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Time: 45 Min

Date: 30-03-2026

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REIMAGINING INDIA'S MILITARY STRATEGY IN THE ERA OF DRONE WARFARE

Context

- The ongoing conflict in West Asia, has demonstrated the growing dominance of drones, missiles, and advanced technologies in modern warfare.

Saturation Warfare and Changing Military Strategy

- **Modern warfare** is characterised by the growing use of low-cost, high-impact technologies such as **unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), loitering munitions, swarm drones, and long-range precision strike systems.**
- **Threat of Swarm Saturation:** The deployment of hundreds of drones in a single coordinated attack has demonstrated the serious threat posed by swarm saturation.
  - Even the most advanced air defence systems **face limitations in terms of rate of fire, interception capacity, and reload speed** when confronted with such large-scale attacks.
- **India's counter-drone doctrine** is still in a **transitional phase**, with operational responsibilities expanding significantly.

Global Conflicts as Precursors

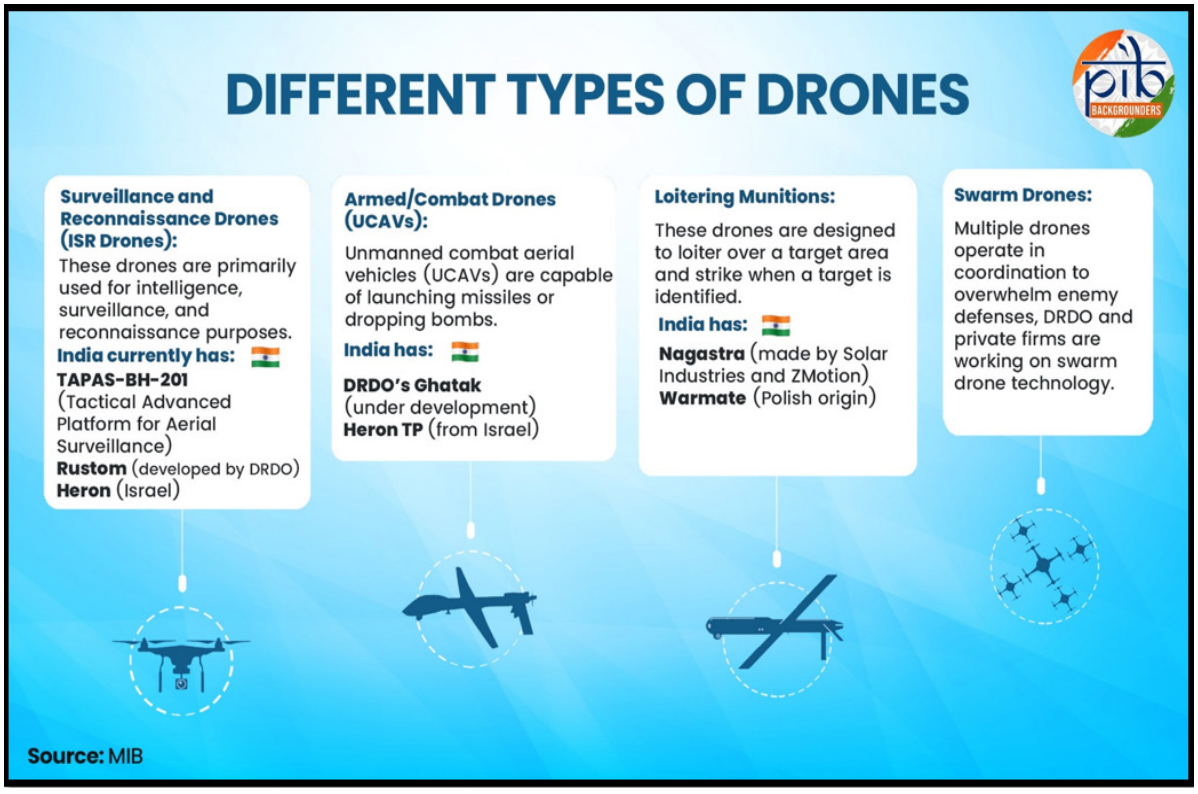
- **The Russia-Ukraine War** has shown that low-cost FPV drones can destroy expensive armoured platforms.
- **The Nagorno-Karabakh War** demonstrated the decisive impact of loitering munitions on conventional warfare.
- **The Gaza Strip conflict** highlighted how non-state actors can use commercial drones for surveillance and targeted strikes.

Insights for India from Contemporary Conflicts

- **Need for Robust Counter-Drone Systems:** Swarm drones are low-cost but high-impact weapons capable of overwhelming advanced air defence systems.
  - India needs to prioritise the **procurement of cost-effective anti-drone systems** capable of detecting, jamming, and neutralising small unmanned aerial vehicles.
- **Integration with Legacy Air Defence Systems:** Retrofitting existing hardware with modern electronic warfare (EW) and AI capabilities extends the utility of older assets like the **L/70 anti-aircraft guns.**
- **Expansion of Robotic Warfare Capabilities:** The increasing role of robotics in warfare is **reducing dependence on human manpower** in high-risk operations.
  - Robotic systems can be effectively deployed for mine detection, surveillance, reconnaissance, and logistical support.
- **Evolving Targeting Strategy in Modern Warfare:** Recent conflicts have demonstrated a **shift towards targeting deep strategic assets** such as energy infrastructure, administrative centres, and industrial facilities.
- **Passive Defence Measures:** The saturation of even advanced defence systems, such as Iron Dome, highlights the limitations of active defence mechanisms.
  - Passive measures such as **dispersion of assets, camouflage, concealment, and underground infrastructure** are essential for force preservation.
- **Decentralised Warfare:** Modern warfare increasingly requires decentralised decision-making and operational flexibility at lower levels of command.

India's Institutional and Strategic Response

- **Integrated Drone Detection and Interdiction System (IDD&IS)** is developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation and Bharat Electronics Limited, provides a comprehensive counter-drone solution.
  - It is capable of **detecting drones at ranges of 5–8 km**, **jamming communication signals within 2–5 km** and neutralising threats using laser-based directed energy weapons at close ranges.
- **Bhargavastra" Anti-Swarm System:** Developed by Solar Defence and Aerospace Limited (SDAL), it is a **low-cost, homegrown counter-drone system** that uses micro-rockets to destroy drone swarms in hard-kill mode.
- The Indian Army has initiated large-scale procurement of **surveillance and kamikaze drones** to enhance both defensive and offensive capabilities.



India's Missile Defence Architecture

- **Multi-layered Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) system under DRDO:**
  - The **Prithvi Air Defence (PAD)** interceptor is designed for exo-atmospheric interception to intercept incoming missiles at altitudes of **50 km to 180 km.**
  - The **Advanced Air Defence (AAD) interceptor** is intended for endo-atmospheric interception during the terminal phase to neutralise threats within the Earth's atmosphere at altitudes up to **30 km.**
- **Layered Air Defence Shield:**
  - The **S-400 Triumf** is a highly advanced, mobile, Russian-developed **surface-to-air missile (SAM)** system inducted by India to enhance **long-range** air defence capability.
  - **Medium-Range (70–100 km):** The Barak-8 (MRSAM/LRSAM), co-developed with Israel, provides **360-degree protection** for both land and naval assets.
  - **Short-Range (25–50 km):** The indigenous **Akash system** and Israel's **SPYDER** protect strategic points and mobile army units.

Way Ahead

- **The Creation of Integrated Theatre Commands (ITCs)** is needed to decentralize decision-making and improve coordination among the Army, Navy, and Air Force.
- The definition of **clear political and military objectives** at the outset of a conflict is essential for strategic clarity. A well-defined **conflict termination strategy** ensures controlled escalation and prevents prolonged engagements.
- **Indigenous development** of drones, anti-drone systems, and critical defence technologies is essential for strategic autonomy.
- Contemporary conflicts indicate the possibility of **prolonged engagements** rather than short and decisive wars.
    - **Sustained logistics, industrial capacity, and resource mobilisation** are essential for maintaining combat effectiveness over time.

Source: IE

INDIA'S DEPENDENCE ON UREA IMPORT

Context

- **Nearly 90%** of the urea consumed in India is import-dependent.

About

- Since the Green Revolution, India **has relied on urea to supply the nitrogen essential for higher crop yields.**
- Urea accounts for **56% of all fertilisers consumed** and nearly 80% of all nitrogenous fertilisers.
- **Over 80% of domestic urea** is produced **using imported natural gas,** and more than a fifth of the total consumption is imported.

What is Urea?

- Urea is a chemical compound with the formula **$CO(NH_2)_2$.**
- It contains about 46% nitrogen (N), which is the highest nitrogen content among solid fertilizers.
- **Use:**
    - Promotes leafy growth (important for crops like rice, wheat, maize).
    - Enhances protein formation in plants.

Why India Import Urea?

- **High Demand from Agriculture:** India has a large agrarian economy with crops like rice and wheat that require heavy nitrogen use. Urea is the most preferred fertilizer because it is cheap and effective.
- **Insufficient Domestic Production:** Although India has many urea plants, production is not enough to meet total demand.
    - Some plants are old and inefficient, leading to lower output and setting up new plants requires high investment and time.
- **Dependence on Natural Gas:** Urea is produced using natural gas as a key input. India is not self-sufficient in natural gas, leading to higher production costs, and limited expansion of domestic urea production.
- **Cost Advantage of Imports:** Sometimes, importing urea from countries is cheaper than producing it domestically.

Concerns

- **High Fiscal Burden:** Heavy subsidy on urea increases the government's fertilizer subsidy bill and strains public finances.
- **Imbalanced Fertilizer Consumption:** Excessive use of urea (nitrogen) compared to phosphatic and potassic fertilizers disturbs the N:P:K ratio, reducing soil productivity.
- **Low Nitrogen Use Efficiency (NUE):** Only a part of applied urea is utilized by crops; the rest is lost through volatilization, leaching, and denitrification.
- **Soil Degradation:** Continuous overuse leads to soil acidification, micronutrient deficiency, and long-term fertility decline.
- **Environmental Pollution:** Causes water pollution (eutrophication) due to nitrate runoff, emits nitrous oxide (N_2O), a potent greenhouse gas.
- **Import Dependence & External Vulnerability:** Reliance on imported urea and natural gas exposes India to global price volatility and supply disruptions.

Recommendations

- **Shift policy focus:** Reorient the National Green Hydrogen Mission towards domestic green urea production instead of export-centric green ammonia.
- **Integrate CCUS with urea plants:** Use carbon capture funding to ensure dedicated CO supply for urea manufacturing.
- **Curb overuse & improve efficiency:** Enhance nitrogen use efficiency (NUE) and promote sustainable/organic farming.
- **Undertake structural reforms:** Move towards phased decontrol and market competition to boost efficiency, innovation, and reduce subsidy burden.

Government Initiatives

- **Neem-Coated Urea (NCU):** Mandatory coating of urea with neem to reduce nitrogen loss, improve efficiency, and prevent diversion to non-agricultural uses.
- **Nutrient-Based Subsidy (NBS) Scheme:** Promotes balanced fertiliser use (N:P:K) by subsidising phosphatic and potassic fertilisers, reducing overdependence on urea.
- **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) in Fertilisers:** Subsidy is transferred to companies after sale to farmers, ensuring transparency and reducing leakages/diversion.
- **Promotion of Nano Urea:** Developed by Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited, Nano Urea reduces conventional urea requirement while maintaining crop yield.
- **Soil Health Card Scheme:** Provides farmers with soil nutrient status, encouraging judicious and need-based fertiliser use.

Source: IE

BUILDING RESILIENT SUPPLY CHAINS FOR INDIA'S ECONOMIC SECURITY

Context

- Recent geopolitical disruptions, particularly in West Asia, have highlighted **India's vulnerability to global supply chain shocks** and the urgent need for long-term resilience.

Why Supply Chain Resilience is Critical for India?

- **Energy Dependence:** India imports nearly **85%** of its crude oil and more than **50%** of its natural gas requirements.
  - Volatility in global energy markets directly impacts inflation, fiscal stability, and economic growth.
- **Food and Fertilizer Imports:** India remains heavily dependent on imports of edible oils and pulses, exposing domestic markets to global price fluctuations.
  - The fertilizer sector relies significantly on imported **phosphatic and potassic inputs**, affecting agricultural productivity and food security.
- **Pharmaceuticals and APIs:** India imports nearly **65–70%** of its Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs), mainly from China.
  - This creates vulnerabilities in the healthcare sector despite India's strength in generic drug manufacturing.
- **Critical Minerals and Rare Earths:** India depends on imports for **lithium, cobalt, copper, and rare earth elements** essential for electronics, renewable energy, and electric mobility.
  - The global concentration of these resources increases strategic and supply risks.

Initiatives to Secure India's Supply Chains

- **The Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI)** is a trilateral partnership launched in 2021 by **India, Japan, and Australia** to reduce reliance on single-source suppliers and enhance economic stability in the Indo-Pacific region.
  - It focuses on **diversifying sourcing, utilizing digital technology, and sharing best practices** to combat disruptions.
- **Energy Security Initiatives:**
  - **The National Green Hydrogen Mission** aims to position India as a global hub for green hydrogen production and export.
  - **Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR):** India has established strategic petroleum reserves at key locations to cushion against global supply disruptions.
  - **Renewable Energy Expansion:** India's total non-fossil fuel capacity reached 266.78 GW by 2025-end.
- **Food and Fertilizer Security Initiatives:**
  - **The National Food Security Mission** aims to increase the production of pulses, oilseeds, and cereals.
  - **The National Mission on Edible Oils - Oil Palm (NMEO-OP),** launched in 2021 aims to make India self-reliant in palm oil.
  - Initiatives to promote **nano-fertilizers and bio-fertilizers** reduce dependence on imported chemicals.
- **India has joined the Pax Silica** Initiative to strengthen supply chain resilience in critical silicon-based technologies such as semiconductors and solar components.
- **The India Semiconductor Mission (ISM)** is a 76,000 crore initiative to establish a robust domestic semiconductor and display manufacturing ecosystem.
- **Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme** covers sectors such as electronics, semiconductors, telecom, automobiles, and advanced chemistry cells.
  - It encourages **domestic manufacturing and integration** into global value chains.

Way Ahead

- **Strategic Diversification of Imports:** India must diversify sourcing across geographies such as **Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia** to reduce overdependence on specific regions.
  - Long-term supply contracts and strategic partnerships should be prioritised for critical commodities.
- **Adoption of AI, IoT, and blockchain** should be scaled up for real-time supply chain monitoring and predictive analytics.
- **Recycling of critical materials** such as lithium-ion batteries and rare earths should be scaled up.

Source: TH

GOVERNMENT REVISES PM E-DRIVE SCHEME

Context

- The government has revised the **PM Electric Drive Revolution in Innovative Vehicle Enhancement (PM E-DRIVE) scheme** to set new deadlines and unit caps for e-scooters and e-rickshaws.

Revision of the Scheme

- The Ministry of Heavy Industries has **extended subsidies** for electric two-wheelers till 31 July 2026, and for electric rickshaw and electric carts **till 31 March 2028.**
- The maximum ex-factory price to avail an incentive is capped at 1.5 lakh for electric two-wheelers and 2.5 lakh for electric three-wheelers (e-rickshaws and e-carts).

About PM E-DRIVE Scheme

- The scheme was launched in **2024** by The Ministry of Heavy Industry.
- The scheme duration was from October, 2024 till 31st March, 2026 and is now extended to March 31, 2028.
- **The EMPS-2024 (Electric Mobility Promotion Scheme)** was also subsumed under the PM E-DRIVE scheme.
- The PM E-DRIVE scheme is proposed to be implemented through the following components:
  - **Subsidies:** Demand Incentives for e-2W, e-3W, e-ambulances, e-trucks and other new emerging EV categories.
  - **Grants for creation of capital assets:** e-buses, establishment of network of charging stations & upgradation of testing agencies of MHI, and;
  - Administration of the Scheme including IEC (Information, Education & Communication) activities and fee for project management agency (PMA).
- **The following categories of vehicles are eligible for support:**
  - Buses (only electric buses) (e-bus);
  - Three-Wheelers (electric) including registered e-rickshaws & e-carts and L5 (e-3W);
  - Two wheelers (electric) – e-2W;
  - e-ambulances (electric, plug in hybrid & strong hybrid); and
  - e-trucks and other new emerging EV categories (to be notified subsequently).
- **Charging Stations:** The scheme addresses range anxiety of EV buyers by promoting in a big way the **installation of electric vehicle public charging stations (EVPCS).**

What are Electric Vehicles?

- An electric vehicle (EV) operates on an **electric motor,** instead of an internal-combustion engine that generates power by burning a mix of fuel and gases.
- They are seen as a possible **replacement for current-generation automobiles** in order to address the issue of rising pollution, global warming, depleting natural resources, etc.

Government Initiatives

- **National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (2020) and FAME-I:** NEMMP was brought into effect to accelerate the adoption and production of electric vehicles (EVs).
  - As part of this mission, the FAME India Scheme (Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles) was implemented from 2015 to 2019 to encourage the adoption of electric and hybrid vehicles.
- **FAME II (Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles) — Phase II:** Launched in 2019, the scheme focuses on increasing EV adoption, expanding the e-bus network, and strengthening the charging infrastructure.
- **Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Automobile and Auto Component Industry in India (PLI-Auto):** Launched in 2021, the scheme aims to boost domestic manufacturing of Advanced Automotive Technologies (AAT).
  - Major players like Tata Motors and Mahindra & Mahindra have stepped up with significant EV production investments.
  - A key mandate is that companies must ensure at least 50% domestic value addition (DVA) to qualify for incentives.
- **Scheme for Promotion of Manufacturing of Electric Passenger Cars in India 2024 (SPMEPCI):** To draw global automakers to invest, the scheme grants approved applicants a five-year window to import Completely Built-in Units (CBUs) of electric four-wheelers (e-4W) valued at a minimum CIF (Cost, Insurance, and Freight) of USD 35,000 at a significantly reduced customs duty of 15%.
- **India Electric Mobility Index (IEMI):** NITI Aayog unveiled the India Electric Mobility Index (IEMI) in 2025. It is designed to track, measure, and compare how States and Union Territories are progressing on their electric mobility ambitions.
  - Based on these results, regions are ranked as frontrunners with thriving ecosystems; Delhi, Maharashtra, and Chandigarh are leading as 'Frontrunners' in the recent IEMI score.
- **PM e-Bus Sewa-Payment Security Mechanism (PSM) Scheme:** It was notified in 2024, aims to support deployment of more than 38,000 electric buses.
  - The objective of the scheme is to provide payment security to e-bus operators in case of default by Public Transport Authorities (PTAs).

Source: TH

NEWS IN SHORT

BIRSA MUNDA

Context

- The Vice-President of India visited the birthplace of Birsa Munda in Jharkhand.

About

- **Birsa Munda was born** on **15th November 1875** in Ulihatu of the erstwhile Bengal Presidency (present day Jharkhand) .
  - He was a legendary Indian tribal freedom fighter, religious leader, and folk hero from the Munda tribe.
- **Birsait religion:** He founded a new religion called **"Birsait"** and declared himself as God's messenger. He believed in **One God.**
  - People of Munda and Oraon community joined the sect and challenged British conversion activities of tribals.
  - He was referred to as **'Dharti Abba or Father of Earth'** by his followers.
- **Munda Rebellion:** It was the tribal movement led by Birsa Munda against the oppressions of the British Raj and local exploiters (Dikus).
  - It is also referred to as **'Ulgulan'** or the **'Great Tumult'.**
  - In 1900 he was arrested in Jamkopai forest and passed away in custody (due to cholera).
  - **Outcome:** The British government introduced the **Chotanagpur Tenancy Act in 1908**, to prohibit the transfer of tribal land to **non-tribals (Dikus).**
- **Janjatiya Gaurav Divas:** Observed on November 15 **since 2021** to honor his legacy.

Source: HT

ZOJILA PASS

Context

- An **avalanche** at the **Zojila Pass** claimed multiple lives, raising concerns over traffic management and safety protocols on this high-risk mountain highway.
  - An avalanche is a rapid flow of snow down a slope, such as a hill or mountain.

Zojila Pass

- It is one of the **most critical and challenging high-altitude passes** in the world.
- It is located at 3,528 metres in Jammu and Kashmir.

- It is a vital link between the **Kashmir Valley and Ladakh.**
- It is known for its strategic importance and stunning Himalayan scenery.

Zojila Tunnel Project

- It is an under-construction tunnel situated at an altitude of 11,578 ft (around 3,500 metres) on the Srinagar-Leh Highway in Jammu and Kashmir.
- It will be India's longest road tunnel, and Asia's longest bi-directional tunnel.

Source: AIR

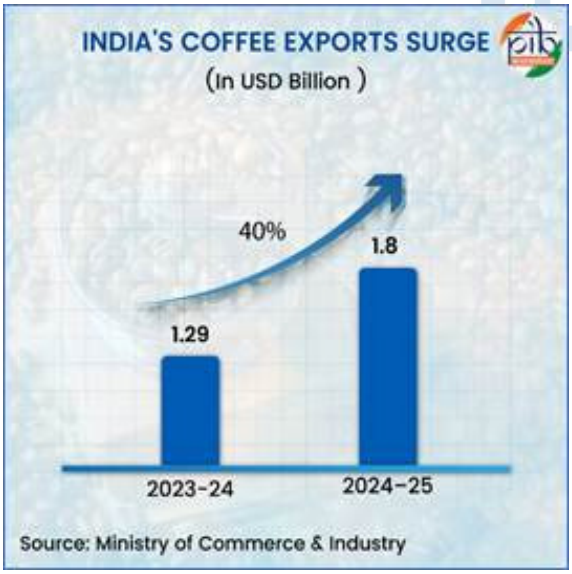
WEST ASIAN CRISIS DISRUPTS INDIA'S COFFEE EXPORTS

Context

- The ongoing crisis in West Asia has severely disrupted Indian coffee exports, stalling approximately 15–20% of shipments near the Persian Gulf, impacting key markets in West Asia and Europe.

Coffee Exports of India

- India ranks as the **fifth-largest** exporter of coffee.
- The top 5 export destinations for Indian coffee are **Italy (18.09percent), Germany (11.01percent), Belgium (7.47percent)**, the **Russian Federation (5.28percent),** and the **United Arab Emirates (5.09percent).**



Geographical Condition for Coffee production

- **Climate:** Coffee grows well in tropical climates. It requires a **warm, humid climate with mild winters**. Shade is essential for healthy growth, and coffee is often grown under tree cover.
- **Soil:** Requires **well-drained, fertile soils, rich in humus** and **organic matter.**
  - Soil should be slightly acidic, with a pH of **6.0–6.5.**
- **Temperature:** Ideal annual temperature ranges between **15°C and 28°C.**
  - Frost is harmful to **coffee plants**, and **extreme hot or dry conditions** also reduce yield.
- **Precipitation:** Coffee thrives in hilly regions with elevations of **600–1,600 metres** above sea level.
  - Sloping terrain ensures proper **drainage** and **prevents waterlogging.**
- **Major Coffee producing states** are **Karnataka** (largest producer, contributes nearly **70%** of India's coffee), Kerala, and Tamil Nadu.
  - **Other emerging states are:** Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, and the North-Eastern region (mainly Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, and Meghalaya).

Indian coffees with GI tags

- **Coorg Arabica** coffee: Grown in Kodagu district, Karnataka.
- **Wayanad robusta** coffee: Cultivated in Wayanad district, Kerala.
- **Chikmagalur Arabica** coffee: Produced in Chikmagalur district, Karnataka.
- **Bababudangiri Arabica coffee:** Grown in Chikmagalur, known for hints of chocolate.
- **Monsooned Malabar robusta coffee:** A distinctive speciality from Kerala, renowned for its unique taste.
- **Araku coffee:** cultivated in the hilly terrains of the Visakhapatnam district in **Andhra Pradesh and the Odisha region,** at elevations of **900-1100 meters** above sea level.

Key Takeaways

- *India ranks **7th** in global coffee production, contributing **3.5%**; Annual output is **3.6 lakh tonnes** of which **70%** exported to **128 countries**.*
- *Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu account for **96%** of India's coffee production, with Karnataka leading at an estimated **2,80,275 MT (2025–26).***
- *Coffee exports reached a record **USD 1.8 billion** in **FY 2024–25**, marking a **40%** increase from the previous year; India positioned as the **5th-largest** coffee exporter among the Coffee producing countries.*
- *Trade pacts like **India–UK CETA** and **India–EFTA TEPA** enable duty-free access to the UK, Switzerland, Norway, and Iceland.*
- *The GST reduction from **18% to 5%** on instant coffee is expected to lower prices by **11–12%,** boosting domestic demand and expanding market reach.*

Coffee Board of India

- It was established under the **Coffee Act VII of 1942.**
- It functions under the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry.**
- **Headquarters:** Bengaluru.

Source: TH

EXTRACELLULAR RNA (EXRNA)

Context

- Scientists have reported that **extracellular RNA (exRNA)** from bacteria can persist in disinfected drinking water.

About

- **Extracellular RNA (exRNA)** refers to RNA molecules that are **found outside cells,** circulating in body fluids such as blood, saliva, urine, and cerebrospinal fluid.
- **Normally, RNA (like mRNA, tRNA, etc.)** works inside cells to help make proteins. But in this case, RNA is released into the extracellular environment and can travel between cells.
- To survive outside the cell, exRNA travels in **its own molecular containers** that prevent enzymes from breaking it down before it reaches its destination.
- The discovery is significant as by just testing a patient's blood or other body fluids, **doctors can identify specific RNA patterns linked to cancer or heart disease.**

Ribonucleic Acid

- **RNA (Ribonucleic Acid)** is a **biological molecule** that helps convert **genetic information into proteins,** which are essential for life.
- RNA is a **single-stranded nucleic acid** made of nucleotides containing Ribose sugar, Phosphate group, Nitrogen bases: Adenine (A), Uracil (U), Cytosine (C), Guanine (G).
- **Different types of RNA exist in cells:** messenger RNA (mRNA), ribosomal RNA (rRNA) and transfer RNA (tRNA).

Source: TH

ARTEMIS 2 MISSION

Context

- NASA is going to launch the **Artemis II mission**.

About Artemis II

- **Artemis II** is part of **NASA's Artemis programme**, which aims to return humans to the Moon in a more sustained and strategic manner.
- The mission will send **four astronauts** on a journey **around the Moon**.
- Artemis II is part of a broader effort to establish a **long-term human presence on the Moon**.
- The mission treats the Moon not just as a destination, but as a **platform for deeper space exploration**.

Difference between Artemis and Apollo Missions

Apollo Programme	Artemis Programme
• The **Apollo programme** landed **12 humans on the Moon**. These landings took place **between 1969 and 1972**. • The astronauts landed **two at a time**. • Apollo missions were historic achievements, but they were designed primarily for **short-duration visits** and demonstration of technological capability.	• The **Artemis programme** aims not only to land humans on the Moon, but also to: ◆ develop the capability for **repeated missions**, ◆ support **long-term astronaut presence**, ◆ and create infrastructure needed for **future deep-space missions**. • Artemis is a stepping stone toward **more ambitious human exploration beyond the Moon**.

Source: TH

PM-KUSUM 2.0

In News

- The government is considering adding a **battery energy storage** component under the revamped **PM-KUSUM 2.0** scheme.

About PM-KUSUM

- **PM-KUSUM** stands for **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan**.
- The current **PM-KUSUM scheme**, launched in **2019**, is set to **expire in March 2026**. The revamped version is likely to be called **PM-KUSUM 2.0**.
- The proposal has gained importance because the existing scheme focuses on **solarisation of agricultural pumps** but does **not include battery storage**.
- The scheme seeks to reduce farmers' dependence on **diesel** and **grid electricity**.
- It also supports India's broader **renewable energy transition**.
- The scheme is implemented by the **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE)**.

- The scheme follows a **shared funding model** like 30 percent subsidy by Union government & state government each and 40 % contribution by the farmers.

Role of Battery Storage

- Battery storage can store **surplus solar power** generated during peak hours.
- It can then supply this stored power when demand remains high, but solar generation falls.
- Therefore, battery storage is being considered as a way to improve **energy management**, **power reliability** and **grid stability**.

Source: TH

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