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Global Rankings For Schools of Public Health

Why in News?

- In the first global rankings for schools of public health, the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) has secured an impressive second place, surpassing Harvard.

More About the News

- In the first global rankings for schools of public health, the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) has secured an impressive second place, surpassing Harvard.
- The rankings are part of a report titled 'A New Model for Ranking Schools of Public Health : The Public Health Academic Ranking' (PHAR) published in the International Journal of Public Health.



- The PHAR is the first international bibliometric university ranking system designed for academic public health.
- The project was funded by the Institute of Global Health, University of Geneva.
- The authors of the report said that given the importance of public health, the common use of rankings in the academic world, and the demand for a valid ranking system, a ranking for schools of public health was designed and tested.

- Although two of the top five schools were from the United States, the top ten included institutions from four continents.
- The presence of schools from India, Thailand, South Africa and Singapore is notable and may reflect the increasing importance of public health research in non-high-income countries.

GI tag for Majuli Masks of Assam

Why in the News?

- The traditional Majuli masks in Assam were given a Geographical Indication (GI) tag by the Centre recently. Majuli manuscript painting also got the GI label.

More About the News

- A GI tag is conferred upon products originating from a specific geographical region, signifying unique characteristics and qualities. Essentially, it serves as a trademark in the international market.
- Majuli, the largest river island in the world and the seat of Assam's neo-Vaishnavite tradition, has been home to the art of mask-making since the 16th century.
- The handmade masks are traditionally used to depict characters in bhaonas, or theatrical performances with devotional messages under the neo-Vaishnavite



tradition, introduced by the 15th-16th century reformer saint Srimanta Sankardeva.

- The masks can depict gods, goddesses, demons, animals and birds - Ravana, Garuda, Narasimha, Hanuman, Varaha Surpanakha all feature among the masks.
- They can range in size from those covering just the face (mukh mukha), which take around five days to make, to those covering the whole head and body of the performer (cho mukha), which can take up to one-and-a-half months to make.
- According to the application made for the patent, the masks are made of bamboo, clay, dung, cloth, cotton, wood and other materials available in the riverine surroundings of their makers.
- Hemchandra Goswami is the sattradhikar or the administrative head of the Samaguri Sattra, and a well-known practitioner of the traditional mask-making art.
- The arts of dance, song and musical instruments are closely tied to the sattras and the one who began this was Assam's guru Srimanta Sankardev. In the 16th century, he established this art of masks through a play called Chinha Jatra.
- The word means explaining through images. At that time, to attract ordinary people to Krishna bhakti, he had presented the play in his birthplace Batadrava.
- There, he presented two masks, which were worn to express what a person's face could not. One was the four-headed Brahma and the other was Garuda.

**India world's top arms importer
between 2019-23 : SIPRI**

Why in the News?

- India was the world's top arms importer for the period 2019-23 with imports having gone up by 4.7% compared to the period 2014-18, according to the Swedish think tank, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

More About the News

- Nine of the 10 biggest arms importers in 2019–23, including the top 3 of India, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, were in Asia and Oceania or the Middle East.
- Ukraine became the fourth biggest arms importer globally after it received transfers of major arms from over 30 states in 2022-23.
- India seems to have come back to the top slot in arms imports after briefly ceding space to Saudi Arabia in the past.

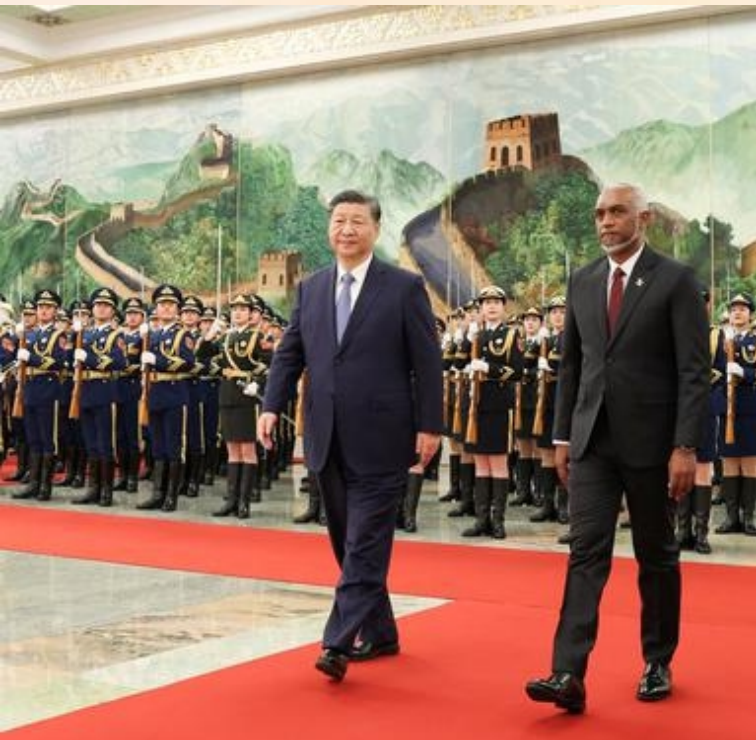


- In the interim budget presented in February for financial year 2024-25, the total allocation for the Defence Ministry was at Rs 6.2 lakh crore of which the capital allocation, for new procurements, was Rs 1.72 lakh crore, 5.78% higher than the Budget Estimates of last year.
- Imports of Pakistan, the fifth largest arms importer in 2019–23, went up by 43%, with China supplying as much as 82% of all its arms imports.
- Arms exports of the world's largest supplier, U.S. grew by 17% between 2014–18 and 2019–23, while those by Russia fell by more than half, -53%.
- At the same time, France emerged as the world's second largest arms supplier as its exports grew by 47%.
- Among the top 10 arms exporters, five of them saw decrease between the two five-year periods: China (-5.3%), Germany (-14%), U.K. (-14%), Spain (-3.3%) and Israel (-25%).

Indian troops begin withdrawal from Maldives

Why in the News?

- Indian troops stationed in the Maldives have begun withdrawing from the island nation, its defence authorities said, in line with President Mohamed Muizzu's 'India out' promise to his supporters.



More About the News

- According to local media reports in the Maldives, some 25 Indian troops deployed in the southernmost atoll of Addu have left the archipelago ahead of the March 10 deadline.
- The remaining military personnel are expected to pull out in batches, before May 10, according to an earlier announcement from the Maldives Foreign Ministry.
- The move comes even as the Maldives seeks to strengthen strategic ties with China, as was agreed during President Muizzu's state visit in January this year.
- Last week, the Maldives Defence Ministry signed a pact with China, seeking military assistance and "stronger bilateral ties". The agreement would enable the Maldives to receive non-lethal military equipment and military training from China.

- Apart from its enhanced defence cooperation with China, the Maldives has also acquired surveillance drones from Turkey for patrolling its exclusive economic zone, according to local media reports.

IAF's Tejas Aircraft crashes at Jaisalmer

Why in the News?

- A Tejas Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) of the Indian Air Force (IAF) crashed at Jaisalmer during an operational training sortie on March 12. This is the first crash of the indigenous jet since it first flew 23 years ago on January 4, 2001.



More About the News

- The incident occurred as the tri-service fire power demonstration exercise Bharat Shakti was underway not far away which was witnessed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- The IAF currently operates two LCA squadrons and is set to third squadron soon.
- The LCA achieved Initial Operation Clearance (IOC) in December 2013 and Final Operational Clearance (FOC) in February 2019.
- The IAF had earlier signed two contracts with HAL, for 20 IOC configuration aircraft including four IOC trainers on March 31, 2006 and for 20 FOC configuration aircraft including four FOC trainers on December 23, 2010.
- All through the development phase, the LCA maintained an accident free track record, an accomplishment among global flight development projects.

About Tejas Aircraft

- The Light Combat Aircraft Tejas is an indigenous supersonic aircraft used by the Indian military. The Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) programme was started by the Government of India in 1984 when they established the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA).
- The LCA Tejas, developed by India's HAL (Hindustan Aeronautics Limited), succeeded the ageing Mig 21 fighter jets after being designed and developed.
- In 2003, the Light Combat Aircraft program was named as 'Tejas' (which translates to 'radiance' in Sanskrit) by the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.
- It is the second supersonic fighter jet that was developed by HAL (the first one being HAL HF-24 Marut).
- The Tejas is the lightest and smallest multi-role supersonic fighter aircraft in its category, engineered to accommodate various types of air-to-air, air-to-surface, precision-guided, and standoff weaponry.
- Tejas is a low-cost aircraft with a simple design. Hence, it is very attractive to cost-conscious nations in Asia. Although currently, HAL is not sold to other countries, Singapore, Egypt, Sri Lanka, the UAE, Turkmenistan, and Malaysia have expressed interest in acquiring this aircraft.

India's first automobile in-plant railway siding

Why in the News?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated India's first automobile in-plant railway siding project of Maruti Suzuki India in Hansalpur, Gujarat.

More About the News

- India's first automobile in-plant railway siding - built at Hansalpur unit of Maruti Suzuki in Gujarat - will help the automobile manufacturer transport three lakh "finished car dispatches" by train, thereby helping the company "eliminate 50,000 truck-trips every year".



- The in-plant railway siding built by Maruti at the cost of Rs 105 crore is linked to the Katosan-Becharaji-Ranauj route which has been converted to Broad Gauge at cost of Rs 976 crore by Bahucharaji Rail Corporation Ltd which is a joint venture between MSIL, G-Ride and GIDC.
- A part of PM Gati Shakti programme, the in-plant railway siding is expected to reduce carbon footprint in logistics, bring down fossil fuel consumption, and reduce road congestions.

About PM Gati Shakti

- PM GatiShakti National Master Plan (PMGS-NMP) was launched on 13th October 2021 for providing multimodal connectivity infrastructure to various economic zones. Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) accorded approval for the implementation of PM GatiShakti National Master Plan on 21st October 2021.
- PM GatiShakti is a transformative approach for economic growth and sustainable development. The approach is driven by 7 engines, namely: Railways, Roads, Ports, Waterways, Airports, Mass Transport, and Logistics Infrastructure.

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