



INSIGHTSIAS
SIMPLIFYING
IAS EXAM PREPARATION

Insights PT 2018 Exclusive

International Relations and
Organisations

June 2017 to January 2018

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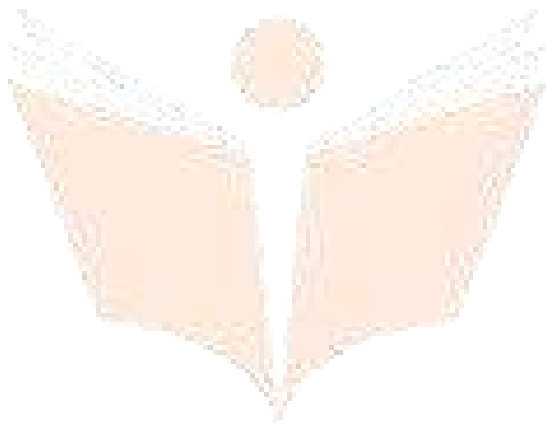
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Bilateral Relations

India – China

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1. Doklam Dispute

- The 71-day standoff between India and China at Doklam was successfully resolved.
- Doklam, also called Donglang is **located at a tri-junction of India, Tibet and Bhutan and is close to the Nathu La pass, through which China had blocked in 2017 the Kailash Mansoravar yatra.**
- Doklam is recognised as a Bhutanese territory by India and Bhutan. But, China claims some parts of the Doklam Plateau as part of its “ancient” frontier.
- The reason behind the stand-off was the Chinese attempt to build a road in the strategically located Doklam.
- Indian troops intervened to block the path of Chinese People’s Liberation Army soldiers engaged in **building road-works on the Doklam plateau.**
- This was the **first time that India used troops to protect Bhutan’s territorial interests.**
- This raised concerns between Bhutan and China.
- Bhutan has a written agreement with China that pending the final resolution of the boundary issue, peace and tranquility should be maintained in the area.
- **India and Bhutan have a Friendship Treaty** signed in 2007 according to which, India serves as a virtual security guarantor to Bhutan.
 - Under the agreement, neither Government shall allow the use of its territory for activities harmful to the national security and interest of the other.



2. India, China ‘clash’ near high-altitude Pangong Lake

- The Indian and Chinese armies clashed recently along the **Pangong lake in Ladakh** when the People’s Liberation Army tried to penetrate into the Indian side.
- **Pangon lake or Pangong Tso**, a 135-km long lake, located in the Himalayas at the height of approximately 4,350 m, **stretches out from India to China.**
- One-third of water body, its 45 km stretch, is in Indian control while the rest of the 90 km is under Chinese control.



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- There has been constant strife between the two countries over the region as **both assert territorial possession.**
- The region has been a bone of contention between India and China for long.
- In the 1990s, when the Indian side laid claims over the area, the Chinese army built a metal-top road contending that it was part of the Aksai Chin, which is another disputed border area between the two.
- **The Aksai Chin area falls under Chinese control and is governed as part of Hotan County. However, India also claims it to be a part of the Ladakh region of Jammu and Kashmir.**

3. India – China Trade Deficit

- India's trade deficit with China rose to \$46.56 billion in 2016.
- China's exports to India totalled \$58.33 billion, registering a meagre increase of 0.2% compared to \$58.25 billion in 2015.
- India's exports to China dropped 12% from 2015 to \$11.76 billion.
- **India exports less to China (mainly raw materials) and imports more (mainly electronics and other manufactured goods which are in high demand).**
- **China's exports to India account for only 2% of its total exports.** So even if Indians boycott all the goods imported from China, it will not make as big an impact on China.
- India imports telecom gear worth over Rs 70,000 crore annually, much of it from Chinese firms like Huawei and ZTE.
- **Chinese companies dominate the telecom sector in India.** India's pharma sector has critical dependence on Chinese imports used in drugs manufacturing.
- Power is another sector where India depends on Chinese imports. In the 12th Plan alone, almost 30% of the generating capacity was imported from China.
- Between April 2016 and January 2017, **solar equipment** from China had a share of 87% in a market pegged at \$1.9 billion.

India – U.S

1. India major defence partner: U.S.

- the US recognised India as a “major defence partner” in June 2016, which means that for defence related trade and technology transfer **the country would now be treated at par with America's closest allies.**
- This status is bestowed upon the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) countries and the US treaty allies such as Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand and Philippines.
- The designation of this status is **unique to India, a non-NATO ally of US.**
- India's Major Defence Partner status has been made a part of the India Amendment in the **National Defence Authorization Act (NDAA), 2017 of US.**
- It will facilitate US to transfer of advanced defence technology to India.
- It will also strengthen institutional effectiveness of **US-India Defence Trade and Technology Initiative (DTII)** and the durability of the **India Rapid Reaction Cell in Pentagon.**

2. US House passes Bill for strengthening defence ties with India

- The US House of Representatives has passed a **\$621.5 billion defence policy** bill that proposes to advance defence cooperation with India.
- An amendment in this regard was adopted by the House as part of the **National Defense Authorisation Act (NDAA) 2018**.
- NDAA-2018 asks the State Department and the Pentagon to **develop a strategy** that addresses common security challenges, the role of American partners and allies in India-US defence relationship, and role of the defence technology and trade initiative.

3. US rolls out expedited entry for 'low-risk' Indian travellers

- The US has started rolling out for India its **Global Entry programme** which allows for expedited clearance of pre-approved, low-risk travellers.
- **Global Entry Programme:**
 - On landing at select airports, the programme members enter the United States through automatic kiosks, instead of queueing up to clear the immigration by meeting an immigration officer.
 - At these airports, the members proceed to the Global Entry kiosks, present their machine-readable passport or US permanent resident card, place their fingerprints on the scanner for fingerprint verification and complete a customs declaration.
 - **Travellers must be pre-approved for the Global Entry programme.** All applicants undergo a rigorous background check and in-person interview before enrolment.
 - With this India has become only the 11th country whose citizens are eligible to enroll in the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) initiative.

4. US- India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF)

- A new representative body — **US- India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF)** — is set up to further **enhance business relations** between the two countries.
- The **non-profit corporation** aims to promote bilateral trade and work on creating “meaningful opportunities that have the power to change the lives of citizens.”
- The body will **work closely together with businesses and government leaders** to achieve its goals of driving **economic growth, job creation, innovation, inclusion and entrepreneurship**.

5. India, US establish new ministerial dialogue

- India and US have established new **2-by-2 ministerial dialogue** to **enhance strategic coordination** between them and **maintaining peace and stability** in the **Indo-Pacific region**.
- The **India-US Strategic and Commercial Dialogue**, once described by the US State Department as the “signature mechanism for advancing the United States’ and India’s shared priorities,” **will now be replaced by the new dialogue**.
- **Composition:** The new dialogue format will involve the **External Affairs**

Minister and Defence Minister from India and their American counterparts **Secretary of State and Defence Secretary**.

- The shared priorities include **job creation, improving the business and investment climate and sustaining a rules-based global order**.
- The US has strategic consultations in this format with key partners and allies including Australia, Japan and the Philippines. India has had a dialogue in the two-plus-two format with Japan with secretaries or senior-most bureaucrats from the foreign and defence ministries engaging each other.

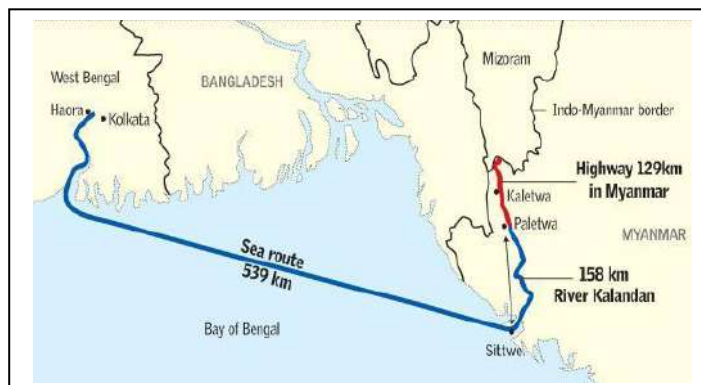
6. 'Merit-based' immigration plan may benefit Indian professionals

- President Donald Trump has announced his support for ***the Reforming American Immigration for Strong Employment (RAISE) Act*** that would cut in half the number legal immigrants allowed into the US while moving to a "merit-based" system favouring English-speaking skilled workers for residency cards.
- RAISE Act:
 - The RAISE Act would scrap the current lottery system to get into the US and instead institute a points-based system for earning a green card. Factors that would be taken into account include English language skills, education, high-paying job offers and age.
 - The RAISE Act ends chain migration, and replaces the low-skilled system with a new points-based system for receiving a Green Card.
 - If passed by the Congress and signed into law, the legislation titled the Reforming American Immigration for Strong Employment (RAISE) Act could benefit highly-educated and technology professionals from countries like India.

India – Myanmar

1. India awards road contract to complete Kaladan project in Myanmar

- The contract for building 109-km road connecting **Paletwa river terminal to Zorinpui in Mizoram border** has been awarded by the Indian government.
- **Background:**
 - Mooted in 2003, India entered a framework agreement with Myanmar for Kaladan project in 2008.
 - Construction began in 2010 with a deadline in June 2015.
 - But, no headway was achieved on the road project.
 - Inadequate fund allocation and planning failure were seen as major reasons for the delay.
- **Kaladan project:**
 - Kaladan multi-modal



transport projects was the **first major project taken up by India in Myanmar.**

- The Kaladan project **connects Sittwe Port in Myanmar to the India-Myanmar border.**
- The project was jointly initiated by India and Myanmar to create a **multi-modal platform for cargo shipments** from the eastern ports to Myanmar and to the North-eastern parts of India through Myanmar.
- It is expected to open up sea routes and promote economic development in the North-eastern states.
- This project will reduce distance from Kolkata to Sittwe by approximately 1328 km and will reduce the need to transport good through the narrow Siliguri corridor, also known as Chicken's Neck.

2. Conservation of Pagodas at Bagan

- The Union Cabinet has approved the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Myanmar for the **conservation of earthquake-damaged pagodas at Bagan, Myanmar.**



- **Pagodas:**
 - A pagoda is a tiered tower with multiple diminishing roofs rise above the other, built in traditions originating as stupa in South Asia and further developed in East Asia.
 - It is commonly found into Nepal, India, China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and other parts of Asia.
 - They became prominent as **Buddhist monuments** and are used for enshrining sacred relics.
 - In India, it is mostly found in Mandi, Kullu, Shimla hills and Kinnaur regions of Himachal Pradesh.
- **Bagan:**
 - Bagan in central Burma is one of **the world's greatest archaeological sites.**
 - The Ayeyarwady (Irrawaddy) River drifts past its northern and western sides.
 - From the 9th to 13th centuries, the city was **the capital of the Pagan Kingdom**, the first kingdom that unified the regions that would later constitute modern Myanmar.
 - During the kingdom's height between the 11th and 13th centuries, over 10,000 Buddhist temples, pagodas and monasteries were constructed in the Bagan plains alone.

India – Russia

1. 18th Annual India Russia Summit

- **18th Annual India Russia Summit was held at St. Petersburg, Russia.**
- Marking 70 years of diplomatic ties, India and Russia signed the **St Petersburg Declaration.**

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- The Declaration is an action plan for deepening not only political and economic development of the two countries but also to ensure a benchmark of stability in times of global instability.

India – Afghanistan

1. India - Afghanistan dedicated air freight corridor

- India and Afghanistan inaugurated a **dedicated air freight corridor service** in June 2017.
- The corridor passes through the airspace of Pakistan.
- The connectivity will provide Afghanistan, a landlocked country, greater access to markets in India, and will allow Afghan businessmen to leverage India's economic growth and trade networks for its benefit.
- It would enable Afghan farmers quick and direct access to the Indian markets for their perishable produce.

India – Bangladesh

1. Interpretative notes between India and Bangladesh

- The Union Cabinet has given its approval for the **Joint Interpretative Notes (JIN)** on the agreement between India and Bangladesh
- The objective is for the **promotion and protection of investments** between the two countries.
- **The JIN includes** interpretative notes to be jointly adopted for many clauses, including,
 - The definition of investor and investment,
 - exclusion of taxation measures,
 - Fair and Equitable Treatment (FET),
 - National Treatment (NT) and Most Favoured Nation (MFN) treatment,
 - expropriation, essential security interests and
 - Settlement of disputes between an investor and a contracting party.
- Joint Interpretative Statements play an important supplementary role in **strengthening the investment treaty regime**.
- With increasing Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) disputes, issuance of such statements is likely to have strong persuasive value before tribunals.
- The JIN would impart clarity to the interpretation of the existing agreement between India and Bangladesh for the Promotion and Protection of BIPA (Bilateral Promotion and Protection of Investments).

2. Operation Insaaniyat

- **Operation Insaaniyat** was launched by the government of India to assist Bangladesh in managing crisis caused due to heavy influx of refugees from neighbouring Myanmar.
- As part of this programme, the Indian government sent relief material.
- The Indian Air Force has been tasked to airlift the relief material from India to Bangladesh.
- This aircraft will be loaded with relief material consisting of critical daily

necessities viz., rice, pulses, sugar, salt, cooking oil, ready to eat meals, mosquito nets etc.

- India has always responded readily and swiftly to any crisis in Bangladesh, in keeping with the close ties of friendship between the peoples of India and Bangladesh.

India – Japan

1. India - Japan civil nuclear deal

- The **India-Japan Agreement for Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy** entered into force on July 20, 2017.
- The pact was signed in Tokyo during the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Japan on November 11, 2016.
- **India is the first non-member of the non-proliferation treaty (NPT)** to have signed such a deal with Japan.
- The deal will **help India access Japan's nuclear market**.
- The deal includes the option that Japan can give a year's notice before terminating it in case India breaks the nuclear testing moratorium that it had extended to the Nuclear Suppliers Group in 2008.
- The deal is significant as it will help guarantee Japan's continued support to India's civil nuclear programme.
- The deal will bring Japan into the Indian nuclear market where France and Russia have already have a strong presence.

2. Asia Africa Growth Corridor

- The **Asia-Africa Growth Corridor** or **AAGC** is an **economic cooperation agreement** between the governments of **India and Japan with the active support of the African Development Bank and several African countries including South Africa who wish to reduce their dependence on Beijing**.
- The idea is to create a **'free and open Indo-Pacific region'** by rediscovering ancient sea-routes and creating new sea corridors by integrating the economies of South, Southeast, and East Asia with Oceania and Africa.
- It primarily **focuses on**
 - **Development Cooperation Projects,**
 - **Quality Infrastructure and Institutional Connectivity,**
 - **Enhancing Skills, and**
 - **People-to-People Partnership.**
- It was **launched in May 2017**. Its detailed roadmap has been prepared by three agencies viz.
 - Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) New Delhi,
 - The Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) Jakarta, and
 - Institute of Developing Economies (IDE-JETRO) of Tokyo.

3. India-Japan sign open sky agreement

- India and Japan have agreed to an open sky arrangement under which the

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airlines of both countries can operate an unlimited number of flights.

- The agreement will not only **encourage connectivity and passenger travel** between the two countries, but will also result in **reduction in airfares** on these routes.
- **Open sky agreement:**
 - The agreement was signed in accordance with the **National Civil Aviation Policy (NACP), 2016.**
 - The NACP permits the government to enter into an *'open sky' air services agreement on a reciprocal basis with SAARC nations as well as countries with territory located entirely beyond a 5,000 kilometre radius from New Delhi.*
 - In 2016 India signed an open sky agreement with Greece, Jamaica, Guyana, Czech Republic, Finland, Spain and Sri Lanka.
 - India also signed a bilateral open sky agreement with the US in 2005.
 - In 2003, India had signed an open sky agreement with the 10-member Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

4. India Japan Act East Forum

- A memorandum of understanding to set up **India Japan Act East Forum** with an aim to *marry India's Act East Policy with Japan's Free and Open Asia-Pacific strategy* is among the major agreements signed during Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit to India for the 12th Indo-Japan annual summit.
- The forum will **enhance connectivity and promote developmental projects** in India's Northeast region in an efficient and effective manner.
- **Japan's investments in the North East:**
 - Japan has cooperated with a variety of development projects in the Northeast, ranging from connectivity infrastructure such as roads and electricity, water supply and sewage, to forest resource management and biodiversity.
 - Recently, India and Japan signed a document on **Japanese loan and aid for highway development in the Northeast.**
 - Japan will extend a loan of Rs 2,239 crore to India for **'North East Road Network Connectivity Improvement Project'** to improve the National Highway 40 (NH-40) and construct a bypass on NH-54 in the Northeast.
 - Japan has a historic connection to the Northeast and is among the few countries that India has allowed a presence in the region.

India – Pakistan

1. Indus Waters Treaty

- The World Bank has said that **India is allowed to construct hydroelectric power plants on the Jhelum and Chenab Rivers** after secretary-level discussions between India and Pakistan on the technical issues over the Indus Waters Treaty concluded recently.
- **What the disagreement is about:**
 - India and Pakistan disagree about the construction of the **Kishenganga**

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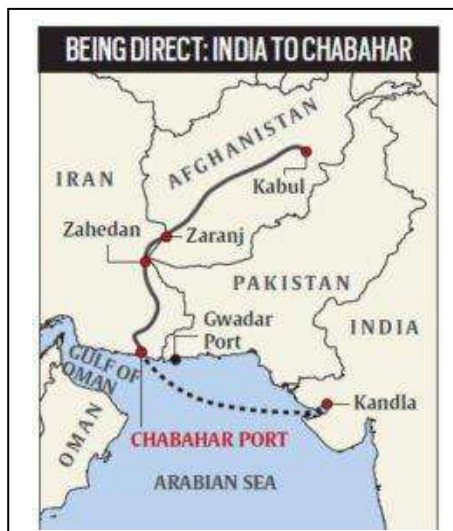
(330 megawatts) and **Ratle** (850 megawatts) **hydroelectric power plants** being built by India (the World Bank is not financing either project).

- The two countries disagree over whether the technical design features of the two hydroelectric plants contravene the Treaty.
- The plants are on respectively a tributary of the **Jhelum and the Chenab Rivers**.
- The Treaty designates these two rivers as well as the Indus as the “Western Rivers” to which Pakistan has unrestricted use.
- India is permitted to construct hydroelectric power facilities on these rivers subject to constraints specified in Annexures to the Treaty.
- **Indus Water Treaty (IWT):**
 - **The treaty was signed in 1960** by then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and then Pakistan President Ayub Khan.
 - The six rivers of the Indus basin originate in Tibet and flow across the Himalayan ranges to end in the Arabian Sea south of Karachi.
 - **The three western rivers (Jhelum, Chenab and Indus) were allocated to Pakistan while India was given control over the three eastern rivers (Ravi, Beas and Sutlej).**
 - While *India could use the western rivers for consumption purpose, restrictions were placed on building of storage systems.*
 - The treaty states that aside of certain specific cases, no storage and irrigation systems can be built by India on the western rivers.
 - It was brokered by the **World Bank**. The Treaty also provides **arbitration mechanism** to solve disputes amicably.
 - **A Permanent Indus Commission** was set up as a bilateral commission to implement and manage the Treaty. The Commission solves disputes arising over water sharing.

India – Iran

1. Chabahar Port

- The first phase of the Chabahar port on the Gulf of Oman was inaugurated recently.
- **Background:**
 - India and Iran had signed a pact for the development of Chabahar port in May 2016.
 - **India Ports Global**, a port project investment arm of the shipping ministry and a joint venture between the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust and the Kandla port, will invest \$85 million in developing two container berths and three multi-cargo berths.
- **Chabahar port:**



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- Iran's Chabahar port is **located on the Gulf of Oman** and is the only oceanic port of the country.
- It is located on the **Makran coast**, Chabahar in southeastern Iran.
- **For India, Chabahar is of strategic importance for the following reasons:**
 - India can bypass Pakistan in transporting goods to Afghanistan.
 - It is located 76 nautical miles (less than 150km) west of the **Pakistani port of Gwadar**, being developed by China. This makes it ideal for keeping track of Chinese or Pakistani military activity based out of Gwadar.
 - Also, Chabahar port acts as link with **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)** to which India is one of the initial signatories.
 - The port will cut transport costs/time for Indian goods by a third.
 - The **Zaranj-Delaram road constructed** by India in 2009 can give access to Afghanistan's Garland Highway, setting up road access to four major cities in Afghanistan — Herat, Kandahar, Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif.

India – Nepal

1. A new Bridge over Mechi River at Indo-Nepal border

- The Union Cabinet has approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Nepal for starting construction of a **new Bridge over Mechi River at Indo-Nepal border**.
- The estimated cost of construction of the bridge is Rs. 158.65 crore, which would be **funded by Government of India through Asian Development Bank (ADB) loan**.
- The new bridge is part of up-gradation of the Kakarvitta (Nepal) to Panitanki Bypass (India) on NH 327B.
- **Mechi Bridge is the ending point of Asian Highway 02 in India leading to Nepal** and provides critical connectivity to Nepal.
- **National Highway and Infrastructure Development Corporation (NHIDCL)** under Ministry of Road Transport & Highways has been designated as the implementing agency for this project.
- **Importance of the bridge:**
 - The construction of the bridge will improve regional connectivity and has potential to strengthen cross border trade between both the countries and cementing ties by strengthening industrial, social and cultural exchanges.
- **About Mechi river:**
 - The Mechi River is a **trans-boundary river flowing through Nepal and India**.
 - It is a **tributary of the Mahananda River**. The Mechi originates in the Mahabharat Range in Nepal.

India – Brazil

1. MoU between India and Brazil for cooperation in the fields of Zebu Cattle Genomics and Assisted Reproductive Technologies

- The Union Cabinet has apprised Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between India and Brazil for cooperation in the fields of Zebu Cattle Genomics and Assisted Reproductive Technologies. The MoU was signed in October, 2016.
- The MoU would **promote and facilitate scientific cooperation and setting up of genomic selection programme in Zebu Cattle through:**
 - Application of genomic in Zebu Cattle and their crosses and buffaloes.
 - Application of assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs) in cattle and buffaloes.
 - Capacity building in genomic and assisted reproductive technology.
 - Related research and development in Genomics and ART in accordance with the respective laws and regulations of the two countries and is covered.

- **Zebu cattle:**

- Zebu, sometimes known as **indicine cattle or humped cattle**, is a species or subspecies of domestic cattle originating in the Indian subcontinent.
- Zebu are characterised by a fatty hump on their shoulders, a large dewlap, and sometimes drooping ears.
- They are well **adapted to withstanding high temperatures, and are farmed throughout the tropical countries.**
- Zebu are used as **draught oxen, dairy cattle, and beef cattle**, as well as for byproducts such as hides and dung for fuel and manure.
- In 1999, researchers at Texas A&M University successfully cloned a zebu.



India – Israel

1. India-Israel Industrial R&D and Technological Innovation Fund

- The Union Cabinet has approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Israel on “**India-Israel Industrial R&D and Technological Innovation Fund (I4F)**”. The MoU was concluded in July, 2017.
- The MoU envisages promotion of **bilateral Industrial R&D and Innovation cooperation** in the fields of science and technology by extending support to joint projects for innovative or technology-driven new or improved products, services or processes.
- Such projects will lead to **affordable technological innovations** in focus areas of mutual interest such as water, agriculture, energy and digital technologies.
- Institutional support in building up consortia including private industry, enterprises and R&D institutions from India and Israel will be enabled through

these collaborative projects.

- **India and Israel will make contribution of four million US Dollars each for the Fund, both equivalent amount, annually for five years.**
- The Innovation Fund will be **governed by a joint Board** which will consist of four members from each country.
- The activities supported by the Joint Fund would increase the **techno-economic collaboration between the two countries.**

India – South Korea

1. Korea Plus

- “Korea Plus” operationalised on June 18, 2016 is a strategic initiative between the Governments of India and South Korea **“to promote, facilitate and retain Korean investments in India.”**
- The government is planning to facilitate greater investments from South Korea and would strengthen the ‘Korea Plus’ cell in this regard.
- **The mandate of Korea Plus covers the entire investment spectrum including:**
 - Supporting Korean enterprises entering the Indian market for the first time,
 - Looking into issues faced by Korean companies doing business in India and
 - Policy advocacy to the Indian government on their behalf.
- Korea Plus will act as a mediator in arranging meetings, assisting in public relations and research, evaluation and provide information and counselling in regard to Korean companies’ investing in India.
- Korea Plus comprises of a representative each from the Korean ministry of industry, trade and energy, Korea Trade Investment and Promotion Agency as well as three representatives from Invest India – the national investment promotion and facilitation agency of India.

India – Sri Lanka

1. Bottom Trawling

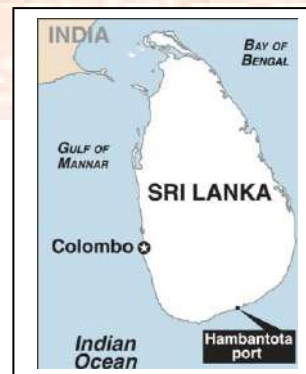
- During the recently held meeting of the **Joint Working Group**, India informed Sri Lanka that it has taken measures to stop bottom trawling by its fishermen in the waters near the Sri Lankan coastline.
- Bottom trawling by Indian fishermen had emerged as a major issue because of the disruptive impact it left on the coastal communities of Sri Lanka.
- **Bottom trawling:**
 - Bottom trawling is a **destructive fishing practice which affects the marine ecosystem.**
 - The practice, which involves trawlers dragging weighted nets along the sea floor, is known to cause **great depletion of fishery resources**, and curbing it is in the interest of sustainable fishing.
- **Measures taken by India:**
 - The launch of a programme on diversification of bottom trawlers into deep-sea fishing vessels for tuna long lining under the Blue Revolution

Scheme.

- Construction of Mookaiyur and Poompuhar fishing harbours, and capacity-building programmes for fishermen of the Palk Bay area in deep sea tuna long lining.
- Fresh registration for bottom trawlers in the Palk Bay area has been banned by the Government of Tamil Nadu.

2. India, Sri Lanka ink housing project deal in Hambantota

- Sri Lanka signed an agreement with India to build 1,200 houses in the southern port city- Hambantota.
- Of the 1,200 houses to be built, 600 will be constructed in the Southern Province, while the remaining would be built across Sri Lanka, through one model village in each of the country's 25 districts.
- **Significance:**
 - **Hambantota is right in the middle of vital energy supply lines in the Indian Ocean, connecting the Middle East and East Asia**
 - The signing of the MoU in Hambantota assumes significance not only in its timing, but also in taking India's housing project to the Sinhala-majority Southern Province.
 - Earlier India had constructed as many as 46,000 homes in Tamil-majority north and east, and 4,000 houses are being built in hill country in Central and Uva provinces.
 - India has been taking steps to protect itself in the Indian Ocean by allying itself with the United States and Japan in a clear bid to counter growing Chinese influence.
- **Hambantota:**
 - Hambantota is the main town in Hambantota District, Southern Province, Sri Lanka.
 - This underdeveloped area was hit hard by the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and is underwent a number of major development projects including the construction of a new sea port and international airport.



Protocols / Conventions / Treaties / Agreements

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1. India ratifies two key ILO conventions on child labour

- India has ratified two key ILO conventions on child labour concerning the elimination of child labour, the Minimum Age Convention (No 138) and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No 182).
- **Minimum Age Convention:**
 - The Convention concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment, is a Convention **adopted in 1973** by the International Labour Organization.
 - It requires ratifying states to **pursue a national policy designed to ensure the effective abolition of child labour** and to raise progressively the minimum age for admission to employment.
 - Countries are free to specify a minimum age for labour, with a minimum of 15 years.
 - A declaration of 14 years is also possible when for a specified period of time.
 - Laws may also permit light work for children aged 13–15 (not harming their health or school work).
 - The minimum age of 18 years is specified for work which “is likely to jeopardise the health, safety or morals of young persons”.
 - Definitions of the type of work and derogations are only possible after tripartite consultations (if such a system exists in the ratifying country).
- **Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention:**
 - The Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, known in short as the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, was adopted by ILO in 1999.
 - **By ratifying this Convention, a country commits itself to taking immediate action to prohibit and eliminate the worst forms of child labour.**
 - The ILO’s International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) is responsible for assisting countries in this regard as well as monitoring compliance.
 - The convention includes forms of child labour, which are predefined worst forms of child labour. They are also sometimes referred to as automatic worst forms of child labour.
- **Background:**
 - **India is a founder member of the International Labour Organization (ILO)**, which came into existence in 1919.
 - As of April 2016, the ILO has 187 members.
 - The principal means of action in the ILO is the setting up of International standards in the form of Conventions, Recommendations and Protocol.
 - India had so far ratified 45 Conventions, out of which 42 are in force. Out of these 4 are Fundamental or Core Conventions.

2. Social Security Agreement

- The Union Cabinet has approved Amendment of **the bilateral Social Security Agreement (SSA) between India and the Netherlands** by incorporating the **“Country of Residence”** Principle.
- The circumstances where the “country of residence” principle will apply to a few instances of Indian nationals include:
 - An Indian worker who dies in the Netherlands and has his/her spouse and children living in India.
 - An Indian worker who gets disabled while working in the Netherlands and returns to India.
- **Background:**
 - A bilateral Social Security Agreement, (SSA) was signed between India and the Netherlands on 22nd October 2009 and came into force on 15th June 2010.
 - The SSA **allows exemption from double contribution to the social security system in both jurisdictions, exportability of accumulated social security benefits across jurisdictions (applicable even to the self-employed), and totalization of serving periods.**
 - As on date, India has signed and operationalized SSAs with 18 countries – Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and South Korea.

3. Antarctica Treaty

- India is drafting a dedicated Antarctica policy.
- The new policy is expected to come up with clear policy objectives regarding infrastructure, research, tourism, etc. in Antarctica.
- The new law will be drafted in concurrence with the **Antarctica Treaty** to which India has acceded.
- **Background:**
 - The government is rebuilding its station, **Maitri, to make it bigger and last for at least 30 years.**
 - **Dakshin Gangotri, the first Indian base established in 1984,** has weakened and become just a supply base.
- **Antarctic Treaty:**
 - The treaty entered into force in 1961. As of now, the total number of parties to the treaty stands at 53.
 - The treaty is framed to ensure **‘in the interests of all mankind that Antarctica shall continue forever to be used exclusively for peaceful purposes and shall not become the scene or object of international discord.’**
 - It prohibits military activity, except in support of science; prohibits nuclear explosions and the disposal of nuclear waste; promotes scientific research and the exchange of data; and holds all territorial claims in abeyance.
 - Several related conventions, such as the Conservation of Antarctic

Seals (1972) and the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (1980), are appended to this treaty for protection.

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4. Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

- The **Nuclear Weapon Prohibition Treaty** was initiated by the United Nations in its session in July 2017.
- The treaty was adopted by a vote of 122 in favour with one country — NATO member The Netherlands voting against — while Singapore abstained.
- In order to come into effect, **signature and ratification by at least 50 countries is required.**
- **The treaty prohibits a full range of nuclear-weapon related activities**, such as undertaking to develop, test, produce, manufacture, acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, as well as the use or threat of use of these weapons.
- This is the most significant multilateral development on nuclear arms control since the adoption of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1968.
- None of the nine countries that possess nuclear weapons — the United States, Russia, Britain, China, France, India, Pakistan, North Korea and Israel — took part in the negotiations or the vote.
- Even Japan — the only country to have suffered atomic attacks, in 1945 — boycotted the talks as did most NATO countries.
- **Why is it being opposed?**
 - Nuclear powers argue their arsenals serve as a deterrent against a nuclear attack and say they remain committed to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).
- **50 nations ink UN nuclear ban treaty:**
 - Fifty countries recently signed a treaty to ban nuclear weapons, a pact that the world's nuclear powers spurned but supporters hailed as a historic agreement nonetheless.

5. Indian Community Welfare Fund

- The Union Cabinet has approved revision of the **Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) guidelines.**
- The revised guidelines seek to **expand the scope of welfare measures** that can be extended through the Fund.
- The guidelines would cover three key areas namely **Assisting Overseas Indian nationals in distress situations, Community Welfare activities and Improvement in Consular services.**
- They are expected to provide Indian Missions and Posts abroad greater flexibility in swiftly addressing to requests for assistance by Overseas Indian nationals.
- ICWF, **set up in 2009**, is aimed at assisting Overseas Indian nationals in times of distress and emergency in the most deserving cases on a means tested basis.
- The ICWF would be funded through budgetary support, funds raised by the Indian Missions by levying a nominal service charge on consular services and through Voluntary contributions from the Indian community.

6. Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction

- The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction or **Hague Abduction Convention** is a multilateral treaty developed by the **Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH)** that provides an expeditious method to **return a child internationally abducted by a parent from one member country to another.**
- The Convention entered into force between the signatories on 1 December 1983.
- The Convention was drafted to ensure the prompt return of children who have been abducted from their country of habitual residence or wrongfully retained in a contracting state not their country of habitual residence.
- The primary intention of the Convention is to preserve whatever status quo child custody arrangement existed immediately before an alleged wrongful removal or retention thereby deterring a parent from crossing international boundaries in search of a more sympathetic court.
- The Convention **applies only to children under the age of 16.**
- As of September 2017, 98 states are party to the convention. In 2016, Philippines and Pakistan acceded to the convention.
- **What is Inter-country parental child abduction?**
 - Inter-country parental child abduction is a situation that is attained when one parent takes a child or children to a foreign country to prevent the other parent from seeking custody of the child.
- **Centre rethinks joining Hague child custody pact:**
 - An “inter-ministerial process” is under way to discuss the repercussions of **the Hague convention** on India.
 - The government had in November 2016 announced that it would not sign the convention.
 - The Ministry of Women and Child Development has reservations about the treaty because they believe it could trample on women’s rights.
 - However, America says India should sign this convention to create a more effective response to deal with abduction cases and prevent **inter-country parental child abduction.**
- **Indian scenario:**
 - India’s case-load (regarding IPCA) is second largest in the United States which is followed by Mexico.
 - At least 90 children from 80 Indian-American families were affected by separating parents and the legal problems involved.
 - As more and more Indians are studying and working in the U.S, such cases are growing in number and it is necessary to get a better mechanism to deal with this.

7. Extradition Treaty

- The Union Cabinet has given its approval for the signing and ratification of **the Extradition Treaty between India and Lithuania.**

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- **Benefits of this treaty:**
 - The Treaty would provide a legal framework for seeking **extradition of terrorists, economic offenders and other criminals** from and to Lithuania.
 - It will bring the criminals to justice, with a view to ensure peace and tranquility to public at large.
- **What is extradition?**
 - Extradition is the **surrender of a criminal to one country by another**.
 - It also helps in maintaining the **territoriality of the penal code** which says that a country should not apply its criminal law to a person who committed an offence outside its territories except when the crime is related to the country's national interest.
 - The process is regulated by treaties between the two countries.
- **What are the internationally accepted conditions for extradition?**
 - There is a general consensus about few conditions of extradition.
 - The crime should fulfil the **criterion of dual criminality**, i.e. it is a punishable offence in both the countries.
 - For instance homosexuality might be a crime in country A while it is accepted in B. The country A can not request B to extradite a person who is charged with a homosexuality related offence.
 - **Persons charged for political reasons are generally not extradited**.
 - Some countries refuse to extradite if the kind of expected punishment is abolished or is not administered in their own territories.
 - For instance Australia, Canada, Macao, Mexico, and most of the European nations refuse to extradite a criminal if the person in question might get capital punishment after his extradition.
- **What are the extradition laws of India?**
 - In India the **Extradition Act, 1962** regulates the surrender of a person to another country or the request for arrest of a person in a foreign land.
 - The act specifies that any conduct of a person in India or in a foreign state that is mentioned in the list of extradition offence and is punishable with minimum one year of imprisonment qualifies for extradition request.
 - **The process has to be initiated by the central government**.
 - In the case of countries with which India does not have such a treaty, the central government can by notified order treat any convention to which India and the foreign country is a party as the extradition treaty providing for extradition with respect to the offences specified in that convention.
 - If the extradition request has come from two or more countries then the government has the rights to decide which of them is the fittest for the request.
- **In what conditions can the government deny extradition?**
 - If the government finds the case trivial and if it thinks that the **surrendering of the person is not being made in good faith** or in the interests of justice or for political reasons, it can deny the request.

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- If the surrender according to the requesting country's own law is barred by time then also the person cannot be extradited from India.
- The government can also stop the process if it feels that the person will be charged with an offence not mentioned in the extradition treaty.
- The government can put the extradition on hold if it feels that the person will be charged for a lesser offence, which is disclosed by the requesting authorities so that they can have the possession of the person.
- Apart from this, if the person is serving a jail term or he/she is accused of an offence in Indian soil, which is different from the offence for which the person is wanted abroad, then also the extradition process can be stopped.
- Similarly if a fugitive criminal has committed an offence which is punishable with death in India while the laws of foreign state do not provide death for the same offence then criminal will get life imprisonment in India also.

8. Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT)

- It is an international treaty whose **objective is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology**, to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and to further the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament.
- The Treaty entered into force in 1970.
- **Four UN member states have never joined the NPT: India, Israel, Pakistan and South Sudan.** North Korea, which acceded to the NPT in 1985 but never came into compliance, announced its withdrawal in 2003.
- **The treaty recognizes five states as nuclear-weapon states:** the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, and China.
- The NPT is interpreted as a **three-pillar system**, with an implicit balance among them: the three pillars are:
 - Non-proliferation.
 - Disarmament
 - The right to peacefully use nuclear technology.
- **India has denounced a call to give up its nuclear weapons and sign the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT)** while it “remains committed to universal, non-discriminatory and verifiable nuclear disarmament”.
 - This was in response to a call by a group calling itself the New Agenda Coalition that India – along with Israel and Pakistan – sign the NPT as NNWS (non-nuclear weapon states), which would effectively mean giving up its nuclear arsenal.
 - However, India has reiterated its commitment “as a responsible nuclear power” to “a policy of credible minimum deterrence based on a No First Use posture and non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states”.

9. Wassenaar Arrangement

- India became the **42nd member of Wassenaar Arrangement (WA)**, which is expected to raise New Delhi's stature in the field of non-proliferation besides helping it acquire critical technologies.
- The Wassenaar Arrangement is one of the world's four **major export control regimes**, the other three being the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the Missile Technology Control Regime and the Australia Group.
- The **Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies**, commonly known as the Wassenaar Arrangement, is a **multilateral export control regime** established to ensure regional and international security and stability promoting transparency in transfer of arms and dual-use goods and technologies.
- **What do the participating nations do?**
 - The participating nations make sure that the export of ammunition does not contribute to the development or enhancement of military capabilities undermining regional security.
 - In order to achieve the aim of stable defence deals, the participatory nations apply export controls to all items listed in the List of Dual-Use Goods and Technologies and the Munitions List.
- **How will this membership help India?**
 - It would **enhance its credentials in the field of non-proliferation** despite not being a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).
 - The WA membership is also expected to build up a strong case for India's entry into Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG).
 - Further, since India has low reserves of uranium required for its civil nuclear energy programmes, it will **help secure the supply of nuclear fuel more easily**.

10. Australia Group

- India was recently admitted as the **43rd member of the Australia Group**, an informal bloc of countries that keeps a tight control over exports of substances used in the making of chemical weapons.
- The Australia Group works to counter the spread of materials, equipment and technologies that could contribute to the development or acquisition of **chemical and biological weapons (CBW)** by states or terrorist groups. It was established in 1985.
- China, Pakistan, Iran, North Korea are not its members.
- With its admission into the Australia Group, **India is now part of three of the four key export control groups in the world**.
- The only export control group that India is not a part of is the elite Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG).

11. Strategic Framework for Education in Emergencies in the Arab Region

- **UNESCO** has launched a Strategic Framework for Education in Emergencies in the Arab Region (2018-2021).

- It aims to respond to the **Education crisis** in the region through supporting Member States in meeting their educational needs, and helping them meet the commitments set out in **SDG4 which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education** and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030.
- **Why Arab region?** Education has been deeply affected by the scale of crisis in the Arab Region, with over 13 million children and youth not going to school due to conflict.
- **Goals:** The Strategic Framework consists of **four strategic goals** anchored in the **three pillars of education: Access, Quality and System Strengthening**.
- **Significance of the framework:** The Framework aims to increase access to quality learning opportunities for children and youth, to empower them with values, knowledge and skills for life and work, to support teachers and enhance the resilience of education systems.

Strategic Goal 1	Strategic Goal 2	Strategic Goal 3	Strategic Goal 4
Children and youth affected by crisis access inclusive and quality learning opportunities	Learners affected by crisis are empowered with values, knowledge, and skills for life and work	Education actors provide quality education for better learning outcomes	Education systems are responsive and resilient to crisis

12. UN Convention against Torture

- India has signed the UN Convention against torture way back in 1997. But, it has still not ratified it.
- The Convention defines torture as a **criminal offence**.
- The Convention requires states to take effective measures to prevent torture in any territory under their jurisdiction, and forbids states to transport people to any country where there is reason to believe they will be tortured.
- **Background:**
 - The Supreme Court recently disposed of a PIL seeking to put in place a statutory framework to curb torture and custodial violence as it said that it can't direct the government to make an anti-torture law or ratify the UN convention against Torture.
 - The **Law Commission** has recommended that the Centre ratify the United Nations Convention against Torture and frame a standalone anti-torture law, making the state responsible for any injury inflicted by its agents on citizens.
 - The **National Human Rights Commission** has been urging the government to recognise torture as a separate crime and codify the punishment in a separate penal law.
 - The centre contends some States were not in favour of such a law and the Indian Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code were more than sufficient.

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13. Budapest Convention

- India was reconsidering its position on becoming a member of the **Budapest**

NOTES**Convention.**

- This was because of the surge in cybercrime, especially after a push for digital India.
- The Ministry of Home Affairs has flagged the need for international cooperation to check cyber crime, radicalization and boost data security
- The move is being **opposed by the Intelligence Bureau (IB)**.
- IB argues that sharing data with foreign law enforcement agencies infringes on national sovereignty and may jeopardize the rights of individuals
- The **Convention on Cybercrime, also known as the Budapest Convention**, is the first international treaty seeking to address Internet and computer crime by harmonizing national laws, improving investigative techniques, and increasing cooperation among nations.
- It was drawn up by the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, France, with the active participation of the Council of Europe's observer states Canada, Japan, South Africa and the United States.
- The Convention has 56 members, including the US and the UK.
- The Budapest Convention provides for the **criminalisation of conduct**, ranging from illegal access, data and systems interference to computer-related fraud and child pornography, procedural law tools to make investigation of cybercrime and securing of e-evidence in relation to any crime more effective, and international police and judicial cooperation on cybercrime and e-evidence.

International Organisations / Groupings

1. BRICS

- BRICS is the acronym for an association of five major emerging national economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.
- Originally the first four were grouped as "BRIC" before the induction of South Africa in 2010.
- The BRICS members are all leading developing or newly industrialized countries. All five are G-20 members.

Summits	Year	Location	Importance
1 st	June 2009	Russia	
2 nd	April 2010	Brazil	
3 rd	April 2011	China	First summit to include South Africa alongside the original BRIC countries.
4 th	March 2012	India	The BRICS Cable announced an optical fibre submarine communications cable system that carries telecommunications between the BRICS countries.
5 th	March 2013	South Africa	
6 th	July 2014	Brazil	BRICS New Development Bank and BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement agreements signed.
7 th	July 2015	Russia	Joint summit with Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) - Eurasian Economic Union (EEU)
8 th	October 2016	India	Joint summit with BIMSTEC
9 th	September 2017	China	Joint summit with Emerging Markets and Developing Countries Dialogue (EMDCD)

2. BRICS Media Forum

- China's state-run news agency Xinhua has announced a USD one million fund to institutionalise **media cooperation among the BRICS countries** including awards for journalists from the five member states.
- The BRICS media forum is a joint initiative of Xinhua News Agency, Brazil's CMA Group, Russia's Sputnik News Agency and Radio, the Hindu Group of India and South Africa's Independent Media.
- The plan will promote six objectives, including **"balanced reporting"**.
- It aims to create an alternative media narrative distinct from the media of western nations.
- It would also focus on **joint development of BRICS digital media**, financial information services and promoting people- to-people contacts.

3. BRICS 'Beijing Declaration On Education'

- **BRICS ministers of education** and assigned representatives have adopted 'Beijing Declaration on Education' in the 5th meeting of BRICS Ministers of education at Beijing.
- The Indian delegation was led by Prakash Javadekar, the Union Minister of Human Resource Development (HRD).
- According to the declaration, members states are committed to **the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4)-Education 2030 which aims to** *"Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all"*.

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- The declaration reiterated support for **the BRICS Network University (NU)** to collaborate in the fields of education, research and innovation.
- It also encouraged universities to participate in the BRICS University League.
- BRICS member states also decided to increase cultural cooperation through language education and multilingualism.

4. BRICS Labour & Employment Ministers' Meet

- China was the chair for the BRICS Labour & Employment Ministers' Meet for the year 2017. The meeting was held in Chongqing, China.
- The meeting concluded with the adoption of the **BRICS Labour and Employment Ministerial Declaration** by the BRICS Labour and Employment Ministers.
- The Declaration covered a variety of areas that are of critical importance to all BRICS countries including India and called upon **strengthening collaboration and cooperation** on these through appropriate institutionalisation. These areas consisted of:
 - "Governance in the Future of Work",
 - "Skills for development in BRICS",
 - "Universal and sustainable social security systems",
 - "BRICS Network of Labour Research Institutions",
 - "BRICS Social Security Cooperation Framework" and
 - "BRICS entrepreneurship research".

5. BRICS Agriculture Research Platform

- The Union Cabinet has given its ex-post facto approval for a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed among India and various BRICS countries for establishment of **the BRICS Agriculture Research Platform (BRICS-ARP)**.
- In October 2016, a MoU for setting up agriculture research platform (ARP) was signed by foreign ministers of BRICS countries in the 8th BRICS Summit held at Goa.
- With this, the Centre will promote **sustainable agricultural development** and **poverty alleviation** through strategic cooperation in agriculture to **provide food security** in the BRICS member countries.
- **BRICS-ARP will be the natural global platform for science-led agriculture-based sustainable development** for addressing the issues of world hunger, under-nutrition, poverty and inequality, particularly between farmers' and non-farmers' income, and enhancing agricultural trade, bio-security and climate resilient agriculture.

6. BRICS Leaders' Xiamen Declaration

- **9th BRICS summit** was recently held in Xiamen, China. This is **the second time the China has hosted the summit after the 2011 summit**.
- At the end of the summit, **Xiamen declaration** was adopted by the leaders of the five countries.
- **Highlights of the Xiamen declaration:**
 - BRICS countries will strive towards broad **partnerships with emerging markets and developing countries**

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- To promote the **development of BRICS local currency bond markets** and to jointly establish a **BRICS local currency bond fund** and also to facilitate **financial market integration**.
- Explorations toward the establishment of the **BRICS Institute of Future Networks**.
- To strengthen BRICS **cooperation on energy** and work to foster open, flexible and transparent markets for energy commodities and technologies.
- **BRICS Agriculture Research Platform** is proposed to be established in India.
- To establish a **genuinely broad counterterrorism coalition** and support the UN's central coordinating role in this regard.
- **Importance of people-to-people exchanges** in promoting development and enhancing mutual understanding, friendship and cooperation.
- To work together to **promote most effective use of fossil fuels** and wider use of gas, hydro and nuclear power.

7. BRICS Interbank Cooperation mechanism

- The Union Cabinet has given its approval to the signing of the (i) **Interbank Local Currency Credit Line Agreement** and (ii) **Cooperation Memorandum Relating to Credit Ratings by Exim Bank** with participating member banks under BRICS Interbank Cooperation Mechanism.
- As both the Agreement and the MoU are umbrella pacts, and are **non-binding** in nature, the Board of Directors of Exim Bank has been authorized to negotiate and conclude any individual contracts and commitments within their framework.
- **Impact:**
 - The Agreements will **promote multilateral interaction** within the area of mutual interest which will **deepen political and economic relations** with BRICS nations.
 - Signing of the Agreement will **position Exim Bank in the international platform** along with large development finance institutions, like CDS, VEB and BNDES.
 - Exim Bank, leveraging this umbrella agreement, could enter into bilateral agreement with any of these member institutions to raise resources for its business.
 - As and when an opportunity arises for co-financing in commercial terms, by any two member institutions (say India and South Africa), lending in single currency by both the institutions would also be possible.
- **Background:**
 - **Exim Bank finances, facilitates and promotes India's international trade.**
 - It provides competitive finance at various stages of the business cycle covering import of technology, export product development, export production and export credit at pre-shipment and post-shipment

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stages and investments overseas.

- **Interbank Local Currency Credit Line Agreement:**
 - The initial Master Agreement on Extending Credit Facility in Local Currency under the BRICS Interbank Cooperation Mechanism had a validity of five years, which has expired in March 2017.
 - It is understood that some of the member banks (like CDB and VEB; CDB and BNDES) have entered into bilateral agreements for local currency financing under the Master Agreement signed in 2012.
 - Although the current conditions are not conducive to usage, it was useful to keep the same alive as an enabling feature in case a suitable opportunity materializes in future.
 - Exim Bank raises resources in the off-shore market in diverse currencies and swaps to mitigate the risk.
 - The umbrella Agreement would serve as an enabler to enter into bilateral agreements with member banks subject to national laws, regulations and internal policies of the signatories.
- **Cooperation Memorandum Relating to Credit Ratings:**
 - It would enable sharing of credit ratings amongst the BRICS member banks, based on the request received from another bank.
 - This would be an ideal mechanism to mitigate the credit risks associated with cross-border financing.
 - In future, such a mechanism could also serve as pre-cursor to the proposal of having an alternate rating agency by BRICS nations.

8. Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG)

- Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) is a multinational body concerned with **reducing nuclear proliferation by controlling the export and re-transfer of materials that may be applicable to nuclear weapon development** and by improving safeguards and protection on existing materials.
- The NSG was **set up in 1974 as a reaction to India's nuclear tests** to stop what it called the misuse of nuclear material meant for peaceful purposes.
- Currently, it has 48 members and **works by consensus**.
- **Once admitted, an NSG member state:**
 - Gets timely information on nuclear matters.
 - Contributes by way of information.
 - Has confirmed credentials.
 - Can act as an instrument of harmonization and coordination.
 - Is part of a very transparent process.
- **Background:**
 - India sought membership of the NSG in 2008, but its application hasn't been decided on, primarily because **signing the NPT or other nuclear moratoriums on testing is a pre-requisite**.
 - The NSG works under the principle of **unanimity** and **even one country's vote** against India will scuttle its bid.
 - However, India has received a special waiver to conduct nuclear trade with all nuclear exporters.
 - **India, Pakistan, Israel and South Sudan are among the four UN**

member states which have not signed the NPT, the international pact aimed at preventing the spread of nuclear weapons.

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9. BIMSTEC

- BIMSTEC or the **Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation** is a regional organization which comprises of **seven member states** which lie near the Bay of Bengal.
 - 5 come from South Asia, including **India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka**; and 2 come from Southeast Asia, which includes **Myanmar and Thailand**.
- This sub-regional organisation was started on June 6, in the year 1997 through a **Bangkok Declaration**.
- BIMSTEC celebrated its 20th anniversary on June 06, 2017.
- BIMSTEC headquarters are situated in **Dhaka**, Bangladesh.
- The main objective of BIMSTEC is **technological and economical cooperation** among South Asian and South East Asian countries along the coast of the Bay of Bengal.
- The BIMSTEC region is home to around 1.5 billion people which constitute around **22% of the global population**.
- The region has a combined gross domestic product (**GDP**) of **\$2.7 trillion**.

10. BIMSTEC Disaster Management Exercise – 2017

- The **first BIMSTEC Disaster Management Exercise-2017 (DMEx-2017)** was held in New Delhi.
- It was conducted by the **National Disaster Response Force (NDRF)** as the nodal agency in Delhi and the National Capital Region.
- The Exercise provided a platform to **share the Best Practices** on comprehensive aspects of **Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)**, strengthening regional response and coordination for Disaster Management among the BIMSTEC nations.
- The exercise comprised of a Table Top Exercise (TTX), Field Training Exercises (FTXs) on Earthquake and Flood and an After Action Review (AAR).
- The exercise also aimed to **test region's preparedness and resilience** towards effective activation of inter-Governmental interaction and agreements for immediate deployment of regional resources for disaster response.
- **India has been at the forefront of DRR** efforts by hosting the South Asian Annual Disaster Management Exercise (SAADMEx) and the Asian Ministerial Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR).
- India has also offered its expertise and capabilities in DRR such as the South Asia satellite, GSAT-9, and the Tsunami Early Warning Centre to other countries.

11. BIMSTEC meeting

- The **15th ministerial meeting** of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation concluded in Kathmandu, **endorsing the memorandum of understanding for the establishment of BIMSTEC grid interconnection** and also agreed to **expedite the negotiations for BIMSTEC**

Free Trade Area Agreement.

- The meeting of the BIMSTEC also pledged to deepen **cooperation for shared prosperity in the region.**
- The meeting decided to establish cells focused on areas, like energy, environment and culture, among others, for effective cooperation and to elevate BIMSTEC as a vibrant and visible regional cooperation.
- The meeting also decided to form an **eminent persons' group to prepare the future roadmap of BIMSTEC.**

12. BIMSTEC Task Force on Traditional Medicine

- The first-ever meeting of BIMSTEC Task Force on Traditional Medicine (BITFM) was held at Parvasi Bhartiya Kendra in New Delhi.
- It was organized by **Union Ministry of AYUSH.**
- India being a major stakeholder in the field of Traditional Medicine plays an important role in influencing the policies and strategies related to the Traditional Medicine in the BIMSTEC Forum.
- **Important Agenda:**
 - Implementation of Strategies of BIMSTEC Task Force on Traditional Medicines
 - Identification of priority areas in traditional medicine for technical and research collaboration among member states
 - Regional Strategy for protection of Genetic Resource associated with Traditional Medicine Knowledge and Intellectual Property Rights
 - Human Resource Development and Capacity Building among the BIMSTEC Member States
 - New Initiative, proposals and programmes for cooperation on Traditional Medicine among the BIMSTEC Task Force on Traditional Medicine.

13. Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)

- SCO is a **Eurasian economic, political and security organisation** headquartered in Beijing, China.
- It was **founded in 2001.** The full members of the organization are **China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, India and Pakistan.**
- **Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran and Mongolia have observer status** at present.
- China had founded this grouping in 1996 and then it was called as Shanghai Five comprising of Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.
- In 2001, Uzbekistan was invited to join it and SCO was officially born.
- The groupings **main objective is military cooperation** between members.
- It is primarily centred on **Central Asian security-related concerns.**
- The SCO has established relations with the United Nations, where it is an **observer in the General Assembly, the European Union, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation.**
- 17th SCO summit concluded in Astana, capital of Kazakhstan in June 2017.
- India and Pakistan were inducted as full members of the SCO at the summit.
- The next summit of the organization would take place in 2018 in China.

14. SCO contact group meeting on Afghanistan

- **India for the first time ever was invited to join Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) contact group meeting on Afghanistan** to discuss prevailing security situation and economic potential of the landlocked country.
- The meeting was held in Moscow and comes as a feather in the cap for India's Afghan strategy after successful US backed Indo-Afghan trade and investment show in Delhi.
- The development is viewed as acknowledgement of India's stake in the war-torn country.
- **Background:**
 - The SCO contact group on Afghanistan that became defunct in 2009 has been revived following intervention by Russian President Vladimir Putin.
 - India was invited to join maiden SCO contact group meeting on Afghanistan after it became a SCO member this June.

15. International Economic Association (IEA)

- The Finance Ministry's former Chief Economic Advisor Kaushik Basu has taken over as President of **the International Economic Association (IEA)**. He will hold the office for a **term of three years**.
- The IEA was founded in 1950 as a **Non-Governmental Organization**, at the instigation of the Social Sciences Department of UNESCO.
- It has since its creation maintained information and consultative relations with UNESCO and is since 1973 a federated member of the International Social Science Council.
- Its aim has been to **promote personal contacts and mutual understanding among economists** in different parts of the world through the **organization of scientific meetings**, through common research programs and by means of publications of an international character on problems of current importance.
- The IEA is governed by a **Council, composed of representatives of all Member Associations as well as a limited number of co-opted members**.
- The Council meets triennially when it reviews the general policy of the Association and elects the President and other Officers and members of the Executive Committee for a three-year term of office.
- Amongst the past presidents of IEA were the Nobel Laureates Robert Solow, Amartya Sen and Joseph Stiglitz.

16. South Asian Sub-Regional Economic Cooperation (SASEC)

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs gave its approval for upgradation and widening of 65 kms of **Imphal-Moreh Section of NH-39 in Manipur**.
- The project is being developed with **ADB's loan assistance under the South Asian Sub-Regional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Road Connectivity Investment Program**.
- **The project corridor is also a part of the Asian Highway No. 01 (AH01) and acts as India's Gateway to the East.**

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- **SASEC:**
 - Established in 2001, the SASEC program is a project-based partnership to **promote regional prosperity** by improving **cross-border connectivity**, boosting trade among member countries and strengthening regional economic cooperation.
 - The seven-member SASEC comprises **India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Myanmar**.
 - **ADB is the secretariat and lead financier of the SASEC program**, which has supported around 46 projects worth \$9.17 billion in transport, trade facilitation, energy and information and communications technology (ICT).
 - The **SASEC OP (Operational Plan)**, endorsed in June 2016 by the SASEC member countries, is SASEC's first comprehensive long-term plan to promote greater economic cooperation among the member countries in the areas of transport, trade facilitation, energy, and economic corridor development.
 - Bringing regional cooperation to a higher level, the SASEC OP plans to extend physical linkages not only within SASEC but also with East and Southeast Asia by the next decade.

17. G20 Summit

- **12th G20 Summit** was recently held at the **German city of Hamburg**.
- The **theme** for 2017 G20 Summit: **"Shaping an Inter-connected World"**.
- The leaders of the G20 countries agreed for taking concrete **steps to stop funding of the terror activities**.
- The leaders proposed the **Hamburg Action Plan** to address major global challenges, including climate change, harnessing digitalisation, and to contribute to prosperity and well-being.
- The 'Group of Twenty' is made up of **19 countries and the European Union**.
- The countries are Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, **India**, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the UK and the US.
- It was **started in 1999** as a meeting of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors in the aftermath of the South-east Asian financial crisis.
- The G20, with its **ministerial-level beginnings in 1999**, first met for a summit in 2008 in Washington to discuss ways to achieve balanced and sustainable world economic growth.

18. G20 Sherpa

- **Shri Shaktikanta Das**, Former Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, has been appointed as India's G 20 Sherpa till December 31, 2018 for the Development Track of the G20.
- **Who is a Sherpa?**
 - A Sherpa is a **personal representative of the leader of a member country** at an international Summit meeting such as the G8, G20 or the Nuclear Security Summit.
 - The term is derived from the Nepalese Sherpa people, who serve as

guides for mountaineers in the Himalayas.

- **Appointment:**
 - Sherpas are career diplomats or senior government officials appointed by the leaders of their countries.
 - There is only one Sherpa per Summit for each member country; he/she is assisted by several sous Sherpas.
- **What they do?**
 - The Sherpa engages in **planning, negotiation and implementation tasks** through the Summit.
 - They coordinate the agenda, seek consensus at the highest political levels, and participate in a series of pre-Summit consultations to help negotiate their leaders' positions.
- **Sherpas at G20 summit:**
 - There are two tracks in G 20- **Finance Track and Development Track**.
 - Finance Track is managed by the Secretary (Economic Affairs) as India's Deputy to G 20 and the Development Track is coordinated by the Sherpa.
 - The Department of Economic Affairs will provide necessary support to the Sherpa.

19. Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)

- RCEP is proposed between the **ten member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)** (Brunei, Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam) **and the six states with which ASEAN has existing FTAs** (Australia, China, India, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand).
- RCEP negotiations were formally launched in November 2012 at the ASEAN Summit in Cambodia.
- RCEP is viewed as an **alternative to the TPP trade agreement**, which includes the United States but excludes China and India.



20. Trans-Pacific Partnership

- 11 Pacific Rim countries have formally entered into **Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership** or CP TPP or TPP11.
- It is **revised version** of Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) proposed by US, that was finalized after **US withdrew from it**.
- TPP11 includes Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam.
- It will be world's third largest trade bloc after European Union (EU) and North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

21. World Petroleum Congress

- The **22nd World Petroleum Congress (WPC) International Conference** was held at Istanbul, Turkey. India also took part in the conference.
- The tri-annual WPC Conference is widely recognized as the `Olympics` of the oil and gas industry.
- It attracts Ministers, CEOs of Oil and Gas MNCs, experts and academics from the hydrocarbon sectors and provides an ideal forum to showcase potential of countries' hydrocarbon sector.
- It also provides a platform to interact with policy makers, technologists, scientists, planners and management experts.

22. Arab League

- The Arab League is a regional organization of Arab countries in and around **North Africa, the Horn of Africa and Arabia**.
- It was formed in Cairo on 22 March **1945** with six members: Kingdom of Egypt, Kingdom of Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Syria.
- **Currently, the League has 22 members**, but Syria's participation has been suspended since November 2011, as a consequence of government repression during the Syrian Civil War.
- The League's **main 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*".
- The objective is to provide economic, political, cultural, scientific and social programmes designed to promote the interests of the Arab world.

23. Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)

- India had strongly rejected the resolutions of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) that had expressed concern about the attacks on people by cow-vigilante groups.
- India has termed the resolutions adopted at the OIC's foreign ministers' meeting as "factually incorrect".
- **Background:**
 - The OIC noted that incidents of violence against the Muslim community were being committed by extremist Hindu groups and said it viewed such incidents "with grave concern".
- **About the OIC:**
 - Organisation of Islamic Cooperation is an international organization founded in 1969, consisting of 57 member states.
 - A few countries with significant Muslim populations, such as Russia and Thailand, are Observer States, while others, such as India and Ethiopia, are not members.
 - The organisation states that it is "***the collective voice of the Muslim world***" and works to "*safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony*".

- The OIC **has permanent delegations to the United Nations and the European Union.**
- The official languages of the OIC are Arabic, English, and French.

24. Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC)

- **The Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC)** has adopted **three Codex standards for black, white and green pepper, cumin and thyme**, paving the way for universal agreement on identifying quality spices in various countries.
- This would facilitate evolving a **common standardization process** for their global trade and availability.
- The Codex standards were adopted in the wake of India conducting three sessions of Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH) at Kochi (2014), Goa (2015) and Chennai (2017). The Chennai session succeeded in achieving this consensus.
- With the adoption of the Codex standards on pepper, cumin and thyme, **spices have been included for the first time as commodities that will have such universal standards.**
- The adoption of the Codex standards would imply that there are now reference points and benchmarks for the member-countries to align their national standards for spices with Codex.
- It will bring harmony to the global spice trade and ensure availability of high quality, clean and safe spices to the world.
- **Codex Alimentarius Commission:**
 - The Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) is an **intergovernmental body** with over 180 members, within the **framework of the Joint Food Standards Programme.**
 - It was established by the **Food and Agriculture Organization** of the United Nations (FAO) and the **World Health Organization (WHO)**, with the purpose of protecting the health of consumers and ensuring fair practices in the food trade.
 - The Commission also promotes **coordination of all food standards** work undertaken by international governmental and nongovernmental organizations.
 - The Codex Alimentarius is recognized by the World Trade Organization as an international reference point for the resolution of disputes concerning food safety and consumer protection.

25. Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN)

- ASEAN is a group of **10 Southeast Asian nations** which came into existence on August 8, **1967 after ASEAN declaration** (also known as **Bangkok declaration**).
- It is a regional organisation that aims to promote **intergovernmental cooperation** and facilitates economic integration amongst its members.
- Its Motto is **“One Vision, One Identity, One Community”**.
- The 10 members are **Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.**
- Founder countries of ASEAN are Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Philippines

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and Thailand.

- The **Secretariat of ASEAN is at Jakarta, Indonesia.**
- ASEAN is an official United Nations observer, as well as an active global partner.

26. ASEAN-India Connectivity Summit (AICS)

- **India hosted the Asean-India Connectivity Summit (AICS)** on the theme **“Powering Digital and Physical Linkages for Asia in the 21st Century”**.
- It was organized by the **Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)** in collaboration with AIC (ASEAN-India Centre) and CII (Confederation of Indian Industry).
- It was organised as part of the celebratory events being organised to commemorate the silver jubilee of ASEAN-India dialogue partnership.
- The AICS aims to accelerate existing connectivity prospects, identify issues of concern, evolve suitable policy recommendations and develop strategies to enhance economic, industrial and trade relations between ASEAN and India.
- **Its focus areas** are infrastructure, roadways, shipping, digital, finance, energy and aviation.
- **Participants:** Policymakers, senior officials from the government, investors, industry leaders, representatives of trade associations and entrepreneurs on the same platform.

27. ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit

- **Delhi declaration** was adopted at the recently concluded **ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit**.
- ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit was held to celebrate the **25th anniversary** of the establishment of sectoral dialogue between two sides under the theme of **“Shared Values, Common Destiny”**.
- India and 10 ASEAN countries for first time mentioned cross-border movement of terrorists and made commitment to counter the challenge through close cooperation as part of the declaration.

28. Delhi Dialogue 9

- The 9th edition of the Delhi Dialogue was held in New Delhi.
- The Delhi Dialogue is an **annual event to discuss politico-security, economic and socio-cultural engagement between ASEAN and India**. It has been held annually since 2009.
- The theme for Delhi Dialogue 9 is **“ASEAN-India Relations: Charting the Course for the Next 25 Years”**.
- Delhi Dialogue is a conference in which policymakers converge to discuss a range of issues relating to India-Asean relations.
- The Delhi Dialogue is being organised by the **Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)** in collaboration with the **Observer Research Foundation (ORF)**, **Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Ficci)**, and other bodies of the Asean countries.

29. International Vaccine Institute (IVI)

- The **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** has signed a **MoU with the**

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International Vaccine Institute (IVI) for collaborating on vaccine research and development.

- India will commit \$5,00,000 (₹3.20 crore) annually for a stake in IVI.
- International Vaccine Institute (IVI), Seoul, South Korea, is an international non-profit organization established in 1997 on **the initiatives of the UNDP**, is devoted to **developing and introducing new and improved vaccines** to protect the people, especially children, against deadly infectious diseases.
- Created initially as an initiative of the UN Development Programme (UNDP), IVI began formal operations as an independent international organization in 1997.
- Currently, IVI has 40 countries and the World Health Organization (WHO) as signatories to its Establishment Agreement.
- The Institute has a unique mandate to work exclusively on vaccine development and introduction specifically for people in **developing countries**, with a **focus on neglected diseases** affecting these regions.
- **India and the IVI:**
 - In the year 2007, with the approval of Cabinet, India joined IVI. India is a long-term collaborator and stake-holder of IVI.
 - IVI has been partnering with Indian vaccine manufacturers, research institutes, government, and public health agencies on vaccine development, research, and training.
 - One of the most successful collaborations was with Shantha Biotech on the development of **Shanchol, the world's first low-cost oral cholera vaccine**.

30. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

- The International Atomic Energy Agency is the world's central intergovernmental forum for scientific and technical co-operation in the nuclear field.
- It was established as an autonomous organization in 1957 through its own international treaty, the **IAEA Statute**.
- It is **not under direct control of the UN**. Though established independently of the United Nations, **the IAEA reports to both the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council**.
- It was set up as the world's "**Atoms for Peace**" organization in 1957.
- It also seeks to **promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy**, and to inhibit its use for any military purpose, including nuclear weapons.
- The Agency works with its Member States and multiple partners worldwide to promote safe, secure and peaceful nuclear technologies.
- The **IAEA Secretariat is headquartered at the Vienna International Centre in Vienna, Austria**.
- The IAEA serves as an intergovernmental forum for **scientific and technical cooperation** in the peaceful use of nuclear technology and nuclear power worldwide.

31. European Free Trade Association (EFTA)

- The **European Free Trade Association (EFTA)** is a regional trade

organization and free trade area consisting of **four European states: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland.**

- The organization operates in parallel with the European Union (EU), and all four member states participate in the European Single Market.
- They are **not party to the European Union Customs Union.**
- It was established in May 1960 through Stockholm Convention to serve as an alternative trade bloc for those European states that were unable or unwilling to join the European Economic Community (EEC) which subsequently became European Union.
- **EFTA is not a customs union** and member states have full rights to enter into bilateral trade arrangements with third-country.
- EFTA does not envisage political integration and does not issue legislation.
- Its **secretariat is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.**
- India and European Free Trade Association (EFTA) is yet to conclude their long pending negotiations on Free Trade Agreement (FTA). So far, around 16 rounds of negotiations have taken place which had started in 2008.

32. International Organization for Migration (IOM)

- IOM was established in **1951 as the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM)** to help resettle people displaced by World War II.
- It was granted **Permanent Observer status to UN General Assembly in 1992.**
- As of September 2016, it became a **related organization of the United Nations.**
- Its headquarters is in **Geneva, Switzerland.**
- IOM is the leading **inter-governmental organization in the field of migration** and works closely with governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental partners.
- With 169 member states, a further 8 states holding observer status and offices in over 100 countries, IOM is dedicated to **promoting humane and orderly migration for the benefit of all.**
- It does so by providing services and **advice to governments and migrants.**
- **India is a member of IOM.**
- IOM works to help ensure the orderly and humane management of migration, to **promote international cooperation on migration issues**, to assist in the search for practical solutions to migration problems and to provide **humanitarian assistance to migrants in need**, including refugees and internally displaced people.
- **IOM works in the four broad areas of migration management:**
 - Migration and development.
 - Facilitating migration.
 - Regulating migration.
 - Forced migration.
- **World Migration Report 2018:**
 - World Migration Report 2018 is the ninth in the series.
 - Since 2000, **International Organization for Migration** has been producing world migration reports to contribute to increased **understanding of migration throughout the world.**

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- **India tops the world in the number of migrants sent abroad.** About 16.59 million Indian live abroad. Mexico sent out 13 million migrants, the second highest number.
- Most of the international migration takes place among developing countries with 60% of the migrants from Asia going to other Asian countries.
- **International migrants:**
 - The definition of international migrants used in the report is broad, taking into account anyone living in a country other than their own and includes refugees and economic migrants, both those immigrating officially and those who do so “irregularly”.
 - The numbers are not a count of people by national origin or ethnicity and, therefore, do not include children of migrants born in the countries their parents went to.

33. BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement

- **Bangladesh, India and Nepal agreed on text of operating procedures for passenger vehicle movement** (Passenger protocol) in sub-region under Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA).
- The passenger protocol agreed upon is document detailing procedures for cross-border movement of buses and private vehicles for transport facilitation in sub region.
- It will be signed by three countries after completing necessary internal approval processes in their government.
- Bangladesh, India, and Nepal have already ratified the MVA and have agreed to start implementation of the MVA among the three signatory countries, with Bhutan joining after it ratifies the Agreement.
- **Background:**
 - India in June 2015 had signed the major sub-regional transport project, Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA), for the seamless transit of passenger and cargo vehicles among them.
 - Bhutan could not get public and parliamentary support for it.
 - However, Bhutan had suggested that Bangladesh, India and Nepal may consider the implementation of the MVA.
- **BBIN MVA:**
 - The four SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) countries had in June 2015 signed the Motor Vehicle Agreement.
 - The pact aims at **allowing motor vehicles of all categories registered in three countries to move freely in the region.**
 - The pact aims to realise the ultimate objective of **free movement of people and goods** in the region and said that this would be supplemented through the **building and upgrading roads, railways and waterways infrastructure.**
 - The **Asian Development Bank (ADB) has been providing technical, advisory, and financial support** to the BBIN MVA initiative as part of its assistance to the south Asia sub-regional economic cooperation

(SASEC) programme.

- Earlier, trial runs for cargo vehicles under the MVA were conducted along the Kolkata-Dhaka-Agartala and Delhi-Kolkata- Dhaka routes.

34. IBSA Dialogue Forum

- **Established in June 2003, INDIA-BRAZIL-SOUTH AFRICA (IBSA)** is a coordinating mechanism amongst **three emerging countries**, three multi ethnic and multicultural democracies, which are determined to:
 - Contribute to the construction of a new international architecture.
 - Bring their voice together on global issues.
 - Deepen their ties in various areas.
- It brings together three large democracies and major economies from three different continents namely, Africa, Asia and South America that represents three important poles for galvanizing South-South cooperation.
- IBSA also opens itself to concrete projects of cooperation and partnership with less developed countries.
- The establishment of IBSA was formalised by the **Brasilia Declaration** of 6 June 2003.
- Their status as middle powers, their common need to address social inequalities within their borders and the existence of consolidated industrial areas in the three countries are often mentioned as additional elements that bring convergence among the members of the Forum.

35. IBSA Trust Fund Agreement

- India, Brazil and South Africa have signed **the IBSA Trust Fund Agreement** that seeks to **fight poverty in developing countries**.
- The agreement was signed at the **8th IBSA trilateral Ministerial Commission Meeting** in Durban.
- Each country contributes USD 1 million annually to this fund which is **managed by the UN Development Programmes (UNDP) Special Unit for South-South Cooperation**.

36. International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN)

- The **Nobel Peace Prize** has been awarded to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (Ican).
- Ican has been chosen for its **“groundbreaking efforts to achieve a treaty prohibition” on nuclear weapons**.
- Ican, a **coalition of hundreds of non-governmental organisations (NGOs)**, is 10 years old and is based in Geneva, Switzerland.

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- Ican set about an alternative approach – to raise popular awareness of the issue and to pressure governments to open up a new treaty for signature in 2017 that would seek an outright ban on nuclear weapons.
- In July 2017, after pressure from Ican, 122 nations backed a UN treaty designed to ban and eventually eliminate all nuclear weapons. But none of the nine known nuclear powers in the world – including the UK and the US – endorsed it.

Big push to disarmament

The Nobel Peace Prize 2017 has been awarded to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) for its work to draw attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons

- 1** ICAN focusses on the threat to humanity posed by nuclear arms
- 2** Works on building global support for the abolition of nuclear weapons
- 3** Founded in Vienna in 2007, ICAN has the support of more than 400 NGOs across the world
- 4** It was a key player in the adoption of a historic nuclear weapons ban treaty, signed by 122 countries on July 7, 2017



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37. International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities (IALA)

- Union Cabinet has given its approval for International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities (IALA) to change its **status from Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) to Inter-Governmental Organization (IGO)**.
- The move will facilitate “to foster the safe, economic and efficient movement of vessels”.
- It will bring IALA at par with **International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and International Hydrographic Organisation (IHO)**.
- **Background:**
 - In its 12th session held in La Coruna, Spain in May 2014, IALA General Assembly had adopted resolution stating that status of IALA from NGO to IGO will best facilitate IALA’s aims in 21st century.
- **IALA:**
 - The IALA, having headquarters at St. Germainen Laye (France) was established in 1957 under French law.
 - It is governed by a General Assembly having 83 National members, with its Council as the executive body.
 - The IALA council consists of 24 National Members and **India is one of the council members represented through the Directorate General of Lighthouses and Lightships (DGLL), Ministry of Shipping.**
 - DGLL establishes and maintains Aids to Navigation in general waters along coast of India including A&N and Lakshadweep group of islands, as per Lighthouse Act 1927.

38. South Asia Economic Summit

- **Xth South Asia Economic Summit (SAES)** was held at Kathmandu.
- More than 200 participants including ministers, members of parliaments, ambassadors, government officials, eminent experts and thinkers attended the summit.
- **The theme of the summit** is “Deepening Economic Integration for Inclusive and Sustainable Development in South Asia”.
- Started in 2008, South Asia Economic Summit is like Davos- World Economic Forum event in South Asia.
- It is a regional platform for **discussing and analyzing economic and development issues** and challenges faced by South Asian countries and advancing the cause of regional integration and cooperation.
- It brings together stakeholders from the government, private sector, research, academics and civil society to generate innovative and actionable ideas for consideration by the region’s policymakers and SAARC.

39. Asia Pacific Computer Emergency Response Team (Apcert)

- The 15th Asia Pacific Computer Emergency Response Team (APCERT) Conference was held in New Delhi.
- It is **first ever conference to be held in India and South Asia**.
- It was organised by **Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In)** under the aegis of Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology.
- The theme of conference was “**Building Trust in the Digital Economy**”.
- APCERT (Asia Pacific Computer Emergency Response Team) is a **coalition of CSIRTs (Computer Security Incident Response Teams), from 13 economies across the Asia Pacific region**.
- APCERT organizes an annual meeting called APSIRC conference, and the first conference was held in March 2002, Tokyo, Japan.
- **Membership:** Any CSIRT from Asia Pacific Region, who is interested to furthering the objectives of APCERT, will be allowed to join as APCERT members after meeting all member accreditation requirements.
- **APCERT membership model has 2 levels:**
 - Full members: Full Members are CSIRTs/CERTs in the Asia Pacific region, who have the right to vote on APCERT issues, as well as to stand for election to the APCERT Steering Committee.
 - All Founding Members are Full Members.
 - General Members: Any CSIRTs/CERTs in the Asia Pacific region with an interest in incident response and IT security, can join APCERT as a General Member.
 - General Members are not eligible to vote or to stand for election to the APCERT Steering Committee.
 - An applicant is required to join APCERT as a General Member first.
 - After applicants obtain a General Member status, they can later apply to upgrade their membership to a Full Member status.
 - General Membership is a pre-requisite to become a Full Member.

40.7th Asian Energy Ministers' Round Table organised by International Energy Forum (IEF)

- **India was the current Chair of the IEF.**
- It was hosted by Thailand and co-Hosted by the United Arab Emirates.
- **Highlights:**
 - How to overcome market and policy hurdles.
 - Importance of a flexible, transparent and non-discriminatory global LNG trading regime which would expedite ushering in the golden age of gas.
 - Need to move to a gas based economy and the avenues for FDI in building infrastructure for gas including LNG terminals, pipelines, CGD etc.
- **International Energy Forum (IEF):**
 - IEF is the largest inter-governmental organisation in the field of oil and gas comprising 72 member countries, accounting for 90% of global supply and demand of oil and gas.
 - Members include developing, developed, OPEC, Non-OPEC and G20 countries.
 - 18 of the G20 countries are members of IEF.
 - The IEF is promoted by a permanent Secretariat based in the Diplomatic Quarter of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

41. International Energy Agency (IEA)

- **The 2017 IEA Ministerial Meeting was recently held in Paris.**
- The focus of the meeting was on global energy challenges and how they can be overcome.
- Founded in 1974, the IEA was initially designed to help countries co-ordinate a collective response to major disruptions in the supply of oil, such as the crisis of 1973/4.
- Members: Presently it has 30 member countries. India is the associate member of IAE.
- Headquarters (Secretariat): Paris, France.
- Publications: **World Energy Outlook report.**
- **The four main areas of IEA focus are:**
 - **Energy Security:** Promoting diversity, efficiency, flexibility and reliability for all fuels and energy sources;
 - **Economic Development:** Supporting free markets to foster economic growth and eliminate energy poverty;
 - **Environmental Awareness:** Analysing policy options to offset the impact of energy production and use on the environment, especially for tackling climate change and air pollution; and
 - **Engagement Worldwide:** Working closely with partner countries, especially major emerging economies, to find solutions to shared energy and environmental concerns.
- **Functions:**
 - The IEA examines the full spectrum of energy issues including oil, gas

and coal supply and demand, renewable energy technologies, electricity markets, energy efficiency, access to energy, demand side management and much more.

- The IEA advocates policies that will enhance the reliability, affordability and sustainability of energy in its member countries and beyond.

42. South Asia Regional Training and Technical Assistance Center

(SARTTAC)

- An **Interim Meeting of the Steering Committee** of the International Monetary Fund (IMF)'s South Asia Regional Training and Technical Assistance Center (SARTTAC) was held recently in national capital to assess the Center's activities since its inauguration in February 2017 and to review the Fiscal Year 2018 Work Plan.
- Officials from all Six Member countries attended the meeting, together with the Development Partner representatives (the European Union, the United Kingdom, Australia, and USAID), and IMF staff.
- **SARTTAC, the newest addition to the IMF's global network of fourteen regional centres**, is a new kind of **capacity development institution**, fully integrating customized hands-on training with targeted technical advice in a range of macroeconomic and financial areas, and generating synergies between the two. It was inaugurated at Delhi in February 2017.
- SARTTAC is financed mainly by its **six member countries** — Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka — with **additional support** from Australia, the Republic of Korea, the European Union and the United Kingdom.
- SARTTAC's strategic goal is to help its member countries **strengthen their institutional and human capacity** to design and implement macroeconomic and financial policies that promote growth and reduce poverty.
- SARTTAC will allow the IMF to meet more of the high demand for technical assistance and training from the region. Through its team of international resident experts, SARTTAC is expected to become the focal point for the delivery of IMF capacity development services to South Asia.

43. International Committee of Military Medicine (ICMM)

- The **42nd World Congress of the International Committee of Military Medicine (ICMM)** was recently organised by the **Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS)** under the aegis of the Ministry of Defence (MoD).
- The event was organised for the **first time in India**, and was the largest medical conference ever organised by the AFMS.
- **The theme of this 42nd World Congress** is "Military Medicine in Transition: Looking Ahead."
- The ICMM is an international inter-governmental organisation created in 1921 with its secretariat at Brussels in Belgium and currently has 112 nations as members.
- The ICMM was established after World War I had revealed the lack of care provided to victims and the need to strengthen cooperation between the

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health services of the armed forces worldwide.

- **The main objective of the ICMM** is to ensure that our medical services personnel have the means to work together, using similar practices, in operations involving international cooperation.
- This is a long-term goal, and the ICMM can work towards achieving this in a number of ways:
 - by encouraging activities at which scientific and technical experience is shared,
 - by developing contacts with the scientific community,
 - by promoting regional events.
- This will enable us to pool our resources and work experience of military medicine, both in the theatre of operations and in a support role in the case of crisis situations.

44. International Geological Congress

- A high level delegation of the **International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS)** recently visited India to discuss the preparatory aspects of the **36th International Geological Congress (IGC) to be held in Delhi, India in the year 2020.**
- **Background:**
 - Described as the **Olympics of Geosciences**, the IGCs are held quadrennially under the aegis of the IUGS through a process of global bidding.
 - India won the bid in 2012 at Brisbane, Australia to host the Congress in 2020.
 - The event makes a come back to the Indian soil after nearly 6 decades.
 - The event is being jointly funded by the **Ministry of Mines and Ministry of Earth Sciences** with the active support of the **Indian National Science Academy (INSA)**, and the Science Academies of the other neighbouring **co-host countries, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.**
- International Geological Congress (IGC) is the prestigious global platform for advancement of Earth Science.
- The first session of IGC assembled in 1878 in France with an aim to provide the global geological community with an opportunity to create an organizational frame work for meeting at regular intervals.
- **Management:**
 - Founded as a non-profit scientific and educational organization in 1878, IGC came under the aegis of International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) in 1961.
 - Since then the meetings of IGC are held in collaboration and under scientific sponsorship of IUGS.
- **Previous congresses:**
 - Since the inception of IGC, 33 Congresses have been hosted by 24 countries throughout the world at 3- to 5-year intervals.
 - The 35th IGC was held at Capetown, South Africa in 2016.
- **IUGS:**

- The IUGS was founded in 1961 and is a Scientific Union member of the International Council for Science (ICSU), which it recognizes as the coordinating body for the international organization of science.
- Currently geologists from 121 countries (and regions) are represented in IUGS through 121 Adhering Organization.
- It is an international non-governmental organization devoted to international cooperation in the field of geology.
- IUGS is a joint partner with UNESCO for the International Geoscience Programme (IGCP) and they also participate in the Global Network of National Geoparks (GGN).

45. Financial Action Task Force (FATF)

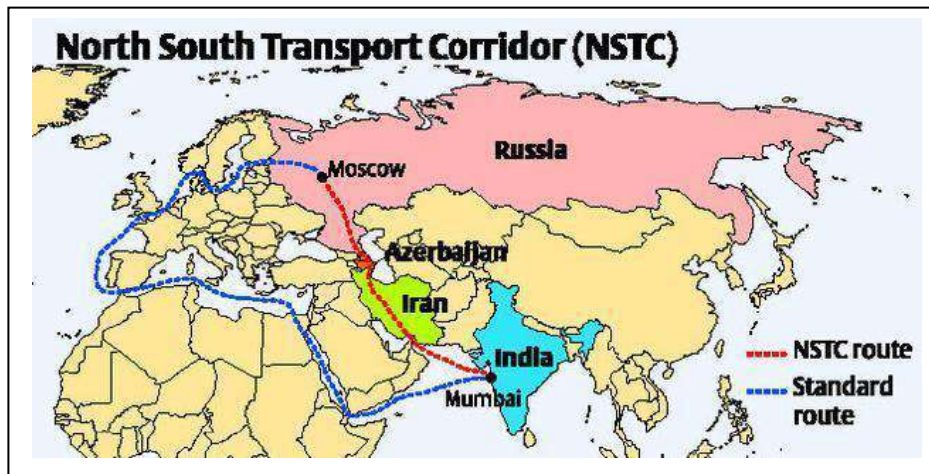
- The Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the **global anti- money laundering watchdog** has placed Pakistan back on its terrorist financing watchlist.
- The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is an **inter-governmental body established in 1989** on the initiative of the G7.
- It is a “policy-making body” which works to generate the necessary political will to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms in various areas.
- **Objectives:**
 - The objectives of the FATF are to **set standards and promote effective implementation** of legal, regulatory and operational measures for combating money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.
- **What it does?**
 - The FATF monitors the progress of its members in implementing necessary measures, reviews money laundering and terrorist financing techniques and counter-measures, and promotes the adoption and implementation of appropriate measures globally.
 - In collaboration with other international stakeholders, the FATF works to identify national-level vulnerabilities with the aim of protecting the international financial system from misuse.
- There are currently 37 members of the FATF; 35 jurisdictions including India and 2 regional organisations (the Gulf Cooperation Council and the European Commission).
- There are also 31 international and regional organisations which are Associate Members or Observers of the FATF.

46. International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC)

- **India, Iran and Russia** had in September 2000 signed the INSTC agreement to build a corridor to provide the shortest multi-modal transportation route **linking the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea via Iran and St Petersburg.**
- From St Petersburg, North Europe is within easy reach via the Russian Federation. The estimated capacity of the corridor is 20-30 million tonnes of goods per year.
- **The route primarily involves** moving freight from India, Iran, Azerbaijan and Russia via ship, rail and road.

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- The objective of the corridor is to increase trade connectivity between major cities such as Mumbai, Moscow, Tehran, Baku, Bandar Abbas, Astrakhan, Bandar Anzali and etc.
- INSTC will not only help cut down on costs and time taken for transfer of goods from India to Russia and Europe via Iran but also provide an alternative connectivity initiative to countries in the Eurasian region.
- It will be India's second corridor after the Chabahar Port to access resource rich Central Asia and its market.



47. Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

- The 38th Gulf Cooperation Council summit was held in Kuwait.
- The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is a **political and economic alliance of six countries** in the **Arabian Peninsula**: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.
- Its **headquarters is in Riyadh, capital city of Saudi Arabia.**
- **Established in 1981**, the GCC promotes economic, security, cultural and social cooperation between the six states and holds a summit every year to discuss cooperation and regional affairs.
- Due to their geographic proximity, similar political systems and common socio-cultural stances, the immediate goal was for these countries to protect themselves from threats after the Iran-Iraq War.
- The GCC comprises six main branches that carry out various tasks, from the preparation of meetings to the implementation of policies.
 - They are- Supreme Council, Ministerial Council, Secretariat-General, Consultative Commission, Commission for the Settlement of Disputes and the Secretary-General.
- **All current member states are monarchies**, including
 - Three constitutional monarchies (Qatar, Kuwait, and Bahrain),
 - Two absolute monarchies (Saudi Arabia and Oman), and
 - One federal monarchy (the United Arab Emirates, which is composed



of six member states, each of which is an absolute monarchy with its own emir).

48. Raisina Dialogue

- The **third edition of the geo-political conference** – Raisina Dialogue was held in New Delhi.
- It was inaugurated by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.
- The event is jointly organised by the **Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and Observer Research Foundation (ORF)**.
- The theme of the conference- '**Managing Disruptive Transitions: Ideas, Institutions and Idioms**'.
- The name of conference comes from **Raisina Hill** which is the elevation in New Delhi where Rashtrapati Bhavan is located.
- It is organized on the lines of the **Shangri-La Dialogue held in Singapore**.
- The **first edition** of the conference was held in March **2016** with the theme 'Asia: Regional and Global Connectivity'.
- It is structured as a multi-stakeholder, cross-sectorial conclave, involving **policy and decision makers**, including cabinet ministers from various Governments, high-level Government officials and policy practitioners, leading personalities from business and industry etc.

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United Nations Organisations

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1. UN Specialised Agencies

- Specialized agencies are **autonomous organizations** working with the United Nations.
- Specialized agencies **may or may not have been originally created by the United Nations**, but they are incorporated into the United Nations System by the United Nations Economic and Social Council.
- At present the UN has in total **15 specialized agencies** that carry out various functions on behalf of the UN.
- **The specialized agencies are listed below:**
 - Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).
 - International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).
 - International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).
 - International Labour Organization (ILO).
 - International Maritime Organization (IMO).
 - International Monetary Fund (IMF).
 - International Telecommunication Union (ITU).
 - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
 - United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).
 - Universal Postal Union (UPU).
 - World Bank Group (WBG).
 - The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD),
 - The International Finance Corporation (IFC),
 - The International Development Association (IDA),
 - The Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), and
 - The International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID).
 - World Health Organization (WHO).
 - World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).
 - World Meteorological Organization (WMO).
 - World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).
- **Former Specialized Agencies:**
 - The only UN specialized agency to go out of existence is the **International Refugee Organization**, which existed from 1946 to 1952.
 - In 1952, it was replaced by the **Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees** which is a subsidiary organ of the United Nations General Assembly.

2. International Court of Justice (ICJ)

- **India's nominee to International Court of Justice (ICJ) Dalveer Bhandari was elected for the second term.**
- He was elected after **United Kingdom withdrew** its candidate from the election.
- **For the first time, the U.K. will not have a judge on the ICJ.** It is also the first

time that a permanent member of the UNSC has lost at the ICJ on a vote.

- **About ICJ:**

- The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is **the principal judicial organ of the United Nations (UN)**.
- It was established in June 1945 by the Charter of the United Nations and began work in April 1946.
- The seat of the Court is at the **Peace Palace in The Hague (Netherlands)**.
- Of the six principal organs of the United Nations, it is the only one not located in New York (United States of America).
- The Court's role is to **settle, in accordance with international law, legal disputes submitted to it by States** and to give advisory opinions on legal questions referred to it by authorized United Nations organs and specialized agencies.
- Its **judgments have binding force** and are **without appeal** for the parties concerned.

- **Judges at ICJ:**

- The ICJ consists of **15 judges** elected to **nine-year terms** by the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council that vote simultaneously but separately.
- **Elections take place every three years, with one-third of the judges retiring each time.**
- Judges are eligible to stand for re-election.
- President and Vice-President of the court are elected by secret ballot to hold office for three years.

- **The 15 judges of the Court are distributed as per the regions:**

- Three from Africa.
- Two from Latin America and Caribbean.
- Three from Asia.
- Five from Western Europe and other states.
- Two from Eastern Europe.

- **Eligibility criteria:**

- A candidate must receive an **absolute majority of the votes in both bodies (UNSC and UNGA)**.
- Judges will be elected from among persons of high moral character, who possess the qualifications required in their respective countries for appointment to the highest judicial offices, or are jurisconsults of recognised competence in international law.
- **Judges are chosen on the basis of their qualifications, not their nationality, but no two judges can be from the same nationality.**
- Effort is also taken to ensure that the principal legal systems of the world are reflected in the composition of the court.

- **Independence of the Judges:**

- Once elected, a Member of the Court is a delegate neither of the government of his own country nor of that of any other State.
- Unlike most other organs of international organizations, the **Court is not composed of representatives of governments.**

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- **Members of the Court are independent judges** whose first task, before taking up their duties, is to make a solemn declaration in open court that they will exercise their powers impartially and conscientiously.
- In order to guarantee his or her independence, no Member of the Court can be dismissed unless, in the unanimous opinion of the other Members, he/she no longer fulfils the required conditions. This has in fact never happened.

3. UN Office for South- South Cooperation (UNOSSC)

- The United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) was established to promote, coordinate and support South-South and triangular cooperation globally and within the United Nations system.
- UNOSSC, hosted by UNDP since 1974, was **established by the UN General Assembly** with a mandate to advocate for and coordinate South-South and triangular cooperation on a global and UN system-wide basis.
- **UNOSSC receives policy directives and guidance from the General Assembly** and through its subsidiary body, the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation.
- UNOSSC submits its strategic planning frameworks to the UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS Executive Board for approval and funding.

4. International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS)

- In a significant victory for India at the UN, international law expert **Neeru Chadha** has won a crucial election to a top UN judicial body that deals with disputes related to the law of the sea, becoming **the first Indian woman to be appointed as a judge at the tribunal**.
- Chadha, an eminent lawyer and the first Indian woman to become the chief legal adviser in the ministry of external affairs, is elected for a nine-year term from 2017 to 2026.
- Chadha is only **the second woman to be judge of ITLOS in its two decades of existence**.
- **ITLOS:**
 - The Hamburg-based ITLOS, established in 1996, is **one of dispute settlement mechanisms under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) that entered into force in 1994**.
 - The Tribunal is composed of 21 independent members who are elected from among persons enjoying the highest reputation for fairness and integrity and of recognised competence in the field of the law of the sea.
 - The tribunal is based in Hamburg, Germany.
 - The Tribunal has the power to settle disputes between party states. Currently, there are 161 parties.
 - **India is also a signatory to this convention.**

5. UN approves creation of new office on counter-terrorism

- The UN General Assembly has approved the establishment of **a new office to**

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coordinate counter-terrorism efforts.

- Under the new structure, the **Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force Office (CTITF)** and the **UN Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT)**, currently in the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA) will be transferred to the new office, together with their existing staff and all associated regular and extra-budgetary resources.
- The new Office would be headed up by an **Under-Secretary-General.**
- **The Office would have five main functions:**
 - Provide leadership on the General Assembly counter-terrorism mandates entrusted to the Secretary-General from across the United Nations system.
 - Enhance coordination and coherence across the 38 Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force entities to ensure the balanced implementation of the four pillars of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.
 - Strengthen the delivery of United Nations counter-terrorism capacity-building assistance to Member States.
 - Improve visibility, advocacy and resource mobilization for United Nations counter-terrorism efforts.
 - Ensure that due priority is given to counterterrorism across the United Nations system and that the important work on preventing violent extremism is firmly rooted in the Strategy.

6. United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

- India has been re-elected to the **UN's principal organ on economic, social and environmental issues** for another three-year term.
- India was among 18 nations to win election to the ECOSOC. India obtained 183 votes, the second highest after Japan in the Asia Pacific category.
- The current elected members of the ECOSOC will hold a three year term beginning January 1 2018.
- ECOSOC is one of the six main organs of the United Nations which was established by the UN Charter.
- It is **the principal body for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on economic, social and environmental issues, as well as for implementation of the internationally agreed development goals.**
- The Council's 54 **member Governments are elected by the General Assembly for overlapping three-year terms.**
- Seats on the Council are allotted based on geographical representation.

7. UN Tax Fund

- **India has contributed \$100,000 to a UN fund** to help developing countries actively participate in the discussion of tax issues, becoming **the first country to make the contribution.**
- The **UN Tax Trust Fund** aims to support the work of the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters (the UN Tax Committee).
- Voluntary contributions for the fund have been called for by the UN and the committee since its establishment in 2006.

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- The call for contributions was also emphasised in the **Addis Ababa Action Agenda** adopted at the third International Conference on Financing for Development in 2015.
- Through the fund, the UN expects that more **developing countries will draw upon the best practice of other bodies**, ensuring that global tax cooperation norms and rules will work more effectively and efficiently for all countries and all stakeholders.
- **Addis Agenda:**
 - The Addis Agenda provides a **global framework to ensure the effective mobilisation of resources at the national and international level for sustainable development**.
 - Implementation of the Addis Agenda supports the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

8. India-UN Development Partnership Fund

- India has pledged an additional 100 million dollars to a UN partnership fund launched to support **sustainable development projects across the developing world**.
- The India-UN Development Partnership Fund was set up in 2017 as a **partnership between India and the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC)**.
- **Managed by UNOSSC**, the fund will support Southern-owned and led, demand-driven, and transformational sustainable development projects across the developing world.
- **Focusing on Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States**, United Nations agencies will implement the Fund's projects in close collaboration with partnering governments.
- **Focus areas:** Reducing poverty and hunger, improving health, education and equality, and expanding access to clean water and energy.

9. International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO)

- The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) is a **UN specialized agency**, established in 1944 to manage the administration and governance of **the Convention on International Civil Aviation (Chicago Convention)**.
- ICAO works with the Convention's 191 Member States and industry groups to **reach consensus on international civil aviation Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs)** and policies in support of a safe, efficient, secure, economically sustainable and environmentally responsible civil aviation sector.
- These SARPs and policies are used by ICAO Member States to ensure that their local civil aviation operations and regulations conform to global norms.
- ICAO also:
 - Coordinates assistance and capacity building for States in support of numerous aviation development objectives;
 - Produces global plans to coordinate multilateral strategic progress for safety and air navigation;

- Monitors and reports on numerous air transport sector performance metrics; and
- Audits States' civil aviation oversight capabilities in the areas of safety and security.

10. International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

- **ITU is the United Nations specialized agency** for information and communication technologies – ICTs.
- It **allocates global radio spectrum and satellite orbits**, develops the technical standards that ensure networks and technologies seamlessly interconnect, and strives to improve access to ICTs to underserved communities worldwide.
- ITU is **committed to connecting all the world's people** – wherever they live and whatever their means.
- ITU brings the benefits of modern communication technologies to people everywhere in an efficient, safe, easy and affordable manner.
- An organization based on public-private partnership since its inception, ITU currently has a membership of 193 countries and almost 800 private-sector entities and academic institutions.
- ITU is **headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland**, and has twelve regional and area offices around the world.

11. United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

- The United Nations Security Council (**UNSC**) is **one of the six principal organs of the United Nations** and is charged with the **maintenance of international peace and security**.
- Like the UN as a whole, the **Security Council was created following World War II** to address the failings of a previous international organization, the League of Nations, in maintaining world peace.
- **UNSC powers include:**
 - Establishment of **peacekeeping operations**,
 - Establishment of **international sanctions**, and
 - Authorization of **military action** through Security Council resolutions;
 - It is the **only UN body with the authority to issue binding resolutions** to member states.
- The Security Council held its first session on 17 January 1946.
- The Security Council **has 15 members**, including five permanent.
- The **five permanent members, each with the power of veto**, are China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States.
- The **Council's 10 non-permanent seats are allocated according to a rotation pattern set by the Assembly in 1963**, to ensure a proportionate representation over time from the different parts of the world:
 - Five from African and Asian States;
 - One from Eastern Europe;
 - Two from Latin American States; and
 - Two from Western European and Other States.
- The Security Council is also responsible for determining the existence of a threat against peace and to respond to an act of aggression.

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- It is also responsible for **finding peaceful means to settle a conflict** or a dispute between States.
- In some cases, the Council can resort to sanctions or even authorize the use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security.
- The five permanent members of the Security Council are also the only countries recognized as nuclear-weapon states (NWS) under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

12. International Maritime Organisation (IMO)

- The IMO is **the United Nations specialised agency** with responsibility for the **safety and security of shipping** and the prevention of marine pollution by ships.
- It was established in 1948 in Geneva and came into force in 1959. Its headquarters are in London, United Kingdom.
- It has 173 Member States and three Associate Members.
- India was one of earliest members of the IMO.
- The IMO's primary purpose is to develop and maintain a comprehensive **regulatory framework for shipping** and its remit today includes safety, environmental concerns, legal matters, technical co-operation, maritime security and the efficiency of shipping.
- IMO is governed by an **assembly of members** and is financially administered by a **council of members** elected from the assembly.
- The IMO's structure comprises the Assembly, the Council, the Maritime Safety Committee, the Marine Environment Protection Committee, the Legal Committee, the Technical Cooperation Committee, and the secretariat, headed by a Secretary-General.
- **IMO council:**
 - The **IMO Council acts as the IMO's Governing Body**.
 - It has a crucial role to play in deciding various matters in relation to the global shipping industry, including its work programme strategy and budget.
 - **Members of the Council consist of 40 member states, elected by its Assembly including:**
 - **10 members in category A** with the largest interest in providing international shipping services;
 - **10 members in category B** with the largest interest in international seaborne trade and
 - **20 members in category C** with special interests in maritime transport or navigation.
- **India was re-elected to Council of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO).**
 - India was elected under category B.
 - India has been elected to the Council of the IMO ever since it started functioning, except during 1983-1984.
 - IMO Council consists of 40 member countries who are elected by IMO Assembly.
 - It plays a crucial role in deciding various matters related to global

shipping industry.

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13. United Nations Peacekeeping

- United Nations Peacekeeping was created in 1948.
- Its first mission involved the establishment of the **UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO)**, which served to observe and maintain ceasefire during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.
- **UN Peacekeeping maintains three basic principles:**
 - Consent of the parties,
 - Impartiality and non-use of Force except in self-defence and
 - Defence of the mandate.
- The UN Peacekeepers are led by the **Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DKPO)**.
- There are currently 17 UN peace operations deployed on four continents.
- UN Peacekeepers are from diverse backgrounds, from areas all around the world.
- They include police, military and civilian personnel.
- They are often referred to as **Blue Berets or Blue Helmets** because of their light blue berets or helmets.
- The UN Peacekeeping Force won the **Nobel Peace Prize in 1988**.
- The United Nations Charter gives the United **Nations Security Council the power and responsibility to take collective action to maintain international peace and security**.
- For this reason, the international community usually looks to the Security Council to authorize peacekeeping operations.
- **India seeks greater role for troops contributing countries in UN peacekeeping missions:**
 - India has sought enhanced role for troops contributing countries in the decision-making process of UN peacekeeping missions.
 - Also, India has asked the UN Security Council to revisit the way mandates are designed.
 - According to India, the current system of excluding the troop and police-contributing countries (T/PCCs) from the process of framing the mandates is not sustainable.
 - **India is one of the largest contributors of troops and police to UN peacekeeping missions.** However, it has no say in the process of formulation of the mandate.

14. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

- UNESCO is a United Nations organization that helps **preserve historical and cultural sites worldwide**.
- It is a special multi-country agency, **formed in 1945 and based in France**, which promotes sex education and literacy as well as improving gender equality in countries around the world.
- Its declared purpose is to **contribute to peace and security** by promoting international collaboration through **educational, scientific, and cultural**

reforms in order to increase universal respect for justice, the rule of law, and human rights along with fundamental freedom proclaimed in the United Nations Charter.

- It is the **successor of the League of Nations' International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation**.
- UNESCO has 195 member states and ten associate members.
- UNESCO pursues its objectives through five major programs: education, natural sciences, social/human sciences, culture and communication/information.
- It is also a member of the **United Nations Development Group**.
- It is also known for its work to preserve cultural and heritage sites such as ancient villages, ruins and temples, and historic sites such as the Great Mosque of Samarra in Iraq, which at one point came under threat of being destroyed by the Islamic State.

15. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

- The Food and Agriculture Organization is a **specialised agency of the United Nations** that leads international efforts to defeat hunger.
- Serving both developed and developing countries, FAO acts as a neutral forum where **all nations meet as equals to negotiate agreements and debate policy**.
- FAO is also a source of knowledge and information, and helps developing countries in transition modernize and improve agriculture, forestry and fisheries practices, ensuring good nutrition and food security for all.
- It was established on 16 October 1945 and its headquarters is in Rome, Italy.
- Its motto is **"Let there be bread"**. It has 194 member states, along with the European Union (member organization).
- FAO meet the demands posed by major global trends in agricultural development and challenges faced by member nations.

16. UN's Global Compact on Migration

- The United States has pulled out of UN Global Compact on Migration.
- US participation in Global Compact on Migration process was started in 2016 following Obama Administration's decision to join **UN's New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants**.
- US under Trump administration has pulled out of several global commitments including UNESCO, UN cultural and educational body and 2015 Paris climate change agreement.
- The **global compact for migration** is the first, intergovernmental negotiated agreement, prepared **under the auspices of the United Nations**, to cover all dimensions of international migration in a holistic and comprehensive manner.
- In the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, adopted in September 2016, the General Assembly decided to develop a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration.
- The global compact is a significant opportunity to **improve the governance on migration**, to address the challenges associated with today's migration, and

to strengthen the contribution of migrants and migration to sustainable development.

- The global compact is framed consistent with **target 10.7 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** in which member States committed to cooperate internationally to facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration.

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International Banks / International Financial Institutions

1. Asian Development Bank (ADB)

- **ADB, based in Manila, Philippines** is dedicated to reducing poverty in Asia and the Pacific through inclusive economic growth, environmentally sustainable growth, and regional integration.
- Established in 1966, it is owned by 67 members – 48 from the region.
- The bank admits the members of the **United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific** (UNESCAP, formerly known as the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East) and non-regional developed countries.
- It offers both **Hard Loans and Soft loans**.
 - The ADB offers “hard” loans from ordinary capital resources (OCR) on commercial terms,
 - The Asian Development Fund (ADF) affiliated with the ADB extends “soft” loans from special fund resources with concessional conditions.
- **ADB focuses on five core areas of operations:** infrastructure; the environment, including climate change; regional cooperation and integration; finance sector development; and education.
- **Funding:**
 - ADB raises funds through bond issues on the world’s capital markets.
 - ADB also rely on its **members’ contributions**, retained earnings from its lending operations, and the repayment of loans.
 - **As of 31 December 2016, Japan holds the largest proportions of shares at 15.67%.**
 - The United States holds 15.56%, China holds 6.47%, **India holds 6.36%**, and Australia holds 5.81%.
- **Board of Governors:**
 - It is the highest **policy-making body** of the bank.
 - It is composed of one representative from each member state.
 - The Board of Governors also elect the bank’s President who is the chairperson of the Board of Directors and manages ADB.
- **Subhash Chandra Garg**, Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), Ministry of Finance, Government of India has been appointed as **India’s Alternate Governor on the Board of Governors of the Asian Development Bank (ADB)**
- ADB and the Government of India have signed a \$220 million loan agreement meant to improve connectivity, transport efficiency, and safety on the State highways of Rajasthan.

2. Leading Asia’s Private Infrastructure Fund (LEAP)

- **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** is processing USD 500 million as debt and equity funding for **private infrastructure projects** in India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Thailand.
- ADB has already approved two projects worth over USD 210 million in debt financing from the **co-financing arm Leading Asia’s Private Infrastructure Fund (LEAP)** in its first year of operation.

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- **Leading Asia's Private Infrastructure Fund (LEAP):**
 - The Leading Asia's Private Sector Infrastructure Fund (LEAP) was established in March 2016.
 - The fund is an **infrastructure co-financing fund**, expected to leverage and complement ADB's existing nonsovereign platform to fill financing gaps and increase access to finance for infrastructure projects in the region.
 - **Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)** has made a contribution to the fund.
- **What are the priorities?**
 - The fund will provide cofinancing to **nonsovereign infrastructure projects** at different stages of development, and greenfield and brownfield projects.
 - It will support projects with strong anticipated development impacts and alignment with the strategies of ADB and JICA.
 - The fund will seek to support public–private partnerships, joint ventures, private finance initiative projects, and privatizations, as well as conventional project finance.
- **Eligible project types will include the following infrastructure subsectors:**
 - Energy, including renewable energy generation, energy efficiency and conservation, and natural gas transmission and distribution.
 - Water and other urban infrastructure and services, including water, wastewater, and solid waste management.
 - Transport, including road transport, water transport, rail transport, air transport, multimodal logistics, urban roads and traffic management, and urban public transport.
 - Information and communication technology and health.
- **Who is eligible to receive the fund?**
 - The fund will provide financing to companies and projects, as well as to financial intermediaries (e.g., holding companies and local currency vehicles) where there is a link to Infrastructure.
 - Eligible countries include ADB developing member countries that are also eligible for official development assistance (ODA) from Japan.

3. BRICS' New Development Bank (NDB)

- It is a **multilateral development bank operated by the BRICS countries**.
- It is seen as an alternative to the existing US-dominated World Bank and International Monetary Fund.
- The New Development Bank was agreed to by BRICS leaders at **the 5th BRICS summit** held in Durban, South Africa in 2013.
- The bank is set up to foster greater **financial and development cooperation** among the five emerging markets.
- The bank is **headquartered in Shanghai, China**.
- Unlike the World Bank, which assigns votes based on capital share, in the New Development Bank **each participant country will be assigned one vote and none of the countries will have veto power**.
- The New Development Bank will mobilise **resources for infrastructure and**

sustainable development projects in BRICS and other emerging economies and developing countries, to supplement existing efforts of multilateral and regional financial institutions for **global growth and development**.

- It is **headed by eminent Indian banker K V Kamath**.
- NDB plans to lend \$1.5 billion to South Africa for infrastructure projects over the next eighteen months. The bank **also officially opened its African regional centre in Johannesburg**.
- NDB has approved two infrastructure and sustainable development projects in India and Russia with loans of \$400 million.
- The loans will be used to rehabilitate the **Indira Gandhi canal system in India** and to build a toll transport corridor connecting Ufa city centre to the M-5 federal highway in Russia.

4. Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)

- The AIIB was established as a **new multilateral financial institution** aimed at providing “financial support for **infrastructure development in the Asia – Pacific region.**”
- The bank started operation after the agreement entered into force on 25 December 2015, with its **headquarters in Beijing**.
- Its goals are also to boost economic development in the region, create wealth, provide infrastructure and promote regional cooperation and partnership.
- The value of AIIB’s **authorized capital amounts to \$100 billion**, with almost \$30 billion invested by China.
- **China, India and Russia are the three largest shareholders of AIIB**, taking 30.34%, 8.52%, 6.66% stake respectively. Their voting shares are 26.06%, 7.5% and 5.92% respectively.
- The share of non-Asian countries is restricted to a maximum of 30 per cent.
- The bank currently has 64 member states while another 20 are prospective members for a total of 84 approved members. **India is the founding member of AIIB.**
- Major economies that are not members include Japan, Mexico, Nigeria, and the United States.
- The first AIIB Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors was held in Beijing, China in 2016.
- Third Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors will be held in Mumbai, India in June 2018.

5. European Bank for Reconstruction & Development

- India has got the go-ahead to join the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), after shareholders of the London-based multilateral lender agreed to the **country becoming its 69th member**.
- **How will this membership help India?**
 - Membership of EBRD would **enhance India’s international profile** and promote its **economic interests**.
 - It will also give access to EBRD’s Countries of Operation and sector knowledge.

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- It would increase the scope of cooperation between India and EBRD through **co-financing opportunities** in manufacturing, services, Information Technology, and Energy.
- It would help India leverage the **technical assistance and sectoral knowledge** of the bank for the benefit of development of private sector.
- It would enhance the **competitive strength of the Indian firms**, and provide an enhanced access to international markets in terms of business opportunities, procurement activities, consultancy assignments etc.
- This would open up new vistas for Indian professionals on the one hand, and give a fillip to **Indian exports** on the other.
- It would also enable Indian nationals to get the **employment opportunity** in the Bank.
- **EBRD:**
 - The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is an international financial institution that supports projects in over 30 countries, from Eastern Europe to central Asia and the southern and eastern Mediterranean.
 - **Investing primarily in private sector clients** whose needs cannot be fully met by the market, the EBRD **promotes entrepreneurship** and fosters transition towards **open and democratic market economies**.
 - The mandate of the EBRD stipulates that it must only work in countries that are committed to democratic principles.
 - Respect for the environment is part of the strong corporate governance attached to all EBRD investments.
 - The EBRD provides **project financing for banks, industries and businesses**, both new ventures and investments in existing companies.
 - It also works with publicly owned companies, to support privatisation, restructuring state-owned firms and improving municipal services.
 - It uses close relationship with governments in the region to promote policies that will bolster the business environment.
 - The EBRD is owned by 65 countries and two intergovernmental institutions: the European Union and the European Investment Bank (EIB).
 - The powers of the EBRD are vested in the **Board of Governors** to which each member appoints a governor, generally the minister of finance.
 - The Board of Governors delegates most powers to the **Board of Directors**, which is responsible for the EBRD's strategic direction.
 - The President is elected by the Board of Governors and is the legal representative of the EBRD.
 - Under the guidance of the Board of Directors, the President manages the EBRD's work.

International Events

1. ANUGA 2017

- ANUGA – an acronym for Allgemeine Nahrungs Und Genußmittel Ausstellung (General Food and Non- essential Provisions Exhibition) is **the world's biggest and most important trade fair for Food and beverage trade**.
- It takes place biennially (every 2 years). ANUGA 2017 is the 34th edition held in Cologne, Germany.
- **India was the co-partner country** in ANUGA 2017.
- ANUGA offers an extensive supporting programme with Lectures, Special exhibition and attractive industry events.

2. World Maritime Day 2017

- The World Maritime Day was formally celebrated by the **International Maritime Organisation (IMO)** on 28 September 2017.
- World Maritime Day is an **official United Nations day**.
- Every year, it provides an opportunity to focus attention on the **importance of shipping and other maritime activities** and to emphasize a particular aspect of IMO's work.
- This day also serves as a reminder to all and sundry that a vibrant and sustainable blue economy is a boon to all mankind.
- **Theme: "Connecting Ships, Ports and People"**.

3. World Food Day

- World Food Day is celebrated on October 16 every year to raise **awareness on the issues of poverty and hunger**.
- World Food Day was established by **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)** in November 1979 and since then the day is celebrated worldwide by many organisations that are concerned with food security.
- **Theme: "Change the future of migration. Invest in food security."**
- World Food Day is a chance to show our commitment to **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2** – to achieve Zero Hunger by 2030.
- It's also a day for us to celebrate the progress we have already made **towards reaching #ZeroHunger**.

4. Global Conference on Cyber Space 2017

- India, for the first time hosted the Global Conference on Cyber Space (GCCS), one of the world's largest conferences in the field of Cyber Space and related issues.
- The **National e-Governance Division (NeGD)**, under the Ministry of Electronics & IT (MeitY) is the main agency to organize GCCS 2017.
- **The theme for the GCCS 2017** is 'Cyber4All: An Inclusive, Sustainable, Developmental, Safe and Secure Cyberspace'.
- This is **the fifth edition of GCCS** wherein international leaders, policymakers, industry experts, think tanks and cyber experts gathered to deliberate on issues and challenges for optimally using cyber space.

- The overall goals of GCCS 2017 are to promote the importance of **inclusiveness and human rights in global cyber policy**, to defend the status quo of an open, interoperable and unregulated cyberspace and to create political commitment for **capacity building initiatives** to address the digital divide and assist countries.
- GCCS is a prestigious international conference that aims at encouraging dialogue among stakeholders of cyberspace, which has been taking place since 2011.
- Incepted in 2011 in London, GCCS witnessed a participation of 700 global delegates.
- **Global Forum on Cyber Expertise (GFCE)** for capacity building in cyber space was launched in the fourth edition of the conference held in The Hague, Netherlands.

5. Global Entrepreneurship Summit 2017 (GES-2017)

- **8th annual Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES 2017)** was held in Hyderabad, Telangana.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump's advisor and daughter Ivanka Trump jointly inaugurated the summit.
- The summit organised annually **since 2010**, is the preeminent annual entrepreneurship gathering that convenes over one thousand emerging entrepreneurs, investors, and supporters from around the world.
- GES 2017 marks the **first GES held in South Asia**.
- It was hosted by **NITI Aayog in partnership with US government**.
- The summit was attended by 1,500 entrepreneurs from 170 countries.
- **GES 2017 Theme:** "Women First, Prosperity for All".
- The four primary focus areas of GES 2017 are Digital Economy and Financial Technology, Health Care and Life Sciences, Energy and Infrastructure, and Media and Entertainment.
- **Outcomes of the summit:**
 - The Summit provided opportunities for meeting with global industry leaders, networking of international entrepreneurs, innovators, investors.
 - The summit also provided forum for pitching competition, strategic workshops and sector-programmes to help in creating new collaborations amongst entrepreneurs and Investors.
 - The Summit provided for significantly increased economic opportunities for young entrepreneurs, especially, women entrepreneurs and start-ups.

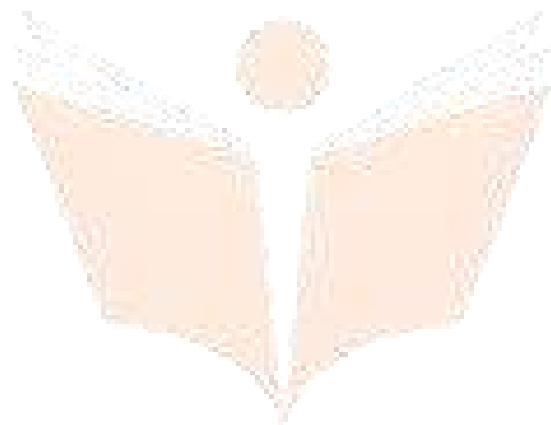
6. Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD)

- The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) is celebrated every year on January 9 to mark the contribution of Overseas Indian community in the development of India.
- **2018 PBD celebrated ASEAN-Indian partnership** with the theme: **Ancient Route, New Journey: Diaspora in the Dynamic ASEAN INDIA Partnership**.
- **2018 marks 25 years of ASEAN-Indian Partnership** which is based on

centuries-old cultural, religious and human links, forged on an ancient route of commerce.

- The PBD was held in Singapore – which is considered as India’s gateway to the East and also is the heart of ASEAN.
- January 9 was chosen as the day to celebrate this occasion since it was on this day in **1915 that Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest Pravasi, returned to India from South Africa**, led India’s freedom struggle and changed the lives of Indians forever.

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Military Exercises

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1. Varuna-18

- The Indo-French joint naval exercise Varuna-18 was held in Arabian Sea off Goa coast.
- Varuna-18 was conducted in three sea areas, including the Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal and South Western Indian Ocean.
- France was the **first country** with which India conducted a **joint naval exercise called 'Varun'** after the 1998 nuclear tests.

2. Malabar 2017

- The MALABAR series of exercises was initiated in 1992 between the Indian and US Navies.
- **Originally a bilateral exercise** between India and the United States, **Japan became a permanent partner in 2015.**
- In 2007, the exercise also saw participation of Australia and Singapore.
- The 21st edition of the exercise, MALABAR-17 was conducted in the Bay of Bengal in July 2017.
- The primary aim of this exercise is to increase interoperability amongst the three navies as well as develop common understanding and procedures for maritime security operations.

3. Yudh Abhyas – 2017

- The **13th edition** Yudh Abhyas 2017, a **joint military training exercise between India and United States** was held at Joint Base Lewis McChord, Washington, US.
- Yudh Abhyas is annual bilateral military exercise, alternately held by the two countries.
- The purpose of the exercise is **counter insurgency and counter terrorism operations** (CICT under UN charter).

4. International Maritime Search and Rescue Exercise (IMMSAREX) 2017

- The 2017 International Multilateral Maritime Search and Rescue Exercise (IMMSAREX) were held in Bangladesh.
- The exercise was under the aegis of **Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS).**
- From India, Navy Chief Admiral Sunil Lanba participated in the exercise to consolidate bilateral naval relations between India and Bangladesh and to explore new avenues for naval cooperation.
- The ships and aircraft of IONS members and observers including China (observer status) and Pakistan also participated in exercise.
- **IONS:**
 - The IONS is a **regional forum of Indian Ocean littoral states**, represented by their Navy chiefs, launched by India in February 2008.
 - It presently has 23 members and nine observers.
 - It is a **voluntary initiative** that seeks to **increase maritime co-**

operation among navies of the littoral states of the Indian Ocean Region by providing an open and inclusive forum for discussion of regionally relevant maritime issues and, in the process, endeavors to generate a flow of information between naval professionals that would lead to common understanding and possibly agreements on the way ahead.

- Under the charter of business adopted in 2014, the grouping has working groups on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), Information Security and Interoperability (IS&I) and anti-piracy now renamed as maritime security.

5. Exercise INDRA - 2017: Indo-Russia Joint Exercise

- The **Joint Indo-Russia Tri-Services Exercise (Navy, the Army and the Air Force) INDRA-2017** was successfully conducted at Vladivostok, Russia.
- It was **India's first joint tri-services exercise** and also **first between Russia and India**.
- Exercise INDRA in its previous nine avatars has been conducted as a single service exercise alternately between the two countries.
- It was also first time Russia has hosted Tri-Services Exercise on its soil.

6. Surya Kiran

- India and Nepal held their joint military exercise in Nepal. This is **the 12th edition of Nepal-India joint military exercise**. The exercise – Surya Kiran – is being participated by around 300 troops each side.
- The 11th edition of the joint exercise was held in Pithoragarh in Uttarakhand.
- The Surya Kiran series of Exercises are being **conducted annually**, alternatively in Nepal and India.
- **The aim of this exercise is to conduct battalion level joint training** with emphasis on Counter Terrorism in mountainous terrain.
- Aspects of Disaster Management have also been included in the exercise.

7. Mitra Shakti 2017

- The fifth **India-Sri Lanka Joint Training Exercise MITRA SHAKTI 2017** was held in Pune.
- The aim of the joint training is to exchange the best of military practices of the two countries and build a strong **military-to-military relation** between the two armies.
- The exercise, the fifth in the series, also aims at developing joint strategies by sharing the expertise of conducting operations, especially in the **counter-insurgency and counter terrorism (CI and CT) environment**.

8. CORPAT (Coordinated Patrol)

- CORPAT is a bilateral maritime exercise **between India and Indonesia**.
- Both countries have been carrying out maritime exercise **twice a year since 2002**.
- The CORPAT exercise between the two navies' aims to enhance mutual understanding and inter-operability between the navies, carries search and

rescue operations, institutes measures for vessels indulged in unlawful activities as well as control pollution.

- The exercise is aimed to foster **closer maritime ties with countries located on the rim of the Indian Ocean.**
- **INS Sukanya** participated in the 30th edition of CORPAT (Coordinated Patrol) and 3rd bilateral exercise between the Indian Navy and the Indonesian Navy.
- As part of the Indian Government's vision of **SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region)**, Indian Navy has also been involved in assisting countries in the Indian Ocean Region with EEZ surveillance, Search and Rescue and other capability enhancement activities.

9. Sampriti 2017

- It is Joint **Indo-Bangladesh Training Exercise**. The 2017 edition was recently held in Mizoram. It is the seventh such exercise in the SAMPRITI series.
- The exercise has been aimed to strengthen and broaden the aspects of interoperability and cooperation between the Indian and Bangladesh Armies.

10. Ex Blue Flag-17

- The bi-annual multilateral exercise 'Blue Flag-17' was held at Uvda Air Force Base in Israel.
- Blue Flag is a bi-annual exercise which aims to strengthen military cooperation amongst participating nations.
- The exercise is designed to **strengthen Israel's military cooperation internationally.**
- This is the first time India is participating in the drill, along with the US, France, Germany, Italy, Greece and Poland. Ex Blue Flag will give an opportunity to the IAF to share and learn best practices with some of the best professionals from other Air Forces.

11. Ekuverin

- It is a joint military exercise between **India and Maldives**. The eighth edition of the exercise was held in Belagavi, Karnataka.
- The bilateral annual exercise is a 14-day joint military training between the Indian Army and the Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF), which is held alternatively in India and Maldives since 2009.
- The seventh edition of the exercise was held at Kadhdhoo, Lammu Atoll, Maldives in December, 2016.
- The focus of the exercise is to acquaint both armies with each other's operating procedures in the backdrop of **counter-terrorist operations** in an urban or semi-urban environment under the United Nations (UN) Charter, with an overall aim to enhance interoperability between the two armies.
- 'Ekuverin' means 'friends' in the Maldivian language.

12. Ajeya Warrior 2017

- Ajeya Warrior is a **joint exercise between the Indian Army and Royal British Army.**
- The Exercise is held once in two years, alternatively in India and the UK.

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- The 3rd edition of this joint military exercise was held in Rajasthan.
- **The aim of the Exercise** is “to build and promote positive military relations between Indian and UK Army and to enhance their ability and interoperability to undertake joint tactical level operations in Counter Insurgency/Counter Terrorism Environment under United Nations Charter”.
- The exercise further focuses on enhancing and exchanging skills and experience between the Indian Army and the Royal British Army.

13. Naseem-Al-Bahr

- It is a bilateral exercise between **Indian Navy and Oman Navy**.
- The exercise is also called as “**Sea Breeze**”. The 11th edition of this exercise was held in Muscat.
- The first exercise Indian Navy with Royal Navy of Oman was conducted in 1993 and 2017 marked 24 years of Indian Navy -Royal Navy of Oman bilateral exercises.

14. VINBAX

- It is a military exercise between **India and Vietnam**.
- VINBAX-2018 was Table Top Exercise to carry out training for Peace Keeping Operations under United Nations (UN) mandate.
- It is the first military exercise between the two countries.
- The exercise was being held in Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh.

15. Vajra Prahar

- ‘Vajra Prahar’ is an **Indo-US Special Forces joint training exercise** conducted alternately in India and the US.
- The aim of the exercise is to promote military relations between the two countries by enhancing interoperability and mutual exchange of tactics between Special Forces.

Places in News

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1. Lisbon

- PM Modi paid a visit to Lisbon, Portugal.
- Lisbon is the **capital and the largest city of Portugal**.
- It is continental Europe's westernmost capital city and the only one along the Atlantic coast.
- Lisbon lies in the western Iberian Peninsula on the Atlantic Ocean and the River Tagus.



2. Nathu La

- Nathu La is a **mountain pass in the Himalayas**. It connects the Indian state of Sikkim with China's Tibet Autonomous Region.
- It is also **one of the four officially agreed BPM (Border Personnel Meeting) points** between the Indian Army and People's Liberation Army of China for regular consultations and interactions between the two armies.
- The four BPM are: Chushul in Ladakh, Nathu La in Sikkim, Bum La Pass in Tawang district of Arunachal Pradesh, and Lipulekh Pass in Uttarakhand.
- The pass reduces the journey time to Mansarovar Lake from fifteen days to two days.



3. Djibouti

- Djibouti has acquired major significance as result of **geopolitical developments and presence of military bases of US and China in Djibouti**.
- Djibouti, officially the Republic of Djibouti, is a country located in the **Horn of Africa**.
- It is bordered by Eritrea in the north, Ethiopia in the west and south, and Somalia in the southeast.
- The remainder of the border is formed by the **Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden** at the east.

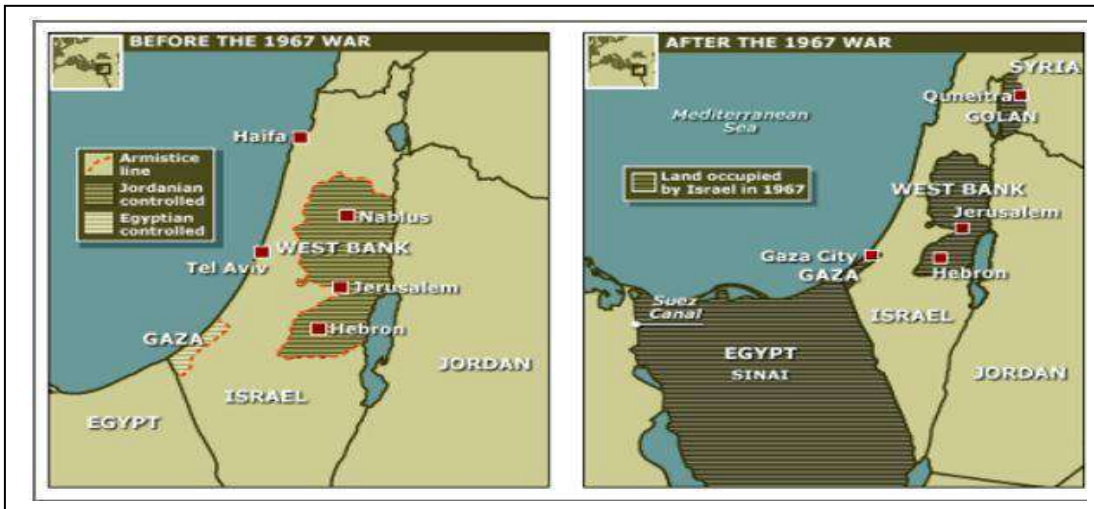


4. Israel-Palestine

- The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is over who gets what land and how it's controlled.
- The 1967 war is particularly important for today's conflict, as **it left Israel in control of the West Bank and Gaza Strip**, two territories home to large Palestinian populations.

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- Today, ***the West Bank is nominally controlled by the Palestinian Authority and is under Israeli occupation.***
- This comes in the form of Israeli troops, who enforce Israeli security restrictions on Palestinian movement and activities, and Israeli “settlers,” Jews who build ever-expanding communities in the West Bank that effectively deny the land to Palestinians.
- Gaza is controlled by Hamas, an Islamist fundamentalist party, and is under Israeli blockade but not ground troop occupation.



5. Hebron

- **The UNESCO World Heritage Committee has put the West Bank city of Hebron on endangered heritage list.**
- This made Israel angry and triggered a new Israeli-Palestinian spat at the international body.
- **Hebron is part of the West Bank**, a territory captured by Israel in the 1967 Mideast war. The international community considers it to be occupied.
- The Old City of Hebron has sites that are holy to both Jews and Muslims, known as either the Tomb of the Patriarchs or the al-Ibrahimi mosque.

6. Belarus

- The Union Cabinet has given its ex-post facto approval for a Memorandum of Understanding between India and Belarus for **cooperation in the field of Vocational Education and Training (VET).**
- This is for the first time a MoU for cooperation in area of vocational education, training and skill development has been signed with Eurasian country.
- **Belarus is a landlocked country in Eastern Europe** bordered by Russia to the northeast, Ukraine to the south, Poland to the west, and Lithuania and Latvia to the northwest.



7. Catalonia

- **Catalonia is an autonomous community of Spain in the north-east end of the Iberian Peninsula, designated as a nationality by its Statute of Autonomy.**
- It has four provinces: Barcelona, Girona, Lleida, and Tarragona.
- The capital and largest city is Barcelona, which is the second most populated city in Spain.



8. Colombia

- The Union Cabinet has given its approval for signing the **Joint Interpretative Declaration (JID)** between India and Colombia regarding the existing Agreement for the **Promotion and Protection of Investments** between India and Colombia.
- Colombia is a sovereign state largely situated in the northwest of South America.
- Colombia shares a border to the northwest with Panama, to the east with Venezuela and Brazil and to the south with Ecuador and Peru.
- Ecologically, it is one of the world's 17 megadiverse countries, and the most densely biodiverse of these per square kilometer.



Miscellaneous

1. Sustainable Development Goals

- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), otherwise known as the Global Goals, are a **universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity**.
- The SDGs are a set of **17 goals and 169 targets** aimed at resolving global social, economic and environmental problems.
- These new SDGs **replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)** which were adopted in 2000.
- The SDGs came into effect in January 2016, and they will continue to **guide UNDP policy** and funding until 2030.
- **UNDP provides support to governments** to integrate the SDGs into their national development plans and policies.



- According to the UN forecast, India's population could surpass that of China's around 2024, two years later than previously estimated, and is projected to touch 1.5 billion in 2030.
- Currently China with 1.41 billion inhabitants and India with 1.34 billion remain the two most populous countries, comprising 19 and 18% of the total global population.

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3. One-China Policy

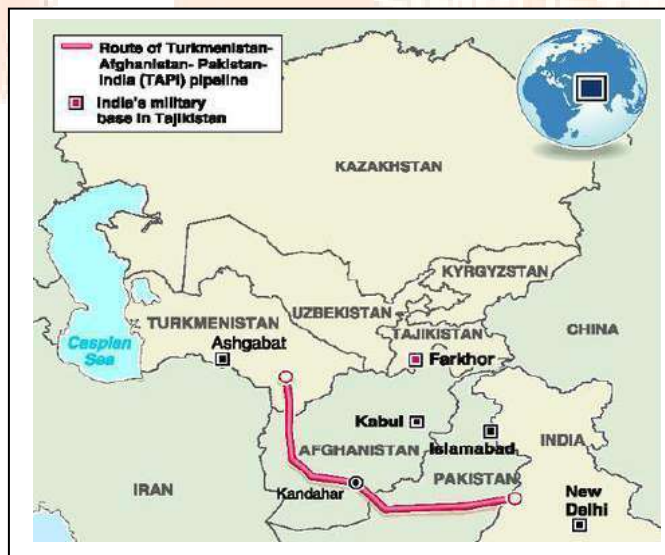
- The "**One China principle**" is the principle that insists both **Taiwan and mainland China are inalienable parts of a single "China"**.
- Under the policy, any country that wants diplomatic relations with mainland China must break official ties with Taipei that it considers a 'breakaway province.'
- Under the policy, the US recognises and has formal ties with China rather than the island of Taiwan.
- Since, the US established formal diplomatic ties with Beijing in 1979, it had to sever ties with Taiwan and closed its Taipei embassy.

4. US Lists China Among World's Worst Human Trafficking Offenders

- The United States declared **China as among the world's worst offenders in human trafficking and forced labor**, placing it alongside — Iran, North Korea and Syria.
- China has been listed as a **Tier 3 human trafficking and forced labour offender**, the lowest ranking. In 2016, China was placed in Tier 2 “watch list”.
- According to the US, Beijing was not doing enough to curb “state sponsored forced labor,” and did not meet “minimum standards” for fighting human trafficking, even though it was making progress.
- Girls and women from rural areas are at higher risk of being recruited for sex trafficking in cities.
- **Implications of this move:**
 - Countries placed in Tier 3 can be **penalized with sanctions**, including the withholding of non-humanitarian aid and assistance that could affect agreements with the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.
 - Officials from countries designated in that tier can be barred from participating in US government educational and cultural exchange programs.

5. TAPI Gas Pipeline

- **Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India (TAPI)** have ceremonially broke ground on the Afghan section of an ambitious, multi-billion dollar gas pipeline, expected to help ease energy deficits in South Asia.
- Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India aim to complete the **1,840-km pipeline** and begin pumping natural gas from **Turkmenistan's Galkynysh gas fields** by the beginning of 2020 and supply life is expected to last for period of 30 years.
- TAPI Project is **being developed by the Asian Development Bank**.
- The TAPI pipeline will have a capacity to carry 90 million standard cubic metres a day (mscmd).
- India and Pakistan would get 38 mscmd each, while 14 mscmd will be supplied to Afghanistan.
- The pipeline runs through Galkynysh field (Turkmenistan), Afghanistan's Herat and Kandahar province, Pakistan's Multan via Quetta and ends at Fazilka in Punjab (India).



- India's effort is to tap Turkmenistan's Galkynysh gasfields, which are the fourth largest in the world.

6. India, ASEAN-5 more fetching to FDI than other emerging markets

- As per a report, **India along with Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam has emerged as attractive destinations to FDIs** as compared to other emerging markets and flows to these nations are expected to surge to around USD 240 billion by 2025.
- For the same reason, India and ASEAN-5 (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam) have been dubbed as "**Asia's tiger cubs**".
- Sources of FDI to these nations are also witnessing a significant shift with **more inflows expected from countries as China and Japan.**
- **Factors behind this:**
 - Rising labour costs in China and an ageing population in Northeast Asia have disincentivised FDI and they are in search of new destinations and India and the ASEAN-5 are well placed to emerge as that destination.
 - Other factors— large and growing domestic markets; reforms focussed on improving infrastructure and the ease of doing business; a more open and liberal FDI regime; sound economic management and political stability; and availability of low-cost labour.

7. India's Exclusive Rights to Explore Polymetallic Nodules Extended

- India's exclusive rights to explore polymetallic nodules from **seabed in Central Indian Ocean Basin (CIOB)** have been extended by five years.
- This has been approved unanimously in the **23rd session of International Seabed Authority (ISA)** concluded at Kingston, Jamaica.
- The rights extended are over **75000 sq. km of area in international waters** allocated by International Seabed Authority for developmental activities for polymetallic nodules.
- The estimated polymetallic nodule resource potential in this region is 380 million tonnes.
- **Background:**
 - **India is the first country to have received the status of a pioneer investor in 1987 and was allocated an exclusive area in Central Indian Ocean Basin by United Nations (UN) for exploration and utilization of nodules.**
 - India is one among the top 8-countries and is implementing a long-term programme on **exploration and utilization of Polymetallic Nodules through Ministry of Earth Sciences.**
 - This includes survey and exploration, environmental studies, technology development in mining and extractive metallurgy, in which significant contributions have been made.
- **What are PMN?**
 - **Polymetallic nodules (also known as manganese nodules)** are largely porous nodules found in abundance carpeting the sea floor of world oceans in deep sea.

- Besides manganese and iron, they contain nickel, copper, cobalt, lead, molybdenum, cadmium, vanadium, titanium, of which **nickel, cobalt and copper are considered to be of economic and strategic importance.**
- **ISA:**
 - **International Seabed Authority (ISA) is a UN body set up to regulate the exploration and exploitation of marine non-living resources of oceans in international waters.**
 - ISA is an autonomous international organization based in Kingston, Jamaica, established in 1994.
 - It is an organization **established under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).**
 - The Authority obtained its **observer status to the United Nations** in October 1996.
 - India actively contributes to the work of International Seabed Authority.
 - In 2016 India was re-elected as a member of Council of ISA.
 - India's nominees on Legal and Technical Commission and Finance Committee of the ISA were also elected in 2016.

8. Atomic fuel reserve in Kazakhstan

- **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has opened world's first low Enriched Uranium (LEU) Bank in Oskemen in Kazakhstan.**
- The bank is **owned and managed by IAEA.** It will be the first of its kind LEU bank not to be under control of any individual country.
- The bank will hold 90 tons of uranium—enough to power a large reactor for three years—and member states that withdraw from the bank will cover the cost of restocking.
- To ensure transport, the IAEA signed an agreement with Russia in 2015 to allow the material to travel through the country.
- **What is it for?**
 - The bank will serve as **sources of last resort for low-enriched uranium when IAEA members are unable to either produce** it or if it becomes unavailable on the international market for whatever reason.
 - This function will help **non-proliferation efforts.** By providing uranium, it will disincentivise countries from developing their own uranium enrichment capacities—as even supposedly peaceful programs could see uranium enriched to a weapons-grade level.
 - The bank seeks **to ensure that in the event of an international crisis or similar circumstances,** countries dependent on nuclear power would still have access to uranium.
- The **IAEA has established a series of strict criteria** for a member state to request and purchase uranium from the bank. **These criteria include:**
 - **There must be a disruption in supply “due to extraordinary circumstances”** that would render the country in question unable to obtain fuel by the usual means.
 - In addition, **the IAEA must have certified that nuclear material has not**

been diverted by the country in the past and that the country complies with all safety measures.

- The buying country **must commit to using uranium only to produce fuel**, never for weapons, and **not to enrich it or transfer it to third parties** without the express consent of the IAEA.
- If these conditions are met and the uranium is purchased at the prevailing market price, the material will be introduced into special cylinders and transferred from northern Kazakhstan, to a facility where LEU can be converted into fuel.

9. ICT Facts and Figures 2017 report

- **The ICT Facts and Figures 2017 report released by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)**, the United Nations specialised agency for Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), shows that of the 830 million young people online worldwide, 320 million, or 39%, are in China and India.

10. Bali Declaration

- **India refused to be a part of Bali Declaration** adopted at conclusion of **World Parliamentary Forum on Sustainable Development** held in Bali.
- India disassociated from the adoption of the Bali Declaration as it referred to the violence in the Rakhine state of Myanmar and emphasised that any mention of country-specific issues was not appropriate.
- **Bali declaration:**
 - **The Bali Declaration, adopted at the World Parliamentary Forum on Sustainable Development** in Indonesia **called on all parties to contribute to restoring stability and security in the region.**
 - It urged everyone to “exercise maximum self-restraint from using violent means, respect the human rights of all people in Rakhine state regardless of their faith and ethnicity, as well as facilitate and guarantee safe access for humanitarian assistance”.
- **Why India refused to sign the declaration?**
 - India has maintained that the Bali Declaration was **not in line with the agreed principles of sustainable development.**
 - India also maintained that it continues to support achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Forum’s mandate was to discuss global issues and the overarching principles relating to SDGs.
 - India argued **that specifying a particular country is unjustified** as this Forum is focused on SDGs and inclusive development for all countries based on cooperative and collaborative approach to achieve the 2030 Agenda for the world.

11. India will soon grant citizenship to Chakma, Hajong refugees

- The Centre will soon grant citizenship to nearly one lakh **Chakma and Hajong refugees, who came from the erstwhile East Pakistan five decades ago** and are living in camps in the northeast.
- In 2015, the Supreme Court had directed the Central government to grant

citizenship to the Chakma and Hajong refugees, mostly staying in Arunachal Pradesh.

- Chakmas and Hajongs were **originally residents of Chittagong Hill Tracts** in the erstwhile East Pakistan.
- They left their homeland when it was submerged by the **Kaptai dam project in the 1960s**.
- The **Chakmas, who are Buddhists**, and the **Hajongs, who are Hindus**, also allegedly faced religious persecution and entered India through the then Lushai Hills district of Assam (now Mizoram).
- The Centre moved the majority of them to the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA), which is now Arunachal Pradesh.
- Their numbers have gone up from about 5,000 in 1964-69 to one lakh. At present, they don't have citizenship and land rights but are provided basic amenities by the state government.

12. UNHCR Refugee Cards

- The West Bengal government distributed identity cards issued by the **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)** to Rohingya children lodged in the juvenile justice homes of the State.
- **Background:**
 - The UNHCR has issued identity cards to the Rohingyas in India so as to **shield them from harassment and arbitrary arrests**.
 - The UNHCR says some 16,500 Rohingya from Myanmar are registered with it in India.
- **UNHCR cards:**
 - The UNHCR issues ID cards to registered refugees and documents to asylum-seekers which help to prevent arbitrary arrests, detention and deportation.
 - The card includes a number of enhanced security features including 3D holograms, bar codes and a large QR code.
 - The card is supported by enhanced biometric data collection at the UNHCR office, including retina, 10 fingers and face scan.
- **Significance of these cards:**
 - The government issues long-term visas to refugees which ease their access to public services and employment in the private sector.
 - Because of some recent changes to the documentation processes, some refugees have reportedly been facing challenges in accessing public services and opening bank accounts.
 - It is important for refugees to have access to employment and basic services. Therefore, refugee cards help in facilitating their access to these services.

13. One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative

- The Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-century Maritime Silk Road also known as **One Belt, One Road** is a development strategy and framework initiative of China that focuses on **connectivity and cooperation among countries primarily between the People's Republic of China and the rest of**

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Eurasia.

- It consists of two main components, the land-based "**Silk Road Economic Belt**" (SREB) and oceangoing "**Maritime Silk Road**" (MSR).
- The coverage area of the initiative is **primarily Asia and Europe**, encompassing around 60 countries. **Oceania and East Africa** is also included.
- OBOR initiative aims to connect major Eurasian economies through **infrastructure, trade and investment**.
- The "**Belt**" is a network of **overland road and rail routes**, oil and natural gas pipelines, and other infrastructure projects that will stretch from Xi'an in central China through Central Asia and ultimately reach as far as Moscow, Rotterdam, and Venice.
- The "**Road**" is its **maritime equivalent**: a network of planned **ports and other coastal infrastructure projects** that dot the map from South and Southeast Asia to East Africa and the northern Mediterranean Sea.
- It is basically **investment and trade promotion scheme** aiming to deepen economic connections between China and rest of the world.



14. Integrated Check Posts (ICPs)

- A Cabinet proposal to set up **13 new Integrated Check Posts (ICPs)** is being mooted by the Union Home Ministry to **encourage India's engagement with its neighbours** belonging to SAARC region.
- Among the 13 ICPs, **seven will be along the India-Bangladesh border**, apart from the three already operational there.
- The ICPs planned along the Bangladesh border will be at Hili, Changrabandha, Ghojadanga, Mahadipur, Fulbari in West Bengal, Kawripuchhuah in Mizoram and Sutarkandi in Assam.
- Among the new ICPs, only one will be on the India-Pakistan border while four will be on the India-Nepal border and one on the India-Myanmar border.
- Some of the other ICPs are at Dawki (Meghalaya), Akaura, (Tripura) Kawarpuchiah (Mizoram), Jobgani (Bihar), Sunauli (UP) and Rupaidiha/Nepalganj (UP).
- The cost of setting up 13 ICPs will be Rs 3,000 crore.

- They are managed by **Land Port Authority of India (LPAI)**.
- An ICP not only provides various services under one roof but is also equipped with cargo process building, cargo inspection sheds, warehouse, cold storage, currency exchange counters, Internet hubs, clearing agents, banks, vehicle scanners, isolation bay and parking.

15. South China sea dispute

- The South China Sea is located at the western edge of the Pacific Ocean, to Asia's southeast.
- It encompasses an area of about 1.4 million square miles and contains a collection of reefs, islands and atolls, including the Spratly Islands, Paracel Islands and Scarborough Shoal.
- **China's claims:**

- **Beijing claims 90% of the South China Sea**, a maritime region believed to hold a wealth of untapped oil and gas reserves and through which roughly \$4.5tn of ship-borne trade passes every year.



- **Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan also contest China's claims** to islands and reef systems closer to their territory than Beijing's.
- China says it follows a historical precedent set by the **"nine-dash line"** that Beijing drew in 1947 following the surrender of Japan.
- The line has been included in subsequent maps issued under Communist rule.

- **Importance of South China Sea:**
 - It is a 3.5m sq km waterway.
 - One of the world's most strategically vital maritime spaces.
 - More oil passes through here than the Suez Canal.
 - More than \$5 trillion in trade flows through its waters each year. That is a third of all global maritime commerce.
 - The Strait of Malacca that links Indian and Pacific Oceans handles four times as much oil as Suez Canal.