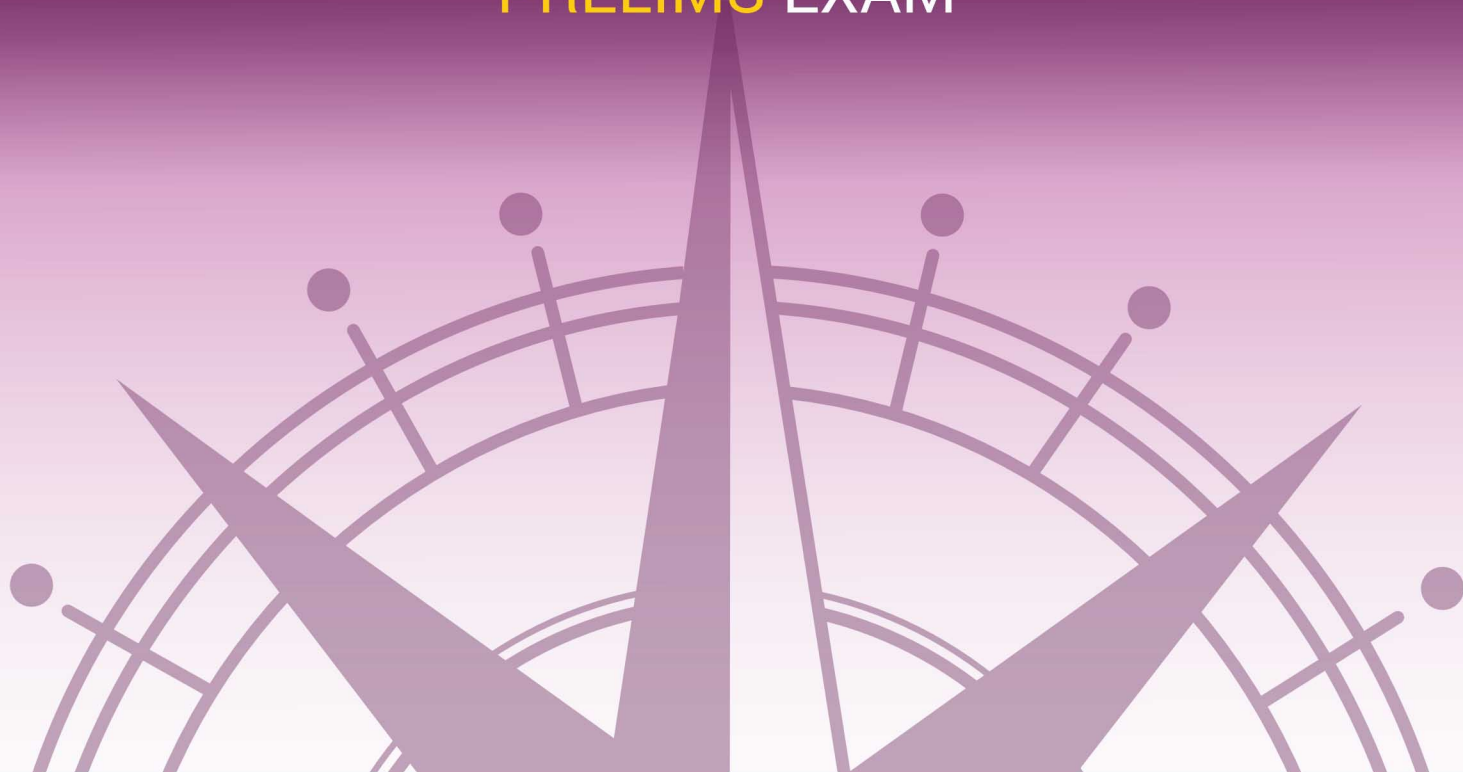


PRELIMS
COMPASS 2025

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

CURRENT AFFAIRS COMPILATION
UPSC CIVIL SERVICES
PRELIMS EXAM



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CONTENTS

INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

	6
1. UNITED NATIONS	6
2. OUR COMMON AGENDA	10
3. UN CONVENTION FOR LAW OF SEA (UNCLOS)	12
4. INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANISATION (IMO)	14
5. UN COMMISSION ON STATUS OF WOMEN	15
6. UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL	15
7. UNHCR: 1951 REFUGEE CONVENTION	16
8. GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM	17
9. UN WORLD FOOD PROGRAM	18
10. ECOSOC CHAMBER	18
11. INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE	19
12. INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT	20
13. UN COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE LAW	21
14. UN GLOBAL CONGRESS OF VICTIMS OF TERRORISM	21
15. COMPREHENSIVE CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM	21
16. UNISFA	23
17. GROUP OF FRIENDS	23
18. UNRWA	23
19. 1 ST COMMITTEE OF UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY - VARIOUS RESOLUTIONS	24
20. INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNAL FOR THE LAW OF THE SEA (ITLOS)	24
21. INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY (IAEA)	24
22. G20	25
23. INITIATIVES UNDER INDIA'S G20 PRESIDENCY	27
24. INDIA MIDDLE EAST EUROPE ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (IMEC)	30
25. INDIA UN CAPACITY BUILDING INITIATIVE	31

26. INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK FOR PROSPERITY	31
27. 'FIVE EYES' INTELLIGENCE ALLIANCE	32
28. FINANCIAL ACTION TASK FORCE	32
29. INTERPOL	33
30. SHANGHAI COOPERATION AGREEMENT (SCO)	34
31. EXPANSION OF BRICS	35
32. QUADRILATERAL SECURITY DIALOGUE (QUAD)	36
33. ORGANISATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION	36
34. COLLECTIVE SECURITY TREATY ORGANISATION	37
35. SAARC	37
36. CONFERENCE ON INTERACTION AND CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURES IN ASIA (CICA)	38
37. ASEAN	39
38. EAST ASIA SUMMIT (EAS)	40
39. EASTERN ECONOMIC FORUM	41
40. OPEC AND OPEC+	41
41. G7	42
42. COMMONWEALTH OF NATIONS	42
43. INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION (ILO)	42
44. UN CONVENTION AGAINST CORRUPTION	44
45. UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL ORGANISED CRIMES (UNTOC)	44
46. WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM (WEF)	44
47. COUNCIL OF EUROPE	45
48. MIDDLE EAST QUAD	45
49. GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL	47
50. INDIA'S ARCTIC POLICY	48
51. COLOMBO SECURITY CONCLAVE	50
52. NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANISATION (NATO)	50

53. TREATY ON CONVENTIONAL ARMED FORCES IN EUROPE (CFE)	50
54. WARSAW PACT	51
55. COLLECTIVE SECURITY TREATY ORGANISATION	51
56. ORGANISATION FOR SECURITY & COOPERATION IN EUROPE (OSCE)	51
57. MONTREUX CONVENTION	51
58. GLOBAL GATEWAY PROGRAM	52
59. COALITION FOR EPIDEMIC PREPAREDNESS INNOVATIONS	52
60. AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN TRANSIT TRADE AGREEMENT	52
61. TIR CONVENTION	52
62. JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OF ACTION (JCPOA)	53
63. MEKONG GANGA COOPERATION	53
64. THREE SEAS INITIATIVE	54
65. APEC	54
66. NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT (NAM)	54
67. BLETCHLEY DECLARATION	55

ARMS CONTROL 56

1. JOINT STATEMENT ON PREVENTING NUCLEAR WAR & ARMS RACE	56
2. NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY (NPT)	56
3. TREATY ON PROHIBITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS/ NUCLEAR WEAPON BAN TREATY	57
4. OUTER SPACE TREATIES	57
5. NUCLEAR SUPPLIERS GROUP	58
6. CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT	59
7. CIVIL NUCLEAR COOPERATION	59
8. HAGUE CODE OF CONDUCT	59
9. WASSENAAR ARRANGEMENT	59
10. AUSTRALIA GROUP	60
11. MISSILE TECHNOLOGY CONTROL REGIME	60
12. CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION	60
13. OPEN SKIES TREATY	61
14. INF TREATY	61
15. NEW START TREATY	62
16. ARMS TRADE TREATY (ATT)	62

17. COMPREHENSIVE TEST BAN TREATY ORGANISATION (CTBTO)	62
18. BIOLOGICAL AND TOXIN WEAPONS CONVENTION, 1972	62

REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS 64

1. ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK	64
2. NEW DEVELOPMENT BANK	64
3. ASIAN INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT BANK (AIIB)	64
4. SYSTEM FOR TRANSFER OF FINANCIAL MESSAGES (SPFS)	65
5. ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES (ECOWAS)	65
6. NORTHERN SEA ROUTE	66
7. BELT & ROAD INITIATIVE	66
8. PANAMA CANAL	67
9. EASTERN MARITIME CORRIDOR (EMC)	67
10. CHINA-PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (CPEC)	68
11. CHINA-MYANMAR ECONOMIC CORRIDOR	68
12. CHINA-NEPAL ECONOMIC CORRIDOR	69
13. BANGLADESH-CHINA-INDIA-MYANMAR ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (BCIM)	69
14. INTERNATIONAL NORTH-SOUTH TRANSPORT CORRIDOR (INSTC)	69
15. CHABAHAR PORT	70
16. KALADAN MULTIMODAL PROJECT	70
17. INDIA-MYANMAR-THAILAND TRILATERAL HIGHWAY	71
18. MOTIHARI-AMLEKHGUNJ PIPELINE	71
19. NAGORNO-KARABAKH	71
20. POWER OF SERBIA GAS PIPELINE	72
21. EUROPEAN UNION	72

INTERNATIONAL CRISIS 73

1. VENEZUELA-GUYANA CONFLICT	73
2. IRAN'S ATTACK ON "ANTI-IRANIAN TERRORIST GROUPS"	73
3. HOUTHIS ATTACKING RED SEA SHIPS & OPERATION PROSPERITY GUARDIAN	74
4. ASHGABAT AGREEMENT	76
5. ROHINGYA CRISIS	76

6. DIRTY BOMB	76	34. RULES OF ORIGIN	94
7. LIBYA CRISIS	77	35. INDIA EFTA TRADE & ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT	94
INITIATIVES IN NEWS	78	36. IMF INITIATIVES	95
1. 'EMIGRATION CHECK REQUIRED' (ECR COUNTRIES)	78	37. GLOBAL SOVEREIGN DEBT ROUNDTABLE (GSDR)	95
2. SURINAME	79	38. BLACK SEA GRAIN DEAL	96
3. EUROPEAN SKY SHIELD INITIATIVE	80	39. CONFLICT IN SUDAN	96
4. FINANCIAL INTERMEDIARY FUND	80	POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY	97
5. ICET	80	1. NEW POLITICAL MAP OF PAKISTAN	97
6. NORD STREAM 2 PIPELINE	81	2. PANGONG TSO	97
7. INDIAN OCEAN RIM ASSOCIATION (IORA)	81	3. EAST CONTAINER TERMINAL AT COLOMBO	98
8. INTERNATIONAL ENERGY AGENCY	82	4. AYN-AL-ASAD AND ERBIL	99
9. INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE, CRICKET INCLUDED IN OLYMPICS	82	5. LUSOPHONE COUNTRIES	99
10. COMMISSION ON LIMITS OF CONTINENTAL SHELF	83	6. ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR	99
11. PARTNERS IN BLUE PACIFIC	83	7. GLOBAL STRATEGIC CHOKE POINTS	100
12. MACOLIN CONVENTION	84	8. WEST ASIA/MIDDLE EAST	108
13. EURASIAN ECONOMIC UNION (EAEU)	84	9. INDIAN OCEAN REGION	111
14. IPMDA	84	10. PACIFIC OCEAN REGION	112
15. RESILIENT DEMOCRACIES STATEMENT	85	11. EURASIA	113
16. NON-MONEY FOR TERROR CONFERENCE (NMFT), 2025	85	12. EAST ASIAN SEA	114
17. SADC (SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY)	85	13. TAIWAN ISSUE	114
18. INDIA UN DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP FUND	86	14. GLOBAL CRISIS RESPONSE GROUP ON FOOD, ENERGY & FINANCE	114
19. BAPA+40	86	15. GREEN STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP	114
20. CURRENCY MONITORING LIST	86	16. BATKEN REGION & FERGHANA VALLEY	115
21. INDO PACIFIC REGIONAL DIALOGUE	87	17. MARIB	115
22. CHINA+1 STRATEGY	87	18. CAM RANH BAY BASE	115
23. ASEAN CONSENSUS	87	19. KUNDUZ	116
24. INDIA AUS ECTA	88	20. UKRAINE	116
25. PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES	88	21. NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES OF UKRAINE	117
26. LANCANG MEKONG COOPERATION	89	22. BLACK SEA SURROUNDING COUNTRIES	118
27. TWIPLOMACY	89	23. RIVERS DRAINING INTO BLACK SEA	118
28. CRITICAL MINERAL PARTNERSHIP	89	24. RIVERS OF EUROPE	118
29. GENEVA PACKAGE (WTO)	89	25. NORD STREAM 2 PIPELINE	119
30. ANTARCTIC TREATY AND BILL	91	26. BALTIC SEA BORDERING COUNTRIES	119
31. MIGRATION AGREEMENT (INDIA-GERMANY)	92	27. MINSK ACCORDS	120
32. SOUTH CHINA SEA	92	28. AGALEGA & ASSUMPTION ISLANDS	120
33. ISTANBUL CONVENTION	94	29. MASIRAH – OMAN	120
		30. NANGARHAR – AFGHANISTAN	120
		31. NINE DASH LINE	121
		32. INNOCENT PASSAGE	121

33. GREEN STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP	121
34. TRINCOMALEE	121
35. KAZAKHSTAN	122
36. PANGONG TSO LAKE	122

LOCATIONS IN NEWS 124

1. HORN OF AFRICA	124
2. SOMALIA	124
3. OKAVANGO RIVER BASIN	124
4. MALAWI	125
5. LOCATIONS IN SOUTH SUDAN	125
6. DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC)	126
7. BURKINA FASO	126
8. GAMBIA	126
9. TUNISIA	127
10. LAMU ARCHIPELAGO (KENYA)	127
11. MASS ABDUCTIONS IN KADUNA STATE OF NIGERIA	127
12. CHAD	128
13. TANZANIA	128
14. MOZAMBIQUE	129
15. GULF OF GUINEA	129
16. SABANG PORT	130
17. BOHAI SEA	131
18. LEBANON	131
19. PORTS IN ISRAEL (HAIFA, BILAT & ASHDOD)	131
20. BANIYAS, SYRIA	132
21. CIVIL WAR IN SYRIA	132
22. CAMBODIA	133
23. INDONESIA	133
24. NEGEV, ISRAEL	133
25. GULF OF AQABA	134
26. KOILASTILA GAS FIELD	134
27. GIANT SINKHOLE	134
28. FALKLAND ISLANDS	134
29. CHANCAY, PERU	135
30. INTERNAL CONFLICT IN HAITI	135
31. GALAPAGOS ISLAND (ECUADOR)	135
32. VALE DO JAVARI	136
33. BARENT SEA	137
34. GIBRALTAR	137
35. KERCH STARIT	137
36. LAKE GARDA	138

37. ICELAND (MOUNT FAGRADALS JALL VOLCANO)	138
38. RUSSIA (SHIVELUCH VOLCANO)	139
39. BELARUS	139
40. SNAKE ISLAND	139
41. BLACK SEA	140
42. CROATIA	140
43. AEGEAN SEA	141
44. SIEVIERODONETSK	141
45. DONBAS	141
46. SAINT- TROPEZ	142
47. ODESSA	142
48. LA- REUNION	142
49. SOLOMON ISLANDS	142
50. SULU SEA	143
51. RED SEA	144
52. HAWAII MOUNT LOA	144
53. GUDAI - DARRI- MINE (AUSTRALIA)	144
54. SAINT VINCENT AND GRENADINES	145
55. CHINA DISPUTE SITE IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH	145
56. BHUTAN	145

MISCELLANEOUS NEWS 147

1. FREE MOVEMENT REGIME	147
2. DAVOS SUMMIT	147
3. IRAN'S ATTACK ON "ANTI-IRANIAN TERRORIST GROUPS"	148
4. INDIA - US CIVIL NUCLEAR COOPERATION	148
5. KALADAN MULTIMODAL TRANSIT TRANSPORT PROJECT	149
6. EUROPE FREE TRADE ASSOCIATION (EFTA)	149
7. PANCHESHWAR MULTIPURPOSE PROJECT (PMP)	150
8. NB8 VISIT TO INDIA	150
9. INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION FOR MIGRATION (IOM)	151
10. GLOBAL MARITIME TRADE NAVIGATING TROUBLED WATERS: UNCTAD REPORT	151
11. GENEVA CONVENTION ON REFUGEES	152
12. CONFLICT IN EASTERN CONGO	152
13. GUYANA	153
14. INTERNATIONAL SEABED AUTHORITY (ISA)	154

15. PERMANENT STATUS FOR PALESTINE	155	26. ILO REPORT: GLOBAL ESTIMATES ON	
16. BAY OF BENGAL INITIATIVE FOR MULTI-		INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS	162
SECTORAL TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC		27. BHARATPOL PORTAL	162
COOPERATION (BIMSTEC)	155	28. NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE GRID (NATGRID)	
17. FUNAN TECHO CANAL PROJECT	156		163
18. PACIFIC ISLAND FORUM	156	29. GREENLAND	164
19. INDIA JOINS US-LED MINERAL SECURITY		30. PANAMA CANAL	164
FINANCE NETWORK	157	31. Z-MORH TUNNEL	165
20. UN RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR		32. US SEC AND HAGUE SERVICE CONVENTION	
PALESTINE REFUGEES	158		166
21. H-1B VISA	159	33. CROSSROADS FOR PEACE INITIATIVE	167
22. SILIGURI CORRIDOR	160	34. C10 AND L69	167
23. INDIRA GANDHI PEACE PRIZE 2024	160	35. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATIVE ALLIANCE	167
24. US WITHDRAWS FROM WHO	160	36. INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE COUNCIL	167
25. US WITHDRAWS FROM PARIS CLIMATE DEAL		37. RIYADH TREATY ON DESIGN LAWS	167
	161	38. CASCAIS DECLARATION OF UNITED NATIONS	
		ALLIANCE OF CIVILISATIONS (UNAOC)	168

1 CHAPTER INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

1. UNITED NATIONS

UN CHARTER

- The Charter of the United Nations is the founding document of the United Nations.
- It was signed on 26 June 1945, in San Francisco, at the conclusion of the United Nations Conference on International Organisation and came into force on 24 October 1945.
- The UN can act on a wide variety of issues due to its unique international character & 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 bound by it.**
- The UN Charter codifies major principles of international relations, from sovereign equality of States to prohibition of use of force in international relations.

International Court of Justice. the principal judicial organ of UN, functions in accordance with the Statute of the International Court of Justice, which is annexed to the UN Charter, and forms an integral part of it.

ORGANS OF UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

- Main deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the UN.
- All 193 Member States of UN are represented in General Assembly, **making it the only UN body with universal representation.**
- Decisions on important questions, such as those on peace and security, admission of new members and budgetary matters, **require a two-thirds majority of the General Assembly.** Decisions on other questions are **by simple majority.**

MAIN COMMITTEES OF UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

- **FIRST COMMITTEE:** Deals with disarmament, global challenges and threats of peace that affect the international community and seeks out solutions to the challenges in the international security regime.
- **SECOND COMMITTEE:** Aims to preserve financial stability and promote sustainable development of both developing and developed countries.
- **THIRD COMMITTEE:** Deals with issues relating to social, humanitarian affairs and human rights issues that affect people all over the world.
- **FOURTH COMMITTEE:** Also known as Special Political & Decolonisation Committee. It considers broad ranges of issues covering a cluster of 5 decolonisation related items like effects of atomic radiation, questions relating to information, review of peacekeeping operations and review of special political missions.
- **FIFTH COMMITTEE:** Concerned with responsibilities related to administrative and budgetary matters. Based on reports of the Fifth Committee, the UNGA considers and approves the budget of the UN.
- **SIXTH COMMITTEE:** Primary forum for consideration of legal questions in UNGA. All UN member states are entitled to representation on the Sixth Committee.

HONOUR ROLL OF UNITED NATIONS

- The Honour Roll reflects names of those member states of UN that have paid in full their mandatory financial support to the UN - assessed contributions to UN's Regular Budget, within 30 days of issuance of a payment note from UN.

- India has joined the Honour Roll of the United Nations for 2023. India's assessed contribution for 2023 has been \$30.54 million. India has consistently figured in the UN Honour Roll, which reflects India's steadfast commitment to multilateralism and UN.

UN SECURITY COUNCIL

- Security Council has primary responsibility, under the UN Charter, for maintenance of international peace and security.
- It has 15 Members (5 permanent and 10 non-permanent members). Each Member has one vote.
- **Elections of Non-Permanent Members of UNSC:** Each year the UN General Assembly elects 5 non-permanent members (out of total 10 non-permanent members) for a two-year term. The 10 non-permanent seats are distributed on a regional basis: Five for African & Asian States; One for Eastern European States; Two for Latin American & Caribbean States; Two for Western European and other States. **A retiring member is not eligible for immediate re-election.** The election is held by a secret ballot and there are no nominations. Non-permanent members of the UNSC are elected by two-thirds majority in UNGA. (India was elected as the non-permanent member of the UN Security Council on January 1, 2021. Term of India as non-permanent member ended on December 31, 2022. India has earlier been a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 1950-51, 1967-68, 1972-73, 1977-78, 1984-85, 1991-92 and 2011-12.)
- The UN Security Council is organised to be able to function as a continuous body. Meetings of UNSC are held at the call of the President of UNSC at any time he deems necessary, but that interval between meetings shall not exceed 14 days.
- Under the Charter, all Member States are obligated to comply with Council decisions.
- **Subsidiary bodies of Security Council:** UN Charter empowers the UNSC to establish subsidiary bodies as needed for the performance of its functions. All existing committees are composed of 15 members of UNSC. Standing committees are chaired by the President of UNSC, rotating monthly, other committees and working groups are chaired by designated members of UNSC who are announced on an annual basis by a Note of the President of UNSC.
- Under Article 41 of the UN Charter, the Security Council has authority to impose measures not involving the use of armed forces. In some cases, the Security Council can resort to imposing sanctions or even authorize the use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security.
- All members of the United Nations agree to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council.
- While other organs of the United Nations make recommendations to member states, **only the Security Council has the power to make decisions** that member states are then obligated to implement under the Charter.
- **PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS:** Consist of military, police and civilian personnel, who work to deliver security, political and early peacebuilding support. They are usually led by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), and many although not all – peacekeeping operations have a Chapter VII mandate. In addition, peacekeeping operations, as opposed to other missions, have a military or international police presence in the field.
- **PEACEBUILDING & POLITICAL OFFICES:** They are generally overseen by the Department of Political Affairs. These missions are part of a continuum of UN peace operations working in different stages of the conflict cycle. PEACEBUILDING COMMISSION is an intergovernmental advisory body that supports peace efforts in countries emerging from conflict.

ARTICLE 99 OF UN CHARTER INVOKED

The UN Secretary General formally warned the Security Council to push for the Gaza ceasefire by invoking Article 99 of the UN Charter. The UN Secretary General has urged Israel to carry out a ceasefire in this conflict.

About Article 99 of UN Charter

- Article 99 of the UN Charter states that "The Secretary General may bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security." Thus, it is a **discretionary power of the Secretary General of the UN**.
- According to the UN, the President of the UN Security Council is under the obligation to call a meeting of the UNSC, if the Secretary General brings to the attention of the UNSC any matter under Article 99 of the UN Charter. However, this provision has been rarely invoked in the past. Some instances when it was invoked are:
 - Article 99 of the UN Charter was invoked earlier in the Republic of Congo in 1960 after Belgium's colonial rule ended and in 1961, when Tunisia demanded it after an attack by its former colonial ruler France.

ARTICLE 27 OF THE UN CHARTER STATES THAT-

- Each member of the Security Council **shall have one vote**.
- Decisions of the Security Council on procedural matters **shall be made by an affirmative vote of nine members**.
- Decisions of Security Council on all other matters shall be made by an affirmative vote of nine members including the concurring votes of the permanent members.
- Right to Veto**: US, China, France, UK and Russia have been granted the Right to Veto.
- If any one of the five permanent members cast a **negative vote** in the 15-member Security Council, the resolution or decision would not be approved.
- All five permanent members have exercised the right of veto at one time or another.
- If a permanent member does not fully agree with a proposed resolution but **does not wish to cast a veto, it may choose to abstain**, thus allowing the resolution to be adopted if it obtains the required number of nine favourable votes.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

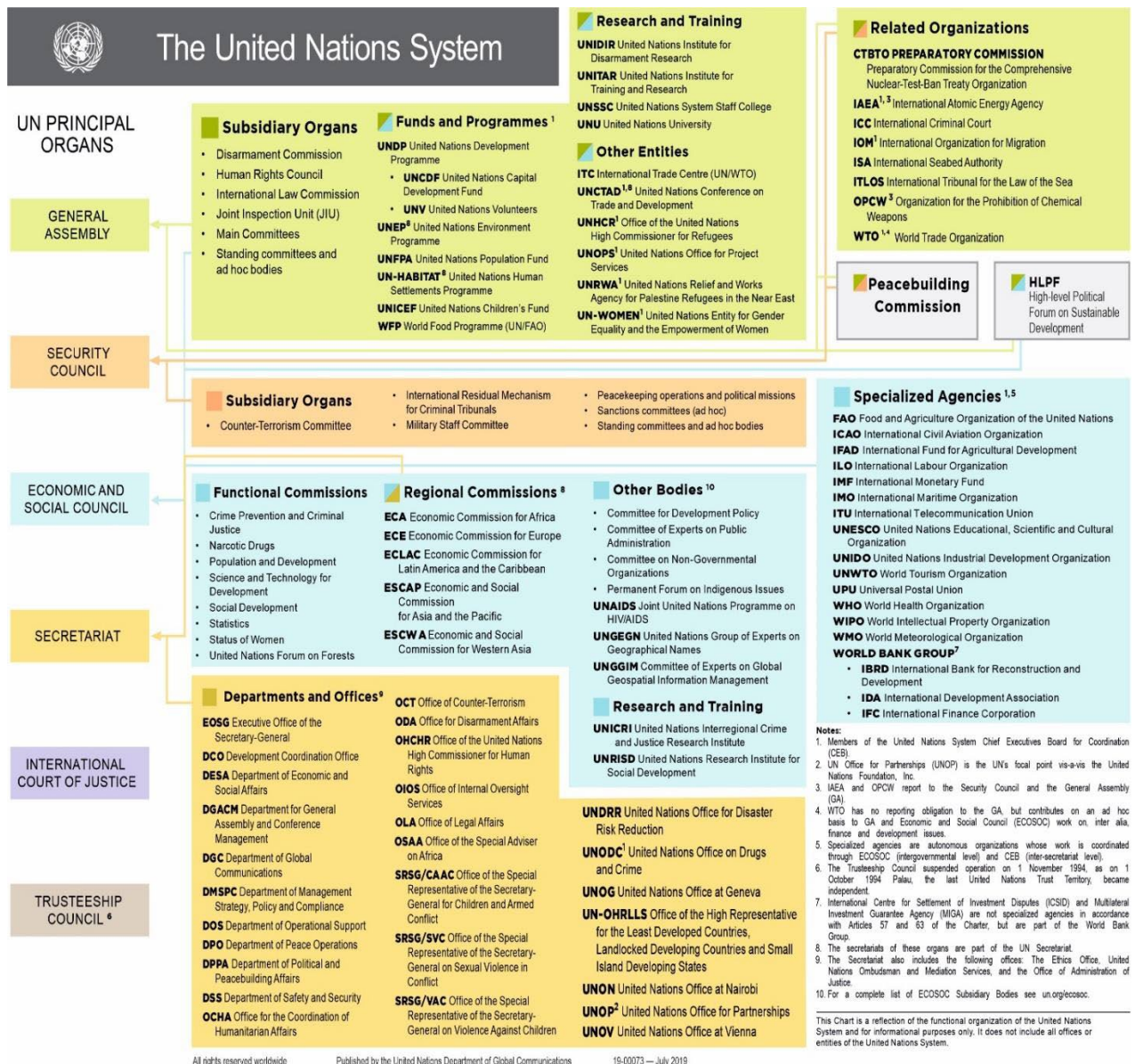
- It is the principal body for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on economic, social and environmental issues, as well as implementation of internationally agreed development goals.
- It serves as the central mechanism for activities of the UN system and its specialised agencies in the economic, social and environmental fields, supervising subsidiary and expert bodies.
- It has 54 Members, elected by the General Assembly for overlapping three-year terms.

TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL

- Established in 1945 by the UN Charter to provide international supervision for 11 Trust Territories that had been placed under the administration of seven Member States and ensure that adequate steps were taken to prepare the Territories for self-government and independence.
- By 1994, all Trust Territories had attained self-government or independence.
- Trusteeship Council suspended operation on 1 November 1994.

SECRETARIAT OF UN

- Comprises Secretary-General and international UN staff members who conduct the day-to-day work of the UN as mandated by the General Assembly and the Organisation's other principal bodies.
- Election of Secretary General**: UN Security Council first sends a recommendation to the UN General Assembly, which will then appoint the Secretary General. The Secretary General is appointed to a 5-year term and may serve up to two terms.



UN SYSTEM

- The UN system, in addition to the UN itself, comprises many funds, programs & specialised agencies, each having their own area of work, leadership & budget.
- The programmes and funds are financed through voluntary rather than assessed contributions.
- Specialised Agencies are independent international organisations funded by both voluntary and assessed contributions.
- The UN coordinates its work with these separate UN system entities, which cooperate with the Organisation to help it achieve its goals.

UN SPECIALISED AGENCIES

UN specialised agencies are autonomous international organisations working with the United Nations. All were brought into a relationship with the UN through negotiated agreements.

There are 17 Specialised Agencies:

- FAO:** Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
- ICAO:** International Civil Aviation Organisation

- **IFAD:** International Fund for Agricultural Development
- **ILO:** International Labour Organisation
- **IMF:** International Monetary Fund
- **IMO:** International Maritime Organisation
- **ITU:** International Telecommunication Union
- **UNESCO:** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
- **UNIDO:** United Nations Industrial Development Organisation
- **UNWTO:** World Tourism Organisation
- **UPU:** Universal Postal Union
- **WHO:** World Health Organisation
- **WIPO:** World Intellectual Property Organisation
- **WMO:** World Meteorological Organisation
- **World Bank Group**
 - **IBRD:** International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
 - **IDA:** International Development Association
 - **IFC:** International Finance Corporation

(International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) and Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) are not specialised agencies but are part of the World Bank Group.)

2. OUR COMMON AGENDA

- To mark the 75th Anniversary of the UN, Member States came together to recognise that our challenges are interconnected and can only be addressed through stronger international cooperation and reinvigorated multilateralism with the United Nations at the Centre of our efforts.
- Global leaders pledged to strengthen global governance for the sake of present and coming generations and asked the Secretary General to prepare a report with recommendations to advance our common agenda and respond to current and future challenges.
- The UN Secretary General prepared a comprehensive report titled outlining 12 comprehensive action areas named '**Our Common Agenda**'.

The important proposals in the report are given below. The Secretary General proposed a **Summit of the Future** to forge a new global consensus on what our future should look like and what we can do to secure it.

KEY PROPOSALS ACROSS THE 12 COMMITMENTS FROM

the declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations



All proposed actions are in line with and designed to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.



1. Leave no one behind

- Renewed social contract anchored in human rights
- New era for **universal social protection**, including health care and basic income security, reaching the 4 billion unprotected
- Reinforce **adequate housing, education and lifelong learning and decent work**
- **Digital inclusivity**
- **World Social Summit in 2025**
- Identify **complementary measures to GDP**



2. Protect our planet

- Leaders meeting ahead of the global stocktaking in 2023
- Commit to the 1.5-degree Celsius goal and **net zero emissions by 2050 or sooner**
- Declarations of **climate emergency** and **right to a healthy environment**
- **Package of support to developing countries**
- Measures for adaptation and resilience
- No new coal after 2021 and phasing out fossil fuel subsidies
- **Account for the environment in economic models**, carbon pricing mechanisms and credible commitments by financial actors
- **Post-2020 biodiversity framework**
- **Transforming food systems** for sustainability, nutrition and fairness
- Action by the General Assembly on **territorial threats of climate change** and to prevent, protect and resolve situations of environmental displacement



3. Promote peace and prevent conflicts

- **New agenda for peace to:**
 - Reduce strategic risks (nuclear weapons, cyberwarfare, autonomous weapons)
 - Strengthen international foresight
 - Reshape responses to all forms of violence
 - Invest in prevention and peacebuilding, including Peacebuilding Fund and Peacebuilding Commission
 - Support regional prevention
 - Put women and girls at the centre of security policy
- **Peaceful, secure and sustainable use of outer space**, including through a multi-stakeholder dialogue on outer space



4. Abide by international law and ensure justice

- Human rights as a **problem-solving** measure, including by comprehensive anti-discrimination laws and promoting participation
- Application of **human rights** online and to frontier issues and new technologies
- Universal access to the Internet as a human right
- Human rights mechanisms on a more sustainable financial footing
- **Legal identity for all**, end to statelessness and protection of internally displaced persons, refugees and migrants
- New vision for the **rule of law**
- **Global road map** for the development and effective implementation of international law



5. Place women and girls at the centre

- Repeal of gender-discriminatory laws
- Promote gender parity, including through quotas and **special measures**
- Facilitate women's economic inclusion, including investment in the care economy and support for women entrepreneurs
- Include voices of **younger women**
- Eradication of violence against women and girls, including through an **emergency response plan**



6. Build trust

- **Global code of conduct that promotes integrity in public information**
- Improve people's experiences with **public institutions and basic services**
- Inclusive **national listening and "envisioning the future" exercises**
- Action to tackle **corruption** in line with the United Nations Convention against Corruption
- Reformed **international tax system**
- **Joint structure on financial integrity and tackling illicit financial flows**



7. Improve digital cooperation

- **Global Digital Compact** to:
 - **Connect all people to the Internet**, including all schools
 - Avoid Internet fragmentation
 - Protect data
 - Apply human rights online
 - Introduce accountability criteria for discrimination and misleading content
 - Promote regulation of artificial intelligence
 - Digital commons as a global public good



8. Upgrade the United Nations

- **High-level Advisory Board** led by former Heads of State and Government on improved governance of global public goods
- System-wide policy that **puts people at the centre**, taking into account age, gender and diversity
- More listening, participation and consultation (including digitally), building on the seventy-fifth anniversary declaration and Our Common Agenda
- **Gender parity** within the United Nations system by 2028
- Re-establish the Secretary-General's **Scientific Advisory Board**
- **"Quintet of change"** for United Nations 2.0, including innovation, data, strategic foresight, results orientation and behavioural science



9. Ensure sustainable financing

- **Biennial Summit between the Group of 20, the Economic and Social Council, the Secretary-General and the heads of international financial institutions** for a sustainable, inclusive and resilient global economy including to:
 - Support a **Sustainable Development Goal investment boost**, including through a **last-mile alliance** to reach those furthest behind
 - Provide more flexible research and development incentives
 - Resolve **weaknesses in the debt architecture**
- Fairer and more resilient multilateral **trading system**, including a reinvigorated WTO
- New business models
- Improve the **United Nations budget process**



10. Boost partnerships

- Annual meetings between the United Nations and all heads of **regional organizations**
- **Stronger** engagement between the United Nations system, international financial institutions and regional development banks
- More systematic engagement with **parliaments, subnational authorities and the private sector**
- **Civil society focal points** in all United Nations entities
- United Nations Office for Partnerships to **consolidate access and inclusion**, including accessibility online



11. Listen to and work with youth

Youth

- **Remove barriers to political participation** and measure progress through a **"youth in politics" index**
- **United Nations Youth Office**
- Transforming Education Summit in 2022
- **Recovery barometer** to track career paths and labour market outcomes for youth
- **High-ambition coalition** to promote green and digital-economy job creation

Future generations

- Summit of the Future in 2023
- **Ensure long-term thinking**, including through a United Nations **Futures Lab**
- **Represent succeeding generations**, including through a **repurposed Trusteeship Council**, a **Declaration on Future Generations**, and a **United Nations Special Envoy for Future Generations**



12. Be prepared

- **Emergency Platform** to be convened in response to complex global crises
- **Strategic Foresight and Global Risk Report** by the United Nations every five years
- **On global public health:**
 - **Global vaccination plan**
 - Empowered WHO
 - Stronger global health security and preparedness
 - Accelerate product development and access to health technologies in low- and middle-income countries
 - **Universal health coverage** and addressing determinants of health

3. UN CONVENTION FOR LAW OF SEA (UNCLOS)

UNCLOS is an acronym for the United Nations Convention for the Law of the Sea. The convention is also sometimes referred to as the Law of the Sea Convention or the Law of the Sea treaty.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea was adopted in 1982. It lays down a comprehensive regime of law and order in the world's oceans and seas establishing rules governing all uses of the oceans and their resources.

SECRETARIAT

The Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS) of the Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations serves as the secretariat of the Convention on the Law of the Sea.

KEY POINTS

- UNCLOS as the currently prevailing law of the sea is binding completely.
- Even as the name of the nautical law suggests a United Nations' involvement, the UN does not have any major functional role in the working of UNCLOS.

- There are **17 parts, 320 articles** and nine annexes to UNCLOS.
- The law of the sea provides for full money rights to nations for a 200-mile zone by their shoreline. The sea and oceanic bed extending this area is regarded to be an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and any country can use these waters for its economic utilisation.
- **IMO (International Maritime Organisation)** plays a vital role in the operation of UNCLOS. Along with **IMO**, organisations like International Whaling Commission and the International Seabed Authority are vital parties in the functional areas of the nautical law
- Even though it has 160 member parties, the **US is a country that has still not sanctioned (ratified) the nautical law**. The main reason for the US not approving the sea law arises mainly because of its disagreement about Part XI of UNCLOS.
- Due to opposition from Republicans in the Senate, the US has not been able to accept and ratify the convention. The Republicans disagree with Part XI of UNCLOS, which lays down the equitable distribution of minerals found on the seabed.

Are the UNCLOS verdicts legally binding on states?

Yes, its decisions are binding on its member states. However, China does not honour the 2016 verdict on the South China Sea, and many countries complain about Chinese vessels in their waters.

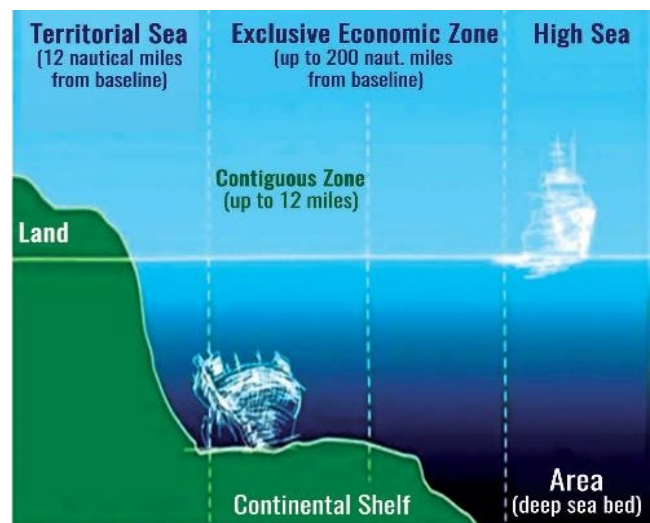
WHAT IS EEZ UNDER UNCLOS?

The exclusive economic zone is an area beyond and adjacent to the territorial sea, subject to the specific legal regime established in this Part, under which the rights and jurisdiction of the coastal State and the rights and freedoms of other States are governed by the relevant provisions of this Convention.

The exclusive economic zone shall not extend beyond 200 nautical miles from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured.

IN EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE, THE COASTAL STATE HAS:

1. Sovereign rights for the purpose of exploring and exploiting, conserving and managing the natural resources, whether living or non-living, of the waters superjacent to the seabed and of the seabed and its subsoil, and about other activities for the economic exploitation and exploration of the zone, such as the production of energy from the water, currents and winds.
2. Jurisdiction as provided for in the relevant provisions of this Convention about:
 - the establishment and use of artificial islands, installations and structures.
 - marine scientific research.
 - the protection and preservation of the marine environment.
 - other rights and duties provided for in this Convention.



RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF OTHER STATES IN EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE

1. In EEZ, all States enjoy the freedoms of navigation and overflight and of the laying of submarine cables and pipelines, and other internationally lawful uses of the sea related to these freedoms, such as those associated with the operation of ships, aircraft and submarine cables and pipelines, and compatible with the other provisions of this Convention.
2. In exercising their rights and performing their duties under this Convention in the exclusive economic zone, **States shall have due regard to the rights and duties of the coastal State and shall comply with the laws and regulations adopted by the coastal State** in accordance with the provisions of this Convention and other rules of international law in so far as they are not incompatible with this Part.

4. INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANISATION (IMO)

*Context: India was re-elected to the International Maritime Organisation Council with the highest vote tally. This allows India to be a member of IMO Council which is the executive body responsible for international shipping. The term of the IMO Council will be for **biennium 2024-25**. India has been elected under Category (B) of IMO Council which represents States with largest interest in international seaborne trade.*

ABOUT IMO

- **IMO** was established in 1948 in Geneva, it was not enforced until 1959 at a meeting held in London, its headquarters.
- UN specialised agency with responsibility for safety and security of shipping and the prevention of marine and atmospheric pollution by ships.
- IMO is a **part of the UN**, and was created to oversee the maritime domain by bringing out rules, guidelines and regulations. It **also** brings out international treaties and other mechanisms for maritime safety. It discourages discriminatory practices in international trade.
- IMO's work supports UN SDGs. While ocean's goal, **SDG 14**, is central to IMO, aspects of Organisation's work can be linked to all individual SDGs.

STRUCTURE OF THE INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANISATION

- **IMO Assembly** is the highest governing body. All member states of IMO are members of IMO Assembly and meet once in two years. It is responsible for approving the work program and budget and determining financial arrangements and electing the IMO Council.
- **IMO Council** is the executive organ of IMO and is responsible to the IMO Assembly for supervising the work of IMO Council. The Council is made up of 40 Member States, elected by the Assembly for two-year terms. Between the sessions of the assembly, the Council performs the functions of IMO Assembly, except that of making recommendations to governments on maritime safety and pollution prevention.
- Assembly of IMO elects following States to be Members of IMO Council for two years:
 - **Category (A):** 10 States with **largest interest in providing international shipping**.
 - **Category (B):** 10 States with **largest interest in international seaborne trade**. India has been elected in this category.
 - **Category (C):** 20 States not elected under Category (A) or (B), which have special interests in maritime transport or navigation and whose election to the IMO Council will ensure representation of all major geographical areas of the world.
- **Secretary General of IMO:** IMO is led by the Secretary General supported by a Secretariat which is based at IMO headquarters in London, UK.
- **IMO has five main committees:**
 - Maritime Safety Committee (MSC)
 - Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC)
 - Legal Committee
 - Technical Cooperation Committee
 - Facilitation Committee

KEY IMO CONVENTIONS

- **International Convention for Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS):** This treaty was developed as a result of Titanic disaster in 1912. It applies to passenger ships carrying more than 12 passengers on international voyages.
- International Convention for Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973 and its protocols (MARPOL)
- International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) and its Manila Amendments.
- **Hong Kong International Convention for the Safety and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships, 2009.**

5. UN COMMISSION ON STATUS OF WOMEN

The 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69) was held from March 10 to 21, 2025, under the chairmanship of Saudi Arabia.

Commission on Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. A functional commission of the **Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)**

It was established in 1946, and has become instrumental in promoting women's rights, documenting the reality of women's lives across the world, and shaping global standards on gender equality and empowerment.

The commission consists of one representative from each of **45 member states**, elected by the Economic and Social Council based on equitable geographical distribution. Members are elected for a **period of four years**.

6. UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

UNHRC is in the news because of the ongoing 58th session (Feb-April, 2025). It was also in the news in the context of the rise of human rights violations and terrorism in Bangladesh.

About UNHRC

- The council is the central structure in the global human rights architecture, a political body with representatives drawn from the General Assembly.
- UNHRC **replaced the UN Human Rights Commission in 2006**.
- The UNHRC has **47 members serving at any time** with elections held to fill up seats every year, based on allocations to regions across the world to ensure geographical representation.
- There is **no special privilege for more developed Western countries**, as is the case with other multilateral institutions such as the IMF or World Bank.
- The members serve for three years and are not eligible for immediate re-election after serving two consecutive terms.

LEADERSHIP OF THE COUNCIL

The Council has a five-person Bureau, consisting of a president and four vice-presidents, each representing one of the five regional groups. They serve for a year each, in accordance with the Council's annual cycle.

- It passes **non-binding resolutions** on human rights issues, besides overseeing expert investigation of violations in specific countries.
- The UNHRC holds regular sessions three times a year, in March, June, and September.
- In 2007, the Council adopted an "institution-building package" to set up its procedures and mechanisms. Among these were
- **Universal Periodic Review**: The Universal periodic review (UPR) mechanism reviews all 192 UN member states every four years to "ensure universality of coverage and equal treatment of all Member States. "It provides opportunities to member states to declare what actions they have taken to improve human rights and to fulfil their obligations.
- **Special Procedure**: The special procedures of the Human Rights Council are independent human rights experts with mandates to report and advise on human rights from a thematic or country-specific perspective. The system of Special Procedures is a central element of the United Nations human rights machinery and covers all human rights: civil, cultural, economic, political, and social.
- **Special Rapporteur**: The titles Special Rapporteur, Independent Expert, and Working Group Member are given to individuals working on behalf of the United Nations (UN) within the scope of "special procedure" mechanisms.

The mechanism of Universal Periodic Review (UPR) was incorporated into the functioning to give teeth to the organisation. The UPR, which has a national report from the state under review plus a compilation of UN information prepared by the Office of UN High Commission for Human Rights, also allows for a summary of information from civil society actors.

7. UNHCR: 1951 REFUGEE CONVENTION

Context: The UN Human Rights Committee has ruled that Australia retains responsibility for the arbitrary detention of asylum-seekers redirected or transferred to Nauru, consistent with UNHCR's long-held position.

- It is a multi-lateral treaty which defines who is a refugee and sets out the rights of individuals who are granted asylum and responsibilities of the country that granted asylum.
- It defines the term 'refugee' and outlines the rights of the displaced, as well as the legal obligations of States to protect them.
- It is the key legal document that forms the basis of international law regulating the rights and duties of refugees and the host countries. It is ratified by 145 countries.
- It provides for the core principle of non-refoulement, which asserts that a refugee should not be returned to a country where they face serious threats to their life or freedom. This is now considered a rule of customary international law.

UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR)

- It serves as the guardian of the 1951 convention and its 1967 protocol. According to the legislation, States are expected to cooperate with UNHCR in ensuring that the rights of refugees are respected and protected.
- The 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees expanded the Convention's scope, making it the most relevant international legal regime for addressing the contemporary global refugee crisis.
- India has not ratified the 1951 Refugee convention and its protocol.

NEW YORK DECLARATION

All 193 members of the UN adopted a resolution called New York Declaration in 2016 that recommended two global compacts: a global compact on refugees and a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration.

GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES

- Global Compact on Refugees is a non-binding framework for predictable & equitable responsibility-sharing, recognizing that a sustainable solution to refugee situations cannot be achieved without international cooperation. It was concluded in 2018.
- It provides a blueprint for governments, international organisations, and other stakeholders to ensure that host communities get the support they need and that refugees can lead productive lives.

GLOBAL COMPACT FOR MIGRATION

- Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, a non-binding agreement for better management of migration, adopted in 2018.
- It is the first inter-governmentally negotiated agreement, prepared under the auspices of the United Nations, to cover all dimensions of international migration in a holistic and comprehensive manner.
- The major goal of the compact is to assist nation states to frame well-managed migration policies.

Aims for efforts to strengthen regular migration pathways and protect human rights of migrants.

REFUGEES

Refugees are people who have fled war, violence, conflict or persecution and have crossed an international border to find safety in another country.

Refugees are defined and protected in international law. The **1951 Refugee Convention** is a key legal document and defines a refugee as:

"Someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion."

Not only it defines who is a refugee but it also determines what kind of assistance, right and legal protection a refugee is entitled to receive.

MIGRANTS

The term 'migrant,' on the other hand, is not defined under international law and is sometimes used differently by different stakeholders. Traditionally, the word 'migrant' has been used to designate people who move by choice rather than to escape conflict or persecution, usually across an international border. This can include finding work or pursuing an education, but also for reuniting with family or other reasons. People may also move to alleviate significant hardships that arise from natural disasters, famine, or extreme poverty. Those who leave their countries for these reasons would not usually be considered refugees under international law.

HOW IS UNHCR FUNDED?

UNHCR relies almost entirely on voluntary contributions. Individual governments and the European Union provide 85 per cent of our budget. Another 11 per cent comes from individuals and the private sector, including foundations, corporations and the public. Even so, UNHCR typically receives only half the money it needs each year.

It lays down obligations on the refugees towards host countries.

The act also specifies certain categories of people who do not qualify for refugee status.

India is not a party to the convention.

FOR SUSPENSION FROM UNHRC

Russia was suspended from the UNHRC.

The resolution titled 'Suspension of the rights of membership of the Russian Federation in the Human Rights Council' was adopted with 93 votes in favour, 24 against and 58 abstentions, including India.

Russia became the second country to have its membership rights stripped at the rights council, which was established in 2006. In 2011, Libya was suspended by the assembly when upheaval in the North African country brought down long-time leader Moammar Gadhafi.

Voting procedure at UNGA

The UN General Assembly, by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting, may suspend the rights of membership in the Council of a member of the Council that commits gross and systematic violations of human rights. Abstentions do not count and the resolution requires two-thirds of yes/no votes to be adopted.

8. GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM

Context: The UN refugee agency (UNHCR) has launched a \$10 billion appeal for 2025 to meet critical needs and implement sustainable solutions for millions of refugees, displaced persons and stateless people worldwide.

ABOUT GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM

- In 2023, Second Global Refugee Forum was co-hosted by UNHCR and Switzerland. It was co-convened by six countries: Colombia, France, Japan, Jordan, Niger & Uganda.
- It is the largest international gathering on refugees, designed to support practical implementation of the objectives set out in **Global Compact on Refugees** i.e.,
 - Easing pressures on host countries,
 - Enhance refugee self-reliance,
 - Increase access to third country solutions.
 - Improve conditions in countries of origin.
- Global Refugee Forum is organised every four years at the Ministerial Level for all UN member states.
- The first Global Refugee Forum (GRF), a two-day gathering of UN member states took place in Geneva, Switzerland in 2019.
- Global Refugee Forum is the Global Arrangement for International Cooperation laid down in Global Compact on Refugees (adopted by UNGA in 2018).

OFFICE OF UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (OHCHR)

OHCHR at the United Nations provides Special Rapporteurs with the personnel and logistical assistance necessary for them to conduct their mandates outlined in specific U.N. resolutions.

ABOUT OHCHR

- The commissioner is a UN official with principal responsibility for promoting and protecting human rights.
- OHCHR is part of the UN Secretariat and supports the High Commissioner in implementation of his/her mandate.
- OHCHR has led responsibility for the promotion and protection of human rights, and for implementing the human rights program within the UN.
- It serves as the secretariat of both Charter-based bodies such as the Human Rights Council, and treaty-based bodies – i.e., the bodies established under the various international human rights conventions.

9. UN WORLD FOOD PROGRAM

- World Food Program (WFP) is the leading humanitarian organisation saving lives and changing lives, delivering food assistance in emergencies and working with communities to improve nutrition and build resilience.
- In 2015 the global community adopted the 17 Global Goals for Sustainable Development to improve people's lives by 2030. Goal 2 – Zero Hunger – pledges to end hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
- For its efforts to combat hunger, bettering conditions for peace in conflict-affected areas and for acting as a driving force in efforts to prevent the use of hunger as a weapon of war and conflict, WFP was awarded Nobel Peace Prize in 2020.
- Funded entirely by voluntary donations.
- It works closely with its two sister organisations, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations and the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT (IFAD)

- IFAD is an international financial institution and specialised United Nations agency.
- The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) invests in rural people, empowering them to increase their food security, improve the nutrition of their families and increase their incomes. We help them build resilience, expand their businesses and take charge of their development.
- IFAD is the only multilateral development institution that focuses exclusively on transforming rural economies and food systems.

10. ECOSOC CHAMBER

- The Economic and Social Council is at the heart of the U system to advance the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental.
- It is the central platform for fostering debate and innovative thinking, forging consensus on ways forward, and coordinating efforts to achieve internationally agreed goals.
- It is also responsible for the follow-up to major UN conferences and summits.
- The UN Charter established ECOSOC in 1945 as one of the six main organs of the United Nations.
- It has 54 Members, elected by the General Assembly for overlapping three-year terms.
- It serves as the central mechanism for the activities of the United Nations system and its specialised agencies and supervises the subsidiary and expert bodies in the economic, social and environmental fields.
- It has undergone reforms to strengthen the Council and its working methods.

11. INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

JURISDICTION

- Article 36(1) of Statute of the ICJ provides that the ICJ shall have jurisdiction in all matters relating to the UN Charter or other treaties or conventions in force.
- Genocide Convention 1948** under Article IX provides that disputes between states relating to interpretation, application or fulfilment of the Genocide Convention, as well as those relating to the responsibility of a state for genocide shall be submitted to the ICJ **at the request of any of the parties to the dispute**.

PROVISIONAL MEASURES

- The Statute of the International Court of Justice, under Article 41 empowers the ICJ to indicate provisional measures in any case before it to preserve the rights of the parties involved. When the ICJ indicates such provisional measures, the parties to the dispute and the UN Security Council must be notified.
- Provisional measures are binding in character and create international legal obligations.

MANDATE

- It is the **principal judicial organ** of the United Nations. It was established by the United Nations Charter, signed in 1945.
- It is situated in the Peace Palace Hague, Netherlands.
- It has two primary functions:** to settle legal disputes submitted by States under established international laws and to act as an advisory board on issues submitted to it by authorized international organisations.

MEMBERS

- It is composed of 15 judges who are elected for a term of nine years, by the UN General Assembly and the UN Security Council. The elected judges form part of the list of people nominated by the national groups in the Permanent Court of Arbitration.
- No two judges can be nationals of the same country. The judges in ICJ are chosen to represent all geographic regions of the world- an informal understanding between the nations.

JURISDICTION

- Only UN Member States are eligible to appear before the Court in contentious cases.
- It cannot deal with a dispute of its motion. It is not permitted, under its Statute, to investigate and rule on acts of sovereign States as it chooses. The States concerned must accept the jurisdiction and must provide consent to the Court's considering the dispute in question.
- The Court has no jurisdiction to deal with applications from individuals, non-governmental organisations, corporations or any other private entity, and neither provides them with legal counselling.
- However, a State may take up the case of one of its nationals and invoke against another State the wrongs which its national claims to have suffered at the hands of the latter; the dispute then becomes one between States.
- Judgments delivered by the Court are binding upon the parties concerned; are final and without appeal.

Comparison between ICJ AND ICC

FEATURE	ICJ	ICC
Year Established	1946	2002
Languages	English, French	English, French

UN-relationship	Official court of the UN; commonly referred to as the World Court.	Independent of the UN. May receive case referrals from the UN Security Council. Can initiate prosecutions without UN action or referral.
Location	Hague, Netherlands	Hague, Netherlands
Jurisdiction	U.N. member-states (i.e., national governments)	Individuals

- ICJ is not a supreme court to which national courts can turn; it does not function as a court of last resort for individuals.
- Nor is it an appeal court for any international tribunal. It can, however, rule on the **validity of arbitral awards**.

The United Nations General Assembly has passed a resolution calling on the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to give an opinion on the legal consequences of Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian territories.

ADVISORY PROCEEDINGS - LEGAL OPINION

- Advisory proceedings before the Court are only open to five organs of the United Nations and 16 specialised agencies of the United Nations family or affiliated organisations.
- The United Nations General Assembly and Security Council may request advisory opinions on "any legal question." Other United Nations organs and specialised agencies which have been authorized to seek advisory opinions can only do so concerning "legal questions arising within the scope of their activities".
- Such opinions are essentially advisory; in other words, unlike the Court's judgments, they are not binding.
- However, certain instruments or regulations provide that an advisory opinion by the Court does have binding force (e.g., the conventions on the privileges and immunities of the United Nations).

12. INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

- It is a permanent international court established to investigate, prosecute and try individuals accused of **genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression**.
- It was established by the treaty known as the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The ICC prosecutes individuals, not groups or States.
- It has no retrospective jurisdiction – only crimes committed after Rome Statute came into force i.e., 1st July 2002 will be under its purview.

ICC & UN

ICC is neither an office nor an agency of the United Nations, yet the Rome Statute allows the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to refer specific situations to the Court that are outside the jurisdiction of ICC.

JURISDICTION OF ICC

- A State that is a party to the Rome Statute is placed within the jurisdiction of the ICC. It may exercise its jurisdiction in situations where the alleged perpetrator is a national of a member State or when the crime was committed in the territory of a Member State.
- A State not party to the Statute may decide to accept the jurisdiction of the ICC. Moreover, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) can also refer a situation to the ICC.

ICC AND NATIONAL JUDICIAL SYSTEM

ICC does not replace national criminal justice systems and primary priority is given to the national judicial system for criminal prosecution of the perpetrators.

INDIA AND ICC

- **India is not a party to the Rome Statute along with the US and China.** India considers the inherent jurisdiction of the ICC as a violation of a nation's sovereignty. Therefore, India has insisted on having an 'opt-in'

provision whereby a country could accept the jurisdiction of the ICC by declaration, specified to an issue and period.

13. UN COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE LAW

- The United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) is the core legal body of the United Nations system in the field of international trade law.
- A legal body with universal membership specialising in commercial law reform worldwide for over 50 years, UNCITRAL's business is the modernisation and harmonisation of rules on international business.
- UNCITRAL was established by the General Assembly in 1966 (Resolution 2205 of 17 December 1966).
- UNCITRAL conducts its work through six Working Groups which are assigned specific topics to work on from time to time.

14. UN GLOBAL CONGRESS OF VICTIMS OF TERRORISM

- UN Global Congress provided a platform for victims of terrorism to directly share experiences, challenges, stories of their resilience, and contributions to wider society in a socially connected environment and to advocate for the strengthening and upholding of their rights and effective fulfilment of their needs.
- India has proposed Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) which has yet to be adopted by the UN.

UN GLOBAL COUNTER-TERRORISM STRATEGY (GCTS)

UN GCTS was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2006 as a unique global instrument to enhance national, regional and international efforts to counter terrorism.

It was adopted by consensus in 2006 where all UN Member States agreed for the first time to a common strategic and operational approach to fighting terrorism.

Four Pillars of GCTS are:

- Addressing conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism.
- Measures to prevent and combat terrorism.
- Measures to build state capacities to prevent and combat terrorism and strengthen the UN system against terrorism.
- Measures to ensure respect for human rights and rule of law as fundamental basis to fight terrorism.

15. COMPREHENSIVE CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

- CCIT is a proposed treaty by India which intends to criminalise all forms of international terrorism.
- It provides a legal framework which makes it binding on all signatories to deny funds and safe havens to terrorist groups.

MAJOR OBJECTIVES

- To have a **universal definition of terrorism** that all 193 members of the UNGA will adopt into their criminal law.
 - To ban all terror groups and shut down terror camps.
 - To prosecute all terrorists under special laws
 - To make cross-border terrorism an extraditable offence worldwide.
- Despite India's efforts to push a global intergovernmental convention to tackle terrorism, the conclusion and ratification of the CCIT remain deadlocked, mainly due to opposition from three main blocs – the US, the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC), and the Latin American countries.

- All three have objections over the “definition of terrorism” (the most divisive of the issues) and seek exclusions to safeguard their strategic interests.

UN RESOLUTION 2593

- The resolution called on the Taliban to keep its commitment to preventing terror groups in Afghanistan and urged them to assist in the safe evacuations of all Afghan nationals wishing to leave the country.
- It specifically mentions individuals designated by the UNSC resolution 1267,” which includes the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM)

UN RESOLUTION 2589

- It called upon member states, hosting or having hosted United Nations peacekeeping operations, to take all appropriate measures to bring to justice perpetrators of the killing of, and all acts of violence against United Nations personnel, including, but not limited to, their detention and abduction.
- The resolution called on member states to take all necessary measures to investigate such acts, arrest and prosecute perpetrators of such acts in line with their national law, consistent with applicable international obligations & under international humanitarian law.

UN SC1267 COMMITTEE

- The UNSC 1267 Committee listed Abdul Rehman Makki as a global terrorist.
- It was set up in 1999 after Taliban and Al-Qaeda were listed as terror outfits by Resolution 1267 of the UNSC
- Function: To designate terrorists, implement sanctions and monitor their implementation.
- Composition: Made up of 15 members of UNSC. (Permanent & non-permanent members)
- Earlier efforts, in conjunction with partners like the United States, were stymied after China placed a “technical hold” on Makki’s listing. According to the UNSC 1267 Committee’s rules, a technical hold allows countries to request more time to study the information.

UNSC RESOLUTION 1540 (2004)

India coordinated with United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Committee, established under UNSC Resolution 1540 (2004) which obliges States, inter alia, to refrain from supporting non-State actors from developing, acquiring, manufacturing, possessing, transporting, transferring or using nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and their delivery systems, by any means.

UNSC - CTC (COUNTER TERRORISM COMMITTEE)

- The Counter Terrorism Committee (CTC) of the UN Security Council was established in 2001 in the aftermath of 9/11 terror attacks, pursuant to the UN Security Council resolution 1373.
- The committee comprises all fifteen members of the UNSC.
- India has been the chair of the UNSC Counter Terrorism Committee from January this year.
- Objectives: The committee has been tasked with monitoring and implementation of UNSC resolution 1373 and requesting countries to implement several measures intended to enhance their legal and institutional ability to counter terrorist activities at home, in their regions and around the world.
- The resolution mandates the committee to monitor the full implementation by member states (UN members) of resolution 1373. For this function, the CTC is assisted by an executive directorate, known as Counter Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED).

COUNTER TERRORISM EXECUTIVE DIRECTORATE (CTED)

- It is the executive directorate of the UNSC Counter Terrorism Committee.
- CTED conducts the CTC's policy decisions and conducts expert assessments of all 193 member states of the United Nations.

UNSC RESOLUTION 2538

- India co-sponsored this resolution at the UNSC.
- In **unanimously adopting resolution 2538 (2020)**, the Council called upon Member States, the United Nations Secretariat and regional organisations to strengthen their **collective efforts towards** women's **full, effective and meaningful participation at all peacekeeping levels and positions**.

16. UNISFA

India deployed a platoon of Women Peacekeepers in Abyei on the border of Sudan and South Sudan as part of the Indian Battalion in the United Nations Interim Security Force in Abyei (UNISFA) in 2023.

ABOUT UNISFA

In 2011, the Security Council authorized the deployment of a peacekeeping force to the disputed Abyei Area, which straddles northern and southern Sudan and has been claimed by both sides.

This will be India's largest single unit of women peacekeepers in a UN Mission since it deployed the first-ever all-women's contingent in Liberia in 2007.

17. GROUP OF FRIENDS

- India has launched a 'Group of Friends' to promote accountability for crimes against peacekeepers.
- It will in future also have a database that will record all crimes against the Blue Helmets.
- CO-CHAIRS India, Bangladesh, Egypt, France, Morocco and Nepal are co-chairs of the 'Group of Friends to Promote Accountability for Crimes Against Peacekeepers'.

18. UNRWA

India contributed US\$ 2.5 million to United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in Near East (UNRWA) in support of the Agency's programs and services, including education, health care, relief and social services for Palestine refugees.

ESTABLISHMENT

Following the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict, UNRWA was established by UNGA Resolution 302 to carry out direct relief and works programmes for Palestine refugees.

PALESTINE REFUGEES

Tkaulhe's term was defined in 1952.

UNRWA is unique in terms of its long-standing commitment to one group of refugees. It has contributed to the welfare and human development of four generations of Palestine refugees, defined as "persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict." The descendants of Palestine refugee males, including legally adopted children, are also eligible for registration.

In addition to Palestine refugees, the UN General Assembly has also mandated UNRWA to offer services to certain other persons who require humanitarian assistance, on an emergency basis as and when required, in UNRWA fields of operations. Notably, the General Assembly has mandated the Agency to provide services to persons in the region who are currently displaced and in serious need of continued assistance as a result of the 1967 and subsequent hostilities. These persons are not registered as Palestine refugees.

Unlike UNHCR, UNRWA does not have the mandate to resettle Palestine refugees and has no authority to seek lasting durable solutions for refugees.

UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions from UN Member States. UNRWA also receives some funding from the Regular Budget of the United Nations, which is used mostly for international staffing costs.

19. 1ST COMMITTEE OF UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY - VARIOUS RESOLUTIONS

- The United Nations General Assembly First Committee (also known as the Disarmament and International Security Committee or DISEC or C1) is one of six main committees at the General Assembly of the United Nations. It deals with disarmament and international security matters.
- India's traditional resolution titled "Measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction," was again adopted by the First Committee in 2020 without a vote.
- The resolution calls upon UN Member States to take measures aimed at preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction and to support international efforts in this regard.
- Two other resolutions of India were adopted with the broad support of the UN member States:
 - (a) Convention on prohibition of use of Nuclear Weapons, which reiterates call to Conference on Disarmament to commence negotiations on an International Convention for prohibiting the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances.
 - (b) Reducing Nuclear Danger highlights the need for a review of nuclear doctrines and immediate steps to reduce the risk of intentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons, including through their de-alerting and de-targeting.
- Another India-sponsored resolution on "Role of Science and Technology in the context of International Security and Disarmament" was adopted by consensus.
- The Resolution encourages outreach events at the national, regional and international levels to facilitate multilateral dialogue, concurrent developments in science and technology and the potential impact on international security and disarmament efforts.

20. INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNAL FOR THE LAW OF THE SEA (ITLOS)

It is an independent judicial body established by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). It is seated in Hamburg, Germany.

- The Convention establishes a comprehensive legal framework to regulate all ocean space, and its uses and ITLOS seeks to adjudicate disputes arising out of the interpretation and application of the convention resources.
- Contains provisions related to territorial sea and its contiguous zone, continental shelf, Exclusive economic zone, High seas, protection and preservation of the marine environment, exploration for and exploitation of the resources of the seabed and ocean floor and subsoil which is beyond the limits of national jurisdiction, among others.

21. INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY (IAEA)

- Established as an autonomous organisation in 1957.
- The Agency was set up as the world's "Atoms for Peace" organisation.
- Though established independently of the United Nations through its international treaty, the IAEA Statute, the IAEA reports to both the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council.
- India is a founding member of the IAEA.
- Signature and ratification of Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) are not preconditions for membership in the IAEA.
- North Korea is not a member.

IAEA SAFEGUARDS

- Safeguards are a set of technical measures applied by IAEA on nuclear material and activities, through which the Agency seeks to independently verify that nuclear facilities are not misused and nuclear material is not diverted from peaceful uses.
- States accept these measures through the conclusion of safeguards agreements.
- Under Article 3 of NPT, each Non-Nuclear Weapon State is required to conclude a safeguards agreement with the IAEA.

Three types of safeguards agreements under IAEA:

- Comprehensive safeguards agreements with non-nuclear-weapon State parties to the NPT.
- Voluntary offer safeguards agreements with the nuclear-weapon State parties to the NPT.
- Item-specific safeguards agreements with non-NPT States.

ADDITIONAL PROTOCOL

- Additional Protocol is not a stand-alone agreement.
- Each of the safeguard agreements may be complemented with an **Additional Protocol** that includes provisions for information about, and access to, all parts of a State's nuclear fuel cycle, from mines to nuclear waste.
- It provides additional tools for verification.
- It significantly increases the IAEA's ability to verify the peaceful use of all nuclear material in States with comprehensive safeguards agreements.
- As a non-signatory to the NPT, **India lacks comprehensive safeguards** that NNWS signatories to NPT have. India's Additional Protocol stipulates that only certain facilities are placed under safeguards.
- India's Additional Protocol applies many of the voluntary safeguards provisions that exist for nuclear weapon states, although **India is not recognized by the IAEA as a nuclear weapon state.**

SMALL QUANTITIES PROTOCOL

A small quantities protocol may be concluded in conjunction with a comprehensive safeguard agreement. Small quantities protocols are currently **available for States that have minimal or no nuclear material and no nuclear material in a facility.**

→ ORGANISATIONS

22. G20

The 19th G20 Summit was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 2024, under the theme "Building a Just World and a Sustainable Planet".

ABOUT G20 RIO DE JANEIRO

- The Rio summit marked the first time the African Union (AU) participated as a full member.
- It was hosted by Brazil, it is the third Global South host after Indonesia (2022) and India (2023).
- The next G20 Summit will be held in South Africa.

ABOUT G20

- Group of Twenty is the premier forum of international economic cooperation. It plays an important role in shaping and strengthening global architecture on all major international economic issues.
- **Members of G20:** 19 Countries and EU. Countries include Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, UK and USA. G20 members represent around 85% of global GDP and 75% of global trade and 2/3rd of global population.
- G20 does not have a permanent secretariat or staff.

- **The G20 presidency** rotates among the members and is selected from a different regional grouping of countries. G20 member countries are divided into 5 groups comprising a maximum of four countries each. Most groups are formed on a regional basis. However, Group 1 includes Australia, Canada, Saudi Arabia and USA) and Group 2 includes India, Russia, South Africa and Turkiye do not follow the regional pattern. Group 3 includes Argentina, Brazil and Mexico; Group 4 includes France, Germany, Italy and UK and Group 5 includes China, Indonesia, Japan & South Korea. The EU is not a member of any of these regional groups.
- Each year another country from a different group assumes the G20 Presidency. The countries in a group are each equally entitled to take Presidency when it is their group's turn.
- The G20 Summit is held annually, under the leadership of a rotating presidency. G20 initially focused largely on economic and macroeconomic issues, but it has since expanded its agenda to include trade, sustainable development, health, agriculture, energy, environment, climate change and anti-corruption.
- The G20 Presidency is responsible for bringing together the G20 agenda in consultation with other members. The Presidency is supported by the Troika – previous, current and incoming Presidency of G20. During India's Presidency, the troika consisted of Indonesia, India and Brazil respectively.
- **Inception of G20:** G20 was founded in 1999 after the Asian Financial Crisis as a forum for Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors to discuss global economic and financial issues.
- **Elevation to Leader's Level:** In 2008, G20 was upgraded to Heads of State/Government level in the wake of the Global Financial crisis of 2007. In 2009, G20 was designated as the premier forum for international economic cooperation. First G20 Summit took place in 2008 in Washington.

STRUCTURE OF G20

G20 consists of two parallel tracks: Finance Track & Sherpa Track.

- **SHERPA TRACK:** Headed by Sherpa who is representative of the Leader. Focuses on socio-economic issues such as agriculture, anti-corruption, climate, digital economy, education, employment, energy, environment, health, tourism, trade & investment.
- **FINANCE TRACK:** Headed by Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors, who generally meet four times a year, with two meetings being held on the side-lines of World Bank/IMF meetings. Focuses on Fiscal & Monetary Policy, International Financial Architecture, Infrastructure, financial regulation, international taxation etc.
- The Sherpas oversee negotiations over the course of the year, discussing agenda items for the Summit and coordinating the substantive work of the G20.
- **ENGAGEMENT GROUPS:** As part of G20 members' commitment to consult relevant stakeholders communities, dialogue is facilitated through engagement groups, comprising non-government participants from each G20 member. These groups often draft recommendations to G20 Leaders that contribute to the policy making process. Some engagement groups are: Business20, Civil20, Labour20, Parliament20, Science20, SAI20, Startup20, Think20, Urban20, Women20, Youth20.

OTHER G20 INITIATIVES

- **Research & Innovation Initiative Gathering (RIIG):** Aims to enhance, intensify and strengthen research & innovation collaboration among G20 member countries. RIIG is further the work of the Academic Forum held during the Italian Presidency in 2021, by bringing together science, technology and innovation experts of G20 member countries.
- **G20 EMPOWER:** G20 Alliance for Empowerment & Progression of Women's Economic Representation (G20 EMPOWER) was launched during G20 Osaka Summit in 2019. It aims to accelerate women's leadership and empowerment in the private sector by leveraging its unique alliance among business leaders and governments across G20 countries.
- **Space Economy Leaders Meeting:** Under India's G20 Presidency, ISRO is organising the fourth edition of Space Economy Leaders Meeting (SELM) to continue deliberations on the significance of space in shaping the global economy.

23. INITIATIVES UNDER INDIA'S G20 PRESIDENCY

JAIPUR CALL FOR ACTION

Aims to address the challenges in access to trade and market related information by MSMEs. Better access to such information will help MSMEs better integrate with global value chains and contribute to economic growth. In this regard, Jaipur Call for Action called for upgrading the already existing Global Trade Helpdesk portal.

Global Trade Helpdesk: It is a joint initiative of International Trade Centre, UNCTAD and WTO that aims to simplify market research for companies and especially MSMEs by integrating trade and business information into a single online portal. It collates and organises from ITC, WTO and UNCTAD and other organisations to provide an integrated solution that puts a wealth of global trade information for firms.

DECCAN HIGH LEVEL PRINCIPLES ON FOOD SECURITY & NUTRITION

G20 Agriculture Ministers adopted these principles for improving global food security, addressing malnutrition aggravated by climate change, geopolitical tensions.

- Facilitate Humanitarian Assistance to Countries and Populations in Vulnerable Situations
- Enhance Availability and Access to Nutritious Food and Strengthen Food Safety Nets
- Strengthening policies and actions for Climate-Resilient and Sustainable Agriculture & Food Systems
- Promoting One Health Approach for preventing anti-microbial resistance and zoonotic diseases to food security & agriculture.
- Accelerate innovation & use of digital technology.
- Scale up responsible public & private investments in agriculture.

GEOGLAM

During India's presidency of G20 Grouping, G20 Members took a call for strengthening the GEOGLAM initiative.

About Geoglam

- GEOGLAM stands for Group on Earth Observations Global Agricultural Monitoring Initiative.
- It aims to increase market transparency and improve food security by producing and disseminating relevant, timely and actionable information on agriculture conditions and outlooks of production at national, regional and global scales.
- GEOGLAM produces these reports by strengthening the international community's capacity to utilise coordinated and sustained Earth observations.
- It is a flagship initiative of the **Group of Earth Observations**.
- GEOGLAM is an open community with no formal membership process.

ABOUT GROUP ON EARTH OBSERVATIONS (GEO)

- GEO is a global intergovernmental body dedicated to produce user-driven Earth intelligence solutions that inform decisions and accelerate action on global, social and environmental challenges.
- Membership of GEO is open to all member states of UN and European Commission. India is also a member of this organisation.

GLOBAL BIOFUEL ALLIANCE

Context: Supported by G20 countries and organisations like IAE, ICAO, WEF, World LPG Foundation and on the sidelines of the latest G20 meeting at New Delhi, the Global Biofuels Alliance was announced

- Leaders of **India, Singapore, Bangladesh, Italy, USA, Brazil, Argentina, Mauritius and UAE** have launched the Global Biofuel Alliance.
- Global Biofuel Alliance is an initiative by India as the chair of G20 that **aims to serve as a catalytic platform, fostering global collaboration** for the advancement and widespread **adoption of biofuels**.

- It is an **alliance of governments, international organisations and industry** to facilitate adoption of biofuels.
- It brings together the biggest consumers and producers of biofuels aiming to drive biofuels development and deployment and position biofuels as a key to energy transition and economic growth.

GANDHINAGAR IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAP (GIR) & GANDHINAGAR INFORMATION PLATFORM (GIP) FOR STRENGTHENING G20 GLOBAL LAND INITIATIVE

Aims for restoration of landscapes of **forest fire impacted areas and mining affected areas** on **voluntary basis**, to reinforce the implementation of G20 Global Land Initiative.

Gandhinagar Implementation Roadmap (GIR)

Objectives:

- Enhance focus on ecological/ecosystem restoration of land by reinforcing the capacity of habitats to sustain the diversity of their species in particular keystone/umbrella/indicator species, in accordance with respective priorities as determined by scientific evidence.
- Accelerate action on identified landscapes by operationalising GIR's tangible pillars.
- Bring all forest fire degraded lands and mining impacted under effective restoration by 2030 and enable their ecological restoration by 2040, on a voluntary basis.

Pillars of Gandhinagar Implementation Roadmap

All participating countries to the roadmap will nominate national nodal institutes/experts/organisations engaged in the restoration of the two identified landscapes on a voluntary basis. These nodal institutions/experts/organisations will be the backbone of Gandhinagar Implementation Roadmap by acting across **Five mentioned pillars**:

- Showcase progress on ecological restoration of identified landscapes by compiling annual reports on projects and best practices.
- Engage national nodal institutes/experts/organisations for scientific research, knowledge and technology sharing and supporting monitoring and driving of key activities on identified landscapes.
- Collaborate through the network of nodal institutions/experts/

Gandhinagar Information Platform (GIP)

- Gandhinagar Information Platform has been conceived as the enabler for implementation of GIR.
- This platform shall display progress on voluntary ambitions of the GIR and act as information sharing hub for policies, best practices and actions.
- Foster collaboration between the nodal institutions/experts/organisation while showcasing traditional and indigenous knowledge on ecological restoration of the identified landscapes and adopting a solutions approach to enable affordable, replicable
- GIP will enable operationalisation of GIR in the following ways:
- **Engage stakeholders:** Indian Council of Forestry Research & Education (ICFRE) and Indian Institute of Forest Management (IIFM) will coordinate with nodal institutions/experts/organisations for collation of data, best practices and information received from participating countries and also responsible for design, development and maintenance of GIP.
- **Enable collaboration on a voluntary basis:** best practices and policies shared on GIP shall enable cross learning and ecological restoration.
- **Innovation through traditions:** Highlight traditional knowledge and role of other stakeholders (e.g., Indigenous People, Local communities etc.) for ecological restoration.
- **Access to and sharing of information** across a network of experts, researchers and civil society organisations invited by participating countries for capacity building activities.

G20 Global Land Initiative

- Aims to prevent, halt and reverse land degradation with an ambition to reduce degraded land by 50% by 2040.

Objectives of G20 Global Land Initiative

- **Objective 1:** Conserving land and halting habitat loss, habitat fragmentation and land degradation
- **Objective 2:** Promoting integrated, sustainable and resilient land and landscape management through nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based approaches.
- **Objective 3:** Restoring degraded land

GLOBAL DIGITAL PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE REPOSITORY (GDPIR)

- It is a comprehensive resource hub for pooling essential lessons and expertise from G20 members and guest nations, enabling easy discoverability.
- It showcases the information in a standardised format from countries and organisations that have developed DPIs at scale, incorporating elements such as maturity scales, source codes and governance frameworks.
- Each participant, based on whether their DPIs are built on open platforms, APIs, standards and protocols, can choose to display any information at their discretion, which can help others to develop their DPI.
- An initiative of India's G20 Presidency.
- **Aim:** To bridge knowledge gaps in choices and methodologies required for the design, construction, deployment and governance of DPIs.
- **Developed by** India's Ministry of Electronics & IT (MEITY).

SOCIAL IMPACT FUND

- It is a government led, multi-stakeholder initiative to fast-track DPI implementation in the global south.
- This fund will offer financial support to provide upstream technical and non-technical assistance to countries in developing DPI systems.
- It offers a platform for all relevant stakeholders, including other governments, international organisations and philanthropic entities to contribute to this fund and help accelerate the achievement of SDGs in Low- & Middle-Income Countries through DPIs.
- India has pledged an initial commitment of 25 million USD towards the Social Impact Fund.

ONE FUTURE ALLIANCE

It is a voluntary initiative aimed to build capacity and provide technical assistance and adequate funding support for implementing DPI in Low- & Middle-Income Countries.

Proposed by India at the G20 Summit.

G20 DIGITAL INNOVATION ALLIANCE

- Launched under India's G20 presidency to be implemented by Meity Startup Hub.
- **Objective:** Support startups developing innovative digital solutions that bridge the digital divide and propel global economic growth.
- **Member countries:** All G20 Countries and Members and 9 Guest Countries: Bangladesh, Egypt, Mauritius, Netherlands, Nigeria, Oman, Singapore, Spain and UAE.

INCLUSION OF AFRICAN UNION AS A PERMANENT MEMBER OF G20

- The African Union is a continental body consisting of 55 members that make up the countries of the African Continent.
- It was officially launched in 2002 as a successor of Organisation of African Unity (OAU).
- Heads of State and Government of Organisation of African Unity (OAU) issued the **Sirte Declaration** calling for establishment of an African Union to accelerate the process of integration in Africa to enable Africa to play its rightful role in the global economy and addressing problems of the continent.
- African Union was formally launched in July 2002 in Durban, South Africa
- Principal decision-making organs of African Union
- **Assembly:** Composed of Heads of States and Government or their duly accredited representatives. It is the supreme organ of AU. It meets at least once a year in ordinary sessions.
- **Executive Council:** Composed of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of member countries. Meets at least twice a year in ordinary sessions.

- **African Union Commission (AUC):** Secretariat of African Union and undertakes the day-to-day activities of AU. Based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- **Headquarters: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA (ADDIS ABABA DECLARATION)

- It entered into force in May 2019, after the required ratification by African member states. The operational phase of the African Continental Free Trade Area, ACFTA has been launched at the Niamey Summit held in July 2019.
- India has extended US\$ 15 million grant assistance to Niger in support of organising African Union (AU) summit in Niamey, Niger.
- The 18th session of the African Union, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 2012 adopted a decision to establish a Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) by 2017.
- Majority African countries signed the African Continental Free Trade Area and the Protocol establishing the African Economic Community in Kigali, Rwanda in 2018.
- Accra, Ghana serves as the secretariat of the AfCTA.
- It is the largest free trade area in the world in terms of participating countries since the formation of the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

24. INDIA MIDDLE EAST EUROPE ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (IMEC)

The India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor was launched during the G-20 summit in 2023.

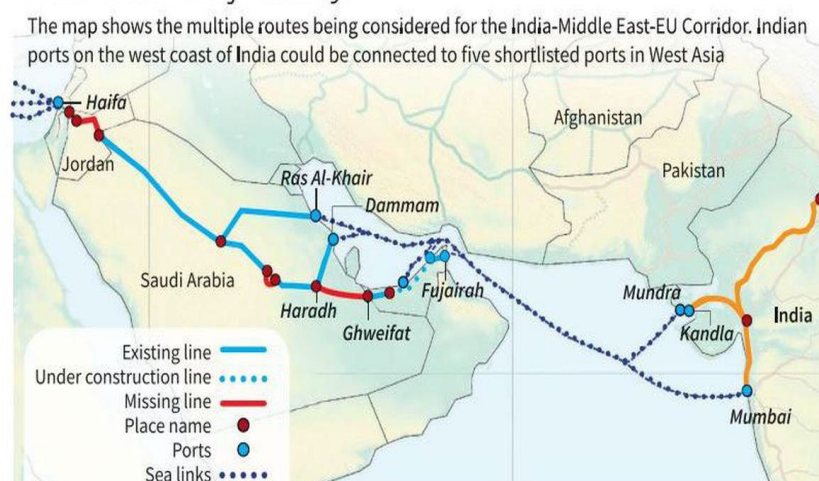
ABOUT IMEC CORRIDOR

- Governments of Saudi Arabia, EU, India, UAE, France, Germany, Italy and USA signed an MoU to commit to work together to establish the IMEC Corridor which aims to stimulate economic development through enhanced connectivity and economic integration between Asia, Arabian Gulf and Europe.
- IMEC comprises of two corridors:
 - (i) **East Corridor** connecting India to Arabian Gulf
 - (ii) **Northern Corridor** connecting Arabian Gulf to Europe.
- It will **include a railway** that will provide a reliable and cost-effective cross-border ship to rail transit network to supplement existing maritime and road transport routes – enabling goods and services to transit between India, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Israel and Europe.
- Along the railway route, cables will be laid for electricity and digital connectivity and pipelines for clean hydrogen exports.
- The funding for the IMEC project is expected to come from G7's Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment Initiative (PGII).

IMPORTANT LOCATIONS ON IMEC CORRIDOR

- **Ports in India:** Kandla Port, JNPT Port, Mundra Port
- **Ports in Persian Gulf:** (i) Fujairah, Jebel Ali & Abu Dhabi Ports in UAE (ii) Dammam and Ras Al Khair Ports in Saudi Arabia.
- **Ports in Israel:** Haifa Port of Israel which is the largest seaport in Israel and is controlled by India's Adani group.

Corridor trajectory



- **Ports in Europe:** Piraeus port in Greece, Messina Port in Italy and Marseille port in France.
- **Piraeus Port in Greece:** Piraeus Port is controlled by China Ocean Shipping Company which is a Chinese state-owned company. It is the chief seaport of Athens and is located on the Saronic Gulf on the western coast of Aegean Sea. It is Europe's largest passenger port.

PARTNERSHIP FOR GLOBAL INFRASTRUCTURE & INVESTMENT (PGII)

- It is an initiative of the G7 group of countries (USA, Canada, Italy, France, UK, Germany & Japan) aiming to mobilise public and private investments in sustainable, inclusive, resilient and quality infrastructure.
- PGII aims to mobilise \$600 billion by 2027 to narrow the infrastructure gap in low and middle income countries.
- Focus areas: (i) Climate change and energy crisis (ii) Supply chain resilience (iii) Connectivity through digital infrastructure and transport networks (iv) Sustainable health systems (v) Gender equality and equity (vi) Promote Just Energy Transition Partnerships.

25. INDIA UN CAPACITY BUILDING INITIATIVE

*India and the United Nations launched a joint capacity building initiative for the **Global South**.*

- It **aims to share India's development experiences, best practices and expertise** with partner countries in the Global South through capacity building and training programs.
- It will be a significant contribution to global efforts towards accelerating momentum for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), by strengthening South-South Cooperation and reflects India's continuing efforts to strengthen its development partnership with the Global South.

26. INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK FOR PROSPERITY

- The US launched the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) with Australia, Brunei, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. (14 Countries). **Launched in:** 2022.
- **Aim of IPEF:** To contribute to cooperation, stability, prosperity, development, and peace within the region. This framework will offer tangible benefits that fuel economic activity and investment, promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth, and benefit workers and consumers across the region.
- Fourteen IPEF partners collectively represent 40% of global GDP and 28% of global trade.
- IPEF is not a traditional trade agreement. The IPEF will not include market access commitments such as lowering tariff barriers, as the agreement is "more of an administrative arrangement".
- Countries are free to join (or not join) initiatives under any of the stipulated pillars but are expected to adhere to all commitments once they enroll.

LAUNCH BEGAN DISCUSSIONS OF FUTURE NEGOTIATIONS ON THE FOLLOWING PILLARS:

- (1) Trade
- (2) Supply Chains: IPEF Supply Chain Agreement
- (3) Clean Energy, Decarbonization, and Infrastructure: IPEF Clean Economy Agreement
- (4) Tax and Anti-Corruption: IPEF Fair Economy Agreement
- (5) Institutionalisation of IPEF: Agreement on IPEF For Prosperity

INDIA AND IPEF

One pillar, which deals primarily with trade, was not joined by India because the contours of the framework - particularly on commitments required on environment, labour, digital trade and public procurement — are still emerging.

To see what benefits member countries will derive and whether any conditionalities on aspects like environment may discriminate against developing countries who have the imperative to provide low cost and affordable energy to meet the needs of our growing economy,

OPERATIONALISATION OF IPEF SUPPLY CHAIN AGREEMENT

The agreement recognises the importance of building resilient & competitive supply chains across the Indo-Pacific region.

It came into force in February 2024 with all 14 IPEF countries signing the agreement in November 2023.

The IPEF Supply Chain Agreement establishes three bodies:

IPEF Supply Chain Council: The agreement establishes the IPEF Supply Chain Council composed of a relevant senior official from the central government of each party. The IPEF Supply Chain Council will elect a Chair following approval from 2/3rds of its members to serve a term of two years.

IPEF Supply Chain Crisis Response Group

Labour Rights Advisory Board

27. 'FIVE EYES' INTELLIGENCE ALLIANCE

Context: The directors of "Five Eyes" intelligence agencies met on the sidelines of Raisina Dialogue in Delhi (2025).

WHO ARE THE 'FIVE EYES'?

- The 'Five Eyes' is a multilateral intelligence sharing network of five countries, **Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the U.K. and the U.S.**
- It is both surveillance based and tracks signals intelligence (**SIGINT**).
- The **alliance between the U.S. and the U.K.** evolved around the **Second World War** to counter the Cold War Soviet threat.
- In **1946**, the **alliance was formalised** through an agreement for cooperation in signals intelligence.
- The arrangement was later extended to 'second party' countries – Canada joined in 1948, while **Australia and New Zealand** became part of the alliance in 1956.

The Five Eyes have become involved in ocean and maritime surveillance, scientific and defence intelligence analysis, medical intelligence, geospatial intelligence, counterintelligence, counterterrorism, and the continuous sharing of intelligence products via a secret collective database known as '**Stone Ghost**'.

28. FINANCIAL ACTION TASK FORCE

- Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is the global money laundering and terrorist financing watchdog.
- The inter-governmental body sets international standards that aim to prevent these illegal activities and the harm they cause to society.
- As a policy-making body, the FATF works to generate the necessary political will to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms in these areas.
- With more than 200 countries and jurisdictions committed to implementing them. The FATF has developed the FATF **Recommendations, or FATF Standards**, which ensure a coordinated global response to prevent organised **crime, corruption and terrorism**.
- They help authorities go after the money of criminals dealing in illegal drugs, human trafficking and other crimes.
- The FATF **also works to stop funding for weapons of mass destruction**.
- The FATF reviews **money laundering and terrorist financing techniques** and continuously strengthens its standards to address new risks, such as the regulation of virtual assets, which have spread as **cryptocurrencies gain popularity**.
- FATF monitors countries to ensure they implement FATF Standards fully and effectively and holds countries to account that do not comply.
- FATF **does not address all issues related to low tax jurisdiction or tax competition**.
- The FATF mandate **focuses only on laundering** of proceeds of crimes and the financing of terrorism.

FATF MEMBERS

There are currently 39 members of the FATF: 37 jurisdictions and 2 regional organisations (**Gulf Cooperation Council and European Commission**). These 39 Members are at the core of global efforts to combat money laundering and terrorist financing.

India, China, Israel, UK and USA are the members, while Pakistan, North Korea, and Iran are not the members.

FATF '40+9'

- FATF issues a report containing a set of Forty Recommendations, which are intended to provide a comprehensive plan of action needed to fight against money laundering.

In 2001, the development of standards in the fight against terrorist financing was added to the mission of the FATF thereby further adding 9 Special Recommendations.

- FATF has formed 40 recommendations against money laundering and 9 special recommendations against terrorist financing, which form the commonly known '40+9' FATF Standards.

MUTUAL EVALUATIONS

- The FATF conducts peer reviews of each member to assess levels of implementation of the FATF Recommendations.
- It provides an in-depth description and analysis of each country's system for preventing criminal abuse of the financial system.

FATF LISTINGS

- FATF issues a list of '**Non-Cooperative Countries or Territories**' (NCCTs), commonly called **FATF Blacklist**.
- These countries or territories are uncooperative in international efforts against money laundering and terrorism financing.
- The **grey list** is a list of countries or territories with strategic anti-money laundering/countering the financing of terrorism deficiencies for which they have developed an action plan with the FATF.

ARE THE FATF AND OECD RELATED?

FATF and OECD are separate organisations. Although the member countries overlap to a large degree, there are several countries which are members of the FATF and not the OECD and vice versa. However, the FATF Secretariat (currently 40 people) is housed administratively at the OECD.

FATF was not formed as a formal international organisation. Rather, FATF is a task force composed of member governments who agree to fund FATF on a temporary basis with specific goals and projects (a "mandate").

29. INTERPOL

- Interpol stands for **International Criminal Police Organisation**, an inter-governmental organisation. It has 194 member countries and helps police in all of them to work together to make the world a safer place.
- In each country, an INTERPOL National Central Bureau (NCB) provides a central point of contact for the General Secretariat and other NCBs. An NCB is run by national police officials and usually sits in the government ministry responsible for policing.
- The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is designated as the National Central Bureau of India.
- INTERPOL Notices are international requests for cooperation or alerts allowing police in member countries to share critical crime-related information. Interpol issues **eight types of Interpol notices**, seven of which are: red, blue, green, yellow, black, orange, and purple. **An eighth special notice** (for groups and individuals under UN sanctions) is issued at the special request of the United Nations Security Council.
- Notices are published by the General Secretariat at the request of a National Central Bureau and are made available to all our member countries.
- Headquarters - LYON, FRANCE**

GLOBAL COMPLEX FOR INNOVATION

Based in Singapore since 2015, the INTERPOL Global Complex for Innovation is the centre of our activities in cybercrime, research and development, and capacity building. It also provides an Asian base for the Organisation in several crime areas.

DECISION MAKING

The General Assembly takes decisions. Each member country represented has one vote. The decision-making process is made by either a simple or two-thirds majority, depending on the subject matter.

FUNDING

There are two main sources of income:

- **Statutory contributions from our membership:** Each of our member countries pays a statutory contribution to INTERPOL each year; it is an obligatory payment. This contribution is based on economic weight.
- **Voluntary funding for our activities:** Most of the voluntary funding comes from government agencies, notably those responsible for policing, but there were also smaller contributions from international and non-governmental organisations, foundations and private entities.



INTERPOL METAVERSE

Interpol has developed its own virtual reality space to help users train and attend virtual meetings.

This new virtual reality space can be only accessed through secure servers. It helps police officers to experience Metaverse, offering them an idea of what crimes could take place and how they could be handled in future.

30. SHANGHAI COOPERATION AGREEMENT (SCO)

China will host the SCO presidency in 2025.

About SCO: It is a permanent intergovernmental international organisation formed in 2001.

SHANGHAI FIVE

Shanghai Five, a political association based on the Agreement on Confidence-Building in the Military Field in the Border Area and the Agreement on the Mutual Reduction of Armed Forces Members: (SCO - UZBEKISTAN)

WORKING

- The Heads of State Council (HSC) is the highest decision-making body in the SCO.
- The secretary general and executive director of RATS is appointed by HSC for a 3 Year term.
- The Heads of Government Council (HGC) meets once per year to discuss a strategy for multilateral cooperation and priority directions within the Organisation's framework.
- Organisation has two permanent bodies — the **Secretariat in Beijing** (China) and the **Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) in Tashkent**.
- **SCO RATS:** Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) of SCO is a permanent body based in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The objective of RATS is based upon the Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism. RATS possess information on terrorist organisations and terrorists.

MEMBERS

- **SCO full members:** 10 countries: Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India, Pakistan, Iran (2023) and Belarus (2024).
- **Observer countries of SCO:** Afghanistan, Mongolia.

- SCO decided to admit India & Pakistan as full members in 2017. India participated for the first time as a full member at the recently held 18th Qingdao Summit of SCO in China that was held in 2018.

SCO BUSINESS COUNCIL

- Business Council of SCO was founded in 2006 in Shanghai. It is a non-government entity that unites highly authoritative business community representatives of SCO member states.
- SCO Business Council is **an independent institution** capable of taking advisory decisions and giving expert assessments regarding the involvement of members of the business communities of the SCO member states in trade, economic and investment interaction within the framework of the Organisation.
- SCO **Business Council's Permanent Secretariat** is headquartered in **Moscow**.

SCO INTERBANK CONSTORIUM

- Established in 2005 to provide funding and bank services for investment projects sponsored by the governments of the SCO member states.
- The members of the SCO IBC are Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.
- INDIA is not a member of SCO IBC
- China is the largest economic power in SCO. India is now the 2nd largest economic power in SCO.
- Military exercise 'Peace Mission 2018' was conducted in Russia and became the first platform after UN Peace Mission Peacekeeping Missions for joint military engagement between India and Pakistan.
- The military exercise called 'Tsent (Centre) 2019' was conducted by Russia at Orenburg, where all SCO members participated.
- Wonders of SCO include archaeological and historical monuments of SCO. It includes Statue of Unity (India), Daming Palace (China), Navruz Palace (Tajikistan), Mughals Heritage (Pakistan), Tamgaly Gorge (Kazakhstan), Poi-Kalan Complex (Uzbekistan), The Golden Ring of Russia and Lahore, Mughal's heritage (Pakistan).

SCO AND INDIA

- Held a virtual exhibition on shared Buddhist heritage
- Hosted First SCO STARTUP FORUM
- Translation of Indian books into official languages (Russian and Chinese) of SCO.

31. EXPANSION OF BRICS

- Recently, the 16th BRICS Summit was held in Kazan, Russia (2024).
- The concept of '**BRICS Plus**' was first mooted by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in 2017 with the objective of widening the "circle of friends" of BRICS that can bring unity among developing countries & enhance South-South cooperation.
- Argentina, Indonesia, Egypt & Pakistan are among countries that have previously indicated their interest in joining grouping.

ABOUT BRICS

- BRICS is an **intergovernmental organisation** comprising **ten** countries – Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, United Arab Emirates and Indonesia.
- The acronym 'BRIC' was coined by economist **Jim O'Neill** in 2001.
- **Founding countries of BRIC:** Brazil, Russia, India, and China.
- **First formal BRIC summit:** Held in **2009** in **Yekaterinburg, Russia**
- **South Africa** joined BRIC in **2010**, transforming **BRIC to BRICS**.
- **New members:** Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates joined in 2024. **Indonesia** in 2025.
- **BRICS was conceived as a counterweight** to the Group of Seven (G7) developed economies, made up of the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy and Japan.

- **New Development Bank (NDB)** is a multilateral development bank established by BRICS. **Objective:** To mobilise resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in emerging markets and developing countries (EMDCs). **Initial authorised capital:** \$100 billion.

32. QUADRILATERAL SECURITY DIALOGUE (QUAD)

- **QUAD** is an informal strategic platform comprising US, India, Japan and Australia.
- **Aim:** To promote regional security and economic partnership in the Indo-Pacific region.
- **Objectives of Quad:**
 - Rules based international order and sovereignty
 - Free, open, prosperous and inclusive **Indo-Pacific (I-P) region**.
 - Promoting democracy, human rights, rules of law and countering China's influence in the region.
- **Quad does not have a decision-making body** or a secretariat, or a formal structure like NATO or United Nations. The alliance is maintained through summits, meetings, information exchanges and military drills.

KEY AREAS OF COOPERATION:

- Maritime awareness and response in Regional waters
- Disaster response and climate change: **Quad Climate Working Group** (capacity building for adaptation to climate change)
- Health security and Pandemic response
- Digital and Physical Infra & supply-chain resilience: ICT Tech Infra; Critical and Emerging Technologies and Resilient Port Infrastructure.
- Cyber-security: **Quad Senior Cyber Group** (shared cyber standards).
- Cooperation in space sector: Sharing satellite data

MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS OF THE LATEST MEETING (SEPTEMBER 2024)

- **QUAD Wilmington Declaration:** reaffirming Quad's commitment to collective action in addressing regional and global challenges.
- **QUAD Cancer Moonshot:** target cancer, cancer-care collaboration cervical cancer, initially.
- **MAITRI** (Maritime Initiative for Training in the Indo-Pacific): India will host inaugural MAITRI workshop in 2025.
- **QUAD I-P Logistics Network:** enhance civilian response during disaster management.
- **QUAD Ports for future Partnership:** build resilient port infra.
- **Semiconductor Supply Chains Contingency Network:** enhance resilience of QUAD's semiconductor supply chain.
- **Maritime Legal Dialogue** to support Rules-based Maritime order in Indo-Pacific.

33. ORGANISATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION

OIC has endorsed the Arab League's Plan against Donald Trump's plan to develop Gaza. The Arab-backed proposal, led by Egypt, calls for Hamas to relinquish control to interim administration until Palestinian Authority assumes governance. Unlike Trump's plan, the Egyptian framework would allow two million Palestinians to remain in Gaza.

- OIC was established in a summit which took place in **Rabat, Morocco in 1969 and 1970** it was decided to establish a permanent secretariat in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. India is not a member.
- It endeavours to safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace.
- Second largest inter-governmental organisation after the UN with a membership of 57 states spread over four continents. It has its main membership from Muslim-majority countries; however, several non-Muslim majority countries are also provided membership to OIC for various geo-political reasons under the earlier 1972 Charter.

- The OIC Charter adopted in 2008 limits membership to states that are members of the United Nations, having a Muslim majority with approval by consensus required. Provisions are the same for acquiring observer status.
- All decision-making in the forum requires a quorum defined by the presence of two-thirds of the member states and complete consensus. In case a consensus cannot be reached, decisions shall be made by a two-thirds majority of members present and voting.
- OIC is financed by the member states proportionate to their national incomes.
- Islamic Summit, composed of Kings and heads of state, is the supreme authority of the organisation. Convening every three years, it deliberates, and takes policy decisions.
- The Council of Foreign Ministers is the chief decision-making body and meets annually to decide on how to implement the OIC's general policies.

34. COLLECTIVE SECURITY TREATY ORGANISATION

Kazakhstan's capital Astana held a summit meeting of Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) in November 2024.

Background: When the Cold War ended in 1991, the Warsaw Pact, an alliance of eight socialist states, and the Soviet Union's answer to NATO dissolved.

Russia and five of its allies in the Commonwealth of Independent States, which was nothing but a loose club of post-Soviet countries, signed a new Collective Security Treaty, which came into force in 1994.

Collective Security Treaty Organisation, a full-blown military alliance.

Today it has six members: Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan. (Uzbekistan quit the alliance in 2012). Also referred to as TASHKENT PACT or TASHKENT TREATY

The HQ is in Moscow.

Collective Security Council (CSC) is the highest body of the Organisation and consists of heads of the Member States.

35. SAARC

- SAARC is a regional intergovernmental organisation and was established with the signing of the **SAARC Charter** in Dhaka on 8 December 1985.
- **8 member States:** Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
- The Secretariat is in **Kathmandu, Nepal.**
- **SAARC** works on the **principle of consensus.**

INITIATIVE UNDER SAARC

- **SAARC EMERGENCY FUND:** India has asked the leaders of the SAARC countries to chart out a common strategy to combat COVID-19 in the region.
- **SAARC ARBITRATION COUNCIL:** SARCO was established to resolve cost-effective settlement of disputes via arbitration within the region.
- **South Asian Regional Standard Organisation** to harmonize standards and promote cooperation in the fields of metrology, accreditation and conformity assessment for enhancing the capacity of the respective national institutions in conducting their technical tasks.
- **SOUTH ASIAN UNIVERSITY** was established in Delhi.
- **SAARC DEVELOPMENT FUND** is a comprehensive funding mechanism with the provision of three Windows (Social, Economic and Infrastructure).

SOUTH ASIA SUBREGIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION (SASEC)

- **Members:** Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal & Sri Lanka (**Pakistan is not included while Myanmar is there, among SAARC members**).

- A project-based partnership that aims to promote regional prosperity, improve economic opportunities and build a better quality of life in the subregion.

VISION

- Boost intraregional trade & cooperation in South Asia
- Developing connectivity and trade with Southeast Asia through Myanmar, China and the global market.

PRIORITY SECTORS

- Transport
- Trade Facilitation
- Energy
- Economic Corridor Development.

SAARC CURRENCY SWAP

- SAARC Currency Swap Framework came into operation on November 15, 2012.
- RBI can offer a swap agreement with an overall corpus of USD 2 billion
- Swap drawals can be made in USD, EURO or Indian Rupee

Recently the Reserve Bank of India signed a Currency Swap Agreement with the Maldives Monetary Authority (MMA) to enable MMA to make drawals in multiple tranches up to a maximum of \$200 million from the RBI.

In 2020, the RBI signed a similar pact for extending up to a \$400 million currency swap facility to Sri Lanka.

CURRENCY SWAP FRAMEWORK

- RBI has revised the currency swap arrangement for SAARC countries for 2019-2022.
- **India and Japan** signed a bilateral currency swap agreement in 2018.
- A foreign currency swap is an agreement to exchange currency between two foreign parties. The agreement consists of generally swapping principal and interest payments on a loan made in one currency, for principal and interest payments on a loan of equal value in another currency.
- The purpose of engaging in a currency swap is usually to procure loans in foreign currency at more favourable interest rates than if borrowing directly in a foreign market.
- Currency swaps are done to reduce exposure to anticipated fluctuations in exchange rates.
- This facility will enable the agreed amount of foreign capital to be available to India for use as and when the need arises. So, there is no immediate cost when an amount is withdrawn by India.
- It would bring greater stability to foreign exchange & capital markets in India thereby improving market sentiments.

36. CONFERENCE ON INTERACTION AND CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURES IN ASIA (CICA)

- CICA is an intergovernmental forum that promotes peace, security, and stability in Asia through dialogue and cooperation. **28 member** states. **Kuwait** is the latest country to join CICA in 2022.
- India has been a member of CICA since its inception in 1999 and has been actively participating in various activities conducted under the aegis of CICA.
- A multinational forum for enhancing cooperation towards promoting peace, security & stability in Asia.
- The forum is based on the recognition that there is a close link between peace, security and stability in Asia and the rest of the world.
- The idea of convening the CICA was first proposed by the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

MEETING

- Meeting of CICA Heads of State and Government (Summit) is the highest decision-making body of CICA.

- **CICA Summit is convened every four years** 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**.
- Two founding documents of CICA *are (i) Declaration on Principles Guiding Relations between CICA Member States* adopted at the First Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs held in Almaty in 1999 and *(ii) Almaty Act (Charter of CICA)* adopted at the First Summit Meeting held in Almaty in 2002. These two documents became the guide for the future evolution of the CICA.
- For becoming a member of CICA, a state must have at least a part of its territory in Asia. Fifteen states meeting this criterion signed the Declaration on the Principles Guiding Relations between the CICA Member States at the First Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in 1999 and became founding members of CICA.
- CICA secretariat is located in **Astana, Kazakhstan**.

37. ASEAN

- Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a regional intergovernmental organisation comprising ten countries in Southeast Asia - Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, Brunei, Cambodia, Myanmar (Burma), and Laos.
- It aims to promote intergovernmental cooperation and facilitates economic, political, security, military, educational, and socio-cultural integration among its members and other countries in Asia.

21ST ASEAN INDIA SUMMIT

The 21st ASEAN-India Summit was held in **Vientiane, Lao PDR**, in 2024. It marked a decade of India's Act East Policy, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi joined ASEAN leaders to review the progress of **ASEAN-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership** and chart the future direction of cooperation. This was Prime Minister's 11th participation in the Summit where he laid out 10 point plan:

- Celebrating the year 2025 as ASEAN-India Year of Tourism for which India would make available USD 5 million towards joint activities;
- To celebrate a decade of Act East Policy through several people centric activities including Youth Summit, Start-up Festival, Hackathon, Music Festival, ASEAN-India Network of Think Tanks and Delhi Dialogue.
- To organise ASEAN-India Women Scientists Conclave under ASEAN-India Science and Technology Development Fund.
- Doubling the number of scholarships at Nalanda University and provision of new scholarships for ASEAN students at Agricultural Universities in India.
- Review of ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement by 2025.
- Enhancing Disaster Resilience for which India would make available USD 5 million.
- Initiate a new Health Ministers' track towards building Health Resilience.
- Initiate a regular mechanism of ASEAN-India Cyber Policy Dialogue towards strengthening Digital and Cyber Resilience.
- Workshop on Green Hydrogen; and
- Invited ASEAN Leaders to join 'Plant a Tree for Mother' campaign towards building climate resilience.

ASEAN PLUS SIX

The ASEAN Plus Six alliance, which also consists of China, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, and Australia, includes India.

A Free Trade Agreement between India and ASEAN was also ratified and implemented in 2010

ADMM PLUS

The ADMM Plus is an annual meeting of Defence Ministers of ten ASEAN countries and its eight dialogue partner countries, viz., India, USA, Russia, China, Australia, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea.

MEMBERSHIP

The Concept Paper on ADMM-Plus: Principles for Membership, adopted at the 3rd ADMM, Pattaya 2009 outlines the principles for membership to the ADMM-Plus process, as follows:

- The Plus country shall be a full-fledged Dialogue Partner of ASEAN.
- The Plus country shall have significant interactions and relations with ASEAN defence establishment; and
- The Plus country shall be able to work with the ADMM to build capacity to enhance regional security substantively to promote capacity-building in the region in the fields of defence and security.



DEFENCE MINISTERS MEET

The maiden India-ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting was held at Siem Reap, Cambodia to commemorate the 30th Anniversary of India-ASEAN relations in 2022, which was designated as 'ASEAN-India Friendship Year'.

Two-Initiatives proposed.

- 'India-ASEAN Initiative for Women in UN Peace Keeping Operations' which includes conduct of tailor-made courses for women peacekeepers of ASEAN Member States at the Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping in India and the conduct of a 'Tabletop Exercise' in India for women officers from ASEAN incorporating facets of UN peacekeeping challenges.
- 'India-ASEAN Initiative on Marine Plastic Pollution' which includes channelising the energy of the youth towards addressing the critical issue of marine pollution.

It was suggested that coordination between NCC and equivalent youth organisations of ASEAN countries for a collective effort in this direction in the region. It also proposed the establishment of an India-ASEAN Marine Pollution Response Centre at Chennai by the Indian Coast Guard to address and supplement regional efforts to deal with marine pollution incidents.

38. EAST ASIA SUMMIT (EAS)

Prime Minister (PM) attended the 19th East Asia Summit (EAS) in 2024 in Vientiane, Lao PDR.

He underlined that India's participation in the East Asia Summit was an important pillar of its Act East Policy. Noting that a free, open, inclusive, prosperous and rules-based Indo-Pacific was important for peace and development in the region.

ABOUT EAST ASIA SUMMIT

- The East Asia Summit (EAS) process was initiated **in 2005 with 16 participating countries**, namely the ASEAN Member States, Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, and the Republic of Korea. The United States and the Russian Federation joined later on. It refers to the Meeting of Heads of State/Governments of these countries and is convened annually.
- EAS is a regional forum held annually by leaders of, initially, 16 countries in the East Asian, Southeast Asian, and South Asian regions, based on the ASEAN Plus Six mechanism.
- Membership expanded to 18 countries including **Russia and the United States** at the Sixth EAS in 2011.
- EAS meeting is held after annual ASEAN leaders' meetings and plays an important role in the regional architecture of Asia-Pacific.

- PM Modi has also proposed an **“Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative”** for a safe, secure and stable maritime domain under the aegis of the East Asia Summit.

39. EASTERN ECONOMIC FORUM

Representatives from over 70 nations arrived in **Vladivostok** to participate in the 9th Eastern Economic Forum in 2024. The theme of the meeting was “Far East 2030”.

About Eastern Economic Forum: The Eastern Economic Forum was established by decree of the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin in 2015 to support the economic development of Russia's Far East and to expand international cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.

The forum was aimed at connecting the Far East with the Asia-Pacific region.

The Indian PM virtually attended the EEF. India previously has offered a \$1bn line of credit, NITI Aayog has been working closely with the Ministry of development for the Far East and Arctic, and ONGC VL has purchased stakes in the Sakhalin 1 project in the region.

ABOUT RUSSIA'S FAR EAST

It is the easternmost part of Russia.

It borders the Pacific and Arctic oceans.

It borders **(China, Japan Mongolia, The USA and North Korea)**

India and
Russia

Note: Russian Far East is a region in North Asia which includes the Russian part of the Far East, the easternmost territory of Russia, between Lake Baikal in Eastern Siberia and the Pacific Ocean.



40. OPEC AND OPEC+

ABOUT ORGANISATION OF THE PETROLEUM EXPORTING COUNTRIES (OPEC)

- OPEC is a permanent intergovernmental organisation of 13 oil-exporting developing nations that coordinates and unifies the petroleum policies of its Member Countries.
- It was created at the Baghdad Conference in 1960, by Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela (founding members).
- **Twelve Members:** Algeria, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Libya, United Arab Emirates, Nigeria, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela. (**Note:** Angola withdrew its membership from 1st January 2024).
- **OPEC Statute** distinguishes between Founder Members and Full Members - those countries whose applications for membership have been accepted by the Conference.
- **Addition of new members in OPEC:** The Statute stipulates that “any country with a substantial net export of crude petroleum, which has fundamentally similar interests to those of Member Countries, may become a Full Member of the Organisation, if accepted by a majority of three-fourths of Full Members, including the **concurring votes of all Founder Members**.”
- **OPEC Fund:** OPEC Fund for International Development is a multilateral development finance institution established in 1976. It is the only globally mandated development institution that **provides financing exclusively to non-member countries**.

OPEC FUND

The OPEC Fund's work is people-centred, focusing on financing projects that meet essential needs, such as food, energy, infrastructure, employment

It is the only globally mandated development institution that provides financing from member countries to non-member countries exclusively.

By providing public, private and trade sector financing, as well as grants, to countries and regions that often find funds difficult to secure, the organisation is helping to solve challenges

- OPEC's objective is to co-ordinate and unify petroleum policies among Member Countries, to secure fair and stable prices for petroleum producers; an efficient, economic and regular supply of petroleum to consuming nations; and a fair return on capital to those investing in the industry.
- OPEC has its headquarters in Vienna, Austria.

OPEC+

- OPEC+ is a group of OPEC countries and its allies.
- It also includes non-OPEC oil-producing countries. They are Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Brunei, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mexico, Oman, Russia, Sudan and South Sudan.

41. G7

ABOUT G7

- Group of 7 (G7) is an informal group of 7 countries — USA, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and UK; the heads of which hold an annual summit with the European Union and other invitees.
- India, Australia, South Korea and South Africa were invited to the 47th G7 summit hosted by the UK.
- Together the G7 member countries represent 40% of the global GDP and 10% of the world's population.
- G7 has no legal existence, permanent secretariat or official members.
- Leaders of G7 countries meet annually and discuss emerging global issues.
- The presidency of G7 meetings is held by each of the 7 countries in turn, each year.

In all G7 countries, annual public sector expenditure exceeded revenue in 2023. Most G7 countries also had a high level of gross debt, especially Japan (255% of GDP), Italy (139%) and the US (123%).

The 50th G7 summit was organised in Italy in 2024. India also attended the summit.

42. COMMONWEALTH OF NATIONS

- The Commonwealth of Nations is a group of 56 member countries, the vast majority of which are former British colonies. They are mostly in Africa, Asia, the Americas, and the Pacific. Three European nations are part of the Commonwealth: Cyprus, Malta, and of course, the UK itself.
- Established in 1949 by the **London Declaration**.
- In 1949, newly independent India was invited to join the Commonwealth, and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru agreed with a pivotal caveat. India asked that it should be given membership **without the requirement of having to swear allegiance to the Crown**. The member nations agreed — and later that year, India, Pakistan, and Ceylon (Sri Lanka) joined the Commonwealth.
- The commonwealth secretariat (London) was created in 1965 as a central intergovernmental organisation to manage the Commonwealth's work.
- Operates by the inter-governmental **consensus** of Member States.
- Four countries in the Commonwealth — Mozambique (1995), Rwanda (2009), Togo (2022), and Gabon (2022) — had **no colonial ties with Britain**.

43. INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION (ILO)

- It is the **only tripartite** U.N. agency which **brings together governments, employers and workers**, to set labour standards, develop policies and devise programmes promoting decent work for all women and men.
- It was created in **1919**, under the League of Nations, as part of the **Treaty of Versailles** that ended World War I, to reflect the belief that universal and lasting peace can be accomplished only if it is based on social justice.
- In **1946**, the ILO became a **specialised agency** of the newly formed United Nations.

- It is headquartered in **Geneva, Switzerland**.
- In **1969**, the ILO received the **Nobel Peace Prize** for improving fraternity and peace among nations, pursuing decent work and justice for workers, and providing technical assistance to other developing nations.
- The **Governing Body** is the executive body of the International Labour Organisation. It **meets three times a year**, in March, June and November.
- The ILO constitution **permits any member of the United Nations** to become a member of the ILO. ILO is also a member of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG).
- The International Labour Conference, held in June 2019, adopted a landmark **ILO Centenary Declaration** (focuses on the major challenges and opportunities for the future of work, ranging from technology to climate change, from demographic shifts to the need for new skills).
- **Reports released by ILO:**
 - World Employment and Social Outlook
 - World Social Protection Report
 - Global Estimates of Modern Slavery
 - Global Wage Report
 - Global Employment Trends for Youth

India and ILO:

- **India** is one of the founding members of ILO (since 1919).
- ILO has eight core conventions of which India has **not-ratified two conventions**:
 - **No. 87:** Freedom of Association and Protection of Rights to Organise Convention.
 - **No. 98:** Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining.
- In 2017, India ratified ILO Conventions **No. 138 and 182**, signaling its legal commitment to the elimination of **child labour**.

GLOBAL COALITION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Voluntary initiative of ILO that aims to generate increased political commitments and investments and to foster concrete actions **towards social justice and decent work**.

The Coalition intervenes by enhancing advocacy, promoting policy coherence, and generating knowledge. Through cooperation and partnerships, we mobilize resources to address critical issues and evolve our activities over time to best serve the interlinked causes of social justice and decent work.

THEMATIC PRIORITIES OF GLOBAL COALITION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

- Addressing inequality, discrimination, and exclusion
- Realizing labour rights as human rights, ensuring human dignity and meeting basic needs.
- Expanding access to and capabilities for productive and freely chosen employment.
- Providing protection and building resilience.
- Strengthening just transitions and social dimension of sustainable development, trade and investment.
- Reinforcing institutions of social dialogue.

MEMBERSHIP OF GLOBAL COALITION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

The membership of Global Coalition for Social Justice is open to governments, employers', workers' organisations, international entities, financial institutions, businesses, INGOs and academia.

- National Governments: Currently, 37 countries are members to this, including India.
- International Organisations: Currently, 15 International organisations are members like FAO, ILO, IPU, ITC, IUCN, OHCHR, UN Women, UN Habitat, UNEP, UNFCCC, UNGC, UNIDO, WTO, UNCTAD, UNRISD.

GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS OF GLOBAL COALITION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

The Coalition will be led by a Coordinating Group which meets twice a year to guide the strategic agenda.

Secretariat: Hosted by the International Labour Organisation. Secretariat supports key events including Coordinating Group and Forum meetings and maintains a repository of good practices through a web portal.

44. UN CONVENTION AGAINST CORRUPTION

- The United Nations Convention against Corruption is the only legally binding universal anti-corruption instrument.
- Negotiated by member states of the United Nations (UN) it has been adopted by the UN General Assembly in October 2003 and entered into force in December 2005.
- The Convention covers five main areas: preventive measures, criminalization and law enforcement, international cooperation, asset recovery, and technical assistance and information exchange. The Convention covers many different forms of corruption, such as bribery, trading in influence, abuse of functions, and various acts of corruption in the private sector.
- Its goal is to reduce various types of corruption that can occur across country borders, such as trading in influence and abuse of power, as well as corruption in the private sector, such as embezzlement and money laundering.
- Another goal of the UNCAC is to strengthen international law enforcement and judicial cooperation between countries by providing effective legal mechanisms for international asset recovery.

Note: India has signed and ratified the UN convention against corruption.

45. UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL ORGANISED CRIMES (UNTOC)

ABOUT UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL ORGANISED CRIMES (UNTOC)

- The UNTOC also called the Palermo Convention, is a 2000 United Nations-sponsored **multilateral treaty against transnational organised crime**.
- The Convention is further supplemented by three Protocols, which target specific areas and manifestations of organised crime:
 - a. Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children
 - b. Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air
 - c. Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and **Components and Ammunition**.
- Countries must become parties to the Convention itself before they can become parties to any of the Protocols.
- **India has signed and ratified the treaty.**

46. WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM (WEF)

- **Professor Klaus Schwab** founded WEF in 1971, originally called the **European Management Forum**, as a non-profit foundation based in **Geneva, Switzerland**.
- It is the International Organisation for **Public-Private Cooperation**.
- It introduced the concept of '**stakeholder capitalism**' i.e. a form of capitalism in which companies do not only optimize short-term profits for shareholders, but seek long term value creation, by taking into account the needs of all their stakeholders, and society at large.
- **In 2015**, the Forum was **formally recognised as an international organisation**.
- The Forum is **chaired by Founder** and Executive Chairman Professor Klaus Schwab.

- The **Managing Board**, chaired by the Forum's President, Børge Brende, acts as the executive body of the World Economic Forum.
- The **Great Reset Initiative** is an economic recovery plan drawn up by the World Economic Forum (WEF) in **response to the COVID-19 pandemic**.
- The **Global Redesign Initiative (2010)** of WEF was a global, multistakeholder dialogue on the future of international cooperation. Set up in the midst of the global financial crisis, its purpose was to stimulate thinking and debate about how the international community and its institutions and organisations in their widest sense can be adapted to contemporary challenges.
- **Reports released by WEF:**
 - Global Risks Report
 - Global Gender Gap Index (**#2017 Prelims**)
 - Fostering Effective Energy Transition Report
 - Travel and Tourism Development Index
 - Global Cyber Security Outlook
 - Global Competitiveness Report (**#2019 Prelims**)

47. COUNCIL OF EUROPE

ABOUT COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The Council of Europe was founded in 1949 (through the Treaty of London) and its mission is to uphold human rights and rule of law as part of the post-war order. It is a separate institution distinct from the EU.

The Council of Europe is responsible for drawing up the European Convention on Human Rights which established the European Court of Human Rights.

In 1996, the Russian Federation joined the Council of Europe following the break-up of the Soviet Union a few years prior.

It has 46 member states.

Headquarter- FRANCE

48. MIDDLE EAST QUAD

The term has gained currency after the first-ever meeting between the foreign ministers of India, Israel, UAE, and USA. Its formation was facilitated by a thaw in Israel – Arab relations because of Abraham Accords.

CONTEXT OF FORMATION OF THE MEQ

- Abraham Accords resulted in smoothening Israel– Arab Faultline. This has facilitated initiation of the so-called New Quad in the Middle East involving the US, Israel, UAE and India.
- New Quad is being seen as a new Security architecture in the Middle East.
- This is shaping up at a time when the US is withdrawing from the region.
- The region is also witnessing an increased presence of China.

OBJECTIVE

Expanding economic and political cooperation in the Middle East and Asia, including through trade, combating climate change, energy cooperation, and increasing maritime security.

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN MEQ AND QUAD

Middle East Quad VS Indo – Pacific Quad

India and US are common members – signifying strategic closeness

Israel would view it as a counter to Iran, While US sees IPQ as a counter to China

Both are not seen as a military alliance

IPQ has been focusing on global concerns like – Climate Change, COVID vaccines etc.

Similarly, MEQ has also called for Economic and Infrastructure cooperation.

IPQ countries take part in MALABAR exercise, while Israel has invited UAE as an observer to the Blue Flag Air force with India and US.

For India, both are partnerships beyond neighbourhoods having implications on the neighbourhood.

Both aim at the broader goal of countering Chinese influence.

DIFFERENCES

MIDDLE EAST QUAD	INDO – PACIFIC QUAD
A new concept – was formed because of Abraham Accords	Has developed gradually over the past 15 years.
Strategic Focus is yet to be outlined.	Definite Strategic focus – Free and Open Indo- Pacific
Role of other members is yet outlined	Focuses on ASEAN centrality
It focuses on Economic collaboration through Private companies	Focuses on goals to be achieved through G2G collaboration
If it aims to counter Iran, India already has strong relations with Iran	IPQ has been strengthened by the India – China border tensions.
No parallel military partnership with common objectives	AUKUS can be seen as a parallel military partnership to the Quad.

ABRAHAM ACCORD

Abraham accord refers to establishment of full diplomatic ties between UAE & Bahrain with Israel under a deal brokered by the United States.

- UAE & Israel have agreed to establish full diplomatic ties as part of a deal to halt the annexation of occupied land sought by Palestine for their future state.
- Makes UAE the **first Gulf Arab state** to do so & **third Arab nation after Egypt and Jordan** to have active diplomatic ties with Israel.
- Bahrain followed UAE to become the **second Gulf Arab state** and **fourth Arab nation** to normalise ties with Israel.
- "Abraham Accord" is used to refer collectively to agreements between Israel and UAE (**Israel-United Arab Emirates normalization agreement**) and Israel and Bahrain, respectively (**Bahrain-Israel normalization agreement**).
- The accords are **named after the patriarch Abraham**, regarded as a prophet by both religions of Judaism and Islam and traditionally considered a shared patriarch of the Jewish and Arab peoples.

ARAB COUNTRIES

- Arab countries are a group of 22 countries which are members of the **Arab League**.
- Arabic is the lingua franca throughout the Arab world.
- All Arabic-speaking nations are not part of the Arab world.
- Malta, an island country in Southern Europe whose national language also derives from Arabic (through Sicilian Arabic), is not included in the region.
- Chad & Eritrea also recognize Arabic as one of their official languages but are not included in the region because they are not members of the Arab League.



ARAB LEAGUE

- Arab League or the League of Arab States is a regional organisation of African and Western Asian countries.
- Formed in Cairo in 1945 initially with six members: Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Syria.
- Presently, the league has 22 nations - Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain, Yemen, Iraq, Syria (**membership suspended**), Tunisia, Oman, Lebanon, Qatar, Comoros, Sudan, Palestine, Algeria, Mauritania, Libya, Djibouti and Somalia.
- Its goal is to "draw closer the relations between member states and co-ordinate collaboration between them, to safeguard their independence and sovereignty, and to consider in a general way the affairs and interests of the Arab countries".
- **Six countries have observer states**—Eritrea, Brazil and Venezuela, **India**, Armenia and Chad.
- In a response to the UAE & Bahrain normalising their ties with Israel, the Palestinian Authority has formally stepped down from a key role in the Arab League.
- **NOTE:** The **Arab League readmitted Syria** after more than a decade of suspension, consolidating a regional push to normalize ties with President Bashar al-Assad in a move criticised by Washington.

BEIRUT DECLARATION

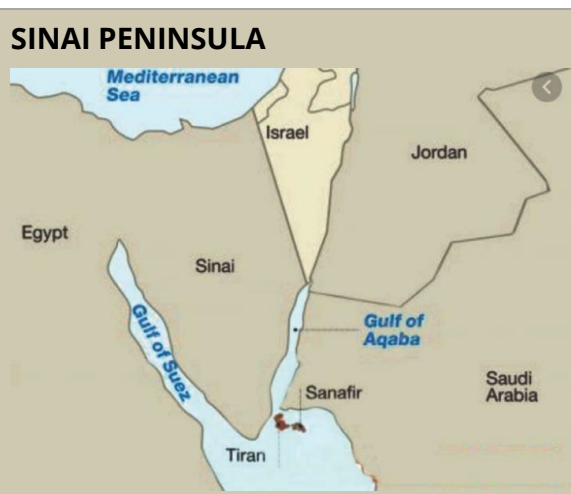
- Result of joint statement issued by 20 countries of Arab League in 2019 in Arab Economic and Social Development Summit.
- Called for establishment of an Arab free trade zone and urged the international community to support nations hosting Syrian refugees.
- Israel & Arab states fought 3 wars: **1956 Suez conflict**, **1967 Six-Day War** & **1973 Yom Kippur War**.
- In the 1967 Middle East War, Israel captured the West Bank and East Jerusalem, Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip and Golan Heights.

ISRAEL AND ITS NEIGHBOURS



49. GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL

- GCC was established by an agreement in 1981 in Riyadh among **Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE** given their special relations, geographic proximity, similar political systems based on Islamic beliefs, joint destiny and common objectives.



AGREEMENTS RELATED TO ISRAEL-PALESTINE CRISIS

• **1967 – UN Security Council Resolution 242**

After the Six-Day War, U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 called for the “withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict” in return for all states in the area respecting each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence.

• **1978 – Camp David agreement**

Israel and Egypt agreed on a framework for regional peace that called for an Israeli withdrawal in stages from Egypt's Sinai and a transitional Palestinian government in the West Bank and Gaza.

• **1993-1995 – Oslo Accords**

- Israel and the PLO hold secret talks in Norway that resulted in interim peace accords calling for the establishment of Palestinian interim self-government and an elected council in the West Bank and Gaza for a five-year transitional period, Israeli troops. withdrawals and negotiations on a permanent settlement.

• **2002-2003 – Bush Declaration / Arab peace initiative / Road Map**

George W. Bush became the first U.S. president to call for the **creation of a Palestinian state**, living side-by-side with Israel “in peace and security.” It was popularly termed a **Two-State Solution** to the Israel Palestine Conflict.



50. INDIA'S ARCTIC POLICY

SALIENT FEATURES OF INDIA'S ARCTIC POLICY

The policy lays down Six Pillars of India's Arctic Policy:

- Strengthening India's scientific research and cooperation.
- Climate and environment protection.
- Economic and human development.
- Transportation and connectivity.
- Governance and international cooperation.
- National capability building for the Arctic region.

NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS DEALING WITH ARCTIC

- **National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), Goa** an autonomous institute under Ministry of Earth Sciences is the nodal institution for India's Polar research program, which includes Arctic studies.
- India's Arctic Policy will be implemented by an action plan and reviewed by the inter-ministerial **Empowered Arctic Policy Group**.
- India has set up an underground observatory, called **IndARC**, at the Kongsfjorden fjord, halfway between Norway and the North Pole.
- India's first Arctic research station, **Himadri** is located at Spitsbergen, Svalbard, Norway.

INSTITUTIONS RELATED TO ARCTIC

Svalbard Treaty 1920	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognises sovereignty of Norway over Svalbard archipelago. Svalbard is an entirely visa-free & demilitarised zone. • India's first engagement with the Arctic Region.
Arctic Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-level intergovernmental forum that addresses issues faced by the Arctic governments and Indigenous people of the Arctic. • The Ottawa Declaration of 1996 established the Arctic Council. • Membership: 8 countries exercise sovereignty over lands within the Arctic Circle and all these 8 are members of the Arctic Council. They are Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the USA. • Arctic Communities: Aleutians (USA & Russia); Athabaskan (USA & Canada); Gwich (USA & Canada); Inuit (Greenland, Canada, USA, Chukchi Peninsula of Russia, Saami People (Russia, Finland, Norway & Sweden) • Observers: 13 observers (India has observer status in the Arctic Council).
Arctic Economic Council (AEC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is an independent organisation that facilitates Arctic business-to-business activities, sustainable and responsible economic development through the sharing of best practices. • The Arctic Council created it. • Membership in AEC is open to corporations, partnerships & indigenous groups that have an economic interest in the Arctic. <p>AEC works through its 5 working groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maritime Transportation Working Group • Investment & Infrastructure Working Group • Responsible Resource Development Working Group • Connectivity Working Group • Blue Economy Working Group
Arctic Investment Protocol	<p>These are guidelines of the Arctic Economic Council to promote sustainable and equitable economic growth in the Arctic region.</p> <p>AIP emphasises responsible Arctic development by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build resilient societies through economic development. • Respect and include local communities and indigenous people. • Pursue measures to protect the environment of the Arctic. • Practice responsible and transparent business models • Consult and integrate science and traditional ecological knowledge.

- Strengthen Pan-Arctic collaboration and sharing of best practices.

51. COLOMBO SECURITY CONCLAVE

Member States of Colombo Security Conclave signed the Charter and an MoU for the establishment of secretariat of the grouping in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

- Colombo Security Conclave is a regional maritime security organisation which operates at the level of national security advisors of member countries.
- **Members:** India, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Mauritius
- **Observers:** Bangladesh & Seychelles.
- **Areas of cooperation:** Member countries of Colombo Security Conclave will cooperate on 5 broad pillars:
 - Maritime safety & security
 - Countering terrorism & radicalisation
 - Combating trafficking & transnational organised crime
 - Cyber security & protection of critical infrastructure & technology
 - Humanitarian assistance & disaster relief.

→ ORGANISATIONS RELATED TO RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

52. NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANISATION (NATO)

Russia attacked Ukraine, highlighting that Ukraine acceding to NATO would be a security threat to Russia. Ukraine has been seeking NATO's support against Russia. This attack started a debate about the cold war alliances.

- NATO is a political and military alliance of 32 countries from Europe and North America. It provides a link between the 'Western countries' of the two continents.
- NATO membership is **open to any other European country which adheres to the principles of NATO** and contributes to the security of the North Atlantic area.
- A NATO decision is the expression of the collective will of all 32 member countries since all decisions are taken by consensus. **Note: Finland & Sweden** are the latest members to join NATO, both countries joined NATO following Russia's attack over Ukraine.
- NATO's core tasks are Collective defence, Crisis-management & Cooperative security.
- Principle of 'Collective Defence' under which an attack against one or several NATO members is considered an attack against all. The principle of collective defence is enshrined in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty.
- NATO invoked **Article 5** for the first time in its history after the 9/11 terrorist attacks against the United States.
- NATO has taken collective defence measures on several occasions, for instance in response to the situation in Syria and the wake of the Russia-Ukraine crisis.

53. TREATY ON CONVENTIONAL ARMED FORCES IN EUROPE (CFE)

ABOUT CONVENTION ARMED FORCES IN EUROPE (CFE)

- Negotiated during the final years of the Cold War, the CFE Treaty has earned its reputation as the linchpin of European security.

- It established an agreement aimed at reducing the possibility for major offensive operations in Europe through the reduction of troops and armaments in Central Europe.
- The treaty proposed equal limits for the two “groups of states-parties”, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the Warsaw Pact.

54. WARSAW PACT

- Warsaw Pact, formally Warsaw Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance, (May 14, 1955–July 1, 1991) treaty establishing a mutual-defence organisation (Warsaw Treaty Organisation)
- Composed originally of the Soviet Union and Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Romania.
- Ended with the disintegration of the Cold war.

55. COLLECTIVE SECURITY TREATY ORGANISATION

- Started in 1992 by the heads of Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Later, Azerbaijan, Belarus and Georgia (1993) joined it.
- Key Article 4 of the Treaty states: “If one of the States Parties is subjected to aggression by any state or group of states, then this will be considered as aggression against all States Parties to this Treaty.

MUNICH SECURITY CONFERENCE

- The Munich Security Conference is an annual conference on international security policy that has been held in Munich, Bavaria, Germany since 1963.
- The Munich Security Conference is the world's leading forum for debating international security policy. It is a venue for diplomatic initiatives to address the world's most pressing security concerns.
- The list of attendees includes heads of states, governments and international organisations, ministers, members of parliament, high-ranking representatives of armed forces, science, civil society, as well as business and media.

56. ORGANISATION FOR SECURITY & COOPERATION IN EUROPE (OSCE)

- It is the world's largest regional security organisation with a membership of 57 countries. OSCE works to build & sustain, peace and democracy.
- Origins of OSCE date back to the Helsinki Final Act (1975) and the creation of the Conference on Security & Cooperation in Europe (CSCE).
- The body is rooted in the concept of indivisibility of security in Europe. Helsinki Principles lays 10 principles for security in Europe.
- **Membership:** 57 participating states are members of the body. Members come from North America, Europe and Asia.

57. MONTREUX CONVENTION

- The Montreux Convention Regarding the Regime of the Straits (Montreux Convention) is an international agreement governing the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits in Turkey.
- It was signed in 1936 addressing the Straits Question as to who should control the strategically vital link between Black Sea and Mediterranean Sea.
- Guarantees complete freedom of passage for all civilian vessels during peacetime and permits Turkey to restrict the passage of navies not belonging to Black Sea states.
- Turkey has recognised Russian invasion of Ukraine (2022) as war enabling Turkey.

58. GLOBAL GATEWAY PROGRAM

- The EU has unveiled its connectivity program known as Golden Gateway for countering the Chinese Belt & Road initiative. The EU will invest €300 billion (\$340 billion) in this project.
- **Aim:** Help underpin global recovery by mobilizing investments in digital, clean energy & transport networks, boosting health, education & research systems across the world.
- It aims at creating strong & sustainable links, not dependencies (a reference to Debt Trap of Chinese BRI projects), between Europe & world.

59. COALITION FOR EPIDEMIC PREPAREDNESS INNOVATIONS

- CEPI was launched in 2017 at World Economic Forum's Davos Summit to develop vaccines and other biologic countermeasures to stop future epidemics so they can be accessible to all the people in need.
- It is a global partnership of private, public, philanthropic and civil society organisations.

100 DAYS MISSION OF CEPI

CEPI is planning to develop a platform which enables the world to be able to respond to the next Disease X with a new vaccine in just 100 days. It is a 5-year plan requiring \$3.5 billion in funds.

Recently, the UK Government and CEPI hosted the Global Pandemic Preparedness Summit to explore vaccine development for Disease X (unknown infectious disease) within 100 days.

→ AFGHANISTAN

60. AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN TRANSIT TRADE AGREEMENT

- **Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement** (known as **APTTA**) is a bilateral trade agreement signed in 2010 by Pakistan and Afghanistan that calls for greater facilitation in the movement of goods amongst the two countries.
- The 2010 agreement supersedes the 1965 Afghanistan Transit Trade Agreement, which granted Afghanistan the right to import duty-free goods through Pakistani seaports, mostly notably from Karachi.
- The signed Agreement permits Afghanistan trucks access to Wagah border with India, where Afghan goods will be offloaded onto Indian trucks, but does not permit Indian goods to be loaded onto trucks for transit back to Afghanistan.
- The APTTA agreement allows Afghan trucks to transport *exports* to India via Pakistan up to the Wagah crossing point but does not offer Afghanistan the right to *import* Indian goods across Pakistani territory.

61. TIR CONVENTION

- 'TIR' stands for Transports Internationaux Routiers (International Road Transport) and the TIR Convention facilitates the international carriage of goods from one or more customs offices of departure to customs offices of destination.
- The Customs Convention on International Transport of Goods under cover of TIR Carnets, 1975 (TIR Convention), is an international transit system under the auspices of **the UN Economic Commission for Europe** for facilitating the seamless movement of goods within and amongst the Parties to the Convention.
- The International Road Transport Union (IRU) administers the TIR international guarantee chain under UN mandate.
- Reciprocal recognition of customs controls is at the heart of the Convention. Thus, customs clearance can take place at internal customs locations thereby avoiding clearances at Border Crossing Points and ports that may often be congested.

INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

- India acceded to the Customs Convention on International Transport of Goods under cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention) in 2017.
- FICCI is the National Issuing and Guaranteeing Association for TIR Carnets in India. It is jointly responsible with NCA for the operation and administration of the TIR system at national level.
- National Customs Authorities implement TIR at national level & can also contribute to amendments to the TIR Convention.

62. JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OF ACTION (JCPOA)

- JCPOA is an agreement reached by Iran and the **P5+1 (China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States)** on July 14, 2015.
- The nuclear deal was endorsed by **UN Security Council Resolution 2231**.
- Iran's compliance with the nuclear-related provisions of the JCPOA is verified by the **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)** according to certain requirements set forth in the agreement.
- Under the agreement Tehran agreed to limit its nuclear program in return for relief from crippling economic sanctions imposed by the UN, US and the EU.
- It **limited the number of centrifuges** Iran could run and restricted them to an older, slower model. Iran also reconfigured **a heavy-water reactor so it could not produce plutonium** and agreed to convert its enrichment site at **Fordow** into a research centre.
- **2018:** The US under the Trump Administration unilaterally **abandoned the deal** (claiming JCPOA failed to curtail Iran's missile program and regional influence) and reinstated banking and oil sanctions on Iran. Thereafter, Iran has ramped up (accelerated) its nuclear programme.

POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY

- Iran has two main facilities – Natanz and Fordo, for forming enriched Uranium. Iran will have limited research on enrichment at Natanz till 2024 and no enrichment at Fordo until 2031. Iran cannot form enriched uranium.
- Iran had been building a heavy-water nuclear facility near the town of Arak, wherein spent fuel from a heavy-water reactor contains plutonium suitable for a nuclear weapon. Under the JCPOA, Iran would redesign the reactor so it could not produce any weapons-grade plutonium.



63. MEKONG GANGA COOPERATION

- The Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) is an initiative by six countries – **India and five ASEAN countries, namely, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam** for cooperation in tourism, culture, education, as well as transport and communications.
- Note that China is not a member although Mekong originates in China and passes through Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam.
- Mekong drains into the South China Sea.
- It was launched in 2000 at Vientiane, Lao PDR.
- Both the Ganga and the Mekong are civilizational rivers, and the MGC initiative aims to facilitate closer contacts among the people inhabiting these two major river basins.

64. THREE SEAS INITIATIVE

- Three Seas Initiative is a forum of **Central and Eastern European (CEE) states** launched in 2015.
- It was envisioned by Polish President Andrzej Duda and Croatian President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović.
- The Initiative seeks to create a new dynamic of cooperation among countries located at eastern borders of the European Union (EU) to advance economic growth and help bridge the East-West economic gap within the EU through energy, transport, and digital connectivity.
- The Three Seas Initiative has 12 EU member states along a north-south axis from the Baltic Sea to the Adriatic Sea and the Black Sea: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.
- The first summit of the Initiative was held in Dubrovnik in 2016; the second in Warsaw in 2017 which was also attended by the US President Donald Trump; and the third in Bucharest in 2018. China too has participated in these summits as a key partner.

65. APEC

- The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) is a regional economic forum **established in 1989** to leverage the growing interdependence of the Asia-Pacific.
- APEC's 21 members aim to create greater prosperity for the people of the region by promoting balanced, inclusive, sustainable, innovative and secure growth and by accelerating regional economic integration.
- India is **not a member of APEC**.
- India has requested membership in APEC, and received initial support from the United States, Japan, Australia and Papua New Guinea.
- **India does not border the Pacific Ocean, which all current members do.**
- APEC's 21 member economies are Australia; Brunei Darussalam; Canada; Chile; People's Republic of China; Hong Kong, China; Indonesia; Japan; Republic of Korea; Malaysia; Mexico; New Zealand; Papua New Guinea; Peru; Philippines; Russia; Singapore; Chinese Taipei; Thailand; United States of America.



66. NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT (NAM)

The Non-Aligned Movement was formed during the Cold War, largely on the initiative of then-Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito, as an organisation of States that did not seek to formally align themselves with either the United States or the Soviet Union but sought to remain independent or neutral.

- The basic concept for the group originated in 1955 during discussions that took place at the **Asia-Africa Bandung Conference held in Indonesia**.
- The First NAM Summit Conference took place in **Belgrade, Yugoslavia**, in September 1961.
- The Conference was attended by 25 countries: Afghanistan, Algeria, Yemen, Myanmar, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Congo, Cuba, Cyprus, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Lebanon, Mali, Morocco, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, former Yugoslavia.
- NAM **does not have a formal constitution or permanent secretariat**, and its administration is non-hierarchical and rotational.
- **Decisions are made by consensus**, which requires substantial agreement, but not unanimity.

67. BLETCHLEY DECLARATION

In 2023, Britain unveiled the “Bletchley Declaration” in collaboration with the United States and China, with the objective of enhancing international cooperation in the realm of artificial intelligence (AI) safety. In 2025, France will hold the third AI Summit.

ABOUT BLETCHLEY DECLARATION

- The goals encompass fostering a collective understanding and accountability regarding the potential risks and opportunities of cutting-edge AI, while also outlining a pathway for global cooperation in advancing AI safety and research, with a focus on enhancing scientific collaboration.
- The declaration encouraged transparency and accountability from actors developing frontier AI technology on their plans to measure, monitor and mitigate potentially harmful capabilities.
- This is a landmark achievement that sees the world's greatest AI powers agree on the urgency behind understanding the risks of AI – helping ensure the long-term future of our children and grandchildren.

NOTE: European Union is the first region or country to enact a comprehensive legislation to regulate Artificial Intelligence.

CHAPTER ARMS CONTROL

1. JOINT STATEMENT ON PREVENTING NUCLEAR WAR & ARMS RACE

Leaders of Five Nuclear Weapon States (China, USA, UK, France & Russia) issued a joint statement on Preventing Nuclear War and Avoiding Arms Race.

SALIENT FEATURES

- They consider avoidance of war between Nuclear-Weapon States and reduction of strategic risks as their foremost responsibilities.
- A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. Nuclear weapons, for as long as they continue to exist, should serve defensive purposes, deter aggression and prevent war. Further spread of such weapons must be prevented.
- Emphasised on addressing nuclear threats and importance of preserving and complying with their bilateral and multilateral non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control agreements and commitments.
- They are committed to Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) obligations, including Article 6 of NPT 'to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.'
- P5 countries will strengthen national measures to **prevent unauthorised or unintended** use of nuclear weapons. They also agreed on de-targeting meaning that none of their nuclear weapons will be targeted at each other or at any other State.
- P5 countries will work with all states to create a security environment more conducive to progress on disarmament with the goal of a world without nuclear weapons with undiminished security for all.

INDIA'S STAND ON NUCLEAR WEAPONS

India has a doctrine of maintaining a **credible minimum deterrence** based on a **No First Use posture** and **non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states**.

2. NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY (NPT)

- The NPT is a multilateral treaty aimed at limiting the spread of nuclear weapons including three elements: **(1) Non-proliferation, (2) Disarmament (3) Peaceful use of nuclear energy**.
- The Treaty defines nuclear weapon states (NWS) as those that had manufactured and detonated a nuclear explosive device prior to 1 January 1967.
- All the other states are therefore considered non-nuclear weapon states (NNWS). The **five nuclear weapon states are China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States**.
- The Treaty does not affect the right of state parties to develop, produce, and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.
- The IAEA verifies NNWS compliance with commitments under the NPT not to acquire nuclear weapons.
- Negotiation of such an agreement should begin immediately after the NNWS' accession to the NPT and enter into force within 18 months.

WHY INDIA DID NOT SIGN NPT?

- **India, Israel, and Pakistan possess nuclear weapons but have never accepted the NPT.** India did not sign the NPT, not because of its lack of commitment for non-proliferation, but because NPT creates a club of "nuclear haves" and a larger group of "nuclear have-nots" by restricting the legal possession of nuclear weapons to those states that tested them before 1967.
- India considers NPT as a flawed treaty and as it does not recognize the need for universal, non-discriminatory verification and treatment.

3. TREATY ON PROHIBITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS/ NUCLEAR WEAPON BAN TREATY

- Treaty on the Prohibition of nuclear weapons bans the use, possession, development, testing, deployment and transfer of nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosives under international law.
- Adopted in 2017 and entered into force in 2021.
- The agreement was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2017 as the first legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons and lead towards their complete elimination.
- Signatories are barred from transferring or receiving nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices, control over such weapons, or any assistance with activities prohibited under the Treaty.
- States are also prohibited from using or threatening to use nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. States Parties cannot allow the stationing, installation, or deployment of nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices in their territory.
- In addition to the Treaty's prohibitions, States Parties are obligated to provide victim assistance and help with environmental remediation efforts.
- **The treaty does not contain a verification regime. Each State Party must maintain its existing safeguards agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).**
- State Parties that have not yet done so must, at a minimum, conclude a comprehensive safeguards agreement.

INDIA'S STAND ON TPNW

- India did not participate in the negotiations on the TPNW.
- India does not want to become a party to the treaty.
- India does not support the treaty and shall not be bound by any of the obligations that may arise from it. India believes that this treaty does not constitute or contribute to the development of customary international law, nor does it set any new standards or norms.

INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO ABOLISH NUCLEAR WEAPONS (ICAN)

- It is a coalition of non-governmental organisations promoting adherence to and implementation of the UN nuclear weapon ban treaty.
- It was inspired by the success of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, which led to the antipersonnel mine ban treaty or Ottawa treaty in 1997.
- ICAN won a Nobel Peace Prize in 2017 for its efforts in achieving NWBT.
- Support for NWBT & ICAN is mainly from the countries of four regions: Africa (Treaty of Pelindaba), South-East Asia (Bangkok Treaty), South Pacific (Treaty of Rarotonga) and Latin America and Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco). These treaties established the Nuclear Weapons Free Zone in the respective areas.

4. OUTER SPACE TREATIES

Outer space is becoming democratised, commercialised and crowded, the multilateral framework for its governance is becoming obsolete. Since most of the Treaties governing outer space were finalised in the 1960s-70s.

There are five UN treaties relating to activities in Outer Space. The primary treaty is the Outer Space Treaty, 1967, the four other treaties are:

- **Rescue Agreement of 1968** requires States to assist an astronaut in case of accident, distress, emergency or unintended landing.
- **Liability Convention of 1972** establishes the standards of liability for damage caused by space objects.
- **The Registration Convention of 1975** requires States to register all objects launched into outer space with the UN.
- **Moon Agreement of 1979** elaborates on the provisions of the Outer Space Treaty as they apply to the Moon and other celestial bodies.

Note: India has signed all the five treaties but only ratified four whereby the Moon Agreement is pending.

OUTER SPACE TREATY, 1967

International treaty binding the parties to use outer space only for peaceful purposes.

- Nations are prohibited from placing nuclear arms or other weapons of mass destruction in orbit, on the Moon, or on other bodies in space.
- Nations cannot claim sovereignty over the Moon or other celestial bodies.
- Nations are responsible for their activities in space, are liable for any damage caused by objects launched into space from their territory and are bound to assist astronauts in distress.
- Their space installations and vehicles shall be open, on a reciprocal basis, to representatives of other countries.
- Nations cannot establish military bases or installations, test "any type of Weapons" or conduct military exercises on the moon and other celestial bodies.
- However, Outer space is still used for transit of weapons & military satellites.

5. NUCLEAR SUPPLIERS GROUP

- It is a multilateral export control regime and a group of nuclear supplier countries that seek to prevent nuclear proliferation by controlling the export of materials, equipment and technology that can be used to manufacture nuclear weapons.
- Currently, it has 48 participating governments.
- NSG first met in November 1975 in London and is thus popularly referred to as the "London Club". It was founded in response to the Indian nuclear test in May 1974 called the Smiling Buddha.
- The NSG controls most of the world's nuclear trade. India has been trying to get into NSG without being a signatory of NPT.
- While the U.S. and other countries support India's entry into the NSG, China is opposing India's membership citing Pakistan's non-admission in the exclusive group.

NSG GUIDELINES

- The NSG Guidelines aim to ensure that nuclear trade for peaceful purposes does not contribute to the proliferation of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, while not hindering international trade and cooperation in the nuclear field.
- The first set of NSG Guidelines governs the export of items that are especially **designed or prepared for nuclear use**.
- These include: (i) nuclear material; (ii) nuclear reactors and equipment; therefore, (iii) non-nuclear material for reactors; (iv) plant and equipment for the reprocessing, enrichment, and conversion of nuclear material and for fuel fabrication and heavy water production; and (v) technology associated with each of the above items.
- **Dual use controls** - The second set of NSG Guidelines governs the export of nuclear-related dual-use items and technologies (**items that have both nuclear and non-nuclear applications**), which could make a significant contribution to an unsafeguarded nuclear fuel cycle or nuclear explosive activity.

- The NSG Guidelines are consistent with, and complement, the various international, legally binding instruments in the field of nuclear non-proliferation. These include the NPT, and the Treaty for the Prohibition of nuclear weapons in Latin America (Treaty of Tlatelolco), the South Pacific Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone Treaty (Treaty of Rarotonga), the African Nuclear-Weapons-Free Zone Treaty (Treaty of Pelindaba) and the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapons-Free Zone (Treaty of Bangkok).

6. CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

- India participated actively in Conference on Disarmament (CD), putting forth its position on nuclear disarmament, prevention of an arms race in outer space, new types of weapons of mass destruction, and transparency in armaments, at its sessions from January-September 2020.
- CD was recognized by Tenth Special Session on Disarmament of the UN General Assembly (SSOD-I) (1978) as a single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community.
- The CD and its predecessors have negotiated such major multilateral arms limitation and disarmament agreements such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC), the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC) and Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

7. CIVIL NUCLEAR COOPERATION

- An Agreement between Government of India & European Atomic Energy Community for Research and Development Cooperation in the field of Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy was concluded on 15 July 2020.
- An Arrangement extending the duration of the MoU between the Government of India and the Government of United States of America concerning cooperation with the Global Center for Nuclear Energy Partnership, India was announced on 27 October 2020.
- An MoU between India's Atomic Energy Regulatory Board and Vietnam Agency for Radiation and Nuclear Safety was signed on 21 December 2020.

8. HAGUE CODE OF CONDUCT

- Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation (HCOC), formerly known as International Code of Conduct, was adopted at an international conference held in 2002 in The Hague.
- It is aimed at bolstering efforts to curb ballistic missile proliferation worldwide and to further delegitimize such proliferation.
- The HCOC is the only normative instrument to verify the spread of ballistic missiles.
- The Code does not call for the destruction of any missiles, it is simply an agreement between States on how they should "conduct" their trade in missiles.
- It is meant to supplement Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), but its membership is not restricted.

9. WASSENAAR ARRANGEMENT

- India became the 42nd member in late 2017 of Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies.
- The agreement to establish the Wassenaar Arrangement was reached in 1995, and the Wassenaar Arrangement became operational after the adoption of the Initial Elements in 1996.
- The Initial Elements establish the foundations of the Wassenaar Arrangement agreement and state its purpose, scope and modalities. It also constitutes the basic mechanism of information exchange on transfers of conventional weapons and dual-use goods and technologies.

EXPORT CONTROL REGULATIONS

- Munition's list consists of small arms, light weapons, tanks and other Military Armed Vehicles, aircraft and unmanned airborne vehicles, aero engines, among several other items. The dual-use goods and technologies list consist of sensors, lasers, propulsion systems, avionics, among several other items.
- A country must be a producer/exporter of arms to become a member. Member countries have agreed to maintain national export controls on items included in the WA Control Lists. These controls are implemented via national legislation. The decision to transfer or deny the transfer of any item is the sole responsibility of each member country.
- Initial Elements were amended after the 9/11 attacks and a provision was added that countries would continue to prevent terrorist organisations and individuals from acquiring conventional arms and dual-use goods and technologies that could be used for military purposes. This is significant because it recognized the responsibility of countries in the conduct of their military arms and technology trade with non-state actors.
- The list of dual-use technologies was updated in 2013 to encompass surveillance and intelligence-gathering software referred to as 'intrusive software'. The motive is to restrict the sale and distribution of computer surveillance tools to oppressive regimes, terrorist groups and rogue countries.

10. AUSTRALIA GROUP

- Australia Group is an informal arrangement which aims to allow exporting countries to minimise the risk of assisting in chemical and biological weapon (CBW) proliferation. Annual meetings of AG are held in Paris, France.
- The principal objective of Australia Group participants' is to use licensing measures to ensure that exports of certain chemicals, biological agents, and dual-use chemical and biological manufacturing facilities and equipment, do not contribute to the spread of CBW.
- Members need to be participants with strict adherence to the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

EXPORT CONTROL REGULATIONS

- Participants in the Australia Group do not undertake any legally binding obligations and therefore effectiveness of AG depends solely on the commitment and strength of each member's respective national measures.
- The items form the basis for the Group's common control lists and participants also require licenses for the export of Dual-use chemical manufacturing facilities, equipment and related technology, Plant pathogens, Animal pathogens, biological agents & Dual-use biological equipment and related technology.
- The control lists developed by the Group includes technologies and equipment which can be used in the manufacturing or disposal of chemical and biological weapons.
- It has a "no-undercut" requirement, which states that any member of the group considering making an export to another state that had already been denied an export by any other member of the group must first consult with that member state before approving the export.
- It has the "catch-all" provision which requires member states to halt all exports that could be used by importers in chemical or biological weapons programs, regardless of whether the export is on the group's control lists.

11. MISSILE TECHNOLOGY CONTROL REGIME

- **Mandate:** To Control unmanned aerial vehicles capable of delivering a payload of at least 500 kg to a range of at least 300 km.
- **Indian Membership:** 2016.

12. CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION

- It is a multilateral treaty that bans chemical weapons and requires their destruction within a specified period. The treaty is of unlimited duration and is far more comprehensive than the 1925 Geneva Protocol, which outlaws the use but not the possession of chemical weapons.

- CWC negotiations started in 1980 in the UN Conference on Disarmament. It entered into force in 1997.
- Under the Convention's '**challenge inspection**' procedure, States Parties have committed themselves to the principle of 'anytime, anywhere' inspections with no right of refusal.

STATUS

- CWC is open to all nations and currently has 193 states-parties.
- **Israel** has signed but is **yet to ratify** the convention. Three states have neither signed nor ratified the convention (**Egypt, North Korea and South Sudan**).

PROHIBITIONS

Chemical Weapons Convention prohibits:

- Developing, producing, acquiring, stockpiling, or retaining chemical weapons.
- The direct or indirect transfer of chemical weapons.
- Chemical weapons use or military preparation for use.
- Assisting, encouraging, or inducing other states to engage in CWC-prohibited activity.
- The use of riot control agents "as a method of warfare."

ORGANISATION FOR PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS (OPCW)

- OPCW is the **implementing body for the Chemical Weapons Convention**. The OPCW, with its 193 Member States, oversees the global endeavour to eliminate chemical weapons permanently and verifiably.
- India is a member of this body. The Office of Cabinet Secretary is the nodal representative of India.

13. OPEN SKIES TREATY

Russia has withdrawn from the Open Skies Treaty after the US withdrew from the agreement earlier.

- The treaty is designed to enhance mutual understanding and confidence by giving access to aerial surveillance over the entire territory of the country. The treaty was signed in 1992 in Helsinki. It entered into force in 2002.

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP

Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark (including Greenland), Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

IMPORTANT PROVISIONS OF THE TREATY

- Entire territory accessible to aerial observation
- Observation flights to be conducted by unarmed fixed wing aircraft.
- Aircraft may be equipped with video cameras and panoramic and framing cameras for daylight photography; infra-red line scanning systems, which can operate by day and night; and synthetic aperture radar, which can operate day and night in any weather.
- Each State Party in Open Skies has agreed to a quota of observation flights which it is willing to accept annually from other States Parties.
- Imagery collected from Open Skies missions is available to any state party upon request for the cost of reproduction. As a result, the data available to each state party is much greater than that which it can collect itself under the treaty quota system.

14. INF TREATY

The US has officially withdrawn from the treaty Russia also withdrew from the treaty.

- The US has alleged that Russia is developing an SSC-8 missile that can target Europe, however Russia is denying this. The US considers this as a violation of the INF treaty.

ABOUT INF TREATY

- The INF Treaty required the USA and USSR to eliminate and permanently eliminate **all their nuclear and conventional** ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges of 500 to 5,500 kilometres.
- It was exempted for similar sea-based & air-launched missiles.

INF treaty ban originally applied only to U.S. & USSR, but treaty's membership expanded in 1991 to include successor states of the former Soviet Union

15. NEW START TREATY

- Russia has officially suspended the New-Start Treaty.
- Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) is a treaty between the USA and the Russian Federation on measures for the further reduction and limitation of strategic offensive arms. It entered into force in 2011.
- It is a successor to the START framework of 1991 which was signed after the Cold War.

16. ARMS TRADE TREATY (ATT)

ATT is an international treaty that regulates the international trade in conventional arms and seeks to prevent and eradicate illicit trade and diversion of conventional arms by establishing international standards governing arms transfers.

- Came into force in 2014. Currently, it has 110 State Parties.
- India is not a party of the Agreement. China ratified the Arms Trade Treaty in 2020.

17. COMPREHENSIVE TEST BAN TREATY ORGANISATION (CTBTO)

The executive secretary has invited India to be an observer in the CTBT, and the observer status is not tied to India's ratifying the CTBT.

- CTBTO Preparatory Commission was established in 1996 with the purpose to make necessary preparations so that CTBT can be effectively implemented once the Treaty enters force & CTBTO is established.
- CTBTO is an independent international organisation & has a cooperative mechanism with the United Nations.

COMPREHENSIVE NUCLEAR-TEST-BAN TREATY (CTBT)

- It was adopted by the UN General Assembly and opened for signature in 1996.
- It bans nuclear explosions by everyone, everywhere: on the Earth's surface, in the atmosphere, underwater and underground.
- China, North Korea, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, Pakistan and the US are the remaining Annex 2 countries to either sign and/or ratify the treaty.
- France, UK & Russia have ratified the CTBT, while China & US have signed CTBT but both have yet to ratify it.
- India, North Korea & Pakistan have not signed it.

18. BIOLOGICAL AND TOXIN WEAPONS CONVENTION, 1972

BTWC was the first multilateral disarmament treaty banning production of an entire category of weapons.

TERMS OF THE TREATY

BWC bans the development, stockpiling, acquisition, retention and production of:

- Biological agents and toxins of types and in quantities that have no justification for prophylactic, protective or other peaceful purposes.
- Weapons, equipment, and delivery vehicles & designed to use such agents or toxins for hostile purposes or in armed conflict.

- Transfer of or assistance with acquiring the agents, toxins, weapons, equipment, and delivery vehicles described above. All State parties must destroy all such bioweapons upon becoming a member of BTWC.
- Requires states-parties to destroy or divert to peaceful purposes the & agents, toxins, weapons, equipment, and means of delivery; described above within nine months of the convention's entry into force.
- Mandates that states-parties consult with one another and cooperate, bilaterally or multilaterally, to solve compliance concerns. It also allows states-parties to lodge a complaint with the UN Security Council if they believe other member states are violating the convention. The Security Council can investigate complaints, but this power has never been invoked.
- The treaty stands for an indefinite period.

NINTH REVIEW CONFERENCE OF BTWC (2022)

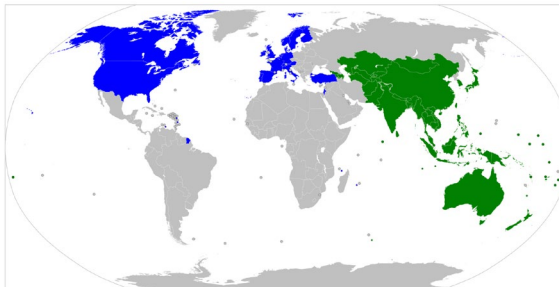
- The Ninth Review Conference saw the adoption of the final outcome document. Salient features of Ninth Review Meeting:
- **Working Group on Strengthening of Convention:** The conference established this working group open to all states to strengthen the effectiveness and implementation of BTWC. The working group will identify, examine and develop specific and effective measures, including possible legally binding measures to make recommendations to strengthen and institutionalise the BTWC.
- **Implementation Support Unit (ISU):** The mandate of Implementation Support Unit was renewed for the period between 2023-2027. ISU was established during the 6th Review Conference in 2006 to provide administrative support to meetings agreed by the Review Conference (Acts as secretariat of BTWC meetings), comprehensive implementation and universalisation of the Convention and exchange of confidence-building measures.
- Establish a mechanism to review and assess scientific and technological developments relevant to BTWC.

Promotion of Universalisation of BTWC: To promote universalisation of BTWC the conference requested states parties to promote universalisation through bilateral contacts with non-State parties, through regional and multilateral fora and using the Implementation Support Unit to promote universal acceptance.

3 CHAPTER REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS

1. ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

- It is a **Manila based** financial institution whose mission is to help its developing member countries reduce poverty and improve the quality of life of their people.
- It is owned and financed by its 69 members, of which 49 are from the region and 20 are from other parts of the globe. India is the founding member of the bank.
- It raises funds through bond issues on world's capital markets and relies on members' contributions, earnings from lending operations and the repayment of loans.
- Chairmanship of ADB is **always allotted to a Japanese person.** Its 3 Deputy Chairmen belong to the USA, Europe & Asia.



Asian Development Bank member states
 ■ Outside regions
 ■ Asia-Pacific region

2. NEW DEVELOPMENT BANK

- Also known as **BRICS bank**
- During the **sixth BRICS Summit in Fortaleza (2014)**, the leaders signed the Fortaleza Agreement establishing the New Development Bank (NDB).
- It is headquartered in **Shanghai, China.**
- Unlike the World Bank, which assigns votes based on capital share, in the New Development Bank each participant country has assigned one vote and none of the countries has veto power.
- Expansion of Membership:** Earlier only BRICS countries were members of NDB i.e., Brazil, Russia, India, China & South Africa. However, the membership of BRICS Bank is open to all members of the UN, in accordance with provisions of the Articles of Agreement of the NDB. Membership is open to both borrowing and non-borrowing members. Thus, **Bangladesh, Egypt & UAE** have become members of NDB in 2021.
- Prospective members:** Egypt & Uruguay have been admitted as prospective members of NDB. Prospective members are admitted by NDB's Board of Governance and will officially become a member country once they deposit their instrument of accession.
- Shareholding:** NDB's initial authorised capital was \$100 billion divided equally into five initial members. Later when Bangladesh & UAE became members of NDB, the shareholding of original members decreased. **Presently, Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa countries each have equal shareholding of 18.98% each, Bangladesh has 1.79%, Egypt has 2.27% and UAE has 1.08% shareholding.**

3. ASIAN INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT BANK (AIIB)

- AIIB is a multilateral development bank with a mission to improve social and economic outcomes in Asia and beyond. It is headquartered in **Beijing.**
- The capital of the bank is \$100 billion, equivalent to 2/3 of the capital of the Asian Development Bank and about half that of the World Bank.
- India hosted the annual meeting of AIIB for the first time in June 2018.
- India is the second largest shareholder** in AIIB after China and is also the largest recipient of funds from the multilateral agency. **India is its founding member.**

4. SYSTEM FOR TRANSFER OF FINANCIAL MESSAGES (SPFS)

- It is the financial messaging system of the Central Bank of Russia, developed by Russia as an alternative to SWIFT.
- Russia was banned from using SWIFT in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine War.
- SPFS operates 24 hours X 7 days X 365 days. It can send & monitor financial messages in SWIFT formats, use their proprietary formats, exchange ISO 20022 messages and manage the lists of counterparties and types of messages to be received.

5. ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES (ECOWAS)

The military regimes of **Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger** announced their withdrawal from the West African Bloc ECOWAS.

ABOUT ECOWAS

- The Heads of State and Government of fifteen West African Countries established the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) when they signed the ECOWAS Treaty (**Treaty of Lagos**) in **1975 in Lagos, Nigeria**.
- The **only Arabic-speaking Member Mauritania** withdrew in December 2000. Mauritania recently signed a new associate-membership agreement in August 2017.

MEMBER STATES



- It was set up to foster the **ideal of collective self-sufficiency** for its member states. As a **trading union**, it is also meant to create a single, large trading bloc through economic cooperation.
- Headquarters: Abuja, **Nigeria**.
- **Aim of ECOWAS:** is to promote co-operation and integration, leading to the establishment of an economic union in West Africa in order to raise the living standards of its peoples, and to maintain and enhance economic stability, foster relations-among Member States and contribute to the progress and development of the African continent.
- ECOWAS consists of two operating institutions to implement policies: the **ECOWAS Commission and the ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID)** – formerly known as the Fund for Cooperation.
- **ECOWAS Community Court of Justice** was created by a protocol signed in 1991. The jurisdiction of the court allows rulings on disputes between states over interpretations of the Treaty. Like its companion courts, the European Court of Human Rights and East African Court of Justice, it has **jurisdiction to rule on fundamental human rights breaches**.
- The estimated 300 million citizens of the community can ultimately take ownership for the realization of the new vision of moving from an ECOWAS of States to an **"ECOWAS of the People: Peace and Prosperity to All" by 2050**.

Note: The region of West Africa is located west of the north-south axis lying close to 10° east longitude. The Atlantic Ocean forms the western as well as the southern borders of the West African region. The northern border is the Sahara Desert, with the **Ranishanu Bend (#PrelimsFact)** generally considered the northernmost part of the region. The eastern border lies between the **Benue Trough (#PrelimsFact)**, and a line running from **Mount Cameroon to Lake Chad**.

→ INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS

6. NORTHERN SEA ROUTE

Murmansk, popularly called the capital of the Arctic region and the beginning point of the Northern Sea Route (NSR), is witnessing the rising trend of Indian involvement in cargo traffic.

ABOUT NORTHERN SEA ROUTE

It is the shortest shipping route for freight transportation between Europe and countries of the Asia-Pacific region, straddles four seas of the Arctic Ocean. Running to 5,600 km, the route begins at the boundary between the Barents and the Kara seas (Kara Strait) and ends in the Bering Strait. The **entire route lies in Arctic waters and within Russia's exclusive economic zone (EEZ)**.

SIGNIFICANCE OF NORTHERN SEA ROUTE (NSR) FOR INDIA

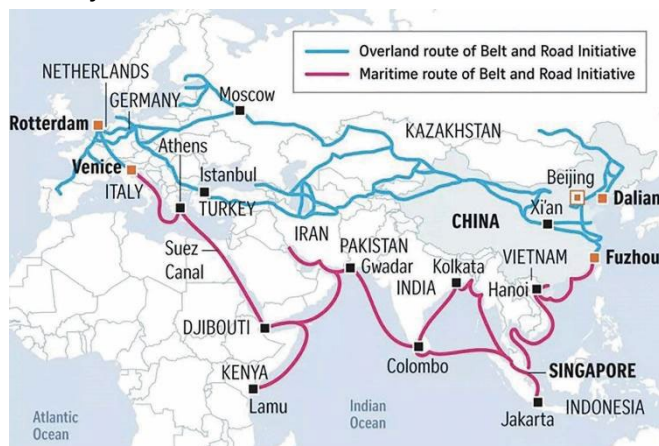
- Primarily, the growth in cargo traffic along the NSR is on the constant rise and during 2018-2022, the growth rate was around 73%. With India increasingly importing crude oil and coal from Russia in recent years, the record supplies of energy resources for the Indian economy are possible due to such a reliable and safe transport artery as the NSR.
- The NSR, as a transit route, assumes importance, given India's geographical position and the major share of its trade associated with sea transportation.
- Note:** Murmansk, is an all-weather seaport in Northern Russia.



7. BELT & ROAD INITIATIVE

Third Belt and Road forum was held in Beijing in 2023 to discuss the infrastructure project Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which began in 2013.

- BRI is a development strategy adopted by the Chinese government involving infrastructure development and investments across Europe, Asia, Middle East, Latin America and Africa.
- "Belt" refers to the overland routes for road and rail transportation, called "the Silk Road Economic Belt"; whereas "road" refers to the sea routes, or the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road.
- It was known as the One Belt One Road (OBOR) until 2016.
- The trillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has been promoted as a global public good as it would focus on common development of all the participating countries and their people.
- BRI is considered as an international club without formal members. The BRI is not a multilateral organisation and has no protocol for admitting members. It is also not a trade pact that imposes clear rules on participants in return for trade benefits.
- By signing a MOU, a country does not become a 'member' of the BRI, nor does it necessarily become entitled to the construction of China-funded infrastructure projects.



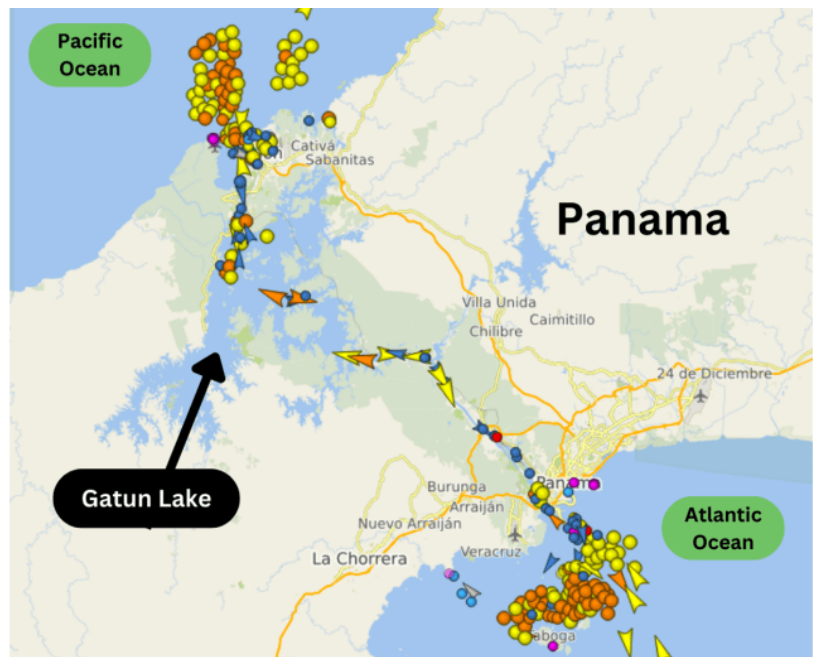
- Italy is the first of the G7 group of industrialised nations who endorsed China's BRI by signing a MoU with China.

BELT AND ROAD FORUM

- The first meeting of the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, or BRIC was held in 2017.
- Its purpose is to build a more open and efficient international cooperation platform for working out action plans for implementation of the initiative in the areas of infrastructure, energy and resources, production capacity, trade and investment and identification of major projects.

8. PANAMA CANAL

- Panama Canal is a man-made waterway in Panama connecting the Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific Ocean.
- It is 82 km long and has been constructed by digging up the Isthmus of Panama connecting North America and South America continents.
- The Panama Canal is not **dug at sea level but above sea level** to save on the drilling cost. Panama Canal is made up of a **system of locks that raises the ship to the level of Gatun Lake (26 meters above sea level)**. In addition, the **water that feeds our Canal is fresh**, because it comes mainly from this lake, and this determines the draft along its channel.
- The Canal locks at each end lift ships up to **Gatun Lake**, an artificial freshwater lake 26 m above sea level created by damming up the **Chagres River and Lake Alajuela** to reduce the amount of excavation work required for the canal, and then lower the ships at the other end. An average of 200,000,000 litres of fresh water are used in a single passing of a ship.
- **Note: Suez Canal has been dug at Sea level.** Thus, the Suez Canal never faces the risk of drying up as it is fed by ocean water that moves in the Suez Canal at sea level.
- Panama Canal is a key conduit for international maritime trade. It has been a major thoroughfare for international trade for over 100 years, connecting nearly 2,000 ports in 170 countries.
- **Drought in Panama:** Since the start of 2023, traffic through the canal has slowed down due to a prolonged drought that has diminished the amount of available water used to fill the canal locks, which require 101,000 cubic metres of water to fill. The water is drawn from the nearby lakes.



9. EASTERN MARITIME CORRIDOR (EMC)

ABOUT EMC

- It connects **Chennai in India to Vladivostok in Russia** and is expected to reduce transportation time between Indian and Russian ports in the Far East Region by up to 40%, from **40 days to 24 days**.

- Compared to the Mumbai-St. Petersburg route covering 8,675 nautical miles, the EMC spans about 5,600 nautical miles, which is significantly shorter.
- For India, EMC provides a shorter and more efficient route to access Far East markets, including China and Japan.
- The corridor will allow India to have a presence in the South China Sea through a trade route that is primarily aimed at the speedy transportation of coking coal.

10. CHINA-PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (CPEC)

- India's hesitation in embracing the China-led BRI is the projection of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as a flagship project.
- The CPEC is expected to connect Kashgar in China's restive province of Xinjiang with the Gwadar port in the volatile Baluchistan province of Pakistan.
- It will pass through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Gilgit-Baltistan—both Indian territories occupied by Pakistan. This is at the core of India's doubts about China's sincerity in seeking its collaboration.



11. CHINA-MYANMAR ECONOMIC CORRIDOR

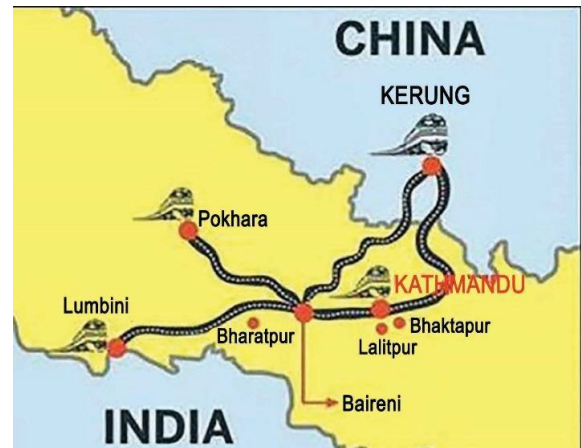
It was recently proposed by China and has been touted as a flagship project of Beijing's BRI in Myanmar.

- CMEC includes infrastructure projects of connectivity such as roads, railways, electric power and energy based on three pillars, namely,
 1. Kyaukphyu Special Economic Zone,
 2. Myanmar-China Border Economic Cooperation Zones, and
 3. New urban development of Yangon City
- Among the major infrastructure projects under consideration are the development of a special economic zone and a deep-sea port at Kyaukphyu. And the construction of a railway line from the China border to Mandalay in central Myanmar.
- CMEC holds great significance for China whose landlocked Yunnan Province needs access to the Indian Ocean and thereby also resolve China's 'Malacca dilemma.'
- A dual pipeline between Kyaukphyu and Kunming is already functional and China is also forming a SEZ in Kyaukphyu, Myanmar.
- Myitsone Dam is a part of this project which was proposed across Irrawaddy River.



12. CHINA-NEPAL ECONOMIC CORRIDOR

- China-Nepal Economic Corridor (CNEC) connects Tibet to Nepal and knocks at the doors of the Gangetic plain. Phase one of the project is expected to get the railway across from Gyirong on the Tibetan side to Rasuwaghadhi in Nepal and from there to Kathmandu. In a planned second phase, China and Nepal would like to extend it to Lumbini.
- In 2017, Nepal signed up to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which sought to create highways, airports and other infrastructure in the country.



13. BANGLADESH-CHINA-INDIA-MYANMAR ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (BCIM)

- The BCIM corridor was formally given shape first in the Kunming Meet in China (2013) and then in Cox's Bazar Meet in Bangladesh (2014).
- It included connectivity projects linking Kunming in China's Yunnan province with Mandalay in Myanmar, then India's Northeast and then to Dhaka in Bangladesh before heading to Kolkata, India.
- However, post-2014, due to India's stand on CPEC and non-participation in BRF, BCIM has not been undertaken as means of Sub-regionalism and the focus now has shifted to Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) and Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN).
- Hence, now China has excluded BCIM economic corridor from the list of projects covered by BRI.



14. INTERNATIONAL NORTH-SOUTH TRANSPORT CORRIDOR (INSTC)

- INSTC is the shortest multimodal transportation route linking the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf via Iran to Russia and Europe.
- It was initiated by Russia, India and Iran in September 2000 to establish transportation networks among the member states and to enhance connectivity with the land-locked region of Central Asia.
- North-South Transport Corridor is an ancient route that connected South Asia with North Europe for centuries.
- It will reduce time taken and cost for transport of goods between India and Eurasia once fully functional and increase economic activities between India and the resource-rich Russia as well as markets of Europe.

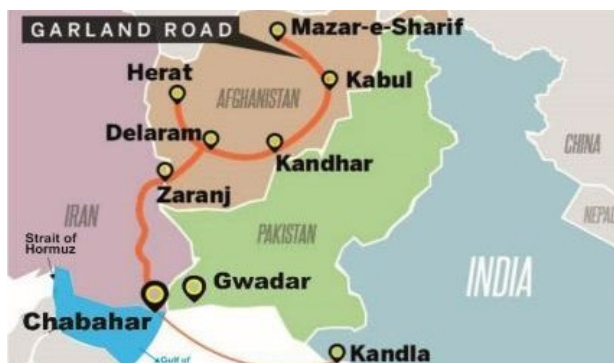


15. CHABAHAR PORT

- Located in the **Gulf of Oman**, near Iran's border with Pakistan.
- Serves as Iran's only major oceanic port because it is the only major port of Iran that lies beyond the **Strait of Hormuz** and has direct access to the Indian Ocean.

AFGHAN OVERVIEW

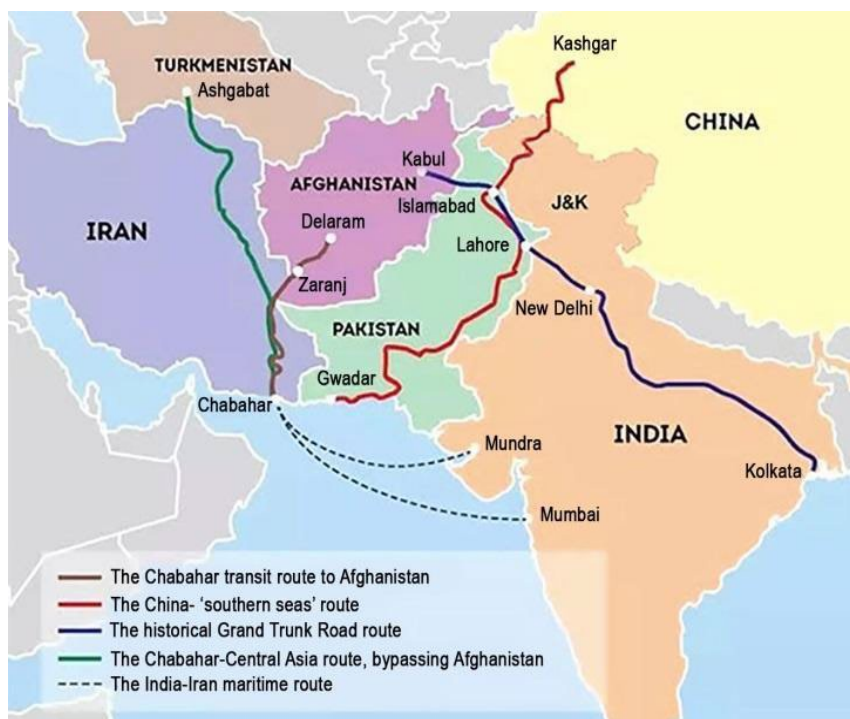
- Chabahar port in Iran connects to Afghanistan at the **Zaranj** and **Delaram highway**. Chabahar port to Delaram is approx. 1800 km.
- This highway then links it to the Afghan 'garland road' or 'Ring Road' that connects the major Afghan cities of Herat, Kandahar, Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif.



INDIAN OVERVIEW

- Chabahar port is the nearest Iranian port to India, which is at approx. 1020km from Kandla port, Gujarat or 1560km from Mumbai.
- The port also serves as the nearest port entry, after Pakistani ports, for India into Central Asia.
- Chabahar Port also provides direct access to India's Farkhor Air Base in Tajikistan.

IMPORTANT TRADE ROUTES



16. KALADAN MULTIMODAL PROJECT

The project includes a waterways component of 158 km on Kaladan River from Sittwe to Paletwa in Myanmar and a road component of 109 km from Paletwa to Zorinpui on India-Myanmar border in Mizoram.



- The waterways component comprises Sittwe Port, Inland Water Transport (IWT) terminals, backup facilities and navigational channel.
- The project is being implemented with Gol's grant assistance under the head of 'Aid to Myanmar.'

17. INDIA-MYANMAR-THAILAND TRILATERAL HIGHWAY

- It is a highway under construction under India's Look East policy that will connect Moreh, India with Mae Sot, Thailand via Myanmar.
- India has proposed extending the highway to Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. The proposed approx. 3,200 km (2,000 mi) route from India to Vietnam is known as East-West Economic Corridor (Thailand to Cambodia and Vietnam became operational in 2015).



18. MOTIHARI-AMLEKHGUNJ PIPELINE

- South Asia's first cross-border petroleum products pipeline from Motihari (in Bihar) in India to Amlekhgunj in Nepal.
- The 69-km pipeline has a capacity of 2 million metric ton per annum & will provide petroleum products at affordable cost to Nepal.



19. NAGORNO-KARABAKH

- This is a landlocked region in the Caucasus region of Asia. This region is a disputed territory between Azerbaijan & Armenia.
- The region is internationally recognised to be part of Azerbaijan but is also claimed as Armenia (Armenia refers to the region as Artsakh).
- **Lachin Corridor** is a mountain road that links Armenia and the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh. Being the only road between these two territories, it is described as a lifeline for residents of Nagorno-Karabakh.



20. POWER OF SERBIA GAS PIPELINE

- **Russia & China** have inaugurated the cross-border gas pipeline, called "Power of Siberia."
- Under this project, Russia will deliver 1 trillion cubic meters of natural gas to China over the next 30 years.
- Russia has been a primary gas supplier to Europe, but Power of Siberia is the first cross-border gas pipeline between Russia and China, adding a prominent eastern dimension to Moscow's energy blueprint.
- Gas is being sourced from Chayandinskoye and Kovytkha fields in eastern Siberia and is then piped to Blagoveshchensk — the last town on the Russian side of the border.
- From there, it is tunnelled under the Amur River, before entering Heihe on the Chinese side.



21. EUROPEAN UNION

The European Union agreed to open membership talks with Ukraine and Moldova.

ABOUT EUROPEAN UNION (EU)

- It is a political and economic union of 27 European countries.
- **The Maastricht Treaty** of 1993 laid the foundation of the European Union.
- Belgium, France, West Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands were the founding members of the EU.
- It was awarded the Nobel **Peace Prize** in 2012 for its contribution to the advancement of peace and reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe.
- The **United Kingdom** became the only country to leave the EU in 2023.

CRITERIA FOR EU MEMBERSHIP

Certain criteria must be met for accession. These criteria (known as the **Copenhagen criteria**) were established by the **Copenhagen European Council** in 1993 and strengthened by the Madrid European Council in 1995.

They are:

- stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities.
- a functioning market economy and the ability to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the EU.

the ability to take on the obligations of membership, including the capacity to effectively implement the rules, standards and policies that make up the body of EU law (the 'acquis'), and adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union.

4

CHAPTER INTERNATIONAL CRISIS

1. VENEZUELA-GUYANA CONFLICT

- Guyana-Venezuela territorial dispute is an ongoing territorial dispute between Guyana and Venezuela over the disputed **Essequibo region**.
- Essequibo is 159,500 sq. km. region west of the Essequibo river. This region is currently under the control of Guyana. The disputed region of Essequibo covers 2/3rd of Guyana's territory.
- The dispute dates back to the Paris Arbitral Award, 1899. The matter was referred to the International Court of Justice in 2018 by Venezuela.



INDIA-GUYANA RELATIONS

- Guyana has a large Indian diaspora present in the country, accounting for 40% of the population.
- Guyana has gained significance in the oil & gas sector becoming the world's newest oil producer. According to OPEC World Oil Outlook 2022, Guyana is projected to see a significant ramp-up in production, with liquid supply growing from 0.1 million barrels per day to 0.9 million barrels per day.

2. IRAN'S ATTACK ON "ANTI-IRANIAN TERRORIST GROUPS"

Iran launched missile and drone attacks in Iraq, Syria and Pakistan.

WHY DID IRAN LAUNCH THE STRIKES?

- Iranian security personnel were killed in **Rask**, a town closer to the Pakistan border, by the **Jaish al-Adl (the Army of Justice)** militant group in December 2023. Iran carried out a surprise attack in **Panjur, a border town in Pakistan's Baluchistan**.
- **Syria's (Daesh terrorist group)** suicide bombers struck crowds gathered near the tomb of the revered IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps) general Qasem Soleimani in **Kerman (city in Iran) in January 2024**. In response, Iran launched ballistic missiles into **Syria's Idlib region**.
- In Iraq, the IRGC claimed responsibility for targeting an alleged Israeli facility. Iran launched a missile strike into **Erbil**, resulting in the destruction of **Mossad's (Israel's external security agency) spy headquarters in the Kurdistan region**. The attack is purportedly a response to recent Israeli actions, including the assassination of Iranian and pro-Iranian commanders.

KEY FACTS FOR PRELIMS

- **Jaish al-Adl, or the "Army of Justice"**, is a Sunni militant group founded in 2012 that largely operates in Pakistan.
- **Daesh (also known as ISIL, Islamic State, or ISIS)** is a terrorist group operating in Syria.
- **The Houthis, 'Supporters of God'**, is a Shia Islamist political and military organisation that emerged from Yemen in the 1990s and backed by Iran.
- Places in news: **Erbil, Kurdish region, Kerman, Idlib**.



3. HOUTHIS ATTACKING RED SEA SHIPS & OPERATION PROSPERITY GUARDIAN

Post the Israeli military offensive against Hamas in Gaza strip region of Palestine the peace and security of the middle east region has again started to appear fragile. Houthi rebels based in Yemen have started conducting a series of attacks using UAVs and ballistic missiles on commercial and merchant shipping vessels in the Southern Red Sea. To counter this threat by Houthi rebels against merchant vessels, US has announced establishment of Operation Prosperity Guardian under the Combined Maritime Forces.

ABOUT RED SEA

- The Red Sea is a narrow sea between the Arabian Peninsula and Africa.
- Towards its north lies the Sinai Peninsula of Egypt and Gulf of Suez and Gulf of Aqaba. Suez Canal connects the Gulf of Suez to the Mediterranean Sea.
- Towards its south, Bab-al-Mandeb strait connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden. Bab al Mandeb separates Yemen on the Arabian Peninsula to the Djibouti and Eritrea located on the Horn of Africa.
- Bab al-Mandeb passage (choke point) which connects the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden is only 29 km wide at its narrowest point.
- Currently, between 10-15% of global shipping flows through the Red Sea.
- On account of the recent Houthi attacks, many international shipping companies have had to re-route through the Cape of Good Hope adding weeks to the delivery of goods and materials, including oil and gas.

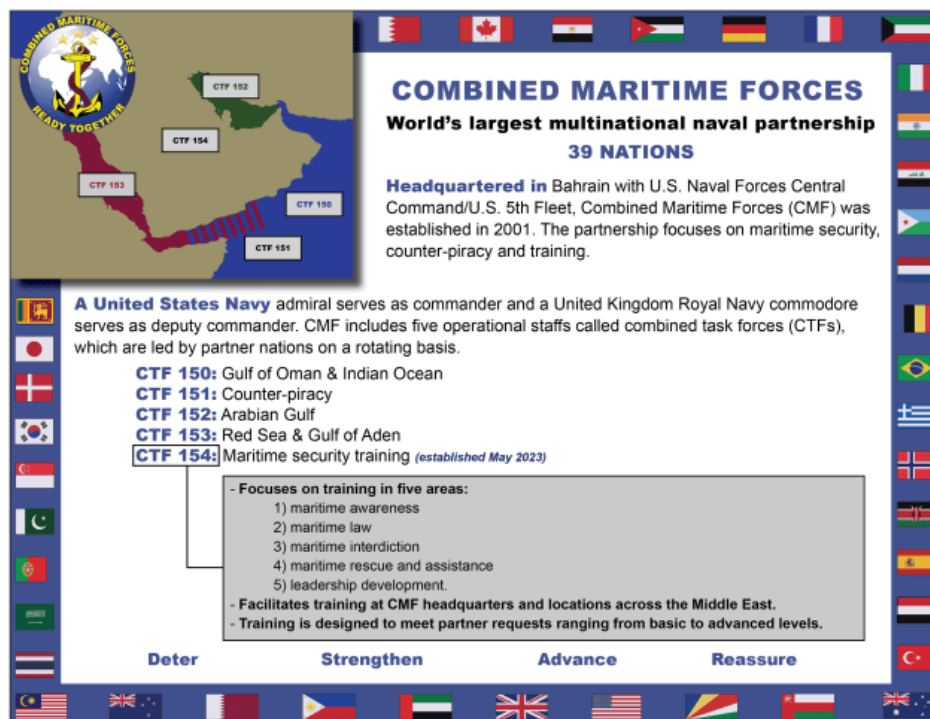


ABOUT COMBINED MARITIME FORCES (CMF)

- CMF is a multinational maritime partnership, which exists to uphold the rules-based international order (RBIO) by countering illicit non-state actors on the high seas and promoting security, stability and prosperity across approximately 3.2 million square miles of international waters, which encompass some of the world's most important shipping lanes.
- Established in **2001**.
- Headquarters of CMF is in **Manama, Bahrain**.
- **Focus areas of CMF:** Counter-narcotics, counter-smuggling, suppressing piracy, encouraging regional cooperation and engaging with regional and other partners. Promoting a safe maritime environment free from illicit non-state actors. When requested, CMF assets at sea will also respond to environmental and humanitarian incidents.
- **39 Members of CMF are:** Australia, Bahrain, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Djibouti, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, **India**, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Republic of Korea, Kuwait, Malaysia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, **Pakistan**, the Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Seychelles, Singapore, Spain, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Türkiye, UAE, United Kingdom, United States, and Yemen. (**India is a member and also Pakistan**).
- **Functioning of CMF:** CMF is a coalition of the willing and does not proscribe or mandate a specific level of participation from any member nation. CMF members are not bound by a fixed political or military mandate.
- **Combined Task Forces under CMF:**
 - **CTF 150:** Conducts Maritime Security Operations **outside the Arabian Gulf** to ensure that legitimate commercial shipping can transit the region, free from non-state threats.
 - **CTF 151:** Aims to suppress **piracy outside territorial waters of Coastal States**, indirectly curb trafficking of humans and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.
 - **CTF 152:** Focuses on regional maritime security cooperation focusing on illicit non-state actors **in the Arabian Gulf**, especially between Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations.
 - **CTF 153:** **Focuses on Red Sea Maritime Security in the Red Sea, Bab al Mandeb and Gulf of Aden.** Established in 2002.
 - **CTF 154:** **Train partner navies** and improve operational capabilities to enhance maritime security in Middle East. Established in 2023.
- CMF's head or commander by vice-admiral of US Navy. CMF's deputy commander is a UK Royal Navy Commodore.

MISSION ASPIDES

The European Union has formally launched a naval mission to protect commercial vessels in the Red Sea from attacks by Iran-backed Houthi rebels. It will aim to preserve freedom of navigation in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.



OPERATION PROSPERITY GUARDIAN

The US Secretary of State Lloyd Austin announced a maritime security initiative called Operation Prosperity Guardian to aid the safe movement of ships in the Red Sea.

4. ASHGABAT AGREEMENT

- Enhance connectivity within Eurasian region and synchronize it with other transport corridors within that region including the International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC).



- India formally joined in February 2018.

5. ROHINGYA CRISIS

- Rohingya are an ethnic group from Myanmar, mostly Muslims, who are based in Rakhine province of West Myanmar.
- Myanmar has not granted them full citizenship and they are classified as "resident foreigners" or as "associate citizens."
- They speak a dialect of Bengali as opposed to Burmese. They left Myanmar in large numbers, first in 2012, during the first wave of organised attack against them by the Burmese army.
- The attacks revived in 2016-17 when lakhs took shelter in Cox's Bazaar area of Bangladesh whereby Cox Bazaar is now the World's largest refugee camp.



6. DIRTY BOMB

- A dirty bomb is a mix of explosives, such as dynamite, with radioactive powder or pellets. It is also known as a radiological dispersal device (RDD). (Either Uranium/ Caesium 137)
- A dirty bomb cannot create an atomic blast like an improvised nuclear device or nuclear weapon.
- When the dirty bomb explodes, the blast carries radioactive material into the surrounding area.
- Dirty bombs do not create city-flattening atomic explosions but are designed to spread toxic waste.

7. LIBYA CRISIS

India has evacuated its stranded persons from Libya.

- Anti-government protests in Libya began on February 15, 2011, leading to civil war between opposition forces and Muammar Gaddafi loyalists.
- Libya is a mostly desert and oil-rich country in northern Africa.
- Libya has the largest oil reserve in Africa and one of the largest oil producers in the world.



CHAPTER INITIATIVES IN NEWS

1. 'EMIGRATION CHECK REQUIRED' (ECR COUNTRIES)

Context: The recent incident of Indian workers having been recruited by the Russian Army for participation in the Russia- Ukraine war has raised concerns regarding the vulnerable situation and exploitation of Indian emigrants as workers in foreign nations. This has in turn given rise to demand for the government to review its procedures of emigration to countries in conflict, updating the list of **18 "Emigration Check Required" countries**, so that the contracts of Indians travelling abroad for such work are verified more thoroughly and they are advised better along with providing adequate protection.

ABOUT EMIGRATION CHECK REQUIRED COUNTRIES

- Formulated under the **Emigration Act, 1983**.
- **Emigration Act 1983 has provided two bodies:**
 - **Protector General of Emigrants** - Responsible for protecting the interests of Indian workers going abroad.
 - **Protector of Emigrants** - Responsible for granting emigration clearance to the intending emigrants
- ECR nations are those countries that do not have strict laws regulating the entry and employment of foreign nationals. They also do not provide avenues for grievance redressal.
- All persons having ECR endorsed Passports and going to any of the 18 ECR countries for taking up employment require emigration clearance from the Protector of Emigrants.
- But ECR passport holders going to any ECR country for purposes other than employment do not require emigration clearance.
- Currently, **there are 18 ECR countries:**

Asia- UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman,
Kuwait, Bahrain, Malaysia, Jordan, Yemen,
Thailand, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria,
Indonesia, Lebanon.

Africa- Libya, Sudan, South Sudan

ABOUT PROTECTOR GENERAL OF EMIGRANTS

- **Statutory body** under Ministry of External Affairs constituted under the **Emigration Act, 1983**.
- Responsible for protecting the interest of Indian workers going abroad.

Powers of Protector General of Emigrants are

- Power to **grant the Registration Certificate (RC)** to recruitment agencies under Section 11 and 12 of the **Emigration Act, 1983** and **renew** the same under Section 13 of the Act.
- Power to **suspend, cancel and revoke the RC** under Section 14 of the Act.
- Power to issue permits to the foreign employer (FE) and Project Exporter (PE) under Chapter IV of the Act.
- Power to sanction prosecution for offences and penalties under Section 24 and 25 of the Act.
- Power to search, seize and detain persons/conveyance, etc. conferred to an officer of customs under the Customs Act, 1962.

- Power to prescribe any return, record or register for the Recruitment agency and inspect the same as well at their office under Section 36 of the Act.
- Power of civil court under Section 37 of the Act.

PROTECTORS OF EMIGRANTS

- **Statutory body** responsible for **granting emigration clearance to the intending emigrants** as per the procedure prescribed under the Emigration Act, 1983.
- The Protectors of Emigrants shall perform the functions assigned to them by this Act **under the general superintendence and control of the Protector General of Emigrants.**

Powers of Protector of Emigrants are

- To protect and aid with his advice all intending emigrants and emigrants.
- Oversee all the provisions of this Act and of the rules made there under to be compiled with.
- Inspect, to an extent and in a manner as may be prescribed-any emigrant conveyance, or any other conveyance if he has reason to believe that any intending emigrant or emigrants are proceeding from, or returning to, India, to or from a place outside India by such other conveyance.
- Inquire into the treatment received by emigrants during their voyage or journey to, and during the period of their residence in the country to which they emigrated and also during the return voyage or journey to India and report thereon to the Protector General of Emigrants or such other authority as may be prescribed.
- Aid and advise emigrants who have returned to India.

LIST OF PERSONS EXEMPTED FROM ECR PROVISIONS

- Holders of Diplomatic/Official Passports and their Spouses
- **Gazetted Government Servants** and their Spouses
- **Income-tax payers** (including Agricultural Income Tax payees) in their individual capacity.
- **All professional degree holders**, such as Doctors holding **MBBS** degrees or Degrees in **Ayurveda or Homoeopathy**; Accredited **Journalists; Engineers; Chartered Accountants; Lecturers; Teachers; Scientists; Advocates** etc and their Spouses.
- **Persons holding class 10 or higher qualification.**
- Persons **holding permanent immigration Visas**, such as the visas of UK, USA and Australia.
- Persons possessing two years diploma from any institute recognized by the National Council for Vocational Training (NCVT) or State Council of Vocational Training (SCVT) or persons holding three years diploma/equivalent degree from institutions like Polytechnics recognized by Central/State Governments.
- **Nurses** possessing qualification recognized under the **Indian Nursing Council Act, 1947.**
- All **persons above** the age of **50 years.**
- All persons who have been **staying abroad for more than three years** (the period of three years could be either in one stretch or broken) and their spouses.
- **Children below 18 years** of age.

2. SURINAME

India sends 425 MT of Grain to the Surinam Social welfare Programme.

ARRIVAL OF INDIANS IN SURINAME

- On 6th June 1873, the first group of Indians reached Suriname, on board the ship Lalla Rookh.
- Suriname has established 'Baba and Mai Monument' as a symbolic representation of the first Indian man and women, who first set foot in Suriname.
- India's diaspora in Suriname plays an important role in deepening relations between India and Suriname.

- The Government of India has extended the eligibility criteria for OCI cards from the fourth generation to the sixth generation of those original Indian immigrants who had arrived in Suriname from Indian territories. The OCI card has served as an important tool in maintaining connections between India's diaspora and India.

ABOUT SURINAME

- Also known as Dutch Guiana. Before independence in 1975, Suriname was a colony of the Netherlands.
- Smallest and least populated countries in South America.
- Capital of Suriname: Paramaribo

3. EUROPEAN SKY SHIELD INITIATIVE

- European Sky Shield Initiative (ESSI) is the latest military upgrade to come out of NATO's security doctrine.
- The objective of this initiative is to develop a common air and missile defence system to defend NATO and European airspace.
- It came out in the backdrop of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, this initiative is an attempt by NATO and its allies to bolster NATO's Integrated Air and Missile Defence System
- The initiative will allow all participating nations to jointly develop an air and missile defence system using interoperable, off-the-shelf solutions. This multinational and multifaceted approach offers a flexible and scalable way for nations to strengthen their deterrence and defence in an efficient and cost-effective way.
- 14 NATO allies included: Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania, the United Kingdom

4. FINANCIAL INTERMEDIARY FUND

- A Financial Intermediary Fund (FIF) for Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response (PPR). It has received financial commitments from various countries including India.
- The fund will provide a dedicated stream of additional, long-term financing to strengthen PPR capabilities in low- and middle-income countries and address critical gaps through investments and technical support at the national, regional, and global levels.
- The World Bank will serve as the FIF's trustee and host the Secretariat, which will include technical staff seconded from the World Health Organisation (WHO).
- The FIF's Governing Board includes equal representation of sovereign donors and potential implementing country governments (co-investors), as well as representatives from foundations and civil society organisations (CSOs).

5. iCET

- The latest addition to the expanding list of India-US ties has been the potentially consequential Initiative for Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET)
- iCET was conceived as an initiative which will be spearheaded by the National Security Councils of the two countries to expand partnership in critical and emerging technologies.
- The two most prominent aims of the iCET are to elevate and expand strategic technology partnerships and defence industrial cooperation between India and the US.
- It seeks to provide momentum to defence technology cooperation with a focus on joint development and joint production.
- Focuses on the space sector and cooperation in the education sector, including expansion of universities in India.

6. NORD STREAM 2 PIPELINE

In 2015, Gazprom and 5 other European energy firms decided to build Nord Stream 2, valued at around \$11 billion. The 1,200 km pipeline runs from UstLuga in Russia to Greifswald in Germany and will carry 55 billion cubic metres of gas per year.

Nord Stream 1 is a 1,224 km underwater gas pipeline running from Vyborg in northwest Russia to Lubmin in north-eastern Germany via the Baltic Sea. The majority is owned by the Russian energy giant Gazprom; it is the primary network through which gas reaches Germany.

Bornholm is a territory under Denmark.

ABOUT BALTIC SEA

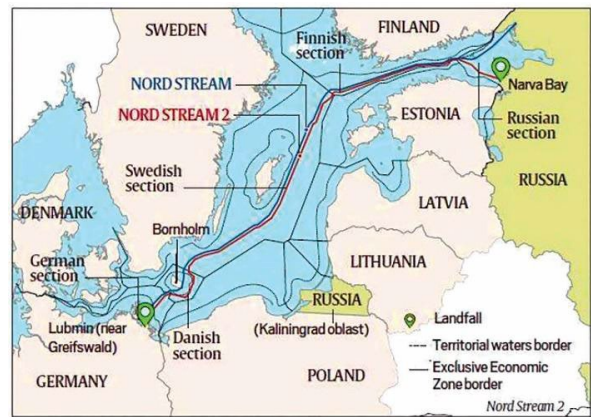
Baltic sea is linked to White Sea by White Sea Canal (artificial) and to the North Sea by Kiel canal

BALTIC SEA NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES

Nine countries border the Baltic Sea: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia & Sweden.

BALTIC COUNTRIES

It includes the countries of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.



7. INDIAN OCEAN RIM ASSOCIATION (IORA)

- It is an **intergovernmental** organisation of states on the rim of the Indian Ocean.
- It was **established in 1997** with an aim to strengthen **regional cooperation** and **sustainable development** within the Indian Ocean region.
- IORA's apex body is the **Council of Foreign Ministers (COM)** which **meets annually**.
- The Council of Ministers has established a 'Troika' consisting of the chair, vice-chair and previous chair.
- **Members of IORA:** Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, France, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.
- **All sovereign States** of the **Indian Ocean Rim** are **eligible** for membership of the Association.
- To become members, **States must adhere** to the principles and objectives enshrined in the **Charter of the Association**.
- The **Secretariat of the IORA** is hosted by the Government of the Republic of **Mauritius**, which is based in Cyber City, Ebène, Mauritius.
- **Note:** *Pakistan is not a member of IORA.*

PRIORITY AND FOCUS AREA OF IORA

- Maritime safety & security
- Trade & investment facilitation
- Fisheries management
- Disaster risk management
- Tourism & Cultural exchanges
- Academic, science and technology cooperation

- Blue economy
- Women's economic empowerment

FLAGSHIP PROJECTS OF IORA

1. **Indian Ocean Dialogue (IOD):** It is a standalone Track 1.5 discussion encouraging an open and free flowing dialogue by key representatives of IORA Member States such as scholars, experts, analysts and policymakers from governments, think tanks and civil societies on a number of crucial strategic issues of the Indian Ocean Region. The first IOD meeting took place in Kerala, India in 2014.
2. **IORA Sustainable Development Program (ISDP):** This initiative of IORA aims to assist least developed countries that require assistance and support to conduct projects, with the purpose to promote sharing experiences and best practices among IORA member states.

8. INTERNATIONAL ENERGY AGENCY

The International Energy Agency completed 50 years of existence.

ABOUT INTERNATIONAL ENERGY AGENCY

- It was created in **response to the 1973-1974 oil crisis** when an oil embargo by major producers pushed prices to historic levels, and exposed the vulnerability of industrialized countries to dependency on oil imports.
- It was created as an **autonomous intergovernmental agency** under the framework of **OECD in Paris**.
- Its founding members were Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, United Kingdom, and the United States.
- **Only OECD member states may join the IEA.** Members are required to maintain total oil stock levels equivalent to at least 90 days of the previous year's net imports.
- **India is an association member country and not a full member state.**
- The IEA's structure includes a **Governing Board**, Ministerial Meetings, and Standing Groups and Committees.
- The Governing Board constitutes the **main decision-making body** of the organisation. It is composed of member country representatives and meets three to four times a year.
- The Governing Board is responsible for the IEA's administrative proceedings and approving binding decisions in relation to energy developments

9. INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE, CRICKET INCLUDED IN OLYMPICS

The 144th session of the IOC took place in Greece.

During the 141st session of International Olympic Committee being held at Mumbai (India) changes were introduced in the Olympic Charter, which will strengthen human rights commitments of IOC. The amendments were principally introduced in the Fundamental Principles of Olympism, which is a part of Olympic Charter and amendments to ensure freedom of expression of all competitors, team officials and other team personnel at the Olympic Games. India is hosting the session of IOC after a gap of 40 years (Last in 1983 in New Delhi). Prime Minister of India has announced India's candidature for hosting Olympic Games in 2036.

ABOUT OLYMPIC CHARTER

- Olympic Charter is the codification of fundamental principles of Olympism and rules and bye-laws adopted by the International Olympic Committee.
- The Olympic Charter was first published in 1908. However, some of the rules in the first Charter were written by Pierre de Coubertin in 1889.
- It governs the **organisation**, actions and functioning of the Olympic Movement and establishes the conditions for celebration of Olympic Games.

- It establishes the relations between International Federations, National Olympic Committees and Olympic Movement.

ABOUT INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE (IOC)

- IOC is an international NGO and Non-Profit Organisation headquartered in Lausanne (Switzerland).
- It is the Supreme Authority leading the Olympic Movement and the catalyst for all Olympic family members.
- IOC members, natural persons, are representatives of the IOC in their respective countries, and not their country's delegate within the IOC.
- It aims to encourage the promotion of Olympic values, to ensure regular celebration of Olympic Games and its legacy and to support all organisations affiliated to the Olympic Movement.
- The IOC Session is the general assembly of IOC members. It is the supreme decision making body of IOC and its decisions are final. An ordinary IOC session is held once a year.
- The Executive Board of IOC is the executive body of IOC and oversees the general responsibility for administration of IOC and monitors compliance with Olympic Charter. It comprises IOC President, four Vice-presidents and 10 other members, all elected by the Session.

INCLUSION OF A SPORT IN OLYMPICS

- The sports to be included in a particular edition of Olympics Games are decided by **IOC Session** from the among the sports governed by International Federations (IFs) recognised by IOC.
- Only sports which comply with Olympic Charter, World Anti-Doping Code and Olympic Movement Code on Prevention of Manipulation of Competition are eligible to be included in Olympic Games.
- However, the Organising Committee of a specific edition of Olympic Games may propose to IOC the inclusion, for such edition only, of one or more additional events from the sports governments by IOC Recognised IFs.
- Thus, **Los Angeles 2028 Olympics** Organising Committee proposed inclusion of 5 games – **Cricket, Flag Football, Lacrosse, Squash and baseball-softball**. The Executive Committee of IOC has approved the inclusion of these games in the Los Angeles Olympics in 2028.
- The IOC has given its final approval for inclusion of the above five games into the Los Angeles Olympics in 2028. Thus, **enabling the inclusion of cricket for the first time in Olympic Games. The inclusion will only be for the edition of the Olympic Games in Los Angeles in 2028.**

10. COMMISSION ON LIMITS OF CONTINENTAL SHELF

- Established pursuant to article 2, annex II to the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Commission makes recommendations to coastal States on matters related to the establishment of the outer limits of their continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured, based on information submitted to it by coastal States.
- The Commission is a body of 21 experts in the field of geology, geophysics or hydrography. They serve in their personal capacities. Members of the Commission are elected for a term of five years by the Meeting of States Parties to the Convention from among their nationals having due regard to the need to ensure equitable geographical representation.

11. PARTNERS IN BLUE PACIFIC

No Oil Producing and Exporting Cartels (NOPEC) bill, was passed by a Senate committee and is intended to protect U.S. consumers and businesses from engineered oil spikes.

The NOPEC bill would tweak U.S. antitrust law to revoke the sovereign immunity that has protected OPEC+ members and their national oil companies from lawsuits.

If signed into law, the U.S. attorney general would gain the option to sue the oil cartel or its members, such as Saudi Arabia, in federal court.

12. MACOLIN CONVENTION

- The Council of Europe Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions, known as the Macolin Convention, is a multilateral treaty aimed at checking match-fixing.
- It came into force in 2019.
- The Macolin Convention is a legal instrument and the only rule of international law on the manipulation of sports competitions. It requests public authorities to co-operate with sports organisations, betting operators and competition organisers to prevent, detect and sanction the manipulation of sports competitions. It proposes a common legal framework for an efficient international cooperation to respond to this global threat.
- It has been ratified by Greece, Iceland, Italy, Norway, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Switzerland and Ukraine. 32 other European States have signed it, as well as Australia and Morocco.

13. EURASIAN ECONOMIC UNION (EAEU)

India is exploring a possibility to forge a free trade agreement with Eurasian Economic Union.

- It is an international organisation for **regional economic integration**.
- It has **international legal personality** and is established by the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union.
- It provides for **free movement of goods, services, capital and labour**, pursues coordinated, harmonized and single policy in the sectors determined by the Treaty and international agreements within the Union.
- **Member-States:** Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus and Armenia.



- The Union is being created to comprehensively upgrade, raise the competitiveness of and cooperation between the national economies, and to promote stable development in order to raise the living standards of the nations of the Member-States.
- Each year, a **Member State is elected chairman to head the Union**. Chairmanship is passed from country to country in alphabetical order in the Russian language.

14. IPMDA

QUAD welcomed the partnership i.e. **Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA)**, designed to work with regional partners to respond to humanitarian and natural disasters, and combat illegal fishing.

IPMDA will support and work in consultation with Indo-Pacific nations and regional information fusion centres in the Indian Ocean, Southeast Asia, and Pacific Islands by providing technology and training to support enhanced, shared maritime domain awareness to promote stability and prosperity in our seas and oceans.

Quad Partnership on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) in Indo-Pacific: This Partnership will further strengthen our collaboration to effectively respond to disasters in the region.

INDIAN NAVY'S INFORMATION FUSION CENTRE-INDIAN OCEAN REGION (IFC-IOR)

- The IFC-IOR was established in 2018 for regional collaboration on maritime security issues including "maritime terrorism", IUUF, piracy, armed robbery on the high seas, and human and contraband trafficking.

- The Gurgaon-based data fusion centre has information sharing links with 50 nations and multinational/maritime centres, according to its website.
- The centre was established as part of the government's SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) framework for maritime co-operation in the Indian Ocean region.
- It hosts international liaison officers from partner countries, which include both India's immediate neighbours in the Indian Ocean region and from further afield, including Australia, France, Japan, Singapore, the UK and the US.
- The two other data fusion centres likely to be involved in this initiative are the Singapore Navy's Information Fusion Centre, and the Australia-sponsored Pacific Fusion Centre, set up in 2019 in Port Vila in Vanuatu.

15. RESILIENT DEMOCRACIES STATEMENT

Leaders of the powerful G7 grouping and its five partner countries, including India, have said that they are committed to open public debate and the free flow of information online and offline while guarding the freedom, independence and diversity of civil society actors.

In a joint statement titled '2022 Resilient Democracies Statement' issued during the G7 Summit, the leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi said they are prepared to defend these principles and have resolved to protect the freedom of expression.

The joint statement came amidst allegations that the government was stifling the freedom of speech and the civil society actors.

Apart from India, the signatories to the statement were Germany, Argentina, Canada, France, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Senegal, South Africa, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and the European Union.

16. NON-MONEY FOR TERROR CONFERENCE (NMFT), 2025

Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Shri Nityanand Rai headed the Indian Delegation to the 4th No Money for Terror (NMFT) Conference held at Munich, Germany on 13th February 2025.

NMFT started in 2018 as an initiative of the French government which had, in 1989, laid the foundation of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the international body at the forefront of combating money laundering and terrorist financing.

The agenda for NMFT 2022 conference included use of virtual assets and crowdfunding platforms by terrorist entities, their use of the dark web, the links between terror financing and legitimate economic activities, and payment intermediaries.

17. SADC (SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY)

Export-Import Bank of India (India Exim Bank) has concluded a Master Risk Participation Agreement for supporting trade transactions with FirstRand Bank (FRB) Limited.

The agreement opens financing avenues to support trade between India and Africa, aiming to strengthen the growing economic engagement between India and African nations.

It was signed under the trade assistance program.

Under this programme, India Exim Bank provides credit enhancement to trade instruments, thereby augmenting the capacity of commercial banks / financial institutions to undertake cross-border trade transactions involving markets where trade lines are constrained, or where the potential has not been harnessed.

The main objectives of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) are to achieve economic development, peace and security, and growth, alleviate poverty, enhance the standard and quality of life of the peoples of Southern Africa, and support the socially disadvantaged through Regional Integration.

The predecessor of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) was the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC), established in 1980 in Lusaka, Zambia.

It has 16 members.



India signed an MoU on economic cooperation with SADC in 1997.

First India SADC Forum meeting was held in Windhoek in 2006.

18. INDIA UN DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP FUND

Dedicated facility established in 2017 within UNFSSC.

It is supported and led by India, managed by UNOSSC (United Nation Office for South-South cooperation), and implemented in collaboration with the United Nations system.

India-UN Development Partnership Fund supports Southern-owned and led, demand-driven, and transformational sustainable development projects across the developing world, with a focus on least developed countries and small island developing states.

United Nations agencies implement the Funds projects in close collaboration with partnering governments.

India-UN Fund is a notable example of South-South cooperation with the system. Its thematic reach spans all 17 SDGs, with several initiatives addressing more than one Goal.

India has committed \$150 million over 10 years to the India-UN Fund, including \$50 million under a separate Commonwealth Window, \$14 million dedicated to countries of the Caribbean Community, and \$12 million for Pacific Island developing States.

19. BAPA+40

BUENOS AIRES PLAN OF ACTION

It concerns with South-South Cooperation, and is also known as BAPA+40.

"The Conference has provided with a roadmap for South-South and triangular cooperation,"

20. CURRENCY MONITORING LIST

India has been removed from United States' Currency Monitoring List, released by the Department of Treasury.

In its biannual report to Congress, the US' Treasury Department announced that it had also removed Italy, Mexico, Vietnam and Thailand from the list.

The report states that economies that meet two or three criteria in the 2015 Act are placed on the list. Under this legislation, the Treasury Department must assess the macroeconomic and exchange rate policies of the US' trading partners for three specific criteria:

- (1) A significant bilateral trade surplus with the United States is a goods and services trade surplus that is at least \$15 billion
- (2) A material current account surplus is one that is at least 3% of GDP, or a surplus for which Treasury estimates there is a material current account "gap" using Treasury's Global Exchange Rate Assessment Framework (GERAF).

- (3) Persistent, one-sided intervention occurs when net purchases of foreign currency are conducted repeatedly, in at least 8 out of 12 months, and these net purchases total at least 2% of an economy's GDP over a 12-month period.

DURATION

Once on the list, an economy will remain there for at least two consecutive reports so that the Treasury can assess whether any improvements in performance are durable and not due to temporary factors.

India and four other countries were removed from the Monitoring List as they now only met one of the three criteria for two consecutive reports.

OTHER MAJOR COUNTRIES STILL ON LIST

According to the report, these countries are presently on the list:- China- Japan- Korea- Germany- Malaysia- Singapore- Taiwan.

21. INDO PACIFIC REGIONAL DIALOGUE

The Indo pacific regional dialogue (IPRD) is the Indian Navy's yearly, recurring, top-level international conference geared at the Indian Navy's strategic level.

The discourse is being led by the National Maritime Foundation NMF, which is also the Indian Navy's knowledge partner.

In 2018, the initial conception of an IPRD was made.

The IPRD reviews the current geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific region and identifies opportunities, dangers, and problems that might be present.

22. CHINA+1 STRATEGY

China-Plus-One, or just Plus One refers to a strategy in which companies avoid investing only in China and diversify their businesses to alternative destinations.

A grouping of 18 economies, including India, the US, and the European Union, unveiled a roadmap for establishing collective supply chains that would be resilient in the long term. The roadmap also included steps to counter supply chain dependencies and vulnerabilities.

Beijing's Zero-Covid policy, the resultant supply chain disruptions, and high lead times from China ended up giving a fillip to the China-Plus-One strategy for many global firms.

The US and Europe, with their sourcing dependence on China, were forced to look at other locations for both reliable supplies of components and materials and production cost advantages.

23. ASEAN CONSENSUS

Despite adopting a **"five-point consensus"** on the crisis a year ago, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has failed to fulfil its pledges or take meaningful steps toward pressing the junta to end its human rights violations.

Myanmar's junta has spent the past year committing atrocities in disregard for its commitments to ASEAN.

At a summit in Jakarta in April 2021, the nine ASEAN leaders and Myanmar junta chief, agreed to five points.

These five points are:-

1. First, there shall be immediate cessation of violence in Myanmar and all parties shall exercise utmost restraint.
2. Second, constructive dialogue among all parties concerned shall commence to seek a peaceful solution in the interests of the people.
3. Third, a special envoy of the ASEAN Chair shall facilitate mediation of the dialogue process, with the assistance of the Secretary General of ASEAN.
4. Fourth, ASEAN shall provide humanitarian assistance through the AHA Centre.
5. Fifth, the special envoy and delegation shall visit Myanmar to meet with all parties concerned

24. INDIA AUS ECTA

Ind-Aus ECTA provides an institutional mechanism to encourage and improve trade between the two countries. It covers almost all the tariff lines dealt by India and Australia.

India will benefit from preferential market access provided by Australia on 100% of its tariff lines, including all the labour-intensive sectors of export interest to India, such as Gems and Jewellery, Textiles, leather, footwear, furniture, food, and agricultural products, engineering products, medical devices and Automobiles.

Indian goods on all tariff lines to get access to the Australian market with zero customs duty.

The Agreement will benefit various labour-intensive Indian sectors that are currently subjected to 5% import duty by Australia. The agreement will result in immediate market access at zero duty to 98.3% of tariff lines accounting for 96.4% of India's exports to Australia in value terms. The remaining 1.7% lines are to be made zero duty lines over 5 years. Overall, Australia is offering duty elimination on 100% of its tariff lines.

END TO DOUBLE TAXATION

The Agreement has removed the discrepancies regarding use of Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement for taxation of Indian firm royalties, fees and charges.

Protective Features to guard against Unintended Consequences

The #IndAusECTA also has certain 'protective features' aimed at guarding both countries against unintended consequences on trade.

Australian services to get Negative List Treatment after 5 Years.

India has for the first time agreed to Negative listing after 5 years of coming into force of the Agreement.

But what is a negative listing? Under the negative listing approach, a country treats imported and locally produced goods / services equally in all areas, and areas where this is not done are listed – in the negative list - as exceptions. So, in this case, India would provide this treatment to services exports from Australia, after a period of 5 years.

25. PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES

Pacific Islands, an island geographic region of the Pacific Ocean and is a cluster of 14 states. It comprises three ethnographic groupings—Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia—but conventionally excludes the neighbouring island continent of Australia, the Asia-related Indonesia, Philippine, and Japanese archipelagos, and the Ryukyu, Bonin, Volcano, and Kuril Island arcs that project seaward from Japan. Neither does the term include the Aleutian chain

They are some of the smallest and least populated states, they have some of the largest Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) in the world.

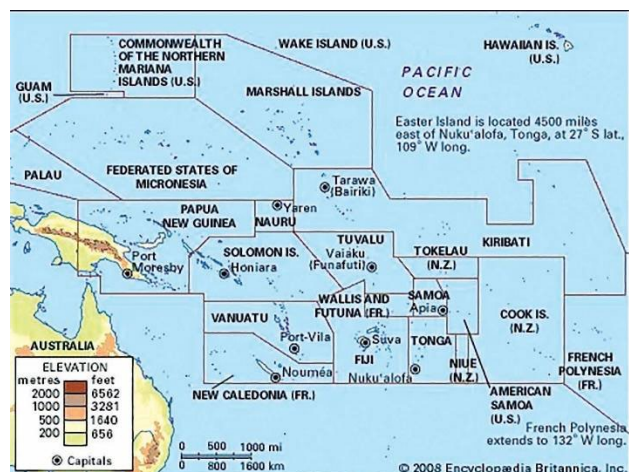
INTERNATIONAL LAW COMMISSION (ILC)

The International Law Commission was established by the UN General Assembly in 1947 to undertake the mandate of the UN General Assembly under Article 13 (1) (a) of Charter of United Nations to initiate studies and make recommendations for the purpose of encouraging the progressive development of international law and its codification.

Recently, the International Law Commission has done an evaluation study on sea-level rise in international relations.

IMPACT OF SEA LEVEL RISE FOR INTERNATIONAL LAW

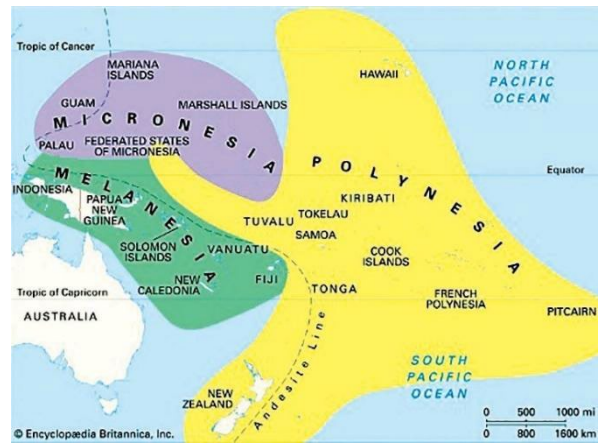
- Sea-level rise will impact baselines and the maritime zones that are measured from baselines.
- Increased competition over natural resources



- Forced migration and displacement of population.
- Submergence of state territory which even challenges the existence of states, a novel situation for international law.

MICRONESIA

Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) consists of four island states, Yap, Chuuk, Kosrae and Pohnpei (where the capital Palikir is located), all in the Caroline Islands. Also known as the Carolines.



26. LANCANG MEKONG COOPERATION

The Lancang-Mekong area is one of the regions with the greatest development potential in Asia and beyond. Lancang and Mekong differ in name but refer to the same river—an important river running across China and the Indo-China Peninsula.

Originating from China's Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, the river has its source in Yushu of Qinghai Province. It is called Lancang River in China, while in its downstream after flowing out of Yunnan Province, it is called the Mekong River, running across Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam

Countries: China, Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam (launched in 2016)

27. TWIPLOMACY

Twiplomacy, or Twitter Diplomacy, is the coming together of traditional and digital diplomacy, and Twitter. When a world leader tweets about a world event or a new policy framework, other politicians turn to the mainstream media to either reply to the tweet or defend it, or to simply give their opinion on the issue concerned. These replies, in turn, add to the online discussion that consequently shapes public opinion.

The diplomatic services of many countries use Twitter to communicate directly with the people and lend a more participatory character to foreign policy debates. Twitter diplomacy, in that sense, has lent a degree of transparency to foreign policy debates.

28. CRITICAL MINERAL PARTNERSHIP

India and Australia decided to strengthen their partnership in the field of projects and supply chains for critical minerals. Australia's Critical Minerals Facilitation Office (CMFO) and KABIL (Khanij Bidesh India Ltd) had recently signed an MoU aimed at ensuring reliable supply of critical minerals to India.' KABIL has earned its first overseas mining lease for Lithium in **Catamarca province of Argentina**.

Australia confirmed that it would "commit A\$5.8 million to the three-year India-Australia Critical Minerals Investment Partnership".

WHAT ARE CRITICAL MINERALS?

Critical minerals are elements that are the building blocks of essential modern-day technologies and are at risk of supply chain disruptions. These minerals are now used everywhere from making mobile phones, computers to batteries, electric vehicles and green technologies like solar panels and wind turbines. Based on their individual needs and strategic considerations, different countries create their own lists.

29. GENEVA PACKAGE (WTO)

Member countries of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) wrapped up the Ministerial Conference's thirteenth outing (MC13).

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

It meets once every two years and can take decisions on all matters under any multilateral trade agreement. Unlike other organisations, such as the International Monetary Fund or World Bank, WTO does not delegate power to a board of directors or an organisational chief. All decisions at the WTO are made collectively and through consensus among member countries at varied councils and committees.

AGRICULTURE Negotiators could not reach agreements on issues such as permissible public stockholding threshold for domestic food security, domestic support to agriculture, cotton, and market access.

It instituted a work programme to come up with measures to help LDCs (least-developed countries) and NFIDCs (Net Food Importing Developing Countries) enhance their domestic food security and bolster agricultural production.

FISHRIES India successfully managed to carve out an agreement on eliminating subsidies to those engaged in illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

The agreements hold that there would be no limitation on subsidies granted or maintained by developing or least-developed countries for fishing within their exclusive economic zones (EEZ).

PATENT Member countries agreed on authorising the use of the subject matter of a patent for producing COVID-19 vaccines by a member country, without the consent of the rights holder.

Further, it asks member countries to waive requirements, including export restrictions, set forth by WTO regulations to supply domestic markets and member countries with any number of vaccines.

ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

Member countries agreed to extend the current moratorium on not imposing customs duties on electronic transmission (ET)

105 countries, including the U.S., the U.K., Australia, China and Japan among others, had sought an extension of the moratorium, with India and South Africa being in opposition.

MULTI-PARTY INTERIM APPEAL ARBITRATION ARRANGEMENT (MPIA)

- It is an interim, alternative mechanism for resolving WTO disputes that are appealed by a Member by arbitrations in the absence of a functioning and staffed WTO Appellate Body.
- The WTO Appellate Body has been dysfunctional since 2019 due to USA blockage of appointments of members to the Appellate Body of WTO.
- Article 25 of Understanding on Rules and Procedures Governing the Settlement of Disputes allows for parties to resolve disputes in the implementation of WTO Rules by arbitration as an alternative to adjudication by panels and the Appellate Body. Under the Article, parties must agree on arbitration and procedures to be followed.
- MPIA provides that the participating members will resolve disputes by using arbitrations, instead of appealing to the non-functional Appellate Body, when they are unable to accept the adoption of the panel decisions.
- Countries participating: Currently, 52 countries and regions, including EU, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Singapore, Japan & New Zealand are prominent countries participating in MPIA.

GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL MECHANISM UNDER WTO

- Dispute settlement is a central pillar of the Multilateral Trading System and essential for stability and rule of law in the global economy.
- **Dispute Settlement Body:** Settling disputes is the responsibility of Dispute Settlement Body, which consists of all WTO members. Dispute Settlement Body has sole authority to establish 'Panels' of experts to consider the case and to accept or reject the panel's findings or results of an appeal. It monitors implementation of rulings and recommendations and has power to authorize retaliation when a country does not comply with a ruling.

- **First Stage - Consultation:** Before taking any other action, countries in dispute talk to each other to see if they can settle their differences by themselves. However, if talks fail, they can ask the WTO Director-General to mediate or try to help.
- **Second Stage - Panel:** If consultations fail, complaining countries can ask for a panel to be appointed. The country 'in the dock' can block the creation of a panel once, but when the Dispute Settlement Body meets for a second time, the panel must be constituted unless there is a consensus against it. The Panel helps the Dispute Settlement Body make rulings or recommendations. Since the panel's report can only be rejected by consensus in the Dispute Settlement Body, its conclusions are difficult to overturn. The final report of the panel is the ruling or recommendation of the Dispute Settlement Body unless a consensus rejects it. Both sides can appeal the report.
- **Appeals to Appellate Body:** Appeals must be based on points of law such as legal interpretation. Each appeal is heard by three members of a permanent seven-member Appellate Body set up by the Dispute Settlement Body and broadly representing the range of WTO membership. Members of Appellate Body have four-year terms. Members of Appellate Body are individuals with recognised standing in law and international trade, they are not affiliated with any government. An appeal can uphold, modify or reverse the panel's legal findings. Dispute Settlement Body must accept or reject the appeals report and rejection is possible only by consensus.
- **Enforcement of decisions:** Priority for enforcement actions brings the policies of losing the country in line with the final ruling of WTO Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) and in a reasonable time. If it fails to act within a period of 30 days, the losing side must enter negotiations with the complaining country to determine a mutually acceptable solution. However, if after 20 days, no satisfactory compensation is agreed upon, the winning side may ask DSB to retaliate. Retaliation is a temporary measure, focused on encouraging the losing country to comply. Ex. The winning side can block imports from the losing country. In principle, the retaliation should be in the same sector as the dispute. However, if this is not effective or practical, it can be in a different sector of the same agreement. However, in serious issues, actions can be taken under another agreement also.

→ CONVENTIONS & TREATIES IN NEWS

30. ANTARCTIC TREATY AND BILL

ABOUT ANTARCTICA TREATY

- The Antarctic Treaty was signed in 1959 by 12 countries — Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, French Republic, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Union of South Africa, USSR, the UK of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the USA came into force in 1961. India is a signatory of Antarctica Treaty in 1983.
- **AREA:** Treaty covers area south of 60°S latitude.
- **OBJECTIVE:** Demilitarize Antarctica and establish it as a zone used for peaceful research activities and to set aside any disputes regarding territorial sovereignty, thereby ensuring international cooperation.
- **MEMBERSHIP:** 54 nations are signatories to Antarctic Treaty, but only 29 nations have a right to vote at Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings, including India.

ANTARCTIC TREATY SYSTEM

Parties to the treaty have negotiated three more treaties which are collectively known as the Antarctic Treaty System.

CONVENTION on Conservation of Antarctic Seals, 1972.

Convention on Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) was set up in 1980 (ratified by India)

The Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty was signed in 1991 and came into force in 1998. (Signed by India)

ABOUT BILL (INDIA ANTARCTIC BILL)

Applicability: Provisions of the Bill will apply to any person, vessel or aircraft that is a part of an Indian expedition to Antarctica under a permit issued under the Bill.

Central committee: The central government will establish a Committee on Antarctic Governance and Environmental Protection. The Committee will be chaired by the Secretary of the Ministry of Earth Sciences.

Functions of Committee include:

- (i) Granting permits for various activities,
- (ii) Implementing and ensuring compliance of relevant international laws for protection of Antarctic environment.
- (iii) obtaining and reviewing relevant information provided by parties to the Treaty, Convention, and Protocol.
- (iv) negotiating fees/charges with other parties for activities in Antarctica.

Offences and penalties: The Bill specify penalties for contravention of its provisions. For instance, conducting a nuclear explosion in Antarctica will be punishable with an imprisonment of 20 years which may extend to life imprisonment and a fine of at least Rs 50 crore. Drilling for mineral resources or introducing non-native animals or plants in Antarctica without a permit will be punishable with imprisonment up to seven years and a fine between Rs 10 lakh and Rs 50 lakh.

COURTS- The central government may notify one or more Sessions Courts to be the Designated Court under the Bill and specify its territorial jurisdiction to try offences punishable under the Bill.

FUND- There is also provision of Antarctic Fund to be applied towards the welfare of Antarctic research work and protection of the Antarctic environment.

LICENSING- There is also provision for special permits for commercial licensing.

ABOUT ANTARCTICA

- Antarctica is the fifth-largest continent in area.
- Antarctic includes island territories within the Antarctic Convergence. The islands of the Antarctic region are: South Orkney Islands, South Shetland Islands, South Georgia, and the South Sandwich Islands
- Antarctica has a few mountain summits, including the Transantarctic Mountains, which divide the continent into eastern and western regions.
- The Antarctic region has an important role in global climate processes. It is an integral part of Earth's heat balance.
- Antarctica holds 90% of Earth's Total Ice volume and 70% of the Earth Water

INDIA AND ANTARCTICA

1. India undertook its first Antarctica expedition in 1982 i.e., Operation Gangotri
2. 1984 -- The first unmanned Antarctica research base was established named Dakshin Gangotri.
3. India established two manned research stations in Antarctica MAITRI in 1988 and BHARATI in 2012
4. Indian Antarctic program is managed by National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research,(NCPOR) GOA

31. MIGRATION AGREEMENT (INDIA-GERMANY)

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock's visit to India and talks with external affairs minister S. Jaishankar have set the stage for a more updated bilateral relationship. The two sides signed an agreement on a Comprehensive Migration and Mobility Partnership agreement on mobility and migration that boosts travel for students, researchers, investors, and businesses.

Earlier the German Skilled Immigration Act 2020 has expanded the opportunities for workers from the countries outside.

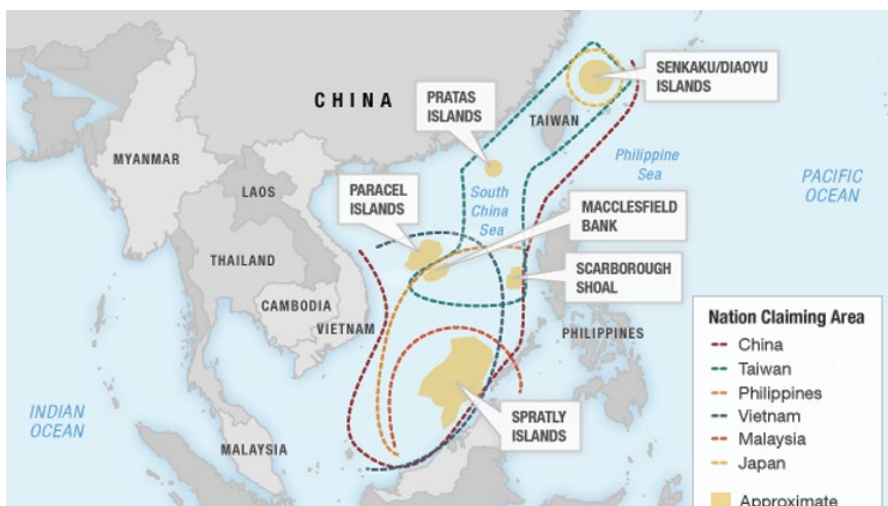
32. SOUTH CHINA SEA

Overlapping claims on the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the South China Sea has become a source of regional conflict and tensions.

China has been asserting its sovereignty over nearly the entire South China Sea and claims an area '**Nine-Dash Line**'.

China has been building artificial islands and is expanding existing islands it controls in the South China Sea. Despite assurances, China has militarised artificial islands in the South China Sea.

Japan voted to rename an area including islands disputed with China and Taiwan in the South China Sea. It has been renamed Senkaku Islands -- known by Taiwan and China as the Diaoyus -- from "Tonoshiro" to "Tonoshiro Senkaku".



DISPUTED ISLANDS	CLAIMANT COUNTRY
Senkaku Island	China & Japan
Spratly Island	China & Philippines; Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei too claim parts of the island Chain
Scarborough Shoal	China & Philippines
Parcel Island	China and Vietnam

- More than \$5 trillion of world trade ships pass through the SCS every year. The SCS is also resource rich, with numerous offshore oil and gas blocks.
- The South China Sea has emerged as the geopolitical centre of gravity. China has claimed 90% of the area with its conception of the 9-dash line.
- Japan has increased its presence because of the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Island. Philippines, Vietnam have emerged as regional players asserting their rights in Spratly & Paracel Islands respectively. Other players include Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei.
- Major rivers that flow into South China Sea include Pearl, Min, Jiulong, Red, Mekong, Rajang, Pahang, Agno, Pampanga, and Pasig Rivers.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR SOUTH CHINA SEA

In 1995, China illegally occupied Mischief Reef, just 210 km from Philippine Island of Palawan. ASEAN issued a Joint Communiqué in 1996 expressing concern over the situation in the South China Sea, calling for "peaceful resolution of the dispute and self-restraint by parties."

2002: After years of negotiation between ASEAN and China a non-binding, aspirational Declaration of Conduct (DOC) in South China Sea was arrived at.

2017: ASEAN and China adopted a Framework of a Code of Conduct in South China Sea intended to "facilitate the work for conclusion of an effective **Code of Conduct** on a mutually agreed timeline."

2018: Agreement on a Single Draft South China Sea Code of Conduct Negotiating Text (SDNT) was agreed upon. This too was not legally binding.

Most ASEAN countries support a legally binding Code of Conduct while China is opposed to the binding nature of Code of Conduct.

33. ISTANBUL CONVENTION

Turkey withdrew from the **Istanbul convention in 2021**. The Nationalist party claimed that the convention demeans traditional family structure, promotes divorces and encourages acceptance of LGBTQ in the society.

ISTANBUL CONVENTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The Council of Europe established the Istanbul Convention, a human rights treaty, with the aim to prevent and prosecute all forms of violence against women, promote gender equality and ensure protection and rehabilitation of women who are victims of violence.

The treaty was opened for ratification in 2011. Turkey became the first country to ratify the Istanbul convention in 2012, it incorporated the Istanbul Convention into domestic law.

34. RULES OF ORIGIN

- Rules of origin are the criteria needed to determine the national source of a product. Their importance is derived from the fact that duties and restrictions in several cases depend upon the source of imports.
- There is wide variation in the practice of governments regarding the rules of origin.
- Under this a country that has signed an FTA with India cannot dump goods from some third country in the Indian market by just putting a label on it. If the goods are to be exported value addition is needed.
- Customs (Administration of Rules of Origin under Trade Agreements) or CAROTAR Rules, came into effect from September 2020.
- It empowers the customs officers to ask the importer to furnish further information, consistent with the trade agreement, in case the officer has reasons to believe that the country-of-origin criteria have not been met.
- Where the importer fails to provide the requisite information, the officer can make further verification consistent with the trade agreement.
- In the event of a conflict between a provision of these rules and a provision of the Rules of Origin, the provision of the Rules of Origin shall prevail to the extent of the conflict.
- CAROTAR aims to check duty evasion through routing exports to India and here the importers need to furnish proof of 35% value addition in goods from the country. The importer must also provide a list of minimum information.
- This was done as India has inked FTAs with several countries, including the UAE, Mauritius, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and ASEAN members.

35. INDIA EFTA TRADE & ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

India and EFTA Countries signed the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) in March 2024. This is the first time that India is signing an FTA with four developed countries. The FTA is significant as there is a binding commitment of investing \$100 bn investments and 1 million direct jobs in next 15 years in India by EFTA Countries.

ABOUT EFTA COUNTRIES

- It is the **intergovernmental** organisation set up in 1960 (**through Stockholm Convention**) for the promotion of free trade and economic integration between its members.
- Members: **Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.**
- It **does not** envisage political integration.
- It does not issue legislation, **nor does it establish a customs union.**
- EFTA States are **not obliged by the EFTA Convention** to conclude preferential trade agreements as a group. They maintain the full right to enter into bilateral third-country arrangements.
- The **EFTA Council** is the highest governing body of EFTA, usually meets eight times a year at the ambassadorial level (heads of permanent delegations to EFTA) and twice a year at Ministerial level. Each Member State is represented and **decisions are taken by consensus.**

- The **Chairmanship rotates every six months**. For the EFTA Council, the chairmanship rotates between Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein and Switzerland.
- **Secretariat:** Geneva, Austria.
- **Note:** Among EFTA countries, Switzerland is the largest trading partner of India followed by Norway.

36. IMF INITIATIVES

EXTENDED FUND FACILITY

When a country faces serious medium-term balance of payments problems because of structural weaknesses that require time to address, the IMF can assist through an Extended Fund Facility (EFF)

An EFF provides support for comprehensive programs including the policies needed to correct structural imbalances over an extended period.

The IMF's Executive Board regularly assesses program performance and can adjust the program to adapt to economic developments.

REPAYMENT

EFF engagement and repayment cover longer periods than most Fund arrangements.

Extended arrangements are typically approved for periods of three years but may be approved for periods as long as 4 years to implement deep and sustained structural reforms. Amounts drawn under an EFF are to be repaid over 4½–10 years.

RESILIENCE & SUSTAINABILITY FACILITY (RSF)

- RSF complements the existing IMF lending toolkit by helping low-income and vulnerable middle-income countries address longer-term challenges, including those related to climate change and pandemic preparedness.
- RSF was created under Resilience & Sustainability Trust (RST) to provide policy support and affordable longer-term financing to strengthen member's resilience and sustainability and contribute to prospective balance of payments stability.
- Low-income and vulnerable middle-income countries, including small states (3/4th of IMF membership) are eligible for RSF financing.

Conditions for access to funding under RSF are:

- **High quality policy reforms:** A package of high-quality policy reforms should help the member make significant progress toward reducing critical risks to the long-term structural challenge of climate change or pandemic progress.
- **A Concurrent IMF-supported program:** The country should be already getting assistance from the IMF. However, countries getting emergency financing facilities like RFI, RCF, SMP or SLL do not qualify.
- **Sustainable debt & adequate capacity to repay.**
- **Conditionalities:** RSF has streamlined conditionality which is linked to reform progress. Each reform measure is connected to one RSF disbursement.
- **Terms of RSF Loans:** RSF arrangements have a 20-year maturity and 10.5-year grace period during which no principal is repaid. There is a tiered interest structure which differentiates financing across country groups, low-income members benefit from more concessional terms.

37. GLOBAL SOVEREIGN DEBT ROUNDTABLE (GSDR)

- It is a platform launched by the IMF, World Bank and Indian Presidency of G20.
- It aims to bring together creditors (official, old, new and private) and debtors' countries to facilitate the debt resolution process. The roundtable is expected to iron out differences in the debt resolution process under the G20 Common Framework.
- The first meeting of GSDR took place in Bengaluru on the margins of G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bankers.

38. BLACK SEA GRAIN DEAL

Black Sea Grain deal endeavours to tackle escalating food prices emanating from supply chain disruptions because of Russian actions in the world's 'breadbasket.'

The deal was brokered by the United Nations and Turkey, and was signed in Istanbul.

The deal was to provide for a safe maritime humanitarian corridor for Ukrainian exports (particularly for food grains) from three of its key ports, namely, Chornomorsk, Odesa and Yuzhny/Pivdennyi.

The deal put in place a Joint Coordination Centre (JCC), comprising senior representatives from Russia, Turkey, Ukraine and the UN for oversight and coordination.



39. CONFLICT IN SUDAN

There is an ongoing civil war in Sudan between two rival factions of the military government.

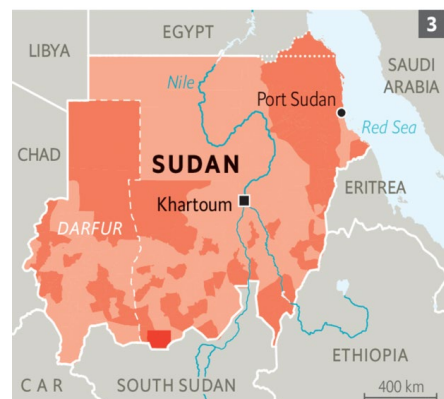
The conflict is concentrated around the Khartoum and Darfur region in the Western Sudan.

The factions are:

- Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) under Abdel Fattah al-Burhan (de-facto ruler of Sudan).
- Rapid Support Forces (RSF) under Hemedti.

The conflict has resulted in lakhs of Sudan's citizens seeking refuge in Chad and other Surrounding countries.

The Rapid Support Force faction has been undertaking multiple massacres targeting the Masalit community. Masalit are an ethnic group inhabiting western Sudan and eastern Chad. The principal border crossing between Chad and Sudan used by refugees is the Adre town in Chad.

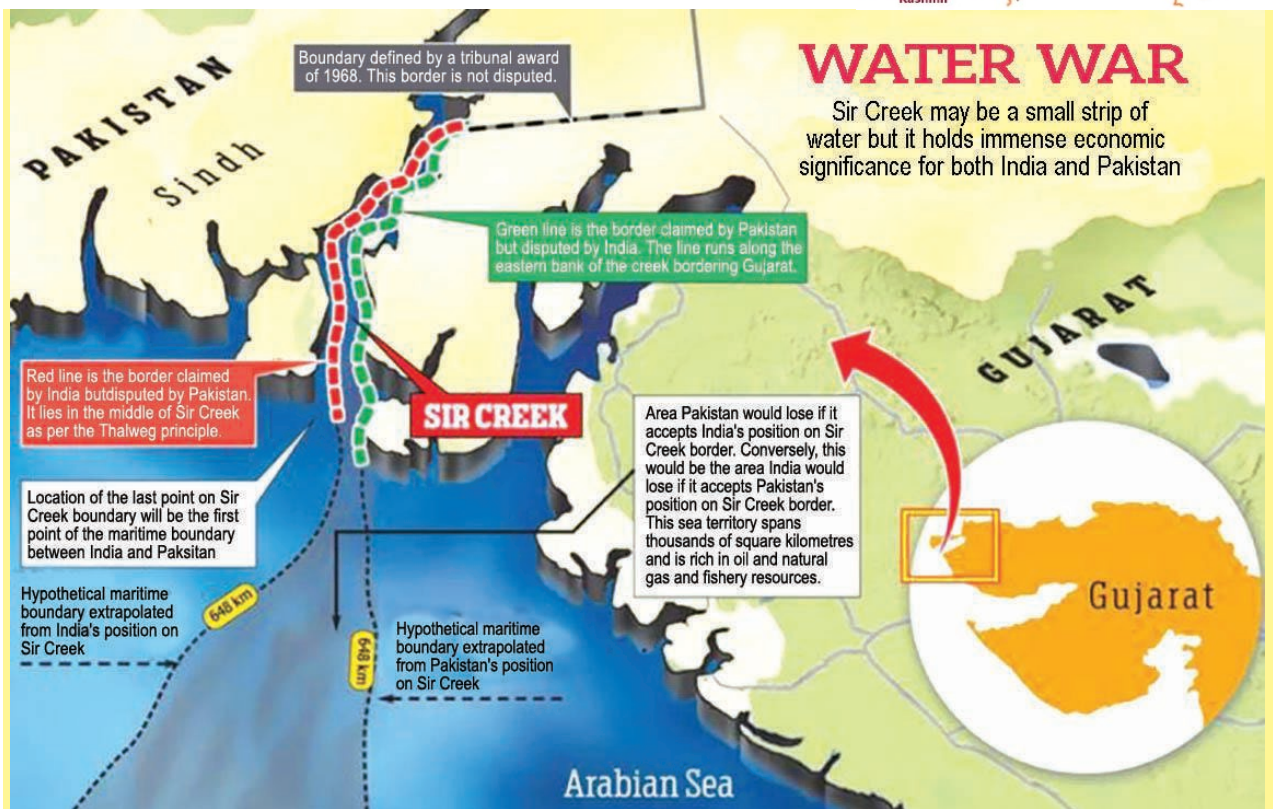


6

CHAPTER POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY

1. NEW POLITICAL MAP OF PAKISTAN

- On the eve of the first anniversary of the withdrawal of Jammu and Kashmir's special status under Article 370 and its bifurcation into Union territories, Pakistan released a new political map which depicts J&K as a disputed territory and claims the regions of Sir Creek and the erstwhile state of Junagadh in Gujarat as part of its territory.



2. PANGONG TSO

ABOUT PANGONG LAKE

- Pangong Tso is an **endorheic lake (landlocked)** that is **partly in India's Ladakh region and partly in Tibet**. The name reflects the mixed heritage of the lake: Pangong in Ladakhi means extensive concavity, the word Tso is Tibetan for lake.
- Situated at an elevation of about 4,270 m, it is a 135-km long, narrow lake — 6 km at its widest point — and shaped **like a boomerang**. Its total area is over 600 sq. km.

- Karakoram Mountain range, which crosses Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and India, with heights of over 6,000 m including K2, the world's second highest peak, **ends at the north bank of Pangong Tso**. Its southern bank too has high broken mountains sloping towards Spangur Lake in the south.
- The lake's water, while clear, is **brackish**, making it undrinkable. The lake freezes during the winter, allowing some vehicular movement on it as well.
- Galvan Valley: This river originates in the Chinese controlled Aksai Chin region belonging to India and flows into India's territory. It is a tributary of Shyok river. Shyok river is a tributary of the Indus River.



3. EAST CONTAINER TERMINAL AT COLOMBO

Sri Lanka has said that it will develop the West Container Terminal (WCT) at the Colombo Port, along with India and Japan. The decision comes a month after the Rajapaksa government rejected the two partners from a 2019 tripartite agreement to jointly develop the East Container Terminal (ECT), citing resistance to “foreign involvement”.

THE IMPORTANCE OF INDIA HAVING A TERMINAL AT COLOMBO PORT

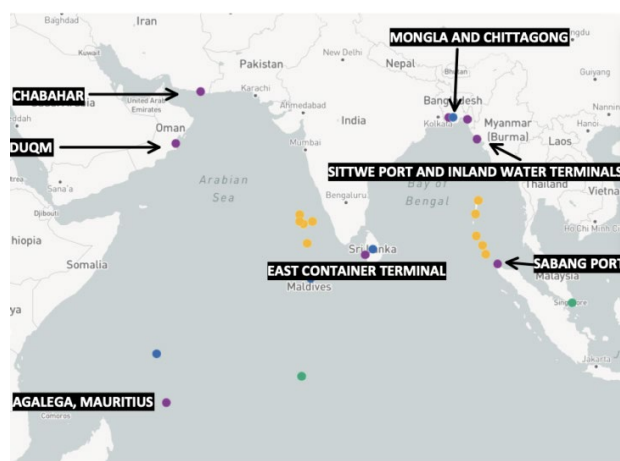
- This port was strategic for India since it was adjacent to the Chinese-run Colombo International Container Terminal (CICT).
- More than two-thirds of trans-shipment at this port is tied to India, making it an important trade and connectivity link.

COLOMBO PORT TERMINALS



INDIAN AND CHINESE PORTS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION

- Based on the theory of string of pearls in the Indian Ocean, China is investing in strategically important foreign commercial ports.
- Some of these ports include **Chittagong in Bangladesh, Gwadar in Pakistan, Hambantota in Sri Lanka, Kyaukphyu in Myanmar, Malacca in Malaysia, Mombasa in Kenya. China has also formed its only foreign military base in Djibouti, Somalia.**



- As a response India has presence in the ports shown in the picture below.

4. AYN-AL-ASAD AND ERBIL

- Iran had fired rockets at two military bases in Iraq hosting American troops amid escalating tensions between Tehran and Washington.
- The missiles hit two bases, Ayn al-Asad in Anbar province and a facility in Erbil.



5. LUSOPHONE COUNTRIES

India is moving in to strategically engage with a new geopolitical grouping: the Lusophone (Portuguese-speaking countries) as Delhi wants to leverage the untapped potential and the historical connect.

SPREAD: The Lusophone world is spread in nine countries across four continents, and Portuguese is the most widely spoken language in the Southern Hemisphere.

There is huge potential to expand and strengthen trade and economic collaboration between India and the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP) countries.

Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP) or Lusophone Commonwealth, was founded in 1996 in Lisbon, with Angola, Brazil, Cabo Verde, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal and Sao Tome and Principe as members, while Timor Leste and Equatorial Guinea joined later.

India joined CPLP as an observer in 2021.

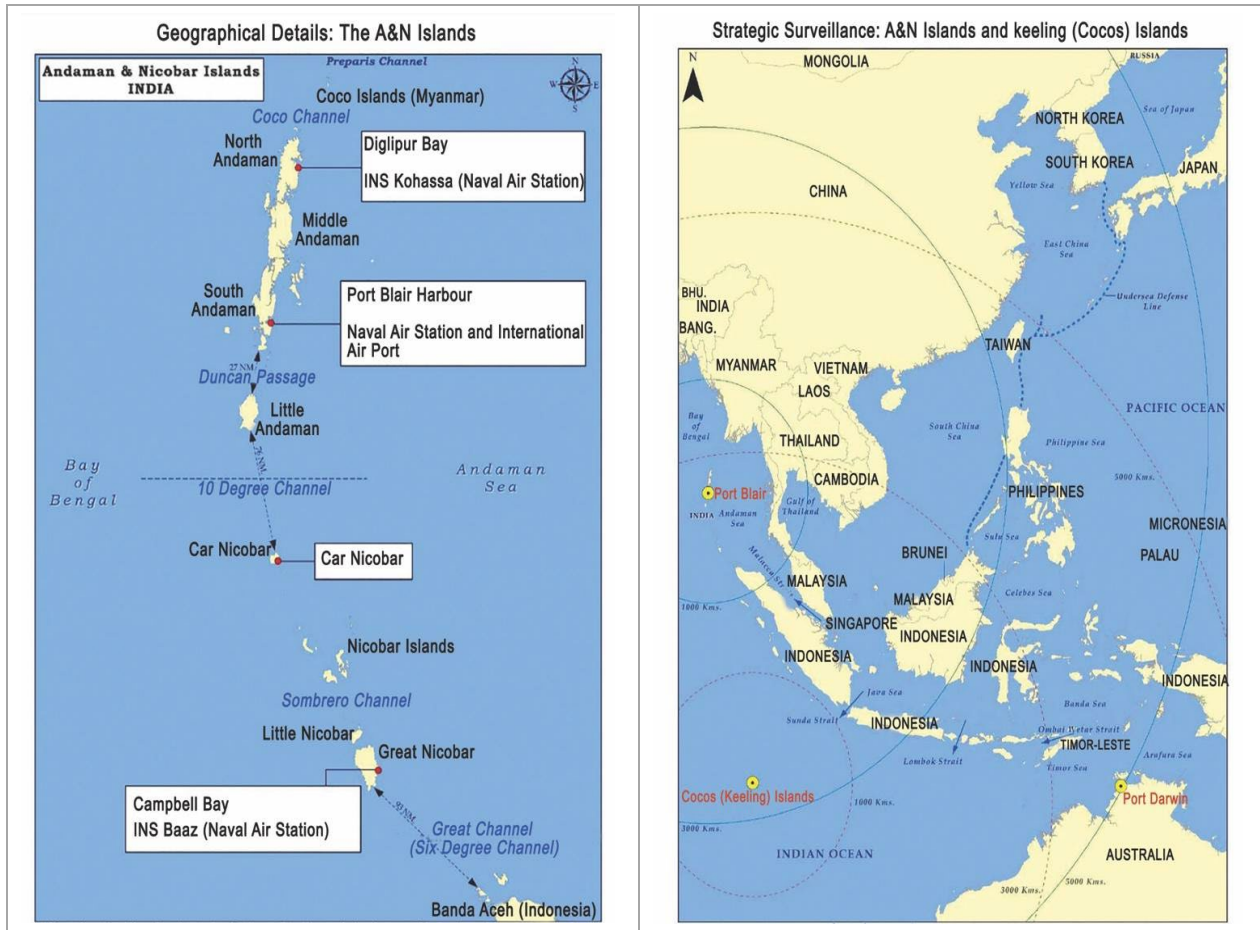
6. ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR

STRATEGIC LOCATION OF ANDAMAN & NICOBAR

- **Andaman & Nicobar Islands** are a group of 572 islands. They lie at the juncture of the **Bay of Bengal & Andaman Sea**.
- The territory is about 150 km north of **Aceh (in Sumatra) in Indonesia** and separated from Thailand and Myanmar by the Andaman Sea.
- Andaman Islands (partly) and the Nicobar Islands, separated by the 150 km wide **Ten Degree Channel** (on the 10°N parallel).
- The Andaman Sea lies to the east and the Bay of Bengal to the west.
- The islands host **Andaman and Nicobar Command, the only tri-service geographical command of the Indian Armed Forces**.
- **Preparis Channel & Six Degree Channel** are located to the north and south of the Island chain, respectively.
- All these passages are important trade routes for any shipping destined for Southeast and East Asia.
- **Six Degree & Ten Degree Channels** in the Andaman Sea which **lead to the Malacca Strait are vital to the sea lanes of communication (SLOCs)** along which flows global commerce, including energy trade, between Asia, Africa and Pacific.
- China has been operating in the **Coco islands of Myanmar** since 2009.
- India's concerns about Chinese activity in the eastern Indian Ocean are exacerbated by its belief that China will eventually build a canal across the **Isthmus of Kra in Thailand**, giving Chinese vessels a relatively direct route into the Indian Ocean.



China has developed new bases, including at Gwadar, Djibouti and Hambantota.



7. GLOBAL STRATEGIC CHOKE POINTS

They have come into limelight because of the blockage of the Suez Canal by a container vessel.

1. SUEZ CANAL



2. BAB EL MANDEB

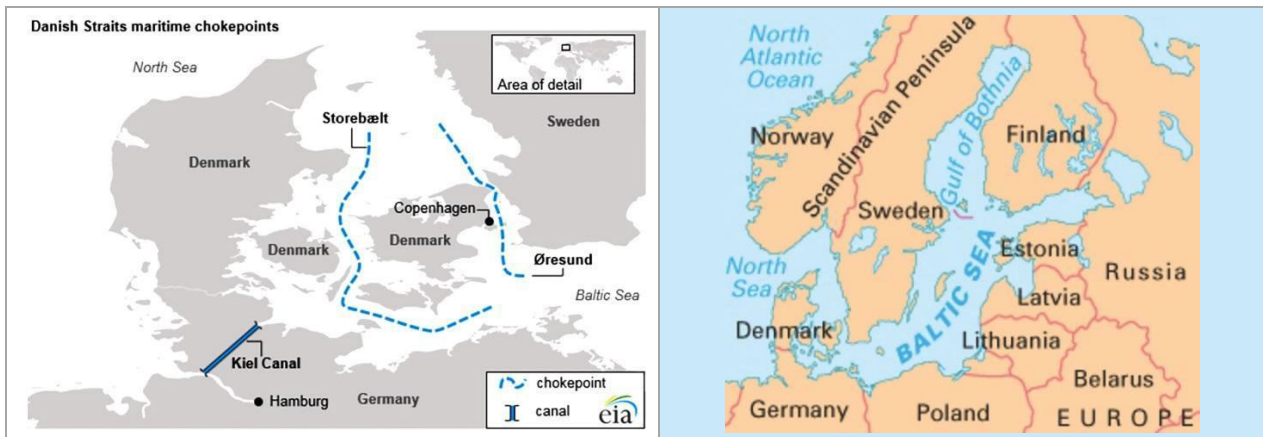




3. STRAIT OF HORMUZ


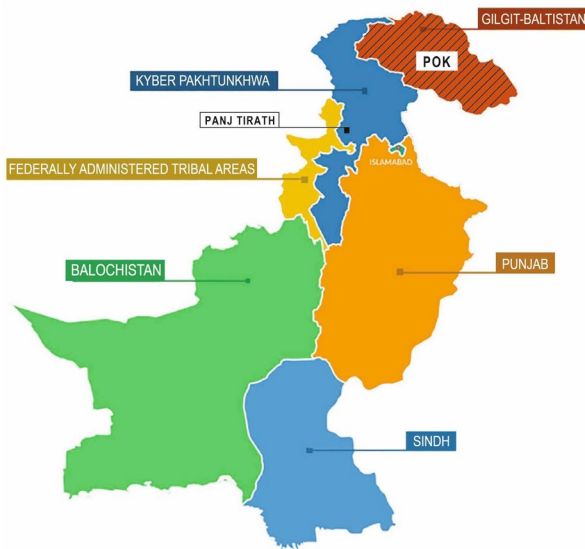



4. MALACCA STRAIT





5. PANAMA CANAL**6. STRAIT OF BOSPORUS (TURKISH STRAIT)****7. DANISH STRAITS**

PLACES IN NEWS	REGIONS RELATED FACTS	MAP
<p>▣EAST KALIMANTAN PROVINCE</p> <p><i>Indonesia set up its new capital from the megacity of Jakarta to the East Kalimantan province of Borneo Island.</i></p> <p>It stated it to be a strategic location at the centre of Indonesia, close to a growing urban area.</p>	<p>Borneo Island, Indonesia</p> <p>Note: Borneo is the third-largest island in the world and the largest in Asia.</p> <p>It is not equally among three countries: Malaysia and Brunei in the north, and Indonesia to the south</p>	
<p>▣DAMS ON BRAHMAPUTRA</p> <p>China also intends to undertake gigantic water diversion projects which include building a dam on the Great Bend of Yarlung, where the river curves into the Assamese plains of India.</p> <p>China has completed the Zangmu Dam and three more dams at Dagu, Jiacha and Jeixu are currently under construction.</p>	<p>China, India and Bangladesh</p> <p>Yarlung Tsangpo enters India after passing the Great Bend, through Arunachal Pradesh as Siang/Dihang, then onto Assam as Brahmaputra, and finally to Bangladesh as Jamuna.</p>	
<p>▣CHATTOGRAM AND MONGLA PORTS</p> <p><i>India and Bangladesh have signed pact to use Chattogram and Mongla ports to serve the needs of north-east states</i></p>	<p>India and Bangladesh</p> <p>India shares the longest border with Bangladesh.</p> <p>Bordering States: West Bengal, Tripura, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Assam.</p>	

PLACES IN NEWS	REGIONS RELATED FACTS	MAP
<p>■KALAPANI AREA</p> <p><i>A new political map released by the Govt. of India caused uproar in Nepal.</i></p> <p>A tri-junction point, where the Indian, Nepalese and Tibetan (Chinese) borders meet.</p> <p>The region has been manned by the Indo-Tibetan Border Police since 1962.</p>	<p>India and Nepal</p> <p>River Mahakali or River Kali, also known as Sharda River flows through the area.</p> <p>Note:</p> <p>Nepal bordering states are Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh (largest area), Sikkim, West Bengal and Bihar.</p>	
<p>■KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA</p> <p><i>Pakistan has declared Panj Tirath, the Hindu religious site in Peshawar as national heritage.</i></p> <p>■BALUCH LIBERATION ARMY</p> <p><i>The U.S. designated the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) as a terror organisation, which targets security forces and civilians, in ethnic Baloch areas of Pakistan.</i></p>	<p>India and Pakistan</p> <p>Baluchistan:</p> <p>bordered by Iran, Afghanistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab province, Sindh province and the Arabian Sea.</p>	
<p>■MANGDECHHU HYDROELECTRIC POWER PLANT, BHUTAN</p> <p><i>Recently inaugurated by Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi.</i></p> <p>It is one of the major projects under Bhutan's initiative to generate 10,000 MW hydropower by 2020 with the support of the Government of India (GOI).</p>	<p>India and Bhutan</p>	

PLACES IN NEWS	REGIONS RELATED FACTS	MAP
<p>❑KARTARPUR CORRIDOR</p> <p><i>Connects Dera Baba Nanak village in Gurdaspur, India to Gurudwara Darbar Singh Kartarpur, Pakistan.</i></p> <p>Gurudwara is located on the bank of river Ravi in Pakistan.</p> <p>The place where Guru Nanak ji ascended to God.</p> <p>Guru ka Langer tradition started in Kartarpur.</p>	<p>India and Pakistan</p> <p>(Kartarpur lies in Punjab Province of Pakistan)</p>	
<p>❑KHASH – ZAHEDAN</p> <p><i>Several individuals of the Revolutionary Guards were killed in a terrorist attack in the Khash-Zahedan sector of Sistan-Baluchistan province located near the Iran – Pakistan border.</i></p> <p>Zahedan hosts the Chabahar – Zahedan railway line being built by India.</p>	<p>Afghanistan</p> <p>India is finalising a plan to construct a 900-km Chabahar-Zahedan-Hajigak railway line that will connect Port of Chabahar in Iran, being built with Indian help, to the mineral-rich Hajigak region of Afghanistan.</p>	
<p>❑UIGHUR MUSLIMS</p> <p><i>Around a million Uighurs Muslims have been bundled into 'de-radicalisation camps' in China where they are detained and subjected to ideological reorientation.</i></p> <p>Ethnically Turkic in origin and follow the Sunni sect of Islam.</p> <p>Have closer affinities to Central Asian ethnic groups thereby differentiating them from the majority Han ethnic group of China.</p>	<p>Xinjiang, China</p> <p>Xinjiang is the largest and most western of China's administrative regions, surrounded by Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India.</p>	

PLACES IN NEWS	REGIONS RELATED FACTS	MAP
<p>■ MUSTANG REGION</p> <p><i>The Upper Mustang region in Nepal (bordering China) may have large deposits of uranium.</i></p>	Nepal	
<p>■ BHASAN CHAR ISLAND</p> <p>Silt island in Bangladesh built to accommodate Rohingya Muslims who have fled waves of violent persecution.</p>	Bangladesh	
<p>■ FENI RIVER</p> <p><i>Union Cabinet has given its ex-post facto approval for a MoU between India and Bangladesh on the withdrawal of 1.82 cusecs of water from the Feni River by India for a drinking water supply scheme for Tripura.</i></p> <p>Feni River forms part of the India-Bangladesh border.</p>	India & Bangladesh	

PLACES IN NEWS	REGIONS RELATED FACTS	MAP
<p>❑ KUSHIYARA RIVER</p> <p>India and Bangladesh have entered into an agreement to address the issue of changing the course of the Kushiya River.</p> <p>Over the last century, the flow of Barak River has changed in such a way that the bulk of the river's water flows into Kushiya River while the rest goes into Surma.</p> <p>The additional water of Kushiya through the Rahimpur Canal therefore is the only way to ensure steady supply of water for irrigation of agriculture fields and orchards of the subdivisions of Sylhet.</p>	<p>India & Bangladesh</p>	
<p>❑ SIACHEN GLACIER</p> <p><i>The world's highest battlefield, Siachen Glacier, is now open for tourists.</i></p> <p>The glacier is at the height of around 20,000 feet in Karakoram range.</p> <p>It is known as the highest militarised zone in the world. It has been a bone of contention between India and Pakistan. The Indian Army gained strategic control of the glacier in 1984 following 'Operation Meghdoot'.</p> <p>Prior to 1984 neither India nor Pakistan had any permanent presence in the area.</p>	<p>J&K (India)</p>	

8. WEST ASIA/MIDDLE EAST

GOLAN HEIGHTS, WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP

US drops the term Israeli-occupied from references to the Golan Heights, West Bank and Gaza

U.S. Says Israeli Settlements in West Bank Do Not Violate International Law.

The US has asserted to fully recognise Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights.

Note: The Golan - like the West Bank and Gaza Strip, territories also taken by Israel in the June 1967 conflict - is regarded internationally as occupied under a U.N. Security Council resolution passed later that year.

IMPORTANT CITIES IN GAZA:

1. **KHAN YOUNIS** (Second largest City)

2. **GAZA CITY** (Largest City and Capital of Gaza).

Note: Gaza region has no port. The aid that has to enter this region is thus routed through either Israel or Egypt. This is despite Gaza being located on the Mediterranean Sea, as Israel has denied the region to build its own port.

Important Ports of Israel are:

HAIFA PORT &

ASHDOD PORT (Closest to Gaza).

Israel - Palestine

Gaza Strip is a self-governing Palestinian territory on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, which borders Egypt on the southwest for 11 kms and Israel on the east and north.

Golan Heights is a fertile plateau which lies to the north and east of the Sea of Galilee.

West Bank is a landlocked territory near the Mediterranean coast of Western Asia, bordered by Jordan to the east and Israel on the south, west and north.

Rafah border crossing

It is a crossing between Gaza Strip and Egypt.

Sole route for aid to enter Gaza directly outside Israel.

It is the only exit that does not lead to Israeli territory.

The crossing is at the south of the Gaza Strip and wedged between Israel, Egypt and the Mediterranean Sea.



RAQQA, DEIR EZZOR AND BAGHOUZ

Syrian Democratic Forces, a Kurdish led rebel group assisted by the United States, have reduced ISIS to Baghouz, an Eastern Syrian village. This follows the removal of ISIS controlled areas of Raqqa and Deir Ezzor.

Syria



MANBIJ

Turkey and the United States intend to create a safe zone between the Kurdish controlled Syrian border with Turkey.

The Kurds are the Indigenous groups in the Middle East and the region's fourth-largest ethnic group. They are Sunni Muslims.

IDLIB

Idlib is the last province that is rebel-held and stands in the way of ending the nine-year-long Syrian civil war.

Syria



ERBIL

The capital of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq.

It is among the largest cities of Iraq.

Iraq





HODEIDAH, SALIF & RAS-ISSA

Port cities in Yemen.

Yemen



<p>STRAIT OF HORMUZ</p> <p>The tensions between Iran and the U.S. have raised concerns over the maritime security of Strait of Hormuz.</p> <p>The Strait of Hormuz channel links the Persian Gulf (west) with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea (southeast).</p> <p>It separates Iran (north) from the Arabian Peninsula. It contains the islands of Qeshm, Hormuz, and Hengam.</p>	<p>A narrow waterway in the Middle East</p>	
<p>DUQM PORT</p> <p>India has secured access to the key strategic Port of Duqm in Oman in Arabian sea for military use and logistical support.</p> <p>The Port of Duqm is situated on the south-eastern seaboard of Oman, overlooking the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean.</p> <p>It is strategically located, near the Chabahar port in Iran.</p>	<p>Oman</p>	
<p>IRAS TANURA PORT</p>	<p>Saudi Arabia</p>	<p>This place was attacked by Iran backed Houthi rebels from Yemen.</p>
<p>DATBARA</p>	<p>Sudan</p>	<p>Location of civil unrest</p>
<p>ARAK, NATANZ AND FORDOW</p>	<p>Iran</p>	<p>Nuclear facility in Iran. In the news because of JCPOA.</p>
<p>AL-AQSA MOSQUE</p>	<p>Located in Old city of Jerusalem, Israel</p>	<p>Considered to be the third holiest site in Islam after Mecca and Medina. It is in proximity to the Second Temple, the holiest site of Judaism. Hence, a flash point of Israeli-Palestine conflict. The site has been in news due to Abraham Accords which plan to open the Mosque to all faiths and not just for Muslims.</p>

9. INDIAN OCEAN REGION

■ GREAT CHANNEL

Separates Great Nicobar Island of India and Aceh Province of Indonesia.

Located at six degrees north of equator and is popularly referred to as the 'Six Degree Channel.'

Also Located at the western edge of the Malacca Strait.

Indian Ocean Region



■ CHAGOS ISLANDS (DIEGO GARCIA)

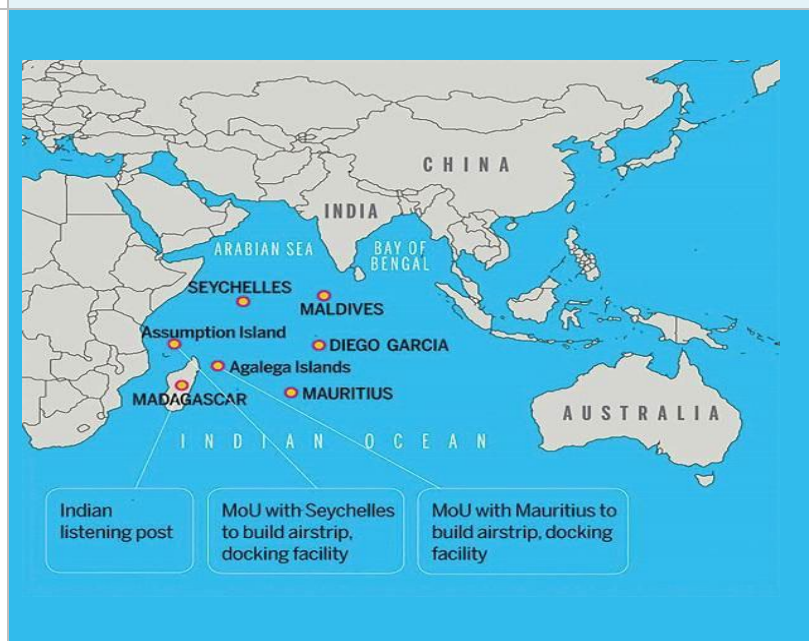
ICJ rules Britain to return Diego Garcia to Mauritius.

Prior to independence, Mauritius had agreed in 1965 agreement with the UK for separation of the Chagos archipelago.

Thereafter, the UK had leased Diego Garcia to the US and the US had formed its Indian Ocean military base.

Mauritius

Indian Ocean

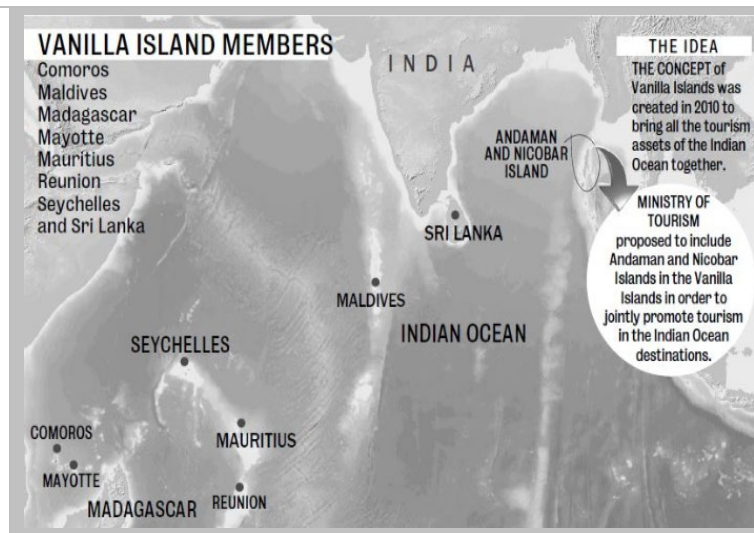


IVANILLA ISLANDS

Affiliation of the island nations Seychelles, Madagascar, Reunion, Mauritius, Comoros, Mayotte in the Indian Ocean to promote tourism.

Defined under the aegis of the Indian Ocean Commission.

Southwestern Indian Ocean.

**10. PACIFIC OCEAN REGION****ISOLOMON ISLANDS & KIRIBATI ISLANDS**

Solomon and Kiribati Island nations have ended diplomatic relations with Taiwan in favour of China.

Pacific Ocean Island nations

**IBOUGAINVILLE**

The voters of the autonomous region of Bougainville have voted in favour of becoming a separate nation, enabling the troubled islands to become the world's newest nation.

Buka is the main town of Bougainville.

Papua New Guinea

South-western Pacific Ocean



❑ KURILE ISLANDS

Russia & Japan have undertaken several Confidence Building Measures to resolve the Kurile Island dispute.

All of them are under Russian jurisdiction but Japan claims four islands: Etorofu, Kunashiri, Shikotan and Habomai as its Northern territories.

Pacific Ocean

A volcanic archipelago of some 56 islands from Japan's Hokkaido to Russia's Kamchatka in the Sea of Okhotsk in East Asia.



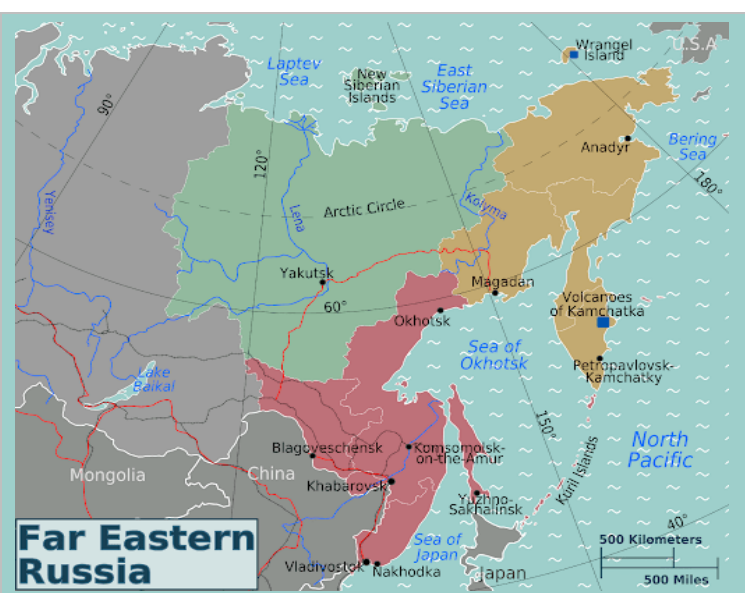
11. EURASIA

❑ VLADIVOSTOK, Russia

India participated in the Eastern Economic Forum (EEF) which is meant to support economic development of Russia's Far East and to expand international cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.

India and Russia

Note: Russian Far East is a region in North Asia which includes the Russian part of the Far East, the easternmost territory of Russia, between Lake Baikal in Eastern Siberia and the Pacific Ocean.



❑ LITHUANIA, LATVIA & ESTONIA

The Vice President of India embarked on a 1st ever high-level visit (from India) to 3 Baltic countries.

Baltic countries

(North-eastern region of Europe on the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea).



12. EAST ASIAN SEA

SENKAKU/ DIAOYU ISLANDS DISPUTE

China and Taiwan have claimed the Senkaku islands as part of Chinese territory since the 16th century. However, the Japanese claim that when the island was surveyed by them in the 1800's, it was uninhabited and showed no signs of Chinese occupation.

One China Policy: This refers to treating Taiwan as part of China. India recognises Taiwan as part of China and does not have formal diplomatic relations with it.

East Asia Sea

Senkaku islands contain fishing areas and possible natural resources like oil, gas, and mineral deposits.

It would give the country strategic control in the East Asia sea.



13. TAIWAN ISSUE

The United States has backed the participation of Taiwan at the United Nations. However, this move of the US has been condemned by China as it considers Taiwan as its province and its inalienable part.

- It is part of a string of islands off the coast of East and Southeast Asia extending from Japan south through the Philippines to Indonesia.
- Taiwan is bounded to the north and northeast by the **East China Sea**, with the Ryukyu Islands (the southernmost part of Japan) to the northeast.
- To the east there lies the great expanse of the Pacific Ocean and to the south is the **Bashi Channel**, which separates Taiwan from the Philippines.
- To the west is the **Taiwan (Formosa) Strait**, which separates Taiwan from the Chinese mainland.



14. GLOBAL CRISIS RESPONSE GROUP ON FOOD, ENERGY & FINANCE

- This body has been constituted by the Secretary General of United Nations, Antonio Guterres in the UN Secretariat.
- This body will assist by the Steering Committee of Global Crisis Response Group
- Deputy Secretary General of UN, Amina Mohammed will lead the Steering Committee of GCRG.

15. GREEN STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

India and Denmark agreed on a five-year action plan to take forward their unique “green strategic partnership” and signed four agreements aimed at boosting cooperation in green technologies and management of natural resources such as groundwater.

16. BATKEN REGION & FERGHANA VALLEY



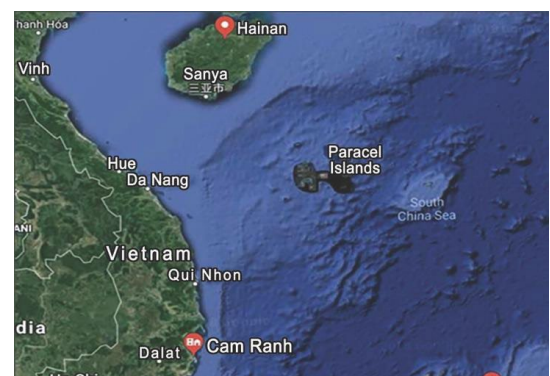
17. MARIB

It is a town in Yemen, where a recent skirmish between the Houthi rebels and Yemen Government backed by Saudi Government led to loss of life of many fighters. Houthis are backed by Iran and are Shia.



18. CAM RANH BAY BASE

It is a naval and air force base in Vietnam. Under a security agreement with Vietnam, India has been given access to this base by Vietnam. Thus, this base gives a foothold to India in the strategic South China Sea.



19. KUNDUZ

At least 100 people have been killed and wounded after a suicide bomb attack tore through in Afghanistan's north-eastern Kunduz province.

20. UKRAINE

Russia has registered a big victory, capturing the town of Avdiivka.

AVDIIVKA

- It is a city in **Donetsk Oblast, Ukraine**.
- The city is located in the centre of the oblast, just north of the regional centre, Donetsk.
- The battle of Avdiivka was a major battle between the Russian Armed Forces and Russian-controlled Donbas militias on one side and the Ukrainian Armed Forces on the other.
- It is described as a "gateway" to the nearby provincial capital of Donetsk.



- Russian attacks on Ukraine and the related locations

CITIES IN NEWS WHICH HAVE COME UNDER RUSSIAN ATTACK





Kakhovka dam collapsed in Ukraine. It was located on the Dnieper River. The dam was destroyed while it was under Russian control.



21. NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES OF UKRAINE



22. BLACK SEA SURROUNDING COUNTRIES



23. RIVERS DRAINING INTO BLACK SEA

DANUBE, DNIESTER, DNIEPER, DON.

KYIV THE CAPITAL OF UKRAINE IS LOCATED ON DNIEPER



24. RIVERS OF EUROPE



25. NORD STREAM 2 PIPELINE

Germany halts Nord Stream 2

Berlin halted certification of an \$11.6bn Russian gas pipeline project while Western states prepare to sanction Moscow over Ukraine. The 1,230km pipeline is designed to move 151 million cubic metres of gas a day.



Germany has halted certification of the Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline in response to the Russian Move in Ukraine

26. BALTIC SEA BORDERING COUNTRIES

Ukraine's drone attack strikes Russian Novatek Fuel Terminal, on the Baltic Sea, aimed at infrastructure connected with Moscow's war machine.



- **ABOUT BALTIC SEA:** The Baltic Sea is an **arm of the Atlantic Ocean** that is enclosed by **Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, Sweden**, and the North and Central European Plain.
- It **separates the Scandinavian Peninsula from the rest of continental Europe**.
- It is a **shelf sea and marginal sea** of the Atlantic with limited water exchange between the two, making it an inland sea.

- The Baltic Sea drains through the **Danish Straits into the Kattegat** by way of the Øresund, Great Belt and Little Belt.
- It includes the Gulf of Bothnia (divided into the Bothnian Bay and the Bothnian Sea), the Gulf of Finland, the Gulf of Riga and the Bay of Gdańsk.
- The Baltic Sea is connected by artificial waterways to the White Sea via the White Sea–Baltic Canal and to the German Bight of the North Sea via the Kiel Canal.

27. MINSK ACCORDS

The Minsk 1 and II accords, reached in 2014 and 2015, had brought a ceasefire between the Russian-backed rebels in Ukraine's Donbas region, and put forward a formula for resolving the conflict.

- However, the terms of these processes were never implemented on ground.
- This process has ended because of Russia's recognition.

28. AGALEGA & ASSUMPTION ISLANDS

Context: The PM of India along with the PM of Mauritius jointly inaugurated a new airstrip and St. James Jetty at the Agalega Islands in Mauritius.

Mauritian government affirmed that the construction work awarded in 2015 is still ongoing but **denied any plans to allow a military installation on the Agalega island.**



29. MASIRAH – OMAN

An Israeli Oil Tanker Ship was attacked near Masirah located in Oman. US and Israel have blamed Iran for the attack. This attack and the following allegations will further add fuel to the fire in the ongoing Middle East rivalries.



30. NANGARHAR – AFGHANISTAN

America conducted drone strikes against ISIS - K in response to the Explosions at Kabul Airport - claimed by ISIS - which killed more than 100 people which included 13 American soldiers.

CHINA'S FIRST RAIL-ROAD LINK TO INDIAN OCEAN

The first shipments on a newly launched railway line from Myanmar border to the key commercial hub of Chengdu in western China, that provides China a new road-rail transportation channel to the Indian Ocean, were delivered recently.



31. NINE DASH LINE

Chinese authorities have said that they will require a range of vessels “to report their information” when passing through what China sees as its “territorial waters” in the South China Sea.

The “nine dash line” is deemed by most countries as being inconsistent with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which only gives states the right to establish a territorial sea up to 12 nautical miles.

The requirements of the latest notice will also be seen as being inconsistent with UNCLOS, which states that ships of all countries “enjoy the right of innocent passage through the territorial sea”.



US\$ 5 trillion global trade passes through its sea lanes and over 55% of India's trade passes through South China Sea and Malacca Straits.

32. INNOCENT PASSAGE

- Innocent passage is a concept in the law of the sea that allows for a vessel to pass through the archipelagic and territorial waters of another state, subject to certain restrictions.
- The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea Article 19 defines innocent passage as
- Passage is innocent so long as it is not prejudicial to the peace, good order or security of the coastal State. Such passage shall take place in conformity with this Convention and with other rules of international law.

33. GREEN STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

India and Denmark agreed on a five-year action plan to take forward their unique “green strategic partnership” and signed four agreements aimed at boosting cooperation in green technologies and management of natural resources such as groundwater.

34. TRINCOMALEE

Sri Lankan cabinet has given approval to jointly develop with India 61 tanks out of the 99 tanks in the Trincomalee oil tank farm.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

- It is a natural harbour.
- Location is strategically important for India.
- India has talked about developing Trincomalee as a regional petroleum Hub.
- The presence of the Indian Oil subsidiary has seen opposition in Sri Lanka.
- The opposition is led by the Sinhala nationalists.





35. KAZAKHSTAN

Important locations, borders and neighbouring countries.



36. PANGONG TSO LAKE

A bridge being built by China across the Pangong lake in an area claimed by India is expected to be completed in a few months and will give the People's Liberation Army (PLA) an edge in speedily moving troops between several locations.



7

CHAPTER LOCATIONS IN NEWS

→ AFRICA

1. HORN OF AFRICA

As the Horn of Africa enters its sixth consecutive rainy season with no rain, displacement continues to climb as millions from Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya struggle to survive amid scarce water sources, hunger, insecurity and conflict.

ABOUT HORN OF AFRICA

- It is a region in East Africa bordering the Gulf of Aden and Red Sea. Also known as the Somali Peninsula.
- Countries part of Horn of Africa: Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia & Somalia.



2. SOMALIA

- **Puntland:** An arid region in North-East Somalia which declared itself an autonomous province to avoid the clan warfare engulfing southern Somalia. The region was relatively stable. However, the region grabbed international headlines with an upsurge in pirate attacks on international shipping lines in the Indian Ocean. Unlike its neighbouring region of Somaliland, Puntland does not want to establish a separate sovereign state but wants to remain a federal autonomous province under Somalia.
- **Somaliland:** It is a breakaway, semi-arid territory on the coast of Gulf of Aden. It declared independence after the overthrow from the presidency of Somalia of military dictator Siad Barre in 1991. Lanscanood (Also known as Las Anod) is a city in the Somaliland area where there has been a conflict going on.



3. OKAVANGO RIVER BASIN

Prospecting for oil in the Okavango River Basin poses a significant threat to the water security of Namibia and Botswana.



4. MALAWI

- Malawi is a landlocked country in south-eastern Africa.
- Located in the Eastern African Rift Valley.
- Bordering countries: Zambia, Tanzania and Mozambique.
- Lake Nyasa, known in Malawi as Lake Malawi, accounts for more than one-fifth of the country's total area.
- It became the first country in Southern Africa to eliminate Trachoma (a disease of the eye caused by infection with bacterium *Chlamydia trachomatis*).



5. LOCATIONS IN SOUTH SUDAN

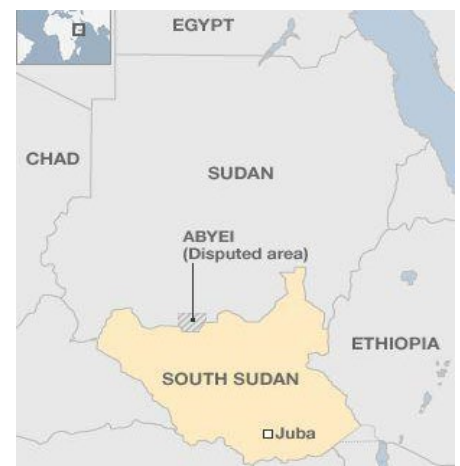
South Sudan separated from Sudan and established itself as a sovereign state in 2011 with its capital at Juba. South Sudan incorporated 10 southern states of Sudan. It is one of the most diverse countries of Africa being home to more than 60 ethnic groups.

CIVIL WAR IN SOUTH SUDAN

A Civil War in South Sudan in 2013 due to conflict between two factions led by incumbent President Salva Kiir and Vice President Riek Machar.

A ceasefire and power sharing agreement were signed between two camps led by Salva Kiir and rebel leader Machar to bring peace to South Sudan in 2018.

Abyei: A disputed territory between Sudan and South Sudan. Abyei Box is an oil rich region over which both Sudan & South Sudan want to establish control.



6. DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC)

UN Security Council strongly condemned the resumption of attacks by the 23 March Movement, also known as M23, in North Kivu (a province in Eastern DRC, bordering Rwanda & Uganda).

M23 Rebellion: M23 is a rebel group and name of arms rebel group active in the Eastern region of DRC. The Northern Kivu region occupied by M23 rebels in DRC lies along the borders of Rwanda, Uganda.

Goma is the capital of North Kivu province of DRC.

The EU has announced creation of **Humanitarian Air Bridge** flight operations to help reinforce humanitarian or emergency responses in countries facing fragile contexts. These flights help fill critical gaps by facilitating the delivery of humanitarian aid, emergency assistance and transport of humanitarian staff when required. The EU has announced a Humanitarian Air Bridge for Eastern DRC.



7. BURKINA FASO

Burkina Faso has been facing jihadist insurgency.

ABOUT BURKINA FASO

- A landlocked country in Western Africa. It was previously known as the Republic of Upper Volta.
- Neighbouring countries: Mali, Niger, Benin, Togo and Ghana and Ivory Coast.
- It has three principal rivers -- RED volta, White Volta and Black Volta
- The country has been affected by affiliate groups of Islamic State known as Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb



8. GAMBIA

India launched an investigation on the death of children on the consumption of cough syrup.

country in western Africa situated on the Atlantic coast and surrounded by the neighbouring country of Senegal. It occupies a long narrow strip of land that surrounds the Gambia river.

The Gambia is Africa's smallest non island country. It is also one of Africa's most densely populated countries.



9. TUNISIA

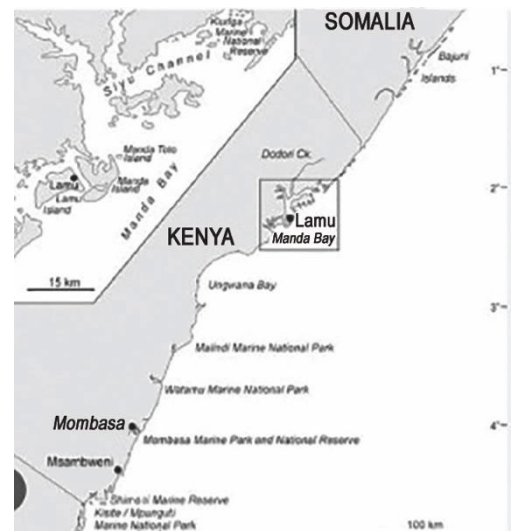
Political protest against the President again erupted in country of North Africa. Tunisia's accessible Mediterranean Sea coastline

Tunisia is bounded by Algeria to the west and southwest, by Libya to the southeast, and by the Mediterranean to the east and north.



10. LAMU ARCHIPELAGO (KENYA)

- India has handed over to Kenya 100 nautical charts covering the general coastal area around the
- Lamu Archipelago (near Kenya's northern coast), following a joint survey of the area by Navies of two countries.



11. MASS ABDUCTIONS IN KADUNA STATE OF NIGERIA

- On March 7, 2024 more than 300 students were abducted by armed bandits in Kaduna's Chikun district. Of these 137 school children who were kidnapped by armed gunmen in Nigeria have been released,
- Terrorist group Boko Haram is operational in Nigeria and its nearby countries.



12. CHAD

The military government and rebel groups signed a pledge.

Chad, landlocked country in north-central Africa. The terrain is that of a shallow basin that rises gradually from the Lake Chad area in the west and is rimmed by mountains to the north, east, and south.

Chad is bounded on the north by Libya, on the east by Sudan on the south by the Central African republic and on the west by Cameroon, Nigeria, and Niger

The lowest altitude of the basin is the Djourab Depression which is 573 feet (175 metres) above sea level.

LAKE CHAD

Niger has officially confirmed its desire to accede to the Water Convention. The accession of Niger is decisive for the West African region as it will bring Lake Chad fully under the Convention's legal framework.



ABOUT LAKE CHAD

- It is a large, shallow, freshwater lake in Central Africa which has shrunk by 90%.
- Countries sharing boundaries with Lake Chad: Nigeria, Niger, Chad & Cameroon.
- Rivers falling in Lake Chad:
 - Chari River, which flows from the Central African Republic through Chad into Lake Chad, provides 90% of water flowing into Lake Chad.
 - The Yobe River flows from Niger and Nigeria into Lake Chad.



WATER CONVENTION

- CONVENTION ON PROTECTION & USE OF TRANSBOUNDARY WATERCOURSES & INTERNATIONAL LAKES is known as Water Convention.
- It is a unique legally binding agreement promoting sustainable management of shared water resources, prevention of conflicts and promotion of peace and regional integration.
- It requires Parties to prevent, control and reduce transboundary impact, use transboundary waters in a reasonable and equitable way.
- Parties bordering the same transboundary waters must cooperate by entering into specific agreements and establishing joint bodies.
- As a framework agreement, the Convention does not replace bilateral & multilateral agreements for specific basins or aquifers, instead, it fosters their establishment & implementation and further development.
- Originally negotiated as a regional framework for the pan-European region. However, following an amendment in 2016, all UN Member States can accede to it.

13. TANZANIA

India and Tanzania have plans to form a roadmap for a five-year future road map to enhance the defence cooperation between the two countries.

Tanzania, East African country situated just south of the Equator. Tanzania was formed as a sovereign state in 1964 through the union of the theretofore separate states of Tanganyika and Zanzibar. Dar-es-Salaam is the largest city and port in the country.

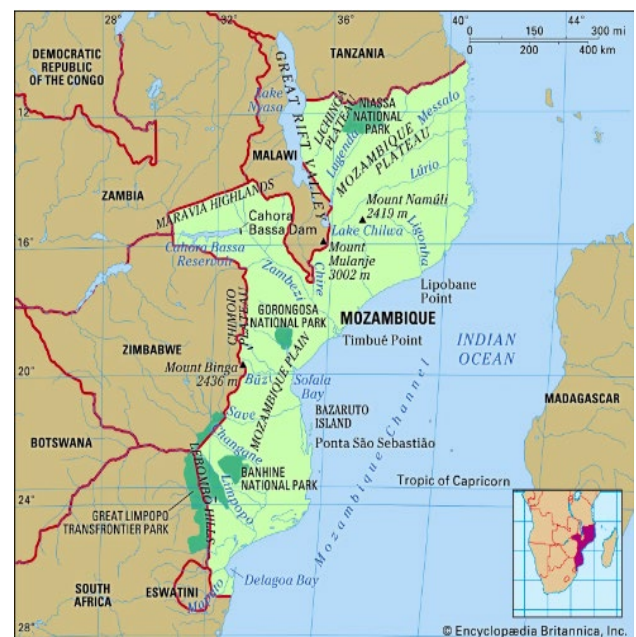
The Tanzania mainland is bounded by Uganda, Lake Victoria, and Kenya to the north, by the Indian Ocean to the east, by **MOZAMBIQUE**, Lake Nyasa, Malawi and Zambia to the south and southwest, and by **Lake Tanganyika**, Burundi and Rwanda to the west.



14. MOZAMBIQUE

The first edition of India-Mozambique-Tanzania Trilateral Exercise (IMT TRILAT), a joint maritime exercise among the Indian, Mozambique and Tanzanian navies commenced at Dar Es Salaam.

Mozambique, a Country in south-eastern Africa. Most of its territory stretches along the Indian Ocean coast from **Cape (Cabo) Delgado** in the north past the capital city of Maputo in the south. It is bordered to the north by Tanzania to the east by the Mozambique Channel, which separates it from the island of Madagascar to the south and southwest by South Africa and Swaziland to the west by Zimbabwe and to the northwest by Zambia, Malawi and Lake Nyasa.



15. GULF OF GUINEA

India and EU ships conducted joint activities in the Gulf of Guinea, in an effort to reinforce naval maritime security cooperation in support of the region.

YAOUNDE CODE OF CONDUCT

establishes the Maritime Security Architecture framework in West Africa and the Gulf of Guinea. With four different levels of authority, its architecture reflects the areas of responsibility and the location of the relevant entities and structures contributing to maritime security, all situated at the regional level in Western and Central Africa.



→ ASIA AND MIDDLE EAST

16. SABANG PORT

India and Indonesia have completed a joint feasibility study on developing the strategically valuable Sabang port, which is located in the province of Aceh, Indonesia.



ACEH PROVINCE

Authorities in Indonesia's ultra-conservative Aceh province have ordered men and women not immediately related or married to stay apart in vehicles and public places.



17. BOHAI SEA

- The innermost bay of North-western sea is called Bohai Sea.
- Yellow, Hai and Liao are some of the important rivers of China flowing into it.



18. LEBANON

Israel and Lebanon signed a maritime boundary settlement agreement brokered by the USA. This agreement lays down maritime boundaries for the first time, which opens up the possibility for both countries to conduct offshore energy exploration.

ISRAEL-LEBANON CONFLICT

- Israel and Lebanon have no diplomatic relations and have formally been at war since Israel's creation in 1948.
- Hezbollah is an Iran backed armed group in Lebanon which has conducted a series of attacks against Israel.
- Under the Agreement, Israel will get rights over the Karish gas field and Lebanon over the Qana gas field in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea.
- **Lebanon** is located on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. The capital is Beirut. Lebanon is bounded to the north and east by Syria, to the south by Israel, and to the west by the Mediterranean Sea.

19. PORTS IN ISRAEL (HAIFA, BILAT & ASHDOD)

The Adani Group acquired the strategic Israeli port of Haifa for \$1.2 billion and vowed to transform the skyline of this Mediterranean city as part of its decision to invest more in the Jewish nation, including opening an artificial intelligence lab in Tel Aviv.

Important ports of Israel are:

- Haifa Port
- Bilat Port
- Ashdod Port

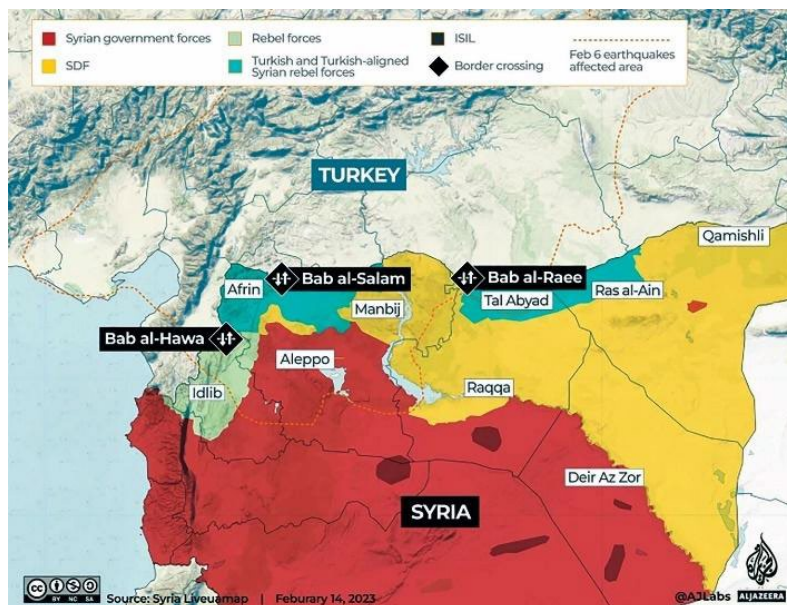


20. BANIYAS, SYRIA



21. CIVIL WAR IN SYRIA

- Idlib:** A city in North-Western Syria and capital of Idlib Governorate (provinces). Since 2011, Idlib governorate has been under the control of Syrian rebels' militias in the aftermath of Syrian Civil War. Since 2017, these rebel groups were formalised and came to be known as the Syrian Salvation Government, de facto alternative government.
- Bab-al-Hawa Crossing:** It is located on the borders of Syria and Turkey. This crossing is the only one authorised for aid deliveries by the UN Security Council before the earthquake. However, after the earthquake an agreement was reached between the Syrian Government under President Bashar al-Ashad and the United Nations to open to further crossings of Bab al-Salam and Al Ra'ee in north-west Syria for an initial period of three months.
- Al-Hawl (Al-Hol) Refugee Camp:** It is a refugee camp in Southern Syria on the borders of Syria-Iraq borders. The camp holds individuals who have been displaced by violence led by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The camp is in the territory dominated by US backed **Syrian Democratic Forces**. Iraq has been facilitating the return of the migrants based in the Al-Hol camp into the Jeddah Rehabilitation Centre located in Baghdad.



22. CAMBODIA

ASEAN SUMMIT 2022 was held here.

Country on Indo Chinese Mainland of Southeast Asia

It is bordered to the west and northwest by Thailand, to northeast by Laos, to east and southeast by Vietnam, and to the southwest by the Gulf of Thailand.

It includes Tonle Sap (Great Lake) and the upper reaches of the Mekong River delta.



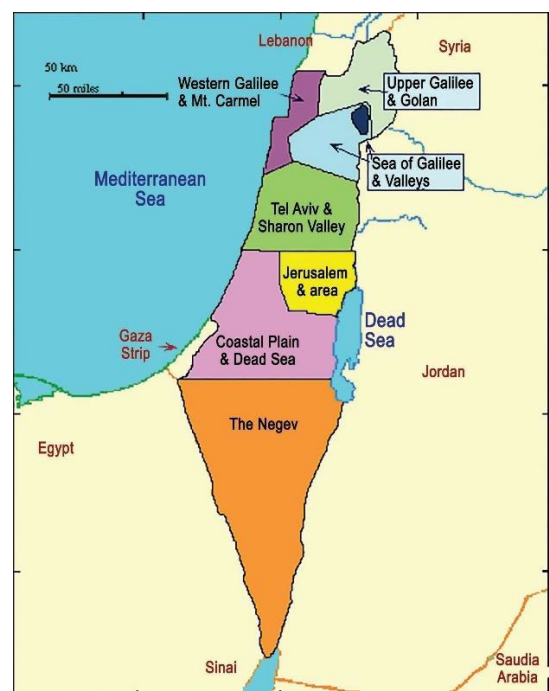
23. INDONESIA



Indonesia passed a law approving the relocation of its capital from slowly sinking Jakarta to Borneo Island that will be known as NUSANTARA.

24. NEGEV, ISRAEL

- Israeli archaeologists unveiled a rare ancient mosque in Israel's south that antiquities officials said sheds light on the region's transition from Christianity to Islam.
- The mosque located in the Negev desert contains "a square room and a wall facing the direction of Mecca", with a half-circle niche in that wall pointing to the south.
- Negev is shaped like a triangle with the apex at the south. It is bounded by the Sinai Peninsula (west) and the Jordan valley (east). Its northern boundary—where the region blends into the coastal plain in the northwest, the Judean Hills (Har Yehuda) in the north, and the Wilderness of Judaea (Midbar Yehuda) in the northeast—is indistinct.



25. GULF OF AQABA



North-eastern arm of Red Sea, penetrating between Saudi Arabia and Sinai Peninsula.

26. KOILASTILA GAS FIELD

Bangladesh has discovered a new gas field with capacity to produce 20 million cubic feet of gas per day (MMCFD) at the Koilastila Gas field.

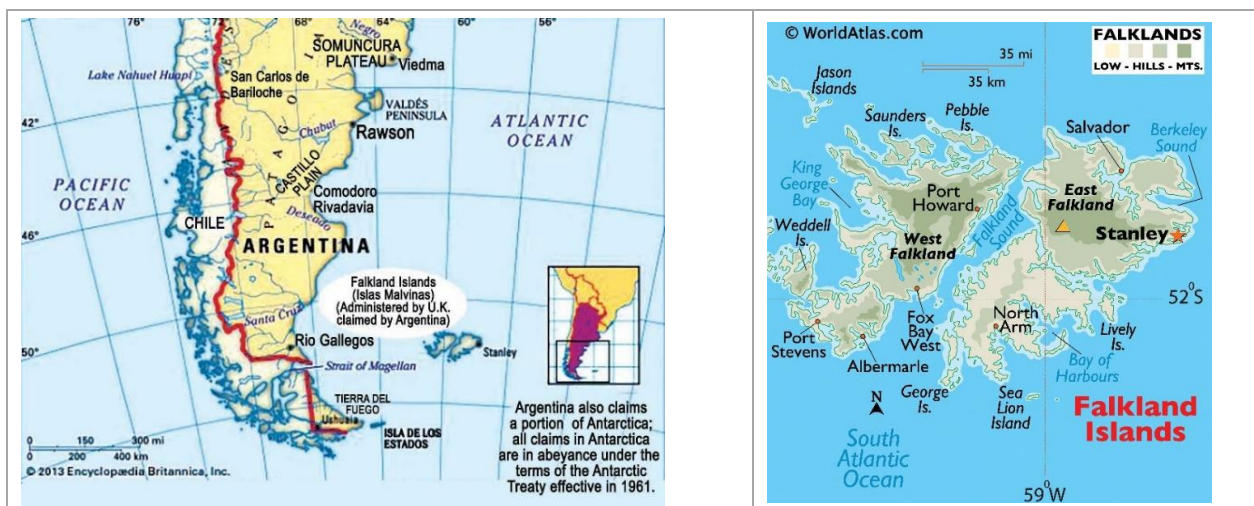
27. GIANT SINKHOLE

The giant sinkhole—also called tiankeng, or “heavenly pit,” in Chinese—is in south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region in Leye County.

→ SOUTH AMERICA

28. FALKLAND ISLANDS

Also known as Las Islas Malvinas in Spanish. Falklands islands are located in the South Atlantic about 600 kms from Argentine mainland and 12,700 kilometres from London have been long claimed by Argentina and were the cause of a brief war in 1982.



Argentina lays claim to the Falkland Islands through the Spanish crown as well as proximity to the Argentine mainland.

Britain, meanwhile, points to its long-time administration of the Falkland Islands.

29. CHANCAY, PERU

The upcoming inauguration of the \$3.5 billion deep water port in Chancay, Peru marks a significant milestone as the first port in South America under Chinese management.



30. INTERNAL CONFLICT IN HAITI

Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince has been the site of ongoing war between two major criminal groups and their allies. The gangs in conflict are Revolutionary Forces of the G9 Family and the G-Pep. The Government of Haiti and security forces have struggled to maintain their control over Port-au-Prince.

Approximately one year following Haiti's plea to the United Nations for urgent assistance in addressing life-threatening gang violence, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has authorized international intervention.



31. GALAPAGOS ISLAND (ECUADOR)

Cold currents protect these islands against global warming.



A country of north-western South America



Ecuador straddles part of the Andes and occupies part of the Amazon Basin. Situated on the Equator, from which its name derives, it borders Colombia to the north, Peru to the east and the south, and the Pacific Ocean to the west. It includes the Pacific archipelago of the Galapagos Island (Archipelago de Colón).

32. VALE DO JAVARI

Vale do Javari is the remote corner of the Amazon Rain Forest. It is home to “the greatest concentration of isolated groups in the Amazon and the world”.

Vale do Javari also forms part of an international cocaine trafficking route, with gold being exchanged for drugs and arms, consequently making it a hotspot for violent crimes.



→ EUROPE

33. BARENT SEA

It is bounded by the archipelagos of Svalbard and Franz Josef land (north), the Norwegian and Russian mainland (south), the Novaya Zemlya archipelago (east), and by the conventional border with the Greenland (west), which runs from Spitsbergen to Norway's northernmost tip, North Cape, via Bear Island.

**34. GIBRALTAR**

British overseas territory has now been declared as a city.

Gibraltar is a heavily fortified British air and naval base that guards the Strait of Gibraltar, which is the only entrance to the Mediterranean Sea from the Atlantic Ocean.

**35. KERCH STRAIT**

Blast took off on Kerch Bridge during the ongoing Russia- Ukraine war.

only water body that connects the Black Sea with the Sea of Azov

The two most important ports on the Kerch Strait are the seaport of Kerch and the port of Kavkaz.

The Port of Kerch lies in the Kerchenskaya Bay, near the Kerch Strait linking the Black Sea to the Azov Sea



36. LAKE GARDA

Italy's largest lake has now dropped to an extremely low level.



37. ICELAND (MOUNT FAGRADALS JALL VOLCANO)



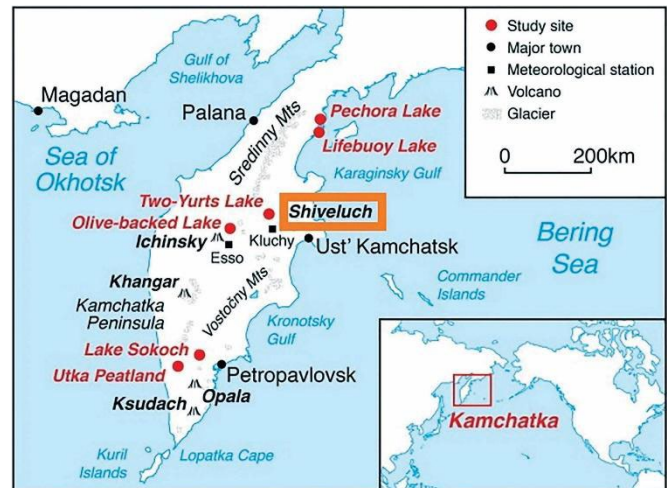
A volcano erupted here.

38. RUSSIA (SHIVELUCH VOLCANO)

Shiveluch is the largest & active volcano in Kamchatka, having erupted at least 60 times in the past 10,000 years.

It has two main parts: Old Shiveluch: 3,283 metres (10,771 ft), and Young Shiveluch: smaller, 2,800-metre peak protruding from its side.

Kamchatka is home to 29 active volcanoes, part of a vast belt of Earth known as the “Ring of Fire” which circles the Pacific Ocean and is prone to eruptions and frequent earthquakes.



39. BELARUS

Belarus is a landlocked country bordered by Lithuania and Latvia to the northwest, by Russia to the north and east, by Ukraine to the south, and by Poland to the west. In area, it is roughly one-third the size of its southern neighbour, Ukraine.

Belarus allowed Russia to stage part of the invasion from its territory, giving Russia the shortest possible land route to Ukraine's capital, Kyiv.



40. SNAKE ISLAND

Zmiinyi Island, also known as Snake or Serpent Island, is a small piece of rock less than 700 metres from end to end, that has been described as being “X-shaped”. It is located 35 km from the coast in the Black Sea, to the east of the mouth of the Danube and roughly southwest of the port city of Odessa.



41. BLACK SEA

The famed water body bound by Ukraine to the north and northwest, Russia and Georgia to the east, Turkey to the south, and Bulgaria and Romania to the west, which links to the Sea of Marmara through the Bosphorus and then to the Aegean through the Dardanelles, has traditionally been Russia's warm water gateway to Europe.



42. CROATIA

Croatia switched to the shared European currency, the euro, and removed dozens of border checkpoints to join the world's largest passport-free travel area.

The country located in the north-western part of the Balkan Peninsula

CAPITAL ZAGREB

The upper arm of the Croatian crescent is bordered on the east by SERBIA and on the north by HUNGARY and SLOVENIA. The body of the crescent forms a long coastal strip along the ADRIATIC SEA and the southern tip touches on MONTENEGRO. Within the hollow of the crescent, Croatia shares a long border with BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA.



43. AEGEAN SEA

Aegean Sea, part of Mediterranean Sea is located between Greek peninsula on west & Asia Minor on east.

AEGEAN SEA is connected to BLACK SEA and MARMARA SEA by the Strait of Dardanelles and the Bosphorus.

Turkey warned Greece to demilitarize islands in the Aegean Sea.



44. SIEVIERODONETSK

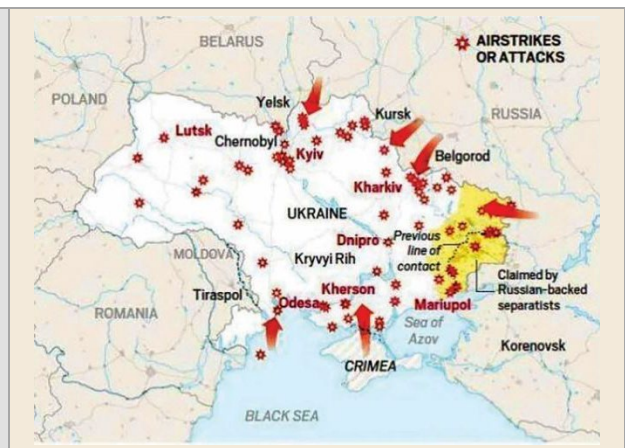
It is the strategic eastern city that remains the focus of intense fighting in the battle between UKRAINE AND RUSSIA.

Located nearly 140 km south of the Russian border, Sievierodonetsk is one of the largest cities of the Donbas region. It is located near the left bank of the Siverskyi Donets river,

Administratively, Sievierodonetsk falls under **UKRAINE's Luhansk oblast (province)**



45. DONBAS



Donetsk and Luhansk are two states located in Eastern Ukraine which share with Russia.

Russian forces had taken control of Luhansk, which together with the neighbouring Donetsk province makes up Ukraine's industrial heartland of Donbas.

46. SAINT- TROPEZ

During his official visit to the Cannes Film Festival in France, Union Minister Anurag Thakur paid a visit to the Allard Square in Saint-Tropez. Here, Thakur, a Lok Sabha MP from Himachal Pradesh, paid floral tributes to Maharaja Ranjit Singh (the first Maharaja of the Sikh Empire), Jean-Francois Allard (a general in Singh's army) and Allard's spouse Princess Bannu Pan Dei.

General Jean-François Allard was born in Saint-Tropez. He served in the Napoleon army and fought in the Battle of Waterloo. Forced into exile after Napoleon's downfall, he served under Maharajah Ranjit Singh in Punjab, where he fell deeply in love with Princess Bannu Pan Dei, who was born in Chamba, Himachal Pradesh.



47. ODESSA

Russia destroyed the port.



48. LA- REUNION

La-reunion is a French overseas department and overseas region. It is in the western Indian Ocean about 420 miles (680 km) east of Madagascar and 110 miles (180 km) southwest of Mauritius.



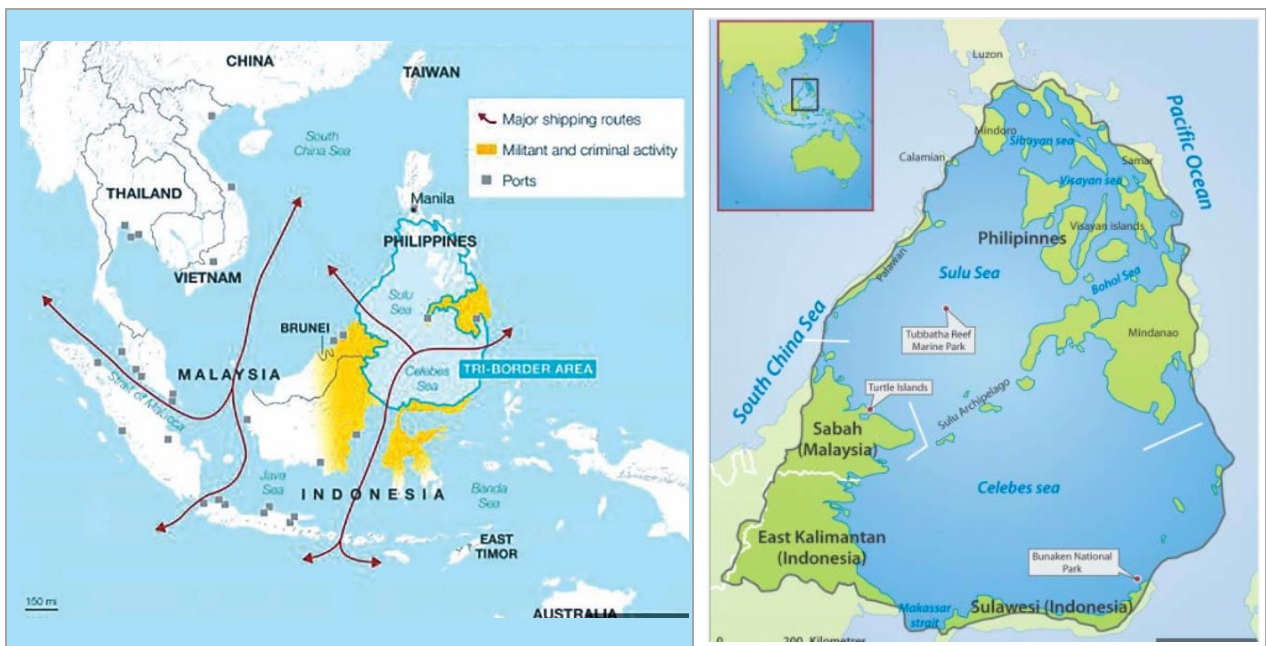
→ RANDOM

49. SOLOMON ISLANDS



- It suspended entry of foreign ships into its waters, pending process for approval of port visits.
- **Solomon Islands**, country in the southwestern Pacific Ocean. It consists of a double chain of volcanic islands and coral atolls in Melanesia.
- Once a British protectorate Solomon Islands achieved independence as a republic in 1978.
- Honiara, on the north coast of Guadalcanal Island, is Solomon Islands' capital and largest city.

50. SULU SEA



It is a body of water in southwestern area of the Philippines, separated from the South China Sea in the northwest by Palawan and from Celebes Sea in the southeast by the Sulu Archipelago.

51. RED SEA

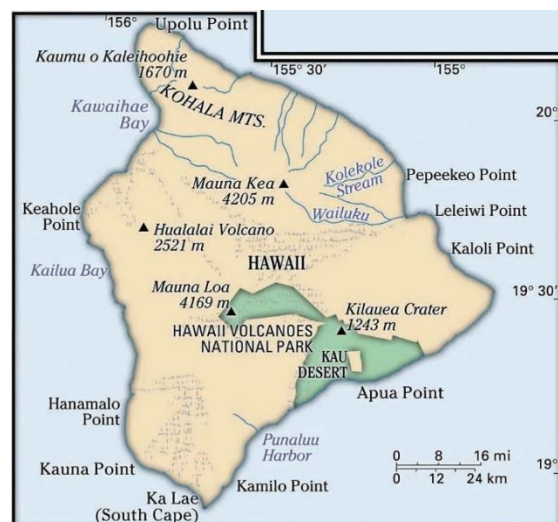
The Israel and Palestine war brought the critical waterways into the middle of the conflict.

- Inlet of the Indian ocean between Africa and Asia
- Connected to Indian ocean via Bab-al-Mandeb strait and the Gulf of Aden
- Jordan shares a boundary with the Red Sea through the Gulf of Aqaba.
- It is connected to the Mediterranean Sea through the Suez Canal.
- It occupies a part of Great African Rift Valley
- BORDERING COUNTRIES:- **SEEDS-Y** (SUDAN, EGYPT, ERITREA, DIJBOUTI, SAUDI ARABIA AND YEMEN)



52. HAWAII MOUNT LOA

- The site has witnessed spikes of earthquakes.
- Mount Loa is an active volcano.
- Hawaii is a group of volcanic islands in the central Pacific Ocean
- The capital is Honolulu, located on the island of Oahu.



53. GUDAI - DARRI- MINE (AUSTRALIA)

Authorities recovered a tiny radioactive capsule, smaller than a coin which was lost in Australia's Outback

The radioactive capsule was part of a gauge used to measure the density of iron ore feed from Rio Tinto's Gudai-Darri mine. Located in northern reaches of Western Australia.

54. SAINT VINCENT AND GRENADINES



55. CHINA DISPUTE SITE IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH



56. BHUTAN

- China and Bhutan have border disputes in three main regions. To resolve the boundary dispute, Bhutan & China have agreed to a **Three Step Roadmap for Expediting the Boundary Negotiations in 2021**.
- Xiaokang:** As part of infrastructure push in Tibet region China has been building Xiaokang (moderately prosperous) frontier villages, to establish civilian settlements in areas, including disputed ones along Tibet-Bhutan and Tibet-India border.



AREAS OF DISPUTE BETWEEN CHINA & BHUTAN

- Western:** Doklam and areas along western borders of Bhutan and near India-China-Bhutan trijunction near Chumbi Valley. Western border areas are particularly more sensitive to India's Chicken Neck Corridor.
- Northern:** Jakarlung and Pasamlung valleys along Bhutan's northern borders.

- **Eastern:** In recent years, areas on Bhutan's eastern borders in Sakteng Wildlife Sanctuary, which borders India's Arunachal Pradesh have also been claimed by China.
- Bhutan & India formally demarcated their 699 km boundary in 2006.

GELEPHU MINDFULNESS CITY

- Bhutan plans to create a massive infrastructure project in the form of 'Gelephu Mindfulness City'. The City will be spread over 1,000 sq km (larger than Singapore).
- Bhutan plans to develop the city as the economic hub of South Asia.
- Aims to attract non-polluting companies, IT centres, hospitals, schools and resorts, dams and hydro-power projects with business-friendly laws in a demarcated Special Administrative Region separate from Bhutan.
- Gelephu is located on the border with India and close to the Indian districts of Kokrajhar and Bongaigon.



8

CHAPTER MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

→ AFRICA

1. FREE MOVEMENT REGIME

The Government of India is all set to scrap the Free Movement Regime (FMR) along the Myanmar border.

ABOUT FREE MOVEMENT REGIME (FMR)

- The border between India and Myanmar runs for **1,643 km** in the four states of **Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, and Arunachal Pradesh**.
- The FMR is a mutually agreed arrangement between the two countries that allows tribes living along the border on either side to **travel up to 16 km inside the other country** without a visa.
- It is usually valid for a year, and a person **can stay for up to two weeks per visit**.
- The **FMR was implemented in 2018** as part of India's **Act East policy** at a time when diplomatic relations between India and Myanmar were on the upswing.

2. DAVOS SUMMIT

The World Economic Forum held its annual meeting from January 15 to 19, 2025 in Davos, Switzerland.

ABOUT WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM (WEF)

- **Professor Klaus Schwab** founded WEF in 1971, originally called the **European Management Forum**, as a non-profit foundation based in **Geneva, Switzerland**.
- It is the International Organisation for **Public-Private Cooperation**.
- It introduced the concept of '**stakeholder capitalism**' i.e. a form of capitalism in which companies do not only optimize short-term profits for shareholders, but seek long term value creation, by considering the needs of all their stakeholders, and society at large.
- **In 2015**, the Forum was **formally recognised as an international organisation**.
- The Forum is **chaired by Founder** and Executive Chairman Professor Klaus Schwab.
- The **Managing Board**, chaired by the Forum's President, Børge Brende, acts as the executive body of the World Economic Forum.
- The **Great Reset Initiative** is an economic recovery plan drawn up by the World Economic Forum (WEF) in **response to the COVID-19 pandemic**.
- The **Global Redesign Initiative (2010)** of WEF was a global, multistakeholder dialogue on the future of international cooperation. Set up during the global financial crisis, its purpose was to stimulate thinking and debate about how the international community and its institutions and organisations in their widest sense can be adapted to contemporary challenges.
- **Reports released by WEF:**
 - Global Risks Report
 - Global Gender Gap Index (**#2017 Prelims**)
 - Fostering Effective Energy Transition Report
 - Travel and Tourism Development Index
 - Global Cyber Security Outlook

- Global Competitiveness Report (#2019 Prelims PYQ)

3. IRAN'S ATTACK ON "ANTI-IRANIAN TERRORIST GROUPS"

Iran launched missile and drone attacks in Iraq, Syria and Pakistan.

WHY IRAN LAUNCHED THE STRIKES?

- Iranian security personnel were killed in **Rask**, a town closer to the Pakistan border, by the **Jaish al-Adl (the Army of Justice)** militant group in December 2023. Iran carried out a surprise attack in **Panjur**, a border town in **Pakistan's Baluchistan**.
- **Syria's (Daesh terrorist group)** suicide bombers struck crowds gathered near the tomb of the revered IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps) general Qasem Soleimani in **Kerman (city in Iran) in January 2024**. In response, Iran launched ballistic missiles into **Syria's Idlib region**.
- In Iraq, the IRGC claimed responsibility for targeting an alleged Israeli facility. Iran launched a missile strike into **Erbil**, resulting in the destruction of **Mossad's (Israel's external security agency) spy headquarters in the Kurdistan region**. The attack is purportedly a response to recent Israeli actions, including the assassination of Iranian and pro-Iranian commanders.

KEY FACTS FOR PRELIMS

- **Jaish al-Adl, or the "Army of Justice"**, is a Sunni militant group founded in 2012 that largely operates in Pakistan.
- **Daesh (also known as ISIL, Islamic State, or ISIS)** is a terrorist group operating in Syria.
- **The Houthis, 'Supporters of God'**, is a Shia Islamist political and military organisation that emerged from Yemen in the 1990s and backed by Iran.
- Places in news: **Erbil, Kurdish region, Kerman, Idlib**.



4. INDIA – US CIVIL NUCLEAR COOPERATION

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Energy Resources, emphasized the significance of the India-U.S. nuclear cooperation, which was initiated two decades ago, labelling it as "an important piece of unfinished business".

INDIA US CIVIL NUCLEAR COOPERATION: 2008

- The **123 Agreement** signed between the United States of America and the Republic of India is known as the **U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Agreement** or Indo-US nuclear deal.
- Under this, India agreed to separate its civil and military nuclear facilities and to place all its civil nuclear facilities under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards and, in exchange, the United States agreed to work toward full civil nuclear cooperation with India.

Note: The Agreement entails no obligations for India to sign Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and does not grant any waiver for India to join the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG).

5. KALADAN MULTIMODAL TRANSIT TRANSPORT PROJECT

Kaladan Multimodal Project has suffered a setback due to the capture of a Paletwa town in Myanmar by a rebel group.

ABOUT KALADAN MULTIMODAL TRANSIT TRANSPORT PROJECT (KMTTP)



- It will connect the eastern Indian seaport of **Kolkata with Sittwe seaport** in Rakhine State, Myanmar by sea.
- In Myanmar, it will then link Sittwe seaport to Paletwa in Chin State via the Kaladan river boat route, and then **from Paletwa by road to Mizoram** state in Northeast India.
- It will reduce distance from Kolkata to Sittwe by approximately 1,328 km and will reduce the need to transport goods through the narrow Siliguri corridor, also known as **Chicken's Neck**.

6. EUROPE FREE TRADE ASSOCIATION (EFTA)

In a draft of the India – EFTA free trade agreement, a clause may postpone the access to affordable generic drugs in India for six years.

ABOUT EUROPE FREE TRADE ASSOCIATION (EFTA)

- It is the **intergovernmental** organisation set up in 1960 (through **Stockholm Convention**) for the promotion of free trade and economic integration between its members.
- Members: **Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.**
- It **does not** envisage political integration.
- It does not issue legislation, **nor does it establish a customs union.**
- EFTA States are **not obliged by the EFTA Convention** to conclude preferential trade agreements as a group. They maintain the full right to enter into bilateral third-country arrangements.
- The **EFTA Council** is the highest governing body of EFTA, usually meets eight times a year at the ambassadorial level (heads of permanent delegations to EFTA) and twice a year at Ministerial level. Each Member State is represented and **decisions are taken by consensus.**
- The **Chairmanship rotates every six months.** For the EFTA Council, the chairmanship rotates between Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein and Switzerland.
- **Secretariat:** Geneva, Austria.



7. PANCHESHWAR MULTIPURPOSE PROJECT (PMP)

India and Nepal signed an agreement on long term power sharing without making any forward movement on the Pancheshwar Multipurpose project.

ABOUT PANCHESHWAR MULTIPURPOSE PROJECT (PMP)

- It is a bi-national hydropower project to be developed on **Mahakali River** bordering Nepal and India.
- Development of PMP is covered under integrated **Mahakali Treaty** signed between Nepal and India according to which, equal sizes of underground power house i.e. of 3240MW will be constructed on each side of Mahakali river in India and Nepal.
- It offers the benefit of regulated water for irrigation to a vast area of agricultural land both in Nepal and India along with the benefit of flood control downstream.

ABOUT MAHAKALI TREATY

- It is an agreement signed in 1996 between the Government of Nepal and the Government of India regarding the development of the watershed of Mahakali River.
- It calls for an **integrated development of barrage, dams and hydropower** for mutual cooperation of the two countries by managing the water resources.
- It **recognizes the Mahakali River as a boundary river between the two countries.**

ABOUT MAHAKALI OR SHARDA RIVER

- The Sharda River, also called Kali River and Mahakali River, **originates at Kalapani in the Himalayas** in the **Pithoragarh district in Uttarakhand, India.**
- It flows along Nepal's western border with India.
- It **joins the Ghaghra River, a tributary of the Ganges.**
- It takes the name Kali River from the union of the two streams at Gunji as it flows through the hills. After Brahmadev Mandi near Tanakpur, it enters the Terai plains, where it is called the Sharda River.

8. NB8 VISIT TO INDIA



Amidst the geopolitical landscape reshaped by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine two years ago, the urgency of collaboration with global partners has never been more evident. The representatives of the Nordic-Baltic cooperation,

known as the NB8, gather in New Delhi and underscores the vital importance of trust, dialogue, and cooperation in times of upheaval and conflict.

Nordic-Baltic cooperation or NB8 is a regional cooperation format which as of **1992** has brought together **five Nordic countries and three Baltic countries (Finland, Sweden, Norway, Iceland, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania)** in order to discuss important regional and international issues in an informal atmosphere.

9. INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION FOR MIGRATION (IOM)

- Established in 1951, IOM is the leading intergovernmental organisation in the field of migration and is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society.
- IOM is part of the United Nations system, as a related organisation. IOM supports migrants across the world, developing effective responses to the shifting dynamics of migration and, as such, is a key source of advice on migration policy and practice.
- The organisation works in emergency situations, developing the resilience of all people on the move, and particularly those in situations of vulnerability, as well as building capacity within governments to manage all forms and impacts of mobility.
- The Organisation is **guided by the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations**, including upholding human rights for all.
- The organisation's global mandate includes assistance to migrants, including **migrant workers, refugees and internally displaced persons.**
- The Director General of the organisation is **elected by the delegates of the IOM member states for a five-year term.**

10. GLOBAL MARITIME TRADE NAVIGATING TROUBLED WATERS: UNCTAD REPORT

Ship transits through the Red Sea, Black Sea and Panama Canal slump 40% as per the recent report by United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

For the first time, the world is contending with simultaneous disruptions in two vital maritime trade routes. Since November 2023, **increasing attacks on ships in the Red Sea** (by Houthi rebels) **have compounded disruptions in the Black Sea** caused by Russia – Ukraine. Additionally, **transit through the Panama Canal has been hindered by climate-induced droughts.** These disruptions carry far-reaching implications for inflation, as well as for the security of food and energy supplies globally.



UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT (UNCTAD)

- It is an **intergovernmental organisation** within the **United Nations Secretariat** that promotes the interests of developing countries in world trade.
- It was **established in 1964 by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).**
- UNCTAD is composed of 195 member states and works with nongovernmental organisations worldwide.
- Its permanent secretariat is in **Geneva, Switzerland.**
- The Generalized System of **Preferences (GSP), instituted in 1971 under the aegis of UNCTAD,** has contributed over the years to creating an enabling trading environment for developing countries.

Note: *United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is not the parent organisation of UNCTAD. It is an independent body under the United Nations Secretariat.*

11. GENEVA CONVENTION ON REFUGEES

Indira Jaising, the former Additional Solicitor General of India, suggested that instead of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), India could have chosen to sign the Geneva Convention on Refugees to demonstrate its commitment to safeguard the persecuted minorities.

The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951 Refugee Convention or the Geneva Convention of 28 July 1951)

- It is a United Nations multilateral treaty that **defines who a refugee** is and sets out the rights of individuals who are granted asylum and the responsibilities of nations that grant asylum.
- It sets out which people **do not qualify as refugees, such as war criminals**.
- It provides for some **visa-free travel** for holders of refugee travel documents issued under the convention.
- The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol are the key legal documents which define the term 'refugee' and outline their rights and the international standards of treatment for their protection. UNHCR serves as the 'guardian' of these documents.
- The **core principle of the 1951 Convention is non-refoulement**, which asserts that a refugee should not be returned to a country where they face serious threats to their life or freedom.
- Rights contained in the 1951 Convention include:
 - a) The right not to be expelled, except under certain, strictly defined conditions
 - b) The right not to be punished for irregular entry into the territory of a contracting State
 - c) The right to non-discrimination
 - d) The right to decent work
 - e) The right to housing, land and property, including intellectual property
 - f) The right to education
 - g) The right to freedom of religion
 - h) The right to access to justice
 - i) The right to freedom of movement within the territory
 - j) The right to be issued civil, identity and travel documents
 - k) The right to social protection

EXCEPTIONS

The 1951 Convention only protects persons who meet the criteria for refugee status. Certain categories of people are considered not to deserve refugee protection and should be excluded from such protection. This includes persons for whom there are serious reasons to suspect that:

- (a) they have committed a crime against peace, a war crime, or a crime against humanity;
- (b) they have committed a serious non-political crime outside their country of refuge prior to the admission to that country as a refugee; or
- (c) they are guilty of acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

12. CONFLICT IN EASTERN CONGO

The recent clashes in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo between Congolese army and Rwandan backed M23 group have sparked global concern.

KEY FACTS FOR PRELIMS

- **Tutsis and Hutus:** The **Rwandan genocide**, also known as the genocide against the Tutsi, occurred in 1994 during the Rwandan Civil War. During this, members of the **Tutsi minority ethnic group were killed** by armed **Hutu militias**.
- **Zaire:** It was the name of the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** from 1971 to 1997.

- **North Kivu and South Kivu:** These provinces in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo were embroiled in the Kivu armed conflict over natural resources. **#UPSC Prelims 2023**
- **M23 or March 23 movement (also known as the Congolese Revolutionary Army):** It was formed by Tutsis to defend their interests against Hutu militias in 2012.

ABOUT DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC)

- Democratic Republic of the Congo, a country located in central Africa.
- Officially known as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the country has a 25-mile (40-km) coastline on the Atlantic Ocean, **hence not landlocked**.
- It is the **second largest country on the continent**; only Algeria is larger.
- The capital, **Kinshasa**, is located on the Congo River.



13. GUYANA

Eager to expand the scope of defense exports to African nations beyond the current 15%, India has granted a Line of Credit (LOC) of \$23.37 million to Guyana.

KEY FACTS ABOUT GUYANA

- Guyana is located on the northern edge of **South America**.
- It borders three other nations and is the 3rd smallest nation in South America. Suriname sits to the east, Brazil to the south, and Venezuela to the west.



- **Important geographical features:** The Pakaraima Mountains, Kanuku Mountains, and Acarai Mountains; Kaieteur Falls; Mount Roraima is the highest point in Guyana; The Essequibo River (largest in the nation).

14. INTERNATIONAL SEABED AUTHORITY (ISA)

India has made a formal request to the International Seabed Authority (ISA), seeking permission to conduct exploration activities in two extensive areas (one of these regions, a cobalt-rich crust long known as the **Afanasy Nikitin Seamount (AN Seamount)**) of the Indian Ocean seabed beyond its territorial jurisdiction.



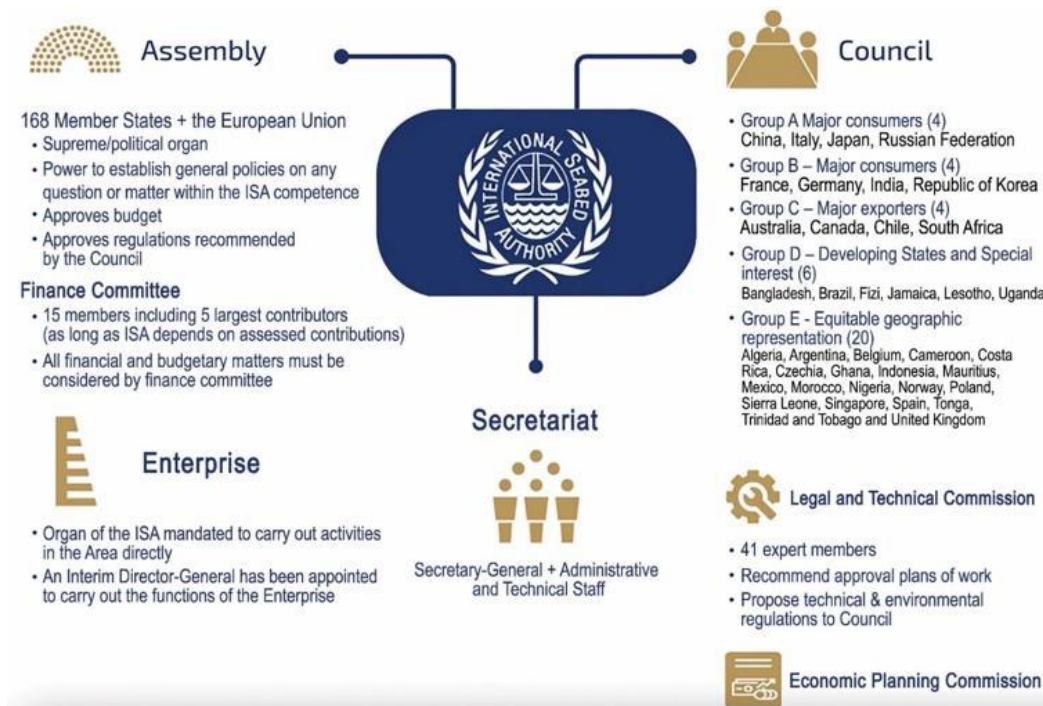
KEY FACTS ABOUT EXPLORATION PROCESS

- Before any tangible extraction can occur, interested parties (i.e. nations) must initially seek an exploration license from the International Seabed Authority (ISA).
- These rights are specifically designated for regions within the open ocean, defined as marine expanses encompassing the air above, surface, and seabed; where no nation holds sovereignty claims.
- Presently, no nation has engaged in commercially viable resource extraction endeavours in open ocean territories.
- Countries have **exclusive rights extending up to 200 nautical miles** from their borders, including the underlying seabed.
- Some ocean-bound states possess a natural land extension, known as the continental shelf, connecting their border to the deep ocean beyond the 200 – miles limit. To substantiate this claim, a country must present a detailed scientific rationale, accompanied by underwater maps and surveys, to a scientific commission appointed by the ISA.
- If the claim is approved, the country gains priority to explore and potentially exploit **both living and non-living resources** in the designated region.

ABOUT INTERNATIONAL SEABED AUTHORITY (ISA)

- It is an **autonomous** international organisation established **under** the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (**UNCLOS**).
- It is the organisation through which States Parties to UNCLOS organise and control all mineral-resources-related activities in 'the Area' for the benefit of humankind as a whole.
- The **international seabed area or 'the Area'** – the part which is under ISA jurisdiction – is the seabed and ocean floor and the subsoil thereof, beyond the limits of national jurisdiction. The international seabed area represents **around 50 per cent of the total area of the world's oceans**.
- ISA has the mandate to ensure the effective protection of the marine environment from harmful effects that may arise from deep-seabed-related activities.
- Headquarters: **Kingston, Jamaica**.
- In accordance with UNCLOS, **all States Parties to UNCLOS are ipso facto members of ISA (including India)**.
- Hence, membership in ISA is open to countries and international organisations (e.g. the European Union) Parties to UNCLOS.

ORGANS OF ISA



15. PERMANENT STATUS FOR PALESTINE

Algeria moves the resolution advocating for Palestine's full membership at the United Nations.

MEMBERSHIP AT UNITED NATIONS

- It is open to all peace-loving States that accept the obligations contained in the United Nations Charter and, in the judgment of the Organisation, can carry out these obligations.
- States are admitted** to membership in the United Nations **by a decision of the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council.**

RECOGNITION BY UNITED NATIONS

- The recognition of a new State or Government is an act that only other States and Governments may grant or withhold. It generally implies readiness to assume diplomatic relations.
- United Nations is neither a State nor a government, and therefore does not possess any authority to recognize either a State or a Government.
- As an organisation of independent States, it may admit a new State to its membership or accept the credentials of the representatives of a new Government.

Note: There are two non-member observer states: the Holy See and Palestine.

16. BAY OF BENGAL INITIATIVE FOR MULTI-SECTORAL TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION (BIMSTEC)

BIMSTEC gets the 'legal personality' status with its Charter coming into force on 20th May 2024. It enables the admission of new members and observers, and enables the conclusion of agreements with countries or sub-regional, regional and international organisations and institutions.

ABOUT BIMSTEC

- It is a regional organisation comprising **seven Member States** around the Bay of Bengal region.

- BIMSTEC constitutes a **unique link** between **South and South-East Asia** with five Members from South Asia (**Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka**) and two from South-East Asia (**Myanmar and Thailand**).
- The organisation came into being in **1997 through the 'Bangkok Declaration'**.
- **Permanent Secretariat** of BIMSTEC has been operational since September 2014 in **Dhaka**.
- **Initially**, the economic bloc was formed with **four Member States** with the acronym 'BIST-EC' (**Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand** Economic Cooperation). Following **inclusion of Myanmar on 22 December 1997** during a special Ministerial Meeting in Bangkok, the Group was renamed 'BIMST-EC' (**Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand** Economic Cooperation).
- With the admission of **Nepal and Bhutan** at the 6th Ministerial Meeting (February 2004, Thailand), the name of the grouping was changed to 'Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation' (BIMSTEC).
- BIMSTEC **Summit Meetings shall be held once every two years**, preceded by the Ministerial Meeting, and be hosted by the Member State holding the BIMSTEC Chairmanship.
- All decisions of the Summit Meetings shall be made on the basis of consensus.

5TH BIMSTEC SUMMIT 2022

- It was hosted in virtual mode by **Sri Lanka**.
- The Summit's theme **"Towards a Resilient Region, Prosperous Economies, Healthy People"** captures the main current priorities of member states, and the efforts by BIMSTEC to develop cooperation activities that support member state's programmes to deal with the economic and development consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The **main outcome of the Summit** was the **adoption and signing of the BIMSTEC Charter**, which formalizes the grouping into an organisation made up of member states that are littoral to, and dependent upon, the Bay of Bengal.

NOTE: The 6th Summit of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is set to take place on **April 4 2025 in Bangkok**, Thailand, under the theme **"Prosperous, Resilient, and Open BIMSTEC,"** as per the release from BIMSTEC Secretariat.

17. FUNAN TECO CANAL PROJECT

Cambodia has launched a \$1.7 bn Funan Techo Canal mega connectivity project.

ABOUT FUNAN TECO CANAL PROJECT

- The Funan-Techo Canal Project aims to connect Cambodia's capital Phnom Penh with the coastal town of Kep located on the Gulf of Thailand by a 180 km canal.
- As per the plans, the canal will be 100 metres wide and 5.4 metres deep allowing for two shipping lanes.
- Currently, ocean-bound shipping from Phnom Penh passes through Vietnam's Mekong Delta to ports near Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam.
- The Funan Techo Canal will provide Cambodia an alternative route for sea trade and reduce its dependence on Vietnamese ports.
- The Canal project is part of the broader Belt and Road Project of China and will be built with Chinese assistance.



18. PACIFIC ISLAND FORUM

The island nation of **Tonga** hosted the **annual meeting of the Pacific Island Forum** from August 26 to 30. The week-long meeting was held in **Nuku'alofa**, the capital of Tonga, and was attended by more than 1,500 delegates from around 40 countries.

ABOUT PACIFIC ISLAND FORUM (PIF)

- Formed in 1971, PIF is an intergovernmental organisation which consists of **18 member states located in the Pacific region**.
- **Member states (18):**
 - **Australia**, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, **New Zealand**, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.
 - Australia and New Zealand are among the wealthiest and largest countries which are part of the organisation.
- **Aim:** To push for **economic growth, enhance political governance, strengthen regional cooperation** and enhance **climate and maritime security** for the Pacific region.
- **Working:**
 - **Annual Forum:** The Pacific Islands Forum holds an **annual meeting** where leaders from member countries discuss and decide on issues affecting the region. The decisions are implemented by the **Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (located in Fiji)**.
 - **Dialogue Partners:** The Forum engages with external partners, including countries like the USA, China, Japan, India and the European Union, through the Forum Dialogue Partners process.
 - **Observer Status:** Some territories and organisations, like the Asian Development Bank and the Commonwealth Secretariat, hold observer status.
- **Agenda (2024):** In this year's annual meeting, **climate change** and the **China-US battle for influence** over the strategic region were the dominating discussions.



19. INDIA JOINS US-LED MINERAL SECURITY FINANCE NETWORK

- India has officially joined the Minerals Security Finance Network (MSFN), a US-led effort to secure critical mineral supply chains.
- The MSFN is an extension of the Minerals Security Partnership (MSP), initiated by the US in 2022. India became a member of the MSP in June 2023.
- **Collaborating Nations:** The pact involves 14 countries and the European Union, emphasizing collective action to mitigate dependence on China for critical resources.
- **Focus on Minerals:** The MSP and MSFN focus on supply chains for minerals such as:
 - Cobalt
 - Nickel
 - Lithium
 - 17 rare earth minerals
- **Partnership Goals:**
 - Strengthen cooperation among member countries.
 - Address the rising global demand for critical minerals, crucial for clean energy transition.
 - Encourage collaboration between public and private sectors for investment in mineral supply chains.
- **Development Finance Institutions (DFIs) and Export Credit Agencies (ECAs):** The partnership aims to create synergies between DFIs and ECAs from member countries to enhance impact and investment.

- **Remarks by US Officials:**
 - The US Undersecretary of State highlighted the need for increased production capacity to ensure resilience in supply chains.
- **Significance for India:**
 - India's inclusion in the MSP is pivotal for its growth strategy, particularly in transitioning to electric vehicles (EVs) and boosting electronics manufacturing and semiconductor production.
- **Diplomatic Efforts:** India's induction was the result of a strong diplomatic push, addressing concerns over not being part of this strategic partnership aimed at reducing reliance on China.
- **Project Initiatives:** The MSP is exploring around 150 projects, with a focus on:
 - Establishing a critical minerals and metals cooperation forum.
 - Developing battery materials.
 - Creating a minerals processing facility in South America.
- **Mineral Dependencies:**
 - India has limited deposits of certain rare earth elements (REEs), particularly high-demand heavy REs (HREEs), with significant reliance on China, which dominates global production.
- **Future Outlook:**
 - India aims to enter the lithium value chain as the EV sector undergoes potential disruptions, with advancements in battery technology on the horizon.

India's participation in the MSFN underscores its commitment to securing essential mineral supplies, enhancing resilience against global supply chain disruptions, and supporting its energy transition goals.

20. UN RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES

Israel's parliament passed a law banning the U.N. Palestinian refugee agency UNRWA from operating in Israel and the Palestinian territories.

MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS

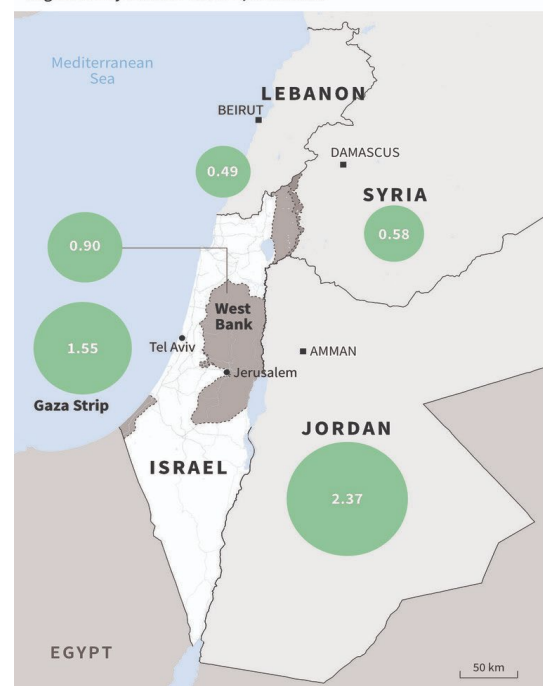
- Israel has argued that the **UNRWA's role is obsolete**, and its work to aid Palestinian refugees and their descendants has been an obstacle to a peace settlement.
- Israel's parliament voted to designate UNRWA a **terrorist organisation**. Israel accused some of UNRWA's employees in Gaza of participating in October 2023 attacks on Israel by Hamas.
- **Impact:** This could lead to the **breakdown of Gaza's already fragile aid distribution system**, intensifying the humanitarian crisis in which nearly 2 million displaced Palestinians are facing severe shortages of food, water, and medicine.

ABOUT THE UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES (UNRWA)

- It is a UN agency that supports the relief and human development of Palestinian refugees.
- **Established:** 1949 by the UN General Assembly.

Palestinian refugees

Registered by UNRWA* in 2022, in millions



Source: *United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. Map data: OSM. AFP

- **Objective:** To provide aid to about 700,000 Palestinians who were forced to leave their homes during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war.
- **Operating regions:** UNRWA operates in five areas: Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.
- **Role and Functions:**
 - Originally intended to provide employment and direct relief, its mandate has broadened to include providing education, health care, and social services to its target population.
- **Funds:** It is funded mostly by voluntary contributions from donor states such as the United States, Germany, the European Union, etc. It also gets a limited subsidy from the UN, which is used only for administrative costs.

21. H-1B VISA

*The US President elect Donald Trump's supporters are locked in a public row about skilled immigration and H-1B visa. H-1B Visa has been the highly **desired pathway for jobseekers** including Indians to migrate to the US.*

H-1B VISA

- The **H-1B** is a Visa in the **United States** that **allows the US employers to employ high skilled foreign workers** in specialised occupations. The programme was started in **1990**.
- **Criterion:** Specialty Occupation refers to a job that requires a specific set of specialised skills and educational qualifications.
 - **Educational Requirement:** At least a Bachelor's degree or higher in a specific field of study.
 - **Specialised Knowledge:** Expertise in a particular field like- IT specialists, engineers, scientists, healthcare professionals etc.
 - **Complex and specialised duties** associated with the position.

DURATION AND CAP

- H-1B status is **initially granted for three years** but can be **extended to another three years** (maximum of 6 years).
- After 6 years the visa holder has to either leave the US for a period of at least 12 months before returning or apply for and receive permanent residence that is a **green card**.
- There is **no capping** on the number of H1-B Visas that an individual can have in his/her lifetime.
- Currently, the annual numerical limit is **85,000** for H-1B visas (65,000 new status visas and extra 20,000 visas available to those with a Master's degree or higher from the US universities.)

DEBATE OVER H-1B VISAS

- **Immigration** is one of the most polarising political issues in the US. Much of the election time anti-immigration rhetoric focused on **low skilled labour migration**.
 - Critics of the H-1B program claim that this program has been **misused by tech corporations** to staff their low to mid-level workforce for much less pay than what Americans would demand.
 - Such immigration **depresses wages** and takes away jobs that would have otherwise gone to the American working class.
- **Proponents of H-1B visa argue** that this programme is essential for bridging the skill gaps in the USA and wages are market driven. Since, China and India boast the **highest number of STEM graduates** (more than 6 million combined) in the World. When compared to the number of STEM graduates in the US (nearly 8 lakh), they become critical and vital for the economy.

22. SILIGURI CORRIDOR

SILIGURI CORRIDOR

- Siliguri Corridor (Chicken's Neck) is a **narrow strip of land in West Bengal** that connects the **North-eastern States** to the rest of the country.
- The area has a width of about **20 km and length of 60 km** and is not far away from China.

IMPORTANCE

- **Connectivity:** Only **land route** connecting the eight northeastern states of India—Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura—to the Indian mainland. All land transportation between these states and the rest of India passes through this corridor.
- **Economic Role:** Key route to facilitate trade and commerce not only within India but also with neighbouring countries like **Nepal and Bhutan**.
- **Military Significance:** Crucial for national security as it allows for the movement of military personnel and supplies to sensitive areas near international borders with **China and Bangladesh**.



23. INDIRA GANDHI PEACE PRIZE 2024

Former **Chilean President** and prominent **human rights voice Michelle Bachelet** has been conferred with the Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development for 2024.

ABOUT MICHELLE BACHELET

- She is the **founding director of UN Women (2010-2013)**, has served as UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (2018-2022).
- She has spoken strongly for **gender equality** and the rights of the **most vulnerable sections of the population** at home and across the world.
- She served as the President of Chile from 2006-2010 and 2014-2018. During her tenure, she implemented education and tax reforms, and a free trade agreement was signed between India and Chile.



ABOUT INDIRA GANDHI PEACE PRIZE

- Established in 1986 and awarded by the **Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust**.
- It includes a **cash award of Rs 25 lakh and a citation**.
- The Prize is **awarded annually to a person or organisation without any distinction of nationality, race or religion**, in recognition of creative efforts towards:
 - Promoting international peace and disarmament, racial equality, and goodwill and harmony among nations.
 - Securing economic co-operation and promoting a new international economic order.
 - Accelerating the all-round advancement of developing nations.
 - Ensuring that discoveries of science and modern knowledge are used for the larger good of the human race.
 - Enlarging scope of freedom and enriching the human spirit.



24. US WITHDRAWS FROM WHO

The US President Donald Trump has passed an **executive order** to withdraw from the **World Health Organisation (WHO)**.

REASONS FOR THE US WITHDRAWAL FROM WHO

- Trump criticises WHO as an **ineffective agency and biased against the interests of the US**. E.g., WHO failed to control COVID-19 pandemic.
- The US claims that WHO is **discriminatory in nature** of its operations, as it focuses more on the developing nations, by extracting funds from the first world nations.
- Trump alleges the present **Director General of WHO is under Chinese influence**, and China is using public relations and backdoor funding channels to compromise the integrity of WHO.
- The US funds about **15% of annual funds** to WHO making it the largest fund giver. This puts an additional burden on the US economy **compromising** its nationalistic agendas.

WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION (WHO)

- WHO is a **specialised agency** of the United Nations, responsible for international public health.
- Established in **April 1948**, celebrated annually as **World Health Day**.
- **Members:** 192 member states (excluding the US)
- **Headquarters:** Geneva, Switzerland

PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

- **Vaccine and Immunisation:** Partnered with organisations like GAVI and UNICEF for the Expanded Program on Immunisation (EPI).
- **Coordinating for global health security** as it manages the **International Health Regulations (IHR)** framework.

Famous reports and publications: World Health Report, World Malaria Report, Global Tuberculosis Report, World Mental Health Report, Global Nutrition Report, World Health Statistics, International Classification of Diseases (ICD), Noncommunicable Diseases Progress Monitor, Global Vaccine Action Plan Monitoring Reports, and the State of the World's Nursing Report.

25. US WITHDRAWS FROM PARIS CLIMATE DEAL

*The US President Donald Trump signed an **executive order** to withdraw from the landmark **Paris climate agreement**, dealing a blow to worldwide efforts to combat global warming.*

ABOUT PARIS CLIMATE AGREEMENT

- The Paris Climate Agreement aims to limit global warming to **well below 2°C, preferably 1.5°C, above pre-industrial levels**.
- **Adopted** by 196 Parties in 2015, during the 21st Conference of Parties (**COP21**) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, at **Paris, France**.
- **Key Features of the Climate deal:**
 - **Nationally Determined Contributions:** Each country sets its own emission reduction targets, with updates **every five years** to enhance ambition.
 - **Global Stocktake:** A periodic review of the progress on climate action at global level (not the national level) and identify overall gaps, conducted every five years.
 - **Climate Finance:** Developed countries pledged to **mobilise \$100 billion** annually by 2020 to support climate action in developing nations, with plans for scaling this amount post-2025.
- **Significance:** First universal, **legally binding**, global climate deal. It emphasises global cooperation, fairness, and commitment to sustainable development, while recognising the individual capacities of nations.

INDIA'S TARGETS

INDIA'S CLIMATE TARGETS: EXISTING AND NEW

Target (for 2030)	Existing: First NDC (2015)	New: Updated NDC (2022)	Progress
Emission intensity reduction	33-35 per cent from 2005 levels	45 per cent from 2005 levels	24 per cent reduction achieved in 2016 itself. Estimated to have reached 30 per cent
Share of non-fossil fuels in installed electricity capacity	40 per cent	50 per cent	41.5 per cent achieved by the end of June this year
Carbon sink	Creation of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of additional sink through afforestation	Same as earlier	Not clear.

26. ILO REPORT: GLOBAL ESTIMATES ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS

The 4th edition of International Labour Organisation's *Global Estimates on International Migrant Workers* was released in December 2024.

MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS OF THE REPORT

- Approximately **169 million** international migrant workers recorded in 2022. This accounts for **4.7% of the global workforce**.
- Estimates of migrant workers have **increased** from previous years, i.e., 164 million in 2017 and 150 million in 2013.
- Over 68.4% of all migrants are in **high-income nations** like Europe, North America and Arab states.
- Evident **gender disparity** in the migrant labour force. Only 38.7% of female migrants are employed, as compared to the 61.3% of male migrants.
- The migrant population **dominates the services sector**.

27. BHARATPOL PORTAL

BHARATPOL portal was launched which aims to provide police and security agencies in India with a seamless connection to **INTERPOL** (international police organisation).

ABOUT BHARATPOL

- BHARATPOL** is a **centralised and real-time digital platform** developed by **Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)**.
- It **integrates CBI** (Nodal agency of INTERPOL in India) with State law enforcement agencies and the

New platform for police assistance

Union home minister Amit Shah on Tuesday launched the Bharatpol portal to facilitate faster international assistance for agencies and speed up investigations

BHARATPOL

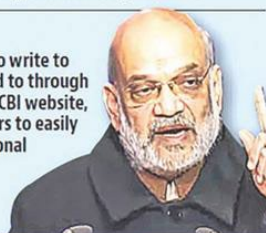
Broadcast Hub for Assistance and Real-Time Action against Transnational Crimes via International Police Cooperation

WHAT IS IT?

A platform which integrates CBI (which is the National Central Bureau or nodal agency of Interpol in India) with state law enforcement agencies and the Centre, for sharing information on fugitives, criminal matters and processing requests for Interpol notices

WHAT CHANGES?

Earlier, states/UTs' police used to write to CBI and any queries were replied to through letters. The portal, available on CBI website, will allow frontline police officers to easily and promptly request international assistance from 195 Interpol member countries using standardised templates.



THINGS OF NOTE

- The entire process will become paperless and faster now
- It will enable easy drafting of Red Notice requests and other notices of Interpol
- It will provide access to documents, templates, and training resources, enhancing the capability of frontline officers to conduct probes

FIVE MODULES

Connect: Links CBI with all law enforcement authorities in India by including Interpol Liaison Officers and Unit officers

Interpol notices: Rapid, secure and structured transmission of requests for Interpol notices

Interpol references: Facilitates assistance to Indian agencies in criminal matters and investigation abroad through Interpol channels

Broadcast: Requests from 195 countries for assistance in criminal intelligence shared by them can be transmitted for action to Indian law enforcement agencies

Resources: Provides access to relevant documents and capacity building resources

Central government, for sharing information on fugitives, criminal matters and processing requests for INTERPOL notices.

- **Objectives:**

- To facilitate faster and paperless processing of **INTERPOL notices**, extradition requests, and other forms of **international legal assistance**.
- To enhance international law enforcement cooperation especially in dealing with **transnational crimes**.

- Previously, Indian police had to rely on **manual methods and letters** to coordinate with INTERPOL and foreign agencies, leading to delays in cases related to fugitives and transnational crimes. Bharatpol eliminates these inefficiencies by offering a **centralised and real-time digital platform**.

28. NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE GRID (NATGRID)

*To control crime in the National Capital, Delhi Police Commissioner has authorised district deputy commissioners of police (DCPs) to start using the **NATGRID** (National Intelligence Grid) tool **to track down suspects and criminals**.*

ABOUT NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE GRID

- NATGRID is a **database** compiled by the **Ministry of Home Affairs** that contains over 24 sets of data **to help agencies identify and monitor suspects**.
- It was conceived in **2008** after the 26/11 attacks in Mumbai.
- The data sets include (Natgrid collects data from):
 - Immigration records, passports
 - Banking details, credit card information, PAN records
 - Travel history
 - Phone data
 - Vehicle registration data
 - National Population Register
 - Company details etc.

UTILITY

- The data repository at NATGRID **captures all the digital footprints** of an individual or an entity.
- NATGRID offers **real-time intelligence** about individuals and other entities to law-enforcement authorities across the country.
- The data is used to **counter illegal activities** (E.g., suspicious financial transactions, drug rackets) by sharing information with several security agencies.

DATA IS UTILISED BY

- NATGRID services are available to **11 central agencies** and **police departments** of all states and union territories.
- The **eleven agencies include** the Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW), Intelligence Bureau (IB), National Investigation Agency (NIA), Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), Enforcement Directorate (ED), Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) and Directorate General of GST Intelligence.

CRITICISM

- NATGRID has faced opposition on account of **possible violations of privacy** and **leakage of confidential personal data**.
- However, as per the government:

- NATGRID infrastructure has **adequate safeguards** to prevent any unauthorised access.
- The data is **end-to-end encrypted** and can be accessed only after proper authorisation and authentication have been completed.

Note: The local police take the help of **CCTNS** (Crime and Criminal Tracking Network System) to probe cases.

29. GREENLAND

Recently, the U.S. President Donald Trump said he would not rule out the possibility of using military force to seize control of **Greenland**.

ABOUT GREENLAND

- Greenland is the **world's largest island** with a population of 57,000. Almost 80% of it is covered by the ice cap and glaciers.
- It is surrounded by the **Atlantic Ocean** and **Arctic Ocean**.
- It is the location of the **northernmost point of land** in the world— **Kaffeklubben Island**.
- The climate of Greenland is **Arctic**, modified only by the slight influence of **Gulf Stream** in the south-west.



POLITICAL SITUATION IN GREENLAND

- Greenland is an **autonomous territory** controlled by **Denmark**. Citizens of Greenland are European Union citizens. It was **colonised by the Danes** in the 18th century and has been associated with Europe. Geographically, it is part of the **North American continent**.
- Greenland's foreign, monetary and military policies are dictated by **Denmark**. Greenland has a **Parliament** which deals with domestic affairs such as business taxes, immigration, and mining. Calls for complete independence from Denmark have been rising in Greenland.

30. PANAMA CANAL

The US President Donald Trump called the '**Panama Treaty**' foolish and intended to **regain the Panama Canal**.

ABOUT PANAMA CANAL

- **Man-made sea route** that connects the **Atlantic Ocean** and the **Pacific Ocean**.
- **Length:** 80 km
- It is constructed across **Isthmus of Panama**, Panama Country.
- It was **constructed by the US** and officially opened in 1914.
- It is one of the **major choke points** of the world. It handles the **6% maritime trade volume** of the world, and significantly reduces the cost, time and distance for international trade.



TRANSFER OF PANAMA CANAL TO PANAMA

- **Panama Treaty**, also known as **Torrijos-Carter Treaties**, was signed between the US and Panama in **1977** to hand over the canal to Panama in a phased manner.
- **Transfer of Control**: The **Canal was turned over to Panama** on December 31, **1999**.

31. Z-MORH TUNNEL

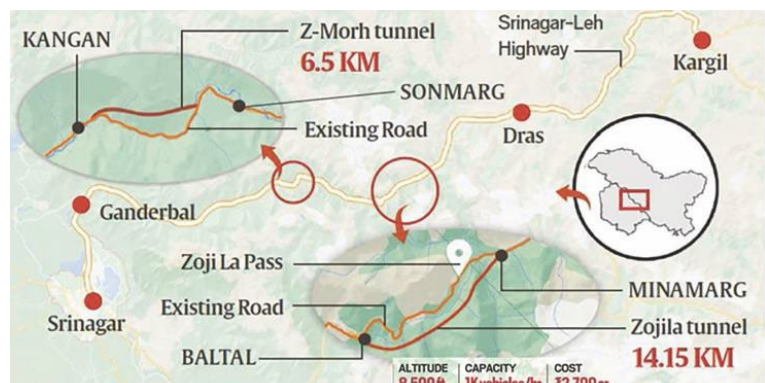
The Prime Minister of India inaugurated the **Z-Morh tunnel** in **Sonmarg area** of the UT Jammu and Kashmir.

ABOUT Z-MORH TUNNEL

- **Z-Morh tunnel** is situated between **Gangangir** and **Sonamarg** in **Jammu & Kashmir**.
- The **6.5 km long** tunnel provides a year-round alternative to the **Zojila Pass** (Zojila Pass connects Srinagar and Leh).

PURPOSE

- **Connectivity**: Tunnel will facilitate tourism, trade, and military logistics in the region.
- **Strategic importance**: Together with the adjacent **Zoji-La Tunnel**, this geostrategically important tunnel on the Srinagar-Leh national highway provides **year-round all-weather connectivity** to **Baltal** (Amarnath cave), **Kargil** and other places in **Ladakh**.



■ The Z-Morh Tunnel will ensure an all-weather link to tourist destination Sonamarg from central Kashmir. The overground road stretch is prone to avalanches and snow-ins.

■ The tunnel, whose name comes from the Z-shaped

road stretch that was previously at the place where the tunnel is being constructed, is part of the 12,000-foot Zojila project that will connect Srinagar to Ladakh.

■ Expected to be completed by December 2026, the

Zojila Tunnel will help military personnel and supplies reach border areas throughout the year by road.

■ This all-weather link will also reduce the dependence and expenditure on operating and maintaining transport aircraft.

ABOUT ZOJILA TUNNEL PROJECT

- The **Zojila Tunnel** is a 13.14 km-long, all-weather tunnel connecting **Srinagar** and **Leh**, bypassing the **Zojila Pass**.
- It ensures year-round connectivity, boosts tourism, enhances military logistics, and reduces travel time from 3 hours to 15 minutes.

32. US SEC AND HAGUE SERVICE CONVENTION

The U.S. **Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC)** has sought assistance from the Union Law Ministry of India under the **Hague Service Convention** to serve summons to Gautam Adani and his associates in a securities fraud case.

ABOUT HAGUE SERVICE CONVENTION

- The **Hague Service Convention** is formally known as the **Convention on the Service Abroad of Judicial and Extrajudicial Documents in Civil or Commercial Matters (1965)**.
- It is an international treaty that standardises the process of **serving legal documents across borders**.

KEY FEATURES OF THE HAGUE SERVICE CONVENTION

- **Established in 1965** to standardise the service of judicial and extrajudicial documents across borders.
- **Purpose:**
 - To facilitate the service of judicial and extrajudicial documents in civil and commercial matters between signatory countries.
 - To ensure timely and actual notice of legal proceedings for defendants in foreign jurisdictions.
- **Central Authority:** Each member country designates a Central Authority to receive and process service requests.
 - It has been signed by **84 states**, including **India and the U.S.**
 - It is applicable **only when both the sending and receiving countries are signatories**.
- **Modes of transmission** vary by country but generally include:
 - **Primary method:** Service through the designated Central Authority.
 - **Alternative channels:** Diplomatic/consular service, postal service (if permitted), direct service by judicial officers, or direct contact between government authorities.

SERVICE OF PROCESS IN INDIA

- **India acceded to the Convention on November 23, 2006**, with expressly opposing all alternative service methods under **Article 10**.
- **India opposes all alternative service methods, including postal service**, except for nationals of the requesting country.
- **Service must be done exclusively through the Ministry of Law and Justice** (India's Central Authority).
- Requests must be in **English or accompanied by an English translation**.
- India's **Central Authority can reject a service request** under **Article 13** if it compromises sovereignty or security but **not** based on exclusive jurisdiction claims.
- The service process typically takes **6 to 8 months** and is treated as an Indian court summons under **Section 29(c) of the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908**.

DEFAULT JUDGMENTS UNDER THE CONVENTION

- A default judgment may be issued under the Convention if a foreign government **refuses to cooperate in serving summons** on a defendant residing within its jurisdiction.
- **Article 15** allows a default judgment if:
 - The document was transmitted using a Convention-approved method.
 - **At least six months** have passed without service confirmation.
 - The court deems that all reasonable efforts were made to obtain proof of service.
- **India allows default judgments** even without a service certificate, provided **Article 15 conditions are met**.

33. CROSSROADS FOR PEACE INITIATIVE

The second India-Iran-Armenia Trilateral Consultations were held in New Delhi in December 2024, marking a significant step in advancing regional cooperation, connectivity, and trade.

ABOUT CROSSROAD OF PEACE INITIATIVE

It is a regional transport proposal aimed at connecting Armenia with its neighbouring countries like Turkey, Azerbaijan, Iran, and Georgia.

Objective: To revitalize and develop crucial infrastructure like **roads, railways, pipelines, cables, and electricity lines** for facilitating the flow of goods, energy, and people across these nations.

It also aims to connect the Caspian Sea to the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian Gulf to the Black Sea through easier and more efficient transportation links.

34. C10 AND L69

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar participated in the first-ever Joint Ministerial Meeting of the L.69 and C-10 groupings of nations on the sidelines of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

C10 grouping

Origin: Committee of Ten African Ministers of Finance and Central Bank Governors (C-10) was created in 2008.

Members: Algeria, Botswana, Cameroon, Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, the Central Bank of West African States (CBWAS), and the Central Bank of Central African States (CBCAS).

Mandate: Advocating enhanced African participation in governance of international financial institutions (IFIs), etc.

L.69 grouping.

Origin: Established in 2007 by a group of developing countries to push for UN Security Council reform. Named after the document "L.69" which was a resolution tabled in the General Assembly in 2007-2008, leading to the Intergovernmental Negotiation (IGN) process on UNSC reform.

Cause: Advocates for an expansion in both categories of UNSC membership to include more developing countries and to reflect contemporary geopolitical realities.

Members: L69 is a grouping that includes countries from Africa, Latin America, Caribbean, Pacific Island states and Asia. **India is also a member of L69.**

35. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATIVE ALLIANCE

- India hosted the global conference of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) in November 2024 in Delhi. Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the 'United Nations **International Year of Cooperatives 2025**' at the conference November 25, 2024.
- It is for the first time in the 130-year-long history of the ICA, which is the premier body for global cooperative movement, the ICA General Assembly and Global Cooperative Conference will be **hosted by India**. It was founded in **London in 1805 and has 306 member organisations** across 105 countries.

36. INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE COUNCIL

Retired Supreme Court judge Justice **Madan B. Lokur** has been appointed as the chairperson of the UN Internal Justice Council (IJC). The primary function of IJC is to ensure independence and accountability of the UN's internal justice system. Its members are appointed by the Secretary General.

37. RIYADH TREATY ON DESIGN LAWS

India has signed the Riyadh Design Law Treaty, which seeks to **harmonise procedures and simplify registration processes of industrial designs in different countries.**

ABOUT THE TREATY

- Riyadh Design Law Treaty (DLT) shall strengthen India's intellectual property ecosystem and promote inclusive growth.
- The treaty promotes innovation and creativity, especially among SMEs, startups, and independent designers.
- It also aims to harmonize industrial design protection processes globally. This will make it easier, faster, and more affordable for designers to protect their work internationally.
- The DLT introduces a standardized framework for design registration, reducing complexity and administrative burdens for applicants.

ADVANTAGES OF THE TREATY

- It provides a mechanism to restore rights in case of lapses, ensuring that applicants can recover lost opportunities. Provisions have been added to make it easier to correct or add priority claims.
- Applicants can file multiple designs in a single application, saving time and costs.
- The treaty encourages countries to adopt **electronic systems for design registration** and facilitate the **digital exchange of priority documents, reducing cost and time for startups**.
- It will create an environment where **creativity meets accessibility**, allowing startups to protect their innovations efficiently.
- India now ranks 6th in the world in terms of filing of patents. "Initiatives such as the Startup India programme and the Startups Intellectual Property Protection (SIPP) scheme have further amplified India's IP capacity. By linking these efforts with the Design Law Treaty, India aims to boost its global competitiveness.

ABOUT WIPO

- The World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) is the **United Nations agency** that serves the world's innovators and creators, ensuring that their **ideas travel safely to the market** and improve lives everywhere.
- Established in 1967
- Headquarters: Geneva, Switzerland

38. CASCAIS DECLARATION OF UNITED NATIONS ALLIANCE OF CIVILISATIONS (UNAOC)

The **10th Global Forum** of the **United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)** adopted the Cascais Declaration in Portugal to promote principles of tolerance and peaceful existence and build bridges between cultures.

ABOUT UNAOC: The **United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)** is an initiative launched in **2005** by the **United Nations**, co-sponsored by **Spain and Turkey**, with the goal of promoting intercultural and interreligious dialogue to counter extremism and build peaceful societies.

KEY OBJECTIVES OF UNAOC

- **Countering Extremism** – Addressing radicalization and fostering tolerance.
- **Promoting Dialogue** – Enhancing understanding between different cultures, religions, and civilizations.
- **Youth Engagement** – Encouraging youth participation in peacebuilding.
- **Media and Education** – Promoting responsible media and educational reforms to reduce prejudice.
- **Migration and Integration** – Supporting policies that help integrate migrants and prevent discrimination.

MAJOR ACTIVITIES & PROGRAMS

- **Intercultural Innovation Award** – Recognizing projects that foster cross-cultural dialogue.
- **Youth Solidarity Fund** – Providing grants for youth-led peacebuilding projects.
- **Global Forums** – Hosting international conferences for dialogue between civilisations.