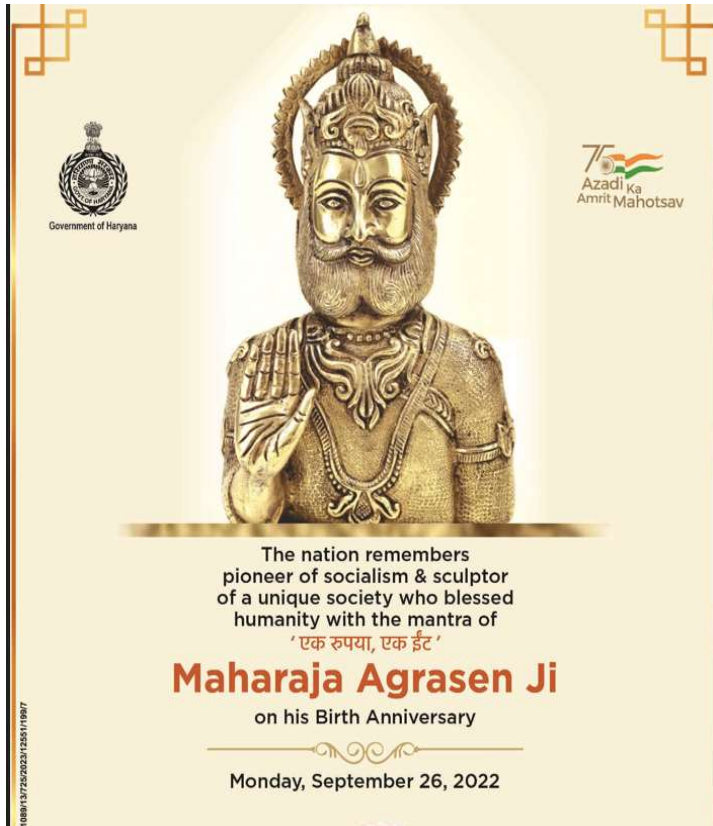


CURRENT AFFAIRS

26 SEPTEMBER 2022



TOPIC: HISTORY



- ✓ Agrasen was a legendary Indian king of Agroha, a city of traders. He is the descendant of Kush, son of lord Ram and he was born in 35th generation after lord Ram.
- ✓ He is credited with the establishment of a kingdom of traders in North India named Agroha, and is known for his compassion in refusing to slaughter animals in yajnas.
- ✓ The Government of India issued a postage stamp in honour of Agrasen in 1976.
- ✓ Maharaja Agrasen was a Vaish King of the Solar Dynasty who adopted Vanika Dharma for the benefit of his people.

A ground plan for India's reformed multilateralism

Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's visit to the United States (September 18-28) has set the stage for an expansive range of bilateral and multilateral diplomacy by India. It is a unique visit as it seeks to achieve a vast list of objectives led by the Indian delegation's participation in the High-Level Week at the 77th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, which opened on September 13.

Perhaps the only precedent to the Minister's current 11-day whirlwind diplomacy is his 2019 visit to the General Assembly, followed by a policy outreach comprising seven think-tanks in seven days in Washington DC. Even so, this year's diplomatic agendas and international setting separate it from earlier years in quite a few ways. Coming just after the recently concluded Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) meet in Samarkand, which was attended by the Prime Minister, India's varied multilateral engagements showcase a road map for India's renewed multilateral diplomacy.

Overhauling the Security Council

At the heart of India's participation in the 77th General Assembly is the call for a 'reformed multilateralism' through which the United Nations Security Council should reform itself into a more inclusive organisation representing the contemporary realities of today. India's call for this structural overhaul of global multilateral institutions incorporates institutional accountability and a wider representation of the developing countries.

For a global organisation such as the UN, growing stakes of developing countries in the Security Council could foster trust and leadership across the world. The theme of the 77th General Assembly, which seeks "A watershed moment: Transformative Solutions to Interlocking Challenges", places India right in the midst as a strong partner of the UN.

At least three recent global developments reflective of the UN's functional evaluation have stood out in India's quest for a reform of the UN. The COVID-19 pandemic was a weak moment for UN's multilateralism. It highlighted the UN's institutional limitations when countries closed



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New Delhi's call for a structural overhaul of global multilateral institutions incorporates institutional accountability and a wider representation of the developing countries

their borders, supply chains were interrupted and almost every country was in need of vaccines. Countries of the global South, including India, which stepped up through relief efforts, drug distribution and vaccine manufacturing, have created space for a more inclusive UN, particularly through its Security Council (UNSC) reform.

The UN's faultlines

Second, UN-led multilateralism has been unable to provide strong mechanisms to prevent wars. The shadow of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war has loomed large over several deadlocks in UNSC resolutions since the war broke out in February this year. With the West boycotting Russia, the veto provision of the UNSC is expected to reach an even more redundant level than in the past. As such, a reformed multilateralism with greater representation could generate deeper regional stakes to prevent wars.

Finally, China's rise, belligerence and aggression which has been on display through its actions in the South China Sea, the Indo-Pacific region, and now increasingly globally, have also underscored the limitations of the UN-style multilateralism. China's growing dominance could lead it to carve its own multilateral matrix circumventing the West, economically and strategically. The international isolation of Russia and Iran as well as increasing the United States' Taiwan-related steps could usher in these changes more rapidly than expected.

China's control of multilateral organisations, including the UN, is only increasing – most recently seen in the unofficial pressure China exerted on the former UN's human rights chief, Michelle Bachelet, to stop the release of a report by the UN Human Rights Council on the condition of Uyghurs in China. Moreover, China's unabashed use of veto power against India continues at the UN.

In the most recent case, it blocked a joint India-U.S. proposal at the UN to enlist Sajid Mir, a top Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) operative involved in directing the 2008 Mumbai attacks, as a 'global terrorist'.

Consistent with the changing times, India's call for reform of the UNSC has grown in the past few

years. In this regard, Mr. Jaishankar's hosting of a ministerial meeting of the G4 (Brazil, India, Germany and Japan) holds special significance. Another high-level meeting of the Indian delegation with the L.69 Group, on "Reinvigorating Multilateralism and Achieving Comprehensive Reform of the UN Security Council", will be critical in the planning of the next steps. The L.69 group's vast membership spread over Asia, Africa, Latin America, Caribbean and Small Island Developing States could bring about a wider global consensus on the issue of the UNSC reforms.

In focus

India's emphasis on reinvigorated multilateralism coincides with a critical juncture in the UN-led multilateralism. Just as burden-sharing has become integral to evolving multilateralism between regional countries, the UN could integrate such practices within its institutional ambit. In the past few years, the UN's responses to both global and regional events have evinced a clear space for leadership and representation, as much as they have depicted its institutional inability to lead globally on its own. With starker divisions between countries as result of the Russia-Ukraine war and lingering pandemic-induced restrictions, the need for the UN's reform is likely to be felt more palpably than ever before.

Beyond the UN, the Minister's participation in plurilateral meetings of the Quad (Australia, India, Japan, the U.S.), IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa), BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), Presidency Pro Tempore CELAC (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States), India-CARICOM (Caribbean Community) and other trilateral formats, such as India-France-Australia, India-France-the United Arab Emirates and India-Indonesia-Australia underlines India's search for new frameworks of global governance, amidst growing frustration with the extant multilateral order. As Mr. Jaishankar has rightly highlighted in his remarks at the UN, at a challenging time for the world order, New Delhi continues to affirm its commitment to "diplomacy and the need for international cooperation".

BRICS

- ✓ Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. S. Africa joined later in 2011.
- ✓ 2014: BRICS New Development Bank

Quad

- ✓ Quadrilateral Security Dialogue is an informal strategic dialogue between the United States, Japan, Australia and India.

TOPIC: MONSOON, RAINFALL

Shifting monsoon patterns

Why are certain regions of the country experiencing higher rainfall than normal? How is the triple dip El Niño effect contributing to this change? Do these changes affect the sowing of the summer crop?

EXPLAINER

Jacob Koshy

The story so far:

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has said that the monsoon has begun to retreat from Rajasthan.

What is the monsoon withdrawal?

The monsoon is a sea-breeze that has consistently landed in the Indian sub-continent for thousands of years. It enters mainland India between the last week of May and the first week of June — though June 1 is its official onset date over Kerala. The IMD only counts the rainfall between June 1 and September 30 as monsoon rainfall. This doesn't mean that the monsoon system ceases to pour rain over India from October 1. In fact, monsoon-related rain can continue well into the first fortnight of October and only really retreats from India by late October. It is then replaced by the retreating, or northeast monsoon in November which is the key source of rainfall for several parts of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and north interior Karnataka.

When does the monsoon withdraw?

The monsoon begins its withdrawal from the last State it reaches, which is Rajasthan. Around September 15, cyclonic systems from the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal that fuel the monsoon from June-September are replaced by an 'anti-cyclone' circulation which means dry, windless conditions start to prevail over western and northern India. More technically, withdrawal is a cessation of rainfall activity over northwest India for five straight days, an anticyclone establishing itself in the lower troposphere and a marked reduction in moisture content. A day after the IMD announced the withdrawal, torrential rains began in several parts of north India.

How has the monsoon been this year? Monsoon rainfall in India has been surplus



Pouring down: A man riding a horse passes through the waterlogged Aluva Shiva temple premises following monsoon rains in Kochi on August 2. PTI

by around 7% this year though with extreme inequity. Central and southern India saw a sharp surge in rainfall. Rains in Central India were surplus by 20% and in southern India by 25%, with the last month seeing several instances of flooding in Kerala, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh. On the other hand, large parts of U. P., Bihar, Odisha have seen large deficits. The east and northeast of India have reported a 17% shortfall and the northwest 2%. This has impacted sowing of the kharif, or summer crop. Paddy planting has been impacted with sown area 5.51% lower than last year, according to the Agriculture Ministry. The Centre is expecting a minimum of six-million tonne shortfall in rice production and this is likely to elevate inflation.

What led to excessive rains in southern and central India? In April, the IMD had forecast 'normal'

rains over India but by May-end indicated it to be above normal. Central India and the southern peninsula were expected to get 6% more than their historical average but what we have seen are rains far in excess of this. These heavy rains are premised on a La Niña, the converse phenomenon of the El Niño and characterised by cooler than normal sea surface temperatures in the central Pacific.

While, El Niños are linked to reduced rains over India, La Ninas indicate surplus rainfall. India is seeing an extended spell of the La Niña, called a 'triple dip' La Niña which is a phenomenon lasting across three winter seasons in the northern hemisphere. This is only the third time since 1950 that a triple dip La Niña has been observed. This, in part, is why for the third year in a row, India is seeing surplus rain in September, a month that usually marks the retreat of the monsoon.

Are monsoon patterns changing?

Since 2019, monsoon in India has returned surpluses, barring a slight dip last year. The June-September rainfall in 2019 was 10% more than the 88 cm that India usually gets. Though June saw deficit rain, the months of July and August returned extra rain, with September registering 52% more rain than normal. In 2020, India saw 9% more rain with August registering 27% more rain and September 4% more than its usual quota. The rainfall over the country as a whole, in 2021, was 1% less than normal though rainfall in September was a remarkable 35% above what is usual. This year the monsoon is already in surplus by about 6% and a vigorous September is likely to see India post yet another year of surplus rain. Three years of above normal rain in a block of four years is unprecedented in more than a century of IMD's record keeping, data suggests.

THE GIST

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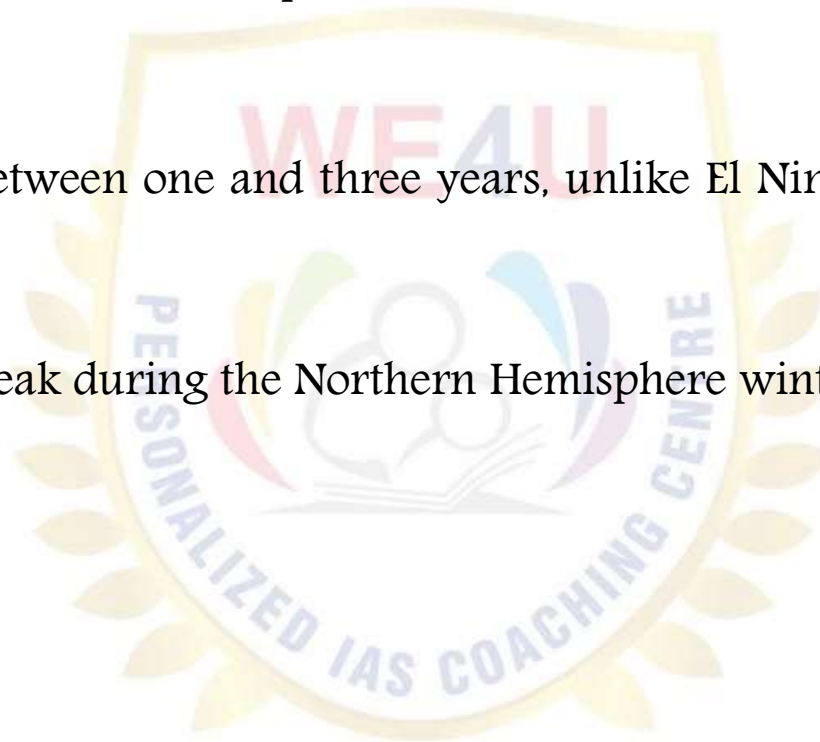
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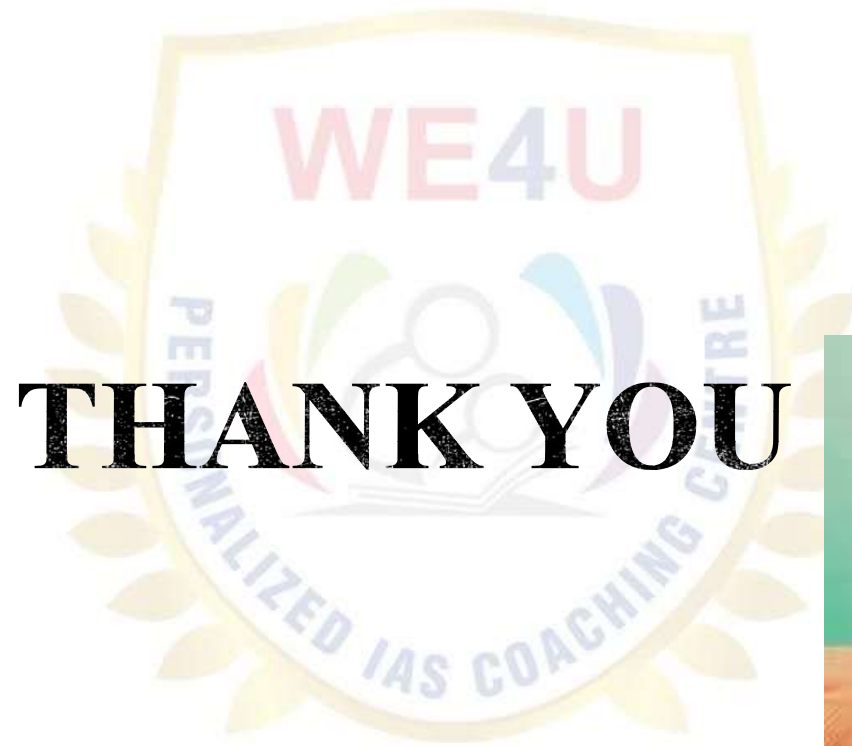
ELNINO

- ✓ El Nino is a climate pattern that describes the unusual warming of surface waters in the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean.
- ✓ It occurs more frequently than La Nina.
- ✓ El Nino was first recognized by Peruvian fishermen off the coast of Peru as the appearance of unusually warm water.
- ✓ The Spanish immigrants called it El Nino, meaning “the little boy” in Spanish.
- ✓ El Nino soon came to describe irregular and intense climate changes rather than just the warming of coastal surface waters.
- ✓ The El Nino event is not a regular cycle, they are not predictable and occur irregularly at two- to seven-year intervals.

LA NINA

- ✓ La Nina, the “cool phase” of ENSO, is a pattern that describes the unusual cooling of the tropical eastern Pacific.
- ✓ La Nina events may last between one and three years, unlike El Nino, which usually lasts no more than a year.
- ✓ Both phenomena tend to peak during the Northern Hemisphere winter.





THANK YOU

