

FINDER

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FORTUNE IAS NEWS DAILY EXPLAINER

IMEC is caught between commerce and geopolitics

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 2
Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.

1. What key military and strategic lessons has the Iran conflict revealed?

- Myth of military superiority weakened as the U.S. and Israel could not secure decisive victory despite technological advantage.
- Iran demonstrated strong resilience and used asymmetric tactics (missiles, drones) effectively.
- Around **42 U.S. aircraft lost/damaged**, including **F-35 stealth fighters**.
- More than **50% of Patriot, Tomahawk, and THAAD(Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) missiles were expended**.
- Iran reportedly struck **240+ U.S. targets**.
- Key takeaway: **Asymmetric warfare can offset conventional superiority**.

2. How has the conflict highlighted choke points and energy security?

- Iran's blockade of the **Strait of Hormuz** disrupted global trade.
- Nearly **20 million barrels/day (about 1/3 global oil supply)** passes through it.
- The blockade caused severe global economic disruption.
- India imports **nearly 88% of crude oil (about 1.8 billion barrels annually)**, making it highly vulnerable.
- Need to avoid **conflict zones and choke points** in trade routes.

- Projects like **INSTC(International North-South Transport Corridor)** and **BRI(Belt and Road Initiative)** aim to diversify routes.

3. What is IMEC and how has the war affected it?

- **IMEC(India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor) (2023, G20 New Delhi)** connects India-Middle East-Europe, bypassing Suez.
- Multimodal corridor: **rail, ports, energy, digital, hydrogen networks**.
- Structure: India-UAE (sea), UAE-Saudi-Jordan-Israel-Haifa (land), Haifa-Europe (sea).
- The Gaza war (2023) and Iran conflict delayed implementation.
- UAE ports (**Jebel Ali, Fujairah**) targeted; Hormuz disruptions exposed risks.
- Saudi-UAE differences, UAE's **OPEC exit (2026)**, and Israel ties complicate geopolitics.

4. What strategies can ensure IMEC's success?

- Adopt a **flexible and adaptive corridor design**.
- Use Oman ports (**Salalah, Duqm, Muscat**) as safer eastern alternatives.
- Use the Egypt **route** instead of Haifa temporarily.
- Egypt offers strong infrastructure: **Suez Canal Economic Zone, 6 ports, 4 industrial hubs**.
- Manage Saudi-UAE geopolitical differences.
- India can act as a **trusted diplomatic bridge**.
- Europe (Italy, France) supporting IMEC; **India-Italy (2026)** reaffirmed commitment.
- Core takeaway: Success depends on **geopolitical stability + strategic adaptability**.

Orbital rivalry — the challenge of China’s space power

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 3
Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology and issues relating to intellectual property rights.

1. Why are China’s growing counter-space capabilities a concern?

- China is **developing ASAT (Anti-Satellite) weapons, laser systems, and co-orbital satellites capable of disrupting space assets.**
- In 2007, China destroyed its own weather satellite in an ASAT test, creating thousands of space debris fragments.
- These **can disrupt ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance) and military C2 (Command and Control) systems.**
- China **operates around 1,900 satellites, making it the world’s second-largest satellite operator after the United States.**
- The PLA (People’s Liberation Army) **views space dominance as critical for future warfare.**

2. What are China’s major space ambitions and strategic objectives?

- China **aims to achieve technological and military superiority in outer space.**
- It **plans a crewed Moon landing by 2036, a nuclear-powered space shuttle by 2040, and a space-based solar power station by 2050.**
- China intends to deploy over 36,000 LEO (Low Earth Orbit) satellites by 2030.
- It is also exploring lunar and asteroid mining
- Chinese private firms such as LandSpace, iSpace and OneSpace are **expanding China’s commercial space capabilities.**
- China **operates the Tiangong Space Station, becoming the third country to independently maintain a permanent space station.**

3. How do China’s space capabilities affect India’s security?

- India has **about 60 operational satellites, compared to China’s large military and civilian satellite network.**
- Chinese systems **could target India’s CARTOSAT (Cartographic Satellite) and RISAT (Radar Imaging Satellite) constellations.**

CARTOSAT (Cartographic Satellite): An Indian Earth-observation satellite series developed by Indian Space Research Organisation for high-resolution cartographic mapping, urban planning, and strategic applications.

RISAT (Radar Imaging Satellite): An Indian radar-imaging satellite series equipped with Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) that provides all-weather, day-and-night Earth observation for surveillance, disaster management, and resource monitoring

- **Jamming could affect NavIC** (Navigation with Indian Constellation), India’s indigenous satellite navigation system.
- **Temporary blinding of satellites through lasers or electronic warfare could reduce** India’s ISR capabilities during border crises.
- **Space disruptions could affect military communications, surveillance, and precision targeting.**

4. What measures can India adopt to safeguard its space interests?

- **Increase satellite manufacturing and launch capacity through greater private-sector participation** alongside ISRO.
- **Shift from a few large satellites to multiple smaller satellites** for better resilience and backup.
- **Strengthen protection of ground stations** and other critical space infrastructure.
- **Expand data-sharing and cooperation with strategic partners** and commercial satellite networks.
- Enhance space security by improving monitoring capabilities, defining clear red lines, and **strengthening deterrence through Mission Shakti (2019).**

Mission Shakti (2019): India's first Anti-Satellite (ASAT) missile test, conducted by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) on 27 March 2019, successfully destroyed the Microsat-R satellite in Low Earth Orbit, making India the fourth country to demonstrate ASAT capability (following the United States, Russia, and China).

Why do cities get polluted in summer?

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
General issues on Environmental ecology, Biodiversity and Climate Change.

Mains: General Studies - 3
Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

1. Summer Air Pollution: A Growing Concern

- **Air pollution, long associated with winter**, is increasingly emerging as a significant **concern during summer in many Indian cities**.
- Cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, and Kolkata recorded **high PM10 and ozone levels** during summer.
- Major pollution sources include **vehicular emissions, road dust, construction activities, industrial emissions, and dust storms**.

2. How Summer Pollution Differs from Winter Pollution

- **Winter pollution** is mainly dominated by **PM2.5 (fine particles)**.
- **Summer pollution** is primarily driven by **PM10 (coarse dust particles)** and **ground-level ozone**.
- While pollution sources remain largely the same throughout the year, dust storms, heat, and strong sunlight create a **distinct pattern of summer air pollution**.

3. Causes of High Ozone and PM10 Levels

Ozone Formation

- **Ozone is not directly emitted**; it forms when **Nitrogen Oxides (NOx)** and **Volatile Organic Compounds**

(VOCs) react under **strong sunlight**.

- Hotter and sunnier conditions increase ozone formation, causing **respiratory health problems**.

Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) are emitted as gases from certain solids or liquids. VOCs include a variety of chemicals, some of which may have short- and long-term adverse health effects.

PM10 Increase

- **Dust storms**, including **loo winds** and local **andhi storms**, carry dust from **West Asia** and the **Thar Desert** across India.
- **Construction activities, demolition work, and vehicles on broken roads** further increase dust levels by resuspending particles into the air.

4. Measures to Control Summer Air Pollution

- Use **Air Quality Early Warning Systems (AQEWS)** and weather forecasts to **predict dust storms and pollution events**.
- Ensure strict **dust management at construction sites** and better road maintenance.
- Reduce **NOx and VOC emissions** through cleaner transport, industrial compliance, and control of solvent and fuel emissions.
- Implement city-specific **summer action plans** involving **forecasting, public health advisories, dust control, and ozone reduction strategies**.
- Promote behavioural initiatives such as **switching off vehicle engines at traffic signals** to reduce emissions.

KEYWORDS

Index of Industrial Production (IIP)

- Index of Industrial Production (IIP) **measures changes in India's industrial output and is released monthly by the National Statistics Office, which is part of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).**
- Under the **revised 2022–23 base year series, IIP grew 4.9% in April 2026, compared to 5.8% in April 2025** under the old series.
- The new series **has broadened coverage by incorporating water supply, sewerage, waste management, and gas supply activities**, while retaining the core sectors of mining, manufacturing, and electricity.
- The **revised basket includes 1,042 products mapped to 463 item groups, up from 839 products and 407 item groups** in the previous series.
- IIP is a **key indicator of industrial growth and overall economic performance** in India.

Phenylketonuria (PKU)

- **Phenylketonuria (PKU) is a rare inherited genetic disorder** in which the body is unable to properly break down an amino acid called **phenylalanine**, leading to its accumulation in the body.
- The condition is caused by a change (mutation) in the **PAH gene**.
 - ➔ This gene helps the body produce an **enzyme** that breaks down **phenylalanine**.
- In the absence of sufficient PAH enzyme activity, **phenylalanine accumulates to harmful levels**, especially when individuals consume **protein-rich foods** or **aspartame**, an artificial sweetener.
- If left untreated, this buildup can result in **serious health complications**.

India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)

- **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)**, announced at the **G-20 Summit (New**

Delhi, 2023), is a strategic transnational initiative to connect **India with Europe via the Arabian Peninsula**.

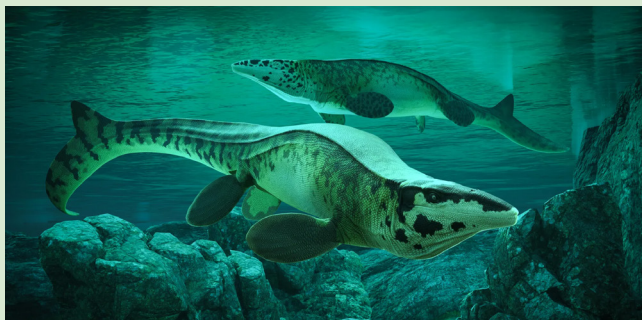
- It is a **multimodal framework** integrating **sea routes, rail networks, pipelines, digital data cables, green hydrogen corridors, and energy grids**.
- The corridor has **three segments**:
 - ➔ **Eastern sea route** (India-UAE)
 - ➔ **Central overland corridor** (UAE-Saudi Arabia-Jordan-Israel to Haifa)
 - ➔ **Western sea route** (Haifa to Europe)
- Its implementation faces **geopolitical challenges** such as **West Asian conflicts, Strait of Hormuz vulnerabilities, and regional strategic divergences**.
- To improve **resilience**, alternatives like **Oman ports (Salalah, Duqm, Muscat)** and a **western extension via Egypt's Mediterranean logistics hubs** are being explored.

Mule Account

- Mule accounts are **bank or digital payment accounts used to receive, transfer, and launder illicit funds**, helping criminals **hide the origin of money**.
- They function as **intermediary channels in cyber fraud**, where stolen money is routed through **multiple layers of accounts (layering process)** to avoid detection.
- The account holder (money mule) may be **knowingly complicit for commission** or **unknowingly exploited** through fake job offers, phishing, or social media traps.
- Mule accounts are a **critical enabler of the cybercrime ecosystem**, supporting activities like **phishing scams, online frauds, illegal betting, and money laundering networks**.
- Even indirect involvement can attract **legal liability**, including **account freezing, police investigation, and prosecution under cyber and financial laws**, as seen in **Operation Mule Hunt (Gujarat)** targeting large-scale mule account networks.

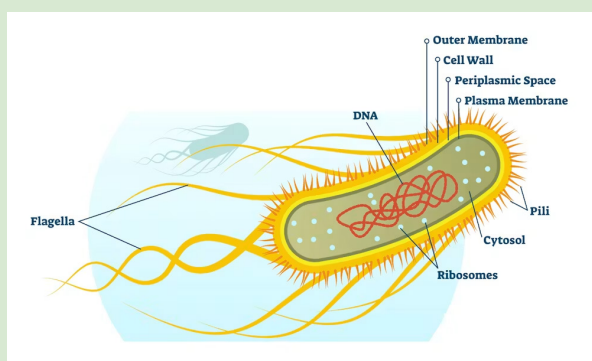
Species In News

Tylosaurus rex



- **Tylosaurus rex** is a newly identified species of **giant prehistoric marine reptile** that lived about **80 million years ago** during the **Cretaceous Period**.
- It inhabited the **Western Interior Seaway**, a vast inland sea that once split **North America** into two landmasses.
- A member of the **mosasaur** group, it evolved from **land-dwelling lizards** and became an **apex predator** of the ancient oceans.
- It possessed **serrated teeth, powerful jaws and neck muscles**, and a **streamlined body**, making it a formidable hunter.
- Scientists believe **Tylosaurus rex** rivalled **Tyrannosaurus rex** in both **size and ecological dominance**, ruling the seas much as T. rex dominated the land.
- The largest known specimen, nicknamed **"Bunker,"** measured about **13.2 metres (43 feet)**, slightly larger than **"Sue,"** the largest known T. rex specimen.

Escherichia coli (E. coli)



- **Escherichia coli (E. coli)** is a **bacterium** commonly found in the intestines of **humans** and other **warm-blooded animals**.
- While most strains are **harmless**, certain strains, particularly **Shiga toxin-producing E. coli (STEC)**, can cause **serious foodborne illnesses**.
- The infection is mainly transmitted through the consumption of **contaminated food**, including **raw or undercooked meat, unpasteurised milk, and contaminated raw vegetables and sprouts**.
- STEC produces **Shiga toxins**, which are named for their similarity to the toxins produced by **Shigella dysenteriae**, and these toxins are responsible for the severe symptoms associated with the infection.