



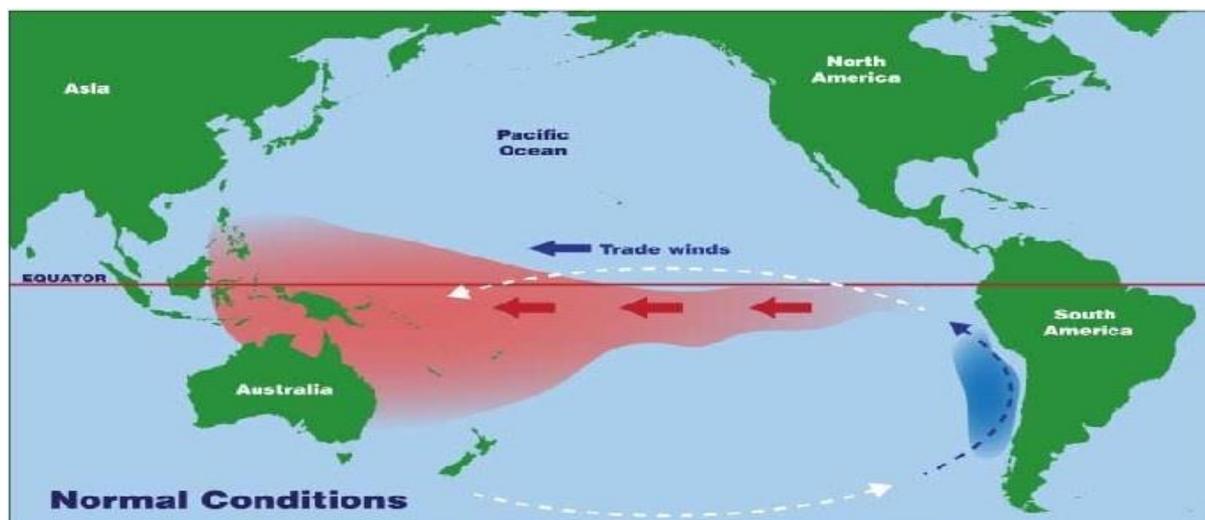
Current Affairs of the Day

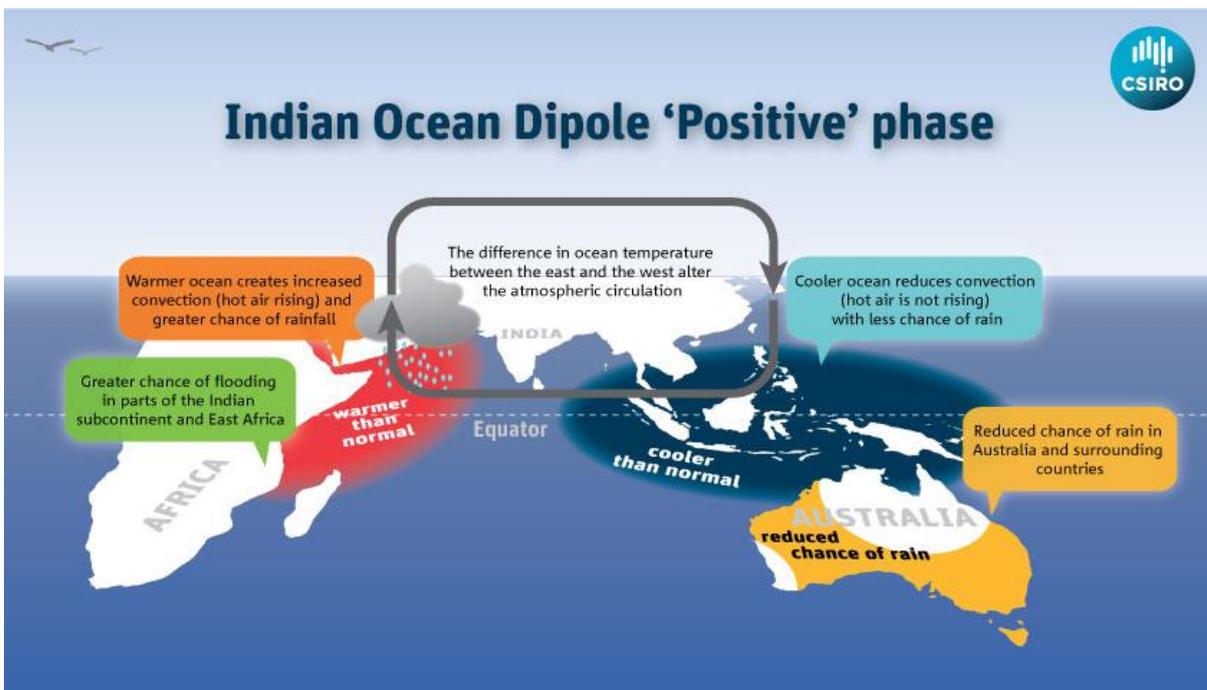
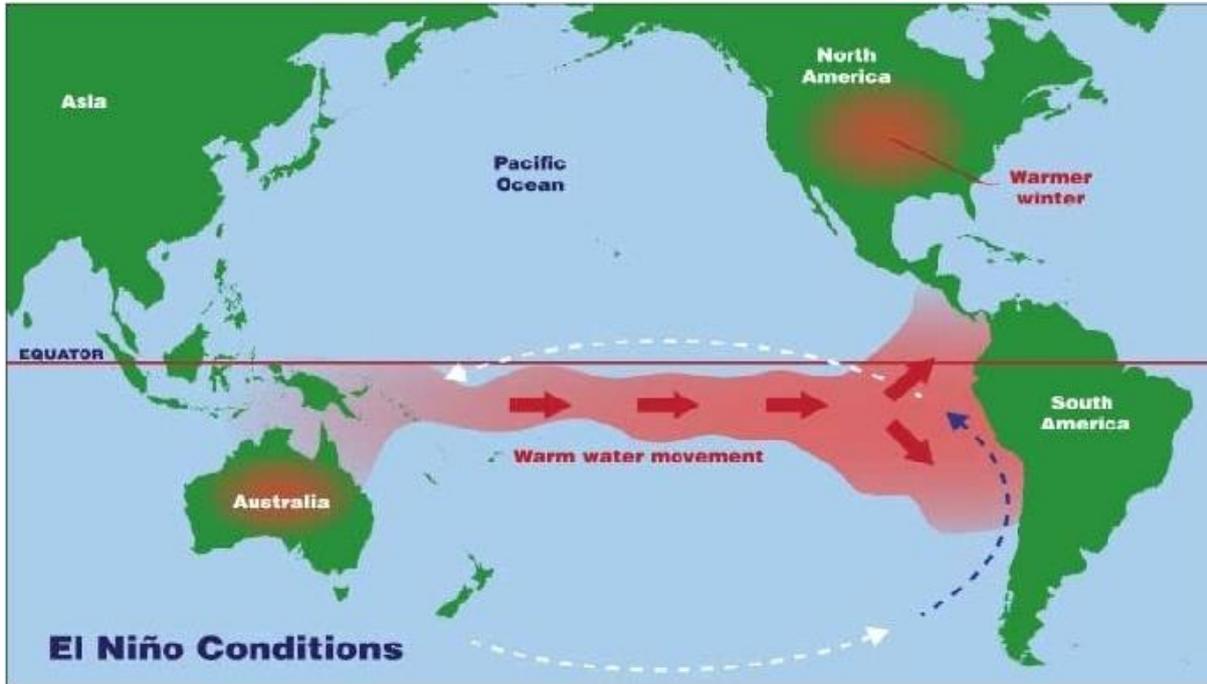
IMD predicts a normal monsoon. But India must take steps to meet the narrowing supply of fertilisers

India is today facing a tight supply position, especially in phosphatic and potassic fertilisers, ahead of the Kharif sowings that will start with the monsoon.

The trio of Global phenomenon and monsoon:

1. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) predicts a normal southwest monsoon: Rainfall is expected to be 99 per cent of the historical average for the country from June-September.
2. The sanguine forecast is based on “La Niña” conditions prevailing and likely to continue through the four-month monsoon season.
3. La Niña is the opposite of El Niño — abnormal warming of the eastern Pacific waters usually causing heavy rains around South America, but also drought in the other western end whose effects percolate to India.
4. Besides La Niña, which is generally favourable for the Indian monsoon, the IMD is counting on a “neutral” Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD).
5. A “negative” IOD, wherein the eastern Indian Ocean waters off Indonesia and Australia turn unusually warm relative to the western part, is considered bad for the monsoon. The IMD believes that this time there will be La Niña and “neutral” IOD, at least till early in the season.

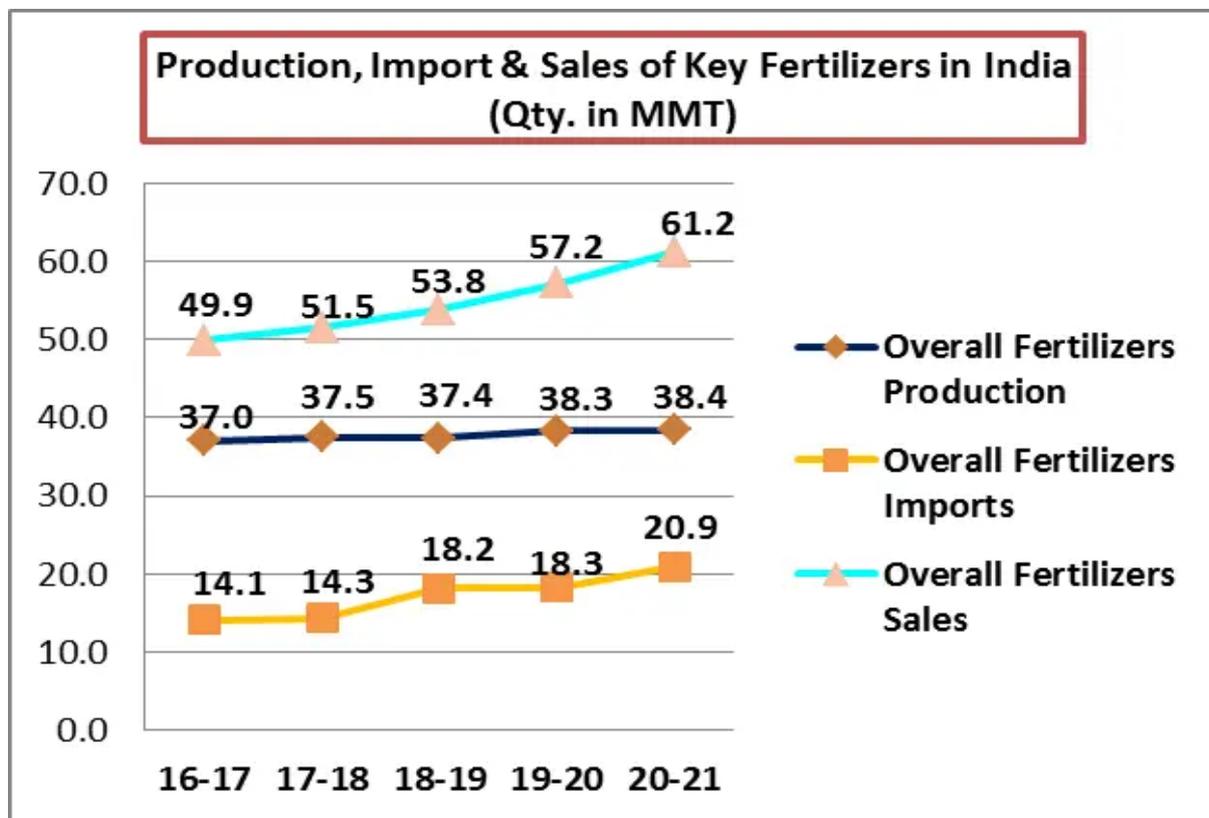






Fertilizer's crunch:

1. India is today facing a tight supply position, especially in phosphatic and potassic fertilisers, ahead of the Kharif sowings that will start with the monsoon.
2. The country imports its entire muriate of potash (MOP) requirements. While it does manufacture phosphatic and complex fertilisers, its raw materials and intermediates — mainly rock phosphate, sulphur, phosphoric acid and ammonia — are largely imported.
3. In the last year, global prices of finished fertilisers and ingredients have doubled or trebled. Before the war Russia was the world's largest and its next-door ally Belarus the sixth-largest fertiliser exporter in 2020. War has only worsened things.
4. Hardly any new imports have been contracted in the past two months, with companies unsure whether the government will allow them to pass on the higher prices or absorb the burden through increased subsidy rates.





Way Forward:

1. The government must announce a higher subsidy
2. It should immediately launch a campaign to promote single super phosphate and complex fertilisers. These contain less phosphorus or potash than di-ammonium phosphate and MOP, but farmers can be shown ways to apply them in the right dosage (along with farmyard manure, compost and organic wastes) without sacrificing crop yields.
3. The use of high-analysis fertilisers is a luxury for a country with hardly any natural gas, rock phosphate, potash or elemental sulphur reserves.
4. The government should also actively engage with countries such as Canada, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Senegal, Togo, and even Russia and Belarus, to contract more supplies, both for Kharif and the next rabi season.

'India to get record number of doctors in next 10 years

1. Prime Minister said the country will get a record number of doctors in the next 10 years due to the Central government's policy of establishing at least one medical college in every district.
2. The goal of having at least one medical college in every district of the country and ensuring that medical education was within the reach of everyone will result in the country getting record numbers of doctors and medical practitioners after 10 years.

Russia supplies S-400 to India amid warfare

1. Russia has begun fresh deliveries of S-400 Triumf air defence systems that will constitute the Indian Air Force's (IAF) second squadron of the weapon amid the ongoing Ukraine war and Washington's attempts to wean India away from its dependence on Russian military hardware.
2. These are ongoing deliveries as part of the contract signed with Russia four years ago. The first elements of the S-400 air defence missile systems were supplied by Russia last December.
3. Russia is expected to complete all deliveries by 2023.



S-400:

- India ordered five S-400 missile systems from Russia for ₹39,000 crores in October 2018. The S-400 is capable of destroying a variety of aerial threats, including enemy fighter jets and missiles, at a range of 400km.
- IAF is on track to bolster its air defence capabilities with the phased induction of the new system, said the second official. The S-400 comes with a mix of radars and missiles that allow it to knock down threats at various height and range bands.

Sanctions and Indian Military requirements:

- The complications stemming from the wide-ranging sanctions slapped on Russia by the US and

Deliveries on schedule

New deliveries of S-400 missile systems have started, despite Russia's engagements amid the ongoing war in Ukraine and complications stemming from sanctions on Moscow

INDIA'S S-400 ORDER

5 S-400 Triumf air defence systems; Cost: ₹39,000 crore

Russia is expected to complete all deliveries by 2023

S-400 is one of the world's most advanced air defence systems, capable of destroying a variety of aerial threats

DEEP TIES IN DEFENCE

46% of India's imports in the last 5 yrs have been from Russia

Russian equipment used in India includes jets, choppers, warships, submarines, among others



INKED DEALS

\$5.4 bn contract for S-400 missile system

\$3 bn pact to lease another nuclear attack submarine

\$2 bn contract to buy 4 frigates



The Russian Front

Russia still remains India's top weapons supplier and this complicates the relationship with the US



IN THE PIPELINE

\$1 bn+ deal for AK-203 assault rifles to be made in partnership with the Ordnance Factory Board

\$1 bn for Kamov Ka-226 choppers to be made in partnership with Hindustan Aeronautics

\$1 bn worth of emergency supplies, including ammunition, missiles, assault rifles and anti-tank systems





its allies on the back of the war in Ukraine have posed new challenges for the India-Russia defence relationship.

2. The global backlash against Russia has also prompted questions about the fate of new projects, spare procurement for existing Russian-origin weapons, maintenance and servicing of legacy equipment and creating an alternative payment system for defence trade with Russia amid the banking sanctions.
3. Russia accounted for 46% of India's imports during the last five years, even though India made fewer purchases from Russia over the last decade.
4. Russian weapons exports to India fell 47% between 2012-16 and 2017-21, according to a report published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) last month.
5. Still, two-thirds of India's military equipment is of Russian origin.

Ongoing projects:

Moreover, procurements and projects in the works include the S-400 air defence systems, more Sukhoi-30 and MiG-29 fighter jets, frigates, T-90 tanks, and joint production of AK-203 assault rifles and, above all, the lease of a nuclear-powered submarine.

Centre considers delinking oil and gas extraction from mining tag

1. The Union environment ministry is considering a proposal to delink oil and gas extraction from mining projects, as far as the environmental appraisal is concerned. If approved, oil and gas extraction will not be considered a mining activity anymore.
2. The ministry of petroleum and natural gas (MoPNG) has requested the environment ministry to create a separate category for appraisal of oil and gas projects on their Parivesh portal, where various environmental clearances are processed.
3. The MoPNG is seeking a separate category of clearance for oil and gas because if it is considered a mining activity, the environmental norms may prove to be more stringent, an official in the ministry said.



- They will need permission from the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) if the extraction needs to take place in forest areas or in an eco-sensitive zone of a wildlife reserve. Mining activities will need a forest clearance also, besides an environmental clearance.

Judicial precedence and Caution:

- The extraction of natural gas and oil cannot be considered mining in terms of the Supreme Court order in the TN Godavarman vs Union of India case.

MASSIVE FIRE AT ASSAM'S BAGHJAN OIL FIELD IN TINSUKIA



- Oil and gas extraction is not the same as open cast mining but the impact of the extraction can be several times higher. One can look at what happened in Assam's Baghjan in 2020 in the oil and gas leak and fire.

MAINS DAWP

Q1. The Union environment ministry is considering a proposal to delink oil and gas extraction from mining projects, as far as the environmental appraisal is concerned. If approved, oil and gas extraction will not be considered a mining activity anymore. Critically discuss the implications of the move.

Q2. Rising non-performing assets (NPAs) and Scams in the cooperative banking sector call for tighter regulation and less political interference. Comment.

Q3. Enumerate steps needed for India to achieve self-sufficiency in fertilizers. Critically discuss the impact of the Russia-Ukraine war on Indian agriculture.



MCQs

Q1. Which of the following are used as raw materials for the production of fertilizers?

1. Rock phosphate
2. Sulphur
3. Phosphoric acid
4. Ammonia
5. Potash

Select the correct answer from the codes given below

- a. 1 and 4 only
- b. 1, 3 and 4 only
- c. 2, 3 and 4 only
- d. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5