

**19<sup>th</sup> July, 2024**

### Economy

#### India, Russia Aim for \$100 Billion Trade Target by 2030

**Context:** At the 22nd annual summit in Moscow, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin unveiled a plan to enhance their strategic economic cooperation. This significant development comes amid rapidly growing trade between the two nations, with a target set to achieve \$100 billion in trade by 2030.



#### Technological and Financial Integration

- ❖ Key aspects of economic cooperation include the adoption of digital financial assets and the establishment of a bilateral settlement system using national currencies. These measures aim to mitigate the impact of Russia's exclusion from SWIFT.

- ❖ Additionally, the mutual recognition of India's RuPay and Russia's MiR card systems facilitates smoother and faster financial transactions between the two countries.

#### Energy and Resource Collaboration

- ❖ The agreements reflect a deepening collaboration in critical energy sectors, including nuclear energy.
- ❖ Discussions also focused on increasing the supply of coking and anthracite coal from Russia to India, enhancing India's energy security and meeting its industrial demands.

#### Focus on Arctic and Eurasian Connectivity

- ❖ Indian and Russian leaders agreed to develop and open shipping routes through the Arctic's Northern Sea Route to boost trade and stabilize Eurasian transportation pathways.
- ❖ This partnership aims to establish reliable supply and demand chains across the region, potentially balancing Chinese initiatives in Eurasia.

## Defence

### India Unveils 'Zorawar' Tank for High-Altitude Warfare

**Context:** India has introduced a new light tank named "Zorawar," designed to enhance combat capabilities in challenging terrains and high elevations. This development is a collaborative effort between India's Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO) and the tech firm Larsen & Toubro.



### Design and Capabilities

- ❖ The "Zorawar" tank, developed in just two years, highlights the rapid advancement of India's defense technology sector.
- ❖ It features a 105mm rifled gun for accurate firing and is equipped with advanced hybrid modular armor for enhanced protection.
- ❖ The inclusion of a sophisticated turret, developed with the assistance of John Cockerill, allows for the integration of electro-optical cameras and anti-tank guided missiles, significantly boosting its combat effectiveness.

## Strategic Implications

- ❖ The creation of the "Zorawar" light tank was driven by strategic needs identified during the Galwan Valley standoff.
- ❖ Its deployment aims to strengthen India's military presence in critical regions such as Ladakh, Sikkim, and Kashmir, known for their challenging terrain and harsh weather conditions.

## Environment

### IUCN Red List Update

**Context:** The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has recently updated the Red List, emphasizing the need to protect various lizard and cactus species. Notably, the Ibiza wall lizard has been reclassified as threatened, primarily due to invasive species and human-induced problems.



### Key Factors Contributing to Decline

- ❖ **Invasive Species:** The introduction of the horseshoe whip snake to Ibiza and the California kingsnake to Gran Canaria has significantly impacted local reptiles. These invasive species compete for resources and prey on native species.
- ❖ **Illegal Trade:** The high demand for ornamental cacti has led to rampant illegal trade, severely affecting natural populations. This issue has been exacerbated by social media and global trade.
- ❖ **Environmental Changes:** Climate change and infrastructure development are altering landscapes and natural processes crucial for local flora and fauna. For instance, changes in marine fog patterns are vital for the moisture retention of Copiapoa cacti.

### Impact on Specific Species

- ❖ The Ibiza wall lizard population has decreased by 50% since 2010.

- ❖ The populations of the Gran Canaria giant lizard and the Gran Canaria skink have declined significantly.
- ❖ Approximately 82% of Copiapoa cactus species are now considered critically endangered, a substantial increase from previous assessments.

### Proposed Solutions and Future Outlook

- ❖ **Stricter Laws:** Enforcing laws to curb illegal trade.
- ❖ **Habitat Management:** Modifying habitat management practices to support conservation.
- ❖ **International Cooperation:** Countries are collaborating to combat poaching.
- ❖ **Research and Education:** Enhancing public awareness and research efforts to improve conservation strategies.
- ❖ **Greenhouse Cultivation:** Growing endangered cacti in greenhouses to support wild populations.

### International News

#### Philippines, Japan Sign Key Military Cooperation Deal

**Context:** Japan and the Philippines have signed a significant security agreement to enhance their military cooperation amidst rising tensions in the Indo-Pacific region. This agreement facilitates mutual military access, thereby reinforcing their strategic partnership.



#### Background of Regional Tensions

- ❖ In 2016, an international court ruled against China's extensive claims in the South China Sea, a decision China rejected. Japan faces its own strategic issues with China over territorial claims in the East China Sea.

- ❖ In December 2023, Japan announced a substantial military expansion, marking a departure from its post-World War II pacifist policies due to concerns over China's regional activities.

#### Details of the Agreement

- ❖ The deal was signed in Manila by Philippine Defense Minister Gilberto Teodoro and Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa, witnessed by Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.
- ❖ This agreement is Japan's first security pact of its kind in Asia. The agreement awaits ratification by the lawmakers of both countries before it can be fully implemented.



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