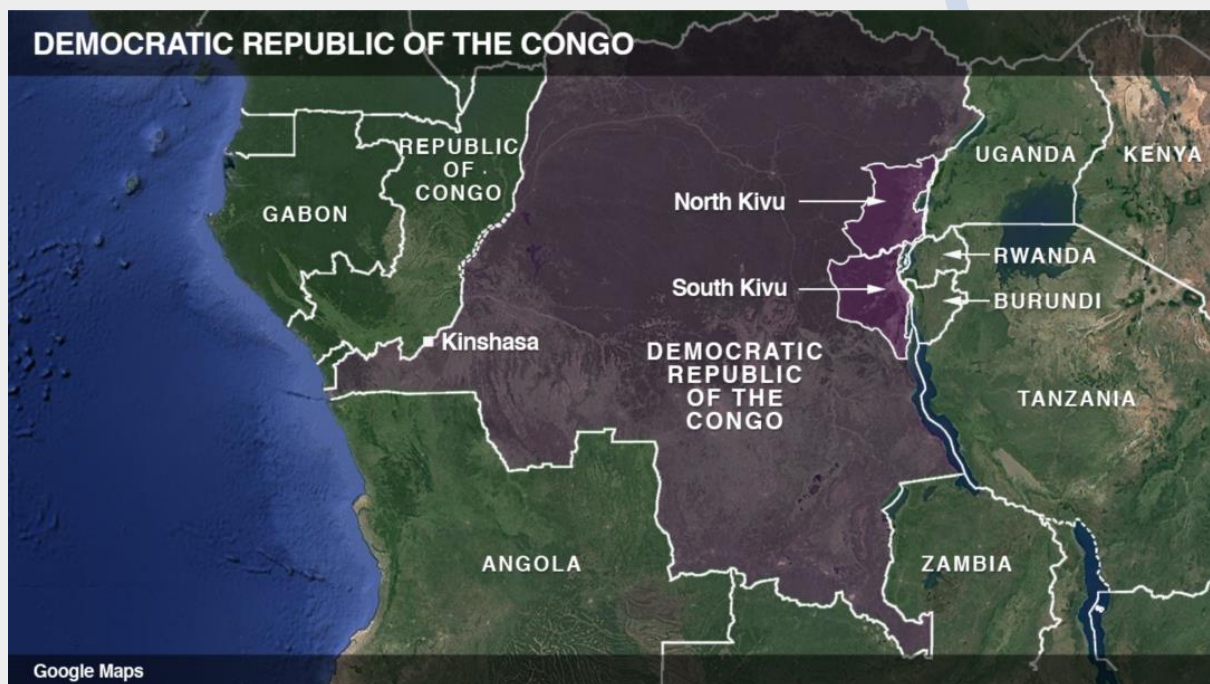


1. What is happening in Congo and why are M23 rebels fighting?**Introduction**

Rwandan-backed M23 rebels in the Democratic Republic of Congo are seeking to advance south towards Bukavu, the capital of South Kivu province, in an attempt to expand their area of control in the country's east after capturing the city of Goma. The latest fighting is part of a major escalation of a decades-old conflict.

**What is happening?**

The rebels entered Goma, the capital of North Kivu province, on January 27 night. By January 30 morning, the rebels were in control of the devastated city, where corpses still lay in the streets.

Since then, M23 fighters have pushed southwards into South Kivu, battling the Congolese army. The reports claim of Rwandan troops crossing the border into South Kivu.

What are M23 rebels?

M23, which refers to the March 23, 2009, accord that ended a previous Tutsi-led revolt in eastern Congo, is the latest group of ethnic Tutsi-led insurgents to take up arms against Congolese forces. It launched the current rebellion in 2022.

The group has accused the government of Congo of not living up to the peace deal and fully integrating Congolese Tutsis into the army and administration.

It also vows to defend Tutsi interests, particularly against ethnic Hutu militias such as the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR). The FDLR was founded by Hutus who fled Rwanda after participating in the 1994 genocide of close to one million Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

Advances into new territory by M23 rebels since the start of the year have prompted hundreds of thousands more people to flee their homes. For more than a year, M23 has controlled Congo's coltan-mining region of Rubaya, generating an estimated \$800,000 per month through a production tax. Coltan is used in the production of smartphones and other equipment.

Why is Rwanda involved?

The government of Congo, UN officials and Western powers including the United States have accused Congo's neighbour Rwanda of fuelling the conflict by deploying thousands of its own troops and heavy weapons on Congolese soil in support of M23.

According to Rwandan President Paul Kagame's government, which denies backing the rebels, it has taken what it calls defensive measures and accuses Congo of fighting alongside the FDLR, which has attacked Tutsis in both countries.

Relevance: GS Prelims; International Relations

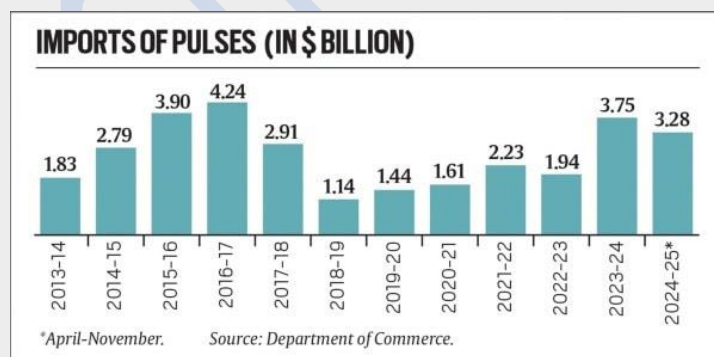
Source: Indian Express

2. Budget announcement: Why Aatmanirbharta in pulses is a challenge

Mission for Aatmanirbharta (self-reliance) in Pulses

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has announced the launch of a six-year 'Mission for Aatmanirbharta (self-reliance) in Pulses' with a special focus on tur/arhar (pigeonpea), urad (black gram) and masoor (red lentil).

The 2025-26 Union Budget has allocated Rs 1,000 crore towards this scheme, which aims to provide minimum support price (MSP)-based procurement and post-harvest warehousing solutions in respect of the three pulses crops.



Rising Imports

Between 2013-14 and 2016-17, India's pulses imports rose both in value (from \$1.83 billion to \$4.24 billion) and quantity (from 31.78 lakh tonnes to 66.09 lakh tonnes) terms. Subsequently, they fell to 24.96 lakh tonnes (\$1.94 billion) in 2022-23. However, the Pulses imports seem to be rising in current

year. Only 8 months of imports have reached \$3.28 billion.

What's new this time?

Domestic pulses production increased from 192.55 lakh tonnes in 2013-14 to 273.02 lakh tonnes in 2021-22 and 260.58 lakh tonnes in 2022-23.

This was mainly courtesy two crops: chana and moong (green gram). Chana output went up from 95.26 Lakh tonnes in 2013-14 to 122.67 Lakh Tonnes in 2022-23 and the Moong output increased from 14.56 Lakh Tonnes in 2013-14 to 36.76 Lakh Tonnes in 2022-23.

Development of short-duration varieties of Chana

The production increase was enabled by the development of short-duration varieties. Traditional chana varieties take 140-150 days to grow from seed to grain, while requiring 1-2 irrigations. The newer varieties can be harvested in 100-120 days, with farmers having to give a single irrigation at most. They can sow from end-September to mid-October, after harvesting of the kharif (post-monsoon) crop and using the residual moisture left by it in the soil.

New Varieties of Moong

The breeding breakthroughs have been even greater in moong, where farmers today take as many as four crops. The first one is during kharif, with sowing from end-June to mid-July and harvesting after mid-September. The second is during rabi (winter), with sowing in November-December. The third is grown in spring (February-March sowing) and the last one over summer (after April 1-20 sowing). The summer and rabi moong crops mature in 50-60 days, while it is slightly longer (65-75 days) for the kharif and spring varieties.

In moong, Indian scientists have bred varieties that are not just short-duration, but also photo-thermo insensitive: Being non-sensitive to temperature or photoperiod (the length of time in a 24-hour period that plants are exposed to light), they can practically be grown anytime and anywhere.

Challenges

The Modi government probably wants to replicate the above success story and extend it to other pulses – namely tur/arhar, urad and masoor.

That's easier said than done. To start with, there are growing limitations, particularly in tur/arhar, which was traditionally a 250-270 days crop yielding around 20 quintals per hectare. Breeders have brought the duration down to 150-180 days with 15-16 quintals/hectare yields, but that's still comparatively long and low.

Aatmanirbharta in tur/arhar would, perhaps, require development of hybrids maturing within 140-150 days, giving 18-20 quintals/hectare yields.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Economics

Source: Indian Express

3. Gender Budget Allocations in Union Budget of 2025-26

Overall Share in Total Budget

Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman presented the Union Budget 2025-26 in Parliament on 1st February, 2025. The share of Gender Budget allocation in the total Union Budget has increased to 8.86% in FY 2025-26 from 6.8% in FY 2024-25.

An allocation of Rs. 4.49 lakh crore has been reported for welfare of women and girls in the gender budget statement of FY 2025-26. This is an increase of Rs. 37.25% over the GBS allocation of Rs. 3.27 lakh crore in FY 2024-25.

Gender Reporting by More Ministries/Departments

This year a total of 49 Ministries/Departments and 5 UTs have reported allocations as against 38 Ministries/Departments and 5 UTs in FY 2024-25. This is the highest number of reporting by the Ministries/Departments in the GBS since its inception. Twelve new Ministries/Departments have reported allocations in the GBS 2025-26.

Gender Budgeting

Gender budget does not refer to a separate budget for women. Instead, the gender budget is an attempt to ensure that some part of the budget is definitely spent on women. As a result, separate women cells have been created in various ministries/departments to ensure that a section of grants is allocated dedicatedly for women.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Economics

Source: Indian Express

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