

26 Apr 2021: PIB Summary & Analysis

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1. Forest fires in Mizoram

Context:

PM talks to Mizoram CM and takes stock of forest fire situation.

Details:

- The fire broke out on April 24 in the general area of Veng College in Lunglei and spread towards Serkawn and Zotlang areas.
- The areas most effected were Bazar Veng, Serkawn, Zotlang and Chanmari Ramthar areas.
- While Lunglei district was the most affected, the forests fires had also spread to certain surrounding districts.
- The fire has been controlled by the firefighters, Assam Rifles troops and locals.
- The Indian Air Force (IAF) had also pressed in two Mi-17V5 helicopters, equipped with Bambi Buckets, to douse the flames after several parts of the district and the adjoining areas were engulfed by forest fires, which had also spread to populated areas.

Also read: [National Disaster Management Plan](#)

- No human casualty has been reported although vast tracts of land and vegetation has been damaged by the fires.
- According to a satellite data assessment by the [Forest Survey of India](#) (FSI), there were as many as 2,671 forest fire points in the state between April 20 and 26, with over 400 points on April 26 alone.
- Officials from the FSI say that **several factors may have led to the fires.**
 - The forests in that region have large bamboo plantations and bamboo leaves are highly inflammable. When there is less moisture and high fuel load in the form of dry leaves and twigs on the forest floor, fire catches easily and spreads rapidly.
 - According to the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), the states of Mizoram and Tripura recorded “large deficiency” in rainfall during the pre-monsoon period from March 1 to April 26 at 74% and 67% below normal.
 - Jhum cultivation could be another factor. During this dry season, certain manmade factors may have led to extensive fires.

- Jhum cultivation, also known as the slash and burn agriculture, is the process of growing crops by first clearing the land of trees and vegetation and burning them thereafter.
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2. DGFT 'COVID-19 Helpdesk'

Context:

Operationalisation of DGFT 'COVID-19 Helpdesk' for International Trade related Issues.

Background:

- The Department of Commerce, Government of India and Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) have undertaken to monitor the status of exports and imports, and difficulties being faced by trade stakeholders in view of the surge of COVID-19 cases.
- DGFT has accordingly operationalised a 'COVID-19 Helpdesk' to support and seek suitable resolutions to issues arising in respect of International Trade.

About the Helpdesk:

- It would look into issues relating to Department of Commerce/DGFT, import and export licensing issues, customs clearance delays and complexities arising thereon, import/export documentation issues, banking matters, etc.
 - The Helpdesk would also collect and collate trade related issues concerning other Ministries/Departments/Agencies of Central Government and State Governments and will co-ordinate to seek their support and provide possible resolution(s).
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3. Project Dantak

Context:

Project DANTAK completes 60 years in Bhutan.

About Project Dantak:

- Dantak is a BRO project that was initiated in 1961.
- It is headquartered at Simtokha, near Thimphu under a Chief Engineer.
- Project DANTAK has constructed, under GOI funding, over 1500 km of roads through very difficult mountainous terrain in Bhutan.
- Identifying the utmost importance of connectivity in the socio-economic development and growth of Bhutan, DANTAK was mandated with constructing motorable roads in the Himalayan kingdom.
- Project Dantak has built all the major highways such as the East-West highway (548 km) and Thimphu-Phuentsholing highway (181 km), airfields at Paro and Yangphula and airport terminal at

Paro, a number of helipads, the Indo- Bhutan microwave link, Bhutan Broadcasting Station, India House Complex, Chhukha Hydroelectric Housing Complex, Power sub-stations, river training works, and several important buildings (including SAARC Convention Centre).

- The medical and educational facilities established by DANTAK in far flung areas were often the first in those locations.

Also read: [India – Bhutan relations](#)

