



Drishti IAS Presents...



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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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India And Neighbourhood

Afghanistan

Regional Security Dialogue on Afghanistan: Delhi

Why in News

Recently, India hosted the 'Delhi Regional Security Dialogue on Afghanistan'.

- The meeting will be held at the level of **National Security Advisors (NSAs)** and will be chaired by India's NSA Ajit Doval.

Key Points

- **About the Meeting:**
 - **Invited Participants:** India's top security establishment, the **National Security Council Secretariat**, has taken the lead in organising the in-person meeting.
 - Invitations were sent to Afghanistan's neighbours such as **Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan**, and other key players including **Russia, and China**.
 - **Need:** After the **withdrawal of US forces** and the **Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan**, India is concerned about security in the region.
 - **Objective:** In this context, India has taken this initiative to organise a conference of regional stakeholders and important powers on the country's current situation and future outlook.
 - **Pakistan and China's Denial:** Pakistan's National Security Advisor has held that he would **not attend** the meeting.
 - **China** has also **decided to skip** a regional security meeting due to scheduling difficulties, but is **open to maintaining discussions with India** through bilateral channels.
 - India is of the view that the denial by Pakistan to attend this meeting reflects its mindset of **viewing Afghanistan as its protectorate**.
- **Delhi Declaration on Afghanistan:** Reiterated strong support for a peaceful, secure and stable Afghanistan while emphasising the respect for sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity and non-interference in its internal affairs.



National Security Council Secretariat:

- India formed a **National Security Council (NSC)** in 1999, where all aspects of national security are deliberated upon by it.
 - NSC acts as the apex body, headed by the Prime Minister.
- NSC comprises the three-tier structure- **Strategic Policy Group (SPG), the National Security Advisory Board (NSAB) and the National Security Council Secretariat**.
- The Ministers of Home Affairs, Defence, External Affairs and Finance are its members and the National Security Adviser acts as its Secretary.

Bangladesh

Ramna Kali

Temple: Bangladesh

Why in News

Recently, the Indian President has inaugurated the **reconstructed Ramna Kali temple in Ramna, Dhaka (Bangladesh)**, where the **landmark Suhrawardy Udyan** (the former Ramna Race Course) is located.

- The inauguration of the reconstructed Ramna Kalibari coincided with the **50th anniversary of the victory of Bangladesh and India in the Liberation War**, which also marks the **golden jubilee of the bilateral relations** between the two sides.

Key Points

- **Ramna Kali Temple:**
 - The temple in the area, dedicated to the Goddess Kali, is **believed to have been built during the**

Note:





Mughal period. It is believed to be 400 years old, even though it is difficult to pinpoint a year in which it was built.

- The temple was built by a Hindu sect, but it is difficult to identify exactly who built it. However, it is said that it **was built by a certain Haricharan Giri** who was a mahant in the temple.
 - It was not a very large temple, and was fairly ordinary in terms of its architecture. However, it is **the second oldest Hindu temple in Bangladesh**, the Dhakeshwari Temple being the oldest.
 - The temple gained prominence in the **early 20th century when the renowned saint Ma Anandamayi built her ashram in its precincts.**
 - Anandamayi was popularly addressed as “Shahbag-er ma”, or the Mother of Shahbag.
- **The Temple and the War:**
- On 27th March 1971, the **Pakistani army destroyed the temple and massacred 85 Hindus**, including priests and devotees.
 - On 7th March 1971, Days before the temple was razed, **Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman delivered his historic speech at the Ramna Race Course maidan**, in which he exhorted Bengalis for the struggle for independence.
 - Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (1920-1975) is the founding leader of Bangladesh and the country's first Prime Minister.

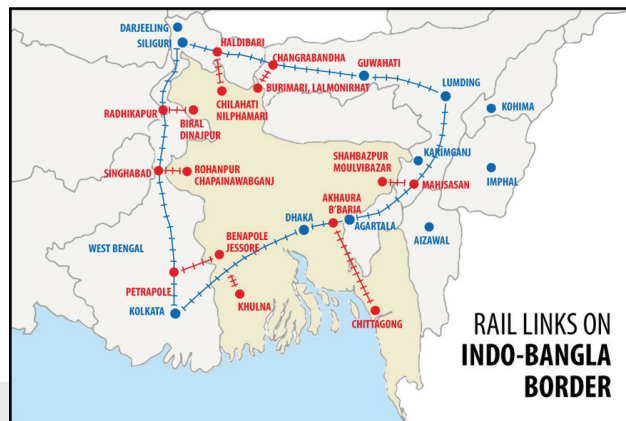
India-Bangladesh Commercial Railway Link Restored

Why in News

Recently, Bangladesh and India started **regular operation of freight trains through the restored Haldibari**

-Chilahati rail route after over 50 years, which will strengthen railway connectivity and bilateral trade between the two countries.

- The Haldibari-Chilahati rail link is one such route that was operational till 1965.
- Another rail link, between **Agartala-Akhaura**, is scheduled to open by the end of 2021.



Key Points

- **Background:**
 - **After the Partition in 1947, seven rail links were operational** between India and Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) **until 1965.**
 - Presently, there are **Five rail links** between Bangladesh and India that are **operational.**
 - They are Petrapole (India)-Benapole (Bangladesh), Gede (India)-Darshana (Bangladesh), Singhabad (India)-Rohanpur (Bangladesh), Radhikapur (India)-Biorol (Bangladesh), Haldibari (India)-Chilahati (Bangladesh).

Indo-Bangladesh Ties

- **Historical Ties:**
 - Fifty years ago, the **Bangladesh Liberation War** in 1971 had added the colours of victory for India as it led the charge towards the formation of the new nation of Bangladesh.
- **Defence Cooperation:**
 - **Joint exercises:**
 - **SAMPRI** (Army).
 - **TABLE TOP** (Air).
 - **IN-BN CORPAT** (Navy).
 - **Exercise Bongosagar** (Navy).

Note:



- **SAMVEDNA** (Multinational Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Exercise with Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and UAE)
- **Border Management:** India and Bangladesh share 4096.7 km. of border, which is the longest land boundary that India shares with any of its neighbours.
- **Partnership on Multilateral forums:**
 - **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation** (SAARC).
 - **Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation** (BIMSTEC).
 - **Indian Ocean Rim Association** (IORA).

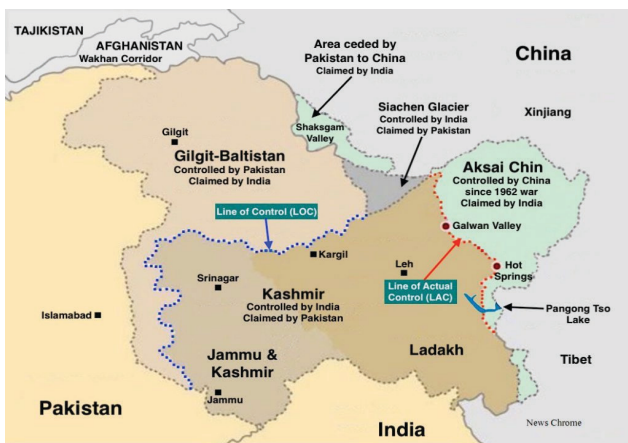
China

China Builds Bridge across Pangong Lake

Why in News

Recently, it was found that China is building a **new bridge on Pangong Tso** which will provide an additional axis to deploy troops faster between the north and south banks of the lake, and closer to the **LAC (Line of Actual Control)**.

- Earlier, **China's new law on land borders** came into effect from 1st January, 2022, at a time when border standoff in eastern Ladakh remains unresolved and several places in Arunachal Pradesh have been renamed recently by China as part of its claim on the Indian state.
- India too has been **improving its infrastructure in the border areas**. In 2021, the Border Roads Organisation completed more than 100 projects in border areas, the majority of which were close to the border with China.



Pangong Tso lake

- Pangong Lake is located in the Union Territory of **Ladakh**.
- It is situated at a height of almost 4,350m and is the world's highest saltwater lake.
- Extending to almost 160km, one-third of the Pangong Lake lies in India and the other two-thirds in China.

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 **Line of Actual Control (LAC)**, and it flows from the east to Ladakh, where it meets the Shyok river on India's side of the LAC.
- 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.

Chang Chenmo River

- Chang Chenmo River or Changchenmo River is a tributary of the Shyok River, part of the **Indus River system**.
- It is at the southern edge of the disputed Aksai Chin region and north of the Pangong Lake basin.
- The source of Chang Chenmo is near the Lanak Pass.

Kongka Pass

- The Kongka Pass or Kongka La is a low mountain pass over a hill that intrudes into the Chang Chenmo Valley. It is in the disputed India-China border area in Ladakh.

Karakoram Range

- It is also known as Krishnagiri which is situated in the northernmost range of the Trans-Himalayan ranges. It forms India's frontiers with Afghanistan and China.
- It extends eastwards from the Pamir for about 800 km. It is a range with lofty peaks (elevation 5,500 m and above).
- Some of the peaks are more than 8,000 metre above sea level. K2 (8,611 m)[Godwin Austen or Qogir] is the second highest peak in the world and the highest peak in the Indian Union.
- The Ladakh Plateau lies to the north-east of the Karakoram Range.

Note:



China's New Border Law

Why in News

China's new law on land borders came into effect from 1st January, 2022.

- It comes at a time when **border standoff in eastern Ladakh remains unresolved** and **several places in Arunachal Pradesh have been renamed** recently by China as part of its claim on the Indian state.
- The new law lays down that the People's Republic of China (PRC) shall set up **boundary markers on all its land borders** to clearly mark the border.

Dalai Lama

Why in News

Recently, the **last surviving member of a small troop** of Indian soldiers **who escorted the Dalai Lama** as he fled from Tibet in 1959 has died.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - The Dalai Lama **belongs to the Gelugpa tradition of Tibetan Buddhism**, which is the largest and most influential tradition in Tibet.
 - There have been **only 14 Dalai Lamas in the history of Tibetan Buddhism**, and the first and second Dalai Lamas were given the title posthumously.
 - The 14th and current Dalai Lama is **Tenzin Gyatso**.
 - The Dalai Lamas are believed to be **manifestations of Avalokiteshvara or Chenrezig**, the Bodhisattva of Compassion and the patron saint of Tibet.
 - Bodhisattvas are realized beings inspired by a wish to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings, who have vowed to be reborn in the world to help humanity.
- **Dalai Lama's Escort:**
 - The political landscape of China **started changing in the 1950s**.
 - Plans were made to **bring Tibet officially under Chinese control**. But in March 1959, Tibetans took to the streets demanding an end to Chinese rule. Chinese People's Republic troops crushed the revolt and thousands were killed.

- The **Dalai Lama fled from Tibet to India with thousands of followers during the 1959 Tibetan uprising**, where he was welcomed by former Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru who gave him permission **to form the 'Tibetan government in exile' in Dharamsala** (Himachal Pradesh).

India's Trade with China

Why in News

India's trade with China in 2021 crossed USD125 billion with imports from China nearing a record USD100 billion, underlining continued demand for a range of Chinese goods, particularly machinery.

- This **is when the relations hit a new low** due to the prolonged standoff by the militaries in eastern Ladakh.

Key Points

- **India's Biggest Exports to China:**
 - India's biggest exports to China in recent years were iron ore, cotton and other raw material-based commodities, which have seen a recovery in demand in China last year (2021).
- **India's Biggest Imports from China:**
 - India has imported large quantities of electrical and mechanical machinery, **Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs)**, auto components and, over the past two years, a range of medical supplies from oxygen concentrators to Personal Protective Equipments (PPEs).
- **Growth in Bilateral Trade:**
 - The **43% year-on-year growth in bilateral trade with India was among the highest among China's major trading partners**.
- **Trade Deficit with China:**
 - The trade deficit for India grew to USD 69.38 billion in 2021.

Developing Country Tag to China: WTO

Why in News

Recently, China got the '**developing country**' status at the **World Trade Organisation (WTO)**.

- It has become a **contentious issue with a number of countries raising concerns** against the decision.
- Earlier in 2019, the **South Korean Government decided not to seek any special treatment** as a developing country from future negotiations at the WTO.



Key Points

- **About:**
 - The **WTO has not defined 'developed' and 'developing' countries** and therefore member countries are free to announce whether they are 'developed' or 'developing'.
 - However, **other members can challenge the decision** of a member to make use of provisions available to developing countries.
 - The **WTO lacks a proper definition of a developing nation although two-thirds of its 164 members classify themselves as developing.**
 - As WTO members can declare themselves developing nations, this provides an advantage to nations like China to expand their dominance in global trade even while classifying themselves as developing and thereby obtaining **Special and Differentiated Treatment (S&DT)**.
- **China's Case:**
 - Given **the rise in China's per capita income to become an upper middle-income country according to the World Bank** and the country's alleged use of unfair trade practises, **a number of nations have called on China to either refrain from seeking benefits** available to developing countries or forgo its classification as a developing country altogether.

- Some of China's **unfair trade practises include** preferential treatment for state enterprises, data restrictions and inadequate enforcement of **intellectual property rights**.
 - Prima facie, it does appear anomalous that the world's second-largest economy—which accounted for a quarter of global **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** growth in 2021—considers itself as the largest developing country.

World Bank's Classification of Countries

- The World Bank assigns the world's economies to **four income groups**—low, lower-middle, upper-middle, and high-income countries.
- The classifications are **updated each year on 1st July** and are based on **Gross National Income (GNI)** per capita in current USD of the previous year.
 - GNI is the total amount of money earned by a nation's people and businesses.
- In its latest classification (2020-21), the World Bank has classified **India as a lower-middle-income country.**

China-Taiwan Issue

China-Taiwan relationship has been strained for years, but the latest escalation comes from a series of air incursions by the Chinese military.

- While a **country's airspace is internationally recognised by law**, its **air defence zone is a self-declared region** which is monitored by the country's military for defence purposes.



Key Points

- **Conflict between China and Taiwan (Background):**
 - China and Taiwan **separated amid civil war in 1949** and **China considers Taiwan part of its territory** to be taken control of by force if necessary.

Note:



- But **Taiwan's leaders** say that **Taiwan is a sovereign state**.
- After decades of hostile intentions and angry rhetoric, relations between China and Taiwan **started improving in the 1980s**. China put forward a formula, known as **"one country, two systems"**, under which Taiwan would be given significant autonomy if it accepted Chinese reunification.
- In Taiwan, the offer was rejected, but the **government did relax rules** on visits to and investment in China.
- There were also limited talks between the two sides' unofficial representatives, though Beijing's insistence that **Taiwan's Republic of China (ROC) government is illegitimate** prevented government-to-government contact.
- China's implementation of a **national security law in Hong Kong** in 2020 was seen by many as yet another sign that Beijing was becoming significantly more assertive in the region.

➤ **China's Concerns:**

- **One China Policy Challenged:**
 - This means that countries seeking diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC, Mainland China) must break official relations with the Republic of China (ROC, Taiwan) and vice versa.
 - The existent diplomatic relationship of the Taiwan and its membership in intergovernmental organizations challenges this policy:
 - The ROC, Taiwan has diplomatic relations with 15 countries and substantive ties with many others such as Australia, Canada, EU nations, Japan and New Zealand.
 - Besides, Taiwan has full membership in 38 intergovernmental organizations and their subsidiary bodies, including the **World Trade Organization, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, Asian Development Bank** and Central American Bank for Economic Integration.

➤ **India's Stand on the Issue:**

- Since 1949, India has **accepted the "One China" policy** that accepts Taiwan and Tibet as part of China.
- However, India **uses the policy to make a diplomatic point**, i.e., if India believes in "One China" policy, **China should also believe in a "One India" policy**.

- India and Taiwan **do not have formal diplomatic relations** but since 1995, both sides have maintained representative offices in each other's capitals that function as de facto embassies.

China's New Sea-Road-Rail Link to Indian Ocean

Why in News

Recently, a new sea-road-rail link **providing Chengdu (China) with access to the Indian Ocean via Yangon (Myanmar)** was opened.

- The trade corridor is **China's first to link western China with the Indian Ocean**.



Key Points

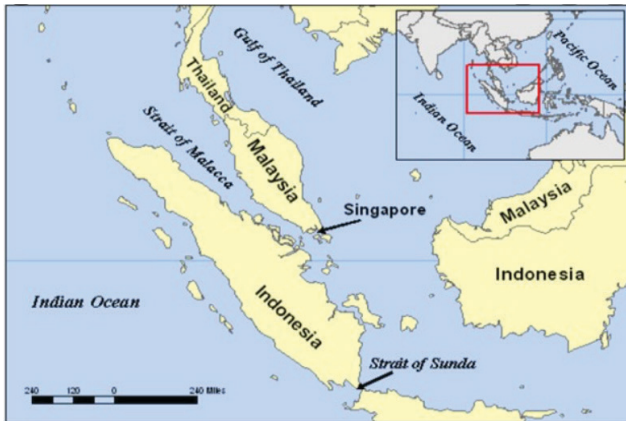
➤ **About New Trade Corridor:**

- The new trade corridor passage **connects the logistics lines of Singapore, Myanmar and China**, and is currently the most **convenient land and sea channel linking the Indian Ocean with southwest China**.
- China also has plans to develop **another port in Kyaukphyu in the Rakhine state, Myanmar** including a proposed railway line from Yunnan (China) directly to the port, but the progress there has been stalled by **unrest in Myanmar**.
- China plans to develop this region in Myanmar as a **'border economic cooperation zone'** under the **Belt and Road Initiative**.
- It is expected to become the **lifeblood of international trade for China**, while providing a source of income for Myanmar.

Note:



- This trade corridor is **another direct Chinese outlet to the Indian ocean.**
 - The first one being at the **Gwadar port in Pakistan.**
- This trade route is also **China's alternative to the "Malacca Dilemma".**
 - Malacca Dilemma is **a word coined in 2003**, by the then Chinese President Hu Jintao.
 - This refers to **China's fear of a maritime blockade at the Straits of Malacca.** Since most of China's oil imports pass through the Straits of Malacca, a maritime blockade here could paralyze China's economy.



China's New Maritime Regulations for Foreign Ships

Why in News

Recently, China has notified new maritime rules, warranting vessels to report their information when passing through what China sees as its **"Territorial Waters"**, that took effect from 1st September 2021.

- China claims under a so-called **"Nine Dash Line"** on its maps most of the South China Sea's waters, which are disputed by several other countries, including **the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia.**

Key Points

- **About:**
 - Operators of submersibles, nuclear vessels, ships carrying radioactive materials and ships carrying bulk oil, chemicals, liquefied gas and other toxic and harmful substances that may endanger the

maritime traffic safety of China **are required to report their detailed information upon their visits to Chinese territorial waters.**

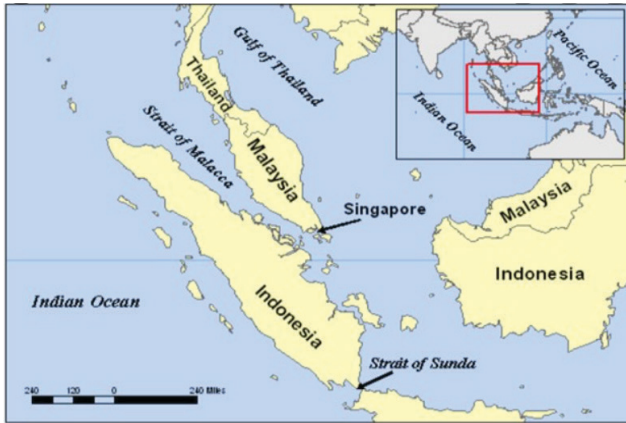
- China claims almost **all of the 1.3 million square-mile South China Sea as its sovereign territory.** It has been building military bases on artificial islands in the region.



- It is seen as a **sign of stepped-up efforts to safeguard China's national security** at sea by implementing strict rules to boost maritime identification capability.
- China sees the **US' incursion into the region is of assertive nature** that can be the biggest destroyer of peace and stability in the region.
- **Nine Dash Line:**
 - Stretches hundreds of kilometers south and east of China's southerly Hainan Island, covering the strategic Paracel and Spratly island chains.
 - It is **deemed by most countries as being inconsistent with the UNCLOS**, which only gives states the right to establish a territorial sea up to 12 nautical miles.
 - China claims it by citing 2,000 years of history when the two island chains were regarded as its integral parts.
 - The **Hague-based Permanent Court of Arbitration issued a decision in 2016, rejecting China's claims** as lacking a basis in international law. **China dismissed the ruling then.**

Note:





Nepal

New Bridge: India & Nepal

Why in News

Recently, the Union Cabinet has cleared a plan to build a new bridge connecting India and Nepal over the **Mahakali river** and link **Dharchula in Uttarakhand** with **Nepal's Dharchula**.



Key Points

- **About**
 - The bridge will be completed **within three years**. It **will strengthen the relationship between the two countries**.
 - India and Nepal **share unique ties of friendship and cooperation**.
 - The construction of the bridge **will help people living in Dharchula in Uttarakhand and in the territory of Nepal**.
- **Mahakali River:**
 - It is also known as **Sharda river or Kali Ganga in Uttarakhand**.

- It joins **Ghagra river** in Uttar Pradesh, which is a tributary of Ganga.
- **River Projects:** Tanakpur hydro-electric project, Chameliya hydro-electric project, Sharda Barrage.

Pakistan

Prohibition of Attacks against Nuclear Installations and Facilities: India-Pakistan

Why in News

Recently, India and Pakistan have **exchanged a list of their nuclear installations**.

- The exchange was in accordance with the Article-II of Agreement on **Prohibition of Attacks against Nuclear Installations and Facilities** between Pakistan and India.
- The two countries also **exchanged lists of prisoners** held in each other's prisons under the provisions of the **Agreement on Consular Access signed in May 2008**.
 - Under this pact, the two countries should exchange comprehensive lists on 1st January and 1st July every year.

Current Issues in India-Pakistan Relations

- **Cross Border Terrorism:**
 - **Terrorism emanating from territories** under Pakistan's control remains a core concern in bilateral relations.
 - India has consistently stressed the need for Pakistan to take credible, irreversible and verifiable action to end cross border terrorism against India.
- **Indus Water Treaty:**
 - Every now and then, **there is an uproar in India for abrogating the Indus Water Treaty** as a response to Pakistan's **cross-border terrorism** and tenacity.
 - It is a treaty brokered by the **World Bank**, which administers how the waters of the Indus and its tributaries that flow in both the countries will be utilised.
- **Siachen Glacier:**
 - Siachen is regarded as the **world's highest, deadliest and costliest battlefield**.
 - Decades of military operations have **damaged the glacier and the surrounding environment**.

Note:



- But due to the complex nature of Indo-Pak relations and the distrust between the two countries, there has been no decision on the matter yet.

➤ **Sir Creek:**

- It is a **96 km long strip of water disputed** between India and Pakistan in the Rann of Kutch marshlands.
- The dispute lies in the **interpretation of the maritime boundary line between Kutch and Sindh**.
 - Pakistan claims the line to **follow the eastern shore of the estuary** while **India claims a centerline** (differing interpretations of paragraphs 9 and 10 of the Bombay Government Resolution of 1914 signed between the then Government of Sindh and Rao Maharaj of Kutch).

➤ **Reorganization of Jammu & Kashmir:**

- It also **created a crisis in Kashmir-centric Pakistan** as at one go, the large territory of Ladakh was disassociated from the Kashmir dispute.
 - Pakistan's frustration showed in its desperate attempts to push terrorism and failed effort to gather international support against this move by India.

India-Pakistan Joint Protocol on Religious Pilgrimages 1974

Why in News

Recently, the **Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)** announced that India is "positive" and "willing to engage" in talks with Pakistan on upgrading the **1974 Joint Protocol on Religious Pilgrimages**.

- It will allow air travel as well as increase the number of shrines pilgrims from both countries could visit.

Key Points

- Under the protocol **both the countries agreed on the following principles** for facilitating visits to such shrines:
 - Pilgrimage **visits from one country to the other shall be allowed without discrimination** as to religion or sect. The **list of shrines to be visited shall be finalised** shortly through correspondence.
 - The agreed list may be **enlarged from time to time by mutual agreement**.

- The protocol currently includes five Muslim shrines on the Indian side and 15 shrines on the Pakistani side, a majority of them gurdwaras.

- **Upto 20 parties may be allowed to visit** from one country to the other every year. This number may be revised from time to time.
- Every **effort should continue to be made to ensure that places of religious worship mentioned in the agreed list are properly maintained** and their sanctity preserved.
- Such visitors will be given **Visitor Category visas**.

➤ **Kartarpur Corridor:**

- The Kartarpur corridor **connects the Darbar Sahib Gurdwara in Narowal district of Pakistan with the Dera Baba Nanak shrine in Gurdaspur district in India's Punjab province**.
- The corridor was built to **commemorate 550th birth anniversary celebrations of Guru Nanak Dev**, founder of Sikhism on 12th November 2019.

Pakistan Violating Freedom of Air

Why in News

Recently, India has launched a direct flight between **Srinagar and Sharjah (UAE)** operated by budget airline **GoFirst (formerly known as GoAir)**. The flight was to operate through Pakistani airspace.

- However, the flight was **denied permission to enter Pakistan** and the flight had to take a longer route to reach the destination.
- This has raised the concern of **Pakistan violating the first freedom of the air**.

Key Points

➤ **Freedom of Air:**

- The freedom of air means a country grants airlines of a particular country the **privilege to use and/or land in another country's airspace**.
- Freedom of air rule emanates from the **Chicago Convention** in 1944.
- The signatories to the convention decided to set rules that would act as fundamental building blocks to **international commercial aviation**.

Note:



- The convention provides **Nine freedoms of air**, but only the **first five freedoms** have been officially recognized by the **International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO)**.
 - **First Freedom Right:** It is granted by one State to another State or States to fly across its territory without landing.
 - In the case of the GoFirst flight (Indian carrier) was using the airspace of Pakistan (the second country) and was landing in the UAE (the third country).
 - **Second Freedom Right:** The right or privilege, in respect of scheduled international air services, granted by one State to another State or States **to land** in its territory for non-traffic purposes.
 - This means an **Air India flight from New Delhi to New York can land at a British airport to get refuelled** without embarking or disembarking passengers.
 - **Third Freedom Right:** To put down, in the territory of the first State, traffic coming from the home State of the carrier.
 - **Fourth Freedom Right:** To take on, in the territory of the first State, traffic destined for the home State of the carrier.
 - **Fifth Freedom Right:** To put down and to take on, in the territory of the first State, traffic coming from or destined to a third State.

International Civil Aviation Organisation:

- It is a **United Nations (UN)** specialized agency, **established in 1944**, which laid the foundation for the **standards and procedures for peaceful global air navigation**.
 - The **Convention on International Civil Aviation** was signed on 7th December 1944 in Chicago.
 - It **established the core principles permitting international transport by air**, and also led to the creation of the ICAO.
- One of its **objectives is to foster the planning and development of international air transport** so as to ensure the safe and orderly growth of international civil aviation throughout the world.
 - India is among its 193 members.
- It is **headquartered in Montreal, Canada**.

Kulbhushan Jadhav Case

Why in News

Recently, **Pakistan's Parliament has enacted a law to give Indian death-row prisoner Kulbhushan Jadhav the right to file a review appeal** against his conviction by a military court.

- The bill was enacted to implement an order of the **International Court of Justice (ICJ)**.
- However, India points out that the law has several **"shortcomings"**, and that steps are needed to implement the ICJ's order "in letter and spirit".

International Court of Justice

- ICJ is a **principal judicial organization** of the United Nations (UN).
- It was established in 1945 by a **UN Charter** and began working in 1946 as the successor to the **Permanent Court of International Justice**.
- It settles legal disputes between member countries and gives advisory opinions to authorized UN Organs and Specialized Agencies.
- It is seated in the **Peace Palace of Hague, Netherlands**.

Vienna Convention

- The **Vienna Convention on Consular Relations** is an international treaty that defines consular relations between independent states.
 - A consul (who is not a diplomat), is a representative of a foreign state in a host country, who works for the interests of his countrymen.
- **Article 36 of the Vienna Convention** states that foreign nationals who are arrested or detained in the host country must be given notice without delay of their right to have their embassy or consulate notified of that arrest.

Provincial Status to Gilgit-Baltistan: Pakistan

Why in News

Recently, it has been reported that Pakistani authorities have finalised a law (**26th Constitutional Amendment Bill**), to award **provisional provincial status** to strategically located Gilgit-Baltistan.



Key Points

➤ About Gilgit-Baltistan:

- Gilgit-Baltistan is one of the **disputed territories** of India.
- It is a chunk of **high-altitude territory** located on the **north western corner of the Union Territory of Ladakh**.
- It is located strategically as it **borders Pakistan, Afghanistan and China**.

➤ Background of Gilgit-Baltistan Dispute:

- The region is **claimed by India as part of the erstwhile princely state of Jammu & Kashmir** as it existed in 1947 at its accession to India.
 - **Maharaja Hari Singh**, the last Dogra ruler of J&K, had signed the Instrument of Accession with India on 26th October 1947.
- However, it has been under **Pakistan's control since 4th November, 1947**, following the **invasion of Kashmir by tribal militias** and the Pakistan army.
- Following this invasion, India moved to the **United Nations Security Council** to raise the issue of Pakistan's invasion, on 1st January 1948.
- The UN Security Council passed a resolution:
 - Calling for **Pakistan to withdraw from all of Jammu and Kashmir** and then **India had to reduce its forces to the minimum level** following which a **plebiscite** would be held to ascertain people's wishes.
- However, **no withdrawal** was ever carried out and it remains a point of contention between two countries.

➤ Current Status:

- Gilgit-Baltistan is an **autonomous region** now and after the bill is passed, it will become the **5th province of the country**.
 - Currently, Pakistan has four provinces namely Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Sindh.
- Presently, it has been ruled mostly by **executive orders**.
- Until 2009, the region was simply called **Northern Areas**.
- It got its present name only with the **Gilgit-Baltistan (Empowerment and Self-Governance) Order, 2009**, which replaced the Northern Areas Legislative Council with the Legislative Assembly.

➤ India's Stand:

- India maintains the Government of Pakistan or its judiciary has no locus standi on territories illegally and forcibly occupied by it.
- India has clearly conveyed to Pakistan that the entire Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, including the areas of Gilgit and Baltistan, are an integral part of the country by virtue of its fully legal and irrevocable accession.
- India has protested to China over the CPEC as it is being laid through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

Protests in Balochistan

Why in News

Over the last few weeks, there have been continuous protests in **Gwadar, Balochistan** against mega development plans of the port city as part of the **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor**.

- The protesters have sought to draw attention to the **marginalisation of the local people in the development of the port**.
- Pakistan claims that India has been supporting these protests.

Key Points

➤ About Balochistan:

- Balochistan is one of the **four provinces of Pakistan**.
- It is least populated even though it is the **largest province** in terms of land size.

Note:





- It is populated in **ethnic Baloch people** which can be found in modern day Iran and Afghanistan though the majority of Baloch can be found in Balochistan.
- Balochistan is rich in **natural gas and oil** and is one of the most important regions of Pakistan.

CPEC & India's Concerns

➤ About CPEC:

- The CPEC is a **bilateral project between Pakistan and China**.
- It aims to link the **Western part of China (Xinjiang province) to the Gwadar Port in Balochistan, Pakistan** via Khunjerab Pass in the Northern Parts of Pakistan.
- It is intended to promote connectivity across Pakistan with a **network of highways, railways, and pipelines** accompanied by energy, industrial, and other infrastructure development projects.
- It will pave the way for China to access the **Middle East and Africa from Gwadar Port**, enabling China to access the Indian Ocean.



- CPEC is a part of the **Belt and Road Initiative**.
 - The BRI, launched in 2013, aims to link Southeast Asia, Central Asia, the Gulf region, Africa and Europe with a network of land and sea routes.

➤ India's Concerns:

- **Sovereignty Issue:** Some of the proposed infrastructure that the Chinese have been developing for Pakistan are passing through the disputed region of **Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK)**.
 - India considers it to be a part of its own territory.
- **Dual Purpose of Gwadar Port:** India has been concerned about Gwadar, which gives **China strategic access to the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean**.
 - It is not just being developed as a trade entrepot but as a dual purpose port for use by the Chinese Navy.
 - It is part of **String of pearls theory**, under which China is building state of the art gigantic modern ports all along the Indian Ocean and to the south of it, in **Gwadar (Pakistan), Chittagong (Bangladesh), Kyauk Phru (Myanmar) and Hambantota (Sri Lanka)**.
 - The string of pearls is a strategic threat to India, as it aims to **encircle India to establish Chinese dominance** in the Indian Ocean.



Sri Lanka

Four Pronged Strategy on Srilanka Crisis

Why in News

Recently, **India and Sri Lanka** agreed to a **four-pronged approach** to discuss initiatives on food and energy security to help mitigate **Sri Lanka's economic crisis**.

Note:



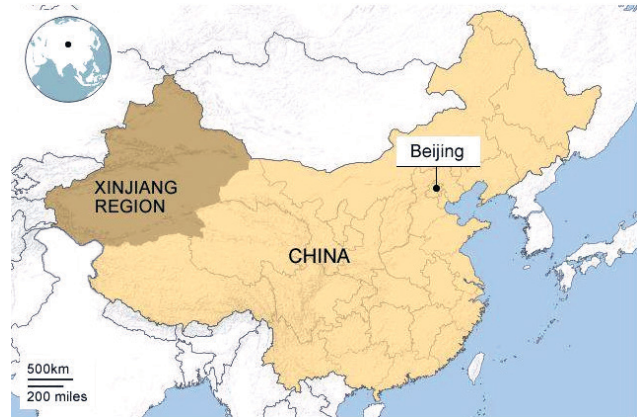
- Earlier this year, Sri Lanka **declared an economic emergency** amid **rising food prices**, a depreciating currency, and rapidly depleting **forex reserves**.

Key Points

- **Four-Pillar Initiative Comprises:**
 - **Lines of credit:** Lines of credit for food, medicines and fuel purchases granted by India.
 - **Lines of credit** is a credit facility extended by a bank or any other financial institution to a government, business or an individual customer, that enables the customer to draw the maximum loan amount.
 - **Currency Swap:** A **currency swap** agreement to deal with Sri Lanka's **balance of payment** issues.
 - The word swap **means exchange**. A currency swap between the two countries is an **agreement or contract to exchange currencies** with predetermined terms and conditions.
 - **Modernisation Project:** An **early modernisation project** of the **Trinco oil farms** that India has been pursuing for several years.
 - The Trincomalee Harbour, one of the **deepest natural harbours** in the world, was developed by the **British during World War II**.
 - In particular, the **projects to develop oil infrastructure in Trincomalee** have been hanging fire since 2017.
 - **Indian Investments:** A Sri Lankan **commitment to facilitate Indian investments** in various sectors.



borders with eight countries, including India, Pakistan, Russia and Afghanistan.



Uyghurs Muslims

- The Uyghurs are a predominantly **Muslim minority Turkic ethnic group**, whose origins can be traced to Central and East Asia.
 - The Uyghurs speak their own language, similar to Turkish, and see themselves as culturally and ethnically close to Central Asian nations.
- The Uyghurs are considered to be one of the **55 officially recognized ethnic minority communities in China**.
 - However, China recognises the community only as a regional minority and rejects that they are an indigenous group.
- Currently, the **largest population of the Uighur ethnic community** lives in the Xinjiang region of China.
 - A significant population of Uyghurs also lives in the neighbouring Central Asian countries such as **Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan**.
 - **Xinjiang** is technically an autonomous region within China — its largest region, rich in minerals, and **sharing borders with eight countries**, including India, Pakistan, Russia and Afghanistan.

US Imposes New Sanctions on China

Why in News

The U.S is imposing new **sanctions on several Chinese biotech and surveillance companies** and government entities over **human rights abuses of Uyghur Muslims** in the **Xinjiang region** of China.

- **Xinjiang** is technically an **autonomous region within China** — its largest region, rich in minerals, and sharing

East Asia

American Sanctions Over North Korea

Why in News

Recently, the US has imposed its first sanctions over **North Korea's weapons programs** following a series of **North Korean missile launches**.

Note:



- These sanctions were aimed both to prevent the **advancement of North Korea's programs** and to impede its **attempts to proliferate weapons technologies**.
- North Korea is continuing its missile program despite several **UN Security Council** resolutions and the international community's calls for **diplomacy and denuclearization**.

Key Points

- **US-North Korea Conflict:**
 - During the **Cold War era**, (**allegedly with the support of Russia and China**) North Korea accelerated its nuclear programme and developed nuclear capabilities.
 - During the same time, the **US extended its Nuclear Umbrella** (guarantee of support during a nuclear attack) to its allies i.e South Korea and Japan.
 - North Korea withdrew from the **Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 2003** and afterwards, under **present leader Kim Jong-un**, it increased nuclear missile testing.
 - North Korea is **barred from testing ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons under international law**.
 - In response to this, the US started deploying **THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defence)** in South Korea in March 2017.
 - The territorial conflict which started between North and South Korea has **transformed into a tussle between the US and North Korea**.
 - Following the failure of diplomatic efforts to improve relations with North Korea, **the US has imposed sanctions**.

Zen Garden - Kaizen Academy

Why in News

Recently, Indian Prime Minister virtually inaugurated a Japanese '**Zen Garden - Kaizen Academy**' at the Ahmedabad Management Association (AMA) in Gujarat.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - It is a **joint endeavour** of the Japan Information and Study Centre at the AMA and the Indo-Japan

Friendship Association (IJFA), Gujarat. It is supported by the Hyogo International Association (HIA) Japan.

- It **has traditional Japanese elements** such as Red Bridge Guzei, Shoji Interior, Glory of Tori, a 3D art mural, fusion Chabutaro, Taki waterfall, Tsukubai basin and Kimono scroll.
- It will **propagate Japan's work culture in India** and increase business interactions between Japan and India.
 - **Zen** is a Japanese school of **Mahayana Buddhism** emphasizing the value of meditation and intuition rather than ritual worship or study of scriptures. Zen in Japan is **meditation in India**.
 - **Kaizen** translates to 'change for the better' or 'continuous improvement'. Kaizen is a Japanese business philosophy that focuses on gradually improving productivity by involving all employees and by making the work environment more efficient.

South Asia

Forum of the Election Management Bodies of South Asia (FEMBoSA)

Why in News

Recently, the **Election Commission of India** inaugurated the **11th Annual meeting of the Forum of the Election Management Bodies of South Asia (FEMBoSA)** for the year 2021.

Key Points

- **About the Meeting:**
 - **Hosted By:** Election Commission of Bhutan.
 - **Chairmanship:** The **Election Commission of India handed over the chairmanship of FEMBoSA role to the Election Commission of Bhutan for 2021-22**.
 - **Thimphu Resolution:** A resolution was unanimously adopted by the FEMBoSA members **to extend the tenure of chairmanship to two years** during the current pandemic situation.
 - Before this, the tenure of the chairmanship was one year.
 - **Theme of Meeting:** 'Use of Technology in Elections'.

- **Digitization of Election:** The technology is extensively used to make elections more **participative, accessible and transparent**.
 - It has become more important during the **Covid 19** situation as it is helping in minimizing person-to-person contact.
- **About FEMBoSA:**
 - **Establishment:**
 - The forum was established at the **3rd Conference of Heads of Election Management Bodies (EMBs) of SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) Countries in 2012.**
 - **SAARC comprises eight member States:** Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
 - **Aim:**
 - To increase mutual cooperation in respect to the common interests of the SAARC's EMBs.
 - **Significance:**
 - FEMBoSA represents a **very large part of the democratic world** and it is an active regional cooperation association of EMBs.
 - Its logo with golden pearls **stands for the eternal values of transparency, impartiality, democracy and cooperation.**

BHIM - UPI Launched in Bhutan

Why in News

The **Union Minister of Finance of India** along with her counterpart, the **Finance Minister of Bhutan** has jointly launched **Bharat Interface for Money-Unified Payments Interface (BHIM-UPI)** in Bhutan.

- The payment system was launched by **NPCI International Payments Ltd. (NIPL)**, the international arm of **National Payment Corporation of India (NPCI)**, in partnership with the **Royal Monetary Authority (RMA)** of Bhutan.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - Bhutan is the **first country** to adopt **UPI standards** for its Quick Response (QR) code, and the first country in our immediate neighbourhood to accept mobile based payments through the BHIM App.



- It is also the **second country after Singapore** to have **BHIM-UPI acceptance at merchant locations**.
- Bhutan will also become the **only country to both issue and accept RuPay cards as well as accept BHIM-UPI.**
- **Bharat Interface for Money-Unified Payments Interface (BHIM-UPI):**
 - BHIM is developed by the **National Payment Corporation of India (NPCI)**.
 - It is an initiative to enable fast, secure, reliable cashless payments through the mobile phone.
 - BHIM is based on **Unified Payment Interface (UPI)** to facilitate e-payments directly through banks.
 - It is interoperable with other Unified Payment Interface (UPI) applications, and bank accounts.
 - **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)** is an instant real-time payment system, allowing users to transfer money on a real-time basis, across multiple bank accounts without disclosing details of one's bank account to the other party.

RuPay Card Scheme

- RuPay is the first-of-its-kind **domestic Debit and Credit Card payment network of India**.
- The name, derived from the words 'Rupee and 'Payment', emphasises that it is India's very own initiative for Debit and Credit Card payments.
- The card can also be used for transactions in Singapore, **Bhutan**, UAE, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia.

Advantages:

- The simple, safe, cost-effective mobile-based payments system has become one of the most prominent forms of digital payments.
- The payment infrastructures of the two countries are seamlessly connected and **will benefit a large number of tourists and businessmen from India who travel to Bhutan each year.**

Note:



- This will enhance the ease of living and ease of traveling through cashless transactions at the touch of a button.
- In 2020, UPI enabled commerce worth USD 457 billion, which is equivalent to approximately 15% of India's GDP.

Important International Institutions

Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)

Why in News

Recently, former **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** governor **Urjit Patel** has been appointed **vice-president of the Beijing-based Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)**.

- In October 2021, the **Union Minister of Finance** participated in the **6th Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of AIIB**.

Key Points

- **About AIIB:**
 - It is a **multilateral development bank** with a mission to improve social and economic outcomes in Asia.
 - It **aims to** connect people, services and markets that over time will impact the lives of billions and build a better future by investing in sustainable infrastructure and other productive sectors.
 - It is established by the **AIIB Articles of Agreement (entered into force December 2015)** which is a multilateral treaty.
 - It is **headquartered in Beijing (China)** and began its operations in January 2016.
- **AIIB and India:**
 - The AIIB has **approved more loans for India** than any other member of the bank.
 - **China is its biggest shareholder** and India is the second-largest.
 - The AIIB has funded **28 projects in India amounting to USD6.7 billion**.

- It has recently **emphasised green projects** and supporting public health initiatives during the **Covid-19** pandemic, besides infrastructure.
- In October 2021, India applied for loans from the AIIB and **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** to procure 667 million doses of Covid-19 vaccines with the ADB expected to lend USD1.5 billion and the AIIB around USD500 million, under the ADB's **Asia Pacific Vaccine Access Facility (APVAX) initiative**.
- Last year (2021), the AIIB also approved a USD356.67 million loan to the Indian government to support the **expansion of the Chennai metro rail system**.

United Nation Security Council

Why in News

The **United Nation Security Council (UNSC)** got five new non permanent members (**Albania, Brazil, Gabon, Ghana and the United Arab Emirates**).

- Estonia, Niger, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia and Vietnam finished their terms recently.
- Albania is joining for the **first time** while Brazil is taking an **11th turn**. Gabon and Ghana each have been on the council three times before and the UAE once.
- More than 50 of the UN's 193 member countries have never been elected to the council since its formation.

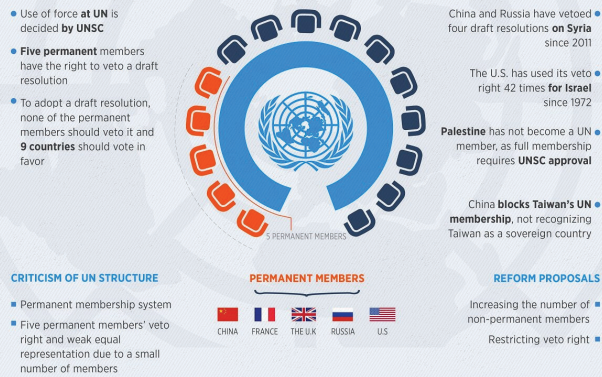
Key Points

- **UNSC:**
 - **About:**
 - The Security Council was established by the UN Charter in 1945. It is one of the six principal organs of the **United Nations**.
 - The other 5 organs of the United Nations are—the General Assembly (UNGA), the Trusteeship Council, the Economic and Social Council, the International Court of Justice, and the Secretariat.
 - Its primary responsibility is **to work to maintain international peace and security**.
 - The council is **headquartered at New York**.

UN SECURITY COUNCIL STRUCTURE LOCKS INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

UN Security Council's five permanent members' use of their veto power for their national interests leads to questioning of the legitimacy of the UNSC

UNSC STRUCTURE



Members:

- The council has 15 members: the **five permanent members** and **ten non-permanent members** elected for **two-year terms**.
 - The five permanent members are the United States, the Russian Federation, France, China and the United Kingdom.
 - India, for the **eighth time**, has entered the UNSC as a **non-permanent member** last year (2021) and will stay on the council for two years i.e 2021-22.
- Each year**, the General Assembly **elects five non-permanent members** (out of ten in total) for a two-year term. The ten non-permanent seats are **distributed on a regional basis**.
- The **council's presidency is a capacity that rotates every month among its 15 members**.

Voting Powers:

- Each member of the Security Council **has one vote**. Decisions of the Security Council on matters are **made by an affirmative vote of nine members including the concurring votes of the permanent members**. A "No" vote from one of the five permanent members blocks the passage of the resolution.
- Any member of the United Nations which is **not a member of the Security Council may participate**, without vote, in the discussion of any question brought before the Security Council whenever the latter considers that the interests of that member are specially affected.

Antonio Guterres: 2nd Term UN Secretary General

Why in News

The **United Nations General Assembly** appointed **Antonio Guterres** as the **ninth UN Secretary General (UNSG)** for a **second term** beginning **1st January, 2022** and ending on **31st 2026**.

- India had expressed its support for the re-election of Guterres as UN Chief.

Key Points

About Antonio Guterres:

- Guterres took **oath of office on 1st January, 2017** and his first term **ends on 31st December 2021**.
- Guterres **served as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees** for a decade from **June 2005 to December 2015**.
- He was the **former Prime minister of Portugal**.

Appointment:

- Under the UN Charter, the Secretary-General is **appointed by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council**.
- Each Secretary-General has the option of a second term** if they can garner enough support from Member states.
- Guterres was elected **after a reformed selection process that included a public informal dialogue session** in the General Assembly, involving civil society representatives, aimed at ensuring transparency and inclusivity.

UN Charter:

- The **Charter of the United Nations** is the **founding document** of the United Nations. It was signed on **26th June 1945**, in San Francisco, at the conclusion of the United Nations Conference on International Organization, and came into force on **24th October 1945**.
- The UN can take action on a wide variety of issues due to its **unique international character** and the powers vested in its Charter, which is considered an international treaty.
- As such, the UN Charter is **an instrument of international law**, and **UN Member States** are

Note:



bound by it. The UN Charter codifies the major principles of international relations, from sovereign equality of States to the prohibition of the use of force in international relations.

Pledge to Stop Nuclear Proliferation: Permanent Five of UNSC

Why in News

Recently, the Five permanent **United Nations Security Council** members (China, France, Russia, the U.K. and US) pledged to prevent atomic weapons spreading and to avoid nuclear conflict.

- The pledge was made in a rare joint statement ahead of a review of the **Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) 1970**.
- The statement comes as **tensions between Russia and the US** have reached heights rarely seen since the **Cold War** over a troop **build-up by Russia** close to the Ukrainian border.
- The statement also comes as the **world powers seek to reach agreement with Iran** on reviving the **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) 2015** over its controversial nuclear drive, which was rendered dying by the US walking out of the accord in 2018.

Key Points

- **The Pledge:**
 - The further **spread of such weapons must be prevented**. A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.
 - The avoidance of war between nuclear-weapon states and the **reduction of strategic risks as our foremost responsibilities**.
 - Nuclear weapons — for as long as they continue to exist — **should serve defensive purposes, deter aggression, and prevent war**.
 - They intend to maintain and further strengthen their national measures to prevent unauthorised or unintended use of nuclear weapons.
- **China's Stand:**
 - It **raised concerns that tensions with the US could lead to conflict**, notably over the island of Taiwan.
 - China considers Taiwan part of its territory and has vowed to one day seize it, by force if necessary.

➤ Russia's Stand:

- Russia welcomed the declaration by the atomic powers and expressed hope it would reduce global tensions.

Non-Proliferation Treaty

➤ About:

- The NPT is an **international treaty whose objective is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology**, to foster the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and to further the goal of disarmament.
- The treaty was **signed in 1968 and entered into force in 1970**. Presently, it has 190 member states.
 - India is not a member.
- It **requires countries to give up any present or future plans to build nuclear weapons** in return for access to peaceful uses of nuclear energy.
- It represents the only binding commitment in a multilateral treaty to the goal of disarmament by the nuclear-weapon States.
- **Nuclear-weapon states parties** under the NPT are defined as those that manufactured and exploded a nuclear weapon or other nuclear explosive devices before 1st January, 1967.

➤ India's Stand:

- India is **one of the only five countries that either did not sign the NPT or signed but withdrew later**, thus becoming part of a list that includes **Pakistan, Israel, North Korea, and South Sudan**.
- India always considered the NPT as **discriminatory** and had refused to sign it.

Nuclear Supplier Group

- It is a **group of nuclear supplier countries that seeks to contribute to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons** through the implementation of two sets of Guidelines for nuclear exports and nuclear-related exports.
- It was created **following the explosion in 1974** of a nuclear device by a non-nuclear-weapon State (**India**), which demonstrated that nuclear technology transferred for peaceful purposes could be misused.
- The grouping has **48 participating governments** and the NSG Guidelines are implemented by each member in accordance with its national laws and practices. The **NSG takes decisions by consensus**.

- India has **opposed the international treaties** aimed at non-proliferation since they were selectively applicable to the non-nuclear powers and legitimised the monopoly of the five nuclear weapons powers.

Resolution 2593 on Taliban: UNSC

Why in News

Recently, the India-led **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)** adopted a **Resolution 2593 on Taliban**.

- The resolution, **sponsored by France, UK and the US**, was adopted with 13 members, including India, voting in favour, **none against it**.
 - Two permanent and veto-wielding members **Russia and China abstained**.
- The adoption of the resolution is a **strong signal from the Security Council and the international community on its expectations** in respect of Afghanistan.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - Reiterates the **importance of combating terrorism in Afghanistan**, including those individuals and entities designated pursuant to **resolution 1267 (1999)**
 - Called for the **Taliban to facilitate safe passage** for people wanting to leave Afghanistan, allow humanitarians to access the country, **uphold human rights**, including for women and children and inclusive and **negotiated political settlement**.

Taliban

- The Taliban, or students in the Pashto language, emerged in the early 1990s in northern Pakistan **following the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan**.
- It is an **Islamic fundamentalist political and military organisation** operating in Afghanistan. They have dominated Afghan polity for quite some time and feature regularly in international affairs.
- The Taliban have been fighting against the U.S.-backed government in Kabul for around 20 years. They **seek to reimpose their strict version of Islam in Afghanistan**.

UNITE Aware Platform

Why in News

India, in collaboration with the **United Nations (UN)**, has launched a technology platform to ensure the safety and security of peacekeepers who are operating across the world.

- The launch of the UNITE AWARE platform came as India assumed the **Presidency of the 15-nation UN Security Council** for the month of August.

Key Points

- **About the UNITE Aware:**
 - **Aim:** This project aims to demonstrate the impact of **modern surveillance technology** on the **detection of asymmetric threats**.
 - **Situational Awareness Software Programme:** It utilises modern surveillance technology for real time threat assessments to peacekeepers in maintaining security.
 - This will access live video and satellite imagery, and in very volatile circumstances can also deliver early warnings to peacekeepers.
 - It can also record data on critical incidents and events and follow daily operational activities.
 - Using the platform, the entire peacekeeping operation can be visualised, coordinated, and monitored on a real time basis.
 - **Partnership:** India has developed the technology platform in partnership with the **UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations** and the **Department of Operational Support**.
 - **Deployment:** The platform will be deployed initially in four UN Peacekeeping Missions: **MINUSMA (Mali)**, **UNMISS (South Sudan)**, **UNFICYP (Cyprus)** and **AMISOM (Somalia)**.
 - **India's Contribution:** India has contributed USD 1.64 million for this project.
- **UN Peacekeeping:**
 - **Joint Effort:** It is a joint effort between the **Department of Peace Operations** and the **Department of Operational Support**.
 - It deploys troops and police from around the world, integrating them with civilian peacekeepers to address a range of mandates set

by the **UN Security Council (UNSC)** and the **General Assembly**.

- It helps countries navigate the difficult path from conflict to peace.
- **Financial Contribution:** The **financial resources of UN Peacekeeping operations** are the collective responsibility of UN Member States.
- **Legal Obligation:** According to the UN Charter, every **Member State is legally obligated** to pay their respective share for peacekeeping.
- **India's Contribution:**
 - India is a major contributing nation to UN peacekeeping activities.
 - Currently, there are 5506 troops and police from India who have been deployed to nine different UN peacekeeping missions, the second highest amongst troop-contributing countries.
 - More than 200,000 Indians have served in 49 of the 71 UN peacekeeping missions established around the world since 1948.
 - India has a long tradition of sending **women on UN peacekeeping missions**.
 - In 2007, India became the first country to deploy an all-women contingent to a UN peacekeeping mission.

Davos Summit: World Economic Forum

Why in News

Recently, the **Prime Minister addressed the World Economic Forum's (WEF) Davos Agenda** via video conferencing.

- The WEF annual meeting in Davos (Switzerland) engages the world's top leaders to shape global, regional and industry agendas.

Key Points

- **One Earth, One Health:**
 - During the course of **Covid-19**, India saved many lives by exporting essential medicines and vaccines by **following its vision of "One Earth, One Health"**.
 - India is the **world's third-largest pharmaceutical producer** and is considered 'pharmacy to the world'.



➤ **Pro-Planet People (P3) Approach:**

- Proposed the idea of the "P3 (Pro-Planet-People) movement" that underscores **India's commitments to climate change at the global forum (UNFCCC COP 26)**.
 - Reiterated India's "clean, green, sustainable, and reliable" energy goals which dwell on **achieving a net-zero carbon emission target by 2070**.
- **Making LIFE (Lifestyle for Environment - given by the Indian PM at UNFCCC COP 26 Conference) into a mass movement can be a strong foundation for P3.**

World Economic Forum

➤ **About:**

- The World Economic Forum (WEF) is a **Swiss nonprofit foundation established in 1971**, based in Geneva, Switzerland.
- Recognized by the Swiss authorities as the international institution for public-private cooperation.

➤ **Mission:**

- Committed to **improving the state of the world by engaging business, political, academic, and other leaders of society** to shape global, regional, and industry agendas.

➤ **Founder and Executive Chairman:** Klaus Schwab.

➤ **Some major reports published by WEF are:**

- **Energy Transition Index.**
- **Global Competitiveness Report.**
- **Global IT Report**
 - WEF along with INSEAD, and Cornell University publishes this report.
- **Global Gender Gap Report.**
- **Global Risk Report.**
- **Global Travel and Tourism Report.**

Note:



RATS-SCO

Why in News

Recently, India assumed the Chairmanship of Council of **Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (RATS-SCO)** in 2021 for a period of one year.



Key Points

- **About RATS-SCO:**
 - SCO-RATS is a permanent body of the SCO and is intended to **facilitate coordination and interaction** between the SCO member states in the fight against **terrorism, extremism and separatism**.
 - The main functions of SCO-RATS are **coordination and information sharing**.
 - As a member, India has actively participated in the activities of SCO-RATS.
 - **India's permanent membership** would enable it to generate greater understanding among members for its perspective.
- **About Shanghai Cooperation Organization(SCO):**
 - The **Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)** was established as a multilateral association to ensure security and **maintain stability across the vast Eurasian region**.
 - It envisages joining forces to counteract emerging challenges and threats, and enhance trade, as well as cultural and humanitarian cooperation. It was **created in 2001**.
 - Prior to the creation of SCO in 2001, **Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan were members of the Shanghai Five**.

- **Shanghai Five** (1996) emerged from a series of border demarcation and demilitarization talks which the four former Soviet republics held with China to ensure stability along the borders.

- Following the accession of Uzbekistan to the organisation in **2001, the Shanghai Five was renamed the SCO**.
- The SCO Charter was signed in 2002, and entered into force in 2003. The SCO's **official languages are Russian and Chinese**.
- SCO has two Permanent Bodies:
 - SCO Secretariat in Beijing,
 - Executive Committee of the **Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)** in Tashkent.
- The Chairmanship of SCO is by rotation for a year by Member States.
- India and Pakistan became members in 2017.
- **Member countries:** Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India, Pakistan.

UNCLOS

Why in News

Recently, India **reiterated its support for the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)**.

- India also **supported freedom of navigation and overflight, and unimpeded commerce**, based on the principles of international law, reflected notably in the UNCLOS 1982.
- India is a **state party to the UNCLOS**.

Key Points

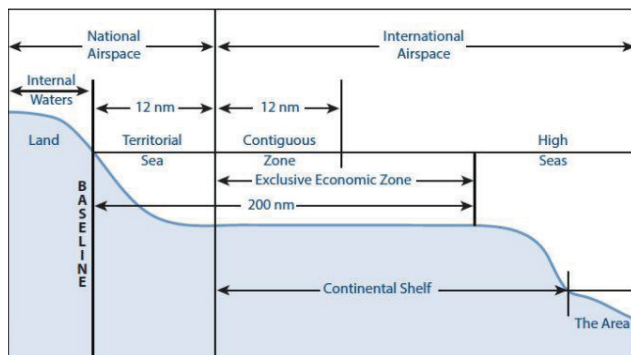
- The **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), 1982** is an international agreement that establishes the legal framework for marine and maritime activities.
- It is also known as **Law of the Sea**. It divides marine areas into **five main zones** namely- **Internal Waters, Territorial Sea, Contiguous Zone, Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)** and the **High Seas**.
- It is the only international convention which **stipulates a framework for state jurisdiction in maritime spaces**. It provides a different legal status to different maritime zones.
- It provides **the backbone for offshore governance by coastal states and those navigating the oceans**.

Note:



- It not only zones coastal states' offshore areas but also **provides specific guidance for states' rights and responsibilities** in the five concentric zones.
- While UNCLOS has been signed and ratified by nearly all the coastal countries in the **South China Sea**, its interpretation is still hotly disputed.
 - There is a maritime dispute in the **East China Sea** as well.

Maritime Zones



Humanitarian Trust Fund for Afghanistan: OIC

Why in News

A meeting of foreign ministers from the **Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)** agreed to establish a **humanitarian trust fund** to address the **growing economic crisis** in **Afghanistan** which has left millions facing hunger over the winter.

- The meeting is the **biggest major conference on Afghanistan** since the **fall of the US-backed government**.
- In July 2021, India rejected the **OICs proposal to assist a dialogue between India and Pakistan**.

Key Points

- **Humanitarian Trust Fund:**
 - The fund will be set up under the **Islamic Development Bank** to channel **aid to Afghanistan** in coordination with other groups.
 - Allowing Afghanistan access to its financial resources would be pivotal to preventing economic collapse and said realistic pathways to unfreezing billions of dollars in frozen central bank reserves should be explored.

- The meeting also **called on the international community to provide urgent and sustained humanitarian aid to Afghanistan** as well as to the main countries housing Afghan refugees.

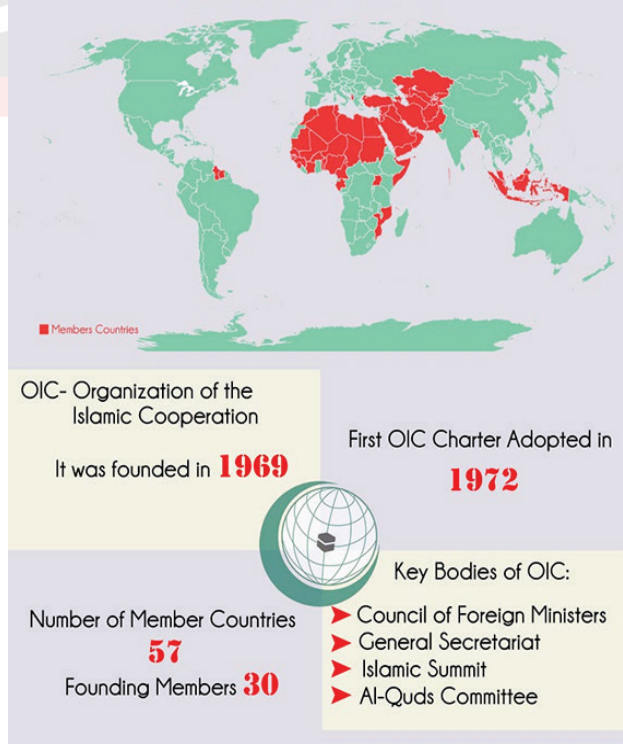
Trust Fund by United Nation:

- The **United Nations (UN)** has also set up a **special trust fund to provide urgently-needed cash directly to Afghans** through a system that taps into donor funds frozen since the **Taliban** takeover in August
- It was set up with the aim of injecting liquidity into Afghan households in a bid to permit them to survive the upcoming winter and remain in their homeland.
- Germany is a first contributor to the fund. It had pledged 50 million euros (USD58 million) for it.

Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

- The OIC is the **second largest intergovernmental organisation** after the **United Nations** with a membership of 57 states.
- It is the collective voice of the Muslim world. It endeavors to safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony among various people of the world.

What is OIC?



Note:



- It was established upon a decision of the historical summit which took place in **Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco** on the 25th of September 1969.
- **Headquarters:** Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

IEA Invites India to be a Full-Time Member

Why in News

Recently, the **International Energy Agency (IEA)** has invited India, the **world's third-largest energy consumer**, to become its full-time member.

Key Points

- **Background:**
 - India became an Associate member of IEA in **March 2017** but it was in engagement with IEA long before its association with the organization.
 - Earlier in 2021, India also inked a **Strategic Partnership Agreement** with the IEA to strengthen cooperation in global energy security, stability and sustainability.
 - As a natural corollary to the India IEA strategic partnership, **IEA invited India to deepen its cooperation with IEA by becoming a full Member.**
- **IEA's Membership:**
 - The IEA is made up of **30 member countries**.
 - It also includes **eight association countries**. Four countries are seeking accession to full membership, **Chile, Colombia, Israel and Lithuania**.
 - A candidate country to the IEA must be a member country of the **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)**.
- **Eligibility Criteria:** A candidate country to the IEA must have:
 - **Crude oil and/or product reserves (Strategic Oil Reserves)** equivalent to **90 days** of the previous year's net imports, to which the government has immediate access (even if it does not own them directly) and could be used to address disruptions to global oil supply.
 - India's current strategic oil reserves equal 9.5 days of its requirement.

International Energy Agency

About:

- It is an **autonomous Intergovernmental Organisation** established in **1974** in **Paris, France**.
- It mainly focuses on its **energy policies** which include **economic development, energy security and environmental protection**. These policies are also known as the **3 E's of IEA**.
- **IEA Clean Coal Centre** is dedicated to providing independent information and analysis on how coal can become a cleaner source of energy, compatible with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Major Reports:

- **World Energy Outlook Report.**
- **World Energy Investment Report.**
- World Energy Statistics.
- World Energy Balances.
- Energy Technology Perspectives.
- **India Energy Outlook Report.**

13th BRICS Summit

Why in News

Recently, the **Prime Minister chaired the annual summit** of the **BRICS** which was held virtually.

- The **theme** for the Summit was '**BRICS@15: Intra-BRICS cooperation for continuity, consolidation and consensus**'.

Other Key Takeaways

Reforming Multilateral System Leaders endorsed the joint statement on strengthening and reforming the multilateral system adopted by five foreign ministers, and agreed on the principles of strengthening and reforming the multilateral system.	UNSC Reforms Summit called for reforms of the principal organs of the United Nations, including instilling new life in the discussions on reforming the UN Security Council.	Space & Climate Cooperation Agreement on space agencies and remote sensing will help enhance research capabilities in global climate change, disaster management, environment protection, prevention of food and water scarcity. Leaders expressed commitment to fully implement UNFCCC, its Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement.	Agriculture Cooperation Agricultural Research Platform launched: Action Plan 2021-2024 for Agricultural Cooperation adopted.	Green Tourism Green tourism to promote measures which can shape a more resilient, sustainable and inclusive tourism sector.
				
Focus Areas Intra-BRICS trade to boost cooperation among customs departments.			New Development Bank's progress in expanding membership: Bangladesh, UAE and Uruguay.	

Key Points

- **Adopted BRICS Counter Terrorism Action Plan:**
 - It defines the approach and actions of the BRICS countries towards areas of Counter Terrorism cooperation which includes: Countering Radicalization and Online Terrorist Threats, Border Management, Information/ Intelligence Sharing, etc.
- **Adopted Delhi Declaration:**

Note:



- The declaration **called for reforms of the principal organs** of the **United Nations** including that of the **UN Security Council (UNSC)**.
 - It is the **first time that BRICS** has taken a **collective position** on **'Strengthening and Reforming Multilateral Systems'**.
- It also called for an **"inclusive intra-Afghan dialogue"** for stability in **Afghanistan**.
 - Apart from Afghanistan, the BRICS leaders also took up the **conflicts in Myanmar**, Syria, the **tension in the Korean peninsula**, **Israel-Palestine violence** and other territorial disputes.

BRICS

- BRICS is an **acronym** for the grouping of the world's leading emerging economies, namely **Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa**.
 - In **2001**, the **British Economist Jim O'Neill** coined the term BRIC to describe the four emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India, and China.
 - The grouping was **formalised** during the first meeting of BRIC Foreign Ministers' in **2006**.
 - **South Africa was invited to join BRIC in December 2010**, after which the group adopted the acronym BRICS.
- The BRICS brings together five of the largest developing countries of the world, representing 41% of the global population, 24% of the global GDP and 16% of the global trade.
- The **chairmanship of the forum is rotated annually** among the members, in accordance with the acronym B-R-I-C-S.
 - **India is the chair for 2021**.
- During the **Sixth BRICS Summit in Fortaleza (Brazil) in 2014**, the leaders signed the Agreement establishing the **New Development Bank (NDB - Shanghai, China)**. They also signed the **BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement** to provide short-term liquidity support to the members.

6th Eastern Economic Forum

Why in News

Recently, the Prime Minister of India (PM) addressed the plenary session of the 6th **Eastern Economic Forum (EEF)** via video-conferencing.

- The PM highlighted the importance of India-Russia relations and potential areas of cooperation in line with the **'Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership'**.

Key Points

➤ About Eastern Economic Forum:

- EEF was **established by the decree of the President of the Russian Federation in the year 2015**.
- It **takes place each year in Vladivostok**, a city in Russia.
- It serves as a platform for the **discussion of key issues** in the world economy, regional integration, and the development of new industrial and technological sectors, as well as of the **global challenges facing Russia and other nations**.
- The Forum's **business programme** includes a number of business dialogues with leading partner countries in the Asia-Pacific region, and with **ASEAN**, a key integration organization of dynamically developing nations in Southeast Asia.
- Over the years, it has **emerged as an international platform** for discussing the strategy for developing political, economic and cultural ties between Russia and Asia Pacific.



FATF Retains Pakistan on Grey List

Why in News

Recently, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) retained Pakistan in the **'greylist' or 'increased monitoring list'**.

- The FATF also announced the **'greylisting' of Jordan, Mali and Turkey**.

Note:



- Botswana and Mauritius had been taken out of the grey list.

Key Points

- Pakistan is retained for failing to effectively implement the **global FATF standards and over its lack of progress on investigation and prosecution** of senior leaders and commanders of UN-designated terror groups.
- Pakistan **will remain on the grey list till** it addresses all items on the **original action plan agreed to in June 2018** as well as all items on a **parallel action plan handed out by the FATF's regional partner - the Asia Pacific Group (APG) - in 2019**.
 - The Pakistan government has two concurrent action plans, with a **total of 34 action plan items**. It has **largely addressed 30 of the items**.
 - Pakistan has made significant progress and it has largely **addressed 26 out of 27 items on the action plan** it first committed to in June 2018. The item on **financial terrorism still needed to be addressed**.
 - The **2019 action plan** largely **focussed on money laundering deficiencies**.

Financial Action Task Force

- **About:**
 - An **inter-governmental body** established in 1989 during the **G7 Summit** in Paris.
 - Assesses the strength of a country's anti-money laundering and anti-terror financing frameworks, however it does not go by individual cases.
- **Objectives:**
 - 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.
- **Headquarters:**
 - Its Secretariat is located at the **Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)** headquarters in Paris.
- **Member Countries:**
 - The FATF currently has **39 members** including two regional organisations - the **European Commission** and **Gulf Cooperation Council**. **India is a member of the FATF**.

Lists under FATF:

- **Grey List:**
 - Countries that are considered safe haven for supporting terror funding and money laundering are put in the FATF grey list.
 - This inclusion serves as a warning to the country that it may enter the blacklist.
- **Black List:**
 - Countries known as **Non-Cooperative Countries or Territories (NCCTs)** are put in the blacklist. These countries support terror funding and money laundering activities.
 - The FATF revises the blacklist regularly, adding or deleting entries.
 - Currently, **Iran and Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)** are under High-risk Jurisdiction or black list.
- **Sessions:**
 - The **FATF Plenary is the decision making body** of the FATF. It meets **three times per year**.

G20 Foreign Ministers Meeting

Why in News

Recently, **Italy** hosted the **G-20** foreign ministers' meeting to discuss the **fight against Covid-19** and how to **speed up the recovery of the global economy** and **boost sustainable development in Africa**.

- Currently, **Italy holds the presidency of G-20**. The **G-20 summit** is scheduled to be held in Italy in October, 2021.
- **India** is expected to hold the **presidency of the G-20 in 2023**.

G-20

- The G20 is an **informal group of 19 countries** and the **European Union**, with representatives of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.
- The G20 membership comprises **a mix of the world's largest advanced and emerging economies**, representing about **two-thirds of the world's population**, **85% of global gross domestic product**, **80% of global investment** and over **75% of global trade**.

- The **members of the G20** are Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union.
- It does **not have any permanent secretariat or headquarters**.

Build Back Better World (B3W) Initiative

Why in News

B3W is an international infrastructure investment initiative announced by the **Group of Seven (G-7) richest democracies** in June 2021.

- The B3W initiative is being seen as the **US' initiative to counter China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**.
- The Finance Ministers from the G7 nations also reached a landmark accord setting a **Global Minimum Corporate Tax Rate (GMCTR)**.

Key Points

- **B3W & its Guiding Principles:**
 - **Goal:** The Build Back Better Plan is a Covid-19 relief, future economic, and infrastructure package proposed by G-7 countries for developing and lower-income countries.
 - **Components of B3W:** Through B3W, the G7 and other like-minded partners will coordinate in **mobilizing private-sector capital** in four areas of focus:
 - Climate,
 - Health and health security,
 - Digital technology,
 - Gender equity and equality.
 - **Good Governance and Strong Standards:** B3W to infuse investment by complying with the standards promoted by the **Blue Dot Network**, relating to the environment and climate, labor and social safeguards, transparency, financing, construction, anti-corruption, and other areas.
 - **Climate-Friendly:** The investments will be made in a manner consistent with achieving the goals of the **Paris Climate Agreement**.

Global Minimum Corporate Tax Rate

- **About:**
 - G7 would back a **minimum global corporation tax rate of at least 15%**, and **put in place measures to ensure taxes were paid in the countries where businesses operate**.
 - **Corporation tax** is a direct tax imposed on the net income or profit that enterprises make from their businesses.
- **Applicability:**
 - It would apply to companies' overseas profits. Therefore, **if countries agree on a global minimum, governments could still set whatever local corporate tax rate they want**.
 - But **if companies pay lower rates in a particular country**, their home governments could **"top-up"** their taxes to the agreed minimum rate, **eliminating the advantage of shifting profits to a tax haven**.
 - A **tax haven** is generally an offshore country that offers foreign individuals and businesses little or no tax liability in a politically and economically static environment.
- **Need of GMCTR:**
 - **Reduce Tax Loss:**
 - Increasingly, **income from intangible sources** such as drug patents, software and royalties on **intellectual property** has migrated to **low tax jurisdictions**, allowing **companies to avoid paying higher taxes** in their traditional home countries (**tax base erosion** of the higher-tax jurisdictions).
 - These **companies typically rely on complex webs of subsidiaries to Hoover profits out of major markets into low-tax countries** such as Ireland or Caribbean nations such as the **British Virgin Islands or the Bahamas**, or to central American nations such as Panama.
 - **India's annual tax loss** due to corporate tax abuse is estimated at over **USD 10 billion**.
 - **To Bring Uniformity:**
 - GMCTR will **end a decades-long race to the bottom** in which countries have competed to attract corporate giants with ultra-low tax rates and exemptions. And it will bring uniformity in corporate taxation worldwide.
- **Other International Effort:**

Note:



- The **Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development** (OECD) has been **coordinating tax negotiations among 140 countries for years** on rules for taxing **cross-border digital services and curbing tax base erosion**, including a global corporate minimum tax.

Group of Seven (G7)

- It is an intergovernmental organisation that was formed in 1975.
- The bloc meets annually to discuss issues of common interest like global economic governance, international security and energy policy.
- The G7 countries are the **UK, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the US**.
 - All the G7 countries and India are a part of **G20**.
- The G7 does not have a formal constitution or a fixed headquarters. The decisions taken by leaders during annual summits are non-binding.

Africa

Mission Sagar

Why in News

Recently, **Indian Naval Ship (INS) Kesari** has reached the **Port of Maputo, Mozambique** to deliver 500 tonnes of food aid to support the efforts of Government of Mozambique **to cope with ongoing drought and concurrent challenges of pandemic**.

- India has also **delivered two fast interceptor craft and self-defence military equipment** to Mozambique.
- This is the **eighth such deployment in consonance with the Prime Minister's vision of Security And Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)** and is being conducted in close coordination with the Ministry of External Affairs, and other agencies of the Government of India.

Key Points

- **Mission Sagar:**
 - **Launched in May 2020, 'Mission Sagar'** was India's **initiative to deliver Covid-19 related assistance to the countries in the Indian Ocean Littoral states**. The countries included were **Maldives, Mauritius, Madagascar, Comoros and Seychelles**.



- Under 'Mission Sagar', the **Indian Navy has been deploying its ships to send medical and humanitarian aid** to the countries in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and beyond.
- Under the mission, the **Indian Navy has delivered assistance** of more than 3,000 metric tons of food aid, over 300 metric tons of liquid medical oxygen, 900 oxygen concentrators and 20 ISO containers to 15 friendly foreign countries.
- In November 2020, as part of **Mission Sagar-II**, INS Airavat delivered food aid to Sudan, South Sudan, Djibouti and Eritrea.
- **Mission Sagar-III** is part of India's Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) assistance to friendly foreign countries during the ongoing **Covid-19 pandemic**.

Vision 'SAGAR'

- **Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)** was launched in 2015. It is India's strategic vision for the **Indian Ocean Region (IOR)**.
- Through SAGAR, **India seeks to deepen economic and security cooperation** with its maritime neighbours and assist in building their maritime security capabilities.
- Further, India seeks to **safeguard its national interests** and ensure the Indian Ocean region to become inclusive, collaborative and respect international law.
- The key relevance of SAGAR emerges when seen in conjunction with India's other policies impacting the maritime domain like **Act East Policy, Project Sagarmala, Project Mausam**, India as 'net security provider', focus on **Blue Economy** etc.

Note:



- The assistance has been delivered to **Vietnam and Cambodia**. It highlights the importance accorded to **ASEAN countries** and further strengthens the existing bonds.

Stand-Off on GERD

Why in News

Recently, Ethiopia has started the second phase of filling a **Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam's (GERD)** reservoir on the upper Blue Nile, which raised tensions from Sudan and Egypt ahead of an upcoming **UN Security Council meeting** on the issue.

- Ethiopia had previously announced it would proceed to the second stage of filling in July, with or without a deal.



Key Points

- **About:**
 - The **Nile, Africa's longest river**, has been at the center of a decade-long complex dispute involving several countries that are dependent on the river's waters.
 - **Ethiopia began the construction of the GERD in 2011 on the Blue Nile.**
 - This 145-meter-tall hydropower project is **Africa's biggest dam project** and will have **lasting impacts on its longest river- Nile.**
 - **Blue Nile is a tributary of the Nile river** and it carries about two-thirds of the river's water volume and most of the silt.
 - Egypt, which lies downstream, has **objected to the construction** of the dam and **proposed a longer timeline** for the project.
 - It does not want the water level of the Nile to dramatically drop as the reservoir fills with water in the initial stages.

- Sudan **has also been involved** due to its location.
- The Nile is an important water source in the region so there are concerns that **this dispute may evolve into a full-fledged conflict between Egypt and Ethiopia.**
- Recently, **the USA has stepped in** to mediate.

Nile River

- The River Nile is in Africa. It **originates in Burundi**, south of the equator, and flows northward through northeastern Africa, eventually flowing through Egypt and finally **draining into the Mediterranean Sea.**
- The **source of the Nile is sometimes considered to be Lake Victoria**, but the lake itself has feeder rivers of considerable size like the Kagera River.
- The Nile River **is considered as one of the longest rivers in the world.**
 - The Nile is **formed by three principal streams:** the Blue Nile, the Atbara, and the White Nile.
- The **Nile basin is huge** and includes parts of Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda, Congo (Kinshasa), Kenya.
- The Nile River **forms an arcuate delta** as it empties into the Mediterranean Sea. Deltas with triangular or fan-shape are called arcuate (arc-like) deltas.

Violence in South Africa

Why in News

Recently, **Riots and looting in South Africa** have left more than 70 people dead, hurt thousands of businesses and damaged major infrastructure.

- It is the **worst civil unrest since the end of white minority rule in 1994.**

Key Points

- **Reason for Recent Violence:**
 - Protests began over calls for **release of former president Jacob Zuma, who served the country from 2009-18** and is facing corruption charges.
 - Former Cabinet ministers, high-ranking government officials and executives of



Note:



state-owned enterprises have **implicated Jacob Zuma in corruption**.

- Many feel that **his successor as president, Cyril Ramaphosa, has failed to provide decisive leadership** - either to calm anger over Zuma's imprisonment or to reassure South Africans that they will be safe.

- While the violence may have been spurred on by the **imprisonment of Jacob Zuma**, it's being **fanned by underlying problems in the country amid a raging pandemic and failing economy**.

- In 2020, the country had witnessed its sharpest decline in annual **Gross Domestic Product** since 1946.

- **Unemployment** stood at a record high of 32.6% in the first three months of 2021.

➤ **Background:**

- India's links with the struggle for freedom and justice in South Africa date back to the period during which **Mahatma Gandhi started his Satyagraha** movement in South Africa over a century ago.
- India was at the forefront of the international community in its **support to the anti-apartheid movement**; it was the **first country to sever trade relations with the apartheid Government (in 1946)** and subsequently **imposed a complete -- diplomatic, commercial, cultural and sports -embargo** on South Africa.
- After a gap of four decades, India re-established trade and business ties in 1993, after South Africa ended its institutionalised **racial segregation (apartheid)**.
 - In November 1993, **diplomatic and consular relations were restored**.

➤ **Political Relations:**

- After South Africa achieved democracy in 1994, it was the **Red Fort Declaration on Strategic Partnership** between India and South Africa, signed in March 1997 which set the parameters for a rekindled relationship.
- The Strategic Partnership between the two countries was again reaffirmed in the **Tshwane Declaration (October 2006)**.
 - Both these declarations have been instrumental mechanisms that have contributed in the past to both South Africa and India for achieving their respective national objectives.

- India and South Africa have a **long history of working together by coordinating their views and efforts** in institutions of global governance/multilateral fora, in order to achieve greater autonomy and ensure that the agenda of 'South' is prioritised.

- **For Example: BRICS** (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), **IBSA** (India, Brazil, and South Africa), **G20**, **Indian Ocean Rim Association** (IORA) and **World Trade Organisation (WTO)**.

➤ **Economic:**

- India is **South Africa's fifth-largest export destination**, and **fourth-largest import origin** and is the **second-largest trading partner in Asia**.
 - Both countries are working to boost trade volumes in the coming years. Bilateral trade between India and South Africa **currently stands at USD 10 billion**.
- In **2016** both the countries agreed to collaborate in the defence sector, especially in terms of the opportunities available for South African private sector under '**Make in India**' initiative, energy sector, agro-processing, human resource development, and infrastructure development.

➤ **Science & Technology:**

- The Department of Science and Technology of both countries have collaborated, especially in the **Square Kilometer Array (SKA)** project.

➤ **Culture:**

- With the help of the **Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)**, an intensive programme of cultural exchanges is organised throughout South Africa including scholarships for South African nationals.
- The 9th **World Hindi Conference** was held in September 2012 at Johannesburg.

➤ **Indian Community:**

- The **major part of the Indian origin community came to South Africa from 1860 onwards** as farm labour to serve as field hands and mill operatives in the sugar and other agricultural plantations.
- South Africa is **home to the highest number of Indian Diaspora in the African continent**, with a total strength of 1,218,000 thereby constituting **3% of South Africa's total population**.
 - Since 2003 onwards, India has celebrated **Pravasi Bhartiya Divas (PBD)** each year on 9th January (the day Mahatma Gandhi returned from South Africa to India).

India-Central Asia

India-Central Asia Summit

Why in News

Recently, the Prime Minister of India hosted the first **India-Central Asia Summit** in virtual format.

- It was attended by Presidents of the **Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Republic of Uzbekistan**.
- This first India-Central Asia **coincided with the 30th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Central Asian countries**.
- The summit came two days after a **similar China-Central Asia Conference** was held where China offered USD 500 million in assistance and pledged to ramp up trade to USD 70 billion from the present levels of about USD 40 billion a year.

Key Points

- **Institutionalization of the Summit:**
 - Discussed the **next steps in taking India-Central Asia relations to new heights**. In a historic decision, the Leaders agreed to institutionalise the Summit mechanism by deciding to **hold it every 2 years**.
 - They also **agreed on regular meetings** of Foreign Ministers, Trade Ministers, Culture Ministers and Secretaries of the Security Council to prepare the groundwork for the Summit meetings.
 - An **India-Central Asia Secretariat in New Delhi** would be set up to support the new mechanism.
- **India-Central Asia Cooperation:**
 - The Leaders discussed far-reaching proposals to **further cooperation in areas of trade and connectivity, development cooperation, defence and security** and, in particular, on cultural and people to people contacts. These included:
 - **Round-Table** on Energy and Connectivity.
 - **Joint Working Groups** at senior official level on **Afghanistan** and use of **Chabahar Port**.
 - **Showcasing of Buddhist exhibitions** in Central Asian countries and commissioning of an India-Central Asia dictionary of common words.
 - **Joint counter-terrorism exercises**.

- Visit of 100 member **youth delegation** annually from Central Asian countries to India and special courses for Central Asian diplomats.

- A **comprehensive Joint Declaration** was adopted by the leaders that enumerates their common vision for an enduring and comprehensive India-Central Asia partnership.
- **Afghanistan:**
 - The leaders reiterated their **strong support for a peaceful, secure and stable Afghanistan** with a truly representative and inclusive government.
 - India conveyed its **continued commitment to provide humanitarian assistance** to the Afghan people.



3rd India-Central Asia Dialogue

Why in News

Recently, the 3rd meeting of the **India-Central Asia Dialogue** was held in New Delhi.

- It is a ministerial-level dialogue between India and the **Central Asian countries** namely **Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan**.
- India virtually hosted the second meeting of the **India-Central Asia Dialogue in 2020**.

Key Points

- **India-Central Asia Dialogue**
 - It is a ministerial-level dialogue between India and the **Central Asian countries** namely **Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan**.
 - All five nations became independent states after the collapse of the USSR in 1991, post-**Cold war**.

Note:



- All the countries participating in the dialogue, except for Turkmenistan, are also members of the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation**.
- The dialogue focuses on a number of issues including ways to improve connectivity and stabilise war-ravaged Afghanistan.

CICA 6th Foreign Ministers Meeting

Why in News

Recently, the External Affairs Minister addressed the 6th Ministerial (2021) meeting of the **Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures (CICA)** in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan.

- Last year, **Kazakhstan** assumed the **chairmanship of CICA**.
- The **5th Meeting** of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the CICA was **held in Beijing in the year 2016**.

About CICA

- The CICA is an **intergovernmental forum** aimed at strengthening regional cooperation and ensuring peace, security, and stability in Asia.
- The **idea of creating the organization** was first voiced by Kazakhstan's First President Nursultan Nazarbayev in 1992 at the 47th session of the **United Nations General Assembly**, while the **first CICA summit** was held in June of 2002.
- The **highest decision making** organ of CICA is the **Meeting of the CICA Heads of State and Government (Summit)**. The CICA Summit is **convened every four years** in order to conduct consultations, review the progress of, and set priorities for CICA activities.
 - The **Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs** is required to be held **every two years**.
- CICA **members include 27 Asian countries**, including Azerbaijan, Bahrain, China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, Russia, South Korea, and Turkey, **nine observer states**, and **five international organizations**.
- **India co-chairs two CICA CBMs** (Confidence Building Measures) on 'Development of Secure and Effective Systems of Transportation Corridors,' and 'Energy Security'.
- The CICA **Secretariat** has been located in **Almaty (Kazakhstan)** since **June 2006**.

Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA)

- A multinational forum for enhancing cooperation towards promoting peace, security and stability in Asia
- Proposed by Nursultan Nazarbayev, Kazakhstan's first president, at the 47th Session of the United Nations General Assembly on **October 5, 1992**

Member states (27):



Summits:



India-USA

Homeland Security Dialogue between India and US

Why in News

Recently, a **Homeland Security Dialogue** was held between the officials of India and US.

- In October 2021 the Ministry of Defence signed a **deal with the US Government** for procurement of MK 54 Torpedo and Expendable (Chaff and Flares) for the Indian Navy, under Foreign Military Sale (FMS).
- In July 2021 the **US Secretary of State visited India**.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - The Indo-US homeland security dialogue was **launched in 2010** as the mechanism to a sequel to the signing of the India-US counter-terrorism initiative.

- First Homeland Security Dialogue was held in May 2011.
- The latest virtual meeting came after in **March 2021**, the US President Joe Biden administration had announced the **re-establishment of the Homeland Security Dialogue** which was discontinued by former US President Donald Trump's administration.
- There are **six sub-groups formed under the Indo-US homeland security dialogue** which cover the areas of:
 - Illicit finance, Financial fraud and counterfeiting.
 - Cyber information.
 - Megacity policing and sharing of information among federal, state and local partners.
 - Global supply chain, transportation, port, border and maritime security.
 - Capacity building.
 - Technology upgradation.
- **India-US Relations:**
 - **About:**
 - India-US bilateral relations have developed into a **"global strategic partnership"**, based on shared democratic values and increasing convergence of interests on bilateral, regional and global issues.
 - In 2015, both the countries issued a **Delhi Declaration of Friendship** and adopted a **Joint Strategic Vision for Asia-Pacific** and the **Indian Ocean Region**.
 - **Civil-Nuclear Deal:**
 - The **bilateral civil nuclear cooperation** agreement was signed in October 2008.
 - **Energy and Climate Change:**
 - As a priority initiative under the **PACE (Partnership to Advance Clean Energy)**, the US Department of Energy (DOE) and the Government of India have established the **Joint Clean Energy Research and Development Centre (JCERDC)** designed to promote clean energy innovations by teams of scientists from India and the United States.
 - **India-US Clean Energy Agenda 2030 Partnership** was launched at the Leaders climate summit 2021.
 - **Defence Cooperation:**
 - Defence relationship has emerged as a major pillar of India-US strategic partnership with the signing of **'New Framework for India-US Defence Relations'** in 2005 which was further updated for 10 years in 2015.
 - India and US inked important defence pacts in the last few years and also formalised the four nation alliance of **QUAD** (India, US, Japan and Australia).
 - The alliance is seen as an **important counter to China in the Indo-Pacific**.
 - The **Malabar exercise** in November 2020 portrayed a high point in Indo-US strategic ties, it was the first time in 13 years that all four countries of QUAD came together sending a strong message to China.
 - India now has access to American bases from **Djibouti in Africa** to Guam in the Pacific. It can also access advanced communication technology used in US defence.
 - India and US have **four foundational defence agreements**:
 - **Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geospatial Intelligence (BECA)**.
 - General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA).
 - Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA).
 - **Communication Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA)**.
 - **India-US Counter-Terrorism Cooperation Initiative** was signed in 2010 to expand collaboration on counter-terrorism, information sharing and capacity building.
 - A tri-services exercise – **Tiger Triumph** - was conducted in November 2019.
 - Bilateral and regional exercises include: **Yudh Abhyas** (Army); **Vajra Prahar** (Special Forces); **RIMPAC**; **Red Flag**.
 - **Trade:**
 - The US is India's second largest trading partner and a major destination for India's exports of goods and services.
 - The US replaced Mauritius as the second largest source of **foreign direct investment** into India during 2020-21.
 - The previous US government **ended India's special trade status (GSP withdrawal)** and also

Note:



imposed several bans, India also retaliated with bans on 28 US products.

- Current US government has allowed all the bans by the previous government to expire.
- **Science & Technology:**
 - **Indian Space Research Organisation** and **National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)** are working together to realise a joint microwave remote sensing satellite for Earth observation, named **NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR)**.
- **Indian Diaspora:**
 - There is a growing presence of Indian diaspora in all spheres in the US. For example the **current Vice-President (Kamala Harris)** of the US has a strong Indian connection.

Climate Action and Finance Mobilisation Dialogue: India-US

Why in News

Recently, US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, along with India's Union Minister for Environment, Forests and **Climate Change** launched the **Climate Action and Finance Mobilisation Dialogue (CAFMD)** between the two countries.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - It is **one of the two tracks of the India-US Climate and Clean Energy Agenda 2030** partnership launched at the **Leaders' Summit on Climate** in April 2021.
 - Earlier, the **revamped US-India Strategic Clean Energy Partnership SCEP** (first track) was launched.
 - It will provide both countries an **opportunity to renew collaborations on climate change** while **addressing financing aspects and deliver climate finances** primarily as grants and concessional finance as envisaged under the **Paris Agreement**.
 - It will also **help to demonstrate how the world can align swift climate action** with inclusive and resilient economic development, taking into

account national circumstances and sustainable development priorities.

➤ Pillars to the CAFM:

- **Climate Action Pillar:**
 - It would have **joint proposals looking at ways in which emissions could be reduced** in the next decade.
- **Finance Pillar:**
 - Through this the **US will collaborate in attracting capital and enhancing the enabling environment** to deploy 450 GW of renewable energy capacity in India and demonstrate and scale innovative clean energy technologies and promote bilateral clean energy investment and trade.
- **Adaptation and Resilience:**
 - The two countries will collaborate in building capacities to **"measure and manage climate risks"**.

US-India Strategic Clean Energy Partnership (SCEP)

Why in News

Recently, the revamped **US-India Strategic Clean Energy Partnership SCEP** was launched during the ministerial meeting of the Petroleum and Natural Gas Ministry with the US Ministry of Energy.

- The SCEP was launched in accordance with the **US - India Climate and Clean Energy Agenda 2030 Partnership** announced by both countries at the **Leaders' Summit on Climate** held earlier this year (2021).

Key Points

- **US-India Agenda 2030 Partnership:**
 - The aim is to create stronger **bilateral cooperation on actions** in the current decade to meet the goals of the **Paris Agreement**.
 - The Partnership will proceed along **two main tracks**: the Strategic Clean Energy Partnership and the Climate Action and Finance Mobilization Dialogue.
 - India elevated the India-US energy dialogue to a **strategic energy partnership** in 2018.
- **Revamped Strategic Clean Energy Partnership (SCEP):**
 - Addition of a fifth Pillar on **Emerging Fuels (cleaner energy fuels)**.

Note:



- With this, the **SCEP inter-governmental engagement** now spreads across **five pillars of cooperation** - Power and Energy Efficiency, Responsible Oil and Gas, Renewable Energy, Sustainable Growth and Emerging Fuels.
- Support India in achieving its goal of installing **450GW of renewable energy capacity by 2030**.
- A new **India-U.S. Task Force on Biofuels** was also announced.

The America COMPETES Act

Why in News

The United States has unveiled the ambitious **America Creating Opportunities for Manufacturing, Pre-Eminence in Technology, and Economic Strength (COMPETES) Act, 2022**, which proposes to **open up new vistas for talented individuals** from across the world with a new start-up visa.

- It aims to make the supply chains stronger and reinvigorate the innovation engine of the country's economy to outcompete China and the rest of the world for decades to come.

Nuclear Submarine Alliance: AUKUS

Why in News

Recently, **Australia, the US and the UK** signed an agreement allowing the exchange of sensitive **"naval nuclear propulsion information"** between their nations.

- It is the first agreement on the technology to be publicly signed since the three countries announced the formation of a **defence alliance, AUKUS**, to confront strategic tensions in the Pacific where China-US rivalry is growing.
- Under the AUKUS deal, Australia would obtain **eight state-of-the-art, nuclear-powered but conventionally armed submarines** capable of stealthy, long-range missions.

AUKUS

- **About:**
 - In September 2021, the US announced a new

trilateral security partnership for the **Indo-Pacific**, between **Australia, the UK and the US (AUKUS)**.

- The major highlight of this arrangement is the sharing of US nuclear submarine technology to Australia.
- Its Indo-Pacific orientation **makes it an alliance against China's assertive actions in the South China Sea**.
- It will involve a **new architecture of meetings and engagements between the three countries**, as well as cooperation across emerging technologies (**applied AI, quantum technologies and undersea capabilities**).

Europe

Russia-Ukraine Conflict

The **Ukraine crisis** has crossed a critical point, with Russia following up its **recognition of rebel regions in eastern Ukraine (Donbas region)- Donetsk and Luhansk** with a full-fledged invasion to "demilitarise" and "denazify" Ukraine.

- This decision by Moscow is a rejection of the inviolability of national borders in Europe as agreed to in the **Helsinki agreement of 1975** and a **major challenge to the global order**.
- While on one hand **Russia remains India's biggest and time-tested supplier** of military hardware, the **US, the EU, and UK are all vital partners** that India cannot afford to antagonise. Considering India's strategic interests, a **balanced approach** that India has followed till now, is a pragmatic way forward.

What is the Conflict?

- Contestation about **post-Cold War central European territoriality** and resurrecting a burnished Russian past is at the **core of the Ukraine crisis**.
- Ukraine and Russia share hundreds of years of cultural, linguistic and familial links.
- For many in Russia and in the ethnically Russian parts of Ukraine, the shared heritage of the countries is an emotional issue that has been **exploited for electoral and military purposes**.
- As part of the Soviet Union, Ukraine was the second-most powerful Soviet republic after Russia, and was crucial strategically, economically and culturally.

- The **balance of power in the region**, **Ukraine being a crucial buffer** between Russia and the West, **Ukraine's bid for NATO membership** and **Russian interests in the Black Sea** accompanied by the **protests in the Ukraine** are the **major causes of the ongoing conflict**.

What is the Current Scenario?

- The conflict is now the **largest attack by one state on another in Europe since the Second World War**, and the first since the Balkan conflict in the 1990s.
- With the invasion of Ukraine, agreements like the **Minsk Protocols of 2014**, and the **Russia-NATO Act of 1997 stand all but voided**.
- The **G7 nations strongly condemned** Russia's invasion of Ukraine.
 - **Sanctions have been imposed** by the U.S., the **European Union (EU)**, the UK, Australia, Canada and Japan.
- **China rejected calling Russia's moves on Ukraine an "invasion"** and urged all sides to exercise restraint.
- **India did not join the Western powers' condemnation** of Russia's intervention in Crimea and kept a low profile on the issue.
 - More recently, **India abstained on a US-sponsored UNSC resolution** that "deplores in the strongest terms" Russia's "aggression" against Ukraine, with New Delhi saying dialogue is the only answer to settling differences and disputes and voicing "regret" that the path of diplomacy was given up.
 - **China too abstained, along with the United Arab Emirates (UAE)**.

What is Russia's Stand?

- NATO's expansion **violated promises made prior to the breakup of the Soviet Union**; that Ukraine's accession to NATO would **cross Russia's red lines**; and that NATO's strategic posture poses a continuing security threat to Russia.
- NATO's expansion as a politico-military alliance, even after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the **Warsaw Pact**, was a U.S.'s initiative intended to temper European ambitions for strategic autonomy and to **counter Russia's resurgence**.
- The Ukraine crisis was justified by the Russian President on the grounds of **security interests and the rights of ethnic Russians** in former Soviet Republics.

- Russia wants an assurance from the West that **Ukraine will never be allowed to join NATO**. Kyiv is currently a "partner country", which implies that it will be allowed to join the military alliance in the future.
- The US and its western allies are **refusing to bar Ukraine** from NATO, claiming it as a **sovereign country that is free to choose its own security alliances**.

How will India be impacted by this Conflict?

- The Russia-Ukraine crisis will **send cooking gas, petrol and other fuel bills soaring** for Indian households and businesses. **Higher oil prices add to freight/transportation costs**.
- Depending on how long global oil prices remain elevated, the tensions could raise **questions on the RBI's credibility** in making inflation projections and **upset the government's budget calculations**, particularly fiscal deficit.
 - The surge in crude oil prices will lead to an **increase in India's oil import bills**, and gold imports could jump back up, **keeping the rupee under pressure**.
- India's imports of petroleum products from Russia are only a fraction of its total oil import bill and, thus, replaceable.
 - However, getting **alternative sources for fertilisers and sunflower oil** may not be as easy.
- Exports to Russia account for less than 1% of India's total exports, but exports of **pharmaceuticals and tea could face some challenges**, as will shipments to **CIS countries**. Freight rate hikes could make **overall exports less competitive**, too.

What Could Be The Way Forward?

- **Immediate Ceasefire**: Unlike during the Cold War, though, the global economy is now deeply integrated. The **costs of a prolonged conflict are too dire**, foremost in terms of the **loss of life** and suffering that is already underway in Ukraine.
 - The world is **still reeling from the Covid-19 pandemic**, which hurt the poorest countries and people the most; it can ill-afford a conflict-induced slowdown.
 - It is **incumbent on Russia to implement a ceasefire** and, subsequently, for both sides to **return to the negotiating table**. Escalation is not an option.
- **New Security Order for Europe**: Without justifying the manner in which Russia has chosen to "right"

Note:



the perceived “wrongs”, the current crisis somehow **results from a broken security architecture in Europe.**

- A **sustainable security order** has to reflect current realities: it cannot be simply an outgrowth of the Cold War order, and it has to be driven from within.
- Also, a European order that does not **accommodate Russia’s concerns through genuine negotiation** cannot be stable in the long term.
- **Reviving Minsk Peace Process:** A practical solution for the situation is to revive the Minsk peace process.
 - Therefore, the West (US and Other western Countries) should push both sides to **resume talks and live up to their commitments as per the Minsk agreement** to restore relative peace on the border.

What is an India-Specific Way Forward?

- **Geopolitical Aspect:** India has to brace itself for some immediate challenges flowing from the Russian actions.
 - It will have to **balance the pressure** from one strategic partner to condemn the violation of international law, with that from another to **understand its legitimate concerns.** India managed these pressures during the 2014 crisis of Crimea annexation; it shall again manage it effectively.
- **Economic Aspect:** On the fiscal side, the Government, which has been conservative in its revenue assumptions in the Budget, has the **room to pre-emptively cut domestic fuel taxes** to nip inflationary expectations, **stoke faltering consumption levels** and **sustain India’s fragile post-Covid-19 recovery** through this global churn.
- **A Balanced Approach:** India-Russia ties have ensured that Delhi has not been entirely left out of the **conversation on Afghanistan**, and in **Central Asia**, while also providing some leverage with the US.
 - At the same time, the **US, the EU, and UK are all vital partners**, and India’s relations with each of them, and the Western world in general, go far beyond the sum of their parts.
 - Delhi must **talk continually to all sides**, and engage with all of its partners, keeping in mind that there is **no justification for the violation of any country’s territorial sovereignty.**
 - India must also make it clear to coercing countries that their **“with us or against us” formulations are hardly constructive.**

- The best course is for all parties to **step back and focus on preventing an all-out war**, rather than divide the world and return it to the days of the Cold War.

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

- It is a **military alliance established by the North Atlantic Treaty (also called the Washington Treaty) of April, 1949**, by the United States, Canada, and several Western European nations to **provide collective security against the Soviet Union.**
- A key provision of the treaty, the **so-called Article 5**, states that **if one member of the alliance is attacked in Europe or North America, it is to be considered an attack on all members.** That effectively put Western Europe under the “nuclear umbrella” of the US.
- As of 2019, there are **29 member states**, with **Montenegro becoming the latest member to join the alliance in 2017.**



Nord Stream Pipeline

Why in News

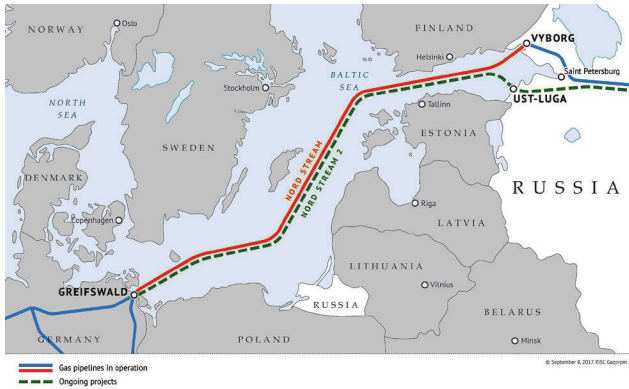
Recently, the **US has said it will stop the Nord Stream if Russia attacks Ukraine.**

- However, European countries, led by Germany, **seemed reluctant initially to impose sanctions** on the Nord Stream due to its importance though it has now said sanctions are not off the table.

Note:



- Nord Stream, the **longest subsea pipeline**, is an **export gas pipeline** which runs under the **Baltic Sea** carrying gas from Russia to Europe.



Key Points

- **About:**
 - Nord Stream consists of two pipelines, which have two lines each.
 - Nord Stream 1 was **completed in 2011** and runs from **Vyborg in Leningrad (Russia) to Lubmin near Greifswald, Germany**.
 - Nord Stream 2 which runs from **Ust-Luga in Leningrad to Lubmin** was completed in September 2021 and has the capacity to handle 55 billion cubic meters of gas per year once it becomes operational.
 - The twin pipelines together can transport a **combined total of 110 billion cubic metres (bcm) of gas a year** to Europe for at least 50 years.
 - The Nord Stream crosses the **Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs)** of several countries including Russia, Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Germany, and the territorial waters of Russia, Denmark, and Germany.
 - In Germany, the pipeline connects to the **OPAL (Baltic Sea Pipeline)** and **NEL (North European Pipeline)** which further connects to the **European grid**.

Global Gateway Plan: EU

Why in News

Recently, the European Commission has announced a plan, called **Global Gateway**, to mobilise **EURO 300 billion by 2027** in **public and private infrastructure investment around the world**.

- Although the plan doesn't mention China, it is seen as a response to **China's Belt and Road strategy**.

Key Points

- **About Global Gateway Plan:**
 - **Developmental Dimensions:** With Global Gateway, the EU, in a **Team Europe approach**, will offer its partners a response to the urgent needs:
 - To develop **sustainable and high quality digital, climate and energy and transport infrastructures**.
 - Strengthen **health, education and research systems** across the world.
 - **Funding:** To finance the project, the EU will use its **European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus**.
 - Under this, 40 billion euros are made available in guarantee capacity, and will offer grants of up to 18 billion euros from **external assistance programs**.
 - The plan will need funding from **international institutions** and from the private sector if it is to get anywhere near its target.
 - The financing will be done under fair and favorable terms in order to limit the risk of debt distress.
 - **Offshoot of B3W Project:** The EU strategy is an offshoot of the **Build Back Better World (B3W) Initiative**.
 - B3W is an international infrastructure investment initiative announced by the **Group of Seven (G-7) richest democracies** in June 2021.

Renegotiation of BTIA: India-EU

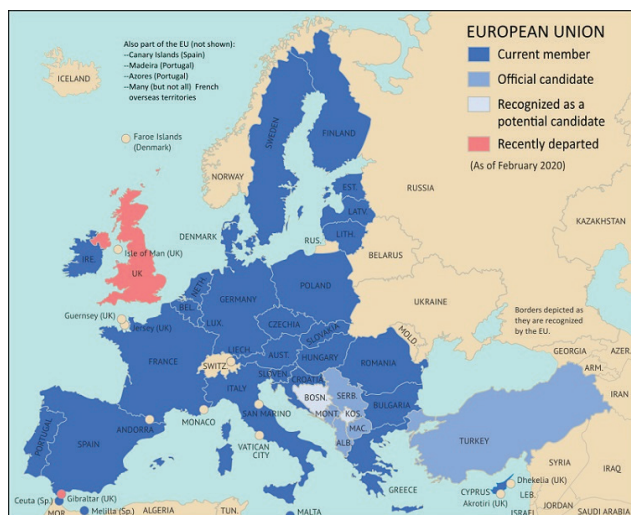
Why in News

Recently, government officials have revealed that India and the **European Union (EU)** are set to resume negotiations for a **Bilateral Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA)**. The BTIA talks have been suspended since 2013.

- However, at **India-EU Leaders' Meeting** earlier this year, both countries agreed to relaunch free trade negotiations for the BTIA and also adopted a **Connectivity Partnership**.

Note:





Key Points

➤ About BTIA:

- **Background:** India and EU had launched talks for having a wide-ranging **Free Trade Agreement (FTA)**, officially called broad-based BTIA, long ago in 2007.
 - The BTIA was proposed to encompass trade in goods, services and investments.
 - However, the talks stalled in 2013 over differences on market access and movement of professionals.
- **Scope:** The EU was India's largest trading partner in goods 2019-20, ahead of China and the US, with total trade close to USD 90 billion.
 - With the signing of the BTIA, India and the EU expect to promote bilateral trade by removing barriers to trade in goods and services and investment across all sectors of the economy.
- **Challenges:** Pursuit of self-reliance has been accelerated by the Covid-19 crisis under the **Atmanirbhar Bharat Mission**. This is perceived by the European Union as India's "**protectionist stance**".
 - India may find it difficult to meet the sustainable standards in labour and environment on which the EU now lays greater emphasis.
- **Significance:** India seeks to signal that it means business and is **not averse to signing trade agreements** after it opted out of the **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)** at the last moment.
 - The EU, in turn, wants to diversify its value chain away from China to India and, hence, there is interest on its part also to have a trade agreement with India.

4th India-Swiss Financial Dialogue

Why in News

The 4th **India-Swiss Financial Dialogue** was held virtually through video conferencing.



Key Points

➤ India-Switzerland Relations:

- **Political Relations:**
 - A **Treaty of Friendship** between India and Switzerland was signed at New Delhi in 1948.
 - India's **policy of non-alignment** and Switzerland's traditional **policy of neutrality** has led to a close understanding between the two countries.
- **Economic Relations:**
 - India-Switzerland **Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT)** is under negotiation.
 - Negotiations are also taking place on **India-EFTA Trade & Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA)**.
 - The **European Free Trade Association (EFTA)** is the intergovernmental organisation of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.
 - These countries are not part of the European Union (EU) with which India is negotiating a separate trade agreement called the

Note:



India-EU Broad-based Trade and Investment Agreement.

○ **Cooperation in Other Areas:**

- An **Indo-Swiss Joint Research Programme (ISJRP)** was launched in 2005.
- **Skill Training:** Several Institutes from both the countries have collaborated to impart the highest standards of skill training in India. E.g.:
 - Bharatiya Skill Development Campus and University, Jaipur.
 - Indo-Swiss Centre of Excellence, Pune.
 - Vocational Training Center, Andhra Pradesh.
- **Capacity Building for Low Carbon and Climate Resilient City Development (CapaCITIES):**
 - The **Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)** is supporting the implementation of the CapaCITIES project in Indian cities.
 - The CapaCITIES project aims to strengthen the capacities of Indian cities, to identify, plan and implement measures for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and for enhancing resilience to climate change in an integrated manner.

One Sun, One World, One Grid (OSOWOG)

Why in News

India and the UK are likely to announce a joint declaration on “one sun, one world, one grid” — or OSOWOG at the upcoming **Conference of Parties (COP26)**.

- The **UN Climate Change Conference, or COP26**, is scheduled to be held between 31st October and 12th November in Scotland.
- The concept of OSOWOG is what the British have called a **green grid**.
- The idea behind the concept is a **trans-national electricity grid supplying solar power** across the globe.

Key Points

- **OSOWOG or the Green Grid:**
 - The vision behind the OSOWOG is ‘**The Sun Never Sets**’ and is a constant at some geographical location, globally, at any given point of time.

- This is by far **one of the most ambitious schemes** undertaken by any country (India) and is of global significance in terms of sharing economic benefits.
- It has been taken up under the technical assistance program of the **World Bank**.
- The OSOWOG plan may also leverage the **International Solar Alliance (ISA)**, co-founded by India that has 80 countries as members.
- With India in the middle, the **solar spectrum can easily be divided into two broad zones**, which are:
 - Far East including countries like Myanmar, Vietnam, Thailand, Lao, Cambodia etc.
 - Far West covering the Middle East and the Africa Region.
- **Three Phases of the Plan:**
 - **First Phase:** It will entail interconnectivity within the **Asian continent**.
 - **Second Phase:** It will add Africa.
 - **Third Phase:** It is about global interconnection.

Multilateral Engagements

Second ASEAN Digital Ministers Meeting

Why in News

Recently, the **2nd ASEAN Digital Ministers’ (ADGMIN)** Meeting with India virtually, where two sides finalized **India-ASEAN Digital work plan 2022** for future collaboration in the field.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - ADGMIN is an **annual meeting of telecom ministers** of **10 ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations)** countries and **dialogue partner countries**—Australia, Canada, China, EU, India, Japan, Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Russia, UK and US.
 - **ASEAN nations include** Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.
- **India-ASEAN Digital Work Plan 2022:**
 - India and ASEAN nations have **jointly approved a work plan** under which they will **develop a**

Note:



system to combat use of stolen and counterfeit mobile handsets.

- Other areas of cooperation include **wifi access network interface** for nationwide public internet.
- Emphasis will also be given on the **capacity building and knowledge sharing** in emerging areas in the field of **information and communication technologies** such as **Internet of Things (IoT)**, **5G**, advanced satellite communication, cyber forensics.

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

➤ About:

- It is a **regional grouping** that promotes economic, political, and security cooperation.
- It was established in **August 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand** with the signing of the **ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration)** by the founding fathers of ASEAN, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.
- Its **chairmanship rotates annually**, based on the alphabetical order of the English names of Member States.
- ASEAN countries have a total population of 650 million people and a combined **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** of USD 2.8 trillion. It is **India's 4th largest trading partner** with about USD 86.9 billion in trade.

➤ Members:

- ASEAN brings together ten Southeast Asian states – Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam – into one organisation.

➤ Recently, India participated in the 18th India-ASEAN Summit at the invitation of Brunei, the current Chair of ASEAN.

- The Year 2022 has been highlighted as India-ASEAN Friendship by the leaders.
- India-ASEAN Summit is held every year and provides an opportunity for India and Asean to engage at the highest level.

Other Related Groupings

➤ ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) Plus:

- It is an **annual meeting of Defence Ministers of 10 ASEAN countries and eight dialogue partner countries**.



- The **ADMM-Plus countries include ten ASEAN Member States and eight Plus countries**, namely Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, and the United States (same as in the EAS).

➤ ASEAN Regional Forum:

- Established in 1994, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) is an important platform for security dialogue in the Indo-Pacific.
- It comprises **27 members**: the **10 ASEAN member states**, the **10 ASEAN dialogue partners** (Australia, Canada, China, the European Union, India, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea (ROK), Russia and the United States); Bangladesh, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Mongolia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Timor-Leste; and one ASEAN observer (Papua New Guinea).

➤ East Asia Summit (EAS):

- Established in 2005, it is a forum of **18 regional leaders for strategic dialogue and cooperation** on the key political, security, and economic challenges facing the Indo-Pacific region.
- It comprises the **ten member states of the ASEAN** which are Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam, **along with 8 other countries namely** Australia, China, Japan, India, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Russia and the USA.

Connectivity Projects: India and Southeast Asia

Why in News

Recently, at the virtual **ASEAN** (Association of

Note:



Southeast Asian Nations) summit on Future of India-ASEAN Connectivity Partnerships, the Indian government underlined the importance of cross-border connectivity between India and Southeast Asian nations.

Key Points

- **Connectivity between India and Southeast Asia:**
 - India currently is working with ASEAN on multiple connectivity projects, **through land, water, and air**.
 - Giving substance to ASEAN-India relations through connectivity will **gradually change the geopolitical landscape of this region**.
 - In this context, India has now been **actively developing infrastructure in Northeastern India**.
 - **Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Corridor** is part of this.
 - These connectivity projects **will not only curb existing insurgencies**, but also help India's north-eastern states to develop their economic potential and integrate with mainland India.
 - Further, **India-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** is central to India's growing engagement with her eastern neighbours.
 - It will enable small and medium-sized enterprises in the border areas to explore new business opportunities.
- **Examples of Cross Connectivity Projects:**
 - **India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway:**
 - One of the flagship projects **for land connectivity** between ASEAN and India.
 - Connecting the three countries **from Moreh in India to Mae Sot in Thailand to Bagan in Myanmar**, was first proposed in 2002.



○ Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project (KMMTTP):

- To develop connectivity **through water**, ASEAN and India are working on **KMMTTP**.
- Initiated by the Indian government in 2008 and is entirely funded by India.
- To seek an **alternative route through Myanmar for the transportation of goods to the northeast region of India**.
- Connects **Kolkata in India to Sittwe and Paletwa in Myanmar** by sea and river respectively.



○ Mekong-India Economic Corridor (MIEC):

- Involves the integration of **four Mekong countries – Vietnam, Myanmar, Thailand, and Cambodia – along with India**, connecting Ho Chi Minh City, Dawei, Bangkok, and Phnom Penh with Chennai.



India Joins OECD /G20 Inclusive Framework Tax Deal

Why in News

India and the majority of the members of **OECD-G20 Inclusive Framework on Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS)** have joined a new **two-pillar plan** to reform international taxation rules.

Note:



- The two-pillar plan - **inclusive framework tax deal on Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS)**- seeks to **reform international tax rules** and ensure that multinational enterprises pay their fair share wherever they operate.

Key Points

- **Two Pillar Plan:**
 - **Pillar One:**
 - It will **ensure a fairer distribution of profits and taxing rights** among countries with respect to the largest MNEs, including digital companies.
 - It would re-allocate some taxing rights over MNEs from their home countries to the markets where they have business activities and earn profits, regardless of whether firms have a physical presence there.
 - According to OECD, more than USD 100 billion of profit are expected to be reallocated to market jurisdictions each year.
 - **Pillar Two:** It is about **minimum tax and subject-to-tax rules** (All sources of income liable to tax without taking account of tax allowances).
 - It seeks to put a minimum standard tax rate among countries through a **global minimum corporate tax rate**, currently **proposed at 15%**.
 - This is **expected to generate an additional USD 150 billion** in tax revenues.
- **Significance:**
 - It will ensure that large multinational companies pay their fair share of tax everywhere.
 - The two-pillar package will provide much-needed support to governments needing to raise necessary revenues to repair their budgets and their balance sheets while investing in essential public services, infrastructure and the measures necessary to help optimise the strength and the quality of the post-Covid recovery.

Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS)

- BEPS is a term used to describe tax planning strategies that exploit mismatches and gaps that exist between the tax rules of different jurisdictions.
- It is done to **minimize the corporation tax** that is payable overall, by either making tax profits 'disappear' or **shift profits to low tax jurisdictions where there is little or no genuine activity**.

In general BEPS strategies are **not illegal**; rather they **take advantage of different tax rules operating in different jurisdictions**.

- BEPS is of **major significance** for developing countries due to their heavy reliance on corporate income tax, particularly from multinational enterprises (MNEs).
- The BEPS initiative is an **OECD** initiative, approved by the **G20**, to identify ways of providing more standardised tax rules globally.
- The **OECD/G20 Inclusive Framework was established in 2016**.
 - India has ratified the Multilateral Convention to Implement Tax Treaty Related Measures to Prevent Base Erosion and Profit Shifting ("**Multilateral Instrument**" or "**MLI**") - outcome of the OECD / G20 Project to tackle BEPS.

Atlantic Charter

Why in News

Recently, the **US' President** and **UK's Prime Minister** signed a **new version of the 80-year old Atlantic Charter**.

Key Points

- **Atlantic Charter (1941):**
 - The Atlantic Charter was a **joint declaration released by US President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill** on 14th August, 1941 (during **World War II**) following a meeting of the two heads of government in Newfoundland.
 - The Atlantic Charter was **subsequently incorporated** by reference in the Declaration of the **United Nations** in 1942.
 - **World War II** was a conflict that **involved virtually every part of the world during the years 1939–45**.
 - The principal belligerents were:
 - **Axis powers:** Germany, Italy, and Japan.
 - **Allies:** France, Great Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union, and, to a lesser extent, China.
 - The Atlantic Charter **provided a broad statement of US and British war aims such as:**
 - They desired **no territorial changes without the free assent of the peoples concerned**.

- They **respected every people's right** to choose its own form of government and wanted sovereign rights and self-government restored to those forcibly deprived of them.
- They would **try to promote equal access** for all states to trade and to raw materials.
- They hoped to **promote worldwide collaboration** so as to improve labour standards, economic progress, and social security.
- The destruction of **"Nazi tyranny," (Germany)** they would look for a peace under which all nations could live safely within their boundaries, without fear or want.
- Under such a peace the **seas should be free.**
- Pending a general security through renunciation of **force, potential aggressors must be disarmed.**

➤ **New Atlantic Charter (2021):**

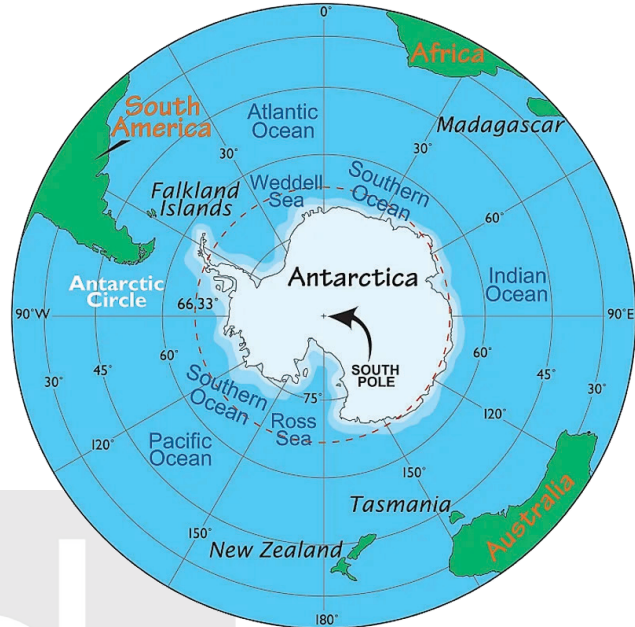
- The new charter, a 604-word declaration, is an effort to **stake out a grand vision for global relationships in the 21st century**, just as the original was a declaration of a Western commitment to democracy and territorial integrity just months before the US entered World War II.
- It is a statement of principles, a promise that the UK and the US would meet the challenges of their age together. It calls for both countries to **adhere to the rules-based international order.**
- The new charter focuses on **climate change** and the **need to protect biodiversity.** With references to **emerging technologies, cyberspace and sustainable global development.**
- It calls on Western allies to **oppose interference through disinformation or other malign influences, including in elections.**
 - It **ranks the threats to democratic nations** in a technological era.
- It vows that as long as there are nuclear weapons, **North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)** will remain a nuclear alliance.

Antarctic Treaty

Why in News

Recently, the **60th anniversary** of the **Antarctic Treaty** was celebrated.

- The Antarctic treaty remains the only example of a **single treaty that governs a whole continent.**
- It is also the foundation of a **rules-based international order for a continent without a permanent population.**



Key Points

➤ **About:**

- The Antarctic Treaty was signed between **12 countries in Washington on 1st December 1959** for making the **Antarctic Continent a demilitarized zone to be preserved for scientific research only.**
 - The **twelve original signatories** are Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, France, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the UK and the US.
- It **entered into force in 1961** and has since been acceded by many other nations.
- Antarctica is defined as all of the **land and ice shelves south of 60°S latitude.**
 - Recently, an enormous **iceberg 'A-76'** has calved from the **western side of the Ronne Ice Shelf, lying in the Weddell Sea, in Antarctica.**

➤ **Members:**

- Currently it has 54 parties. **India became a member of this treaty in 1983.**

➤ **Headquarters:**

- Buenos Aires, Argentina.

➤ **Major Provisions:**

Note:



- Promoting the **freedom of scientific research**.
- Countries can use the continent only for **peaceful purposes**.
- Prohibition of **military activities, nuclear tests** and the **disposal of radioactive waste**.
- Neutralising **territorial sovereignty**, this means a limit was placed on making any new claim or enlargement of an existing claim.
- It put a **freeze on any disputes between claimants** over their territories on the continent.

➤ **Antarctic Treaty System:**

- **About:**
- It is the whole **complex of arrangements** made for the purpose of **regulating relations among states in the Antarctic**.
- Its purpose is to **ensure in the interests of all mankind that Antarctica shall continue forever to be used exclusively for peaceful purposes** and shall not become the scene or object of international discord.
 - It is a **global achievement** and has been a hallmark of **international cooperation for more than 50 years**.
- These agreements are **legally binding and purpose-built for the unique geographical, environmental and political characteristics** of the Antarctic and form a robust international governance framework for the region.
- **Major International Agreements of the Treaty System:**
 - The 1959 **Antarctic Treaty**.
 - The 1972 **Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Seals**.
 - The 1980 **Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources**.
 - The 1991 **Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty**.

Indian Antarctic Programme

➤ **About:**

- It is a **scientific research and exploration program** under the **National Centre for Antarctic and Ocean Research (NCPOR)**. It started in **1981 when the first Indian expedition to Antarctica was made**.
- NCPOR is the **nodal agency for planning, promotion, coordination and execution** of the

entire gamut of polar and **southern ocean scientific research** in the country as well as for the associated logistics activities.

- It was **established in 1998**.

➤ **Dakshin Gangotri:**

- Dakshin Gangotri was the **first Indian scientific research base station established in Antarctica**, as a part of the Indian Antarctic Program.
- It has weakened and become just a supply base.

➤ **Maitri:**

- **Maitri is India's second permanent research station in Antarctica**. It was built and finished in **1989**.
- Maitri is **situated on the rocky mountainous region** called Schirmacher Oasis. India also built a freshwater lake around Maitri known as Lake Priyadarshini.

➤ **Bharti:**

- Bharti, **India's latest research station operation since 2012**. It has been constructed to help researchers work in safety despite the harsh weather.
- It is India's first committed research facility and is **located about 3000 km east of Maitri**.

➤ **Other Research Facilities:**

○ **Sagar Nidhi:**

- In 2008, India commissioned the Sagar Nidhi, for research.
- An ice-class vessel, it can cut through the thin ice of 40 cm depth and is **the first Indian vessel to navigate Antarctic waters**.

Gulf Region

Houthi Attack UAE

Why in News

Recently, a suspected **drone** attack in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the **United Arab Emirates (UAE)**, caused multiple explosions in which two Indians were also killed.

- The **Shia Houthi rebels of Yemen**, who have been **controlling the northern parts of the country**, including the capital Sana'a, for almost seven years, have claimed responsibility for the attack.

Note:



- Earlier in 2021, there was a **ballistic missile attack by the Houthis on the Saudi capital Riyadh**.



Key Points

- **Houthis:**
 - The roots of the Houthi movement can be traced to **“Believing Youth”** (Muntada al-Shahabal-Mu’min), a **Zaydi revivalist group founded by Hussein al-Houthi** and his father, Badr al-Din al-Houthi, in the **early 1990s**.
 - Badr al-Din was an influential Zaydi cleric in northern Yemen. **Inspired by the Iranian revolution of 1979 and the rise of Hezbollah** in southern Lebanon in the 1980s, **Badr al-Din and his sons started building vast social and religious networks among the Zaydis of Yemen**, who make up roughly one-third of the Sunni-majority country’s population.
 - But when the movement turned political and started attacking the **“corrupt” regime of Ali Abdullah Saleh** (in Yemen) and his support for the US’ war on terror, it became a thorn on Saleh’s side.
 - They called themselves Ansar Allah (Partisans of God), **mobilising tribesmen in the north against the government**.
 - In 2004, Saleh’s government issued an arrest warrant against Hussein al-Houthi. He resisted the arrest, **starting an insurgency**.
 - In **September 2004**, the government troops attacked the rebels and killed Hussein. Since then, the government launched multiple military campaigns in Sa’dah, the **Zaydi stronghold**, to **end the resistance, which was locally called the Houthis movement**, after their “martyred” leader.

- But it only strengthened the Houthis, who, by 2010, when a ceasefire was reached, had captured Sa’dah from the government troops.

Zaydis

- **Zaydis** are the oldest branch of the Shia. The Zaydis are named after Zayd Bin Ali, the great grandson of Imam Ali, Prophet Mohammed’s cousin and son-in-law who Shias, Sunnis and Zaydis revere.
- Zayd Bin Ali had led a revolt against the **Ummayyad Caliphate in the eighth century**. He was killed, but **his martyrdom led to the rise of the Zaydi sect**. While the Zaydis are seen part of the Shia branch of Islam, both in terms of theology and practice, they are different from the ‘Twelver’ Shias of Iran, Iraq and Lebanon.
- For centuries, the Zaydis were a powerful sect within Yemen.
- After the collapse of the **Ottoman Empire in 1918**, the Zaydis would establish a monarchy (the Mutawakkilite Kingdom) in the country. But their dominance would come to an end in 1962 when the Egypt-backed republicans overthrew the monarchy.

Indian Initiatives:

- **Operation Rahat:**
 - India launched a **massive air and sea operation to evacuate over 4000 Indian nationals from Yemen** in April 2015.
- **Humanitarian Assistance:**
 - India has **provided food and medical aid to Yemen** in the past and thousands of Yemeni nationals have availed of medical treatment in India over the past few years.
 - India also continues to **facilitate education of a large number of Yemeni nationals** in various Indian institutions.

India and Oman

Why in News

The **Secretary General of the Ministry of Defence of the Sultanate of Oman** is on a visit to India.

- He will be in Delhi to co-chair the **Joint Military Cooperation Committee (JMCC)** with India’s Defence Secretary.

Note:





Oman's Strategic Significance for India

➤ About:

- Oman is India's closest defence partner in the **Gulf region** and an important anchor for India's defence and strategic interests.
 - Oman is at the gateway of **Strait of Hormuz** through which India imports one-fifth of its oil imports.
- Defence cooperation has emerged as a key pillar for the robust India-Oman strategic partnership. Defence exchanges are guided by a **Framework MOU which was recently renewed in 2021**.
- Oman is the only country in the Gulf region with which all three services of the Indian armed forces conduct regular bilateral exercises and staff talks, enabling close cooperation and trust at the professional level.
- Oman also provides critical operational support to Indian naval deployments in the Arabian sea for anti-piracy missions.
- Bilateral training cooperation between the two sides is also robust with Omani forces regularly subscribing to training courses in India both at professional as well as higher command level. Indian armed forces also subscribe to the Staff and Command courses conducted in Oman.
- Oman also actively participates in the **Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS)**.
- India has supplied rifles to Oman. Also, India is considering setting up a defence production unit in Oman.

➤ Port of Duqm:

- In a strategic move to expand its footprint in the Indian Ocean region, India has secured access to the key Port of **Duqm** in Oman for military

use and logistical support. This is part of India's maritime strategy to counter Chinese influence and activities in the region.

- The Port of Duqm is situated on the southeastern seaboard of Oman, overlooking the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean.
- It is strategically located, in close proximity to the **Chabahar port** in Iran. With the **Assumption Island** being developed in Seychelles and Agalega in Mauritius, Duqm fits into India's proactive maritime security roadmap.
- The Port of Duqm also has a **special economic zone**, where about USD 1.8 billion investments are being made by some Indian companies.

Enriched Uranium Stockpile by Iran

Why in News

Recently, Iran's atomic agency said that its stockpile of 20% enriched uranium has reached over 210 kilograms.

- In April 2021, the **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)** said Iran had begun the process of enriching uranium to 60% fissile purity at an above-ground nuclear plant at Natanz.
- Under the **historic 2015 nuclear deal** between Iran and the World Powers, Iran was not meant to enrich uranium above 3.67%. Enriched uranium above 90% can be used for nuclear weapons.

Key Points

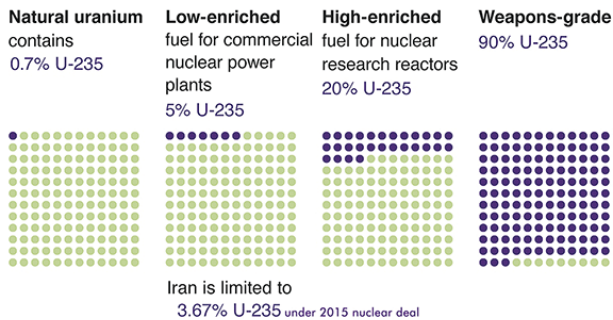
➤ Uranium Enrichment:

- Natural uranium consists of two different isotopes - nearly 99% U-238 and only around 0.7% of U-235.
 - U-235 is a fissile material that can sustain a chain reaction in a nuclear reactor.
- Enrichment process increases the proportion of U-235 through the process of isotope separation (U-238 is separated from U-235).
- For nuclear weapons, enrichment is required upto 90% or more which is known as weapons-grade uranium.
- Low-enriched uranium, which typically has a 3-5% concentration of U-235, can be used to produce fuel for commercial nuclear power plants.

- **Highly enriched uranium has a purity of 20% or more and is used in research reactors.**

Uranium enrichment process

Increasing the concentration of **U-235** atoms, by removing **U-238**, means it can be used for nuclear fuel or bombs



How much effort is required to get to weapons-grade uranium?

Very little extra effort is needed to get from 20% enriched uranium to bomb material

83.5% effort needed to reach 4% U-235 > +8.5% effort needed to reach 20% U-235 > +8% more effort to reach 90% U-235



➤ 2015 Nuclear Deal:

- In 2015, **Iran with the P5+1 group of world powers** - the USA, UK, France, China, Russia, and Germany agreed on a long-term deal on its nuclear programme.
 - The deal was named as **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)** and in common parlance as Iran Nuclear Deal.
 - Under the deal, **Iran agreed to curb its nuclear activity** in return for the lifting of sanctions and access to global trade.
 - The agreement **allowed Iran to accumulate small amounts of uranium** for research but it **banned the enrichment of uranium**, which is used to make reactor fuel and nuclear weapons.
 - Iran was also **required to redesign a heavy-water reactor being built**, whose spent fuel would contain plutonium suitable for a bomb and to allow international inspections.
- In May 2018, the **USA abandoned the deal** criticising it as flawed and reinstated and tightened its sanctions.
 - Since sanctions were tightened, **Iran has been steadily breaking some of its commitments**

to pressure the remaining signatories to find a way to provide sanctions relief.

- After months of delays, the **European Union, Iran and the US** have recently announced that **indirect talks to resuscitate the deal would resume on 29th November 2021 in Vienna.**



➤ Importance of Iran for India:

- **Geo-strategic Outreach:** India views Iran as key to **access land-locked Afghanistan and Central Asia through Chabahar Port.**
 - Iran's geographical position is paramount to India's geopolitical outreach, especially to **Central Asia**, a rich reservoir of natural resources.
 - Similarly, Iran is vital for **India's access to Afghanistan** in which India has immense strategic and security interests.
 - Further, India has been developing the **Chabahar port in a bid to bypass the impediments placed by Pakistan** in the way of its attempts to trade with Afghanistan.
- **Energy Security:** Iran, **one of the richest countries in hydrocarbons** and India, a rapidly growing economy with a deep thirst for energy - make them natural partners.

CEPA: India-UAE

Why in News

Recently, India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) formally launched negotiations on the **India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).**

- Looking to build on the progress made by both countries under the **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership signed in 2017**, both countries expressed a desire to reach a **mutually beneficial economic deal.**

Note:





Key Points

- **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement:**
 - It is a **kind of free trade pact** which covers negotiation on the trade **in services and investment**, and other areas of economic partnership. It may even consider negotiation on areas such as trade facilitation and customs cooperation, competition, and **Intellectual Property Rights**.
 - Partnership agreements or cooperation agreements are more comprehensive than **Free Trade Agreements**.
- **India-UAE Economic Relations:**
 - The **UAE is currently India's third-largest trading partner** with bilateral trade in 2019/2020 valued at **USD 59 billion**.
 - The **UAE is also India's second-largest export destination after the US**, with exports valued at approximately **USD 29 billion in 2019-2020**.
 - The **UAE is the eighth-largest investor in India**, having invested USD 11 billion between April 2000 and March 2021, while investment by Indian companies in the UAE is estimated to be over USD 85 billion.
 - **Major Exports:** Petroleum products, precious metals, stones, gems and jewellery, minerals etc.
 - **Major Imports:** Petroleum and petroleum products, precious metals, stones, gems and jewellery, minerals etc.

Other Types of Trade Agreements

- **Free Trade Agreement (FTA):**
 - It is an agreement in which **two or more countries agree to provide preferential trade terms, tariff concession etc.** to the partner country.
 - India has negotiated FTA with many countries e.g. Sri Lanka and various trading blocs as well e.g. **ASEAN**.
- **Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA):**
 - In this type of agreement, two or more partners give **preferential right of entry to certain products**. This is done by reducing duties on an agreed number of tariff lines.
 - Tariffs may even be reduced to zero for some products even in a PTA. **India signed a PTA with Afghanistan**.
- **Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA):**
 - CECA generally **covers negotiation on trade tariff and TRQ (Tariff Rate Quotas) rates only**. It is not as comprehensive as CEPA. India has signed CECA with Malaysia.
- **Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT):**
 - It is a bilateral agreement in which **two countries sit together and decide the conditions for private investments** by citizens and firms of the two countries.
- **Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA):**
 - It is a trade pact between two or more countries which **establishes a framework for expanding trade and resolving outstanding disputes** between countries.

India and Israel Relations

Why in News

To mark the **30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties** between the two countries, **India and Israel launched a commemorative logo**.

- The logo features the **Star of David and the Ashoka Chakra**- the two symbols that adorn the national flags of both countries- and forms the numeral 30 depicting the 30th anniversary of bilateral relations.

Note:





Key Points

➤ Diplomatic Ties:

- Though India officially recognised Israel in 1950, the two countries established full diplomatic ties only on **29th January 1992**. As of December 2020, India was among 164 **United Nations (UN)** member states to have diplomatic ties with Israel.

➤ Economic and Commercial Relations:

- From USD 200 million in 1992, bilateral merchandise trade stood at USD 4.14 billion (excluding defence) during the period April 2020 – February 2021 with the **balance of trade being in India's favour**.
 - **Trade in diamonds** constitutes about 50% of bilateral trade..
- India is **Israel's third-largest trade partner in Asia** and seventh largest globally.
 - Israeli companies have invested in India in energy, renewable energy, telecom, real estate, water technologies, and are focusing on setting up R&D centers or production units in India.
- India is **also in dialogue with Israel for concluding a Free Trade Agreement (FTA)**.

➤ Defence:

- **India is the largest buyer of military equipment** from Israel, which, in turn, is the second-largest defence supplier to India, after Russia.
- The Indian armed forces have **inducted a wide array of Israeli weapon systems** over the years, which range from **Phalcon AWACS (Airborne Warning And Control Systems)** and Heron, Searcher-II and Harop drones to Barak anti-missile defence systems and Spyder quick-reaction anti-aircraft missile systems.

- The acquisitions also include a **host of Israeli missiles and precision-guided munitions**, from Python and Derby air-to-air missiles to Crystal Maze and Spice-2000 bombs.

- At the **15th Joint Working Group (JWG 2021)** meeting on Bilateral Defence Cooperation, countries agreed to form a Task Force to formulate a comprehensive Ten-Year Roadmap to identify new areas of cooperation.

➤ Cooperation in Agriculture:

- In May 2021, **"a three-year work program agreement"** for development in agriculture cooperation, was signed.
- The programme aims to **grow existing Centres of Excellence, establish new centers, increase CoE's value chain, bring the Centres of Excellence** into the self-sufficient mode, and encourage private sector companies and collaboration.

➤ Others:

- Israel is also joining the **India-led International Solar Alliance (ISA)**, which aligns very well with the objectives of both countries to scale up their cooperation in **renewable energy** and partner in clean energy.



Note:



Al-Aqsa Mosque & Sheikh Jarrah: Israel-Palestine

Why in News

Recently, Israeli armed forces attacked **Al-Aqsa Mosque in the Haram esh-Sharif in Jerusalem**, ahead of a march by Zionist nationalists commemorating Israel's capture of the eastern half of the city in 1967.

- The threatened eviction of dozens of Palestinian families in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of **Sheikh Jarrah** escalated the crisis further.
- **Zionism** is a worldwide Jewish movement that resulted in the establishment and development of the state of Israel and that now supports the state of Israel as a Jewish homeland.

Key Points

➤ Al-Aqsa Mosque:

- It is one of the holiest structures in the Islamic faith. It sits inside a 35-acre site known by Muslims as Haram al-Sharif, or the Noble Sanctuary, and by Jews as the Temple Mount.
 - The site is part of the Old City of Jerusalem, **sacred to Christians, Jews and Muslims.**
- It is believed to have been **completed early in the eighth century** and faces the Dome of the Rock, the golden-domed Islamic shrine that is a widely recognized symbol of Jerusalem.
- The **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO**, has classified the **Old City of Jerusalem and its walls as a World Heritage Site.**

➤ Conflict over Jerusalem:

- Jerusalem has been at the centre of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. According to the original 1947 **United Nations (UN)** partition plan, Jerusalem was proposed to be an international city.
- But in the **first Arab Israel war of 1948**, the Israelis captured the western half of the city, and Jordan took the eastern part, including the Old City that houses Haram al-Sharif.
- Israel captured East Jerusalem from Jordan in the **Six-Day War 1967** and annexed it later.
 - Since its annexation, **Israel has expanded settlements in East Jerusalem.**

- **Israel** sees the whole city as its **"unified, eternal capital"**, whereas the **Palestinian leadership** across the political spectrum have maintained that they would not accept any compromise formula for the future Palestinian state unless **East Jerusalem is its capital.**

➤ Sheikh Jarrah Issue:

- Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were forced out of their homes when the State of Israel was created in historical Palestine in 1948.
 - Twenty-eight of those **Palestinian families moved to Sheikh Jarrah in East Jerusalem to settle there.**
- In 1956, when East Jerusalem was ruled by Jordan, the Jordanian Ministry of Construction and Development and the **UN Relief and Works Agency facilitated the construction of houses for these families in Sheikh Jarrah.** But Israel would capture East Jerusalem from Jordan in 1967.
 - By the early 1970s, **Jewish agencies started demanding the families leave the land.**
- Earlier this year (2021), the **Central Court in East Jerusalem upheld a decision to evict four Palestinian families** from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah in favor of Jewish settlers.
- The issue remains **unresolved and potentially inflammable.**

➤ India's Stand on Israel-Palestine Issue:

- India **recognised Israel in 1950** but it is also the **first non-Arab country to recognise Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO)** as the sole representative of the Palestinian.
 - India is also one of the first countries to **recognise the statehood of Palestine in 1988.**
- In 2014, India favored **UNHRC's** resolution to probe Israel's human rights violations in Gaza. Despite supporting the probe, **India abstained from voting against Israel in UNHRC in 2015.**
- As a part of Link West Policy, India has **de-hyphenated its relationship with Israel and Palestine in 2018** to treat both the countries mutually independent and exclusive.
- In June 2019, India **voted in favor of a decision introduced by Israel** in the **UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** that objected to granting consultative status to a Palestinian non-governmental organization.

- So far India has tried to maintain the image of its historical moral supporter for Palestinian self-determination, and at the same time to engage in the military, economic, and other strategic relations with Israel.

Indian Ocean Region

Indian Ocean Naval Symposium

Why in News

The 7th edition of Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) Conclave of Chiefs was hosted by the French Navy at Paris from 15th-16th Nov 21.

- The inaugural edition of IONS was held in Feb 2008 at New Delhi, with the Indian Navy as the Chair for two years. The IONS Chair is presently held in France.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - The IONS is a voluntary and inclusive initiative that brings together navies of Indian Ocean Region (IOR) littoral states to increase maritime co-operation and enhance regional security.
 - It also serves to develop an effective response mechanism and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) against natural disasters.
 - The chairmanship of IONS has been held by India (2008-10), UAE (2010-12), South Africa (2012-14), Australia (2014-16), Bangladesh (2016-18) and Islamic Republic of Iran (2018-21).
 - France assumed the Chairmanship in June 2021 for a two-year tenure.
- **Members:**
 - IONS includes 24 member nations that touch or lie within the IOR, and 8 observer nations.
 - The members have been geographically grouped into the following four sub-regions:
 - **South Asian Littorals:** Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan, Seychelles, Sri Lanka and United Kingdom (British Indian Ocean Territory)
 - **West Asian Littorals:** Iran, Oman, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates

- **East African Littorals:** France (Reunion), Kenya, Mauritius, Mozambique, South Africa, and Tanzania.
- **South East Asian and Australian Littorals:** Australia, Indonesia,

➤ Other Important Groupings/Initiatives Associated with IOR:

- **Indian Ocean Rim Association:** The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) was established in 1997.
 - It is aimed at strengthening regional cooperation and sustainable development within the Indian Ocean region.
- **Indian Ocean Commission:** Recently, India has been approved as an observer of the Indian Ocean Commission, the inter-governmental organization that coordinates maritime governance in the south-western Indian Ocean.
- **Information Fusion Centre for the Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR):** It was set up by India in 2018, as an information-sharing hub of maritime data.
- **Asia Africa Growth Corridor:** The idea of Asia Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) emerged in the joint declaration issued by India and Japan in 2016.
 - The AAGC is raised on four pillars of Development and Cooperation Projects, Quality Infrastructure and Institutional Connectivity, Enhancing Capacities and Skills and People-to-People partnership.
- **Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation:** It is a sub-regional organization that came into being in 1997 through the Bangkok Declaration.
 - It mainly aims to create an enabling environment for rapid economic development; accelerate social progress; and promote collaboration on matters of common interest in the IOR.

India First Responder In Indian Ocean Region

Why in News

Recently, the Defence Minister of India addressed the 5th World Congress on Disaster Management (WCDM) held in New Delhi.

Note:



- At the congress the Raksha Mantri asserted that, time and again India has proved itself to be “**first responder**” in the **Indian Ocean Region (IOR)**.
- The emerging concept of India as a “first responder” reflects the **country’s growing capability and increasing willingness to assume the role of a leading power**.

World Congress on Disaster Management

- It is a unique **initiative of Disaster management initiatives and convergence society** to bring researchers, policy makers and practitioners from around the world in the same platform to discuss various challenging issues of disaster risk management.
- Its mission is to **promote interaction of science, policy and practices to enhance understanding of risks and advance actions** for reducing risks and building resilience to disasters.

Key Points

- **Manifestation of India As First Responder:**
 - **HADR Operations:** India has been regularly conducting exercises to deepen the HADR co-operation and coordination with its **neighbours and friendly countries** with a focus on sharing expertise and building capabilities.
 - The Indian government and military forces have played a critical role in supporting neighbouring countries in relief operations like the **2004 tsunami, 2015 Nepal Earthquake, etc.**
 - **Building Disaster Resilience:** India taking lead and offering expertise of **Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (DRI)** to its friendly countries .
 - **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)** was first proposed by India during the 2016 Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in New Delhi.
 - **Expatriate Evacuation Operations: Operation Rahat** in Yemen in 2015 when India rescued and evacuated over 6,700 persons, including over 1,940 citizens of more than 40 other countries.
 - **Non-Traditional Security Challenges:** The Indian Navy has emerged as the Indian Ocean’s default first responder to non-traditional security challenges.
 - To **combat piracy** in the **Gulf of Aden since 2008**, it deployed almost thirty warships that have escorted more than 1500 ships and thwarted around thirty piracy attempts.

- **Post-Conflict Relief And Rehabilitation:** India has often taken the lead in supporting countries going through post-conflict processes which require expert resources and significant funding.
 - **For Example**, India provided help to Afghanistan and Sri Lanka for post conflict recovery.
- **Refugee Flows:** Whenever people fear for their lives in South Asia, they often look up to India first. **India has consistently provided an emergency safe haven for refugee** and minority populations from across South Asia.

Indian Base in Mauritius' Agalega Islands

Why in News

Recently, Mauritius has denied a report that it has allowed **India to build a military base on the remote island of Agalega.**

- Earlier it was reported by a news broadcaster that an **airstrip and two jetties to house an Indian military base on Agalega island is under construction.**



Key Points

- **Background:**
 - In 2015, India signed an agreement with Mauritius for development of Agalega Islands.

Note:



- It provided for **setting up and upgradation of infrastructure for improving sea and air connectivity enhancing capabilities** of the Mauritian Defence Forces in safeguarding their interests in the Outer Island.
- However, since then, **there have been growing reports over the Indian naval and coastguard's interests in setting up transponder systems and surveillance infrastructure**, which has led to some local protests.
- **Agelega Project:**
 - Agelega project includes **the construction of a jetty, rebuilding, and extension of the runway, and building an airport terminal** on Agelega Island.
 - The USD 87 million projects are funded by India.
 - The project would add a new airport, port and logistics and communication facilities and potentially any other facilities related to the project.
 - The Agelega island is located in the **southwestern Indian Ocean**, 1,122 km north of Mauritius.
 - It has a total land area of 27 square miles (70 square km).
- **Other Recent Developments:**
 - In July 2021, Prime Ministers of India and Mauritius jointly **inaugurated a Supreme Court building** in Mauritius.
 - In February 2021, the Union Cabinet approved signing of the **Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA)** between India and Mauritius.
 - India and Mauritius signed a **USD 100 million Defence Line of Credit** agreement
 - Mauritius would get a Dornier aircraft and an **Advanced Light Helicopter Dhruv** on lease which would build its maritime security capabilities.
 - The two sides also discussed the **Chagos Archipelago** dispute, which was an issue of sovereignty and sustainable development before the **United Nations (UN)**.
 - In 2019, **India voted at the UN General Assembly in support of the Mauritian** position on the issue. India was one of the 116 countries that voted demanding that **the UK end its "colonial administration"** from the group of islands.
 - India **delivered 1,00,000 Covishield vaccines** to Mauritius.

Central America

Chile Rewrites Its Constitution

Why in News

The South American country of Chile has formed a Constitution Convention to write a new constitution to tackle a **"climate and ecological emergency."**

- As climate catastrophes become inevitable, countries that are already struggling with resource depletion (water, in Chile's case) are being forced to take action by its people.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - The new **constitution will focus on lithium mining and its regulation**. In addition, it will foresee how lithium mining benefits indigenous communities. The architects of the new constitution will also assess whether Chile's political system needs a revamp.
 - Their work will not only shape how this country of 19 million is governed. It will also determine the future of a soft, lustrous metal — lithium — lurking in the salt waters beneath this vast desert beside the **Andes Mountains**.
 - This reworking of the constitution is a **reminder of changing priorities in a world moving towards climate catastrophes**.
- **Lithium in Chile:**
 - Chile's **extremely rich in lithium** (second-largest lithium producer after Australia) - an essential component of batteries that support almost all modern smart devices.
 - As the world races to replace fossil fuel consumption, the demand for **lithium is causing a surge in its price**.

Protests in Cuba

Why in News

Recently, thousands of Cubans took to the streets across the country to protest longstanding restrictions on rights, scarcity of food and medicines, and the government's poor response to the **Covid-19 pandemic**.

- These protests are the **biggest anti-government demonstrations on the Communist-run island** in decades.



Key Points

- **Ongoing Protests:**
 - The anti-government protests erupted amid **Cuba's worst economic crisis** since the fall of the Soviet Union, its former ally, or end of the **cold war (1945-1991)**.
 - Cuba has been an authoritarian communist state for more than six decades.
 - Cuba has been **hit hard by US sanctions and Covid-19**.
 - Cubans have been angered by the collapse of the economy, food and medicine shortages, price hikes and the government's handling of the pandemic.
 - Protesters shouted "freedom" and **demanded for President Miguel Diaz-Canel to step down**.
 - On the other hand, Cuba's President **blamed the US for the turmoil**.
 - He called tight sanctions imposed by the US on Cuba, has resulted in a **policy of economic suffocation** and is the prime reason for protests in Cuba.
 - Further, the US President said the US stands with the people of Cuba in their call for freedom.
- **History of Cuba:**
 - From the 15th century, Cuba was a **colony of Spain** until the **Spanish-American War of 1898**, when Cuba was occupied by the US.

- However, Cuba gained nominal independence as a de facto United States protectorate in 1902.
- In 1940, Cuba attempted to strengthen its democratic system. But, political radicalization and social strife culminated in a coup and **subsequent dictatorship under Fulgencio Batista in 1952**.
- Open corruption and oppression under Batista's rule led to his ousting in January 1959 by the **26th of July Movement**. This established communist rule under the **leadership of Fidel Castro**.
- Since 1965, the state has been governed by the **Communist Party of Cuba**.
- Moreover, the country was a point of contention during the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States. A **nuclear war** nearly broke out during the **Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962**.

Miscellaneous

Indian Military Dependence on Russian Equipments

Why in News

According to the **Military Balance 2021**, India's present military arsenal is heavily stocked with **Russian-made or Russian-designed equipment**.

- The Military Balance is the **International Institute for Strategic Studies'** (global think tank) **annual assessment** of the military capabilities and defence economics of 171 countries worldwide.

Key Points

- **India-Russia's Military Relations:**
 - **Indian Dependence:** According to **Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)**, since 2010, Russia has been the source of nearly two-thirds (62%) of all Indian arms imports.
 - Further, India has been the largest Russian arms importer, accounting for nearly one-third (32%) of all Russian arms exports.
 - **Favourable Russian Military Exports to India:** Much of Russia's influence in India comes through its willingness to provide weapons systems and technologies that no other country will export to India.

Note:





The Russian Front
Russia still remains India's top weapons supplier and this complicates the relationship with the US

INKED DEALS

- \$5.4 bn** contract for S-400 missile system
- \$3 bn** pact to lease another nuclear attack submarine
- \$2 bn** contract to buy 4 frigates

IN THE PIPELINE

- \$1 bn+** deal for AK-203 assault rifles to be made in partnership with the Ordnance Factory Board
- \$1 bn** for Kamov Ka-226 choppers to be made in partnership with Hindustan Aeronautics
- \$1 bn** worth of emergency supplies, including ammunition, missiles, assault rifles and anti-tank systems

- The **US** only provides non-lethal defence technology like C-130j Super Hercules, C-13 Globemaster, P-8i Poseidon etc, while **Russia** provides high-end technology like Brahmos supersonic missile, S-400 anti-missile system.
- Russia also continues to offer advanced weapons platforms at relatively attractive rates.
- **Army Cooperation:** Around 10,000 pieces of military hardware are procured from Russia.
 - The **Indian Army's main battle tank** force is composed predominantly of Russian T-72M1 (66%) and T-90S (30%).
 - India is negotiating on the price of AK103 rifles for **Make in India**.
- **Naval Cooperation:** Indian Navy's sole operational aircraft carrier is a refurbished Soviet-era ship (**INS Vikramaditya**). The Navy's fighter fleet comprises 43 MiG-29K.
 - Four of the Navy's 10 guided-missile destroyers are **Russian Kashin class**, and six of its 17 frigates are **Russian Talwar class**.
 - The Navy's sole nuclear-powered submarine is on lease from Russia, and eight of the service's 14 other submarines are **Russian-origin Kilo class**.
- **Air Force Cooperation:** The Indian Air Force's 667-plane FGA (Fighter Ground Attack) fleet is 71% Russian-origin (39% Su-30s (**Sukhoi**), 22% MiG-21s, 9% MiG-29s).
 - All six of the service's air tankers are **Russian-made Il-78s**.

- **Missile Cooperation:** The country's only nuclear-capable supersonic cruise missile, **BrahMos**, is produced by a joint venture with Russia.
 - The S-400 Air Defence Missile Systems is expected to be delivered by 2021.
- **Military Exercises:** India and Russia conduct the **INDRA series** of military exercises, which began in 2003. However, the first joint Tri-Services Exercise was conducted in 2017.

Barbados: World's Newest Republic

Why in News

Recently, Barbados has officially removed **Queen Elizabeth II** as its head of state and become the **world's newest republic** nearly 400 years after the country became a British colony.

- The **Caribbean island nation**, 55 years after its independence, got rid of the remnants of colonial rule by separating from Britain.
- Barbados, however, will continue to be one of the 54 **Commonwealth nations**.



Commonwealth of Nations

- It is an international intergovernmental organization of countries that were **mostly former territories of the British Empire and dependencies**.
- It was established by the **London Declaration** in 1949.

Note:



- **Queen Elizabeth II** is the head of the Commonwealth.
- The current membership includes 54 Countries. The membership is based on **free and equal voluntary co-operation**.
 - It is home to 2.5 billion people, and includes both advanced economies and developing countries.
- The last country to join the Commonwealth was **Rwanda** in 2009.
- The **Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting** is a **biennial summit** meeting of the heads of government from all Commonwealth nations.

Tax Inspectors Without Borders Programme

Why in News

Recently, the **United Nations Development Programme** (UNDP) and the **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development** (OECD), have launched the **Tax Inspectors Without Borders (TIWB) Programme** in Seychelles.

- **India has been chosen as the Partner Administration** and has provided **Tax Expert** for this programme.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - It is expected to be of **12 months duration** where India aims to aid Seychelles in **strengthening its tax administration by transferring technical know-how and skills** to its tax auditors through sharing of best audit practices.
 - It is the **sixth TIWB programme** which India has supported by providing **Tax Expert**.
 - **Fifth TIWB programme** with India was launched in Bhutan in June 2021.
- **Tax Inspectors Without Borders Programme:**
 - TIWB is a **capacity-building programme**.
 - It is a **joint OECD/UNDP initiative launched in July 2015** to strengthen developing countries' auditing capacity and multinationals' compliance worldwide.
 - It deploys qualified experts in developing countries **across Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean** to help build tax capacity in the areas of audit, criminal tax investigations and the effective use of automatically exchanged information.

- TIWB assistance **has led to increased domestic resource mobilisation** in some of the least developed countries in the world.

New Quad

Why in News

Recently, the **Foreign Ministers of India, the US, Israel and the UAE** concluded a virtual meeting. The meeting is a strong **manifestation of the changes in West Asian geopolitics** and formation of **another Quad like grouping in the Middle East**.

- **India's involvement** in this new grouping **reflects a shift in its foreign policy**.

Key Points

- **Factors Responsible for New Grouping:**
 - **Abraham Accord:** The new grouping is possible after the resumption of formal diplomatic relations between Israel and the UAE, through the **Abraham Accord**.
 - **Tackling Turkey's Regional Dominance:** The new Quad can be termed as a result of converging interests between India, the UAE, and Israel amidst Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan's assertive claims for the leadership of the Islamic world.
 - **US Pivot to Asia:** The US is clearly seeking to lessen its footprint in the Middle East as part of its pivot to East Asia to tackle China's rise, which is redrawing West Asia's traditional equations.
 - In order to contain rising China's assertiveness, the US under its 'pivot to Asia policy' has launched **Quad initiative, Indo pacific narrative**.

Quad

- It is a **four-nation alliance of India, Australia, USA and Japan** which was **established in 2007**.
 - The idea of Quad was first mooted by former **Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe**.
- It is often dubbed as an **"Asian" or "mini" North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)**, and is viewed as a **counterbalance to China's military and economic clout** in the Indo-Pacific region.
- Interestingly, the QUAD, which used to be known as the quadrilateral security dialogue, is **now known as the quadrilateral framework** to indicate it has **gone beyond a narrow security dialogue**.

Note:



India-Australia First 2+2 Dialogue

Why in News

Recently, the foreign and defence ministers of India and Australia held the first India-Australia 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue in New Delhi.

- The inaugural dialogue is held in pursuant to the elevation of India-Australia bilateral relations to **comprehensive strategic partnership** during the India-Australia **Leaders' virtual summit** in 2021.

Key Points

- 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue is the highest-level institutional mechanism between the two countries.
- It is a format of dialogue where the defence/foreign ministers or secretaries meet with their counterparts from another country.
- India holds such talks with Australia, Japan and the USA.

Congressional Gold Medal

Why in News

Recently, a resolution has been reintroduced in the US House of Representatives to posthumously award the Congressional Gold Medal to **Mahatma Gandhi** for his contributions made through his methods of non-violence.

- If given the award, Mahatma Gandhi **would become the first Indian to receive the Congressional Gold Medal**, which is the **highest civilian award in the US**.

Key Points

- **About the Award:**
 - The **US Congress (legislature)** has **commissioned gold medals** as its **highest expression of national appreciation** for distinguished achievements and contributions.
 - The **first recipients** of the medal were **participants of the American Revolution (1775-83), the War of 1812 and the Mexican War (1846-48)**.
 - Most recently, the medal was **awarded to the US Capitol Police** and those who protected the US Capitol on 6th January 2021, the day of the siege.

St. Queen Ketevan's Relics: Georgia

Why in News

Recently, **India has gifted one part of the holy relics of 17th century St. Queen Ketevan to the Georgian government**.

- These relics were gifted on the **first ever visit of India's External Affairs Minister to independent Georgia**.
- Georgia is a **strategically important country situated at the intersection of Eastern Europe and Western Asia**.

Church of St. Augustine

- Church of St. Augustine is a ruined church complex located in Goa.
- The church was completed in 1602 by Augustinian monks who landed in Goa in 1587.
- The church was abandoned in 1835 after the Portuguese government of Goa began evicting many religious orders in Goa under its new repressive policies.
- The subsequent neglect caused the vault of the church to collapse in 1842.
- It is a part of the **Churches and convents of Goa**, which is a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**.

Caucasus

- Mountain system and region **lying between the Black Sea (west) and the Caspian Sea (east)** and occupied by **Russia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia**.



Global Expansion of Nuclear Arsenal: SIPRI Report

Why in News

According to a recent report published in the **SIPRI Yearbook 2021**, the **number of nuclear warheads which are ready and deployed have increased globally**.

- The SIPRI Yearbook is **released by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)** which researches international armament and conflict.
- The SIPRI "Yearbook 2021" assesses the current state of armaments, disarmament and international security.

Key Points

- **Nine Nuclear Armed States:**
 - The nine nuclear armed states are: **US, Russia, the U.K., France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea**.
 - These countries **together possessed an estimated 13,080 nuclear weapons** at the start of 2021.
 - **Russia and the US together possessed over 90% of global nuclear weapons** and have extensive and expensive modernisation programmes under way.
 - Both the US and **Russia have approved** the extension of the **New START treaty**.
 - The Treaty is the last remaining **nuclear Russia-US arms control treaty** which expired in February 2021.
 - **China's nuclear arsenal consisted of 350 warheads up from 320** at the start of 2020.
 - China is in the middle of a significant modernisation and expansion of its nuclear weapon inventory.
 - **India possessed an estimated 156 nuclear warheads** at the start of 2021 **compared to 150** at the start of last year, while **Pakistan had 165 warheads, up from 160** in 2020.
 - India and Pakistan are seeking new technologies and capabilities that dangerously undermine each other's defence under the nuclear threshold.
 - **Low Levels of Transparency:** The availability of reliable information on the status of the nuclear arsenals and capabilities of the nuclear-armed states vary considerably.

Nuclear Weapons Treaty

- **Treaties Preventing Nuclear Proliferation and Testing**
 - The **Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)**.
 - The Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests In The Atmosphere, In Outer Space And Under Water, also known as the **Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT)**.
 - The **Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)** was signed in 1996 but has yet to enter into force.
 - The **Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)**, which will enter into force on 22nd January 2021.
- **Other Related Initiatives:**
 - **Nuclear Suppliers Group**, the **Missile Technology Control Regime**, the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, and the **Wassenaar Arrangement**.
- **India's Nuclear Weapon Program:**
 - India **tested its first nuclear device in May 1974**, and **remains outside both the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)**.
 - However, India has a facility-specific safeguards agreement in place with the **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)** and a waiver from the **Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG)** allowing it to participate in global civilian nuclear technology commerce.
 - It was admitted as a member into the **Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR)** in 2016, **Wassenaar Arrangement** in 2017 and **Australia Group** in 2018.
 - India **maintains its official commitment to no-first-use of nuclear weapons**.
- **Largest Military Spenders:**
 - The growth in **total spending in 2020** was largely influenced by expenditure patterns in the **United States and China** (first and second largest spenders respectively).
 - **India's** spending of USD 72.9 billion, an increase of 2.1% in 2020, ranked it as the **third highest spender in the world**.
- **Importers of Major Arms:**
 - SIPRI **identified 164 states** as importers of major arms in 2016-20.

- **Country Wise:** The **five largest arms importers** were **Saudi Arabia, India, Egypt, Australia and China**, which together accounted for 36% of total arms imports.
- **Region wise:** The region that received the largest volume of major arms supplies in 2016-20 was **Asia and Oceania**, accounting for 42% of the

global total, followed by the **Middle East**, which received 33%.

➤ **Suppliers of Major Arms:**

- The **five largest suppliers** in 2016-20 - the **United States, Russia, France, Germany and China** - accounted for 76% of the total volume of exports of major arms.



Note:



Key Points

Details

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Summary

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Summary