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22 OCTOBER 2025

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WEDNESDAY, 22nd OCTOBER 2025

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1. Suez Canal Economic Zone (SCZone)

- **Prelims** - Suez Canal Economic Zone (SCZone)
- **Mains** - GS 2 - International Relations

Why in the news?

- The Egyptian Foreign Minister has proposed that India shall consider joining the Suez Canal Economic Zone.

Suez Canal Economic Zone (SCZone)

- **What is it?:** The SCZone is a specially designated economic region in Egypt, established along both banks of the Suez Canal, created to attract investment, industrial development, logistics, trade and export-oriented manufacturing.
- **Strategic Significance:**
 - Located on one of the world's busiest maritime trade routes, linking Asia, Africa, and Europe.
 - Acts as a gateway for trade between East and West, providing quicker access to key global markets.
 - Supports Egypt's geopolitical and economic influence in the region.
- **Key Features:**
 - **Location & scale:** The zone runs along the Suez Canal corridor, covering multiple industrial zones, ports and logistic hubs.
 - **Ports & infrastructure:** SCZone offers access to multiple seaports (six ports are cited) and at least two airports.
 - **Incentives:** Investors in SCZone benefit from preferential regulations, tax/investment incentives, streamlined administrative procedures.
 - **Industry & sectors:** Intended to host light and heavy manufacturing, logistics, trade hubs, export processing, energy & green fuels, services. For example, solar module export facilities are being developed.
 - **Regulatory framework:** Regulatory framework established under a legislation of Egypt.



- **Significance for India:**

- The Suez Canal handles ~12% of global trade and for a country like India, joining the SCZone means access to a strategic manufacturing/logistics hub bridging Asia, Africa, Europe.
- It adds diversification of investment opportunities: beyond just import/export, into value-added manufacturing, re-exports, regional trade.
- Participation can deepen bilateral/trilateral cooperation (e.g., through combined industrial complexes, supply-chain linkages, port-logistics tie-ups).
- The SCZONE enhances India–Egypt cooperation in trade, manufacturing, and maritime security.
- Strengthens India’s efforts in increasing engagements with the African Union.

- **Challenges:**

- Geopolitical/logistics risks (e.g., shipping disruptions, regional instability) can affect the zone’s attractiveness despite its strategic location.
- The SCZone already hosts industrial complexes from China, Russia, and Gulf countries. India may face strategic competition or reduced influence compared to entrenched players aligned with their own blocs.
- Integrating SCZone participation within India’s IMEC vision may require complex coordination with Western, Arab, and Mediterranean partners to avoid duplication or conflict of interest.
- Return on investment (ROI) uncertainty
- Egypt has faced currency depreciation, inflation, and IMF-linked fiscal reforms, which could raise costs or erode profitability.
- Although SCZone is a “special regime,” overlapping national laws, customs processes, or approval layers can delay project execution.



2. Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP)

- **Prelims** - Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP)
- **Mains** - GS 3 - Environment

Why in the news?

- CAQM invoked the 12-point action plan under Stage-II of the current Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) across the entire National Capital Region (NCR) with immediate effect.

Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP)

- **What is it?:** The Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) is a pre-emptive and emergency framework designed to control and reduce air pollution levels in the Delhi-NCR region by introducing graded sets of measures that are triggered automatically based on Air Quality Index (AQI) levels.
- **Objectives:**
 - To prevent further deterioration of air quality once it crosses threshold levels.
 - To ensure coordinated and time-bound action among agencies.
 - To make pollution control measures predictable, science-based, and incremental.
- **Institutional Framework:**
 - **Legal Basis:** Directed by Supreme Court under *M.C. Mehta* case (2016).
 - **Notification:** By Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEFCC) in 2017.
 - **Implementing Authority:** CAQM (replacing EPCA in 2020 under Commission for Air Quality Management in NCR and Adjoining Areas Act, 2021).
 - **Technical Support:** Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM) and India Meteorological Department (IMD) provide AQI and meteorological forecasts.
- **Implementation Mechanism:**
 - **Supervisory Body:** CAQM (under MoEFCC).
 - **Executing Agencies:** State Pollution Control Boards, CPCB, municipal corporations, transport & traffic departments.



- **Sub-Committee on GRAP:** Meets frequently to monitor real-time data and issue orders as per AQI forecasts.
- Orders of CAQM override state-level directions when there is a conflict.
- **Significance:**
 - Provides a scientific, graded framework for pollution control.
 - Enhances accountability among multiple agencies.
 - Enables pre-emptive action during winter months when pollution peaks.
 - Promotes inter-state coordination in NCR, covering Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan.
- **Challenges:**
 - Implementation gaps and weak enforcement at the ground level.
 - Lack of permanent measures addressing root causes (vehicular emissions, stubble burning, industrial waste management).
 - Coordination issues among multiple state agencies.
- **GRAP Updations:**
 - Revised GRAP (2023 onwards) now includes forecast-based early implementation- Measures can be triggered three days in advance if deterioration is anticipated.
 - Includes focus on green fuels, waste management, and real-time AQI public disclosure.



3. Nauru

- **Prelims** - Location of Nauru
- **Mains** - GS 1 - Geography

Nauru

Why in the news?

- Australia has defended its A\$2.5 billion, 30-year agreement with Nauru to resettle deported non-citizens, a move criticised by human rights groups who allege it shifts refugee responsibility to smaller, aid-dependent Pacific nations.

Nauru

- **Location:** Nauru is an island nation and a microstate in Oceania, located in the southwestern Pacific Ocean.
- **Capital:** It has no official capital city but Yaren is the de facto capital of Nauru.
- **Fact:** It is the smallest republic in the world.
- **Border:** The island is about 1,300 km northeast of the Solomon Islands; its closest neighbour is the island of Banaba, in Kiribati.
- **Geography:** The island is dominated by a central phosphate plateau which is surrounded by coral cliffs.

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4. Chandrayaan-2 Mission and Coronal Mass Ejection (CME)

- **Prelims** - Chandrayaan-2 Mission and Coronal Mass Ejection (CME)
- **Mains** - GS 3 - Science and Technology

Why in the news?

- Chandrayaan-2 has made the first-ever observation of the effects of the Sun's Coronal Mass Ejection (CME) on the Moon.

Chandrayaan-2 Mission

- **Launched by:** Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)
- **Launch date:** 22 July 2019
- **Launch vehicle:** GSLV Mk-III-M1 (Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle)
- **Mission type:** India's second lunar exploration mission
- **Aim:** To explore the south polar region of the Moon, a largely uncharted area, and to study lunar topography, mineralogy, and exosphere.
- **Scientific Objectives**
 - **Lunar topography:** Map surface features and craters.
 - **Mineralogy:** Study mineral and elemental composition.
 - **Exosphere:** Analyze the thin lunar atmosphere.
 - **Water-ice detection:** Assess the distribution of hydroxyl and water molecules near the south pole.
 - **Surface composition:** Map Mg, Al, Si, Ca, Fe, Ti abundances using X-ray and infrared spectrometers.
- **Mission Components**
 - **Orbiter:**
 - ★ Provides high-resolution imaging and mineral mapping.
 - ★ Lifespan: ~7 years.
 - **Vikram Lander**
 - ★ Aimed for soft landing near south pole.
 - **Pragyan Rover**
 - ★ Six-wheeled robotic vehicle carried inside Vikram.
 - ★ Could not operate due to failed landing.



- **Significance**

- First attempt to land near lunar south pole.
- Demonstrated India's advanced space engineering and deep-space communication capabilities.
- Data from orbiter continues to aid Chandrayaan-3 (2023) and global lunar studies.

Coronal Mass Ejection (CME)

- **Definition**: A Coronal Mass Ejection (CME) is a massive burst of plasma and magnetic field released from the Sun's outer atmosphere (the corona) into space.
- **Origin**
 - CMEs occur during solar flares or from active magnetic regions on the Sun.
 - They are caused by the sudden release of magnetic energy when twisted magnetic field lines reconnect and eject solar material.
- **Effects**
 - **Geomagnetic Storms**: Disturb the Earth's magnetic field, cause auroras, and may disrupt satellites, GPS, radio networks, and power grids.
 - **Radiation Hazards**: Increase radiation levels harmful to astronauts and high-altitude flights.
 - **Space Weather Impact**: Influence communication systems, navigation, and even pipeline currents on Earth.
- **Monitoring and Prediction**
 - NASA missions: SOHO, STEREO, Parker Solar Probe.
 - ISRO mission: Aditya-L1 monitors solar corona and CME activity.
 - NOAA's SWPC: Issues global space weather alerts.



5. Women Entrepreneurship Platform and We Rise Initiative

- **Prelims** - Women Entrepreneurship Platform and We Rise Initiative
- **Mains** - GS 2 - Social Justice

Why in the news?

- NITI Aayog's Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) and DP World have jointly launched the initiative 'We Rise- Women Entrepreneurs Reimagining Inclusive and Sustainable Enterprises'.

Women Entrepreneurship Platform

- **Launch:** The Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) is a flagship initiative by NITI Aayog, launched on 8 March 2018, following its announcement at the 8th Global Entrepreneurship Summit (2017) in Hyderabad.
- **Aim:** It serves as a unified access portal to promote and support women entrepreneurship across India, bridging gaps in information, finance, and mentorship.
- **Vision:** The platform embodies the vision "*Women First, Prosperity for All*" and aims to make women-led development a reality.
- **Objectives:**
 - Promote inclusive and women-led entrepreneurship in India.
 - Provide end-to-end support through mentorship, financial literacy, legal guidance, and networking.
 - Create a vibrant ecosystem for growth and sustainability of women-led enterprises.
 - Address bottlenecks faced by women entrepreneurs by curating information and linking to existing schemes and institutional support.
- **Key Features:**
 - **Financial Aid:** Access to seed and growth capital.
 - **Mentoring and Networking:** Collaboration with industry leaders and peers.
 - **Skill Development:** Linking to training institutions and online programs.
 - **Market Access:** Marketing, branding, and export readiness support.
 - **Compliance Services:** Legal, accounting, and licensing guidance.
 - **Incubation and Acceleration:** For startups and scaling enterprises.



→ **PPP Model:** WEP transitioned into a Public–Private Partnership (PPP) framework in 2022.

- **Recent Initiatives:**

- **Financing Women Collaborative (FWC):** Improves women entrepreneurs' access to credit.
- **SEHER (2024):** A financial literacy and credit education program in collaboration with TransUnion CIBIL.
- **Award to Reward (ATR) Initiative (2023):** Encourages ecosystem collaboration while celebrating success stories.
- **We Rise Initiative (2025):** Partnership with DP World to promote global trade opportunities for women entrepreneurs.

We Rise Initiative

- **Key Objectives:**

- **Export Readiness:** Equip 100 high-potential women-led MSMEs to meet international trade standards.
- **Global Market Access:** Connect Indian women entrepreneurs to global buyers through trade expos like *Bharat Mart* in Dubai's Jebel Ali Free Zone.
- **Mentorship and Capacity Building:** Offer structured guidance on compliance, logistics, branding, and financing using DP World's global expertise.
- **Sustainable and Inclusive Growth:** Promote women-led economic development aligned with India's Viksit Bharat @2047 vision.

- **Features:**

- Implemented under WEP's ATR initiative- institutionalizes collaborations among ecosystem partners to create scalable and sustainable support for women entrepreneurs.
- Encourages public–private partnerships to tackle common challenges faced by women entrepreneurs.
- Identifies 100 high-potential women-led MSMEs across India- Provides tailored mentorship programs in trade facilitation, international compliance, logistics, and branding.



- Offers the selected entrepreneurs an opportunity to showcase products at Bharat Mart, Dubai, a B2B and B2C marketplace within the Jebel Ali Free Zone (Jafza).
- **Significance:**
 - Bridges the gender gap in export participation.
 - Strengthens India's women entrepreneurship ecosystem through mentorship and trade facilitation.
 - Serves as a model Public–Private Partnership (PPP) promoting women-led development.
 - Aligns with the “Women-led Development” goal and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).



6. Lead Pollution

- Prelims - Lead Pollution
- Mains - GS 3 - Environment

Why in the news?

- A new study found that lead exposure continues to pose a serious public health and economic challenge in the 21st century, despite the global phase-out of leaded petrol.

Lead Pollution

- **What is lead?**
 - Lead (Pb) is a toxic heavy metal that accumulates in the environment and living organisms.
 - It is non-biodegradable and persists in soil, water, and air, causing long-term contamination.
- **Sources of Lead Pollution**
 - **Industrial Sources:**
 - ★ Battery manufacturing and recycling (especially lead-acid batteries).
 - ★ Smelting and mining of lead ores.
 - ★ Paint and pigment industries.
 - ★ Ceramics, glass, and plastic manufacturing.
 - **Vehicular Emissions (historical):**
 - ★ Use of leaded petrol was a major source before it was phased out globally (India banned leaded petrol in 2000).
 - **Domestic and Urban Sources:**
 - ★ Lead-based paints, plumbing pipes, contaminated dust, and old household products.
 - ★ E-waste and informal recycling sectors.
 - **Agricultural and Water Sources:**
 - ★ Contaminated soil and irrigation water near industrial areas.
 - ★ Leaching from lead pipes into drinking water.
- **Impacts**
 - **Health Impacts**
 - ★ Damage to brain and nervous system → reduced IQ, learning disabilities.
 - ★ Anemia due to interference with hemoglobin synthesis.



- ★ Kidney and liver damage.
- ★ Reproductive problems and developmental delays.
- ★ In adults: hypertension, cardiovascular issues, and neurological disorders.

→ **Environment Pacts**

- ★ Contaminates soil, water, and crops, entering the food chain.
- ★ Affects microbial activity in soil, reducing fertility.
- ★ Aquatic life suffers from bioaccumulation and toxicity.

● **Government Measures in India**

- Ban on leaded petrol (2000).
- Regulation of Lead in Paint Rules (2016): Limits lead content in paints to 90 ppm.
- E-Waste Management Rules (2016): Regulates recycling of batteries and electronics.
- National Programme for Elimination of Lead Poisoning (proposed): To monitor blood lead levels and raise public awareness.
- Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) monitors industrial lead emissions and water quality.

● **Preventive and Mitigation Measures**

- Promote lead-free paints, batteries, and plumbing materials.
- Enforce safe recycling and waste disposal practices.
- Strengthen public health surveillance for lead exposure.
- Raise awareness on occupational safety and hygiene in informal sectors.
- Encourage green and circular economy practices in metal recycling