

UPSC Daily Current Affairs | Prelim Bits 18-03-2021

Report on International Arms Transfers

- This report was released by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).
- Largest arms exporters in 2016-20 - US, Russia, France, Germany, China.
- Top importers in 2016-20 - Saudi Arabia, India, Egypt, Australia, China.
- The United States, the world's largest arms exporter, saw a rise in its global share of exports from 32% to 37% between 2011-15 and 2016-20.
- India's arms imports fell 33% between 2011-15 and 2016-20, due to its attempt to reduce its dependence on Russian arms and complex procurement processes.
- India's top three arms suppliers during 2016-20 were Russia (49% of India's imports), France (18%) and Israel (13%).
- India accounted for 0.2% of the share of global arms exports during 2016-20, making it the world's 24th largest exporter of major arms.
- Top recipients of India's arms - Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Mauritius.

Rule Curve of Mullaperiyar Dam

- The Supreme Court said that Tamil Nadu Chief Secretary is "personally responsible" for the failure to give information on the rule curve for Mullaperiyar dam to the Court-appointed Supervisory Committee.
- **Rule curve** in a dam decides the fluctuating storage levels in a reservoir.
- The gate opening schedule of a dam is based on the rule curve. It is part of the "core safety" mechanism in a dam.
- The Court directed the Committee to submit a compliance report after issue directions or take steps to address the three core safety issues and,
 1. Monitoring and performance of the instrumentation of the dam,
 2. Finalising the rule curve and
 3. Fixing the gate operating schedule.

Amicus Curiae

- Solicitor General (SG) made an appeal to the Supreme Court to frame guidelines to demarcate the role and ambit of the court's amici curiae in various cases, especially sensitive ones.
- SG's remarks came during the hearing of a case of alleged extra-judicial

killings by the Army, Assam Rifles and the State police in Manipur during the heights of insurgency.

- Amicus Curiae or 'friend of the court' are the lawyers appointed by the courts to present diverse views and assist the court in specific cases.
- Amicus curiae is appointed to help the court compile facts, research the law in question and even offer a non-partisan opinion.
- An oral statement from a top government law officer in the highest court to tether amici curiae hand-picked by the latter is significant.

Cyber Attack

- Maharashtra State Cyber Cell probe had found 14 Trojan horses in the servers of the Maharashtra State Electricity Transmission Company.
- This announcement came after a US-based cyber security firm Recorded Future reported that 'Red Echo' group, linked to the Chinese government, had targeted India's power distribution systems.
- The kind of infrastructure sought to be accessed by Red Echo, such as Regional Load Despatch Centres, has minimal espionage possibilities.
- Recorded Future found many IP addresses linked to critical Indian systems communicating for months with AXIOMATICASYMPTOTE servers, which connected to Red Echo.
- These servers had domains spoofing those of Indian power sector entities configured to them. AXIOMATICASYMPTOTE servers act as command-and-control centres for a malware known as ShadowPad.

ShadowPad

- ShadowPad is a backdoor Trojan malware, which means it opens a secret path from its target system to its command-and-control servers.
- Via this path, information can be extracted or more malicious code delivered.
- ShadowPad is built to target supply-chain infrastructure in sectors like transportation, telecommunication, energy and more.
- Trojanised softwares, or softwares that have dangers hidden in them, are the primary mode of delivery for ShadowPad.
- Recorded Future in its report notes large overlaps in the systems used by Red Echo and 'APT41/Winnti/Barium'.

Completing the Budget Process

- Lok Sabha guillotined all demands for grants related with FY2021-22. The House also approved Appropriation Bill.
- With this one, more process of Union Budget has been completed.
- Lok Sabha is expected to take Finance Bill for consideration and passage

that has all the provisions prescribing changes in the tax laws.

Demand for Grants

- It is the form in which estimates of expenditure from the Consolidated Fund, included in the annual financial statement.
- It is required to be voted upon in the Lok Sabha, and are submitted in pursuance of Article 113 of the Constitution.
- There are 101 demands for grants related with various Central Ministries and Departments.

Appropriation Bill

- Enactment of Appropriation Bill allows the government to withdraw money from the Consolidated Fund of India.
- Once the Rajya Sabha returns the Appropriation Bill, it will be sent to the President for assent and then it will become law.

Source: The Hindu, The Indian Express, Business Line

