LAZY Prep

WEEK 1- DAY 5
International Relations

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1. US–Russia Alaska Summit Ends without Agreement

Context

- The **US–Russia Alaska Summit** ended without a breakthrough, leaving the **Russia–Ukraine conflict unresolved**.
- Fallout: Spotlight on **US–India trade frictions**, particularly over **tariffs linked to India's Russian oil imports**.



India's Concerns on US Tariffs

- **US Tariff Move**: 50% tariff on Indian exports.
- **Impact**:
  - Makes **Indian goods costlier** in US market.
  - Risk of **trade disruptions** and reduced competitiveness.
  - Complicates ongoing **India–US economic negotiations**.
- **US Objective**:
  - Pressure importers (like India) to cut Russian oil purchases.

- Proposed Bill in US Congress → Tariffs up to **500% on nations aiding Russia's war economy**.

- **India's Energy Security**:
  - Imports **35–40% of crude oil from Russia** at discounted rates.
  - Critical for inflation control & fiscal stability.

India's Strategic Autonomy

- India follows a **multi-alignment strategy**:
  - Deepening ties with **US** (defence, technology, trade, Indo-Pacific strategy).
  - Preserving long-standing **Russia partnership** (energy, defence, nuclear cooperation).
- **Core Principle**: Decisions based on **national interest** → energy security, affordable imports, diversification of suppliers.
- India unlikely to fully align with Western sanctions on Russia.

Geo-Political Impact of Summit Failure

1. **Prolonged Russia–Ukraine Conflict**
   - No agreement on **security guarantees, territorial concessions, or NATO's role**.
   - Prolonged instability in Europe.
2. **Global Economic Uncertainty**
   - Volatile **energy prices, supply chain risks, inflationary pressures**.
   - Complicates recovery for developing economies, including India.
3. **Pressure on Strategic Partners**
   - US may **tighten secondary sanctions** on Russian trade partners.
   - India faces **balancing act**: Avoiding US trade retaliation while safeguarding Russian oil imports.

Way Forward for India

- **Diplomatic Balancing**:

  - Engage US to **seek waiver/exemption** on punitive tariffs.
  - Highlight role as a **balancing power** in global geopolitics.
- **Trade Diversification**:
  - Explore **alternative energy sources** (Middle East, US LNG).
  - Strengthen **trade with EU, ASEAN, Global South** to reduce dependence on US market.
- **Energy Security Strategy**:
  - Continue **discounted Russian imports** while investing in **renewables & domestic reserves**.
  - Push for **rupee–ruble settlements** or diversification of currency trade.
- **Strategic Autonomy Narrative**:
  - Reinforce India's independent foreign policy at forums like **BRICS, SCO, G20, IPEF**.

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2. UNDP Equator Initiative Award

Latest News

- A **Self-Help Group (SHG) from Kundgol taluk, Dharwad district, Karnataka** has won the **UNDP Equator Initiative Award 2025**.
- The recognition highlights **grassroots efforts in biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction**.

About UNDP Equator Initiative Award

- **Established by**: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) under the **Equator Initiative**.
- **Nature**: Biennial award recognizing **outstanding community initiatives**.
- **Nicknamed**: "Nobel Prize for Biodiversity Conservation."
- **Prize Money**: **USD 10,000** per awardee.

- **2025 Theme**: "Women and Youth Leadership for Nature-Based Climate Action."

Eligibility Criteria

1. **Duration**:
    - Initiative must exist for at least **3 years**, or
    - Actions must have been implemented for at least **3 years**.
2. **Who can apply**:
    - Local **community-based groups** in rural areas of UNDP-supported countries.
    - **Indigenous Peoples' communities** in rural areas (globally).
3. **Scope of Action**:
    - Must be **nature-based solutions**, and
    - Deliver measurable benefits related to **two or more Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

Significance

- **Empowers grassroots communities** → showcases that local solutions can drive global sustainability.
- **Recognition of Indigenous and rural knowledge** in biodiversity conservation.
- **Supports SDGs**: especially **SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 15 (Life on Land)**.

3. African Nations Challenge China's Mining Dominance

Context

- China has long dominated Africa's **mining sector**, especially **critical minerals** (cobalt, lithium, copper).

- Growing **government scrutiny, civil society activism, environmental concerns, and demands for value addition** are challenging China's extractive model.
- African nations are renegotiating contracts and asserting sovereignty over their mineral wealth.

Shifting Dynamics in Africa–China Mining Relations

1. Demand for Fair Partnerships

- Earlier **"resources-for-infrastructure"** model seen as inadequate.
- Push for **accountability, transparency, and economic sovereignty**.
- Civil society groups demand **benefit-sharing and local development**.

2. Critical Mineral Wealth

- **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**: Holds **80% of global cobalt reserves**, vital for **EV batteries**.
- **Sicomines Deal**: China dominates extraction, but benefits to Congolese people are limited.

Rising Challenges to Chinese Investments

1. **Economic Discontent**
    - Tax exemptions to Chinese firms cost DRC **$132 million in 2024**.
    - Public pressure for contract renegotiations.
2. **Government Pushback**
    - DRC seeks to raise its **stake in joint ventures** from 32% → 70%.
    - Deal to sell Chemaf Resources to China's **Norin Mining** blocked.
3. **Corruption & Unfulfilled Promises**
    - **Namibia's Xinfeng**: bribery over lithium mines.
    - Promised **processing facilities unbuilt**, unsafe conditions for workers.

Environmental & Social Backlash

1. **Regulatory Action**

- Zimbabwe: Blocked coal mining near **Hwange National Park**.
- Zambia: Acid spill at Chinese-owned copper mine → **Kafue River pollution**.

2. **Local Resistance**
   - Cameroon: NGOs oppose **Lobé-Kribi Iron Ore Project** citing cultural & environmental risks.
   - Criticism over **inadequate consultation** and **benefit-sharing**.

Policy Shifts Toward Value Addition

1. **Export Bans on Raw Minerals**
   - Zimbabwe (2022) → Lithium ore ban.
   - Namibia (2023) → Similar ban.
   - Aim: Force investors to set up **local processing plants**.
2. **Challenges**
   - Export bans alone not enough.
   - Need **local industrial capacity, inclusive policies**.
   - Otherwise, benefits may flow to elites, not communities.

Emerging Future of Africa–China Mining Relations

- **China's dominance no longer assured**: Opaque contracts, corruption, and environmental harm under scrutiny.
- **African nations asserting sovereignty**: Demanding fair deals, local processing, and environmental safeguards.
- **Potential Transformation**: Africa may shift from raw material exporter → **value-added player in green economy**.

Implications for India

1. **Critical Mineral Mission**
   - India depends heavily on imports for **lithium, cobalt, rare earths**.
   - Partnerships with Africa can **diversify supply chains** and reduce dependence on China.

2. **Opportunities**
    - **India–Africa Forum Summit (IAFS)** platform for mining partnerships.
    - Collaboration on **local processing, capacity building, technology transfer**.
3. **Challenges**
    - China still has **financial muscle and deep ties**.
    - India must balance **diplomacy, investments, and sustainable practices** to be a credible alternative.

Multiple Choice Questions

1. Consider the following regarding the UNDP Equator Initiative Award:

1. It is a biennial award given to **community-led initiatives** that reduce poverty while conserving biodiversity.
2. The award carries a cash prize of **USD 1,00,000**.
3. The **2025 theme** was "Women and Youth Leadership for Nature-Based Climate Action."
4. Only government departments or UN agencies are eligible to apply.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

a) 1 and 3 only
b) 1, 2 and 4 only
c) 2 and 3 only
d) 1, 3 and 4 only

2. With reference to the shifting Africa–China mining relations, consider the following:

1. The **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)** holds nearly **80% of the world's cobalt reserves**, critical for electric vehicle (EV) batteries.
2. Zimbabwe and Namibia have banned the export of **unprocessed lithium**, pushing for local value addition.

3. India's **Critical Mineral Mission** seeks to reduce dependence on China by diversifying imports, including from Africa.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

a) 1 and 2 only
b) 2 and 3 only
c) 1 and 3 only
d) 1, 2 and 3

Multiple Choice Questions Day 4 – Geography and Environment

1. Consider the following statements regarding the Asiatic Lion (Panthera leo persica):

1. It is listed in **Appendix II of CITES**.
2. The species is now confined only to Gujarat, India.
3. The Asiatic lion population has shown steady growth over the past decade.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

a) 1 and 2 only
b) 2 and 3 only
c) 1 and 3 only
d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: b) 2 and 3 only

Explanation:

- Asiatic Lion is listed under **CITES Appendix I** (not II) and **Schedule I of WPA 1972** → Statement 1 is incorrect.
- Found **only in Gujarat** (Gir and surrounding landscape) → Statement 2 is correct.
- Population increased to **891 (2025)**, growth of +70% in the past decade → Statement 3 is correct.

2. The Dardanelles Strait, recently in news, is significant because:

a) It connects the Caspian Sea to the Mediterranean.
b) It is one of the narrowest straits used for international navigation, linking the Aegean Sea with the Sea of Marmara.
c) It is the only maritime route connecting the Persian Gulf with the Arabian Sea.
d) It lies between Russia and Turkey, providing access to the Arctic Ocean.

Answer: b) It is one of the narrowest straits used for international navigation, linking the Aegean Sea with the Sea of Marmara.

Explanation:

- **Dardanelles Strait** lies in **northwestern Turkey**, connects the **Aegean Sea ↔ Sea of Marmara**.
- Along with the **Bosporus**, it forms the **Turkish Straits system** (access to Black Sea).
- Options (a), (c), (d) describe other water bodies (Caspian–Mediterranean not directly linked; Persian Gulf–Arabian Sea = Strait of Hormuz; Arctic Ocean = not related).

3. The Sea of Galilee, recently reported to have turned red due to algal bloom, is notable for which of the following reasons?

1. It is the **lowest freshwater lake** on Earth.
2. It lies along the course of the **Jordan River**.
3. It is located in **Lebanon**.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) 1 only
b) 1 and 2 only
c) 2 and 3 only
d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: b) 1 and 2 only

Explanation:

- Sea of Galilee is the **lowest freshwater lake on Earth**, and **second-lowest overall** after the Dead Sea → Statement 1 is correct.
- Fed primarily by the **Jordan River** → Statement 2 is correct.
- Located in **Israel**, not Lebanon → Statement 3 is incorrect.

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WEEK 1- DAY 5

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