



India & Gulf Countries

For Prelims: Types of Trade Agreements, India & Gulf Countries

For Mains: India and its Neighbourhood, Bilateral Groupings & Agreements, Significance of Indian-Gulf Relations

Why in News?

Recently, Indian Vice President visited **Qatar**, which is one of the [Gulf Cooperation Council \(GCC\) Countries \(Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE\)](#), where he highlighted the **strength of India-Qatar ties and called for building an enabling environment and forging more collaborations** for mutual benefit.



What are the Key Highlights of the Vice President's Visit to Qatar?

- **India-Qatar Start Up bridge:**
 - The Vice President launched the "India-Qatar Start Up bridge" that **aims to link the start-up ecosystems of the two countries.**
 - India has emerged as the **3rd largest ecosystem for startups globally**, with

over 70,000 registered Startups.

- India is home to 100 unicorns with **a total valuation of over USD 300 billion.**

- **Environment and Climate Change:**

- India has been making sustained efforts for the protection of environment and combating climate change.
- He recalled **India's leadership in establishing the [International Solar Alliance \(ISA\)](#)** and increasing the thrust on renewable energy.
- He invited Qatar, as **India's trusted partner in its energy security**, to be a partner in this journey for sustainability and join the ISA.

- **Joint Business Council Between Business Chambers:**

- He expressed happiness that a Joint Business Council between Business Chambers of India and Qatar has been established and that a Joint Task Force on Investments would take its work forward.
- He also complimented Invest **India and Qatar Investment Promotion Agency for entering into a partnership of guiding and assisting businesses** on both sides to tap new and emerging opportunities.

- **Collaborations at Multilateral Forums:**

- He called for more collaboration between India and Qatar at multilateral forums like the **[Inter Parliamentary Union \(IPU\)](#)**, Asian Parliamentary Assembly, and others.

Why is the Gulf Region Crucial for India?

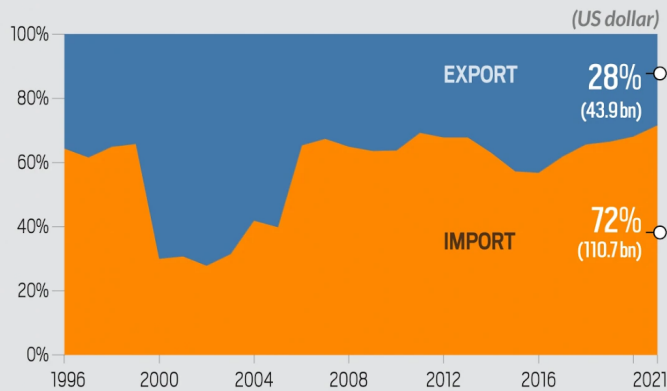
- India has enjoyed **centuries of good relations with countries like Iran, while smaller gas-rich nation Qatar is one of India's closest allies** in the region.
- India shares good relations with most of the countries in the Gulf.
- The **two most important reasons for the relationship are oil and gas, and trade.**
- Two additional reasons are the **huge number of Indians who work in the Gulf countries, and the remittance** they send back home.

How much trade does India do with countries in this region?

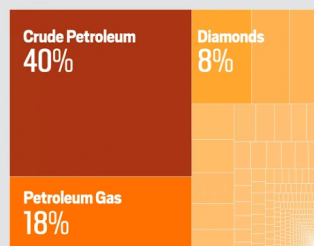
- **UAE:**

- The UAE was **India's third largest trading partner in 2021-2022**, and second largest for both exports (USD 28 billion) and imports (USD 45 billion) when these are counted individually.
- In terms of total trade volume, the UAE (USD 72.9 billion) was **behind the United States (USD 1.19 trillion) and China (USD 1.15 trillion).**
- The UAE accounted for **6.6% of India's total exports and 7.3% of imports in the last financial year**, up 68.4% since the previous year when international trade was impacted by the pandemic.

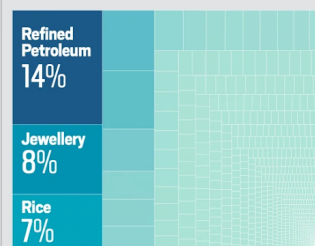
INDIA'S TRADE WITH GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL



INDIA'S TOP 3 IMPORTS



INDIA'S TOP 3 EXPORTS



▪ Saudi Arabia:

- At a total volume of USD 42.9 billion in 2021-22, **Saudi Arabia was India's fourth largest trading partner.**
- While exports were low at USD 8.76 billion (2.07% of India's total exports), imports from **Saudi Arabia were the fourth largest at USD 34.1 billion (7%),** up 50% from the previous year. Most of it was crude oil.

▪ Iraq:

- It was **India's fifth largest trading partner** in 2021-22 at USD 34.3 billion.

▪ Qatar:

- The total trade was USD 15 billion, accounting for just 1.4% of India's total trade, but the country is India's most important supplier of natural gas.
- Qatar accounts for **41% of India's total natural gas imports.**
 - The UAE accounts for another 11%.

▪ Oman:

- For Oman, India was the 3rd largest (after UAE and China) source for its imports and 3rd largest market (after UAE and Saudi Arabia) for its non-oil exports in 2019.
- Major Indian financial institutions have a presence in Oman. Indian companies have invested in Oman in sectors like iron and steel, cement, fertilisers, textile etc.

How much oil does India import?

- The 239 million tonnes of oil petroleum imports were worth USD 77 billion and accounted for **nearly one-fifth of the country's total imports in 2021.**
- The share of Persian Gulf countries in **India's crude imports has remained at around 60%** over the last 15 years.
- In 2021-2022, the **largest exporter of oil to India was Iraq**, whose share has gone up from 9% in 2009-2010 to 22%.
- Saudi Arabia has accounted for 17-18% of India's oil imports for over a decade. Kuwait and UAE remain major oil exporters to India. Iran used to be the second largest oil exporter to India in 2009-2010, its share went down to less than 1% in 2020-21, due to US sanctions.

What is the Scenario of Indians in the Gulf and the Remittances?

- More than 13.46 million Indian citizens work abroad. If [Persons of Indian Origin](#) (those who have taken up citizenship of other countries, and their descendants) are added, this number goes up to over 32 million.
- Counting only the 13.4 million **non-resident Indians (NRIs)**, the Gulf has the largest numbers.
 - The UAE (3.42 million), Saudi Arabia (2.6 million) and Kuwait (1.03 million) together account for over half of all NRIs.
- In terms of remittances from abroad, **India was the largest recipient in 2020 at USD 83.15 billion**, according to World Bank data.
 - This was nearly **twice the remittances to the next highest recipient**, Mexico, at USD 42.9 billion.
- The largest contributor is the **huge Indian diaspora in the Gulf**.
 - The UAE accounted for 26.9%, Saudi Arabia for 11.6%, Qatar for 6.4%, Kuwait for 5.5% and Oman for 3%. Beyond the GCC, remittances from the US accounted for 22.9%, second only to the UAE.

What are Recent Developments?

- Recently, India and Oman signed a [Programme of Cooperation \(POC\)](#) in the fields of Science and Technology for the period 2022 – 2025.
 - The POC for Cooperation in the fields of Science and Technology was signed in pursuance of the Agreement for Cooperation in Science and Technology (S&T) concluded on 5th October, 1996 between Oman and India.
- In September 2021, India and the UAE [formally launched negotiations on the India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement \(CEPA\)](#).
- In 2021, the Indian External Affairs Minister met the Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where both countries discussed **bilateral cooperation in multilateral forums such as the [United Nations](#), [G-20](#) and [Gulf Cooperation Council \(GCC\)](#)**.
- In 2021, India and Bahrain agreed to strengthen their **historic ties, including in areas of defence and maritime security**.
- In 2020, the legal and legislative committee of Kuwait's National Assembly approved the **draft expat (expatriate) quota bill**.
 - According to the bill, **Indians should not exceed 15% of the population and if it is enacted into law**, over 8 lakh Indians could be forced out of Kuwait.

Way Forward

- There is a **need to focus on the new and long-term possibilities for economic cooperation with the Gulf countries**, which is looking at a future beyond oil.
 - The Gulf states have embarked on massive economic diversification and are investing in a variety of new projects including renewable energy, higher education, technological innovation, smart cities, and space commerce.
- With the rise of Khaleeji capitalism, the **Gulf countries today deliver economic and security assistance to friendly states**, build ports and infrastructure, acquire military bases and broker peace between warring parties and states.
 - The UAE currently chairs the [Indian Ocean Rim Association \(IORA\)](#) and has been eager to work with India in developing joint infrastructure projects.
 - India **needs to bring scale and depth to its regional initiatives** on connectivity and security in the Indian Ocean.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question

Q. Which of the following is not a member of 'Gulf Cooperation Council'? (2016)

- (a) Iran
- (c) Oman
- (b) Saudi Arabia
- (d) Kuwait

Ans: (a)

Exp:

- The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is an alliance of 6 countries in the Arabian Peninsula – Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Iran is not a member of the GCC.
- It was established in 1981 to promote economic, security, cultural and social cooperation between the members and holds a summit every year to discuss cooperation and regional affairs.
- Hence, option (a) is the correct answer.

Source: IE

GeM For Cooperatives

For Prelims: GeM Portal, Co-operatives

For Mains: Significance of GeM Portal and challenges posed by GeM Platform

Why in News?

The Union Cabinet has cleared up a proposal allowing cooperatives to sell products on the [**Government-e-Marketplace \(GeM\) platform**](#).

- The cooperatives may however be charged a transaction fee to cover the incremental costs.
- The validated list of cooperatives to be onboarded on the GeM - for pilot as well as subsequent scale up - will be decided by the [**Ministry of Cooperation**](#) in consultation with the GeM SPV (Special Purpose Vehicle).

What is the Gem Portal?

- **GeM** is a **one-stop National Public Procurement Portal** to facilitate online procurement of common use Goods & Services required by various Central and State Government Departments/Organisations/Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs).
- The procurement of goods and services by Ministries and the Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) is **mandatory for goods and services available on GeM**.
- It also **provides the tools of e-bidding and reverse e-auction** to facilitate the government users achieve the best value for their money.
- At present, GeM has more than 30 lakh products, over Rs. 10 lakh crores worth of transactions have happened so far at the portal.
- **Launch:**
 - It was launched in 2016 to bring transparency and efficiency in the government buying process.
- **Nodal Ministry:**
 - Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- **Recent Updates:**
 - [**Country of Origin Mandatory**](#): GeM has made it mandatory for sellers to enter the Country of Origin while registering all new products on GeM.
 - This has been enabled on the portal so that the buyers can choose to buy only

those products that meet the minimum 50% local content criteria.

What is the Significance of GeM?

- **Transparent and Cost-effective Procurement:** GeM enables quick, efficient, transparent and cost-effective procurement, especially when government organizations require products and services urgently to fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.
- **Promotion of [Atmanirbhar Bharat](#):** GeM has been promoting the Atmanirbhar Bharat policy, introduced in the wake of the [Covid-19 pandemic](#), meant to encourage self-reliance and boost small Indian manufacturers.
- **Entry of Small Local Sellers:** The Marketplace has facilitated entry of small local sellers in Public Procurement, while **implementing** '[Make in India](#)' and **MSME** Purchase Preference Policies of the Government in the true sense.
- **Multiple Entities at One Place:** The online marketplace can aggregate demand from multiple entities for similar products, and build on the preferences provided by State governments to small enterprises.

What are the Challenges associated with GeM?

- **Multiple Portals:**
 - There are multiple portals in Central government departments, such as the defence procurement portal, and the Indian Railways e-Procurement System, which could limit GeM's effort to achieve its mandate as the National Public Procurement Portal and provide the benefit of economies of scale and efficiency.
- **Lack of Compliance:**
 - It also faces a bit of a challenge in getting all Central organizations to comply with Rule 149 of the **General Financial Rules (GFR) 2017**, which mandates that all common-use goods and services that are available on the GeM portal should necessarily be procured on the platform.

Way Forward

- **Single Portal:** The multiple portals are leading to confusion among farmers and also cause synchronization challenges. A single portal for all the public purchases may help to solve this problem and will help in tackling the problem of misgovernance.
- **Imposition of penalty:** There should be penalties for misgovernance in matters related to agricultural marketing and an increase in penalties wherein they already exist. It will help in tackling the problem of lack of compliance.
- **Use of vernacular Language:** The user interface for public purchase portals should be in local language to tackle the issue of a particular language dominance.
- **Interoperability:** The public portals should ensure portability from one platform to another to ensure their smooth functioning.
- **Cost Competitiveness:** GeM Portal will help farmers and cooperatives find buyers for their products easily and will save them from losses which they incur due to rotting of the perishable products due to lack of sales and will also increase the cost competitiveness of their products as earlier fees by [Agricultural Produce Market Committees \(APMCs\)](#) of states had led huge increase in cost due to administrative inefficiency.
 - It will help in realizing the vision of **Doubling Farmers Income by 2022** as recommended by **Ashok Dalwai committee**.

What are Co-operatives?

- According to the [International Labour Organisation \(ILO\)](#), a cooperative is an **autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs** and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise.
- There are many **types of cooperatives** such as **Consumer** Cooperative Society, **Producer** Cooperative Society, **Credit** Cooperative Society, **Housing** Cooperative Society and **Marketing** Cooperative Society.

- The [United Nations General Assembly](#) had declared the year **2012 as the International Year of Cooperatives**.
- India is an agricultural country and laid the foundation of **World's biggest cooperative movement in the world**.
- In India, a **Co-operative based economic development model is very relevant** where each member works with a spirit of responsibility.

[Source: TH](#)

Heavy Metal Pollution

For Prelims: Heavy Metals, Heavy Metal Pollution, Namami Gange Mission, Central Water Commission

For Mains: Contribution of heavy metals to river pollution, Wastewater treatment plants

Why in News?

Recently, the **Center for Science and Environment** has reported that rivers of India are facing severe metal pollution.

- **Three out of every four** river monitoring stations in India have observed alarming levels of **heavy toxic metals** such as **lead, iron, nickel, cadmium, arsenic, chromium** and copper.

What is Heavy Metal Pollution?

- **Heavy Metals:**
 - **Heavy metals** may be defined as elements with an **atomic number** larger than **20** and an **atomic density greater than 5 g cm⁻³** that must possess metal-like characteristics. **Example: arsenic, cadmium, chromium, copper, lead, manganese, mercury, nickel, uranium etc.**
- **Heavy Metal Pollution:**
 - Heavy metal pollution has been caused in our **rivers, soils, and environment** as a result of rapidly growing **agriculture** and **metal industries**, [improper waste management](#), **heavy use of fertilizers**, and [pesticides](#).
 - **Agricultural and industrial operations**, [landfilling](#), **mining**, and **transportation** are the primary sources of heavy metals in **groundwater**.
 - Through the **agricultural water runoff heavy metals** reach upto river.
 - **Discharge of wastewater** from industries (like the tannery industry which is a big source of chromium heavy metals) directly into [river bodies](#) intensified the severity of the **heavy metal pollution**.
 - Heavy metals have the property of long persistent in plants, animals and environment.

What are the Sources of Heavy Metals?

- There are two kinds of sources through which the heavy metals enter into the environment.
 - **Natural Source:**

- Heavy Metals are naturally present in the **earth's crust**. Rocks are the natural source of heavy metals. Heavy Metals are present in the **rocks** in the form **minerals**. Examples: arsenic, copper, lead etc.
- **Anthropogenic Source:**
 - **Mining, industrial, and agricultural operations** are all anthropogenic sources of **heavy metals** in the environment.
 - These heavy metals are produced during the **mining** and **extraction** of various elements from their respective **ores**.
 - **Heavy metals emitted** into the atmosphere during **mining, smelting**, and other industrial activities are deposited on land by **dry** and **wet deposition**.
 - Discharge of **wastewaters** such as **industrial effluents** and **domestic sewage** add heavy metals to the environment.
 - Application of **chemical fertilizers** and **combustion of fossil fuels** also contribute to the **anthropogenic input of heavy metals** in the environment.

What has been Observed in Monitoring of Heavy Metal Pollution?

- There are **764 river quality monitoring stations** in India, spread over **28 states**.
- Out of the **33 monitoring stations in Ganga**, **10** had **high levels of heavy metals contaminants**.
- The **Central Water Commission** examined water samples from 688 sites for heavy metals between August 2018 and December 2020.
- **Total coliform** and **biochemical oxygen demand** were high in **239** and **88** of the **588 water quality stations** examined for pollution throughout **21 states**.
- It indicates that **wastewater treatment** from **industry, agricultural, and domestic households** is inadequate.
- According to the **Center for Science and Environment's State of the Environment Report 2022**, the river, which is the focus of the **Namami Gange mission**, contains high levels of lead, iron, nickel, cadmium, and arsenic (CSE).
- The report is a yearly compilation of data on environmental development obtained from public sources.
- According to the **Central Pollution Control Board**, **ten states** do not treat their sewage at all.
- In India, 72% of sewage waste is dumped untreated.

What are the Consequences of the Heavy Metal Pollution?

- These toxic heavy metals entering the environment may lead to **bioaccumulation and biomagnifications**.
 - **Bioaccumulation:**
 - The net **accumulation of a pollutant in an organism** from all sources, including water, air, and food, is known as bioaccumulation.'
 - **Biomagnifications:**
 - Biomagnification is the **accumulation of a chemical by an organism** as a result of water and food exposure, **resulting in an increase in concentration** that is higher than would have been expected from equilibrium.
- Some heavy metals have an effect on **biological activities** and **growth**, while others accumulate in one or more organs, resulting in a variety of **severe diseases** such as **cancers, skin diseases, nervous system disorders** etc.
 - **Metal toxicity** results in the production of **free radicals**, which **damages DNA**.
- These heavy metals are not readily degradable in nature and accumulate in the animal as well as human bodies to a **very high toxic** amount.
 - Heavy metal intake has been related to **developmental retardation, renal damage, a variety of cancers**, and **even death** in extreme cases.

What is Namami Gange Mission?

- Namami Gange mission is an **Integrated Conservation Mission**, approved as a '**Flagship Programme**' by the **Union Government** in June 2014 to accomplish the twin objectives of

effective **abatement of pollution and conservation** and rejuvenation of **National River Ganga**.

- It is being operated under the **Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Ministry of Jal Shakti**.
- The program is being implemented by the **National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)**, and its state counterpart organizations i.e **State Program Management Groups (SPMGs)**.
- **NMCG** is the implementation wing of **National Ganga Council** (set in 2016; which replaced the **National Ganga River Basin Authority - NGRBA**).
- **The main pillars of the programme are:**
 - Sewage Treatment Infrastructure
 - River-Front Development
 - River-Surface Cleaning
 - Biodiversity
 - Afforestation
 - Public Awareness
 - Industrial Effluent Monitoring
 - Ganga Gram

What is the Central Water Commission?

- The Central Water Commission is the apex technical organization in the country for development of water resources and is an attached organization of the **Ministry of Jal Shakti**.
- The Commission is responsible for **initiating, coordinating and furthering**, in consultation with the **State Governments**, the schemes for **control, conservation, development and utilization of water resources** throughout the country for the purpose of **irrigation, flood management, power generation, navigation** etc.

[Source: TH](#)

World Food Safety Day

For Prelims: World Food Safety Day, WHO, FAO, food security, SFSAI, FSSAI, Ayushman Bharat, POSHAN Abhiyaan, Anemia Mukta Bharat, Swachh Bharat Mission

For Mains: Need to Ensure Food Safety and related Challenges, Government Policies & Interventions

Why in News?

Every Year, 7th June is observed as [World Food Safety Day](#).

What are the Key Highlights of World Food Safety Day?

- **About:**
 - The [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) and the [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations \(FAO\)](#) jointly facilitate the observance of World Food Safety Day, in collaboration with Member States and other relevant organizations.

- It was **first celebrated in 2019**, to strengthen the commitment to scale up food safety made by the Addis Ababa Conference and the Geneva Forum in 2019 under the umbrella of **“The Future of Food Safety”**.
- **Aim:**
 - To **draw attention and inspire action to help prevent, detect and manage foodborne risks**, contributing to [food security](#), human health, economic prosperity, agriculture, market access, [tourism](#) and [sustainable development](#).
- **2022 Theme:**
 - Safer Food, Better Health
- **Need:**
 - **Foodborne illnesses:**
 - With an **estimated 600 million cases** of foodborne illnesses annually, unsafe food is a threat to human health and economies, disproportionately affecting vulnerable and marginalized people, especially women and children, populations affected by conflict, and migrants.
 - **Foodborne Disease Burden:**
 - An **estimated 420000 people around the world die every year** after eating contaminated food and children under 5 years of age carry 40% of the [foodborne disease burden](#), with 125 000 deaths every year.

What are the Related Initiatives?

- **Global:**
 - The [Codex Alimentarius](#), or "Food Code" is a collection of standards, guidelines and codes of practice adopted by the [Codex Alimentarius Commission](#).
 - The **Codex Alimentarius Commission is a joint intergovernmental body** of the Food and Agriculture Organization and World Health Organization.
 - Currently, it has **189 members and India is a member**.
- **India's:**
 - **State Food Safety Index:**
 - FSSAI has developed the [State Food Safety Index \(SFSI\)](#) to measure the performance of States on five parameters of food safety.
 - The **parameters include** Human Resources and Institutional Arrangements, Compliance, Food Testing- Infrastructure and Surveillance, Training and Capacity Building and Consumer Empowerment.
 - **Eat Right India Movement:**
 - It is an **initiative of the Government of India and [Food Safety and Standards Authority of India \(FSSAI\)](#) to transform the country's food system** in order to ensure safe, healthy and sustainable food for all Indians.
 - Eat Right India is aligned to the [National Health Policy 2017](#) with its focus on preventive and promotive healthcare and flagship programmes like [Ayushman Bharat](#), [POSHAN Abhiyaan](#), [Anemia Mukh Bharat](#) and [Swachh Bharat Mission](#).
 - **Eat Right Awards:**
 - FSSAI has instituted the '**Eat Right Awards**' to recognize the contribution of **food companies** and individuals to empower citizens to choose safe and healthy food options, which would help improve their health and well-being.
 - **Eat Right Mela:**
 - Organised by FSSAI, it is an **outreach activity for citizens to nudge them towards eating right**. It is organised to make citizens aware of the health and nutrition benefits of different types of food.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question

Q. Consider the following statements: (2018)

1. The Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 replaced the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954.
2. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is under the charge of Director General of

Health Services in the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans: (a)

Exp:

- Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is an autonomous body under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, GoI. It has been established under Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 which consolidates various acts and orders that have hitherto handled food related issues in various Ministries and Departments.
- The **Food Standards and Safety Act, 2006 replaced several Acts and Orders** like the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954; Fruit Products Order, 1955; etc. Hence, statement 1 is correct.
- FSSAI is headed by a non-executive Chairperson, appointed by the Central Government, either holding or have held a position not below the rank of Secretary to the GoI. It is **not under the charge of Director General of Health Services**. Hence, statement 2 is not correct.
- FSSAI has been created for laying down science based standards for articles of food and to regulate their manufacture, storage, distribution, sale and import to ensure availability of safe and wholesome food for human consumption. Therefore, option (a) is the correct answer.

Source: HT

Rubber Industry

For Prelims: Essential conditions for the growth of Rubber, Production and Distribution of Rubber, FTAs, MSME

For Mains: Distribution and Production of Rubber Industry in India and related issues

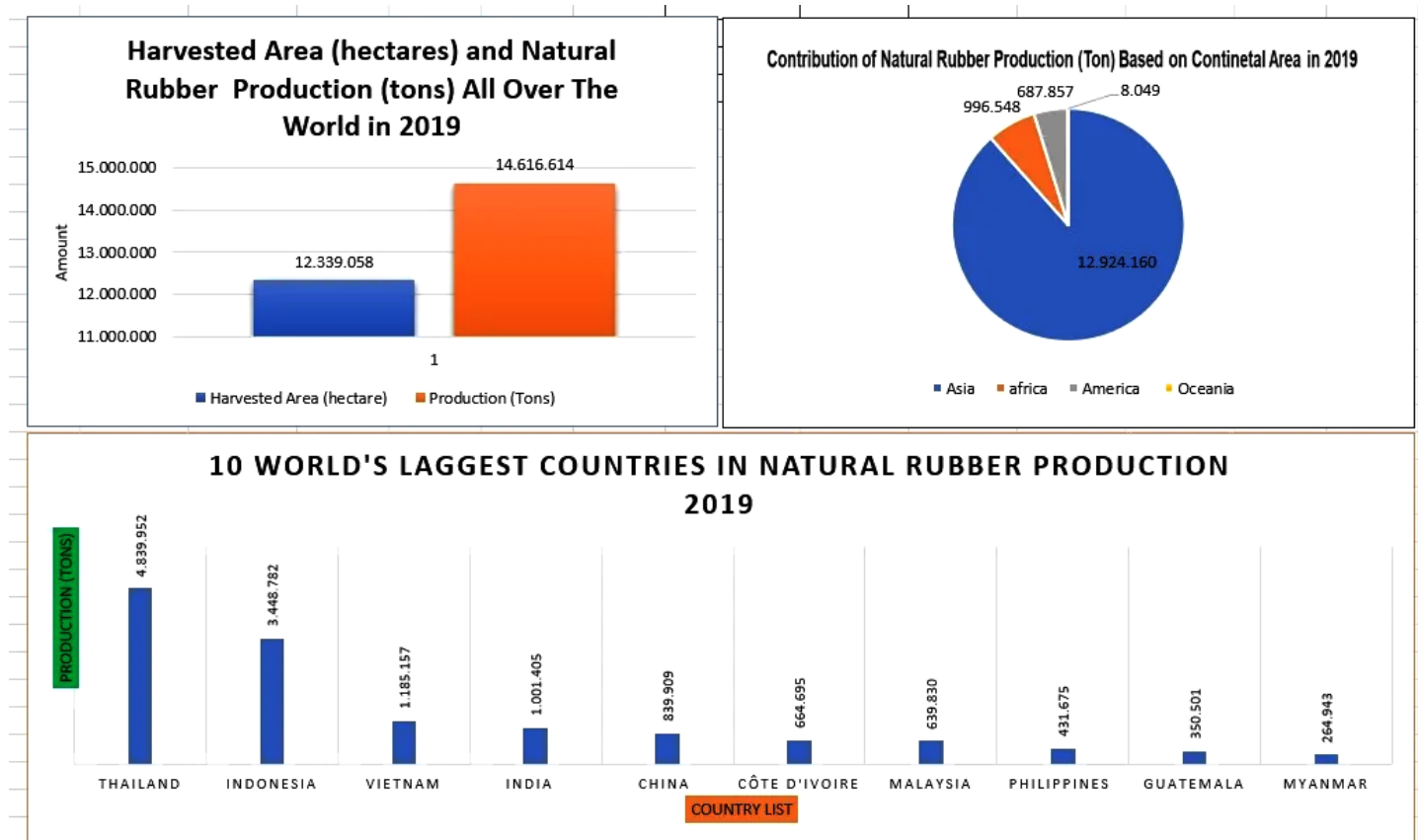
Why in News?

According to the **All India Rubber Industries Association (AIRIA)**, the USD 2-billion non-tyre rubber sector is aiming to double its exports by 2025.

- The global market for rubber products, which is estimated at around \$212 billion is expected to grow by 2025.
- The government should take steps to ensure that the terms of the [Free Trade Agreements \(FTAs\)](#) benefit the [MSMEs](#) to increase rubber exports.
- As MSMEs are so important to India's economy and commerce, India's should include FTAs provisions to address the special concerns, demands and barriers that MSMEs may face while doing business in foreign markets.

What is AIRIA (All India Rubber Industries Association)?

- The All-India Rubber Industries Association (AIRIA) is a not for profit making body serving the rubber industry and trade with the objectives of safeguarding and promoting interests of the industry.



What are Key Features of Rubber?

- **About:**
 - Natural rubber is a polymer of isoprene, an organic compound.
 - Rubber is a coherent elastic solid obtained from the latex of a number of tropical trees of which **Hevea brasiliensis** is the most important.
 - Rubber trees have an economic life period of around 32 years in plantations.
- **Sources:**
 - Natural rubber comes from various sources, the most common being the Pará rubber tree (**Hevea brasiliensis**). It grows well under cultivation and **yields latex** for several years.
 - The vines in the **genus Landolphia** yield the Congo rubber. These vines cannot be grown in cultivation and this led to large-scale exploitation of the wild plants in Congo.
 - Latex is also present in dandelion milk which can be used to produce rubber.
- **Cultivation of Rubber Trees:**
 - **Soil:**
 - The trees demand well-drained and well-weathered soils.
 - **Lateritic type, alluvial, sedimentary types, and non lateritic red soils** are best for the growth of these trees.
 - **Precipitation and Temperature:**
 - An evenly distributed rainfall with **at least 100 rainy days a year** and a temperature range of about **20 to 34°C** are optimum conditions for the growth of the Hevea rubber tree.
 - A **humidity of around 80%, 2000 hours of sunshine, and absence of strong winds** are also necessary for the best results.
- **Uses:**
 - Rubber is used for a variety of purposes from **erasing pencil marks to manufacturing**

tyres, tubes and a large number of industrial products.

- **Natural rubber is preferred over synthetic rubber** due to its high tensile strength and vibration dampening properties, along with tear resistance.
 - This makes it important for the construction and automobile industries.
 - The growth of the automobile market across countries is anticipated to increase the demand for natural rubber production.
 - The rise in demand for latex products, such as catheters, gloves, and belts, is also a factor that is likely to aid in the growth of the rubber market.
- **Production and Distribution:**
 - According to FAOStat (Food and Agricultural Organisation Corporate Statistical Database) of 2019, Thailand is the largest Producer of Rubber in the World followed by Indonesia, Malaysia, India, China etc.

What is the Status of Rubber Production in India?

- According to FAOStat 2019, India is the **fourth largest producer and consumer of Rubber in the World.**
- **Consumption:**
 - Most of the rubber consumption came from the transportation sector, followed by the footwear industry.
- **Exports:**
 - The quantity of natural rubber which was exported from India accounted for over 12 thousand metric tons during fiscal year 2020.
 - The leading countries importing natural rubber from India were **Germany, Brazil, the United States and Italy.**
 - Export products included **automotive tires and tubes, footwear, pharmaceutical goods and hoses, coats and aprons.**
- **Distribution:**
 - The first rubber plantations in India were set up in 1895 on the hill slopes of Kerala.
 - However, rubber cultivation on a commercial scale was introduced in 1902.
 - **Kerala** is the **largest producer** of natural rubber in India.
 - **Major areas:** Kottayam, Kollam, Ernakulam, Kozhikode districts produce practically all the rubber of this state.
 - **Tamil Nadu:**
 - Nilgiri, Madurai, Kanniyakumari, Coimbatore and Salem are the chief rubber producing districts of Tamil Nadu.
 - **Karnataka:**
 - Chikmagalur and Kodagu are the main producing districts.
 - **Tripura, Assam, Andaman and Nicobar, Goa** etc are some other rubber producing States.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question

Q. Match List-I with List-II and select the correct answer using the code given below the Lists: (2008)

List-I (Board)	List-II (Headquarters)
A. Coffee Board	1. Bengaluru
B. Rubber Board	2. Guntur
C. Tea Board	3. Kottayam
D. Tobacco Board	4. Kolkata

Code: A B C D

- (a) 2 4 3 1
- (b) 1 3 4 2
- (c) 2 3 4 1

(d) 1 4 3 2

Ans: (b)

Exp:

- **Coffee Board:** It was established through the Coffee Act VII, 1942. The Coffee Board, under the administrative control of Ministry of Commerce and Industry, is an organisation that promotes coffee production in India. It is headquartered in Bengaluru.
- **Rubber Board:** It was constituted under the Rubber Act, 1947 and Rubber Rules 1955. Rubber Board is a statutory body under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry for the overall development of the rubber industry in the country. Head Office of the Board is located at Kottayam in the State of Kerala.
- **Tea Board:** It was established by the Tea Act in 1953. The Tea Board of India is a State agency of the Govt established to promote the cultivation, processing, and domestic trade as well as export of tea from India. It is headquartered in Kolkata.
- **Tobacco Board:** It was constituted as a statutory body on 1st January, 1976 under Section (4) of the Tobacco Board Act, 1975. The Board is headed by a Chairman with its headquarters at Guntur, Andhra Pradesh. It is responsible for the development of the tobacco industry. Therefore, option (b) is the correct answer.

Source: IE

World Summit of Information Society 2022

Why in News?

Recently, the Minister of Communications attended the opening ceremony of the **World Summit of Information Society (WSIS) 2022** in Geneva, Switzerland, where **India showcased its telecom prowess during multilateral & bilateral engagements.**

- The participation comes with India contesting the re-election to the [ITU \(International Telecommunication Union\) Council](#), for the term 2023-2026. India has been a member of ITU, since 1869 and has been continuously participating, actively in the works, and activities of the Union.

What is WSIS?

- The World Summit on the Information Society Forum 2022 represents the world's **largest annual gathering of the 'ICT for development' community.**
- The Forum provides **structured opportunities to network, learn and participate in multi-stakeholder discussions and consultations on WSIS implementation.**
- The Agenda and Programme of the Forum will be built on the basis of the submissions received during the Open Consultation Process.
- Furthermore, the 2022 WSIS Forum will **provide an opportunity to serve as a platform to track the achievements of WSIS Action Lines** in collaboration with the UN Agencies involved and provide information and analyses of the implementation of WSIS Action Lines since 2005.

What are the Highlights of the Minister's Address?

- India has developed the Low mobility Large Coverage Standard, earlier called **5Gi** using a new waveform that enables 5G towers to cover wider areas in rural and remote areas.
 - These standards were among the first 5G standards, which have been approved by the **ITU** and have also become part of Globally harmonized 3GPP (3rd Generation Partnership Project) Release 17 standards. These will be immensely helpful for countries with similar geographical spread.
- Over six hundred villages are being connected on **Optical Fibre cable**, with nearly 175,000 already connected.
- Villages left out of 4G connectivity are being covered through **Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF)**.
- India focuses on the **use of technologies that can accelerate development and bridge this divide**, like using E band wireless carriers, **LEO (Low Earth Orbit)** and **MEO (Middle earth Orbit)** satellite connectivity among others.
- India has issued the first service license for LEO or MEO connectivity and hopes to harness the technology to enable digital inclusion in remote areas.
- Developing 5G test bed, indigenous 4G and 5G stack, development of Indian 5G standards and setting up of 6G innovation forum are the initiatives to reduce cost, facilitate faster 5G spread in rural areas and eliminate dependency on specific vendors.

What is Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF)?

- USOF** ensures that there is universal **non-discriminatory access to quality ICT** services at economically efficient prices to people in rural and remote areas.
 - Currently, it is charged at the rate of 5%, while the TSPs demand it to be reduced to 3%.
- It was created under the Department of Telecommunications in **2002**.
- It is a **non-lapsable fund**, i.e., the unspent amount under a targeted financial year does not lapse and is accrued for next years' spending.
- All credits to this fund require **parliamentary approval** and it has a **statutory support** under **Indian Telegraph (Amendment) Act, 2003**.

[Source: PIB](#)

EX SAMPRITI-X

Why in News?

A joint military training exercise **Ex SAMPRITI-X between India and Bangladesh** is being conducted at Jashore Military Station in Bangladesh from 5th to 16th June 2022.



What are the Key Highlights about the Ex SAMPRITI-X?

- **About:**
 - SAMPRITI is an **important bilateral defence cooperation** endeavour conducted alternately by both countries which **aims to strengthen and widen the aspects of interoperability** and cooperation between both the armies.
- **Aim:**
 - To **strengthen interoperability between the two armies** and to understand each other's tactical drills and operational techniques.
- **Representation by India:**
 - The Indian contingent of company strength is being represented by a **Battalion of the DOGRA Regiment**.
- **Significance:**
 - During the joint military exercise, **armies of both the Nations will share expertise in multiple simulated scenarios** of [Counter Terrorism](#), Humanitarian Assistance & Disaster Relief and [UN Peacekeeping Force](#) under [United Nations](#) mandate.
 - The **participants will gain an understanding of each other's organisational structure** and tactical exercises.

What are the Other Military Exercises by India?

Joint Military Exercises of India with Other Countries	
Name of Exercise	Country
Garuda Shakti	Indonesia
Ekuverin	Maldives
Hand-in-Hand	China
Kurukshetra	Singapore
Mitra Shakti	Sri Lanka
Nomadic Elephant	Mongolia
Maitree Exercise	India & Thailand
Vajra Prahar	India & US
Yudh Abhyas	India & US
Shakti Exercise	India & France
Dharma Guardian	India & Japan

Surya Kiran	India & Nepal
SIMBEX	India & Singapore
Exercise LAMITYE	India & Seychelles

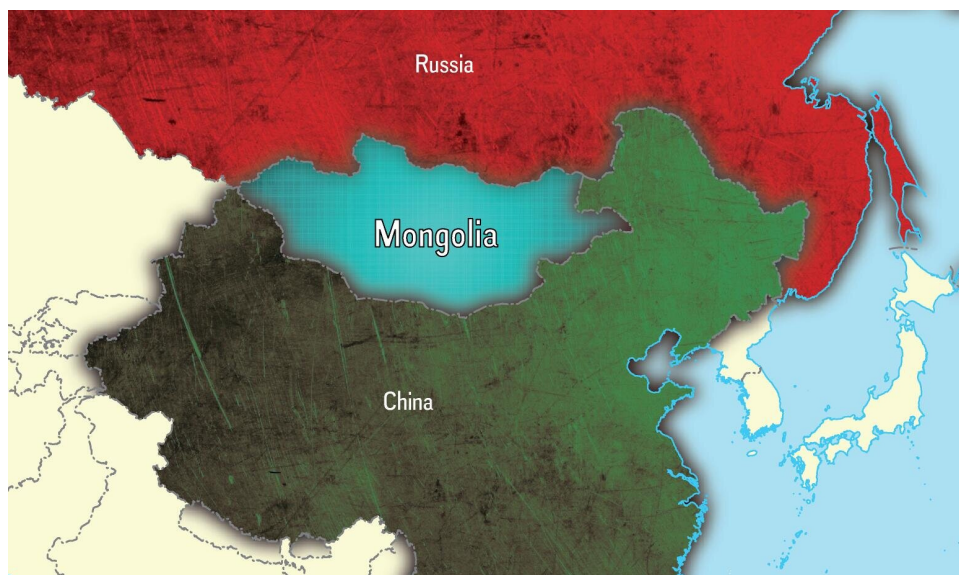
[Source: PIB](#)

Ex Khaan Quest 2022

Why in News?

A Multinational Peacekeeping exercise **“Ex Khaan Quest 2022”** featuring participation from military contingents from 16 countries **has commenced in Mongolia.**

- [Indian Army](#) is represented by a contingent from the **Ladakh Scouts.**
- [Nomadic Elephants](#) is the other Military Exercise which is Conducted between the two Countries.



What is the Ex Khaan Quest?

- Khaan Quest 2022 is a **multinational peacekeeping operations exercise conducted in Mongolia.**
 - It consists of a [United Nations Peacekeeping Mission](#) command post exercise, a UN PKO (PeaceKeeping Operation) Mission field training exercise, at the Mongolian Armed Forces' Five Hills Training Area.
- The exercise is designed to **improve peacekeeping capabilities, strengthen military-to-military relationships and enhance the core UN doctrine PKO competencies** of all participants.
 - The 2008 doctrine re-confirms and provides a contemporary understanding of how practitioners might apply the UN's three basic peacekeeping principles, namely: consent, impartiality and non-use of force, except in self-defence and defence of the mandate.
- The exercise will also **enable sharing of best practices between the Armed Forces of participating nations** and will include field training exercises, combat discussions, lectures and demonstration.

- The military exercise will **enhance the level of defence co-operation between Indian Army and participating countries** especially with the Mongolian Armed Forces which will enhance bilateral relations between the two countries.

Source: PIB

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