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CURRENT AFFAIRS



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United Nations General Assembly: Russia-Ukraine

- Recently, India has not participated in the vote conducted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The resolution called on Russia to unconditionally withdraw its troops from Ukraine.
- After the use of veto by Russia in the past, the same resolution failed in the United Nations General Assembly (UNSC), after which this session of the General Assembly was called.

Key points

- Co-sponsored by 96 countries, the resolution required a two-thirds vote of the member states present and voting for it to pass.
- It condemns the 'special military operation' of 24 February 2022 by Russia on Ukraine.
- It states that any territory acquired by force will not be recognized and calls on Russia to stop military operations in Ukraine "immediately without any conditions".

India's stand and concerns:

- India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations T.S. Tirumurti said ensuring "safe and uninterrupted passage" for Indian citizens, especially students, is India's "top priority".
- India has also called for an "immediate ceasefire" and to provide humanitarian assistance in conflict areas.
- India hoped that the second round of talks between Russia and Ukraine would yield positive results.
- Russia's actions have put India in an uncomfortable position as it tries to balance its interests with both Russia and Western countries.

- Given its experiences with China and Pakistan, India is wary of unilateral attempts to change the borders shared by one country with another.
- India urges that all member states respect the principles of the United Nations Charter, commitment to international law and the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states.
- For example, many neighboring countries of India supported the proposal, such as Bhutan, Nepal and Maldives. Afghanistan, which is currently ruled by a terrorist organization (the Taliban), and Myanmar, which is currently ruled by a junta (military), also voted in favor.
- Like India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and China abstained from voting.

Are UN resolutions binding?

- Resolutions and decisions are the formal expression of the opinion or will of the organs of the United Nations.
- The nature of the resolution determines whether it is considered binding on the states.
- Articles 10 and 14 of the United Nations Charter refer to the resolutions of the General Assembly as "Recommendations".
- The 'recommendatory nature' of General Assembly resolutions has been repeatedly emphasized by the International Court of Justice (ICJ).
- However, some General Assembly resolutions relating to the internal affairs of the United Nations – such as budgetary decisions or directives to lower-ranking organs – are expressly binding.
- In general, resolutions acting under Chapter VII of the Charter are considered binding by the Security Council in accordance with Article 25 of the Charter.
- Although they are subject to the veto exercised by the permanent members of the UNSC.

Konark city grid dependency

- Konark city of Odisha state of India is going to become the first model city to shift from grid dependency to green energy.
- The Odisha government has issued policy guidelines in this regard.
- A scheme for solarization of Konark Sun Temple and Konark City in Odisha was launched by the Central Government in May 2020.

Policy Guidelines:

- Under the guidelines issued by the state government, by the end of the year 2022, the target of generating 2,750 MW of electricity from renewable energy sources such as sun, wind, biomass, small hydropower and Waste-to-Energy (WTE) etc.
- The state government has also set a target to generate 2,200 MW of electricity from solar power and a part of it will be used to run the Sun Temple and Konark city on solar power.
- The use of renewable/renewable energy for Konark is part of an ambitious plan of the Union Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE).

Significance of this initiative and associated challenges:

- Shifting from grid to solar power will help in reducing the electricity consumption of the Sun Temple.
 - Financial benefits from solar energy will help in completing other development works of the temple.
 - Odisha is facing many challenges in setting up huge solar power plants.
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- 480 kms in the state. It has a coastline which is affected due to regular cyclones. It has faced 10 cyclones including Super Cyclone, Phailin, Hudhud, Titli, Amphan and Fani during 22 years so far.
 - Besides, land acquisition is another major challenge in setting up solar power plants.
 - These coastal areas are affected by cyclones and parts of Odisha have dense forests, as well as land is more expensive in densely populated areas.

Konark Sun Temple:

- Konark Sun Temple is located near the holy city of Puri in eastern Odisha.
- It was built by King Narasimhadeva I in the 13th century (1238-1264 AD). It represents the splendor, architecture, strength and stability of the Ganga dynasty as well as the historical environment.
- The Eastern Ganga Dynasty is also known as Rudhi Ganga or Oriental Ganga.
- It was a vast Indian royal dynasty in the medieval era that ruled from Kalinga from the 5th century to the early 15th century.
- The formation of the Eastern Ganga dynasty began when Indravarma I defeated the Vishnukundin king.
- The temple is built in the shape of a huge chariot.
- It is dedicated to the Sun God.
- Konark temple is not only known for its architectural grandeur but also for the depth and proficiency of the sculpture work.
- It is the highest point of achievement of Kalinga architecture which reflects grace, happiness and rhythm of life.
- It was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in the year 1984.
- There are two rows of 12 wheels on either side of the Konark Sun Temple. Some are of the opinion that the 24 wheels symbolize the 24 hours of the day, while others say that they represent the 12 months of the year.
- Seven horses are considered to symbolize the seven days of the week.
- Seafarers once called it the 'Black Pagoda', as it was believed to attract ships to shore and destroy them.
- Konark is an invaluable link in the history of the spread of the 'Sun cult', which emerged in Kashmir during the 8th century and eventually reached the shores of eastern India.

Other Important Monuments in Odisha:

- Jagannath Temple
- Tara Tarini Temple
- Udayagiri and Khandagiri Caves
- Lingaraja Temple

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