

## OBOR

- China's investments in infrastructure projects under its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) have declined while Beijing's short and medium term assistance to partner countries, some of which are dealing with rising debt levels, is increasing.
- The report noted three clear trends in the BRI: a growing role for Chinese State-owned Enterprises; the average size for project deals falling, from \$558 million in 2021 to \$325 million last year; and an increasingly uneven spread of engagement.

### About OBOR

- The Belt and Road Initiative, reminiscent of the Silk Road, is a massive infrastructure project that would stretch from East Asia to Europe.
- Some analysts see the project as a disturbing expansion of Chinese power, and the United States has struggled to offer a competing vision.
- The initiative has stoked opposition in some countries involved in Belt and Road that have taken on high levels of debt.

## What was the original Silk Road?

- The original Silk Road arose during the westward expansion of China's Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), which forged trade networks throughout what are today the Central Asian countries of Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, as well as modern-day India and Pakistan to the south.
- Those routes extended more than four thousand miles to Europe.
- Central Asia was thus the epicentre of one of the first waves of globalization, connecting eastern and western markets, spurring immense wealth, and intermixing cultural and religious traditions.

## THE HINDU

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### Great India Bustard

- The perceived beliefs and recorded observations of egg laying habit of Great Indian Bustard (GIB) have changed after the recent excessive rains in western Rajasthan.
- The critically endangered bird species has adopted an altogether new behaviour of giving clutch of two eggs at a time after getting an

additional protein diet during the monsoon season.

### **About Great Indian bustard**

- Historically, the great Indian bustard was distributed throughout Western India, spanning 11 states, as well as parts of Pakistan. Its stronghold was once the Thar Desert in the north-west and the Deccan plateau of the peninsula. Today, its population is confined mostly to Rajasthan and Gujarat.
- A small population occurs in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Bustards generally favour flat open landscapes with minimal visual obstruction and disturbance, therefore adapt well in grasslands.
- In the non-breeding season they frequent wide agro-grass scrub landscapes.
- While in the breeding season (summers and monsoons) they congregate in traditional undisturbed grassland patches characterized by a mosaic of scantily grazed tall grass (below 50 cm).
- They avoid grasses taller than themselves and dense scrub like thickets.
- Listed in Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, in Appendix I of CITES, as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List

and the National Wildlife Action Plan (2002-2016).

- It has also been identified as one of the species for the recovery programme under the Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India.

### **THE HINDU**

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#### **VideoLAN ban and IT act**

##### **The story so far:**

- The website of VideoLAN Client (VLC) has been banned in India.
- Although there is no official information on the ban, VLC states that according to its statistics, its website has been banned since February this year.

##### **In which situations can online content be blocked to the public?**

- There are two routes through which content can be blocked online executive and judicial.
- First, given the reach of the internet and its potential to cause significant harm to online users, governments across the world reserve the power to monitor and issue directions for regulation of the online content being available in their jurisdictions.

- The Government of India gets this power from Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000.
  - Section 69A allows the government to direct an intermediary to “block for access by the public any information generated, transmitted, received, stored or hosted in any computer resource” if it is “necessary or expedient to do so, in the interest of sovereignty and integrity of India, defense of India, security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states or public order or for preventing incitement to the commission of any cognizable offense”.
  - Section 69A draws its power from Article 19(2) of the Constitution which allows the government to place reasonable restrictions on the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression.
  - Second, courts in India, also have the power to direct intermediaries to make content unavailable in India to provide effective remedy to the victim/plaintiff.
  - For example, courts may order internet service providers to block websites which provide access to pirated content and violate the plaintiff’s copyright.
- What is the procedure for blocking access to content online?**
- A detailed procedure for blocking content is provided by the Information Technology Rules, 2009 (IT Rules, 2009) that have been formulated under Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000.
  - An important point to note is that only the Central government can exercise this power of directing intermediaries to block access to online content directly, and not the State governments.
  - The procedure typically provides that Central or State agencies will appoint a “nodal officer” who will forward the blocking order to the “designated officer” of the Central government.
  - The designated officer, as part of a committee, examines the request of the nodal officer.
  - The committee comprises representatives from the Ministries of Law and Justice, Information and Broadcasting, Home Affairs, and the Cert-In
  - The creator/host of the content in question is given a notice to submit clarifications and replies.

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## Chinese Manja

- Traditional Manja is based on fine pure cotton thread coated with a mixture of rice glue, tree gums and similar natural ingredients and an abrasive: finely powdered glass, aluminium oxide or zirconia alumina.
- In some places, individuals make their own Manja from personal 'secret' recipes - but most are made by specialist craftsmen on a large scale.
- So-called "chemical manja" or "Chinese manja" is a relatively recent introduction. It is based on non-biodegradable synthetic fibres.
- This makes it harder to break, which can be seen as unsportsmanlike, and makes the string more dangerous to bystanders and birds.
- In Brazil, in addition to cerol, there is a more dangerous version of the kite string, the so-called "linha chilena" (Chilean string), which contains essentially the same ingredients used to make cerol, but with the addition of quartz powder and aluminium powder, which makes the string four times more dangerous than regular cerol.

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