1. A selective nuclear policy

**Issue:**

The resumption of North Korea’s largest fissile material production reactor at Yongbyon has sparked speculation about its real and symbolic significance.

Background:

* The reactor at the Yongbyon complex has been central to the North Korean reprocessing of spent fuel rods to generate plutonium, besides the production of highly enriched uranium for the development of atomic bombs.
  + However, observers also point to the diversification of the country’s nuclear weapons and missile programme to covert locations over time.
* The 1994 Agreed Framework – an executive agreement signed by President Bill Clinton, required North Korea to freeze all nuclear activity and allow inspection of its military sites in return for the construction of two light water reactors. The accord broke down in 2002.
* In June 2008, in order to buttress its de-nuclearization commitment to the U.S. and four other countries, North Korea blew up the cooling tower at the Yongbyon complex.
  + However, this move did not ease the concerns of critics, either regarding the plutonium stockpile the regime had amassed or its engagement in secretive nuclear proliferation.
  + But it nevertheless led former U.S. President George W. Bush to ease some sanctions against North Korea.
  + More controversial was Washington’s decision to revoke the designation of “state sponsor of terrorism”. North Korea was placed on the terrorism list after the 1987 bombing of a South Korean airplane.
* A few months after blowing up the cooling tower in 2008, North Korea barred [IAEA](https://byjus.com/free-ias-prep/international-atomic-energy-agency-iaea/) inspectors access to its reprocessing plant in the Yongbyon complex and eventually expelled them.
* In 2010 American scientist Siegfried Hecker confirmed accounts that North Korea had rapidly built a uranium enrichment plant at Yongbyon.
* In the aftermath of the first U.S.–North Korea summit meeting in Singapore and the two inter-Korean summits, the Yongbyon reactor’s operations were ceased in December 2018.
* The second inter-Korean summit resulted in a joint statement that indicated North Korean willingness to pursue the permanent dismantlement of the nuclear facilities at Yongbyon, depending upon corresponding measures from the United States.
* At the Hanoi summit in 2019, North Korea offered to dismantle this reactor, alongside other facilities at the Yongbyon complex, in exchange for a large sanctions-relief package covering most of the measures adopted by the UN Security Council against the country’s economy in 2016 and 2017.

**Concerns:**

* The gas-graphite reactor at Yongbyon has long been the focal point of U.S. and international diplomatic efforts to constrain North Korea’s nuclear program.
* In a recent development, North Korea’s five-megawatt electrical reactor at its Yongbyon complex appears to be back up and running.
* The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has underlined that the restart of activity constitutes a violation of UN Security Council resolutions.
* As North Korea’s nuclear programme is opaque, it partly accounts for the current confusion over the motives behind the restart of the reactor.
* The Biden administration has adopted a pragmatic path of declaring its readiness to resume negotiations with North Korea.
* Meanwhile, Mr. Kim (Supreme Leader of North Korea since 2011) has rejected all such propositions until he can win concrete relief from sanctions, especially those relating to raw materials exports.

**Way Forward:**

* The Biden administration should treat this reactor’s restart with the seriousness it deserves.
* Apart from the punitive impact of such measures on an impoverished people, the prolonged stand-off over North Korea reinforces the hollowness of the doctrine of deterrence.
* It raises questions if proliferation can ever be prevented just because nuclear weapons states want to perpetuate their dominance.
* A morally superior alternative is the UN treaty on the complete abolition of atomic arms, whose deliberations were boycotted by all nuclear weapons states.

1. Haryana govt. says uncultivable land outside Old Gurugram not Aravalis

The Aravalli Range is a mountain range in Northern-Western India, running approximately 670 km in a south-west direction, starting near Delhi, passing through southern Haryana and Rajasthan, and ending in Gujarat.

* The peaks reach their maximum height in the south-western segment. The highest peak is Guru Shikhar at 1,722 metres, near Mount Abu and hills around Udaipur.
* By the time the Aravallis reach Delhi, they get inundated under a swathe of young alluvium, only rising occasionally as hillocks like the Raisina Hill, upon which rest the powerful government offices, the North and South Block.
* It travels beyond, but this time under the ground right up to Haridwar after which it disappears. The hidden limb of the Aravallis that extends from Delhi to Haridwar creates a divide between the drainage of rivers of the Ganga and the Indus.

**History**

* These are fold mountains of which rocks are formed primarily of folded crust, when two convergent plates move towards each other by the process called orogenic movement.
* The Aravallis date back to millions of years when a pre-Indian sub-continent collided with the mainland Eurasian Plate.
* The natural history of the Aravalli Range dates back to times when the Indian Plate was separated from the Eurasian Plate by an ocean. It is part of the Indian Shield that was formed from a series of cratonic collisions.
* In ancient times, Aravalli were extremely high but since have worn down almost completely by millions of years of weathering, whereas the Himalayas being young fold mountains are still continuously rising. Aravalli, being the old fold mountains, have stopped growing higher due to the cessation of upward thrust caused by the stopping of movement of the tectonic plates in the Earth’s crust below them.
* The Aravalli Range joins two of the ancient earth’s crust segments that make up the greater Indian craton, the Aravalli Craton which is the Marwar segment of earth’s crust to the northwest of the Aravalli Aravalli Range, and the Bundelkand Craton segment of earth’s crust to the southeast of the Aravalli Range.
* Cratons, generally found in the interiors of tectonic plates, are old and stable parts of the continental lithosphere that has remained relatively undeformed during the cycles of merging and rifting of continents.
* Mining of copper and other metals in the Aravalli range dates to at least the 5th century BCE, based on carbon dating. Recent research indicates that copper was already mined here during the Sothi-Siswal period going back to c. 4000 BCE.
* Ancient Kalibangan and Kunal, Haryana settlements obtained copper here.
* Three major rivers and their tributaries flow from the Aravalli, namely Banas and Sahibi rivers which are tributaries of Yamuna, as well as Luni River which flows into the Rann of Kutch.
* North-to-south flowing rivers originate from the western slopes of the Aravalli range in Rajasthan, pass through the southeastern portion of the Thar Desert, and end into Gujarat.

1. Luni River, originates in the Pushkar valley near Ajmer, ends in the marshy lands of Rann of Kutch. It used to be one of the channel of the Saraswati River, as a result its banks have several Indus Valley Civilisation sites including Lothal.
2. Sakhi River, ends in the marshy lands of Rann of Kutch.
3. Sabarmati River, originates on the western slopes of Aravalli range of the Udaipur District, end into the Gulf of Cambay of the Arabian Sea.
4. West to north-east flowing rivers, originating from the eastern slopes of Aravalli range in Rajasthan, flow northwards to Yamuna.
5. Chambal River, a southern-side tributary of Yamuna River.
6. Banas River, a northern-side tributary of Chambal River.

**SIGNIFICANCE OF ARAVALLI**

* The Aravallis have had a profound global effect and continue to influence the subcontinent’s climate. Some 750 million years ago, for example, a massive Malani volcanic eruption created the mesa upon which Jodhpur’s Mehrangarh fort stands today.
* At that time, our planet was covered from pole to pole by ice, a condition which palaeontologists christened Snowball Earth.
* The copious lava flow from the Malani event was, perhaps, the first trigger to liberate Earth from the grip of ice and eventually led to the explosion of multicellular life on the planet.
* Aravallis were also an impediment that prevented the spread of sediments brought down by fast- flowing rivers that emerged from the young Himalayan ranges. Soil scientists believe that the alluvium that lies east of Delhi is the Varanasi or “older” alluvium deposited between 32 million and about half a million years ago.
* To the west of the Delhi Ridge lies the Ambala or “younger” alluvium (aged only 26,000 to 12,000 years old) which overlies the “older” alluvium.
* The Aravallis also act as a water divide between the Indus basin in the north-west and Ganga basin in the east, covering extensive areas of the plains of north India.
* In modern times too, the Aravallis continue to have an impact upon the climate of northwest India and beyond. During monsoons, the mountain range gently guides the attenuated monsoon clouds eastwards towards Shimla and Nainital, thus helping nurture the sub-Himalayan rivers and feeding the north Indian plains.
* In the winter months, it protects the fertile alluvial river valleys (the para-Indus and Gangetic) from the assault of cold westerly winds from Central Asia.
* The Aravallis also impact the ground-water along the areas they pass through. The seemingly impervious granitegneiss and quartzite rocks bear small crack and fractures, and the somewhat porous sandstones and marble on top help regulate the flow of water.
* Hydrologists are now beginning to appreciate that the quartzite and granitic networks under the deep alluvium form complex groundwater aquifers which hold immense quantities of water and act to release it slowly.
* A Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) report in June 2017 said aquifers in Aravallis are
* interconnected and any alternation in the pattern can disturb the groundwater condition of Haryana and Delhi.
* Aravallis range of mountains, the last barrier between the expanding desert and the north Indian plains
* The occurrence of normal rainfall in north-west India depends much on the preservation of lush green forest cover and the resultant normal evapo-transpiration process over the Aravalli hills.
* Aravalli hills are rich in minerals like Granite, Marble and sandstone.
* The Aravalli is rich in biodiversity and provides habitat to 300 native plant species, 120 bird species
* and many exclusive animals like the jackal and mongoose.
* Wildlife and ecological significance

1. The Sariska-Delhi leopard wildlife corridor or the Northern Aravalli leopard wildlife corridor is a 200 km long important biodiversity and wildlife corridor which runs from the Sariska Tiger Reserve in Rajasthan to Delhi Ridge.
2. Southern Aravalli leopard wildlife corridor runs from Sariska and Ranthmbor to Rann of Kutch National Park and Gir National Park in Gujarat.
3. Sultanpur National Park
4. Sariska Tiger Reserve
5. Ranthambore National Park
6. National Chambal Sanctuary
7. fluorescent gecko only found in Aravalli

Huge reserves of Granite, Marble and Sandstone are found in Aravalli – Used in construction of Taj Mahal and Victoria Memorial

1. A global war on terror with no tangible results

The War on Terror (WoT), also known as the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) and the United

States War on Terror, is the name given to the US government's ongoing international military operation

initiated in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks. The campaign's primary targets are extremist

groups across the Muslim world, with Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State, and their many franchise groups

being the most prominent. The campaign's name is based on a war metaphor to allude to a wide range

of acts that do not constitute a traditional war.

Criticism of the War on Terrorism addresses the issues, morals, ethics, efficiency, and other

questions surrounding the War on Terrorism. Arguments are also made against the phrase itself, calling

it a misnomer.

**Criticism of Methods**

* 1. **Against International Law**

o According to Ira Chernus, a professor at the University of Colorado, the war on terrorism's philosophy ultimately leads to a state of continuous war.

o It fails to meet one of the prerequisites of a fair war, and that by fighting a pre-emptive war, the US has undermined international law and the UN's authority, notably the UN Security Council.

o On this basis, it has been argued that the US violated international law, including the UN Charter and the Nuremberg standards, by attacking a country that does not constitute an immediate threat and without UN support.

**Violation of State sovereignty.**

* Afghanistan was primarily invaded due to the fact that people who the US considered to be terrorists linked to the 9/11 attacks and living in Afghanistan at the time were not handed over to the US.
* But it seems dialogue and diplomacy could have been pursued in order to reach an agreement, rather than rushing to the conclusion that an invasion was the only means for the US to achieve its objectives. This is because international law states that other means to resolve disputes should be looked to before considering the act of war.
* This is affirmed by Article 2(4) of the UN charter which states that ‘all Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.
* In the aftermath of 9/11, the United Nations Security Council drafted two resolutions in response to the attacks, which contained information as to what would constitute an appropriate response.
* The two resolutions adopted were resolution 1368 and resolution 1373, both of which dealt with ‘threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts’.
* Neither of these two resolutions allowed for military action on the ground in Afghanistan because of the attacks, nor did either contain any aggressive language that could be used to justify military action.
  1. **Terrorism is a criminal act**

Many individuals believe that waging a "war" on terrorism is clearly immoral because terrorist attacks are criminal crimes, similar to murder, and should be investigated by the police, with the culprits brought to justice and given a fair trial in a court of law.

Military action frequently intensifies violence by murdering civilians and maybe producing more terrorists from devastated persons seeking vengeance.

* 1. **Human right violations**
* Many people feel that interrogation methods used by US soldiers in places like Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and Abu Ghraib, Iraq, violate international Geneva Conventions.
* They feel that if US forces behave immorally or unethically, they are no better than the militants they are attempting to apprehend.
* Enemy combatant designation

1. Enemy combatant is a person who, either lawfully or unlawfully, engages in hostilities for the other side in an armed conflict.
2. After the September 11 attacks, the term "enemy combatant" was used by the George W. Bush administration to include an alleged member of al-Qaeda or the Taliban being held in detention by the U.S. government. In this sense, "enemy combatant" refers to persons the United States regards as unlawful combatants, a category of persons who do not qualify for prisoner-of-war status under the Geneva Conventions.

* Extraordinary rendition:

1. Practice of kidnapping or capturing people and sending them to countries where they face a high risk of torture or abuse in interrogations.

* Secret Jails:

1. America has a network of secret jails for terror suspects, Abu Ghraib is but one example. Many of the countries those jails are in would consider the existence of secret torture jails in their territory without their knowledge as an act of war if a lesser nation would have done it.
   1. **Civil liberties are curtailed to fight terror**

* Some Libertarians argue that waging a "war" on terrorism is bad because it elevates national security to the point that any sacrifice of human liberty and freedom, no matter how modest, is judged necessary.
* They argue that this leads to not just an unjustified erosion of liberty, but also to a widespread climate of fear, making individuals reluctant to use their civil liberties. They warn of the dangers of mass monitoring enslaving the people, as everyone will eventually be suspected of being a potential terrorist.
  1. **War on Terror as a pretext to meet American Objectives:**

Some have argued that part of the "War on Terrorism" has little to do with its stated purpose. They point out that Iraq had nothing to do with the September 11 attacks and that the invasion of a largely secular country was carried out on the basis of faulty intelligence.

* 1. **Failed to meet the long term stated objectives:**

Afghanistan has again fallen into the hands of Taliban with greater and deeper control of the country.

USA interventions in Syria, Iraq and Lybia have given rise to IS which is now a threat to the global community.

* 1. **Civilian deaths**

Civilian deaths caused by United States and Coalition military action have been criticized.

Within Iraq, these estimates are between 50,000 to 100,000, with 100 deaths per day. The United States Department of Defense does not record the deaths of non-Coalition persons, a so-called " body count."

1. GDP data Q1 – 2020

Recently the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) released

the GDP data for the first quarter of the current financial year (2021-22).

Each year, the MoSPI releases four quarterly GDP data updates and these help

observers assess the current health of the Indian economy.

What data do these updates contain?

Each such release provides data for two variables — one tracks the total demand in the

economy and the other the total supply.

* The first is GDP, which is the total monetary value of final goods and services — that is, those that are bought by the final user — produced in a country in a given period of time (in this case a quarter).

In other words, it measures the value of total output in the economy by tracking the total demand.

* The other is Gross Value Added or GVA. It looks at how much value was added (in money terms) in different productive sectors of the economy. As such, it tracks the total output in the economy by looking at the total supply.

On the face of it, the total output should be the same but every economy has a government, which imposes taxes and also provides subsidies.

As such, GDP is “derived” by taking the GVA data and adding the taxes on different

products and then subtracting all the subsidies on products. In other words,

GDP = (GVA) + (Taxes earned by the government) — (Subsidies provided by the

government)

As explained, the difference between these two absolute values will provide a sense of

the role the government played. As a thumb rule, if the government earned more from taxes than what it spent on subsidies, GDP will be higher than GVA. If, on the other hand, the government provided subsidies in excess of its tax revenues, the absolute level of GVA would be higher than the absolute level of GDP.

* And what do the latest data show?

The data showed that in Q1 of 2021-22, India’s GDP grew by 20.1% while the GVA grew by 18.8%. These are year-on-year comparisons; in other words, the total output (as measured by GDP) of the Indian economy in the first three months of the current financial year (April, May and June) was 20.1% more than the total output created by

the economy in the same months last year. The total output, as measured by GVA, grew

by 18.1% YoY.

It is important to remember that GDP and GVA had contracted by 24.4% and 22.4%,

respectively, in Q1 of the last

financial year.

* Has India registered a V-shaped recovery?

No. There is a difference between an economy benefiting from a “low base effect” and

one registering a V- shaped recovery. A V-shaped recovery requires the absolute GDP of an economy getting back to the level before the crisis.

India’s total output in Q1, whether measured through GDP or GVA, is nowhere near what it was in Q1 of 2019-20 (the year before the pandemic struck). In fact, both

variables suggest India’s output levels are closer to 2017-18 levels. In other words,

India produced the same amount of goods and services in Q1 this year as it produced in Q1 four years ago.

The lofty increases in GDP and GVA are in percentage terms, and while they look good

and should not be scoffed at, they are for the most part a statistical illusion created by the very low base set by the complete nationwide lockdown in Q1 of last year.

It is for this reason that Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist, ICRA (a rating agency), states,

“the sharp YoY expansion in Q1 FY2022 is analytically misleading with a sequential slowdown of 16.9% over Q4 FY2021 and a shortfall of 9.2% relative to the pre-Covid level of Q1 FY2020”.

Here’s another way to understand what is happening. Imagine that the GDP in Q1 of 2019-20 was Rs 100. Then it fell by 24% in Q1 of 2020-21 to be Rs 76. Then in Q1 of current financial year the GDP rose by 20% to become Rs 91. As such, even though the GDP has risen 20% in percentage terms, the actual output is Rs 9 lower than it was

two years ago. Add to that the loss of two full years of growth that would have happened were it not for the pandemic.

If we compare quarter-on-quarter growth — Q1 FY22 to Q4 FY21 — then the GDP

contracted by almost 17%. It is for these reasons that in times of massive crises, it is always better to look at the absolute levels of output to correcting assess the state of an economy’s health. Percentage changes work well in normal times.

* What do the sub-components of GDP tell us about the state of the economy?

The GDP data show what is happening to the four engines of economic growth in any

economy. In India’s context, the biggest engine is consumption (C) demand from private individuals. This demand typically accounts for 56% of all GDP; technically called “Private Final Consumption Expenditure” or PFCE.

The second-biggest engine is the investment (I) demand generated by private sector businesses. This accounts for 32% of all GDP in India; technically called Gross Fixed Capital Formation or GFCF.

The third engine is the demand for goods and services generated by the government (G). This demand accounts for 11% of India’s GDP, and is called “Government Final Consumption Expenditure (GFCE)”.

The fourth engine is the demand created by “Net Exports” (NX). This is arrived at by subtracting the demand Indians have for foreign goods (that is, India’s imports) from the demand that foreigners have for Indian goods and services (that is, India’s exports). Since India typically imports more than it exports, it is the smallest engine of GDP growth; it is often negative.

So, GDP = C + I + G + NX

As the GDP data shows, private demand, the biggest engine of growth, in Q1 of the current year was down to almost exactly the level where it was in 2017-18.

This is the most important variable and the most worrisome one as well. That’s because

unless demand from private individuals increases, business will not be enthused to invest more. It is no surprise to find that the second biggest engine — investments or GFCF — is languishing at 2018-19 levels.

The government’s strategy has been to revive growth by stimulating private sector investments. To this end, the government has given tax breaks and other incentives to existing companies owners and new entrepreneurs. But unless private consumption demand rises, this strategy is unlikely to bear fruit.

It is also noteworthy that government expenditures (GFCE) have actually fallen below

last year’s levels. This could be a drag on future growth. At a time when all other sectors are struggling to create demand, the government is expected to resort to what is called a “counter-cyclical” fiscal policy and spend more than usual.

What do the GVA data say about the economy?

They tell us which specific sectors are doing well and which are struggling to add

value.

The first check is whether the GVA of a sector in Q1 was more than in 2019-20. As

things stand, only two sectors

— Agriculture etc. and Electricity and other utilities — have managed to grow more

than they did in 2019-20.

But the most worrisome bit is that the GVA of ‘Trade, Hotels, Transport, Communication & Services related to Broadcasting’ and ‘Construction’ is less than what it was even in 2017-18. These are two sectors that created lots of jobs for both unskilled and skilled workers in the past, and their weakness implies weak higher unemployment levels. The former in particular is the sector that has most of the contact services. From a policy perspective, a recovery here requires fuller levels of vaccination and improved public confidence.

1. **NATGRID to finally see the light of day**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to launch the National Intelligence Grid or NATGRID shortly.

* NATGRID aims to provide cutting-edge technology to enhance India’s counter-terror capabilities.
* The ambitious electronic database was mooted after the [26/11 Mumbai terror attacks in 2008](https://byjus.com/free-ias-prep/this-day-in-history-nov26/).
* The National Intelligence Grid or NATGRID is the integrated intelligence grid connecting databases of core security agencies of the Government of India.
* It is a robust intelligence gathering mechanism related to immigration, banking, individual taxpayers, air and train travels.
* First conceptualised in 2009, NATGRID seeks to become the one-stop destination for security and intelligence agencies to access databases related to immigration entry and exit, banking and telephone details of a suspect on a “secured platform”.
* The data will be procured by NATGRID from 21 organisations such as telecom, tax records, bank, immigration, etc.
* NATGRID will act as a link between intelligence and investigation agencies.

1. CLEANING YAMUNA

The draft NCR Regional Plan-2041 prepared by the National Capital Region Planning Board (NCRPB) has fixed 2026 as the new deadline to ensure ‘zero discharge of untreated sewage and industrial discharge into the Yamuna’.

Yamuna River System

* The Yamuna River is the largest tributary of the Ganga River.
* It originates from the Yamunotri glacier, at the Bandarpoonch peak in Uttarakhand.
* The main tributaries joining the river include the Sin, Hindon, Betwa Ken, and Chambal.
* The Tons is the largest tributary of the Yamuna.
* It travels through Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Rajasthan and Delhi before its confluence with the Ganga.

**Concerns:**

* The first Yamuna Action Plan (YAP), for which a loan agreement was signed in 1992, was for the improvement of water quality conservation in the river, and the hygiene environment in the cities in the river basin.
* After the first and second plans, YAP-III is currently underway, but the Yamuna is not even fit for bathing in the Delhi stretch, with the exception of Palla (the point where the river enters Delhi).
* At present, the levels of faecal coliform (microbes from human and animal excreta) is beyond the desirable levels. At a few points, the concentration is 760 times the desirable level.
* The Supreme Court and the [NGT](https://byjus.com/free-ias-prep/concepts-in-news-national-green-tribunal/) have also criticised various authorities responsible for cleaning the river for their laxity.

**Missed deadlines:**

* In 1994, the Supreme Court took cognisance of a newspaper article and summoned the [Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)](https://byjus.com/free-ias-prep/central-pollution-control-board-cpcb/) to explain the issue.
* Subsequently, various stakeholders, including the Delhi government, the Delhi Jal Board (DJB), the Delhi municipal corporations, and the Uttar Pradesh and Haryana governments became part of the case.
* In a judgment in 2015, the NGT formed the ‘Maily se nirmal (from dirty to clean) Yamuna Revitalisation Plan, 2017’, which was set to be completed by March 31, 2017. But that did not happen.
* Besides, the Interceptor Sewer Project (ISP), which has been in the plans since 2006, has been delayed multiple times.
* In 2018, the NGT formed a monitoring panel headed by two retired bureaucrats to primarily implement the 2015 judgment.
* The NGT dissolved the committee in January 2021 and directed the Chief Secretaries of various States to monitor the progress.

**Way Forward:**

1. two of the major causes of pollution are less water in the river in Delhi and 22 drains dumping sewage and industrial effluents into it.
2. To solve the first issue, the water flow has to be increased.
   * But increasing the flow is not that easy due to existing interstate water treaties.
   * Ministry of Jal Shakti has observed that the water-sharing agreement of 1994 between Uttarakhand, H.P., U.P., Haryana, Rajasthan and Delhi is due for revision in 2025 unless any of the States so demand. This implies that no revision of water sharing will be possible to achieve the environmental flow in the Yamuna.
3. To increase the flow of water, all States have to come together and think about the river and not them and it needs political will.
4. The second one can be addressed by treating the sewage and effluents generated in the city.
5. **Saudi, Iranian Foreign Ministers to visit India**

New Delhi is preparing for visits by the Saudi and Iranian Foreign Ministers, it is a part of a series of engagements aimed at broad-basing discussions on Afghanistan with partner countries.

* Iranian Foreign Minister Amir Abdollahian’s visit has been postponed due to the upcoming summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, where he is expected to meet External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, with a visit to India at an early date.
* Saudi Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud is expected in New Delhi for his first visit to India as Foreign Minister.
* While both engagements are expected to focus on bilateral issues, the developments in Afghanistan will be a key component, as they have been in bilateral conversations with partners in Europe and Australia in the past few weeks.
* Outreach by the rival countries in West Asia indicates that all partner countries want to speak to India and vice versa.

Note:

Unlike in the previous Taliban regime in 1996, this time Saudi Arabia and UAE have not recognised or kept embassies open in Kabul after the Taliban takeover, while Iran has maintained its embassy in Kabul and has maintained close contacts with the Taliban.

* The National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) is one of India’s oldest and largest independent, non-profit, economic and social research institutes. It was not formed by a resolution of the Union Cabinet. It was set up by funding from the Ford Foundation, the Finance Ministry and Tata Sons.
* It engages in economic research.
* NCAER has set up a National Data Innovation Centre (NDIC) to serve as a laboratory for experiments in data collection, interfacing with partners in think tanks, Indian and international universities, and government. NDIC forms an important core of NCAER’s long-standing data collection activities.