DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 09-05-2026

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Lake Chad

Syllabus: GS-1: Geography – Lakes.

Context:

- At least 23 Chadian soldiers were killed and 26 injured in a Boko Haram attack on a military post in the Lake Chad region of Chad recently.

About Lake Chad

- Lake Chad is a **freshwater lake** located in the **semi-arid Sahel region** of west-central Africa.
- It is situated mainly in **western Chad**, with parts extending into **Cameroon, Nigeria, and Niger**.

- Lake Chad was once the **sixth largest lake in the world**, but **prolonged drought** and **increased water use** have drastically reduced its size.
- Presently, the lake covers **less than one-tenth** of the area it occupied in the 1960s.
- It is an **endorheic lake** (a lake with **no outlet to the sea**).
- The **Chari River** (about **1,400 km long**) is the main river feeding the lake and contributes nearly **90% of its water**.
- The lake is **shallow**, with depth generally **less than 10 metres**.
- Lake Chad contains several **small islands, mud banks, and reed beds**, occupying nearly **half of its area**.
- The surrounding region shows a complex interaction of **sand deserts and water bodies**, forming networks of **meanders**, some of which are cultivated.

Geography

- Inland drainage system (Endorheic basin)
- Sahel region and desertification
- Shrinking lakes and climate change impacts

Internal Security

- **Boko Haram insurgency** in the Lake Chad Basin region
- Cross-border security challenges in Africa

Environment

- **Water scarcity** and ecological degradation
- Impact of drought and anthropogenic water use on freshwater ecosystems

UDGAM Portal

Syllabus: GS-3: Indian Economy – RBI initiatives.

Context:

- The Reserve Bank of India recently informed the Supreme Court of India that 30 banks have been integrated into the centralized UDGAM portal to enable legal heirs to trace funds belonging to deceased account holders.

About UDGAM Portal

- UDGAM (**Unclaimed Deposits-Gateway to Access inforMation**) is an online portal developed by the Reserve Bank of India.
- RBI collaborated with **Reserve Bank Information Technology Pvt Ltd** (ReBIT), Indian Financial Technology & Allied Services (IFTAS), and **selected banks** for development of the platform.
- It facilitates registered users to search unclaimed deposits/accounts across multiple banks at one place in a centralized manner.
- At present, **30 banks are part of the UDGAM portal**, covering around 90% of unclaimed deposits (in value terms) in the Depositor Education and Awareness (DEA) Fund of RBI.
- All unclaimed deposits/accounts that are part of the DEA Fund of RBI can be searched through the portal.

- It provides information related to both individual and non-individual category of unclaimed deposits.

Functions of the Portal

- UDGAM portal facilitates only:
  - Search of unclaimed deposits/accounts across multiple banks at one place.
  - Information regarding claim/settlement process of respective banks (available in search results).
- The portal does not directly settle or transfer claims.
- Unclaimed deposits can be claimed only from the respective bank.

Unclaimed Deposit Reference Number (UDRN)

- After registration on the **UDGAM portal,** a person receives UDRN.
- **UDRN is a unique number generated** through Core Banking Solution (CBS) by banks and assigned to each unclaimed account/deposit transferred to the DEA Fund of RBI.
- It ensures that **neither the account holder nor the bank branch** maintaining the account can be identified by any third party.
- UDRN enables bank branches to seamlessly settle claims received from customers/depositors who have made successful searches on the portal.

What are Unclaimed Deposits?

- According to RBI, "Unclaimed Deposits" refer to:
  - Funds in savings/current accounts remaining inactive for 10 years.
  - Fixed Deposits (FDs) not withdrawn within 10 years from the maturity date.
- Such deposits are transferred by banks to the Depositor Education and Awareness (DEA) Fund maintained by the Reserve Bank of India.

Significance

- Enhances transparency and accessibility in tracing dormant bank deposits.
- Reduces difficulties faced by depositors/legal heirs in locating unclaimed funds.
- Supports depositor protection and financial awareness initiatives of RBI.

Methane Alert and Response System

Syllabus: GS-3: Environment – Pollution – Methane Pollution.

Context:

- Recently, the United Nations Environment Programme's **International Methane Emissions Observatory (IMEO)** announced that the Methane Alert and Response System (MARS) will be expanded to **cover coal mines and waste facilities**.

About Methane Alert and Response System (MARS)

- **A data-to-action platform** set up as part of UNEP's International Methane Emissions Observatory (IMEO) mission.
- Aims to put **open, reliable and actionable data** into the hands of those who can reduce emissions.
- **First public global satellite detection and notification system** providing actionable data on very large methane emissions worldwide.
- Announced at the **United Nations Climate Change Conference COP27** in November 2022; initial pilot phase began in January 2023.

Objective

- Uses satellites to scan the globe for **major emission sources.**
- **Alerts countries** and companies to take methane action.
- Accelerates progress in support of the **Paris Agreement** and the **Global Methane Pledge.**

Working of MARS

- Detection of large sources of **human-caused methane emissions**.
- Notification of relevant countries and companies regarding detected emissions.
- Response by notified stakeholders to address emissions.
- **Tracking progress of mitigation actions** and collaboration to prevent future methane emissions.

International Methane Emissions Observatory (IMEO)

- Launched at the **G20 Leaders Summit 2021.**
- Initially focused on methane emissions from the fossil fuel industry.
- Reconciles methane data from:
    - Scientific measurement studies

- Satellites through MARS
- Rigorous industry reporting through OGMP 2.0
- National inventories

Oil and Gas Methane Partnership 2.0 (OGMP 2.0)

- **UNEP's flagship programme** for improving accuracy and transparency of methane emissions data from the oil and gas sector.
- **Partnership framework** involving companies committed to systematic methane emissions reporting and reduction.

Ecocide International Law Debate

Syllabus: GS-3: Environment and Ecology – Related Concepts.

Context:

- The term "ecocide" has gained renewed attention amid recent conflicts in West Asia, with Lebanon and Iran accusing Israel of causing severe environmental destruction during military operations.
- Although international law already addresses severe environmental damage in armed conflict, activists and legal experts are demanding recognition of ecocide as a separate international crime under the framework of the International Criminal Court (ICC).
- Objective: strengthen accountability, broaden environmental protection, and recognise environmental destruction as a serious global crime.

Ecocide: Meaning, Origin and Recognition

Meaning

- Ecocide refers to severe and large-scale environmental destruction caused by human activities, resulting in widespread or long-term ecological harm.
- Commonly associated with:
  - Industrial disasters
  - War-related environmental damage
  - Actions devastating ecosystems

Legal Recognition in National Laws

- Vietnam became the first country to include ecocide in domestic law in 1990.

- Other countries incorporating similar provisions:
  - Russia
  - Ukraine
  - France
  - Belgium
  - Chile

Proposed International Definition (2021)

- Ecocide proposed as:
  - "Unlawful or reckless acts committed with awareness that they could cause severe, widespread, or long-term environmental damage."

Lack of International Recognition

- Despite growing attention and national-level recognition, ecocide is still not formally recognised as an international crime under global law.

Existing International Law on Environmental Damage

Rome Statute of ICC

- The International Criminal Court Rome Statute treats attacks causing "widespread, long-term and severe" environmental damage as war crimes when they directly affect human beings.

Geneva Conventions

- Prohibit warfare methods causing major environmental harm.

ENMOD Convention

- Environmental Modification Convention (ENMOD) bans deliberate manipulation of natural processes causing severe consequences.

State Responsibility Principle

- Environmental harm can be challenged through:
  - State sovereignty principles
  - Cross-border responsibility obligations
- Example: pollution of rivers flowing into another country may constitute violation of international obligations.

Ecocide vs Existing International Law

Existing International Law

- Largely anthropocentric:
    - Environment protected mainly because destruction harms humans.

Ecocide Concept

- Recognises environment itself as a victim deserving independent legal protection.

Key Difference

- Shift from:
    - Human-centred protection → Ecocentric legal protection.

Significance

- Would establish accountability for large-scale ecological destruction even where immediate human suffering is not directly visible.

Limitations of Current International Law

Limited Scope

- Rome Statute provisions mainly apply during armed conflict, not peacetime ecological disasters.

Jurisdictional Challenges

- Countries such as Iran and Lebanon are not parties to the ICC.
- Prosecution possible only through:
    - Referral by United Nations Security Council
    - Special legal arrangements

Absence of Criminal Liability

- Most environmental agreements do not impose direct international criminal liability for ecological destruction.
- Many acts causing severe environmental harm escape effective punishment.

Amendment Procedure

- Adding ecocide to the Rome Statute requires:
    - Proposal by a State Party
    - Approval by two-thirds majority of member states
    - Fulfilment of additional legal conditions before enforcement

Major Obstacle: Enforcement

Practical Limitation

- No direct prosecution has yet occurred for war-related environmental destruction.

Political Constraints

- International law depends heavily on:
  - Political will
  - Compliance by powerful states

Result

- International law often functions more as:
  - Moral restraint
  - Diplomatic pressure mechanism
  - Rather than coercive enforcement system

Significance of Recognising Ecocide

- Establishes legal and ethical standards
- Discourages impunity for environmental destruction
- Prevents states from claiming legitimacy for ecologically destructive actions
- Strengthens global environmental governance

Growing International Recognition

IUCN Recognition

- International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has passed motions recognising ecocide as a crime.

Council of Europe Convention (2025)

- Council of Europe adopted:
  - "Convention on the Protection of the Environment through Criminal Law"
- Significance:
  - First binding international treaty criminalising severe and large-scale environmental destruction
  - Allows European domestic courts to prosecute such crimes even if committed outside Europe

Analytical Takeaway

- Debate reflects transition from anthropocentric environmental jurisprudence to ecocentric legal thinking.

- Recognition of ecocide may strengthen global environmental accountability but effectiveness depends on enforcement capacity and political consensus.
- Issue links environment, international law, ethics, human security, and global governance.

India's Energy Security Amid Global Conflicts

Syllabus: GS-3: Indian Economy – Industry – Energy Sector.

Context:

- Recent geopolitical conflicts, particularly in West Asia, have exposed the fragility of global energy markets and their immediate transmission effects on domestic economies like India.
- India, importing over 85% of its crude oil, faces acute vulnerability to external shocks.
- Sharp rise in Brent crude prices during conflicts and projected macroeconomic impacts, including slower GDP growth and rising inflation.
- Highlights that energy security today extends beyond cost efficiency to resilience and strategic diversification.

Changing Definition of Energy Security

- Traditionally, energy security meant ensuring access to affordable fuel.
- Evolving geopolitical landscape has fundamentally altered this definition; today it encompasses:
    - Resilience against supply disruptions
    - Diversification of suppliers and routes
    - Macroeconomic stability amid price volatility
- The Russia-Ukraine conflict exposed risks of overdependence on a single supplier.
- Europe's response:
    - Reduced reliance on Russian gas from 45% to 12%
    - Accepted underutilised LNG infrastructure
    - Shifted toward "insurance-based" energy planning rather than pure efficiency

Impact of West Asia Conflict on India

- Ongoing tensions in West Asia have amplified risks for India due to heavy reliance on maritime oil routes.
- Strait of Hormuz:
  - Nearly 25% of global oil passes through this route
  - Critical for price stability and supply continuity
- India imports roughly 45% of its crude through this route, making it highly susceptible to disruptions.
- Geopolitical shocks can quickly translate into:
  - Domestic inflationary pressures
  - Economic slowdown
- Operational risks have also increased:
  - Indian LPG carriers required naval escort under Operation Sankalp during heightened tensions.

India's Energy Demand and Global Position

- India is the world's third-largest oil consumer, and demand trajectory continues to rise.
- Projections:
  - Oil demand expected to reach 5.74 mb/d in 2025 and 5.99 mb/d in 2026
  - Demand growth (~130 kb/d) surpasses China's (~80 kb/d)
- India is emerging as a key driver of global oil demand growth.
- In a scenario of declining OECD demand, India's consumption becomes strategically significant for global energy markets.

Diversification of Energy Imports

- India has shown considerable agility in adapting to supply shocks.
- Russian oil imports increased:
  - From 2% before 2022
  - To nearly 36% in FY2024-25
  - Russia became India's largest supplier
- India also maintains a diversified import basket including:
  - Iraq
  - Saudi Arabia

- United Arab Emirates
- United States

- Reinforces the concept of "optionality":
  - Ability to switch suppliers based on geopolitical and economic conditions.

Structural Challenges in Energy Security

High Import Dependence

- India's crude oil import dependence reached 89.4% in FY2024-25.
- Domestic production remains limited.
- Exposes economy to:
  - Global price fluctuations
  - Freight cost variations
  - Exchange rate volatility

Geographic Constraints

- Even with diversified suppliers, logistical realities such as chokepoints cannot be bypassed.
- Maritime risks continue to constrain strategic flexibility.

Emerging Risks from Energy Transition

- Transition to renewable energy reduces fossil fuel dependence but introduces new vulnerabilities:
  - Dependence on critical minerals like lithium, cobalt, nickel and rare earths
  - China's dominance (>90% in rare earth processing)
  - India's limited domestic processing capacity (<5% of projected needs by 2035)
- Energy transition shifts dependency rather than eliminating it.

Global Comparative Strategies

- Major economies have adopted proactive measures to enhance energy security:
  - China: Long-term LNG contracts (~25 million metric tons annually)
  - South Korea: Secured oil supplies bypassing chokepoints
  - Japan: Strategic reserves equivalent to 254 days of consumption
- Emphasise:

- Long-term planning
- Stockpiling
- Route diversification

- India still needs to scale up efforts in these areas.

Strategic Path Forward for India

- Expand Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR):
  - Build larger buffers against supply shocks
- Reduce Oil Intensity:
  - Promote EVs, public transport and fuel efficiency
- Enhance Maritime Security:
  - Strengthen naval capabilities to secure trade routes
- Develop Critical Mineral Ecosystem:
  - Invest in domestic mining, refining and international partnerships
- Strengthen Supply Chain Resilience:
  - Reduce overdependence on single countries

Conclusion

- Energy security has evolved from a narrow concern of affordability to a broader framework of resilience, diversification and strategic autonomy.
- For India, balancing rising energy demand with geopolitical uncertainties and energy transition challenges will remain central to economic stability and national security.