DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 03-04-2025

GS-1

1. **Sarhul Festival**

GS-2

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Sarhul Festival

Syllabus: GS-1; Art & Culture

Context

- The Sarhul Festival, celebrated by Adivasi communities in Jharkhand and the Chhotanagpur region, marks the arrival of spring and the new year.

Celebration Highlights

- **Grand Processions in Ranchi:** Massive gatherings at Siram Toli Sarna Sthal, with tribals in traditional attire, singing folk songs, and carrying Sal flowers.
- **Cultural Performances:** Traditional dances like Karam and Jhumar, accompanied by Mandar drums.
- **Youth Participation:** Increased involvement from younger generations to promote tribal heritage.

Political Significance

- **Demand for Sarna Religion Code**: Tribal groups pushed for official recognition of Sarnaism in the census.
- **Controversy:** Hindu organizations argued Adivasis are part of Sanatan Dharma, leading to debates on identity.
- **Historical Context:** Processions, started by Baba Karthik Oraon in the 1960s, now symbolize tribal rights movements.

Ecological Importance

- **Sacred Groves (Sarna Sthals):** Protected forest patches central to rituals, acting as biodiversity hubs.
- **Deforestation Concerns:** Urban expansion near Ranchi threatens sacred groves.
- **Piplantri Model:** Activists suggest adopting Rajasthan's "111 trees per girl child" initiative in Jharkhand.

Expansion & Modern Trends

- **Global Celebrations:** Observed by tribal diaspora in Nepal, Bangladesh, Assam, and Andaman Islands.
- **Tourism Promotion:** Jharkhand government endorsed eco-cultural tourism, offering tribal homestays.
- **Commercialization Issues:** Traditional Handia (rice beer) being sold commercially, raising concerns over cultural dilution.

Challenges & Future Demands

- **Legal Recognition**: Persistent calls for Sarna as a separate religion in government records.
- **Environmental Protection:** Need for stricter policies to conserve sacred groves.
- **Cultural Preservation:** Balancing modernization with traditional practices.

India China 75th Anniversary of Diplomatic Ties

Syllabus: GS-2: International Relations –Bilateral Relations.

Context:

- As India and China mark 75 years of diplomatic ties, Chinese President Xi Jinping has called for a "cooperative" tango between the two Asian giants.

India-China: 75 Years of Diplomatic Relations (1950-2025)

Historical Background

- **Establishment of Diplomatic Ties**: On April 1, 1950, India became the first non-socialist country to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC), marking the beginning of formal ties.
- **Early Optimism**: The 1950s saw a period of goodwill, epitomized by the slogan *"Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai"* (India-China are brothers). India supported China's entry into the UN and recognized the PRC over Taiwan.

- **Panchsheel Agreement (1954)**: Both nations jointly advocated the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence during PM Nehru's visit to China and Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai's visit to India, laying a foundation for peaceful bilateral relations.

Key Milestones in 75 Years

- **1950s - Early Cooperation**:
  - India and China participated in the 1955 Bandung Conference, promoting the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and decolonization.
- **1962 Sino-Indian War**:
  - A major setback due to border disputes over Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh (then NEFA). China retained control over Aksai Chin, leading to a trust deficit.
- **1976 - Restoration of Ties**:
  - Ambassadorial relations resumed after a 15-year gap post-1962, signaling normalization efforts.
- **1988 - Rajiv Gandhi's Visit**:
  - Marked a turning point in improving relations. Both sides agreed to enhance bilateral ties and address the border issue peacefully.
- **1993 - Border Peace and Tranquility Agreement (BPTA)**:
  - Signed to maintain peace along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), followed by Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) in 1996.
- **2000s - Economic Boom**:
  - Trade grew from $3 billion (2000) to over $100 billion by 2021. China became India's largest trading partner by 2008.
- **2018 & 2019 - Informal Summits**:
  - Wuhan Summit (2018) and Mamallapuram Summit (2019) between PM Modi and President Xi aimed to reset ties post-Doklam standoff (2017).
- **2020 - Galwan Valley Clash**:
  - A violent clash along the LAC in Ladakh led to casualties on both sides, severely straining relations.
- **2025 - 75th Anniversary**:

- Celebrated on April 1, 2025, with diplomatic exchanges emphasizing stability, trust, and cooperation despite ongoing tensions.

Areas of Cooperation

- **Economic Ties**:
  - Bilateral trade reached $135 billion in 2022, though heavily skewed in China's favor (India's trade deficit ~$70-80 billion annually).
  - Key Indian exports: Iron ore, cotton, seafood.
  - Key imports from China: Electronics, machinery, pharmaceuticals.
- **Multilateral Engagements**:
  - BRICS, SCO, G20: Platforms for collaboration on global governance, climate change, and economic development.
- **Cultural Exchanges**:
  - Revival of Buddhist ties, educational exchanges (e.g., Education Exchange Programme, 2006), and people-to-people contact (e.g., Kailash Mansarovar Yatra).
- **Anniversary Celebrations**:
  - 70th anniversary (2020) saw plans for 70 joint activities, disrupted by COVID-19 and border tensions. The 75th anniversary focuses on resuming dialogue and public diplomacy.

Major Challenges

- **Border Disputes**:
  - Unresolved boundary along the 3,488 km LAC, with flashpoints like Aksai Chin, Arunachal Pradesh, Doklam (2017), and Galwan (2020).
  - Recent disengagement efforts (e.g., Gogra-Hot Springs, 2023) indicate de-escalation but no final resolution.
- **Trade Imbalance**:
  - India's dependence on Chinese imports (e.g., 70% of APIs, 45% of consumer durables) vs. limited market access for Indian goods in China.
- **Geopolitical Rivalry**:

- China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor) opposed by India due to sovereignty concerns over PoK.
- India's growing ties with the US, Japan, and Australia (Quad) seen as a counter to China's regional dominance.

- **Regional Influence**:
  - China's engagement with India's neighbors (e.g., Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal) via infrastructure projects raises strategic concerns for India.

Recent Developments (2020-2025)

- **Post-Galwan Tensions**:
  - India banned 200+ Chinese apps, tightened FDI norms, and reduced economic reliance on China.
- **Diplomatic Revival**:
  - Modi-Xi meeting at BRICS Summit (Kazan, 2023) and the 23rd Special Representatives (SR) meeting (2024) signaled a thaw in relations.
  - Focus on de-escalation along LAC and confidence-building measures.
- **75th Anniversary (2025)**:
  - Resumption of Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, hydrological data sharing on trans-border rivers (e.g., Brahmaputra), and direct air services planned.
  - Emphasis on strategic trust and a multipolar world order.

Significance for India

- **Strategic Autonomy**: Balancing relations with China while strengthening ties with Western powers and regional allies.
- **Economic Opportunities**: Leveraging China's market while reducing dependency through initiatives like *Atmanirbhar Bharat*.
- **Regional Stability**: Peace along the LAC critical for India's security and development in border areas (e.g., Vibrant Villages Programme).
- **Global Role**: Cooperation with China in multilateral forums enhances India's voice in the Global South.

Way Forward

- **Diplomatic Engagement**: Regular high-level talks to build trust and resolve border issues.
- **Border Management**: Strengthen infrastructure (e.g., Sela Tunnel in Arunachal Pradesh) and defense preparedness.
- **Economic Balance**: Diversify trade, promote Indian exports (e.g., IT, pharmaceuticals), and reduce import reliance.
- **Multilateral Cooperation**: Use BRICS, SCO to align interests on global issues like climate change and terrorism.

Monetary Policy

Syllabus: GS-3: Indian Economy – Monetary Policy.

Context:

- Economist Poonam Gupta has been appointed a deputy governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for a three-year term.
- She will drive the monetary policy as the central bank faces inflationary pressure amid a global tariff war.

Introduction to Monetary Policy

Monetary Policy refers to the macroeconomic policy laid down by the **central bank (RBI in India)** to regulate the **money supply, credit availability, and interest rates** to achieve economic objectives such as **price stability, economic growth, and financial stability**.

Objectives of Monetary Policy

- **Price Stability** – Controlling inflation/deflation.
- **Economic Growth** – Ensuring adequate credit flow for productive sectors.
- **Exchange Rate Stability** – Managing forex reserves to prevent excessive currency volatility.
- **Full Employment** – Supporting job creation via economic expansion.
- **Financial Stability** – Preventing banking crises and ensuring liquidity.

Types of Monetary Policy

(A) Expansionary Monetary Policy

- **Objective:** Boost economic growth during recession/low demand.
- **Tools Used:**
  - ↓ Repo Rate
  - ↓ Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR)
  - ↓ Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR)
  - Open Market Operations (OMO) – Buying govt. securities

(B) Contractionary Monetary Policy

- **Objective:** Control inflation by reducing money supply.
- **Tools Used:**
  - ↑ Repo Rate
  - ↑ CRR & SLR
  - OMO – Selling govt. securities

Monetary Policy Tools in India

(A) Quantitative Tools

1. **Repo Rate**
   - Rate at which RBI lends to commercial banks (currently ~6.5%).
   - ↓ Repo Rate → Cheaper loans → More investment & consumption.
2. **Reverse Repo Rate**
   - Rate at which RBI borrows from banks (usually 0.25-1% below repo rate).
   - ↑ Reverse Repo Rate → Banks park more funds with RBI → ↓ Money supply.
3. **Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR)**
   - % of deposits banks must keep with RBI (currently 4.5%).
   - ↑ CRR → Less money for lending → ↓ Inflation.
4. **Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR)**
   - % of deposits banks must invest in govt. securities (currently 18%).
   - ↑ SLR → Less credit available → ↓ Money supply.
5. **Open Market Operations (OMO)**

- RBI buys/sells govt. bonds to adjust liquidity.

6. **Marginal Standing Facility (MSF)**
    - Emergency borrowing window for banks (Repo + 0.25%).

(B) Qualitative Tools

- **Moral Suasion** – RBI advises banks on lending policies.
- **Credit Rationing** – Limits on sectoral credit flow.
- **Margin Requirements** – Changing collateral requirements for loans.

Monetary Policy Framework in India

(A) Before 2016: Multiple Indicators Approach

- RBI considered GDP growth, inflation, exchange rate, etc.

(B) Post-2016: Flexible Inflation Targeting (FIT)

- **Inflation Target:** 4% (±2%) as per **Urjit Patel Committee (2014)**.
- **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** formed (6 members: 3 RBI + 3 Govt.).
- **Meetings:** Bi-monthly (6 times a year).

Key Concepts

(A) Transmission Mechanism

- How RBI's policy rates affect the broader economy: **Repo Rate → Bank Lending Rates → Investment & Consumption → GDP Growth**

(B) Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF)

- Includes Repo & Reverse Repo to manage short-term liquidity.

(C) Neutral Interest Rate

- Rate that neither stimulates nor restricts economic growth.

(D) Zero Lower Bound (ZLB) Problem

- When interest rates are near 0%, conventional monetary policy fails (e.g., Japan).

Challenges in Monetary Policy

- **Time Lag** – Delay in policy impact.
- **Incomplete Transmission** – Banks may not pass rate cuts to borrowers.

- **Global Spillovers** – Fed rate hikes can trigger capital outflows.
- **Fiscal Dominance** – Govt. borrowing can constrain RBI's policy.

Recent Developments

- **COVID-19 Response:** RBI cut repo rate to 4% (2020), introduced LTRO, TLTRO.
- **Inflation Targeting Review (2021-2026):** Retained 4% (±2%) target.
- **Digital Currency (e₹):** RBI exploring CBDC (Central Bank Digital Currency).

UPSC Previous Year Questions

- **2023:** "Discuss the role of the Monetary Policy Committee in inflation targeting in India."
- **2021:** "How does the RBI use OMOs to manage liquidity?"
- **2019:** "Explain the concept of 'liquidity trap' in monetary policy."

Conclusion

Monetary Policy is crucial for macroeconomic stability. The RBI uses **interest rates, reserve ratios, and OMOs** to balance growth and inflation. The **MPC and inflation targeting** have brought transparency, but challenges like **transmission lags** persist.

Artemis Accords

Syllabus: GS-3: Science and Technology – Space science.

Context:

- Slovenia signs NASA's Artemis Accords for cooperative space exploration.

What are Artemis accords?

- The Artemis Accords are established by the U.S. State Department and NASA along with seven other founding members: Australia, Canada, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, the United Arab Emirates, and the United Kingdom in 2020.
- Their purpose is to set common principles governing the civil exploration and use of outer space, including the Moon, Mars, comets, and asteroids, for peaceful purposes.
- They build upon the foundation of the Outer Space Treaty of 1967.
- The Outer Space Treaty, a multilateral pact under the United Nations, forms the basis of international space law.

- The treaty emphasizes space as a shared resource for humanity, prohibits national appropriation, and promotes the peaceful use of space.

Commitments under the Accords:

Commitment	Description
Peaceful Purposes	Conduct space activities for peaceful purposes in accordance with international law, implementing MOUs between governments or agencies.
Common Infrastructure	Acknowledge the importance of common exploration infrastructure to enhance scientific discovery and commercial utilization.
Registration and Data Sharing	Register relevant space objects and openly share scientific data in a timely manner. Private sectors are exempt unless acting on behalf of a signatory.
Preservation of Heritage	Preserve historic landing sites, artifacts, and evidence of activity on celestial bodies.
Utilization of Space Resources	Ensure utilization of space resources supports safe and sustainable activities without interfering with other signatories' activities. Share information to prevent interference.
Mitigation of Debris	Plan for the safe disposal of spacecraft and limit the generation of harmful debris.

Missions under Artemis Program:

Artemis-I: Unmanned Mission to the Moon

- Launched the spacecraft "Orion" on the Space Launch System (SLS) from NASA's Kennedy Space Center on November 16, 2022.
- The SLS carried Orion directly to the moon on a single mission.

Artemis-II: Crewed Lunar Flyby Mission

- Scheduled for 2024, it will be the first crewed mission under the Artemis program.
- Four astronauts will be aboard the SLS, performing maneuvers on an expanding orbit around Earth.
- The mission will involve a lunar flyby before returning to Earth.

Artemis-III: Human Return to the Moon

- Set for 2025, this mission marks a significant milestone in human space exploration.
- Astronauts will land on the lunar surface, going beyond the lunar flyby of Artemis-II to study the moon extensively.
- Establishment of Lunar Gateway Station
- Planned for 2029.
- This station will serve as a docking point for astronauts and facilitate scientific research and experiments.

9K33 Osa-AK Missile System

Syllabus: GS-3: Science and Technology – Defence Technology.

Context:

- Indian Army has conducted a live missile firing exercise at the Gopalpur Seawards Firing Ranges in Odisha, involving the firing of the 9K33 Osa-AK missile system, with all direct hits on the maneuverable expandable aerial targets (MEAT).

Introduction

- **Definition**: The 9K33 Osa-AK is a Soviet/Russian-built, highly mobile, low-altitude, short-range tactical surface-to-air missile (SAM) system.
- **NATO Designation**: Known as SA-8B "Gecko Mod-0" in NATO terminology.
- **Purpose**: Designed to protect troops and strategic assets from aerial threats, including aircraft, helicopters, and drones, during mobile combat and on the march.
- **Development**: Originated in the Soviet Union in the 1960s; Osa-AK variant introduced in 1975 as an upgrade to the original 9K33 Osa system.

Historical Background

- **Origin**: Development began in 1960 under the Soviet Union to counter low-flying aerial threats, with the base 9K33 Osa entering service in 1971-1972.
- **Osa-AK Upgrade**: Introduced in 1975 with enhanced capabilities over the original Osa system, reflecting advancements in missile and radar technology.
- **Global Use**: Exported to numerous countries, including India, and widely used in conflicts like the Gulf War, Russo-Georgian War, and Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Technical Specifications

- **Platform**: Mounted on a six-wheeled BAZ-5937 transporter erector launcher and radar (TELAR) vehicle.
    - Fully amphibious and air-transportable.
    - Road range: Approximately 500 km.
- **Missile**: Uses 9M33M2 missiles.
    - Sealed rounds housed in ribbed containers.
    - Maximum range: 12 km.
    - Maximum altitude: 5 km (upgraded in later variants).
- **Radar**: Features the 1S51M3-2 "Land Roll" radar system.
    - Derived from the naval "Pop Group" radar but compact and without stabilization needs.
    - Autonomous detection, tracking, and engagement capability.
- **Payload**: Carries six missiles (up from four in the original Osa), improving firepower.
- **Engine**: Powered by a 300 hp turbocharged diesel engine, with an auxiliary gas turbine for stationary operations.