yet?

Outside India, seven sites in China have been proclaimed "best protected and managed protected areas," including the Badain Jaran Desert-Towers of Sand and Lake, Chengjiang Fossil Site, and Mount Huangshan.

The Natural World Heritage sites make up less than 1% of the Earth's surface, but nurture more than 20% of mapped global species richness. "This includes over 75,000 species of plants, and over 30,000 species of mammals, birds, fishes, reptiles and amphibians," says the report.

This report is timely. "The world has agreed to halt biodiversity loss through the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and the UNESCO World Heritage Convention is uniquely placed to meet these challenges by bridging the gap between nature and culture, and protecting places with extraordinary biodiversity, functional habitats and high ecosystem integrity," says the report. "This report is more than a health check. It is a guide for action," says Ms. Aguilar.

conservation outlook, valuing "attributes [that] are currently in good condition and likely to be maintained for the foreseeable future, provided that current conservation measures are maintained."

The Western Ghats, a mosaic of forests and grasslands, are older than the Himalayas and have an exceptionally high level of biological diversity and endemism, habitat to some 325 globally threatened (listed in IUCN's Red List) flora, fauna, bird, amphibian, reptile and fish species, according to UNESCO. This includes the Nilgiri tahr, a stocky, agile goat found nowhere else in the world.

What makes the Ghats vulnerable?

The Western Ghats are highly endangered not least by hundreds of hydropower projects such as the proposed ₹5,843 crore Sillahalla Pumped Storage Hydroelectric project in the Nilgiris,

THE GIST

The IUCN's World Heritage Outlook 4 report released earlier this month attributes four threats to the loss of habitats and species in South Asia: climate change, tourism activities, invasive alien species, and roads.

The Western Ghats are highly endangered not least by hundreds of hydropower projects.

The Natural World Heritage sites make up less than 1% of the Earth's surface, but nurture more than 20% of mapped global species richness.

Why has IUCN red-flagged the Western Ghats?

Source: The Hindu Page Number: 8
Subject: Environment – Biodiversity Conservation / Climate Change

Why in News:

- The IUCN's World Heritage Outlook 4 report (2024) has categorized the Western Ghats and two national parks in India — Assam's Manas and West Bengal's Sundarbans — as sites of "significant concern."
- Report highlights major threats to habitats and species in South Asia due to climate change, tourism, invasive species, and hydropower projects.

Summary:

- The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) periodically assesses the condition of World Heritage natural sites through its World Heritage Outlook reports.
- The 2024 report lists Western Ghats, Manas National Park, and Sundarbans National Park under "significant concern" due to degrading ecological health.
- Out of 32 Asian sites evaluated, only four Indian sites — Great Himalayan National Park, Kaziranga, Keoladeo, and Nanda Devi — were rated as "good with some concerns."

Key Threats Identified (Western Ghats):

- 1. Climate change – altering rainfall, temperature, and habitat range of species.**
 - 2. Tourism pressure – garbage pollution, habitat disturbance, and wildlife conflict.**
 - 3. Invasive alien species – such as acacia and eucalyptus (introduced in colonial times).**
 - 4. Hydropower projects and dams – e.g., River Sillanala and River Kundah projects impacting tiger and elephant habitats.**
- Sundarbans mangroves are also under stress from salinity, pollution, and over-extraction of resources, along with sea-level rise and frequent storms.**
 - Despite concerns, IUCN notes some positive conservation outcomes, with around 60% of sites showing improvement since 2014, but the Western Ghats continue to face ecological fragmentation and biodiversity loss.**
 - Globally, natural World Heritage sites make up less than 1% of Earth's surface but harbor over 20% of mapped global species richness.**

What is the problem faced by paddy farmers of Tamil Nadu?

Why are there issues with procuring and storing paddy from the Cauvery delta?

T. Ramakrishnan

The story so far:

Sensing the growing discomfort among farmers of the Cauvery delta in Tamil Nadu about reports of damage to paddy at many places, the **Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) government**, on **October 19**, requested the Union government to **relax the permissible moisture content for paddy procurement from 17% to 22%**. Subsequently, the **Union Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution** has formed **three teams** to assess the situation.

What led to the present problem?

The problem, per se, is not new to the **Cauvery delta**, regarded as the **rice bowl of south India**. Some of the causes include increasing dependence of farmers on the **Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation (TNCSC)** for selling their produce,

reluctance of private traders to buy paddy harvested during the *Kuruvai* season in view of **higher moisture content, inadequate number of Direct Purchase Centres (DPCs), and a lack of storage infrastructure**. This year's bumper harvest has worsened the situation. Against the normal coverage of around four lakh acres, more than six lakh acres were brought under paddy cultivation. With Cauvery water being available in abundance, sections of farmers, who had burnt their fingers by going for cotton that got damaged during rains, began raising the paddy late. Normally, the crop gets harvested by the end of September. But this year, the operation is still on. Rains have aggravated the problem, making higher moisture content inevitable.

What has the Union govt. done?

Under the **decentralised procurement scheme of the Union Ministry, State governments procure paddy and wheat**

on behalf of the Centre, in addition to storing and distributing the grain in line with the Centre's policies. The Union government meets the cost of procurement, apart from monitoring the quality of foodgrain procured. Farmers are paid the Minimum Support Price (MSP) fixed by the Centre. Besides, some States including Tamil Nadu pay incentive to farmers. Since the procurement is done as per the norms of the Centre, State governments have to comply with those specifications. Generally, the allowed moisture content is up to 17%, which is measured through moisture metres, available at DPCs, railheads, godowns, and modern rice mills. The Centre can relax the norms, if any State asks for it, citing factors beyond their control. In the past, the Centre has waived stipulations for Andhra Pradesh and Punjab.

Going by the **Central Foodgrains portal**, nearly 10.4 lakh tonnes were procured from all over Tamil Nadu up to

October 24 through 1,855 DPCs. Over 1.2 lakh farmers were paid ₹2,519 crore towards MSP. The estimated quantity of paddy to be procured for the season is nearly 24 lakh tonnes.

What is the political anxiety?

The Cauvery delta accounts for two-thirds of paddy procured by the TNCSC annually. On an average in the last five years, at least 40 lakh tonnes were obtained from farmers all over the State. Last year, it was about 48 lakh tonnes. Politically, the region, which elects 41 of the 234 MLAs, has been a traditional bastion of the DMK. Therefore, the ruling party is anxious to ensure hassle-free paddy procurement.

What is the way forward?

Besides strengthening the storage infrastructure, the State government should ensure proper coordination among all stakeholders, including farmers and the Railways, which play a key role in moving paddy from DPCs to storage points or hulling units. In a consultative manner, the authorities should identify sites for temporary DPCs, apart from making materials available for preserving the procured paddy. The government should also contemplate opening up the system of procurement to rope in farmers producers' organisations, just as it permitted co-operative societies to operate DPCs in non-delta areas.

What is the problem faced by paddy farmers of Tamil Nadu?

The Hindu; Page Number: 8

Subject: Economy – Agriculture / Minimum Support Price (MSP)

Why in News:

- Cauvery delta farmers in Tamil Nadu face distress due to wet paddy harvest and procurement hurdles.
- The DMK government (Oct 19) requested the Centre to relax the moisture limit for paddy procurement from 17% to 22%.
- The Union Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution formed three central teams to review the situation.

About MSP & Procurement:

- Under the decentralised procurement scheme, State governments procure paddy and wheat on behalf of the Centre.
- Farmers are paid the Minimum Support Price (MSP) fixed by the Central Government.
- The allowed moisture content is 17%, measured at DPCs, godowns, and rice mills.
- Centre can grant temporary relaxation during abnormal weather (as requested now by Tamil Nadu).

Way Forward:

- Strengthen storage and drying facilities across delta districts.
- Open temporary DPCs and ensure smooth movement of paddy with help from Railways.
- Improve coordination among farmers, procurement agencies, and cooperatives to speed up collection and drying.

U.S. seeks stronger ties with Pakistan, but not at India's expense, says Rubio

Press Trust of India
WASHINGTON

The U.S. sees an opportunity to expand its strategic relationship with Pakistan but it will not be at the expense of its historic and important ties with India, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio has said.

Ahead of his meeting with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar in Kuala Lumpur on Monday, Mr. Rubio, referring to India's energy ties with Russia, said New Delhi has already expressed a desire to diversify its procurement of crude oil.

The U.S. Secretary of State was interacting with journalists ahead of his trip to Malaysia for the ASEAN summit.

Mr. Rubio, to a question on the U.S. ties with Pakistan, said New Delhi is "con-



U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio is set to meet External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar in Kuala Lumpur on Monday.

cerned for obvious reasons" and that Washington's relationship with Islamabad will not be at the expense of the ties with New Delhi.

"But, I think they (India) have to understand we have to have relations with a lot of different countries. We see an opportunity to

expand our strategic relationship with Pakistan," he said.

"I think the Indians are very mature when it comes to diplomacy and things of that nature. Look, they have some relationships with countries that we don't have relationships with. So, it's part of a ma-

ture, pragmatic foreign policy," he said.

"I don't think anything we're doing with Pakistan comes at the expense of our relationship or friendship with India, which is deep, historic, and important," Mr. Rubio added.

The U.S.-Pakistan ties have witnessed an upswing in the last six months, especially after President Donald Trump's meeting with Pakistan Army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir following the military conflict between India and Pakistan in May.

India-Russia oil trade

To another question on if India will be willing to really shove off its purchases of Russian oil for a trade deal with the U.S., Mr. Rubio said New Delhi has already expressed an interest in diversifying its oil portfolio.

U.S. seeks stronger ties with Pakistan, but not at India's expense, says Rubio

Source: The Hindu | Page Number: 10

Subject: International Relations – India–U.S. Relations

Why in News:

- **U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Washington aims to expand strategic ties with Pakistan, but not at the cost of its deep and historic relationship with India.**
- **Statement came ahead of his meeting with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar in Kuala Lumpur during the ASEAN Summit.**
- **Rubio emphasized that India and the U.S. share a mature, pragmatic, and strategic partnership, and relations with Pakistan will not affect that.**



Satellite for armed forces to be launched next week

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will launch military communications satellite CMS-03 on November 2 from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota.

The CMS-03 communication satellite, also known as GSAT-7R, will be launched by the Launch Vehicle Mark 3 (LVM3).

Heavy satellite

"CMS-03 is a multi-band communication satellite that will provide services over a wide oceanic region including the Indian landmass. CMS-03, weighing about 4,400 kg, will be the heaviest communication satellite to be launched to Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO) from Indian soil," the ISRO said on Sunday.

The launch vehicle has been fully assembled and integrated with the spacecraft, and has been moved to the launch pad on Sunday for further pre-launch operations, it added.

The launch of CMS-03 will be the first by the LVM3 rocket in over two years. The last time the rocket was deployed was in July 2023 to launch the historic Chandrayaan-3 mission from Sriharikota.

Satellite for armed forces to be launched next week

Source: The Hindu | Page Number: 12

Subject: Science & Technology – Space (ISRO)

Why in News:

- ISRO will launch the military communication satellite CMS-03 (GSAT-7R) on November 2 from Sriharikota.
- The satellite will be launched using the Launch Vehicle Mark-3 (LVM3) – its first launch in over two years (last used for Chandrayaan-3 in July 2023).
- CMS-03 is a multi-band heavy communication satellite ($\approx 4,400$ kg) meant for armed forces communication across a wide oceanic and Indian landmass region.
- It will be the heaviest communication satellite launched to a Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO) from Indian soil.



Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO)

A Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit is an elliptical orbit used as an intermediate path to place a satellite into a final geosynchronous or geostationary orbit.

- The satellite is first placed in this elliptical orbit and later uses its own propulsion to circularize the orbit at the desired altitude (~36,000 km).

Japan seeks Indian workers but people-to-people ties lag

Japan, with one-third of its population over the age of 65, requires a workforce, academics for research, and a market for its goods, while India, with 65% of its 1.4 billion population under 35, faces rising pressure to create opportunities for its youth

Suhasini Haidar
TOKYO

Since 1981, when Suzuki Motor Corporation set up a factory in India to manufacture the Maruti car, the Japanese company has been a byword for bilateral ties. Ken-ichi Ayukawa, executive vice-president and chief global marketing officer, who headed Maruti Suzuki operations in India from 2013 to 2022, says.

Suzuki was among the first to bring Japanese engineers to India to streamline processes and train Indian workers to build the car. With both New Delhi and Tokyo seeking solutions to Japan's ageing population and India's burgeoning youth population, the company is now reversing that trend.

"Suzuki is now trying to invite a lot of Indians to Japan, training them and helping them develop technology in Japan," Mr. Ayukawa said, accompanied by Indian scholar and Suzuki executive Chandrali Sarkar. Ms. Sarkar first came to Japan to study at Keio University and has been working on India operations at Suzuki's Hama-



Low numbers: Japan ranks 34th among countries where Indian students pursue higher education. Only about 1,500 Indian students are currently registered in Japan. AFP

matsu headquarters, about 250 km from Tokyo, since 2022. She noted that while some hesitation among Indians stems from limited Japanese language skills, the broader challenge is unfamiliarity with Japan.

"Japan should know more about India and vice versa. Especially the next generation needs to connect, and we need more Indian students, engineers, professionals to come to Japan," said Kenji Hiramatsu, Chairman of the Institute for International Strategy at The Japan Research In-

stitute (JRI), and Japan's Ambassador to India from 2015 to 2019. "It is important that we change the mindset of Indian youth that Japan is a special partner for India," he added, noting that the current number of Indians studying in Japan is far below its potential.

Japan opens doors

According to a parliamentary response from the Indian Ministry of Education last year, Japan ranks 34th among countries where Indian students pursue high-

er education. Only about 1,500 Indian students are currently registered in Japan, a small fraction of more than 3.3 lakh foreign students in the country. Employment figures are similarly modest: about 54,000 Indians work in Japan, one-fourth of the 2.3 lakh Nepali citizens among a total of 23 lakh foreign workers.

To address this shortfall, Japan is preparing to open its doors to thousands like Ms. Sarkar under an "Action Plan" launched by Prime Minister Narendra

Modi and former Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba in August. The plan aims to facilitate five lakh workforce exchanges over the next five years, including the movement of 50,000 skilled personnel from India to Japan.

Officials in the Cabinet Secretariat and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs point to the "perfect complementarity" between the two countries. Japan, with one-third of its population over the age of 65, requires a workforce, academics for research, and a market for its goods. India, with 65% of its 1.4 billion population under 35, faces rising pressure to create opportunities for its youth amid stricter immigration policies in the U.S., Canada, and Europe, and Chinese restrictions on high-tech and semiconductor exports.

Despite decades of growing government-to-government and business-to-business ties, the officials said, people-to-people connections between India and Japan continue to lag.

(The correspondent is visiting Japan at the invitation of the Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Japan seeks Indian workers but people-to-people ties lag

Source: The Hindu | Page Number: 12

Subject: International Relations – India–Japan Relations

Why in News:

- Japan, facing labour shortages with one-third of its population above 65, is seeking skilled Indian workers.
- India, with 65% population under 35, aims to create global job opportunities for its youth.
- Despite strong strategic and business ties, educational and cultural exchanges remain weak – Japan ranks 34th for Indian students.

India–Japan Action Plan:

- Plan to facilitate 5 lakh workforce exchanges in five years.
- Includes movement of 50,000 skilled Indian professionals to Japan.
- Focus on training, language learning, technology cooperation, and ease of migration.
- Seeks to deepen economic and skill linkages while bridging the people-to-people gap.