

2019



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CURRENT AFFAIRS

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

18th November- 23rd November



BusinessLine



1. ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus

Why in News?

The 6th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) was held in Bangkok on 20th November 2019.

About ADMM-Plus

- The ADMM-Plus is a platform for ASEAN (The Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and its eight Dialogue Partners to strengthen security and defence cooperation for peace, stability, and development in the region.
- The eight Dialogue Partners are:
 - Australia
 - China
 - India
 - Japan
 - New Zealand
 - Republic of Korea
 - Russian Federation
 - United State
- It aims to promote mutual trust and confidence between defence establishments through greater dialogue and transparency.
- It is the only official framework of Defence Minister's meetings in Asia - Pacific region.
- It has five areas of cooperation:
 - Maritime Security
 - Counter-Terrorism
 - Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief
 - Peacekeeping Operations
 - Military Medicine

2. US Policy On Israeli Settlements In The West Bank

Why in News

- The United States recently declared that the Israeli settlements on the West Bank are not illegal.
- This is in line with the current President's Israel policy which has favoured Israel.
 - In 2017, U.S. recognised Jerusalem, a disputed city as Israel's capital - breaking an international consensus that the status of Jerusalem should be settled as part of a peace agreement.
 - Earlier this year in 2019, US also recognised the Golan Heights, which Israel seized from Syria in the 1967 war and has occupied ever since, as part of Israel.
- However, this is contrary to the US stand since 1978 that viewed settlements in the Israeli-occupied West Bank as inconsistent with international law.

West Bank

- The West Bank - a landlocked territory in West Asia.

- It is sandwiched between Israel and Jordan.
- Israel took control of West Bank back during the Six Day War of 1967, and has occupied it ever since.
- Post-1967, Israel started to build settlements for its Jewish community in the newly-occupied Palestinian territories, including in the West Bank.

Impact

- The issue of Jewish settlements in occupied territory is one of the most contentious of the conflict between Israel and Palestine.
- It is a main reason why the peace process has run aground as it erodes the viability of a two-state solution.
- US recognition of the settlements in West Bank will give further legitimacy and boost to the right of Israelis to annex West Bank and can block the establishment of a viable Palestinian state.

World Opinion

- The United Nations General Assembly, the UN Security Council, and the International Court of Justice believes that the Israeli settlements on the West Bank are illegal and violative of the Fourth Geneva Convention.
 - According to the Fourth Geneva convention, an occupying power “shall not transfer parts of its civilian population into the territory it occupies”.
- Most of the world’s nations look West Bank as occupied territory.
- The Arab world considers the settlements occupation of land that belongs in an independent Palestinian state.
- The UN Security Council has asked Israel to stall the settlement activities, but Israel has hardly paid any attention to international opinion.
- Under the Oslo Accords of the 1990s, both Israel and the Palestinians agreed that the status of settlements would be decided by negotiations. The new policy of US violates the negotiation spirit.

3. Bougainville

Why in News?

Approximately 30 years after a decade-long brutal civil war, Bougainville, a tiny island in the Pacific, will vote for referendum to gain independence from Papua New Guinea.

- If Bougainville’s people vote for its independence in the referendum, the world will get its newest and possibly smallest nation.

Background

- Bougainville is currently a province of Papua New Guinea - one of the most populous Pacific island states.

- It forms the part of the Solomon Islands archipelago.
- The current autonomy arrangements were implemented following the constitutional enactment of the Bougainville Peace Agreement in 2001.
 - The Peace Agreement brought autonomy and an end to the violent conflict between the people of Bougainville and the government of Papua New Guinea.

Reasons behind Bougainville Referendum

- There has been dissatisfaction among Bougainvilleans over implementation of the arrangements for Bougainville autonomy, particularly in regard to the financial arrangements.
 - The Autonomy Bougainville Government (ABG) is legally entitled to financial grants, but the Papua New Guinea National Government has not provided the same in accordance with the ABG's calculations and expectations.
- The desire for independence is rooted in the historic plunder of the resource-rich island that has large deposits of copper.
 - The Panguna mine (also known as the Bougainville Copper Mine) holds some of the world's largest reserves of copper.
 - It is the world's largest open-cut copper mine.
 - The mine created job opportunities for people from Papua New Guinea and Australia seeking their own fortunes
 - Bougainville locals were denied job opportunities leading to the unequal distribution of wealth.
 - Mining activities over the years also caused environmental degradation of Bougainville's lands and water.

4. Amnesty International

Why in News?

According to human rights watchdog, Amnesty International, many lives were lost in Iran during the ongoing unrest over a fuel price hike.

- The U.S. economic sanctions on Iran and the rise in gasoline prices in the country have resulted in a collapse of Iranian currency (Rial).

About Amnesty International

- Amnesty International (commonly known as Amnesty or AI) is a non-governmental organisation founded in London in 1961.
- It is focussed on human rights and campaigns for compliance with international laws and standards.
- Its mission is to campaign for "*a world in which every person enjoys all of the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments.*"

- The organisation was awarded the 1977 Nobel Peace Prize for its "defence of human dignity against torture" and the United Nations Prize in the Field of Human Rights in 1978.

5. Kimberley Process

Why in News?

The Plenary meeting of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) was hosted by India from 18th to 22nd November, 2019 in New Delhi.

- India is one of the founder members of KPCS and is the Chair of the Kimberley Process for the year 2019.
- India had earlier chaired KPCS in the year 2008.
- India will hand over the KP Chair to the Russian Federation.

About Kimberley Process

- The Kimberley Process is a tripartite mechanism involving Government, International Diamond Industry and Civil Society mandated by UN to stem the flow of Conflict Diamonds.
 - *“Conflict Diamonds”, also known as ‘blood’ diamonds, are rough diamonds used by rebel movements or their allies to finance conflict aimed at undermining legitimate governments.*
- The KPCS came into effect from 1st January, 2003 and evolved into an effective mechanism for stopping the trade in conflict diamonds.
- At present, KPCS has 55 members representing 82 countries including EU with 28 members.
- Since 2003, India has been actively participating in the KPCS process.
- It is chaired, on a rotating basis, by participating countries.
- The KPCS works on principle of consensus and all the decisions are taken unanimously by all members.
- The KP is not, strictly speaking, an international organisation: **it has no permanent offices or permanent staff.**
 - It relies on the contributions – under the principle of ‘burden-sharing’ - of participants, supported by industry and civil society observers.
- It is a **binding agreement** that imposes extensive requirements through the national legislations of its participants.

How KPCS Works

- As per the Scheme, each shipment of rough diamonds being exported and imported by crossing an international border be transported in a tamper proof container and accompanied by a validated Kimberley Process Certificate.
- The shipment can only be exported to a co-participant country in the KPCS.

- No uncertified shipments of rough diamonds are permitted to enter a participant country.
- Department of Commerce is the nodal Department and Gem & Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC) is designated as the KPCS Importing and Exporting Authority in India.
 - GJEPC is responsible for issuing KP Certificates and is also the custodian of KP Certificates received in the country.

Importance for India

- The importance of KPCS is immense to India as **more than one million people are directly employed by the diamond industry.**
 - The industry also plays a pivotal role in sustaining livelihoods of these people.
- Currently, **India exports around USD 24 billion cut and polished diamonds.**
- It is expected that India will reach an export target of USD 1 trillion in coming years and the gem and jewellery sector particularly cut and polished diamonds will contribute significantly to achieve this target.
- Moreover, **India has been actively involved in the development of KP** as an important protocol in trade of diamonds which has ensured that 99.8% of the diamonds in the world are conflict free.

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