

Mains Master

Navigating the U.S.China relationship

Summit Outcome:

- **Military Communications:** Restoration of military-to-military communications between the US and China.
- **Agreement Reinstatement:** Resumption of regular exchange of information under the Military Maritime Consultative Agreement.
- **Closed Channels Reopened:** Channels initially closed after Nancy Pelosi's controversial visit to Taiwan were reopened, impacting diplomatic ties.

Taiwan Issue:

- **Contentious Status:** Taiwan's status remains a core issue leading to tensions between the US and China.
- **Opposition to Visits:** Beijing strongly opposes US officials' visits to Taiwan, considering it a violation of established norms.
- **Display of Strength:** China warns against US interference in Taiwan and showcases military prowess as a deterrent.

Trade Dispute:

- **US Actions:** Blacklisting companies, imposing export controls on crucial tech related to China's AI and supercomputing.
- **China's Response:** Counteractions like banning exports of critical materials (gallium, graphite) and tightening data protection laws.

Way Forward:

- **Persistent Conflict:** The US-China conflict has persisted across different administrations, maintaining similar contours.
- **Shift in Approach:** There's a subtle shift towards exploring pragmatic coexistence rather than complete disengagement or 'decoupling.'
- **Focus on Economic Stability:** The focus lies on de-risking economies as a potential pathway to ease tensions and reduce confrontation.

The role of special inquiry committees of Parliament

Role of Ethics Committee:

- **Investigation by Ethics Committee:** Mahua Moitra facing inquiry for "unethical conduct" and "breach of privileges."
- **Function of the Committee:** Oversees moral conduct of members, examines cases of unethical behavior, and examines complaints against MPs.

Privileges Committees:

- **Serious Accusations:** Handles more serious accusations against members, like the 'cash for query' scam in 2005.
- **Historical Example:** In 1951, a member was found guilty of promoting a business interest by posing questions for financial gain.

Expulsion and Constitutional Grounds:

- **Constitutional Perspective:** Article 101 specifies grounds for vacating an MP's seat, but expulsion isn't explicitly mentioned.
- **Conflicting Court Rulings:** Supreme Court rulings differ on the constitutionality of expulsion from the House.

Balancing House Privileges and Representation:

- **Punishment Severity:** Raises questions about whether expulsion for such actions is a disproportionate punishment.
- **Ensuring Representation:** Concerns about leaving constituents without representation until the next election or a bye-election.

Resolution Suggestions:

- **Legal Inquiry and Trial:** Calls for a legal inquiry; suggests setting up fast-track courts to handle such cases within a stipulated timeframe.
- **Outcome of Trials:** Proposes that convictions in a time-bound trial would result in disqualification under the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

Who is responsible for farming's impact on the environment?

Introduction:

- **Global Agricultural Impact:** Increasing demand for agricultural products results in significant social and environmental consequences globally.
- **Global Supply Chains:** International trade creates global supply chains connecting consumers to distant impacts, including carbon emissions, biodiversity loss, freshwater depletion, soil degradation, and labor-rights issues.

India's Role:

- **Key Player:** India, due to its vast size and consumer market, plays a crucial role in the global trade of agricultural products.
- **Environmental Pressure:** Large land areas in India cater to international demand, putting pressure on national soil and water resources.
- **Global Impact:** India's consumer market leads to land use, even outside its borders, to meet domestic demand.

Impact Accounting Paradigms:

- **Production-Based Accounting:** Traditional method measures impacts where products are produced, raising concerns about managing 'leaks', accountability, and fairness.
- **Consumption-Based Accounting:** Attributes impacts at the point of consumption, urging consumers to take responsibility for the environmental and social impacts during production and trade.

Demand Perspective:

- **Equity and Justice:** Consumption-based accounting aligns with arguments of equity and justice, holding consumers responsible for the consequences of production practices.
- **Responsibility Shift:** Shifts significant impacts from emerging markets like India to economically developed countries, emphasizing the responsibility of industrialized states.

Supply Perspective:

- **Encouraging Cleaner Production:** Consumption-based accounting encourages producer countries to implement strategies for cleaner production to lower the environmental footprint of exports.

- **Incentive for Standards:** Producers have incentives to raise living standards in agricultural supply chains to ensure access to foreign markets.

Benefits of Environmental Action:

- **Policy Initiatives:** European Commission takes steps to ensure products consumed in the EU do not contribute to deforestation in their origin countries.
- **Impact on Carbon Emissions:** Expected reduction in carbon emissions from deforestation and biodiversity loss with such measures.

India's Position:

- **Unique Position:** Developed economies have an environmental footprint in India due to their consumption of Indian agricultural produce.
- **Deforestation Footprint:** India's deforestation footprint outside its borders has increased, driven by demand.

Fair Impact Attribution:

- **Global Environmental Action:** Consumption-based accounting facilitates an agreement on global environmental action, sharing responsibilities between producers and consumers.
- **Opportunity for Coordinated Action:** Provides an opportunity for developed economies to take responsibility for some impacts, allowing developing economies like India to grow and improve agricultural systems.

Implementation Challenges:

- **Liability and Compliance:** Consumption-based accounting faces challenges in liability, monitoring, and compliance but serves as a tool to diagnose impact-intensive consumption patterns.
- **Domestic Application:** Can be applied domestically, shifting focus from producers to consumers and encouraging individual and collective changes in consumption behavior.

Prelims Booster

Garba dance of Gujarat makes it to UNESCO list

Inclusion under UNESCO:

- **2003 Convention:** 'Garba' included under the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO.
- **Description:** Described as a ritualistic and devotional dance celebrated during the nine days of Navaratri in Gujarat, dedicated to worshipping feminine energy or Shakti.

Significance of Garba:

- **Worship of Feminine Energy:** Celebrates the feminine divine energy through cultural and visual expressions.
- **Community Event:** Garba is an inclusive community event held in homes, temple courtyards, public spaces, and large grounds.

UNESCO's Perspective:

- **Preservation and Continuation:** UNESCO hopes the recognition will encourage preserving and passing down the knowledge and skills associated with Garba.
- **Celebration at UNESCO:** A troupe showcased Garba at the UNESCO meeting venue, and several curated events in Gujarat marked the occasion.

PM Narendra Modi's Reaction:

- **Joy and Pride:** PM Modi expressed joy over the global recognition, highlighting Garba's celebration of life, unity, and Indian traditions.

Other Recognitions by UNESCO:

- **New Inscriptions:** Besides 'Garba of Gujarat,' new additions include various cultural elements like Rickshaws and Rickshaw painting in Bangladesh, Songkran in Thailand, Junkanoo from the Bahamas, among others.
- **Diverse Intangible Heritage:** The list now comprises 704 elements from 143 countries, showcasing the diversity and importance of intangible cultural heritage worldwide.

Indian origin media executive Samir Shah to head BBC Board

New BBC Chair Appointment:

- **Samir Shah:** A British-Indian media executive, chosen to lead the BBC as its new chair.
- **Background:** Born in Aurangabad, moved to the UK in 1960, with a history in media and connections to the Conservative Party.
- **Challenges Faced:** Takes charge amid concerns over BBC's independence, financial difficulties, and cost-cutting measures.

Google unveils 'Gemini,' AI tech trained to behave like humans

Introduction of Project Gemini:

- **Launch by Google:** Project Gemini unveiled by Google as an AI model designed to simulate human behavior, sparking debates about its potential and risks.
- **Phased Rollout:** Released in stages - "Nano" and "Pro" versions integrated into Google's chatbot Bard and Pixel 8 Pro phone immediately.



News in Numbers

310 districts most vulnerable to climate change, says Tomar

Distribution by States/UTs:

- **"Very High" Category:** Uttar Pradesh (22), followed by Rajasthan (17), Bihar (10), and others with varying district counts.
- **"Highly" Vulnerable:** Uttar Pradesh (26), Madhya Pradesh (14), Orissa (13), West Bengal, Karnataka, Bihar, Rajasthan having significant counts.
- **Other States:** Jharkhand, Manipur, Chhattisgarh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu also have "highly" vulnerable districts.