

International

23rd Meeting of the Special Representatives of India and China



About News:-

- ❖ The 23rd Meeting of the Special Representatives (SRs) of India and China, respectively Shri Ajit Doval, National Security Advisor of India, and Mr. Wang Yi, Member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and Minister of Foreign Affairs, was held in Beijing on 18 December 2024.
- ❖ The last 22nd meeting of the Special Representatives of India and China was held in New Delhi on 21 December 2019. Thus, a meeting was held after five years between the two countries' Special Representatives.

Key Points:-

- ❖ The SRs reiterated the importance of maintaining a political perspective on the overall bilateral relationship while seeking a fair, reasonable, and mutually acceptable framework for settling the boundary question and resolved to inject more vitality into this process.
- ❖ This was the first meeting of the SRs since frictions had emerged in the Western Sector of the India-China border areas in 2020. The SRs positively affirmed the implementation of the latest disengagement agreement of October 2024, resulting in patrolling and grazing in relevant areas.
- ❖ Both SRs underlined the importance of maintaining peace and tranquillity in the border areas to promote the overall development of the India-China bilateral relationship. They emphasised the need to

ensure peaceful conditions on the ground so that issues on the border do not hold back the normal development of bilateral relations. Drawing on what they learned from the events of 2020, they discussed various measures to maintain peace and tranquillity and advance effective border management. They decided to use, coordinate and guide the relevant diplomatic and military mechanisms towards this purpose.

- ❖ The SRs exchanged views on bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest. They provided positive directions for cross-border cooperation and exchanges including resumption of the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, data sharing on trans-border rivers and border trade. They agreed on the salience of stable, predictable and amicable India-China relations for regional and global peace and prosperity.
- ❖ NSA invited Mr. Wang Yi to visit India at a mutually convenient date to hold the next round of SR meetings.

National

India achieves historic milestone with first-ever Ganges river dolphin tagging in Assam



About News:-

- ❖ The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) conducted the first-ever Ganges River Dolphin tagging in Assam on Wednesday.
- ❖ This initiative, implemented by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) in collaboration with the Assam Forest Department and Aaranyak, marks a significant step forward for Project Dolphin.

- ❖ This monumental effort underscores India's commitment to wildlife conservation and sets a new benchmark in the protection of endangered species, according to a press release by the environment ministry.
- ❖ The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) carried out the first-ever tagging of Ganges River Dolphins in Assam on Wednesday.

Key Points:-

- ❖ The initiative, spearheaded by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) in collaboration with the Assam Forest Department and conservation group Aaranyak, represents a major milestone for Project Dolphin.
- ❖ The project received funding from the National CAMPA Authority.
- ❖ This historic tagging is the first of its kind globally for the Ganges River Dolphin. A healthy male dolphin was tagged and released under expert veterinary care.
- ❖ The tagging will provide crucial data on the dolphin's seasonal movements, migratory patterns, range, distribution, and habitat use, particularly in disrupted river systems.
- ❖ The Ganges River Dolphin, India's National Aquatic Animal, is unique in its ecology, being nearly blind and relying on echolocation for its biological needs.
- ❖ Approximately 90% of the species' population resides in India, historically distributed across the Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna and Karnaphuli river systems. However, its distribution has drastically declined over the past century.
- ❖ Despite its wide range, significant knowledge gaps remain regarding this species due to its elusive behaviour.
- ❖ It surfaces for only 5-30 seconds at a time, posing a significant challenge in understanding the ecological needs of the species and for any scientifically sound conservation interventions.

State

Banaskantha's Masali becomes India's first border solar village



About News:-

Masali village in Banaskantha district has achieved a significant milestone by becoming India's first border solar village.

Key Points:-

- ❖ All 119 homes in the village have successfully installed solar rooftop panels, collectively generating 225.5kW of electricity exceeding the combined electricity needs of the entire village. This achievement was announced by the Gujarat govt on Wednesday.
- ❖ Located 40km from the Pakistan border, Masali village, with a population of around 800, has embraced solar energy with full force. District collector Mihir Patel felicitated the village panchayat office-bearers for this feat.
- ❖ The project, undertaken at a cost of Rs 1.16 crore, was a collaborative effort involving the revenue department, Uttar Gujarat Vij Company Limited (UGVCL), banks and solar companies. The installation of solar rooftop systems was facilitated by subsidies provided under both Union and state govt schemes.
- ❖ The state govt further announced plans to replicate this success, identifying 17 villages in Vav and Suigam talukas to be developed as fully solar-powered communities.
- ❖ Magniram Rawal, sarpanch of Masali gram panchayat, expressed immense satisfaction, stating that the adoption of solar energy has permanently resolved electricity issues for the villagers, freeing them from the burden of electricity bills.

Appointment

Shankar Sharma reappointed as Nepal's ambassador to India



About News:-

- ❖ Nepal's President, Ramchandra Paudel, has reappointed Dr. Shankar Prasad Sharma as the Resident Ambassador of Nepal to India. Alongside this, Dr Netra Prasad Timsina was named the Resident Ambassador of Nepal to Malaysia.
- ❖ These appointments were made under Article 282 (1) of Nepal's Constitution, following recommendations from the Council of Ministers.

Key Points:-

- ❖ Dr. Sharma, a distinguished economist and diplomat, previously served as Nepal's Ambassador to the United States from 2009 to 2014 and as Vice-Chairman of the National Planning Commission between 2002 and 2006.
- ❖ Nepal's ambassador to India is earlier tenure as Ambassador to India lasted from March 2022 to July 2024, marking his return to a pivotal diplomatic role.

Defence

Indian Army launches AI incubation centre in Bengaluru



About News:-

- ❖ Indian Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi inaugurated the Artificial Intelligence Incubation Centre (IAIIC) in Bengaluru on Wednesday through a virtual ceremony, highlighting the Army's commitment to adopting innovative technologies and empowering its personnel with Artificial Intelligence (AI).
- ❖ The IAAIIC aligns with the Indian Army's vision of technological evolution by enhancing operational capabilities, building an AI-ready force, and addressing modern security challenges.

Key Points:-

- ❖ The key objectives and features include: Hub for Innovation and Collaboration in AI
- ❖ Domain: The IAAIIC will serve as a platform for academia, startups, industry leaders, and domain experts to collaborate on developing indigenous AI solutions tailored to the Army's unique needs.
- ❖ Promotion of R&D: The centre will explore AI applications across critical areas such as Predictive Maintenance, Enhanced Surveillance, Decision Support Systems, and Autonomous Platforms. Supported by a 1-petaflop supercomputer from CDAC, the facility is well-equipped for AI modelling and training.
- ❖ Indigenous Capacity and Talent Building: By nurturing local talent and reducing dependence on foreign technologies, the IAAIIC reinforces India's pursuit of self-reliance in defence technology. The centre will also help the Indian Army in building a cadre of AI experts.
- ❖ Operational Edge: The IAAIIC is aimed to position the Indian Army at the forefront of defence technology, equipping it for multi-domain warfare.
- ❖ By aligning with national priorities and fostering the spirit of self-reliance and Atmanirbharta, the IAAIIC promises to elevate India's defence capabilities, setting

benchmarks for innovation and excellence in military AI applications.

- ❖ This initiative not only strengthens national security but also underscores the Indian Army's endeavour for absorption of niche technology in the "Decade of Transformation".

Award

Tom Cruise honoured with the US Navy's highest civilian award



About News:-

- ❖ Hollywood star Tom Cruise has been feted with the US Navy's highest civilian honour for his "outstanding contributions" to the military with his work on screen.
- ❖ The Distinguished Public Service Award was presented to Cruise during a ceremony on Tuesday at the Longcross Film Studios in Chertsey, Surrey.

Key Points:-

- ❖ It was with the 1986 blockbuster "Top Gun", that Cruise shot to fame, and the film's record-breaking success spiked military enlistment.
- ❖ The 62-year-old star expressed his gratitude for the "extraordinary acknowledgement".
- ❖ Cruise starred as the pilot Maverick in Top Gun, a movie about Cold War flying aces, and it was so influential that the Navy even set up recruitment tables in theatres.
- ❖ He then reprised his role as Lieutenant Pete Mitchell in the 2022 sequel "Top Gun: Maverick", which the Navy said "reinvigorated" military interest from younger audiences.
- ❖ Cruise was also celebrated for his roles in action hits "Born on the Fourth of July", "A Few Good Men" and the "Mission: Impossible" series.

- ❖ Cruise was in Chertsey, Surrey while working on his next film "Mission: Impossible: The Final Reckoning", which is set to release in May 2025.

Retirement

R Ashwin Announces Retirement From International Cricket.



Ravichandran Ashwin

Major international records

- Most player-of-the-series awards in Test - **11 awards**
- Fastest to 350 wickets in Test - **66 matches**
- 2nd most 5-wickets in an innings - **37 innings**
- 4th most wickets taken bowled - **109 wickets**
- 7th most wickets in Test cricket - **537 wickets**
- 11th most wickets in a career - **765 wickets**

About News:-

- ❖ India's celebrated off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin revealed his decision to retire from international cricket moments after the Brisbane Test ended in a draw on Wednesday, December 18.
- ❖ Further, the 38-year-old cricketer spoke about rejoining the five-time champions Chennai Super Kings franchise for the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2025.

Key Points:-

- ❖ Ashwin played 106 Tests, taking a staggering 537 wickets, including 37 five-wicket hauls, and scored 3,503 runs. His contributions to Indian cricket extend far beyond these impressive statistics.
- ❖ He is the seventh-highest wicket-taker in Test cricket history and the second-highest for India, behind Anil Kumble (619). He also has the second-most five-wicket hauls in Tests, after Sri Lankan legend Muttiah Muralitharan (67).

- ❖ Ashwin was instrumental in India's dominance in Test cricket, especially during their rise to the top between 2014 and 2019.
- ❖ In limited-overs cricket, Ashwin played 181 matches, taking 228 wickets. He featured in 116 ODIs, claiming 156 wickets with best figures of 4/25 and scoring 707 runs. In 65 T20Is, he took 72 wickets, with best figures of 4/8, and scored 184 runs.
- ❖ With 765 international wickets across formats, Ashwin is India's second-highest wicket-taker, behind Kumble (953). He was also part of India's 2011 World Cup-winning squad and the 2013 Champions Trophy team.
- ❖ Ashwin's retirement marks the end of a remarkable era, leaving behind a legacy that will inspire future generations.

Sport

Kiran Jadhav wins men's 50m rifle 3P national crown & Olympic bronze winner Kusale third

About News:-

Indian Navy's Kiran Ankush Jadhav beat Paris Olympic bronze medallist Swapnil Kusale and another Olympian Aishwarya Pratap Singh Tomar to clinch the men's 50m rifle 3 positions (3P) title at the 67th National Shooting Championship Competitions (NSCC) here on Wednesday.



Key Points:-

- ❖ Jadhav shot 465.8 in the final to leave Aishwarya Pratap (463.1) of the home state in second place at the M.P. State Academy Shooting range.
- ❖ Swapnil of Railways led the 45-shot final till the 40th shot but bowed out in third ahead of the final gold-deciding shot, with a tally of 451.8.

- ❖ The National Shooting Championship Competition 2024 for rifle shooters in Bhopal will end on December 31.
- ❖ The National Championship for pistol shooters being held at the Dr Karni Shooting Range in New Delhi will end on January 5.

Obituary

Malayalam actor Meena Ganesh passes away



About News:-

Renowned Malayalam actor Meena Ganesh passed away on Thursday, December 19, at the age of 81.

About Meena Ganesh:-

- ❖ Meena was married to popular theatre and film artist AN Ganesh. She began her acting career at the age of 19. She started as a theatre artist and eventually explored films as well. She made her acting debut in 1977 with the film 'Mani Muzhakkam.' The movie was directed by PA Backer and also starred Hari and Beatrice.
- ❖ She has over 100 films to her credit, most of which she was seen playing a supporting role. These include 'Mandanmar Londanil', 'Utsava Melam', 'Golanthara Vartha', 'Sakshal Sreeman Chathunni', 'Kalyana Sougandhikam', 'Siamese Irattakal', 'Sreekrishnapurathe Nakshathrathilakkam', and 'My Dear Karady', to name a few.
- ❖ Throughout her career, she worked with several acclaimed actors in the Kerala film industry. These included Kalabhavan Mani, Prithviraj Sukumaran, Dileep, Mohanlal and Mammootty. Her last memorable outings were 'The Reporter' and 'Doctor Innocentanu'. Her final film was in 2016. She starred in 'Pathirakkattu'. Besides films, she was also seen in a few TV serials. These include 'Ramayanam', 'Mangalyam', 'Kalyanaveeran' and 'Minnukettu'.

Important Day

International Human Solidarity Day - 19 December



About Day:-

Every year, December 20th is designated as International Human Solidarity Day. It's a day to consider the value of unity and to take proactive steps to help those in need and make the world more just.

History

- ❖ The United Nations General Assembly created International Human Solidarity Day in 2005 to raise awareness of solidarity as a core principle for human progress. It acknowledges the need for solidarity in bringing about world peace and harmony.
- ❖ International Human Solidarity Day serves as a reminder that global issues demand global solutions and that everyone may contribute to the development of a more fair and just society.

