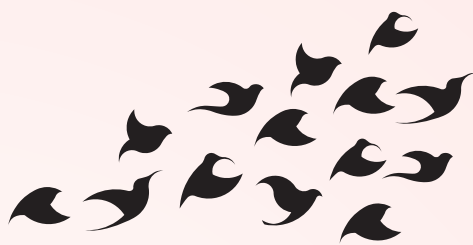




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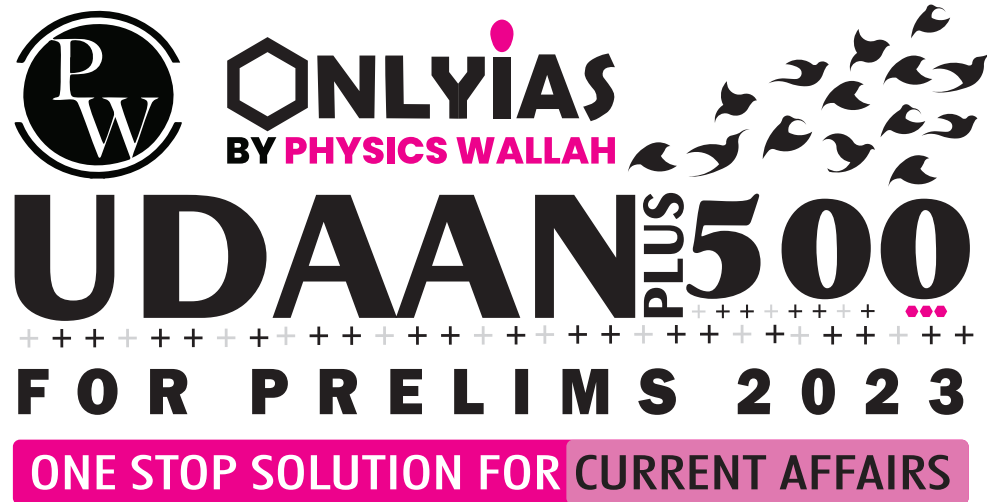
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FOR PRELIMS 2023

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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS **AND** DEFENCE



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND DEFENCE

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India and Neighbouring Countries

CHINA BUILDS BRIDGE ACROSS PANGONG LAKE

News: It will provide an additional axis to deploy troops faster between the north and south banks of the lake, and closer to the LAC (Line of Actual Control).



About:

- China is constructing a bridge in **Eastern Ladakh connecting the North and South Banks of Pangong Tso**.
- The new bridge between the closest points on two banks, will bring down the movement time from around 12 hours to three or four hours.
- The bridge is located around 25 km ahead of the Line of Actual Control (LAC), in China's territory.

India-China Dispute on Pangong Tso Lake:

- Pangong Tso is an **endorheic lake**. **India holds just 1/3rd of the lake**.
- The lake has mountain spurs **referred to as fingers** which are divided into 8 parts.
- The Chinese say that the Line of Actual Control (LAC) is at finger 4. However, India's perceived LAC is at finger 8. This leads to frequent disputes in the area.
- In 2020, India and China have agreed for complete disengagement on the North and South Banks of Pangong Lake.

- **Currently**, the Indian Army has a permanent position near Finger 3, while the PLA has a base East of Finger 8.

AGREEMENT FOR KUSHIYARA RIVER

News: India and Bangladesh have signed an interim water sharing agreement for the Kushiya river.

About:

- **Signed by:** India and Bangladesh.
- **Significance:** This is the first such pact between them in over 25 years — the Ganga water treaty was signed in 1996.
- The pact will benefit people in southern Assam and Sylhet in Bangladesh. Under the pact, the two countries will also share the data on floods.

Kushiya River:

- Kushiya River **is a tributary river of Barak River in Bangladesh and Assam**.
- It **forms on the India-Bangladesh border** as a branch of the Barak River when the Barak separates into the Kushiya and Surma.
- The waters of the **Kushiya originate in the state of Nagaland** and pick up tributaries from Manipur, Mizoram, and Assam.

BRI (BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE)

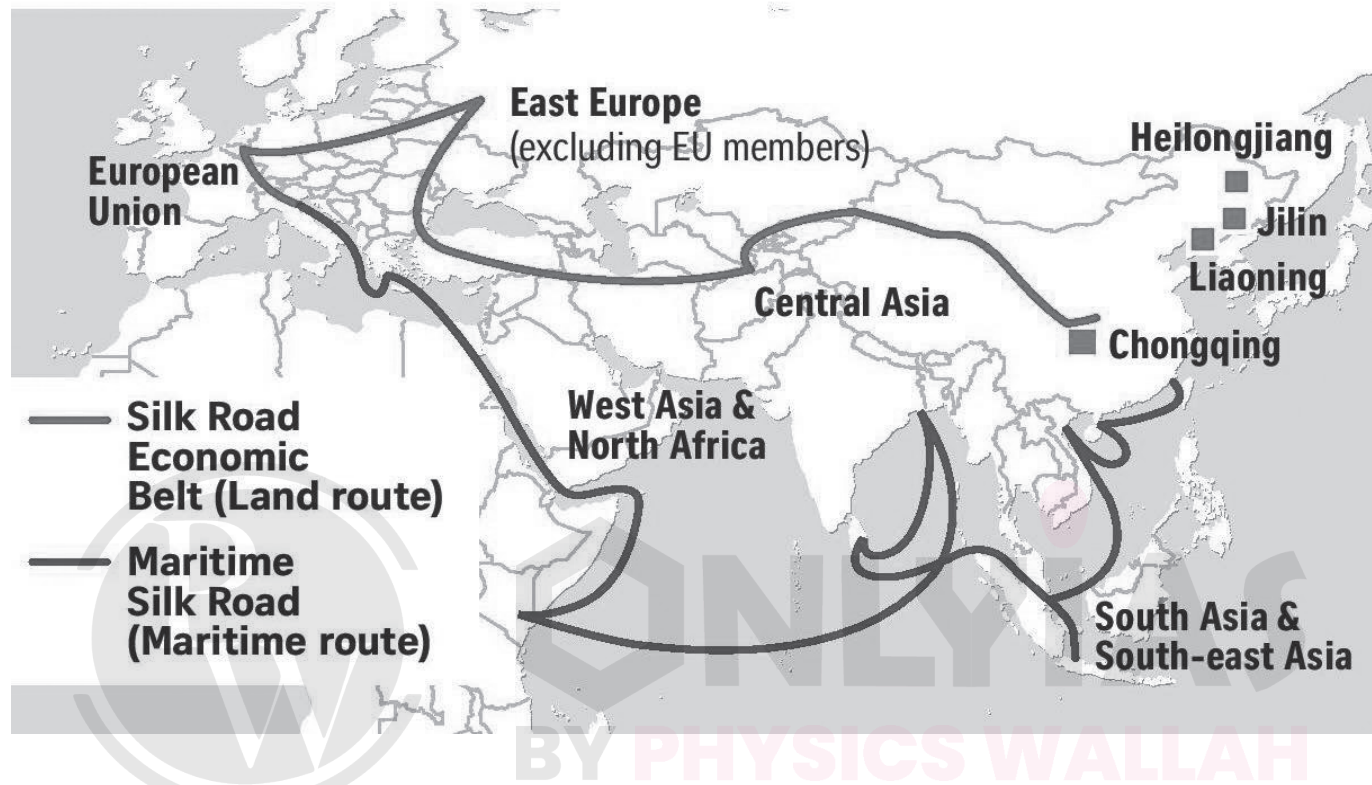
News: Italy has become the first G7 country to join China's Belt & Road Initiative (previously known as One Belt One Road (OBOR) Initiative).

About:

- It is a **transcontinental long-term policy and investment program which aims at infrastructure development and acceleration of the economic integration of countries** along the route of the historic Silk Road.
- It was **unveiled in 2013 by China and until 2016, was known as OBOR (One Belt One Road)**.

- According to the Belt and Road Portal, **currently 71 countries are taking part in the Initiative**, together representing more than a third of the world's GDP and two thirds of the world's population.
- **BRI combines two initiatives:**
 - The (land based) Silk Road Economic Belt.
 - 21st Century Maritime Silk Road.

China's One Belt, One Road initiative



ONE COUNTRY, TWO SYSTEMS (OCTS)

News: China marked the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong's return and emphasised Beijing's control over Hong Kong under One country, two systems (OCTS).

About OCTS:

- "One country, two systems" is a constitutional principle of the People's Republic of China (PRC) describing the governance of the special administrative regions of Hong Kong and Macau.
- Under this, China proposed that Hong Kong, and Macau, can have different economic and political systems from that of mainland China, while being part of China.
- Both regions became Special Administrative Regions of China with their own currencies, economic and legal systems. **However, defence and foreign affairs would be decided by China.**



- Also, Hong Kong has freedom of assembly and speech, and some democratic rights, which are not available in mainland China.
- These freedoms are protected by the Basic Law, a mini constitution that guides the relationship between Hong Kong and China.
- **Basic law is valid for 50 years**, till 2047 for Hong Kong and 2049 for Macau.

Hong Kong and Macau:

- **The British had taken control of Hong Kong in 1842 after the First Opium War.**
- In 1898, Britain and China signed a Convention, which allowed the British to take control of the islands surrounding Hong Kong on lease for 99 years.
- **Macau, on the other side, had been ruled by the Portuguese from 1557.**
- In the 1980s, China initiated talks with both Britain and Portugal for the transfer of two territories.
- **Hong Kong returned to Chinese control in 1997, and Macau's sovereignty was transferred in 1999.**

INDIA-CHINA BORDER DISPUTE

News: China's new law on land borders has come into effect from 1st January, 2022.

About the new Chinese law:

- It lays down provisions for border protection and integration of border areas.
- It designates the responsibilities of various agencies in China, from the military to local authorities, in guarding the frontiers.
- It empowers states to engage in activities such as improvement in public services and infrastructure along borders for overall border defence, economic and social development.
- China shares its land boundary with 14 countries including India, third longest after Mongolia and Russia.

Disputed border with China:

- **Border is not clearly demarcated throughout and there is no mutually agreed Line of Actual Control (LAC).**
 - LAC is the demarcation that separates Indian-controlled territory from Chinese-controlled territory.
 - India considers the LAC to be 3,488 km long, while the Chinese consider it to be only around 2,000 km.

LAC is divided into three sectors:

1. **Western sector (Ladakh):** Boundary dispute in this sector pertains to the **Johnson Line** proposed by the British in the 1860s that extended up to the Kunlun Mountains and put Aksai Chin in the then princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. India used the Johnson Line and claimed Aksai Chin as its own. China does not recognise it and instead accepts the McDonald Line which puts Aksai Chin under its control.
 2. **Middle Sector (Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand):** In this sector dispute is a minor one. Here LAC is the least controversial except for the precise alignment to be followed in the Barahoti plains. India and China have exchanged maps on which they broadly agree.
 3. **Eastern Sector (Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim):** disputed boundary in this sector is over the McMahon Line (in Arunachal Pradesh) decided in 1914 in a meeting of Representatives of China, India, and Tibet in Shimla. Though the Chinese initiated the agreement, they subsequently refused to accept it. The Tawang tract claimed by China was taken over by India in 1951.
- India's consistent and principled position is that Arunachal Pradesh and the entire UTs of J&K and Ladakh have been, are and shall be an integral part of India.

INDIA-SRI LANKA RELATIONS

- India inks a deal with Sri Lanka to **jointly develop Trincomalee oil tank farm.**
- **Renewable energy projects and investments in information technology** in Sri Lanka by India.
- Credit lines for fuel and food.
- India and Sri Lanka **extended the existing S&T cooperation for 3 more years**, with focus on new areas like waste-water technologies, biotech, sustainable agriculture, big data etc.
- **India provided a \$ 400 m credit swap facility to Sri Lanka** and deferred the Asian Clearing House settlement of \$515.2 million.
- The Sri Lankan government prepared a roadmap to repair its ties with India.

Areas of Cooperation:

- **Political:** The 2020 virtual summit issued a joint statement "**Mitratva Magga**" covering all areas of bilateral relations.
- **Economic:** Sri Lanka remains among the largest trade partners of India in SAARC.
- **Cultural:** Buddhism, spread by Ashoka is one of the strong pillars connecting both Nations. Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Scheme, Study in India

tourism etc. also played their part in strengthening cultural connect between the two nations.

- **Development Projects:** Sri Lanka is India's one of the major development partners. For e.g., India housing Project in Sri Lanka.
- **Military Exercises:** MITRA, SHAKTI, IN-SLN etc.

MARITIME RESCUE COORDINATION CENTRE (MRCC)

News: India and Sri Lanka have signed a Memorandum of Understanding for Bharat Electronics Ltd (BEL) to set up a state-of-the-art Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) in Colombo.

About Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC):

- MRCCs are **part of an international network under the UN's International Maritime Organisation to monitor the sea lanes.**
- **Objective is to provide swift response to emergencies**, such as vessels in distress, rescue and evacuation of people, and prevention of and containing environmental disasters such as oil spills.
- Each country is responsible for its own Search and Rescue Region. The work of MRCCs is coordinated by the Navy or Coast Guard in each country.
 - **In India, the Coast Guard is the coordinating agency.** In Sri Lanka, it is the Navy.
- The agreement appears to be **part of India's SAGAR (Security and Growth for all in the Region) initiative** in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and will also help in enhancing maritime security in the region.

About International Maritime Organisation (IMO):

- It is a **specialised agency of the United Nations** which is responsible for measures to improve the safety and security of international shipping and to prevent pollution from ships.
- It is also involved in legal matters, including liability and compensation issues and the facilitation of international maritime traffic.
- It currently has **175 Member States. India is a member.**

INDUS WATER TREATY

News: The 118th meeting of the Permanent Indus Commission (PIC), was held in New Delhi. The World Bank has appointed a Neutral Expert (NE) and a Chairman of the Court of Arbitration (CoA) regarding the Kishenganga and Ratle hydroelectric power plants.

More in the news:

- The appointments were made under the Indus Water Treaty (IWT) to resolve the disputes between India and Pakistan over India's run-of-the-river hydroelectric projects.
 - **Kishanganga Hydroelectric Project (KHEP)** located on Kishanganga or Neelum, a tributary of Jhelum, was inaugurated in 2018.
 - **The Ratle Hydroelectric Plant (RHEP)** is being constructed on the Chenab River.
 - **The World Bank is not financing either project.**

About the IWT:

- The **Indus Waters Treaty, 1960** is a water distribution treaty between India and Pakistan. It was **brokered by the World Bank.**
- The **Indus system** comprises Indus, Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej.
- The **basin is mainly shared by India and Pakistan**, with a small share for China and Afghanistan.
- Under the Indus treaty, **all the waters of three eastern rivers namely Ravi, Sutlej, and Beas were allocated to India for exclusive use.**
- On the other hand, the **waters of Western rivers namely Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab were allocated to Pakistan.**
 - But **India can use the water in western rivers for non-consumptive needs** like irrigation, storage, and even for electricity production.
 - Thus, **India has been given the right to generate hydroelectricity through a run of the river projects** on the western rivers, subject to specific criteria for design and operation.

Permanent Indus Commission:

- The **Permanent Indus Commission is a bilateral commission** of officials from India and Pakistan, created to implement and manage goals of the Indus Waters Treaty, 1960.
- The Commission **according to the treaty must meet regularly at least once a year**, alternately in India and Pakistan.

INDIAN INVESTMENT IN AFGHANISTAN

News: There is talk about India's investment in Afghanistan going waste after the Taliban took over the country.

About:

- **Assistance in construction, upgradation, and rebuilding of various infrastructures:**
 - Parliament in Kabul.

- Reconstruction of Salma dam.
- Construction of Zaranj-Delaram road.
- High impact community development project.
- **Assistance of various types:** military vehicles, choppers, ambulances, buses, food, and medicines etc.
- **People-to-people exchanges.**
 - Scholarships for students.
 - Training for soldiers, police officers and public servants.

INDIA PAKISTAN EXCHANGE LISTS OF NUCLEAR INSTALLATION

News: Part of an annual ritual that has been in practice between the two neighbours for more than three decades.

About:

- **Exchanged a list of their nuclear installations that cannot be attacked in case of an escalation in hostilities.**
- The lists of nuclear installation and facilities were **exchanged as per the provisions of the Article-II of the Agreement on Prohibition of Attacks against Nuclear Installations and Facilities**, signed on December 31, 1988, and ratified on 27 January 1991.
- **According to this agreement, both countries must inform each other of the nuclear facilities.**
- The exchange of the lists came amid strain in ties between the two countries over the Kashmir issue as well as cross-border terrorism.

INDIA-MALDIVES RELATIONS

News: Recently Maldives banned the “**India out campaign**” which was regarded as an organised campaign that aims to disrupt relations between the two countries by inciting unrest.

About Strategic importance of Maldives for India:

- Maldives’ proximity to the **west coast of India**.
- Its location at the hub of commercial sea lanes running through the Indian Ocean.
- **Both countries have signed a security cooperation pact with a credit line from India** for capacity building in the maritime domain.
- **Maldives is part of the Colombo Security Conclave (India initiated)** which envisages peaceful cooperation in the Indian Ocean along with Sri Lanka and Mauritius.

- **India is constructing High Impact Community Development Project (HICDP)** in various atolls of Maldives.
- **India’s approach** for Maldives is **driven by the vision of Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)** to assist island nations in the Eastern Indian Ocean.

INDIA-MAURITIUS CECPA

News: 1st session of High-Powered Joint Trade Committee (JTC) under India-Mauritius Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA) was recently held.

About:

- **First trade agreement signed by India with a country in Africa.**
- Provides a **mechanism to improve trade** between the two countries.
- It covers Trade in Goods, Rules of Origin, Trade in Services, Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures, Dispute Settlement, Movement of Natural Persons, Telecom, Financial services etc.

TRANS-HIMALAYAN MULTI-DIMENSIONAL CONNECTIVITY NETWORK

News: China and Nepal agreed to build the Trans-Himalayan Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network.

About:

- THMCN also referred as the Trans-Himalayan network is **an economic corridor proposed in 2019** between Nepal and China **as a part of China’s Belt and Road Initiative**.
- The corridor **aims to enhance connectivity** in ports, roads, railways, aviation, and communications.
- **Also aims to pave the way for more integration** between China and the rest of South Asia, solidify border controls and aid in the economic development and integration of China’s TAR.

WEST SETI HYDROPOWER PROJECT

News: India will be taking over the West Seti hydropower project in Nepal nearly four years after China withdrew from it.

About:

- **It is a 750 MW hydropower project** planned on Seti River in Nepal’s far west region.

- During the monsoon, the reservoir will be filled up and will be used to produce electricity during dry seasons.
- Nepal is rich in power sources with an estimated potential for 83,000 MW across around 6000 rivers.
- India is viewed as a feasible market for Nepal, but there has been some uncertainty over India's inability to deliver projects on time.

INDIA-BANGLADESH RELATIONS

News: On Bangladeshi PM's recent visit, India and Bangladesh announced several initiatives to further cooperation between two nations.

Key decisions/initiatives announced:

- **CEPA:** negotiations will soon begin on a bilateral agreement that covers trade in goods and services, investment, competition, and intellectual property rights (IPRs).
- **Water sharing:** Signed MoU on sharing of waters of Kushiya river; first such pact since signing of Ganga water treaty in 1996.
- **Connectivity ports:** Inauguration of Rupsha bridge, a key part of Khulna-Mongla Port rail project.
 - Khulna Darshana railway link project upgrading existing infrastructure from Gede-Darshana (India) to Khulna (Bangladesh).
 - Parbatipur -Kaunia railway line will connect to the existing border rail at Birol (Bangladesh)-Radhikapur (West Bengal).
- **Others:**
 - **Maitree power plant at Rampal**, Khulna unveiled. It is being set-up as Indian Development Assistance under Concessional Financing Scheme (CFS).

Recent initiatives for improving connectivity:

- Second addendum to the **Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade (PIWTT)** was signed in May 2020 for including **two new India-Bangladesh Protocol Routes**:
 - Sonamura-Daudkandi on river Gomti
 - Extension of Dhulia to Godagiri up to Aricha on river Padma
 - Five new ports of call and two extended ports of call.
- **Successful trial run of transshipment of Indian goods** from Kolkata to Agartala via Bangladesh.
 - The successful trial run for trans-shipment of cargo movement from Kolkata to the Agartala via Mongla port in Bangladesh took place recently.
- **Restored railway link** between Chilahati (Bangladesh) and Haldibari (India).

- Dhaka-Siliguri-Gangtok-Dhaka and Dhaka-Siliguri-Darjeeling-Dhaka **bus service** to enhance people to people contacts.
- **Feni Bridge (Maitree Setu)** connecting LCS Subroom (Tripura) and LCS Ramgarh (Bangladesh) has been jointly inaugurated.

BBIN MOTOR VEHICLES AGREEMENT (MVA)

News: Recently, India, Bangladesh and Nepal have finalised a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for implementing the **Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA)**.

About:

- **Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal (BBIN)** had signed the Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA) in 2015 at Thimphu, Bhutan.
- **Aim:** To provide seamless people-to-people contact and enhance economic interaction by facilitating cross border movement of people and goods.



- As per the agreement, **member countries would allow vehicles registered in the other countries to enter their territory under certain terms and conditions.**
 - Customs and tariffs will be decided by the respective countries and these would be finalised at bilateral and trilateral forums.
- **Assistance:** Asian Development Bank (ADB) has been providing **technical, advisory**, and financial support to the BBIN MVA initiative as part of its assistance to the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) program.

Why has Bhutan remained out?

- Given Bhutan's "current infrastructure levels" and top priority to remaining a "carbon-negative" country, it said it would not be possible to consider joining the MVA.
- **Significance:** Once implemented, it will provide- Safe, Economical, Efficient and Environmentally sound road transport in the region.



SOUTH ASIAN SUB-REGIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION

About SASEC Program:

- **Founded in 2001**, It brings together for project-based partnership the following countries:
 - Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.
- The member countries share common aspirations of economic growth, economic diversification, inclusive growth and sustainability, and energy access and security.
- **Aim:** To promote regional prosperity, improve economic opportunities, and build a better quality of life for the people of the sub-region.
- **SASEC Operational Priorities Sector:** Transport, Trade Facilitation, Energy and Economic Corridor Development.
- **Asian Development Bank (HQ: Metro Manila, Philippines) serves as SASEC secretariat.**
- As of March 2022, SASEC member countries have signed and implemented 72 ADB-financed investment projects worth over \$17.28 billion in priority sectors.

ASEAN DIGITAL MINISTERS

News: The 2nd ASEAN Digital Ministers (ADGMIN) meeting with India was held on a virtual platform.

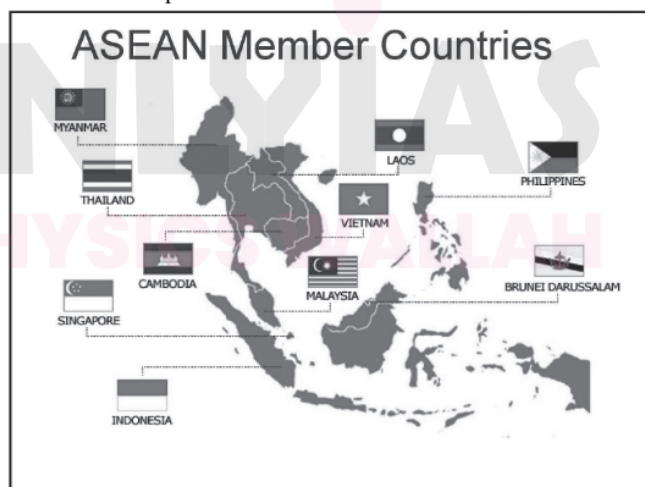
About ADGMIN:

- An annual meeting of Telecom Ministers of 10 ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations) countries and dialogue partner countries – Australia, Canada, China, EU, India, Japan, Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Russia, UK, and US.

India-ASEAN Digital Work Plan 2022:

- The meeting discussed and deliberated various matters relevant to strengthening regional digital cooperation in the spirit of digital inclusion and integration.
- **They approved the India-ASEAN Digital Work Plan 2022. The work plan includes -**

- System for combating the use of stolen and counterfeit mobile handsets.
- **WiFi Access network interface for nationwide public internet.**
- **Capacity building and knowledge sharing in emerging areas** in the field of Information and Communication Technologies such as Internet of Things (IoT), 5G, Advanced Satellite Communication, Cyber Forensics among others.
- The Vice President led delegates **took part in the 19th ASEAN-India summit at Phnom Penh, Cambodia.**
- **2022 marks the 30th anniversary of ASEAN-India relations** and is being celebrated as the ASEAN-India Friendship Year.



ASEAN:

- The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, was established on **8 August 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand**, with the signing of the ASEAN Declaration (**Bangkok Declaration**).
- **India's relationship with ASEAN** has emerged as a key cornerstone of our foreign policy.
- **The relationship between the ASEAN and India has evolved from the 'Look East Policy'** enunciated in early 1990s which led **India to become a Sectoral Partner of ASEAN in 1992, a Dialogue Partner in 1996 and a Summit-level Partner in 2002.**
- The upgrade of this partnership to **Strategic Partnership during the celebration of 20th**

anniversary Commemorative Summit at New Delhi in 2012.

REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP (RCEP)

News: The RCEP will come into effect on January 1, 2022, marking the formation of the world's largest free trade zone in terms of trade volume.

About:

- **Background:** RCEP negotiations were formally launched in **2012 at the ASEAN Summit in Cambodia**.
- **Members:** It is a **trade deal between sixteen countries** namely **10 countries of ASEAN** (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam) and China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand.
- **India is not a member** of RCEP.

Aims and Objectives of RCEP:

- **To lower tariffs**, open trade in **services and promote investment** to help emerging economies catch up with the rest of the world.
- **To help reduce costs and time for companies by allowing them to export a product anywhere within the bloc without** meeting separate requirements for each country.
- It also **touches on intellectual property**, but will not cover environmental protections and labour rights.

Significance:

- RCEP will cover about 30% of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP), worth \$26.2 trillion (€23.17 trillion), and nearly a third of the world's population, some 2.2 billion people.
- **Under RCEP, around 90% of trade tariffs within the bloc will eventually be eliminated.**

- RCEP will also set common rules around trade, intellectual property, e-commerce, and competition.

17TH EAST ASIA SUMMIT 2022

News: The Vice President addressed the 17th East Asia Summit at Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

About:

- The East Asia Summit was held as part of the 40th and 41st ASEAN Summits in Phnom Penh.
- **The 17th EAS focused on:**
 - Advancing women's economic empowerment,
 - Strengthening energy cooperation for a comprehensive post-Covid-19 Recovery, and
 - Promoting volunteerism for Sustainable Development.

East Asia Summit:

- The East Asia Summit (EAS) is **the Indo-Pacific's premier forum for strategic dialogue**.
- It is the **only leader-led forum at which all key Indo-Pacific partners meet** to discuss political, security and economic challenges facing the region.
- **It has 18 members:** The 10 ASEAN and its eight dialogue partners - India, China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Russia.
- **The chair position of EAS rotates between ASEAN Member States annually.**
- The annual Leaders' Summit is usually held alongside ASEAN Leaders meetings.
- Apart from the Leaders' Summit, meetings of EAS Foreign Ministers and Economic Ministers are held every year.
- **The 16th EAS chaired by Brunei Darussalam was virtually held on 27 October 2021** due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



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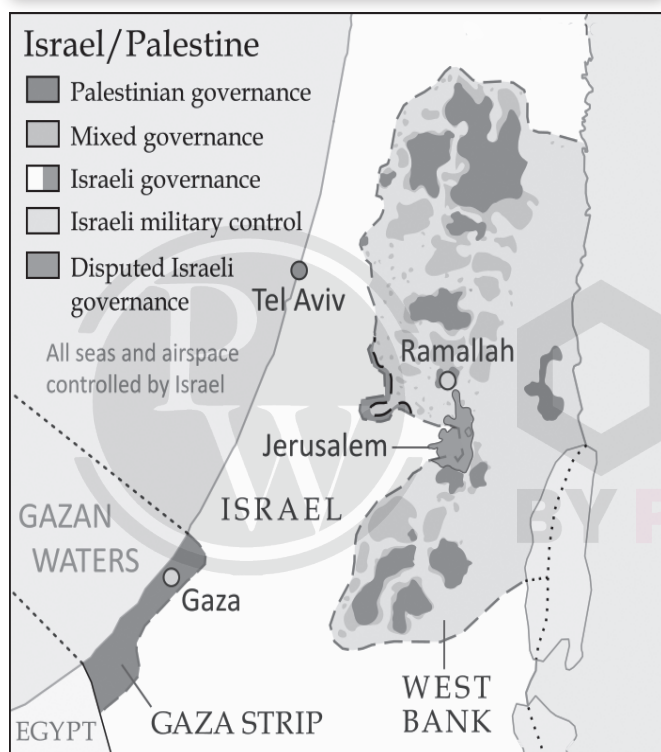


Previous Year Questions Analysis



DAMASCUS GATE

News: Since the start of Ramadan 2022, Israeli forces have assaulted and arrested Palestinian residents in the Damascus Gate area.



About:

- **The Damascus Gate, or Bab al-Amud ('gate of the pillar'),** has been a flashpoint between Palestinians and Israeli forces in occupied East Jerusalem for a long time.
- **It is an Ottoman-era Plaza,** which has been in its current form since 1537.
- It is the **largest of the 7 open gates to the wall of Jerusalem's Old City,** which lies in East Jerusalem.
- The wall was built during the times of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent from the 16th century.
- A social, cultural, and political Palestinian landmark, Damascus Gate is one of the few open spaces available for residents to gather.

- The Damascus Gate has become a national symbol for Jerusalemites and for Palestinians more generally - a symbol that expresses the national identity in the city.
- **History:** Israel occupied the Palestinian-majority East Jerusalem during the 1967 war and annexed it in breach of international law.
 - Israel declares all of Jerusalem its **"complete and united"** capital.
 - But, most countries around the world do not recognise Israeli sovereignty in East Jerusalem, and consider it occupied territory.

INDIA-UAE CEPA ENTERS INTO FORCE

News: The **Comprehensive economic partnership agreement** is likely to benefit about \$26 billion worth of Indian products that are currently subjected to 5% import duty by the UAE.

About India-UAE relations:

- **CEPA is a bilateral agreement that covers trade in goods and services,** investment, competition, and intellectual property rights.
- UAE is India's third-biggest trading partner behind the US and China.
- **Key Provisions of Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement:**
 - Around 90% of products exported from India to UAE will attract zero duty.
 - Provides for a permanent safeguard mechanism to deal with sudden surge in imports of any product.
 - Automatic registration and marketing authorisation of Indian generic medicines, once they are approved in developed countries.
 - It also has stringent 'rules of origin' reflecting requirements for substantial processing of up to 40% value addition.
- **Rules of origin (ROOs)** are used to determine if products are eligible for duty-free or reduced duties under trade agreements.

Significance of CEPA with UAE:

- Expected to increase the total value of bilateral trade in goods to over 100 billion US dollar and trade in services to over 15 billion US dollar during next five years.
- An estimated 1 million new job opportunities in India.
- Will pave the way for broader trade agreements with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries like Oman, Qatar, etc.



INDIA-CENTRAL ASIA SUMMIT

News: Recently, the Prime Minister of India hosted the first India-Central Asia Summit in virtual format.



About:

- It is the first of its kind **engagement between India and the Central Asian countries** at the level of leaders.
- It was **attended by** Presidents of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Republic of Uzbekistan.
- **Objectives:** To make it clear that **cooperation between India and Central Asia is essential for regional security and prosperity.**

Key Points:

- **Institutionalisation of the Summit:** The countries agreed to institutionalise the Summit mechanism by deciding to hold it every 2 years. An India-Central Asia Secretariat in New Delhi would also be set up to support the new mechanism.
- **Annual Meetings:** There will be annual meetings of the Foreign, Trade and Cultural Ministers and Secretaries of Security (National Security Advisors).

- **Connectivity, Defence and Cultural Relations:** They discussed further cooperation in areas of connectivity, defence, and cultural contacts.
- **They agreed on:**
 - Round-Table on Energy and Connectivity,
 - Joint Working Groups at senior official level on Afghanistan and use of Chabahar Port.
 - Showcasing of Buddhist exhibitions in Central Asian countries.
 - Joint counter-terrorism exercises
 - Visit of 100-member youth delegation annually from Central Asian countries to India.
- **Trade:**
 - They discussed the possibilities of increasing Indian trade with the Central Asia region beyond the currently low levels of about \$2 billion.
 - The Turkmenistan President stressed on the importance of the TAPI gas pipeline project that runs from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan and Pakistan to India.



NAGORNO-KARABAKH DISPUTE

News: The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh has been at the centre of three major wars and multiple clashes for decades. The recent flare-up began after Azerbaijan claimed that it had captured the territory in Karabakh in retaliatory action

About:

- Nagorno-Karabakh is a disputed territory internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan but mostly governed by the Republic of Artsakh, de facto independent state with an Armenian ethnic majority backed by neighbouring Armenia.

Origin of the conflict:

- This region was part of the erstwhile USSR.
- It was an ethnic-majority Armenian region, but the Soviets gave control over the area to Azerbaijani authorities.

- In late 1980s Nagorno-Karabakh's regional parliament officially voted to become part of Armenia.
- Azerbaijan sought to suppress the separatist movement, while Armenia backed it.
- **This led to full-scale war.** Armenian forces gained control of Nagorno-Karabakh and areas adjacent to it before a Russian-brokered ceasefire was declared in 1994.
- After that deal, Nagorno-Karabakh remained part of Azerbaijan, but since then it has been run by ethnic Armenians and backed by the Armenian government.

INDIA-TURKMENISTAN RELATIONS

News: The President of India paid a state visit to Turkmenistan which is the first ever visit by an Indian President to Turkmenistan.

More about the relation:

- India was one of the **first countries to recognize Turkmenistan's** independence in 1991 and establish formal diplomatic relations in 1992.
- **It considers Turkmenistan as part of its extended neighbourhood.**
- Turkmenistan acts as a link to central Asian countries and the Caspian Sea.
- Turkmenistan has an estimated 4th largest gas reserve of the world along with petroleum, sulphur, and other minerals.

Major Initiatives involving India and Turkmenistan:

- **Connect Central Asia Policy:** It is a broad-based approach including political, security, economic, and cultural connections. The policy envisages **deeper mutual relations** with the region including Turkmenistan.
- **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC):** It encompasses ship, rail and road routes connecting India with Russia, Central Asia, and Europe via Iran. **India is also planning to include Chabahar port in the INSTC framework.**
- **TAPI (Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India) project:** The project aims to transport 33 billion cubic metres of gas from Turkmenistan's Galkynysh gas field to Afghanistan,
- Pakistan and finally India through the proposed 1814-km long pipeline, **also called the 'Peace Pipeline'.**
- **Ashgabat Agreement (India joined in 2018):** It aims to establish an international multimodal transport and transit corridor between Central Asia and the Persian Gulf.

MENTORSHIP AND DOUBT ENGINE



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LAUNCHING SOON



AUSTRALIA-INDIA WATER SECURITY INITIATIVE

News: The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) and the Government of Australia have signed an MoU for Technical Cooperation in urban water management.

About:

- The MoU will enable both India and Australia to learn about technological advancements gained by two nations in key areas of urban water security and, it will promote exchange of learning, best practices, and capacity building of institutions.
- It will also help **promote cooperation between the two countries under Australia-India Water Security Initiative (AIWASI).**

Australia-India Water Security Initiative (AIWASI):

- Established in: **2020.**
- **Aim:** To work towards the Water Sensitive City vision, which is based on holistic management of the integrated water cycle.
- **The initiative will pair Australia's expertise in water and urban design with Indian counterpart agencies and institutes – known as a “twinning arrangement.”**
- **Phase one of the initiative includes analysis and selection of two locations in New Delhi,** employing spatial intelligence analysis and mapping to determine two suitable sites to design and demonstrate exemplar Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) and Nature-Based Solutions.

INDIA-AUSTRALIA RELATIONS

News: Recently, the 2nd India-Australia Virtual Summit was held between India's and Australia's Prime Minister.

About:

- The bilateral relationship was elevated to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP).

- Both countries agreed to establish annual summits between PMs under CSP.
- Establish a Young defence officer exchange program to boost military cooperation, improve training opportunities and enhance capabilities.

India-Australia ECTA (Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement):

- It was signed recently and is the **first free trade agreement (FTA) of India with a developed country after more than a decade.**
 - It will boost bilateral trade in goods and services to \$45-50 billion over five years, up from around \$27 billion, and generate over one million jobs in India.
- **Trade in goods:**
 - Labour intensive sectors like textiles, gems and jewellery, leather, farm products and food to benefit.
 - Australian coal, mineral ores, and wines to enter India easily.
- **Trade in services:**
 - Indian students will get 2-4 years' work visas.
 - Fast track approval to patented, biosimilar and generic medicines.

Features of the agreement:

- **India will benefit from preferential market access** provided by Australia on 100% of its tariff lines.
- **India will be offering preferential access to Australia on over 70%** of its tariff lines,
- As regards trade in services, Australia has offered wide ranging commitments in and Most Favoured Nation (MFN) in key areas of India's interest like IT, ITES, Business services, Health, Education, and Audio visual.
- **Both sides have also agreed to a separate Annex on Pharmaceutical products which will enable fast track approval for patented, generic, and biosimilar medicines.**
- Indian graduates from STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) will be granted extended post-study work visas.

Other areas of cooperation:

- **Both countries are members of** Quad, G-20, IOR-ARC, ASEAN Regional Forum, Asia Pacific Partnership on Climate and Clean Development.
- **Maitri scholarship programme by Australia** to provide more than 11 million USD for 4 years to Indian students for studying in Australia's leading universities.
- In 2021, both countries along with Japan have launched the **Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI)** for sustainable, balanced, and inclusive growth in the region.
- **Defence exercises** like AUSTRAHIND, AUSINDEX take place between the two.
- **The 2014 civil nuclear cooperation agreement** allows Australia to sell uranium to India.

EARLY HARVEST AGREEMENT

News: India and Australia have announced that they are set to conclude an Early Harvest Agreement and a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) thereafter.

About:

- **An interim or early harvest trade agreement is used to liberalise tariffs on the trade of certain goods** between two countries or trading blocs before a comprehensive FTA (Free Trade Agreement) is concluded.
- The interim agreement will cover most areas of interest for both countries including goods, services, rules of origin, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, and customs procedures.
- **India is likely to seek easier visa access** for both students and professionals visiting Australia.
- **Australia is likely to seek market access for wines and agricultural products** which are not produced on a large scale in India.
- However, Australia would likely not seek market access for products in dairy, beef, and wheat categories as they are sensitive sectors for India.
- **Current Bilateral Trade between India and Australia**
 - Bilateral trade between the two countries stood at about \$12.5 billion in FY21 and has already surpassed \$17.7 billion in the first 10 months of FY22.
 - Key imports from Australia include coal, gold, and LNG while key exports to the country from India include diesel, petrol and gems and jewellery.

ALTERNATIVES TO BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE (BRI)

News: The United States aims to raise \$200 billion over five years to fund needed infrastructure in developing countries under a G7 initiative aimed at countering China's Belt and Road project.

About:

- The overall investment, **including G7 partners and private capital, aims to hit \$600 billion over the next five years.**
- The announcement is an official launch and a rebranding of what had been rolled out last year at the G7 in the UK as **"Build Back Better World" (B3W).**
- The effort is now called the **Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment, or PGII.**

About Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII):

- It seeks to provide an alternative to China's estimated \$1 trillion in hard infrastructure investment around the world in the last decade.
- **This G7 initiative is funding projects in four major categories:**
 1. Clean energy,
 2. Health systems,
 3. Gender equality
 4. Information and communications technology.
- **At the centre of PGII is a different approach to financing infrastructure projects:** using limited government funding to catalyse greater volumes of private capital (pension funds, private equity funds and insurance funds, among others).
- This stands in contrast to BRI, which provides financing largely via state-to-state channels creating unsustainable debt levels.

Other Alternatives to BRI:

- **EU's Global Gateway Project:** The project aims to **mobilise up to €300 billion in investments between 2021 and 2027** to underpin a lasting global recovery.
 - It will **support smart investments in quality infrastructure**, respecting highest social and environmental standards, in line with international norms and standards.
 - It is a European Strategy to boost smart, clean, and secure links in digital, energy and transport as well as strengthen health, education, and research systems across the world.
 - **EU's Global Gateway provides a positive offer for its partners by financing them under fair and**

favourable terms to limit the risk of debt distress in contrast with China's BRI

- **Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC):** Another attempt put forth by India and Japan in 2017 is AAGC.
 - This bilateral partnership intends to foster quality and sustainable (social and transport) infrastructure, development projects, and connectivity in Africa.
 - It aims to promote a "free and open" world order, while also providing an alternative to China's increasing investments and influence in Africa.

India's response to BRI:

- **MAUSAM** project to strengthen bilateral ties with countries in the Indian Ocean region.
- **SAGAR** (Security and Growth for All in the Region) concept with multiple objectives such as:
 - Protecting maritime interests,
 - Enhancing economic and security cooperation in the littoral,
 - Promoting collective action to deal with maritime threats,
 - Building greater trust and promoting respect for maritime rules, norms, and peaceful resolution of disputes.
- **Increased aid, investment, and other economic engagements** to counter Chinese influence in neighbours like Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Maldives.

2ND INDIA-NORDIC SUMMIT

News: India and Nordic countries 2nd India-Nordic Summit at Copenhagen, after the 1st summit of 2018 in Stockholm.

About:

- Nordic countries represent the **five countries of the Nordic region, i.e., Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland.**
- It also includes Faroe Islands and Greenland as part of the Kingdom of Denmark, and Aland which is part of Finland.
- The principal focus of discussion and partnership was on **Blue Economy**, Renewable energy- investment avenues, Health sector etc.
- It also focuses on India-Nordic cooperation in the Arctic region.

UKRAINE CRISIS

News: Russia invaded Ukraine, starting a war in a country that borders NATO countries.

Concerns for India due to Ukraine crisis:

- **To maintain balance between Russia and US:** India has good relations with both Russia and the US and siding with one of these countries could cost India its relationship with the other.
- **S-400 delivery and US waiver:** The crisis comes precisely as India's purchase of the Russian S-400 missile system is under way and India hopes for a **waiver of U.S. sanctions on this.**
- **Brings Russia China closer:** The Crisis will make Moscow more **dependent on friends like China and build a regional bloc** of sorts that India is not a part of.
- **India's Investment in Russia:** India's plans in Russia's energy sector and in the **development of its Far East, in general**, would become problematic, especially by the reluctance of the private sector to fall afoul of the complex US sanctions.
- The **new sanctions could exclude Russia from the Swift payments system.**

TREATY ON THE NON-PROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS (NPT)

News: Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference which was held in New York ended without adopting a substantive outcome due to Russia's objection.

About:

- It is an **international treaty signed in 1968 and came into force in 1970.**
- The NPT is a **multilateral treaty aimed at limiting the spread of nuclear weapons** including **three elements**:
 1. Non-proliferation,
 2. Disarmament, and
 3. Peaceful use of nuclear energy.
- These elements **constitute a "grand bargain"** between the five nuclear weapon states and the non-nuclear weapon states.
- The Treaty represents the **only binding commitment** in a multilateral treaty to the goal of disarmament by the nuclear weapon States.
- It requires countries to give up any present or future to build nuclear weapons in return for access to peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Implications:

- States without nuclear weapons will not acquire them.
- States with nuclear weapons will pursue disarmament.
- All states can access nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, under safeguards.

Key provisions:

- The Treaty defines nuclear weapon states (NWS) as **those that had manufactured and detonated a nuclear explosive device prior to 1 January 1967.**
- All the other states are therefore considered Non-Nuclear Weapon States (NNWS).
- The **five nuclear weapon states are China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.**
- The **Treaty does not affect the right of state parties to develop, produce, and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.**

Role of states:

- Nuclear weapon states are **not to transfer to any recipient whatsoever nuclear weapons and not to assist, encourage, or induce any NNWS to manufacture or otherwise acquire them.**
- Non-nuclear weapons states are not to receive nuclear weapons from any transferor, and are not to manufacture or acquire them.
- NNWS **must accept the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards on all nuclear materials** on their territories or under their control.
- **Other nuclear armed states:** India, Israel and Pakistan have not joined the treaty. Further, North Korea and South Sudan have also not signed the treaty.

INDIA-ISRAEL RELATIONS

News: India is in dialogue with Israel for concluding a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) on the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries.

India-Israel Bilateral Relations: Areas of Cooperation

- **India and Israel along with the US and UAE formed the 'New Quad' or the 'Middle-Eastern Quad'** to work on furthering the economic and political ties between the four countries.

Economic and Commercial Relations:

- **Bilateral merchandise trade:** US\$ 5.6 billion (excluding defence) in 2018-19 (grew by 30 times since 1992), with the balance of trade being in India's favour.
- **India is Israel's third largest trade partner in Asia** and seventh largest globally.

- **Trade in diamonds** constitutes close to 40% of bilateral trade.
- **In recent years, bilateral trade has diversified** into several sectors such as pharmaceuticals, agriculture, IT and telecom, and homeland security.
- **India has benefited from Israeli expertise and technologies:** horticulture mechanisation, protected cultivation, orchard and canopy management, nursery management, micro-irrigation, and post-harvest management particularly in Haryana and Maharashtra.

INDIA-ISRAEL INDUSTRIAL R&D & TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION FUND

News: Experts from India and Israel deliberated on widening the scope of India-Israel Industrial R&D and Technological Innovation Fund (I4F) at its 8th Governing Body meeting.

About:

- They approved 3 joint R&D projects worth 5.5 million \$ and suggested measures to create a broader India-Israel collaborative ecosystem.
- **The three projects are:**
 1. **Centrally Monitored IoT Nano sensors for Molecular Diagnostics** in Healthcare and Screening Applications'
 2. **'NoMoreMos- a mosquito control biological solution'** and
 3. **'IoT enabled satellite communication** for real-time collection of agriculture and environment data across India.'

India-Israel Industrial R&D and Technological Innovation Fund (I4F):

- I4F is a cooperation between the Department of Science and Technology (DST), the Government of India, and the Israel Innovation Authority, the Government of Israel.
- **Aim:** To promote, facilitate and support joint industrial R&D projects between companies from India and Israel, which would address the challenges in the agreed 'Focus Sectors' and lead to successful commercialization and benefit for both countries.
- **Focus Sectors:** it will prioritise the areas of Agriculture, Energy, Healthcare, Information & Communication Technologies (ICT) and Water.
- **Implementing Agency:** Global Innovation & Technology Alliance (GITA) is appointed to implement the I4F program in India, while Israel Innovation Authority is the implementing agency in Israel.

INDIA AFRICA DEFENCE RELATIONS

News: India-Africa Defence Dialogue (IADD) was held recently on the side-lines of Def-Expo 2022 in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

About India-Africa Defence Dialogue (IADD):

- **IADD was institutionalised (in 2020)** to be held biennially during successive Def-Expos.
- **Gandhinagar Declaration was adopted** as an outcome document of IADD 2022.
- **It proposes to enhance cooperation in the field of training** in all areas of mutual interest.

Initiatives taken:

- **Africa-India Field Training Exercise 2019 (AFINDEX-19)** to strengthen defence preparedness and security.
- **India-Africa Defence Ministers Conclave (IADMC) in 2020** that led to the adoption of the Lucknow Declaration, which pertains specifically to defence, military, and security cooperation. IADMC provides a concrete platform for Indian and African leaders to conduct sustained discussions at the topmost level.
- **African countries are among the foremost beneficiaries of Indian Navy 's humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) operations**, non-combatant evacuations and search and rescue operations.
- **India has participated in several UN peacekeeping missions** implemented on the African continent including in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, Somalia, Angola, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Liberia etc.
- **Bilateral Institutional mechanisms** like the Joint Defence Cooperation Committees and MoUs / Agreements for defence collaboration have been put in place with key countries.

RECIPROCAL ACCESS AGREEMENT

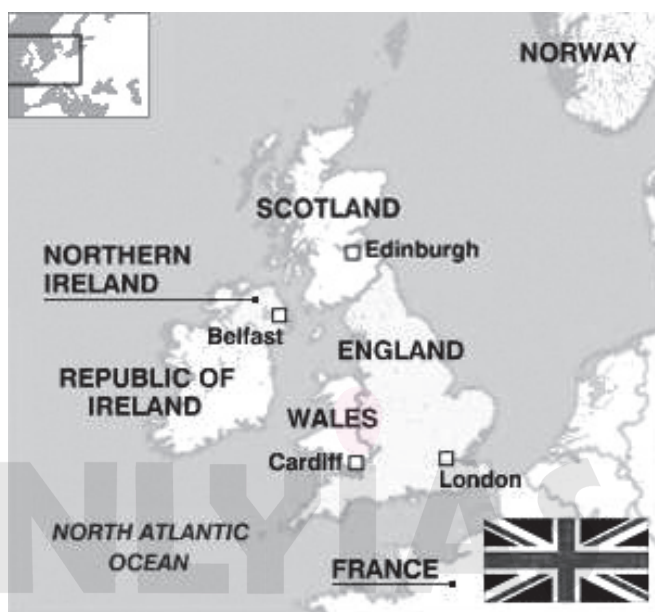
News: Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) signals that middle powers are willing to play a more active role in the Indo-Pacific.

About:

- The RAA is a **bilateral defence and security pact between the governments of Australia and of Japan** that provides for shared military training and military operations.
- It **establishes streamlined arrangements** to support the deployment of defence forces more quickly and with less administration.

- **It is Japan's first such agreement with any country** and will allow the Australian and Japanese militaries to work seamlessly with each other on defence and humanitarian operations.
- **The pact was signed because of concerns that the Chinese were exhibiting increased belligerence especially over the South China Sea region**, including militarization of disputed features, and dangerous coercive use of coast guard vessels.

INDIA AND UK FREE TRADE AGREEMENT



News: Recently, India has launched the Free Trade Agreement negotiations with the United Kingdom.

About:

- **Aim:** The agreement aims to facilitate the target of **doubling bilateral trade to \$100 billion** between India and the United Kingdom by 2030.
- Initially, an interim FTA would be signed and subsequently a comprehensive deal by the end of the year would be signed.
- The **interim agreement will include tariff liberalisation in 60-65% of traded goods**, while the final deal will include more than 90% of items.
- This means that sensitive issues, such as allowing freer movement of skilled professionals from India, could be taken up during the final deal.
- Moreover, **Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs)** on Pharma could also be signed, which could provide additional market access.
- **Significance:** It is expected to increase our exports in Leather, Textile, Jewellery, Marine Products and processed Agri products.

- **India is not part of any regional trade deal.** Hence, FTAs like this will enable the country to achieve its ambitious merchandise export target of \$1 trillion by FY28.

INDIA-JAPAN RELATIONS

News: Recently, Prime Ministers of India and Japan held 14th India Japan Annual Summit in New Delhi and, the year 2022 marks the 70th anniversary of the establishment of their diplomatic relations.

About Key Highlights of the summit:

- **Clean energy partnership:** launched under India-Japan energy dialogue established in 2007.
- **Joint credit mechanism:** Established for implementation of Article 6 of the Paris Agreement related to private capital flow to developing countries.
- **Sustainable development**
- **Climate initiative:** Japan would be joining the **Indian-Swedish climate initiative LeadIT** (Leadership group of Industry transition) to promote heavy industry transition.
- **Development of NE India:** via the launch of 'Sustainable Development Initiative for the North-eastern Region of India.'
- **Seat at UNSC:** India supported Japan's bid for 2023-24 non-permanent seat at UNSC.
- **Investment:** of 3.2 lakh crores in India over the next 5 years.
- **Cybersecurity:** capacity building and cooperation, information sharing to be done under an MoC.

Other areas of cooperation between India and Japan:

- **Both are members of Quad, G20 and G4** (along with Brazil and Germany for permanent membership of each other in the UNSC).
- Japan is the **largest Official Development Assistance (ODA)** partner for India.
- **CEPA** (Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement) signed between the two in 2011.
- **Defence cooperation:** Both countries engage in bilateral exercises- Dharma Guardian (Army), Shinyuu-Maitri (Airforce), JIMEX (Navy). Permanent participant since 2015; of Malabar exercise along with India and US.
- **Strategic Cooperation:**
 - Japan welcomes the **Indo-Pacific Ocean's Initiative (IPOI)** announced in 2019 at East Asia Summit (EAS) in Bangkok.
 - The **Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC)** between both countries is seen as a response to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

- **Historical ties:** between the two have been since the 6th century when Buddhism was introduced in Japan.

ASIA ENERGY TRANSITION INITIATIVE

News: The Government of Japan announced the "Asia Energy Transition Initiative (AETI)," which includes a variety of support for realising energy transitions in Asia.

About:

- **Japan plans to provide support to India to drive the transition to clean energy under this initiative.**
- It aims to achieve sustainable growth and carbon neutrality in Asia through energy transitions.
- It includes \$10 billion in finance for renewable energy, energy efficiency and liquefied natural gas (LNG) projects.

INDIA-DENMARK GREEN STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP (GSP)

News: India & Denmark agreed to initiate joint research and development on green fuels including green hydrogen, during the Joint S&T Committee meeting on 14th January 2022.

About:

- **Background:** Launched during the virtual summit between the two PMs in September 2020 is a 5-year action plan.
- **It specifically focuses on** an ambitious implementation of the Paris Agreement and the UN SDGs.
- **Purpose:** to advance political cooperation, expand economic relations, promote green growth, create jobs, and strengthen cooperation on addressing global challenges and opportunities.
- **Focus sectors:** water, urban development, renewable energy, and intellectual property rights and working groups for each have been instituted in both countries.
- **Joint action plan:** Danish companies with the pertinent technologies and expertise will help India in meeting its air pollution control targets, specifically the key problem of burning crop stubble.
- The plan **also includes cooperative efforts in water efficiency**, construction of India-Denmark energy parks and an India-Denmark skill institute to train the Indian workforce.

Other outcomes of the India-Denmark meeting:

- Launched "**India Green Finance Initiative**" to finance green projects in India for accelerating green growth and job creation in India.

- India agreed to join the **International Centre for Antimicrobial Resistance (ICARS)** as mission partner.
 - To support the development and implementation of solutions to tackle Antimicrobial Resistance in Low and Low Middle-Income Countries.
- **Denmark confirmed its accession to the Global Digital Health Partnership (GDHP).**
 - GDHP is a collaboration of governments and territories, government agencies and the WHO, formed to support the effective implementation of digital health services.
 - **India is a part of GDHP.**

ISRAEL AND THE UAE TRADE DEAL

News: Israel signed a free trade deal with the United Arab Emirates (UAE), its first with an Arab country, building on their U.S.-brokered Abraham Accords.

About:

- Signed in 2020, between Israel and UAE, Bahrain and later Morocco, the accord called for normalise diplomatic relations between these nations and broke with decades of Arab policy that had called for a Palestinian state before ties with Israel.
- Deal is expected to provide customs exemption immediately or gradually on 96% of trade between the countries.
- **Abraham Accords** is a series of peace agreements between Israel and several Arab countries, UAE being the first.
 - In 2020, it was mediated by the USA between UAE, Bahrain, and Israel.
- **The name "Abraham" refers to** the great father of the faith of the three Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
- It is a symbolic title that promotes unity between Arabic and Jewish people by recognizing the shared patriarch.

THE AMERICA COMPETES ACT

News: The U.S. House of Representatives has introduced the Act to **"create opportunities for America's manufacturing, pre-eminence in technology, and economic strength"**, or America COMPETES Act of 2022.

About:

- Funds to **further encourage semiconductor production in the U.S.**

- Funds for **grants and loans to improve supply chain resilience and manufacturing**, among other programs.
- Funding to **address social and economic inequality, climate change and immigration.**
- to make the United States less dependent on solar components manufactured in Xinjiang, China.

Significance for India and the Indians:

- It would mean more opportunities in the US for Indian talent and skilled workers.
- Every year, Indians and Indian companies corner the lion's share of H-1B work permits issued that year. With this new category, Indian professionals will probably have a better chance of opportunities than the law is likely to offer.

Work Visas:

- The US administration issues a certain number of visas each year which allows companies from outside the US to send employees to work on client sites.
- **H-1B:** To work in a specialty occupation. Requires a higher education degree of its equivalent.
- **L1 visas** allow companies to transfer highly skilled workers to the US for a period of up to seven years.
- **H-2B visas** allow food and agricultural workers to seek employment in the US.
- **J-1 Visas:** It is for students on work-study summer programmes.

MAJOR NON-NATO ALLY (MNNA)

News: Recently, the US has designated Qatar a MNNA.

About:

- It is a **designation given by the United States government to close allies** that have strategic working relationships with the US Armed Forces but are not members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).
- **Nations with MNNA designation are eligible to, among other things,** host U.S. war reserve stockpiles of material inside their countries.
- **While MNNA status provides military and economic privileges,** it does not entail any commitments to the designated country.
- **India is not a MAJOR NON-NATO ALLY of US.**

INDO-GERMAN WORKING GROUP ON QUALITY INFRASTRUCTURE

News: The 8th Annual Meeting of the Indo-German Working Group on Quality Infrastructure, led by the Indian Ministry for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy was held virtually.



About:

- The Working Group has **met annually since 2013**.
- **Objective:** It identifies areas of cooperation to support and strengthen quality infrastructure considering the needs and requirements of relevant stakeholders from diverse technology areas to support bilateral trade.

Key highlights:

- India and Germany have signed a **Work Plan 2022**.
- The plan aims to cooperate in strengthening quality infrastructure, reducing technical barriers to trade, enhancing product safety, and strengthening consumer protection.
- The areas identified for collaboration include mobility, energy, circular economy, smart farming/ agriculture, medical devices, digitalisation (artificial intelligence, Industry 4.0, and other new technology areas), machinery safety, medical devices and equipment and market surveillance.

Global Quality Infrastructure Index (GQII):

- A GQII study conducted by the German side was **also shared** during the group meeting.
- **India is placed** at the seventh position on standardisation aspect, ninth for accreditation activities and 19th for metrology related activities.

- **India scored** 95.6 out of 100 and is ranked at 10th place in the world for the overall quality infrastructure environment in the country.

INDIA'S ARCTIC POLICY

News: The Ministry of Earth Science has unveiled India's Arctic Policy, titled 'India and the Arctic: building a partnership for sustainable development.'

About:

- **The policy document lays down six pillars:**

Strengthening India's scientific research and cooperation, Climate and environmental protection, Economic and human development, Transportation and connectivity, Governance and international cooperation and National capacity building in the Arctic region.

Objectives of the Policy:

- Strengthening national capabilities, climate and environmental protection, maritime and economic cooperation with the Arctic region.
- Inter-ministerial coordination in pursuit of India's interests in the Arctic.
- Enhancing understanding of the impact of climate change in the Arctic region on India's climate, economic, and energy security.
- Contributing better analysis, prediction, and coordinated policymaking on the implications of ice melting in the Arctic.
- Studying linkages between polar regions and the Himalayas.
- Deepen cooperation between India and countries of the Arctic region under various Arctic forums.
- Increase India's participation in the Arctic Council.

The Arctic and India:

- India's engagement with the Arctic began when it signed the **Svalbard Treaty in 1920**.
- **India initiated its Arctic research program in 2007** with a focus on climate change in the region.
- **India has the status of 'Observer' member in the Arctic Council** and participates in several meetings that are mostly themed around research.
- **Arctic Council:** Eight nations — Canada, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Iceland, Russia, Sweden, and the United States — make up the Arctic Council.
- **Arctic weather influences the Indian monsoon** and hence has been of interest to Indian researchers for decades.



- Currently, India has a single station, Himadri, in Svalbard, a Norwegian archipelago, where research personnel are usually present for 180 days.
- India has sent 13 expeditions to the Arctic since 2007 and runs 23 active science projects.

Polar Science and Cryosphere Research (PACER) scheme:

- PACER scheme has been approved for continuation during 2021-2026.
- **About PACER scheme:**
 - Comprises the Antarctic program, Indian Arctic program, Southern Ocean program and Cryosphere and Climate program.
 - Implemented through National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), an autonomous institute under the Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- **Achievements:**
 - Executed 39th & 40th Indian Scientific Expedition to Antarctica (41st ongoing).
 - Automatic Weather Station (AWS) systems installed at Baralacha La, in the Spiti region.
 - The IndARC mooring system was deployed in Kongsfjorden, Svalbard.
 - Executed 11th Indian Southern Ocean Expedition.

INDIA-JAMAICA RELATIONS

News: President Ram Nath Kovind is on a state visit to two Caribbean nations of Jamaica and St. Vincent & Grenadines.



About:

- Jamaica is an island country situated in the Caribbean Sea.
- It is the third-largest island of the Greater Antilles and the Caribbean (after Cuba and Hispaniola).
- **Kingston** is the country's capital and largest city.

India-Jamaica relation:

- The President will inaugurate a street named after Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar.
- It is the first-ever visit by an Indian President to Jamaica.

FIRST ISLAND CHAIN

News: Due to the conflict between China and Taiwan, the first island chain defence strategy came into news.

About:

- **First Island Chain** comprises the Kuril Islands, the Japanese Archipelago, Ryukyu Islands, Taiwan, northwest Philippines and ending at Borneo.
- **This chain is the first line of defence** and serves as the maritime boundaries between the East China Sea, Philippine Sea, South China Sea, and the Sulu Sea.
 - In this chain are located the Bashi Channel and the Miyako Strait which are critical chokepoints for China.
- It is a part of the Island Chain Strategy formulated by the US in 1951 to contain the erstwhile USSR and China with a string of naval bases in the western Pacific region to restrict sea access to these two countries.

MEET OUR GS FACULTIES



RAJNEESH RAJ

(HISTORY)

- > MOST LOVED FACULTY FOR HISTORY OPTIONAL
- > 20+ YEARS OF EXPERIENCE AT RENOWNED INSTITUTES
- > MENTORED MORE THAN 2,00,000 UPSC CSE ASPIRANTS
- > MORE THAN 2000 SELECTIONS IN UPSC
- > POST GRADUATE FROM DLHI UNIVERSITY



AMIT KUMAR SINGH

(ETHICS)

- > 15+ YEARS OF EXPERIENCE AT RENOWNED INSTITUTES
- > MENTOR MORE THAN 1,00,000+ STUDENTS & 1000+ SELECTION
- > TAUGHT ETHICS & PHILOSOPHY IN DELHI UNIVERSITY FOR 3 YEARS
- > GRADUATE FROM ALLAHABAD UNIVERSITY IN PHILOSOPHY & POST GRADUATE FROM DELHI UNIVERSITY



DR. ADARSH KUMAR

(POLITY, GOVERNANCE AND IR)

- > EDUCATIONAL & LEGAL CONSULTANT
- > PHD IN ROLE OF BUREAUCRACY, UGC-NET QUALIFIED
- > 23+ YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN TEACHING, MENTORING 3,00,000+ STUDENTS FOR CIVIL SERVICE EXAM
- > AUTHORED BOOKS ON INDIAN POLITY, CONSTITUTION & PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION FOR UPSC ASPIRANTS



RAJESH MISHRA

(GEOGRAPHY)

- > 10+ YEARS OF UPSC TEACHING EXPERIENCE WITH MENTORING OF 1 LAKH+ ASPIRANTS
- > UGC-NET QUALIFIED
- > EX. FACULTY FOR MULTIPLE RENOWNED INSTITUTES



DEEPAK KUMAR SINGH

(ETHICS & IR)

- > 18 YEARS+ EXPERIENCE IN BOTH ONLINE AND OFFLINE PLATFORM
- > RENOWNED FACULTY FOR ETHICS, PSIR & POLITY.
- > EX-EDUCATOR OF TOP PROMINENT INSTITUTES.
- > MENTORED MORE THAN 100000+ STUDENTS IN UPSC



RITESH R JAISWAL

(SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT)

- > 15+ YEARS OF UPSC TEACHING EXPERIENCE WITH RENOWNED INSTITUTES ACROSS INDIA
- > MOCK INTERVIEW PANELIST & INTERVIEW EXPERT
- > SPECIALIZED IN TEACHING SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT



PRATIK GUPTA

(ECONOMY)

- > POST GRADUATE FROM DU & IGNOU
- > MENTORED MORE THAN 1,00,000 STUDENTS FOR CIVIL SERVICE EXAM
- > 10+ YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN TEACHING WITH VARIOUS RENOWNED INSTITUTES



KAPIL SIKKA

(POLITY & GOVERNANCE)

- > MENTORING, GUIDING AND TEACHING UPSC STUDENTS SINCE 9 YEARS
- > SPECIALIZED IN TEACHING INDIAN POLITY, INDIAN ECONOMY, ESSAY, INTERNAL SECURITY & POST INDEPENDENCE INDIA WITH AN EXPERIENCE OF TEACHING IN LEADING INSTITUTES



DR. MOHD. ZIA

(ECONOMY & HISTORY)

- > FACULTY, COACH AND MENTOR- GS-HISTORY, GS-ECONOMY AND HISTORY OPTIONAL
- > TEACHING EXPERIENCE OF 8+ YEARS WHICH INCLUDES SERVICE AS ASSISTANT PROFESSOR AT RIE, NCERT, BHOPAL
- > MA IN HISTORY FROM IGNOU, PHD FROM A.M.U.



ABHISHEK SRIVASTAV

(HISTORY)

- > EXPERIENCED FACULTY FOR INDIAN HISTORY & CULTURE AT RENOWNED INSTITUTES
- > 7+ YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN TEACHING AND MENTORING 45000+ STUDENTS FOR CIVIL SERVICE EXAM
- > GRADUATE FROM INDIAN MARITIME UNIVERSITY, KOLKATA



LOKESH TRIPATHI

(ECONOMY)

- > MA (ECONOMICS) , UGC NET QUALIFIED
- > APPEARED FOR 3 UPSC INTERVIEWS
- > 10+ YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN TEACHING, MENTORING 60000+ STUDENTS FOR CIVIL SERVICE EXAM
- > FACULTY, COACH AND MENTOR- GS- INDIAN ECONOMY AND GOVERNMENT SCHEMES.



MANJU CHOUDHARY

(POLITY, NCERTS, CA)

- > M.COM (GOLD MEDALIST), MA (PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION) , UGC NET QUALIFIED
- > 6+ YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN TEACHING, MENTORING 50000+ STUDENTS FOR CIVIL SERVICE EXAM
- > FACULTY, COACH AND MENTOR- GS- INDIAN POLITY AND NCERT BASICS, CURRENT AFFAIRS.

MEET OUR GS FACULTIES



DR. MOHD SALEEM
(SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY)

- > RENOWNED SCIENCE & TECH FACULTY
- > 12+ YEARS YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN TEACHING
- > MENTORED MORE THAN 100000+ STUDENTS FOR CIVIL SERVICE EXAM
- > ALUMNI OF JAMIA MILLIA ISLAMIA RESIDENTIAL COACHING
- > EX-EDUCATOR OF PROMINENT INSTITUTES



ANANT TRIPATHI
(HISTORY, CSAT)

- > MBA FROM IIFT, NET QUALIFIED IN HISTORY, MANAGEMENT & PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION.
- > MENTORED MORE THAN 1,00,000 STUDENTS FOR CIVIL SERVICE EXAM
- > 10+ YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN TEACHING WITH VARIOUS RENOWNED INSTITUTES



BARUN
(ECONOMICS & CURRENT AFFAIRS)

- > B. TECH FROM WEST BENGAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY IN ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING
- > MENTORED MORE THAN 5,00,000 STUDENTS FOR CIVIL SERVICE EXAM
- > 5+ YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN TEACHING WITH VARIOUS RENOWNED INSTITUTES



NANKI BAWEJA
(ECONOMY)

- > EX. EDUCATOR AT RENOWNED INSTITUTES WITH AN EXPERIENCE OF MENTORING 5000+ STUDENTS IN THEIR UPSC JOURNEY
- > QUALIFIED COMPANY SECRETARY AND HOLDS AN MBA IN FINANCE



DEEPAK SINGH
(HISTORY, ECONOMY & ETHICS)

- > B.COM ACCOUNTS HONORS GRADUATE
- > MENTORED MORE THAN 1,00,000 STUDENTS FOR CIVIL SERVICE EXAM
- > 8+ YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN TEACHING WITH VARIOUS RENOWNED INSTITUTES



SHASHANK SHEKHAR ROY
(ETHICS & IR)

- > TRAINED THOUSANDS OF STUDENTS FOR UPSC AND OTHER STATE SERVICES
- > DECADES OF EXPERIENCE IN TEACHING, TRAINING AND MENTORING
- > CERTIFIED COMMUNICATION COACH, MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER AND MENTOR



AKSHAT DWIVEDI
(POLITY & IR)

- > B.TECH IN BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING & POST GRADUATION IN M. A. POLITICAL SCIENCE
- > 5+ YEARS OF EXPERIENCE AT RENOWNED INSTITUTE
- > MENTORED MORE THAN 20,000 UPSC CSE ASPIRANTS.
- > INVOLVED IN RESEARCH FIELD OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



SNEHIL TRIPATHI
(POLITY)

- > PUBLISHED AUTHOR WITH MCGRAW HILL EDUCATION AND OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
- > 7+ YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE WITH VARIOUS INSTITUTES ACROSS THE COUNTRY
- > EX. ACADEMIC HEAD AND TOP FACULTY WITH RENOWNED ED-TECH ORGANIZATION



SONIYA AHUJA
(INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS)

- > 7+ YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE IN POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PSYCHOLOGY
- > MA POLITICS WITH SPECIALIZATION IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, JNU DELHI
- > SPECIALIZED IN LEARNING PEDAGOGY & CURRICULUM DESIGN
- > BA IN SOCIAL SCIENCE, TISS MUMBAI



ADITYA TIWARI
(HISTORY, ECONOMY AND ETHICS)

- > BIOCHEMICAL ENGINEER, HBTI, KANPUR
- > G.T.E. DESIGN, INDIAN OIL CORPORATION
- > UPSC INTERVIEW APPEARED

6

International Dialogues, Summits, Forums, and Conferences

WEF DAVOS AGENDA SUMMIT, 2022

News: The World Economic Forum is holding its annual meeting in Davos.

About:

- The summit is being organised **virtually by the World Economic Forum (WEF)**.
- The summit offers the first global platform of 2022 for world leaders to come together to share their visions for the year ahead.
- **Main initiatives:**
 - The agenda 2022 will see the launch of other WEF initiatives on the economic opportunity of nature-positive solutions, and the Mission on Cyber Resilience to accelerate net-zero emissions.
 - Bridging the vaccine gap, strengthening the resilience of global value chains, besides building economies in fragile markets through human investment will also be among the topics of discussion over the next few days.
 - How to use data solutions to prepare for the next pandemic will also be included in the discussion.

World Economic Forum:

- **Established by Klaus Schwab in 1971** as a not-for-profit foundation.
- It was **initially named as European Management Forum**. Later, it changed **its name to the World Economic Forum** in 1987.
- **Aim:** To improve the state of the world by engaging business, political, academic, and other leaders of society to shape global, regional, and industry agendas.
- **Headquarters:** Geneva, Switzerland.
- **Reports:**
 - Global Competitiveness Report
 - Global Gender Gap Report
 - Global Risks Report and
 - Global Travel and Tourism Report among others.

PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM

News: Recently, due to interference in the political activities of Micronesian countries and the earthquake in Tonga, this organisation is in a lot of discussion.

About:

- **Formerly (1971–2000) South Pacific Forum** was established in 1971 to provide a setting for heads of government to discuss common issues and problems facing the independent and self-governing states of the South Pacific.
- **It comprises 18 members:** Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, **Fiji**, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, **New Zealand**, Niue, Palau, **Papua New Guinea**, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, **Tonga**, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.
- **In 2000, Forum leaders adopted the Biketawa Declaration**, which was a response to regional political instability.
 - It put forward a set of principles and actions for members to take to promote open, democratic, and clean government, as well as equal rights for citizens regardless of gender, race, colour, creed, or political belief.

MUNICH SECURITY CONFERENCE

News: The Munich Security Conference is being held in Germany. India had participated in it.

About:

- The Munich Security Conference is **an annual conference on international security policy** that has been held in Munich, Bavaria, Germany since **1963**.
- The conference is **held annually in February**.
- Over the past four decades it has become the **most important independent forum for the exchange of views by international security policy decision-makers**.
- Each year it brings together about 350 senior figures from more than 70 countries around the world to

engage in an intensive debate on current and future security challenges.

RAISINA DIALOGUE

News: Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the seventh edition of Raisina Dialogue on April 25, 2022.

About:

- **This is an annual geo-political event.**
- It is a multilateral conference committed to addressing the most challenging issues facing the global community.
- Every year, global leaders in policy, business, media, and civil society are **hosted in New Delhi** to discuss cooperation on a wide range of pertinent international policy matters.
- The conference is **hosted by the Observer Research Foundation (ORF) in collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs.**
 - **ORF is an independent think tank** based in New Delhi with three centres in Mumbai, Chennai, and Kolkata.
 - It carries Indian voices and ideas to forums shaping global debates.
- It is **designed on the lines of Singapore's Shangri-La Dialogue.**

Seventh Edition:

- **President of the European Union Ursula von Der Leyen was the chief guest** at the Dialogue.
- **The three-day Dialogue is based on the theme - Terranova, impassioned, impatient, imperilled.**

DELHI DECLARATION

News: UN Security Council (UNSC) Counter Terrorism Committee's (CTC) special meeting held in India ended with the adoption of Delhi declaration

About Delhi Declaration:

- Issuing a new set of **non-binding guiding principles in countering digital terrorism threat.**
- Counter terrorist exploitation of Information and Communications Technology (like payment technologies and misuse of drones etc).
- Countering use of technologies for terrorist purposes, while respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- Deepen engagement with civil society, including women's organisations, private-sector entities etc.

About CTC:

- It was **established by UNSC resolution 1373 (2001)** in the wake of the 11 September terrorist attacks in the United States.
- It comprises **all 15 UNSC members.**
- **Mandate:** Tasked with monitoring the implementation of steps to enhance countries' legal and institutional counter-terrorism abilities, at every level, locally and internationally.
- These steps include, Criminalise the financing of terrorism, Suppress the provision of haven, Deny all forms of financial support for terrorist groups etc.
- Under resolution 1535 (2004), Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) to assist the work of the CTC was established.

4TH MOSCOW FORMAT

News: India joined the latest meeting of the 'Moscow format consultations on Afghanistan' held at Moscow.



About:

- It is one of the several dialogue platforms in Afghanistan and began before the Taliban takeover of Kabul.
- The **Moscow format was introduced in 2017** based on the **six-party mechanism for consultations between special representatives from** Russia, Afghanistan, China, Pakistan, Iran, and India.
- **At the 4th Moscow format**, the participants agreed to continue coordinating regional efforts to promote inter-Afghan national reconciliation and enhance security and stability in the region.
- **India emphasised on:**
 - Providing immediate humanitarian assistance,

- Formation of a truly inclusive and representative government,
- Combating terrorism and drug trafficking and
- Preserving the rights of women, children, and minorities.
- **On side-lines of the Moscow format meet, India-Russia-Iran had held a trilateral meet** focusing on Afghanistan with the three having similar concerns over Taliban ruled Afghanistan.

EASTERN ECONOMIC FORUM

News: Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the Plenary Session of 7th Eastern Economic Forum being held in Vladivostok through video conferencing.

About:

- Eastern Economic Forum is an **international forum held each year in Vladivostok, Russia**, for the purpose of encouraging foreign investment in the Russian Far East.
- **It is held each year since 2015** in September, at the **Far Eastern Federal University in Vladivostok, Russia**.
- The **objective is to support the economic development of Russia's Far East** and to expand international cooperation in the **Asia-Pacific region**.

Key highlights:

- India has been emphasising on the need to adopt the path of diplomacy and dialogue since the beginning of the Ukraine conflict, and it supports all peaceful efforts to end the conflict.
- **India has made significant investments in the Russian Far East in the fields of pharma and diamond.**
- India is also keen to strengthen its partnership with Russia on Arctic subjects and there is immense scope for cooperation in the field of energy as well.
- This month marks 30 years since the establishment of the Consulate of India in Vladivostok. **India was the first country to open a consulate in this city.**

TRILATERAL DEVELOPMENT FORUM

News: Ministry of External Affairs has recently launched a platform TDC Fund that would involve private sectors with state support for huge investments in the Indo-Pacific region.

About TDC Fund:

- **Its aim is to provide an alternative** to the Chinese development partnership model that has pushed parts of the developing world to a debt trap.

- **India's Global Innovation Partnership (GIP) launched with the UK** will provide a template to use the TDC Fund for trilateral projects with other countries like Japan, Germany, France, and the EU.
- India's contribution to GIP will be channelized through the TDC Fund.

INDO-PACIFIC TRILATERAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION FUND

News: To facilitate development projects under the International Solar Alliance India and France have decided to establish the Indo-Pacific Trilateral Development Cooperation Fund.

About:

- **This fund aims to support India-based innovators and start-ups** in taking their innovations to third countries, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region.
- **Act as a platform for Indian innovations and start-ups** who can demonstrate their relevance to the requirements of other societies.
- **It will also explore opportunities** to undertake development projects under the framework of the International Solar Alliance and its STAR-C project.
- **Expansion of bilateral relations to new areas** like the Blue Economy and Ocean Governance.

FINANCIAL INTERMEDIARY FUND (FIF)

News: It was established to combat Covid-19 Pandemic

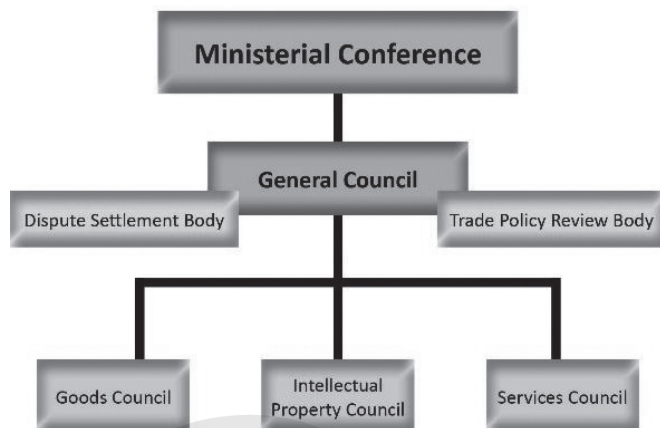
About:

- A new **FIF for pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response (PPR)** has been established internationally, with financial commitments from multiple countries including India.
- **Hosted by World Bank and with technical support from WHO, FIF will:**
 - Provide long-term financing to strengthen PPR capabilities in low- and middle-income countries
 - Address critical gaps at national, regional, and global levels.
- **FIF will help in strengthening PPR capacity** in areas such as zoonotic disease surveillance, laboratories, emergency communication, critical health workforce capacities etc.

12TH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE OF WTO

News: For the first time in a decade, the members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) have finalised a historic deal at the 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12).

Structures of WTO



About Major outcomes of a deal:

- **TRIPS Waiver:** On TRIPS (trade-related intellectual property rights) waiver, **an agreement could be reached only on vaccines**. But not on diagnostics and therapeutics.
 - It will allow developing countries to waive intellectual property protections on the vaccines without the patent holder's permission to spur domestic production of the medicines.
- **On Food Security:**
 - No imposition of export prohibitions or restrictions on foodstuffs purchased for non-commercial, humanitarian purposes by the World Food Programme.
 - However, internal food security concerns will take precedence.
 - Also, there is no working programme on agriculture. This could be considered as a good outcome for India as India's Agri-subsidy will not face any further scrutiny.
- **On E-Transmission Moratorium:**
 - The countries agreed to extend a moratorium on applying duties to electronic transmissions until the next ministerial meeting, likely in 2023.
 - However, the moratorium would expire in March 2024 should the next conference be postponed.
- **On Fisheries Subsidies:** The countries agreed to put in place rules to prohibit subsidies for illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing.

World Trade Organization (WTO):

- The World Trade Organization (WTO) is an intergovernmental organisation that is concerned with the regulation of international trade between nations.
- The WTO officially commenced in 1995 under the Marrakesh Agreement signed by 124 nations, replacing the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).
- Currently, it has 164 members and 23 observer governments (like Iran, Iraq, Bhutan, Libya etc).
- **Headquarters:** Geneva, Switzerland.

CHINA, A DEVELOPING COUNTRY AT WTO

News: China's status as a 'developing country' at the WTO has become a contentious issue since China has derived benefits reserved for developing countries under WTO norms.

About:

- China is **an upper middle-income country**.
- Further, China allegedly uses unfair trade practices such as preferential treatment for state enterprises and data restrictions.
- Therefore, many nations have called on China to either refrain from seeking benefits available to developing countries or forego its classification as a developing country.
- **Developing countries at WTO:**
 - There are **no WTO definitions of "developed" and "developing" countries**.
 - Members **announce for themselves** whether they are "developed" or "developing" countries.
 - However, other members can challenge the decision of a member to make use of provisions available to developing countries.

Benefits of claiming Developing countries:

- Developing countries enjoy special rights through '**special and differential treatment**' (S&DT) provisions.
- WTO pacts set more lenient targets for developing nations and grant them more time to achieve certain targets.
- It allows other countries to offer preferential treatment like the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP).
 - **GSP is a non-reciprocal preferential tariff system** which provides for exemption from the Most Favoured Nation principle of WTO.

Least Developed Country (LDC) status at WTO:

- WTO recognises LDCs relying on a classification by the UN based on a criterion that is reviewed every three years.
- **The identification is currently based on three criteria:** per capita gross national income (GNI), human assets and economic vulnerability to external shocks.
- Recently, concerns have also been raised over LDC status assigned to Bangladesh although it has surpassed India in terms of GDP per capita.

GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (GPAI)

News: India will take over the Chair of the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence, GPAI from France on November 21.

About:

- GPAI is an **international initiative to support responsible and human-centric development and the use of Artificial Intelligence.**
- It aims to **bridge the gap between theory and practice on AI** by supporting innovative research and applied activities on AI-related priorities.
- **Members:** The GPAI is a congregation of **25-member countries, including** the US, UK, European Union, Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, South Korea, and Singapore.
- **India joined the GPAI in 2020 as a founding member.**
- **Its Secretariat is hosted at the OECD.**
- India occupying the chair also signifies how the world today perceives it as a Trusted Technology partner and one that has always advocated for the ethical use of technology for transforming citizens' lives.
- **Significance:**
 - Artificial Intelligence is expected to add 967 billion US dollars to the Indian economy by 2035.
 - It is also expected to add 450 to 500 billion US dollars to India's GDP by 2025 accounting for 10 per cent of the country's 5 trillion-dollar GDP target.

MAJOR ECONOMIES FORUM ON ENERGY AND CLIMATE (MEF)

News: At the virtual meeting of MEF, the Union Minister calls upon the members of MEF to launch a global movement on LIFE i.e., Lifestyle for Environment.

About:

- **Aim:** The MEF meeting was aimed at galvanising actions (both developed and developing countries) that are to strengthen energy security and tackle the climate crisis thereby building momentum for COP27.
- **Background:** MEF was launched in 2009 by US President Barack Obama.

India at MEF 2022:

- India has already installed 159 GW of non-fossil fuel-based electricity generation capacity.
- During the last 7.5 years, India's installed solar energy capacity has increased over 18 times.
- India's annual per capita emissions are only a third of the global average.
- **India's Panchamrit goals are being fructified through one of the largest clean energy development plans** in the world.
- **India is on track to meet its commitments, through the adoption of low carbon policies** across key sectors of our economy ranging from the green hydrogen mission to e-mobility.

PARTNERS IN THE BLUE PACIFIC (PBP) INITIATIVE

News: Recently, The US and its allies — Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and the United Kingdom — have launched the 'Partners in the Blue Pacific' Initiative.

About:

- **Launched by:** US, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and the United Kingdom.
- **Purpose:** It is an "informal mechanism" to support Pacific islands and to boost diplomatic, and economic ties in the Pacific region.
- **Objectives:**
 - To deliver results for the Pacific more effectively and efficiently
 - To expand cooperation between the Pacific and the rest of the world and
 - To focus on bolstering "Pacific regionalism".
- **Priority Areas:** The areas where PBP aims to enhance cooperation with the Pacific islands include climate crisis, connectivity and transportation, maritime security and protection, health, prosperity, and education.

Increased Chinese presence in the Pacific:

- **Security pact with the Solomon Islands in April 2022:** A serious concern for the US and its allies as the Chinese will be setting up a military base close

to the US island territory of Guam and right next to Australia and New Zealand.

- **An agreement called the “Common Development Vision” with the 10 Pacific nations:** To work with traditional and non-traditional security establishments and expand law enforcement cooperation with these countries.

INDUSTRY TRANSITION DIALOGUE

News: India and Sweden hosted the Industry Transition Dialogue in Stockholm, Sweden.

About:

- **Hosted by India and Sweden as part of the Leadership for Industry Transition (LeadIT) Initiative.**
- **Purpose:** To contribute to the UN Conference ‘Stockholm+50’ that will set the agenda for COP27.
- At the dialogue, the Union Environment Minister said that the developed countries with their historical experiences must take lead in the global transition towards net-zero and low carbon industry transition.

LeadIT Initiative:

- **Launched by the Prime Ministers of Sweden and India with support from the World Economic Forum (WEF) in 2019, in New York.**
- **Purpose:**
 - Voluntary initiative for promoting low-carbon transition through active participation of private sector companies.
 - Especially in the sectors like Iron & Steel, Aluminium, Cement and Concrete, petrochemicals, fertilisers, bricks, heavy-duty transport.
- **Members:** Currently, the Group has a membership of 16 countries and 19 companies including Dalmia Cement, Mahindra Group and SpiceJet from India.
- **Secretariat:** It is hosted by **Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), Sweden.**

Other initiatives related to Sweden:

- **Stockholm+50:**
 - **It is an international meeting** to be hosted by the Government of Sweden and convened by the United Nations General Assembly in Stockholm, Sweden.
 - **Theme:** A healthy planet for the prosperity of all — our responsibility, our opportunity.
 - The meeting will commemorate 50 years since the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment, which made the environment a pressing global issue for the first time.

Stockholm Conference, 1972:

- The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm was held from 5th –16th June, 1972.
- **Aim:** Creating a common governance framework for the planetary environment and natural resources.
- This was the **first global convergence on the planetary environment.**
- 122 countries participated in the conference.
- The theme was ‘**Only One Earth**’.

WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY FORUM 2022

News: The forum was held recently in Geneva, Switzerland.

About:

- It represents the **United Nations’s first and largest annual gathering of the Communication Technologies (CT)** for development community.
- **Co-organized by:** International Telecommunication Union (ITU), UNESCO, UNDP and UNCTAD in close collaboration with all WSIS Action Line facilitators.
- **Theme for 2022:** “ICTs for Well-Being, Inclusion and Resilience: WSIS Cooperation for Accelerating Progress on the SDGs”.
- **Objective:** to create an evolving multi- stakeholder platform aimed at addressing the issues raised by information and communication technologies (ICTs).

SUPPLY CHAIN MINISTERIAL FORUM

News: India recently adopted the US’ joint statement of the 2022 Supply Chain Ministerial Forum on cooperation of global supply chains.

About:

- **A partnership of 18 economies, including India, US, and European Union.**
- It has unveiled a four-point roadmap **for building collective, long-term resilient supply chains (RSC)** to counter risks arising from supply dependencies and vulnerabilities.
 - The road map was formulated in the backdrop of a supply chain summit that was held in the US, in 2021.
- **Statement recognises shocks to global supply chains** from pandemics, wars and conflicts, extreme climate impacts, and natural disasters.

- Building the RSC roadmap is **based on global principles of transparency, diversification, security, and sustainability**.
- **Currently, the global supply chain is dominated by China.**
- Measures are aimed at reducing the dependence of 17 partners on Chinese supply chains.
- **India, Japan, and Australia have also launched the Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI)** to Counter China's dominance of the supply chain in the Indo-Pacific region.

INDIAN OCEAN DIALOGUE

News: Hosting the 8th edition of Indian Ocean Dialogue (IOD), India highlighted the region's importance and the need to keep it safe and secure.

About:

- **IOD is a track 1.5 forum** (where government officials who participate in unofficial capacity and non-official actors work together) of **Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)**.
- **Significance of IOR:**
 - Half of the world's container ships and two-thirds of the world's oil shipments pass through this.
 - **Has some of the world's most important choke points-** Straits of Hormuz, Malacca, and the Bab el Mandeb (strategically important for global trade and energy flow).
 - Contains roughly 1/3 of the world's population, 25% of its landmass and around 40% of the world's oil and gas reserves.

India's initiatives towards IOR:

- **Primary security provider** to most of its smaller neighbours like Maldives, Mauritius, Sri Lanka etc.
- **'SAGAR'** (Security and Growth for All in the Region) that aims to pursue and promote India's geo-political, strategic, and economic interests.
- **Indo-Pacific Oceans' Initiative (IPOI)** with focus on maritime security, maritime ecology, disaster risk reduction etc.
- **Other Initiatives:** Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (increase maritime cooperation), Asia Africa Growth Corridor etc.

INDO-PACIFIC REGIONAL DIALOGUE

News: Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue (IPRD) was held from 23 to 25 November 2022.

About:

- IPRD is an **apex-level international annual conference of the Indian Navy**.
- **Organised by:** National Maritime Foundation (NMF).
- **Purpose:** It is an annual international conference that seeks to foster an exchange of ideas and promote deliberations on maritime issues relevant to the Indo-Pacific.
- **Theme of 2022:** 'Operationalising the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI)'.

National Maritime Foundation:

- Established in 2005, it is the **nation's sole maritime think-tank** that concentrates upon the entire gamut of activities relevant to India's maritime interests.
- It has gained significant international traction for the conduct of independent, original, and policy-relevant research on all 'matters maritime.'

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CONSCIOUSNESS

News: Union Minister of Ayush inaugurated the international conference on Consciousness with the theme, "Exploring Consciousness- From Non-Locality to Non-Duality: The Man- Machine Debate" at NIMHANS, Bengaluru.

About:

- **The conference is organised by India Foundation and NIMHANS and supported by the Ministry of Ayush.**
- It will bring together some of the most eminent researchers and inventors in the areas of STEM and allied fields as well as scholars and spiritual teachers of the major Indic Spiritual and psychological disciplines and doctrines.

Ayurswasthya Yojana:

- The Minister also inaugurated the Centre of Excellence project in the Department of Integrative Medicine, NIMHANS, Bengaluru as part of "Ayurswasthya Yojana", a flagship programme under Ministry of Ayush.
- The Centre of Excellence (CoE) will strengthen the competencies of Ayush professionals in Education technology, Research & innovation, and others.
- **Main objectives** of the CoE project at NIMHANS is to conduct clinical trials in four neuro-psychiatric disorders to establish efficacy, safety and proposed mechanism of Integrated Yoga and Ayurveda treatment approaches.



International Convention, Laws, Agreements, Alliances, and Treaties

OBSERVER STATUS TO INTERNATIONAL SOLAR ALLIANCE (ISA)

News: Granting of the status would help provide for a well-defined cooperation between the Alliance and UN that would benefit global energy growth and development.

About:

- It will also provide a choice to ISA to have **permanent office in the UN Hq (New York)**.
- **Observer status of UN:**
 - It **started in 1946 with the Swiss Government as the first permanent observer**; several regional and international organisations are given observer status by UNGA.
 - It works as a collaborative platform for increased deployment of solar energy technologies.
 - It aims to bring energy access, ensure energy security, and drive energy transition in its member countries.
 - It has 101 signatories (US as last signatory) with 80 signatories who have ratified the ISA Framework Agreement.

INTERNATIONAL SOLAR ALLIANCE

News: International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the International Solar Alliance (ISA) during the 42nd session of ICAO Assembly in Montreal, Canada.

About ISA:

- **Formation:** Co-founded by India and France during 2015, the ISA is an action-oriented, member-driven, collaborative platform for increased deployment of solar energy technologies.
- **Its basic motive is to facilitate energy access, ensure energy security, and drive energy transition** in its member countries.
- **ISA is the nodal agency for implementing One Sun One World One Grid (OSOWOG)**, which seeks to

transfer solar power generated in one region to feed the electricity demands of others.

- **Headquarters:** The Headquarters is in India with its Interim Secretariat being set up in Gurugram.
- **Member Nations:**
 - A total of 109 countries have signed the ISA Framework Agreement and 90 have ratified it.
 - **All member states of the United Nations are eligible to join the ISA.**

INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANISATION

News: The Union government cleared three protocols related to amendments in the Chicago Convention.

About ICAO:

- **Chicago Convention** led to the creation of ICAO.
- **ICAO is a United Nations (UN) specialised agency, established in 1944**, which laid the foundation for the standards and procedures for peaceful global air navigation.
- The Convention on International Civil Aviation was signed on 7th December 1944 in Chicago commonly known as the 'Chicago Convention'.
- It established the **core principles permitting international transport by air**, and led to the creation of the ICAO.
- India is among its 193 members.
- **It is headquartered in Montreal, Canada.**

COUNTERING AMERICA'S ADVERSARIES THROUGH SANCTIONS ACT (CAATSA)

News: The S-400 deal of India with Russia is under the purview of USA's CAATSA.

About:

- The **US** has repeatedly asked India to withdraw from the deal, indicating that the Russian S-400 systems may trigger the "Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act" (CAATSA).

- There has been unease in Washington ever since 2016 when India announced the deal with Russia, which remains New Delhi's biggest defence partner.
- Now, the S-400 deal could attract sanctions under US' CAATSA law. The US has already sanctioned China and Turkey over similar purchases.

About S-400:

- **The S-400 Triumf** is a mobile, surface-to-air missile system (SAM) **designed by Russia**.
- It is the most dangerous operationally deployed modern long-range SAM (MLR SAM) in the world, considered much ahead of **the US-developed Terminal High Altitude Area Defence system (THAAD)**.
- **Significance of the deal:** The S-400 decision is a very strong example of how advanced our defence and strategic partnership is, and how strong Indian sovereignty is, to choose its international partners, especially when it comes to issues of national interest and national security.

About CAATSA:

- **Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA)**'s core objective is to **counter Iran, Russia and North Korea through punitive measures**.
- Enacted in 2017 it includes sanctions against countries that engage in significant transactions with Russia's defence and intelligence sectors.

What sanctions will be imposed?

- Prohibition on loans to the sanctioned person.
- Prohibition of Export-Import bank assistance for exports to sanctioned persons.
- Prohibition on procurement by the United States Government to procure goods or services from the sanctioned person.
- Denial of visas to persons closely associated with the sanctioned person.

THE INDIAN ANTARCTIC ACT, 2022

News: Recently, the Indian Antarctic Act, 2022 was enacted.

About

- This act aims to provide national measures for **protecting the Antarctic environment and dependent and associated ecosystems**.

- It aims to give effect to the Antarctic Treaty, the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources and to the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty.

Key Provisions of the Act:

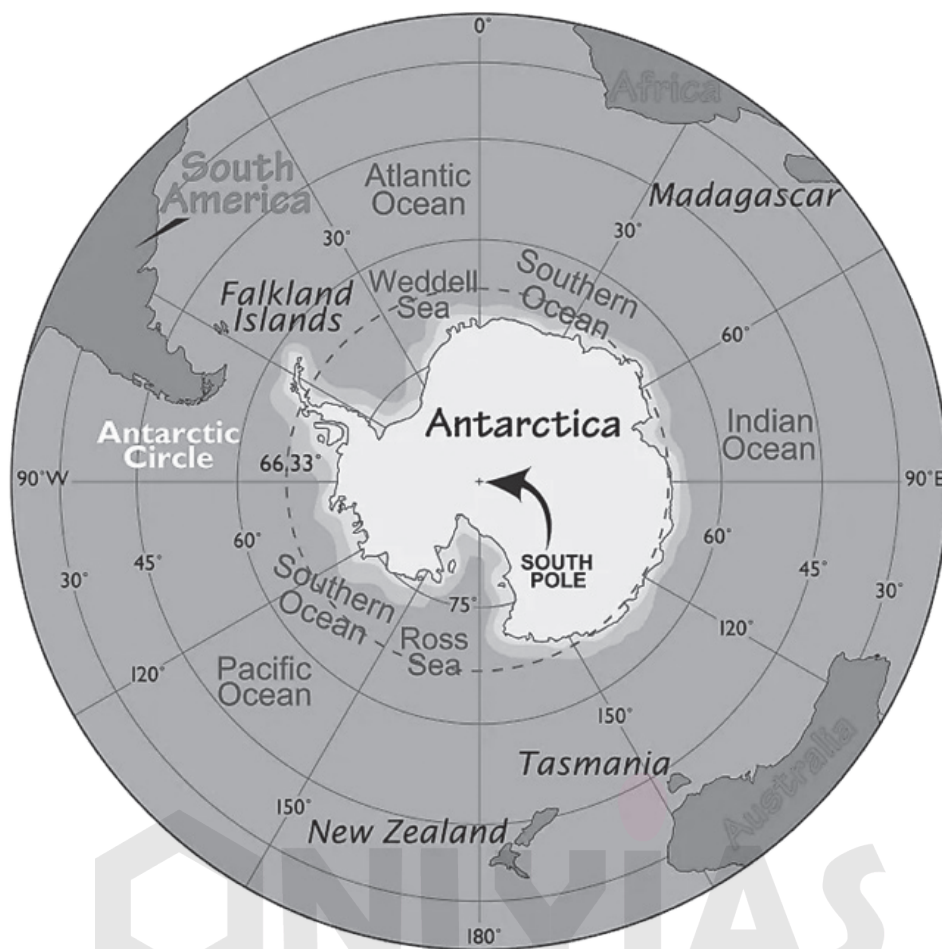
- **Applicability:** Provisions applicable to any, Indian or foreign Citizens; entities incorporated, established, or registered under any law in force in India; vessel or aircraft registered in India or involved in any Indian expedition to Antarctica.
- **Establishment of a Committee:** on Antarctic Governance and Environmental Protection to be chaired by the Secretary of the Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- **Permit system:** A permit by the Committee or written authorisation from another party to the Protocol (other than India) will be required for various activities.
- **Constitution of the Antarctic fund:** to be applied towards the welfare of Antarctic research work and protection of the Antarctic environment.
- **Stringent penalties:** for contravention of its provisions
- **Designated court to try punishable offences:** The central government may notify one or more Sessions Courts to be the Designated Court.
- **Provision for inspection in India:** by an officer designated by the Central Government as an Inspector.

About Antarctica:

- It is the world's **5th largest, southernmost** and the driest, windiest, coldest, and iciest continent.
- **It is not a country and has no government and no indigenous population.** Instead, the entire continent is set aside as a scientific preserve.
- Just 2% of this continent is free of ice, allowing a small toe-hold for hardy animals and plants.
- **It holds 90% of the Earth's total ice volume and 70% of its fresh water.**
- **India and Antarctica:**
 - There was no specific legislation for Antarctica since India's Antarctic expeditions began in 1981.
 - **India is also a member of:**
 1. Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programme (COMNAP)
 2. Scientific Committee of Antarctica Research (SCAR)
 - **India's Research stations:** Maitri at Schirmacher Hills, Bharati at Larsemann Hills (Dakshin Gangotri was the first Indian base established in 1984).

Antarctic Treaty:

- The treaty was **signed in 1959 and came into force in 1961 after ratification by 12 original members.**
- **These 12 countries are:** Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, France, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, USSR (now Russia), the UK and the US.
- **Parties:** Currently 54 countries have acceded to it.
 - **India joined the treaty in 1983** and soon received consultative status.
- **Objectives:**
 - To demilitarise Antarctica and to establish it as a zone free of nuclear tests and the disposal of radioactive waste, and to ensure that it is used for peaceful purposes only.
 - To promote international scientific cooperation in Antarctica.
 - To set aside disputes over territorial sovereignty.
- The Treaty parties have also negotiated three international agreements which govern activities in Antarctica, collectively known as the **Antarctic Treaty System-**
 - Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Seals (1972)
 - Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (1980)
 - Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty (1991)



- The alliance would work towards ensuring that palm oil is recognised as a high-quality, economical, and healthy vegetable oil and to change the negative image of palm oil.
- **Membership of APOA would be further expanded** to include companies or industry bodies associated with production or refining of palm oil across the continent.

About Palm Oil:

- **Currently the world's most consumed vegetable oil.**
- **Uses:** in the production of detergents, plastics, cosmetics, and biofuels.
- **Indonesia and Malaysia together account for almost 90% of the global palm oil production**, with Indonesia producing the largest quantity at over 45 million tonnes in 2021.
- **Top consumers** of the commodity are India, China, and the European Union (EU).
 - **India's annual imports** of edible oil is around 13-14 million tonnes (MT).
 - **Around 8 MT of palm oil is imported from Indonesia and Malaysia**, while other oils, such as

ASIAN PALM OIL ALLIANCE (APOA)

News: The apex edible oil industry associations from five major palm oil importing countries of Asia (India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Nepal) have come together to form the Asian Palm Oil Alliance (APOA).

About:

- The APOA aims is **safeguarding the economic and business interests of the palm oil consuming countries and will work towards increasing the consumption.**

soya and sunflower, come from Argentina, Brazil, Ukraine, and Russia.

- **Asia accounts for around 40% of the global palm oil consumption** while Europe accounts for 12% of palm oil trade. Indonesia and Malaysia are the biggest palm oil exporters in the world.
- **India is the largest importer of palm oil in Asia**, accounting for 15% of global imports, followed by China (9%), Pakistan (4%) and Bangladesh (2%).

UN HIGH SEAS TREATY

News: Negotiations involving 168 countries, including the European Union, to agree on a UN treaty for protecting oceans have failed.

About:

- Also referred to as the '**Paris Agreement for the Ocean.**'
- Aims to deal with **Biodiversity beyond National Jurisdiction.**
- The proposed treaty concerns the ocean **existing beyond the Exclusive Economic Zones.**
 - EEZ lies from the coast of a country to **about 200 nautical miles into the sea**, till where it has special rights for exploration.
 - Waters beyond that are known as **open seas or high seas.**
- **The treaty was to be negotiated under the UNCLOS** (United Nations Convention on Laws of the Sea) of 1982, which governs the rights of countries regarding marine resources.
- As there is no treaty for conserving the health of vast swathes of the earth's oceans, a UN resolution (in 2017) had decided to rectify this while setting 2022 as the deadline.
- Later, a High Ambition Coalition, (now has more than 100 countries including India, the US, and the UK) came about and put the focus on '**30×30' goals - protecting 30% of the ocean by 2030.**
- After the latest deadlock, talks will only resume next year, unless a special session is called.

NEW STRATEGIC ARMS REDUCTION TREATY (NEW-START)

News: Russia halted US inspections of nuclear arsenal under New START treaty.

About:

- New START is an agreement (entered into force in 2011) for nuclear arms reduction **between US and**

Russia, and establishes a limit on deployed strategic warheads.

- It **caps to 1,550 the number of nuclear warheads** that can be deployed by the US and Russia.
- Its duration was to be **10 years (i.e., up to 2021)**; but it was **extended for another 5 years.**

1954 HAGUE CONVENTION

News: UNESCO is in contact with Ukrainian authorities to mark cultural sites and monuments with the distinctive "Blue Shield" emblem of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict.

About 1954 Hague Convention:

- The convention for the **Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict** also known as the Hague Convention was adopted in **1954** under the auspices of **UNESCO.**
- **India is party** to Hague Convention 1954.
- **Aim:** To protect cultural property such as monuments of architecture, art or history, archaeological sites, works of art, manuscripts, books and other objects of artistic, historical or archaeological interest, as well as scientific collections of any kind regardless of their origin or ownership.
- **Significance:** It is the first and the most comprehensive multilateral treaty dedicated exclusively to the protection of cultural heritage in times of peace as well as during an armed conflict.

Blue Shield Emblem/Association:

- **Founded in 1996.** It is an independent, neutral, non-governmental, non-profit, international organisation.
- It strives to protect heritage during armed conflicts and disasters across the world.
- This **includes all forms of cultural property** including museums, monuments, archaeological sites, archives, libraries and audio-visual material, and significant natural areas, as well as intangible heritage.
- **The 1954 Hague Convention designates an emblem for a cultural property** that should be protected, and for identification of those working to protect it.
- The **Blue Shield organisation took up the emblem of the Convention as a symbol of their protective work**, set in a blue circular background.

UNESCO:

- **It is a specialised agency of the United Nations (UN).** It seeks to build peace through international cooperation in Education, the Sciences and Culture.
- **It was founded in 1945 and is in Paris, France.**
- **It has 193 Members** and 11 Associate Members. **India joined UNESCO in 1946.**
- **In 2019, the USA and Israel formally quit UNESCO.**
- **Reports:** UNESCO Science Report, Global Education Monitoring Report, State of the Education Report for India.

GENEVA CONVENTIONS

News: As the Russian-Ukraine Conflict gets intense, there is growing concern surrounding the issue of violations of human rights and Geneva Conventions.

About:

- The Geneva Conventions (1949) and their Additional Protocols are international treaties that **contain the most important rules limiting the barbarity of war.**
- **They protect people who do not take part in the fighting** (civilians, medics, aid workers) and **those who can no longer fight** (wounded, sick and shipwrecked troops, prisoners of war).
- **The convention codifies widely accepted ethical and legal international standards** for humanitarian treatment of those impacted by any ongoing war.
- **The focus of the Conventions is also on the treatment of non-combatants and prisoners** of war, and not the use of conventional or biological and chemical weapons.
- **Treaties under the Convention:** The convention contains four treaties, and three additional protocols
- **Four treaties:**
 1. The first Geneva Convention protects wounded and sick soldiers on land during the war.
 2. The second Geneva Convention protects wounded, sick and shipwrecked military personnel at sea during the war.
 3. The third Geneva Convention applies to prisoners of war.
 4. The fourth Geneva Convention affords protection to civilians, including in occupied territory.
- **Article 3** common to the four Geneva Conventions cover situations of non-international armed conflicts.
 - They include traditional civil wars, internal armed conflicts that spill over into other States, or internal conflicts in which a third State or a multinational force intervenes alongside the government.

- **Parties to the Convention:** The Geneva Conventions have been ratified by 196 states, including all UN member states.
 - The three Protocols have been ratified by 174, 169 and 79 states respectively.
- **Potential Prosecution under the Convention:** Under Article 8 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), it is the ICC that has jurisdiction in respect of war crimes.
- **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC):** It is a **humanitarian organisation based in Geneva, Switzerland.** State parties (signatories) to the Geneva Convention of 1949 and its Additional Protocols have given the ICRC a mandate to protect victims of international and internal armed conflicts.

MONTREUX CONVENTION

News: In response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Turkey is activating the Montreux Convention on naval passage through the Black Sea Straits.

About:

- **Straits:** Also known as the Turkish Straits, the Black Sea Straits are the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits.
- **These straits connect** the Aegean Sea and the Black Sea via the Sea of Marmara.
- It is the only passage through which the Black Sea ports can access the Mediterranean and beyond.
- **"Montreux Convention on the Regime of the Straits" of 1936** is an international agreement governing the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits in Turkey.
 - This pact says that Turkey has control over both the Black Sea Straits.
 - **In the event of a war,** Turkey will have the right to regulate the transit of naval warships and to block the straits to warships belonging to the countries involved in the conflict.
- **Exception under Article 19** is for the countries on the Black Sea that can effectively undermine Turkey's power in blocking the Russian warships entering or exiting the Black Sea.
 - That means warships can return to their original bases in the Black Sea through the passage and Turkey cannot prevent it.
- The condition also applies to Russian fleets currently in the Black Sea that belong to a base in the Mediterranean or Baltic Sea. Russia is free to take them out of the Black Sea.

Official Assignment:

- The official assignment of a ship to a port determines whether it has the right to pass through the Straits or not.

- This assignment, according to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) falls under the authority of the state that owns the ships.
- Therefore, another possible way for Russia to exploit the Montreux Convention would be to reassign some of its vessels to the Black Sea.

COLOMBO SECURITY CONCLAVE

News: Recently, the 5th Edition of Colombo Security Conclave (CSC) was held in Maldives.

About:

- India, Maldives, and Sri Lanka began a National Security Advisor (NSA)-level trilateral meeting on maritime security cooperation in 2011.
- Following a halt from 2014-2019, the trilateral meeting was resumed in 2020, when the decision was taken to establish the Colombo Security Conclave (CSC).
- **Aim of the Conclave:** To forge closer cooperation on maritime and security matters among the three Indian Ocean countries.
- **Pillars:** There are four pillars of security cooperation including marine security, human trafficking, counter-terrorism, and cyber security.
- **Secretariat:** Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Fifth conclave:

- The conclave was **attended by National Security Advisors and representatives from India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Mauritius, Bangladesh, and Seychelles.**
- **Note:** Bangladesh and Seychelles attended as observers at this conclave meeting.
- **Key takeaways:**
 - **Mauritius was included as a new member** of the conclave.
 - The pillar of cooperation of the conclave has been expanded to include Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief as the fifth pillar.

BIOLOGICAL AND TOXIN WEAPONS CONVENTION

News: India has abstained from a UNSC resolution sponsored by Russia alleging US and Ukraine carrying out “military biological activities” violating the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC).

About:

- **Biological Weapons:** use microbiological agents (such as bacteria, viruses, or fungi) or toxins to intentionally cause death or harm to humans, animals, or plants.

- **Formally known as “The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction”.**
- It was **negotiated by the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva, Switzerland.**
- It opened for signature in 1972 and entered into force in **1975.**
- **Purpose:** The convention effectively prohibits the development, production, acquisition, transfer, stockpiling and use of biological and toxin weapons.
- If a state possesses any agent, toxin, or delivery system for them, they have nine months from entry into force of the treaty to destroy their stockpiles or divert them for peaceful use.
- **Membership:**
 - 183 States Parties and 4 Signatory States.
 - **India is a signatory.**
 - Ten states have neither signed nor ratified the BTWC: Chad, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Israel, Kiribati, Micronesia, Namibia, South Sudan, and Tuvalu.
- **Significance:**
 - It is the first multilateral disarmament treaty banning an entire category of weapons of mass destruction (WMD).
 - It supplements the 1925 Geneva Protocol, which prohibited only the use of biological (and chemical) weapons in war.
 - The Geneva Protocol was signed at a conference held in Geneva under the auspices of the League of Nations.
 - It entered into force in 1928 and has ratified this protocol.
- **Drawbacks of the Convention:** There is no implementation body of the BTWC, allowing for blatant violations as seen in the past. There is a review conference every five years to review the convention’s implementation and establish confidence-building measures.

WHITE PHOSPHOROUS

News: Ukrainian police have accused Russian forces of launching phosphorus bomb attacks (chemical weapons) in the Lugansk and Donetsk regions of eastern Ukraine, collectively known as the Donbas.

About:

- It is a colourless, white, or yellow, waxy solid.
- It **does not occur naturally.** It is **manufactured using phosphate rocks.**

- It is a **highly combustible substance** that reacts with oxygen in the air.
- It can catch fire at temperatures as low as 10 to 15 degrees above room temperature.
- Due to its combustible nature, every country has strict regulations regarding its manufacturing and handling.
- **Applications:** It is used mainly in the military, and other applications may include as a component in fertilisers, food additives and cleaning compounds. Initially, it was also used in pesticides and fireworks, but many countries have banned its use in several sectors.

Is White Phosphorus an incendiary or chemical weapon?

- WP has not been categorised as an incendiary or chemical weapon by international agencies.
- **The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons**, (an intergovernmental organisation and the implementing body for the Chemical Weapons Convention) has **not listed WP in any of the three Schedules of Chemical Weapons**.
- However, the **United Nations considers it as an incendiary chemical**.
- The general regulations of Protocol III on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Incendiary Weapons may apply when it is used in military actions.

Chemical Weapons Convention:

- Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is a **multilateral treaty banning chemical weapons** and requiring their destruction within the stipulated time.
- **It became effective from April 1997.**
- It **makes it mandatory to destroy old and abandoned chemical weapons**.
- Members **should also declare the riot-control agents** (sometimes referred to as 'tear gas') in possession of them.
- **India signed the treaty in January 1993.** The Chemical Weapons Convention Act, 2000 was passed to implement the CWC.
- **Convention Prohibits:**
 - The development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, or retention of chemical weapons.
 - Transferring of chemical weapons.
 - Using chemical weapons.
 - Assisting other States to indulge in activities that are prohibited by the CWC.
 - Using riot-control devices as warfare methods.

DIGITAL SERVICES ACT

News: Members of the EU announced that a consensus has been reached with respect to the Digital Services Act.

About:

- **Proposed by the EU Commission in December 2020** it aims at tightly regulating the way intermediaries' function when it comes to moderating user content.
- **Aim to govern the market of digital services in the EU along with the Digital Market Act.**
- It puts the obligations and accountability on the digital service providers, intermediaries, and Digital platforms to assure that all EU customers, regardless of their country of residence, are better protected.
- **DSA will apply to:**
 - Large digital platforms and intermediaries like Google, Meta, YouTube etc.
 - Content that is abusive, illegal and misinformative in nature.
 - Ambit platforms that provide internet access, domain names, hosts etc.
 - Very large platforms and search engines.

MACOLIN CONVENTION

News: The 12th meeting of Interpol's Match-Fixing Task Force (IMFTF), in which the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) was one of the participants.

About the meeting:

- **Purpose:** Call for harmonised global efforts to curb competition manipulation.
- The members deliberated on various mechanisms to improve intelligence sharing.

Macolin Convention:

- **The "Council of Europe Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions"** is a multilateral treaty that aims to prevent, detect, and punish match-fixing in sports.
- The convention was concluded in Macolin, Switzerland in **2014**.
- **A major focus of the convention is** to prevent and punish illegal sports betting operations and to prevent conflicts of interest between legal sports betting operators and sports organisations.

WORLD FORESTRY CONGRESS

News: The Seoul Forest Declaration was an outcome of the discussions held at the recently concluded XV World Forestry Congress in Seoul, South Korea.

About:

- The world forestry Congress is **not an intergovernmental meeting**; it has no formal constituencies nor country delegations.
- **The Congress is a forum for the exchange of views and experiences on all aspects of forests and forestry**, which may lead to the formulation of broad recommendations applicable at national, regional, and global levels.
- The World Forestry Congress is **held approximately once every six years**.
- **The first Congress was held in Italy in 1926**.
- The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has helped host countries organise the Congress since 1954.
- Responsibility for the organisation and financing of each Congress lies with the host country.
- **Theme for 2022:** Building a Green, Healthy and Resilient Future with Forests.

Seoul Forest Declaration:

- It identifies priority areas with potential to lead to a green, healthy, and resilient future.
- It urges that responsibility for forests should be shared and integrated across institutions, sectors, and stakeholders.
- Investment in forest and landscape restoration globally needs to triple by 2030.
- Move towards a circular bioeconomy and climate neutrality.

INVESTMENT INCENTIVE AGREEMENT

News: Recently, India and the United States signed an Investment Incentive Agreement (IIA) at Tokyo, Japan.

About:

- **It supersedes the Investment Incentive Agreement signed between the two sides in 1997.**
- Significant developments have taken place since the signing of the earlier IIA in 1997.
- **Purpose:** to keep pace with the additional investment support programmes, offered by the Development Finance Corporation of USA, such as debt, equity

investment, investment guaranty, investment insurance etc.

- The Agreement is the legal requirement for DFC, to continue providing investment support in India.
- DFC or their predecessor agencies have been active in India since 1974 and have so far provided investment support worth \$5.8 billion of which \$2.9 billion is still outstanding.

E-TRANSMISSION MORATORIUM

News: All members agreed to continue the long-standing moratorium on custom duties on e-commerce transmissions at 12th Ministerial conference of WTO in June 2022 until the subsequent Ministerial Conference or until March 31, 2024, depending on whichever comes first.

About:

- **India had opposed the continuation of a moratorium** on Customs Duties on electronic transmission (E-Transmission) as it favoured developed nations only.
- WTO members have since 1998 agreed not to impose customs duty on electronic transmission and the moratorium has been periodically extended at the Ministerial Conferences.
- The **moratorium is on digitizable products** like photographic films, cinematographic films, printed matter, music, media, software, and video games.

India's stand:

- Many WTO members were seeking a temporary extension of the moratorium till the 13th MC, but India did not want this to continue.
- India and other countries like South Africa on several occasions have asked the WTO to revisit the issue.

Why is India opposing the extension of the E-transmission Moratorium?

- **India is witnessing an exponential rise in imports of electronic transmissions**, (movies, music, video games and printed matter), some of which could fall within the scope of the moratorium.
- Allowing the moratorium to lapse is important to regulate imports and generate revenue through customs duties.
- Moreover, it has been estimated that India loses about \$500 million annually due to the E-transmission Moratorium.

INDIA-EU TRADE AND INVESTMENT AGREEMENT

News: India and the European Union concluded the first round of negotiations for India-EU Trade and Investment Agreements in New Delhi.

Current bilateral trade between India and the EU:

- India's bilateral trade with the EU amounted to USD 116.36 billion in 2021-22.
- Despite the global disruptions, bilateral trade achieved impressive annual growth of 43.5% in 2021-22.
- Currently, the EU is India's second-largest trading partner after the US and the second-largest destination for Indian exports.
- **Significance of Trade Agreement with EU:** The trade agreement with the EU would help India in further expanding and diversifying its exports of goods and services, including securing the value chains.

AUDIO VISUAL CO-PRODUCTION TREATY

News: The Union Cabinet has approved the signing of an Audio-Visual Co-production Treaty between India and Australia, which is aimed at facilitating joint production of films between the two countries.

About:

- They are **enabling documents** which facilitate the co-production of films between both countries.
- Under such umbrella agreements, private, quasi-government or governmental agencies enter contracts to produce films together.
- India has so far signed 15 such treaties with other countries.

- The respective contributions of the producers of the two countries may vary from 20% to 80% of the final total cost of the jointly produced work.
- **Significance of this treaty with Australia:**
 - The treaty will boost ties with Australia, lead to an exchange of art and culture and showcase the soft power of our country.
 - This will also generate employment among artistic, technical as well as non-technical.

INTERNATIONAL TREATY ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

News: India is going to host the 9th session of the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA).

About:

- **Background:** Also known as the **Seed treaty** was adopted by the 31st session of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in November **2001**.
- **Aim:** The Treaty aims at
 - Recognising the enormous contribution of farmers to the diversity of crops that feed the world.
 - Establishing a global system to provide farmers, plant breeders and scientists with access to plant genetic materials.
 - Ensuring that recipients share benefits they derive from the use of these genetic materials with the countries where they have originated.
- The treaty **came into force in 2004** and has been **ratified by 149 countries including India**.



Initiatives: National and International

RULES OF ORIGIN

News: Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) stated that in case of conflict between Customs (Administration of Rules of Origin under Trade Agreements) Rules, 2020 (CAROTAR) and ROO (under free-trade agreement (FTA)) provisions; the provision of FTA or it's ROO shall prevail.

About:

- **FTAs** allow imports of most of the items at zero or concessional basic customs duty rate.
- India has inked FTAs with several countries, including UAE, Mauritius, Japan, Singapore etc
- **CAROTAR** is aimed at plugging duty evasion through routing exports to India under FTAs.
 - Under CAROTAR rules, importers need to furnish proof of 35% value addition in goods from the country of origin to claim duty concession under FTAs.
 - A list of minimum information which the importer is required to possess is also provided.

About ROO:

- ROO are the **criteria prescribed to determine national origin of an imported product in a country.**
- Under this, a country that has inked an FTA with India cannot dump goods from some third country in the Indian market by just putting a label on it.
- It must undertake a prescribed value addition in that product to export to India.

DEFENCE ACQUISITION PROCEDURE

News: Ministry of Defence (MoD) has offered four projects to the Indian Industry for design & development under Make-I category of Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020.

About:

- **First initiated in 2002** to streamline the procurement of military hardware for the Armed Forces in a systematic and time-bound manner.

- It was reformed in 2016 putting an emphasis on indigenously designed, developed, and manufactured weapon systems and eventually moved towards self-reliance in the field of defence manufacturing.

Key features of DAP 2020:

- **Time Bound** Defence Procurement Process.
- **Ban on Import of Certain Items.**
- **Revised Offset Guidelines:** preference will be given to manufacture of complete defence products over components and various multipliers have been added to give incentivisation in discharge of Offsets.
- **Rationalisation of Procedures for Trials and Testing.**
- **New Category of Buy (Global – Manufacture in India).**
- **Leasing:** A new category introduced to enable operating of assets without owning thereby, substitute huge initial capital outlays.
- **Make Category:** Make category of capital acquisition is the cornerstone of the Make in India initiative.
- **Reservation in Categories for Indian Vendors.**

INTER-OPERABLE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM (ICJS) PROJECT

News: Recently, the government has approved the implementation of the Inter-Operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS) project during the period 2022-23 to 2025-26.

About:

- **It is a Central Sector Scheme of the Ministry of Home Affairs.**
- **Purpose:** It is a national platform for enabling integration of the main IT system used for the delivery of Criminal Justice in the country.
- **Five Pillars of the Project:**
 1. Police (Crime and Criminal Tracking and Network Systems),
 2. e-Forensics for Forensic Labs
 3. e-Courts for Courts
 4. e-Prosecution for Public Prosecutors

5. e-Prisons for Prisons.

- **Implementing Agency:** National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) will be responsible for the implementation of the project in association with the National Informatics Centre (NIC).
- **Phases of the Project:**
 - **Under Phase-I** of the project, individual IT systems have been implemented and stabilised, and search of records have been enabled on these systems.
 - **Under Phase-II**, the system is being built on the principle of 'one data one entry' whereby data is entered only once in one pillar and the same is then available in all other pillars without the need to re-enter the data in each pillar.

OPERATION GANGA

News: Prime Minister Narendra Modi had chaired a high-level meeting to review the ongoing efforts under Operation Ganga to bring back Indians stranded in Ukraine.

About:

- **As Russian invasion into Ukraine** has left its major cities, including its capital Kyiv, under siege, India is making efforts to evacuate its citizens stuck in the war-torn country.
- **'Operation Ganga' is the initiative launched by the government of India to bring back Indians stranded in Ukraine.**
- Thousands of Indians, especially students studying medicine in Ukraine, have been stuck in the country since it closed its airspace as a security measure after Russia launched "special military operations."

Other Evacuation Operations carried out by India:

- **Vande Bharat (2020):** When the Covid-19 pandemic hit the world, the Centre launched the Vande Bharat Mission to bring back Indian citizens stranded in foreign countries.
- **Operation Samudra Setu (2020):** It was a naval operation as part of the national effort to bring home Indian citizens from overseas during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- **Operation Raahat (2015):** In 2015, a conflict raged between the Yemeni government and Houthi rebels. India evacuated nearly 5,600 people from Yemen.
- **Operation Maitri (2015):** It is the joint relief and rescue operation by the Indian government and the Indian Armed forces in the aftershock of the 2015 Nepal earthquake.

INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

News: The government of Madhya Pradesh in partnership with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) proposed two inexpensive and ingenious ideas to encourage women to cook balanced meals.

About:

- It is a **specialised United Nations agency created in 1977** engaged in providing grants and loans with low interest for allied projects.
- The IFAD works with rural people allowing them to enhance their food security, improve nutrition and raise their incomes.
- It also helps people to expand their businesses.
- The organisation is an outcome of the World Food Conference of 1974.
- **Headquartered in Rome and headed by a President.**
- **The objectives of the IFAD are three-fold:**
 1. To increase the productive capacity of poor people.
 2. To increase benefits for them from market participation.
 3. To strengthen the environmental sustainability & climate resilience of their economic activities.
- **Membership:** It has 177-member countries.
- IFAD brings out the **Rural Development Report every year.**

About two inexpensive and ingenious ideas:

1. **The '7 days 7 plots' programme:**
 - Here, women from the village are taught how to grow different vegetables in their own gardens, seven to be exact, one for each day of the week.
 - By the end of the week, the first plot is ready to be harvested again. This way, families get to eat fresh, affordable vegetables that they can consume for longer and in greater quantities, as against buying from the market, and so reduce sickness.
 - This scheme is an adjunct to the Tejaswini Rural Women Empowerment Programme implemented by the UN-affiliated IFAD in MP.
2. **Tiranga Thali:**
 - To encourage a more balanced meal, the project introduced the concept of the "Tiranga Thali," where each plate contains ingredients of the three colours from the Indian flag.
 - **Saffron** — all pulses like yellow split peas, pigeon peas, and split red lentils representing proteins;
 - **White** — rice, milk and roti representing carbohydrates; and

- **Green** — leafy vegetables representing vitamins and minerals.

MOST FAVOURED NATION

News: The United States, the European Union, Britain, Canada, and Japan are planning to jointly revoke Russia's "most favoured nation" (MFN) status over its invasion of Ukraine.

About:

- The **World Trade Organization's 164 members commit to treating other members equally so they can all benefit from each other's lowest tariffs, highest import quotas and fewest trade barriers** for goods and services.
- This **principle of non-discrimination** is known as Most Favoured Nation (MFN) treatment.
- **There are some exceptions**, such as when members strike bilateral trade agreements or when members offer developing countries special access to their markets.

Removal of MFN status:

- There is **no formal procedure for suspending MFN treatment** and it is not clear whether members are obliged to inform the WTO if they do so.
- **India suspended Pakistan's MFN status in 2019** after a suicide attack by a Pakistan-based Islamist group killed 40 police. Pakistan never applied MFN status to India.

What does losing MFN status mean?

- Revoking Russia's MFN status sends a strong signal that the United States and its Western allies do not consider Russia an economic partner in any way, but it does not in itself change conditions for trade.
- It does formally allow the Western allies to increase import tariffs or impose quotas on Russian goods, or even ban them, and to restrict services out of the country.
- They could also overlook Russian intellectual property rights.

UNESCO FUND FOR THE ELIMINATION OF DOPING IN SPORTS

News: Recently, the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has released India's contribution to the UNESCO Fund for Elimination of Doping in Sport in 2022.

About:

- **Setup in 2008.**

- The fund assists States Parties to the International Convention against Doping in Sport to develop and implement anti-doping projects.
- **The Fund has three priorities:** Education projects focusing on youth and sports organisations, policy advice and mentoring and capacity-building.

Other Conventions and Declarations related to Anti-Doping:

- **Copenhagen Declaration:**
 - **Background:** agreed upon by governments at the Second World Conference on Doping in Sport held in Copenhagen, Denmark in 2003.
 - The declaration was the political document through which governments signalled their intention to formally recognise and implement the World Anti-Doping Code.
 - **Importance:** This declaration was the first step toward the preparation of the UNESCO International Convention against doping in sports.
 - **India status:** India agreed to this declaration in the year 2003.
- **International Convention Against Doping in Sport:**
 - **Background:** It was adopted at the General Conference of UNESCO in Paris in 2005. It entered into force in 2007.
 - Also known as the '**UNESCO Anti-Doping Convention**'.
 - **Objective:** To promote the prevention of and the fight against doping in sports, with a view to its elimination.
 - **India status:** India ratified this convention in 2007.
- **National Anti-Doping Agency:** It is an autonomous body under the Ministry of Youth Affairs, is responsible for adopting, implementing, and enforcing anti-doping programmes in India.

INDIA-UN DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP FUND

News: Recently India-UN Development Partnership Fund celebrated 5 Years of South-South Collaboration.

About UNDF:

- It is a **dedicated facility established in 2017 within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**.
 - The Government of India has committed **\$150 million over 10 years to the India-UN Fund**.
- It is **managed by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC)** and implemented in collaboration with the United Nations system.

- The UNOSSC, hosted by UNDP since 1974, was established by the UN General Assembly.
- Its mandate is to advocate for and coordinate South-South and triangular cooperation on a global and UN system wide basis.
- It supports Southern-owned and led, demand driven, and transformational sustainable development projects across the developing world.
 - It focuses on least developed countries and small island developing states.
- It is a notable example of South-South cooperation with the system.

About South-South Cooperation:

- South-South cooperation refers to the technical cooperation among developing countries in the Global South.
- Operationally, it is a process whereby two or more developing countries pursue their individual and/or shared national capacity development objectives.
- It derives from the adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (BAPA) by 138 UN Member States in Argentina.

Other types of cooperation:

- North-South cooperation occurs when a developed country supports economically or with another kind of resources a less favoured one.
 - The division of “North” and “South” is used to refer to the social, economic, and political differences that exist between developed countries (North) and developing countries (South).
- Triangular cooperation involves three actors, two from the South and one from the North.
 - The latter, which can also be an international organisation, provides the financial resources so that the countries of the South can exchange technical assistance on a specific topic.

WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

News: There is no single, authoritative definition of a WMD in international law and the expression is usually understood to cover nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) weapons.

About:

- According to the United States Department of Homeland Security, “A weapon of mass destruction is a nuclear, radiological, chemical, biological, or other device that is intended to harm many people”.

- It is therefore categorised as a class of weaponry with the potential to:

- Produce in a single moment an enormous destructive effect capable to kill millions of civilians, jeopardise the natural environment, and fundamentally alter the lives of future generations through their catastrophic effects;
- Cause death or serious injury of people through toxic or poisonous chemicals.
- Disseminate disease-causing organisms or toxins to harm or kill humans, animals, or plants;
- Deliver nuclear explosive devices, chemical, biological or toxin agents to use them for hostile purposes or in armed conflict.

- Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Amendment Act, 2022 was passed by Parliament.

- It amends the Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Act, 2005.
- It prohibits financing of any activity in relation to WMD and their delivery system.
- It empowers the Central Government to:
 - ◆ Freeze, seize or attach funds or other financial assets or economic resources for preventing such financing.
 - ◆ Prohibit making available funds, financial assets, or economic resources for any prohibited activity in relation to weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems.

GLOBAL SECURITY INITIATIVE OF CHINA

News: With an eye on the Pacific Ocean, the Chinese President has proposed a new Global Security Initiative.

About:

- According to China, the new Global Security Initiative will work against the Cold War Mentality or hegemonism, power politics and bloc confrontation.
- It will counter the US Indo-Pacific Strategy, QUAD (the India, US, Australia, and Japan grouping) and AUKUS (Australia, UK, and US).

NIDAAN (NATIONAL INTEGRATED DATABASE ON ARRESTED NARCOFFENDERS)

News: India's first portal (NIDAAN) on arrested narcotics offenders gets operational.

About:

- **NIDAAN is a first-of-its-kind database and one-stop solution for all narcotics offenders** related data of arrested narcotics offenders for prosecution agencies.
- It is developed by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB).
- **It is part of the earlier launched narcotics coordination mechanism (NCORD) portal.**
- It sources its data from the ICJS (inter-operable criminal justice system) and e-Prisons (a cloud-based application) repository.
- It is planned to integrate with the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network System (CCTNS).

DEFCONNECT 2.0

News: Recently, the Ministry of Defence has launched Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) Prime and the sixth Defence India Start-up Challenge (DISC 6) during DefConnect 2.0 in New Delhi.

About DefConnect 2.0:

- **Organised by:** Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX), Defence Innovation Organisation (DIO), under the aegis of the Department of Defence Production (DDP), Ministry of Defence (MoD).
- **Purpose:** To bring together start-ups, big companies, and armed forces personnel to boost indigenous innovation in the defence sector.

Initiatives launched at this event:

- **Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) Prime:** It is aimed at supporting projects, requiring support beyond Rs 1.5 crore up to Rs 10 crore in the ever-growing defence start-ups.
- **Defence India Start-up Challenge (DISC 6):** It has been launched under the ongoing iDEX initiative. It aims to achieve self-reliance and foster innovation and technology development in the defence and aerospace sectors.
- **Innovate 4 Defence internship (i4D):** It is an acceleration program for students of Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs). It is an opportunity for them to learn about developing their ideas, creating innovative Defence products, and eventually becoming a part of the Indian Defence ecosystem and procurement.

Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX):

- **iDEX, launched in 2018,** is an ecosystem to foster innovation & technology development in Defence and Aerospace by engaging innovators & entrepreneurs to deliver solutions for modernising the Indian Military.

- It provides funding/grants to MSMEs, start-ups, individual innovators, R&D institutes, and academia to carry out research and development.
- **iDEX is funded and managed by "Defence Innovation Organisation".**
 - ◆ **DIO is a not-for-profit organisation formed under section 8** of the Companies Act 2013.
 - ◆ **It is funded by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL).**
 - ◆ It provides high-level policy guidance to iDEX.

NCX INDIA

News: Recently, the National Security Council Secretariat organised the National Cyber Security Incident Response Exercise (NCX India).

About:

- **Conducted by:** National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS) in association with Data Security Council of India (DSCI) as the knowledge partner and supported by the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO).
- **Purpose:** It aims to train senior management and technical personnel of Government/Critical Sector organisations and agencies on contemporary cyber threats and handling cyber incidents and response.
- **Areas:** The participants will be trained on various key cyber security areas such as Intrusion Detection Techniques, Malware Information Sharing platforms (MISP), Vulnerability Handling & Penetration Testing, Network Protocols & Data Flows among others.
- **Significance:** The exercise will help strategic leaders to better understand cyber threats, assess readiness, and develop skills for cyber crisis management and cooperation.

National Security Council:

- NSC of India is a **three-tiered organisation** that oversees political, economic, energy and security issues of strategic concern.
- **The National Security Advisor (NSA) presides over the NSC** and is also the **primary advisor to the Prime Minister.**
- The present National Security Advisor is Ajit Doval.
- It was formed in **1998**, where all aspects of national security are deliberated upon.

BLACK SEA GRAIN INITIATIVE

News: Russia has announced it was withdrawing from the Black Sea Grain Initiative for an indefinite period after it accused Ukraine of a “massive” drone attack on the Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol in Crimea.

About:

- **Background:** Ukraine, one of the world’s largest grain exporters normally supplies around 45 million tonnes of grain to the global market every year.
- However, following Russia’s invasion the export of grain has been hit leading to a jump in the price of staple foods around the world.
- To overcome this, in July 2022 the UN, Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine agreed to the Black Sea Grain Initiative.
- The deal allowed exports from Ukraine of grain, other foodstuffs, and fertiliser, including ammonia, to resume through a safe maritime humanitarian corridor from three key Ukrainian ports to the rest of the world.
- To implement the deal, a Joint Coordination Centre (JCC) was established in Istanbul, comprising senior representatives from the Russian Federation, Turkey, Ukraine, and the United Nations.

VILLAGE DEFENCE GROUPS IN J&K

News: Ministry of Home Affairs has given a nod to formation of VDGs in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).

About:

- Members of VDGs will be designated as Village Defence Guards.
- They will function under the direction of SP/SSP of the concerned district.
- VDGs were **earlier known as Village Defence Committees (VDCs)**.
- VDCs play a **significant part in assisting the forces** in counter-terrorism operations, maintaining vigil over inimical elements, and assisting in maintaining peace.

CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY NATIONS (CARICOM)

News: India and CARICOM nations have agreed to work together on global issues such as food and energy security and combating climate change.

About:

- **Formation:** It came into being on 4 July 1973 with the signing of the **Treaty of Chaguaramas**.
- **It is a grouping of twenty countries:** fifteen Member States and five Associate Members.
- Stretching from The Bahamas in the north to Suriname and Guyana in South America, CARICOM comprises states that are considered developing countries, and except for Belize, in Central America and Guyana and Suriname in South America, all Members and Associate Members are island states.
- It is home to approximately sixteen million citizens, 60% of whom are under the age of 30, and from the main ethnic groups of Indigenous Peoples, Africans, Indians, Europeans, Chinese, Portuguese, and Javanese.
- It promotes and supports a unified Caribbean Community that is inclusive, resilient, competitive; sharing in economic, social, and cultural prosperity.

INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE COUNCIL

News: The International Science Council has **released a report titled “Unprecedented and Unfinished – COVID-19 and Implications for National and Global Policy”**.

About:

- It is an **international non-governmental organisation** that unites scientific bodies at various levels across the social and natural sciences.
- **Formed in 2018.**
- **Headquarters:** Paris, France.

Key highlights from the report:

- COVID-19 will have worsened inequalities in health, economics, development, science and technology, and society.
- COVID-19 will have become an endemic disease worldwide and low-income states risk health system collapse and growing food insecurity.
- Mental health concerns will grow even further.
- The world faces high levels of harm to social wellbeing — with long-term school closures, unemployment, and increased gender-based violence.

GLOBAL OFFSHORE WIND ALLIANCE

News: Nine countries including Britain, Germany, the United States and Japan have joined the Global Offshore Wind Alliance (GOWA).

About GOWA:

- Set up by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), Denmark and the Global Wind Energy Council.
- **Purpose:** The alliance brings together governments, the private sector, international organisations and others.
- stakeholders to accelerate the deployment of offshore wind power.
- **Target:** To contribute to achieving a total global offshore wind capacity of a minimum of 380 GW by 2030.

Offshore wind energy:

- Offshore wind energy refers to the deployment of wind farms inside the water bodies.
- They **utilise the sea winds to generate electricity**.
- These wind farms either use fixed-foundation turbines or floating wind turbines.
- A fixed-foundation turbine is built in shallow water, whereas a floating wind turbine is built in deeper waters where its foundation is anchored in the seabed.
- Floating wind farms are still in their infancy.
- Offshore wind farms must be at least 200 nautical miles from the shore and 50 feet deep in the ocean.
- Offshore wind turbines produce electricity which is returned to shore through cables buried in the ocean floor.
- The coastal load centres distribute this electricity based on priority.

COALITION FOR DISASTER RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE (CDRI)

News: The Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) in partnership with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has commenced the International Conference on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure 2022.

About:

- **Formation:** September 23, 2019.
- CDRI is a **multi-stakeholder global partnership** of national governments, UN agencies and programmes, multilateral development banks, the private sector, academic and knowledge institutions.
- **CDRI is led and managed by national governments**, where knowledge is generated and exchanged on different aspects of disaster resilience of infrastructure.
- **Secretariat:** New Delhi, India.
- **Members:** As of March 2021, 29 members, consisting of 22 national governments and 7 organisations have joined CDRI.

International Conference on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI):

- ICDRI is the **annual international conference** of the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) in partnership with member countries, organisations, and institutions to strengthen the global discourse on disaster and climate resilient infrastructure.

WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME

News: India signed an agreement with the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) for the distribution of 50,000 MT of wheat that it has committed to sending to Afghanistan as part of a humanitarian assistance.

About:

- According to the MoU, the wheat will be taken through Pakistan to the Afghan border crossing and handed over to WFP officials in Kandahar.

About UN WFP:

- It is the food assistance branch of the United Nations and the world's largest humanitarian organisation addressing hunger and promoting food security.
- Born in 1961, the WFP strives to eradicate hunger and malnutrition, with the goal in mind of eliminating the need for food aid itself.
- It is a member of the United Nations Development Group and part of its Executive Committee.
- WFP food aid is also directed to fight micronutrient deficiencies, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, and combat disease, including HIV and AIDS.

World Hunger Map

- Alibaba Cloud, the cloud computing arm of Alibaba, is working with WFP to develop a digital "World Hunger Map."
- The map will help to monitor global hunger and operations to end scourge by 2030 which is one of UN's key Sustainable Development goals.
- It also aims to boost efficiency of interventions and shorten emergency response times.

INDIAN NAVY INDIGENISATION PLAN 2015-2030

News: The Navy is ramping up indigenisation efforts especially in weapons and aviation related items in line with the Government's push to cut down on defence imports and boost domestic manufacturing.

About:

- **Aim:** To enable indigenous development of equipment and systems over the next 15 years.
- The plan aims to involve Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) and Indian private industry in indigenisation plans.
- **Under the plan, the warship has been broadly divided into three segments — float, move and fight:**
 - The Navy has achieved 90% indigenisation in the float (ship) category while move (propulsion) and fight (weapons and sensors) components stand at 60% and 30% respectively which are priority areas to be addressed.
- The plan also focuses on the development of complex technologies like air-independent propulsion systems in submarines and surface-to-air missiles.
- The plan also caters to requirements for aviation and diving equipment for the first time.

STOP TB PARTNERSHIP

News: The Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare addressed the 35th Board meeting of the Stop TB Partnership.

About STOP TB PARTNERSHIP:

- Established in the **Year 2000**.
- **Aim:** The aim is to eliminate tuberculosis as a public health problem.
- **Significance:** It is a unique international body as it aligns all countries in the world to fight against TB.
- **Amsterdam Declaration:** In 2000, Stop TB Partnership gave a call for collaborative action from ministerial delegations of 20 countries with the highest burden of TB.
- **Partner organisations:** It has 1500 partner organisations. It includes international, non-governmental, and governmental organisations and patient groups.
- **Secretariat:** Geneva, Switzerland.

Key highlights from the 35th Board meeting:

- **c-TB:** It is a “Made in India” TB infection skin test.
- The test is cost-effective and will be of immense benefit to other high burden countries as well.

Adopt people with TB Initiative:

- The initiative is based on Indian values of collectivism.
- It calls upon corporations, industries, organisations, political parties & individuals to come forward and adopt TB infected people and families and provide them with nutritional and social support.

INDIA IDEAS SUMMIT

News: The Union Minister of Education has participated in the 47th India Ideas Summit.

About:

- **Organised by:** US-India Business Council and the US Chamber of Commerce, International Affairs, South Asia.
- **Purpose:** The summit has been a trusted platform for the U.S.-India dialogue on commercial and strategic cooperation for over 47 years.
- **Theme:** “Maximising the Next 75 years of US-India Prosperity”.

US-India Business Council (USIBC):

- USIBC was **established in 1975** at the behest of the U.S. and Indian Governments.
- **Aim:** To create an inclusive bilateral trade environment between India and the United States by serving as the voice of the industry.

WORLD OF WORK SUMMIT

News: The Union Minister for Labour & Employment has participated in a High-Level Panel discussion under the World of Work Summit.

About:

- **Organised by:** International Labour Organization (ILO).
- The summit was organised on the side-lines of the International Labour Conference.
- **Theme:** “Tackling multiple global crises: promoting human-centred recovery and resilience.”
- **Objectives:**
 - To discuss the multiple challenges that the world of work is facing; such as worsening inequalities, demographic realities, unequal technological progress, informality, and climate change.
 - To discuss the actions that should be taken by the countries and the international communities to tackle these challenges.
 - To achieve the goal of human-centred, resilient, and sustainable recovery.

International Labour Conference:

- It is the only tripartite United Nation (UN) agency that brings together governments, employers, and workers of 187-member States (**India is a member**).
- **Aim:** to set labour standards, develop policies and devise programmes promoting decent work for all women and men.

- **Established in 1919** by the Treaty of Versailles as an affiliated agency of the League of Nations.
- Became the first affiliated specialised agency of the UN in 1946.
- **Headquarters:** Geneva, Switzerland.
- Received the **Nobel Peace Prize in 1969**.

MINERAL SECURITY PARTNERSHIP

News: There is a growing concern over India not finding a place in the US-led Minerals Security Partnership (MSP).

About:

- It is a **US-led partnership** to secure supply chains of critical minerals, aimed at reducing dependency on China.
- **Aim:** To catalyse investment from governments and the private sector to develop strategic opportunities.
- **Members:** US, Australia, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Sweden, United Kingdom, and the European Commission.
- **Significance of the alliance:** The MSP will focus on the supply chains of minerals such as Cobalt, Nickel, Lithium, and the 17 'rare earth' minerals.
- The alliance is also seen as primarily focused on evolving as an alternative to China.

About Critical Minerals and their Significance:

- **Definition:** It refers to mineral resources, both primary and processed, which are-
 - **Essential inputs in the functioning of modern technologies**, economies and national security, and
 - **Faces supply chain disruption** risk on account of nonavailability and price volatility.
- **Elements included:** It includes metallic and non-metallic element such as - Antimony, Beryllium, Cobalt, Germanium, Graphite, Indium, Lithium, Niobium, 17 Rare earths (heavy and light), Rhenium, Tantalum, Silicon, Strontium, Vanadium, Zirconium etc.
- **Significance:** They are critical as their associated impact on the economy is (relatively) higher than the other raw materials and they have limited substitutes.

Why is India not part of MSP?

- India does not bring any expertise to the table.
- In the group, countries like Australia and Canada have reserves and the technology to extract them, and countries like Japan have the technology to process REEs.

Rare Earth Elements:

- Rare earth elements (REEs) are **a group of seventeen chemically similar metallic elements** on the periodic table.
- It comprises 15 lanthanides elements plus scandium and yttrium.
- **REEs are classified as light RE elements (LREE) and heavy RE elements (HREE).**
 - Light rare earth elements are abundantly available, while heavy elements are more critical due to their high demand and less availability.
 - Among LREEs, Neodymium is the most critical one as it is extensively used in all mobile phones, medical equipment, and electric vehicles.
- Hence, there is a dependence on countries such as China for HREEs, which is one of the leading producers of REEs with an estimated 70% share of the global production.

Khanij Bidesh India Ltd. (KABIL):

- **It is a joint venture of 3 Central Public Sector Enterprises** namely,
 1. National Aluminium Company Ltd. (NALCO)
 2. Hindustan Copper Ltd. (HCL) and
 3. Mineral Exploration Company Ltd. (MECL).
- It is mandated to identify and acquire overseas mineral assets of critical and strategic nature such as lithium, cobalt, nickel, Copper, Neodymium, other rare earths etc.
- Currently, it is engaged with countries like Australia, Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile to tap critical and strategic minerals.

UNSC 1267 COMMITTEE/SANCTIONS COMMITTEE

News: India and the US jointly proposed to list Makki, a top LeT (Lashkar-e-Taiba) Militant, under the UN Security Council's Sanctions Committee which is also known as the UNSC 1267 Committee.

About:

- **It was first set up in 1999**, and strengthened after the September, 2001 attacks.
- **It is now known as the Da'esh and Al Qaeda Sanctions Committee.**
- **It comprises all permanent and non-permanent members** of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).
- **The 1267 list of terrorists is a global list**, with a UNSC stamp. It is full of Pakistani nationals and residents.

- It is one of the most important and active UN subsidiary bodies working on efforts to combat terrorism, particularly in relation to Al Qaeda and the Islamic State group.
- It discusses UN efforts to limit the movement of terrorists, especially those related to travel bans, the freezing of assets and arms embargoes for terrorism.
- India has made at least three attempts in the last decade — in 2009, 2016 and 2017 — to list JeM chief as “global terrorism”. All attempts have been blocked by China at Pakistan’s behest.

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON STANDARDS OF TRAINING, CERTIFICATION AND WATCHKEEPING FOR SEAFARERS (STCW)

News: India, Iran have signed MoU for smooth movement of seafarers between both countries as per STCW provision.

About:

- STCW Convention is a **multilateral convention to establish basic requirements on training, certification and watchkeeping for seafarers on an international level.**
- It was **adopted in 1978** and it entered into force in 1984.
- India notified it in 1984; effective from 1985.
- Compliance and implementation to convention is looked after by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), established in 1948 (HQ: Geneva) as a **specialised UN agency.**

COMBINED MARITIME FORCES (CMF)

News: India began cooperation with Bahrain-based CMF.

About:

- **CMF is a multinational naval partnership** to promote security, stability, and prosperity across international waters, which encompass some of the world’s most important shipping lanes.
- **34 nations grouping (India still not a member) is commanded by a U.S. Navy Vice Admiral.**
- CMF’s focus areas include counter-narcotics, counter-smuggling, suppressing piracy, encouraging regional cooperation etc.
- **It comprises the following task forces:** CTF 150 (maritime security and counter-terrorism), CTF 151 (counter piracy), CTF 152 (Arabian Gulf security and cooperation), CTF 153 (Red Sea Maritime Security).

SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY (SADC)

News: Recently, the CII-Exim Bank Regional Conclave on India- Southern Africa Growth Partnership was held.

About:

- The Conclave serves as a platform for dialogues between India Southern African Development Community (SADC).
- The current conclave was aimed at enhancing the collaboration for realising the vision of USD 150 billion investment and USD 200 billion trade between India and Africa by 2030.
- At the conclave the Exim bank in a report titled ‘Reinvigorating India’s Engagements with Southern Africa’ provided strategies to enhance engagement with the SADC.

Initiatives for cooperation with African countries:

- **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme:** It provides technical assistance through human resource development.
- **SAGAR’ (Security and Growth for All in the Region):** It is the basis for the robust maritime partnership between India and Africa.
- **Asia Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC):** It was launched by India in partnership with Japan to enhance growth and connectivity between Asia and Africa.
- **India-Africa Defence Dialogue (IADD):** It was held in 2022 on the side-line of Defexpo, for enhancing defence cooperation.
- **Initiatives by EXIM Bank:** It has extended its own commercial Lines of Credits to various regional financial institutions and parastatal entities in Africa.
- **Humanitarian aid:** India has aided African countries by providing food, essential medicines, and vaccines to African countries amid crises like the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Guiding principles:** In 2018, Prime Minister outlined the ‘Ten Guiding Principles for India-Africa Engagement’ often regarded as India’s vision statement.

MIDDLE EAST GREEN INITIATIVE (MGI) SUMMIT

News: Union Minister for Environment Forest and Climate Change attended the Middle East Green Initiative Summit 2022 at COP 27 Egypt.



About:

- The Middle East Green Initiative (MGI) summit is a **Saudi Arabia-led initiative to drive unified climate action.**
- **Aim:** To provide an ambitious and clearly defined roadmap for regional climate action.
- **Objectives:** To plant 50 billion trees across the Middle East region and reduce carbon emissions by more than 10%.
- The inaugural MGI Summit was hosted by Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in 2021.
- The 2022 summit is being hosted on the sidelines of COP 27 in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt.



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Organizations in News

NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION (NATO)

News: NATO Summit was held recently in Madrid (Spain) amid the Russia-Ukraine War.

About:

- It is an **intergovernmental military alliance between North American and European countries formed in 1949.**
- **HQ:** Brussels, Belgium.
- **Purpose:** a collective security alliance with the aim of providing mutual defence through military and political means if a member state is threatened by an external country. (Article 5 of the NATO charter).
- Article 5 has been invoked once, by the United States, in the wake of the 9/11 attacks in 2001.
- **Origin:** The alliance is based on the North Atlantic Treaty that was signed in 1949. Established by Washington treaty.
- **Composition:**
 - Since its founding, the admission of new member states has increased the alliance from the original 12 countries to 30.
 - The most recent member state to be added to NATO was North Macedonia on 27 March 2020.
 - NATO membership is open to **“any other European state in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area.”**
 - Three former Soviet states (**Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania**) are members of NATO.

NATO's expansion:

- The Soviet Union responded to NATO by creating its own military alliance with seven other states in 1955, **dubbed the Warsaw Pact.**
- But after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, several former Warsaw Pact countries became NATO members. This includes Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia among others.

- **The most recent additions** were Montenegro in 2017 and North Macedonia in 2020, bringing the total number of NATO member states to 30.
- **NATO's Open-door policy (Article 10 of the charter)**, allows any European country that can enhance and contribute “to the security of the North Atlantic area” to join.

COLLECTIVE SECURITY TREATY ORGANISATION (CSTO)

News: A Moscow-led military alliance dispatched troops to help quell mounting unrest in Kazakhstan as the police said dozens were killed trying to storm government buildings.

About:

- CSTO is an **intergovernmental military alliance (six countries)** that was signed on 15 May 1992 and came into effect in 2002.
- **Also referred to as** the “Tashkent Pact” or “Tashkent Treaty.”
- **Headquarter:** Moscow, Russia.
- **Objectives:** strengthen peace, international and regional security including cybersecurity and stability, the protection on a collective basis of the independence, territorial integrity, and sovereignty of the member states.
- **Composition:** Current CSTO members are Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation and Tajikistan.

What does membership entail?

- **Member states are barred from joining other military alliances**, limiting, for example, their relationship with NATO.
- Most importantly, **membership presumes certain key security assurances** – the most significant of which is deterring military aggression by third countries.
- In the CSTO, **aggression against one signatory is perceived as aggression against all.**
- It however remains unclear whether this feature works in practice.

ASIAN INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT BANK

News: Former Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor Urjit Patel has been appointed vice-president of the Beijing-based Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). AIIB has put it on hold for reviewing all projects in Russia and Belarus.

About:

- It is a **multilateral development bank** with a mission to improve social and economic outcomes in **Asia and beyond**.
- **Aim:** It aims to stimulate growth and improve access to basic services by furthering interconnectivity and economic development in the region through advancements in infrastructure.
- It is established by the AIIB Articles of Agreement (entered into force December 2015) which is a multilateral treaty.
- **It is headquartered in Beijing (China)** and began its operations in January 2016.
- **Membership:** There are more than 100 members now.
- **Voting Rights:** China is the largest shareholder with 26.61 % voting shares in the bank followed by India (7.6%), Russia (6.01%) and Germany (4.2 %).
- The **regional members hold 75% of the total voting power in the Bank**.

Various organs of AIIB:

- **Board of Governors:** The Board of Governors consists of one Governor and one Alternate Governor appointed by each member country. Governors and Alternate Governors serve at the pleasure of the appointing member.
- **Board of Directors:** Non-resident Board of Directors is responsible for the direction of the Bank's general operations, exercising all powers delegated to it by the Board of Governors.
- **International Advisory Panel:** The Bank has established an International Advisory Panel (IAP) to support the President and Senior Management on the Bank's strategies and policies as well as on general operational issues.

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND

News: Recently, Sri Lanka has reached a preliminary agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a loan of about \$2.9 billion.

About:

- **It was established in 1944** in the aftermath of the Great Depression of the 1930s.
- **IMF and the World Bank are also known as the Bretton Woods twins** because both were agreed to be set up at a conference in Bretton Woods in the US.
- It is governed by and accountable to the 190 countries that make up its near-global membership.
- **India became a member in December 1945.**
- **Aim:** To ensure the stability of the international monetary system (the system of exchange rates and international payments) which enables countries and their citizens) to transact with each other.
 - **Its mandate was updated in 2012** to include all macroeconomic and financial sector issues that bear on global stability.
- **Financing:** The IMF's resources **mainly come from the money that countries pay as their capital subscription (quotas) when they become members.**
 - Each member of the IMF is assigned a quota, based broadly on its relative position in the world economy.
 - Countries can then borrow from this pool when they fall into financial difficulty.
- **Publications:** World Economic Outlook, Global Financial Stability Report, Fiscal Monitor, Global Policy Agenda.

ASIAN CLEARING UNION

News: India has confirmed a \$400 million currency swap with Sri Lanka while deferring another \$500 million due for settlement to the Asian Clearing Union (ACU).

About:

- Established in **1974** at the **initiative of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (UN-ESCAP)**.
- **Objective:** To facilitate payments among member countries for eligible transactions on a multilateral basis, thereby economising on the use of foreign exchange reserves and transfer costs, as well as promoting trade among the participating countries.
- **Members:** The Central Banks and the Monetary Authorities of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka are currently the members of the ACU.
- **Headquarters:** Tehran, Iran.
- **Currency Swap:**
 - The term "Swap" means **exchange**.
 - Under this, country A provides dollars to a foreign central bank (country B); which provides the

equivalent funds in its currency to the former (country A) based on the market exchange rate at the time of the transaction.

- The parties agree to swap back these quantities of their two currencies at a specified date in the future which could be the next day or even two years later using the same exchange rate as in the first transaction.
- **Benefits:** These swap operations carry no exchange rate or other market risks as transaction terms are set in advance.

INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION

News: India secured a leadership position in ITU's Council Standing Committee on Administration and Management.

About:

- **ITU, founded in 1865**, is a United Nations specialised agency for information and communication.
- It is governed by the Plenipotentiary Conference and Administrative Council.
 - **The Plenipotentiary Conference is the supreme organ of the Union.**
- **ITU currently has a membership of 193 countries** and over 900 private-sector entities and academic institutions.
- **India has been a regular member of ITU since 1952.**
- It empowers people around the world through technology education and training.
- It supports communications in the wake of disasters and emergencies.
- **Headquartered:** Geneva, Switzerland.

AFRICAN UNION

News: The African Union (AU) has suspended Burkina Faso's participation in the organisation's activities until the country restores constitutional order after the military mutiny. ECOWAS was the first to suspend Burkina Faso.

About:

- It is a **continental union consisting of 55 countries of the continent of Africa**, with the exception of various territories of European possessions located in Africa.
- **The bloc was founded on 26 May 2001 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia** and launched on 9 July 2002 in South Africa.

- The intention of the AU is to replace the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), established on 25 May 1963 in Addis Ababa by 32 signatory governments.
- **The AU's secretariat, the African Union Commission, is based in Addis Ababa.**
- **African Union's Agenda 2063:**
 - It is Africa's blueprint and main plan for transforming Africa into the global powerhouse of the future.
 - A strategic framework that aims to deliver on its goal for inclusive and sustainable development.

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS):

- **It is a regional political and economic union of fifteen countries located in West Africa.**
- **Established in 1975**, with the signing of the **Treaty of Lagos**.
- **The goal** of ECOWAS is to achieve "collective self-sufficiency" for its member states by creating a single large trade bloc by building a full economic and trading union.
- It also **serves as a peacekeeping force in the region**.
- Considered one of the pillar regional blocs of the continent-wide African Economic Community (AEC).
- **ECOWAS includes two sub-regional blocs**
 1. The West African Economic and Monetary Union is an organisation of eight, mainly French-speaking states.
 2. The West African Monetary Zone (WAMZ), established in 2000, comprises six mainly English-speaking countries.

GROUP OF FOUR (G4)

News: On the side-lines of the 76th session of the UN General Assembly, the G-4 countries highlight the 'urgent need' for reform in the U.N. Security Council (UNSC).

About:

- Group of Four (G4) was **formed in 2005**.
- **The group is primarily focused on U.N Security Council (UNSC) reform** and permanent membership of the body for G4 members among others.
- **Members of G4:** India, Germany, Brazil, and Japan.

Uniting for Consensus (UFC) group:

- The Uniting for Consensus (UFC) group nicknamed **the Coffee Club** is an informal club that developed at the UN in the 1990s.
- **The group developed in opposition to the possible expansion of permanent seats** in the United Nations Security Council.

- **Under the leadership of Italy**, the group aims to counter the bids for permanent seats proposed by G4 nations and is calling for a consensus before any decision is reached on the form and size of the Security Council.
- **Some of the members of the group include** – Italy, Spain, Malta, San Marino, Pakistan, South Korea, Canada, Mexico, Argentina, Colombia & Turkey.

ASIA-PACIFIC INSTITUTE OF BROADCASTING DEVELOPMENT

News: Recently, India's Presidency of the prestigious Asia-Pacific Institute of Broadcasting Development (AIBD) has been extended for one more year.

About AIBD:

- **Established in 1977 under the auspices of UNESCO.**
- **It is a unique regional inter-governmental organisation** servicing countries of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP) in the field of electronic media development.
- **Objectives:**
 - The AIBD is mandated to achieve a vibrant and cohesive electronic media environment in the Asia-Pacific region through policy and resource development.
 - Provide a window for regional policy makers to access information to worldwide mass media policy formulation and regulations and vice versa.
 - To establish inter-regional links and cooperation for media and communications development.
- **Secretariat:** Located in Kuala Lumpur and is hosted by the Government of Malaysia.
- **Members:** AIBD currently has 26 countries as complete members represented by 43 organisations and 52 affiliate members.

UN-ESCAP:

- UN-ESCAP is **one of the five regional committees under the jurisdiction of the United Nations Economic and Social Council.**
- The organisation was formed to enhance the economic activity in Asia and the Far East and to boost economic relations between the region and other areas of the world.

SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION (SAARC)

News: Former Prime Minister of Bhutan expressed concerns about the status of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and called for greater efforts to rejuvenate the organisation.

About SAARC:

- **SAARC is a regional intergovernmental organisation** established with the signing of the SAARC Charter in Dhaka in 1985.
- **SAARC comprises eight Member States:** Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, **India**, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.
- **Its secretariat is in Kathmandu, Nepal.**
- **Objectives:** To promote the welfare of the people of South Asia and to improve their quality of life, and to accelerate economic growth, territorial integrity, mutual trust, strengthen collective self-reliance etc.
- **The last SAARC summit was held in 2014** and subsequent summits could not be held after the 2016 Summit scheduled in Pakistan got cancelled in the backdrop of terrorist attacks in Pathankot and Uri.
- **SAARC works on the principle of consensus** and the summit cannot be held if even one member decides not to attend.
 - In 2016, India along with Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, and Sri Lanka declined from participating in the Islamabad SAARC summit.

MULTILATERAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

News: India's Union Finance Minister highlighted that multilateral financial institutions need to recalibrate their functioning to remain relevant in the post-pandemic world.

About Multilateral Financial Institutions (MFIs):

- **Also known as International Financial Institutions (IFIs)** are financial institutions established by two or more countries to encourage international cooperation in managing the worldwide financial system.
- Most prominent IFIs were set up after the second world war and were established to aid the reconstruction of Europe.
- **Eminent International Financial Institutions include:**
 - Bretton Woods institutions such as IMF and WTO and

- Multilateral and Regional Development Banks such as World Bank, Asian Development Bank, New Development Bank etc.

UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE LAW (UNCITRAL)

News: The Economic Survey 2021-22 mentioned the report of the Insolvency Law Committee, which had recommended the adoption of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) with certain modifications to bring the foreign assets under the insolvency process.

About:

- **Established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1966.**
- **It provides a legislative framework** that can be adopted by countries with modifications to suit the domestic context of the enacting jurisdiction.
- **It has been adopted by 49 countries**, including Singapore, UK, US, and South Africa.
- UNCITRAL allows foreign professionals and creditors direct access to domestic courts and enables them to participate in and commence domestic insolvency proceedings.
- **It allows recognition of foreign proceedings** and enables courts to determine relief accordingly.
- The Commission carries out its work at annual sessions which are held in alternate years at United Nations Headquarters in New York and at the Vienna International Centre at Vienna.

UNEP@50

News: The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2022.

About:

- **The UNEP is a leading global environmental authority** established on **5th June 1972**.
- **Functions:** It sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the sustainable development within the United Nations system, and serves as an authoritative advocate for global environment protection.
- **Major Reports:** Emission Gap Report, Adaptation Gap Report, Global Environment Outlook, Frontiers, Invest into Healthy Planet.
- **Major Campaigns:** Beat Pollution, UN75, World Environment Day, Wild for Life.
- **Headquarters:** Nairobi, Kenya.
- **Achievements:**

- Since its creation, UNEP has worked closely with its 193 Member States and other stakeholders to galvanise worldwide commitments and coordinated action to address many of the world's most pressing environmental challenges.
- It also played a leading role as the docking station for 15 multilateral environmental agreements.

G-20

News: Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) announced that India is hosting the G-20 (Group of 20) leaders' summit in New Delhi next year 2023.

About:

- The G20 was **formed in 1999 in the backdrop of the financial crisis of the late 1990s** that hit East Asia and Southeast Asia in particular.
- It **aims to secure global financial stability** by involving middle-income countries.
- Together, the G20 countries include 60 % of the world's population, 80 % of global GDP, and 75 % of global trade.

Members:

- Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the EU.
- Spain is invited as a permanent guest.

India's G20 Presidency:

- India will assume the Presidency of the G20 for one year **from 01 December 2022 to 30 November 2023**.
- Under its Presidency, India is expected to host over 200 G20 meetings across the country, beginning in December 2022.
- The G20 Leaders' Summit at the level of Heads of State/ Government is scheduled to be held on 09 and 10 September 2023 in New Delhi.

G20 Troika:

- **India is currently part of the G20 Troika** which comprises the current, previous, and incoming G20 presidencies and includes Indonesia, Italy, and India.
- During its presidency, the **troika will include India, Indonesia, and Brazil**.
- **This will be the first time that the troika will consist of three developing countries** and emerging economies providing them with a greater voice.

Guest countries invited by India as a G20 Presidency:

- **There has been a tradition of the G20 Presidency inviting some Guest countries** and International Organizations (IOs) to its G20 meetings and summits.
- **Accordingly, India will be inviting** Bangladesh, Egypt, Mauritius, Netherlands, Nigeria, Oman, Singapore, Spain, and UAE as **Guest countries**.
- **ISA** (International Solar Alliance), **CDRI** (Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure) and **ADB** (Asian Development Bank) will also be invited as **Guest International organisations**.

INTERPOL

News: INTERPOL has launched the first ever police metaverse specifically designed for law enforcement agencies worldwide during its 90th General Assembly in New Delhi.

About:

- **Metaverse refers to real-time 3D virtual spaces**, where users can meet, create, socialise, work, buy goods and services and attend events with other people who are not in the same physical space.
- **INTERPOL metaverse allows registered users to take virtual tours of its general secretariat headquarters in France's Lyon**, interact with other officers via their avatars, and take training courses in forensic investigation and other policing skills.

About INTERPOL:

- **It is an inter-governmental organisation comprising 195-member countries**, which helps police forces in all these countries to better coordinate their actions.
- It enables member countries to share and access data on crimes and criminals and offers a range of technical and operational support.
 - General secretariat coordinates the organisation's day-to-day activities.
- **It is run by a secretary general with its headquarters in Lyon, France**, and several satellite offices in different regions.
- **It has a National Central Bureau (NCB) in each member country**, which is the central point of contact for both the general secretariat and other NCBs around the world.
- Each NCB is run by police officials of that country, and usually sits in the government ministry responsible for policing (Ministry of Home Affairs in India).

Types of notices:

- **Red-** seek location and arrest warrant with intention to extradite.

- **Blue-** to collect extra information about identity, location, or activities.
- **Green-** provide warnings and intelligence.
- **Yellow-** to help locate missing people or minors or those unable to identify themselves.
- **Black-** seek information on unidentified bodies.
- **Orange-** to warn about an event, process, person, or object with respect to imminent threat.
- **Purple-** seek or provide information on modus operandi, objects, devices, or methods used by criminals.
- **Interpol-UNSC special notice** for groups and individuals who are the targets of UNSC.

UN COUNTRY TEAM (UNCT)

News: Recently, The Union Minister of Environment Forest and Climate Change addressed the special meeting of the UN Country Team (UNCT) on CoP 27.

About:

- **The United Nations Country Team (UNCT) exists in 132 countries**, covering all the 162 countries where there are United Nations programmes.
- The UNCT includes all the UN entities working on sustainable development, emergency, recovery, and transition in programme countries.
- **The UNCT is led by the UN Resident Coordinator**, who is the representative of the UN Secretary-General in each country.
- The UNCT ensures interagency coordination and decision-making at the country level.
- The goal is to plan and work together, as part of the Resident Coordinator system, to ensure the delivery of tangible results in support of the development agenda of the Government,

The Resident Coordinator System:

- **It ensures the coordination of all organisations of the United Nations dealing with operational activities** for development at the country level, regardless of the nature of their presence in the country.
- It encompasses the UN Resident Coordinator, the UN Country Team and Resident Coordinator's Office and is served by the UN Development Coordination Office.

INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

News: An International Court of Justice (ICJ) judgement has awarded the DRC \$225 million for damage to persons, which includes loss of life, rape, recruitment of child soldiers and displacement of civilians.

About:

- The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is the **principal judicial organ of the United Nations (UN)**.
- **Origin:** It was established in June 1945 by the Charter of the United Nations and began work in April 1946.
- **HQ:** The seat of the Court is at the Peace Palace in The Hague (Netherlands).
- **Of the six principal organs of the United Nations, it is the only one not located in New York** (United States of America).
- **Members:** All UN members are its members.
- **Judges:** The Court is composed of 15 judges, who are elected for terms of office of nine years by the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council.
- **Official languages:** Its official languages are English and French.

Function:

- The Court's role is to settle, in accordance with international law, legal disputes submitted to it by States and to give advisory opinions on legal questions referred to it by authorised United Nations organs and specialised agencies.
- The Court can only hear a dispute when requested to do so by one or more States.
- It cannot deal with a dispute on its own initiative.
- **Subject matter:** Sovereignty, boundary disputes, maritime disputes, trade, natural resources, human rights, treaty violations, treaty interpretations and more.

Parties to dispute:

- Only States are eligible to appear before the Court in contentious cases.
- The Court has no jurisdiction to deal with applications from individuals, non-governmental organisations, corporations, or any other private entity.
- However, a State may take up the case of one of its nationals and invoke against another State. The dispute then becomes one between States.

Are decisions of the Court binding?

- Article 94 of the United Nations Charter provides that judgments delivered by the Court in disputes between States are **binding** upon the parties concerned.
- Judgments are **final and without appeal**.

ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION

News: India has lashed out at the Organisation of the Islamic Cooperation for being "communal minded" amid the Karnataka hijab row.

About:

- **Founded in 1969, consisting of 57 member states.**
- **It is the second largest intergovernmental organisation after the United Nations.**
- The organisation states that it is "**the collective voice of the Muslim world**" and works to "safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony".
- The OIC has **permanent delegations to the United Nations and the European Union**.
- The Central African Republic, Russia, Thailand, Bosnia & Herzegovina, and the unrecognised Turkish Cypriot "state," have Observer status.
- The **Permanent Secretariat is in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia**.

GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL

News: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has signed an MoU with the Secretary General of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) on the mechanism of consultations between India and the GCC.

About GCC:

- The "**Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf**", also known as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is a regional, intergovernmental, political, and economic union.
- **Members:** Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.
- **Main headquarters** is in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.
- The Charter of the GCC was signed on **25 May 1981**, formally establishing the institution.

India's trade relations with GCC:

- **GCC is currently India's largest trading partner bloc** with bilateral trade in FY 2021-22 valued at over USD 154 billion.
- GCC countries contribute almost 35% of India's oil imports and 70% of gas imports.

COUNTER-TERRORISM COMMITTEE EXECUTIVE DIRECTORATE (CTED)

News: India, which will chair the UNSC Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) in 2022, voted in favour of a resolution to renew CTED's mandate until December 31, 2025.

About:

- As CTC chair, India will make determined efforts to further enhance the role of CTC in strengthening multilateral response to counter terrorism.

- India will also ensure that the global response to the threat of terrorism remains unambiguous, undivided, and effective.

About CTED:

- **Established by UNSC Resolution 1535 in 2004** as an expert body to support CTC.
- **CTED conducts country visits on CTC's behalf** to assess Member States' counter-terrorism efforts, including progress made, remaining shortfalls, priority areas for technical assistance needs etc.
- **CTC was established by UNSC resolution 1373 (2001)**, to implement measures intended to enhance their legal and institutional ability to counter terrorist activities at home, in their regions and around the world.
- It was **established after the 9/11 terror attack** to bolster the ability of UN member states to prevent terrorist acts both within their borders and across regions.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

News: The Council of Europe has suspended Russia from its rights of representation in the Council. However, Russia was not permanently removed from the council, thus obligated to follow its human rights provisions.

About:

- **Established in 1949 by the Treaty of London.**
- It is an **international organisation founded in the wake of World War II** to uphold human rights, democracy, and the rule of law in Europe.
- **The council is distinct from the European Union (EU).**
- **Members:** It includes 47 member states (27 of which are EU members).
- The Council **cannot make binding laws**, but it does have the power to enforce select international agreements reached by European states on various topics.
- The Council is also an **official United Nations Observer.**
- **Headquarters:** Strasbourg, France.

COURT OF ARBITRATION OF SPORTS

News: The Court of Arbitration of Sports decided not to impose any provisional ban on a Russian figure skater from participating in the Beijing Olympics, who was accused of being in violation of the World Anti-Doping Code (WADC).

About:

- The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) is an **institution independent of any sports organisation.**
- **It facilitates the settlement of sports-related disputes through arbitration or mediation** by means of procedural rules adapted to the specific needs of the sports world.
- The CAS was **created in 1984** and is placed under the administrative and financial authority of the International Council of Arbitration for Sport (ICAS).
- **Headquartered at the Palais de Beaulieu, Lausanne** (Switzerland), the courts of CAS are in New York City (Australia), Sydney (United States) and Lausanne.
- Temporary courts are established in current Olympic host cities.
- The CAS has nearly 300 arbitrators from 87 countries, chosen for their specialist knowledge of arbitration and sports law. Around 300 cases are registered by the CAS every year.

INTERNATIONAL MONSOONS PROJECT OFFICE

News: The Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology launched the International Monsoons Project Office (IMPO).

About:

- **It was established at the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune.**
- **Purpose:** support activities related to international monsoon research fostered under the leadership of the World Climate Research Programme and the World Weather Research Programme.
- **Significance:** mean expanding an integrated scientific approach to solve the seasonal variability of monsoons, enhancing the prediction skill of monsoons and cyclones and strengthening monsoon research for better support operations and services.

World Climate Research Programme (WCRP):

- It is an international programme that helps to coordinate global climate research.
- It was **established in 1980**, under the joint sponsorship of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the International Council for Science (ICSU), and has also been sponsored by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO since 1993.

World Weather Research Programme (WWRP):

- The programme is **coordinated by WMO**. It focuses on advancing and promoting research in weather, its prediction, and its impact on society.

UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

News: The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) has voted to suspend Russia from the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC).

About:

- It was founded in **2006**.
- **UNHRC was reconstituted from its predecessor organisation**, the UN Commission on Human Rights and is a subsidiary organisation to the UNGA.
- **Headquartered** in Geneva, Switzerland. Meets for 3 or more sessions per year for a total of 10 or more weeks.

Composition and Eligibility:

- The UNHRC has **47 members** serving at any time with elections held to fill up seats every year, based on allocations to regions across the world to ensure **geographical representation**.
- Countries are disallowed from occupying a seat for more than two consecutive terms.
- **All U.N. members are eligible**. Countries are nominated by their regional groups and elected by the General Assembly through secret ballot with an absolute majority required.
- The General Assembly considers the candidate States' contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights, as well as their voluntary pledges and commitments in this regard.
- **Term:** Members of the Council serve for a period of three years and are not eligible for immediate re-election after serving two consecutive terms.
- **Suspension of Membership:** If a Council member commits "gross and systematic violations of human rights," the General Assembly may suspend membership with a two-thirds vote of members present.

Mandate and Role in the U.N. System:

- It is **responsible for promoting universal respect for the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all**.
- It **aims to prevent and combat human rights violations**, including gross and systematic violations, and to make recommendations thereon.
- It **also works to promote and coordinate the mainstreaming of human rights within the UN system**.
- It receives substantive and technical support from the U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), an office within the U.N. Secretariat.

- Its decisions, resolutions, and recommendations are not legally binding.

Functions:

- The UNHRC passes **non-binding resolutions on human rights issues** through a periodic review of all 193 UN member states called the "**Universal Periodic Review (UPR)**".
- It oversees expert investigation of violations in specific countries (Special Procedures).

Removal of country from the UNHRC:

- As per the rules, the UNGA can suspend the rights and privileges of any Council member that it decides has persistently committed gross and systematic violations of human rights during its term of membership.
- To suspend a member, **one needs a two-thirds majority vote by the General Assembly**.

India and UNHRC:

- **In 2017, for the third time in less than ten years, India's human rights record was reviewed under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism of the UNHRC.**
- India also presented its Voluntary National Review (VNR) on the implementation of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under the 2030 Agenda at ECOSOC in July 2017.
- In October 2021, India was re-elected to the UNHRC for a sixth term (2022-2024).
- The overwhelming majority (184 votes in the 193-member assembly against the required majority of 97) is a robust endorsement of our strong roots in democracy, pluralism, and fundamental rights.

UNHRC's Universal periodic review:

- The UPR is a **unique process which involves a periodic review of the human rights records of all 193 UN Member States**.
- The aim of this mechanism is to improve the human rights situation in all countries and address human rights violations wherever they occur.
- **Currently, no other universal mechanism of this kind exists.**
- During the review process, States outline specific steps they have taken to implement recommendations posed during their previous reviews and highlight their recent human rights developments.
- **UPR for India:**
 - **The three country representatives serving as rapporteurs ("troika") for the review of India are: Sudan, Nepal, and the Netherlands.**
 - **This review marks the beginning of the UPR fourth cycle.** India's first, second and third UPR

reviews took place in April 2008, May 2012, and May 2017, respectively.

- **Reviews are Based on:**
 - **National report** - information provided by the State under review
 - **Information contained in the reports of independent human rights experts** and groups, known as the Special Procedures, human rights treaty bodies, and other UN entities
 - **Information provided by other stakeholders including national human rights institutions, regional organisations, and civil society groups.**

ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

News: Ukraine war could cut 1% off global growth: OECD.

About:

- **Background:** Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC) was founded in **1948** to help administer the Marshall Plan.
 - In **1961**, the OEEC was reformed into the **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development** and membership was extended to non-European states.
- **Headquarter:** Paris, France
- It **works through consensus** to develop policy recommendations and other “soft law” instruments to encourage policy reform in member countries.
- **Membership:** Currently, it has 38 members. India is not a member but a key partner.

Governance Structure:

- **OECD Council** — provide direction and guidance to the work of the Organisation. Each member country is represented.
- **OECD Substantive Committees** — oversee all the work on each theme (publications, task forces, conferences, and so on).
- **OECD Secretariat** — led by the Secretary-General provides support to Standing and Substantive Committees.
- It provides a platform to compare policy experiences, seek answers to common problems, identify good practices and coordinate domestic and international policies of its members.
- **It is a forum of countries describing themselves as committed to democracy and the market economy.**
- **Most OECD members are high-income economies** with a very high Human Development Index (HDI) and are regarded as developed countries.

INTERNATIONAL ENERGY AGENCY

News: India has welcomed the decision by the International Energy Agency (IEA) to release 120 million barrels of crude oil from its strategic reserves.

About:

- The International Energy Agency (IEA) is a **Paris-based autonomous intergovernmental organisation.**
- **Established in 1974** as per the framework of the **OECD.**
- **Headquarters** (Secretariat): Paris, France.
- **Its mission is guided by four main areas of focus:** energy security, economic development, environmental awareness, and engagement worldwide.
- **Roles and functions:** The IEA were initially dedicated to responding to physical disruptions in the supply of oil, as well as serving as an information source on statistics about the international oil market and other energy sectors.
- It is best known for the publication of its annual **World Energy Outlook.**
- **Membership:** Only **OECD member states can become members of the IEA.** In 2022, **Lithuania** joined the IEA and became its 31st member.

BUCHAREST NINE (B9)

News: The “Bucharest Nine” rejected the Russian claim about the eastward “expansion” of NATO.

Bucharest Nine (B9)

Why in news?

The Russian aggression in Ukraine has put back the focus on Bucharest Nine.

Founders

Romanian President Iohannis and Polish President Andrzej Duda were the initiators.

Function

Provide platform for deepening the dialogue and consultation among the participant allied states of NATO.



About

• Bucharest Nine is a group of eastern European nations that joined NATO after the end of the Cold War.
• It is abbreviated as B9 and named after the capital of Romania where it was founded in 2015.

Membership

• Hungary, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and the Baltic republics of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are members apart from Poland and Romania.
• The member countries were earlier closely associated with Soviet Union.

Take on war

• All the members of Bucharest Nine are opposed to invasion of Ukraine.
• They were critical of Russian move of annexing Crimea in 2014.

About:

- **Bucharest Format” was founded in 2015**, and takes its name from Bucharest, the **capital of Romania.**

- It is a group of nine NATO countries in Eastern Europe that became part of NATO after the end of the Cold War.
- It is also regarded as the “Voice of the Eastern Flank” in the NATO alliance.
- B9 offers a platform for deepening the dialogue among the participant allied states, to articulate their specific contribution to the ongoing processes across NATO.

COMPOSITION OF B9 INCLUDE:

- Romania, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and the three Baltic republics of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.
- All nine countries were once closely associated with the now dissolved Soviet Union, but later chose the path of democracy.
- All members of the B9 are part of the European Union (EU) and NATO.
- The B9 countries have been critical of Russia's aggression against Ukraine since 2014, when the war in the Donbas started and Russia annexed the Crimean Peninsula.

Three Seas Initiative (3SI):

- It is a regional effort in Europe to expand cross-border energy, transportation, and digital infrastructure and boost economic development in the area between the Adriatic Sea, Baltic Sea, and Black Sea.
- Twelve countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia), all of which are members of the EU, participate in the 3SI.

BRICS MEDIA FORUM

News: Leading media groups from the five BRICS countries have put together a three-month long training programme for journalists. It is an initiative of the BRICS Media Forum.

About:

- Established in 2015 by media organisations from the five countries, including The Hindu, Brazil's CMA Group, Russia's Sputnik, China's Xinhua, and South Africa's Independent Media.
- The Forum was “conceived and developed so that it can function as an independent initiative and set of practical activities undertaken within the broad framework of BRICS cooperation.”

About BRICS:

- Composed of the five major emerging countries – Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.
- The acronym BRIC was coined by economist ‘Jim O’Neill’ of Goldman Sachs in 2001 to indicate the emerging powers that would be, alongside the United States, the five largest economies of the world in the 21st century.
- In 2006, BRIC countries started their dialogue, which since 2009 takes place at annual meetings of heads of state and government.
- In 2011, with South Africa joining the group, the BRICS reached its final composition, incorporating a country from the African continent.
- **Significance:** It together represents about 42% of the population, 23% of GDP, 30% of the territory and 18% of the global trade.
- **Key Initiatives:** During the Sixth BRICS Summit in Fortaleza (Brazil) in 2014, the leaders signed the Agreement establishing the **New Development Bank** (NDB headquarters - Shanghai, China).
- They also signed the **BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement** to provide short-term liquidity support to the members.
- **BRICS Leaders adopted the ‘Beijing Declaration’ in 14th BRICS Summit**, convened under the Chairmanship of China, in virtual format.
- **India proposed initiatives:** Online Database for BRICS documents, BRICS Railways Research Network, and strengthening cooperation between MSMEs.
- **India will be organising a BRICS Start-up event** this year to strengthen connections between Start-ups in BRICS countries.
- **Denial of Safe Haven to Corruption:** BRICS welcomed the BRICS Initiative on Denial of Safe Haven to Corruption which further strengthened anti corruption capacity.

SHERPA

News: First BRICS Sherpas meeting of 2022 was held virtually.

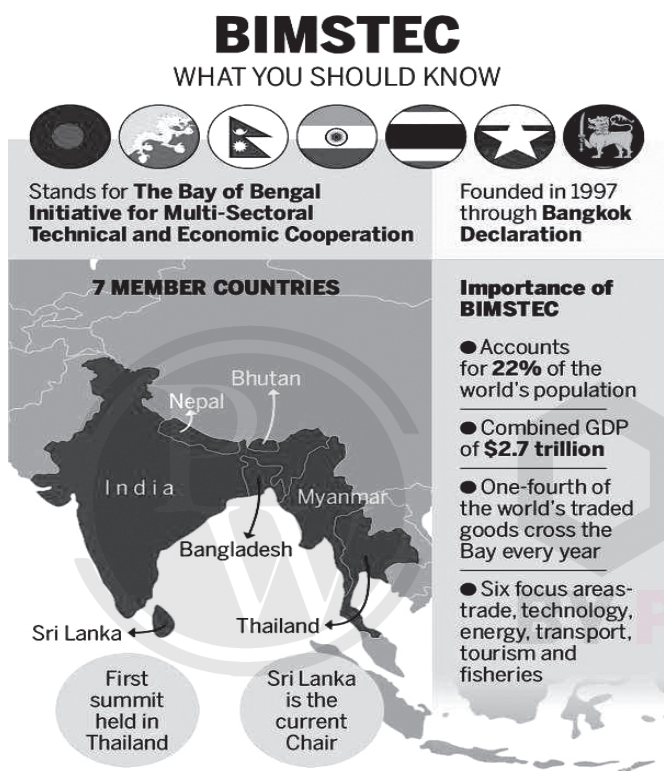
About Sherpas:

- A Sherpa is a personal representative of the leader of a member country at an international Summit such as the G8, G20 etc.
- The term is derived from the Nepalese Sherpa people, who serve as guides for mountaineers in the Himalayas.
- They coordinate the agenda, seek consensus, and participate in a series of pre-Summit consultations to help negotiate their leaders' positions.

- There is only one Sherpa per Summit for each member country.

BIMSTEC (BAY OF BENGAL INITIATIVE FOR MULTISECTORAL, TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION)

News: The fifth summit of the regional grouping, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), held virtually in Colombo.



About BIMSTEC

- BIMSTEC is a **regional multilateral organisation comprising 7 Member States** lying in the littoral and adjacent areas of the Bay of Bengal.
- It came into being on 6 June 1997 through the **Bangkok Declaration**.
- **Member States:** Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Thailand.
- **Secretariat:** Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- Initially, 4 Member States with the acronym '**BIST-EC**' (Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, and Thailand Economic Cooperation).
- **BIMSTEC Centres:** BIMSTEC Energy Centre, BIMSTEC Centre on Weather and Climate.
- The BIMSTEC region is home to around 1.5 billion people which constitute around 22% of the global

population with a combined GDP of 2.7 trillion economy.

- In the last five years, BIMSTEC member states have been able to sustain an average 6.5% economic growth trajectory despite global financial meltdown.
- BIMSTEC is a sector-driven cooperative organisation focussing on agriculture, public health, poverty alleviation, counter-terrorism, environment, culture, climate change, etc.

Important outcome of the Summit:

- **Adoption and signing of the BIMSTEC Charter** presents BIMSTEC as "an inter-governmental organisation" with "legal personality."
- The grouping now views itself as a regional organisation and not sub-regional org.
- To re-constitute and reduce the number of sectors of cooperation from 14 to a more manageable seven.
- Each member-state will serve as a lead for a sector:
 - Bangladesh- Trade, investment, and development
 - Bhutan- environment and climate change
 - India- security including energy
 - Myanmar- agriculture and food security
 - Nepal- people-to-people contacts
 - Sri Lanka- science, technology, and innovation
 - Thailand- connection
- **Adoption of the Master Plan for Transport Connectivity applicable for 2018-2028** which lays out a guidance framework for connectivity related activities in the region in the future.
- **Three new agreements signed by member states:**
 1. BIMSTEC Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters;
 2. BIMSTEC Memorandum of Understanding on Mutual Cooperation in the field of Diplomatic Training;
 3. Memorandum of Association on Establishment of BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Facility.

Major connectivity initiatives under BIMSTEC:

- **Kaladan Multimodal project:** The project envisages connecting Kolkata to Sittwe port in Myanmar, and then Mizoram by river and road.
- **IMT Trilateral Highway:** It will connect India and Thailand through Myanmar. The highway will run from Moreh in Manipur to Mae Sot in Thailand via Myanmar thereby establishing connectivity between India and Southeast Asian countries.
- **Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA):** With Bhutan continuing

to sit out, other three countries are discussing steps in operationalizing the agreement for the free flow of goods and people between them.

BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Facility:

- BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Facility (TTF) agreement was signed by the BIMSTEC member countries at the 5th BIMSTEC Summit held at Colombo, Sri Lanka on 30th March 2022.
- **Objective:** To coordinate, facilitate and strengthen cooperation in technology transfer among the BIMSTEC Member States by promoting the transfer of technologies, sharing of experiences and capacity building.
- **Governing Board:** The TTF shall have a Governing Board and the overall control of activities of the TTF shall be vested in the Governing Board. This Governing Board shall consist of one nominee from each Member State.

ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

News: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) forecasts have provided some useful insights about India's GDP growth.

Global Financial Institutions Compared

WORLD BANK	IMF	ADB	AIIB
1944	1944	1966	2015
188 MEMBER COUNTRIES	188 MEMBER COUNTRIES	67 MEMBERS	57 FOUNDING MEMBERS
US LARGEST SHAREHOLDER	US LARGEST SHAREHOLDER	JAPAN LARGEST SHAREHOLDER	CHINA LARGEST SHAREHOLDER
REDUCE POVERTY & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL	PROMOTE MONETARY STABILITY GOAL	REDUCE POVERTY GOAL	ADDRESS ASIA'S INFRASTRUCTURE GAP GOAL
12,000 STAFF 130 NATIONS	2,600 STAFF 147 NATIONS	3,000 STAFF 60 NATIONS	IN PLANNING
\$223 BILLION SUBSCRIBED CAPITAL	\$370 BILLION SUBSCRIBED CAPITAL	\$165 BILLION SUBSCRIBED CAPITAL	\$100 BILLION AND RISING SUBSCRIBED CAPITAL
US VETO POWER	US VETO POWER	NO VETO POWER	CHINA TO FORGO VETO
WASHINGTON	WASHINGTON	MANILA	BEIJING

About:

- The ADB is a **regional development bank** established on **19 December 1966**.
- **Headquartered:** Manila, Philippines.
- ADB is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty.
- **Members:** The bank admits the members of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP).
 - ADB now has 68 members, 49 from within Asia.
 - **India is a founding member.**
- **Voting rights:** The ADB was modelled closely on the World Bank, and has a similar weighted voting system where votes are distributed in proportion with members' capital subscriptions.

- The president has a term of office lasting five years, and may be re-elected.
- Traditionally, and because Japan is one of the largest shareholders of the bank, the president has always been Japanese.
- ADB is an **official United Nations Observer**.
- **Highlights of the ADB Outlook Report 2020:**
 - India's GDP growth will moderate to 7.5% in 2022-23, from an estimated 8.9% in 2021-22.
 - It has factored in the Russia-Ukraine conflict's implications for India, which would be largely indirect through higher oil prices.
- **ADB-GOI project for safe drinking water and sanitation:**
 - The project is aligned with the objectives of the Government of India's Jal Jeevan Mission which aims to provide piped water to all rural households by 2024.
 - It will upgrade water supply infrastructure and strengthen institutional capacity to ensure safe, sustainable, and inclusive rural water supply and sanitation services.

INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY

News: Rafael Grossi, Director-General of IAEA, will head an assistance mission to the now-defunct Chernobyl nuclear power plant in Ukraine aimed at stepping up efforts to help prevent the danger of a nuclear accident in the wake of the ongoing Moscow-Kiev war.

About IAEA:

- **Founded in:** 1957.
- **Name:** It is widely known as the **world's "Atoms for Peace and Development" organisation** within the United Nations family.
- Reports to both the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council.
- **Headquarters:** Vienna, Austria.

Functions:

- Works with its Member States and multiple partners worldwide to promote the safe, secure, and peaceful use of nuclear technologies.
- Seeks to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and to inhibit its use for any military purpose, including nuclear weapons.

Programs:

- Program of Action for Cancer Therapy (PACT).
- Human Health Program.

- Water Availability Enhancement Project.
- International Project on Innovative Nuclear Reactors and Fuel Cycles, 2000.

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (UNDP)

News: The Ministry of Panchayati Raj and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have signed a joint statement of understanding on localisation of Sustainable Development Goals.

About:

- **Headquartered** in New York City, formed in 1965 to help countries eliminate poverty and achieve sustainable human development.
- UNDP provides expert advice, training, and grants support to developing countries, with an increasing emphasis on assistance to the least developed countries.
- It promotes technical and investment cooperation among nations.
- The UNDP Executive Board is made up of representatives from 36 countries around the world who serve on a rotating basis.
- It is **funded entirely by voluntary contributions from member nations**.
- The UNDP is considered an executive board within the UN General Assembly (UNGA).
- **Report:** The Human Development Report (HDR) is an annual report published by the Human Development Report Office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

OPEC

News: Russian President Vladimir Putin and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman gave a "positive assessment" to their cooperation on the OPEC+ producers group to stabilise the world oil market.

About:

- Created in **2017**.
- **Backdrop:** OPEC (Organisation for Petroleum Exporting Countries) decided to ally with other oil-producing countries outside the group to cut down the global output of oil.
- **Members:** OPEC+ refers to a **group of 23 oil-producing countries that includes:**
 - **13 members of OPEC:** Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Algeria, Angola, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Libya, Nigeria, the Republic of the Congo, and Venezuela

- **10 other oil-producing countries:** Russia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Brunei, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mexico, Oman, South Sudan, and Sudan
- **Facts:**
 - **Saudi Arabia** is the largest oil producer among OPEC members.
 - **Russia**, which produces more oil than even Saudi Arabia, plays a crucial role, along with OPEC, in influencing global crude oil prices.
 - It controls more than 50% of the world's crude supplies.

Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC):

- **Origin:** OPEC was founded in 1960 in Baghdad, Iraq by five countries namely Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela.
- OPEC is a **permanent, intergovernmental organisation**.
- **Objective:**
 - To coordinate and unify petroleum policies among Member Countries.
 - To secure fair and stable prices for petroleum producers; an efficient, economic, and regular supply of petroleum to consuming nations; and a fair return on capital to those investing in the industry.
- **HQ:** Vienna, Austria.
- **OPEC membership is open to** any country that is a substantial exporter of oil and which shares the ideals of the organisation.

INTERNATIONAL FINANCE CORPORATION

News: The Medical Education and Drugs Department (MEDD) and International Finance Corporation (IFC) have joined forces to prioritise health care projects with emphasis on Medical Education under the public-private partnership (PPP) model in Maharashtra.

About:

- **It is a member of the World Bank Group.**
- It is an international financial institution that **offers investment, advisory, and asset management services** to encourage private sector development in developing countries.
- **Headquartered:** Washington, D.C., United States.
- **Background:** It was established in 1956 as the private sector arm of the World Bank Group to advance economic development by investing in strictly for-profit and commercial projects that purport to reduce poverty and promote development.

- **Governed by its member countries**, but has its own executive leadership and staff that conduct its normal business operations.
- It is a corporation whose shareholders are member governments that provide paid-in capital and which have the right to vote on its matters.

Roles and functions:

- Since 2009, the IFC has focused on a set of development goals.
- **Its goals are** to increase sustainable agriculture opportunities, improve healthcare and education, increase access to financing for microfinance and business clients, advance infrastructure, help small businesses grow revenues, and invest in climate health.
- **It offers an array of debt and equity financing services** and helps companies face their risk exposures while refraining from participating in a management capacity.
- **It advises governments on building infrastructure and partnerships** to further support private sector development.

WORLD COAL ASSOCIATION

News: Gainwell Engineering partners with the World Coal Association to promote sustainable coal mining in India.

About:

- **It is an international non-profit, non-governmental association** based in London, United Kingdom.
- It was created to represent the global coal industry.
- The association was formerly called the World Coal Institute (WCI) but changed its name in November 2010.
- The WCA undertakes lobbying, organises workshops, and provides coal information to decision makers.
- It is co-author of a report on the future of coal in ASEAN nations.

UN PEACEKEEPERS

News: Canada and allies are planning to work together to support among United Nations General Assembly members, including China, for a peacekeeping mission in Ukraine.

About:

- It is a **joint effort between the Department of Peace Operations and the Department of Operational Support**.

- Every peacekeeping mission is **authorised by the Security Council**.
- **Composition:**
 - Often referred to as Blue Berets or Blue Helmets (because of their light blue berets or helmets) **can include soldiers, police officers, and civilian personnel**.
 - Peacekeeping forces are contributed by member states on a voluntary basis.
 - Civilian staff of peace operations are international civil servants, recruited and deployed by the UN Secretariat.
- **UN Peacekeeping is guided by three basic principles:**
 - Consent of the parties.
 - Impartiality.
 - Non-use of force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate.
- **Role of Security Council:** The United Nations Charter gives the United Nations Security Council the responsibility to maintain international peace.
 - Thus, the international community usually looks to the Security Council to authorise peacekeeping operations.
 - For its services, UN Peacekeeping has also **received the Nobel Peace Prize**.

About UN Peacekeeping mission:

- **The first UN peacekeeping mission was established in 1948**, to monitor the Armistice Agreement between Israel and its Arab neighbours.
- It aims to build sustainable security and peace in countries affected by conflict.
- **Mandates:**
 - **Maintain peace and security:**
 - ◆ Protect civilians and promote human rights
 - ◆ Assist in the disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration of former combatants
 - **Facilitate political processes:**
 - ◆ Support constitutional processes and the organisation of elections,
 - ◆ Assist in restoring the rule of law and extending legitimate state authority.
- The decision to send a peacekeeping mission to a country is **made by the UN Security Council (UNSC)**.
- UN member states contribute military and police personnel under UN command, for which they are paid from UN funds.

India in Peacekeeping missions:

- **Currently, India is the 2nd highest amongst troop-contributing countries.**

- **India's contribution began** with its participation in the UN operation in Korea in the 1950s.
- India also served as Chair of the three international commissions for supervision and control for Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos established by the 1954 Geneva Accords on Indochina.
- **In 2007, India became the first country to deploy an all-women contingent to the Mission.**
- India was also the first country to contribute to the Trust Fund on sexual exploitation and abuse set up in 2016.
- **So far India has provided more than 2.5 lakh troops and personnel for the missions.**
- Repeatedly India has also pitched for reforms for the mission to overcome to enhance its relevance in the current circumstances.

CERT-IN (COMPUTER EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM)

News: Recently, CERT-In has asked all government and private agencies to mandatorily report cyber security breach incidents to it within six hours of noticing them.

About CERT-In:

- **CERT-In was established in 2004** as a functional organisation of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.
- CERT-In is the **national nodal agency for responding to computer security incidents as and when they occur**.
- The constituency of CERT-In is the Indian Cyber Community.
- **Functions:** The Information Technology (Amendment) Act 2008 designated CERT-In to serve as the national agency to perform the following functions in cyber security -
 - Collection, analysis, and dissemination of information on cyber incidents.
 - Forecast and alerts of cyber security incidents.
 - Emergency measures for handling cyber security incidents.
 - Coordination of cyber incident response activities.
 - Issue guidelines, advisories, vulnerability notes and whitepapers relating to information.
 - Security practices, procedures, prevention, response, and reporting of cyber incidents.
 - Such other functions relating to cyber security as may be prescribed.

Exercise Synergy:

- It is a **Cyber Security Exercise**.

- **Conducted by Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In)** in collaboration with the Cyber Security Agency of Singapore (CSA) for 13 countries.
- **Aim:** To exchange best practices among member-states to build network resiliency against ransomware and cyber extortion attacks.
- **Conducted as part of the International Counter Ransomware Initiative- Resilience Working Group** which is being led by India under the leadership of National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS).
- **Theme:** "Building Network Resiliency to Counter Ransomware Attacks."
- **Scenario:** The exercise scenario was derived from real-life cyber incidents, in which a domestic level (limited impact) ransomware incident escalates to a global cyber security crisis.
- **Significance:** The exercise was successful in meeting its objectives and provided insights for better coordination and cooperation to build network resiliency and counter ransomware attacks.

COMPUTER SECURITY INCIDENT RESPONSE TEAM

News: The Government of India is planning to set up a Computer Security Incident Response Team (CSIRT) at the Central Electricity Authority to avert cyber-attacks on the country's power grid.

About:

- **Purpose:** CSIRT is being created to avert cyber-attacks on the country's power grid.
- **It will act as an arm of the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team, or CERT-In**
- It will remain under the administrative control of the Central Electricity Authority.
- The officers will be recruited through the Combined Engineering Services Examination conducted by UPSC.
- The officers will be trained to detect cyber security incidents, create awareness among stakeholders, monitor incidents and respond accordingly.
- **Need:**
 - Red Echo, a hacker group affiliated with the Chinese government, targeted the control rooms managing critical power grids in 2021 but the Chinese hackers failed
 - To monitor and prevent such cyber-attacks on power grids, CSIRT is being created.

CIVIL AIR NAVIGATION SERVICES ORGANISATION

News: Goa is hosting the three-day Civil Air Navigation Services Organisation (CANSO) Conference. The theme of the conference is "Think Global, Collaborate Regional, Accomplish Local."

About:

- Founded in **1996**.
- It is a **representative body of companies that provide air traffic control**.
- **Headquarters:** Amsterdam Airport, Netherlands.
- It represents the interests of Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSPs).
- CANSO members are responsible for supporting over 85% of world air traffic and through its workgroups, members share information and develop new policies, with the aim of improving air navigation services on the ground and in the air.
- **CANSO also represents its members' views in regulatory and industry forums**, including at the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) where it has **official Observer status**.

NATGRID

News: Union Minister for Home and Cooperation Amit Shah inaugurated the National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID) campus in Bengaluru.

About:

- **C-DAC Pune has been roped in as Technology Partner and IIT Bhilai as Plan Management Consultant** for the development of NATGRID solution.
- **Envisaged as a robust mechanism to track suspects, the NATGRID** can help in preventing terrorist attacks with real-time data and access to classified information like immigration, banking, individual taxpayers, air, and train travels.
- **In 2010, the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) had given approval to the Rs 3,400-crore NATGRID project.**
- **Access of the data:** It will be a medium for 11 Central agencies such as the Intelligence Bureau (IB) and the Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) to access data on a secured platform.
 - The data will be procured by NATGRID from 21 providing organisations such as the telecom, tax records, bank, immigration etc.

NSG AND UNSC

News: France has reiterated its commitment to support India's bid for permanent membership in a reformed UN Security Council and New Delhi's entry into the Nuclear Suppliers' Group.

About NSG (Nuclear Suppliers Group):

- **Brought in 1974 in response to the Indian nuclear test (smiling Buddha).**
- The **48-member NSG is an elite club of countries that deals with the trade-in nuclear technology and fissile materials** besides contributing to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.
- It is a Group of nuclear supplier countries that seek to prevent nuclear proliferation by controlling the export of materials, equipment and technology that can be used to manufacture nuclear weapons.
- **The NSG first met in November 1975 in London**, and is thus popularly referred to as the "London Club".
- Its guidelines are not binding.
- **Benefits associated with NSG membership:** Once admitted, an NSG member state gets - Timely information on nuclear matters, contributes by way of information, has confirmed credentials, can act as an instrument of harmonisation and coordination, Is part of a very transparent process.

United Nation Security Council (UNSC):

- **Established by the UN Charter in 1945.** It is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations.
- Its primary responsibility is to work to maintain international peace and security.
- The council is headquartered in New York.
- **Members:** The council has 15 members: the five permanent members and ten non-permanent members elected for two-year terms.
 - The **five permanent members** are the United States, the Russian Federation, France, China, and the United Kingdom.
 - **Each year, the General Assembly elects five non-permanent members (out of ten in total) for a two-year term.**
 - ◆ Five from African and Asian States,
 - ◆ One from Eastern European States,
 - ◆ Two from Latin American States,
 - ◆ Two from Western European and other States.
- **Voting Powers:** Each member of the Security Council has one vote.
 - Decisions of the Security Council on matters are made by an affirmative vote of nine members

including the concurring votes of the permanent members.

- A "No" vote from one of the five permanent members blocks the passage of the resolution.

ASSOCIATION OF ASIAN ELECTION AUTHORITIES

News: India has been unanimously elected as the new Chair of the Association of Asian Election Authorities (AAEA) for 2022-2024 at the meeting of the Executive Board and General Assembly in Manila, Philippines.

About:

- Established in **1998**.
- **The mission** is to provide a non-partisan forum in the Asian region for sharing experiences and best practices among election authorities.
- **Members:** Currently 20 Asian Election Management Bodies (EMBs) are members of AAEA.
- **Election Commission of India (ECI) is a founder member of EMB** of the AAEA and served on the Executive Board of the AAEA as the Vice Chair during 2011-13 and Chair during 2014-16.
- AAEA is also an Associate Member of the Association of World Election Bodies (A-WEB).

NEW DEVELOPMENT BANK (NDB)

News: New Development Bank (NDB) is setting up a regional office in Gujarat, India for funding and monitoring infrastructure projects in that country and Bangladesh.

About:

- **Formerly referred to as the BRICS Development Bank**, is a multilateral development bank **established by the BRICS states** (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa).
- **Headquartered** in Shanghai, China.
- **History:** It was agreed to by BRICS leaders at the 5th BRICS summit held in Durban, South Africa in 2013. **It was launched in 2015**, at the 6th BRICS Summit at Fortaleza, Brazil.
- **In 2018, the NDB received observer status in the United Nations General Assembly.**
- **Voting:** Unlike the World Bank, which assigns votes based on capital share, in the New Development Bank each participant country will be assigned one vote, and none of the countries will have veto power.
- **Roles and functions:** The Bank will mobilise resources for infrastructure and sustainable development

projects in BRICS and other emerging economies and developing countries.

INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK (IPEF)

News: India agreed to be a part of the IPEF, a U.S.-led economic grouping comprising 14 countries. The Union Minister of Commerce and Industry attended the first in-person Ministerial meeting.

About:

- **Origin of IPEF:** In October 2021, the US administration announced the development of an Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF).
- **IPEF is a U.S.-led framework for participating countries to solidify their relationships and engage in crucial economic and trade matters** that concern the region, such as building resilient supply chains battered by the pandemic.
- **It is not a free trade agreement.**
- **Member states:** US, Australia, Brunei, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Fiji, and Vietnam.
 - Together, these countries account for 40% of the global GDP.
 - Additionally, the framework would be open to other countries willing to join in the future.
- **It would include different modules (four pillars) covering:**
 1. Fair and resilient trade,
 2. Supply chain resilience,
 3. Infrastructure and decarbonization, and
 4. Tax and anti-corruption.
- These pillars will have specific modules.
- Countries would have to sign up to all the components within a module, but do not have to participate in all modules.
- Countries are free to join (or not join) initiatives under any of the stipulated pillars but are expected to adhere to all commitments once they enrol.
- IPEF is more about standard setting and facilitating trade and will not involve more market access for its members. Nor will it negotiate lower tariffs.

Key Features:

- The fair and resilient trade module will be led by the US Trade Representative and include digital, labour, and environment issues, with some binding commitments.
- **Reason for US planning to launch this framework:** US is trying to regain credibility in the region after

former US President Donald Trump pulled out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

- Since then, there has been concern over the absence of a credible US economic and trade strategy to counter China's economic influence in the region.

Outcome of the ministerial:

- **India has joined three out of four pillars related to supply chains, tax and anti-corruption and clean energy**, but did not join the "Fair and resilient trade" pillar as it was apprehensive of commitments required on the environment, labour, digital trade, and public procurement.

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION

News: A document has been released by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) on "Inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) persons in the world of work". Also, a report titled "Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022: Investing in transforming futures for young people".

About ILO:

- It was **established in 1919 by the Treaty of Versailles as an affiliated agency of the League of Nations.**
- It is the **only tripartite U.N. agency** that brings together **governments, employers, and workers of 187-member States.**
- It sets labour standards, develops policies, and devises programmes promoting decent work for all women and men.
- It became the **first affiliated specialised agency of the United Nations in 1946.**
- **Headquarters:** Geneva, Switzerland
- Its founding Mission is social justice is essential to universal and lasting peace.
- It promotes internationally recognized human and labour rights.
- It is providing substantial support in the building of an ethical and productive framework for fair globalisation.

Findings Related to India:

- The youth employment participation rate declined by 0.9 % over the first nine months of 2021 relative to its value in 2020, while it increased by 2 % for adults over the same time.
- The situation is particularly severe for very young people aged 15-20 years.
- Indian young women experienced larger relative employment losses than young men in 2021 and 2022.

UN HABITAT

News: UN-Habitat has identified various pressing issues posing challenges for urban planners of Jaipur City. Issues highlighted include: Rapid expansion of cities, Weak urban mobility etc.

About:

- The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) is the **United Nations agency for human settlements and sustainable urban development**.
- **Objectives:** To promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns & cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all.
- **Established in** 1978.
- **HQ:** Nairobi, Kenya.
- **Parent agency:** It reports to the UN General Assembly. It is also a member of the United Nations Development Group.

Habitat Agenda:

- The mandate of UN-Habitat derives from the Habitat Agenda, adopted by the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) in Istanbul, Turkey, in 1996.
- The twin goals of the Habitat Agenda are adequate shelter for all and the development of sustainable human settlements in an urbanising world.

FINANCIAL ACTION TASK FORCE (FATF)

News: FATF has retained Pakistan on its terrorism financing “grey list”. It has been on the grey list since June 2018. Also, UAE has been added to the grey list.

About:

- FATF is an **inter-governmental body established in 1989** to combat money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.
- **Members:** 39 (including 2 regional organisations- European Commission and Gulf Cooperation Council. **India is a member.**
- **FATF issues two lists:**
 1. Black list (as High-Risk Jurisdictions subject to a Call for Action)
 2. Grey list (referred to as Jurisdictions Under Increased Monitoring).
- FATF reviews money laundering and terrorist financing techniques and continuously strengthens its standards to address new risks.

- FATF Recommendations are recognised as the global anti-money laundering (AML) and counter-terrorist financing (CFT) standard.
 - FATF also works to stop funding for weapons of mass destruction.
- Decisions are made by the grouping on a **consensus basis**, as they conduct reviews of countries on **AML/CFT parameters (called “Mutual evaluations”)**.
 - AML/CFT are strategies used to track and identify or attack finances of organisations.
- The FATF Plenary is the decision-making body of the FATF. It meets three times per year.

Related Terms:

- **Money laundering:** Process by which proceeds from a criminal activity are disguised to conceal a criminal activity.
- **Terror financing:** solicitation, collection, or provisions of funds with the intention that they may be used to support terrorist acts or organisations.

India's anti-money laundering and countering terrorist financing measures:

- Guidelines and rules framed under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).
- Strict adherence to Know Your Customer (KYC) procedures.
- Enactment of the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act in 2018.
- Anti-black money Act of 2015.
- New compliance regime brought in by the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) for banks, other financial institutions.

I2U2 INITIATIVE

News: Recently, the first I2U2 (India, Israel, United States, and the United Arab Emirates) leaders' Summit was held virtually.

About:

- I2U2 initiative is a **new grouping of India, Israel, USA, and UAE.**
- **Origin:** I2U2 was initially formed in October 2021 following the Abraham Accords between Israel and the UAE, to deal with issues concerning maritime security, infrastructure, and transport in the region.
- The **Abraham Accord is the first Arab-Israeli peace deal in 26 years mediated by the USA.**
- At that time, it was called the 'International Forum for Economic Cooperation' also known as the 'West Asian Quad'.

- This is a great achievement which tells the geopolitical changes that happen in the region.

Objectives:

- Its stated aim is to discuss “common areas of mutual interest, to strengthen the economic partnership in trade and investment in our respective regions and beyond.”
- **Six areas of cooperation have been identified** by the countries mutually, and the aim is to encourage joint investments in water, energy, transportation, space, health, and food security.

Key takeaways from the summit:

- **Integrated Food Park in India:** India will provide land for Integrated Food Parks that will be built in collaboration with Israel, the United States, and the United Arab Emirates.
- UAE will invest \$2 billion in India to create these food parks backed by technology from the US and Israel.
- **Note:** India was chosen as the location for the food project because of its proximity to Israel and the UAE which will help in creating a smooth agriculture supply chain.
- **Hybrid Renewable Energy Project in Gujarat:** Project in Gujarat consisting of 300 megawatts (MW) of wind and solar capacity complemented by a battery energy storage system.
- The project is expected to be another step in India's quest for 500 GW of non-fossil fuel capacity by 2030.

ASEAN (ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH-EAST ASIAN NATIONS)

News: 24th ASEAN-India Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) was hosted in Delhi.

About:

- It is a **regional grouping** that promotes economic, political, and security cooperation.
- **Origin:** It was established in August **1967** in **Bangkok, Thailand** with the signing of the ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) by the founding fathers of ASEAN, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand.
- **Mechanism of the Institution:** Its chair rotates annually, based on the alphabetical order of the English names of Member States.
- **Members:** ASEAN brings together ten Southeast Asian states – Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam – into one organisation.
- **Significance:** ASEAN countries have a total population of 650 million people and a combined Gross Domestic

Product (GDP) of USD 2.8 trillion. It is India's 4th largest trading partner with about USD 86.9 billion in trade.

24th ASEAN-India Senior Officials Meeting (SOM):

- India and ASEAN celebrated the 30th anniversary of their Dialogue Relations.
- Earlier, the 2nd ASEAN Digital Ministers' (ADGMIN) Meeting with India was held, where two sides finalised India-ASEAN Digital work plan 2022 for future collaboration in the field.
- **Key Highlights:**
 - The leaders made their assessment on the progress of cooperation under three pillars of Partnership – Political-Security, Economic and Socio-Cultural.
 - The meeting deliberated on the steps for further implementation of the ASEAN-India Plan of Action (2021-2025).

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE OF UNESCO'S 2003 CONVENTION

News: India has been elected as a member of the Intergovernmental Committee of UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage for the 2022-2026 cycle.

About:

- The Intergovernmental Committee of the 2003 Convention consists of 24 members and is elected in the General Assembly of the Convention according to the principles of equitable geographical representation and rotation.
- **Duration:** The members are elected for a term of four years.
- **Functions:** Some of the core functions of the committee include
 - Promoting the objectives of the Convention
 - Providing guidance on best practices
 - making recommendations on measures for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage.
- The Committee also examines requests submitted by States Parties for the inscription of intangible heritage on the Lists as well as proposals for programmes and projects.
- **Note:** In the past, India has served two terms as a member of the Intergovernmental Committee of this Convention. One from 2006 to 2010 and the other from 2014 to 2018.

UNESCO's Convention for Safeguarding the Intangible Heritage:

- Adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2003 and entered into force in 2006.
- **Purpose:**
 - To safeguard the expressions of intangible cultural heritage that are endangered by the processes of globalisation.
 - To ensure respect for the intangible cultural heritage of the communities, groups, and individuals.
 - To raise awareness at the local, national, and international levels of the importance of intangible cultural heritage.

Recognition of Indian Elements under ICH:

- **India has 14 intangible cultural heritage elements** on the prestigious UNESCO Representative List of ICH of Humanity.
- Earlier, **Durga Puja in Kolkata** was inscribed on the UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of Humanity.

G7 CLIMATE CLUB

News: At the 48th G7 summit, hosted by Germany, the leaders decided to form an international "climate club" for nations that want to take more decisive climate action and combat global warming.

About:

- **Origin:** The concept of a climate club was **developed by Yale economist William Nordhaus in 2015.**
- The club he proposed would **exempt its members from climate-related trade tariffs** to which non-members will be subjected.
- The G7's Climate Club is **expected to be established by the end of the year 2022.**
- **It will be an intergovernmental forum** of high ambition that will be "open and inclusive in nature" to those committed to follow the Paris climate agreement 2015.
- **The club will aim to promote collaboration**, help maintain competitiveness and make climate protection a competitive advantage.
- **The climate club will be built on three pillars:**
 1. Focus on advancing transparent policies to achieve climate neutrality (reducing all greenhouse gases as much as possible),
 2. Transforming industries to accelerate decarbonisation, and Facilitating partnerships and cooperation

3. **Implementation:** This open, collaborative club will set joint minimum standards, drive climate action that is internationally coordinated.
- This will ensure that climate action makes a country more competitive at the international level.

About G7:

- **The G7 is an informal forum of leading industrialised nations**, which dominate global trade and the international financial system.
- **It meets annually to discuss issues** such as global economic governance, international security, and energy policy, besides a host of other issues topical to the prevailing situation.
- **Members and Partners:** It includes Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States as core members.
 - In addition to the core nations, there are other invitee nations (acting as partners) that are democracies and classified emerging economies.
- **In the recent summit for example, India was invited** along with Argentina, Indonesia, Senegal, and South Africa as guests.
 - There are also various organisations such as the IMF, World Bank, WHO that are part of international governance.
- **Russia joined G7 in 1998, creating the G8, but was excluded in 2014** for its takeover of Crimea.
 - The EU is not a member of the G7 but attends the annual summit.

EUROPEAN UNION (EU)

News: On 17 June 2022, the European Union relaunched negotiations with India for a Free Trade Agreement, and launched separate negotiations for an Investment Protection Agreement and an Agreement on Geographical Indications (GIs).

About EU:

- It is a **political and economic union of 27 sovereign Member States.**
- **The decisions are taken through a mixed of:**
 - Supranational institutions (i.e., institutions to whom Member States have delegated their powers).
 - Intergovernmental negotiations (which concern areas in which Member States have not delegated their power, but make decisions together).

Trade relations between India and EU:

- The EU is India's third **largest trading partner, accounting for €88 billion worth of trade** in goods in 2021 or 10.8% of total Indian trade.

- **India is the EU's 10th largest trading partner, accounting for 2.1% of EU total trade in goods.**
- Trade in services between the EU and India reached €30.4 billion in 2020.

The main European Institutions are:

- **European Council:** It brings together the heads of state or government of every EU country and decides on the political direction of the EU.
- **European Commission:** It is the EU's politically independent executive arm. It is alone responsible for drawing up proposals for new European legislation, and it implements the decisions of the European Parliament and the Council of the EU. European Commission, as the executive body of the EU, is accountable to the European Parliament
- **Council of the European Union:** It consists of one government minister from every member state. The Council is part of the law-making process in the European Union.
- **European Parliament:** It is the only directly elected institution of the European Union.
- Together with the Council of the European Union, the European Parliament has legislative power (preparing and adopting the EU laws) but no power to initiate legislation.

SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION

News: The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit 2022 was held recently in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.

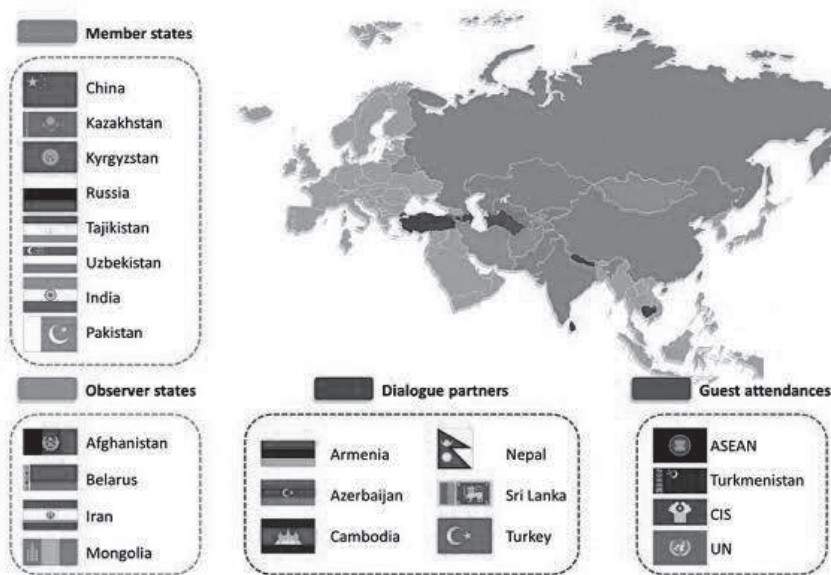
About Key highlights:

- Decision on the Comprehensive Action Plan for 2023-2027.
- **Inclusion of members and dialogue partners:** Iran was admitted to the SCO in 2021 and will become full member in 2023.
 - Launched the procedure of admitting Belarus as a member of the SCO.
 - Granting Maldives, Bahrain, Myanmar, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, the status of SCO dialogue partner.
- **Varanasi as SCO Tourism and Cultural Capital:** The city of Varanasi has been nominated as the first-ever SCO Tourism and Cultural Capital during the period 2022-2023.
- Several events will be hosted in Varanasi during 2022-23 for which guests will be invited to participate from the SCO Member States.

About Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO):

- The SCO is a **permanent intergovernmental international organisation**.
 - It is a Eurasian political, economic, and security alliance and has been the primary security pillar of the region.

THE SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION



- **History:** It was established in 2001. It was preceded by the Shanghai Five mechanism.
- It is a **permanent intergovernmental international organisation, founded in 2001 in Shanghai (China) in 2001** by Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyz Republic, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.
- After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the then security and economic architecture in the Eurasian region dissolved and new structures had to come up.
- The original Shanghai Five were China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan.
- In **June 2017 in Astana, India and Pakistan** were granted status of a full member of SCO.
- **Secretariat:** Beijing, China
- **Official Languages:** Russian and Chinese.
- **Leadership:** It is by rotation for a year by Member States.
- **Significance:** The SCO has been an observer in the UN General Assembly since 2005.
- **Membership:**
 - **Eight-member states:** India, Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.
 - **Four observer states:** Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran, and Mongolia.
- Since its formation, the SCO has focused on regional non-traditional security, with counter-terrorism as a priority.
- The fight against the “three evils” of terrorism, separatism and extremism has become its mantra. Today, areas of cooperation include themes such as economics and culture.

Structure:

- **Heads of State Council** – The supreme SCO body which decides its internal functioning and its interaction with other States & international organisations, and considers international issues.
- **Heads of Government Council** – Approves the budget, considers, and decides upon issues related to economic spheres of interaction within SCO.
- **Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs** – Considers issues related to day-to-day activities.
- **Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)** – Established to combat terrorism, separatism, and extremism.
- **SCO has been an observer in the UN General Assembly since 2005.**

About Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS):

- India hosted a meeting of Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) as India assumed its role as Chairperson of the SCO-RATS mechanism recently.

- It is a **permanent organ of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)** which serves to promote cooperation of member states against the three evils of terrorism, separatism, and extremism.
- It specifically deals with **issues relating to security and defence.**
- **Headquartered** in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.
- **The Agreement on RATS as a permanent SCO body was signed in 2002.**
- RATS has been a coordinating centre for combating terrorism, separatism, and extremism at the regional and global levels.
- Under RATS’ working relationship, the member countries coordinate with each other and other global organisations to gather information to tackle terrorism.
 - RATS also maintains a database of terrorists and terror organisations from across its member countries.
- Within the RATS framework the anti-terrorist capacity of the SCO member states is being developed by holding the annual joint antiterrorist exercises.

INTERNATIONAL NORTH-SOUTH TRANSIT CORRIDOR (INSTC)

News: Iran started the transfer of Russian goods to India by using the International North-South Transit Corridor (INSTC).

About:

- **INSTC is a multi-modal transportation network, first envisaged in 2000** by Russia, India, and Iran, to promote transportation cooperation among the Member States.
- **It connects the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf to Caspian Sea via Iran** and is then connected to Saint Petersburg and North European via Russia.
- **Currently, it has 13 members:** India, Iran, Russia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Turkey, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Oman, Ukraine, and Syria.

INSTC Significance for India:

- Will cut down the transportation costs of goods (by almost 30%) as well transportation time (almost half compared to Suez Canal) between India and Russia.
- Will help India to gain smooth access into Central Asia and beyond and will help to expand trade and investment links.
- Reduce dependence on current trading partners, especially energy connectivity, through realignment of supply chains.

- It is also being seen as India's answer to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Other Planned Corridors Connecting India with Russia and Europe:

- **Chennai-Vladivostok** Maritime Corridor connecting India-Russia.
- **India's Arabian-Mediterranean (Arab-Med) Corridor** connecting India with mainland Europe via Piraeus port of Greece and Middle East.

UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION

News: Recently, The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister has approved the ratification of amendments to the Constitution of the **Universal Postal Union (UPU)**.

About:

- It was established by the **Treaty of Bern in 1874**.
- **Purpose:** It is the primary forum for cooperation between postal sector players. It helps to ensure a truly universal network of up-to-date products and services.
- **Headquarters:** Bern, Switzerland.
- **Significance:** It is a United Nations specialised agency. It is also the second-oldest international organisation worldwide.
- **Members:** Any member country of the United Nations may become a member of the UPU.
 - Any non-member country of the United Nations may become a UPU member provided that its request is approved by at least two-thirds of the member countries of the UPU.
 - The UPU now has 192 member countries. India has been a member of the UPU since 1876.

Amendments approved by the Government of India:

- **The 27th UPU Congress held at Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** adopted several amendments to the constitution of UPU.
- These amendments ensure further legal clarity and stability to the Acts of the Union, and resolve many long-standing discrepancies.

UNMOGIP (UN MILITARY OBSERVER GROUP IN INDIA AND PAKISTAN)

News: The United Nations (UN) has appointed Rear Admiral Guillermo Pablo Rios of Argentina as the Head of Mission and Chief Military Observer for the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP).

About:

- The first group of UN military observers arrived in the mission area on 24 January of 1949 to supervise the ceasefire between India and Pakistan.
- These observers formed the nucleus of the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP).
- **Functions of UNMOGIP:**
 - Post 1971, UNMOGIP has remained in the area to observe developments pertaining to the strict observance of the ceasefire and report thereon to the UN Secretary-General.
 - **The Karachi Agreement** of July 1949 firmed up the role of UN-level military observers and permitted supervision of the Ceasefire Line established in Jammu and Kashmir.
- **India officially maintains that the UNMOGIP's role was "overtaken" by the Shimla Agreement** of 1972 that established the Line of Control (LoC).

NATIONAL INVESTIGATION AGENCY

News: Union Home Ministry handed over the probe into the barbaric killing of a pharmacist at Amravati in Maharashtra to the National Investigation Agency (NIA).

About:

- **Origin:** In the wake of the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack in November 2008, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) was established.
- **Headquartered in Delhi**, it is a **statutory body** under the National Investigation Agency Act, 2008.
- **The NIA is a central agency mandated to investigate all the offences affecting** the sovereignty, security and integrity of India, and the friendly relations with foreign states.
- It also investigates all the offences under the statutory laws enacted to implement international treaties, agreements, conventions and resolutions of the UN, its agencies, and other international organisations.
- **The agency has the power to search, seize, arrest, and prosecute those involved in such offences.**
- **Jurisdiction:** The law under which the agency operates extends to the whole of India and applies to -
 - Indian citizens outside the country;
 - Persons in the service of the government wherever they are posted;
 - Persons on ships and aircraft registered in India wherever they may be;
 - Persons who commit a scheduled offence beyond India against the Indian citizen or affecting the interest of India.

- It investigates the scheduled offences referred to it by the Central government, the cases referred to it by the State governments through the Central government.
- State governments are required to extend all assistance to the NIA.
- **While investigating any scheduled offence, the agency can also investigate any other offence, which the accused is alleged to have committed if the offence is connected to the scheduled offence.**

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO)

News: The USA is resisting the proposed sustainable financing model by WHO.

Current financing model of WHO:

- WHO budget largely consists of two funding types, namely **assessed contributions and voluntary contributions**.
- WHO's work was previously funded entirely by assessed contributions from Member States.
- By 1990, voluntary contributions had increased to 54% of total funds, and they now make up over 80% of WHO's total income.
- While WHO's budget has increased substantially – from US\$ 1.4 billion for 1990–1991 to US\$ 5.8 billion for 2020–2021 – assessed contributions have remained static at about US\$ 1 billion.

World Health Assembly (WHA):

- The World Health Assembly is the **decision-making body of WHO**.
- **It is attended by delegations from all WHO Member States** and focuses on a specific health agenda prepared by the Executive Board.
- **The main functions of the World Health Assembly are:**
 - Determine the policies of the Organization,
 - Appoint the Director-General,
 - Supervise financial policies, and
 - Review and approve the proposed program budget.
- **The Health Assembly is held annually in Geneva, Switzerland.**
- **Article 19 of WHO Constitution:** It gives the World Health Assembly the authority to adopt conventions or agreements on matters of health.
 - A two-third majority is needed to adopt such conventions or agreements.
 - The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control was set up under Article 19 and it came into force in 2005.

International Health Regulations (IHR):

- **An instrument of international law that is legally-binding on 196 countries, including the 194 WHO Member States.**
- **IHR provides an overarching legal framework** that defines countries' rights and obligations in handling public health events and emergencies that have the potential to cross borders.
- **They create rights and obligations for countries**, including the requirement to report public health events.
- **It also outlines the criteria** to determine whether a particular event constitutes a "public health emergency of international concern."

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (ECOSOC)

News: India gets elected to four UN Economic And Social Council (ECOSOC) bodies.

About ECOSOC

- **ECOSOC is one of the six principal organs of the UN System** established by the UN Charter in **1945**.
- **The 54-member ECOSOC is at the heart of the United Nations system** to advance the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social, and environmental.
- **It is elected by the General Assembly.**
 - India was elected to the UN ECOSOC for the term 2022-24, last year, in the Asia-Pacific States category along with Afghanistan, Kazakhstan and Oman.
- **Four bodies of ECOSOC to which India was elected are:**
 1. Commission for Social Development
 2. Committee on Non-Governmental Organisations
 3. Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD)
 4. Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)

INDIA EU TRADE AND TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL

News: This strategic coordination mechanism will allow both partners to tackle challenges at the nexus of trade, technology, and security, and thus deepen cooperation. It is the first for India and 2nd for the EU.

About:

- **TTC will:**
 - **Provide political-level oversight to India-EU relationship.**
 - **Resolve economic divergences** for an early and comprehensive India-EU trade and investment agreement.
 - Bring India-EU politically closer to address current challenges and geopolitical circumstances in the Indo-Pacific region.
 - Better coordination in multilateral bodies such as G20, WTO etc. on issues of mutual interest.
- India-EU relations date to the early 1960s, with India being amongst the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with the European Economic Community.
- **The EU as a block is India's largest trading partner.**
- In 2004, the relationship was upgraded to a 'Strategic Partnership'.
- **In 2020 'India-EU Strategic Partnership: A Roadmap to 2025'** was adopted.
- **TTC signifies enhanced political value of India in an uncertain global strategic environment.**

WORLD FOOD PRICE INDEX

News: According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO), the World food price index averaged 159.3 points in March, breaking an earlier record of 137.6 points scaled 11 years ago in February 2011.

About:

- **Released by:** UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).
- It was introduced in 1996 as a public good to help in monitoring developments in the global agricultural commodity markets.
- The FAO Food Price Index (FFPI) is a measure of the monthly change in international prices of a basket of food commodities.
- It measures changes for a basket of cereals, oilseeds, dairy products, meat, and sugar.
- **Base Period:** 2014-16.

Food and Agriculture Organization:

- **Founded:** 16 October 1945.
- It is a specialised agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat hunger.
- **Headquarters:** Rome, Italy.

- **Goal of FAO:** Their goal is to achieve food security for all and make sure that people have regular access to enough high-quality food to lead active, healthy lives.

HENLEY PASSPORT INDEX

News: For the fifth year running, Japan crowns the Henley Passport Index

About:

- Index lists the world's passports according to the number of destinations their holders can access without a prior visa.
- **It is released by** Henley & Partners, a global leader in residence and citizenship planning.
- **India's passport power** has improved this quarter compared to 2021.
- It now ranks 83rd (90th rank last year).
- **Japan and Singapore top the index.**

COMMON SECURITY

News: Recently, Palme International Centre, International Peace Bureau (IPB) and International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) released a report on Common Security 2022.

About the concept:

- Common security is a notion based on the assumption that no nation, community, or individual can be secure without other nations, communities and individuals enjoying the same level of security.
- Any conflict in one part of the world has cascading effects on the people of another.
 - The effect can be seen in the Ukraine or Afghanistan conflict on other developing countries, particularly, on the supply of food grains, fertiliser, and fuel.
- The common concepts of security go beyond the narrow traditional and realist approach to security.
 - The traditional idea of security was the protection or defence of states against external threats or attacks.
 - The notion of common security is about non-violent approaches to the universal need to be secure.

OPERATION SANKALP

News: Indian Navy's stealth Frigate, INS Talwar is presently deployed for Op-Sankalp commemorating the 3rd continuous year of Indian Navy's presence in the Gulf.

About:

- The Indian Navy has launched '**Operation Sankalp**' in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman as a measure to assure the safety and security of the Indian vessels.
- After the attacks on merchant ships in the Gulf of Oman in June 2019, Indian Navy had commenced Maritime Security Operations, code named Op-Sankalp
- Twenty-three warships have been deployed till date for this operation and on an average 16 Indian-flagged merchant vessels are being provided safe passage each day in the Gulf region.
- Indian Navy's stealth Frigate, INS Talwar is presently deployed in the Gulf region.

EXERCISE SEA DRAGON

News: Recently, the US Sea Dragon 22 exercise began.

About:

- A **US-led multinational exercise designed to practise and discuss Anti-submarine warfare tactics** to operate together in response to traditional and non-traditional maritime security challenges in the Indo-Pacific region.
- **Participants:** Navies of the US, India, Australia, Canada, Japan, and South Korea.
- It is an annual exercise.

Significance:

- The exercise assumes significance in the face of **strained relations** that some countries have with China and the growing forays of the PLA-Navy into the Indian ocean region.
- The Indian Navy has recently inducted two more Poseidon 8I maritime reconnaissance and

anti-submarine warfare aircraft, which would further boost its ability to keep an eye over the Chinese ships and submarines in the region.

PASCHIM LEHAR (XPL-2022) EXERCISE

News: A joint maritime exercise Paschim Lehar (XPL-2022) conducted by the Indian Navy off the West Coast was concluded on 25 January 2022.

About:

- Paschim Lehar is a **tri-service joint maritime exercise conducted by the Indian Navy and with the other two forces (Indian Airforce and Indian Army) and the Coast Guard.**
- Paschim Lehar exercise 2022 was conducted under the aegis of FOC-in-C, Western Naval Command.
- **Objective:** To validate operational plans of the Western Naval Command and enhance Inter-Service synergy among the Indian Navy, Indian Air Force (IAF), Indian Army and Coast Guard.
- **The exercise included the participation of ships and submarines** of the Indian Navy, Aircrafts of IAF, various elements of Army and Patrol Vessels of Coast guard.
- **Significance of the exercise:** The exercise provided all participating forces an opportunity to operate together under realistic conditions, in responding to contemporary maritime challenges, across the areas of the Command's responsibility.

EXERCISE MILAN

News: The US and Russia will be participating in India's biggest maritime exercise named "Milan-2022" amidst escalating tensions between them over Ukraine.

About:

- Milan **began in 1995 and is held biennially** and brings together Navies of all the countries in the region.
- It has so far been held at Port Blair in Andaman and Nicobar but is now being shifted to Visakhapatnam

which offers more infrastructure as well as sea space for the exercise.

- The exercise is aimed to enhance professional interaction between friendly foreign navies and learn from each other's strengths and best practices in the maritime domain.

Exercise Milan 2022:

- Indian Navy's (IN) **biennial multilateral exercise** commencing in Visakhapatnam will witness its largest ever participation, with more than 40 countries.
- The exercise is being held in Visakhapatnam for the first time instead of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- **The theme of the exercise is 'Camaraderie Cohesion Collaboration'.**
- The exercise will see participation from around 40 countries such as the US, Russia, Australia, UK, Japan, South Korea, France and Israel, Saudi Arabia among others.

EXERCISE VOSTOK

News: An Indian Army contingent comprising troops from Gorkha Rifles is participating in the multilateral strategic and command exercise 'Vostok-2022' in Russia.

About:

- It is a **multilateral strategic and command exercise hosted by Russia.**
- **Aim:** To deepen practical and friendly cooperation with the armies of participating countries, enhance the level of strategic collaboration among the participating parties and strengthen the ability to respond to various security threats.
- **Participating countries:** India, China, Belarus, Mongolia, Tajikistan, and other countries are participating in the exercise.

India's Exercises with China & Russia:

- **China:** Exercise Hand-in-Hand.
- **Russia:**
 - **Exercise Indra:** The Indra series of exercises began in 2003 and was conducted as a bilateral naval exercise alternately between the two countries.
 - **Exercise TSENTR:** Exercise TSENTR 2019 is part of the annual series of large-scale exercises that form part of the Russian Armed Forces' annual training cycle.
 - **Exercise ZAPAD 2021:** It is a multinational exercise in which 17 countries including India, China, Russia, and Pakistan are part of it.

EXERCISE EASTERN BRIDGE

News: Indian Air Force (IAF) and Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) are scheduled to participate in a bilateral exercise named Eastern Bridge-VI at Air Force Station Jodhpur.

About:

- It is a **Bilateral air exercise conducted between India and Oman.**
- **First edition:** held in 2009. This is the sixth edition of the exercise.
- The exercise will provide an opportunity to enhance operational capability and interoperability between the two Air Forces.

Other Exercises Between India and Oman:

- **Naseem-al-Bahr (Sea Breeze):** It is a bilateral biennial naval exercise between India and Oman.
- **AL NAGAH:** It is a bilateral military exercise between India and Oman.

EXERCISE COBRA WARRIOR

News: Indian Air Force will participate in a multinational air exercise named 'Ex Cobra Warrior 22' at Waddington, UK.

About:

- **Conducted by the Royal Air Force (RAF)** of the United Kingdom (UK).
- **Type:** Annual multinational air exercise.
- **Aim:** To provide operational exposure and share best practices amongst the participating Air Forces, thereby enhancing combat capability and forging bonds of friendship.
- From the Indian side, indigenous LCA Tejas fighter aircraft will participate in the exercise and a C-17 aircraft will provide transport support.
- Apart from India, the other countries participating in the exercise are Sweden, Saudi Arabia and Bulgaria.

Other Joint Exercises between India and the UK:

- **Navy:** Konkan
- **Air Force:** Indradhanush
- **Army:** Exercise AJEYA WARRIOR.

MARITIME PARTNERSHIP EXERCISE

News: A Maritime Partnership Exercise (MPX) was conducted between Japan Maritime Self Defense Force and Indian Navy in the Andaman Sea.

About:

- **India and Japan** have been carrying out regular exercises in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) towards reinforcing maritime association.
- **Aimed:** The exercises were aimed at enhancing interoperability and streamlining seamanship and communication procedures.
- From the Indian side, INS Sukanya, an offshore patrol vessel participated in the exercise.

Other exercises between India and Japan:

- **Dharma Guardian:** It is an annual military exercise between India and Japan from 2018.
- **Shinyuu Maitri:** It is a bilateral exercise between the Indian Air Force and the Japanese Air Self Defence Force (JASDF).
- **JIMEX:** It is a bilateral maritime exercise between India and Japan.
- **Sahayog-Kaijin:** Joint bilateral exercise between the Indian Coast Guard and the Japan Coast Guard.

OPERATION SARD HAWA

News: Border Security Force (BSF) launched operation 'Sard Hawa' at the international border of Rajasthan, under which vigil will be beefed-up to check the instances of infiltration due to the dense fog in the area.

About:

- BSF conducts "Operation Garam Hawa" in summer and "Operation Sard Hawa" in winter every year.
- **BSF is a Central Armed Police Force (CAPF)** that functions under the Union government.
- It was raised in 1965.
- BSF is deployed **along the Pakistan and Bangladesh borders.**
- It is also deployed in areas affected by Left Wing Extremism etc.

EX VAYU SHAKTI 2022

News: The Indian Air Force (IAF) has decided to postpone its firepower demonstration, Ex Vayu Shakti, scheduled in the Pokhran ranges in Rajasthan.

About:

- It is **conducted once in three years** which is participated by fighters, helicopters, force enablers and support systems.
- The aim of the exercise is to detect and identify targets and neutralise them in day, dusk, and night capability demonstrations.

- The Indian Air Force showcases repower capability of indigenously developed aircrafts and its missile arsenal in this exercise.
- Fighter aircraft including Jaguar, Rafale, Sukhoi-30, MIG-29, light combat aircraft Tejas, MIG-21 Bison, Hawk 32, M200 participated in the exercise.

SLINEX

News: The Ninth Edition of India - Sri Lanka Bilateral Maritime Exercise SLINEX (Sri Lanka-India Naval Exercise) is scheduled at Visakhapatnam from 07 Mar to 10 Mar 2022.

About

- The exercise is being conducted in two phases;
 - Harbour Phase at Visakhapatnam on 07-08 Mar 22
 - Sea Phase on 09-10 Mar 22 in the Bay of Bengal.
- Sri Lanka Navy will be represented by SLNS Sayurala, an advanced offshore patrol vessel and the Indian Navy by INS Kirch, a guided missile corvette.
- The previous edition of SLINEX was conducted off Trincomalee in October 2020.
- SLINEX aims to enhance interoperability, improve mutual understanding, and exchange best practices and procedures for multi-faceted maritime operations between both navies.
- **SLINEX is in consonance with India's policy of 'Neighbourhood First' and PM Modi's vision of 'Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR).'**

EXERCISE LAMITIYE-2022

News: The 9th Joint Military Exercise LAMITIYE-2022 between the Indian Army and Seychelles Defence Forces (SDF) is being conducted at Seychelles Defence Academy (SDA), Seychelles.

About:

- It is a biennial training event which has been conducted in Seychelles since 2001.
- The 10 days long joint exercise will include field training exercises, combat discussions, lectures, demonstrations and culminate with a two days validation exercise.
- Exercise LAMITIYE with Seychelles is significant in terms of growing security concerns in the Indian Ocean Region.
- **Seychelles:** Seychelles is an archipelagic island country consisting of 115 islands in the Indian Ocean at the eastern edge of the Somali Sea.

DUSTLIK EXERCISE

News: Recently, the 3rd edition of joint training exercise between Indian and Uzbekistan armies, EX-DUSTLIK is being conducted at Yangiariq, Uzbekistan from 22nd to 31st March 2022.

About:

- The exercise would **focus on Counter Terrorism operations in semi-urban terrain under a United Nations Mandate**.
- The **Grenadier's battalion** is nominated for the exercise. The battalion is one of the highly decorated battalions of the Indian Army.
- The training schedule will focus primarily on sharing tactical level drills and learning of best practices from each other.
- It aims at enhancing understanding, cooperation, and interoperability between two armies.
- The last edition of DUSTLIK was conducted in Ranikhet (Uttarakhand) in March 2021.

Other Exercises between India and Central Asian Countries:

- **Exercise KAZIND:** It is an annual military exercise between the India and Kazakhstan army.
- **Exercise KHANJAR:** It is a joint military training exercise between India and Kyrgyzstan.

EXERCISE KAKADU

News: INS Satpura and a P8 I Maritime Patrol Aircraft of the Indian Navy reached Darwin in Australia, for participation in the multinational Exercise Kakadu – 2022, hosted by the Royal Australian Navy (RAN).

About:

- Exercise Kakadu is a **multinational maritime exercise hosted by the Royal Australian Navy**.
- The exercise derives its name from Kakadu National Park, which is a protected area in the Northern Territory of Australia.
- **Aim:** To foster and strengthen effective security and humanitarian partnerships across the Indo-Pacific region through a series of training and engagement activities.
- **Participating Countries:** Around 14 countries are participating in the exercise including India.

Other Military Exercises with Australia:

- **Exercise Pitch Black:** Indian Air Force (IAF) has recently participated in this multinational exercise.
- **Malabar Exercise.**

IMEX-22 (INDIAN OCEAN NAVAL SYMPOSIUM (IONS) MARITIME EXERCISE)

News: Maiden edition of IONS Maritime Exercise 2022 (IMEX-22) was conducted at Goa and in the Arabian Sea.

About:

- It is a maiden **maritime exercise of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS)**.
- **Aim of the exercise:** to enhance interoperability in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations among member navies.
- **Participating Countries:** The exercise witnessed participation of 15 out of the 25 member nations of IONS.
- The exercise comprised a Harbour Phase at Mormugao port, Goa, followed by a Sea Phase in the Arabian Sea.
- **Significance:** The exercise is seen as a significant stepping stone for regional navies to collaborate and respond collectively to natural disasters in the region, and paves the way for further strengthening regional cooperation.

About IONS:

- Established in **2007**, is a **voluntary initiative that seeks to increase maritime cooperation among navies of the littoral states of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)**.
- It has enabled discussions on regional maritime issues, promoted friendly relationships, and significantly improved maritime security cooperation in the IOR.
- Inaugural IONS Seminar was held by the Indian Navy in 2008.
- **IONS include 24 nations** that permanently hold territory that lies within the IOR.
- **Importance of IONS for India:**
 - Strengthening and deepening relations with Indian Ocean littoral states.
 - Establishing its leadership potential and aspirations of being a net-security provider.
 - Fulfilling India's vision of a rules-based and stable maritime order in IOR.
 - Counter-balance the increasing presence of China in the region.

EXERCISE VARUNA

News: The 20th edition of the Indian and French Navy bilateral exercise 'VARUNA-2022' is being conducted in the Arabian Sea.

About:

- The **Indian and French Navies** have been conducting bilateral maritime exercises since 1993. Since 2001, these exercises have been called 'VARUNA'.
- This is an **annual event**.
- **Aim:** To develop interoperability between the two navies. Further, it aims to foster cooperation by learning from each other's best practices to conduct joint operations.

Other Indo-French Joint Exercises:

- Desert Knight-21 and Garuda (Air exercise)
- Shakti (Army exercise).

GARUDA VII

News: The chiefs of Indian and French Air Forces recently joined the Air Exercise Garuda-VII in Jodhpur.

About:

- It is a bilateral exercise **between Indian Air Force (IAF) and French Air and Space Force (FASF)**.
- It provides a unique opportunity for both Air Forces to learn and imbibe each other's best practices during operations while also highlighting the growing interoperability between the two Air Forces.
- Ex Garuda-VII is also the first occasion for the light combat aircraft (LCA) Tejas and the light combat helicopter (LCH) Prachand to participate in any international exercise.
- It includes four Rafale fighters and one A-330 multi-role tanker transport aircraft from the French side.

Background:

- This is the seventh edition of the bilateral exercise.
- The first, third and fifth editions were conducted in India in 2003, 2006 and 2014 at Air Force Stations Gwalior, Kalakunda and Jodhpur, respectively.
- The second, fourth and sixth editions were conducted in France in 2005, 2010 and 2019.

EXERCISE BONOSAGAR

News: Recently, the third edition of Indian Navy (IN) – Bangladesh Navy (BN) Bilateral Exercise 'Bongo Sagar' commenced at Port Mongla, Bangladesh.

About:

- **Aim:** To develop a high degree of interoperability and joint operational skills through the conduct of a wide spectrum of maritime exercises and operations between the two navies.
- **Edition:** Its first edition was held in 2019. The present one is the third edition of Bonosagar.
- The harbour phase includes professional and social interactions, and tactical level planning discussions on the conduct of the exercises at sea.
- The sea phase would facilitate ships from both the navies to participate in intensive surface warfare drills, weapon firing drills, seamanship evolutions and coordinated air operations in a tactical scenario.

EXERCISE SAMPRITI

News: Indo-Bangladesh bilateral Joint Military Exercise "Ex SAMPRITI-X" concluded at Jashore Military Station, Bangladesh.

About:

- **Conducted between India and Bangladesh.**
- **Type:** Military Exercise.
- **Hosted by** the exercise is hosted alternately by both countries.
- **Aim:** To strengthen the military relations between the two countries.

EX KHAAN QUEST 2022

News: A multinational peacekeeping exercise commenced in Mongolia.

About:

- A multinational peacekeeping exercise **hosted annually by the Mongolian Armed Forces**.
- The Indian Army is represented by a contingent from the **LADAKH SCOUTS**.
- The 14-day exercise is aimed at enhancing interoperability, building military to military relationships, and developing peace support operations and military readiness among participating nations.
- **Participating Countries:** The exercise saw participation from military contingents from 16 countries. India is one of the participating countries.

INDIA-INDONESIA CORPAT

News: The 38th India-Indonesia Coordinated Patrol (IND-INDO CORPAT) is being conducted in the Andaman Sea and Straits of Malacca.

About:

- The two Navies have been carrying out CORPAT along their International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) since 2002.
- It highlights the mutual trust, synergy and cooperation between the two friendly Navies.
- **Aim:** It is aimed at keeping the Indian Ocean Region safe and secure for commercial shipping, international trade and conduct of legitimate maritime activities.

Other Exercises between India and Indonesia:

- **Samudra Shakti:** A bilateral maritime exercise.
- **Garuda Shakti:** A joint military exercise.

RIM OF THE PACIFIC (RIMPAC) EXERCISE 2022

News: The RIMPAC-22 exercise will be held in and close to the Hawaiian Islands and Southern California from 29th June to 4th August.

About:

- **Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC)** is the **largest naval exercise involving four QUAD countries (including India) and others in the Pacific Rim.**
- It is **held biennially from June-July and is administered by US Navy's Indo-Pacific Command.**
- It aims to train countries to ensure the safety of sea lanes and security on the world's oceans.
- **Theme for 2022:** The theme of RIMPAC 2022 is 'capable, adaptive, partners.'
- **India's Participation:** In the current edition, Indian Navy's INS Satpura and one P8I maritime patrol aircraft are participating in the exercise.

EXERCISE VINBAX 2022

News: The 3rd Edition of Vietnam India Bilateral Army Exercise "Ex VINBAX 2022" is scheduled to be conducted at Chandimandir, Haryana.

About:

- It is a **bilateral military exercise between India and Vietnam.**
- **Purpose:** The exercise is commonly defined as the India and Vietnam army's collaboration, which helps reinforce the India-Vietnam defence and security cooperation and endorses India-Vietnam relations.
- **Theme of the exercise:** "Employment and deployment of an Engineer Company and a Medical Team as part of United Nations Contingent for Peacekeeping Operations."

AL NAJAH-IV

News: India and Oman concluded a 13-day military exercise with a focus on counter-terror cooperation.

About:

- **The fourth edition** between contingents of Indian Army and the Royal Army of Oman took place at the Foreign Training Node of Mahajan Field Firing Ranges from August 1 to 13.
- A 60-member team from the Royal Army of Oman has arrived at the site.
- The Indian Army will be represented by troops from the 18 Mechanised Infantry Battalion.
- The previous edition of the exercise was organised in Muscat in March 2019.

EXERCISE PITCH BLACK

News: Indian Force will join 16 other nations later this month for Exercise Pitch Black, hosted by the Australian Air Force.

About:

- Exercise Pitch Black is a biennial exercise hosted by the Australian Air Force.
- **Aim:** To practise Offensive Counter Air (OCA) and Defensive Counter Air (DCA) combat in a simulated war environment.
- **Participating countries:** The participating countries are Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Indonesia, India, Japan, Malaysia, Netherlands, New Zealand, the Philippines, South Korea, Singapore, Thailand, UAE, U.K and U.S.

Other Exercises with Australia:

- **Bilateral:** Ex AUSTRA HIND (Army), Ex AUSINDEX (Navy).
- **Multilateral:** Malabar Exercise (With the Navies of USA, India, Australia, and Japan).

EXERCISE AUSTRA HIND 22

News: The Bilateral Training Exercise "AUSTRA HIND 22" between contingents of the Indian Army and the Australian Army is scheduled to take place at Mahajan Field Firing Ranges (Rajasthan).

About:

- Exercise AUSTRA HIND is a **bilateral training exercise between the Indian Army and the Australian Army.**
- The first edition of the exercise took place in 2015.

- **Purpose:** To build positive military relations, imbibe each other's best practices and promote the ability to operate together in Semi deserts terrain under a UN peace enforcement mandate.
- **Significance:** This is the first exercise in the series of **Austra Hind** with the participation of all arms and services contingent from both armies.

Other exercises between India and Australia:

- **Exercise Pitch Black:** It is a biennial multilateral air combat exercise hosted by the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) since 1981.
- The Indian Air Force had taken part in the exercise for the first time in 2018.
- **AUSINDEX:** It is a biennial bilateral maritime exercise between the Indian Navy and Royal Australian Navy (RAN).

EXERCISE YUDH ABHYAS

News: 18th edition of India-US joint military training exercise Yudh Abhyas will begin on November 16, 2022 in Auli, Uttarakhand.

About:

- It is a **military exercise between India and the US.**
- **Aim:** To enhance understanding, cooperation, and interoperability between the armies of India and the US with several complex drills being planned.
- The exercise was started in 2004 under the US Army Pacific Partnership Program.
- The exercise is hosted alternately between both countries.

EXERCISE VAJRA PRAHAR

News: The 13th Edition of the Indo-US Joint Special Forces exercise "Ex Vajra Prahar 2022" commenced at the Special Forces Training School (SFTS), Bakloh in Himachal Pradesh.

About:

- Exercise **Vajra Prahar** is a **Special Forces joint military training exercise.**
- It has taken place **alternately in India and the US since 2010.**
- **Aim:** To enable sharing of best practices and experiences in areas such as, joint mission planning capabilities and operational tactics.
- **Significance:** The exercise is a significant step in strengthening the traditional bond of friendship between the special forces of both Nations as well as improve bilateral defence cooperation between India and the USA.

Other Exercises of India with the USA:

- Exercise Yudh Abhyas (Army).
- Cope India (Air Force).
- Red Flag (USA's multilateral air exercise).
- **Malabar Exercise (trilateral naval exercise of India, USA, and Japan).** Exercise Tiger Triumph: It is a tri-service military exercise between India and the US.
- **Exercise Cope India:** It is a series of bilateral Air Force exercises between India and the United States.

GARUDA SHIELD

News: The United States, Indonesia and other countries are conducting joint combat exercises on the Indonesian island of Sumatra.

About:

- Garuda Shield has been an **annual military training since 2009.**
- **Participation of several other countries, including Australia and Japan, makes the 2022 edition the largest ever.**
- **The exercises encompass army, navy, air force and marine drills.**
- It is designed to strengthen capability, interoperability, trust, and cooperation in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

IMT TRILAT

News: The first edition of India-Mozambique-Tanzania Trilateral Exercise (IMT TRILAT) has started at Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania.

About:

- It is a **trilateral maritime exercise** among the **Indian, Mozambique and Tanzania Navies.**
- **Objectives of the exercise:** Capability development to address common threats, enhancing interoperability and strengthening maritime cooperation.
- The Indian Navy is represented by the guided missile frigate, INS Tarkash, a Chetak helicopter and MARCOS (Special Forces).
- **Significance:** These exercises reflect India's and the Indian Navy's commitment to enhancing maritime security and cooperation with maritime neighbours in the Indian Ocean Region and promoting SAGAR (Safety and Growth for All in the Region).

EXERCISE UDARA SHAKTI

News: An Indian Air Force (IAF) contingent has left for Malaysia to participate in a bilateral exercise 'Udarashakti' with the Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF).

About:

- **It is a bilateral air force exercise between India and Malaysia.**
- **The Purpose:** exercise will give a chance to both countries to share and learn best practices and an opportunity for both to discuss mutual combat capabilities.
- The exercise will witness different aerial combat exercises between the two air forces to augment security in the region and to help in strengthening defence cooperation between the two countries.
- **Other Exercises between India and Malaysia:**
 - **Exercise Harimau Shakti:** It is a bilateral joint military exercise between India and Malaysia.

SEA VIGIL 22

News: The third edition of the 'Pan-India' Coastal Defence Exercise 'Sea Vigil-22' was conducted from 15 to 16 November 2022.

About:

- Sea Vigil is a **national-level coastal defence exercise which was conceptualised in 2018.**
- The exercise validates various measures that have been instituted towards enhancing maritime security since '26/11'.
- **Conducted by:** The exercise is being conducted by the Indian Navy in coordination with the Coast Guard and other ministries involved in maritime activities.
- The exercise will be undertaken along the entire 7516-km coastline and Exclusive Economic Zone of India.
- **The exercise involves all the Coastal States and Union territories** along with other maritime stakeholders, including the fishing and coastal communities.
- **It provides a realistic assessment of India's strengths,** weaknesses, and preparedness in maritime and national security.
- **Sea Vigil and TROPEX** together will cover the entire spectrum of Maritime Security challenges.
 - Theatre Level Readiness Operational Exercise (TROPEX) is an inter-service military exercise conducted every two years.

QUIET DIPLOMACY

News: Speaking at the UN Security Council meeting on Ukraine, India called for quiet diplomacy and the peaceful resolution of the Russia-Ukraine tensions.

About:

- Quiet diplomacy is also known as the “softly” approach.
- It is the attempt to influence the behaviour of another state through secret negotiations or by refraining from taking a specific action.
- This method is often employed by states that lack alternative means to influence the target government, or that seek to avoid certain outcomes.

FINLANDIZATION

News: Recently, as Russia invoked the threat of Ukraine joining NATO as a pretext for the invasion, the term “Finlandization” of Ukraine has become popular.



About:

- ‘Finlandization’ is the process whereby a country is induced to favour, or refrain from opposing, the interests of a more powerful country, despite not being politically allied to it.
- This term was originally used with reference to the influence of the former Soviet Union on its neighbour Finland.
- It refers to the policy of strict neutrality between Moscow and the West that Finland followed during the decades of the Cold War.
- Post ww-2 the term was formally coined by the German political scientist Richard Lowenthal in 1961 in the wake of the Berlin crisis.
 - He used it to warn about the Soviet Union’s efforts to gain influence in Europe by the same oppressive methods they used on Finland.

INAS-316 CONDORS

News: Indian Navy formally commissioned its second squadron of P-8I long-range maritime patrol aircraft, ‘Condors’, at INS Hansa in Goa.

About:

- The squadron has been named ‘Condors,’ one of the largest flying land birds with a massive wingspan.
- The ‘Game Changer’ aircraft is a potent platform for maritime surveillance and strike, electronic warfare missions, search, and rescue, providing targeting data to weapon platforms, time-critical surveillance information to the Army and the Air Force.

NATIONAL MARITIME SECURITY COORDINATOR

News: Proposed after the 26/11 terror attacks (2008), the NMSC will be part of the National Security Council Secretariat and will report to the National Security Advisor (NSA).

Role of National Maritime Security Coordinator:

- Principal advisor to the government on maritime security domain. to coordinate among the Indian

Navy, the Coast Guard, security agencies involved in coastal and maritime security and 13 coastal states and UTs.

- At present, all these agencies tend to work in silos with **overlapping jurisdictions** and are constantly at odds with each other.

Other measures for maritime security:

- **SAGAR:** Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) is the theme of Indian Ocean Policy as outlined by PM.
- Signing of White Shipping Agreements, and agreements on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR).
- Setting up of Coastal Surveillance Radar Systems and medical supplies through Operation-Sagar-I and Sagar II during covid times.
- **Net Security provider** - deployment of ships by Indian Navy and Coast guard for maritime security and anti piracy operations.

WEAPONIZATION OF SPACE

News: Recently IAF chief cautioned about the newer threats in the race to weaponize the space domain, a domain which was hitherto considered relatively safe.

About:

- It includes placing weapons in outer space or on heavenly bodies as well as creating weapons that will transit outer space or simply travel from Earth to attack or destroy targets in space.
 - **Examples include** the placing of orbital or suborbital satellites with the intention of attacking enemy satellites, using ground-based direct ascent missiles to attack space assets, jamming signals sent from enemy satellites, satellite attacks on Earth targets etc.
- **The weaponization of space is different from the militarization of space**, which includes using space-based assets for **C4ISR (Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance)**.
 - The militarization of space assists armies on the conventional battlefield, whereas via the weaponization of space, outer space itself emerges as the battleground, sometimes referred to as the “fourth frontier of war.”

India in the race of space power:

- **The Department of Atomic Energy formed the Indian National Committee for Space Research (INCOSPAR)** under the leadership of Dr Sarabhai and Dr Ramanathan in 1962.

- **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** was formed on August 15, 1969.
 - India established a **Defence Space Agency (DSA) in 2019**, which is expected to be the forerunner for a full-fledged aerospace command.
 - It is also establishing a **Defence Space Research Organisation (DSRO)**, which is meant to undertake research and development on the capability mix that is required as per the strategy and policy developed by the DSA.
- **Anti-satellite (ASAT) missile test (Mission Shakti):** India is now the fourth country in the world to conduct an ASAT missile test, after the United States, Russia, and China.
 - The test entailed launching a ballistic missile into outer space to destroy an Indian satellite located about 300 kilometres above the earth’s surface in low earth orbit (LEO).

United States’ programme for developing space weapons:

- **Space-Based Lasers (SBLs):** These would operate in LEO and destroy hostile ballistic missiles during their boost phase.
- **Space-Based Missile Interceptors.**
- **Anti-Satellite (ASAT) Weapons:** It includes high powered lasers, micro-satellites, Kinetic-Energy Anti-Satellites (KE-ASAT) weapons, Near Field IR Experiment (NFIRE), etc.

Outer Space Treaty:

- It was conceptualised by the **United Nations in 1967**.
- It emphasises the fact that the exploration of outer space should be beneficial to all humankind and nations and it should be for peaceful purposes.
- It claims that one nation cannot claim national sovereignty in outer space.

STATE SPONSORS OF TERRORISM

News: Recently, Ukraine has requested the US to designate Russia as a “state sponsor of terrorism.”

About:

- A designation given by the **United States Secretary of State** (the minister primarily in charge of foreign relations) to countries that have repeatedly provided support for acts of international terrorism.
- **The US can place four categories of sanctions on countries that are on this list -**
 1. Restrictions on US foreign assistance.
 2. Ban on defence exports and sales.

3. Certain controls over exports of dual-use items.
 4. Miscellaneous financial and other restrictions.
- Sanctions can also be placed on countries and persons that engage in certain trade with designated countries.
 - **Countries on the list:** As of now, there are four countries on the list of state sponsors of terrorism. They are Syria, Iran, North Korea, and Cuba.
 - **Can countries be taken off the list?** Countries can be put and taken off the list from time to time.
 - A country can be delisted if it is deemed by the US to have reformed its behaviour.

ARMY AVIATION CORPS

News: Captain Abhilasha Barak, created history by becoming the first woman officer to join the Army Aviation Corps as a Combat Aviator (pilot).

About:

- **Army Aviation Corps is the component of the Indian Army** which was established on 1st November, 1986.
- The Army Aviation Corps is headed by a director-general at the Army headquarters in New Delhi.
- It was **immediately inducted into 'Operation Pawan' which was a crucial test for the newly formed corps.**
- The Army Aviation Corps of the Indian Army primarily carries out the evacuation of the injured troops during operations or health emergencies in the high-altitude areas.
- The choppers of the Aviation Corps are also used for observation, reconnaissance, casualty evacuation, combat research and rescue, and essential load drops.

OVERGROUND WORKERS

News: Recently, nearly 250 overground workers (OGWs) were arrested in Jammu & Kashmir (J&K).

About:

- **OGWs were arrested under Public Safety Act (PSA) and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UPA).**
- PSA 1978 of J&K is an administrative detention law that allows detention of any individual for up to two years without a trial or charge.
- **Detention of a person below the age of 18 is strictly prohibited under this Act** and an individual detained shall be produced before the magistrate within 24 hours.
 - UPA 1967 provides for the more effective prevention of certain unlawful activities of individuals and associations (and for dealing with

terrorist activities) and for matters connected therewith.

- OGWs are those that **provide logistical support, cash, accommodation, and other facilities to militants** or terrorists in J&K.

HYBRID MILITANTS

News: A hybrid militant was arrested in Jammu & Kashmir.

About:

- **'Hybrid' or 'part-time' militants** are people who do not figure on police records as ultras, but are radicalised enough to carry out a terror strike and then slip back into routine life.
- **A hybrid militant poses as civilian to dissemble their violent activities** thus making it more difficult for security forces to trace them or determine their activities

OPERATION SATARK

News: RPF launches Focused effort under "Operation Satark" from 5th April to 30th April, 2022.

About:

- Railway Protection Force has recently started "Operation Satark" with an objective of acting against illicit liquor/FICN/illegal tobacco products/unaccounted gold and any other items being transported through railway networks for the purpose of tax evasion and smuggling.

Railway Protection Force:

- Railway Protection Force (RPF) is a security force **under the ownership of Indian Railways, Ministry of Railways, Government of India.**
- Under the Railway Protection Force Act, 1957, it became the **statutory body.**
- It is the lead security agency in the field of railway security having a pan India reach. It is entrusted with the security of railway property, passenger area and passengers.

OPERATION UPALABDH

News: Railway Protection Force (RPF) conducted a Pan India Drive against the alleged black marketeers under Operation Upalabdh.

About:

- **Initiative of Railway Protection Force (RPF).**

- **Purpose:** It is a pan India drive against activities of touts who use virtual tools to buy railway tickets before genuine passengers do. These tickets are then used by touts for business, such as selling tickets at a premium.
- **Benefits:** The operation has been able to curb the activities of touts substantially and make railway tickets available to the average person.

Other operations launched by RPF:

- **Meri Saheli Initiative:** It was launched by RPF to provide security to lady passengers in long distance trains particularly travelling alone or those who are vulnerable to crime.
- **Operation Amanat:** Under this, RPF retrieved left behind luggage having value of more than 23 Crores belonging to 12377 passengers and returned to them after due verification.
- **Toll Free Helpline Number 139 (24 X 7):** It is a single helpline number launched by Indian Railways for quick grievance redressal and enquiries by passengers during their train journeys.
- **Mission Jeevan Raksha:** Under this, RPF personnel have saved 1650 lives from the wheels of the running trains at railway stations in the last four years.
- **Operation Number Plate:** It was launched by the RPF to identify and verify all vehicles parked in Railway premises, circulating areas, parking lots and even in the 'No Parking' areas for a longer duration.
- **Operation Thirst:** It was launched by the RPF to stop selling of unauthorised Packaged Drinking Water (PDW) in railway premises.

AIR INDEPENDENT PROPULSION TECHNOLOGY

News: France's Naval Group declined the bid for the P-75I Project, citing it does not use AIP (Air-Independent Propulsion) Technology yet.

About:

- AIP technology allows a conventional submarine to remain submerged for much longer than ordinary diesel-electric submarines.
- All conventional submarines must surface to run their generators that recharge the batteries that allow the boat to function underwater.
- However, the more frequently a submarine surfaces, the higher the chances of it being detected.
- **AIP allows a submarine to remain submerged for more than a fortnight** compared to two to three days for diesel-electric boats.

- These cells convert chemical energy into electrical energy, recharging the batteries of the submarine.
- **The backdrop of AIP:** Installing AIP increases the length and weight of the boats as it requires pressurised Liquid Oxygen (LOX) storage onboard and supplies for all three technologies.
- **What submarines does India have now?**
 - India has 16 conventional diesel-electric submarines which are classified as SSKs.
 - After the last two Kalvari Class subs are commissioned under P-75, this number will go up to 18.
 - India also has two nuclear ballistic submarines classified SSBN.

OPERATION NAMKEEN

News: Under Operation Namkeen, the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) has recovered 52 kg of cocaine, estimated to be valued at over Rs 500 crore in the international illicit market.

About:

- To interdict the narcotic drugs, "Operation Namkeen" was launched by DRI.
- The **Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI)** is an Indian intelligence agency. It is **India's apex anti-smuggling intelligence, investigations, and operations agency**.
- **The Directorate is run by officers from the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC).**
- The DRI came into existence in 1957.
- **DRI is under the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance, Government of India.**
- DRI enforces the **provisions of the Customs Act, 1962** and over fifty other allied Acts including the Arms Act, NDPS Act, COFEPOSA, Wildlife Act, Antiquities Act etc.

INTEGRATED BATTLE GROUPS

News: The Army has identified a holding formation on the Western front and a Strike formation on the Northern borders to be converted into agile Integrated Battle Groups (IBG).

About:

- IBGs are **brigade-sized, agile, self-sufficient combat formations**, which can swiftly launch strikes against adversaries in case of hostilities.
- Each IBG would be tailor-made based on Threat, Terrain and Task and resources will be allotted based on the three Ts.

- They need to be light so they will be low on logistics and they will be able to mobilise within 12-48 hrs based on the location.
- The IBGs will also be **defensive and offensive in nature**.
- **Their structure:**
 - Each IBG will be **headed by a Major General**.
 - While a Command is the largest static formation of the Army spread across a defined geography, a Corps is the largest mobile formation.
 - Typically, each Corps has about three Divisions. The idea is to reorganise them into IBGs which are Brigade sized units but have all the essential elements like infantry, armoured, artillery and air defence embedded together.

SCALES OF ACCOMMODATION (SOA)

News: Recently, the Defence Minister has approved revised Scales of Accommodation 2022 (SoA) for Defence Services.

About:

- It defines the authorization for construction facilities for operational, functional, training, administrative, living and recreation facilities for the Defence Services.
- These scales are applicable for all three Defence Services and the Indian Coast Guard.
- The previous SoA was approved by the Government of India in 2009.
- However, there was a need for a revised SoA due to the induction of new units, technological facilities, requirements of operational readiness, increased threat perception and concept of sustainable development.

CHIEF OF DEFENCE STAFF

News: Ministry of Defence (MoD) issued a notification which broadens the scope of eligible officers for the post of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS).

About the notification:

- The professional qualifications and age limitations for military generals to be eligible for appointment as CDS.
- **Officers from all three services are required to meet broadly the same two qualifications:**
 - First, an officer must be either serving, or retired, in the rank of general or lieutenant general (three-star generals).
 - Second, his age should be below 62 years on the date of his appointment.
- The central government has reserved the right to extend the tenure of the CDS to a maximum of 65 years.
- New notification will make many officers eligible for CDS, thus providing a wider pool for the selection.
- **He will be the single-point military adviser** to the government as suggested by the Kargil Review Committee in 1999.
- CDS acts as the permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee which will also have three service chiefs as members.
- His core function will be to foster greater operational synergy between the three service branches of the Indian military and keep inter-service frictions to a minimum.
- **Conditions:**
 - Not eligible to hold any Government office after demitting the office of CDS.
 - No private employment without prior approval for a period of five years after demitting the office of CDS.

Roles and functions:

- To **head the Department of Military Affairs (DMA)** in the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and function as its secretary.
- To **act as the Principal Military Advisor to the Defence Minister** on all Tri-Service matters.
- To function as the **Permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee** and to administer the Tri-Service organisations/agencies/commands.
- To **be a member of Defence Acquisition Council (chaired by Defence Minister)** and function as the **Military Advisor to the Nuclear Command Authority**.
- To **ensure optimal utilisation of infrastructure and rationalise** it through jointness among the Services.
- To **implement Five-Year Defence Capital Acquisition Plan and Two- Year roll-on Annual Acquisition Plans**, as a follow up of Integrated Capability Development Plan.
- **Bring about reforms in the functioning of three Services** aimed at augmenting combat capabilities of the Armed Forces.
- **CDS does not exercise any military command**, including over the three Service Chiefs, to be able to provide impartial advice to the political leadership.

PROJECT WARDEC

News: The Army Training Command signed a MoU with Gandhinagar-based Rashtriya Raksha University (RRU) to develop a 'Wargame Research and Development Centre' in New Delhi.

About:

- WARDEC will be a **first-of-its-kind simulation-based training centre in India that will use artificial intelligence (AI) to design virtual reality wargames.**
- **Purpose:** The centre will be used by the Army to train its soldiers and test their strategies through metaverse-enabled gameplay.
- Soldiers will test their skills in the metaverse where their surroundings will be simulated using a combination of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR).
- **Location:** The centre will come up in a military zone in New Delhi.
- **Significance:** The centre will help soldiers prepare for wars as well as counter-terror and counter-insurgency operations.

Rashtriya Raksha University (RRU):

- The RRU, an institute under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), specialises in national security and policing. Located in Gandhinagar's Lavad village, it is an "institute of national importance" – a status granted to it by an Act of Parliament.

REGIONAL CYBER SECURITY

News: First Colombo Security Conclave Virtual Workshop on Developing Regional Cyber Security Capabilities on Defensive Operations, Deep/Dark web handling and Digital Forensics was held recently.

Some Initiatives taken at regional level:

- **Pacific Cyber Security Operational Network (PaCSO)** for sharing cybersecurity threat information and tools between the member states.
- ASEAN members agreed to subscribe in principle to the 11 voluntary, non-binding norms recommended by the 2015 Report of the U.N. Group of Governmental Experts (UNGGE).
- **Singapore-ASEAN Cybersecurity Centre of Excellence (ASCCE)** helps to foster a common understanding of cybersecurity through technical capacity building.

- **YAKSHA, an EU-ASEAN partnership** that develops cybersecurity solutions tailored to specific national needs leveraging EU Know-How and local knowledge.
- **The 2016 Singapore-initiated ASEAN Cyber Capacity Program** and the newly launched ASEAN-Japan Cybersecurity Capacity Building Centre in Bangkok are both meant to address obstacles to ASEAN cohesion on cyber related issues.

Cybercrime in India:

- It is defined as an unlawful act wherein the computer is a tool or target or both. It is a criminal activity that uses computers as instruments for perpetuating crimes.
 - **Information Technology Act, 2000 provides legal recognition** for electronic communication, electronic commerce, and cybercrimes etc.
- **Status of cybercrime:**
 - As per NCRB data from "Crime in India, 2020", Cybercrimes have increased four times or 306 percent in the past four years and rate of cybercrime (incidents per lakh population) increased in 2020.
 - India is among the top five targets for cyberattacks in the Asia Pacific (APAC) region, particularly security breaches that involve cyber espionage, as per 'Cyber Threats to Financial Organizations in 2022' report.
 - As per State of Ransomware 2021, 68% of organisations in India deal with ransomware.

Initiatives to combat cybercrime in India:

- **Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C):** It was rolled out by the Ministry of Home Affairs for the period 2018-2020 to combat cybercrime in the country, in a coordinated and effective manner.
- **Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In):** It serves as national agency for responding to cyber security incidents as per provisions of IT Act, 2000.
- It issues alerts and advisories regarding latest cyber threats/vulnerabilities and countermeasures to protect computers and networks on a regular basis.
- **National Cyber Coordination Centre (NCCC):** It is a multi-stakeholder cybersecurity and e-surveillance agency, under CERT-In. It generates situational awareness of existing and potential cyber security threats and enables timely information sharing for proactive, preventive, and protective actions by individual entities.
- **National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre (NCIIIPC):** It is created under **IT Act, 2000** (amended 2008) and designated as National Nodal Agency to facilitate safe, secure, and resilient information infrastructure for critical sectors of the Nation.

- **Cyber Swachhta Kendra (Botnet Cleaning and Malware Analysis Centre):** It has been launched for detection of malicious programs and provides free tools to remove the same.
- **National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal:** It caters to complaints pertaining to cybercrimes only with special focus on cybercrimes against women and children.

CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

News: Government recently declared ICICI, HDFC, NPCI's IT resources as critical infrastructure (CI).

About:

- **CI or Critical Information Infrastructure (CII),** refers to a physical or cyber-based system, incapacitation, or destruction of which shall have debilitating impact on national security, economy, public health, or safety.
- **It includes-** transport, power and energy, telecom, government, banking and financial services, strategic and public enterprises.
- **Measures taken to protect CI:**
 - National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre (NCIIPC) is the nodal agency for taking all measures to protect CIIs.
 - Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) is a nodal agency for responding to computer security incidents.
 - National Cyber Security Coordinator (NCSC) to coordinate with different agencies at the national level for cyber security matters.
 - National Cyber Security Policy 2013 to build a secure and resilient cyberspace

MULTI AGENCY CENTRE

News: The Union government has asked the States to share more intelligence inputs through the Multi Agency Centre (MAC), a common counter-terrorism grid under the Intelligence Bureau.

About:

- **It is a common counter-terrorism grid under the Intelligence Bureau.**
- Formed in December 2001 following the Kargil intrusion and as suggested by the Kargil Review Committee report.
- **Purpose:** It is the nodal agency for the exchange of intelligence collected by various agencies and police forces across the country.

- As many as 28 organisations, including the Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW), armed forces and State police, are part of the platform.
- Various security agencies share real-time intelligence inputs on the MAC.
- The MAC had the **main server in Delhi**
- **Headquarters:** The national-level MAC is in Delhi, while state capitals have subsidiary MACs (SMACs).
- **Also Remember:**
 - Multi-Agency Centre (MAC) is different from Crime Multi-Agency Centre (Cri-MAC).
 - Cri-MAC was launched by the Ministry of Home Affairs in 2020 to share information between various police forces on heinous crimes and other issues related to interstate coordination.

CRIME MULTI AGENCY CENTRE (CRI-MAC) PORTAL

News: At least seven States and one Union Territory have not uploaded a single alert on the Crime Multi Agency Centre (Cri-MAC) portal since it was launched in March 2020.

About:

- Launched in 2020 by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).
- **Aim:** To share information on crime and criminals 24×7 with various law enforcement agencies and ensure a seamless flow of information among them.
- **Implemented by:** The application is run by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB).
- **Benefits of the portal:** Cri-MAC facilitates the dissemination of information about significant crimes including human trafficking across the country on a real-time basis and enables inter-State coordination.
- This can help in locating and identifying the trafficked victims as also in the prevention, detection, and investigation of crime.

NATIONAL CADET CORPS

News: The National Cadet Corps (NCC) is celebrating the 74th anniversary of its Raising Day on November 27.

About:

- **Background:** It came into existence in 1948 under the National Cadet Corps Act, 1948.
- It is a Tri-Services Organization, comprising the Army, Navy, and Air Force, engaged in grooming the youth into disciplined and patriotic citizens.
- **Working:**

- It is a **voluntary organisation** which recruits cadets from high schools, colleges, and universities all over India.
- The Cadets are given basic military training in small arms and parades. They are given preference in military service over normal candidates during selections.
- **Related Ministries:** Defence Ministry deals with NCC at the National level. The Education Ministry deals with NCC in all States.
- **Directorate General NCC:** It is the national level HQ located at New Delhi. It is headed by the Director General (DG), an Army Officer of the rank of Lieutenant General.

NATIONAL HOSPITAL SHIP

News: The government has issued a Request for Information (RFI) for a national hospital ship (NHS) for the Navy that will act as a floating 250-bed hospital on the high seas.

About:

- The hospital ship is the first such ship for the Indian Navy.
- The vessel will comply with the Geneva Convention and accordingly painted white with the Red Cross displayed prominently on the ship side and on top.
- **Key Features of NHS:**
 - **Capacity of NHS:** capacity to carry 600 personnel on board, including the crew, doctors, and patients.
 - **Timeline of NHS:** Once the contract is signed, the Navy wants the ship to be delivered in four years after that.

Geneva Conventions:

- The Geneva Conventions (1949) and their Additional Protocols are international treaties that contain the most important rules limiting the barbarity of war.
- They protect people who do not take part in the fighting (civilians, medics, aid workers) and those who can no longer fight (wounded, sick and shipwrecked troops, prisoners of war).

THEATRE COMMANDS

News: Minister of Defence announced the setting up of 'Joint Theatre Commands' (JTC) of the tri-services.

About Theatre Commands:

- Theatre Command means putting a specific number of personnel from the three services under a common commander in a specified geographical territory.

- **At present, the Indian Army, navy, and air force each have multiple commands that are vertically split in terms of their command structure.**
 - The army and air force have seven commands each while the navy has three commands.
- **Idea of Theatre commands** has been proposed by both the Kargil review committee as well as D. B. Shekatkar committee.
- While the details are not immediately clear, reports say that single service commands that currently exist would be combined into just 4 geographical commands.
- Also, Air space and cyber war would be the 5th and 6th theatre commands.

INDIA STAYS OUT OF GLOBAL DECLARATION ON FUTURE ON INTERNET

News: Aiming to keep the Internet open, free, and neutral, it is a political commitment among the partners to advance a positive vision for the Internet and digital technologies.

About:

- Around 60 countries have signed the declaration including the US, European Union, United Kingdom, Canada, and France.
- India, China, and Russia are among the large nations that are not part of this declaration.
- **Key principles of Declaration:**
 - Commitments to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms of all people.
 - Promote a global Internet that advances the free flow of information, advancing "inclusive and affordable" connectivity,
 - Promote trust in the global digital ecosystem, including through protection of privacy,
 - Protecting and strengthening the multistakeholder approach to governance.
- **A report titled, "The return of digital authoritarianism: internet shutdowns" highlighted that -**
 - Number of countries that shut down the internet in 2021 has increased to 34 from 29 in 2020.
 - India is the top country to impose internet shutdowns in 2021 for the fourth consecutive year.
- **India also did not sign the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime, 2001.**
 - The data sharing provisions of Budapest Convention infringes on national sovereignty.
 - Presently, it is the only legally binding multilateral convention on cybercrime and electronic evidence.

WALONG MELA

News: Indian Army recently organised Walong Mela in continuation of Diamond Jubilee celebrations of Battle of Walong.

About:

- It aims to commemorate the unsurpassable bravery & sacrifice of the Indian Army while defending the Indian Territory against the Chinese aggression of 1962.
- The aim of the Mela was to familiarise the public with the Indian Army & to encourage a sense of belongingness & togetherness.

Battle of Walong:

- Walong is one of India's easternmost villages in Arunachal Pradesh.
- In the 1962 India-China War, the Indian Army defended against China in all sectors except one — Arunachal Pradesh's Walong.
- The Battle of Walong was the only counterattack India could manage in the war.
- The Indian Army held back the Chinese troops for 27 days, which forced the Chinese to deploy its reserve division from Tawang to Walong.

CHABAHAR PORT

News: India observed 'Chabahar Day' where India and Iran reviewed the progress of Chabahar port and the INSTC transcontinental trade route.

BEING DIRECT: INDIA TO CHABAHAR



About:

- **Chabahar Port is a seaport in Chabahar located in south-eastern Iran, on the Gulf of Oman.**
- It serves as Iran's only deep-sea port, and consists of two separate ports named Shahid Kalantari and Shahid Beheshti, each of which has five berths.
- **The Chabahar port is a key pillar of India's Indo-Pacific vision to connect Eurasia with the Indian Ocean Region.**
- **The port will also be part of the International North South Transport Corridor network connecting India.**
- Its **geographic proximity to countries such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India.**
- **The Chabahar port is considered a gateway to excellent opportunities for trade by India, Iran, and Afghanistan with central Asian countries.**
- **India, Afghanistan, and Iran signed a deal to establish the International Transport and Transit Corridor (Chabahar Agreement) in 2016.**
- This involved **construction of a rail line from Chabahar port to Zahedan and linking it to the Zaranj-Delaram Highway, as an alternate trade route to Afghanistan and Central Asia.**

INTERNATIONAL DRIVING PERMIT

News: Recently, The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has issued a notification for greater facilitation of citizens in the issue of International Driving Permit (IDP) across the country.

About:

- International Driving Permit (IDP) or International Driving Licence (IDL) **is accepted in over 150 countries.**
- **It is an official travel document that is authorised by the United Nations** issued to tourists travelling to foreign countries.
- It is an official translation of your driver's licence issued in your home country.
- **It translates your licence documents into many languages so authorities abroad can verify** and understand your driving credentials.
- The document is issued from various zonal offices. The validity of this permit is for one year.
- The applicants are required to get the licence from the country visiting within a one-year period.
- **India's Status:** India is a signatory to Convention on International Road Traffic of 1949 (**Geneva Convention**).
 - So, India is required to issue International Driving Permit as provided under this Convention, for the acceptance of the same on reciprocal basis with other countries.

STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL PEACE RESEARCH INSTITUTE (SIPRI) REPORT

News: Recently, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) launched the findings of SIPRI Yearbook 2022, which assesses the current state of armaments, disarmament, and international security.

About SIPRI:

- The SIPRI is an independent international institute dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control, and disarmament.

- Established in 1966 at Stockholm, SIPRI provides data, analysis, and recommendations, based on open sources, to policymakers, researchers, media, and the interested public.

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) report:

- India's import of arms decreased by 33% between 2011-15 and 2016-20 and Russia was the most affected supplier, although India's imports of US arms also fell by 46%.
- India's warheads have low yield and have a maximum range of over 5,000 km, as compared to China.
- SIPRI, established in 1966, is an international institute dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control, and disarmament.
- World military spending continued to grow in 2021, reaching an all-time high of \$2.1 trillion despite economic fallout of the pandemic.
- **Five largest spenders** were the U.S., China, India, U.K., and Russia. The U.S. and China alone accounted for 52% spending.

Key Highlights of the report:

- **Globally:** The nine nuclear-armed states—the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)—continue to modernise their nuclear arsenals.
- **India:** India had 160 nuclear warheads as of January 2022. India has expanded its nuclear stockpile from 156 in January 2021 to 160 in January 2022.
 - India does not share official data on its nuclear arsenal.
- **The five largest arms exporters in 2017-21 are –** the United States, Russia, France, China, and Germany.
- **The five largest arms importers were** India, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Australia, and China.

NORD STREAM AND NORD STREAM 2

News: The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) termed the leakage of methane gas due to rupture of Nord Stream natural gas pipeline system as the biggest single release.

Nord Stream pipelines from Russia

Leaks detected on both pipelines near Bornholm



About Nord Stream:

- Nord Stream is the primary network through which gas reaches Germany from Russia through the Baltic Sea.
 - Nord Stream 1 is 1,224 km running from Vyborg in Russia to Lubmin in Germany.
 - Nord Stream 2 is a 1200-km pipeline from Ust-Luga in Russia to Greifswald in Germany.

Significance of Nord Stream Pipeline:

- **Economical and Environment-friendly:** The 1,224 km, \$11-billion underwater link is the shortest, most economical, and environment friendly route to double Russia's gas export to Germany.
- **Energy security to Europe:** It ensures a highly reliable supply of Russian gas to Europe.
- **NS2 is particularly important as Europe sees a decline in domestic gas production** and an increasing demand for imported gas.
- **Offers stability in the region:** The pipeline offers stability to the strategically important energy trade because Russia's dependence on the European Union and vice-versa are increased.

Nord stream2:

- **Germany has suspended the certification process** of Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline from Russia.
- Nord Stream 2 is 1,230-kilometre-long natural gas pipeline run from Ust-Luga in Russia to Greifswald in Germany through the Baltic Sea and will carry 55 billion cubic metres of gas per year.

- It is **designed to double Russia's gas exports to Germany.**
- It **runs parallel to an earlier Nord Stream pipeline** which has been working since 2011 and would double its capacity, to 110 billion cubic metres of gas a year.
- **Russian state-owned gas company Gazprom owns half of Nord Stream 2.**

CRYPTOCURRENCY CRIMES

News: Recently, **Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD)**, a think tank under Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), has issued a standard operating procedure on how to probe crypto crimes.

India's provisions to control cryptocurrency crime:

- **Cryptocurrency and Regulation of Official Digital Currency Bill, 2021:** It is not yet tabled in Parliament.
- **Prevention of Money Laundering Act 2002 (PMLA):** Provisions of PMLA have been used by ED to prosecute offenders in 2020 for facilitating the foreign-related companies to launder the PoC (Proceeds of crime) by converting money generated into cryptocurrency and thereafter transfer to foreign countries.
- **Indian Penal code, 1860 (IPC):** Section 420 of IPC penalises cybercrimes like creation of Bogus websites, cyber frauds like password thefts are punishable with a seven-year jail term and/or fine.
- **For example,** Crypto frauds include phishing websites designed to steal sensitive information from users, as well as Ponzi schemes and fake investment plans like Morris Coin.
- **Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000:** Section 66C of IT Act, deals with Identity theft using passwords, digital signatures, biometric thumb impressions or other identifying features of another person for fraudulent purposes.
 - In 2019, the cryptocurrencies worth Rs 30.85 lakh were stolen from a West Delhi businessman's wallet.

PADMA

News: An automated Pay & Allowances module for the Indian Coast Guard was inaugurated by Shri Rajnish Kumar, Controller General of Defence Accounts (CGDA), Ministry of Defence, on June 28, 2022.

About:

- **Payroll Automation for Disbursement of Monthly Allowances (PADMA)**, is an automated platform to provide seamless and timely disbursal of **Pay & Allowances to around 15,000 Indian Coast Guard personnel.**

- This module has been developed under the aegis of Défense Accounts Department and will be operated by Pay Accounts Office Coast Guard, Noida.
- The launch marked the beginning of the Centralised Pay System (CPS).

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON COUNTERING FINANCING OF TERRORISM

News: Recently, the 3rd Ministerial Conference on Countering Financing of Terrorism – No Money for Terror will be held in New Delhi.

About:

- **Hosted by the Ministry** of Home Affairs.
- **Aim:** To make progress on the discussions on combating terrorist financing.
- **Focus areas:** Global trends in terrorism and terrorist financing, the use of formal and informal channels of funding terrorism.
- **Recently, India also hosted two global events in October 2022 —**
 - the annual General Assembly of the Interpol in Delhi
 - a special session of the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee in Mumbai and Delhi.

INDIA'S DEFENCE EXPORTS

News: Recently, the Philippines signed a \$375 million deal for BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles.

About:

- India exported hardware worth 38,500 crore in the last seven years.
- Exports increased from 1500 crore in 2016-17 to 8500 crores in 2020-21.
- Major exports include- Armoured vehicles, lightweight torpedoes, weapons locating radar, fire control systems, offshore patrol vehicles etc.
- Exports at present happen to more than 75 countries globally.
- In top 100 defence companies; there are three Indian companies -
 1. Hindustan Aeronautics Limited. (HAL)
 2. Bharat Electronics Limited. (BEL)
 3. Ordnance Factory Board. (OFB)

Measures taken to improve defence export:

1. **Draft defence procurement and export promotion policy, 2020 goals (DDPEPP):**
 - To achieve a turnover of Rs 1,75,000 Crores (US\$ 25Bn) including export of Rs 35,000 Crore (US\$ 5

Bn) in Aerospace and Defence Goods and services by 2025.

- To reduce dependence on imports and take forward "Make in India" initiatives through domestic design and development.
- To promote export of defence products and become part of the global defence value chains.
- To create an environment that encourages R&D, rewards innovation, creates Indian IP ownership and promotes a robust and self-reliance defence industry.

2. Defence Indigenisation:

- India's defence expenditure has remained less than 1% of its GDP in the last five years.
- **Spending came down to 0.083% in 2020-21 from 0.088% of GDP in 2016-17.**
- India is funding 6% on Defence Research & Development (R&D) of the Defence Budget whilst USA and China are spending approximately 12% and 20%, respectively.
- It means the capability to design, develop and produce defence equipment within the country using own skills and resources for the purpose of achieving self-reliance and reducing the burden of imports i.e., self-sufficient.
- **Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO)**, Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs), and private organisations i.e., Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) are playing a critical role in indigenisation of defence industries.

USE OF SPACE FOR DEFENCE

News: Prime Minister launched Mission DefSpace at the annual Defense Expo held in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

About Mission Defspace:

- It seeks to develop innovative solutions for the Armed Forces in the space domain through industry and start-ups.
- Under the mission, 75 challenges are being opened to get innovative solutions, based on the defence requirements in the space domain.

Other Global framework for regulation of Space:

- **Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT)** prohibits nuclear weapons tests "or any other nuclear explosion" in the atmosphere, in outer space, and under water.
- **The U.N. Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA)** supports governments in building legal, technical, and political infrastructure to support global space activities.
 - It maintains a registry of objects launched into Outer Space.

- **Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee's (IADC)- Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines** which cover the overall environmental impact of the missions with a focus on Limitation of debris and post-mission disposal.

NEW CYBERSECURITY GUIDELINES

News: Indian CERT-In has issued directions relating to information security practices and reporting of cyber incidents under provisions of section 70B of Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000.

About:

- According to CERT, there has been a three-fold increase in incidents in 2020 compared to 2019, recording 1.16 million breaches.
- India has jumped 37 places to 10th position in Global Cyber Security Index (GCI) 2020 (by International Telecommunication Union).

Key guidelines:

- All government and private agencies will mandatorily have to **report all cyber breach incidents to CERT-In** within six hours.
- **Virtual private server (VPS) providers**, cloud service providers need to register accurate information related to subscriber names, customer hiring services, etc and maintain them for five years or longer duration as mandated by law.

SPRINT CHALLENGES

News: Recently, the Prime Minister unveiled 'SPRINT Challenges' during the Naval Innovation and Indigenisation Organisation (NIIO) seminar 'Swavlamban.'

About:

- In a bid to achieve 'Atma Nirbharta' in defence and as part of 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav' SPRINT project aims to induct at least 75 new indigenous technologies/products into the Indian Navy.
- **Supporting Pole-Vaulting in R&D through Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX), NIIO and Technology Development Acceleration Cell (TDAC).**
- **Objective:** To foster innovation and indigenisation for self-reliance in defence in keeping with the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat.
- **Organizing Authority:** by NIIO, in conjunction with the Defence Innovation Organisation (DIO).
- **Mandate:** to engage Indian industry and academia towards achieving self-reliance in the Defence sector.

- **Significance:** provide a platform for leaders from Industry, Academia, Services and Government to come together on a common platform to ideate and come up with recommendations for the Defence Sector.
- Naval Innovation and Indigenisation Organisation
- **Launched in 2020 by the Ministry of Defence** to fulfil its requirements relating to technology.

HIM DRONE-A-THON PROGRAMME

News: The Indian Army in collaboration with the Drone Federation of India has launched the 'Him Drone-a-thon' programme.

About:

- It is **launched by Indian Army** in collaboration with the Drone Federation of India
- **Aim:** To catalyse and provide focused opportunities to the Indian drone ecosystem to develop path-breaking drone capabilities for meeting the requirements of frontline troops.
- **Features:** Under the programme, the following categories of drones will be developed initially
 - Logistics/ Load carrying Drone in High Altitude Areas
 - Autonomous Surveillance/ Search & Rescue
 - Drone and Micro/ Nano Drones for Fighting in Built Up Areas.

LIVE-FIRE EXERCISES

News: China had started its live-fire exercise near Taiwan by launching at least 11 ballistic missiles into the country's coast. This is being done after the US House speaker visited Taiwan.

About:

- They are exercises in which live ammunition is used to create training conditions that are as close to real combat scenarios as possible.
- During live-fire training, soldiers are placed in simulated combat situations and are given the opportunity to use their weapons and equipment (like ships, aircraft, tanks, and drones).

PORCUPINE STRATEGY

News: Recently, China launched aggressive and unprecedented military exercises near Taiwan in response to US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to the island that China claims as part of its territory.

About:

- The “porcupine doctrine” was proposed in 2008 by US Naval War College research professor William S Murray.
- It is a strategy of asymmetric warfare focused on fortifying a weak state's defences to exploit the enemy's weaknesses rather than taking on its strengths.
- It is about building defences that would ensure that Taiwan could be attacked and damaged but not defeated, at least without unacceptably high costs and risks.

Three defensive layers in porcupine strategy:

1. The outer layer is about intelligence and reconnaissance to ensure defence forces are fully prepared.
2. Behind this come plans for guerrilla warfare at sea with aerial support from sophisticated aircraft provided by the US.
3. The innermost layer relies on the geography and demography of the island.

Need for such a strategy:

- China enjoys overwhelming military superiority over Taiwan. Over the past decade, China has developed far more accurate and precise weapon systems to target Taiwan and has been vocal about its intention to “reunite” the island with the mainland, by force or coercion if needed.

INTERNATIONAL ELECTROTECHNICAL COMMISSION (IEC)

News: India wins the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) Vice Presidency and Strategic Management Board (SMB) Chair for the 2023-25 term.

About:

- International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), a **not-for-profit membership organisation, was founded in 1906 in London.**
- **Purpose:** It is the world's leading organisation for the preparation and publication of international standards for all electrical, electronic, and related technologies. These are known collectively as “electrotechnology”.
- **Membership:** Brings together 173 countries and coordinates the work of 20,000 experts globally.
- **Headquarters:** Geneva, Switzerland
- **Standardization Management Board (SMB)** is an apex governance body of IEC responsible for technical policy matters.

INDO-NAGA CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT

News: National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah) (NSCN (IM)) observed 25 years of signing the “Indo-Naga” ceasefire agreement with the central government.

About “Indo-Naga” ceasefire agreement:

- The NSCN-IM signed a ceasefire agreement with the Government of India on July 25, 1997, which became effective on August 1, 1997.
 - This heralded the start of Indo-Naga peace talks.
- It opened an avenue in the search for a solution to the long-standing political demands of Nagas living across the region between India and Myanmar.
- However, even after 25 years of this agreement, a final solution to the Naga conflict remains elusive.

About Nagas:

- Nagaland is almost entirely inhabited by the Naga tribes **except some Kukis, Kacharis, Garos, Mikris, Assamese** etc. in the plains sector.
- **Major naga tribes include Ao, Angami, Chang, Chakesang, Kachari, Khiamniungan, Konyak, Kuki, Lotha, Phom, Pochury, Rengma, Sangtam, Sumi, Tikhir, Yimkhiong and Zeliang.**
- **Nagas are not a composite people and speak many languages.**
- **There is no caste system among the Nagas.** But each of the Naga tribes is divided into several clans.
- Cultural traditions of the Nagas include features which are common to all the tribes like head hunting, a sort of trial marriage, or great freedom of intercourse before marriage, disposal of dead on raised platforms, etc.

CENTRAL INDUSTRIAL SECURITY FORCE

News: Union Home Minister Amit Shah pitched for a “hybrid” security model where the CISF could train and certify private security agencies so that they can take over the task of efficiently guarding various kinds of industrial and manufacturing units in the country.

About:

- It was **set up under an Act of the Parliament of India in 1969.** CISF was subsequently made an armed force of India by another Act of Parliament passed in 1983.
- The CISF is **governed by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs.**
- Its headquarters are in New Delhi.

Mandate:

- **Provide security cover to industrial units,** government infrastructure projects and facilities and establishments located all over India.
- **Guarding sensitive governmental buildings,** the Delhi Metro, and providing airport security.
- **CISF also provides consultancy services to private industries** as well as other organisations within the Indian government.
- The scope of CISF's consulting practice includes security consulting and fire protection consulting.
- **The CISF has a 'Fire Wing'** which helps during fire accidents in Industries where the CISF is on guard.
- **It also plays a major role in Disaster Management.**

SPECIAL PROTECTION GROUP

News: The Special Protection Group (SPG) has been in news recently due to a security lapse in Punjab. The Supreme Court has also set up a five-member panel to probe the security breach.

About:

- **Created in 1985 as a specialised armed force of the Union to provide undivided attention to the safety and security of the PM.**
- Its sole mission and responsibility are the **protection of the Prime Minister of India.**
- It was created on the recommendation of the **Birbal Nath Committee, 1985.**
- It draws its power and authority from the **Special Protection Group Act 1988.**
- An officer from the Indian Police Service with a **rank not lower than the Inspector General of Police** leads the Special Protection Group.
- Unlike other forces, SPG **does not participate in the Republic Day Parade.**
- SPG coordinates with various other security agencies.
- SPG and its employees **even after their retirement are excluded from the purview of the Right to Information Act (RTI) 2005.**
- By law, the people protected by SPG are exempted from the personal security screenings at all the airports within Indian territory.
- The protection of the SPG is also exempted from the security screenings at various government buildings including the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).
- **SPG does not recruit its employees directly** but rather draws its personnel from the Railway Protection Force (RPF) and various Central Armed Police Force (CAPFs).

GHOST ARMY

News: The US President signed into law a bill titled, "Ghost Army Congressional Gold Medal Act", essentially providing recognition to the 'Ghost Army'.

About:

- **It is a tactical deception unit deployed by the US during World War II.**
- **Refers to the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops and the 3133rd Signal Company Special.**
- The existence was unknown for about 50 years after it was formed by the US War Department in January 1944.
- The unit had a mission, to keep enemy troops in the dark about the number and location of American troops.

SCHEME OF MODERNISATION OF POLICE FORCES

News: The Government under the leadership of Prime Minister has approved continuation of the umbrella scheme of Modernisation of Police Forces (MPF) for the period 2021-22 to 2025-26.

About:

- **Implemented by the Ministry of Home Affairs since 1969-70.**
- **The objective of the scheme:**
 - To meet the identified deficiencies in various aspects of police administration and
 - To reduce the dependence of the State Governments on the Army and Central Armed Police Forces to control internal security and law and order situation by way of equipping the state police forces adequately and imparting the required training.
- **Funding Pattern: Under the Scheme, the States are grouped into two categories:**
 - **Category 'A' States namely, J&K and 8 North Eastern States including Sikkim** will be eligible to receive financial assistance on a 90:10 Centre: State sharing basis.
 - **The remaining States will be in Category 'B'** and will be eligible for financial assistance on a 60:40 Centre: State sharing basis.

PRESIDENT'S FLEET REVIEW

News: President Ram Nath Kovind had taken part in the Indian Navy's 12th Presidential Fleet Review.

About:

- President's Fleet Review is the country's President taking stock of the Navy's capability.
- **It takes place once under every President**, who is the supreme commander of the armed forces.
- The President is taken on one of the Naval ships, which is called the President's Yacht, to look at all the ships docked on one of the Naval ports.
- The President's Yacht this year is an indigenously built Naval Offshore Patrol Vessel, "INS Sumitra," which will lead the Presidential Column.
- The yacht will be distinguished by the Ashoka Emblem on her side and will fly the President's Standard on the Mast."
- The idea is to showcase not all the Navy's ships, but every type of ship — and the kind of capabilities it has at that time.
- **The review also includes merchant ships.**
- In the current fleet review, which took place at Visakhapatnam, President Kovind will review over 60 ships and submarines, and 55 aircraft, from the Navy and the Coast Guard.
- **How many of these reviews have been held?**
 - There have been 11 President's Fleet Reviews since Independence.
 - The first was conducted in 1953, under Dr Rajendra Prasad.
 - The next one was done not by the President but by the then Defence Minister, Y B Chavan, in 1964.
 - The reviews in 2001 and 2016 were International Fleet Reviews, in which some vessels from other countries also participated.

INTERNATIONAL ELECTION VISITORS PROGRAMME

News: The virtual International Election Visitors Programme (IEVP) 2022 was hosted by the Election Commission of India (ECI).

About IEVP

- Since the 2012 elections, India has hosted the International Election Visitors Programme (IEVP), which invites international delegates to visit polling stations and observe electoral processes.
- Hence, this programme provides a platform for the exchange of ideas, sharing of experiences,

best practices, and skills in the field of Electoral Management with various countries.

- **Participants of IEVP 2022:** delegates from nearly 32 countries and 4 international organisations.

International IDEA:

- **International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance** (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organisation that works to support and strengthen democratic institutions and processes around the world.
- **Headquarters:** Stockholm, Sweden. It is also an official United Nations Observer.

International Foundation of Electoral Systems (IFES):

- It is an international, non-profit organisation founded in 1987.
- The organisation helps develop and aids and supports elections in new and emerging democracies.
- **It is based in Arlington, USA.**

Community of Democracies:

- It is an intergovernmental coalition of states established in 2000.
- It aims to bring together governments, civil society, and the private sector in the pursuit of the common goal of supporting democratic rules, expanding political participation, advancing, and protecting democratic freedoms.
- **Its secretariat is based in Warsaw, Poland.**

ARMED FORCES TRIBUNAL

News: The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has recently approved appointments to fill 23 vacancies, including 11 as judicial members and 12 as administrative members, in the Armed Forces Tribunal (AFT).

About:

- The Armed Forces Tribunal Act 2007, was passed by the Parliament and led to the formation of AFT.
- The Tribunal shall transact their proceedings as per the Armed Forces Tribunal (Procedure) rules, 2008.
- **Functions:**
 - It has the power provided for the adjudication or trial by Armed Forces Tribunal of disputes and complaints with respect to commission, appointments, enrolments, and conditions of service in respect of persons subject to the Army Act, 1950, The Navy Act, 1957 and the Air Force Act, 1950.
 - It can further provide for appeals arising out of orders, findings, or sentences of courts- martial

held under the said Acts and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

- **Bench:** Besides the Principal Bench in New Delhi, AFT has Regional Benches at Chandigarh, Lucknow, Kolkata, Guwahati, Chennai, Kochi, Mumbai, Jabalpur, Srinagar, and Jaipur.

Appointments:

- The Judicial Members are retired High Court Judges and Administrative Members are retired Members of the Armed Forces who have held the rank of Major General/ equivalent or above for a period of three years or more.
- Judge Advocate General (JAG) who have held the appointment for at least one year are also entitled to be appointed as the Administrative Member.
- **Other features:**
 - All proceedings in the Tribunal will be in English.
 - The Tribunal will normally follow the procedure as is practised in the High Courts of India.

JOINT CIVIL-MILITARY PROGRAMME

News: Recently, the defence minister has addressed the participants of the 28th Joint Civil-Military Training Programme at Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA) in Mussoorie, Uttarakhand.

About:

- Initiated in 2001 with the aim of fostering a structured interface between civil servants and Armed Forces officers for a shared understanding of national security.

- **Participants:** Participants are drawn from the Civil Services, Armed Forces and Central Armed Police Forces.

Objectives of the Programme:

- To increase awareness of the different dimensions and elements of National Security as well as threats to such security.
- To familiarise the participants with challenges to the management of national security.
- To provide an opportunity for the participants to interact and exchange ideas on the subject.
- To expose them to the imperatives of civil-military synergy.

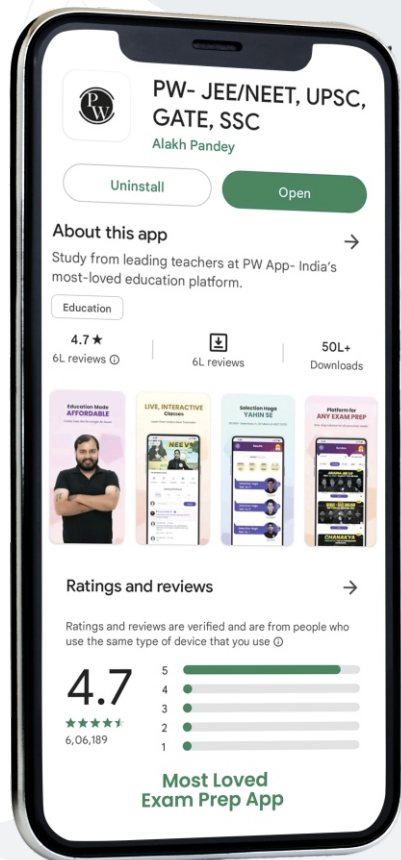
INDIAN COAST GUARD

News: Director General VS Pathania, took over as the 24th Chief of Indian Coast Guard on 31 Dec 21.

About:

- It is an armed force that protects India's maritime interests and enforces maritime law, with jurisdiction over the territorial waters of India, including its contiguous zone and exclusive economic zone.
- **History:** It was formally established in 1978 by the **Coast Guard Act, 1978** as an independent Armed force of India.
- **Parent ministry:** Ministry of Defence.
- **Administration:** The organisation is headed by the Director General Indian Coast Guard (DGICG).
- **HQ:** Coast Guard Headquarters (CGHQ) is located at New Delhi.





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