

Weekly Current Affairs

Sources: The Hindu+IndianExpress+PIB

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PM-DAKSH' Portal and 'PM-DAKSH' Mobile App

In news

The Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment has launched 'PM-DAKSH' Portal and 'PM-DAKSH' Mobile App.

About PM-DAKSH(PradhanMantriDakshtaAurKushaltaSampannHitgrahiYojana) Portal:

- It was launched by the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment (MoSJ&E) in 2020-21.
- It is a National Action Plan for skilling marginalized persons covering SCs, OBCs, EBCs, DNTs, Sanitation workers including waste pickers.
- The Portal has been developed by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, in collaboration with National e-Governance Division(NeGD).
- Under this Programme, eligible target groups are being provided with skill development training programmes on Up-skilling/Reskilling, Short Term and Long Term Training programme
- The training programs are being implemented through Government Training Institutes, Sector Skill Councils constituted by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and other credible institutions.

Source: PIB

Permanent Forum of People of African Descent In news

In news

The United Nations General Assembly has approved a resolution establishing a Permanent Forum of People of African Descent.

About Permanent Forum of People of African Descent:

- It will serve as a platform for improving the safety and quality of life and livelihoods of people of African descent and their full inclusion in the societies where they live.
- <u>The mandate of the Forum</u>: is To advance the full political, economic and social inclusion of people of African descent in the societies in which they live.
 - To provide expert advice and recommendations to the Human Rights Council, the Assembly's main committees, and the various UN entities working on issues related to racial discrimination.
- The forum will consist of 10 members: five elected by the General Assembly from all regions and five appointed by the Human Rights Council following consultations with regional groups and organizations of people of African descent.
- The Forum's first session will take place in 2022.

Source: The Hindu

Custodial Violence

In news

The Chief Justice of India while addressing an event organised by NALSA has said, "the threat to human rights and bodily integrity are the highest in police stations". He also observed that Custodial violence and other police atrocities are problems that still prevail in our society.

About Custodial Violence

- It refers to violence in police and judicial custody. It includes death, rape and torture.
- Between 2001 and 2018, 1,727 persons died in police custody. This includes both persons on police/ judicial remand and those just arrested and not produced before the court. Only 26 policemen were convicted in this period for such deaths.
- Except in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Odisha, no policeman was convicted for such deaths across the country.
- Reasons for Custodial Violence:
 - Lack of Legal representation: Lack of effective legal representation at police stations is a huge detriment to arrested or detained persons.



- Lengthy Judicial Process: Lengthy and expensive
- judicial processes dissuade the poor and the vulnerable from accessing the justice system.
- Digital Divide: The digital divide has not helped the cause of easy access to justice. Rural and remote areas suffer from a lack of connectivity.

About Access to Justice for Marginalized People or the A2J Project:

• Access to Justice Project is a collaborative effort between the UNDP and Department of Justice, Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India.

Aim: The project focuses on strengthening access to justice for the poor by developing strategies that address barriers to accessing justice in legal, social, economic and political domains.

Source: Indian Express, The Hindu and Times of India

National Innovations in Climate Resilient Agriculture(NICRA)

In news

Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has informed Rajya Sabha about National Innovations in Climate Resilient Agriculture(NICRA).

About NICRA:

- It is a network project of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) launched in February 2011.
- The project aims to enhance the resilience of Indian agriculture to climate change and climate vulnerability through strategic research and technology demonstration.
- The research on adaptation and mitigation covers crops, livestock, fisheries and natural resource management.
- Objectives: To enhance the resilience of Indian agriculture covering crops, livestock and fisheries to climatic variability and climate change through the development and application of improved production and risk management technologies.
- Components: The Project is composed of Four Components:

- Strategic research on adaptation and mitigation
- Technology demonstration on farmers fields to cope with current climate variability
- Sponsored and competitive research grants to fill critical research gaps
- Capacity building of different stakeholders

Source: PIB

Battery storage system in Ladakh

In news

India will be calling for bids for the largest global tender for a 13 gigawatt-hours (GWh) gridscale battery storage system in Ladakh Region.

Key takeaways:

- The Government of India has planned to build 10GW of large green energy capacity projects in the Ladakh region, comprising both solar and wind projects.
- These large battery storage projects will be used to store the electricity generated to supply to the rest of the country through a transmission link.
- According to the Central Electricity Authority (CEA), India's power requirement would be 817 GW by 2030. More than half of this would be clean energy.
- This huge injection of electricity in the grid from sources such as solar and wind requires a storage mechanism that can help balance the national electricity grid.
- Hence, it is estimated that there will be a need for a 27GW grid-scale battery energy storage system by 2030 with four hours of storage.
- One GWh (1,000-MWh) of battery capacity is sufficient to power 1 million homes for an hour and around 30,000 electric cars

About Battery Storage Systems

- Battery storage systems are devices that enable energy from renewables like solar and wind to be stored and then released when customers need power most.
- Lithium-ion batteries which are used in mobile phones and electric cars are currently the dominant storage technology.

Source: Livemint

Covishield-Covaxin mix gives better protection: ICMR

In news

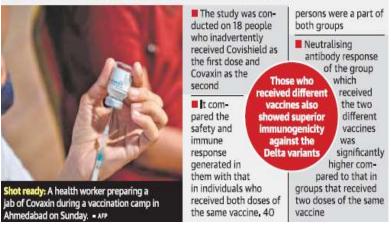
According to a study conducted by the ICMR, the combination of an adenovirus vector platform-based vaccine (Covishield) followed by an inactivated whole virus vaccine (Covaxin) was safe and also elicited better immunogenicity than two doses of the same vaccine.

Key takeaways:

- It has not yet been peer reviewed.
- To conclusively prove these findings, a multicentre Research Trial needs to be carried out because the sample size & follow up period (60-70 days) for this study was small.

- The findings have an important implication for the COVID-19 vaccination programme wherein heterologous immunisation will pave the way for induction of improved and better protection against the variant strains of Covid-19.
- Such mixed regimens will also help to overcome the challenges of shortfall of particular vaccines and remove hesitancy around vaccines in people's mind.

Mix and match A look at key points from the pre-print ICMR report on the immune response generated by mixing doses of Covishield and Covaxin



Source: TheHindu

Adoption Not Limited by Religion: Delhi HC

In news

The Delhi High Court has ruled that a person interested in adopting a child was not limited by his or her religion, if adoption was sought under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act.

Legal Framework Governing Adoption Laws in India

- In India, adoption falls under the ambit of personal laws, and due to the incidence of diverse religions practised in our country, mainly two different laws operate.
- Muslims, Christians, Parsis and Jews are governed by the Guardians and Wards Act, 1890, as formal adoption is not allowed in these religions.
- Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Jains, on the other hand, follow the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act (HAMA), 1956.
- Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act also deals with adoption.

Key takeaways of thejudgement

- The High Court said the personal law of the Hindus recognized adoption. However, this right to adopt had been brought under the HAMA which laid down certain limitations on adoption.
- HAMA was applicable only to Hindus, and specifically provided that it applied to "any other person who is not a Muslim, Christian, Parsi or Jew by religion", the court clarified.
- However, Court said that a person interested in adopting a child was not limited by his or her religion, if adoption was sought under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act.

Source: TheHindu

6th Assessment report of IPCC

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

• The Indian Ocean is warming at a higher rate than other oceans.

- India will witness increased heatwaves and flooding, which will be the irreversible effects of climate change.
- warming of the ocean would lead to a rise in sea levels, leading to frequent and severe coastal flooding in low level areas. India would face significant threats from the rising seas.
- Glaciers in the Hindu Kush Himalayan (HKH) region will keep shrinking and the snowcover will retreat to higher altitudes. Snow covered areas and snow volumes will decrease.
- during the 21st century, snowline elevations will rise and glacier mass is likely to decline with greater mass loss in higher greenhouse gas emission scenarios.
- Rising temperatures and precipitation can increase the occurrence of glacial lake outburst floods.
- Both summer and annual monsoon precipitation will increase, with enhanced inter annual variability over Southeast Asia.

NHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR INDIA?

 The country is expected to see an increase in frequency and severity of hot extremes
Incidents of forest fire may go up because of heat wave conditions
Increase in rainfall will be more severe over the southern parts of India
Rain could also increase by 20% in the southwest coast Monsoon precipitation is projected to go up in the mid- to long-term over south Asia
This can increase the occurrence of glacial lake outbursts, floods and landslides over moraine-dammed lakes
Snowline elevations will rise and glacier volumes will decline

Regional mean sea level in south Asia will continue to rise

Alarm bells

compared to 1850-1900 level

A look at some of the observations and forecasts made by the panel on climate change

 Heatwaves and humid heat stress will become more intense and frequent over Southeast Asia during the 21st century

 Both annual and summer monsoon precipitation will increase, with enhanced interannual variability over Southeast Asia

Heat extremes have increased while cold extremes have decreased, and these trends will continue over the coming decades Glacier run-off in the Asian high mountains will increase up to mid-21st century, and subsequently run-off may decrease due to the loss of glacier storage

Relative sea level around Asia increased faster than global average, with coastal area loss and shoreline retreat. Regional mean sea level will continue to rise

 Heat extremes have increased while cold extremes have decreased and these trends will continue over the coming decades.

What will be new in 6th Assessment report?

- Unlike the previous reports which focused on global scenarios, the 6th assessment report will be focusing on regional scenarios too.
- There is expected to be bigger focus on extreme weather events.
- It is expected to present specific scenarios of the climate change impacts on cities and large urban populations, and also implications for key infrastructure.
- To drive coordinated efforts IPCC is likely to integrate understanding of the situation, cross-link evidence and discuss trade-offs between different options or pathways.

• In the immediate future, the IPCC report could serve as the most important warning towards the rapidly closing window of opportunity to halt the rise in temperatures to unacceptable levels, and propel the governments to take more urgent actions.

Source: Indian Express and TheHindu

National Mission on Edible Oil-Oil Palm (NMEO-OP)

In news

Prime Minister recently announced National Mission on Edible Oil-Oil Palm (NMEO-OP) initiative on palm oil production to help increase farm incomes.Rs. 11,000 crores over five year period will be invested in the edible oil ecosystem through this mission

Key takeaways:

- It will ensure self-sufficiency in edible oil production.
- Its aim is to reduce import dependence from 60% to 45% by 2024-25, by increasing domestic edible oil production from 10.5 million tonnes to 18 million tonnes which is a 70% growth target.
- Farmers will get all needed facilities, from quality seeds to technology.
- Along with promoting the cultivation of oil palm, this mission will also expand the cultivation of our other traditional oilseed crops.
- India is the largest consumer of vegetable oil in the world-> imports are almost 60% of its total vegetable oil imports. Recently, India's dependence on expensive imports has driven retail oil prices to new highs.
- In India, 94.1% of its palm oil is used in food products, especially for cooking.
- The oil is used in food manufacturing, in beauty products, and as biofuel.
- Palm oil accounted for about 33% of global oils produced from oil crops in 2014.
- Top consumers: India, China, and the European Union (EU).

Source: TheHindu

Seekho Aur Kamao Scheme

- It is a skill development Central sector scheme for minorities (youth of 14 35 years age group) and aimed at providing employment and employment opportunities, improving the employability of existing workers, school dropouts etc.
- In the last 7 years appx. 3.92 lakh persons have been benefitted under this employmentoriented scheme.
- The scheme ensures 75% placement, out of which 50% should be in organized sector.
- Post placement support of Rs. 2000/- per month is provided to placed trainees for two months as placement assistance.

Source: PIB

Special Economic Zones (SEZ)

In news

• The government will soon free up unused built-up area worth about ₹30,000 crore and idle land inside SEZs for other economic activities.

• The move to free up unutilised land parcels is likely to be operationalised by the end of August 2021, as part of a simpler regulatory regime that the government is ringing in for SEZs, which account for about 30% of India's exports.

About SEZ

- It is a specifically delineated duty-free enclave, deemed to be foreign territory for the purposes of trade operations and duties and tariffs.
- Goods and services going into the SEZ area from Domestic Tariff Area (whole India except SEZ) shall be treated as exports and goods coming from the SEZ area into DTA shall be treated as imports.
- SEZ units may be set up for manufacture of goods and rendering of services.
- The business and trade laws are different from the rest of the country.
- SEZs are located within a country's national borders.
- Their aims include increasing trade balance, employment, increased investment, job creation and effective administration

Source: TheHindu

Democracy summit

In news

USA President Joe Biden will host a 'Summit for Democracy', virtually, on December 9-10.

About the summit

- It will be held around three themes:
 - Defending against authoritarianism,
 - Fighting corruption,
 - Promoting respect for human rights.
- The summit will gather together Heads of State, civil society, philanthropy, and the private sector.
- The Summit is seen as one way to counter growing Chinese influence.
- There would be country-wise commitments made at the first summit.
- A second summit which will be in-person, will follow in 2022.
- Following a year of consultation, coordination, and action, President Biden will then invite world leaders to gather once more to showcase progress made against their commitments.

Source: The Hindu

GSLV-F10 Failure

In news

A technical anomaly prevented the ignition of the GSLV-F10 rocket's cryogenic upper stage and ISRO could not accomplish the mission to launch earth observation satellite EOS-03 into the intended orbit.

About EOS-03

• It intended to be positioned in the geostationary transfer orbit initially, was supposed to reach the final geostationary orbit.

- It was expected to provide near real-time imaging of a large area of interest at frequent intervals, which could be used for quick monitoring of natural disasters, episodic events and any short-term events.
- The mission life of the satellite was 10 years.
- GSLV-F10 was ISRO's eighth flight with indigenous cryoengine.
- While the first stage of the GSLV is solid fuel, the second is liquid fuel and the third the cryogenic engine.

Note: Cryogenic rocket engine uses a cryogenic fuel and oxidizer, i.e. both its fuel and oxidizer are gases liquefied and stored at very low temperatures. Source: TheHindu

AL – Mohed AL – Hindi: Naval Exercise

In news

- Maiden bilateral naval exercise 'AL Mohed AL Hindi' between India and Saudi Arabia got under way on 12th August off the coast of Al Jubail.
- It saw the two navies undertake co-ordinated action against asymmetric threat, replenishment at sea procedures, anti-piracy and boarding operations, weapon targeting drills etc. to enhance synergy and interoperability between the two navies.

Source: TheHindu

Operation Blue Freedom

In news

Recently, The Government of India has permitted a team of people with disabilities to scale Siachen Glacier. The team of people with disabilities trained by 'Team CLAW' a team of Armed Forces veterans.

Key takeaways:

- The selected people with disabilities from across the country will undertake an expedition till Kumar Post (Siachen Glacier) to create a new World Record for the largest team of people with disabilities to reach the world's highest battlefield.
- The successful execution of this pioneering expedition, 'Operation Blue Freedom', shall firmly place India on the global stage as a leader in empowering Divyangjan and set a benchmark for other nations to emulate.

Source: **<u>PIB</u>**

Wildfires ravage Greek island

In news

Wildfires on the island of Evia have charred vast areas of pine forest, destroyed homes and forced tourists and locals to flee.

About Island of Evia

- Evia lies just northeast of the capital Athens.
- Euboea or Evia is the second-largest Greek island in area and population, after Crete.
- It is separated from Boeotia in mainland Greece by the narrow Euripus Strait.

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• Greece and Turkey have been battling devastating fires for nearly two weeks as the region suffered its worst heatwave in decades, which experts have linked to climate change.

Source: TheHindu

Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)

In news

ITBP force which guards the Line of Actual Control (LAC) along the India-China border has commissioned its first two women officers in combat after they completed their training here. **About ITBP:**

- It is a Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) functioning under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- Initially raised in 1962 under the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) Act, 1949 in the backdrop of 1962 during the India-China War.
- However, in 1992, parliament enacted the ITBPF Act and the rules were framed in 1994.
- ITBP is India's primary border patrol organization for its border with China's Tibet Autonomous Region. It is also deployed for Anti Naxal Operations and other internal security duties.
- Moreover, ITBP personnel have also been deployed abroad in UN peacekeeping missions.

Source: The Hindu

e-Rupi

- Developed by: NPCI, the Department of Financial Services, the National Health Authority and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare .
- It is said to be 'leak proof ' and offers nonctransferable monetary service to citizens.
- Accessible to anyone with a mobile phone, even if the recipient does not have a bank account .
- It comes in the form of one time use.
- e-vouchers to access government health services.
- The e-vouchers can be issued by the government or private entities to the beneficiaries through QR codes or long string SMS.

Source: The Hindu

PM launches Ujjwala 2.0 Scheme

In news

The PM has launched Ujjwala 2.0 (Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana – PMUY) by handing over LPG connections at Mahoba, Uttar Pradesh.

About Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)

- Launched by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas in 2018.
- Its aim is to replace the unclean cooking fuels mostly used in rural India with the clean and more efficient LPG.

- Under the scheme, an adult woman member of a BPL family identified through the Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) was given a deposit-free LPG connection with the financial assistance of Rs 1,600 per connection by the Centre.
- Initially the target was the installation of 5 crores LPG connections by 2019. But the target was revised to 8 crores which was achieved in August 2019.

About Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) 2.0:

- In the Union Budget for 2021-22, the Government has announced the target of an additional one crore LPG connection. These additional connections will be provided under Ujjwala 2.0.
- Aim: to provide deposit-free LPG connections to those low-income families who could not be covered under the earlier phase of PMUY.
- Along with a deposit-free LPG connection, Ujjwala 2.0 will also provide the first refill and hotplate free of cost to the beneficiaries.
- Moreover, the migrants would only be required to submit a self-declaration of their residential address to get the gas connection.

Source: PIB

127th Amendment Bill, 2021

In news

Lok Sabha has unanimously passed the Constitution (127th Amendment) Bill, 2021.

About Constitution (127th Amendment) Bill, 2021:

• The Bill amends the Constitution to allow states and union territories to prepare their own list of socially and educationally backward classes.

Key takeaways:

- The National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) was established under the National Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993.
- The Constitution (One Hundred and Second Amendment) Act, 2018 gave constitutional

status to the NCBC, and empowered the President to notify the list of socially and educationall y backward classes for any state or union territory for

Empowering the States The 127th Constitution Amendment Bill benefits 671 castes in the country and restores the States' rights to make their own list of OBCs

The Bill seeks to restore the power of the States to identify OBCs that are socially and educationally backward after a Supreme Court order in May 2021 empowered only the Centre for this The amendment was thought necessary because the SC, in its order on Maratha reservations, upheld the 102nd Constitutional Amendment Act, which said the President of India, in consultation with Governors, would specify socially and educationally backward classes, taking away the powers of the State governments to do so 3 Several parties also demanded a caste-based census to get a real idea of the number of OBCs in the country and to remove the 50% cap on reservations currently in place

You (BJP) tweaked the Constitution by bringing the 102nd Constitutional Amendment Bill, which gave people the opportunity to go to court and finally the SC removed the States' power ADHIR RANJAN CHOWDHURY, CONGRESS LEADER When the Amendment was brought, the government's intent was that both at the Central and State level, OBC lists will be maintained BHUPENDRA YADAY, LABOUR MINISTER

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all purposes.

- The 2021 Bill amends this to provide that the President may notify the list of socially and educationally backward classes only for purposes of the central government. This central list will be prepared and maintained by the central government.
- Further, the Bill enables states and union territories to prepare their own list of socially and educationally backward classes. This list must be made by law and may differ from the central list.

Note: Article 338B of the Constitution mandates the central and state governments to consult the NCBC on all major policy matters affecting the socially and educationally backward classes.

The Bill exempts states and union territories from this requirement for matters related to the preparation of their list of socially and educationally backward classes.

Source: Indian Express

Satellite phones

In news

Kaziranga has become the first National Park in India to have been equipped with satellite phones. The satellite phones will be used in pockets of the park's six ranges with no wireless or poor mobile connectivity.

Key takeaways:

- The satellite phones will give an edge to the forest personnel over the poachers and also during emergencies like floods.
- The service will be provided by Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd.

About Satellite phones

- It can connect from anywhere as they are directly connected to satellites around the world and do not depend on terrestrial mobile cellular networks.
- A satellite phone is designed to work outdoors, mainly where the mobile phone is not operational due to the lack of a network.
- Satellite phone is particularly useful in the most isolated regions of the world such as mountains, forests, poles, deserts and in the middle of the ocean.
- The first satellite phone was launched by Motorola about 30 years ago, in 1989.

Note: The public is barred from using satellite phones in India. **Source:** <u>The Hindu</u>

Forum of the Election Management Bodies of South Asia (FEMBoSA) for 2021

In news

The Chief Election Commissioner of India has inaugurated the 11th Annual meeting of the FEMBoSA for the year 2021.

About 11th Annual meeting of FEMBoSA:

- hosted by the Election Commission of Bhutan.
- Participating Countries: India, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka (All except Pakistan).
- Theme: "Use of Technology in Elections".

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• Thimphu Resolution: It was unanimously adopted by the FEMBoSA members at this meeting to extend the tenure of the chairmanship to two years during the current pandemic situation.

About FEMBoSA:

- Established at the 3rd Conference of Heads of Election Management Bodies(EMBs) of SAARC Countries in 2012.
- Aim: To increase mutual cooperation in respect to the common interests of the SAARC's EMBs.
- Member Countries: The Forum has eight Member Election Management Bodies from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. <u>The Election Commission of India is the current Chair of the Forum.</u>

Objectives of the forum: Promote contact among the EMBs of the SAARC countries, share experiences and cooperate with one another in enhancing the capabilities of the EMBs towards conducting free and fair elections.

Source: PIB

First Intranasal Vaccine BBV154

In news

BBV154, the first Nasal Vaccine against Covid-19 has received the regulator's nod for conducting Phase 2 and 3 clinical trials.

About BBV154

BBV154 is an intranasal replication-deficient chimpanzee adenovirus SARS-CoV-2 vectored vaccine. It is the first Intranasal Covid-19 Vaccine being developed by Bharat Biotech.

- Vaccines are administered as injectable shots into the muscles (intramuscular) or the tissue just between the skin and the muscles (subcutaneous).
- However, with intranasal vaccines, the solution is sprayed into the nostrils and inhaled instead of injecting it.

About Mission COVID Suraksha

- launched to reinforce and accelerate COVID-19 vaccine development efforts as part of the third stimulus package, Atmanirbhar 3.0.
- Aim: To consolidate and streamline available resources towards a warpath for accelerated vaccine development in order to bring a safe, efficacious, affordable and accessible COVID-19 Vaccine to the citizens at the earliest with a focus on AtmaNirbhar Bharat.
- The mission is led by the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) and implemented by a dedicated Mission Implementation Unit at the Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC).

Source: <u>PIB</u>, TheHindu

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Terms in news

Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC): is a large system of ocean currents. It is the Atlantic branch of the ocean conveyor belt or Thermohaline circulation (THC), and distributes heat and nutrients throughout the world's ocean basins.

Gulf Stream, a part of the AMOC, is a warm current responsible for mild climate at the Eastern coast of North America as well as Europe. Without a proper AMOC and Gulf Stream, Europe will be very cold.

'Ghaznavi': Pakistan successfully test fired a nuclear capable surface to surface ballistic missile which can strike targets up to 290 kilometres.



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