

XPRELIMS EXPRESS

2021



Complete Current Affairs Compilation
from July 2020 to March 2021

**Vol-
II**

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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INDIA AND SOUTH ASIA

India-Nepal Relations

Context

- India, Nepal relations have been strained due to Kalapani Border Dispute.

About the conflict

- Recently, the Defence Minister inaugurated the road to Line of Control between India and China which passes through the Kalapani region. Kalapani area has been still under border negotiations between India-Nepal.

About Kalapani

- Kalapani is a 372-sq km area at the China-Nepal-India tri-junction.
- Presently it is part of Uttarakhand. But recently, Nepal depicted this area as its territory on a map.



Historic Background of the dispute

- The Sugauli treaty signed between Nepal and British India in 1816 demarcates the border between India and Nepal.
- According to the treaty, the Mahakali River that runs through the Kalapani area is the boundary between the two countries. There are many small tributaries from the Mahakali River. Both India and Nepal argue as to the origin of Mahakali as different locations and claim for the Kalapani. Each country produces maps supporting their claims.
- The Kalapani issue has raised repeatedly since the 1960s.
- In the 1980s, the two sides set up the Joint Technical Level Boundary Working Group to delineate the boundary.
- Group demarcated everything except Kalapani and the other problem areas in Susta.



Significance of the area

- Strategic location:** Kalapani, which is advantageously located at a height of over 20,000 ft and serves as an observation post for that area.
- Trade:** China-India trading post at Lipu Lekh, the earliest to be established between the two countries.
- Pilgrimage:**
 - It is on the route of the annual Kailash Mansarovar Yatra.
 - Earlier routes had 20 percent land journeys on Indian roads and 80 percent land journeys in China. Now the ratio has been reversed. Now pilgrims to Mansarovar will traverse 84 percent land journeys on Indian roads and only 16 percent in China.
- Counter China:**
 - India is constructing border roads through the borders to counter Chinese influence in the region.
 - A recent road initiative is one of such actions of India.

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Madhes Movement of Nepal

- The term Madheshi people is used for **people of Indian ancestry** residing in the **Terai of Nepal**.
- Nepal constitution provided the **discriminatory treatment** of Madheshi people.
- During 2015, Madheshi people initiated the **economic blockade over the Indo-Nepal border**. This blockade led to economic impact on Nepal.
- Nepal claims the involvement of India in the blockade. The blockade has been seen as the turning point of Indo-Nepal Relations.

Susta Dispute

- Susta is a disputed territory between Nepal and India. It is **administered by India** as part of the West Champaran district of Bihar.
- The disputed territory is located on the **eastern side of the Gandak River** (Narayani River in Nepal).
- According to the **Sugauli Treaty**, the **Gandak River is the international boundary**.
- The Eastern part of the river belongs to India and the western part of the river belongs to Nepal.
- At the time the treaty was signed Susta village was situated west of the river. However, over the years, the Gandak River changed its course and **Susta moved to the east side of the river**, which is now on the Indian side of the river.
- Nepal maintains the **Gandak's course in 1816** to be taken as the fixed international boundary but India claims that land on the eastern side of the river is its territory.

India Nepal relations

- Physical Border:
 - India- Nepal shares a border of over **1850 km** with five Indian states – **Sikkim, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand**.
- Political:
 - India and Nepal have several bilateral institutional dialogue mechanisms, including the **India-Nepal Joint Commission** co-chaired by External Affairs Minister of India and Foreign Minister of Nepal.
- Defence coordination:
 - India has been assisting the Nepal Army (NA) in its **modernization** by supplying equipment and providing training.
 - The 'Indo-Nepal Battalion-level Joint Military Exercise **SURYA KIRAN**' is conducted alternately in India and Nepal.
 - The **Gorkha regiments of the Indian Army** are raised partly by recruitment from hill districts of Nepal.
- Disaster management:
 - During the **2015 earthquake** Government of India swiftly dispatched National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) teams and special aircraft with rescue and relief materials to Nepal.
 - The Government of India announced a post-earthquake reconstruction package of **US\$ 1 billion**.
- Connectivity and development:
 - India has been assisting Nepal in the development of border infrastructure through the **up gradation of 10 roads in the Terai area**.
 - India has extended **Lines of Credit of USD 1.65 billion** for undertaking development of infrastructure, including post earthquake reconstruction projects.
- Economic relations:
 - India is the largest trading partner of Nepal.
 - **Total bilateral trade** in 2018-19 reached **US\$ 8.27 bn**. In 2018-19, while Nepal's exports to India stood at **US\$ 508 mn**, **India's exports to Nepal were US\$ 7.76 bn**.
- Community:
 - Around 6, 00,000 Indians are living/domiciled in Nepal.
 - The **India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1950** forms the bedrock of the special relations that exist between India and Nepal.
 - Nepalese citizens avail facilities and opportunities on par with Indian citizens under the provisions of the Treaty.

India-China Relations

Galwan Standoff

Context

- India and China are engaged in military-level talks and in controlled engagement; as a violent face-off between the army troops of both sides happened at Galwan Valley in Eastern Ladakh region.

Background of India and China Border Dispute

- India and China share a border that is **more than 3,440km long** and have overlapping territorial claims.
- While both India and China use the term **Line of Actual Control (LAC)**, no common line has been agreed upon by both countries.
- China often talks of the **1959 LAC**, while the alignment of the Indian LAC has not been made public although it is marked on military maps of border areas.
- India did not accept the legal validity of the LAC till 1993 when both countries signed the **Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility** along the LAC in the India-China Border Areas during Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao's visit to Beijing.

Galwan Valley

- The valley refers to the land that sits between steep mountains that buffet the **Galwan River**.
- The river has its source in Aksai Chin, on China's side of the LAC, and it flows from the **east to Ladakh**, where it **meets the Shyok river** on India's side of the LAC.
- Importance:**
 - The valley is strategically located between Ladakh in the west and Aksai Chin in the east, which is currently **controlled by China as part of its Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region**.
 - At its western end are the Shyok river and the **Darbuk-Shyok-Daulat Beg Oldie (DSDBO) road**.
 - Its eastern mouth lies not far from China's vital **Xinjiang Tibet road**, now called the G219 highway.



Previous incidents

1. 2013-Depsang plains

- In 2013, when Chinese troops pitched tents on India's side of the LAC on the Depsang plains, similar to Pangong Tso.
- The UPA government had privately conveyed to China that if the standoff did not end, an upcoming visit by Premier Li Keqiang would be off.

2. Chumar standoff

- The government adopted a similar strategy during the 2014 standoff at Chumar, which coincided with President Xi Jinping's visit to India.

3. Doklam stand-off in 2017

- In 2017, Indian troops crossed over into Bhutan to stop a Chinese road construction on territory India sees as Bhutanese but China claims.
- By extending the road, India argued, China was unilaterally altering the India-Bhutan-China tri junction.



Taiwan Issue

Context

- International recognition of Taiwan was under debate during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Historical Background of Taiwan

- 1895: First Sino-Japanese War China forced cede Taiwan to Japan.
- After World War-II, the **Republic of China** - one of the victors - began ruling Taiwan with the **consent of its allies the US and UK**.
- Since 1949, two "Chinas" actually exist: **Republic of China** (ROC, now usually known as "Taiwan") and **The People's Republic of China** (PRC, commonly known as "China").
- China introduced the concept of **One China policy** and tries to get control over Taiwan.
- Economic liberalization integrated Taiwan with mainland China.



One China Policy:

- According to the "One-China policy" there is only **one sovereign state** under the name China. There **can be two governments**. Currently, there are two different governments
- The One-China Principle is also a **requirement for any political entity to establish diplomatic relations** with the People's Republic of China.
- PRC government policy mandates that any country that wishes to establish diplomatic relations with the PRC must first discontinue any formal relationship with the ROC.

Reasons for the present crisis

- COVID outbreak:**
 - Taiwan has effectively contained the outbreak of COVID19. Taiwan was against the misguiding by the World Health Organization.
 - Taiwan is not a member of the WHO as China has opposed its entry into international bodies.
 - The tussle between WHO and Taiwan led the international community to take a stand towards Taiwan and criticize WHO for pro-China (PRC) bias.
- Cold war between China and USA:**
 - The USA and China (PRC) are in a bitter relationship. Trade war and Cold war between the countries at the peak.
 - This has led the US to openly support Taiwanese independence.
- Demand of Independence:**
 - Surveys suggest that people within the region demand for independence from China.
 - More people support the US over China(PRC)
- Political divergence:**
 - Politically PRC and Taiwan diverge in ideologies. Taiwan supports democracy as against the People Republic of China.

Taiwan Relations Act 1979:

- The USA is the closest ally of Taiwan.
- It promises to **supply Taiwan with defensive weapons**. It also stressed that any attack by China on Taiwan would be considered of "**grave concern**" to the US.
- U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, totaling more than \$25 billion **between 2007 and 2018**.
- Since 1979, the US has been **neutral towards Taiwan**. Election of Donald Trump as President of US lead to a shift in the viewpoint

Taiwan Defense Act (TDA):

- The **US senate** recently introduced Taiwan Defense Act.
- The Act enabled the U.S. to **fulfill its obligations** as outlined in the Taiwan Relations Act amid an increasingly powerful and aggressive Chinese military.

India Taiwan relations

- India does not have formal political relations with Taiwan. However, it maintains **close unofficial relations**.
- **Trade:** Taiwan's relations with India have increased in trade, research and academia. Trade ties amounted to **\$7.5 billion in 2019**, up from \$1 billion in 2000.
- The Taiwanese government has a representative office, the **Taipei Economic and Cultural Center** in India.
- Taiwanese businesses are increasingly interested in **shifting business ties from China to India** and policies that facilitate such cooperation could provide mutual benefits.

India-Sri Lanka Relations

Context

- Sri Lanka's northern fishermen have reported a sudden increase in the number of Indian trawlers spotted in the island's territorial waters.

Fishermen issue

- Fishermen crossing the **International maritime boundary lines** are arrested by the Sri Lankan Navy.
- The Sri Lankan Navy arrested over 450 Indian fishermen in 2017 and 156 in 2018 on charges of poaching. A total of 210 arrests were made in 2019, while 34 have been made so far in 2020.
- Sri Lankan fishermen fear that their livelihoods are under threat due to **high technology trawlers used by Indian fishermen**.
- Indian fishermen use a **bottom trawling mechanism**, which destroys the marine ecosystem causing concern about the future potential of fishing.

Agreement and steps

- Sri-Lanka banned the bottom trawling.
- Setting up of a **Joint Working Group (JWG) on Fisheries** between the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare of India and Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development of Sri Lanka as the mechanism to help find a permanent solution to the fishermen issue.
- India has clearly **demarcated the international maritime boundary** line in 1976.
- India has launched the **deep-sea fishing scheme** to end bottom trawling.

About IMBL:

- The IMBL (International Maritime Boundary Line) is **imaginary**, but it was **geo-tagged** and is visible to the fishermen, thanks to **Global Positioning System (GPS)** sets to make informed decisions.

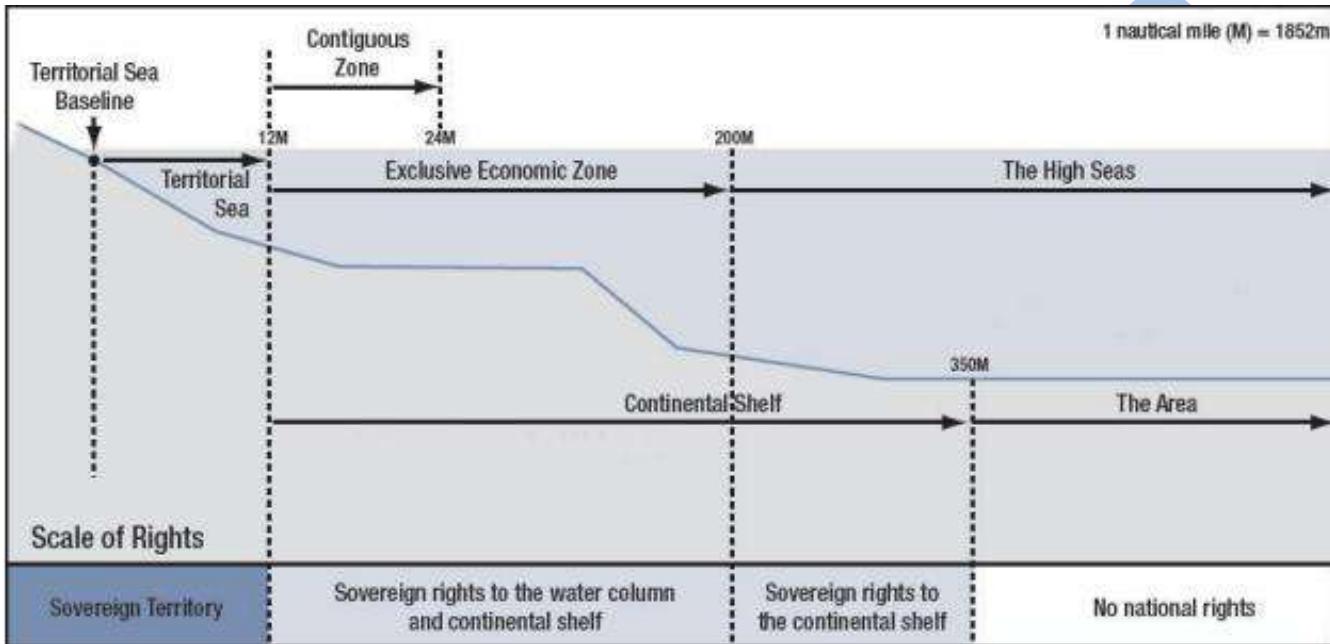
Commercial ties:

- Indian exports account for **14% of Sri Lanka's global imports**. India is also the **fifth largest export destination** for Sri Lankan goods, accounting for **3.6% of its exports**.
- Both nations are also signatories of the **South Asia Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA)**.
- India's **National Thermal Power Corp (NTPC)** is also scheduled to build a **500 MW thermal power plant in Sampoor (Sampur)**.

Development co-operation:

- About **one-sixth of the total development credit** granted by India is made available to Sri Lanka.

- Line of credit of US\$100 million is now being made available for **rehabilitation of the Colombo-Matara railway**.
- A memorandum of understanding on **Cooperation in Small Development Projects** has been signed.
- **Shared Tourism:**
 - Ferry services for tourists have been introduced and suspended repeatedly because of their low usage.
 - The low usage of the old ferry services could be due to the high cost of the former services.
- **Security:**
 - India and Sri Lanka signed an agreement allowing for the **transfer of criminals serving prison sentences** in the other country to be repatriated to serve the balance of their sentences in their home country.



Maritime Boundaries:

- Defined by UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea), also called the Law of the Sea Convention or the Law of the Sea treaty}
- **Internal Waters:** Internal Waters include **littoral areas** such as ports, rivers, inlets and other marine spaces landward of the baseline (low-water line) where the port state has jurisdiction to enforce domestic regulations.
- **Territorial Sea:** In the Territorial Sea, a coastal state has unlimited jurisdiction over all (including foreign) activities unless restrictions are imposed by law. All coastal states have the right to a territorial sea **extending 12 nautical miles from the baseline**.
- **Contiguous Zone:** The Contiguous Zone is an **intermediary zone between the territorial sea and the high seas** extending enforcement jurisdiction of the coastal state to a maximum of 24 nautical miles from baselines for the purposes of preventing or punishing violations of customs, fiscal, immigration or sanitary (and thus residual national security) legislation.
- **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ):** The EEZ is another intermediary zone, lying between the **territorial sea (12 nautical miles) and the high seas** to the maximum extent of 200 nautical miles. Although high seas freedoms concerning general navigation principles remain in place, in this zone the coastal state retains exclusive sovereignty over exploring, exploiting and conserving all natural resources.
- **High Seas:** The High Seas, which lie **beyond 200 nautical miles** from shore, are to be open and freely available to everyone, governed by the principle of equal rights for all.

13th Amendment

Context

- The first-ever India-Sri Lanka Virtual Bilateral Summit held.

Major Outcomes of Summit

- The Central government announced a **grant assistance of 15 million dollars** to Sri Lanka for the promotion of **Buddhist ties** between India and Sri Lanka.
- Indian government called upon the new government in Sri Lanka to work towards realizing the **expectations of Tamils for equality, justice, peace and dignity within a united Sri Lanka** by achieving reconciliation nurtured by implementation of the Constitutional provisions.
- It emphasized that **implementation of the 13th Amendment to the Sri Lankan Constitution** is essential for carrying forward the process of peace and reconciliation.

13th Amendment to the Sri Lankan Constitution

- It is an outcome of the Indo-Lanka Accord of July 1987, signed by the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and President J.R. Jayewardene, in an attempt to resolve Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict.
- The 13th Amendment led to the creation of Provincial Councils, which assured a power sharing arrangement to enable all nine provinces in the country, including Sinhala majority areas, to self-govern.
- Subjects such as education, health, agriculture, housing, land and police are devolved to the provincial administrations.
- Because of restrictions on financial powers and overriding powers given to the President, the provincial administrations have not made much headway.
- The provisions relating to police and land have never been implemented.
- Initially, the north and eastern provinces were merged and had a North-Eastern Provincial Council, but the two were demerged in 2007 following a Supreme Court verdict.



Figure 1 Map

India-Pakistan Relations

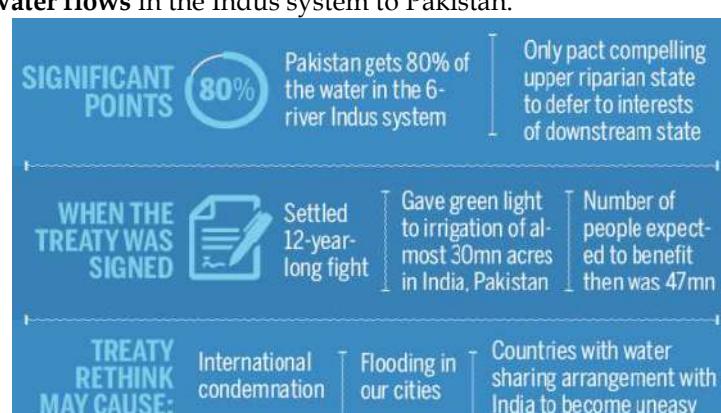
Indus water Treaty

Context

- September 19 marks the 60th anniversary of the Indus Water Treaty (IWT) between India and Pakistan.

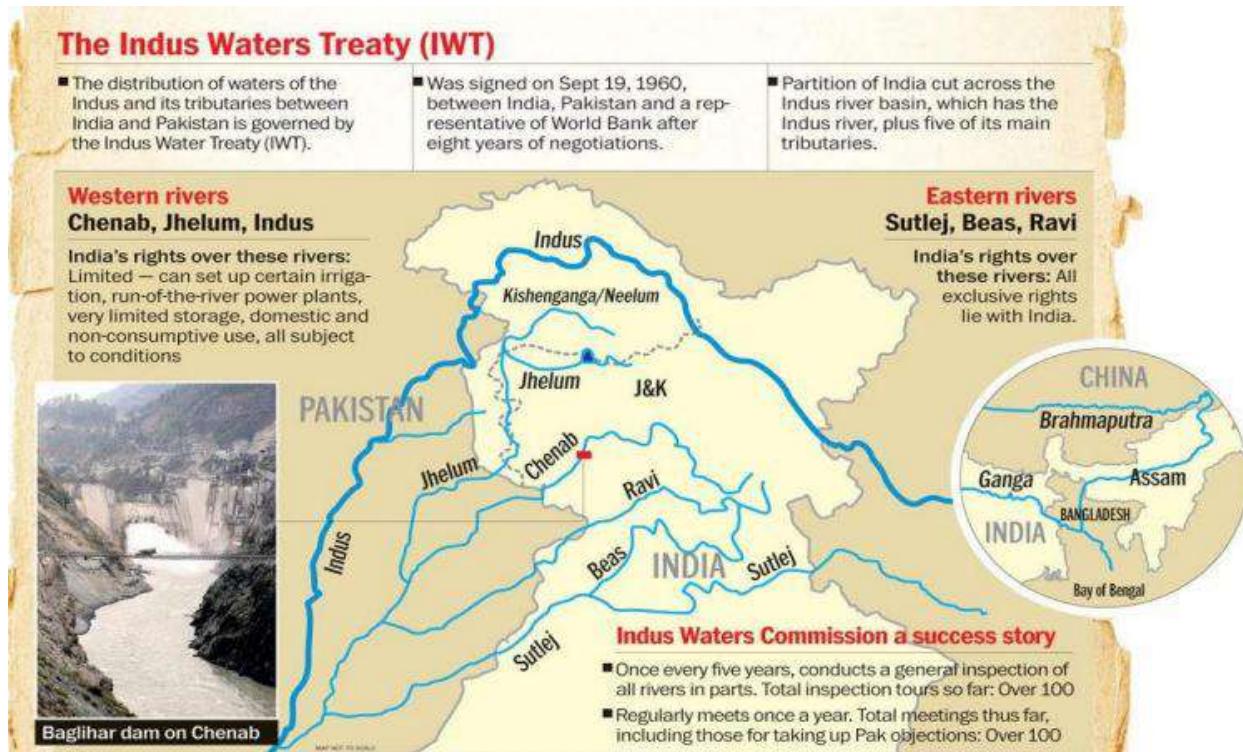
Indus Water Treaty (IWT)

- It is a treaty, and is often cited as an example of the **possibilities of peaceful coexistence** that exist despite the troubled relationship.
- The World Bank, which, as the third party, played a pivotal role in crafting the IWT.
- The sharing formula devised after prolonged negotiations sliced the Indus system into two halves.
- The **three western rivers (Indus, Jhelum and Chenab)** went to Pakistan and the **three eastern rivers (Sutlej, Ravi and Beas)** were portioned to India.
- India conceded **80.52 per cent of the aggregate water flows** in the Indus system to Pakistan.
- It also gave Rs 83 crore in pounds sterling to **Pakistan to help build replacement canals** from the western rivers. Such generosity is unusual for an upper riparian.
- India conceded its **upper riparian position** on the western rivers for the complete rights on the eastern rivers.
- Article XII of the IWT:** It says that it may from time to time be modified by a duly ratified treaty concluded for that purpose between the two governments.



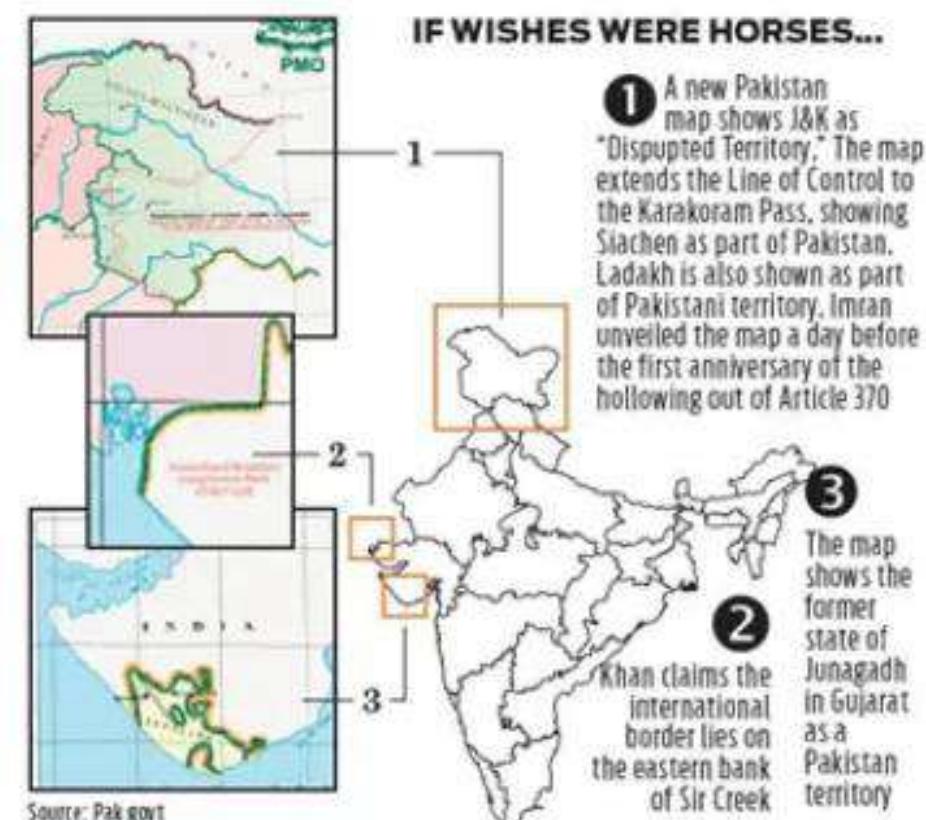
The Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (VCLT)

- It is an international agreement regulating treaties between states.
- Also known as the "treaty on treaties", it establishes comprehensive rules, procedures, and guidelines for how treaties are defined, drafted, amended, interpreted, and generally operated.
- The VCLT is considered a codification of customary international law and state practice concerning treaties.
- Since, India is not a signatory of this party, it can withdraw from IWT.



Pakistan's New Map Context

- Pakistan released a new political map, which depicts J&K as a disputed territory, and claims the regions of Sir Creek and the erstwhile state of Junagadh in Gujarat as part of its territory.



Azad Pattan Hydel Project

- Pakistan and China signed an agreement for the 700 MW Azad Pattan hydel power project on the Jhelum river in Sudhnoti district of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK).
- The \$ 1.5-billion project is the second power project under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).
- The project is a run-of-the-river scheme with a reservoir located near Muslimabad village, 7 km upstream from the Azad Pattan bridge, in district Sudhnoti, one of the eight districts of PoK.

Kohala project:

- This is a 1,124 MW hydel project that will come up on the Jhelum at Muzaffarabad near the Siran and Barsala villages.
- This project is one of the biggest investments by China in PoK.

The Karot Hydropower station:

- It is being executed by China on the Jhelum is on the boundaries of Kotli district in PoK and Rawalpindi district in Pakistan's Punjab province.
- Two hydel projects are planned in Gilgit Baltistan – Phandar Hydropower and Gilgit KIU. On the CPEC site, both are listed as —under review.

FATF's Grey List

Context

- The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) decided to keep Pakistan in the list of "**Jurisdictions under increased monitoring**" or **greylist** till the next review of its compliance to the recommendations in February 2021.
- Pakistan has made progress across all action plan items and has now **largely addressed 21 of 27 action items**.

Details

- Pakistan was placed on the grey list in June 2018 and was given a plan of action to complete by October 2019 or face the risk of being placed on the black list.
- The points on which Pakistan failed to deliver included its
 - lack of action against the charitable organisations or non-profit organisations linked to the terror groups banned by the UN Security Council; and
 - delays in the prosecution of banned individuals and entities like Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) chief Hafiz Saeed and LeT operations chief, Zaki Ur Rahman Lakhvi, as well as Jaish-e- Mohammad chief Masood Azhar.
- Pakistan was found **non-compliant in cracking down on terror financing** through narcotics and smuggling of mining products including precious stones.
- The FATF process also showed **concern about the 4,000 names** that were on Pakistan's **Schedule-IV list under the Anti-Terrorism Act** up to January, but went missing in September 2020.

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FATF

- The FATF is an **inter-governmental body** working 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 holds three Plenary meetings in the course of each of its **12-month rotating presidencies**.
- It currently has **39 members**, including two regional organisations – the **European Commission and the Gulf Cooperation Council**.
- Greylist:** It refers to countries that are under monitored jurisdictions.
- Blacklist:** It refers to those facing a call to action or severe banking strictures, sanctions and difficulties in accessing loans.

Gilgit-Baltistan

Context

- Seven decades after it took control of the region, Pakistan is moving to **grant full statehood to Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B)**. India slammed Pakistan for its attempt to accord **provincial status to Gilgit-Baltistan**.
- After India went to the UN and a series of resolutions were passed in the Security Council on the situation in Kashmir, Pakistan believed that **neither G-B nor PoK should be annexed to Pakistan**.

Background

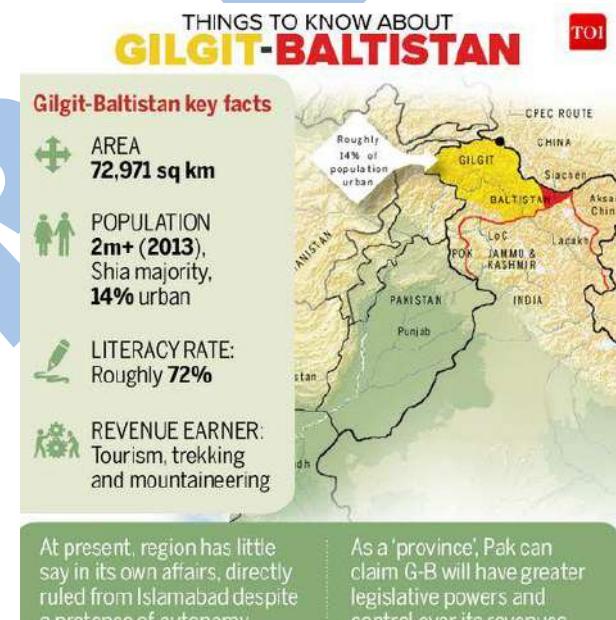
- The British sold Gilgit-Baltistan to the **Dogra ruler of Jammu, Gulab Singh**, after defeating the **Sikh army** in **1846** but retained control over the area through a lease extracted from the Maharaja.
- On November 1 1947, after J&K ruler Hari Singh had signed the **Instrument of Accession with India**, and the Indian Army had landed in the Valley to **drive out tribal invaders** from Pakistan, there was a rebellion against Hari Singh in Gilgit.
- Pakistan did not accept G-B's accession** although it took administrative control of the territory.

Special Status of Gilgit-Baltistan

- Though both PoK and GB are ruled directly from Islamabad, both are "**autonomous territories**".
- During the **first Indo-Pak war of October 1947**, Pakistan occupied **78,114 sq km** of the land of Jammu and Kashmir, including the Northern Areas.
- The **Northern Areas** is the other name of Gilgit-Baltistan that Pakistan has used for **administrative reasons because it was a disputed territory**.
- Under Prime Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, the name of the region was changed to the **Federally Administered Northern Areas (FANA)**.
- Pakistan passed the Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self Governance Order in 2009, which **granted "self-rule" to the "Northern Areas"**.

Importance of this Region

- It is one of the most mountainous regions in the world that is rich with **mines of gold, emerald and strategically important minerals**. It is home to K-2, the second tallest mountain in the world.
- It is known for its extraordinary scenic beauty, diversity and ancient communities and languages. It has some of the **ancient Buddhist sculptures and rock edicts**.
- It is also home to an **old Shia community**, which often finds itself subjected to persecution in Pakistan's urban centres.
- This water-rich region is known for **high altitude dams**, its biggest hydroelectricity project is the **Diamer-Bhasha dam**, which was launched in July 2020.



India Bangladesh Relations

Teesta River

Context

- Bangladesh is discussing an almost \$1 billion loan from China for a comprehensive management and restoration project on the Teesta river. The project is aimed at managing the river basin efficiently, controlling floods, and tackling the water crisis in summers.



Background

- India and Bangladesh have been engaged in a long-standing dispute over water-sharing in the Teesta.
- The two countries were on the verge of signing a water-sharing pact in September 2011. However, the West Bengal Chief minister objected to it.
- PM Narendra Modi visited Dhaka in June 2015 and assured Bangladesh
- PM Sheikh Hasina said that a fair solution on the Teesta through cooperation between central and state governments will be reached.

Relations between Bangladesh and China

- China is the **biggest trading partner of Bangladesh** and is the foremost source of imports.
- In 2019, the trade between the two countries was **\$18 billion** and the **trade is heavily in favour of China**.
- China declared **zero duty on 97% of imports** from Bangladesh. The concession flowed from China's **duty free, quota-free programme** for the Least Developed Countries.
- India has provided **developmental assistance worth \$10 billion**, but China has promised around **\$30 billion** worth of financial assistance to Bangladesh to overcome India assistance.
- China is the biggest arms supplier to Bangladesh and it has been a legacy issue.

India Bangladesh Inland Waterways

Context:

- The **Sonamura-Daudkandi inland waterways** protocol route between **Tripura** and Bangladesh was made operational.
- The forthcoming **Agartala-Akhaura rail project, Indo-Bangla bridge over River Feni** and a second **Integrated Check Post (ICP)** at Sabroom are also aimed at taking up the quantum of trade between the two sides.

About India-Bangladesh inland waterway route:

- The route connects **Tripura** with the National Waterways of India **through Bangladesh**.
- The 90-km long Sonamura-Daudkandi route, included in the list of Indo-Bangla protocol (IBP) routes, is **expected to boost trade**.
- A floating jetty was **set up on the Gomati River** as part of the Indo-Bangla international inland waterways connectivity project.

River Gomati:

- River Gomati is the **largest and longest river of Tripura** with a cumulative length of **180 km**.
- It is also considered a **sacred river** and devotees converge along its banks at Tirthmukh every **Makar Sankranti**.
- Gomati is also a **regulated river**.
- Due to the high altitude of its upper catchment and Dumbur dam built in 1974 as part of the **Gumti hydro-electric power project**, the river erodes a lot of sand and rocky particles in its upper segment.

Bangladesh and Tripura:

- Tripura's cross-border trade commenced in 1995.
- Currently, the state exports a **handful of goods and materials worth Rs 30 crores** to Bangladesh annually, but imports goods worth Rs 645 crore.
- Given the state has **six other land crossings**, the waterway project's trade volume would remain low because the river route would not stay operational throughout the year



India Afghanistan Context

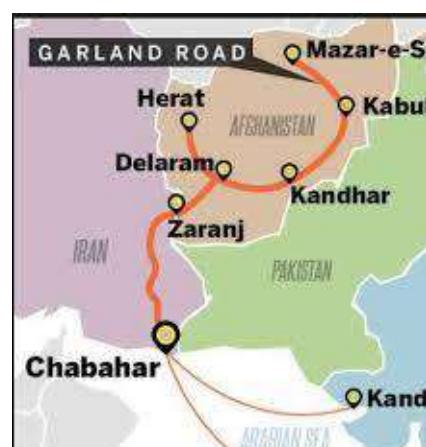
- India has announced the launch of Phase-IV of the High Impact Community Development Projects in Afghanistan.

Other developments

- India's development portfolio in Afghanistan has to-date amounted to over **3 billion US dollars**.
- India had earlier built the 202-kilometer **Phul-e-Khumri transmission line** that provided electricity to Kabul city.
- It was agreed to deepen the "**New Development Partnership**" in the areas of high impact projects in this field of infrastructure, human resources development and other capacity building projects in Afghanistan.
- India agreed to implement important new projects such as the
 - Shahtoot Dam** and drinking water project for Kabul that would also facilitate irrigation;
 - water supply for Charikar City;
 - road connectivity to **Band-e-Amir in Bamyan Province** that would promote tourism;
 - low cost housing for returning Afghan refugees in **Nangarhar Province** to assist in their resettlement;
 - a **gypsum board manufacturing plant in Kabul** to promote value added local industry development and import substitution;

Commercial Relations:

- Given the geographical proximity and historical linkages, India has been a **natural trading partner for Afghanistan** and is the largest market in South Asia for its products.
- The total bilateral trade between India and Afghanistan for CY 2019-20 was at **US\$ 1.5 billion**.
- Difficulties in transit** via Pakistan was a major hurdle in expanding the trade ties.



- a polyclinic in **Mazar-e-Sharif** among others.
- In order to expand trade to India, the Afghan government in collaboration with the Government of India launched a dedicated **Air Freight Corridor on 19 June 2017**.
- **Operationalization of the Chabahar Port** in December 2017, followed by commercial agreement to manage port operations in February 2018.
- **Culture Relations:**
 - The two Governments came together to establish an **India-Afghanistan Foundation (IAF)** in 2007.
 - IAF is a trust fund which **finances projects aimed at fostering India-Afghanistan relations** through enhancement of economic, scientific, educational, technical as well as cultural cooperation.
- **Sports Cooperation:**
 - India and Afghanistan have robust relations in the field of sports.
 - Since 2011, Afghanistan **Under-14 & Under-17 Boys and Under-17 Girls football teams** have been participating in the Subroto Cup International Tournament organised every year by the India Air Force.
 - **Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB)** has been allotted three cricket home grounds in India (Noida, Dehradun and Lucknow).
- **High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDP):**
 - Since 2005, India and Afghanistan have partnered in the area of community development through the HICDP program.
 - Under this scheme, US\$ 120 mn has been committed till date to various small to medium scale projects in areas such as education, health, water management, government buildings, sport facilities, agriculture and irrigation, etc.
- **Human Resource Development and Capacity Building:**
 - More than **15,000 Afghan students pursue education** in India on self-financing basis.
 - India's assistance in **human resource development** has helped to create a large pool of trained manpower that has been an asset to both the public and private sectors in Afghanistan.
- **Humanitarian Assistance:**
 - To combat the global pandemic of COVID-19 and related issues of food security, India is committed to deliver **75,000 MT of Wheat to Afghanistan in 2020**.
 - To promote food security, particularly children during the times of drought, India has distributed **2000 tonnes of pulses to Afghanistan in 2018**.
 - A **Medical Diagnostic Centre in Kabul** was set up in 2015.

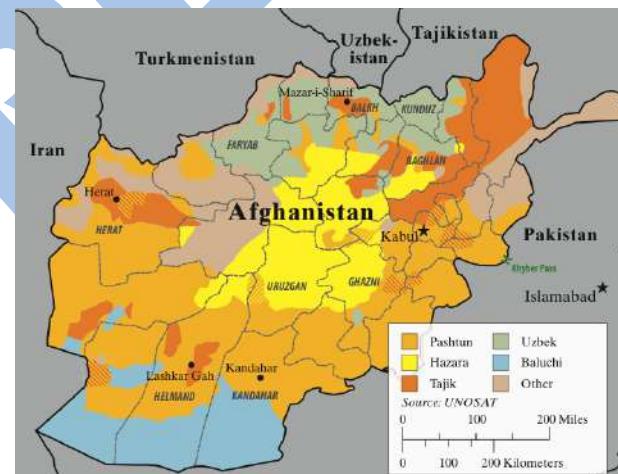


Figure 2Central Asia

India-Kazakhstan Relations

Context

- The 7th round of Foreign Office Consultations between India and Kazakhstan was held via video-conference. During the consultations, the two sides reviewed the entire gamut of bilateral cooperation within the framework of their Strategic Partnership.

Details

- The consultations covered political, economic and commercial, energy, defence, space, consular and cultural matters.
- The two sides also exchanged views on regional and international issues of mutual interest and agreed to enhance cooperation in the multilateral arena, including during the forthcoming stint of India in the UN Security Council for the period 2021-22.
- An MoU on "Indian Grant Assistance for Implementation of High Impact Community Development Projects in Kazakhstan" was signed.

Overview of bilateral relations

- Political relations:**
 - India was one of the first countries to recognize the independence of Kazakhstan.
 - Diplomatic relations were established in February 1992.
 - India and Kazakhstan have been strategic partners since 2009.
 - India and Kazakhstan actively cooperate under the aegis of multilateral fora including CICA (Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia), Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the UN organizations.
 - India supported Kazakhstan's successful candidature for non-permanent membership of UNSC in 2017-18.
- Institutional Mechanisms:**
 - The India-Kazakhstan Inter-Governmental Commission (IGC) established in 1993 is the apex bilateral institutional mechanism for developing trade, economic, scientific, technological, industrial and cultural cooperation between the two countries.
- Defence Cooperation:**
 - The Indo-Kazakh Defence Cooperation is carried out under the framework of an agreement on "Defence and Military Technical cooperation" signed in July 2015.
 - Kazakh Armed Forces Unit underwent training on peacekeeping operations in India for deployment under an Indian Battalion at the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).
- Trade & Economy:**
 - Kazakhstan is India's largest trade and investment partner in Central Asia.
 - As per statistics of Kazakhstan for 2019, total bilateral trade between India and Kazakhstan amounted to US\$ 1.56 billion.
 - FICCI and Chamber of International Commerce of Kazakhstan have set up a Joint Business Council (JBC) to promote trade, economic and investment cooperation between the two countries.
- Cultural relations:**
 - India and Kazakhstan enjoy close cultural relations that manifest in the popularity of yoga, Indian films, dance and music in Kazakhstan.
 - Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre in Nur-Sultan is engaged in various cultural activities, including conducting yoga, dance and music classes; celebration of Indian festivals.
 - India provides scholarships in various disciplines under the ICCR Scholarship programmes for students from Kazakhstan.

India-Central Asia Dialogue

Context

The 2nd meeting of the India-Central Asia Dialogue was held under the chairmanship of the External Affairs Minister of India.

Participants

- Foreign Ministers of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Republic of Uzbekistan as well as First Deputy Foreign Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic participated in the meeting.

Background

- 1st meeting of the India-Central Asia Dialogue was held in 2019 in Uzbekistan.
- Outcome: It established a platform for strengthening cooperation between India and the Central Asian countries in political, security, economic and commercial, development partnership, humanitarian and cultural spheres as well as exchanging views on regional and international issues of mutual interest and enhancing cooperation under the framework of UN and other multilateral fora.

Key outcomes of 2nd meet:

- It emphasized the need to continue close cooperation between the Sanitary and Epidemiological Services of India and the Central Asian countries in the fight against Covid-19 pandemic.
- Other partners acknowledged
 - India's humanitarian medical assistance to their countries in the fight against Covid-19 pandemic
 - Welcomed the provision by India of US\$ 1 billion Line of Credit for priority developmental projects in fields such as connectivity, energy, IT, healthcare, education, agriculture etc.
 - Welcomed India's offer to provide grant assistance for implementation of High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDP) for furthering socio-economic development in the countries of the region.
 - Launch of the India-Central Asia Business Council (ICABC) in New Delhi.
 - India's efforts to modernize the infrastructure of the Chabahar port in Iran, which could become an important link in trade and transport communications between the markets of Central and South Asia.

INDIA AND SOUTH-EAST ASIA/EAST ASIA

India Myanmar Relations

Context

- Myanmar government and armed groups sign framework accord for ceasefire implementation.

Details

- The government of Myanmar and **ten armed ethnic groups** signed a framework agreement for the implementation of the **National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA)** at Nay Pyi Taw on the end of the 4th session of the **Union Peace Conference - 21st Century Panglong**.
- The agreement also includes the framework for **implementation of various processes beyond 2020**, and basic principles to establish a democratic federal union.
- The peace accord called **Union Peace Accord III** contains 15 provisions to implement the NCA.
- These include **troop deployment, protocol to deal with skirmishes** between government troops and the armed groups among others.

Background

- Currently, the **4th round of the peace process** is being held between the government and armed ethnic groups that signed the NCA.
- The peace process in Myanmar was started in **2011** by **President Thein Sein** to end the long-standing conflict with **ethnic armed groups active in the country**.
- A National Ceasefire Accord (NCA) was signed in October 2015 with armed ethnic groups. Subsequently the dialogue to initiate a political peace process was started in 2016, which is continuing.



Key Takeaways from Foreign Secretary's Visit

- A package of 3,000 vials of the antiviral Remdesivir, symbolic of India's commitment to assist Myanmar in its fight against the (Covid-19) pandemic.
- Support for ensuring safe, sustainable and **speedy return of Rohingya refugees**.
- Operationalisation of the crucial Sittwe port in **Myanmar's Rakhine state** by March 2021 A liaison office in Nay Pyi Taw.
- Bust of **Bal Gangadhar Tilak** in **Mandalay Jail**, and a mutual commitment to not allow activities against each other.



Pro-Democracy Protest in Thailand

Context

- Thailand's government banned gatherings of more than five people in the face of three months of escalating demonstrations that have targeted the present King as well as Prime Minister.

Protestor's demand

- Anti-government protests emerged last year after **courts banned the most vocal party opposing the government** of former junta leader Prayuth Chan-ocha.
- Protestors are pushing for **Prayuth's removal, reform the monarchy ,a new constitution** and an end to the harassment of activists.
- Pro-democracy activists say that the **monarchy is too close to the army** and thus undermine democracy.

India and Thailand relations

- Diplomatic relations between India and Thailand were established in 1947, soon after India gained independence.
- **Geographic location:**
 - India shares a long sea border with Thailand as India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands share a maritime border with Thailand along the Andaman Sea.
- **Areas of consensus:**
 - Thailand and India are cooperating in various multilateral fora like India's dialogue partnership with ASEAN, and the East Asia Summit, the sub-regional grouping BIMSTEC.
 - India is a member of the **Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD)** initiated by Thailand in 2002 and of the **Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC)**, a group of six countries.
- **Cultural relations:**
 - India and Thailand have been culturally linked for centuries and India has had a **deep influence on Thai culture**.
 - **Pali**, which was the language of **Magadha** and is the medium of **Theravada**, is another important root of Thai vocabulary.
 - **Buddhism**, the major religion of Thailand, itself originates from India.
 - The Hindu story of **Ramayana** is also well known throughout Thailand in the name Ramakien.
- **Security and defence relations:**
 - In a major boost to bilateral security cooperation, India and Thailand in 2013 signed an **Extradition Treaty**.
 - **Memorandum on Cooperation in anti money laundering** was signed to combat terrorism, organised crime, drug trafficking and counterfeiting.
 - India has provided assistance to Thais to combat **Islamic separatists in Southern Thailand** in return for Thai authorities taking action against Indian separatists using Thailand as a supply route for arms originating in Cambodia.
- **Economic relations:**

- Major exports from Thailand to India include electronics, machinery, automobile and automobile parts and accessories, jewellery, and rubber products.
- Coming the other way from India are crude oil, chemicals, machinery, jewellery including gold and silver, iron and steel products and food products.
- Foreign direct investments (FDI) from Thailand into India have also grown significantly from just USD 11.55 million in 2012 to **USD 92.22 million in 2018.**
- Infrastructure to boost cooperation:
- An MOU between the Indian port of Krishnapatnam located in Andhra Pradesh and Ranong Port in Thailand was signed.
- The India–Myanmar–Thailand Trilateral Highway is a highway under construction under India's Look East policy that will connect Moreh, India with Mae Sot, Thailand via Myanmar.



Japan

Context

- India and Japan have signed an agreement concerning **Reciprocal Provision of Supplies and Services** between the Armed Forces of India and the Self-Defense Forces of Japan.
- This agreement will **enhance the interoperability** between the Armed Force of India and Japan, further increasing the bilateral defence engagements under the **Special Strategic and Global Partnership.**

Other News:

- Japan has committed an **official Development Assistance loan of 3 thousand 500 crore rupees** for the COVID-19 Crisis Emergency Response Support.

This programme loan aims:

- to support India's efforts in fighting COVID-19
- to prepare the health system to manage future epidemics
- To improve the resilience of India's health systems against infectious diseases.
- Provide medical equipment to strengthen the public health and medical system in India.

Overview of India - Japan bilateral Relations

- **Historical relations:**
 - The people of India and Japan have engaged in cultural exchanges, primarily as a result of **Buddhism**, which spread **indirectly from India to Japan, via China and Korea.**
 - The **Japan-India Association** was set up in 1903, and is today the oldest international friendship body in Japan.
 - Bilateral ties have been singularly **free of any kind of dispute** – ideological, cultural or territorial.
- **Political relations:**
 - Positive legacy of the old association was further strengthened by shared values of belief in **democracy, individual freedom and the rule of law.**
 - India conducts 2+2 Dialogue (at the level of Foreign and Defense Secretaries) with Japan.
- **Economic and Commercial Cooperation:**

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- The **India-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)** that came into force in August 2011 is the most comprehensive of all such agreements concluded by India and Japan over a period of 10 years.
- The CEPA envisages **abolition of tariffs over 94% of items** traded between India and Japan over a period of 10 years.
- A “**Japan-India Make in India Special Finance Facility**” of JPY 1.3 trillion was also established.
- Mega projects like Ahmedabad-Mumbai High Speed Rail, the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC), the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor with twelve new industrial townships, and the Chennai-Bengaluru Industrial Corridor (CBIC) will transform India-Japan relations in the next decade.
- **Science & Technology and Cultural Cooperation:**
 - The **India-Japan Science Council (IJSC)** was established to support joint projects, exchange visits of scientists, joint seminars/workshops etc.
 - Annually, **Japan-Asia Youth Exchange Program in Science** also known as the **SAKURA Exchange Program** implemented by DST and JST.

2016 nuclear deal:

- The deal took six years to negotiate, delayed in part by the **2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster**.
- This is the first time that Japan signed such a deal with a **non-signatory of Non-Proliferation Treaty**.
- The deal gives Japan the right to **supply nuclear reactors, fuel and technology** to India.
- This deal aimed to help India build the six nuclear reactors in southern India, increasing **nuclear energy capacity ten-fold by 2032**.

India-Japan Digital Partnership (IJDP) and Start-up Hub:

- In view of synergies and complementarities between the two nations India-Japan Digital Partnership (I-JDP) was launched in 2018.
- Both sides signed a **Joint Statement on Japan-India Startup Initiative** setting up the **first Startup Hub in Bangalore** to identify selected Indian start-ups for Japanese market and for potential Japanese investors.
- **Startup-India (under Invest India)** and **Japan Innovation Network (JIN)** have signed a MoU on innovation collaboration with a focus on SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) connecting two start-up ecosystems.

Australia Virtual Summit Context

- India and Australia raised their relationship to a **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership** after a virtual summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison.



Outcomes of the Summit

- **Mutual Logistics Support Agreement:** It will facilitate reciprocal access to military logistics facilities, allow more complex joint military exercise and improve interoperability between the security forces of the two nations.
- **CECA:** Two sides also decided to recommence suspended talks over the India-Australia Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA).
- **2+2 Talks:** The two countries also agreed to take the “2+2” format of bilateral meetings to the level of Foreign and Defence Ministers.

Joint Declaration: “Shared Vision for Maritime Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific”

- Both India and Australia share a vision of a **free, open, inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific region** to support the freedom of navigation, over-flight and peaceful and cooperative use of the seas.
- By adherence to international law including the **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)** and **peaceful resolution of disputes** rather than through unilateral or coercive actions.

India-Australia relations

- **Historical background:**
 - Before independence, Australia and India were both part of the **British Empire**.
 - They also share political, economic, security, lingual and sporting ties.
 - Australia has traditionally **supported India's position on Arunachal Pradesh**, which is subject to diplomatic disputes between India and the People's Republic of China.
- **Areas of cooperation:**
 - Besides both being members of the Commonwealth of Nations, both nations are founding **members of the United Nations**, and members of regional organisations including the **Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation** and **ASEAN Regional forum**.
 - Australia is part of **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad)** which is an outcome-oriented cooperation for building capacity and improving interoperability in the Indo-Pacific region.
- **Security cooperation:**
 - In June 2020, India and Australia had elevated their relationship to a **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership**.
 - They hold the “**Two-Plus-Two** dialogue to discuss vital security issues.
 - India and Australia signed **Mutual Logistics Support Agreement** to allows each country to use the other's bases for the refueling and maintenance of aircraft and naval vessels
 - Military cooperation between Australia and India includes the regular joint exercise **AUSTRA HIND** (a Special Forces Army Exercise), **AUSINDEX** (a bilateral maritime exercise), **KAKADU** (a multilateral maritime exercise), and Exercise Pitch Black (a multilateral air exercise).
- **Nuclear cooperation:**
 - In 2012, Australian government decided to **sell uranium to India despite** India not being a signatory to the nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty.
- **Economic relations:**
 - India is **Australia's fifth largest trade partner**, with trade in goods and services worth A\$29 billion, representing 3.6 percent of the total Australian trade in 2017-18.
 - India and Australia have established a \$100 million **Strategic Research Fund**.

INDIA & WEST ASIA

UAE Israel Relations

Context

- The United Arab Emirates and Israel have agreed to **establish full diplomatic ties** as part of a deal to halt the annexation of occupied land sought by the **Palestinians for their future state**.
- The announcement makes the UAE the first Gulf Arab state to do so and only the third Arab nation to have active diplomatic ties to Israel after **Egypt (in 1979) and Jordan (1994)**.

- Israel in return for giving up a stated plan to annex the **West Bank**, the main territory of a state that the Palestinians want.

Joint statement:

- Israel and the United Arab Emirates, **helped by the US**, have arrived at an important peace agreement that has the potential to **change the geopolitics of West Asia** and beyond.
- The U.S., the UAE and Israel will sign deals on direct flights, security, telecommunications, energy, tourism and health care.
- The two countries also will partner on **fighting the COVID-19 pandemic**. Opening direct ties between two of the Middle East's most dynamic societies and advanced economies will transform the region by spurring economic growth, enhancing technological innovation and forging closer people-to-people Relations.

Israel-Egypt peace deal

- Arab countries, including Egypt, Transjordan, Syria and Iraq, fought their **first war with Israel in 1948** after the formation of the state of Israel was announced.
- After that, Israel and Arab states fought three more major wars — the **1956 Suez conflict**, the **1967 Six-Day War** and the **1973 Yom Kippur War**.
- After the 1967 war, Israel captured the **Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip** from Egypt, **East Jerusalem** and the **West Bank** from Jordan and the **Golan Heights** from Syria.



Israel-Jordan peace deal

- In **1994**, Jordan became the **second Arab country** to sign a peace treaty with Israel.
- In **1988**, after an initial agreement reached between the two countries collapsed, **Jordan abandoned its claims to the West Bank** and said it would accept a deal between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel.
- Following the **Oslo Accords**, under which the **PLO recognised Israel** and was allowed to form the **Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Gaza**, time was ripe for an Israel-Jordan deal.
- The enmity between the two countries came to an end in July 1994 with the **Washington Declaration**.

India Israel Cultural Agreement

Context

- India and Israel signed a cultural agreement that outlines a **three-year programme of cooperation** to further strengthen their strategic bilateral relations. It aims to **promote greater people-to-people exchanges**.

Details of the Agreement

- The agreement states that it shall **contribute to the development of their relations** and to **raising awareness**, particularly among youth, of the history and culture of the people of both countries.
- The major areas of cooperation identified to promote cultural ties include the
- Exchange of **culture and art experts**,
- Encouraging cooperation in the protection of cultural heritage and archaeology with the help of **israel antiquities authority (IAA)** and **archaeological survey of India (ASI)** and
- Organising literary fests and book fairs while promoting the translation of famous works in each other's languages.
- **Student exchanges** through scholarships, encouraging the participation of films and film-makers in each other's international film festivals, devising youth exchange programmes and encouraging sports-related interaction among youth.

Overview of India Israel Relations

- **Defence:**
 - India is **Israel's top destination** for arms exports, Israel is India's third-largest source of arms.
 - The highlight of the partnership was Israel's supply of **artillery shells during the Kargil war** in 1999 when India faced a shortage.
 - India's imported **Barak 1**, an air-defence missile, unarmed aerial vehicles (UAVs) **Searcher UAVs and Heron UAVs, SPYDER** quick-reaction surface-to-air missile
- **Diplomacy:**
 - Three Indian naval ships, destroyer INS Mumbai, frigate INS Trishul and tanker INS Aditya, made a **goodwill visit at the Haifa port in May 2017** to mark 25 years of full diplomatic relations between the two countries.
- **Agriculture:**
 - An **Indo-Israel agriculture action plan for 2015-18** is operational, and 15 of the proposed 26 **centres of excellence in agriculture** are being developed.
- **Water Management:**
 - The Union cabinet approved a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Israel on the **National Campaign for Water Conservation** in India.
 - Technologically-adept Israel has developed **water-management technologies**, located as it is in a **semi-arid region with limited sources** of fresh drinking water.
 - India and Israel had earlier signed an MoU on **water resources management and development cooperation**.
- **Trade:**
 - Israel was India's **38th-largest trading partner**, with **trade of \$5.02 billion** (Rs 33,634 crore) in 2016-17.
 - **Mineral fuels and oils** are India's leading export to Israel, worth \$1.01 billion in 2016-17.
 - India's major imports from Israel included **natural or cultured pearls** and **precious stones**, worth \$1.11 billion.
 - **Trade in diamonds** accounts for nearly 54 percent of the bilateral trade.

Indian Diaspora in Aus

Context

- Indians lead in acquiring Australian citizenship in 2019-20.

Details

- More than **38,000 Indians** became Australian citizens in 2019-2020, a **60% increase from the previous year** and the largest diaspora group to be granted the country's citizenship.
- Out of the over 200,000 people who became Australian citizens in 2019-2020, 38,209 were Indians, the **highest number** on record, followed by 25,011 Britishers, 14,764 Chinese and 8821 Pakistanis.

Diaspora

'Diaspora' term describes **people of one nationality or common origin living outside** their home country. Indian Diaspora involves following three categories:

- **NRI's:** Indian citizens staying abroad for indefinite period
- **PIO's:** Overseas Indian who have become citizen of the countries of their settlement
- **SPIO:** Stateless Person of Indian Origin they have no documents to substantiate their Indian

Soft power diplomacy

- Diplomacy is an art and practice of conducting negotiations between representatives of states. Soft Power diplomacy is about winning the hearts and minds of people. Hence, there has to be a people centric approach. In international politics, soft power is the ability to attract and co-opt, rather than coerce (contrast hard power).

USA

India-US Strategic Energy Partnership

Context

- U.S. Secretary of Energy and Indian Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas co-chaired a virtual ministerial meeting of the U.S.-India Strategic Energy Partnership (SEP).

Details

- They announced new areas of research on transformational power generation based on supercritical CO₂ power cycles and advanced coal technologies, including carbon capture, utilization and storage.
- The ongoing collaboration on smart grids and energy storage is being implemented by a consortium of 30 Indian and US entities with investment of US \$ 7.5 million each.
- Essential issues related to the adoption and deployment of smart grid concepts along with Distributed Energy Resources (DERs) is being addressed.
- One of the notable outcomes of the dialogue is participation of India in the multilateral platform for Accelerating Carbon Capture Utilization Storage Technologies (ACT) through which avenues have been generated for possible US- India Collaboration.

Accelerating CCUS Technologies (ACT) initiative:

- ACT is an international initiative to establish CO₂ capture, utilization and storage (CCUS) as a tool to combat global warming.
- ACT means Accelerating CCS Technologies, and the ambition of the 16 partners is to fund research and innovation projects that can lead to safe and cost-effective CCUS technology.
- The intention of ACT is to facilitate the emergence of CCUS by accelerating and maturing CCUS technology through targeted financing of innovation and research activities.
- ACT will address the technological, environmental, social and economic challenges required to accelerate CCUS.

About SEP

- Established in April 2018.
- It builds upon our longstanding energy partnership and sets the stage for meaningful engagements through robust government-to-government cooperation and industry engagement.
- The SEP organizes inter-agency engagement on both sides across four primary pillars of cooperation: (1) Power and Energy Efficiency; (2) Oil and Gas; (3) Renewable Energy; and (4) Sustainable Growth.

CAATSA

- The United States remained non-committal even as New Delhi has asked President Donald Trump's administration for exemptions from sanctions to clear its way to procure from Russia 21 MiG-29 and 12 Sukhoi-30MKI fighter aircraft for the Indian Air Force.
- The Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act, CAATSA, is a United States federal law that imposed sanctions on Iran, North Korea, and Russia.
- CAATSA requires the President to impose sanctions against:
 - Iran's ballistic missile or weapons of mass destruction programs,
 - The sale or transfer to Iran of military equipment or the provision of related technical or financial assistance, and
 - Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and affiliated foreign persons.

Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement

Context

- The U.S. is keen that India sign the last foundational agreement, Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-Spatial cooperation (BECA), at the next India-U.S. 2+2 ministerial dialogue.

Details

- A maritime information agreement is also under active deliberation between India and the U.S.
- Beginning 2016, India has signed three foundational agreements: the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) while the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) was signed a long time ago.
- An extension to the GSOMIA, the Industrial Security Annex (ISA), was signed at the last 2+2 dialogue.

Industrial Security Annex (ISA):

- The Industrial Security Annex (ISA), signed between India and the U.S. at the second 2+2 dialogue in Washington.
- ISA will enable smooth transfer of classified technology and information between private entities of the U.S. and India.
- ISA would facilitate collaboration between our defense industries by supporting the secure transfer of key information and technology.
- The ISA is a part of the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA), which India signed with the U.S. long back.

US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF)

Context

- 3rd annual leadership US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) summit held.

Summit Highlights

- Attended by top corporate leaders, government officials and leaders.
- Theme of the Summit: –US-India Navigating New Challenges.
- It highlights areas of bilateral cooperation: trade and investment; strategic energy ties; India's position in global supply chains, collaboration in fintech, healthcare, and technology.
- It is a win-win partnership mutually dependent geo-politically, trade, culturally, diplomatically and scientifically.
- Aggressive and assertive China provides further opportunity for both nations to collaborate and ensure international rule of law prevails.

USISPF

- The US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) is a non-profit organization that works for the partnership between India and the U.S.
- Objectives: It is committed to creating the most powerful strategic partnership between the U.S. and India.
- Mission: Promoting bilateral trade is an important part of their work, to create meaningful opportunities that have the power to change the lives of citizens.
- To achieve goals of driving economic growth, job creation, innovation, inclusion, and entrepreneurship.

India-USA 2+2 Dialogue 2020

Context

- Third edition of the Indo-U.S. 2+2 Dialogue was held in New Delhi.

Key highlights

- To expand cooperation under the 2+2 framework and to realize the full potential of the U.S.-India Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership, following pacts were signed:

- **Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-Spatial cooperation (BECA):** It will allow sharing of high-end military technology, classified satellite data and critical information, expanded geospatial information between two armed forces.
- India and the U.S. also sealed a MoU on **Technical Cooperation in Earth Observations and Earth Sciences**.
- An agreement to extend the duration of the MoU regarding the **Global Center for Nuclear Energy Partnership**.
- 2. **Chinese aggression:** In context of Indian and Chinese forces standoff in eastern Ladakh, United States assured that it will stand with the people of India as they face threats to their sovereignty and their liberty.
- 3. **Indo-Pacific region:** They emphasised that the Code of Conduct in the South China sea should not prejudice the legitimate rights and interests of any nation in accordance with international law|| . The two sides decided to expand joint capacity building activities with partner countries in the Indo-Pacific region.
- 4. **Afghanistan issue:** The two sides also discussed the status of Afghanistan and supported an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process.

Blue Dot Network

Context

- A bipartisan group of Senators had written to India's Ambassador to the United States to join the Blue Dot Network.

What is Blue Dot Network?

- It is a U.S.-led collaboration with Australia and Japan that supports private-sector led infrastructure financing opportunities in response to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
- The Blue Dot Network (BDN), was launched in 2019 by the U.S., Japan and Australia.
- It is an initiative that will bring together governments, the private sector and civil society to certify projects that uphold global infrastructure principles.
- Given that three Quad partners are already involved in BDN, U.S. encourage India's participation in this promising initiative.

RUSSIA

Extending new start treaty

Context

- Russian President proposed a one-year extension without conditions of the major nuclear arms reduction accord between Russia and the U.S.

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The New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) deal

- It was signed in April 2010 but went into force in February 2011.
- It lasts for ten years but with a possible extension.
- It is the only treaty limiting the world's two largest nuclear weapons arsenals.
- New START, which requires rigorous monitoring and verification, is set to expire in February 2021 unless the U.S. and Russian presidents agree to extend it.
- President Vladimir Putin has proposed an extension of five years without conditions, but U.S. remains undecided.

USA's Stand

- It wants a new trilateral arms control agreement, that includes Russia's tactical nuclear weapons and China's smaller stockpile.

China's Stand

- China opposed to a trilateral deal.

Europe

Context

- The 15th Summit between India and the European Union (EU) was held in virtual format.

Highlights of 15th Summit

- Leaders adopted the **EU-India Strategic Partnership: A Roadmap to 2025** to guide cooperation between the EU and India over the next five years.
- They welcomed the signing of the **European Atomic Energy Community** or EuratomIndia Agreement on research and development cooperation in the **peaceful uses of nuclear energy**.
- A **Joint Declaration on Resource Efficiency and Circular Economy** was adopted and renewal of the **EU-India Science and Technology Agreement** for another five years was done.
- India and the EU reiterated their **commitment to human rights, including gender equality**.
- They reaffirmed their strong **commitment to global peace and security, disarmament and non-proliferation** and to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including its financing and countering radicalization.

European Union (EU):

- It is a political and economic union of **27 member states**. It has developed an **internal single market** through a standardised system of laws.
- The EU and European citizenship were established when the **Maastricht Treaty** came into force in **1993**. On 31 January 2020, the **United Kingdom** became the first member state to leave the EU.
- Containing in 2020 some **5.8% of the world population**, the EU (excluding the United Kingdom) had generated a nominal gross domestic product (GDP) of around **US\$15.5 trillion in 2019**.
- In 2012, the EU received the **Nobel Peace Prize** for having contributed to the advancement of peace and reconciliation, democracy, and human rights in Europe.

Lisbon Treaty: It changed the **legal structure** of the European Union, merging the **EU three pillars system** into a single legal entity provisioned with a legal personality, created a permanent President of the European Council.

Overview of India EU relations

- **Political:**
 - Both take great pride in their **democracies** and both are under pressure from hard nosed authoritarian neighbours.
- **Economic:**
 - The EU is India's **first trading partner and the biggest foreign investor**, with €67.7 billion worth of investments made in 2018, equal to 22% of total FDI inflows.

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- Europe is also the **biggest source of foreign investment** in India – though many European firms operate from Mauritius or Singapore shell companies for tax reasons.
- **Climate Change:**
 - The EU is building on its ambitious target to render the continent **carbon-emission neutral by 2050**, through its **new industrial strategy, the Green Deal**.

Broad-based Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA)

- India and the EU have been working on a Broad-based Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA) since **2007**.
- The EU's major demand is that India should **lower its tariffs on automobiles, wines and spirits**.
- India has demanded the **lowering of the non-tariff barriers** such as **sanitary and phytosanitary barriers** along with the strict technical barriers to trade.
- Trade-in services is the most contentious area in the BTIA negotiations.
- There are disagreements with regards to **Intellectual property protection standards**.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

ASEAN

Context

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired the 17th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)-India summit with his Vietnamese counterpart Nguyen Xuan Phuc.

Key highlights of the Summit

- It adopted the ASEAN-India Plan of Action (2021-2025) besides discussing economic recovery and regional cooperation in the post-COVID-19 world.
- India welcomed the ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific, which has a lot in common with India's own "Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative".
- India is looking forward to seeing a strong, unified and prosperous ASEAN playing a central role in the Indo-Pacific region.
- It highlighted Indo-Pacific policy, where all countries stressed the importance of "a rules-based order".

Trade with ASEAN

- India and ASEAN countries said they would explore ways to **increase trade between them** despite India's exit from the 15-nation Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement.
- India walked out of the Free Trade Agreement after negotiations for more than six years, as it did not address India's concerns about being flooded by goods from China, trade deficits and need to protect its agricultural and dairy sectors.
- India is looking for an "**early review**" of the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITGA) to meet trade demands.

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement:

- Launched in **2012**, RCEP is a trade pact between the **10-member ASEAN bloc**, along with China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand.
- The deal includes **2.1 billion people**, with RCEP's members accounting for around **30 percent of global GDP**.
- **Aim:** To lower tariffs, open up trade in services and promote investment to help emerging economies catch up with the rest of the world.
- RCEP is expected to **help reduce costs and time** for companies by allowing them to export a product anywhere within the bloc without meeting separate requirements for each country.
- It also touches on **intellectual property**, but will not cover **environmental protections and labour rights**.

ASEAN

- The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a regional intergovernmental organization comprising ten countries in Southeast Asia
- It promotes intergovernmental cooperation and facilitates economic, political, security, military, educational, and sociocultural integration among its members and other countries in Asia.
- ASEAN operates under six fundamental principles, two of which are mutual respect for independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, and non-interference in member countries' internal affairs.

ASEAN-India Network of Think Tanks (AINTT)

Context

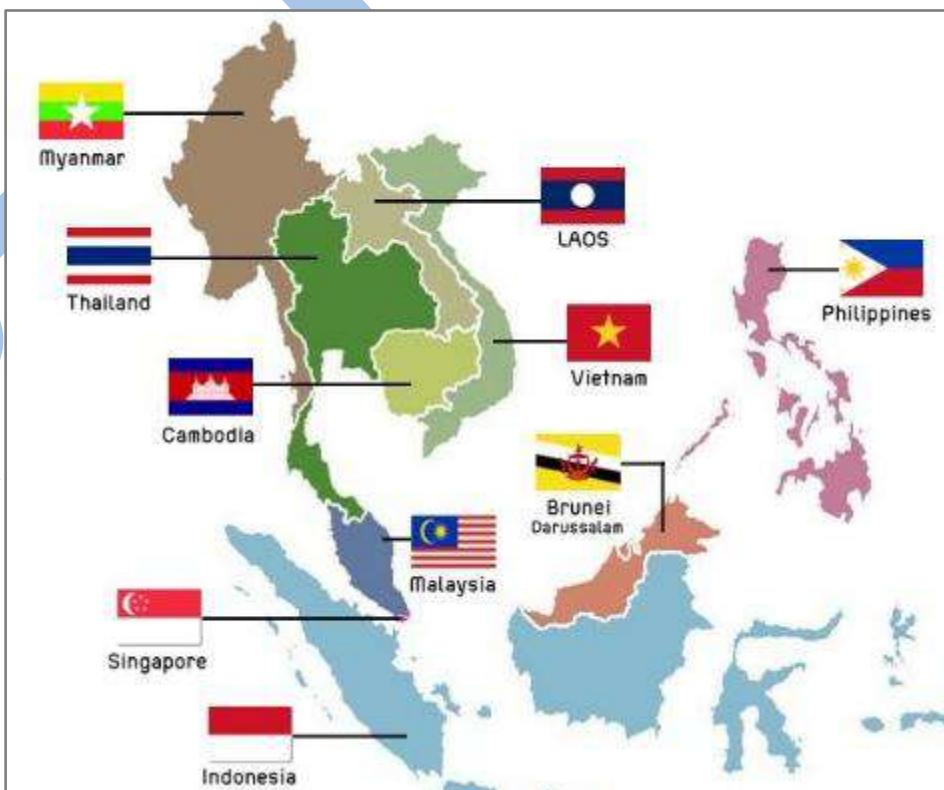
- Ministry of External Affairs in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand organized the 6th Round Table of ASEAN-India Network of Think Tanks (AINTT)

About AINTT

- Theme: The theme of the two day Round Table was 'ASEAN-India: Strengthening Partnership in the Post COVID Era'.
- Focus areas:
 - Changing Landscape of Global Order and ASEAN-India relations in the post Covid-19 Era;
 - Emerging Value Chains: Opportunities for ASEAN and India in the post Covid-19 Era;
 - New Normal and Significance of 4IR on ASEAN-India Partnership and Future Collaborations;
 - ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific (AOIP) and Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI): Complementarities and Cooperation; and Way Forward.

Highlights of the event

- In order to deal with the new global challenges, nation-states were rediscovering the merits of ideas like strategic autonomy.
- It is that just when multilateralism was most in demand, it did not rise to the occasion.
- The current pandemic appeared as an unprecedented challenge and "individual behaviour of many states" should be blamed for the failure of the multilateral organisations to come to the rescue of the pandemic-hit world.
- The impact of COVID-19 on the world economy still not clear and the contraction of the world economy would be the largest since the Great Depression of 1929.



Virtual NAM Summit

Context

- PM Modi participated in a video conference meeting of the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) on the COVID crisis.

Details

- This is the first time PM Modi took part in a NAM meeting. The last time any Indian PM participated at **Tehran NAM meet in 2012**.
- Both in **2016, 2018** summits of NAM, India was represented at the Vice President level.
- Azerbaijan** is the president of the grouping from 2019-2022.
- The title of the summit was "**We stand together against COVID-19**".

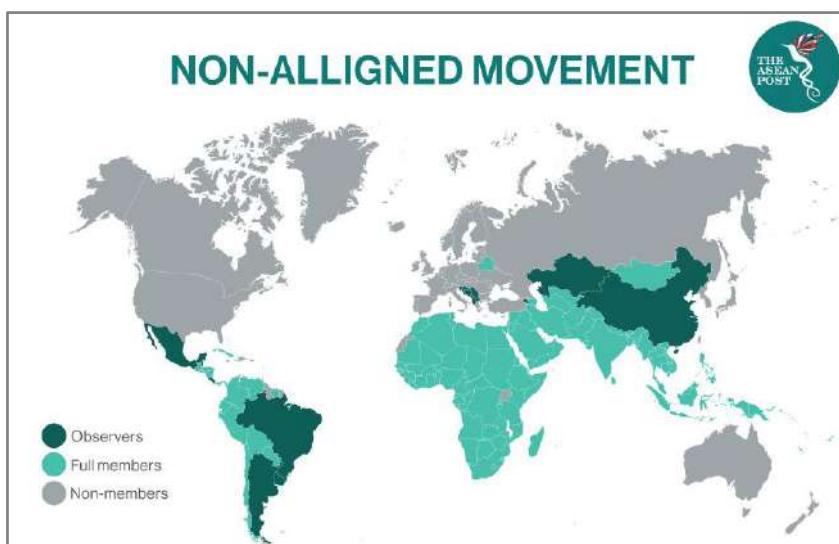
Main takeaways from the Prime Minister's speech

- Coronavirus outbreak has exposed the limitations of the current global order. After the pandemic, the world will need a **new template of globalization** based on fairness and equality.
- The PM highlighted the need to **promote human welfare** and **not focus on economic growth** alone.
- PM called on NAM countries to stand together to ensure that the international community and the World Health Organization focus on **building health capacities in developing countries**.
- India has sent medicines to 123 partner countries including 59 members of NAM.

Non-alignment movement	
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Non-Aligned Movement was formed during the Cold War. There were two power blocks with the United States and the Soviet Union as heads. NAM developed as a forum that is not formally aligned with or against any major power bloc.
Establishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The basic concept for the group originated in 1955, at the Asia-Africa Bandung Conference, Indonesia. Established in 1961 in Belgrade, Yugoslavia. Key founders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia, Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, and Sukarno of Indonesia
Members	120 member states 17 states (observers) 10 international organization
Purpose	<p>Havana Declaration of 1979 defines the purpose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the national independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and security of non-aligned countries. Support countries in their struggle against imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism, and all forms of foreign subjugation.

Principles of NAM

- Respect for the principles enshrined in the charter of the United Nations and international law.
- Respect for **sovereignty, sovereign equality, and territorial integrity** of all States.
- Peaceful settlement of all international conflicts in accordance with the charter of the United Nations.
- Respect for the **political, economic, social and cultural diversity** of countries and peoples.
- Non-interference in the internal affairs** of States.
- Promotion and defence of **multilateralism and multilateral organizations** as the appropriate frameworks to resolve, through dialogue and cooperation, the problems affecting humankind.



United Nations

Context

- 193 members of the United Nations adopted a Commemorative declaration marking **75 years since the victors of World War II met in San Francisco.**
- The **UN75 Declaration** resolves to take action on a range of subjects from **digital cooperation to reform of the UN.**

Human rights: The **Human Rights Declaration of 1948** for the first time set out fundamental human rights to be **universally protected**, recognising that the inherent **dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights** of all members of the human family is the **foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.**

U.N. Security Council

Context

- Five new countries — **India, Mexico, Norway, Ireland and Kenya** — formally joined the U.N. Security Council. The new countries will hold non-permanent seats on the **15-member council for two years.**

More Details

- India will begin its **two-year tenure** as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on January 1.
- India will sit in the **15-nation UNSC for the 2021-22 term** as a non-permanent member — the eighth time that the country has had a seat on the powerful horseshoe table.
- The presidency of the council is held by **each of the members in turn for one month**, following the English alphabetical order of the member states' names.

'Non-permanent seats' at the UNSC

- The UNSC is composed of 15 members: five permanent members — China, France, Russian Federation, the United States, and the United Kingdom — and 10 non-permanent members who are elected by the General Assembly.
- The non-permanent members are elected for two-year terms — so every year, the General Assembly elects five non-permanent members out of the total 10.
- These 10 seats are distributed among the regions of the world: five seats for African and Asian countries; one for Eastern European countries; two for Latin American and Caribbean countries; and two for Western European and Other Countries.
- Of the five seats for Africa and Asia, three are for Africa and two for Asia.
- Also, there is an informal understanding between the two groups to reserve one seat for an Arab country.

About UNSC

- The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is **one of the six principal organs** of the United Nations (UN), charged with
 - ensuring international peace and security,**
 - recommending the admission of new UN members to the General Assembly, and
 - approving any changes to the **UN Charter.**
- The UNSC is the only UN body with the authority to issue **binding resolutions on member states.**
- The Security Council was created **after World War II to address the failings of the League of Nations** in maintaining world peace.

The Most Frequently Elected UN Security Council Members

Non-permanent UN Security Council members with the most terms since 1946*



The 10 non-permanent members are elected for two-year terms by the General Assembly

* Including members already elected to serve their two-year terms in 2021. Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and Poland have also been elected 6 times.

Source: United Nations



statista

- The Security Council consists of fifteen members, of which five are permanent: **China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.**
- Permanent members can **veto any substantive resolution**, including those on the admission of new member states or nominees for the office of Secretary-General.

SAARC

Context

- Thirty-six years after it first began, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), **appears to be all but dead in the water**. The year 2020 marked the sixth year since the leaders of the eight nations that make up SAARC were able to meet.

Pandemic-caused challenges

- Reviving SAARC is crucial to countering the common challenges brought about by the pandemic.
- Comprehensive approach for Pandemic Preparedness and Response to COVID-19 in South Asian Countries is necessary for the **distribution of vaccines**, as well as **developing cold storage chains for the vast market** that South Asia represents is needed.
- The pandemic's **impact on South Asian economies** is another area that calls for coordination.
- Apart from the overall **GDP slowdown, global job cuts** which will lead to an estimated **22% fall in revenue for migrant labour and expatriates** from South Asian countries, there is an expected loss of about 10.77 million jobs and \$52.32 billion in GDP in the tourism sector alone from the impact of COVID-19.

SAPTA:

- It was signed in 1993 and entered into force in 1995.
- The Agreement reflected the desire of the Member States to **promote and sustain mutual trade and economic cooperation** within the SAARC region through the exchange of concessions.
- The agreement provided for a **positive list; the trade of the items on positive list could be regulated**.

SAFTA:

- The South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) is an agreement **reached in 2004** to create SAARC free trade area.
- The members of SAARC signed a framework agreement on SAFTA to **reduce customs duties of all traded goods to zero** by the year 2016.
- The SAFTA agreement **came into force on 1 January 2006** and is operational following the ratification of the agreement by the seven governments.

About SAARC

- The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is the regional intergovernmental organization and geopolitical union of states in South Asia.
- Its member states are **Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka**.
- The SAARC comprises **3% of the world's area, 21% of the world's population** and 4.21% (US\$3.67 trillion) of the global economy, as of 2019.
- The SAARC was founded in Dhaka on 8 December 1985.
- Its secretariat is based in **Kathmandu, Nepal**.



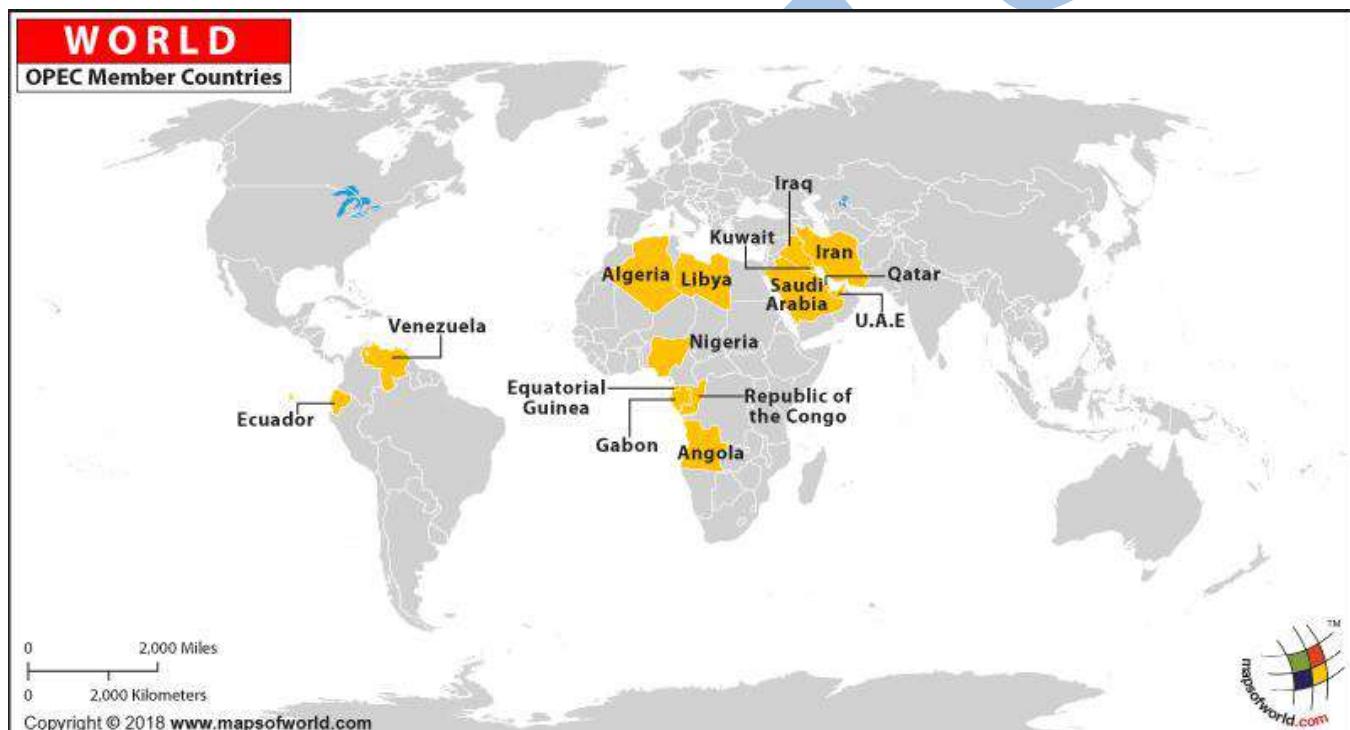
OPEC+

Context

- To ensure the market is not flooded with oil while pandemic-related risks to demand remain high, OPEC kingpin Saudi Arabia decided to cut its own production by one million barrels per day in both months.

About OPEC+

- OPEC+ is a group of **24 oil-producing nations**, made up of the 14 members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), and **10 other non-OPEC members, including Russia**.
- The OPEC bloc is nominally led by Saudi Arabia, the group's largest oil producer, while Russia is the biggest player among the non-OPEC countries.
- The format was **born in 2017** with a deal to **coordinate oil production** among the countries in a bid to stabilize prices.
- Since then, the group has reached deals for members to voluntarily cut and ramp-up production in response to changes in global oil prices.
- OPEC accounts for around **one-third of the world's oil supply**, with the **non-OPEC members** bringing the total share of global oil covered by the deal to just **under half**.
- The **world's largest energy producer, the U.S., is not part of the deal**, nor is China or other leading Western producers such as the U.K., Canada and Norway.



15th East Asia Summit (EAS)

Context

- External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar represented India at the 15th East Asia Summit (EAS) on 14 November 2020.

Key highlights of the summit

- Chaired by: Prime Minister of **Vietnam** H.E. Nguyen Xuan Phuc in his capacity as ASEAN Chair.
- All the **eighteen EAS countries** participated in the virtual Summit.
- It reaffirmed the importance of adhering to international law, respecting territorial integrity and sovereignty, and promoting a rules-based global order.
- EAS Leaders talked about India's response to pandemic and highlighted India's efforts to support the international community.

- India reiterated its commitment to help make the COVID vaccine accessible and affordable to all nations.
- Indo-Pacific region:** EAS leaders noted the growing interest in the Indo-Pacific as an integrated and organic maritime space, with ASEAN at its centre.
- On South China Sea:** EAS leaders expressed concern about actions and incidents that erode trust in the region.

Ha Noi Declaration:

- The Summit discussed ways to strengthen the EAS platform and to make it more responsive to emerging challenges on its 15th anniversary and adopted the Ha Noi Declaration.
- Ha Noi Declaration is REAFFIRMING the
- 2005 Kuala Lumpur Declaration on the East Asia Summit in setting the broad vision, principles, objectives and modalities of the East Asia Summit
- Commitment in the 2010 Ha Noi Declaration on the commemoration of the Fifth Anniversary of the East Asia Summit to cooperate in priority areas of the EAS,
- 2011 Bali Declaration on the Principles for Mutually Beneficial Relations, and
- the 2015 Kuala Lumpur Declaration on the 10th Anniversary of the East Asia Summit outlining our efforts to strengthen our cooperation for promoting peace, stability, and prosperity in the region;

Details

- The summit, held in the virtual format, was chaired by Prime Minister of **Vietnam** Nguyen Xuan Phuc in his capacity as chair of the ASEAN and all the EAS member nations attended it.
- India is generally represented at the summit by the Prime Minister.
- In his address, Mr. Jaishankar also underlined the need for greater international cooperation in the post-COVID-19 world to tackle the challenges cutting across national boundaries such as terrorism, climate change and pandemics.



East Asia Summit (EAS)

- It is a regional forum held annually by leaders of, initially, 16 countries in the East Asian, Southeast Asian, South Asian and Oceania regions, based on the ASEAN plus Six mechanism.
- Membership expanded to 18 countries including Russia and the United States at the Sixth EAS in 2011.

International Solar Alliance

Context

- All member states of the UN can now join the International Solar Alliance.

Details

- All member states of the United Nations, including those lying beyond the tropics, can now join the International Solar Alliance (ISA) with an amendment to its framework agreement coming into effect recently.
- It is done in pursuance of achieving the universalisation of the membership of the International Solar Alliance beyond the tropics.

About International Solar Alliance

- The International Solar Alliance was launched jointly by the **Indian** Prime Minister and the **French** President during the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference, or COP21, in Paris.
- It aims to contribute to the **implementation of the Paris Climate Agreement** through rapid and massive deployment of solar energy.
- As on January 15 this year, 89 countries have signed the framework agreement of the ISA and of these, 72 have deposited their instruments of ratification.
- The ISA aims to bring **together countries to provide a collective response** to the main common obstacles to the massive deployment of solar energy in terms of technology, finance and capacity.
- The objective of the ISA is to **mobilise member countries** and seek **commitments from international organisations and mobilise private sector**, to support rural and decentralised applications, access to affordable finance, island and village solar mini grids, rooftop installations, and solar e-mobility technologies.

G7

Context

- Recently, the U.S. President proposed the expansion of G7 to G10 or G11, with the inclusion of India, South Korea, Australia and possibly Russia.

Historical background

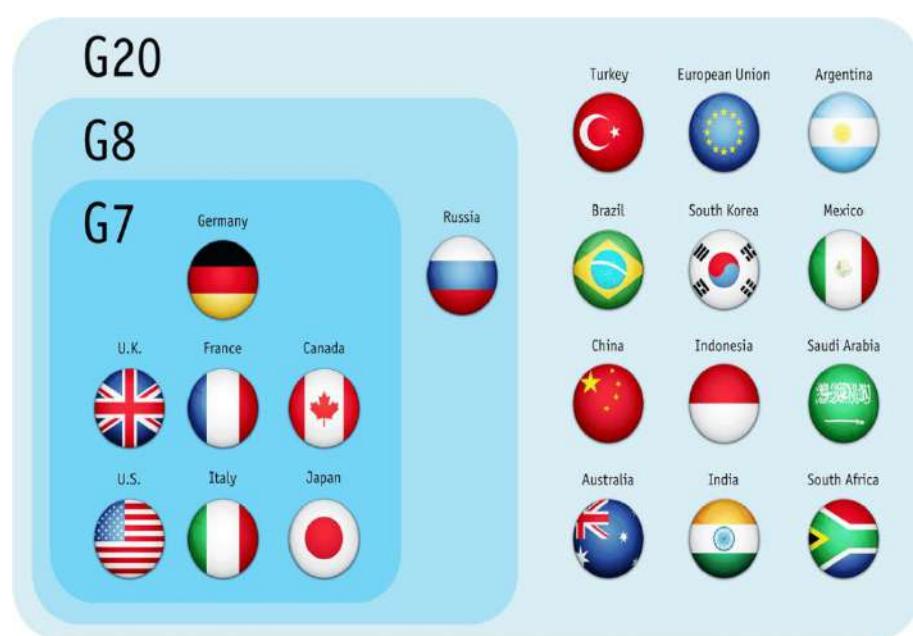
- The G7 emerged as a **restricted club of the rich democracies** in the early 1970s.
- The **quadrupling of oil prices** just after the **1973 Arab-Israeli War**, when OPEC imposed an embargo against **Canada, Japan, the Netherlands, and the United States**, shocked their economies.
- Although the **French were spared the embargo**, the chill winds of the OPEC action reverberated around the world.
- **French President invited the Finance Ministers of five of the most developed members** of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, the United States, Germany, Japan, Italy, and the United Kingdom, for an informal discussion on global issues.
- This transformed into a G7 Summit of the heads of government from the following year with the inclusion of Canada in 1976.

E7

- The seven largest emerging economies, comprising **Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Russia and Turkey**, account for over a third of global GDP on purchasing power parity (PPP) terms.

About G7

- The Group of Seven (G7) is an intergovernmental organization consisting of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States.
- The heads of government of



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the member states, as well as the representatives of the European Union, meet at the annual G7 Summit.

- As of 2018, the G7 represents 58% of the global net wealth (\$317 trillion), more than 46% of the global gross domestic product (GDP) based on nominal values, and more than 32% of the global GDP based on purchasing power parity.
- The seven countries involved are also the largest IMF-advanced economies in the world.

12th BRICS Summit

Context

- The BRICS countries annual Summit, held virtually this time. The 2020 BRICS summit was the **twelfth annual BRICS summit**, an international relations conference attended by the heads of state or heads of government of the five member states **Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa**.

Details

- Two pillars of this year's summit are the **economy and counterterrorism**. Two most of the pressing issues – the coronavirus-shackled economies and sprawling terrorist networks.
- Theme:** "BRICS Partnership for Global Stability, Shared Security and Innovative Growth."
- Hosted by Russia's President Vladimir Putin.
- India will be taking over the Chairship of the BRICS, which would be the third BRICS Presidency for India since its inception (after 2012 and 2016) and will host the 13th BRICS Summit in 2021.

Moscow Declaration

- It adopted the extensive Moscow Declaration "The BRICS Counterterrorism Strategy and BRICS Economic Partnership Strategy 2025".
- The BRICS Counterterrorism Strategy is designed to provide law enforcement authorities with real cooperative mechanisms for timely information exchange and to facilitate concerted measures against the masterminds of terror attacks.
- It also highlighted the urgency of agreeing on an extension of the 2010 Russia-U.S. Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms without delay.
- The Moscow Declaration reaffirms the strategic spirit of BRICS states' unanimity to set long-term goals rather than pursue short-term benefits.
- They've called for a comprehensive global governance model based on reviewing the UN and its Security Council, IMF and WTO mechanisms and bringing in more representativeness and efficiency into these organizations.

BRICS and COVID-19

- The BRICS Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Framework Programme pioneered in 2015 helped scientists and researchers to stay connected and effectively exchange their findings to better facilitate a common response to COVID19.
- BRICS looks better than other global governance institutions amidst the ongoing COVID crises.
- There is no blame-game or pointing fingers within BRICS, rather there is **only a common vision for intensifying cooperation**, including in sectors like healthcare, social welfare.

Financial cooperation

- The New Development Bank (NDB) has demonstrated high efficiency during the crisis by undertaking "timely measures" through its Emergency Assistance Program – offering a \$10 billion pool of emergency loans to its member

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states, split in half between support for healthcare and economic recovery.

- The significance and growing scope of the bank's operations are depicted by the increasing number of regional offices, three of which are already in operation in **Shanghai, Johannesburg and San Paulo**, complemented by a newly opened facility in Moscow and an upcoming one in India.
- BRICS states **created BRICS Payments Task Force** as a step towards cooperation on national payments systems.
- Establishment of the **BRICS Rapid Information Security Channel** is done to promote the exchange of information on cyber threats among their central banks.

BRICS 5G Innovation Base

Context

- China is considering establishing a BRICS innovation base to strengthen cooperation among the five-country bloc including India in sectors like 5G, AI and digital economy, industry and information technology.

Details

- Aim:** To strengthen BRICS members cooperation on - digital transformation, especially in 5G, AI, the digital economy and others, to promote the digital transformation of enterprises and their innovation capabilities, and to promote sustainable economic and social development.
- Hidden Agenda:** China's interest in promoting 5G within the BRICS bloc could be part of its interest in pushing tech giant Huawei internationally – Huawei's name has come up as a contender to build the network in Brazil and South Africa even as it is embroiled in controversies in other countries.

BRICS

- It is an **informal group** of states comprising the Federative Republic of Brazil, the Russian Federation, the Republic of India, the People's Republic of China and the Republic of South Africa.
- Originally the first four were grouped as "**BRIC**" (or "the BRICs"), before the induction of **South Africa** in **2010**.
- The growing economic might of BRICS countries, their significance as one of the main driving forces of global economic development, their substantial population and abundant natural resources form the foundation of their influence on the international scene and are the driving forces behind the grouping.
- At the **Fortaleza Summit (2014)**, in Brazil, important institutions were created: the **New Development Bank (NDB)** and the **Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA)**.

Anti-Drug Working Group BRICS:

- 4th Meeting of the BRICS Anti-Drug Working Group held.
- Fruitful exchange of opinions concerning the drug situation in the BRICS states, the international and regional trends of illegal trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors, as well as the impact of various internal and external factors on the situation took place during the summit.
- India called for nodal points to enable real-time information sharing among BRICS nations.
- Meeting focused on misuse of darknet and other advanced technologies for drug trafficking.

Gulf Cooperation Council

Context

- Gulf leaders have signed a "**solidarity and stability**" agreement towards ending the diplomatic rift with **Qatar at a summit in Saudi Arabia**.
- The announcement came at the **Gulf Arab leaders meeting in Saudi Arabia**, with the annual summit taking place amid a breakthrough in the dispute between a Saudi-led bloc and Qatar that started in June 2017.



About Gulf Cooperation Council

- The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf known as the Gulf Cooperation Council, is a regional intergovernmental political and economic union consisting of all Arab states of the Persian Gulf - **Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates - except Iraq.**
- The Charter of the GCC was signed on **25 May 1981**, formally establishing the institution.
- 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).
- There have been discussions regarding the **future membership of Jordan, Morocco, and Yemen**.
- In order to **reduce their future dependence on oil**, the GCC states are pursuing unprecedented economic structural reform.

Future Investment Initiative

Context

- Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare addressed the 4th edition of the Future Investment Initiative Forum.

Details

- Dr Harsh Vardhan highlighted the five big trends which are emerging due to COVID-19 and influencing global business:
 - The impact of Technology and Innovation
 - Importance of Infrastructure for Global Growth
 - Changes coming in human resource and future of work
 - Compassion for environment
 - Business friendly governance with focus on whole of society and government approach

About Future Investment Initiative

- The Future Investment Initiative (FII) is an annual investment forum held in **Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**, to discuss trends in the **world economy and investment environment**.
- It is hosted by the **Public Investment Fund of Saudi Arabia (PIF)**.
- The first event was in October 2017 and featured the announcements of the **launch of NEOM**, a proposed \$500bn independent economic zone in the northwest of Saudi Arabia.

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

Context

- United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) hosted its two key annual regional meetings
- 7th Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD)
- 76th Session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

About United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

- Established in 1947 as the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE)
- ESCAP is one of the five regional commissions under the jurisdiction of the United Nations Economic and Social Council.
- It was established in order to increase economic activity in Asia and the Far East, as well as to foster economic relations between the region and other areas of the world.
- Members:** 53 countries (total members) + Nine Associate members
- Headquarters:** Bangkok, Thailand
- Functional areas:**

International Atomic Energy Agency

Context

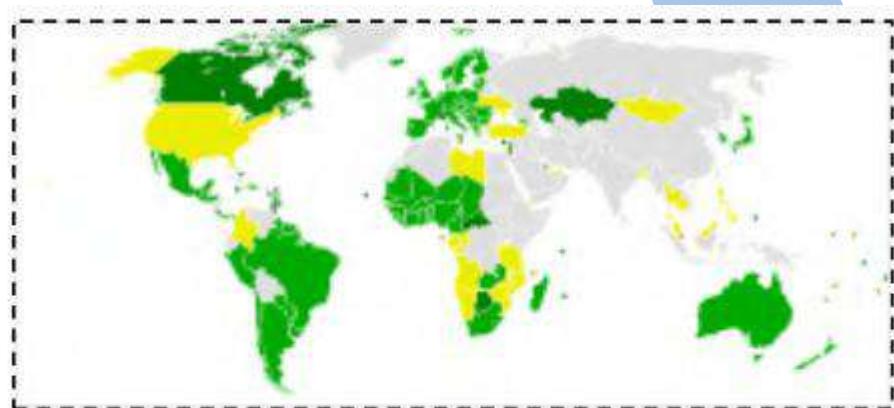
- International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has expressed —serious concern|| about Iran's failure to cooperate with its probe into undeclared nuclear material in the country.

About IAEA

- The IAEA was established as an autonomous organization on 29 July 1957 through its own international treaty, the IAEA Statute.
- Although it is established independently of the United Nations, IAEA reports to both the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council.
- Headquartered in Vienna, Austria.

Functions

- Works with its Member States and multiple partners worldwide to promote the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear technologies.
- Seeks to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and to inhibit its use for any military purpose, including nuclear weapons.
- India is a founding member of the IAEA. India joined the IAEA Response and Assistance Network (RANET) in January 2020.
- RANET is a group of countries that provide assistance to reduce the consequences of nuclear or radiological emergencies.



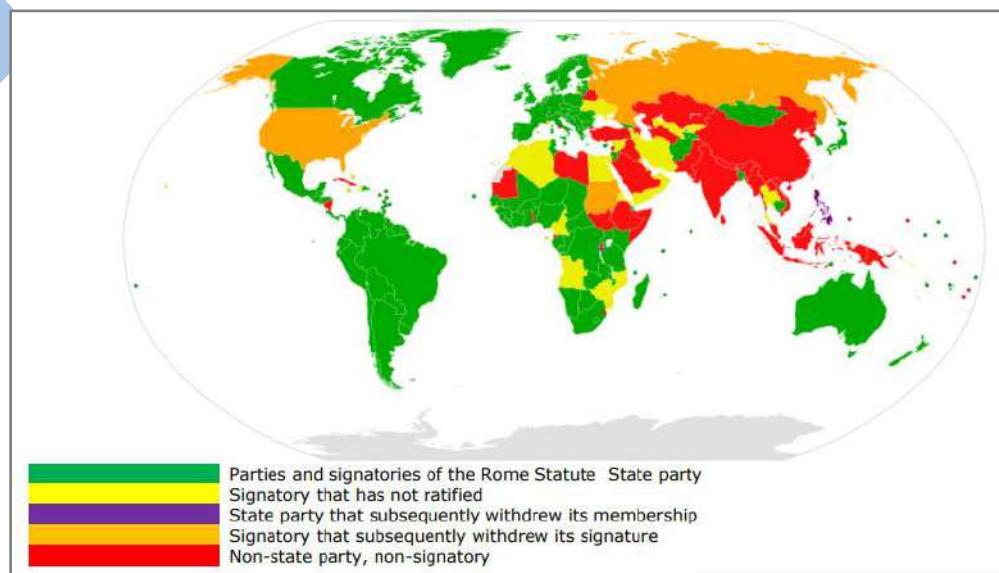
International Criminal Court

Context

- U.S. President Donald Trump had announced sanctions against ICC staff investigating American troops and intelligence officials for possible war crimes in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

About

- The International Criminal Court is an intergovernmental organization and international tribunal that sits in The Hague, Netherlands.
- The ICC has jurisdiction to prosecute individuals for the international crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of aggression.



- It is intended to complement existing national judicial systems and it may therefore exercise its jurisdiction only when national courts are unwilling or unable to prosecute criminals.
- The ICC lacks universal territorial jurisdiction, and may only investigate and prosecute crimes committed within member states, crimes committed by nationals of member states, or crimes in situations referred to the Court by the United Nations Security Council.
- The ICC began functioning on 1 July 2002, the date that the Rome Statute entered into force. The Rome Statute is a multilateral treaty that serves as the ICC's foundational and governing document. States which become party to the Rome Statute become member states of the ICC.
- India is not a member of ICC

Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)

Context

- The Government of India and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) signed a \$750 million —COVID-19 Active Response and Expenditure Support Programme to assist India to strengthen its response to the adverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on poor and vulnerable households. This is the first ever budgetary support programme from the AIIB to India.

About

- The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is a multilateral development bank that aims to support the building of infrastructure in the Asia-Pacific region.
- The bank currently has 82 members as well as 20 prospective members from around the world.
- The bank started operation after the agreement entered into force on 25 December 2015, after ratifications were received from 10 member states holding a total number of 50% of the initial subscriptions of the Authorized Capital Stock
- It is seen as a potential rival to the World Bank and IMF



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Grand Dam on Nile

Context

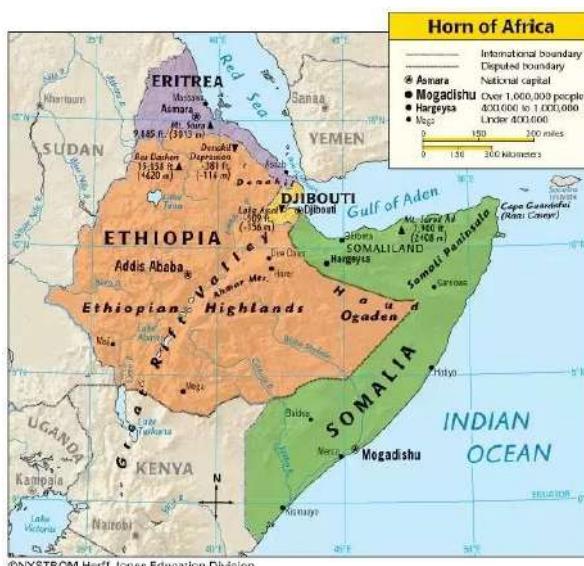
- Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt agreed to resume negotiations to resolve their decade-long complex dispute over the Grand Renaissance Dam hydropower project in the Horn of Africa. The latest round of talks comes six weeks after Sudan had boycotted the ongoing negotiations.

The Nile river

- It is a major north-flowing river in northeastern Africa, and is the **longest river in Africa** and the **disputed longest river in the world**.

- Its drainage basin covers eleven countries:

Tanzania,
Uganda,
Rwanda,
Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, South Sudan, Republic of the Sudan, and Egypt.



- In particular, the Nile is the primary water source of Egypt and Sudan.
- The Nile has two major tributaries – the **White Nile** and the **Blue Nile**.

Horn of Africa

- Horn of Africa is the easternmost extension of African land and includes the region that is home to the countries of Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia, whose cultures have been linked throughout their long history.

Operation "Samudra Setu"

Context

- The Indian Navy has launched Operation "Samudra Setu".

Details

- It is a part of national effort to repatriate Indian citizens from overseas.
- Indian Naval Ships Jalashwa and Magar were sent to the Republic of Maldives to commence evacuation operations.
- This operation is being progressed in close coordination



with Ministries of Defence, External Affairs, Home Affairs, Health, and various other agencies of the Government of India and State governments.

Istanbul Convention

Context

- Poland is to withdraw from a European treaty aimed at preventing violence against women.

About the convention

- The original name is the **Council of Europe Convention** on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.
- It was first opened for signatures on 11 May 2011.
- In 2008, the **Committee of Ministers of Justice of the Council of Europe** set up an expert group mandated to draft up a convention that would set the standards to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence.
- It also states that violence against women is a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination.
- The Convention does outline which acts must be criminalised by the participating countries.
- India is not a signatory of this convention.

RMIFC and EMASOH

Context

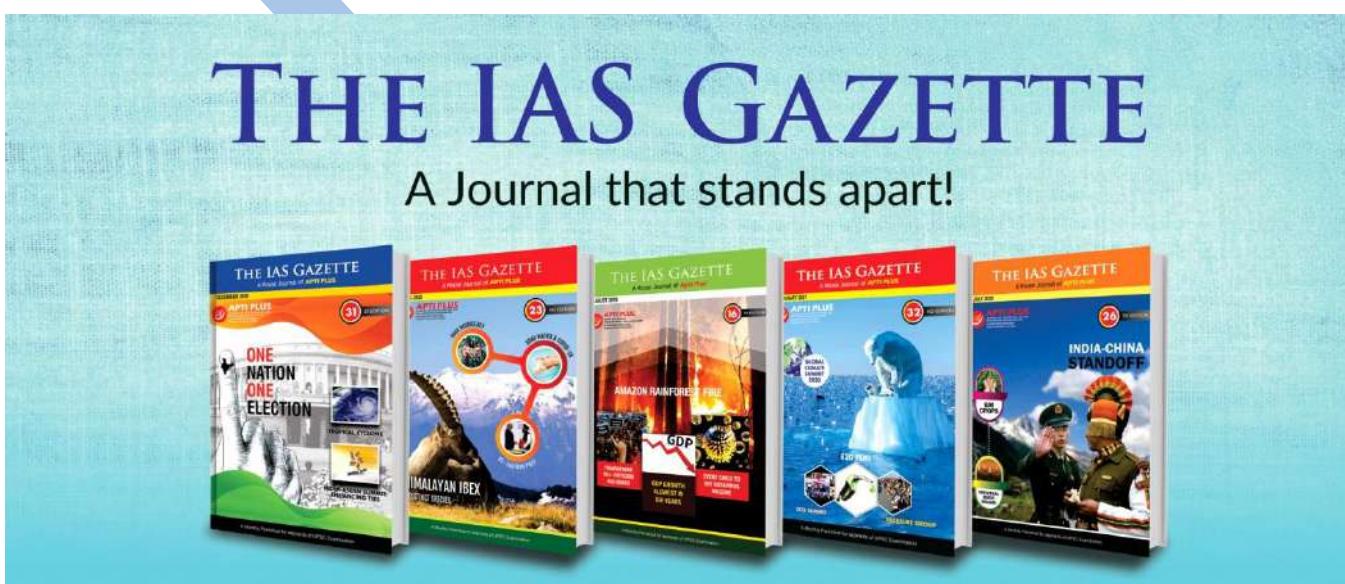
- India is looking to post Navy Liaison Officers at the **Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre (RMIFC)** in **Madagascar** and at the European maritime surveillance initiative in the Strait of Hormuz (EMASOH) for improved **Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA)**.

Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre (RMIFC)

- It functions under the aegis of the **Indian Ocean Commission (IOC)** of which India became an **Observer** in March 2020 along with **Japan and the United Nations**.
- It is based in **Madagascar** and is designed to deepen **maritime domain awareness** by monitoring maritime activities and promoting information sharing and exchange.

European maritime surveillance initiative in the Strait of Hormuz

- It was started by **France** in February 2020.
- The EMASOH headquarters is composed of **Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands and French officers** and based at the French naval base in Abu Dhabi.
- The aim is to **monitor maritime activity and guarantee freedom of navigation in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz**.



Open Skies treaty

Context

- The United States said it would withdraw from the Open Skies treaty.

About Open Skies treaty

- It establishes a program of unarmed aerial surveillance flights over the entire territory of its participants. This treaty is not related to civil-aviation open skies agreements.
- Effective from: 2002
- Total parties: 35
- The Open Skies treaty, proposed by U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower in 1955,
- It was signed in 1992 and took effect in 2002

Reasons for US withdrawal

- The officials cited a years-long effort by Russia to violate the terms, such as by restricting U.S. over flights of Russia's neighbor Georgia and the Russian military enclave in Kaliningrad on the Baltic coast.
- Russia had been using it over flights of American and European territory to identify critical U.S. infrastructure for the potential attack in time of war.

Non-participation of China

- USA has been calling China to be part of the treaty. However China rejected it.
- Currently the US considers China as a bigger threat. Without the participation of China, the treaty has lesser significance to the USA.

Medical Diplomacy

Context

- India's international cooperation is an answer to the United Nations Secretary-General's call for world leaders to come together for an urgent and coordinated global response. This cooperation has been termed as 'medical diplomacy'.

Details:

- In this crisis situation, India has reached out mainly to the countries of the global south as listed under the **Group of 77+ China**, possessing limited capacities to manage the epidemic. Hence, such engagements must be analysed through the lenses of **South-South cooperation (SSC)**.
- Medical Diplomacy by India Leadership:** For India, the pandemic presents an opportunity to demonstrate its willingness and capacity to shoulder more responsibility.

Initiatives by India:

- India has sent the **HCQ tablets** to Afghanistan, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Maldives, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Oman, Syria and Jordan among others.
- Indian Prime Minister proposed the creation of a **SAARC COVID-19 emergency fund**.
- Medical assistance** was provided to twenty African countries.
- India has also been facilitating the **transfer of skill and knowledge to medical professionals** through the capacity building modality of South Cooperation.
- Indian medical staff has been conducting **online training for their counterparts from other SAARC, Caribbean and Latin American countries**.

South-South Cooperation:

- South-South cooperation refers to the **technical cooperation among developing countries** in the Global South.
- It is a tool used by the states, international organizations, academics, civil society and the private sector to collaborate and share knowledge, skills and successful initiatives in specific areas such as agricultural development, human rights, urbanization, health, climate change etc.

North-South Cooperation:

- The **division of North and South** is used to refer to the **social, economic and political differences** that exist between developed countries (North) and developing countries (South).
- A country is defined as North or South **not by location, but depending on certain economic factors** and the quality of life of its population.
- North-South cooperation occurs when a developed country supports economically or with another kind of resources.

Triangular Cooperation:

- Triangular cooperation involves three actors, **two from the South and one from the North**. The latter, which can also be an international organization, provides the financial resources so that the countries of the South can exchange technical assistance on a specific topic.
- For example, **Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)** made it possible financially for demining Cambodian experts to travel to Colombia, exchange their knowledge, and experience in that field.

China-Bhutan Relations

Context

- Chinese claims on eastern Bhutan boundary. Claims of China. China made this claim at an online meeting of the **58th Global Environment Facility (GEF) Council**, while objecting to the **funding request to develop the Sakteng Wildlife Sanctuary project** in eastern Bhutan.

Details

- According to China, the Sakteng Wildlife Sanctuary is located in the **China-Bhutan disputed areas**, which is on the agenda of China-Bhutan boundary talk.
- China claims that the boundary between China and Bhutan has never been delimited. It has had disputes over the eastern, central and western sectors of Bhutan.
- **Bhutan Position:** Bhutan totally rejected the claim made by China. It said that Sakteng Wildlife Sanctuary is an integral and sovereign territory of Bhutan.
- China and Bhutan have a dispute in only two sectors of the border, one in the north (central) – Pasamlung and Jakarlung, and second in the west – Doklam.
- There has been no mention of eastern Bhutan, or Trashigang district, where Sakteng is based, in 24 previous rounds of boundary negotiations held between the two countries between 1984 and 2016.

Treaty of Friendship, 1949:

- Bhutan and India signed the Treaty of Friendship calling for peace between the two nations and non-interference in each other's internal affairs.
- However, Bhutan agreed to let India "guide" its foreign policy and both nations would consult each other closely on foreign and defence affairs. The treaty also established free trade and extradition protocols.

2007 treaty:

- India re-negotiated the 1949 treaty with Bhutan and signed a new treaty of friendship in 2007.
- The new treaty replaced the provision requiring Bhutan to take India's guidance on foreign policy with broader sovereignty and not require Bhutan to obtain India's permission over arms imports.

Overview of Bhutan-India Relations

Economic Relations:

- The economic sector is an important aspect of this shift, with the two-side trade having reached 92.28 billion Indian rupees (\$1.2 billion) in 2018.

- RuPay Card to ease financial transitions between the two countries and an additional \$100 million would be available to Bhutan under a stand by swap arrangement to meet the foreign exchange requirement.
- However, for Bhutan, economic dependency on India, the huge trade deficit, and hydropower have generated serious concerns in Bhutan about India's real intentions.
- **Energy Cooperation:**
 - The two countries signed an agreement covering cooperation in the hydropower sector in 2009, with the Indian government having committed to assist Bhutan in developing a minimum of 10,000 MW of hydropower by 2020 and import the surplus electricity.
 - PM Modi inaugurated a 720 MW hydropower project on the Mangdechhu River.
 - Consequently, India's assistance has so far increased the hydropower generation capacity in Bhutan to 2000 MW, which is viewed as a strong symbol of win-win cooperation.

New public procurement restrictions target China

- The government has now amended the General Financial Rules, 2017 to impose curbs on public procurement from bidders of countries that share a land border with India.
- This latest move by the government, on grounds of defence and national security, is expected to affect mainly Chinese entities as countries to which lines of credit or development assistance have been extended are exempted from the fresh restrictions.
- Earlier, the Government had amended the FDI rules mandating prior approval for investment by entities in countries that share land borders with India.
- The government stated that prior approval was compulsory for foreign investments from all the countries sharing borders with India to prevent opportunistic takeovers of domestic firms following the Covid-19 pandemic.

Dividing line

A brief overview of the boundary dispute between China and Bhutan

- Bhutan and China have no formal diplomatic relations but have held 24 rounds of boundary talks between 1984 and 2016
- Talks concentrated on north and west Bhutan regions
- Eastern Bhutan not part of the talks
- So far, say officials
- Sakteng sanctuary is situated close to the border with Arunachal Pradesh
- In June 2020, China attempted to stop UNDP-GEF funding for Sakteng by claiming it was disputed, but was overruled



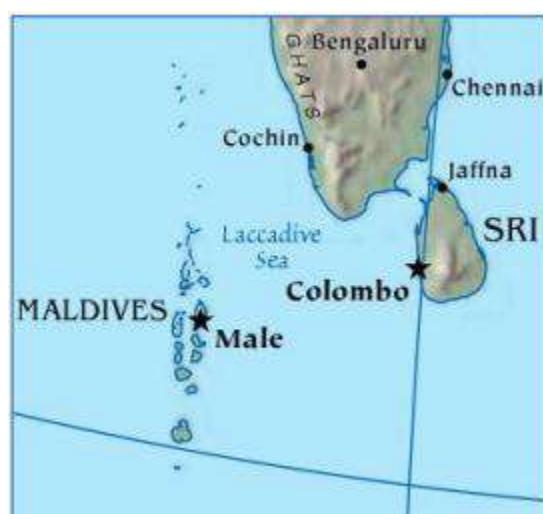
Greater Male Connectivity Project

Context

- India will fund Greater Male Connectivity Project through USD 400 mn Line of Credit & USD 100 mn grant.

About the project

- This 6.7 kilometer bridge project connecting Male with Gulhifalhu Port and Thilafushi industrial zone will help revitalise and transform Maldivian economy.
- A regular cargo ferry service between India and Maldives will boost trade and commerce between the two countries.
- It will be the largest civilian infrastructure project in Maldives, connecting Male with three neighbouring islands - Villingili, Gulhifalhu and Thilafushi.



Other Measure

- India is also starting an air travel bubble with Maldives to sustain and promote the dynamic people-to-people ties between the two countries and it will be the first neighbouring country with which an air bubble is being operationalised.
- An air bubble is a bilateral arrangement with a set of regulations and restrictions in which the carriers of the two countries can operate international flights.

Supply Chain Resilience

Context

- Australia-India-Japan Ministers' trilateral meeting on Supply Chains Resilience held.

Highlights of the meeting

- During 2019, the cumulative merchandise goods and services trade between India, Japan and Australia was \$ 2.7 trillion and \$0.9 trillion respectively.
- Member nations reaffirmed their determination to take a lead in delivering a free, fair, inclusive, non-discriminatory, transparent, predictable and stable trade and investment environment by keeping their markets open.
- India endorsed the concept of working towards ensuring a trustworthy, dependable and reliable supply chain in the IndoPacific region.

Indo-Pacific region:

- In terms of geo-spatiality, the Indo-Pacific is broadly to be understood as an interconnected space between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean.
- Its expanse is debated to be ranging from the eastern shores of Africa to the western coast of the United States, with variations in definitions depending on each actor and their own geographic positioning in the vast expanse.

Supply Chains Resilience initiative

- Supply Chains Resilience initiative aim to support a free, fair, inclusive, non-discriminatory, transparent, and stable trade and investment environment.
- The diversification of supply chain is critical for managing the risks associated with supply of inputs including disciplining price volatility.
- Linking value chains in the region by creating a network of reliable long-term supplies and appropriate capacities.
- Digitization of trade procedures for facilitating trade and thereby maintaining resilience in supply chains.
- Transparency and trust are the hallmark of this initiative.



Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict

Context

- Military action in Nagorno-Karabakh, a region disputed between Armenia and Azerbaijan, has resulted in the death of at least 100 civilians and Armenian combatants.
- The two countries have fought over the region for decades, the current conflict is being seen as one of the most serious in recent years.

What is Nagorno-Karabakh?

- It is internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan, but most of the region is controlled by Armenian separatists, who have declared it a republic called the —Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast.
- Nagorno-Karabakh has been part of Azerbaijan territory since the Soviet era.
- When the Soviet Union began to collapse in the late 1980s, Armenia's regional parliament voted for the region's transfer to Armenia; although the Soviet authorities turned down the demand.
- Years of clashes followed between Azerbaijan forces and Armenian separatists.
- In 1994, Russia brokered a ceasefire, by which time ethnic Armenians had taken control of the region.
- Even after the 1994 peace deal, the region has been marked by regular exchanges of fire.
- In 2016, it saw a Four-Day War before Russia mediated peace.
- The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, chaired by France, Russia and the US, has tried to get the two countries to reach a peace agreement.



WHAT IS THE BISHKEK PROTOCOL, WHICH WAS SIGNED 26 YEARS AGO AND REMAINED ONLY ON PAPER?

- Upon the growing volume of Armenian massacres, the parties signed a cease-fire agreement, known as the Bishkek Protocol, on May 4-5, 1994.
- Although the protocol ended large-scale attacks and operations, the cease-fire has remained on paper for the past 26 years.

Open Skies Treaty

Context

- The United States left the OST first after accusing Russia of violating the pact- allegations that Russia denied.

About Open Skies Treaty

- First proposed in 1955 by former US President Dwight Eisenhower as a means to de-escalate tensions during the Cold War.
- The landmark treaty was eventually signed in 1992 between NATO members and former Warsaw Pact countries following the demise of the Soviet Union.
- It went into effect in 2002 and had 35 signatories, including key players US and Russia, along with one non-ratifying member (Kyrgyzstan).
- The OST aims at building confidence among members through mutual openness, thus reducing the chances of accidental war.
- Under the treaty, a member state can "spy" on any part of the host nation, with the latter's consent.
- A country can undertake aerial imaging over the host state after giving notice 72 hours before, and sharing its exact flight path 24 hours before.

- The information gathered, such as on **troop movements, military exercises and missile deployments**, has to be shared with all member
- Only approved imaging equipment is permitted on the **surveillance flights**, and officials from the host state can also stay on board throughout the planned journey.

Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA)

Context

- PCA has ruled that India does not have jurisdiction to try the marines, who, it held, were entitled to immunity as they were acting on behalf of a state.

Details of the judgement

- It admitted that both India and Italy had concurrent jurisdiction in the matter but concluded that the marines' immunity precluded India's jurisdiction.
- PCA found that the Italian vessel had violated the right and freedom of navigation of the Indian fishing vessel under UNCLOS, and that the action, which caused loss of lives, property and harm, merited compensation.
- It asked the parties to consult each other on the compensation due to India as a result.
- PCA rejected a key argument by Italy that India, by leading the Italian vessel into its territory and arresting the marines, violated its obligation to cooperate with measures to suppress piracy under Article 100 of UNCLOS.

About the court

- The Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) is an intergovernmental organization located in The Hague, Netherlands.
- The PCA is the oldest institution for international dispute resolutions. It was established in 1899 by the first Hague Peace Conference.
- It is not a court in the traditional sense, but provides services of an arbitral tribunal to resolve disputes that arise out of international agreements between member states, international organizations or private parties.
- The PCA is constituted through two separate multilateral conventions with a combined membership of 122 states.
- India is a member.

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Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament (5WCSP)

Context

- Lok Sabha Speaker attended the inaugural ceremony of the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament (5WCSP).

About 5WCSP

- The two day Conference is being organized jointly by the **Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Geneva** and the **Parliament of Austria** with the support of the United Nations (UN).
- Theme of the Conference:—Parliamentary leadership for more effective multilateralism that delivers peace and sustainable development for the people and planet.

About IPU

- The Inter-Parliamentary Union is an international organization of national parliaments.
- Its primary purpose is to promote democratic governance, accountability, and cooperation among its members;
- Other initiatives include advancing gender parity among legislatures, empowering youth participation in politics, and sustainable development.
- The IPU has played a leading role in the development of international law and institutions, including the Permanent Court of Arbitration, the League of Nations, and the United Nations.
- It has permanent observer status at the United Nations General Assembly.

Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme

Context

- 56th ITEC day was observed online by the High Commission of India in Dhaka. In the wake of the COVID 19 pandemic, specialized e-ITEC courses on COVID-19 management strategies were organized for health-care Professionals and Administrators from Bangladesh.
- Over 4000 young Bangladeshi professionals have benefitted from various ITEC programmes since 2007. These training programmes provide an opportunity to share best practices, which benefit both the countries.

Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme (ITEC)

- Instituted in 1964, ITEC is a flagship programme of the Government of India to provide development assistance to developing countries across the globe.
- Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme (ITEC) is a bilateral assistance programme run by the Government of India.
- More than 10 thousand training slots are offered every year to more than 160 partner countries for training courses in various areas like Accounts, Audit, Management, SME, Rural Development, Parliamentary Affairs etc.
- It is a demand-driven, response-oriented programme that focuses on addressing the needs of developing countries through innovative technological cooperation between India and the partnering nation.
- ITEC covers 158 countries across Asia, Africa, Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe, and several Pacific and Caribbean nations.

Djibouti Code of Conduct/ Jeddah Amendment (DCOC/JA)

Context

- India has joined the Djibouti Code of Conduct/ Jeddah Amendment, DCOC/JA, as Observer.

About Djibouti Code of Conduct/ Jeddah Amendment

- DCOC/JA is a grouping on maritime matters comprising 18 member states adjoining the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, the East Coast of Africa and Island countries in the Indian Ocean Region.
- India has joined Japan, Norway, the UK and the US as Observers to the DCOC/JA.

- The DCOC, established in January 2009.
- It is aimed at repression of piracy and armed robbery against ships in the Western Indian Ocean Region, the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea.
- India is looking forward to working together with DCOC/JA member states towards coordinating and contributing to enhanced maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region.

Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA)

Context

- Japanese Prime Minister and his Australian counterpart have signed a landmark defence deal in a bid to counter China's growing influence in the South China Sea and over the Pacific island nations.

About Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA)

- The Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) will allow Japanese and Australian troops to visit each other's countries and conduct training and joint operations.
- This treaty will strengthen their security ties and facilitate cooperation between defence forces.
- The two sides also agreed on the need for a framework to allow Japanese military to protect Australian forces if needed.
- The two sides expressed serious concern about the situation in the South China Sea and reconfirmed their strong opposition to any coercive or unilateral attempts to change the status quo and thereby increase tensions in the region.

ISSUES RELATED TO SECURITY

Shekatkar Committee

Context

- Union Defence Minister approved the abolition of 9,304 posts in the military engineering services. The posts were abolished based on the recommendation of Shekatkar Committee.

Implications

- This step of abolition of around 9000 posts of basic and industrial staff will lead to significant savings. As almost 70% of the defence budget is used for payment of salaries and allowances and leaves very little money for actual infrastructural development.
- If implemented over the next five years, can result in savings of up to ₹25,000 crores in defence expenditure.

Measures as recommended by the Committee and taken up for implementation include:

- Optimization of Signals Establishments to include Radio Monitoring Companies, Corps Air Support Signal Regiments, Air Formation Signal Regiments, Composite Signal Regiments and merger of Corps Operating and Engineering Signal Regiments.
- Restructuring of repair echelons in the Army to include Base Workshops, Advance Base Workshops and Static/Station Workshops in the field Army.
- Re-deployment of Ordnance echelons to include Vehicle Depots, Ordnance Depots and Central Ordnance Depots apart from streamlining inventory control mechanisms.
- Better utilization of Supply and Transportation echelons and Animal Transport Units.
- Closure of Military Farms and Army Postal Establishments in peace locations.
- Enhancement in standards for recruitment of clerical staff and drivers in the Army.
- Improving the efficiency of the National Cadet Corps.

Bru-Reang Refugee Crisis

Context

- A joint team of Nagarik Suraksha Mancha, mostly representing Bengali people displaced from erstwhile East Pakistan post partition in 1947, and the Mizo Convention have submitted a memorandum to Tripura Chief Minister protesting the proposed settlement of the displaced Brus in Kanchanpur Sub-Division of North Tripura district.

Background

- More than 30,000 Bru tribes who fled Mizoram, are residing in Tripura's refugee camps.
- The centre, in January 2020, signed a historic pact for permanent solution of Bru refugees' issue.
- The agreement was between Union Government, Governments of Tripura and Mizoram and Bru-Reang representatives to end the 23-year old Bru-Reang refugee crisis.
- Opponents do not want the Brus to settle in Kanchanpur Sub-Division of North Tripura district.
- The two organisations, however, clarified that they have no objection to the settlement of Brus in 22 other subdivisions of Tripura.

Highlights of the agreement

- Under the agreement, the centre has announced a package of Rs. 600 crore under this agreement.
- As per the agreement, the Bru tribes would be given land to reside in Tripura.
- A fixed deposit of Rs. 4 lakh will be given to each family as an amount of government aid. They will be able to withdraw this amount after two years.
- Each of the displaced families will be given 40×30 sqft residential plots.
- Apart from them, each family will be given Rs. 5,000 cash per month for two years.
- The agreement highlights that each displaced family will also be given free ration for two years and aid of Rs. 1.5 lakh to build their houses.

Brus

- Bru or Reang is a community indigenous to Northeast India, living mostly in Tripura, Mizoram and Assam. In Tripura, they are recognised as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group.
- In Mizoram, they have been targeted by groups that do not consider them indigenous to the state.
- In 1997, following ethnic clashes, nearly 37,000 Brus fled Mamit, Kolasib and Lunglei districts of Mizoram and were accommodated in relief camps in Tripura.
- Since then, 5,000 have returned to Mizoram in eight phases of repatriation, while 32,000 still live in six relief camps in North Tripura.

Tour of Duty Scheme

Context

- Indian Army is considering allowing **common citizens to join the 1.3- million-strong force** for a **three year tenure** to serve the nation under the 'Tour of Duty (ToD) or 'Three Years Short Service' scheme. Initially, 100 officers and 1,000 men are being considered for recruitment as part of test bedding of the project.

Details

- It will be a **voluntary** engagement.
- The Army's plan is to **attract the best talent into the force** and bring the **civil society closer to the force** by giving them an opportunity to experience military life.
- It is for youths who "do not want to make defence services their permanent vocation, but still want to experience the thrill and adventure of military professionalism".
- The proposal is a shift from the concept of permanent service/job in the Armed Forces, towards internship/temporary experience for three years.
- For this, it proposes that the **individual's earnings for the three-year period could be made tax-free** and he/she could be given preference in public sector jobs as well as post-graduate courses.

Integrated Battle Groups

Context

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

Structure

- They need to be light so they will be low on logistics and they will be able to mobilise within 12-48 hrs based on the location.
- An IBG operating in a desert needs to be constituted differently from an IBG operating in the mountains.
- The IBGs will also be defensive and offensive.
- While the offensive IBGs would quickly mobilise and make thrust into enemy territory for strikes, defensive IBGs would hold ground at vulnerable points or where enemy action is expected.
- The composition of the IBGs would also depend on this.

Strategic Roads

Context

- Directed the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) that works on the strategic Darbuk-Shyok-Daulat Beg Oldi (DSDBO) road be completed by October.

Road Construction

- BRO is constructing **61 strategic Indo-China Border Roads (ICBRs)** measuring 3323.57 km in length under the direction of the China Study Group (CSG).
- The Parliamentary standing committee on defence was informed that the BRO has completed **75% of the construction work** on the **61 Indo-China Border Roads (ICBRs)** of 3323.57 km length.
- The BRO has executed **30% more works in the Financial Year (FY) 2019-20** as compared to FY 2018-19.
- BRO has also inducted the latest equipment and machines to expedite works on surfacing with cementations base, use of plastics, geotextiles and various techniques for slope stabilisation.
- Trials have also been carried out successfully for indigenously produced modular bridges in collaboration with the **Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE)**.

About BRO

- Under the control of the Ministry of Defence since 2015; Earlier : Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH)
- Staffed by officers and troops drawn from the Indian Army's Corps of Engineers, Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, Army Service Corps, Military Police and army personnel on extra regimental employment.
- Currently, the organisation maintains operations in twenty-one states, one UT (Andaman and Nicobar Islands), and neighbouring countries such as Afghanistan, Bhutan, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka.
- The BRO operates and maintains over 32,885 kilometres of roads and about 12,200 meters of permanent bridges in the country.
- Constructed Delaram-Zaranj Highway in Afghanistan in 2008. The Farkhor and Ayni air bases of Tajikistan were also restored and repaired by the BRO.

Defense Acquisition Council

Objective

- Ensure expeditious procurement of the approved requirements of the Armed Forces.

Functions

- In-principle approval of 15 Year Long-Term Integrated Perspective Plan for Defence Forces.
- Categorization of the acquisition proposals relating to 'Buy', 'Buy & Make' and 'Make';
- Issues relating to Single vendor clearance;
- Decision regarding 'offset' provisions

- Decisions regarding Transfer of Technology under 'Buy & Make' category of acquisition proposals; and Field Trial evaluation.

About

- Chairman: Defense Minister
- Formed based on the Group of Ministers recommendations on 'Reforming the National Security System', in 2001, post Kargil War (1999).

UN 1267 Committee

Context

- The UN Security Council's 1267 ISIL and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee added Mehsud, 42, to the ISIL (Da'esh) and AlQaida Sanctions List.

Consequences

- Blacklisting by the Security Council entails that all states are required to freeze the funds and other financial assets or economic resources allocated to individuals and entities without delay.

Counter Terrorism committee at UN

- Adopted under resolution 1373 (2001)
- Other Resolutions related to counter terrorism: resolution 1624 (2005), on the prohibition of incitement to commit terrorist acts, and resolution 2178 (2014), on countering foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) and countering violent extremism (CVE).
- Security Council has established:
 - (i) the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999) 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) and its Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities.
- Under Resolution 1267, individual terrorist are blacklisted.

Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)

Context

- Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, took part in the 59th Raising Day function of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP).

About Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)

- It is India's primary border patrol organization with its border with Tibet.
- It is one of the seven Central Armed Police Forces of India, raised on 24 October 1962, under the CRPF Act, in the wake of the Sino-Indian War of 1962.
- Parliament of India enacted the "Indo-Tibetan Border Police Force Act, 1992" to "provide for the constitution and regulation" of the ITBP "for ensuring the security of the borders of India and for matters connected therewith"
- The ITBP is trained in the Civil Medical Camp, disaster management, and nuclear, biological and chemical disasters.
- ITBP personnel have been deployed abroad in UN peacekeeping missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Haiti, Western Sahara, Sudan, Afghanistan, and elsewhere.
- Two battalions of ITBP are deputed to National Disaster Response Force.

MILITARY EXERCISES

SLINEX-20

Context

- SLINEX-20, India and Sri Lanka begin the eighth edition of bilateral maritime exercise.

Aim

- To enhance interoperability, improve mutual understanding and exchange best practices and procedures for multi-faceted maritime operations between both navies.
- It will showcase capabilities of our indigenously constructed naval ships and aircraft.
- SLINEX series of exercises emphasises the **deep engagement between India and Sri Lanka** which has strengthened mutual cooperation in the maritime domain.
- It is in consonance with India's policy of '**Neighbourhood First**' and PM's vision of **Security and Growth for all in the Region (SAGAR)**'.
- The exercise is being conducted in a non-contact 'at-sea-only' format in the backdrop of COVID-19 pandemic.

Exercise Suraksha Kavach

Context

- Exercise Suraksha Kavach is a Joint Anti Terrorist Exercise By Army and Police.

Aim of the exercise

- To harmonize the drills and procedures of both Army and Police for activating anti-terrorist Quick Reaction Teams (QRTs) to counter any terrorist actions in Pune.

Participation

- Quick Reaction Teams, Dog Squads and Bomb Disposal Teams of Army as well as Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) and Quick Reaction Team of Maharashtra Police.
- It involved room intervention drill, search of room for any unidentified items/explosives by Dog squads and their neutralization/ diffusion by Bomb Disposal Units.
- An equipment display was also organized, showcasing important equipment required for the conduct of this exercise.
- The exercise provided an opportunity for both Army and Police to cooperate, coordinate, co-opt and streamline their drills and procedures.

Exercise Bongosagar

Context

- The second edition of the bilateral naval exercise Bongosagar between India and Bangladesh was held in Northern Bay of Bengal.

Key highlights

- Ships from both navies participated in surface warfare drills, seamanship evolutions and helicopter operations.
- Indian Navy & Bangladesh Navy ships undertook manoeuvres, surface drills, helo operations and seamanship evolutions.
- **Aim:** Developing interoperability and joint operational skills through conduct of maritime exercises and operations.
- The first edition of the Exercise Bongosagar, was held in 2019.

CORPAT exercise

- Bongosagar was followed by the third edition of India Bangladesh Coordinated Patrol (CORPAT).
- During the CORPAT exercise, both navies will undertake joint patrolling along the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL).
- In addition to ships, Maritime Patrol Aircraft from both navies and integral helicopters would also be participating in the exercise.

SITMEX

Context

- India, Singapore and Thailand concluded their trilateral naval exercise SITMEX-20. This is the second edition of SITMEX.

Details

- Hosted by:** The Republic of Singapore Navy, the exercise was held in the Andaman Sea.
- This represents a growing number of naval engagements and willingness of regional navies to look to India as a maritime partner in dealing with a rising China.
- Indian Prime Minister announced this trilateral exercise at his keynote address at the 2018 Shangri La Dialogue in Singapore.
- Goals:** To strengthen mutual interoperability and to understand and assimilate best practices between the three navies.

Indra Navy - 20

Context

- The 11th edition of exercise INDRA NAVY, a biennial bilateral maritime exercise between the Indian Navy and Russian Navy held in the Bay of Bengal.

Details

- Started in 2003.
- It symbolizes the long-term strategic relationship between the Indian and the Russian Navy.
- Aim of the exercise: —To consolidate interoperability, improving understanding and imbibing best practices between the two navies.
- The Indian Navy represented guided-missile destroyer Ranvijay, indigenous frigate Sahyadri and fleet tanker Shakti.

PASSEX

Context

- Royal Australian Navy and Indian Navy warships completed two-day Passage Exercise (PASSEX) in the east Indian Ocean region.

Aim

- To enhance interoperability, improve understanding and imbibe best practices from each other.
- It involved advanced surface and anti-air exercises including weapon firing, seamanship exercises, naval manoeuvres and Cross Deck Flying Operations.

About Passage Exercise (PASSEX)

- PASSEX are regularly conducted by the Indian Navy with units of friendly foreign navies.
- Indian Naval ships had conducted a Passage Exercise (PASSEX) with the U.S. and Russia navies.

JIMEX 2020

- The India-Japan maritime bilateral exercise (JIMEX) is conducted biennially.
- Its last edition was conducted off the coast of Visakhapatnam in October 2018.
- JIMEX-20 showcases a high degree of interoperability and joint operational skills across the spectrum of maritime operations.
- Indian warships Chennai, Teg, Tarkash and fleet tanker Deepak took part in JIMEX-20.
- Significance: JIMEX-20 enhanced the cooperation and confidence between the two navies and fortify the long-standing bond of friendship between the two countries.

Indo - US Passex (Passage Exercise)

- Exercise between the US Navy and Indian Navy.
- Will happen in Malacca Strait.
- Participation: USS Nimitz (CVN 68), US Navy's nuclear-powered aircraft carrier and world's largest warship armed with F/A18F Super Hornets as well as F/A-18E Super Hornets and four Indian ships: INS Shivalik, INS Sahyadri, INS Kamorta and INS Rana.

Malabar Exercise

Context

- Australia in Malabar Exercise

About Malabar Exercise

- It is an Annual trilateral naval exercise between India, USA and Japan.
- It was Initiated in 1992 between India and USA.
- Later, Inducted Japan in 2015.

Operation Desert Chase

Context

- Rajasthan Police arrested two civil defence employees in Jaipur based on Military Intelligence (MI) inputs. The arrested employees had been passing on sensitive information to Pakistan's spy agency ISI.

About the Operation

- The operation was jointly carried out by the Army, UP ATS, and Rajasthan Police, and was named Operation Desert Chase.
- It began in August 2019, when the MI learnt about an espionage agent near Sri Ganganagar who was passing military information to his handlers in Pakistan.
- They were arrested under the Official Secrets Act, 1923.

