DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 23-04-2026

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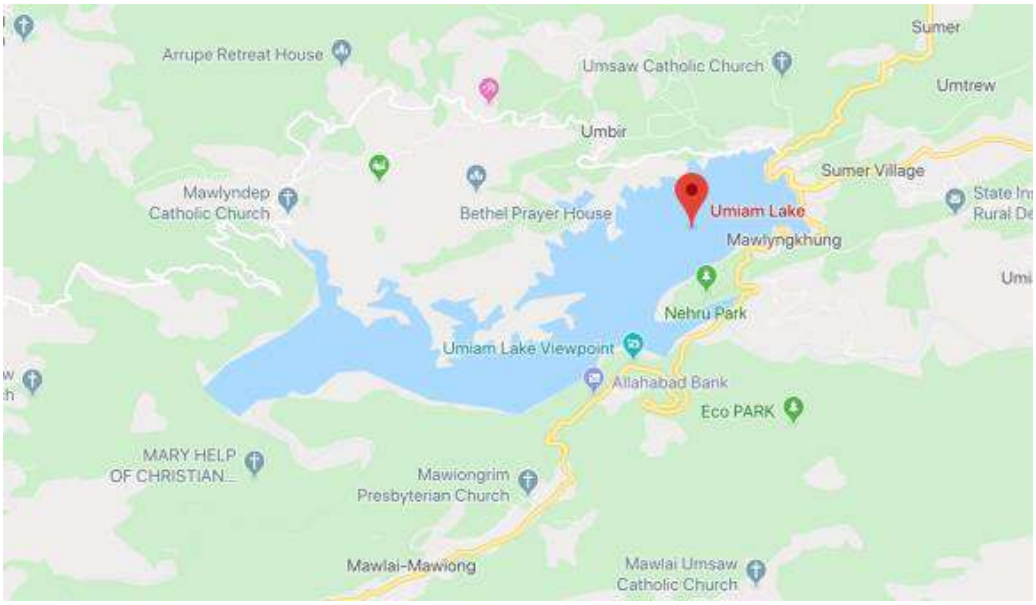
Umiam Lake

Syllabus: Prelims Bits – Lakes in news.

Context:

- The Meghalaya government announced that Lumpongdeng Island in the middle of Umiam Lake will be kept out of the proposed luxury resort project, following protests and concerns raised by local stakeholders.

About Umiam Lake



Location & Nomenclature

- Umiam Lake (also known as Barapani Lake) is a man-made reservoir in Meghalaya, 15 km north of Shillong.
- It is encircled by lush green East Khasi Hills.

History & Formation

- Created in 1965 as part of the UmiamUmtru Hydroelectric Power Project.
- First hydroelectric project in Northeast India.
- Initiated by Assam State Electricity Board with assistance from Government of India and Canadian International Development Agency.

River System & Dam Features

- Constructed by building a dam across the Umiam River, a tributary of the Brahmaputra River.
- Dam specifications: 2200 feet long and 95 feet high.

- Installed capacity: Four turbines generating 60 MW of electricity.

Source of Water & Catchment

- Confluence of streams Umkhrah and Umshyrpi forms Wah Ro-ro stream, which joins Umiam River (main source of water for the lake).
- Principal catchment area: ~220 sq km, covering Shillong and adjoining areas.

Significance

- Important source of water and hydropower in the region.
- Popular venue for water sports and adventure activities.

Vishwa Sutra Initiative

Syllabus: GS-3: Indian Industry – Textile Sector.

Context:

- Recently, the Ministry of Textiles has launched an initiative called **'Vishwa Sutra – Weaves of India for the World'**

About Vishwa Sutra Initiative

- **Institutional Framework:** Initiative of the Office of the Development Commissioner (Handlooms) in collaboration with the National Institute of Fashion Technology
- **Aim:** To present Indian handlooms in a contemporary global design framework
- **Coverage:** 30 distinct handloom weaves from across the country, each representing a different state
- **Conceptual Approach:**
    - Weaves creatively reinterpreted with design inspirations drawn from 30 countries
    - Reflects diverse cultures and modern fashion sensibilities
- **Traditional Continuity:** Reflects the depth and continuity of India's handloom traditions—techniques preserved and refined across generations

Illustrative Examples

- Odisha Ikat with Greek forms
- Kanchipuram with Norwegian lines

- Muga with Egyptian elements
- Patola with Spanish influences
- Banarasi with UAE-inspired ensembles

Significance

- **Vocal for Local to Global:** Reflects Government of India's commitment to transforming traditional industries into globally competitive sectors
- **5F Framework:** Supports **Farm → Fibre → Factory → Fashion → Foreign** (integrated value chain approach for textile sector)

Market Intervention Scheme

Syllabus: GS-3: Indian Agriculture – Agriculture Price Policy.

Context:

- Recently, the Union Agriculture Ministry announced procurement of **20 lakh metric tonnes (LMT) of potatoes** under the Market Intervention Scheme (MIS)

About Market Intervention Scheme (MIS)

Nature and Framework

- It is a component of **Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan (PM-AASHA)**
- Implemented **on the request of the State/UT Government**
- Covers **perishable agricultural commodities** such as Tomato, Onion, Potato etc. **for which MSP is not fixed**

Objective

- To **intervene in the market** to protect growers from **distress sale**
- Applicable in situations of **bumper crop during peak arrival period**
- When prices **fall below economic levels and cost of production**

Pattern of Assistance

- **Loss sharing** between Centre and State:
  - **50:50 basis** (General States)
  - **75:25 basis** (North-Eastern States)

Implementation Mechanism

- Implemented by **Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare**

Conditions for Implementation

- Activated only when:
  - There is a **minimum reduction of 10% in prevailing market price** compared to previous normal year
  - **Procurement/coverage limit** is restricted to **25% of production quantity of crops**

Significance

- Targets **price stabilization in non-MSP crops**, complementing MSP regime
- Focus on **perishables → high price volatility and farmer vulnerability**
- Reflects **cooperative federalism** (State request + cost sharing)
- Limitation: **Restricted coverage (25%) and conditional triggers** may reduce effectiveness in severe market crashes

Matine Spatial Planning

Syllabus: GS-1: Resource Geography – Exploration of Resources.

Context:

- The Odisha government has partnered with the National Centre for Coastal Research under the **Ministry of Earth Sciences** to launch a Marine Spatial Plan (MSP) for integrated coastal and marine management.
- Sustainable ocean planning in India began in 2019 through a partnership with Norway; initial phase focused on the Union Territories of Puducherry and Lakshadweep.
- Building on this, Odisha has now become the first state to implement Marine Spatial Planning in the second phase.

National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR): Role and Functions

- The **National Centre for Coastal Research** (NCCR), established in 1998 in Chennai under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, is a key institution for scientific research and monitoring of coastal and marine environments.
- Originally known as **Integrated Coastal and Marine Area Management Project Directorate (ICMAM-PD),** it supports sustainable coastal management, hazard mitigation, and ecosystem protection.

Key Functions

- **Shoreline Management:** Tracks coastal erosion and changes using satellite and field data, generating maps for all Indian states and Union Territories.
- **Pollution and Water Quality Monitoring:** Assesses coastal water health across multiple hotspots, studying pollutants such as microplastics and heavy metals.
- **Hazard Mitigation:** Develops tools like coastal flood warning systems and shoreline assessment systems to manage risks from tsunamis and storm surges.
- **Ecosystem Research:** Conducts studies on coastal habitats to support sustainable resource management.
- **Capacity Building:** Promotes awareness and training through internships, lab visits, and educational initiatives in ocean and environmental sciences.

Marine Spatial Planning (MSP): Framework for Sustainable Ocean Management

- Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) is a strategic tool for **integrated and sustainable management of ocean resources,** aimed at promoting the blue economy and enhancing climate resilience.
- **Enables planned use of marine spaces** for activities such as energy generation, ports and industries, fisheries, aquaculture, tourism, and environmental conservation.
- Under MSP, experts map coastal and marine areas to allocate specific zones for different human activities, balancing ecological protection with economic and social objectives.
- In India, MSP is part of the Indo-Norway Integrated Ocean Initiative launched in 2019, aligning with the government's focus on the blue economy as a key growth driver.

Marine Spatial Planning in Odisha: Context and Significance

- Odisha has a coastline of over 550 km, characterised by lagoons, mangroves, and estuaries; these ecosystems support biodiversity, livelihoods, and economic activities, making coastal management crucial.

Scientific Mapping and Data-Driven Planning

- Under the MoU with NCCR, detailed studies will be conducted on:
    - Water characteristics: salinity, temperature, and other parameters
    - Benthic mapping: mapping vegetation beneath the sea
    - Identification of zones suitable for tourism; fisheries and aquaculture; seagrass and seaweed cultivation; other economic activities
- This data will help the government formulate evidence-based policies.

Boost to Coastal Economy and Livelihoods

- MSP is expected to support multiple sectors, including fisheries, ports, tourism, and ocean-based industries; will benefit various stakeholders dependent on coastal resources.
- With increasing developmental pressures and environmental concerns, there is a growing need for balanced ecosystem management.
- MSP will help meet sectoral demands, protect marine ecosystems, and ensure long-term environmental sustainability.

Supporting Initiative: Odisha Marine Biotechnology Corridor

- In August 2025, Odisha launched the Odisha Marine Biotechnology Research and Innovation Corridor (OMBRIC) to harness biotechnology for marine conservation and economic development.

Objectives

- Promote marine biotechnology research
- Support startups and enterprises in the marine sector
- Enhance ecological protection
- Develop scientific tourism
- Strengthen livelihood opportunities for coastal communities
- The initiative is designed to reinforce MSP by integrating scientific innovation with sustainable coastal management, ensuring a balanced approach to growth and environmental protection.

India South Korea Relations

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

Context:

- Visiting South Korean President **Lee Jae Myung** held a bilateral meeting with the Indian Prime Minister at Hyderabad House, New Delhi.
- Visit marks a significant step in elevating the **India–South Korea Special Strategic Partnership** with agreements in trade, technology, maritime, and culture.

India–South Korea Relations

Background

- Established in **1973** → evolved into **"Special Strategic Partnership" (2015)** driven by:
    - Robust economic trade,
    - Technological and security convergence,
    - Defense collaboration,
    - Investments by major Korean conglomerates (Samsung, Hyundai).

Key Aspects

- **Political & Strategic:** Supported by convergence of India's *Act East Policy* and South Korea's *New Southern Policy*.
- **Defense & Technology:**
    - Focus on joint production and research, e.g., **K9 Vajra-T gun system** (manufactured in India using Korean technology).
    - Cooperation in AI and shipbuilding.
- **Cultural Bonds:**
    - Strengthened via initiatives like Queen Suriratna memorial in Ayodhya.

Significance

- Crucial for **Indo-Pacific security** and **economic development** of both nations.

Key Outcomes of the Meeting

1. Trade and Economic Cooperation

- Target: Scale bilateral trade from **$27 billion → $50 billion by 2030**.
- Agreement to restart **CEPA (Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement)** upgrade negotiations.
    - CEPA (2010): Trade grew ~90% (**$14.2B → $26.89B (2024–25)**).
    - India faces **trade deficit** (~$21B imports vs ~$5.8B exports).

Recent Developments:

- 11 rounds of CEPA upgradation talks completed.
- Launch of **India–Korea Financial Forum**.
- Establishment of **Industrial Cooperation Committee**.
- Initiation of **Economic Security Dialogue** (focus: critical technologies & supply chains).

2. Digital and Industrial Partnership

- Launch of **India–Korea Digital Bridge** → cooperation in AI, semiconductors, IT.
- Agreements on digital cooperation and SME support.
- Plan for **Korean Industrial Township** in India → ease market entry for Korean SMEs.

3. Maritime and Shipbuilding Cooperation

- Signing of **Comprehensive Framework for Partnership in Shipbuilding, Shipping, and Maritime Logistics**.
  - Korea: advanced shipbuilding technology.
  - India: policy support, land, growing order base.
- Launch of foreign ministry-level dialogue on **climate change, Arctic, and maritime cooperation**.

4. Multilateral and Geopolitical Alignment

- South Korea joined:
  - **International Solar Alliance (ISA)**
  - **Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI)**
- Agreement on **reform of global institutions**.
- Shared concerns on conflicts in West Asia & Europe → emphasis on peace for global stability.

5. Cultural Diplomacy – People-to-People Connect

- Rising popularity of **K-pop & K-dramas** in India; Indian cinema gaining traction in Korea.
- Launch of **Mumbai Korea Centre** → K-pop performance hall & cultural hub.
- Proposal for **India–Korea Friendship Festival (2028)**.

Challenges

- **Trade Imbalance:** Persistent structural issue; limited outcomes of CEPA upgrade talks.
- **Shipbuilding Capacity in India:** Needs infrastructure, skilled labour, regulatory reforms.
- **Geopolitical Uncertainties:** Risks to energy supply chains.
- **Implementation Deficit:** Challenges in grounding MoUs, especially for SMEs & tech transfer.

Way Forward

- **Fast-track CEPA renegotiation:** Reduce trade deficit; expand Indian exports (pharma, textiles, IT services).
- **Leverage Digital Tech:** Co-develop semiconductor supply chains amid chip geopolitics.
- **Attract FDI:** Korean investments into industrial corridors.
- **Build Resilient Supply Chains:** Critical minerals & emerging technologies.
- **Align Maritime Cooperation:** With Sagarmala Project & Maritime India Vision 2030.
- **Position Indo-Pacific:** As a zone of cooperative prosperity.

Conclusion

- Marks a shift from conventional ties → **technology-driven strategic partnership**.
- "**Chips to ships, talent to technology**" reflects the expanding scope.
- South Korea emerges as a **key partner** for India in navigating a **multipolar world** with shared democratic values and technological complementarities.