

Topics - MINDS MAPS included (Daily current affairs 21st December 2024)

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By saurabh Pandey



THE HINDU

Target Mains -2025/26 -

Essay topic - “Digital spread will bring both inclusion and exclusion “

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**Q. Chenda often seen in news is associated with which among the following.
(The Hindu)**

A) Musical instrument.

B) Folk Dance.

C) Type of Folk drama.

D) Type of fabric.

New undersea cables to boost India's digital connectivity

Two new submarine cable systems will provide additional Internet links to Asia and Europe even as India takes a more active role in discussions on undersea cable resilience and security

Aroon Deep
NEW DELHI

With data use increasing year on year, India's undersea cable network is growing. Two new cable systems are set to be launched in the coming three months: the India Asia Xpress (IAX) and the India Europe Xpress (IEX), both connecting India with additional Internet links to the two continents. This comes even as India takes a more active role in discussions around submarine cable security and resilience.

Both cable systems, cumulatively over 15,000 kilometres in length, are owned by Reliance Jio, with a strategic investment from China Mobile. The IAX connects Chennai and Mumbai with Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia in Asia, and the IEX connects them with France, Greece, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Djibouti. This adds to the dozens of cables landing in India, mainly in Mumbai and Chennai.

The cable expansions not only reflect growing traffic, but also increased geopolitical ambition, Ja-



Experts say India is emerging as a strong maritime cable network player in the region. B. VELANKANNI RAJ

gannath Panda, head of the Sweden-based Stockholm Center for South Asian and Indo-Pacific Affairs (SCSA-IPA) wrote recently. The new cable systems bolster India's "defense strategy in terms of the resilience of the cables against physical damages or digital disruptions from cyberattacks by state or non-state actors", Mr. Panda wrote in a paper for the *Marine Policy* journal.

"India is emerging as a strong maritime cable network player in the region," Mr. Panda said in an interview. "There will be focus in the Bay of Bengal and

the South China Sea region, and India's proactive role will be closely watched, and India won't shy away from taking a leading role there," he said.

In March, three submarine cables connecting India to West Asia and Europe were disrupted, impacting traffic to India. While that incident had an impact on India's international bandwidth, traffic still flowed through alternate routes, with data centres within India itself also buffering against disruptions for key Internet services. The alarm over disruptions to connectivity

has been felt worldwide, and India is no exception. Telecom Secretary Neeraj Mittal is part of the International Advisory Body for Submarine Cable Resilience established by the International Telecommunication Union. IT Secretary S. Krishnan asked at an event earlier this month, "Are we stable within the country that all services within this country can be offered even in the event of a disruption?"

Bangladesh connection

The Bangladeshi government recently put on hold plans by Internet service providers in that country to sell bandwidth to North-east India, according to reports from local media. This setback, however, has limited impact for India, said Suvesh Chattopadhyaya, an undersea cable industry veteran. North-east States are already served by fibre laid on top of the Power Grid Corporation of India's transmission lines, and this fibre accounts for "hundreds of gigabits" per second of connectivity, Mr. Chattopadhyaya said, sufficient for current connectivity needs.

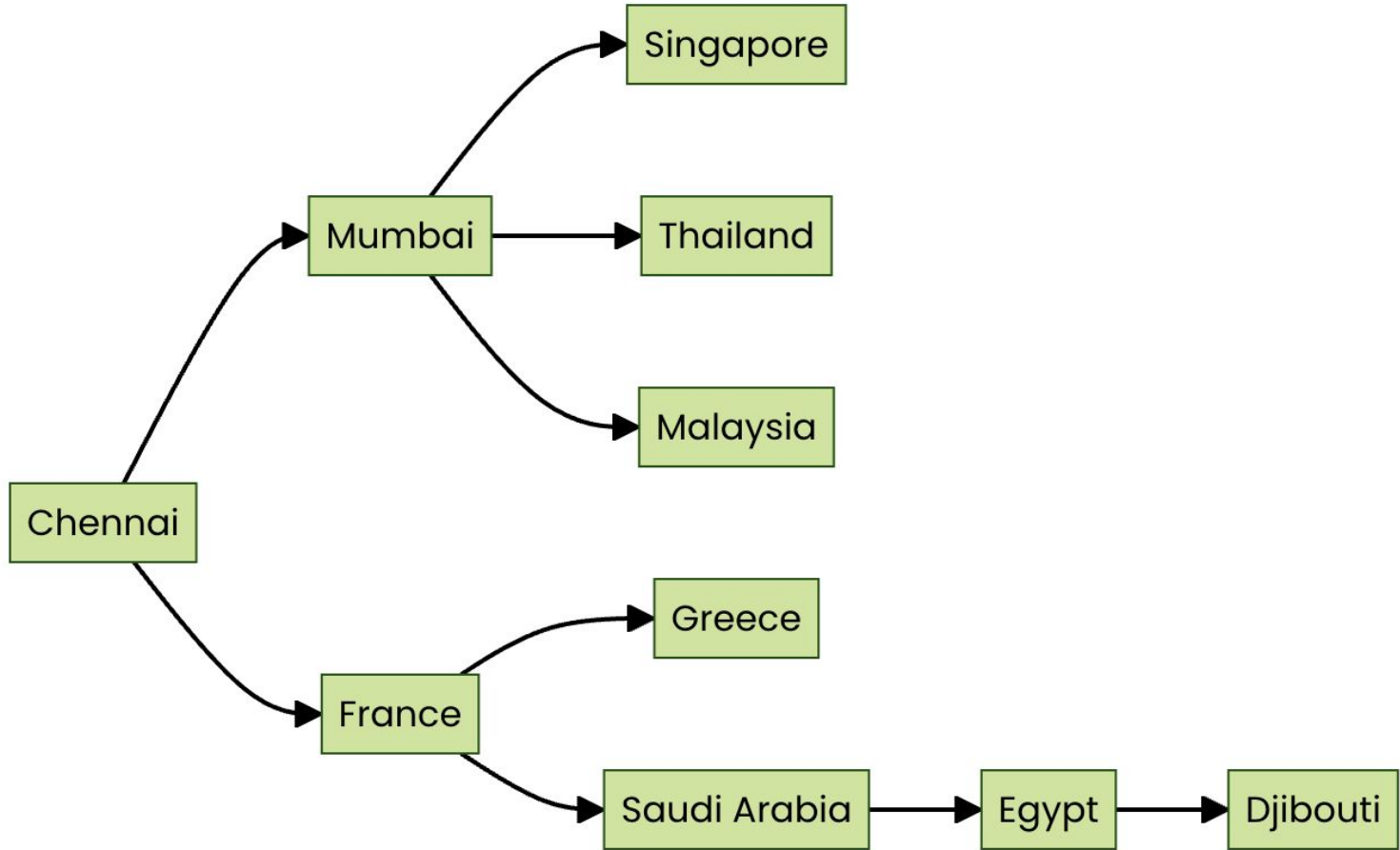
Topic - Undersea Cable connectivity

Introduction

In the digital age, connectivity is paramount, and India is gearing up for a significant leap in its undersea cable infrastructure.

As the demand for data surges year on year, two monumental projects, the India **Asia Xpress (IAX)** and **India Europe Xpress (IEX)**, are set to reshape the landscape of internet connectivity in the region.

This article delves into the implications of these ambitious projects, which collectively span over 15,000 kilometers and bolster India's role in global internet infrastructure.



The Significance of IAX and IEX

The IAX and IEX projects, owned by Reliance Jio with strategic backing from China Mobile, promise to enhance internet connectivity between India and critical regions across Asia and Europe.

IAX links Chennai and Mumbai with destinations like Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia.

IEX connects these Indian hubs to countries such as France, Greece, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Djibouti.

The addition of these cables amplifies India's already extensive network, which primarily converges in Mumbai and Chennai. This expansion not only caters to escalating traffic demands but also positions India as a central player in global digital commerce.

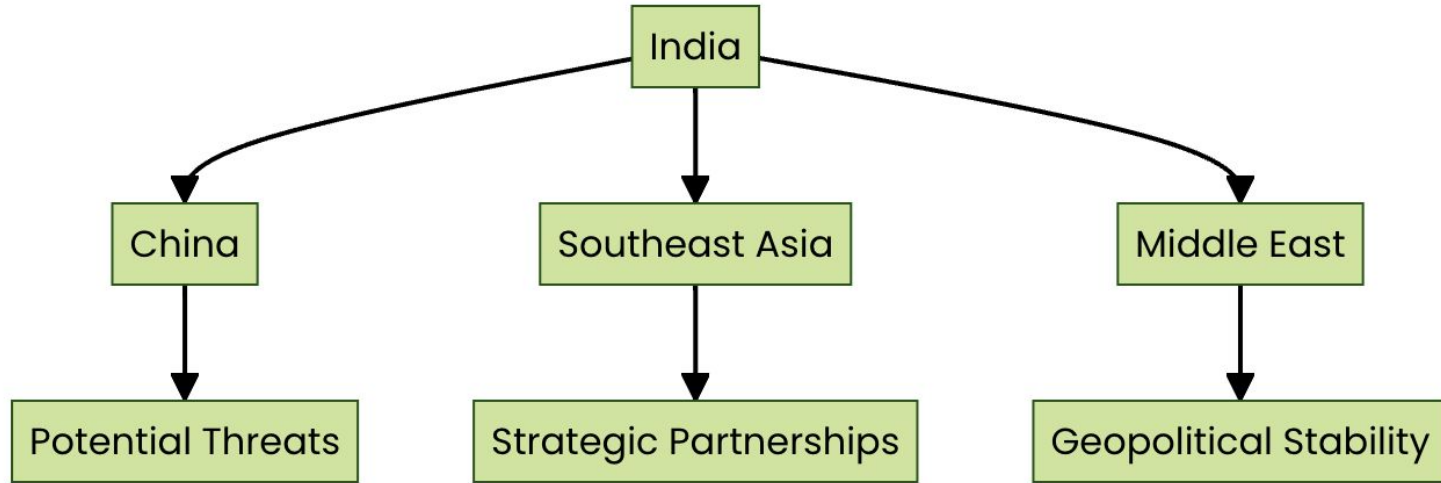
Geopolitical Implications

The growth of India's undersea cable network is not merely a technological advancement; it reflects the country's rising geopolitical ambitions.

→ these new projects significantly enhance India's defense strategy, particularly against potential digital disruptions and cyberattacks.

The strategic positioning of these cables allows India to mitigate risks associated with geopolitical tensions, especially in the Bay of Bengal and South China Sea regions.

Enhanced connectivity through these cables reinforces India's capability to withstand disruptions, as seen in the recent incident where three submarine cables connecting India to West Asia and Europe faced disruptions



Conclusion

As India embarks on a new chapter in its undersea cable expansion, the IAX and IEX projects symbolize a transformative leap in connectivity and geopolitical strategy. These developments not only promise to enhance the nation's digital infrastructure but also position India as a formidable player in the global maritime cable arena

It is for historians to dig for tell-tale remains, not bigots



Normally, digging at historic sites is done by an archaeologist and historians in search of a lost civilisation or an ancient city or some signs of mythological events. But nowhere in the world, in the modern age, is an excavation done underneath a place of worship of one religion to find the remains of a place of worship of another religion. While digging in search of historical facts is a secular act, and is done using internationally recognised scientific methods, digging to establish the presence of a place of worship of one religion in a place of worship of another religion is, clearly, a non-secular act. Therefore, it is absolutely puzzling why the former Chief Justice of India (CJI), D.Y. Chandrachud found nothing objectionable or illegal in a survey in a place of worship of a particular religion by another religious group. In his oral observation, the former CJI said, in 2022 (he was the CJI then), “a survey may not necessarily fall foul of the Places of Worship Act.” He made this tricky observation in the Gyanvapi mosque case.

Clarity in the Act, yet challenged

The Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act was enacted by Parliament in 1991 in the background of a strident movement by Ram Janmabhoomi supporters which heightened communal tensions in Ayodhya and many other parts of north India. The government of the day apprehended the imminent outbreak of violence in different parts of the country due to the raising of claims over the places of worship of a particular minority community. This Act bars the conversion of places of worship of any religious community into a place of worship of a different religious community. It declares that the religious character of a place of worship existing on the 15th day of August 1947, shall continue to be the same as it existed on that day.

The Act further provides that any suit and appeal seeking to convert the religious character of a place of worship existing on 15th August, 1947 pending before any court or tribunal shall abate on the commencement of the Act. It also states that no suit or appeal relating to this matter shall lie in any court after the commencement of the Act, and any suit alleging that the religious character of a place of worship has been converted after 15th August 1947 will be determined in terms of this Act.

But the constitutionality of this Act is under challenge in the Supreme Court of India. A petition was filed in 2020 challenging the constitutional validity of the Act on the grounds



P.D.T. Achary

a former Secretary-
General of the
Lok Sabha

It is unfortunate that judicial misdirection is stirring up the retaliatory instincts of people fed on the falsehoods of manufactured history

that the date of August 15, 1947 was fixed arbitrarily and that this Act takes away judicial review.

The contention that the date of August 15, 1947 was arbitrarily fixed in the Act to prevent the conversion of a place of worship is a specious one. This is the day when the transfer of power from the British government to the Indian government took place. Naturally, this was the earliest date the government could think of for the purpose of this Act. In any case, the Government of India could not have chosen April 21, 1526 when Babur defeated Ibrahim Lodhi in the battle of Panipat and captured Delhi and Agra and laid the foundation of the Mughal empire. Nor could it have chosen, arbitrarily, a later date and kept the field open for a set of religious fanatics to make reckless claims on the places of worship of another religion. Therefore, by all accounts, the date chosen by Parliament in this enactment was the most reasonable one.

The second ground cited in the petition is that the Act takes away judicial review which is a part of the basic structure of the Constitution of India and any enactment which alters it is unconstitutional. This contention, needless to say, is without any merit. The Act declares that from the commencement of the Act, all pending suits, appeal or proceedings seeking to convert a place of worship of one religion existing as on August 15, 1947 into that of another religion or altering the religious character of a place of worship shall abate. It is the legislative policy of the government to declare through a law that certain types of suits shall abate under certain circumstances. It is not the same as stating that “no court shall have any jurisdiction in respect of any suit arising from the place of worship of any religion”. The latter legislative assertion can be interpreted as an exclusion of judicial review which would, no doubt, be unconstitutional. But that is not the case here.

On the lower courts

Subsequent to the above quoted observation of the former CJI, lower courts in the State of Uttar Pradesh are ordering surveys in mosques to determine their religious character with great alacrity. It has led to violence in Sambhal in Uttar Pradesh in which some lives were lost. The lower courts do not seem to have bothered to check whether it was an order of the Supreme Court or a mere observation of the CJI during the hearing. The fact is that such observations from the Bench have no significance as those are not a part of any judgment of the Court.

Besides, it is a matter of common logic that when the law has barred any kind of conversion of the religious character of a place of worship as it existed on August 15, 1947, then what is the relevance of ordering or carrying out a survey to determine its character? Legally, its character is what existed on the date as above. So, where is the need for a fresh survey?

A close reading of the provisions of the Act would reveal that what has been prohibited is not merely the act of conversion but also fresh surveys to establish the religious character of a place of worship. As that stands settled, any attempt to resurrect the dispute and get an order from the court would be clearly in violation of the Act.

The Places of Worship Act 1991 has been hailed as a law which protects secularism in the Ayodhya judgment of the Supreme Court. Wisely, the Court has now put a blanket ban on all litigations relating to the places of worship till it finally determines the issue of the constitutionality of the Act.

Protection of a fundamental right

Quite apart from the issue of constitutionality or otherwise of the Places of Worship Act, a religious denomination has the fundamental right, under Article 26, to manage its own affairs in matters of religion. Worshipping in a mosque or a church is a matter of religion and any kind of interference by any outsider in that place of worship can be treated as a violation of the fundamental right of that religious denomination. The court, while ordering a survey of such a place of worship, is in fact committing a violation of Article 26 of the Constitution. The object of this Article is to protect the right conferred on a religious denomination. So, even if the Act was not in existence, a survey or excavation in a place of worship being used by a religious denomination for the purpose of finding out the religious character of that place would be a violation of Article 26.

It is possible that beneath some mosques lie remains of temples. And beneath the remains of temples there may be the remains of Buddha or Jain *viharas*. History has sequestered in the womb of earth these tell-tale remains for an archaeologist and a historian to chronicle the history of this nation, and not for bigots to kindle revanchism and poison the minds of generations of unwary people. It is a great pity that judicial misdirection is referring the retaliatory instincts of people fed on the falsehoods of manufactured history.

Topic → The Places of Worship Act: Navigating the Intersection of Religion and Law.

Introduction

The Places of Worship Act has emerged as a pivotal piece of legislation, igniting fervent discussions surrounding religious freedom and historical integrity.

At the heart of this discourse lies Article 26 of the Constitution, which guarantees religious denominations the fundamental right to manage their own affairs.

As we navigate this intricate landscape, it's crucial to comprehend the implications of the Act and how it intertwines with our collective history.

Understanding Article 26

Article 26 of the Indian Constitution serves as a guardian of religious freedom, providing every religious denomination the right to manage its practices and affairs without outside interference.

This article is instrumental in upholding the autonomy of various faiths, ensuring that worship within mosques, churches, temples, and other places of reverence remains unhindered.

Key Aspects of Article 26:

Right to Manage Affairs: Each religious group has the autonomy to manage its own affairs concerning religion.

Protection Against Interference: Outsider interference in these matters is considered a violation of this fundamental right.

The historical roots of this article are crucial, as they reflect the secular ethos of the nation, aiming to safeguard diverse religious practices from external meddling.

The Places of Worship Act Explained

The Places of Worship Act, enacted in 1991, was primarily crafted to preserve the religious character of places of worship as they existed on August 15, 1947. Its core objective is to prevent the alteration of the status of these places, thereby fostering communal harmony.

Key Provisions:

Status Quo Clause: Prohibits the conversion of religious places from one religion to another.

Legal Immunity: Provides protection from legal challenges to the status of these places based on historical claims.

While aimed at promoting peace, the Act has stirred controversy and legal challenges, as it clashes with the evolving views on historical narratives and archaeological findings.

Historical Context and Archaeological Significance

Beneath the surface of many religious sites lie remnants of bygone eras—temples beneath mosques, and ancient structures hidden within modern places of worship. This archaeological significance cannot be overlooked, as it offers invaluable insights into the rich tapestry of our shared history.

The Role of Archaeology:

Archaeologists unearth narratives that illuminate our past, providing context for contemporary religious practices.

These findings can sometimes fuel divisive interpretations, highlighting the need for careful stewardship of historical truths.

The delicate balance between preserving history and respecting religious sentiments is vital in fostering mutual respect among diverse communities.

Societal Implications

The Places of Worship Act and the debates surrounding it have profound implications for inter-religious relations in India.

While the Act aims to maintain peace, it also opens avenues for conflict if not approached with sensitivity.

Impact on Inter-Religious Relations:

Potential for heightened tensions among religious groups if claims to sites are perceived as threats.

Importance of fostering dialogue to bridge gaps and promote understanding.

To mitigate conflict and enhance harmony, constructive dialogues and inclusive approaches must be prioritized, ensuring that all voices are heard and respected.

Conclusion

Navigating the intricate web of the Places of Worship Act and Article 26 reveals a landscape fraught with challenges and opportunities.

As we strive for a society that respects religious freedom while acknowledging historical truths, it is essential to engage in thoughtful dialogue and foster understanding.

The journey may be complex, but the pursuit of harmony and respect for our diverse heritage is a worthy endeavor.

A chance to strike gold during the Kuwait visit



The Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, is set to visit Kuwait on December 21-22. The visit will be the first by an Indian Prime Minister in 43 years, the last being the visit by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1981. Mr. Modi was scheduled to visit Kuwait in January 2022, but the visit was postponed due to concerns about COVID-19.

The visit holds great significance not only for the bilateral ties but also the region, which is going through a very difficult phase of conflict and transition. Mr. Modi has visited all the other countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) over the past 10 years, some more than once, and not having visited Kuwait was seen as a gap in India's West Asia engagement. This visit aims to not only plug this gap but also give a boost to the rather stagnant ties between the two countries which, otherwise, have much potential for a strong engagement.

A country with strategic significance

Why is Kuwait important? Despite being one of the smallest countries in the region, it holds significant strategic importance. Located at the north-east end of the Persian Gulf, it shares borders with Iraq and Saudi Arabia and hosts important American military bases. It is the only monarchy in the region which has experimented successfully with democracy. On regional issues, it has generally maintained a neutral stance and has often been the interlocutor in resolving disputes.

Its wealth is owed primarily to its vast oil reserves, which are sixth-largest globally. It is also one of the founding members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

It also has one of the largest basket sovereign wealth funds. These funds, managed by the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA), have grown at an impressive rate and are currently estimated to



Rajeev Agarwal

a retired colonel, is a former Director in the Ministry of External Affairs, a former Director in Military Intelligence (International Relations) and a former Research Fellow, Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi (IDSA), New Delhi

The Indian Prime Minister's visit, long overdue, has many opportunities to develop an important bilateral relationship

be \$924 billion (in March 2024), the fourth largest in the world after Norway, China and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Untapped potential, existing links

India and Kuwait have always enjoyed friendly ties, built on a strong foundation of history and cultural bonds. India was one of the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with Kuwait following its independence from the British Protectorate in 1961. In fact, the Indian rupee was a legal tender in Kuwait till 1961.

Trade and people-to-people ties have traditionally been the main anchors of the bilateral ties. India has consistently been among the top trading partners of Kuwait, with the total bilateral trade with Kuwait during FY 2023-24 being \$ 10.47 billion. During FY2023-24, Kuwait was the sixth largest crude supplier catering to about 3.0 % of India's total energy needs. The KIA has invested indirectly in India with estimated investments of more than US\$10 billion.

During the COVID-19 pandemic too, India and Kuwait demonstrated a strong sense of brotherhood. India provided two lakh vaccine doses. During the second wave of COVID-19 in May 2021, Kuwait provided 282 oxygen cylinders, 60 oxygen concentrators, ventilators and many other medical supplies to India.

People-to-people ties form the other firm anchor. Out of a population of almost 4.9 million, around 1 million Indians not only form the largest expatriate group in Kuwait but are also among the most trusted. As a special gesture, a 'Festival of India' was organised in Kuwait in March 2023. A weekly Hindi radio programme, 'Namaste Kuwait' has been started by Kuwait National Radio since April 2024. And, 26 schools in Kuwait with over 60,000 students, follow the Central Board of Secondary Education curriculum of India.

When tragedy struck on June 12, in the form of

a fire in a residential building in Kuwait killing over 40 Indians, Kuwait rendered help and repatriated their mortal remains quickly.

Areas to elevate ties

Despite enjoying mutual trust and goodwill, India's ties with Kuwait – like with many others in the Gulf region – have not been able to transcend to the next level. Mr. Modi's visit, therefore, offers the perfect opportunity to set things moving. The signing of a comprehensive strategic partnership agreement with Kuwait could be the ideal start. An agreement on defence cooperation could be signed too. India has invited Kuwait to join the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, which Kuwait is likely to accept. An agreement between KIA and the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIIF) in India could be mutually beneficial and give impetus to growth in India. Like the UAE, Kuwait could become an important partner for storing strategic oil reserves in India.

From India, helping Kuwait in building its infrastructure under Kuwait's 'Vision 2035' could be a good initiative. Setting up institutes of higher education, such as the Indian Institute of Technology and the Indian Institute of Management, and modern hospitals in Kuwait could boost people-to-people ties. Kuwait's request for additional seats for its airlines from India (in addition to 12,000 seats per week allotted), could be considered as a special exemption, despite Kuwait not fulfilling the required quota. Cooperation in space programmes including launching satellites for Kuwait would make good headlines too.

The scope for Kuwait-India ties is huge and the wish list endless. Hopefully, this visit will provide the perfect platform to kick-start a golden era in this very important bilateral relationship.

Topic → A Country with Strategic Significance: Why Is Kuwait Important?

Introduction

Kuwait may be one of the smallest countries in the Middle East, This tiny nation packs a punch when it comes to strategic importance. Nestled at the north-east end of the Persian Gulf, Kuwait shares borders with Iraq and Saudi Arabia, making it a key player in regional geopolitics.

Geopolitical Importance of Kuwait

Location and Borders

Kuwait's geographical position is like a chess piece on a board, strategically placed between two major players: Iraq and Saudi Arabia. This location not only gives it a vantage point in regional politics but also makes it a crucial ally for Western powers, particularly the United States.

Military Presence

Speaking of the U.S., Kuwait hosts important American military bases. This military presence underscores its role as a stabilizing force in a region often fraught with tension. Kuwait's willingness to cooperate with international forces enhances its strategic value.

Economic Significance

Oil Reserves

Kuwait is rich in oil reserves, boasting the sixth-largest reserves globally.

This wealth has not only fueled its economy but has also made it a key player in the global oil market. As one of the founding members of OPEC, Kuwait's decisions can sway oil prices worldwide.

Sovereign Wealth Fund

On top of that, Kuwait has one of the largest sovereign wealth funds in the world, managed by the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA). As of March 2024, this fund is estimated to be around \$924 billion, ranking fourth globally. This financial muscle allows Kuwait to invest in various sectors, both domestically and internationally.

Kuwait's Political Landscape

A Unique Monarchy

Unlike many of its neighbors, Kuwait is a monarchy that has successfully experimented with democracy. This unique blend of governance allows for a degree of political freedom that is rare in the region.

Neutral Stance in Regional Issues

Kuwait has generally maintained a neutral stance on regional issues, often acting as a mediator in disputes. This diplomatic approach has earned it respect and trust among its neighbors.

Historical Ties with India

Early Diplomatic Relations

India and Kuwait have enjoyed friendly ties for decades, rooted in a rich history and cultural bonds. India was one of the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with Kuwait after its independence in 1961.

Trade Relations

Trade has been a cornerstone of this relationship, with bilateral trade reaching \$10.47 billion during FY 2023-24. Kuwait has also been a significant supplier of crude oil to India, catering to about 3% of its total energy needs.

Cultural Connections

People-to-People Ties

The people-to-people connections between India and Kuwait are strong. With around 1 million Indians living in Kuwait, they form the largest expatriate group and are well-integrated into Kuwaiti society.

Educational Initiatives

Educational ties are also flourishing, with 26 schools in Kuwait following the Indian curriculum. Initiatives like the 'Festival of India' and a weekly Hindi radio program, 'Namaste Kuwait,' further strengthen these cultural bonds.

Recent Developments

COVID-19 Cooperation

The COVID-19 pandemic showcased the strong sense of brotherhood between India and Kuwait. India provided vaccine doses, while Kuwait sent medical supplies during India's second wave.

Tragedy and Support

When tragedy struck with a fire in a residential building, Kuwait quickly repatriated the remains of the deceased Indians, demonstrating its commitment to its expatriate community.

Future Prospects for Kuwait-India Relations

Strategic Partnership Agreement

Despite the strong ties, there's room for growth. A comprehensive strategic partnership agreement could elevate relations to new heights.

Infrastructure Development

India could assist Kuwait in its 'Vision 2035' initiative, focusing on infrastructure development and education. This collaboration could pave the way for a golden era in bilateral relations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Kuwait may be small in size, but its strategic significance is immense. From its geopolitical position to its economic prowess and rich cultural ties with India, Kuwait stands as a vital player in the region. As both nations look to the future, the potential for deeper cooperation is vast.

Ambushes and nostalgia on banks of frontline Ukraine river

Agence France-Presse
KUPIANSK

Lyubov Voronova still remembers a time before the war when the Oskil River flowing by her east Ukraine home was an idyll where families would swim, picnic and make memories.

Now, nearly three years into Russia's invasion, Kremlin forces have brought panic and destruction to its banks in a war of attrition that has pit invader and defender on opposite banks.

"It's the front line now. They're on one side, and we're on the other," the 72-year-old said in the emptied-out village of Sadovod,

her cottage's plastic-covered windows blown out by a recent strike.

Her neighbour lived his whole life in the nearby village of Dvorichna on the river and wept on his knees recounting those killed there, and his granddaughter's death in a Russian strike nearby.

The Oskil, which winds into Ukraine's Kharkiv region from Russia, is swept by icy winds and surrounded by expansive snow-blanketed fields dotted with Ukrainian bunkers and zig-zagging trenches.

Russian forces crossed it quickly and easily when they invaded in 2022 but were beaten back months



An aerial view of the Oskil River in the Kupiansk district of the Kharkiv region on December 15, 2024. AFP

later in a rout that embarrassed the Kremlin.

'Psychological barrier'
But its forces are now sweeping back.

Russian troops are either

entrenched on its eastern bank, fighting furiously towards it, or making audacious breach attempts – all at a precarious moment for Ukraine across the sprawling front line.

"It's a physical barrier that has military utility, but it's almost a psychological barrier now too," said Mick Ryan, a retired major general from the Australian army and analyst of the war.

"If the Russians get over the Oskil that means things are really bad," he said.

Earlier this month, in a sleepy river bend near Dvorichne, Russian troops established a bridgehead on the Ukrainian-held side by sending infantry across in small boats. Kyiv said they were destroyed.

And in the war-battered town of Kupiansk – one prize of Ukraine's successful 2022 counteroffensive that is divided by the Oskil

– Russian forces recently managed to re-enter by donning Ukrainian military uniforms before being beaten back, an official said.

During a recent visit by AFP to Kupiansk, Ukrainian serviceman Igor was perched on a destroyed rail bridge extending over the Oskil, looking out over warring districts on the opposite side.

Smoke was billowing after an attack.

His unit with the 114th brigade has been using drones to re-supply troops on the far side and kill attacking Russian troops.

"It's hard, very hard. But basically, we're coping

and holding out as long as we can," he said.

Pointing to gradual Russian advances, Ukrainian authorities recently ordered families with children to evacuate from towns near the river in the Kremlin's sights.

In the village of Osynovo, just west of Kupiansk, where an overturned train car next to another destroyed bridge pointed to the fierce fighting of 2022, rail services ended this month.

Russia is persisting. Ukrainian military analysts said last week its forces had on a second recent attempt established a bridgehead near Dvorichne.

Topic → The Oskil River Overview



Key Features of the Oskil River

River Name: The Oskil (or Oskol) is a river located in Russia and Ukraine.

Geographical Origin: It originates between Kursk and Voronezh in Russia.

Flow Direction: The river flows southward to join the Siverskyi Donets, which then flows southeast to the Don.

Length: The Oskil river is 472 kilometers (293 miles) long.

Drainage Basin: It has a drainage basin covering 14,800 square kilometers (5,700 square miles).

Regions: The river flows through Kursk and Belgorod Oblasts in Russia and the eastern part of Kharkiv Oblast in Ukraine.

Reservoir: The Oskil Reservoir was created in 1958 for flood protection and electricity generation.

Summary: The Oskil River, flowing from Russia to Ukraine, is 472 km long and features an artificial reservoir for flood control and power generation.

Pakistan ballistic missile programme is an emerging threat to U.S., says White House

Press Trust of India

WASHINGTON

Asserting that Pakistan developing sophisticated missile technology will give it the capability to strike targets well beyond South Asia, including in the U.S., a top White House official said on Thursday that the Asian country's actions are an emerging threat to the U.S.

The remark comes a day after the U.S. slapped sanctions on four Pakistani entities, including the state-owned flagship aerospace and defence agency – National Development Complex (NDC) – on charges of them contributing to Pakistan's ballistic-missile pro-



Scary proposition: The U.S. is worried some of the technologies possessed by Pakistan allow it to strike beyond South Asia. AFP

gramme. The other three entities are Akhtar and Sons, Affiliates International and Rockside Enterprise. All three are based in Karachi. The NDC, based in Islamabad, is responsible for the ballistic-missile programme. It has worked

to acquire items to advance Pakistan's long-range ballistic missile programme.

"As a result, the (Joe) Biden administration has implemented a series of steps to contend with further development of long-range missile systems. Over the

last year, we have issued three rounds of sanctions against non-Pakistani entities that have provided support to Pakistan's ballistic-missile programme," Principal Deputy National Security Adviser Jon Finer told a think-tank here.

"And yesterday, we issued sanctions directly against Pakistan's state-owned National Development Complex, which the U.S. assesses is involved in the development and production of Pakistan's long-range ballistic missiles, the first time we have sanctioned a Pakistani state-owned enterprise tied to missile development," he said.

"Simply put, we are go-

ing to keep the pressure on Pakistan regarding its long-range missile programme, even as we also continue to seek diplomatic resolutions to address our concerns," Mr. Finer said.

Mr. Finer added that recently, Pakistan has developed increasingly sophisticated missile technology, from long-range ballistic missile systems to equipment that would enable the testing of significantly larger rocket motors.

"If these trend lines continue, Pakistan will have the capability to strike targets well beyond South Asia, including in the United States, raising real questions about Pakistan's intentions," he said.

Topic → Pakistan's Missile Development and U.S. Sanctions

Emerging Threat

Advanced Missile Technology: Pakistan's development of sophisticated missile systems poses a potential threat to the U.S. and regions beyond South Asia.

Sanctions Imposed

Entities Sanctioned: The U.S. has sanctioned four Pakistani entities, including the National Development Complex (NDC), for their involvement in the ballistic missile program.

Key Entities

Sanctioned Organizations: The state-owned NDC in Islamabad and three Karachi-based companies—Akhtar and Sons, Affiliates International, and Rockside Enterprise—are among those sanctioned.

U.S. Response

Biden Administration Actions: Multiple steps, including three rounds of sanctions against non-Pakistani entities, have been taken to curb support for Pakistan's missile program.

Technological Advancements

Missile System Development: Pakistan is reportedly enhancing its long-range strike capabilities with sophisticated missile systems and larger rocket motors.

Diplomatic Efforts

Maintaining Channels: Despite sanctions, the U.S. aims to keep diplomatic channels open to address concerns over Pakistan's missile development.

Concerns About Intentions

Military Capabilities: The advancements in missile technology raise significant questions about Pakistan's intentions and future military capabilities.

Summary: The U.S. has imposed sanctions on Pakistani entities involved in missile development, citing concerns over Pakistan's growing missile capabilities that could threaten targets beyond South Asia, including the U.S.

**Q. Chenda often seen in news is associated with which among the following.
(The Hindu)**

A) Musical instrument.

B) Folk Dance.

C) Type of Folk drama.

D) Type of fabric.

Ans: A

The Chenda is a cylindrical percussion instrument originating in the state of

Kerala and widely used in Tulu Nadu of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu

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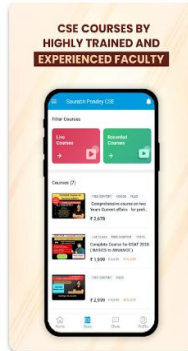
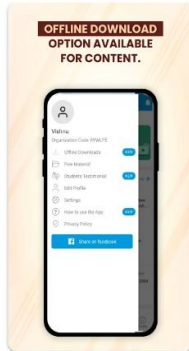
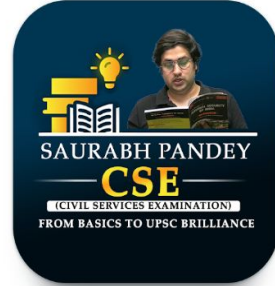
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