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## **INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

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## Bilateral Relations

### India – China

#### 1. Sino-Indian Digital Collaboration Plaza (SIDCOP)

- The Sino-Indian Digital Collaboration Plaza (SIDCOP) has been launched by the **National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM)** in association with Municipal Governments of Guiyang and Dalian.
- The initiative aims to bring Indian IT companies and Chinese enterprises closer to each other on a single AI enabled platform.
- **National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM):**
  - NASSCOM is a not-for-profit industry association and is the apex body for the Indian IT-BPM industry.
  - The membership of the NASSCOM is open for Companies registered in India and are focused on providing IT-BPM products and services.
  - NASSCOM aims to make sure that service quality and enforcement of Intellectual Property Rights have been properly implemented in the Indian software and BPM industry.

#### 2. Protocol amending India-China DTAA

- The Government of Republic of India and the Government of the People's Republic of China have amended the **Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA)** by signing a Protocol.
- **Purpose of the amendment of DTAA:**
  - For the avoidance of double taxation.
  - For the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income.
- **Additional changes by signing the Protocol:**
  - It **updates the existing provisions for exchange of information** to the latest international standards.
  - It incorporates **changes required to implement treaty related minimum standards** under the Action reports of **Base Erosion & Profit Shifting (BEPS)** Project, where India participated on an equal footing.
- **Legal Provision:**
  - Under **Section 90 of the Income-tax Act, 1961**, India can enter into an agreement with a foreign country or specified territory for the avoidance of double taxation of income, for the exchange of information for the prevention of evasion.
- **Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA):**
  - It is referred as **Tax Treaty**, a bilateral economic agreement between two nations that aims to avoid or eliminate double taxation of the same income in two countries.
  - A DTAA applies in cases where a tax-payer resides in one country and earns income in another.
  - DTAA's can either be comprehensive to cover all sources of income or be limited to certain areas such as taxing of income from shipping, air transport, inheritance, etc.

- India has DTAA's with more than eighty countries.

## India – U.S

### 1. CAATSA

- CAATSA is a **US federal law that imposed sanctions on Iran, North Korea and Russia.**
- It includes sanctions against countries that engage in significant transactions with Russia's defence and intelligence sectors.

### 2. Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA)

- India and the U.S. have signed the foundational or enabling agreement COMCASA on the side-lines of the inaugural 2+2 dialogue.

- **What is COMCASA?**

- COMCASA stands for **Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement** and is one of the **four foundational agreements** that the U.S. signs with allies and close partners to facilitate **interoperability between militaries and sale of high-end technology.**

FOUNDATIONAL AGREEMENTS		
<b>Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Provide logistic support, refuelling &amp; berthing facilities for each other's warships &amp; aircraft on barter/equal-value exchange basis</li> <li>➤ Will not involve stationing of US troops on Indian soil. Nor will India extend support if US goes to war with "a friendly country"</li> <li>➤ Good for US forces re-balancing to Asia Pacific. Indian forces rarely operate far away from their shores but access to Djibouti &amp; Diego Garcia could be useful</li> </ul>	<b>Communication Interoperability &amp; Security Memorandum Agreement (CISMOA)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Technology enabler to help transfer high-tech avionics, encrypted communication &amp; electronic systems to India</li> <li>➤ US says CISMOA will boost 'interoperability' as well as ensure secrecy of its C4ISR (command, control, communications, computer, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance) systems</li> <li>➤ But fears that US will be able to track &amp; snoop on Indian warships/aircraft equipped with such systems</li> </ul>	
	<b>Basic Exchange &amp; Cooperation Agreement for Geo-Spatial Cooperation (BECA)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ US says BECA will help India with advanced satellite &amp; topographical data for long-range navigation &amp; missile-targeting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ But India, which has its own satellite imaging capabilities, unwilling for American digital sensors to be positioned on its soil</li> </ul>

- COMCASA is an India-specific version of the Communication and Information on Security Memorandum of Agreement (CISMOA). It comes into force immediately, and is valid for a period 10 years.
- COMCASA is a **"technology enabler" to help transfer high-tech avionics, encrypted communication and electronic systems to India** as well as ensure secrecy of its C4ISR (command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance) systems from leaking to other countries like Russia.
- This agreement would allow the **interoperability of India and United States equipments.**

- **What next?**

- India had signed the **General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA)** in 2002 and the **Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA)** in 2016. The last one remaining is the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-spatial Cooperation (BECA).
- BECA agreement would facilitate exchange of geospatial information between India and United States for both military and civilian use.

### 3. U.S.-India 2+2 Dialogue

- The new dialogue format was agreed to between the two sides during the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Washington D.C. in June, 2017.
- The dialogue mechanism includes defence and foreign ministers of the two countries.
- It replaced India-U.S. Strategic and Commercial Dialogue for trade and commercial issues.



- **Significance of “2 + 2” Dialogue:**
  - The objective of this dialogue mechanism is to **raise defence and security issues** to the forefront and centre of the relationship between India and the U.S.
  - It is aimed at **enhancing peace and stability across the Indo-Pacific region** by elevating strategic consultations in the dialogue.
  - The shared priorities include **job creation, improving the business and investment climate** and sustaining a **rules-based global order**.
  - The U.S. has strategic consultations in this format with key partners and allies including Australia, Japan and the Philippines.
- Similarly, **India has 2+2 (diplomatic and security) dialogue with Japan**. It was launched in 2010. The 2+2 format provides for the annual consultations over a range of overlapping security and political issues between the foreign and defence ministers of both the countries.

## India – Myanmar

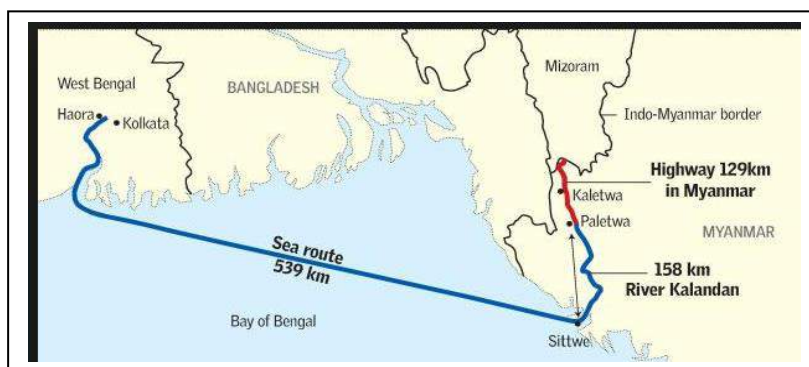
### 1. Rohingya Refugees

- India has handed over to Myanmar the first 50 houses built by the country for the displaced minority Rohingya Muslims in the restive Rakhine province.
- **Background:**
  - India signed a development programme for Rakhine State in Myanmar late last year which was designed to assist the Myanmar government in Rakhine State to build housing infrastructure for displaced persons.
- **Who are Rohingyas?**
  - They are **an Ethnic group, mostly Muslims**. They were not granted full citizenship by Myanmar. They were classified as **“resident foreigners or associate citizens”**.
  - They speak a dialect of Bengali and not Burmese. Ethnically they are much closer to Indo-Aryan people of India and Bangladesh than to the Sino-Tibetans of the Country.

### 2. Sittwe Port

- India and Myanmar have signed an important MoU for the appointment of a private Port Operator for the Operation and Maintenance of Sittwe Port, Paletwa Inland Water Terminal and associated facilities included in the Kaladan Multi Model Transit Transport Project in implementation of India’s Act East Policy.
- **Where is Sittwe located?**
  - Sittwe is the capital of Rakhine State in south-western Myanmar.
  - It is located at the mouth of the **Kaladan river**, which flows into Mizoram in north-eastern India.
- **About Kaladan project:**
  - The Kaladan project **connects Sittwe Port in Myanmar to the India-Myanmar border**.

- The project was jointly initiated by India and Myanmar to create a **multi-modal platform** for cargo shipments from the eastern ports to Myanmar and to the North-eastern parts of the country through Myanmar.
- It is expected to open up sea routes and promote economic development in the North-eastern states, and also add value to the economic, commercial and strategic ties between India and Myanmar.
- This project will reduce distance from Kolkata to Sittwe by approximately 1328 km and will reduce the need to transport good through the narrow Siliguri corridor, also known as Chicken's Neck.



## India – Russia

### 1. S-400 Triumf Missile System

- India and Russia have concluded the contract for five S-400 'Triumf' missile systems, one of the biggest defence deals in recent times.
- **What is S-400?**
  - It is an **air defence missile system** that can take down enemies' aircraft in the sky from the surface itself.
  - The S-400 is known as **Russia's most advanced long-range surface-to-air missile** defence system, capable of destroying hostile strategic bombers, jets, missiles and drones at a range of 380-km.
  - The S-400 is an upgraded version of the S-300 systems. The missile system, manufactured by Almaz-Antey, has been in service in Russia since 2007.

## India – Bangladesh

### 1. Border Haats

- First meeting of India-Bangladesh Joint Committee on Border Haats was recently held in Agartala, Tripura.
- **What are Border Haats?**
  - They are **market places organised by the two countries one day each week**.
  - It is not only a market for buying daily commodities but also a reunion spot for families living on both sides.
  - **Aim:** The border haats aim at promoting the wellbeing of the people dwelling in remote areas across the borders of two countries, by **establishing traditional system of marketing the local produce through local markets**.
- **Operational Border Haats between India and Bangladesh:**
  - Currently, **four border haats are operational along the India-Bangladesh border**. Two border haats are located in **Meghalaya** at Kalaichar and Balat and two are located in **Tripura** at Srinagar and Kamalasagar.

- **How it functions?**
  - The trade at border haats is permitted to be carried out **in Indian Rupees/Bangladesh Taka and on a barter basis**, and data of such trade is maintained by the **Haat Management Committee** of the respective border haat.
- **The Following commodities are traded in the Border Haats:**
  - Vegetables, food items, fruits, spices.
  - Minor Forest produce eg bamboo, bamboo grass and broom sticks, excluding timber.
  - Products of Cottage Industries like Gamcha, Lungi etc.
  - Small Agriculture household implements eg dao, plough, axe, spade, chisel etc.
  - Garments, melamine products, processed food items, fruit juice, toiletries, cosmetics, plastic products, aluminium products, cookeries.
- **Proposed border Haats:**
  - The government of India and the government of Bangladesh have approved **six more border haats**: two in Tripura at Palbasti and Kamalpur and four in Meghalaya at Bholaganj, Nalikata, Shibbari and Ryngku.

## India – Japan

### 1. Currency Swap Arrangement between India and Japan

- Japan and India have entered into a **\$75-billion currency swap arrangement**.
- Key facts:
  - The Agreement shall aid in bringing **greater stability to foreign exchange & capital markets** in India.
  - The facility will serve as a second line of defence for the rupee.
  - Under the arrangement, **India can acquire dollars from Japan in exchange for rupees**. Conversely, Japan can also seek dollars from India in exchange for yen.
  - The arrangement will be used only when required, and will help **meet short-term liquidity mismatches**.
- Significance of the agreement:
  - The currency swap agreement is an important measure in **improving the confidence in the Indian market** and it would not only enable the agreed amount of capital being available to India, but it will also **bring down the cost of capital for Indian entities while accessing the foreign capital market**.
  - The swap arrangement should aid in bringing **greater stability to foreign exchange and capital markets in India**.
- **What is this Currency Swap Arrangement (CSA)?**
  - This is an arrangement, between two friendly countries, which have regular, substantial or increasing trade, to basically involve in **trading in their own local currencies**, where both pay for import and export trade, at the pre-determined rates of exchange, **without bringing in third country currency like the US Dollar**.

- In such arrangements no third country currency is involved, thereby eliminating the need to worry about exchange variations.

## India – Pakistan

### 1. Agreement on Prohibition of Attacks against Nuclear Installations and Facilities

- Both India and Pakistan have exchanged their list of nuclear installations. The exchange was in accordance with the ***Agreement on Prohibition of Attacks against Nuclear Installations and Facilities between Pakistan and India***.
- **Background:**
  - ***The exchange is done each year on January 1***, under the Agreement on the Prohibition of Attack against Nuclear Installations and Facilities, also referred to as the ***Non-Nuclear Aggression Agreement***.
- **About the Agreement on the Prohibition of Attack against Nuclear Installations:**
  - The agreement, which was signed on December 31, 1988, and entered into force on January 27, 1991, provides that the two countries inform each other of nuclear installations and facilities to be covered under the pact on the first of January of every calendar year.

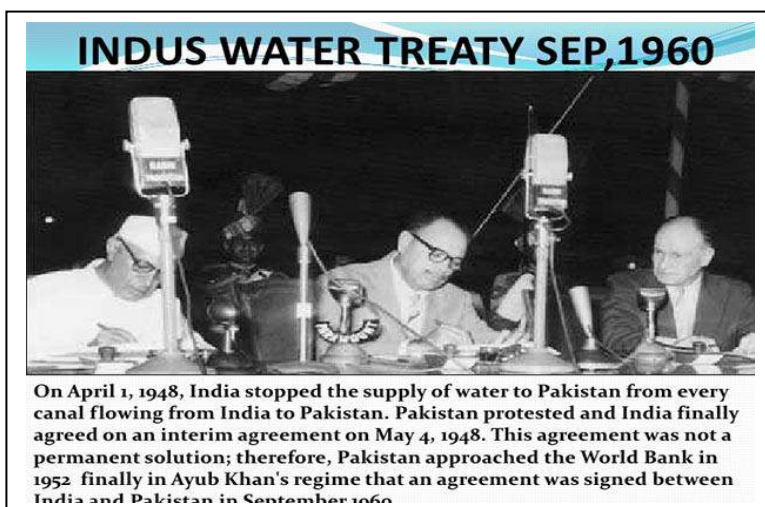
### 2. Gilgit- Baltistan

- India has lodged a strong protest on recent order by Supreme Court of Pakistan on the so-called “Gilgit-Baltistan” which is an interference in India’s internal affairs.
- **Where is Gilgit Baltistan located?**
  - Located in the **northern Pakistan**. It borders China in the North, Afghanistan in the west, Tajikistan in the north west and Kashmir in the south east.
  - It shares a geographical boundary with Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, and **India considers it as part of the undivided Jammu and Kashmir**, while Pakistan sees it as a separate from PoK.
  - It has a regional Assembly and an elected Chief Minister.
  - The USD 46 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) also passes through this region.
  - Gilgit-Baltistan is home to five of the “eight-thousanders” and to more than fifty peaks above 7,000 metres (23,000 ft).
  - Three of the world’s longest glaciers outside the polar regions are found in Gilgit-Baltistan.
- **Recent developments:**
  - Pakistan, in 2017, proposed to declare the strategic Gilgit-Baltistan region as its fifth Province, a move that may raise concerns in India as it borders the disputed Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.
- **Impediments ahead:**
  - Gilgit- Baltistan is part of J&K and any such move would seriously damage Pakistan’s Kashmir case.
  - Two UN resolutions of August 13, 1948 and January 5, 1949 clearly established a link between GB and the Kashmir issue.

- Making the region its fifth province would thus violate the **Karachi Agreement** — perhaps the only instrument that provides doubtful legal authority to Pakistan's administration of GB — as well as the UN resolutions that would damage its position on the Kashmir issue.
- Any such move would also be violative of the **1963 Pak-China Boundary Agreement** that calls for the sovereign authority to reopen negotiations with China "after the settlement of the Kashmir dispute between Pakistan and India" and of the **1972 Simla Agreement** that mentions that "neither side shall unilaterally alter the situation".

### 3. Indus Water Treaty

- Pakistani delegation had come to India to inspect **hydro-power projects at Chenab River basin** under the Indus Waters Treaty.
- **Need:**
  - This tour is an obligation imposed on both the countries by the **Indus Waters Treaty 1960 between India and Pakistan**.
  - Under the treaty, both the commissioners are mandated to inspect sites and works on both the sides of Indus basin in a block of five years.
- **Is it the first time?**
  - No. Since signing of the treaty, a total of 118 such tours on both the sides have been undertaken by the commission.
- **Indus Water Treaty (IWT):**
  - **The treaty was signed in 1960** by then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and then Pakistan President Ayub Khan.
  - The six rivers of the Indus basin originate in Tibet and flow across the Himalayan ranges to end in the Arabian Sea south of Karachi.
  - **The three western rivers (Jhelum, Chenab and Indus) were allocated to Pakistan while India was given control over the three eastern rivers (Ravi, Beas and Sutlej).**
  - While *India could use the western rivers for consumption purpose, restrictions were placed on building of storage systems.*
  - The treaty states that aside of certain specific cases, no storage and irrigation systems can be built by India on the western rivers.
  - It was brokered by the **World Bank**. The Treaty also provides **arbitration mechanism** to solve disputes amicably.
  - **A Permanent Indus Commission** was set up as a bilateral commission to implement and manage the Treaty. The Commission solves disputes arising over water sharing.



### 4. Kishanganga Hydropower Project

- The 330 MW Kishanganga Hydropower Project was recently inaugurated by the Prime Minister in northern Kashmir's Gurez. The PM also laid down the foundation stone for **Pakal Dul hydro power project**.
- **The Kishanganga Hydroelectric project:**



- It is an \$864 million dam which is part of a run-of-the-river hydroelectric scheme that is designed to **divert water from the Kishanganga River to a power plant in the Jhelum River basin.**
- It is located 5 km north of Bandipore in Jammu and Kashmir. It also lies to the north of Wular Lake.
- The state of Jammu and Kashmir would be provided with 12 percent of the power generated by the project.
- **Opposition by Pakistan:**
  - Pakistan has raised several objections to the Kishanganga Project in the past.
  - Pakistan has complained that the Kishanganga Project affects its own Neelum Jhelum Hydropower Plant. However, India maintains that the project would not have any impact on rivers flowing into the neighbouring country.
  - Construction on the dam was temporarily halted by the Hague's Permanent Court of Arbitration in October 2011 due to Pakistan's protest of its effect on the flow of the Kishanganga River (called the Neelum River in Pakistan).
  - In February 2013, the Hague ruled that India could divert a minimum amount of water for power generation.
  - Pakistan has been flagging concern over designs of India's five hydroelectricity projects – Pakal Dul (1000 MW), Ratle (850 MW), Kishanganga (330 MW), Miyar (120 MW) and Lower Kalnai (48 MW) – being built/planned in the Indus river basin, contending these violate the treaty.
- **Pakal Dul hydro power project:**
  - The 1,000-megawatt Pakal Dul hydroelectric power project on Marusadar River, a tributary of Chenab River, in Jammu and Kashmir will provide 12% free power to the state.
  - The project will not only be the largest hydroelectric power project in the state but also the first storage unit.

## 5. Kartarpur Sahib Pilgrim Corridor

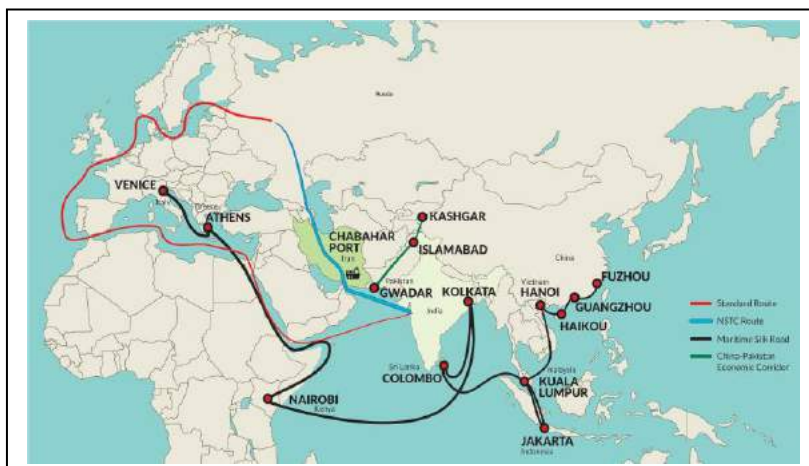
- In a significant decision, the Union Cabinet approved the building and development of the Kartarpur corridor from Dera Baba Nanak in Gurdaspur district to the international border, in order to facilitate pilgrims from India to visit Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur on the banks of the Ravi river, in Pakistan, where Shri Guru Nanak Devji spent eighteen years.
- Pilgrims would then be able to visit the holy shrine throughout the year.
- Key facts:
  - The Kartarpur corridor will be implemented as an **integrated development project** with Government of India funding, to provide smooth and easy passage, with all the modern amenities.
  - Government of India will put in place suitable facilities for smooth passage of pilgrims.
  - Government of Pakistan will be urged to recognize the sentiments of the Sikh community and to develop a corridor with suitable facilities in their territory as well.
- **The shrine:**

- The gurdwara in Kartarpur stands on the **bank of the Ravi**, about 120 km northeast of Lahore.
- It was here that Guru Nanak assembled a Sikh community and lived for 18 years until his death in 1539.
- The shrine is visible from the Indian side, as Pakistani authorities generally trim the elephant grass that would otherwise obstruct the view.
- Indian Sikhs gather in large numbers for darshan from the Indian side, and binoculars are installed at Gurdwara Dera Baba Nanak.
- **Access to gurdwaras in Pakistan:**
  - Sikh jathas from India travel to Pakistan on four occasions every year — for Baisakhi, the martyrdom day of Guru Arjan Dev, the death anniversary of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, and the birthday of Guru Nanak Dev.
  - These Indian pilgrims are given access to all gurdwaras in Pakistan.

## India – Iran

### 1. Chabahar Port

- India has formally taken over operations of Iran's strategic **Chabahar Port**.
- Iran formally handed over the port to India during a first meeting of the follow-up committee for the implementation of the Chabahar Agreement between Iran, Afghanistan, and India held recently in the port city Tehran.
- **Background:**
  - The Chabahar Agreement was signed in June 2015 and approved by Iran's Guardian Council in November 2016.
  - Chabahar is being seen as a gateway for trade by India, Iran and Afghanistan with Central Asian countries.
- **Where is Chabahar port?**
  - Iran's Chabahar port is located on the **Gulf of Oman** and is the only oceanic port of the country.
  - The port gives access to the energy-rich Persian Gulf nations' southern coast.
- Significance of the Chabahar port is the fact that **India can bypass Pakistan in transporting goods to Afghanistan**.
- Chabahar port will boost India's access to Iran, the key gateway to the International North-South Transport Corridor that has sea, rail and road routes between India, Russia, Iran, Europe and Central Asia.
- **Chabahar port will be beneficial to India in countering Chinese presence in the Arabian Sea** which China is trying to ensure by helping Pakistan develop the Gwadar port.
- Gwadar port is less than 400 km from Chabahar by road and 100 km by sea.



## India – Nepal

### 1. Maitri Irrigation Project

- India has extended a financial aid of about Rs 10 crore to Nepal for the construction of 2,700 shallow tube well irrigation systems to boost agricultural productivity.
- The assistance has been extended as part of the final payment for the **Nepal-Bharat Maitri Irrigation Project**.
- The project was launched in January last year to boost growth to the Himalayan nation's agricultural sector through enhanced facilities.
- The project is aimed at installing 2,700 shallow tube wells in 12 districts of Nepal.
- The project would ensure all-season irrigation facility to about 8,115 hectares of farm land, augment productivity of wheat, rice and seasonal fruits, vegetables and other crops.

## India – South Korea

### 1. 7<sup>th</sup> round of India – South Korea Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement

- The 7<sup>th</sup> round of India – South Korea Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) negotiations were held in South Korea from 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> December, 2018.
- The discussions were positive, and subject to Indian sugar industry meeting the quality standards and specifications prescribed by the South Korean Government.
- **Background:**
  - South Korea imports around 15 lac tons of raw sugar annually and the Indian sugar industry is making efforts to export raw sugar from India during 2018-19 sugar seasons.
  - India and South Korea will reduce duties on 11 tariff lines in a bid to expand bilateral trade by updating their existing free-trade agreement, called the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).
  - In 2017-18, India exported goods worth \$4.4 billion to South Korea while imports from the latter were worth \$16.3 billion.
- **Difference between CECA and CEPA –**
  - CECA – Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement
  - CEPA – Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement
  - The major “technical” difference between a CECA and CEPA is that CECA involve only “tariff reduction/elimination in a phased manner on listed/all items except the negative list and tariff rate quota (TRQ) items. CEPA also covers the trade in services and investment and other areas of economic partnership”.
  - So **CEPA is a wider term than CECA** and has the widest coverage.
  - Usually CECA is signed first with a country and after that negotiations may start for a CEPA.

## India – South Africa

### 1. Strategic programme between India and South Africa

- India and South Africa have sealed **a three-year strategic programme** covering all aspects of bilateral ties.
- **The strategic programme will cover** cooperation in a range of areas, including defence and security, trade and investment, the blue economy, tourism, IT and agriculture.
- **Facts:** Strategic Partnership has been established between India and South Africa through the **Red Fort Declaration of March 1997 and the Tshwane Declaration of October 2006**.

## Multilateral Relations

### 1. India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway

- The 1360 kms long India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway is an initiative pertaining to India, Myanmar and Thailand. India is undertaking construction of two sections of the Trilateral Highway in Myanmar namely,
  - Construction of 120.74 KM **Kalewa-Yagyi road section**, and
  - Construction of 69 bridges along with the approach road on the 149.70 KM **Tamu-Kyigone-Kalewa (TKK) road section**.
- The above mentioned projects are **funded by Government of India under Grant Assistance to the Government of Myanmar**.
- **Other Information:**
  - A **Motor Vehicles Agreement** along with protocols for regulating and facilitating movement of cargo and passenger vehicular traffic is **under inter-governmental negotiations between India, Myanmar and Thailand**.
- **Background:**
  - The **India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway** is a highway under construction under **India's Act East Policy** that will connect Moreh, India with Mae Sot, Thailand via Myanmar.
  - The road will boost the trade and commerce in the **ASEAN-India Free Trade Area**, and with the rest of Southeast Asia. India has also proposed extending the highway to Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam.

### 2. India-Nepal-Bhutan plan joint task force to protect wildlife

- The governments of India, Nepal and Bhutan are actively considering having a joint task force for allowing free movement of wildlife across political boundaries and checking smuggling of wildlife across the Kanchenjunga Landscape, a trans-boundary region spread across Nepal, India and Bhutan.
- **Background:**
  - The developments come up after forest officials and representatives of non-government organisation of the three countries visited parts of the landscape and later held a meeting at Siliguri in north Bengal earlier this month.



## Effects of Policies of Developed and Developing Countries on India's Interests

### 1. Asia Reassurance Initiative Act of 2018

- U.S. President Donald J. Trump has signed into law the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act (ARIA), which has already been passed by the U.S. Senate.
- ***The ARIA Act, specifically, calls for America's increased engagement in the Indo-Pacific region and strengthened support***, including arms sales, for U.S. allies in the region.
- **Key highlights of the Act:**
- **Security Interests:**
  - Authorizes US\$ 1.5 billion annually for 5 years to enhance U.S. presence in the Indo-Pacific.
  - Reaffirms **U.S. security commitments** to the allies in the Indo-Pacific, including Japan, South Korea, and Australia and builds security partnerships with nations in Southeast Asia.
  - Establishes a policy goal to peacefully denuclearize North Korea through the campaign of maximum pressure and engagement.
  - Enhances the U.S. diplomatic, economic, and security relationship with India.
  - Enforces U.S. freedom of navigation and overflight rights in the Indo-Pacific.
  - Expresses support for regular arms sales to Taiwan and to enhance the economic, political, and security relationship between Taiwan and the United States.
  - Promotes robust cybersecurity cooperation with the allies in the region.
  - Sets U.S. policy to pursue effective arms control and nuclear non-proliferation policies in the Indo-Pacific region.
- **Economic Engagement:**
  - Promotes economic cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region as essential for the growth of the U.S. economy and success of American businesses.
  - Authorizes bilateral and multilateral trade negotiations with Indo-Pacific nations.
  - Provides for robust U.S. commercial presence throughout the Indo-Pacific region to promote U.S. exports and additional trade facilitation efforts.
  - Authorizes the imposition of penalties on entities and governments engaged in the theft of United States intellectual property.
  - Requires a new comprehensive U.S. policy to promote energy exports.
- **Promoting Values:**
  - Provides US\$ 150 million annually for 5 years for democracy, rule of law, and civil society support, including \$10 million annually for freedom of information efforts in North Korea.
  - Call for additional U.S. efforts against trafficking-in-persons and human slavery; and Authorizes U.S. sanctions against human rights abusers.

### 2. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

- The CPEC is the flagship project of the **multi-billion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**, a project of Chinese President Xi Jinping, aimed at enhancing Beijing's influence around the world through China-funded infrastructure projects.
- **CPEC eventually aims at linking the city of Gwadar in South Western Pakistan to China's North Western region Xinjiang** through a vast network of highways and railways.
- The project will be financed by heavily-subsidised loans, that will be disbursed to the Government of Pakistan by Chinese banking giants such as Exim Bank of China, China Development Bank, and the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China.
- **But, why is India concerned?**
  - It passes through PoK.
  - CPEC rests on a Chinese plan to secure and shorten its supply lines through Gwadar with an enhanced presence in the Indian Ocean. Hence, it is widely believed that upon CPEC's fruition, **an extensive Chinese presence will undermine India's influence in the Indian Ocean.**

## Protocols / Conventions / Treaties / Agreements / Reports

### 1. Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty

- The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty, formally Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles) is **a 1987 arms control agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union**.
- Under the INF Treaty, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. agreed **to eliminate within three years all ground-launched-missiles of 500-5,500 km range and not to develop, produce or deploy these in future**.
- **Importance of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in U.S.-Russia relations:**
  - Under the Treaty, the two parties agreed that a whole important class of nuclear weapons would be removed from Europe, and only tactical nuclear weapons (TNW) or short-range missiles mostly deployed on the territory of Germany would remain.
  - The INF Treaty for years served to mitigate fears of both parties in relation to possibility of military escalation, operational miscalculation, and helping to shift the logic of MAD [mutually assured destruction] to the higher “more sensitive” political level.
- U.S. President Donald Trump announced on 20 October 2018 that he was withdrawing the U.S. from the treaty, accusing Russia of non-compliance. The U.S. formally suspended the treaty on 1 February 2019, and Russia did so on the following day in response to the U.S. withdrawal.

### 2. The Future of Rail Report

- “The Future of Rail” Report has been released by the **International Energy Agency (IEA)**.
- It examines how the role of rail in global transport might be elevated as a means to reduce the energy use and environmental impacts associated with transport.
- **About IEA:**
  - Established in 1974 as per **framework of the OECD**.
  - MISSION – The IEA works to ensure reliable, affordable and clean energy for its 30 member countries and beyond.
  - The mission is guided by **four main areas of focus: energy security, economic development, environmental awareness and engagement worldwide**.
  - Headquarters (Secretariat): Paris, France.
  - A candidate country must be a member country of the OECD. But all OECD members are not IEA members (Ex:Chile, Iceland, Israel, Latvia and Slovenia).
  - **To become member a candidate country must demonstrate that it has:**
    - crude oil and/or product reserves equivalent to 90 days of the previous year’s net imports, to which the government has

immediate access (even if it does not own them directly) and could be used to address disruptions to global oil supply.

- a demand restraint programme to reduce national oil consumption by up to 10%.
- legislation and organisation to operate the Co-ordinated Emergency Response Measures (CERM) on a national basis.
- legislation and measures to ensure that all oil companies under its jurisdiction report information upon request;
- measures in place to ensure the capability of contributing its share of an IEA collective action.

- **IEA mandate:**

- To focus on the “3Es” of effectual energy policy:
  - Energy security
  - Economic development
  - Environmental protection

- **Reports:**

- Global Energy & CO2 Status Report 2017.
- World Energy Outlook.
- World Energy Statistics 2017.
- World Energy Balances 2017.
- Energy Technology Perspectives.

### 3. “Future of Work in India” Survey Report

- “Future of Work in India” survey report has been released by the **World Economic Forum (WEF)**.
- The “Future of Work in India” survey of 770 companies conducted by the WEF included various sectors such as textiles, banking & financial services, transport & logistics, and retail.
- **WEF:**
  - The World Economic Forum is the International Organization for **Public-Private Cooperation**.
  - The Forum engages the foremost political, business and other leaders of society to shape global, regional and industry agendas.
  - It was established in 1971 as a not-for-profit foundation and is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.
  - It is independent, impartial and not tied to any special interests.
  - The Forum strives in all its efforts to demonstrate entrepreneurship in the global public interest while upholding the highest standards of governance.

### 4. Hague Abduction Convention

- The government has clarified that it is not yet ready to sign **the Hague treaty on inter-country abduction of children** by parents fleeing a bad marriage. On the other hand, the government is planning to follow the Japan example and put safeguards in place before acceding to the Hague treaty.
- **Background:**
  - There has been immense pressure from the U.S. on the government to sign the treaty though the government has long held the view that the

decision could lead to harassment of women escaping marital discord or domestic violence.

- **Recommendations of the committee:**

- A **Committee headed by Justice Rajesh Bindal**, had submitted its report on legal issues related to Inter- country removal & retention of children to the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

- **Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (1980)**

- The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction or Hague Abduction Convention is a multilateral treaty developed by the **Hague Conference on Private International Law** that provides an expeditious method to return a child internationally abducted by a parent from one-member country to another.
- The Convention entered into force between the signatories on 1 December 1983.
- The Convention was drafted to ensure the prompt return of children who have been abducted from their country of habitual residence or wrongfully retained in a contracting state not their country of habitual residence.
- The primary intention of the Convention is to preserve whatever status quo child custody arrangement existed immediately before an alleged wrongful removal or retention thereby deterring a parent from crossing international boundaries in search of a more sympathetic court.
- The Convention applies only to children under the age of 16.

- **What is Inter-country parental child abduction?**

- Inter-country parental child abduction is a situation that is attained when one parent takes a child or children to a foreign country to prevent the other parent from seeking custody of the child.

## 5. WHO Framework Convention on tobacco control

- The Union Cabinet has given approval to accede to the Protocol under World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention on tobacco control to eliminate illicit trade in tobacco products.
- It will be applicable to both smoking and chewing or smokeless tobacco (SLT) forms as negotiated and adopted under Article 15 of the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC).
- **The FCTC provides an internationally co-ordinated response to combating the tobacco epidemic, and sets out specific steps for governments addressing tobacco use, including to:**
  - Adopt tax and price measures to reduce tobacco consumption.
  - Ban tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship.
  - Create smoke-free work and public spaces.
  - Put prominent health warnings on tobacco packages.
  - Combat illicit trade in tobacco products.

### WHO FCTC:

- The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) is the **first international public health treaty negotiated under the auspices of the WHO.**
- The objective of FCTC is to provide a framework for supply and demand reduction measures for tobacco control at the national, regional and global levels.
- Article 15 of WHO FCTC envisages elimination of all forms of illicit trade and tobacco products, including smuggling, illicit manufacturing and counterfeiting.
- **India is a party to WHO FCTC.**

## 6. Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT)

- India reiterated its demand for a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) at the UN General Assembly recently.



- India had proposed a draft of a CCIT as far back as 1996.
- The Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism is a proposed treaty which intends to **criminalize all forms of international terrorism** and deny terrorists, their financiers and supporters' access to funds, arms, and safe havens.
- It is a draft proposed by India in 1996 that is yet to be adopted by the UNGA.
- **What does it call for?**
  - Universal definition of terrorism: no good terrorist or bad terrorist.
  - Ban on all groups regardless of country of operation, cut off access to funds and safe havens.
  - Prosecution of all groups including cross border groups.
  - Amending domestic laws to make cross-border terror an extraditable offence.
  - It also addresses, among other things, the issue of Pakistan's alleged support for cross-border terrorism in south Asia.

## 7. Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)

- UN chief Antonio Guterres recently reiterated his appeal to eight nations, including India and the US, to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, saying the failure to bring it into force undermines global efforts to ensure a world free of atomic weapons.
- **Background:**
  - Although more than 180 countries have signed the CTBT, and mostly ratified it, the treaty can only enter into force after it is ratified by eight countries with nuclear technology capacity, namely China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan and the United States.
- **What is CTBT?**
  - The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is the **Treaty banning all nuclear explosions** – everywhere, by everyone.
  - The Treaty was negotiated at the **Conference on Disarmament in Geneva** and adopted by the United Nations General Assembly.
  - It opened for signature on 24 September 1996.
- **Why is the CTBT so important?**
  - The CTBT is the last barrier on the way to develop nuclear weapons.
  - It curbs the development of new nuclear weapons and the improvement of existing nuclear weapon designs.
  - When the Treaty enters into force it provides a **legally binding norm against nuclear testing**.
  - The Treaty also helps prevent human suffering and environmental damages caused by nuclear testing.
- **India and the CTBT:**
  - Since its inception, India has had a number of reservations about the CTBT.
  - While it has stood by its demand for a nuclear weapons-free world, various principled, procedural, political, and security concerns have stood in the way of its support for the CTBT.
  - ***India's principled opposition drew from its emphasis on universal and complete nuclear disarmament in a time-bound manner.***

- India has traditionally believed this to be the end goal with the test ban just being a path to get there. But it did not insist on a complete disarmament clause in 1994, acknowledging that it was a “complex issue.”
- **Another major concern was Article XIV, the entry-into-force (EIF) clause**, which India considered a violation of its right to voluntarily withhold participation in an international treaty. The treaty initially made ratification by states that were to be a part of the CTBT’s International Monitoring System (IMS) mandatory for the treaty’s EIF.

## International Organisations / Groupings

### 1. Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)

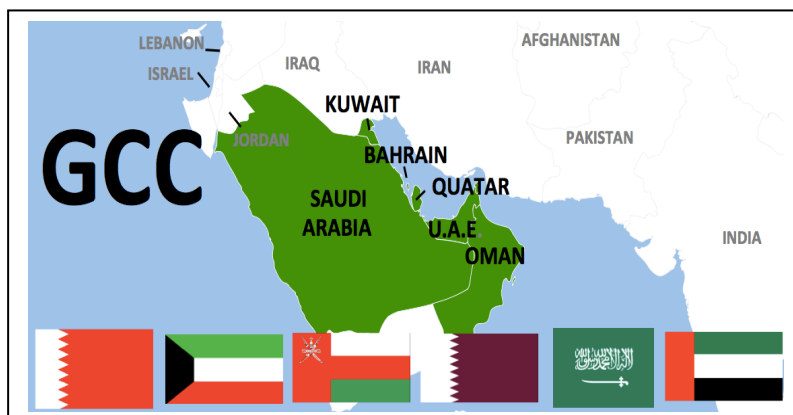
- **Qatar** had announced that it would leave OPEC on January 1, 2019.
- Since June 2017, OPEC kingpin Saudi Arabia — along with three other Arab states — has cut trade and transport ties with Qatar, accusing the country of supporting terrorism and its regional rival Iran. Qatar denies the claims, saying the boycott hampers its national sovereignty.
- **About OPEC:**
  - The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is a group of oil-producing nations that was first established in Baghdad, Iraq, in 1961.
- **Membership:**
  - The OPEC Statute distinguishes between the **Founder Members and Full Members** – those countries whose applications for membership have been accepted by the Conference.
  - The Statute stipulates that “any country with a substantial net export of crude petroleum, which has fundamentally similar interests to those of Member Countries, may become a Full Member of the Organization, if accepted by a majority of three-fourths of Full Members, including the concurring votes of all Founder Members.”
  - The Statute further provides for **Associate Members** which are those countries that do not qualify for full membership, but are nevertheless admitted under such special conditions as may be prescribed by the Conference.
  - Currently, the Organization has a total of **14 Member Countries**. The current OPEC members are the following: Algeria, Angola, Ecuador, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, the Republic of the Congo, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Venezuela.
  - Indonesia is a former member, and Qatar is no longer the member of OPEC from 1 January 2019.
- **Facts for Prelims:**
  - **Tight oil** (also known as shale oil, shale-hosted oil or light tight oil, abbreviated LTO) is light crude oil contained in petroleum-bearing formations of low permeability, often shale or tight sandstone.
  - **Relative to conventional sources, shale oil typically produces more pollution to extract**, though the extent depends on whether or not the operators avoid wasteful and unnecessary emissions.

### 2. Persian Gulf Regional Dialogue Forum

- In a diplomatic initiative to address the lingering conflicts and mistrust in the Gulf region, **Iran has proposed a new platform for regional peace building**.
- The announcement of Persian Gulf Regional Dialogue Forum is significant as it comes in the wake of continued erosion of the **Gulf Cooperation Council**, which in the recent years has been divided between the Iranian and the Saudi spheres.

- **About GCC:**

- Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is **a political and economic alliance of six Middle Eastern countries**—Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman.
- The GCC was established in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in May 1981.
- The purpose of the GCC is to achieve unity among its members based on their common objectives and their similar political and cultural identities, which are rooted in Arab and Islamic cultures.
- Presidency of the council rotates annually.
- All current member states are monarchies, including three constitutional monarchies (Qatar, Kuwait, and Bahrain), two absolute monarchies (Saudi Arabia and Oman), and one federal monarchy (the United Arab Emirates, which is composed of seven member states, each of which is an absolute monarchy with its own emir).
- The **39<sup>th</sup> session of the GCC summit was held recently in Riyadh**. At the end of the summit, the council issued the '**Riyadh Declaration**', which included 72 items covering matters related to the Gulf countries, the region and the world.
- **The 40<sup>th</sup> session of the GCC summit will be held in the UAE**, according to a communique issued at the end of the 39th summit in Riyadh.



### 3. World Gold Council

- WGC has released a report on gold demand in 2019.
- **Important observations made:**
  - Performance of financial markets, monetary policy in key economies including India, and the dollar movement will determine gold demand in 2019.
  - Since gold is considered a safe haven, during choppy markets, the demand for gold improves, normally.
  - Emerging markets, led by India and China—the biggest consuming markets—make up 70% of consumer demand for the metal.
- **About World Gold Council:**
  - The World Gold Council is the market development organisation for the gold industry.
  - It works across all parts of the industry, from gold mining to investment, and their aim is to stimulate and sustain demand for gold.
  - **The World Gold Council is an association whose members comprise the world's leading gold mining companies.**
  - It helps to support its members to mine in a responsible way and developed the Conflict Free Gold Standard.
  - **Headquartered in the UK**, they have offices in India, China, Singapore, Japan and the United States.

#### 4. International Solar Alliance

- The International Solar Alliance is **India's first international organization** comprising of more than 122 countries, most of them being sunshine countries, which come either completely or partly between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn, now extended to all members of UN.
- **The ISA was one of key takeaways at Paris Climate summit, 2015.**
- The alliance's primary objective is work for **efficient exploitation of solar energy** to reduce dependence on fossil fuels.
- The ISA's major objectives include global deployment of over 1,000GW of solar generation capacity and mobilisation of investment of over US\$ 1000 billion into solar energy by 2030.
- The institutional structure of ISA consists of an Assembly, a Council and a Secretariat.
- When the **ISA Framework Agreement** entered into force on December 6th, 2017, ISA formally became a de-jure **treaty based International Intergovernmental Organization**, headquartered at Gurugram, India.
- Its members will take coordinated actions through programmes and activities that will aggregate demands for solar finance, solar technologies, innovation, R&D and capacity building.
- International Solar Alliance (ISA) hosted '**International Solar Alliance Forum**' at the World Future Energy Summit (WFES) 2018 in Abu Dhabi (UAE).

#### 5. Smart Food Executive Council

- Associations including the Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI), Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF), Food Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN), and the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) together have formed **the Smart Food Executive Council**.
- **About Smart Food Executive Council:**
  - **Formed under the aegis of the Smart Food Initiative** that was launched in 2013.
  - **Need:** Stemmed from the strategic thinking around the **need for food that fulfils the criteria of being good for the consumer, good for the planet and good for the farmer.**
  - **Objective:** To diversify staples which can have the strongest impact on nutrition, the environment and farmer welfare.
  - **This would contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** for overcoming poverty and hunger (SDG 1 and 2), responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), along with adaptation to climate change (Goal 13). The approach taken will include gender equality (SDG 5) and action through partnerships (SDG 17).
- **Facts for Prelims:**
  - **The Smart Food initiative** is founded by the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid-Tropics (ICRISAT) and aims to build food systems where the food is good for you (highly nutritious), good for the planet and good for the smallholder farmer.



- It is an initiative which will initially focus on popularizing millets and sorghum.

## 6. Alliance to End Plastic Waste (AEPW)

- An alliance of global companies has launched a new organisation- AEPW- **to help eliminate plastic waste, especially in the ocean.**
- **About the Alliance to End Plastic Waste (AEPW):**
  - The Alliance to End Plastic Waste (AEPW), comprising about 30 companies, pledged over \$1 billion to eliminate plastic waste across the world.
  - They aim to invest \$1.5 billion over the next five years for the same.
  - The alliance is designed as a **non-profit organization**.
  - It includes companies from across North and South America, Europe, Asia, Southeast Asia, Africa as well as the Middle East are part of the Alliance.
  - The aim is to develop solutions to **mitigate plastic pollution** and promote a circular economy by utilising used plastics.
  - Member companies include those that make, use, sell, process, collect and recycle plastics, as well as chemical and plastic manufacturers, consumer goods companies, retailers, converters, and waste management companies, also called the plastics value chain.
  - From India, Reliance Industries will advance efforts towards a sustainable future.

## 7. Global Commission on the Future of Work

- The **Global Commission on the Future of Work** released its report recently.
- The document calls on governments to take steps to address the challenges caused by unprecedented transformations going on in the world of work.
- **Concerns and challenges highlighted by the report:**
  - Due to the unprecedented transformational change in the world of work, there are several **transformational challenges that are bound to occur.**
  - Artificial intelligence, automation and robotics will lead to job losses, as skills become obsolete.
- **About Global Commission on Future of Work:**
  - The formation of a ILO Global Commission on the Future of Work marks the second stage in the **ILO Future of Work Initiative.**
  - Its job is **to undertake an in-depth examination of the future of work that can provide the analytical basis for the delivery of social justice in the 21st century.**
  - Its job also includes **identifying the key challenges facing the world of work and making practical recommendations about how these may be addressed in the future.**

## 8. Africa Centre for Climate and Sustainable Development

- The Africa Centre for Climate and Sustainable Development was inaugurated by the Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte at Rome.

- The centre has been opened by the Italian government in association with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO).
- **About the Centre:**
  - The centre would facilitate **coordination among the G7 and African countries** on common initiatives in Africa to achieve the goals set by the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda.
  - The Centre would contribute towards addressing the needs of Africa by providing a platform for G7 countries to steer their cooperation to contrast environmental degradation and promote sustainable economic growth in the region.
  - The centre will provide a fast-track, demand-driven mechanism for African countries to access grant resources that support policies, initiatives, and best practices on climate change, food security, access to water, clean energy, and accelerating progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Africa.
  - The centre would be hosted by UNDP.

### 9. Group of 77 (G-77)

- Palestine has taken over the chairmanship of G77 from Egypt.
- **How is chairmanship of G77 decided?** The chairmanship of the G77 is based on the system of geographical rotation.
- 2019 was Asia's turn and the Asian group had unanimously endorsed Palestine. Egypt was representing the African Group of countries.
- **G77:**
  - The Group of 77 (G77) at the United Nations is a coalition of **134 developing nations**, designed to promote its members' collective economic interests and create an enhanced joint negotiating capacity in the United Nations.
  - G77 was formed on 15 June 1964 by the "**Joint Declaration of the Seventy-Seven Countries**" issued at the **United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)**.
  - Since **China participates in the G77 but does not consider itself to be a member**, all official statements are issued in the name of The Group of 77 and China.

### 10. G4 Nations

- Formed in 2005, the G4 nations comprise **Brazil, Germany, India and Japan**.
- Unlike many inter-governmental bodies whose primary motives are economic and political, the G4's aim is to **ensure permanent membership on the United Nations Security Council**.
- Each of these four countries have figured among the elected non-permanent members of the council since the UN's establishment.

### 11. G7 Bloc

- G7 Summit is an event conducted annually where world leaders from seven powerful economies of the world, **US, Canada, UK, France, Germany, Japan and Italy** come together to discuss burning issues happening around the globe.

- They, by mutual understanding, also form policies or figure out remedies for the concerned issue.

## 12. Trans Regional Maritime Network (T-RMN)

- India has signed the ascension agreement to the Trans Regional Maritime Network (T-RMN). The multilateral construct comprises of 30 countries and is steered by Italy.
- India already has bilateral White Shipping Agreements with 36 countries.
- **About the Trans Regional Maritime Network (T-RMN):**
  - The network **facilitates information exchange on the movement of commercial traffic on the high seas.**
  - The information is available primarily through the **Automatic Identification System (AIS)** fitted on merchant ships with more than 300 gross registered tonnage as mandated by the International Maritime Organisation.
- **Significance:**
  - Such multilateral agreements are necessitated due to the **large traffic in the Indian Ocean** which cannot be entirely monitored by any one nation.
  - This is a significant move as it will help the Indian Navy keep a watch over the vast Indian Ocean and boost maritime security of the country.

## 13. Kimberley Process

- India is the Chair of Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) from 1st January 2019.
- It was handed Chairmanship by the European Union during KPCS Plenary 2018, which was held in Brussels, Belgium.
- **India is founding member of KPCS.**
- **Who is involved?**
  - The Kimberley Process (KP) is open to all countries that are willing and able to implement its requirements.
  - The KP has 55 participants, representing 82 countries, with the European Union and its Member States counting as a single participant.
  - KP members account for approximately 99.8% of the global production of rough diamonds.
  - In addition, the **World Diamond Council**, representing the international diamond industry, and civil society organisations, such as Partnership-Africa Canada, participate in the KP and have played a major role since its outset.
- **How does the Kimberley Process work?**
  - The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) imposes extensive requirements on its members to enable them to certify shipments of rough diamonds as 'conflict-free' and prevent conflict diamonds from entering the legitimate trade.

### What is the Kimberley Process?

- The Kimberley Process is an international certification scheme **that regulates trade in rough diamonds**. It aims to prevent the flow of conflict diamonds, while helping to protect legitimate trade in rough diamonds.
- The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) outlines the rules that govern the trade in rough diamonds.
- The KP is not, strictly speaking, an international organisation: it has no permanent offices or permanent staff. It relies on the contributions – under the principle of 'burden-sharing' – of participants, supported by industry and civil society observers. Neither can the KP be considered as an international agreement from a legal perspective, as it is implemented through the national legislations of its participants.

### What are Conflict diamonds?

- "Conflict Diamonds" means **rough diamonds used by rebel movements** or their allies to finance conflict aimed at undermining legitimate governments.
- It is also described in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions.

- Under the terms of the KPCS, participating states must put in place national legislation and institutions; export, import and internal controls; and also commit to transparency and the exchange of statistical data.
- Participants can only legally trade with other participants who have also met the minimum requirements of the scheme, and international shipments of rough diamonds must be accompanied by a KP certificate guaranteeing that they are conflict-free.

#### 14. World Customs Organization (WCO)

- 80th Session of the **Policy Commission of the World Customs Organization (WCO)** was held recently in Mumbai. The Session was organized by the WCO and hosted by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC).
- **About WCO:**
  - The World Customs Organization (WCO), **established in 1952 as the Customs Co-operation Council (CCC) is an independent intergovernmental body** whose mission is to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of Customs administrations.
  - As the global centre of Customs expertise, **the WCO is the only international organization with competence in Customs matters** and can rightly call itself the voice of the international Customs community.
  - **The WCO has divided its Membership into six Regions.** Each of the six Regions is represented by a regionally elected Vice-Chairperson to the WCO Council.
- **Roles and functions:**
  - As a forum for dialogue and exchange of experiences between national Customs delegates, the WCO offers its Members a range of Conventions and other international instruments, as well as **technical assistance and training services**.
  - Besides the vital role played by the WCO in stimulating the growth of legitimate international trade, its efforts to **combat fraudulent activities** are also recognized internationally.
  - WCO has also been responsible for administering the **World Trade Organization's Agreements on Customs Valuation**, which provide a system for placing values on imported goods, and the Rules of Origin, which are used to determine the origin of a given commodity.

#### 15. Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)

- The OPCW is an independent, autonomous international organisation with a **working relationship with the United Nations**.
- The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons is **the implementing body of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)**, which entered into force in 1997.
- The organisation was awarded **the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize** "for its extensive efforts to eliminate chemical weapons".
- The OPCW Member States share the collective goal of preventing chemistry from ever again being used for warfare, thereby strengthening international security.
- To this end, **the Convention contains four key provisions:**

- **Destroying all existing chemical weapons** under international verification by the OPCW.
- **Monitoring chemical industry** to prevent new weapons from re-emerging.
- **Providing assistance and protection** to States Parties against chemical threats.
- **Fostering international cooperation** to strengthen implementation of the Convention and promote the peaceful use of chemistry.
- **The Chemical Weapons Convention prohibits:**
  - Developing, producing, acquiring, stockpiling, or retaining chemical weapons.
  - The direct or indirect transfer of chemical weapons.
  - Chemical weapons use or military preparation for use.
  - Assisting, encouraging, or inducing other states to engage in CWC-prohibited activity.
  - The use of riot control agents “as a method of warfare.”

## 16. Commonwealth of Nations

- Maldives has applied to rejoin the Commonwealth.
- The Commonwealth of Nations, at one time known as British Commonwealth, is an organisation of fifty-three states that were principally below the colonial rule of British Government.
- They came into existence with the proclamation of sovereignty of the state from the colonial rule of British Empire and were later given self-governance.
- It proclaims that the Commonwealth nations are “**free and equal.**” The insignia of this Commonwealth Association is Queen Elizabeth II who is considered the Supreme of the Commonwealth nations.
- The member states of the commonwealth are **not legally liable or bound to each other.**
- They are rather united by language, history, culture, likeness of the democracy, human rights and the rule of law.
- Their values are listed down within the **Commonwealth Charter** and the hands of harmony towards the member states are extended by the Commonwealth Games held every four years.
- Former British mandates that did not become members of the Commonwealth are Egypt, Transjordan, Iraq, British Palestine, Sudan, British Somaliland, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates.
- **Key facts:**
  - **Former name** — British Commonwealth.
  - **Composition:** intergovernmental organisation of 53 member states that are mostly former territories of the British Empire.
  - **It operates by intergovernmental consensus** of the member states.
  - Established in 1949 by the **London Declaration.**
  - **Structure:** Head of the Commonwealth — Queen Elizabeth II is the Head of the Commonwealth. The position is symbolic.

## 17. Partners' Forum

- The fourth Partners' Forum was recently held in New Delhi. It was hosted by the Government of India, in association with the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH).
- This is the second time India is hosting the Partners' Forum.
- **What is Partners' Forum?**
  - Partners' Forum is **a global health partnership launched in September 2005 to accelerate efforts to reduce child and maternal mortality, improve adolescent, child, new born and maternal health.**
  - **An alliance:** This partnership is an alliance of more than 1,000 plus members, across 10 constituencies in 92 countries: academic, research and teaching institutions; donors and foundations; health care professionals; multilateral agencies; non-governmental organizations; partner countries; global financing mechanisms and the private sector.
  - **PMNCH's mission** is to **support the global health community** to work successfully towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly the health-related SDGs.
  - The programme of the Partners' Forum will be framed around the objectives of the Global Strategy of Survive – Thrive – Transform.

## 18. International Whaling Commission

- Japan has announced its decision to withdraw from the International Whaling Commission (IWC).
- Japan will resume commercial hunting in its territorial waters and exclusive economic zone from July 2019, but will cease whaling activities in the Southern Hemisphere.
- **About IWC:**
  - The International Whaling Commission is an **Inter-governmental Organisation** whose purpose is the conservation of whales and the management of whaling.
  - It is **an international body set up under International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW).**
  - This Convention was established in 1946, making it one of the first pieces of international environmental legislation.
  - All member countries of the IWC are signatories to this Convention. The IWC has a current membership of 89 Governments from countries all over the world.
  - **Headquarters** — Impington, near Cambridge, England.
  - **In 1986, it adopted a moratorium on commercial whaling.** This ban still continues.
- **Whale sanctuary:**
  - In 1994, it created **the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary** surrounding the continent of Antarctica. Here, the IWC has banned all types of commercial whaling.
  - **Only two such sanctuaries have been designated by IWC till date.** Another is **Indian Ocean Whale Sanctuary** by the tiny island nation of the Seychelles.
- **Objectives:**



- To provide for the proper conservation of whale stocks.
- For orderly development of the whaling industry.

### 19. International Rice Research Institute (IRRI)

- The Prime Minister of India dedicated the **6th International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), South Asia Regional Center (ISARC)** to the nation.
- The Institute is built at the campus of **National Seed Research and Training Center (NSRTC)** in Varanasi.
- It will serve as a hub for rice research and training in South Asia and SAARC region.
- This first international Center in the eastern India is expected to harness and sustain rice production in the region.
- **About IRRI:**
  - The International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) is an **international agricultural research and training organization** known for its work in developing rice varieties that contributed to the Green Revolution in the 1960s.
  - Aim: The Institute, established in 1960 aims to reduce poverty and hunger, improve the health of rice farmers and consumers, and ensure environmental sustainability of rice farming.
- **CGIAR (Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research):**
  - IRRI is one of 15 agricultural research centers in the world that form the CGIAR Consortium of International Agricultural Research centres, a global partnership of organizations engaged in research on food security. It is also the largest non-profit agricultural research centres in Asia.
- **India and the IRRI:**
  - IRRI has successfully collaborated with **Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR)** to introduce drought- tolerant, flood-tolerant and salt-tolerant varieties of rice in India.
  - The Varanasi Centre would help increase farmers' income by enhancing and supporting rice productivity, reducing cost of production, value addition, diversification and enhancement of farmers' skills.

### 20. G20 Summit

- **India will host the G20 Summit In 2022**, when the country celebrates its 75th year of Independence. **It will be the first meet of the global grouping in India.**
- ***The 2018 G20 Summit was held in the city of Buenos Aires, Argentina.***
  - It was the 13th meeting of Group of Twenty (G20) and the first G20 summit to be hosted in South America.
- **About G20:**
  - Formed in 1999, the G20 is an **international forum of the governments and central bank governors** from 20 major economies.
  - Collectively, the G20 economies account for around 85 percent of the Gross World Product (GWP), 80 percent of world trade.
  - To tackle the problems or the address issues that plague the world, the heads of governments of the G20 nations periodically participate in summits.

- In addition to it, the group also hosts separate meetings of the finance ministers and foreign ministers.
- The **G20 has no permanent staff of its own and its chairmanship rotates annually between nations divided into regional groupings.**
- The first G20 Summit was held in Berlin in December 1999 and was hosted by the finance ministers of Germany and Canada.
- **Objectives:**
  - The Group was formed with an aim of studying, reviewing, and promoting high-level discussion of policy issues pertaining to the **promotion of international financial stability.**
  - The forum aims to pre-empt balance of payments problems and turmoil on financial markets by **improved coordination of monetary, fiscal, and financial policies.**
  - The forum seeks to address issues that go beyond the responsibilities of any one organisation.
- **Member Countries:**
  - The members of the G20 consist of **19 individual countries plus the European Union (EU).**
  - The 19 member countries of the forum are Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, United Kingdom and the United States.
  - The European Union is represented by the European Commission and by the European Central Bank.
  - Shaktikanta Das, the former Secretary of the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), was appointed as India's G20 Sherpa till December, 2018 for the Development Track of the G20 summit.
  - A Sherpa is a personal representative of the leader of a member country at an international Summit meeting such as the G8, G20 or the Nuclear Security Summit and are responsible for thrashing out the details before the meeting of the leaders.

## 21. Quad Grouping

- Regional coalition known as the 'Quad', the quadrilateral formation includes **Japan, India, United States and Australia.**
- All four nations find a common ground of being the democratic nations and common interests of unhindered maritime trade and security.
- The idea was first mooted by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2007. However, the idea couldn't move ahead with Australia pulling out of it.

## 22. East Asia Summit

- **6<sup>th</sup> East Asia Summit- Economic Ministers' Meeting (EAS-EMM)** was recently held in Singapore.
- The 6<sup>th</sup> East-Asia Economic Ministers' Meeting was attended by Economic Ministers from 10 ASEAN countries and their eight dialogue partners, Australia, China, India, Japan, Republic of Korea, New Zealand, the Russian Federation and the United States of America.
- **India has been participating in the EAS since its very inception in 2005.**

- The East Asia Summit (EAS) is a forum held annually by leaders of, initially, 16 countries in the East Asian, Southeast Asian and South Asian regions.
- Membership expanded to 18 countries including the United States and Russia at the Sixth EAS in 2011.
- **EAS meetings are held after annual ASEAN leaders' meetings.** The first summit was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 14 December 2005.
- EAS is **an initiative of ASEAN** and is based on the premise of the centrality of ASEAN.
- EAS has evolved as a forum for **strategic dialogue and cooperation on political, security and economic issues** of common regional concern and plays an important role in the regional architecture.
- There are six priority areas of regional cooperation within the framework of the EAS. These are –
  - Environment and Energy, Education, Finance, Global Health Issues and Pandemic Diseases, Natural Disaster Management, and ASEAN Connectivity.
  - India endorses regional collaboration in all six priority areas.

### 23. ASEAN

- 15<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Economic Ministers – India Consultation was recently held in Singapore. **Singapore is currently holding the Chair of ASEAN.**
- The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (more commonly known as ASEAN) is a **political and economic organization** aimed primarily at **promoting economic growth and regional stability** among its members.
- **There are currently 10 member states:** Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Laos, Myanmar, Cambodia and Vietnam.
- ASEAN came into existence on August 8, **1967 after ASEAN declaration** (also known as **Bangkok declaration**).
- It is a regional organisation that aims to promote **intergovernmental cooperation** and facilitates economic integration amongst its members.
- Its Motto is **"One Vision, One Identity, One Community"**.
- The **Secretariat of ASEAN is at Jakarta, Indonesia.**
- ASEAN is an **official United Nations observer**, as well as an active global partner.
- **Why was it set up?**
  - ASEAN was founded half a century ago in 1967 by the five South-East Asian nations of Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.
  - This was during the polarized atmosphere of the Cold War, and the alliance aimed to promote stability in the region. Over time, the group expanded to include its current 10 members.
  - Regional cooperation was further extended with the creation of the **ASEAN Plus Three** forum in 1997, which included China, South Korea and Japan. And then the **East Asia Summit**, which began taking place in 2005 and has expanded to include India, Australia, New Zealand, Russia and the United States.

## 24. South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)

- The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was established with the signing of the **SAARC Charter** in Dhaka on 8 December 1985.
- The **Secretariat** of the Association was set up in **Kathmandu** on 17 January 1987.
- **SAARC comprises of eight Member States:** Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
- **Important objectives of the Association** as outlined in the SAARC Charter are:
  - to promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and to improve their quality of life;
  - to accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region and to provide all individuals the opportunity to live in dignity and to realize their full potentials;
  - to promote and strengthen collective self-reliance among the countries of South Asia.

## 25. Advanced Motor Fuels Technology Collaboration Programme (AMF TCP)

- The Union Cabinet has been apprised of India joining as Member of Advanced Motor Fuels Technology Collaboration Programme (AMF TCP) under **International Energy Agency (IEA)**.
- The primary goal of joining AMF TCP by India to **bring down emissions and achieve higher fuel efficiency in transport sector**.
- **What is Advanced Motor Fuels Technology Collaboration Programme?**
  - AMF TCP is **an international platform under the framework of International Energy Agency (IEA)** for co-operation among countries to promote cleaner and more energy efficient fuels & vehicle technologies.
  - The activities of AMF TCP are **deployment and dissemination of Advanced Motor Fuels**.
  - It looks upon the transport fuel issues in a systemic way taking into account the production, distribution and end-use related aspects.
  - AMF TCP also provides an opportunity for fuel analysis, identifying new/alternate fuels for deployment in transport sector and allied R&D activities for reduction in emissions in fuel intensive sectors.
- **India and Other Members:**
  - **Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas** has joined AMF TCP as its 16th member in May, 2018.
  - The other member Countries of AMF TCP are USA, China, Japan, Canada, Chile, Israel, Germany, Austria, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Spain, Republic of Korea, Switzerland and Thailand.
- **Benefits for India:**
  - India's association with AMF TCP will help in furthering its efforts in identification & deployment of suitable fuels for transport sector for higher efficiency and lesser emissions.
  - The benefits of participation in AMF TCP are shared costs and pooled technical resources.
  - The duplication of efforts is avoided and national Research and Development capabilities are strengthened.

- There is an information exchange about best practices, network of researchers and linking research with practical implementation.
- After becoming member, India will initiate R&D in other areas of its interest in advanced biofuels and other motor fuels in view of their crucial role in substituting fossil fuel imports.

## 26. Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS)

- The **10th anniversary celebrations of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS)** was held in Kochi.
- The commemorative Special Cover of IONS 10th Anniversary celebrations depicts a map of the Indian Ocean and littoral countries of the IOR, signifying the geopolitical importance of the region.
- **About IONS:**
  - IONS, the 21st century's first significant **international maritime security initiative** launched in February 2008, provides a forum for discussion of regional maritime issues and promotes friendly relationships among member nations.
  - It presently has 24 members and eight observer navies.
  - **It is a voluntary initiative** that seeks to increase maritime co-operation among navies of the littoral states of the Indian Ocean Region by providing an **open and inclusive forum for discussion** of regionally relevant maritime issues.
  - Under the charter of business adopted in 2014, the grouping has working groups on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), Information Security and Interoperability (IS&I) and anti-piracy now renamed as maritime security.

## 27. Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)

- The 2018 APEC summit was held recently held in Papua New Guinea.
- **Outcome of the summit:**
  - It ended with **no joint statement from the leaders – a first in APEC history** – and with the fight for dominance in the Pacific region between Australia, the US and Japan on one side and China on the other, coming out into the open.
- **APEC:**
  - The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) is a **regional economic forum** established in 1989 to leverage the growing interdependence of the Asia-Pacific.
  - APEC has 21 members.
  - **Aim:** to create greater prosperity for the people of the region by promoting balanced, inclusive, sustainable, innovative and secure growth and by accelerating regional economic integration.
- **Functions:**
  - APEC works to help all residents of the Asia-Pacific participate in the growing economy.
  - APEC projects provide digital skills training for rural communities and help indigenous women export their products abroad.

- Recognizing the impacts of climate change, APEC members also implement initiatives to increase energy efficiency and promote sustainable management of forest and marine resources.
- The forum adapts to allow members to deal with important new challenges to the region's economic well-being. This includes ensuring disaster resilience, planning for pandemics, and addressing terrorism.
- **Members:**
  - APEC's 21 member economies are Australia; Brunei Darussalam; Canada; Chile; People's Republic of China; Hong Kong, China; Indonesia; Japan; Republic of Korea; Malaysia; Mexico; New Zealand; Papua New Guinea; Peru; The Philippines; The Russian Federation; Singapore; Chinese Taipei; Thailand; United States of America; Viet Nam.
  - APEC Members account for approximately 40% of the world's population, approximately 54% of the world's gross domestic product and about 44% of world trade.

## 28. Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)

- With just about 40% of the agenda items having been resolved, there is still a long way to go before the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) talks are concluded.
- It was agreed during the recently- concluded Singapore Ministerial meeting that the deadline for an agreement be shifted to 2019.
- **Outcomes of the Singapore Ministerial Meeting:**
  - India had scored big diplomatic points at the Singapore meeting by getting the countries gathered to omit the phrase '*significant conclusions*' from the leaders' statements.
  - Some major economies such as China and Japan felt that the phrasing should be that "substantial conclusions" had been achieved. India strongly opposed this.
- RCEP is proposed between the **ten member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)** (Brunei, Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam) **and the six states with which ASEAN has existing FTAs** (Australia, China, India, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand).
- RCEP negotiations were formally launched in November 2012 at the ASEAN Summit in Cambodia.
- **Aim:** RCEP aims to **boost goods trade** by eliminating most tariff and non-tariff barriers. It also seeks to **liberalise investment norms** and do away with services trade restrictions.
- **Why has it assumed so much significance in recent times?**
  - When inked, it would become the world's biggest free trade pact. This is because the 16 nations account for a total GDP of about \$50 trillion and house close to 3.5 billion people.
  - India (GDP-PPP worth \$9.5 trillion and population of 1.3 billion) and China (GDP-PPP of \$23.2 trillion and population of 1.4 billion) together comprise the RCEP's biggest component in terms of market size.





## 29. BRICS

- The Union Cabinet has given its ex-post facto approval for the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) among Brazil, Russian Federation, India, China, South Africa, regarding **Cooperation in the Social and Labour Sphere**.
- The MoU was signed on 3rd August, 2018 during **BRICS Labour and Employment Ministers (LEM) Meeting**.
- BRICS is an acronym for the grouping of the world's leading emerging economies, namely **Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa**.
- **Summits:** The BRICS Leaders' Summit is convened annually with discussions representing spheres of political and socio-economic coordination, in which member countries have identified several business opportunities, economic complementarities and areas of cooperation.
- **Chairship:** The Chairship of the forum is **rotated annually among the members**, in accordance with the acronym B-R-I-C-S. Cooperation among members is predicated on three levels or "tracks" of interaction, namely:
  - Track I: Formal diplomatic engagement between the national governments.
  - Track II: Engagement through government-affiliated institutions, e.g. state-owned enterprises and business councils.
  - Track III: Civil society and "people-to-people" engagement.
- **Facts for Prelims:**
  - The First BRIC Summit was held in June 2009 in Yekaterinburg, Russia.
  - The most recent BRICS summit was 10<sup>th</sup> Summit, took place in South Africa in July 2018.
  - The BRICS members are all leading developing or newly industrialized countries. All five are G-20 members.

## 30. BRICS 2018 Summit

- The 2018 BRICS summit, the tenth such annual summit, was held in South Africa.
- **Theme:** "BRICS in Africa: Collaboration for Inclusive Growth and Shared Prosperity in the 4th Industrial Revolution".
- The theme is intended to align and ensure strategic continuity with the approved themes for South Africa's Chairship of both the South African Development Community (SADC) and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA).

## 31. IORA – Delhi Declaration

- 21 countries in the **Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)** recently adopted the **Delhi Declaration on Renewable Energy in the Indian Ocean Region**. The declaration was the outcome of the 2nd IORA Renewable Energy Ministerial Meeting.
- **The Delhi declaration on Renewable Energy in the Indian Ocean Region:**
  - It calls for collaboration among IORA member states in meeting the growing demand for renewable energy in the Indian Ocean littorals, development of a common renewable energy agenda for the Indian Ocean region and promote regional capacity building.
  - The declaration also calls for **promotion of technology development and transfer**, strengthening of public private partnerships in renewable

energy and collaboration among IORA member states and the member nations of the International Solar Alliance (ISA).

- IORA member countries resolved to collaborate with the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA). As per the declaration adopted, IORA member nations will also collaborate with the ISA member nations to exchange knowledge and share views and potential interests in the renewable energy sector.
- Additionally, IORA member nations and IRENA will undertake the expansion of the **Global Renewable Energy Atlas**, the world's largest-ever joint renewable resource data project, coordinated by IRENA, thereby creating the Indian Ocean region's first and most comprehensive map and database.

- **About IORA:**

- The Indian Ocean Rim Association was set up with the objective of strengthening regional cooperation and sustainable development within the Indian Ocean Region with 21 Member States and 7 Dialogue Partners.
- The IORA is a regional forum, **tripartite in nature**, bringing together representatives of **Government, Business and Academia**, for promoting co-operation and closer interaction among them.
- It is based on the principles of **Open Regionalism** for strengthening Economic Cooperation particularly on Trade Facilitation and Investment, Promotion as well as Social Development of the region.
- India, Australia, Iran, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, South Africa, Mozambique, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Bangladesh, Singapore, Mauritius, Madagascar, UAE, Yemen, Seychelles, Somalia, Comoros and Oman are members of IORA.
- The **Coordinating Secretariat of IORA is located at Ebene, Mauritius**

### 32. Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Summit

- The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) is an informal process of dialogue and cooperation bringing together the 28 European Union member states, 2 other European countries, and the European Union with 21 Asian countries and the ASEAN Secretariat.
- The ASEM dialogue addresses political, economic and cultural issues, with the objective of strengthening the relationship between the two regions, in a spirit of mutual respect and equal partnership.
- It was officially established on 1 March 1996 at the first summit in Bangkok, Thailand.
- The ASEM Summit is a biennial meeting between the Heads of State and Government, the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission, and the Secretary-General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).
- 3<sup>rd</sup> ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting) Conference on '**Global Ageing and Human Rights of Older Persons**' was held in Seoul, Korea.

### 33. Conference on Disarmament (CD)

- The Conference on Disarmament (CD) is a **multilateral disarmament forum** established by the international community to **negotiate arms control** and disarmament agreements based at the Palais des Nations in Geneva.
- The Conference meets annually in three separate sessions in Geneva.
- The Conference was first established in 1979 as the Committee on Disarmament as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community. It was renamed the Conference on Disarmament in 1984.
- The Conference succeeded three other disarmament-related bodies: The Ten-Nation Committee on Disarmament (1960), the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament (1962–68) and the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament (1969–78).
- **Membership:** The conference is currently composed of 65 formal members, representing all areas of the world, as well as all known nuclear-weapon states. Additionally, members are organized into a number of informal regional groups to facilitate their preparation for, and representation in the plenary meetings of the Conference.
- **Relationship to the United Nations:**
  - The Conference is formally **independent from the United Nations**. However, while it is not formally a UN organization, it is linked to it in various ways.
  - The Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva serves as the Secretary-General of the Conference.
  - While the Conference adopts its own rules of procedure and agenda, the United Nations General Assembly can pass resolutions recommending specific topics to the Conference.
  - The Conference submits a report of its activities to the General Assembly yearly, or more frequently, as appropriate.

### 34. International Social Security Association

- The **Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC)** was awarded the 'ISSA Good Practice Award' for administrative solution for coverage extension at the 'Regional Social Security Forum for Asia and the Pacific' held recently at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- The award recognizes the measures taken by ESIC for extension of coverage of the **Scheme for Promoting Registration of Employers and Employees (SPREE)**, reducing the rate of contribution rates for 24 months in newly implemented areas and raising the wage limit for coverage under the ESI Act.
- **About International Social Security Association:**
  - The ISSA is the principal international organization for Social Security Organizations, Govts. and Departments of Social Security.
  - The ISSA was founded in 1927 under the auspices of the **International Labour Organization (ILO)**, Geneva.
  - It promotes excellence in social security administration through professional guidelines, expert knowledge, services and support to enable its Members to develop dynamic social security systems.

- The ESI Corporation hosts ISSA Liaison Office for South Asia at New Delhi.
- The Liaison Office coordinates with the Member countries and Social Security Institutions in Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Iran on activities of ISSA related to social security.
- **Facts for Prelims:**
  - ***The regional social security forum for Asia and the Pacific*** is a triennial Forum, which is the most important social security event in the region.
  - The International Social Security Association (ISSA) invites submissions for the ISSA Good Practices award for Asia and the Pacific regions, on the occasion of the triennial regional forum.

### 35. International Court of Arbitration

- The **NITI Aayog** and **ICC International Court of Arbitration** had recently organised a Workshop on Best Practices in International Arbitration in New Delhi.
- ***The International Court of Arbitration*** is a branch of the **International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)** and one of the world's leading institutions for providing international arbitration services.
- The International Court of Arbitration is known for **resolving international commercial and business disputes**, administering more than half of all arbitration disputes worldwide.
- The ICC seat is located in Paris.
- ***The International Chamber of Commerce*** is an international business organization with hundreds of thousands of member companies in over 130 countries spanning virtually every sector of private enterprise.

### 36. CLMV Conclave

- **5th India – CLMV (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam) Business Conclave** was recently held at Phnom Penh, Cambodia.
- During the conference, government and business community of CLMV countries were invited to actively partner in India's initiative to strengthen manufacturing capacities.
- **About CLMV:**
  - Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam collectively, is the third largest economy in ASEAN, followed by Indonesia and Thailand.
  - India's trade with the CLMV countries has grown from USD 1.5 bn to more than USD 10 bn in the last 10 years.
- **CLMV conclave:**
  - The CLMV conclave is an annual feature which provides an opportunity for Indian business leaders to interact with government and business stakeholders representing the four countries.
  - The conclave facilitates to create and provide a platform for the decision makers from CLMV countries to interact with a range of Indian business companies involved in trading, manufacturing, processing, engineering, consultancy, construction etc.

### 37. Mission Innovation

- The Mission Innovation Ministerial was held at Malmo-Sweden. India also took part in the ministerial.
- Mission Innovation is a global platform of 23 countries and European Union aimed at accelerating **clean energy innovations** through enhanced Government funding, greater public-private sector partnership and enhanced global cooperation.
- Mission Innovation is complemented by private sector-led investments of extraordinary levels of private capital in clean energy, focusing on early-stage innovations.
- As part of the initiative, participating countries have committed to seek to double their governments' clean energy research and development (R&D) investments over five years, while encouraging greater levels of private sector investment in transformative clean energy technologies.
- Mission Innovation was announced on November 30, 2015, as world leaders came together in Paris to undertake ambitious efforts to combat climate change.
- **India is Founding Member of the Steering Committee** and also a Member of the two sub-groups: Joint research and Capacity Building and Private Sector Engagement.

### 38. Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)

- Pakistan hosted its first ever Shanghai Cooperation Organisation-Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (SCO- RATS) meeting in Islamabad.
- The participants of the meeting include the executive committee of the SCO and of RATS along with legal advisors from eight member states.
- The Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), headquartered in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 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.
- The Head of RATS is elected to a three-year term. Each member state also sends a permanent representative to RATS.

### 39. Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

- SCO is a **Eurasian economic, political and security organisation** headquartered in Beijing, China.
- It was founded in 2001. The full members of the organization are China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, India and Pakistan.
- Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran and Mongolia have observer status at present.
- China had founded this grouping in 1996 and then it was called as Shanghai Five comprising of Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.
- In 2001, Uzbekistan was invited to join it and SCO was officially born.
- The groupings main objective is **military cooperation between members**.
- It is primarily centred on **Central Asian security-related concerns**.
- The SCO has established **relations with the United Nations** (where it is an observer in the General Assembly), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

- India and Pakistan were inducted as full members of the SCO at the 17th SCO summit concluded in Astana, capital of Kazakhstan.

#### 40. Pacific Islands Forum

- The Pacific Islands Forum has been granted approval to establish a **Permanent Observer Office** at the **United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG)**.
- The Permanent Observer status would entrench the presence of the Blue Pacific region in, and strengthen its links to the United Nations organisations, including its specialised agencies, programmes, fund initiatives and joint programs.
- About Pacific Islands Forum:**
  - Pacific Islands Forum, formerly (1971–2000) South Pacific Forum, organization 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 and which 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.

#### 41. Organization of Islamic Cooperation countries (OIC)

- Russia has come in support of Organization of Islamic Cooperation countries (OIC) in their effort to enter the Russian market.
- Organisation of Islamic Cooperation is an international organization founded in 1969, consisting of 57 member states. It is the **second largest inter-governmental organization 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.

#### 42. North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

- Colombia** became the NATO’s first Latin American “global partner.”
- Colombia joined as a “global partner”, which means it will not necessarily have to take part in military action, and will be fully accredited in Brussels.
- Areas of cooperation include cyber security, maritime security, terrorism and its links to organised crime, as well as building the capacities and capabilities of the Colombian armed forces.
- About NATO:**
  - The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was founded in 1949 and is a group of 29 countries from Europe and North America that exists to protect the people and territory of its members.
  - The Alliance is founded on the principle of **collective defence**, meaning that if one NATO Ally is attacked, then all NATO Allies are attacked.



- The NATO lists Afghanistan, Australia, Iraq, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mongolia, New Zealand and Pakistan as “partners across the globe”.

#### 43. Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)

- The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is **a regional organization comprising of seven member states in South Asia and Southeast Asia** lying in littoral and adjacent areas of Bay of Bengal constituting a contiguous regional unity.
- This sub-regional organisation came into being on June 6, 1997, through **the Bangkok Declaration**. It is headquartered in Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- **It comprises of seven member countries:** five deriving from South Asia — including Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka — and two from Southeast Asia, including Myanmar and Thailand.
- **AMENDMENTS IN THE BIMSTEC ORGANISATION:**
  - Initially, the economic bloc was formed with four Member States with the acronym ‘BIST-EC’ (Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand Economic Cooperation).
  - Following the inclusion of Myanmar during a special Ministerial Meeting in Bangkok on December 22, 1997, the group was renamed ‘BIMST-EC’ (Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand Economic Cooperation).
  - With the admission of Nepal and Bhutan at the 6th Ministerial Meeting in February 2004, the name of the grouping was changed to ‘Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation’ (BIMSTEC).
- **Objectives of BIMSTEC:**
  - BIMSTEC is a sector-driven cooperative organization. **Technological and economic cooperation** among South Asian and Southeast Asian countries along the coast of the Bay of Bengal is its main objective.
  - Starting with six sectors-including trade, technology, energy, transport, tourism and fisheries-for sectoral cooperation in late 1997, it expanded to embrace nine more sectors-including agriculture, public health, poverty alleviation, counter-terrorism, environment, culture, people to people contact and climate change-in 2008.

#### 44. BIMSTEC SUMMIT 2018

- Fourth BIMSTEC summit was recently held in Nepal. The member states have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the establishment of a **Bimstec Gird Interconnection** to enhance energy cooperation among the member states.
- **THEME OF BIMSTEC SUMMIT 2018:** The theme of the fourth BIMSTEC summit is ‘Towards a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable Bay of Bengal region’.
- **Kathmandu Declaration:**
  - The Fourth BIMSTEC Summit concluded with an 18-point Kathmandu Declaration.
  - The declaration is expected to enhance the effectiveness of BIMSTEC Secretariat by engaging it in various technical and economic activities in the region.

#### 45. Nuclear Suppliers Group

- 28<sup>th</sup> NSG plenary meeting was held recently in Jurmala, Latvia. With this, Latvia has become the first Baltic state to Chair the NSG.
- The United States has asserted that it will continue to advocate for New Delhi's membership to the Nuclear Suppliers Group as it meets all the criteria. US has granted India the **Strategic Trade Authorisation (STA-1)** status.
- The status places India in the inner circle of America's closest allies.
- **What's the issue?**
  - India has been seeking entry into the 48-member elite nuclear club, which controls nuclear trade, but China has repeatedly stonewalled its bid.
  - While India, which is backed by the US and a number of western countries has garnered the support of a majority of the group's members, China has stuck to its stand that new members should sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), making India's entry difficult as the group is guided by the consensus principle.
  - India is not a signatory to the NPT.
- **What is NSG?**
  - Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) is a **multinational body concerned with reducing nuclear proliferation** by controlling the export and re-transfer of materials that may be applicable to nuclear weapon development and by improving safeguards and protection on existing materials.
  - Interestingly, the NSG was set up in 1974 as a reaction to India's nuclear tests to stop what it called the misuse of nuclear material meant for peaceful purposes.
- **Background:**
  - India sought membership of the NSG in 2008, but its application hasn't been decided on, primarily because signing the NPT or other nuclear moratoriums on testing is a pre-requisite. However, India has received a special waiver to conduct nuclear trade with all nuclear exporters.
  - **India, Pakistan, Israel and South Sudan are among the four UN member states which have not signed the NPT**, the international pact aimed at preventing the spread of nuclear weapons.
- **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 harmonization and coordination.
  - Is part of a very transparent process.

#### 46. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

- India has decided to place four more reactors under the IAEA safeguards. Accordingly, two Russian-designed Pressurised Light Water Reactors and two Pressurised Heavy Reactors being built with Indian technology will be covered.
- With this, a total of 26 Indian nuclear facilities will be under the international nuclear energy watchdog.
- **IAEA safeguards:**

- **What are they?** Safeguards are a set of technical measures applied by the IAEA on nuclear material and activities, through which the Agency seeks to independently verify that **nuclear facilities are not misused and nuclear material not diverted from peaceful uses**. States accept these measures through the conclusion of safeguards agreements.
- **The objective of IAEA Safeguards** is to **deter the spread of nuclear weapons** by the early detection of the misuse of nuclear material or technology. This provides credible assurances that States are honouring their legal obligations that nuclear material is being used only for peaceful purposes.
- **Need and implementation:** IAEA safeguards are an essential component of the international security system. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the centrepiece of global efforts to prevent the further spread of nuclear weapons. Under the Treaty's Article 3, each Non-Nuclear Weapon State is required to conclude a safeguards agreement with the IAEA.
- **About IAEA:**
  - The IAEA is the world's centre for cooperation in the nuclear field.
  - **It was set up as the world's "Atoms for Peace" organization in 1957.**
  - It was established as an autonomous organization in 1957 through its own international treaty, the **IAEA Statute**.
  - The Agency works with its Member States and multiple partners worldwide to promote the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear technologies.
  - It seeks to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and to inhibit its use for any military purpose, including nuclear weapons.
  - **IAEA reports to both the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council.**
  - The IAEA has its headquarters in Vienna, Austria.
  - The IAEA serves as an **intergovernmental forum** for scientific and technical cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear technology and nuclear power worldwide.

#### 47. SAARC Development Fund

- Thimpu-based SAARC Development Fund will soon be launching a **social enterprise development programme (SEDP)** to fund 80 entities annually across eight-member states, including India.
- **What is social enterprise development programme (SEDP)?**
  - The SEDP is being launched as part of its SAARC Development Fund's social window.
  - The programme will be implemented in **all the SAARC member states** with the objective of identifying and building social enterprises by using a mix of grants and concessional returnable capital.
- **About SAARC Development Fund:**
  - SDF was established by the heads of the eight SAARC Member States in April 2010.
  - SDF have three Windows. They are Social, Economic and Infrastructure Windows.

- Its governing council comprises finance ministers of the SAARC countries.
- **The aim of the fund is to:**
  - Promote the welfare of the people of SAARC region.
  - Improve their quality of life.
  - Accelerate economic growth, social progress and poverty alleviation in the region.

#### **48. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)**

- Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) has released its 2018 edition of the yearly report on the current state of armaments, disarmament and international security.
- There are nine countries which have nuclear warheads. They include Russia, the US, the UK, France, China, Israel, India, Pakistan and North Korea.
- **SIPRI** is an independent international institute dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament.
- Established in 1966, SIPRI provides data, analysis and recommendations, based on open sources, to policymakers, researchers, media and the interested public.
- Based in **Stockholm**, SIPRI also has a presence in Beijing, and is regularly ranked among the most respected think tanks worldwide.

#### **49. IBSA SUMMIT**

- 2018 IBSA Ministerial meet was recently held in Pretoria, South Africa. The outcome of this meeting was a document titled **IBSA Declaration on South-South Cooperation**.
- This document calls for contribution of each of the member of IBSA forum to contribute to greater understanding of development cooperation as a common endeavour of the global south.
- The establishment of IBSA was formalised by **the Brasilia Declaration** of 6 June 2003.
- IBSA is a coordinating mechanism amongst three emerging countries, three multi ethnic and multicultural democracies, which are determined to:
  - Contribute to the construction of a new international architecture.
  - Bring their voice together on global issues.
  - Deepen their ties in various areas.

#### **50. Financial Action Task Force (FATF)**

- In a blow to Pakistan, the Financial Action Task Force has placed it on the 'grey list' for failing to curb anti-terror financing.
- The decision was taken at the global financial watchdog Financial Action Task Force's (FATF) plenary session held recently in Paris.
- The placement on the 'grey list' could hurt Pakistan's economy as well as its international standing.
- **About FATF:**
  - The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is an inter-governmental body established in 1989 by the Ministers of its Member jurisdictions.

- It is a “**policy-making body**” which works to generate the necessary political will to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms in various areas.
- The **FATF Secretariat is housed at the OECD headquarters in Paris**.
- The objectives of the FATF are to set standards and promote effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures for **combating money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats** to the integrity of the international financial system.
- The FATF's decision making body, the FATF Plenary, meets three times per year.
- Pakistan remained on the FATF grey list from 2012 to 2015.

## 51. Asia Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA)

- India has agreed to provide tariff concessions on 3,142 products to Asia Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA) members.
- These duty concessions will be more for least developed countries (LDCs) and less for developing nations.
- **About APTA:**

- The Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA), previously named the **Bangkok Agreement**, was signed in 1975 as an initiative of ESCAP.

- The **six member countries** are Bangladesh, China, India, Laos, Korea and Sri Lanka.

- Being the oldest preferential trade agreement among developing countries in Asia-Pacific, APTA aims to promote economic

development through the adoption of mutually beneficial trade liberalization measures that will contribute to intra-regional trade expansion and provides for economic integration through coverage of merchandise goods, services, investment and trade facilitation.

- **Significance of APTA:**

- Open to all developing member countries, APTA is a truly region-wide trade agreement spanning East and South Asia, with potential to expand to other sub-regions, including Central Asia and the Pacific.
- **APTA is the first plurilateral agreement among the developing countries in the region to adopt common operational procedures for certification and verification of the origin of goods** and it has the longest effective implementation period amongst the trade agreements in the entire Asia-Pacific.
- Notably, **APTA is the only operational trade agreement linking China and India**, and other major markets such as the Republic of Korea.



## 52. World Customs Organisation (WCO)

- **India has become the Vice-Chair (Regional Head) of the Asia Pacific Region of World Customs Organisation (WCO)** for a period of two years, from July, 2018 to June, 2020.
- **About WCO:**

- The World Customs Organization (WCO), established in 1952 as ***the Customs Co-operation Council (CCC) is an independent intergovernmental body*** whose mission is to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of Customs administrations.
- Today, the WCO represents 182 Customs administrations across the globe that collectively process approximately 98% of world trade.
- ***It is headquartered*** in Brussels, Belgium.
- WCO is the only international organization with competence in Customs matters and can rightly call itself the voice of the international Customs community.
- The WCO has divided its Membership into six Regions. Each of the six Regions is represented by a regionally elected Vice-Chairperson to the WCO Council.
- **Roles and functions:**
  - As a forum for dialogue and exchange of experiences between national Customs delegates, the WCO offers its Members a range of Conventions and other international instruments, as well as technical assistance and training services provided either directly by the Secretariat, or with its participation.
  - WCO has also been responsible for administering the World Trade Organization's Agreements on Customs Valuation, which provide a system for placing values on imported goods, and the Rules of Origin, which are used to determine the origin of a given commodity.



## United Nations Organisations

### 1. UN Specialised Agencies

- Specialized agencies are **autonomous organizations** working with the United Nations.
- Specialized agencies **may or may not have been originally created by the United Nations**, but they are incorporated into the United Nations System by the United Nations Economic and Social Council.
- At present the UN has in total **15 specialized agencies** that carry out various functions on behalf of the UN.
- **The specialized agencies are listed below:**
  - Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).
  - International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).
  - International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).
  - International Labour Organization (ILO).
  - International Maritime Organization (IMO).
  - International Monetary Fund (IMF).
  - International Telecommunication Union (ITU).
  - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
  - United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).
  - Universal Postal Union (UPU).
  - World Bank Group (WBG).
    - The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD),
    - The International Finance Corporation (IFC),
    - The International Development Association (IDA),
    - The Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), and
    - The International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID).
  - World Health Organization (WHO).
  - World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).
  - World Meteorological Organization (WMO).
  - World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).
- **Former Specialized Agencies:**
  - The only UN specialized agency to go out of existence is the **International Refugee Organization**, which existed from 1946 to 1952.
  - In 1952, it was replaced by the **Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees** which is a subsidiary organ of the United Nations General Assembly.

### 2. World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)

- **World Intellectual Property Indicators 2018 report** was recently released in Geneva by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).
- Globally, 1.4 million patents were granted in 2017. China's patent authority led the world in the number of patents granted with 420,144 and was followed by the US with 318,829, according to the WIPO.

- **About WIPO:**

- The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) is **one of the 17 specialized agencies of the United Nations**.
- It was created in 1967 “to encourage creative activity, to promote the protection of intellectual property throughout the world.”
- It has currently 191 member states, and is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.
- Non-members are the states of Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Solomon Islands, South Sudan and Timor-Leste. Palestine has observer status.
- **India is a member of WIPO and party to several treaties administered by WIPO.**

### 3. UN’s Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

- Former Indian diplomat, Preeti Saran has been elected unopposed to an Asia Pacific seat on the United Nation’s Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR).
- The UN’s Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) elected Saran to the 18-member committee ‘CESCR’ for a four-year term beginning on January 1, 2019.
- **About Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR):**
  - The CESCR was set up in 1985 by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations.
  - It was constituted with an aim **to monitor on its behalf the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESR)**, which has been ratified by 169 countries.
  - The countries that are parties to the covenant are required to submit reports to the CESCR every five years on how they protect the economic, social and cultural rights.
  - The committee examines each report and addresses its concerns and recommendations to the State party in the form of concluding observations.
  - The Members of the CESCR serve in their personal capacities as experts and do not represent their countries even though they may be nominated by their own nation.

### 4. UN Framework to Combat International Terrorism

- The United Nations has launched a new framework titled ‘**UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact**’ to combat international terrorism and coordinate efforts across the peace and security, humanitarian, human rights and sustainable development sectors.
- **About the ‘UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact’:**
  - The framework is an agreement between the UN chief, 36 organisational entities, the International Criminal Police Organisation (INTERPOL) and the World Customs Organisation to better serve the needs of member states when it comes to tackling the scourge of international terrorism.
  - The Coordination Committee of the United Nations will oversee the implementation of the framework and monitor its implementation. The

committee will be chaired by UN Under-Secretary-General for counter-terrorism.

## 5. UN Panel of Auditors

- Comptroller and Auditor General Rajiv Mehrishi has become the Vice-Chair of the UN Panel of Auditors.
- The United Nations Panel of Auditors consists of External Auditors of the United Nations and its agencies.
- The United Nations General Assembly in 1959 established the Panel of External Auditors, comprising the individual external auditors of the United Nations system, who are also Heads of Supreme Audit Institutions.
- Presently, the panel consists of 11 countries — India, Germany, Chile, Canada, France, Italy, Philippines, Ghana, Indonesia, Switzerland and United Kingdom. Currently, the panel is chaired by the Comptroller and Auditor General of the UK.

## 6. Global Compact for Migration

- The UN General Assembly (UNGA) has endorsed the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, also known as the Marrakech Compact on Migration.
- Alongside, the UN also launched the Migration Network to support the compact's implementation at country level.
- **About the Marrakech Compact on Migration:**
  - In **the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, adopted in September 2016**, the General Assembly decided to develop a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration.
  - **The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM)** sets out a common, comprehensive approach to international migration.
  - **The GCM is a voluntary, non-binding document** that introduces no additional obligations to states. It is a global agreement setting out a common framework, shared principles and best practices on international migration.
  - **It aims** at cooperation between states and promotes measures to strengthen regular migration pathways, to tackle irregular migration, and to protect human rights of migrants among other objectives.
  - The compact is the first intergovernmental agreement to cover wide-ranging dimensions of international migration in holistic and comprehensive manner.
  - The Global Compact establishes a **United Nations mechanism** allowing Governments and companies to contribute technical, financial and human resources for implementing it.
  - **The global compact is framed consistent with target 10.7 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** in which member States committed to cooperate internationally to facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration.
- **Opposition:**
  - The US quit negotiations early on, in December 2017, and was followed by Hungary seven months later. Dominican Republic, Australia, Austria,

Bulgaria, Israel, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia also refused to sign the document.

## 7. United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)

- 109<sup>th</sup> session of United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Executive Council was held in Manama, Bahrain.
- The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is the United Nations agency responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism.
- **Members:**
  - UNWTO's membership includes 158 countries, 6 Associate Members and over 500 Affiliate Members representing the private sector, educational institutions, tourism associations and local tourism authorities.
- **What it does?**
  - UNWTO promotes tourism as a driver of economic growth, inclusive development and environmental sustainability and offers leadership and support to the sector in advancing knowledge and tourism policies worldwide.
  - UNWTO encourages the implementation of the **Global Code of Ethics for Tourism**, to maximize tourism's socio-economic contribution while minimizing its possible negative impacts, and is committed to promoting tourism as an instrument in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), geared towards reducing poverty and fostering sustainable development worldwide.
  - UNWTO generates market knowledge, promotes competitive and sustainable tourism policies and instruments, fosters tourism education and training, and works to make tourism an effective tool for development through technical assistance projects in over 100 countries around the world.

## 8. UN Habitat

- The National Mission for Clean Ganga partnered with UN Habitat recently organized a policy dialogue- '**Urban Cafe: River for Habitat**' in New Delhi on the occasion of World Cities Day 2018.
- **About UN Habitat:**
  - The **United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)** is the United Nations agency for human settlements and sustainable urban development.
  - It was established in 1978 as an outcome of the First UN Conference on Human Settlements and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat I) held in Vancouver, Canada in 1976.
  - It is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all. It is a member of the United Nations Development Group.
  - 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 urbanizing world.
- As an inter-governmental policy making and decision-making body, the Governing Council of UN-Habitat seeks to promote integral and comprehensive approach to human settlements, assist the countries and regions in addressing human settlement problems and strengthen cooperation among all countries on human settlement issue.
- UN-Habitat reports to the United Nations General Assembly.

## 9. International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

- The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has announced that it will establish its South Asia Area Office and Technology Innovation Centre at New Delhi.
- India has been elected as a Member of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) Council for another 4-year term (2019-2022).
- The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is ***an agency of the United Nations (UN)*** whose purpose is to coordinate telecommunication operations and services throughout the world.
- Originally founded in 1865, as the International Telegraph Union, the ITU is the oldest existing international organization.
- ITU headquarters are in Geneva, Switzerland.
- **The ITU consists of three sectors:**
  - ***Radiocommunication (ITU-R)*** — ensures optimal, fair and rational use of the radio frequency (RF) spectrum.
  - ***Telecommunication Standardization (ITU-T)*** — formulates recommendations for standardizing telecommunication operations worldwide.
  - ***Telecommunication Development (ITU-D)*** — assists countries in developing and maintaining internal communication operations.
- **Membership:**
  - There are 193 Member States of the ITU, including all UN member states except the Republic of Palau, plus the Vatican City.
  - Membership of ITU is open to only UN members, which may join the Union as Member States, as well as to private organizations like carriers, equipment manufacturers, funding bodies, research and development organizations and international and regional telecommunication organizations, which may join ITU as non-voting Sector Members.
- **Functions:**
  - The ITU sets and publishes regulations and standards relevant to electronic communication and broadcasting technologies of all kinds including radio, television, satellite, telephone and the Internet.
  - The organization conducts working parties, study groups and meetings to address current and future issues and to resolve disputes.
  - The ITU organizes and holds an exhibition and forum known as the **Global TELECOM** every four years.
  - Another important aspect of the ITU's mandate is helping emerging countries to establish and develop telecommunication systems of their own.

- Although the recommendations of the ITU are non-binding, most countries adhere to them in the interest of maintaining an effective international electronic communication environment.

### 10. World Food Programme (WFP)

- United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba Group have formed strategic partnership to support efforts eliminate hunger globally by 2030.
- As per the agreement, Alibaba will lend its cutting-edge technology and resources to support digital transformation of WFP's operations.
- **"World Hunger Map":**
  - Alibaba Cloud, the cloud computing arm of Alibaba will work with WFP to develop 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.
- **About WFP:**
  - The World Food Programme (WFP) is ***the food assistance branch of the United Nations and the world's largest humanitarian organization*** addressing hunger and promoting food security.
  - The WFP strives to eradicate hunger and malnutrition, with the ultimate 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.
  - Born in 1961, WFP pursues a vision of the world in which every man, woman and child has access at all times to the food needed for an active and healthy life.
  - The WFP is governed by an Executive Board which consists of representatives from member states.
  - ***The WFP operations are funded by voluntary donations from world governments, corporations and private donors.***
  - WFP food aid is also directed to fight micronutrient deficiencies, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, and combat disease, including HIV and AIDS.

### 11. UN Central Emergency Response Fund

- The United Nations has announced \$9.2 million in health and nutritional aid for crisis-stricken Venezuela, where hunger and preventable disease are soaring amid the collapse of the country's socialist economic system.
- The U.N. Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) will support projects to **provide nutritional support** to children under five years old, pregnant women and lactating mothers at risk, and emergency health care for the vulnerable.
- **UN Central Emergency Response Fund:**
  - It is a humanitarian fund established by the United Nations General Assembly on December 15, 2005 and launched in March 2006.
  - CERF seeks to enable more timely and reliable humanitarian assistance to those affected by natural disasters and armed conflicts.



- ***The fund is replenished annually through*** contributions from governments, the private sector, foundations and individuals.
- Allocations:
- The CERF grant element is divided into two windows:
  - **Rapid Responses** (approximately two thirds of the grant element)
    - The Rapid Response window provides funds intended to mitigate the unevenness and delays of the voluntary contribution system by providing seed money for life-saving, humanitarian activities in the initial days and weeks of a sudden onset crisis or a deterioration in an ongoing situation.
  - **Underfunded Emergencies** (approximately one third of the grant element).
    - The Underfunded Emergencies window supports countries that are significantly challenged by “forgotten” emergencies.

## 12. International Court of Justice (ICJ)

- The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is the principal judicial body of the UN.
- Established in 1946 to replace the Permanent Court of International Justice, the ICJ mainly operates under the statute of its predecessor, which is included in the UN Charter.
- 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).
- ***It has two primary functions:*** to settle legal disputes submitted by States in accordance with established international laws, and to act as an advisory board on issues submitted to it by authorized international organizations.
- ***The ruling by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) is legally binding.***
- Members of the Court:
  - The International Court of Justice is composed of 15 judges elected to nine-year terms of office by the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council.
  - These organs vote simultaneously but separately.
  - In order to be elected, a candidate must receive an absolute majority of the votes in both bodies.
  - In order to ensure a measure of continuity, one third of the Court is elected every three years. Judges are eligible for re-election.
- What are the qualifications of ICJ judges?
  - A judge should have a high moral character.
  - A judge should fit to the qualifications of appointment of highest judicial officers as prescribed by their respective states.
  - A judge should be a juriconsult of recognized competence in international law.
- The 15 judges of the Court are distributed as per the regions:
  - Three from Africa.
  - Two from Latin America and Caribbean.
  - Three from Asia.
  - Five from Western Europe and other states.
  - Two from Eastern Europe.

- **Independence of the Judges:**

- Once elected, a Member of the Court is a delegate neither of the government of his own country nor of that of any other State.
- Unlike most other organs of international organizations, the Court is not composed of representatives of governments.
- Members of the Court are independent judges whose first task, before taking up their duties, is to make a solemn declaration in open court that they will exercise their powers impartially and conscientiously.
- In order to guarantee his or her independence, no Member of the Court can be dismissed unless, in the unanimous opinion of the other Members, he/she no longer fulfils the required conditions. This has in fact never happened.

### 13. United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)

- The United States withdrew from the United Nations Human Rights Council accusing it of a “chronic bias against Israel”.
- **India has been re-elected to UNHRC for a period of three years** beginning January 1, 2019, getting 188 votes in the Asia-Pacific category, the highest number of votes among all candidates.
- India had previously been elected to the Geneva-based Human Rights Council for the 2011-2014 and 2014-2017 terms.
- **About UNHRC:**
  - The UN body was established in 2006 with the aim of **promoting and protecting human rights around the globe**, as well as investigating alleged human rights violations.
  - It is made up of 47 member states, which are selected by the UN General Assembly on a staggered basis each year for three-year-long terms.
  - Members meet around three times a year to debate human rights issues and pass **non-binding resolutions and recommendations** by majority vote.
  - The council also carries out the **Universal Periodic Review of all UN member states**, which allows civil society groups to bring accusations of human rights violations in member states to the attention of the UN.

### 14. United Nations Peacekeeping Course for African Partners (UNPCAP)

- The third edition of the United Nations Peacekeeping Course for African Partners (UNPCAP) is being held in New Delhi.
- **About UNPCAP:**
  - The course is aimed to build and enhance the capacity of the African Troop Contributing Countries to the UN and to further train the trainers from these countries.
  - The course is conducted by the **Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping in India (CUNPK)** in partnership with the US, the Indian Army said in a statement.
  - The first and second editions of the course were held in New Delhi in 2016 and 2017, respectively.

### 15. Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping (CUNPK)

- The Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping (CUNPK), India and the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect have jointly started the pilot “Training of Trainers (ToT) Course on Civilian Protection and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P)” in Delhi.
- **About CUNPK:**
  - The Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping (CUNPK), has been set up in New Delhi, drawing on India’s vast experience in the field of UN Peacekeeping.
  - It functions under the directions of a Board of management under the Chairmanship of Vice Chief of the Army Staff.
- **Role and important functions:**
  - The Centre conducts International Training Capsules for Military Contingent Officers, Military Observers, and Staff and Logistics Officers.
  - The Centre regularly organizes Seminars, Joint Working Groups and Command Post Exercises at the National and International level.
  - It is also a repository of information on India’s involvement in UN Peacekeeping and is continuing to build and update its research on peacekeeping related issues.
- **What you need to know about UN Peacekeeping?**
  - United Nations Peacekeeping was created in 1948.
  - Its first mission involved the establishment of the **UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO)**, which served to observe and maintain ceasefire during the 1948 Arab- Israeli War.
  - **UN Peacekeeping maintains three basic principles:** Consent of the parties, impartiality and non-use of Force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate.
  - The UN Peacekeepers are led by the **Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DKPO)**. There are currently 14 UN peace operations deployed on four continents.
  - UN Peacekeepers are from diverse backgrounds, from areas all around the world. They include police, military and civilian personnel. They are often referred to as Blue Berets or Blue Helmets because of their light blue berets or helmets.
  - **The UN Peacekeeping Force won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1988.**
  - The United Nations Charter gives the United Nations Security Council the power and responsibility to take collective action to maintain international peace and security. For this reason, the international community usually looks to the Security Council to authorize peacekeeping operations.
- **Facts for Prelims:**
  - **The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect** seeks to transform the principle of the Responsibility to Protect into a practical guide for action in the face of mass atrocities.
  - The Global Centre was founded by a number of supportive governments, leading figures from the human rights community, as well as by International Crisis Group, Human Rights Watch, Oxfam

International, Refugees International, and WFM-Institute for Global Policy.

### 16. United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

- The UN General Assembly has elected Belgium, the Dominican Republic, Germany, Indonesia and South Africa to serve as non-permanent members on the Security Council for two years.
- The five new members will replace Bolivia, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, the Netherlands and Sweden on the council.
- **Selection of members:**
  - There are 15 members on the UN Security Council, including the five permanent ones — Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States — and 10 non-permanent members, half of which are elected each year.
  - Each candidate country needed to secure two thirds of the votes in order to clinch a seat.
- **UNSC:**
  - The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is one of the organs of the United Nations and is charged with the **maintenance of international peace and security**.
  - Its powers include the establishment of peacekeeping operations, the establishment of international sanctions, and the authorization of military action through Security Council resolutions.
  - It is the **only UN body with the authority to issue binding resolutions** to member states.
- **Members:**
  - The Security Council consists of fifteen members. Russia, the United Kingdom, France, China, and the United States—serve as the body's five permanent members.
  - These **permanent members can veto any substantive Security Council resolution**, including those on the admission of new member states or candidates for Secretary-General.
  - The Security Council also has 10 non-permanent members, elected on a regional basis to serve two-year terms.
  - The body's presidency rotates monthly among its members.

### 17. UNSC Resolution 2427

- The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has adopted Resolution 2427. The resolution has won unanimous approval of the 15 members of the council.
- The resolution is aimed at further crystalizing the **protection of children in armed conflicts**, including by combating their recruitment by non-State armed groups and treating formerly recruited children primarily as victims.

### 18. United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)

- A total of 20 countries, including India, announced contributions to the 2018 budget of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestine Refugees.

- India has pledged USD 5 million. The contributions are to help bolster “severe funding crisis” following US’ cut in its annual aid to UNRWA.
- **Background:**
  - UNRWA has been providing health, education, relief and social services, as well as emergency humanitarian assistance, to some 5.3 million Palestinian refugees across its five fields of operation — Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip — for 65 years.
  - However, in January, the agency’s financial situation became catastrophic due to the sudden loss of USD 300 million in voluntary contributions.
  - The Trump administration in January US said it would withhold USD 65 million of USD 125 million it had planned to send to UNRWA.
- **About UNRWA:**
  - Following the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict, UNRWA was established by United Nations General Assembly to carry out direct relief and works programmes for Palestine refugees.
  - The Agency began operations on 1 May 1950. In the absence of a solution to the Palestine refugee problem, the General Assembly has repeatedly renewed UNRWA’s mandate, most recently extending it until 30 June 2020.
  - **UNRWA is the only UN agency dedicated to helping refugees from a specific region or conflict** and is separate from UNHCR.
  - **Funding:** The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions from UN Member States.
  - UNRWA also receives some funding from the Regular Budget of the United Nations, which is used mostly for international staffing costs.
  - **The Agency’s services encompass** education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, microfinance and emergency assistance, including in times of armed conflict.

### 19. Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System (RIMES)

- The Odisha government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System (RIMES) for effective management of disasters.
- RIMES was established on 30 April 2009 to provide user-relevant early warning services to its Member States and others.
- **It is a UN registered international and inter-governmental institution.**
- **It is owned and managed by its 48 members and collaborating states** for building capacities in the generation and application of user-relevant early warning information.

## International Banks / International Financial Institutions

### 1. Asian Development Bank (ADB)

- 51<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting of Asian Development Bank (ADB) was held in Manila, Philippines. The Annual Meeting of the ADB Board of Governors is an opportunity to provide guidance on ADB administrative, financial, and operational directions.
- **About ADB:**
  - It is a regional development bank established on 22 August 1966 and is headquartered in Philippines.
  - It aims to facilitate economic development of countries in Asia. It also aims for an Asia and Pacific free from poverty.
- **Membership:**
  - The bank admits the members of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP, formerly known as the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East) and non- regional developed countries.
  - Currently, it has 68 members – of which 49 are from within Asia and the Pacific and 19 outside.
- **Voting:**
  - ADB was modelled closely on the World Bank, and has a similar weighted voting system where **votes are distributed in proportion with member's capital subscriptions**.
- **Funding:**
  - ADB raises funds through bond issues on the world's capital markets.
  - ADB also rely on its members' contributions, retained earnings from its lending operations, and the repayment of loans.
  - Japan holds the largest proportions of shares at 15.67%. The United States holds 15.56%, China holds 6.47%, India holds 6.36%, and Australia holds 5.81%.
- **Board of Governors:**
  - It is the highest policy-making body of the bank.
  - It is composed of one representative from each member state.
  - The Board of Governors also elect the bank's President who is the chairperson of the Board of Directors and manages ADB.
  - The Alternate Board of Governors are nominated by Board of Governors of ADB's 67 to represent them at the Annual Meeting that meets formally once year to be held in a member country.
- **Loans:**
  - It offers both Hard Loans and Soft loans.
  - The ADB offers "hard" loans from ordinary capital resources (OCR) on commercial terms, and the Asian Development Fund (ADF) affiliated with the ADB extends "soft" loans from special fund resources with concessional conditions.



## 2. Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)

- The board of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) has approved \$100 million investment in the National Infrastructure and Investment Fund (NIIF).
- Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is a multilateral development bank with a mission to improve social and economic outcomes in Asia and beyond.
- It is headquartered in Beijing.
- It commenced operations in January 2016 and has now grown to 93 approved members from around the world.
- By **investing in sustainable infrastructure** and other productive sectors today, it aims to connect people, services and markets that over time will impact the lives of billions and build a better future.
- The capital of the bank is \$100 billion, equivalent to 2/3 of the capital of the Asian Development Bank and about half that of the World Bank.
- **About NIIF:**
  - ***NIIF was set up in 2015 as an investment vehicle for funding*** commercially viable greenfield, brownfield and stalled projects in the infrastructure sector. NIIF will invest in areas such as energy, transportation, housing, water, waste management and other infrastructure-related sectors in India.
  - ***The corpus of the fund is proposed to be around Rs40,000 crore***, with the government investing 49% and the rest to be raised from third-party investors such as sovereign wealth funds, insurance and pension funds, endowments etc.
- **Facts for Prelims:**
  - India hosted the annual meeting of AIIB for the first time in June 2018.
  - India is the second largest shareholder in AIIB after China and is also the largest recipient of funds from the multilateral agency.
  - Nearly 25% of the total funds committed by AIIB have been committed for projects in India, both in the government sector and the private sector.
  - India is the founding member of AIIB.

## 3. South Asia Sub-regional Economic Cooperation (SASEC)

- Established in 2001, the SASEC program is a project-based partnership to **promote regional prosperity** by improving **cross-border connectivity**, boosting trade among member countries and strengthening regional economic cooperation.
- The seven-member SASEC comprises **India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Myanmar**.
- **ADB is the secretariat and lead financier of the SASEC program**, which has supported around 46 projects worth \$9.17 billion in transport, trade facilitation, energy and information and communications technology (ICT).
- The **SASEC OP (Operational Plan)**, endorsed in June 2016 by the SASEC member countries, is SASEC's first comprehensive long-term plan to promote greater economic cooperation among the member countries in the areas of transport, trade facilitation, energy, and economic corridor development.

- Bringing regional cooperation to a higher level, the SASEC OP plans to extend physical linkages not only within SASEC but also with East and Southeast Asia by the next decade.

#### 4. IMF Quotas

- India has called for quota reforms so that share of emerging nations increases in line with their growing economic position.
- Quota shares of Emerging Market & Developing Countries need increase in line with its growing relative economic position in the world.
- **What are IMF Quotas?**
  - The IMF is a quota-based institution. Quotas are the building blocks of the IMF's financial and governance structure.
  - An individual member country's quota broadly reflects its relative position in the world economy.
  - Quotas are denominated in **Special Drawing Rights (SDRs)**, the IMF's unit of account.
- Multiple roles of quotas:
  - **Resource Contributions:** Quotas determine the maximum amount of financial resources a member is obliged to provide to the IMF.
  - **Voting Power:** Quotas are a key determinant of the voting power in IMF decisions. Votes comprise one vote per SDR100,000 of quota plus basic votes (same for all members).
  - **Access to Financing:** The maximum amount of financing a member can obtain from the IMF under normal access is based on its quota.
  - **SDR Allocations:** Quotas determine a member's share in a general allocation of SDRs.
- Quota reviews:
  - The IMF's Board of Governors conducts general quota reviews at regular intervals (no more than five years).
  - Any changes in quotas must be approved by an 85% majority of the total voting power, and a member's own quota cannot be changed without its consent.
  - Two main issues addressed in a general quota review are the size of an overall quota increase and the distribution of the increase among the members.
- About IMF:
  - The IMF, along with the World Bank, was conceived in 1944 at a conference in Bretton Woods, in the US state of New Hampshire.
  - It aims to **preserve economic stability** and to tackle – or ideally prevent – financial crises. Over time, its focus has switched to the developing world.
  - The IMF is funded by a charge – known as a “quota” – paid by member nations – based on a country's wealth.
  - The IMF also acts as a lender of last resort, disbursing its foreign exchange reserves for short periods to any member in difficulties.

## 5. European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)

- **India has joined the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)** as the 69th shareholder, paving the way for more joint investment with Indian companies across the EBRD's regions.
- The EBRD's board of governors, which represents all existing shareholders, voted unanimously in favour of the country's application in March 2018.
- **How will this membership help India?**
  - Membership of EBRD would enhance India's international profile and promote its economic interests.
  - It will also give access to EBRD's Countries of Operation and sector knowledge.
  - India's **investment opportunities** would get a boost.
  - It would increase the scope of cooperation between India and EBRD through co-financing opportunities in manufacturing, services, Information Technology, and Energy.
  - EBRD's core operations pertain to private sector development in their countries of operation.
  - The membership would help India leverage the **technical assistance and sectoral knowledge** of the bank for the benefit of development of private sector.
  - This would contribute to an **improved investment climate in the country**.
  - The membership of EBRD would enhance the competitive strength of the Indian firms, and provide an enhanced access to international markets in terms of business opportunities, procurement activities, consultancy assignments etc.
  - This would open up new vistas for Indian professionals on the one hand, and give a fillip to Indian exports on the other.
  - Increased economic activities would have the employment generating potential. It would also enable Indian nationals to get the employment opportunity in the Bank.
- **About EBRD:**
  - The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is an **international financial institution** that supports projects in over 30 countries, from eastern Europe to central Asia and the southern and eastern Mediterranean.
  - Investing primarily in private sector clients whose needs cannot be fully met by the market, the EBRD promotes entrepreneurship and fosters transition towards open and democratic market economies.
- **EBRD Mandate:**
  - The mandate of the EBRD stipulates that it must only work in countries that are committed to democratic principles.
  - Respect for the environment is part of the strong corporate governance attached to all EBRD investments.
- **What support does EBRD provide in the countries where it works?**
  - The EBRD provides project financing for banks, industries and businesses, both new ventures and investments in existing companies.

- It also works with publicly owned companies, to support privatisation, restructuring state-owned firms and improving municipal services.
- It uses close relationship with governments in the region to promote policies that will bolster the business environment.
- **Who owns the EBRD?**
  - The EBRD is owned by 67 countries and two intergovernmental institutions: the European Union and the European Investment Bank (EIB).
- **How is EBRD governed?**
  - The powers of the EBRD are vested in the Board of Governors to which each member appoints a governor, generally the minister of finance.
  - The Board of Governors delegates most powers to the Board of Directors, which is responsible for the EBRD's strategic direction.
  - The President is elected by the Board of Governors and is the legal representative of the EBRD.
  - Under the guidance of the Board of Directors, the President manages the EBRD's work.

## International Events

### 1. Raisina Dialogue

- The **fourth edition of the Raisina Dialogue**, India's flagship annual conference on geopolitics and geo-economics, **titled 'World Reorder'**, was recently held in New Delhi.
- **"Fair Value for Innovation":**
  - The United States Chamber of Commerce's **Global Innovation Policy Center (GIPC)** launched **a new innovation initiative** at the Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi.
  - The **initiative, titled "Fair Value for Innovation", would enable breakthrough innovation, and explore how policymakers can harness innovation capital** in India and around the globe through research, advocacy, partnerships, and programs.
- **About the Raisina Dialogue:**
  - **This is an annual geo-political event, organised by the Ministry of External Affairs and Observer Research Foundation (ORF).**
  - It is designed **to explore prospects and opportunities for Asian integration as well as Asia's integration with the larger world.**
  - It is predicated on India's vital role in the Indian Ocean Region and how India along with its partners can build a stable regional and world order.
  - The name of conference comes from **Raisina Hill** which is the elevation in New Delhi where Rashtrapati Bhavan is located.
  - It is organized on the lines of the **Shangri-La Dialogue held in Singapore.**
  - The **first edition** of the conference was held in March **2016** with the theme 'Asia: Regional and Global Connectivity'.
  - **Participants:** The conference is a multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral meeting involving policy and decision-makers, including but not limited to Foreign, Defence and Finance Ministers of different countries, high-level government officials and policy practitioners, leading personalities from business and industry, and members of the strategic community, media and academia.

### 2. Arab Economic and Social Development Summit

- Arab leaders and officials have urged the international community to support nations hosting Syrian refugees and take steps to minimise the impact of the refugee crisis.
- The call was made in **the Beirut Declaration at the Arab Economic and Social Development Summit that concluded in the Lebanese capital recently.**
- **Significance of the declaration:**
  - This is **the first time Arab countries have reached a consensus on encouraging Syrian refugees to return to their country.**
  - The declaration said, the refugee crisis in Arab countries is the worst humanitarian problem since World War II.
  - **It points out that the crisis leads to an economic slowdown, increases the expenditure and deficit, imposes burdens on public sectors and infrastructure and poses risks to the society.**

- **Arab Economic and Social Development summits:**
  - They are **summits of the Arab League**, held at the head of state level to address issues of economic and social development among member-states.
- **What is Arab League?**
  - The Arab League is **a regional organization of Arab countries in and around North Africa, the Horn of Africa and Arabia**.
  - It was **formed in Cairo on 22 March 1945 with six members:** Kingdom of Egypt, Kingdom of Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Syria.
  - Currently, the League has 22 members, but Syria's participation has been suspended since November 2011, as a consequence of government repression during the Syrian Civil War.
  - **The League's main goal is to** "draw closer the relations between member States and co-ordinate collaboration between them, to safeguard their independence and sovereignty, and to consider in a general way the affairs and interests of the Arab countries".

### 3. Global Aviation Summit 2019

- Global Aviation Summit 2019 was held in Mumbai, Maharashtra.
- **The theme of the Global Aviation Summit 2019** is 'Flying for all-especially the next 6 Billion'.
- The summit was organised by the Union Ministry of Civil Aviation, Airport Authority of India (AAI) in association with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI).
- The objective of the Summit is to provide a platform to the aviation industry to discuss the challenges faced in the newly developing growth spots and understand how technology-driven innovations will change air travel in the future.

### 4. Pravasi Bhartiya Divas (PBD)

- **The 15th annual Pravasi Bhartiya Divas (PBD) was held in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh.** Usually celebrated on or around 9th January, the grand scale of arrangements that went behind this year's celebrations pushed the event to January 21-23.
- **Chief Guest:** The Prime Minister of Mauritius, Pravind Jugnath.
- **Theme:** "Role of Indian Diaspora in building New India".
- **The first chapter of Pravasi Bhartiya Divas was held in 2003** to recognise the contributions of NRIs in academic and professional fields across the world.
- **The reason 9th January** is usually set aside for celebrating Pravasi Bhartiya Divas is that Mahatma Gandhi returned from South Africa on this day in 1915.
- **Frequency:** yearly till 2015, biennial since then.
- **Significance:** These conventions provide a platform to the overseas Indian community to engage with the government and Indian communities in India for mutually beneficial activities.
- These conventions are also very useful in networking among the overseas Indian community residing in various parts of the world and enable them to share their experiences in various fields.



- During the event, individuals of exceptional merit are honoured with the prestigious Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award to appreciate their role in India's growth.
- The event also provides a forum for discussing key issues concerning the Indian Diaspora.

## 5. Vijay Diwas

- India celebrated Vijay Diwas on 16th December 2018 marking the 47th anniversary of its victory over Pakistan in the 1971 war.
- Vijay Diwas, also called as Victory Day, is celebrated on every 16th December in India. It marks the victory of Indian armed forces over Pakistan in the war of Independence of Bangladesh from Pakistan in 1971.
- At the end of the 1971 war, the Pakistani Army unilaterally and unconditionally surrendered resulting in the independence of East Pakistan, which was called as Bangladesh.

## 6. ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM)

- The 12th ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) and 5th ADMM-Plus were held recently Singapore.
- ADMM and ADMM-Plus serves as key Ministerial-level platforms in regional security architecture for promoting strategic dialogue and practical cooperation between ASEAN and its partners.
- ADMM-Plus:
  - ADMM-Plus is platform for ASEAN and its eight dialogue partners to strengthen security and defence co-operation for peace, stability, and development in the region.
  - Its objective is to promote mutual trust and confidence between defence establishments through greater dialogue and transparency.
  - The inaugural ADMM-Plus was convened in Hanoi, Vietnam in 2010. The defence ministers then had agreed on five areas of practical cooperation, including maritime security, counter-terrorism, peacekeeping operations and humanitarian assistance.

## 7. Fusion Energy Conference (FEC 2018)

- The 27<sup>th</sup> Fusion Energy Conference (FEC 2018) was held recently in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.
- It was organised by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and hosted by Department of Atomic Energy and Gandhinagar-based Institute of Plasma Research.
- **Fusion Energy Conference (FEC 2018):**
  - The 27<sup>th</sup> IAEA Fusion Energy Conference (FEC 2018) aims to provide a forum for the discussion of key physics and technology issues as well as innovative concepts of direct relevance to the use of nuclear fusion as a source of energy.
  - The scientific scope of FEC 2018 is intended to reflect the priorities of this new era in fusion energy research.

## 8. International Conference on Status and Protection of Coral Reefs (STAPCOR – 2018)

- The International Conference on Status and Protection of Coral Reefs (STAPCOR – 2018) was held at **Bangaram coral Island of Territory of Lakshadweep**.
- **Theme:** “Reef for Life”
- **Organizers:** It was jointly organized by Department of Environment and Forest, Union Territory of Lakshadweep Administration with the technical support of Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) and in association with Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Environmental Information System (ENVIS) in consonance with declaration of year 2018 as 3rd decadal International year of Reefs.
- **What is STAPCOR?**
  - The effect of climate change and global warming along with El-Nino on the corals has lead to heavy bleaching internationally during the year 1998.
  - This led to the foundation of STAPCOR with a decision to have a international conference in every 10 years to review the status and progress of coral reefs all over the world.
- **The goals of the 3rd IYOR – 2018 are to:**
  - Strengthen awareness about ecological, economic, social and cultural value of coral reefs and associated ecosystems.
  - Improve understanding of the critical threats to reefs and generate both practical and innovative solutions to reduce these threats.
  - Generate urgent action to develop and implement effective management strategies for conservation and sustainable use of these ecosystems.

## 9. Delhi Dialogue

- **10th edition of the Delhi Dialogue (DD X) was held in New Delhi.**
- **Theme:** “Strengthening India-ASEAN Maritime Cooperation”.
- **What is Delhi Dialogue?**
  - It is a premier annual **track 1.5 event** to discuss politico-security, economic and socio-cultural engagement between India and ASEAN.
  - It has been held annually since 2009 and political leaders, policy makers, senior officials, diplomats, think tanks and academicians from both sides participate in the discussions pertaining to ASEAN-India relations.
  - It is aimed at finding a common ground and expanding the scope of cooperation between India and ASEAN nations.
- **Facts for Prelims:**
  - The theme of ninth edition of dialogue was “**ASEAN-India Relations: Charting the Course for the Next 25 Years**”. It had marked the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ASEAN-India Partnership.
  - The term **track 1.5 diplomacy** is used by some analysts to define a situation where official and non-official actors cooperate in conflict resolution.

## Military Exercises

### 1. IMBEX 2018-19

- It is India-Myanmar bilateral army exercise. IMBEX 2018-19, was held in Haryana. It is the second edition of the IMBEX.
- **Main Objective of IMBEX 2018-19:**
  - Train the Myanmar delegation for participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations under the UN flag.

### 2. Sea Vigil

- It is the first coastal defence Exercise, conducted by the Navy and Coast Guard, in close coordination with State Governments and Union Territories.
- It was the largest such exercise the country had ever witnessed in recent times and saw participation by more than 100 ships, aircraft and patrol boats manned and operated by various security agencies.
- **Aim:** To comprehensively and holistically validate the efficacy of the measures taken since '26/11'.

### 3. Hand-in-Hand Military Exercise

- The seventh edition Hand-in-Hand Military exercise between India, China was held in Chengdu, China.
- The main focus is on counter-terrorism operations.
- It will involve tactical level operations in an International Counter Insurgency/ Counter Terrorist environment under UN mandate.

### 4. Dharma Guardian 2018

- It is a joint military exercise between India and Japan.
- The first edition of this joint **military exercise** was held in **Mizoram**.
- **Aim:** The exercise is aimed at developing mutual understanding and respect between militaries of both countries, as also facilitate in tracking worldwide phenomenon of terrorism.

### 5. SIMBEX 18

- The 25th edition of SIMBEX, an acronym for "Singapore-India Maritime Bilateral Exercise" was held off Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.
- SIMBEX 2018 will be the largest edition since 1994 in terms of scale and complexity.

### 6. Samudra Shakti

- Indian Navy and Indonesian Navy has scheduled Bilateral Exercise 'Samudra Shakti'.
- The aim of the exercise is to strengthen bilateral relations, expand maritime co-operation, enhance interoperability and exchange best practices.

### 7. INDRA 2018

- It is a joint military exercise between Indian and Russia on combating insurgency under the aegis of United Nations (UN).

- The latest edition was conducted at Babina Field Firing Ranges, Babina Military Station.
- **The aim of the exercise** is to practice joint planning and conduct to enhance interoperability of the two Armies in the peace keeping/ enforcement environment under the aegis of the UN.

## 8. Vajra Prahar

- 'Vajra Prahar' is a Indo-US Special Forces joint training exercise conducted alternately in India and the US.
- The 2018 edition of this exercise was held at Mahajan Field Firing Range (MFFR), Bikaner in Rajasthan.
- The aim of the exercise is to promote military relations between the two countries by enhancing interoperability and mutual exchange of tactics between Special Forces.

## 9. KONKAN 18

- It is the naval exercise between India and United Kingdom. The 2018 edition was held in Goa.
- **Bilateral KONKAN exercise** was started in 2004 and since then has grown in scale.
- The exercise is aimed at deriving mutual benefit from each other's' experiences and is indicative of continuing cooperation between two countries.

## 10. COPE INDIA 2019

- It is a bilateral exercise between Indian Air Force (IAF) and US Air Force (USAF) conducted on and over Indian soil. The 2019 edition will be held in West Bengal.
- The first such exercise was conducted at IAF air force station in Gwalior from February 2004.

## 11. Exercise Aviaindra-18

- The second edition of **Exercise Aviaindra**, a **Biennial Air Force level** exercise between **Indian** and the **Russian** Federation, was held recently in Russia.
- The aim of the exercise was to formulate and validate use of airpower in anti-terrorist operation in a bilateral scenario.

## 12. Sixth Edition of IBSAMAR

- The sixth edition of IBSAMAR, a joint Multi – National Maritime Exercise between the **Indian, Brazilian and South African Navies**, was held at **Simons Town, South Africa**.
- IBSAMAR are a series of naval exercises between the navies of India, Brazil, South Africa.
- The aim of the exercise is to undertake collective training for participating navies, building interoperability and mutual understanding as well as sharing of best practices.

## 13. Sahyog HOP TAC -2018

- It is the maiden joint exercise of Coast Guards of India and Vietnam.
- It was held recently in the Bay of Bengal off the Chennai coast, Tamil Nadu.

- It was aimed at strengthening the working level relationship between coast guards of both navies.

#### **14. Japan-India Maritime Exercise (JIMEX)**

- It is a joint Maritime Exercise between India and Japan. It was started in January 2012 with special focus on Maritime Security Cooperation.
- The 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of **Japan-India Maritime Exercise (JIMEX)** was held at Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh.
- JIMEX-18 is aimed to enhance interoperability, improve understanding and imbibe best practices between navies of two countries.

#### **15. SURYA KIRAN-XIII**

- It is a joint Military Exercise between India and Nepal that will be conducted at Pithoragarh.
- The Surya Kiran series of Exercises are being conducted annually, alternatively in Nepal and India.
- Notably in the series of military training exercises undertaken by India with various countries, Surya Kiran series with Nepal is the largest in terms of troop's participation.

#### **16. KAZIND 2018**

- It is a joint military exercise between India and Kazakhstan.
- The aim of the exercise is to build and promote bilateral Army to Army relations and exchange skills and experiences between Kazakhstan Army and the Indian Army.
- The 2018 edition was held in Otar region, Kazakhstan.

#### **17. SLINEX-2018**

- India, Sri Lanka joint naval exercise SLINEX-2018 was recently held at Trincomalee, Sri Lanka.
- SLINEX exercise started in 2005 was previously held once in two years and now it has been converted to annual event this year onwards.

#### **18. Nomadic Elephant-2018**

- INDO-MONGOLIA joint exercise Nomadic Elephant-2018 was held in Ullanbaatar, Mongolia.
- Exercise Nomadic Elephant is an annual, bilateral exercise since 2006 which is designed to strengthen the partnership between Indian Army and Mongolian Armed Forces.

#### **19. Yudh Abhyas 2018**

- As part of the ongoing Indo-US defence cooperation, a joint military training Exercise ***Yudh Abhyas 2018 was held at Chaubattia in Uttarakhand.***
- This was the 14th edition of the joint military exercise hosted alternately by both countries.

#### **20. Coordinated Patrol (CORPAT)**

- India and Bangladesh have agreed to institute a Coordinated Patrol (CORPAT) as an annual feature

between the two Navies.

- The commencement of CORPAT is a major step towards the enhanced operational interaction between both Navies.
- It is aimed to consolidate bilateral defense relations between India and Bangladesh and to explore new avenues for naval cooperation.
- The Navy regularly conducts CORPATs with Indonesia, Myanmar and Thailand. It also conducts EEZ surveillance of Maldives, Mauritius, and Seychelles on their request.



## Places in News

### 1. Israel

- Australia has recognized West Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. With this, Australia has become one of the few countries that officially recognize West Jerusalem as Israel's capital.
- **Background:**
  - Both Israel and the Palestinians claim Jerusalem as their Capital and this dispute is not resolved yet.
  - United States President Donald Trump's administration had also announced recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital on December 6, 2017.
  - **The UN General Assembly passed a resolution in opposition to declare the US President Donald Trump's declaration of Jerusalem as Israel's capital "null and void".** India also supported the resolution, which was approved with a majority of 127-9 at the UN General Assembly calling for the US to withdraw its decision.



### 2. Hodeidah

- Yemen's warring parties have agreed to **an immediate ceasefire in the Red Sea port of Hodeidah** in a potential breakthrough at the end of a week of peace talks in Sweden.
- The agreement includes the future deployment of UN-supervised neutral forces and the establishment of humanitarian corridors.



### 3. Azov Sea

- It is a sea in Eastern Europe. To the south it is linked by the narrow (about 4 km or 2.5 mi) Strait of Kerch to the Black Sea, and it is sometimes regarded as a northern extension of the Black Sea.
- The sea is bounded in the north and in the west by Ukraine, in the east by Russia.
- The Don and Kuban are the major rivers that flow into it.
- The Sea of Azov is the shallowest sea in the world, with the depth varying between 0.9 and 14 metres.
- Why the Kerch Strait is important?
  - The **Kerch Strait is the only connection between the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov**, and the only way to reach two important Ukrainian ports, Mariupol and Berdiansk.
  - Russia has controlled the strait since annexing Crimea in 2014, which has made traffic significantly more difficult for Ukrainian ships.



#### 4. Milingo Island

- Milingo is a small rock Island, located in Lake Victoria which is the largest lake in Africa and the largest Tropical Lake in the whole world.
- For over a decade, Milingo has been a source of tension between Uganda and Kenya, who have been unable to decide to whom it really belongs.

#### 5. Catalonia

- Spain's prime minister has proposed a referendum on whether Catalonia should be given greater autonomy, in a bid to dampen tensions between Madrid and Barcelona.
- Catalonia is an autonomous community of Spain in the north-east end of the Iberian Peninsula, designated as a nationality by its Statute of Autonomy.
- It has four provinces: Barcelona, Girona, Lleida, and Tarragona. The capital and largest city is Barcelona, which is the second most populated city in Spain.



#### 6. Mongolia

- Mongolia is a landlocked unitary sovereign state in East Asia.
- It is sandwiched between China to the south and Russia to the north.
- It is also the world's second-largest landlocked country behind Kazakhstan and the largest landlocked country that does not border a closed sea.

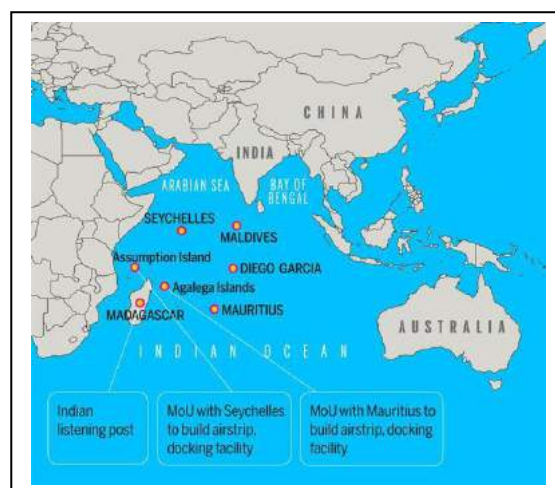


#### 7. Assumption Island

- After a growing political opposition, Seychelles President Danny Faure has cancelled the agreement with India for the development of Assumption Island.

#### 8. Marshall Islands

- It is a country in the central Pacific Ocean.
- It consists of some of the easternmost islands of Micronesia.
- The Marshalls are composed of more than 1,200 islands and islets in two parallel chains of coral atolls—the Ratak, or Sunrise, to the east and the Ralik, or Sunset, to the west.



#### 9. Xinjiang

- Xinjiang shares borders with Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India.

#### 10. Caspian Sea

- Leaders from Russia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan have finally signed a legal convention on ways to manage Caspian Sea and its surrounding areas.

- The Caspian Sea is a geopolitically strategic body of water, both in terms of its location and its resources. Situated in a transcontinental zone between Europe and Asia, it has historically been a key trade and transit corridor between eastern and western powers.

## 11. Venezuela

- Venezuela, once a rich oil reserve country, is now battering an unprecedented economic crisis.
- Hyperinflation, mass migration, food shortage, increasing number of crimes and grinding poverty has pushed the nation into a deep turmoil.

## 12. Port of Duqm

- India has secured access to key strategic **Port of Duqm in Oman** in Arabian sea for military use and logistical support.
- The Port of Duqm is situated on the southeastern seaboard of Oman, overlooking the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. It is strategically located, in close proximity to the Chabahar port in Iran.



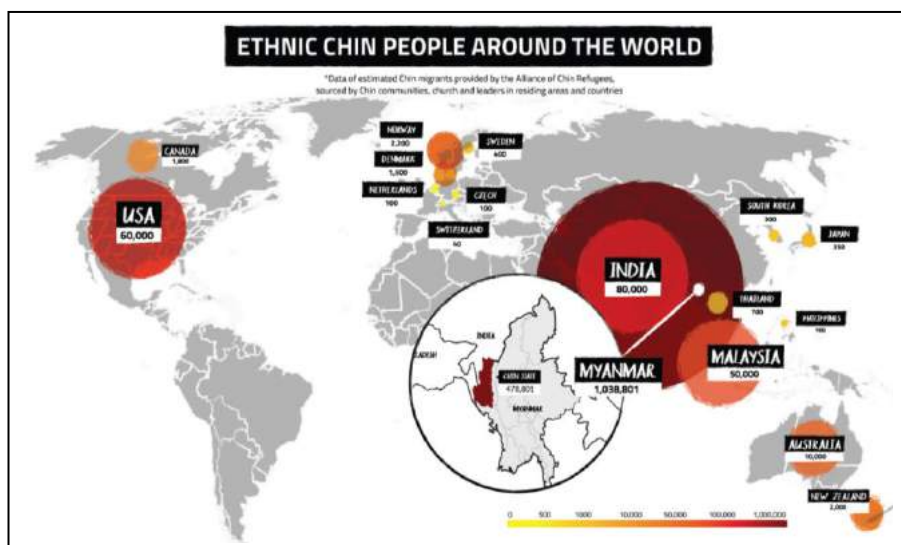
## Miscellaneous

### 1. Chin Refugees

- Eight organisations of the Chakma community have submitted a memorandum to the Ministry of Home Affairs seeking the inclusion of Chin refugees in India by further amending the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016.

- Overview:**

- The Chins are one of the major ethnic groups in Myanmar, and are mostly Christians.
- The number of Chin refugees in India is at least 1.2 lakh.
- There are an estimated 100,000 Chins in Mizoram, which is 20% of the total Chin population in Myanmar.
- Manipur too has an unspecified number of Chins, who are ethnically related to the majority Mizos of Mizoram and the Kuki-Zomi groups in Manipur.



### 2. India's second defence industrial corridor

- Tamil Nadu Defence Industrial Corridor has been inaugurated.
- The corridor is the second defence corridor being set up by the government to support various defence manufacturing units. The first one is being established in Uttar Pradesh.
- The corridor is also referred to as the Tamil Nadu Defence Production Quad as the nodal cities form a quadrilateral with one of them at the centre.
- The key aim behind setting up defence industrial corridors is to ensure connectivity among various defence industrial units.
- The development of the defence corridor will help facilitate a well-planned and efficient industrial base that will lead to an increased defence production in the country.

### 3. Operation Kabaddi

- It was to be the largest planned operation by the Indian Army to end cross-LoC infiltration by capturing at least 25 selected Pakistani posts along the Line of Control (LoC) in September 2001. However, owing to some issues it was not carried out.
- Operation Kabaddi would include** a "wide spectrum of evolving punitive operations such as the execution of deliberate fire assaults to destroy military and terrorist points, and area targets across the LoC; ambushes and raids across the LOC; and company, battalion, and brigade-sized deliberate offensive attacks to capture objectives of tactical importance across the LoC that would improve the Indian Army's counter-insurgency (CI) posture."
- The objective of Operation Kabaddi** was to change the geography of the LoC with access to tactical points there, which would then help the Army tackle the infiltration of militants by the Pakistani side.
- Why is it in news now?** Former army commanders have revealed the details of this operation in the book, Line on Fire: Ceasefire Violations and India-Pakistan Escalation Dynamics.



#### 4. Aadhaar as travel documents to visit Nepal, Bhutan

- ***Aadhaar cards are now valid travel documents for Indians under 15 and over 65 travelling to Nepal and Bhutan.***
- Indians other than those in the two age brackets will not be able to use Aadhaar to travel to the two neighbouring countries, for which no visas are needed.
- ***Background:***
  - Indian citizens going to Nepal and Bhutan have to have a valid passport, identity card issued by the Indian government or the Election Commission, they do not need a visa.
  - “Earlier, persons over 65 and under 15 could show their PAN card, driving licence, Central Government Health Service (CGHS) card or ration card, but not the Aadhaar, to prove their identity and visit the two countries. The Aadhaar card has now been added to the list”.

#### 5. Macedonia renamed as the Republic of Northern Macedonia

- The Parliament of Macedonia has passed the resolution to amend the constitution of the country to rename it as the Republic of Northern Macedonia.

#### 6. First human rights TV channel Launched

- The world’s first television channel dedicated to human rights has been launched in London by the **International Observatory of Human Rights (IOHR)**.
- It would be a web-based channel and would deliver human rights issues to audiences in over 20 countries across Europe, Latin America and the Middle East.

#### 7. Britain’s ‘Golden Visas’

- The UK government has put on hold plans to suspend “golden visa” category in reference to its use by super-rich foreign nationals, including Indians, to acquire fast-track settlement rights in Britain.
- ***What are Golden Visas or Tier 1 Visas?***
  - They provide a faster route for wealthy investors coming from outside the European Union and Switzerland to settle in Britain.
  - The program was introduced in 2008 to attract wealthy foreign nationals willing to invest large amounts of capital in Britain.
- ***Criteria:***
  - To qualify, foreign nationals must put down ***a minimum of 2 million pounds (around \$2.5 million) as an investment in Britain.*** Such an investment in United Kingdom bonds, share capital or companies allows investors to apply for permanent residency within five years.
  - For a £5 million investment, they can apply for ***permanent residency*** after three years.
  - An investment of £10 million can open the door to permanent residency after two years. After that, the nationals theoretically could apply for citizenship.

## 8. World's First Sovereign Blue Bond

### NOTES

- The **Republic of Seychelles** has launched the world's first Sovereign Blue Bond, a financial instrument designed to support sustainable marine and fisheries projects.
- The bond demonstrates the potential for countries to harness capital markets for financing the sustainable use of marine resources.
- Facts for Prelims:
  - ***The Seychelles is an archipelagic nation consisting of 115 granite and coral islands*** in the Indian Ocean, off East Africa.
  - As one of the world's biodiversity hotspots, Seychelles is balancing the need to develop economically and protect its natural resources.

## 9. India's Nuclear Triad

- India has declared that its nuclear triad, stated in its nuclear doctrine, is operational after **indigenous ballistic missile nuclear submarine INS Arihant** recently achieved a milestone by conducting its first deterrence patrol.
- The submarine recently returned from its first deterrence patrol, completing the establishment of the country's survivable nuclear triad.
- INS Arihant is now capable of prowling the deep seas carrying ballistic missiles equipped with nuclear warheads.
- **Significance:**
  - This places India in the league of the few countries that can design, construct and operate **ship submersible ballistic nuclear (SSBN)**.
  - Given India's stated position of 'No-First-Use' (NFU) in launching nuclear weapons, the ship submersible ballistic nuclear (SSBN) is the most dependable platform for a second-strike.
  - Because they are powered by nuclear reactors, these submarines can stay underwater indefinitely without the adversary detecting it. The other two platforms — land-based and air-launched are far easier to detect.
- **About INS Arihant:**
  - Arihant was commissioned into service in August 2016. It has a displacement of 6000 tonnes and is powered by an 83 MW pressurised light-water reactor with enriched uranium.
- **India's NFU:**
  - In 1998, India conducted nuclear tests under Pokhran-II and in 2003, it declared its nuclear doctrine based on credible minimum deterrence and a NFU policy while reserving the right of massive retaliation if struck with nuclear weapons first.
  - That decisions to authorise the use of nuclear weapons would be made by the Prime Minister or his 'designated successor(s)'.

## 10. India Votes Against a UNGA Draft Resolution on Use of Death Penalty

- India has voted against a **United Nations General Assembly draft resolution on the use of death penalty**, saying it goes against the statutory law of the country where an execution is carried out in the "rarest of rare" cases.
- **UN Against Death Penalty:**
  - The draft resolution, taken up in the Third Committee (Social,



Humanitarian, Cultural) of the General Assembly was approved with a recorded vote of 123 in favour, 36 against and 30 abstentions.

- The draft aimed to ensure that it is not applied on the basis of discriminatory laws or as a result of discriminatory or arbitrary application of the law.
- The resolution sought to promote a moratorium on executions with the aim of abolishing death penalty.
- India was among the countries that voted against the resolution, which would have the Assembly call on all States to respect international standards on the rights of those facing death penalty.

#### India's views:

India has voted against the resolution as a whole, as it goes against statutory law in India. The death penalty is exercised in 'rarest of rare' cases, where the crime committed is so heinous that it shocks the conscience of the society.

Indian law provides for all requisite procedural safeguards, including the right to a fair trial by an independent Court, presumption of innocence, the minimum guarantees for defence, and the right to review by a higher court.

### 11. AMBASSADOR OF CONSCIENCE' AWARD

- Amnesty International has stripped Myanmar's leader Aung San Suu Kyi of its highest honour, the 'Ambassador of Conscience' award, over her indifference to atrocities committed by the Myanmar military against and increasing intolerance of freedom of expression.
- **What's the issue?**
  - The Amnesty International, an international human rights group, named Suu Kyi as its 2009 Ambassador of Conscience Award recipient when she was still under house arrest for her opposition to Myanmar's oppressive military.
  - However, considering her failure to speak out and her shielding of the security forces from accountability for the violence against the Rohingya, the organisation withdrew the honour from her.

### 12. Mahatma Gandhi Statue Unveiled in Sydney

- President Ram Nath Kovind has unveiled a statue of Mahatma Gandhi at the Jubilee Park in the town of Parramatta, Sydney.
- The unveiling of the statue is part of the celebrations of the 150th anniversary of the Father of the Nation, which is being observed in different parts of the world.

### 13. Global Geoparks Network (GGN)

- **Geological Survey of India** has chosen heritage locations in Maharashtra and Karnataka for UNESCO Global Geopark Network status.
- The Geopark tag is akin to that of a 'World Heritage Site' for historical monuments that can bring India's famed geological features to the global stage.
- **The sites chosen are- Lonar Lake** in Maharashtra and **St. Mary's Island and Malpe beach** in coastal Karnataka are the **GSI's candidates for UNESCO Global Geopark Network status.**
- **Global Geopark:**
  - UNESCO Global Geoparks are single, unified geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development.
  - Their bottom-up approach of combining conservation with sustainable development while involving local communities is becoming increasingly popular. At present, there are 140 UNESCO Global Geoparks in 38 countries.

- An aspiring Global Geopark must have a dedicated website, a corporate identity, comprehensive management plan, protection plans, finance, and partnerships for it to be accepted.
- **Once a UNESCO Global Geopark, always a UNESCO Global Geopark?**
  - No, a UNESCO Global Geopark is given this designation for a period of four years after which the functioning and quality of each UNESCO Global Geopark is thoroughly re-examined during a revalidation process.
  - As part of the revalidation process, the UNESCO Global Geopark under review has to prepare a progress report and a field mission will be undertaken by evaluators to revalidate the quality of the UNESCO Global Geopark. If, on the basis of the field evaluation report, the UNESCO Global Geopark continues to fulfil the criteria the area will continue as a UNESCO Global Geopark for a further four-year period (so-called “**green card**”).
  - If the area no longer fulfils the criteria, the management body will be informed to take appropriate steps within a two-year period (so-called “**yellow card**”). Should the UNESCO Global Geopark not fulfil the criteria within two years after receiving a “yellow card”, the area will lose its status as a UNESCO Global Geopark (so-called “**red card**”).
- **What is the Global Geoparks Network?**
  - The Global Geoparks Network (GGN), of which membership is obligatory for UNESCO Global Geoparks, is a **legally constituted not-for-profit organisation** with an annual membership fee.
  - The GGN was founded in 2004 and is a dynamic network where members are committed to work together and exchange ideas of best practise and join in common projects to raise the quality standards of all products and practises of a UNESCO Global Geopark.
  - While the GGN as a whole comes together every two years, it functions through the operation of regional networks, such as the European Geoparks Network that meets twice a year to develop and promote joint activities.
- **Difference between UNESCO Global Geoparks, Biosphere Reserves and World Heritage Sites:**
  - UNESCO Global Geoparks, together with the other two UNESCO site designations Biosphere Reserves and World Heritage Sites, give a complete picture of celebrating our heritage while at the same time conserving the world’s cultural, biological and geological diversity, and promoting sustainable economic development.
  - While Biosphere Reserves focus on the harmonised management of biological and cultural diversity and World Heritage Sites promote the conservation of natural and cultural sites of outstanding universal value, **UNESCO Global Geoparks give international recognition for sites that promote the importance and significance of protecting the Earth’s geodiversity** through actively engaging with the local communities.
  - In case an aspiring UNESCO Global Geopark includes a World Heritage Site or Biosphere Reserve, a clear justification and evidence has to be provided on how UNESCO Global Geopark status will add value by being both independently branded and in synergy with the other designations.
- **Key facts:**

- Lonar lake is an **ancient circular lake created by a meteorite strike** in Maharashtra. It is the only known **meteorite crater in basaltic rock**. Lonar crater became a geo-heritage site in 1979. It is relatively young geologically, at just 50,000 years old.
- Mary's Island, declared a national geo-heritage site in 1975, is estimated to be an 88-million-year-old formation that goes back to a time when Greater India broke away from Madagascar.

#### 14. Operation Samudra Maitri

- India has launched massive **humanitarian operation Samudra Maitri** to provide assistance to *earthquake and tsunami victims* in **Indonesia**.
- Under this operation, India has dispatched two aircraft C-130J and C-17 and three naval ships carrying relief material and personnel to the country.

#### 15. Seoul Peace Prize - 2018

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi was awarded the Seoul Peace Prize for 2018 for his contribution to international cooperation and fostering global economic growth.
- The award was presented to him by the **Seoul Peace Prize Foundation**.
- It is awarded biennially to those individuals who have made their mark through contributions to harmony of mankind, reconciliation between nations and world peace.

#### 16. Iran Nuclear Deal

- United States President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew US from historic 2015 Iran nuclear deal or Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) deal signed between Iran and P5+1 countries.
- **What is the Iran nuclear deal?**
  - Iran agreed to rein in its nuclear programme in a 2015 deal struck with the US, UK, Russia, China, France and Germany.
  - Under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) Tehran agreed to significantly cut its stores of centrifuges, enriched uranium and heavy-water, all key components for nuclear weapons.
  - The JCPOA established the Joint Commission, with the negotiating parties all represented, to monitor implementation of the agreement.

#### 17. Permanent Residency Status Scheme

- Recent report by the government shows that even after two years after it was launched, the Permanent Residency Status (PRS) scheme providing a host of facilities for foreigners who invest at least ₹10 crore under the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) route has not found a single applicant.
- **Features of the PRS scheme:**
  - Under the Scheme, suitable provisions will be incorporated in the Visa Manual to provide for the grant of PRS to foreign investors.
  - The PRS will be granted for a

##### What is PRS scheme

A look at the Permanent Residency Status scheme

- The scheme promises facilities for foreigners who invest at least ₹10 crore under the FDI route
- Cleared by the Union Cabinet in 2016 to boost "Make in India"
- Open to foreign investors who pump in a minimum of ₹10 crore within 18 months or ₹25 crore in 36 months, since the date of inception, 2016
- The FDI should result in generating employment to at least 20 Indians in every financial year



- PRS card holders are also eligible to buy residential property in India.
- PRS will be granted for a period of 10 years with multiple entry and can be renewed for another 10 years

- period of 10 years with multiple entry. This can be reviewed for another 10 years if the PRS holder has not come to adverse notice.
- PRS will serve as a multiple entry visa without any stay stipulation and PRS holders will be exempted from the registration requirements.
  - PRS holders will be allowed to purchase one residential property for dwelling purpose.
  - The spouse/ dependents of the PRS holder will be allowed to take up employment in private sector (in relaxation to salary stipulations for Employment Visa) and undertake studies in India.
  - The scheme will be applicable only to foreign investors fulfilling the prescribed eligibility conditions, his/her spouse and dependents. These include:
    - The foreign investor will have to invest a minimum of Rs. 10 crores to be brought within 18 months or Rs.25 crores to be brought within 36 months.
    - Further, the foreign investment should result in generating employment to at least 20 resident Indians every financial year.

### **18. Country Partnership Framework (CPF)**

- The World Bank Group (WBG) Board of Executive Directors has endorsed a new Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for India.
- **Significance:**
  - The CPF aims to support India's transition to a higher middle-income country by addressing some of its key development priorities — resource efficient and inclusive growth, job creation and building its human capital.
  - The India CPF represents the largest country programme of the WBG, reflecting the strong collaboration between India and the Group's institutions — The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), International Finance Corporation (IFC) and Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA). The WBG expects to deliver \$25-30 billion during this CPF period, ending in FY22.
- **What is Country Partnership Framework (CPF)?**
  - The World Bank Group's Country Partnership Framework (CPF) aims to make our country-driven model more systematic, evidence-based, selective, and focused on the Bank's twin goals of ending extreme poverty and increasing shared prosperity in a sustainable manner.
  - The CPF replaces the Country Assistance Strategy (CAS). Used in conjunction with a Systematic Country Diagnostic (SCD), the CPF guides the World Bank Group's (WBG) support to a member country.
  - **A Systematic Country Diagnostic (SCD)** informs each new CPF. The aim of the SCD is to identify the most important challenges and opportunities a country faces in advancing towards the twin goals.