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Landslide in Joshimath

Why in Newspapers?

Recently, **incidents of road and land subsidence** and cracks in houses have been reported in **Joshimath**, a major transit point for the pilgrimage to **Badrinath and Hemkund Sahib**.

Quick Issue?

- Joshimath is situated on **National Highway 7**. This town is considered to be the **gateway to Badrinath Dham, Hemkund Sahib (Sikh shrine) and the Valley of Flowers**.
- It is also the **main gateway to Auli**, which has the largest ropeway in Asia.



Historical Background?

- Experts believe that **the causes of landslides are not new, Local streams are diverted due to haphazard construction on fragile hilly terrain** with loose rocks, seepage of sub-surface water, erosion of top soil layer and man-made activities which block their natural flow.
- Situated on an **east-west running ridge** to the **south-west of Vishnuprayag**, the confluence of the **Dhauliganga and Alaknanda rivers**, the town is geologically sensitive.
- **Joshimath is located in Zone-5, the most prone to earthquakes in India.**
- It is situated in the ancient landslide area. The number of rock shelters is also increasing day by day.
- The work of **hydroelectric project** is also going on **near Joshimath**. Work is also underway on the **Lang-Vishnuprayag bypass**.
- The **Mishra Committee report** of the year **1976** stated that **Joshimath is in the ancient landslide area**. The city is built on **large chunks of rock and unstable piles of soil**. It was also said in the report of the committee that deforestation in Joshimath area is also contributing to the land subsidence.
- **Scattered rocks in the area are covered with debris from old landslides**, consisting of boulders, gneiss rocks (highly weathered), and loose soil with low bearing capacity.





- Increase in construction, **hydroelectric projects and widening of national highways** in the **last few decades have made the slopes highly unstable.**
- Water streams flowing continuously from **Vishnuprayag and slippery nature found along natural streams** is one of the other major reasons.
- The situation has worsened due to the **flood of Rishi Ganga river and incessant rains** between August and October in 2021.
- **To save Joshimath from this disaster, there is a need for a coordinated effort** by the government and civic bodies with the help of military organizations like **Border Roads Organization (BRO).**
- There is an **urgent need to shift the affected people to a safer place** and there is a **need for fresh city planning to accommodate** the changing geographical factors.
- **Drainage and sewer planning** (more and more waste water seeping into the soil and loosening it from within) is **one of the biggest factors that needs to be studied and redeveloped.**
- Environmental experts recommend **complete stoppage of development and hydroelectric projects** in the region.
- **Reforestation is also needed in this area,** especially at vulnerable sites, to maintain soil capacity.
- Adequate number of **National Disaster Response Force (NDRF)** and **State DRF teams should be deployed here** and helicopter facilities should also be provided if necessary.

Other Key Facts?

Joshimath

- Joshimath / Jyotirmath is a hill town situated at an altitude of 6150 ft (1875 m) in **Chamoli district** in **Uttarakhand.**
- Joshimath is included in **high risk seismic zone-V.**
- It is the **gateway to many Himalayan mountain climbing expeditions,** trekking trails (Auli, Valley of Flowers) and pilgrimage centers like Badrinath and Hemkund Sahib.
- Joshimath is also of **great strategic importance to the Indian Armed Forces** and is one of the **most important army cantonments.**
- Here is one of the four major monasteries established by **Adi Guru Shankaracharya** –
 - Joshimath near Badrinath in Uttarakhand
 - Sringeri in Karnataka
 - Dwarka in Gujarat
 - Puri in Odisha

PRALAYA (Missile)

Why in Newspapers?

Amidst the India-China border dispute, the Defense Ministry has decided to deploy the Pralay missile along the border with China and Pakistan.

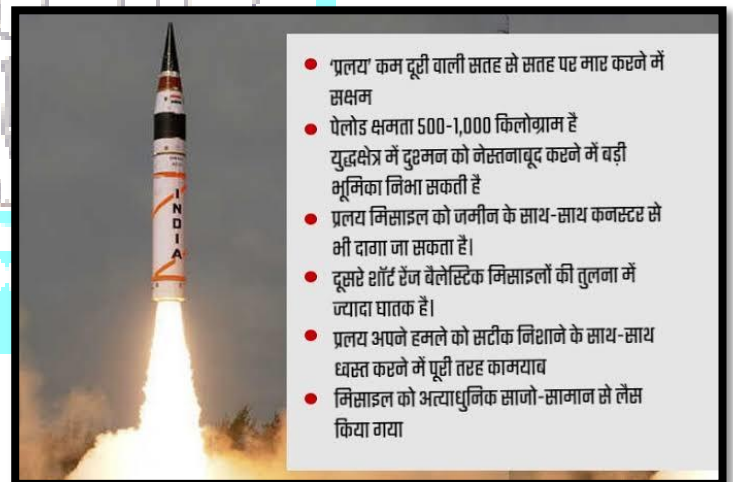
Quick Issue?

- Ministry of Defence has approved the project to buy 120 Pralay ballistic missiles for armed forces. This will be the first time that a ballistic missile will be deployed under a strategic campaign.
- India successfully test-fired this ballistic missile 'Pralay' on December 23, 2021 from Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Island off the coast of Odisha.



Historical Background?

- The Pralay missile has been developed by the DRDO and is a solid-fuelled warhead based on the 'Prithvi Defense Vehicle' of the Indian ballistic missile programme.
- It is a surface-to-surface missile with a range of less than 150-500 km and is capable of carrying a payload of 500-1000 kg.
- State-of-the-art navigation and integrated avionics (i.e. can change course after a certain distance) have also been installed in the guidance system of new technology.
- At present, the Indian Army has the only means of attacking targets at a distance of 500 km is the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile which can hit the target very accurately.
- However, it can carry loads of 200 kg or more and is also a very expensive system. That is why the army needed a short range ballistic missile like Pralay.
- Pralay can compete with China's Dongfeng missile. The special thing is that it can be fired even at night.
- Apart from this, it can be fired from the ground as well as canister launcher.
- DRDO has not yet disclosed the speed of this Pralay missile, but it is being speculated that the Pralay missile can be more deadly than other short range ballistic missiles.



University Grants Commission

Why in Newspapers?

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has released draft norms to allow Foreign Higher Education Institutions (FHEIs) to set up campuses in India.

Quick Issue?

- It aims to internationalize India's higher education, as envisaged in the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020.



Historical Background?

- Approval:** The University Grants Commission will give in-principle approval to FHEIs to set up campuses in India
- Eligibility:** The intending foreign university must be ranked in the top 500 global rankings of universities. The intending foreign educational institution must have a reputation in its home country or jurisdiction.
- Mode of Teaching:** The courses will be taught in physical form. Online classes will not be allowed.
- Autonomy of FHEIs:** There will be autonomy to determine the fees. In addition, there will be freedom to choose faculty from both India and abroad
- Safety of students:** FHEIs are mandated to take permission from the UGC before discontinuing any course/programme or closing the campus. In addition, they will also have to set up a mechanism to redress the grievances of the

WHAT DRAFT REGULATIONS SAY

These varsities will have the freedom to decide on admission criteria and fee structure

The commission has advised keeping the fees "reasonable and transparent"

The foreign institution shall have the autonomy to recruit faculty/staff from India/abroad

The varsity to ensure that the foreign faculty stay at the campus for a reasonable period

WHAT IT ENVISAGES

The regulatory framework allowing the entry of higher-ranked foreign varsities will provide an international dimension to higher education, enable Indian students to obtain foreign qualifications at affordable cost, and make India an attractive global study destination

FUNDS AND FUNDING

Cross-border movement of funds and maintenance of foreign currency accounts, mode of remittance, repatriation, and sale of proceeds shall be as per the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA)

The operation of foreign HEIs shall not be contrary to the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency, or morality

WHO ARE ELIGIBLE

Two categories can apply. Universities that have secured a position within the top 500 of overall or subject-wise global ranking or a reputed institution in its home jurisdiction

An audit report shall be submitted annually to the commission certifying that the operations of the FHEIs in India are in compliance with the Act and related rules, the draft said

The new National Education Policy (NEP) has envisioned that top universities in the world will be facilitated to operate in India. For this, a legislative framework facilitating such entry will be put in place, and such universities will be given special dispensation regarding regulatory, governance, and content norms on par with other autonomous institutions of India
— M Jagadeesh Kumar, UGC chairperson

Other Key Facts?

Significance of allowing foreign institutions in India

- Indian students will get foreign degrees at a lower cost;
- There will be a reduction in the outflow of foreign exchange from India,
- There will be a reduction in brain drain;
- Research and development in India will be encouraged;
- Competition will be encouraged in the higher education sector;
- Will help in making India an attractive global study destination.

students.

- **Safeguarding India's national interest:** FEHIs shall not conduct any program or curriculum that is prejudicial to the national interest of India or the standards of higher education in India.
- **Financial Operations:** Cross border movement of funds will be permitted under the Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999
- Degrees awarded to students at the Indian campuses will be equivalent to degrees awarded at the main campus in FEHIs home country.

India's National Security Advisor hosted the 36th session of the annual India-France (NSA) Strategic Dialogue

- In the **annual Indo-French strategic dialogue**, both sides stressed on '**rules-based international order**' and '**strategic autonomy**'.
 - **Rule-based International Order:** It is actually a **set of rules**, which encourages **peaceful and cooperative behaviour among countries**. This behaviour is in line with **liberal values and principles**. Formal institutional organizations are also included in this system.
 - **Strategic Autonomy:** It is the **ability of a country to take relatively independent decisions** on matters of utmost importance.
- India and France established a **strategic partnership in the year 1998**.
- The **main pillars of the strategic partnership are** - defence and security cooperation, cooperation in the space sector and cooperation in the civil nuclear sector.
- **Defence Cooperation:**
 - India has purchased **Rafale aircraft from France:**
 - Both countries have signed an agreement relating to the provision of mutual logistic support;
 - Both countries participate in bilateral **joint defense exercises like Shakti (Army), Varuna (Navy) and Garuda (Air Force) etc.**
- **Space Cooperation:** Both the countries have **jointly developed the Megha-Tropiques satellite and TRISHNA** (Thermal Infrared Imaging Satellite for High-resolution Natural Resource Assessment). Apart from this, **France is also supporting India in the Gaganyaan mission.**
- **Civil Nuclear Cooperation:** Both the countries signed a **civil nuclear cooperation agreement in the year 2008**. France is also cooperating in the **Jaitpur and Tarapur nuclear power projects**.
 - France also supports **India's efforts to join the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG).**

