**1 Defence**

**1.1 Commissioning of INS Androth**

The commissioning of **INS *Androth*** is a significant development for the Indian Navy and India's defense sector, particularly in the context of the **Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (ASW-SWC)** program. This event highlights India's progress toward achieving **'Aatmanirbhar Bharat'** (self-reliant India) in maritime defense.

**Key Points for UPSC Prelims (Defence)**

* **INS *Androth*** is the **second** ship of the **Arnala-class** of Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Crafts (ASW-SWC). The first ship in this class was INS *Arnala*, commissioned earlier. A total of 16 such ships are planned, with eight being built by **Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE)** and the other eight by Cochin Shipyard Limited.
* The ship was built by **Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE)** in Kolkata, a public sector shipyard.
* Its commissioning ceremony took place at the Naval Dockyard in **Visakhapatnam**.
* **Purpose:** The ASW-SWCs are designed to replace the aging fleet of *Abhay*-class corvettes. Their primary role is to conduct **anti-submarine operations** in coastal and shallow waters (littorals). They are equipped with advanced sonar systems, anti-submarine rockets, and lightweight torpedoes to detect, track, and neutralize underwater threats.
* **Indigenous Content:** The ship has over **80% indigenous content**, a testament to India's growing domestic defense manufacturing capabilities. This includes indigenously developed sonar systems and other onboard technology.
* **Versatility:** Beyond its primary anti-submarine role, INS *Androth* is also capable of other missions, including **maritime surveillance, search and rescue, and coastal defense**.
* **Name:** The ship is named after **Androth Island**, the largest island in the Lakshadweep archipelago, which holds historical and strategic significance for India.
* **Modernisation Drive:** The commissioning of INS *Androth* is part of a broader, balanced modernization drive of the Indian Navy, which has seen the recent induction of other warships like *Arnala*, *Nistar*, *Udaygiri*, and *Nilgiri*.

**1.2** **Comprehensive Note on Maritime Drills and Defence**

The provided image and notes detail a joint maritime exercise, **NATPOLREX-X**, conducted by the Indian Coast Guard and the Indian Navy. This exercise is specifically designed to address **marine oil spill emergencies** and enhance India's preparedness for such disasters. The drill highlights the crucial, and often collaborative, roles of India's maritime security agencies.

**Key Points for UPSC Prelims (Defence & Disaster Management)**

* **NATPOLREX-X (National Pollution Response Exercise)**: This is the tenth edition of the national-level exercise. It is a major drill focused on marine pollution response.
* **Participating Agencies**: The exercise is a joint effort primarily between the **Indian Coast Guard** and the **Indian Navy**. The Indian Coast Guard is typically the nodal agency for marine oil spill emergencies in Indian waters.
* **Purpose of the Drill**:
  + To test and validate the effectiveness of the **National Oil Spill Disaster Contingency Plan (NOSDCP)**.
  + To enhance the preparedness and coordination of various agencies in responding to marine oil spills.
  + To strengthen India's overall capacity for marine pollution control.
* **Nodal Agency**: The **Indian Coast Guard** is the designated nodal agency for oil spill response in the seas surrounding India. This responsibility is a key part of its mandate, which also includes search and rescue, maritime law enforcement, and coastal surveillance.
* **Location**: The exercise was conducted off the **Chennai coast**. This location is strategically important due to its proximity to major shipping lanes and oil terminals in the Bay of Bengal.
* **Disaster Management Context**: While the exercise has a defence component, its primary focus is on **disaster management** related to marine oil spills. This is a critical area of concern, as oil spills can have devastating environmental and economic consequences. The joint nature of the drill underscores the inter-agency cooperation required for effective disaster response.

**1.3 Indian Army and Civil-Military Cooperation**

The article focuses on a unique initiative by the Indian Army in Uttarakhand, which showcases its evolving role beyond conventional defense to include sustainable development and rural upliftment. This project is part of **Operation Sadbhavana** and is aligned with the government's **Vibrant Villages Programme**. 🏕️

**Key Points for UPSC Prelims (Defence, Internal Security)**

* **Operation Sadbhavana**: This is a major "goodwill" initiative by the Indian Army, launched in 1998, to help people in remote areas like Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, and parts of the Northeast. Its goal is to "Win the Hearts and Minds" (WHAM) of the local population by providing development and welfare projects.
* **Indian Army's Evolving Role**: The inauguration of a tent-based homestay in Garbyang, Uttarakhand, demonstrates how the Indian Army is actively involved in promoting **sustainable tourism** and **enhancing rural livelihoods** in border areas. The Army develops these projects but plans to hand them over to the local community for independent operation to ensure they generate revenue for villagers.
* **Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP)**: The Army's initiative aligns with the government's VVP, a centrally sponsored scheme.
  + The VVP aims for the comprehensive development of select villages along the **northern border** (specifically in Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, and Ladakh).
  + The objective is to provide sufficient incentives for people to stay in their native villages, thereby **reversing outmigration** from border areas. This is seen as a way to improve border security.
  + VVP-II is a Central Sector Scheme with 100% funding from the Union Government, which covers a wider range of international land borders.
* **Areas of Focus**: Under Operation Sadbhavana and VVP, the Indian Army undertakes various welfare activities including education (Army Goodwill Schools), healthcare (medical camps), infrastructure development (roads, water supply), and women's empowerment (vocational training centers).
* **Strategic Significance**: These initiatives are crucial for national integration and for strengthening the relationship between the armed forces and the civilian population, which is especially important in areas with past insurgency or cross-border terrorism.

**1.4 'Saksham' Counter-UAS Grid System**

The Indian Army has initiated the procurement of the indigenously developed **'Saksham' Counter-Unmanned Aerial System (C-UAS) Grid System** to secure the **Tactical Battlefield Space (TBS)**. This system is a significant step towards enhancing operational readiness against the growing threat of hostile drones and unmanned aerial systems (UAS). The system's development reflects the government's vision of **'Atmanirbhar Bharat'** in defense technology. 🛡️

**Key Features and Significance**

* **Name and Developer**: The system is named **SAKSHAM**, which stands for "Situational Awareness for Kinetic Soft and Hard Kill Assets Management". It has been developed in collaboration with **Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), Ghaziabad**, an Indian public sector enterprise.
* **Core Functionality**: The system is a high-end, modular Command and Control (C2) system that operates on the secure **Army Data Network (ADN)**. It is designed to **detect, track, identify, and neutralize** hostile drones and UAS in real-time.
* **Expanded Battlefield Domain**: The need for a robust C-UAS framework became evident during **Operation Sindoor**, which exposed vulnerabilities to hostile drone activity. In response, the Army expanded its operational concept from the traditional **Tactical Battle Area (TBA)** to the broader **Tactical Battlefield Space (TBS)**, which includes the **Air Littoral** (airspace up to 3,000 meters or 10,000 feet above ground). SAKSHAM is engineered to secure this new, low-altitude air domain.
* **'Soft Kill' and 'Hard Kill' Capabilities**: SAKSHAM has the capability to neutralize threats using both "Soft Kill" and "Hard Kill" options.
  + **Soft Kill**: This involves countermeasures that interfere with the UAS's guidance or control systems, such as jammers that disrupt the radio frequency or GPS signal.
  + **Hard Kill**: This refers to physical countermeasures like projectiles, blasts, or other munitions that destroy or divert the incoming threat.
* **Advanced Features**: The system incorporates AI-driven fusion technologies for threat evaluation and predictive analysis. It provides a unified picture of both ground and aerial threats on a common GIS-based platform, enabling quick decision-making and swift engagement.
* **Procurement and Future**: The system was approved under the **Fast Track Procurement (FTP) route** and is expected to be rolled out to all field formations within a year. Once operational, it will form the backbone of the Indian Army's C-UAS grid. This initiative is aligned with the **Indian Army's Decade of Transformation (2023–2032)**, which aims for a digitally enabled, networked battlefield.

**Strategic Use for UPSC Preparation**

This article provides an excellent, current example for questions on India's defense modernization, indigenization, and internal security.

* **GS Paper 3 (Internal Security)**: Use SAKSHAM as a concrete example of India's response to the growing threat of non-state actors using drones for surveillance, reconnaissance, and attacks. The system's use of AI and its focus on the Air Littoral highlights the evolving nature of modern warfare.
* **GS Paper 3 (Science and Technology)**: The development of SAKSHAM by BEL, a public sector undertaking, under the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' vision, is a key point for discussing defense indigenization. You can also mention its advanced features, like AI-driven analysis and sensor fusion, as an application of technology in defense.
* **Essay**: The topic of "India's Defense Preparedness in the 21st Century" or "The Role of Technology in Securing India's Borders" can be powerfully supported by the details from this article.
* Query successful

**1.5 India-Australia Defence Agreements**

The articles detail the growing defense partnership between India and Australia, which is a key pillar of the **India-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP)**. This partnership is a significant step towards ensuring stability in the **Indo-Pacific** region.

**Key Points for UPSC Prelims:**

* **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP)**: The bilateral relationship was elevated to a CSP in 2020 and is marking its fifth anniversary this year. This has led to an unprecedented increase in defense engagements, which have more than tripled in the past decade.
* **Recent Agreements and Initiatives**: During a recent visit by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to Australia, three key agreements were signed to enhance cooperation:
  + An agreement on **information sharing**.
  + A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on **submarine search and rescue cooperation**.
  + Terms of reference for establishing **joint staff talks**.
* **Joint Exercises and Cooperation**: The two nations have been expanding their military engagements. These include:
  + The **"AustraHind"** combat exercise, which is slated to have its fourth edition soon.
  + Participation in the **Malabar naval exercise**, which now includes all "Quad" countries.
* **Logistics and Interoperability**: India has a military logistics agreement with Australia that provides for reciprocal refuelling, repair, and berthing facilities for warships and aircraft. The two countries also operate common platforms, such as the Boeing-made **P-8I maritime surveillance aircraft**, which enhances real-time intelligence sharing.
* **Future Plans**: Both sides are working on a **Maritime Security Road Map** to enhance collaboration on maritime domain awareness in the Indian Ocean. Australia is also keen on initiating a **2+2 ministerial dialogue** involving the foreign and defense ministers of both countries.
* **Defense Industrial Collaboration**: Australia sees India as an emerging and reliable partner in defense production and is exploring opportunities for joint production of military hardware. This aligns with India's efforts to increase its defense manufacturing capabilities.

**1.6 Exercise Konkan 2025**

The article reports on the conclusion of the sea phase of **Exercise Konkan 2025**, a bilateral maritime drill between the Indian Navy and the UK's Royal Navy. This exercise is a key element of the broader **India-UK Vision 2035**, aimed at strengthening the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two nations.

**Key Points for UPSC Prelims (Defence)**

* **Exercise Konkan**: This is a **bilateral naval exercise** between the Indian Navy and the UK's Royal Navy. First held in 2004, it has traditionally been a biennial event that has grown in scale and complexity over the past two decades.
* **Historical Significance**: The 2025 edition marks a **historic first** as it is the first time that the **Carrier Strike Groups (CSGs)** of both nations have operated together.
* **Participating Assets**:
  + **India**: The Indian Navy was represented by the carrier battle group of its indigenous aircraft carrier **INS *Vikrant***. The fleet also included other surface, sub-surface, and air combatants.
  + **UK**: The UK Carrier Strike Group (UK CSG 25) was led by the aircraft carrier **HMS *Prince of Wales***. The UK CSG's deployment is part of a broader, eight-month global deployment called **"Operation Highmast,"** which also includes assets from Norway and Japan.
* **Drills and Objectives**:
  + The exercise, which was held off India's **western coast**, was conducted in two phases: a harbour phase and a sea phase.
  + The sea phase involved complex drills including **anti-air, anti-surface, and anti-submarine exercises**, flying operations, and underway replenishment. These drills were designed to enhance **interoperability** and operational readiness between the two navies.
* **Beyond Naval Exercise**:
  + After the conclusion of the naval exercise, the UK CSG is scheduled to participate in a **one-day aerial defence exercise with the Indian Air Force** off the western coast of India.
  + The UK CSG ships will also make port calls in Mumbai and Goa, which are opportunities to strengthen professional, cultural, and trade ties.

**2. Miscellaneous**

**2.1** **László Krasznahorkai, Nobel Prize in Literature**

The article announces that Hungarian writer **László Krasznahorkai** has won the Nobel Prize in Literature for his "compelling and visionary oeuvre that, in the midst of apocalyptic terror, reaffirms the power of art". The Nobel judges praised his "artistic gaze which is entirely free of illusion" and his "unwavering belief in the power of art".

**Key Points for UPSC Prelims**

* **Name**: László Krasznahorkai.
* **Nationality**: Hungarian.
* **Award**: Nobel Prize in Literature.
* **Reason for Award**: For his "compelling and visionary oeuvre that, in the midst of apocalyptic terror, reaffirms the power of art".
* **Literary Style**: He is known for philosophical and bleakly funny novels that often unfold in single sentences of incredible length. The Nobel judges characterized him as a "great epic writer in the Central European tradition that extends through [Franz] Kafka to Thomas Bernhard". His works are also described as being characterized by "absurdism and grotesque excess".
* **Notable Works**: His debut novel, *Satantango*, and *The Melancholy of Resistance* were both adapted into films by Hungarian director Béla Tarr. He also won the National Book Award for Translated Literature in the U.S. in 2019 for *Baron Wenckheim's Homecoming*.
* **Political Context**: He has been a vocal critic of the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and his government's policies, including their lack of support for Ukraine after the Russian invasion.
* **Personal Life**: He was born in the southeastern Hungarian city of Gyula, near the border with Romania.

**2.2 María Corina Machado, Nobel Peace Prize Winner**

The article and additional sources report that Venezuelan opposition leader **María Corina Machado** has been awarded the **2025 Nobel Peace Prize**. The Norwegian Nobel Committee recognized her for her "tireless work promoting democratic rights for the people of Venezuela and for her struggle to achieve a just and peaceful transition from dictatorship to democracy".

**Key Points for UPSC Prelims**

* **Award Recipient**: María Corina Machado. She is the 20th woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize.
* **Nationality**: Venezuelan.
* **Reason for the Award**:
  + Her "tireless work promoting democratic rights".
  + Her struggle for a "just and peaceful transition from dictatorship to democracy".
  + She is seen as a "brave and committed champion of peace" and a symbol of "civilian courage" in Latin America.
  + The Nobel Committee also highlighted her role as a "key, unifying figure in a political opposition that was once deeply divided".
* **Political Background**:
  + She is a prominent opposition leader against the governments of Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro.
  + She co-founded the civil society group **Súmate** in 2002, which focused on promoting free and fair elections.
  + She was a member of Venezuela's National Assembly from 2011 to 2014, when she was expelled by the regime.
  + She was a presidential candidate in 2023 but was blocked from running in the 2024 election by the regime. Despite this, she backed another opposition candidate, Edmundo González Urrutia.
* **Personal Context**:
  + She has been forced to live in hiding due to threats from the Venezuelan government, but has remained in the country.
  + She is an industrial engineer by training, and her father was a prominent businessman in the country's steel industry. Her upper-class roots have been a point of criticism from Venezuela's socialist party.
* **Controversy**: She dedicated her prize to the "suffering people of Venezuela and to President Trump for his decisive support of our cause!".
* **Other Nobel Prizes**: Unlike the other Nobel Prizes, which are awarded in Stockholm, the Nobel Peace Prize is presented in Oslo, Norway.
* **2025 Nobel Peace Prize Ceremony**: The award ceremony takes place on December 10, the anniversary of Alfred Nobel's death.
* **Total Nobel Peace Prizes**: As of 2025, the Nobel Peace Prize has been awarded 106 times to 143 laureates, including 112 individuals and 31 organizations.