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News Analysis (20 Feb, 2021)

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Transatlantic Alliance

Why in News

The **USA President Joe Biden** in his first address to the annual **Munich Security Conference** declared that the '**transatlantic alliance is back**' and **stressed the need to defend democracy around the world.**

- The USA President **intended to improve the strained relationship between the USA and other European allies.**
- The **Munich Security Conference** is an annual conference on international **security policy** that has taken place in Munich, Bavaria (Germany) since 1963.

Key Points

- **About:**

- The Transatlantic Alliance has been the **cornerstone of the post-World War II world order.**

It is a real-world expression of West - of a sense that **both sides of Atlantic are in it together.**

- It is the foundation on which the collective security and shared prosperity of the USA and Europe are built.

However, this historic, long-established friendship between the world's two largest economies has become strained in recent years.

- **Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T-TIP):**

- T-TIP is an ambitious, comprehensive, and high-standard **trade and investment agreement being negotiated between the United States and the European Union (EU).**

The TTIP negotiations were launched in 2013 and ended without conclusion at the end of 2016.

- T-TIP will be a cutting edge agreement aimed at providing greater **compatibility and transparency** in trade and investment regulation, while maintaining high levels of health, safety, and environmental protection.

- **Reason for Strained Relations:**

- The Donald Trump (former) administration flaunted its foreign policy through an **“America First”** lens.
- The former American president **not only attacked the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)** - the fundamental structure of transatlantic alliance but also **withdrew from virtually all multinational agreements** recently **championed by the European Union (EU)**, such as the **Iran nuclear deal** and the **Paris climate agreement**.
- The USA and the EU appear to be **at odds with each other currently regarding their China interests**, particularly on the economic and trade front.

- **Significance of the Latest Declaration:**
 - A boost to **multilateralism**.
 - Concerned with maintaining its global strategic primacy, the **USA was once equivocal about European defence** and strategic autonomy. But as **power has shifted eastward**, subsequent **USA governments have been keen to devote as much attention**, money, and military muscle as possible **to the Indo-Pacific**.
 - The Alliance **can lead to development of an EU-USA carbon border adjustment mechanism**, and can **help in averting most catastrophic impacts of climate change**.
 - On **Iran**, Europeans can anticipate **renewed negotiations on a revamped nuclear deal** aimed at de-escalating tensions across the region.
 - Germany's Merkel spoke about the **need of a transatlantic policy towards Russia**.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization

- **Establishment:** North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was **established by the North Atlantic Treaty (also called the Washington Treaty)** of 4th April, 1949, by the United States, Canada, and several Western European nations to provide collective security against the Soviet Union.
 - NATO provides a **unique transatlantic link** for political and security cooperation.
- **Headquarters:** Brussels, Belgium.
- **Functioning:**
 - NATO is a **political and military alliance** whose primary goals are the collective defence of its members and the maintenance of a democratic peace in the North Atlantic area.
 - NATO has an **integrated military command structure** but very few forces or assets are exclusively its own.
 - Most forces remain under full national command and control until member countries agree to undertake NATO-related tasks.
 - All 30 allies have an equal say, the Alliance's decisions must be unanimous and consensual, and its members must respect the basic values that underpin the Alliance, namely democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law.
- **Members:** As of 2020, there are **30 member states**, with **North Macedonia (2020) becoming the latest member** to join the Alliance.
 - Member Countries: Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom, Montenegro, North Macedonia and the United States.

Quad Meeting

Why in News

Recently, **India joined Australia, Japan and the United States** for a ministerial meeting under the **Quadrilateral grouping** (Quad) and discussed issues across Indo-Pacific and the **military takeover in Myanmar**.

Key Points

- **Meeting Highlights:**
 - Discussed contemporary challenges, especially the **impact of Covid-19** and agreed to enhance access to affordable vaccines, medicines and medical equipment.
 - Discussed countering **disinformation, counter-terrorism, maritime security**, and the “priority of **strengthening democratic resilience** in the broader region”.
 - Emphasised their commitment to **upholding a rules-based international order**, underpinned by **respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty**, rule of law, transparency, **freedom of navigation in the international seas** and peaceful resolution of disputes.
 - Reiterated their “common vision for a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region, with clear support for **ASEAN** cohesion and centrality”, and noted that the **Indo-Pacific concept** had “gathered growing international support, including in Europe”.
 - Discussed **climate change** and cooperation in **humanitarian assistance and disaster relief and supply chain resilience**.
 - Agreed on **holding ministerial meetings of the Quad at least once a year** and meetings at senior and working levels on a regular basis to bolster cooperation on advancing a free and open Indo-Pacific.

- **Significance:**

- The meeting, held in the backdrop of the ongoing **withdrawal of Chinese forces from positions** along the Line of Actual Control, underlines that India's interest in the Quad is not tactical but profoundly strategic.

For India, the Quad is also about **addressing the growing power imbalance with China** that has manifold consequences for India's security and prosperity as well its regional and international standing.

- It signalled the **new USA administration's commitment to the Quad** as a key formation in the Indo-Pacific.

The momentum behind the Quad picked up in 2020 in the wake of the **Covid-19 crisis, China's growing assertiveness**, and deterioration of **China's bilateral relations with all Quad partners**.

- **Chinese** officials have likened the **Quad to a "mini NATO"** and said its activities are aimed at **targeting third parties**, a charge rejected by the four members of the group.

NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) is a **political and military alliance** whose primary goals are the collective defence of its members and the maintenance of a democratic peace in the North Atlantic area.

Quad

- Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) is **an informal strategic dialogue between India, USA, Japan and Australia** with a shared objective to ensure and support a "free, open and prosperous" Indo-Pacific region.
- The **idea of Quad was first mooted by former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2007**. However, the idea couldn't move ahead with Australia pulling out of it, apparently due to Chinese pressure.
- In **December 2012**, Shinzo Abe again floated the concept of **Asia's "Democratic Security Diamond"** involving Australia, India, Japan and the USA to safeguard the maritime commons from the Indian Ocean to the western Pacific.
- In **November 2017**, India, the USA, Australia and Japan **gave shape to the long-pending "Quad" Coalition** to develop a new strategy to **keep the critical sea routes in the Indo-Pacific free of any influence (especially China)**.
- In **2020, all four Quad Countries** - Japan, India, Australia and the USA **took part in the Malabar exercise**.

Malabar exercise is **an annual trilateral naval exercise** between the navies of **India, Japan, and the USA** which is held alternately in the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

Source:TH

Roads on Arunachal Border

Why in News

The Union government approved **more than Rs 1,100 crore for critical infrastructure development in Arunachal Pradesh.**

- The **Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS)** also cleared a proposal for construction of 32 roads under phase II of the **Indo-China Border Roads (ICBR) scheme.**
- **Earlier**, the government **followed a restrictive policy** and areas along the China border were not developed much.

Key Points

- **Critical Infrastructure Development in Arunachal Pradesh:**
 - Most projects have been earmarked in areas along the China border in the north and northeast part of Arunachal.
 - It includes motorable roads, mule tracks and facilities for porters. It envisages construction of roads and 18 foot-tracks measuring 598 km.
This will enhance the capabilities of **Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)**, which maintains vigil along the border. These tracks can be used by the Army to supplement the main border roads for transportation of men and material.
- **Indo-China Border Roads Scheme:**
 - The first phase was **initiated in 2005**, when it was decided that the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) would construct 27 priority roads totalling 608 km along China areas at an estimated cost of Rs. 912 crore and other 14 roads will be built by agencies such as the **Border Roads Organisation (BRO).**
Some of the important projects include the **Darbuk-Shayok-Daulat Beg Oldie (DS-DBO) road** and **Rohtang tunnel** in the Ladakh; and in the northeast, the **Sela Tunnel** and a road and rail tunnel under the Brahmaputra river with Indian Railways.
 - Under phase II of the Indo-China Border Roads (ICBR) scheme, the roads, measuring 638.12 km and amounting to Rs. 12,434.90 crore, are to come up in **Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh.**

- **Importance of Roads near Arunachal Border:**

- Arunachal **shares its longest border with China**, followed by Myanmar and Bhutan.

Further, **China claims the entire Arunachal Pradesh** as South Tibet.

- **Lack of proper communication and other basic facilities** in the border areas not only affects the local population but also is a major cause of concern from the country's security point of view.
- **Insurgency** in the north-east, **smuggling** and **illegal migration** are factors that demand more restricted border security.
- **Encroachment:** China has made rapid strides in border areas of Arunachal by **setting up new villages** and a labyrinth of road network, including highways.

- **Other Related Steps:**

- India will spend 10% funds of the **Border Area Development Programme (BADP)** only to improve the infrastructure along the China border.
- The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) has constructed the **Daporijo bridge** over Subansiri river in Arunachal Pradesh.

It links roads leading upto the Line of Actual Control (LAC) between India and China.

- The Defence Minister has virtually laid the foundation of **a tunnel at Nechiphu** in West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh.
- The state government of Arunachal Pradesh has advocated **selection of 10 census towns along the India-China border** as pilot projects for infrastructure development in order to stop people living along its international borders, specifically with China, from migrating to faraway urban centres in the State.
- The **Sisseri River Bridge** is located at lower Dibang Valley in Arunachal Pradesh, connecting Dibang Valley and Siang.
- In 2019, the Indian Air Force inaugurated resurfaced runway at India's **easternmost Village-Vijaynagar (Changlang district)** in Arunachal Pradesh.
- In 2019, the Indian Army conducted **exercise 'HimVijay'** in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam with its newly created Integrated Battle Groups (IBG).
- **Bogibeel bridge**, which is India's longest road-rail bridge connecting Dibrugarh in Assam to Pasighat in Arunachal Pradesh was inaugurated in 2018.

Source:TH

Statehood Day of Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram

Why in News

The Prime Minister of India extended his wishes to the people of **Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram** on their **35th Statehood Day**.

- **Mizoram** became the 23rd state of India on the same day, with the **53rd Amendment of the Indian Constitution**, 1986.
- Similarly, through the **55th amendment to the Indian Constitution** in 1986, **Arunachal Pradesh** became the 24th state of the Indian Union on 20th February, 1987.



Mizoram

- **Historical background:** The Mizo hills area became the Lushai Hills district within Assam at the time of independence. Further, in 1954 it was renamed the Mizo Hills District of Assam.
 - Mizoram was granted the **status of a Union Territory in 1972** after signing an accord with the moderates of the Mizo National Front (MNF).
 - The Union Territory of Mizoram was conferred the status of a full state in 1986 after signing of a memorandum of settlement (**Mizoram Peace Accord**) between the Central government and the MNF.
- **Geographical Location:**
 - **International Border:** Myanmar and Bangladesh
 - **State Border:** Tripura (northwest), Assam (north) and Manipur (northeast).
- **Demography:** Mizoram is the second least populous state of the country holding a population of 400,309.
 - The Sex Ratio is 975 female per 1000 male (National: 943)
 - The Literacy rate of the state is 91.58 % (National: 74.04%)
- **Biodiversity:** According to **India State of Forest Report (ISFR), 2019** Mizoram has the maximum forest cover as a percentage of their own geographical area at (85.4%).
 - **State Animal:** Saza (serow)
 - **State Bird:** Vavu (Hume Bartailed Pheasant).
- **Protected Areas:**
 - **Dampa Tiger Reserve**
 - Murlen National Park
 - Phawngpui National Park
 - Ngengpui Wildlife Sanctuary
 - Tawi Wildlife Sanctuary
- **Tribals:** It has the highest concentration (percentage) of tribal population among all states of India.
 - Mizos consist of 5 major and 11 minor tribes known as Awzia. The 5 major tribes include: Lushei, Ralte, Hmar, Paihte and Pawi.
 - The Mizos are a close- knit society with no class distinction and discrimination on grounds of sex, status or religion.
 - Mizos are agriculturists, practise “**Jhum Cultivation**” or slash- and- burn system of cultivation.

- **Festivals and Dance:** The Mizos have two main festivals- Mim Kut and Chapchar Kut.
 - **Chapchar Kut:** It is a Spring Festival, most popular and celebrated after completion of the task of jungle clearing for “jhum” operations.
 - **Mim Kut:** It is a Maize festival that is celebrated during the months of August and September, after the harvest of maize.
 - The most colourful and distinctive **dance of the Mizo is called Cheraw**. Long bamboo staves are used for this dance, therefore many people call it ‘**Bamboo Dance**’.

Arunachal Pradesh

- **Historical Background:** During the British Colonial Rule, until 1972, the state was named as the **North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA)**.
On 20th January, 1972, it became a Union Territory and named Arunachal Pradesh.
- **Geographical location:** The state was formed out of Assam in the year 1987.
 - In the **west, Arunachal Pradesh is bordered by Bhutan** and in the **north** falls the **Tibetan region of China**.
 - In the **Southeastern** region falls **Nagaland** and **Myanmar** and to the **southwestern** region falls **Assam**.
- **Demography:** The capital of Arunachal Pradesh is Itanagar.
 - The total literacy rate of the state (as per Census 2011) is 65.38% with male literacy rate being 72.55% and for females, it is 57.70%.
 - The Sex Ratio of the states is 938 female per 1000 male (National: 943)
 - The state is home to 26 major tribes, there are more than 100 sub-tribes, many of them are still unexplored. About 65% of the population of the state is tribals.
- **Occupation:** Mostly the population of the state depends on Agriculture, mainly **Jhum cultivation** (slash and burn cultivation).
 - Other cultivation of cash crops is also done like potatoes.
 - Horticulture crops such as pineapple, apple, oranges, etc are also done.
- **Biodiversity:**
 - **State Animal:** Mithun (also known as Gayal)
 - **State Bird:** Hornbill
 - It is also home to the **Dihang Dibang Biosphere Reserve**.
- **Protected Areas:**
 - **Namdapha National Park**
 - Mouling National Park
 - Sessa Orchid Sanctuary
 - Dibang Wildlife Sanctuary
 - **Pakke Tiger Reserve**

- **Tribals of Arunachal:** The significant tribal groups include **Monpas, Nyishis, Apatanis, Noctes and Sherdukpens.**
 - **Monpas:** They are believed to be the only nomadic tribe of northeast, inhabit the West Kameng and Tawang districts, are essentially Buddhists who follow the Mahayana sect.
 - **Apatanis:** They practice pre-Aryan beliefs, which is evident from their worship of trees, rocks and plants amongst other things. They mainly practise bamboo cultivation.
 - **Noctes:** Found in the Tirap district, they follow Theravada Buddhism and Animism.
 - **Sherdukpens:** A small tribal group, they are one of the most progressive tribes that can be found in Arunachal Pradesh practising agriculture, fishing and rearing of livestock. Although they have adopted Buddhism, most of their practices still remain pre-Buddhist and more Animistic.
 - **Nyishis:** They are the most populous tribe of Arunachal Pradesh and are mainly involved in shifting cultivation and produce rice, millet, cucumber, etc.

Source: TH

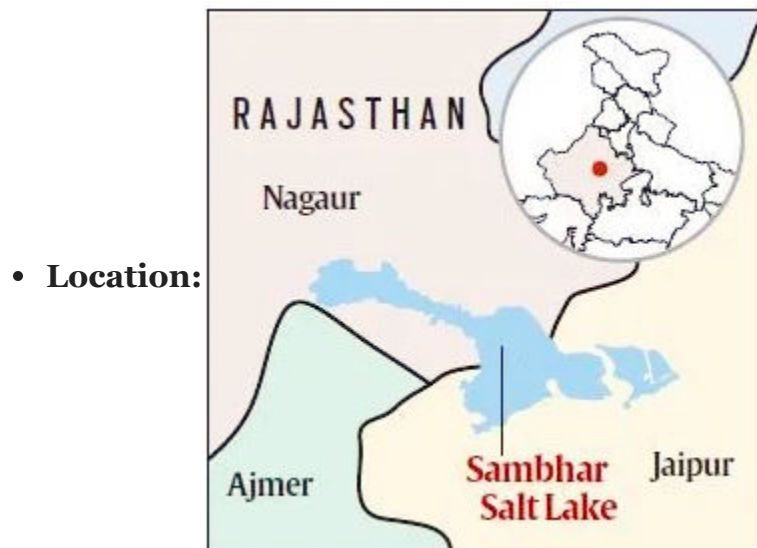
Sambhar Lake: Rajasthan

Why in News

The State Government of **Rajasthan** will identify new tourist points at **Sambhar Salt Lake**.

The Lake forms **part of the desert circuit** in the Centre's **Swadesh Darshan Scheme**. The **Scheme** was launched by the **Ministry of Tourism** in 2014 -15 for integrated development of theme based tourist circuits in the country.

Key Points



Situated about 80 km southwest of **Jaipur**, in east-central **Rajasthan**.

• **Features:**

- **Salt Lake:** It is the **largest inland salt lake in India**. It represents the **depression of the Aravalli Range**.

The lake's **salt supply was worked by the Mughal dynasty (1526–1857)** and it was **later owned jointly by the Jaipur and Jodhpur princely states**.

- **Ramsar Site:** It is a **wetland of ‘international importance’** under the **Ramsar Convention**, declared in **1990**.
- **Size and Depth:**
 - The **area occupied** by this lake **differs from season to season**, so roughly it is between 190 and 230 sq km.
 - Also, being **an extensive saline wetland**, the **depth** of the lake also **fluctuates from season to season**. During peak summers (dry time), the depth measures as low as 60 cm but during the monsoons, it goes up to 3 m.
- **Rivers:** It receives water from **six rivers**, namely Samaod, Khari, Mantha, Khandela, Medtha, and Roopangarh.
- **Vegetation:** The vegetation present in the catchment area is **mostly xerophytic type**.

Xerophyte is **a plant adapted for growth under dry conditions**.
- **Fauna:** **Flamingoes, pelicans and the waterfowls** are commonly sighted at the Sambhar Lake.
 - In 2019, almost **22,000 migratory birds died** at the Lake due to **avian botulism**, a neuromuscular illness.
 - Before 2020's winter season, the Rajasthan government **decided to build temporary shelters for migratory birds** near the Lake.
- **Production of Salt:** It is known for the **production of brine/salt** and also houses one of the largest salt manufacturing units in the country.
- **Other Nearby Places:** Shakambari Devi temple, Sambhar Wildlife Sanctuary.

- **Rajasthan Government's Latest Plan:**

- New tourist points for **witnessing the flora and fauna and having a glimpse of salt harvesting** will be identified at Lake.
- A “**salt train**”, which transported salt from the pans to a nearby refinery, will also be restarted.
- New destinations around the lake, including **salt museum, caravan park, bicycle track and gardens**, will be finalised.
- The **illegal salt production in the lake will be stopped** through action against unauthorised borewells and pipelines laid in the region, while **encroachments on the land will be removed** with the help of police.

Source: TH

NAVDEX 21 and IDEX 21: UAE

Why in News

Indian Naval Ship (INS) Pralaya arrived at Abu Dhabi, UAE to participate in the **NAVDEX 21 (Naval Defence Exhibition)** and **IDEX 21 (International Defence Exhibition)**, scheduled from 20 to 25 February 2021.

INS Mysore (an indigenously built guided missile destroyer deployed in the Persian Gulf) is also participating in the exhibition.

Key Points

- **About NAVDEX 21 and IDEX 21:**

- **IDEX and NAVDEX, and the International Defence Conference are organised by the Abu Dhabi National Exhibitions Company (ADNEC),** in cooperation with the Ministry of Defense and the General Command of the UAE Armed Forces.
- IDEX/NAVDEX **takes place biennially.** The exhibitions **showcase the latest technologies and innovation** in the global defence sector, support the growth of UAE's defence industry, and forge new relationships between major international companies.
- **IDEX** is the only international defence exhibition and conference in the **MENA region** demonstrating the latest technology across land, sea and air sectors of defence.

MENA Region: MENA is an acronym for the **Middle East and North Africa region** and includes **approximately 19 countries.**

- The MENA region accounts for approximately 6% of the world's population, 60% of the world's oil reserves, and 45% of the world's natural gas reserves.
- Countries are Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

- **INS Pralaya:**

- INS Pralaya, a ship of the indigenously built **Prabal Class Missile Vessels**, was commissioned in the Indian Navy in 2002.
- The ship, built indigenously at Goa Shipyard Limited, bears testimony to capabilities of the Indian shipbuilding industry and is a versatile platform capable of performing a wide variety of surface warfare missions.

- **India and UAE Defence Relations:**

- Defence relations between **India and UAE** have been steadily growing since the upgradation of bilateral relations to a '**Comprehensive Strategic Partnership**' in 2017.

Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the **Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi** (capital of UAE), was a **Chief Guest at India's Republic Day celebrations** in 2017.
- Towards enhancing interactions between the two navies, the inaugural edition of **Indian & UAE Navy bilateral exercise GULF STAR-1** was conducted in March 2018. The **next edition** of the exercise is likely to be conducted in **2021.**

India's Defence Exhibitions

- **DefExpo:** The **11th edition of DefExpo** was held for the first time in Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh) in 2020.

It's a flagship biennial event of the Ministry of Defence.

- **Aero India:** The **13th edition of the Aero India** show was held at Bengaluru's Yelahanka Air Force Station (Karnataka).
 - Aero India is a biennial international military and civil airshow.
 - It is a premier event that draws international and Indian military and civil aircraft makers, their support industries, military brass and government dignitaries, and business visitors.

Source: PIB

Nurturing Neighbourhoods Challenge: Smart Cities Mission

Why in News

The **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs** has announced the names of the **25 cities selected** for the **Nurturing Neighbourhoods Challenge** under the **Smart Cities Mission**.

Key Points

- **About the Challenge:**
 - **Launch:** November 2020.
 - **Features:**
 - It is a **3-year initiative that aims to** work with Indian cities and their partners to pilot and scale ways to improve public space, mobility, neighborhood planning, access to early childhood services and amenities, and data management across city agencies.
 - It aims to propagate **an early childhood centric approach** among Indian cities.
 - **Partner Organisations:**
Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Bernard van Leer Foundation (BvLF) and World Resources Institute (WRI) India.
 - **Support to Selected Cities:**
Selected cities based on their proposal, readiness, and commitment - **will receive technical support and capacity-building** to develop, pilot and scale solutions that enhance the quality of life of young children.

- **Significance:**
 - **Sensitivity Towards Children:** Urban design and city planning play a crucial role in **shaping the early years (0- 5 years) of a child's life** – the period most vital for a child's long-term health and development.
 - **In Line with the ITCN Framework of the Smart Cities Mission:** ITCN refers to the **Infant, Toddler, Caregiver-Friendly Neighbourhoods** framework. It has the following **five objectives** pertaining to neighbourhoods - Safe, Playful, Accessible, Inclusive and Green.
 - **Promotes Inclusive Development:** It promotes inclusive development as it aims to enhance opportunities in urban areas for all vulnerable citizens, especially young children.

Smart City Mission

- **About:** It is an innovative initiative under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, **to drive economic growth and improve the quality of life of people** by enabling local development and harnessing technology as a means to create smart outcomes for citizens.
- **Objective:** To promote cities that provide core infrastructure and give a decent quality of life to its citizens, a clean and sustainable environment and application of Smart Solutions.
- **Focus:** On sustainable and inclusive development and to look at compact areas, create a replicable model which will act like a lighthouse to other aspiring cities.
- **Strategy:**
 - Pan-city initiative in which at least one Smart Solution is applied city-wide.
 - Develop areas step-by-step with the help of following three models:
 - Retrofitting.
 - Redevelopment.
 - Greenfield.
- **Coverage and Duration:** The Mission covered 100 cities for the duration of five years starting from the financial year (FY) 2015-16 to 2019-20.
- **Financing:** It is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme**.

Source:PIB

Autism Spectrum Disorder

Why in News

Recently, a 12-year-old Maharashtra girl with **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)** successfully swam across the Arabian Sea from Bandra-Worli Sea Link to Gateway of India in Mumbai.

Key Points

- **About:**

- ASD refers to a range of conditions characterised by some degree of **impaired social behaviour, communication and language**, and a narrow range of interests and activities that are both unique to the individual and carried out repetitively.
- It is a complex brain development disability which makes itself visible during the first 3 years of a person's life.
- It is **not mental retardation** as people with autism may show excellent skills in spheres like art, music, writing etc. The level of intellectual functioning in individuals with ASDs is **extremely variable**, extending from profound impairment to superior levels.

- **Causes:**

There are probably many factors that make a child more likely to have an ASD, including **environmental and genetic factors**.

- **Signs and Symptoms:**

Difficulty with social communication and interaction, restricted interests, and repetitive behaviors.

- **Cure:**

Although autism is **not curable**, its symptoms can be addressed with appropriate interventions like evidence-based psychosocial interventions, behavioural treatment and skills training programmes for parents and other caregivers, health promotion, care, rehabilitation services, etc.

- **Global & National Initiatives to Raise Awareness on ASD:**

- The **Right of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016** increased the types of disabilities **from 7 to 21**. It also added **autism spectrum disorder** among others, which were largely ignored in earlier Act.
- In 2014, the **World Health Organisation (WHO)** adopted a resolution entitled "Comprehensive and coordinated efforts for the management of autism spectrum disorders (ASD)," which was supported by more than 60 countries.
- In 2008, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously declared 2nd April as **World Autism Awareness Day**.

Source: PIB

Epilepsy

Why in News

Recently, a major drugmaker has developed the **Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient (API)** and the finished dosage formulation of Brivanext, a drug for epilepsy.

Key Points

- **Epilepsy:**
 - Epilepsy is a central nervous system (neurological) disorder in which brain activity becomes abnormal, causing seizures or periods of unusual behavior, sensations, and sometimes loss of awareness.
 - Epilepsy is the fourth most common neurological disorder and affects people of all ages.
 - Anyone can develop epilepsy, but it's more common in young children and older adults. It occurs slightly more in males than in females.
- **Symptoms:**
 - Alterations to sense of taste, smell, sight, hearing, or touch, dizziness, tingling and twitching of limbs, Staring blankly, unresponsiveness, performing repetitive movements.
 - It may or may not involve loss of awareness or consciousness.
- **Cure:**

There's **no cure for epilepsy**, but the disorder can be managed with medications and other strategies.
- **Initiative to Raise Awareness:** In 2019, a report **Epilepsy, a public health imperative** was released by the **World Health Organization**.

It is the first global report on epilepsy summarizing the available evidence on the burden of epilepsy and the public health response required at global, regional and national levels.

Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs)

- APIs, also called bulk drugs, are significant **ingredients in the manufacture** of drugs. The Hubei province of China is the hub of the API manufacturing industry.
- India is heavily import-dependent for APIs from China. India's API imports stand at around \$3.5 billion per year, and around 70%, or \$2.5 billion, come from China.

Source: TH

Helina and Dhruvastra: Anti-tank Guided Missile

Why in News

Recently, India has successfully test-fired indigenously-developed **anti-tank guided missile systems 'Helina' and 'Dhruvastra'** in the Pokhran range, Thar desert (Rajasthan).

Key Points

- **About:**
 - The **Helina (the Army version)** and **Dhruvastra (Indian Airforce version)** are **helicopter-launched versions** of third-generation anti-tank guided missiles (**the Nag missile system**).
 - The missile system has all-weather day-and-night capability and can defeat battle tanks with conventional armor and explosive reactive armor.
- **Indigenous:**

The missile systems have been designed and developed indigenously by the **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)**.
- **Operations:**

The 'Helina' and 'Dhruvastra' can engage targets both in direct hit mode as well as **top attack mode**.

 - **Top Attack Mode:** The missile is required to climb sharply after launch and travel at a certain altitude, then plunge on top of the target.
 - **Direct Attack Mode:** The missile travels at a lower altitude, directly striking the target.

Nag Missile

- Nag is a third-generation, fire-and-forget, anti-tank guided missile developed by DRDO to support both mechanized infantry and airborne forces of the Indian Army.
- It is an all-weather condition with day and night capabilities and with a minimum range of 500m and a maximum range of 4 km.
- Nag can be launched from land and air-based platforms. The land version is currently available for integration on the Nag missile carrier (NAMICA).
- DRDO has developed nag Missiles under the **Integrated Guided Missile Development Program**.

IGMDP (Integrated Guided Missile Development Program)

- It was conceived by Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam to enable India to attain self-sufficiency in the field of missile technology. It was approved by the Government of India in 1983 and completed in March 2012.
- The **five missiles (P-A-T-N-A)** developed under this program are:
 - **Prithvi:** Short-range surface to surface ballistic missile.
 - **Agni:** Ballistic missiles with different ranges, i.e., Agni (I, II, III, IV, V).
 - **Trishul:** Short-range low-level surface to air missile.
 - **Nag:** 3rd generation anti-tank missile.
 - **Akash:** Medium range surface to air missile.

Source: PIB

Nathu La, Sikkim

Why in News



Recently, the Indian Army rescued several tourists caught in a snowstorm at **Nathu La** on the **India-China border in Sikkim**.

Key Points

- Nathu La, one of the **highest motorable roads** in the world, is a mountain pass in the Himalayan peaks situated on the Indo-Tibetan border 14450 ft. above sea level.
- Nathu means '**listening ears**', and La means 'pass'.
- It is an open trading border post between India and China.
- The other passes located in the state of Sikkim are **Jelep La Pass**, **Donkia Pass**, **Chiwabhanjang Pass**.

Pass	Link/Features
Banihal Pass	Kashmir Valley with the outer Himalaya and the plains to the south.
Bara-Lacha-La Pass	Lahaul district in Himachal Pradesh with Leh district in Ladakh.
Fotu La Pass	Leh with Kargil of Ladakh
Rohtang Pass	Kullu Valley with the Lahaul and Spiti Valleys of Himachal Pradesh.
Shipki La Pass	Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh with Autonomous Region of Tibet, China.
Jelep La Pass	Sikkim with Autonomous Region of Tibet, China.

Nathu La Pass Sikkim with Autonomous Region of Tibet, China.

Lipu Lekh Pass Chaudans valley of India with Autonomous Region of Tibet, China. It is located close to the tri junction of Uttarakhand (India), China and Nepal.

Khardung La Ladakh with Siachen glacier. It is the highest motorable pass in the world.

Bom di La It is in Arunachal Pradesh

Source: TH
