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EXCLUSIVE
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Bilateral Relations

India – US

1. Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA)
   Enacted in 2017, it is a US federal law that imposed sanctions on Iran, North Korea and Russia. Includes sanctions against countries that engage in significant transactions with Russia’s defence and intelligence sectors. The Act empowers the US President to impose at least five of the 12 listed sanctions on persons engaged in a “significant transaction” with Russian defence and intelligence sectors.

2. Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA)
   • India and the U.S. have signed the foundational or enabling agreement COMCASA.
   • COMCASA stands for Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement and is one of the four foundational agreements that the U.S. signs with allies and close partners to facilitate interoperability between militaries and sale of high-end technology.
   • COMCASA is an India-specific version of the Communication and Information on Security Memorandum of Agreement (CISMOA). It is valid for a period 10 years and came into force immediately it was signed.
   • COMCASA is a “technology enabler” to help transfer high-tech avionics, encrypted communication and electronic systems to India as well as ensure secrecy of its C4ISR (command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance) systems from leaking to other countries like Russia.
   • This agreement would allow the interoperability of India and United States equipments.

What next?
   • India had signed the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) in 2002 and the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) in 2016. The last one remaining is the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-spatial Cooperation (BECA).
   • BECA agreement would facilitate exchange of geospatial information between India and United States for both military and civilian use.

3. PACEsetter Fund programme
   • Ministry of New and Renewable Energy awards grants to four projects in second round of PACEsetter Fund programme.

PACEsetter fund:
   • Constituted by India and the USA in 2015.
• It is a INR 50 crore (USD 7.9 million) fund jointly capitalized by the Governments of the Republic of India and the United States of America.
• It is a joint fund to provide early-stage grant funding to accelerate the commercialization of innovative off-grid clean energy products, systems, and business models.
• The Fund will award grants for direct support of innovative technology, business models, and programs including but not limited to: rural energy services companies (full scale integrated operators); rural distribution companies/franchisees; operations/maintenance companies; technology implementers/system integrators; and enterprises.

Eligibility:
• To be eligible, projects must be focused on improving the viability of off grid renewable energy businesses and organizations, underserved individuals and communities in India without access to grid connected power or with limited or intermittent access less than 8 hours per day using small scale (under 1 megawatt) clean energy systems.

India – Bangladesh

1. Border Haats
What are Border Haats?
• They are *market places organised by the two countries one day each week*.
• It is not only a market for buying daily commodities but also a *reunion spot for families* living on both sides.
• *Aim*: The border haats aim at *promoting the wellbeing of the people* dwelling in remote areas across the borders of two countries, by *establishing traditional system of marketing* the local produce through local markets.

Operational Border Haats between India and Bangladesh:
• Currently, *four border haats are operational along the India-Bangladesh border*. Two border haats are located in Meghalaya at Kalaichar and Balat and two are located in Tripura at Srinagar and Kamalasagar.

How it functions?
• The trade at border haats is permitted to be carried out *in Indian Rupees/Bangladesh Taka and on a barter basis*, and data of such trade is maintained by the *Haat Management Committee* of the respective border haat.

The Following commodities are traded in the Border Haats:
• Vegetables, food items, fruits, spices.
• Minor Forest produce eg bamboo, bamboo grass and broom sticks, excluding timber.
• Products of Cottage Industries like Gamcha, Lungi etc.
• Small Agriculture household implements eg dao, plough, axe, spade, chisel etc.
• Garments, melamine products, processed food items, fruit juice, toiletries, cosmetics, plastic products, aluminium products, cookeries.

Proposed border Haats:
• The government of India and the government of Bangladesh have approved *six more border haats*: two in Tripura at Palbasti and Kamalpur and four in Meghalaya at Bholaganj, Nalikata, Shibbari and Ryngku.
India – Pakistan

1. Agreement on Prohibition of Attacks against Nuclear Installations and Facilities

Both India and Pakistan have exchanged their list of nuclear installations. The exchange was in accordance with the Agreement on Prohibition of Attacks against Nuclear Installations and Facilities between Pakistan and India.

Background:
The exchange is done each year on January 1, under the Agreement on the Prohibition of Attack against Nuclear Installations and Facilities, also referred to as the Non-Nuclear Aggression Agreement.

About the Agreement on the Prohibition of Attack against Nuclear Installations:
The agreement, signed by the Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and her Indian counterparts, Rajiv Gandhi on 21 December 1988; it entered into force on January 1991; it provides that the two countries inform each other of nuclear installations and facilities to be covered under the pact on the first of January of every calendar year.

2. Scope for third party intervention in the Kashmir issue

India has reiterated that there is no scope for third party intervention in the Kashmir issue.

What is mediation?
Both in international law and diplomacy, mediation often denotes a ‘friendly interference’ of a neutral state in the controversies of other nations, with the objective of using its influence to ‘adjust their difficulties’.

Previous instances of mediation:
- **Indus Water treaty:** Both nations were able to reach agreements through third party mediators in case of the Indus Waters Treaty and the negotiations on the Rann of Kutch dispute.
- **Rann of Kutch Accord** (mediated by British Prime Minister Harold Wilson) persuaded the combatants to end hostilities and establish a tribunal to resolve the dispute.
- **During the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war,** the then USSR led mediation efforts paved the way for India and Pakistan to withdraw forces from each other’s territories while agreeing to discuss all future matters. This was followed by signing of the Tashkent Declaration in Uzbekistan.

3. Kartarpur Sahib Corridor Agreement

India signs the Kartarpur Sahib Corridor Agreement with Pakistan.

The Agreement lays down a formal framework for operationalisation of the Kartarpur Sahib Corridor.

The highlights of the Agreement are:
- Indian pilgrims of all faiths and persons of Indian origin can use the corridor;
- The travel will be Visa Free;
- Pilgrims need to carry only a valid passport;
- Persons of Indian Origin need to carry OCI card along with the passport of their country;
- The Corridor is open from dawn to dusk. Pilgrims travelling in the morning will have to return on the same day;
- The Corridor will be operational throughout the year, except on notified days, to be informed in advance;
Pilgrims will have a choice to visit as individuals or in groups, and also to travel on foot;
India will send the list of pilgrims to Pakistan 10 days ahead of travel date. Confirmation will be sent to pilgrims 4 days before the travel date;
The Pakistan side has assured India to make sufficient provision for ‘Langar’ and distribution of ‘Prasad’.

What is the “Kartarpur Corridor” project?
- The corridor – often dubbed as the “Road to Peace” – will connect Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Pakistan’s Kartarpur with Dera Baba Nanak shrine in India’s Gurdaspur district.

The shrine and its significance:
- The gurdwara in Kartarpur stands on the bank of the Ravi, about 120 km northeast of Lahore.
- It was here that Guru Nanak assembled a Sikh community and lived for 18 years until his death in 1539.
- The shrine is visible from the Indian side, as Pakistani authorities generally trim the elephant grass that would otherwise obstruct the view.
- Indian Sikhs gather in large numbers for darshan from the Indian side, and binoculars are installed at Gurdwara Dera Baba Nanak.

4. Indus Water Treaty
- Pakistani delegation had come to India to inspect hydro-power projects at Chenab River basin under the Indus Waters Treaty.

Need:
- This tour is an obligation imposed on both the countries by the Indus Waters Treaty 1960 between India and Pakistan.
- Under the treaty, both the commissioners are mandated to inspect sites and works on both the sides of Indus basin in a block of five years.

Is it the first time?
- No. Since signing of the treaty, a total of 118 such tours on both the sides have been undertaken by the commission.

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 – European Union (EU)**

1. **India-EU Broad Based Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA)**

   The European Union (EU) has expressed interest in exploring a **bilateral investment protection agreement (BIPA)** with India that would be delinked from the proposed free trade agreement (FTA) where ongoing negotiations are in a state of limbo.

   **Implications:**
   
   Carving out a separate investment protection agreement from the bilateral FTA — formally called the **Broad-based Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA)** — which is currently under negotiations, will make it possible for the investment protection pact to be signed even if there is no progress on the BTIA.

   **About India-EU Broad Based Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA) negotiations:**
   
   On 28th June 2007, India and the EU began negotiations on a broad-based Bilateral Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA) in Brussels, Belgium.

   These negotiations are pursuant to the commitment made by political leaders at the **7th India-EU Summit held in Helsinki** on 13th October 2006 to move towards negotiations for a broad-based trade and investment agreement.

   **The negotiations cover:**
   

   **What’s the issue now?**
   
   Negotiations have been languishing since 2013 when the talks collapsed over certain demands from the EU such as greater market access for automobiles, wine and spirits, and further opening up of the financial services sector such as banking, insurance and e-commerce.

   • The EU wanted labour, environment and government procurement to be included in the talks.
• India’s demand for easier work visa and study visa norms as well as data secure status, that would make it easier for European companies to outsource business to India, were also not received enthusiastically by the EU countries.

India – Russia

1. Agreement on Reciprocal Logistics Support (ARLS)
   • India and Russia are finalising a defence agreement that will simplify interoperability and enable military platforms to receive support and supplies across bases in both nations—Agreement on Reciprocal Logistics Support (ARLS).

What is Agreement on Reciprocal Logistics Support (ARLS)?
• It is an arrangement that will allow access to India and Russia, to each other’s military facilities for supplies and fuel, expanding the logistics support and operational turnaround of the Indian military.

Benefits and mutual significance:
• This will be beneficial for the Indian Navy, which has a large number of Russian origin ships, that will get access to Russian ports for supplies and refueling. It would be crucial for joint exercises.
• The air force too will benefit by finding it easier to deploy aircraft for the same purpose.
• This access will also be for ports in the Russian part of the Arctic, allowing access to energy resources there.
• Russia, on the other hand, will be able to access Indian ports and air bases.
• Russia has also assured India access to energy resources in the vast Arctic region.

2. India-Russia Strategic Economic Dialogue
   • The IRSED was established following a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between NITI Aayog and the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation during the 19th edition of the Annual India-Russia Bilateral Summit, which was held on October 5, 2018, in New Delhi.
   • The First India-Russia Strategic Economic Dialogue was held in St. Petersburg in 2018.

India – UAE

1. UAE has been declared ‘reciprocating territory’ by India
   The Ministry of Law and Justice issued an Extraordinary Gazette Notification, declaring the United Arab Emirates to be a “reciprocating territory” under Section 44A of the Civil Procedure Code, 1908.
   • The notification also declared a list of courts in the UAE to be “superior Courts” under the same section.

Apart from UAE, the other countries declared to be “reciprocating territories” are: United Kingdom, Singapore, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Trinidad & Tobago, New Zealand, the Cook Islands (including Niue) and the Trust Territories of Western Samoa, Hong Kong, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Aden.

What is a ‘reciprocating territory’ and what are superior courts?
“Reciprocating territory” means any country or territory outside India which the Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, declare to be a reciprocating territory;
and “superior Courts”, with reference to any such territory, means such Courts as may be specified in the said notification.”

- Essentially, orders passed by certain designated courts from a ‘reciprocating territory’ can be implemented in India, by filing a copy of the decree concerned in a District Court here.
- The courts so designated are called ‘superior Courts’.

What does Section 44 of the CPC say?
Section 44A, titled “Execution of decrees passed by Courts in reciprocating territory”, provides the law on the subject of execution of decrees of Courts in India by foreign Courts and vice versa. Section 44A (1) provides that a decree passed by “a superior Court” in any “reciprocating territory” can be executed in India by filing a certified copy of the decree in a District Court, which will treat the decree as if it has been passed by itself.

Limitations:
The scope of the Section is restricted to decrees for payment of money, not being sums payable “in respect of taxes or other charges of a like nature or in respect of a fine or other penalty”. It also cannot be based on an arbitration award, even if such an award is enforceable as a decree or judgment.

Why is the move significant?
The decision is believed to help bring down the time required for executing decrees between the two countries. Indian expatriates in the UAE would no longer be able to seek safe haven in their home country if they are convicted in a civil case in the UAE.

India – Bhutan

2. Mangdechhu hydroelectric power plant
- In his second visit to Bhutan, the Indian Prime Minister has inaugurated the Mangdechhu hydroelectric power plant.
- The Mangdechhu hydroelectric project is a 720MW run-of-river power plant built on the Mangdechhu River in Trongsa Dzongkhag District of central Bhutan.
- Mangdechhu is one of the ten hydroelectric projects planned under the Royal Government of Bhutan’s initiative to generate 10,000MW hydropower by 2020 with support from the Indian Government.

India – UK

1. UK India Education & Research Initiative (UKIERI) Mobility Programme
- India and UK have joined hands together for UKIERI Mobility Programme: Study in India which will allow UK students to visit India for higher studies.

About the UK India Education & Research Initiative (UKIERI) Mobility Programme: Study in India:
- It will be a bilateral pilot programme which will support UK universities to collaborate with Indian partners to send UK students to India as part of their studies.
- It provides flexible grants to UK higher education institutions (HEIs) and their Indian partner institutions to design and deliver academically rigorous short-term mobility opportunities in India for undergraduate students from UK HEIs.

The aims and objectives of the Programme:
• Increase the levels of outward student mobility from the UK.
• Enhance the employability of UK graduates, recognizing the positive correlation between international experience, academic performance and graduate employability.
• Support the internationalization of Indian higher education institutions in line with the Government of India’s ‘Study in India’ programme through the diversification of the student body, and through establishing links with the potential to seed deeper institutional partnerships and research collaboration.

India – Myanmar

1. Kaladan project
• 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 the country through Myanmar.
• Significance: It is expected to open up sea routes and promote economic development in the North-eastern states, and also add value to the economic, commercial and strategic ties between India and Myanmar. 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.

Where is Sittwe located?
• Sittwe is the capital of Rakhine State (which has been in the news for the plight of Rohingya Muslims) in south-western Myanmar. It is located at the mouth of the Kaladan river, which flows into Mizoram in north-eastern India.
Effects of Policies of Developed and Developing Countries on India’s Interests

1. **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)**
   - The CPEC is the flagship project of the *multi-billion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)*, a project of Chinese President Xi Jinping, aimed at enhancing Beijing’s influence around the world through China-funded infrastructure projects.
   - **CPEC eventually aims at linking the city of Gwadar in South Western Pakistan to China’s North Western region Xinjiang** through a vast network of highways and railways.
   - The project will be financed by heavily-subsidised loans, that will be disbursed to the Government of Pakistan by Chinese banking giants such as Exim Bank of China, China Development Bank, and the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China.
     - **But, why is India concerned?**
       - It passes through PoK.
       - CPEC rests on a Chinese plan to secure and shorten its supply lines through Gwadar with an enhanced presence in the Indian Ocean. Hence, it is widely believed that upon CPEC’s fruition, *an extensive Chinese presence will undermine India’s influence in the Indian Ocean*. 


Protocols / Conventions / Treaties / Agreements / Reports

1. **Mutual Recognition of Certificates of Competency of Seafarers**
   Cabinet approves Model MoU with foreign countries for unilateral/bilateral recognition of **Certificates of Competency of seafarers**.
   This is in pursuance to Regulation 1/10 of **International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) for Seafarers**.

   **Benefits:**
   - It will facilitate unilateral recognition by another country of the certificates issued by the Directorate General of Shipping to Indian seafarers, without seeking similar recognition by India of the certificates issued by that country.
   - Indian Seafarers, will be eligible to be placed on ships under the flag of that country for employment, thus leading to increased employment opportunities.
   - The bilateral MoU would make the seafarers of both the countries to be eligible for employment on ships of either party based on the certificates so recognized. India being a seafarer supplying nation with large pool of trained seafarers will stand to be benefitted.

   **About STCW convention:**
   The **International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watch keeping for Seafarers (or STCW), 1978** sets qualification standards for masters, officers and watch personnel on seagoing merchant ships.
   - STCW was **adopted in 1978 by conference at the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in London, and entered into force in 1984.**
   - The 1978 STCW Convention was the **first to establish basic requirements on training, certification and watchkeeping for seafarers on an international level.**
   - The Convention **prescribes minimum standards relating to training, certification and watchkeeping for seafarers which countries are obliged to meet or exceed.**
   - One important feature of the Convention is that **it applies to ships of non-party States when visiting ports of States which are Parties to the Convention.**
   - The **Manila amendments to the STCW Convention and Code** were adopted on 25 June 2010, marking a major revision of the STCW Convention and Code.

2. **Iran nuclear deal**
   Iran has completely withdrawn from **JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) nuclear deal**. The announcement came after the US troops killed General Qassem Soleimani.

   **What was the Iran nuclear deal?**
   Iran agreed to **rein in its nuclear programme in a 2015 deal struck with the US, UK, Russia, China, France and Germany.**
   - Under the **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)** Tehran agreed to significantly cut its stores of centrifuges, enriched uranium and heavy-water, all key components for nuclear weapons.
   - The JCPOA established **the Joint Commission**, with the negotiating parties all represented, to monitor implementation of the agreement.

   **Why has US pulled out of the deal?**
   - Trump and opponents to the deal say it is flawed because it gives Iran access to billions of dollars but does not address Iran’s support for groups the U.S. considers terrorists, like Hamas and Hezbollah. They note it also doesn’t curb Iran’s development of ballistic missiles and that the deal phases out by 2030. They say Iran has lied about its nuclear program in the past.
3. **Protecting power**

Following the killing of Iranian military and intelligence commander **Major General Qassem Soleimani** in Baghdad in a drone attack carried out by the United States, the Iranian government registered its protest with the Swiss Embassy in Tehran.

**Why Switzerland?**

*Switzerland represents the interests of the US in Iran.* This is because *the US itself does not have an embassy there.*

Iran’s interests in the United States, on the other hand, are represented by *the Pakistan Embassy in Washington.*

**How can one country represent another country?**

In an arrangement such as this, Switzerland is the “Protecting Power” of the United States’ interests in Iran.

The instrument of Protecting Powers is provided for under *the 1961 and 1963 Vienna Conventions on Diplomatic Relations.*

**What the Vienna rules say?**

*1961 Vienna Convention states*, if diplomatic relations are broken off between two States, or if a mission is permanently or temporarily recalled, the sending State may entrust the protection of its interests and those of its nationals to a third State acceptable to the receiving State.  

And *the 1963 Convention reiterates*: “A sending State may with the prior consent of a receiving State, and at the request of a third State not represented in the receiving State, undertake the temporary protection of the interests of the third State and of its nationals.”

**Roles of Protecting power:**

In the absence of diplomatic and consular relations of the United States of America with the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Swiss government, acting through its Embassy in Tehran, serves as *the Protecting Power of the USA in Iran since 21 May 1980.* The Swiss Embassy’s Foreign Interests Section provides consular services to US citizens living in or travelling to Iran. The United States government describes the same role on a web page on *the “US Virtual Embassy” in Iran.*

4. **Oslo Accords**

Palestinians had threaten to quit *Oslo Accords*, if U.S. President Donald Trump announces his *West Asia peace plan.*

**Why? Palestinians’ concerns:**

The main worry is that this initiative will turn *Israel’s “temporary occupation (of Palestinian territory) into a permanent occupation”*.  

The Palestinians see *east Jerusalem as the capital of their future state* and believe Mr. Trump’s plan buries the *two-state solution* that has been for decades the cornerstone of international West Asia diplomacy.

**What’s the issue?**

Under *the Oslo Accords* of the 1993, both *Israel and the Palestinians agreed that the status of settlements would be decided by negotiations.* But the negotiations process has been all but dead for several years now.  

*Israel walked into East Jerusalem in 1967,* and subsequently annexed it. *For Israel, Jerusalem is non-negotiable.*

The Palestinians want East Jerusalem as the capital of their future state. *Most of the world’s nations look at it as occupied territory.*
**About the Oslo Accords:**
Formally known as the *Declaration of Principles (DOP)*, the pact established a *timetable for the Middle East peace process*. It planned for an *interim Palestinian government in Gaza and Jericho in the West Bank*.

*Oslo II*, officially called the *Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza*, expanded on Oslo I. It included provisions for the complete withdrawal of Israeli troops from six West Bank cities and about 450 towns. Additionally, the pact set a timetable for elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council.

5. **West Asia peace plan**

The *West Asia peace plan* was recently unveiled by U.S. President Trump.

**What is it all about?**
It plans to revive the stalled *two-state talks between the Israelis and the Palestinians*. It seeks to give the Israelis an expansive state with *Jerusalem as its “undivided capital” and tight security control over a future Palestinian state*.

6. **Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)**

- The NPT is a *multilateral treaty aimed at limiting the spread of nuclear weapons* including three elements: (1) non-proliferation, (2) disarmament, and (3) peaceful use of nuclear energy.
- These elements constitute a “grand bargain” between the five nuclear weapon states and the non-nuclear weapon states.
- The treaty was signed in 1968 and entered into force in 1970. As of August 2016, 191 states have adhered to the treaty.
- Though *North Korea*, acceded in 1985 but never came into compliance, announced its withdrawal from the NPT in 2003. Four states—*India, Israel, Pakistan, and South Sudan*—have never signed the treaty.

**Implications:**
- States without nuclear weapons will not acquire them.
- States with nuclear weapons will pursue disarmament.
- All states can access nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, under safeguards.

**Key provisions:**
- *The Treaty defines nuclear weapon states (NWS)* as those that had manufactured and detonated a nuclear explosive device prior to 1 January 1967. All the other states are therefore considered *non-nuclear weapon states (NNWS)*.
- *The five nuclear weapon states* are China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
- The *Treaty does not affect the right of state parties to develop, produce, and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes*.

**Role of states:**
- Nuclear weapon states are not to transfer to any recipient whatsoever nuclear weapons and not to assist, encourage, or induce any NNWS to manufacture or otherwise acquire them.
- Non-nuclear weapon states are not to receive nuclear weapons from any transferor, and are not to manufacture or acquire them.
- NNWS must accept the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards on all nuclear materials on their territories or under their control.
7. **Global Social Mobility Report**

*World Economic Forum* has come out with its *first-ever Global Social Mobility Report*. The report has ranked *India a lowly 76 out of the 82 countries profiled.*

**What is social mobility?**

It can be understood as the movement in personal circumstances either “upwards” or “downwards” of an individual in relation to those of their parents.

- In absolute terms, *it is the ability of a child to experience a better life than their parents.*
- On the other hand, *relative social mobility is an assessment of the impact of socio-economic background on an individual’s outcomes in life.*
- It can be *measured against a number of outcomes ranging from health to educational achievement and income.*

8. **United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA)**

*The House of Representatives* has passed *the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement — the replacement for NAFTA, or the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement.* The new deal includes stronger labor and environmental provisions.

**What is NAFTA?**

NAFTA is the initialism for *the North American Free Trade Agreement*, an agreement signed by Canada, Mexico, and the United States that reduced or eliminated trade barriers in North America. (Since the U.S. and Canada already had a free trade agreement (signed in 1988), NAFTA merely brought Mexico into the trade bloc.)

*The agreement went into effect on January 1, 1994.*

9. **Hong Kong International Convention for safe and environmentally sound recycling of Ships**

*The Recycling of Ships Act* has come into force with President Ram Nath Kovind giving assent to the law which provides for safe and environmentally sound recycling of ships. The government also decided to accede to *the Hong Kong International Convention for safe and environmentally sound recycling of Ships, 2009.*

**What is Hong Kong convention?**

*The Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships, 2009 (the Hong Kong Convention)*, was adopted at a diplomatic conference held in Hong Kong, China in 2009.

- It was adopted by *the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in 2009.*
- The Convention is *aimed at ensuring that ships, when being recycled after reaching the end of their operational lives, do not pose any unnecessary risks to human health, safety and to the environment.*
- It also addresses *concerns raised about the working and environmental conditions at many of the world’s ship recycling locations.*
- *The Convention is yet to come into force because it has not been ratified by 15 nations,* representing 40 per cent of the world merchant shipping by gross tonnage (capacity) and a maximum annual ship recycling volume of not less than 3 per cent of the combined tonnage of the countries.

10. **Budapest Convention**

The United Nations has approved *a Russian-led bid that aims to create a new convention on cybercrime.*

The General Assembly approved *the resolution sponsored by Russia and backed by China, which would set up a committee of international experts.*
**Why the US is worried about this?**
A new UN treaty on cybercrime could render the **Budapest Convention** obsolete, further alarming rights groups.

The **Budapest Convention** was drafted by the Council of Europe, but other countries have joined, including the United States and Japan.

Russia has opposed the Budapest Convention, arguing that giving investigators access to computer data across borders violates national sovereignty.

**What is Budapest convention?**
Also known as the **Convention on Cybercrime**, it 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.
- It is **open for ratification even to states that are not members of the Council of Europe**.

As of September 2019, 64 states have ratified the convention.

**What it does?**
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.

**India’s concerns over signing of this agreement:**
- India did not participate in the negotiation of the Convention and thus is worried about it.
- The Convention — through its **Article 32b** — allows for transborder access to data and thus infringes on national sovereignty.
- The regime of the Convention is not effective, “the promise of cooperation not firm enough,” or that there are grounds for refusal to cooperate.

**11. New START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty)**
- It is a **nuclear arms reduction treaty between the United States and the Russian Federation** with the formal name of **Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms**.
- **Signed** on 8 April 2010 in Prague, and, after ratification **entered into force** on 5 February 2011.
- Replaced the **Treaty of Moscow (SORT)**, which was to expire in December 2012.

Its name is a follow-up to the START I treaty, which expired in December 2009, the proposed START II treaty, which never entered into force, and the START III treaty, for which negotiations were never concluded.

**Under terms of the treaty:**
1. Number of strategic nuclear missile launchers will be reduced by half.
2. A new inspection and verification regime will be established, replacing the SORT mechanism.
3. The number of deployed strategic nuclear warheads is limited to 1,550.
4. Number of deployed and non-deployed inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM) launchers, submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) launchers, and heavy bombers equipped for nuclear armaments to 800 will be limited.

INF Treaty, formally Treaty Between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles, was an arms control agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union. It was signed on 8 December 1987.

- Under the INF Treaty, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. agreed to eliminate within three years all ground-launched-missiles of 500-5,500 km range and not to develop, produce or deploy these in future.

U.S. President Donald Trump announced on 20 October 2018 that he was withdrawing the U.S. from the treaty, accusing Russia of non-compliance. The U.S. formally suspended the treaty on 1 February 2019, and Russia did so on the following day in response to the U.S. withdrawal. The US formally withdrew from the treaty on 2 August 2019.

13. Kimberley Process

The Plenary meeting of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) was hosted by India Delhi in November 2019. India is the present Kimberley Process (KP) Chair.

What is the Kimberley Process?
The Kimberley Process is an international certification scheme that regulates trade in rough diamonds. It aims to prevent the flow of conflict diamonds, while helping to protect legitimate trade in rough diamonds.

The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) outlines the rules that govern the trade in rough diamonds.

The KP is not, strictly speaking, an international organisation: it has no permanent offices or permanent staff. It relies on the contributions – under the principle of ‘burden-sharing’ – of participants, supported by industry and civil society observers. Neither can the KP be considered as an international agreement from a legal perspective, as it is implemented through the national legislations of its participants.

What are Conflict diamonds?
"Conflict Diamonds" means rough diamonds used by rebel movements or their allies to finance conflict aimed at undermining legitimate governments. It is also described in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions.

Who is involved?
The Kimberley Process (KP) is open to all countries that are willing and able to implement its requirements. The KP has 56 participants, representing 82 countries, including the European Union and its Member States counting as a single participant. KP members account for approximately 99.8% of the global production of rough diamonds.

In addition, the World Diamond Council, representing the international diamond industry, and civil society organisations, such as Partnership-Africa Canada, participate in the KP and have played a major role since its outset.

14. Automatic Exchange of Information (AEOI)

In the first tranche of information, Switzerland has shared bank account details with the Indian government under the AEOI (Automatic Exchange of Information) framework.

Automatic Exchange of Information (AEOI) is systematic and periodic transmission of “bulk” taxpayer information by the source country to the residence country, which is possible under most of the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreements (DTAAs) and Multilateral Convention on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters (MAC).

It aims to reduce global tax evasion.
It is to be carried out under *Common Reporting Standard (CRS) of OECD.* AEOI is *the exchange of information between countries without having to request it.*

### 15. Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT)

The Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism is a **proposed treaty which intends to criminalize all forms of international terrorism** and deny terrorists, their financiers and supporters access to funds, arms, and safe havens. It is a draft proposed by India in 1996 that is yet to be adopted by the UNGA.

**What does it call for?**

- Universal definition of terrorism: no good terrorist or bad terrorist.
- Ban on all groups regardless of country of operation, cut off access to funds and safe havens.
- Prosecution of all groups including cross border groups.
- Amending domestic laws to make cross-border terror an extraditable offence.
- It also addresses, among other things, the issue of Pakistan’s alleged support for cross-border terrorism in south Asia.

### 16. Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)

- The executive secretary of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) has offered India an ‘Observer’ status and access to state-of-art International Monitoring System (IMS) data.

**Benefits of becoming an Observer:**

- India can benefit immensely from becoming a CTBTO Observer as the organisation setting has changed a lot over the years. India will have access to the data available which was traditionally not made available.

**Background:**

- Although more than 180 countries have signed the CTBT, and mostly ratified it, the treaty can only enter into force after it is ratified by eight countries with nuclear technology capacity, namely China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan and the United States.

**Why is the CTBT so important?**

- The CTBT is the last barrier on the way to develop nuclear weapons. It curbs the development of new nuclear weapons and the improvement of existing nuclear weapon designs. When the Treaty enters into force it provides a legally binding norm against nuclear testing. The Treaty also helps prevent human suffering and environmental damages caused by nuclear testing.

**India and the CTBT:**

- Since its inception, India has had a number of reservations about the CTBT. While it has stood by its demand for a nuclear weapons-free world, various principled, procedural, political, and security concerns have stood in the way of its support for the CTBT.
- India’s principled opposition drew from its emphasis on universal and complete nuclear disarmament in a time-bound manner. India has traditionally believed this to be the end goal with the test ban just being a path to get there. But it did not insist on a complete disarmament clause in 1994, acknowledging that it was a “complex issue.”
- Another major concern was Article XIV, the entry-into-force (EIF) clause, which India considered a violation of its right to voluntarily withhold participation in an international...
treaty. The treaty initially made ratification by states that were to be a part of the CTBT’s International Monitoring System (IMS) mandatory for the treaty’s EIF.
1. **East Asia Summit**
   - India hosted an **East Asia Summit conference** in Chennai with a focus on maritime security cooperation and tackling challenges in the maritime domain.
   - It was organised by the **Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)**, in partnership with the governments of Australia and Indonesia.
   - This conference is the fourth in a series of EAS Maritime Security Conferences organised by the Indian government.

   **About East Asia Summit:**
   - EAS is an initiative of **ASEAN** and is based on the premise of the centrality of ASEAN.
   - It is a forum held annually by leaders of **18 countries** in the East Asian, Southeast Asian and South Asian regions.
   - EAS meetings are held after annual ASEAN leaders’ meetings.
   - The first summit was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 14 December 2005.
   - India has been participating in the EAS since its very inception in 2005.
   - 14th summit was held in November 2019 in Thailand.
   - EAS has evolved as a forum for **strategic dialogue and cooperation on political, security and economic issues** of common regional concern and plays an important role in the regional architecture.
   - **There are six priority areas of regional cooperation within the framework of the EAS.** These are – Environment and Energy, Education, Finance, Global Health Issues and Pandemic Diseases, Natural Disaster Management, and ASEAN Connectivity. India endorses regional collaboration in all six priority areas.
   - EAS is a region of strong and fast-growing economies. It is **considered the third pole of world economy after the US and Europe.**

2. **BIMSTEC**
   - The 2nd **Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) Disaster Management Exercise** was recently conducted in Bhubaneswar, Odisha.
   - The focus of the 2nd edition of Exercise is on **heritage structures’ protection.**

   **What is BIMSTEC?**
   - The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is **a regional organization comprising of seven member states in South Asia and Southeast Asia** lying in littoral and adjacent areas of Bay of Bengal constituting a contiguous regional unity.
   - This sub-regional organisation came into being on June 6, 1997, through the **Bangkok Declaration**. It is headquartered in Dhaka, Bangladesh.
   - **It comprises of seven member countries:** five deriving from South Asia — including Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka — and two from Southeast Asia, including Myanmar and Thailand.

**AMENDMENTS IN THE BIMSTEC ORGANISATION:**
Initially, the economic bloc was formed with four Member States with the acronym ‘BIST-EC’ (Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand Economic Cooperation).

Following the inclusion of Myanmar during a special Ministerial Meeting in Bangkok on December 22, 1997, the group was renamed ‘BIMST-EC’ (Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand Economic Cooperation).

With the admission of Nepal and Bhutan at the 6th Ministerial Meeting in February 2004, the name of the grouping was changed to ‘Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation’ (BIMSTEC).

Objectives of BIMSTEC:
- BIMSTEC is a sector-driven cooperative organization. Technological and economic cooperation among South Asian and Southeast Asian countries along the coast of the Bay of Bengal is its main objective.
- Starting with six sectors-including trade, technology, energy, transport, tourism and fisheries-for sectoral cooperation in late 1997, it expanded to embrace nine more sectors-including agriculture, public health, poverty alleviation, counter-terrorism, environment, culture, people to people contact and climate change in 2008.

Asian Development Bank (ADB) become a partner in 2005, to undertake the "BIMSTEC Transport Infrastructure and Logistic Study" (BTILS), which was completed in 2014.

India hosted the 2nd BIMSTEC summit in 2008. Fourth BIMSTEC summit was recently held in Nepal in 2018.

3. European Union
- United Kingdom has officially left the European Union (EU) and has become the first country to leave the 28-member bloc. The UK joined in 1973 (when it was known as the European Economic Community) and it will be the first member state to withdraw.

What is the European Union?
- The EU is an economic and political union involving 27 European countries. It allows free trade, which means goods can move between member countries without any checks or extra charges. The EU also allows free movement of people, to live and work in whichever country they choose.
- The EU and European citizenship were established when the Maastricht Treaty came into force in 1993.
- The EU traces its origins to the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and the European Economic Community (EEC), established, respectively, by the 1951 Treaty of Paris and 1957 Treaty of Rome.
- The latest major amendment to the constitutional basis of the EU, the Treaty of Lisbon, came into force in 2009.
- In January 2020, the United Kingdom became the first member state ever to leave the EU.
- The union represents itself at the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the G7 and the G20.

4. Commonwealth
The Maldives re-joined the Commonwealth, more than three years after the Indian Ocean island nation quit amid mounting criticism of its human rights. In 2016, the Maldives pulled out of the Commonwealth. Maldives has been formally reinstated into the Commonwealth as its 54th member state.

About Commonwealth of Nations:

www.insightsonindia.com 24 www.insightsactivelearn.com
The Commonwealth of Nations, at one time known as British Commonwealth, is an organisation of fifty-four states that were principally below the colonial rule of British Government.

They came into existence with the proclamation of sovereignty of the state from the colonial rule of British Empire and were later given self-governance.

It was originally created as the British Commonwealth of Nations through the Balfour Declaration at the 1926 Imperial Conference, and formalized by the United Kingdom through the Statute of Westminster in 1931.

It proclaims that the Commonwealth nations are “free and equal.” The insignia of this Commonwealth Association is Queen Elizabeth II who is considered the Supreme of the Commonwealth nations.

The member states of the commonwealth are not legally liable or bound to each other. They are rather united by language, history, culture, likeness of the democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Their values are listed down within the Commonwealth Charter and the hands of harmony towards the member states are extended by the Commonwealth Games held every four years.

Former British mandates that did not become members of the Commonwealth are Egypt, Transjordan, Iraq, British Palestine, Sudan, British Somaliland, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates.

**Key facts:**
*Former name* — British Commonwealth.
*Composition:* intergovernmental organisation of 54 member states that are mostly former territories of the British Empire.

*It operates by intergovernmental consensus of the member states.*
Established in 1949 by the London Declaration.
*Structure:* Head of the Commonwealth — Queen Elizabeth II is the Head of the Commonwealth. The position is symbolic.

### 5. G20 meeting

**G20 meeting** was held recently in Riyadh (Saudi Arabia).

- Saudi Arabia is the first Arab nation to hold the G20 presidency.
- Theme: “Realizing Opportunities of the 21st Century for All”.

India will host the G20 Summit in 2022, when the country celebrates its 75th year of Independence. It will be the first meet of the global grouping in India.

Amid 2008 Financial Crisis the world saw the need for a new consensus-building at the highest political level. It was decided that the G20 leaders would begin meeting once annually.

**About G20:**
- Formed in 1999, the G20 is an international forum of the governments and central bank governors from 20 major economies.
- Collectively, the G20 economies account for around 85 percent of the Gross World Product (GWP), 80 percent of world trade.
- To tackle the problems or the address issues that plague the world, the heads of governments of the G20 nations periodically participate in summits.
- In addition to it, the group also hosts separate meetings of the finance ministers and foreign ministers.
- The G20 has no permanent staff of its own and its chairmanship rotates annually between nations divided into regional groupings.
- The first G20 Summit was held in Berlin in December 1999 and was hosted by the finance ministers of Germany and Canada.
Objectives:
- The Group was formed with an aim of studying, reviewing, and promoting high-level discussion of policy issues pertaining to the promotion of international financial stability.
- The forum aims to pre-empt balance of payments problems and turmoil on financial markets by improved coordination of monetary, fiscal, and financial policies.
- The forum seeks to address issues that go beyond the responsibilities of any one organisation.

Member Countries:
- The members of the G20 consist of 19 individual countries plus the European Union (EU).
- The 19 member countries of the forum are Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, United Kingdom and the United States.
- The European Union is represented by the European Commission and by the European Central Bank.
- In India, Suresh Prabhu is the Sherpa to the G-20. Previous Indian sherpas include Shaktikanta Das, Arvind Panagariya, Montek Singh Ahluwalia.
- 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 and are responsible for thrashing out the details before the meeting of the leaders.

6. Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)
- SCO is a Eurasian economic, political and security organisation headquartered in Beijing, China.
- It is a permanent intergovernmental international organisation.
- 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 Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Charter was signed during the St.Petersburg SCO Heads of State meeting in June 2002, and entered into force on 19 September 2003.
- The SCO's official languages are Russian and Chinese.
- The SCO has established relations with the United Nations (where it is an observer in the General Assembly), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Commonwealth of Independent States.
- India and Pakistan were inducted as full members of the SCO at the 17th SCO summit concluded in Astana, capital of Kazakhstan.

Bodies under SCO:
- Heads of State Council (HSC) is the supreme decision-making body in the SCO. It meets once a year and adopts decisions and guidelines on all important matters of the organisation.
- SCO Heads of Government Council (HGC) meets once a year to discuss the organisation’s multilateral cooperation strategy and priority areas, to resolve current important economic and other cooperation issues, and also to approve the organisation's annual budget.
- The organisation has two permanent bodies — the SCO Secretariat based in Beijing and the Executive Committee of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) based in Tashkent.
- The SCO Secretary-General and the Director of the Executive Committee of the SCO RATS are appointed by the Council of Heads of State for a term of three years.
7. **Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)**

- The Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), headquartered in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, is a **permanent organ of the SCO** which serves to promote cooperation of member states **against the three evils of terrorism, separatism and extremism**.  
- At SCO summit, held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, on June 2004, the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) was established.  
- The Head of RATS is elected to a three-year term. Each member state also sends a permanent representative to RATS.

8. **Blue dot network**

The U.S., Australia and Japan announced the network during the November 4, 2019, Indo-Pacific Business Forum in Bangkok. The initiative aligns with the G20's Principles for Quality Infrastructure Investment, particularly on governance, environmental standards and transparency.

- It is a new **U.S.-led certification plan**.  
- A "blue dot" will be **awarded to projects the initiative endorses**.  
- The Network will not itself directly invest in projects.  
- At present the project is led by the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (boasting access to $60 billion in capital), in partnership with the government-owned Japan Bank for International Cooperation and Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs.  
- Once fully up and running, the new network will bring together governments, the private sector and other organizations behind a set of high-quality global infrastructure development standards.

**Significance:**
It will act as a **globally recognized seal of approval for major infrastructure projects**, letting people know the projects are sustainable and not exploitative.

**Here's how the network will work:**
- Any country or company can participate in the network, as long as it agrees to adhere to the network’s high standards of promoting quality, private sector-led investment.  
- When projects are certified by the Blue Dot Network, communities and investors can be confident about the high standards and sustainability of the infrastructure.

9. **Quad Countries**

- The quadrilateral formation includes Japan, India, United States and Australia.  
- All four nations find a **common ground of being the democratic nations** and common interests of **unhindered maritime trade and security**.  
- The idea was first mooted by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2007. However, the idea couldn’t move ahead with Australia pulling out of it.  
- It was revived in 2017 and is being viewed as **response to increased Chinese economic and military power**.  
- Quad is an opportunity for like-minded countries to share notes and collaborate on projects of mutual interest. Members share a vision of an **open and free Indo-Pacific**.

10. **North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)**

It is an **intergovernmental military alliance**.

**Established by Washington treaty.**  
**Treaty** that was signed on 4 April 1949.  
**Headquarters** — Brussels, Belgium.  
**Headquarters of Allied Command Operations** — Mons, Belgium.
**Significance:** It constitutes a system of collective defence whereby its independent member states agree to mutual defence in response to an attack by any external party.

**Objectives:**
- **Political** – NATO promotes democratic values and enables members to consult and cooperate on defence and security-related issues to solve problems, build trust and, in the long run, prevent conflict.
- **Military** – NATO is committed to the peaceful resolution of disputes. If diplomatic efforts fail, it has the military power to undertake crisis-management operations. These are carried out under the collective defence clause of NATO’s founding treaty – Article 5 of the Washington Treaty or under a United Nations mandate, alone or in cooperation with other countries and international organisations.

11. **Non-Aligned Movement summit**
Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu represented India at the 18th Non-Aligned Movement summit. **Theme:** ‘Upholding the Bandung Principles to ensure concerted and adequate response to the challenges of contemporary world’.
Prime Minister Modi skipped the meet. This is the second time in a row that PM Narendra Modi skipped the summit.

The **Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)** is a forum of 120 developing world states that are not formally aligned with or against any major power bloc.

During 1950s, the world was emerging out of the long, dark period of colonialism.

- **Newly independent nations** dreamed they could make their way in this new world without hewing to either of the big powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, eschewing the icy hostilities of the Cold War and bask in the warmth of Third World (as it was then known) cooperation.
- **The co-founders were** India’s Jawaharlal Nehru, Indonesia’s Sukarno, Egypt’s Gemal Abdel Nasser, Yugoslavia’s Josep Broz Tito, and Ghana’s Kwame Nkrumah.
- The **Asian-African Conference of 1955 held in Bandung** was the catalyst for the establishment of the Non-Aligned Movement.
- The actual formation took place in **Belgrade**, where the Non-Aligned Movement was formally established by the leaders of 25 developing countries in 1961.

12. **BASIC countries**
The 29th **BASIC Ministerial Meeting on Climate Change** was held recently in **Beijing, China**.

Who are the BASIC?
The BASIC group was formed as the result of an agreement signed by the four countries on November 28, 2009.
They are a bloc of four large newly industrialized countries – Brazil, South Africa, India and China.

**Significance of the grouping:**
- **Objectives:** The signatory nations have a broadly common position on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and raising the massive funds that are needed to fight climate change.
- The BASIC countries constituted one of the parties in the **Copenhagen Accord** reached with the US-led grouping; the Accord, was, however, not legally binding.
- BASIC is one of several groups of nations working together to fight climate change and carry out negotiations within the **UNFCCC**.
13. Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)

The 19th IORA Council of Ministers meeting was held in Abu Dhabi with the theme of “Promoting a Shared Destiny and Path to Prosperity in the Indian Ocean”.

- The meeting was important as two of India’s important partners, the United Arab Emirates and Bangladesh, took charge as the new chair and vice-chair of one of the largest regional maritime organisations for the duration of 2019-21.

**About IORA:**

1. The Indian Ocean Rim Association was set up with the objective of strengthening regional cooperation and sustainable development within the Indian Ocean Region.
2. Setup in 1997, it consists of 22 coastal states bordering the Indian Ocean.
3. The IORA is a regional forum, tripartite in nature, bringing together representatives of Government, Business and Academia, for promoting co-operation and closer interaction among them.
4. It is based on the principles of Open Regionalism for strengthening Economic Cooperation particularly on Trade Facilitation and Investment, Promotion as well as Social Development of the region.
5. The Coordinating Secretariat of IORA is located at Ebene, Mauritius.

**Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) has identified six priority areas, namely:**

1. maritime security,
2. trade and investment facilitation,
3. fisheries management,
4. disaster risk reduction,
5. academic and scientific cooperation and
6. tourism promotion and cultural exchanges.

14. ASEAN

- The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (more commonly known as ASEAN) is a political and economic organization which promotes intergovernmental cooperation and facilitates economic, political, security, military, educational, and sociocultural integration among its members and other countries in Asia.
- **There are currently 10 member states:** Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Laos, Myanmar, Cambodia and Vietnam.
- ASEAN 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 Secretariat of ASEAN is at Jakarta, Indonesia.
- ASEAN is an official United Nations observer, as well as an active global partner.
- A major partner of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, ASEAN maintains a global network of alliances and dialogue partners.

**Why was it set up?**

- ASEAN was founded half a century ago in 1967 by the five South-East Asian nations of Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.
- This was during the polarized atmosphere of the Cold War, and the alliance aimed to promote stability in the region. Over time, the group expanded to include its current 10 members.
- Regional cooperation was further extended with the creation of the ASEAN Plus Three forum in 1997, which included China, South Korea and Japan. And then the East Asia Summit, which
began taking place in 2005 and has expanded to include India, Australia, New Zealand, Russia and the United States.

15. Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)
- The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is a proposed free trade agreement in the Asia-Pacific region between the ten member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and five of ASEAN’s FTA partners Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea.
- India, which is also ASEAN’s FTA partner, opted out of RCEP in November 2019.
- RCEP negotiations were formally launched in November 2012 at the ASEAN Summit in Cambodia.
- In 2018, the 16 negotiating parties accounted for about half of the world’s population and 39% of the world’s GDP. Without India, the 15 negotiating parties account for 30% of the world’s population and just under 30% of the world’s GDP.

16. Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)
- India has skipped a meeting of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), which was organised by the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) at Xi’an in China.

Why India did not attend?
- The entire event was organized to discuss and deliberate upon China’s Belt and Road Initiative.

Belt and Road Initiative:
- It is a mammoth infrastructure project unveiled by China in 2017, which plans to connect the three continents of Asia, Europe, and Africa.
- The ‘Belt’ part refers to the Silk Road Economic Belt, consisting of three overland routes.
  - A link between China, Central Asia, Russia and Europe.
  - A link through Central Asia and West Asia linking China with the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea.
  - A connection from China to Southeast Asia, South Asia, and the Indian Ocean.
- The ‘Road’ part refers to the 21st century Maritime Silk Road, creating maritime trade channels from China through the South China Sea, the Indian Ocean, and the South Pacific.

India’s opposition:
- The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, an important part of the BRI, passes through Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK).

About Eurasian economic union:
- It is an international organization for regional economic integration.
- It is an economic union of states located in central and northern Asia and Eastern Europe.
- It has international legal personality and is established by the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union.
- **Composition:** Includes Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.
- It has free movement of goods, services and labour.
- It has its own bureaucratic structure.

Various bodies under it:
- **Supreme Council** is the Union’s supreme authority. The Heads of the Member-States form the Supreme Council.
- **Intergovernmental Council** is a Union’s body consisting of the Heads of the Member-States Governments.
- **Eurasian Economic Commission** is a permanent supranational regulatory body of the Union. The core tasks of the Commission are fostering the conditions to support the operation and development of the Union, and drafting proposals in the field of economic integration within the Union.
- **Court of the Eurasian Economic Union** is the court of justice of the Eurasian Economic Union, which ensures the uniform application of the EAEU Treaty and other Union treaties by the Union Member-States and bodies.

17. **Association of World Election Bodies (A-WEB)**
- **Election Commission** hosted the 4th General Assembly of Association of World Election Bodies (A-WEB) at Bengaluru.
- India took over as A-WEB’s Chair for the 2019-21 term.

About The Association of World Election Bodies (A-WEB):
- It is the largest association of Election Management Bodies (EMBs) worldwide.
- Established on October 14, 2013 in Song-do, South Korea.
- **Permanent secretariat** is located at Seoul.
- Aims to foster efficiency and effectiveness in conducting free, fair, transparent and participative elections worldwide.
- Composition: 115 EMBs as Members & 20 Regional Associations/Organisations as Associate Members. 24 EMBs from Asia, 37 from Africa, 31 from America, 17 from Europe & 6 from Oceania presently are members of A WEB.

18. **Eastern Economic Forum**
- India extends $1 billion line of credit for development of Russia’s Far East.
- This was announced by PM Modi at the 5th Eastern Economic Forum.

About the Eastern Economic Forum:
- **Established by Decree of the President** of the Russian Federation in 2015.
- It takes place each year in Vladivostok.
- Serves as a platform for the discussion of key issues in the world economy, regional integration, and the development of new industrial and technological sectors, as well as of the global challenges facing Russia and other nations.
- **Participants:** The Forum business programme includes a number of business dialogues with leading partner countries in the Asia-Pacific region, and with ASEAN, a key integration organization of dynamically developing nations in Southeast Asia.

ABOUT THE FAR EAST:
- The Far East is the easternmost part of Russia.
• **It borders** two oceans, the Pacific and the Arctic, and five countries (China, Japan, Mongolia, the United States and the DPRK).

• The Far Eastern Federal District **covers more than a third of the country’s territory.**

• **RESOURCES:** The Far East is rich in natural resources like diamonds, stannary, borax materials, 50 gold, tungsten, and fish and seafood. About 1/3 of all coal reserves and hydro-engineering resources of the country are here. Forests of the region comprise about 30% of the total forest area of Russia.

19. **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)**

• The IAEA is the world’s centre for cooperation in the nuclear field.

• **It was set up as the world’s “Atoms for Peace” organization in 1957.**

• It was established as an autonomous organization in 1957 through its own international treaty, the **IAEA Statute.**

• The Agency works with its Member States and multiple partners worldwide to promote the **safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear technologies.**

• It seeks to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and to inhibit its use for any military purpose, including nuclear weapons.

• **IAEA reports to both the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council.**

• The IAEA has its headquarters 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.

• The IAEA and its former Director General, Mohamed ElBaradei, were jointly awarded the **Nobel Peace Prize** on 7 October 2005.

**IAEA safeguards:**

• **What are they?** Safeguards are a set of technical measures applied by the IAEA on nuclear material and activities, through which the Agency seeks to independently verify that **nuclear facilities are not misused and nuclear material not diverted from peaceful uses.** States accept these measures through the conclusion of safeguards agreements.

• **The objective of IAEA Safeguards** is to **deter the spread of nuclear weapons** by the early detection of the misuse of nuclear material or technology. This provides credible assurances that States are honouring their legal obligations that nuclear material is being used only for peaceful purposes.

• **Need and implementation:** IAEA safeguards are an essential component of the international security system. The **Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)** is the centrepiece of global efforts to prevent the further spread of nuclear weapons. Under the Treaty’s Article 3, each Non-Nuclear Weapon State is required to conclude a safeguards agreement with the IAEA.

20. **International Energy Agency (IEA)**

• Established in 1974 as per **framework of the OECD.**

• **MISSION** – The IEA works to ensure reliable, affordable and clean energy for its 30 member countries and beyond.

• The mission is guided by **four main areas of focus:** energy security, economic development, environmental awareness and engagement worldwide.

• Headquarters (Secretariat): Paris, France.

• A candidate country must be a member country of the OECD. But all OECD members are not IEA members (Ex: Chile, Iceland, Israel and Slovenia).

• Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Morocco, Singapore and Thailand are the **associate members** of IEA.

To become member a candidate country must demonstrate that it has:
• crude oil and/or product reserves equivalent to 90 days of the previous year’s net imports, to which the government has immediate access (even if it does not own them directly) and could be used to address disruptions to global oil supply.
• a demand restraint programme to reduce national oil consumption by up to 10%.
• legislation and organisation to operate the Co-ordinated Emergency Response Measures (CERM) on a national basis.
• legislation and measures to ensure that all oil companies under its jurisdiction report information upon request;
• measures in place to ensure the capability of contributing its share of an IEA collective action.

IEA mandate:
• To focus on the “3Es” of effectual energy policy:
  • Energy security
  • Economic development
  • Environmental protection

21. Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)
• The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) was founded in Baghdad, Iraq, with the signing of an agreement in September 1960 by five countries namely Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela. They were to become the Founder Members of the Organization.
• It is a permanent, intergovernmental organization.
• Currently, the Organization has a total of 13 Member Countries.
• The current OPEC members are the following: Algeria, Angola, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, the Republic of the Congo, Saudi Arabia (the de facto leader), the United Arab Emirates and Venezuela. Ecuador, Indonesia and Qatar are former members.
• OPEC’s objective is to co-ordinate and unify petroleum policies among Member Countries, in order to secure fair and stable prices for petroleum producers; an efficient, economic and regular supply of petroleum to consuming nations; and a fair return on capital to those investing in the industry.
• It is headquartered in Vienna, Austria.
• OPEC membership is open to any country that is a substantial exporter of oil and which shares the ideals of the organization.

What is OPEC+?
• OPEC+ refers to the alliance of crude producers, who have been undertaking corrections in supply in the oil markets since 2017.
• OPEC plus countries include Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Brunei, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mexico, Oman, Russia, South Sudan and Sudan.

What are their goals?
• The Opec and non-Opec producers first formed the alliance at a historic meeting in Algiers in 2016.
• The aim was to undertake production restrictions to help resuscitate a flailing market.

22. Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG)
What is NSG?
• It is a Multilateral export control regime.
• It is a Group of nuclear supplier countries that seek to prevent nuclear proliferation by controlling the export of materials, equipment and technology that can be used to manufacture nuclear weapons.
The NSG first met in November 1975 in London, and is thus popularly referred to as the “London Club”.

It is **Not a formal organization, and its guidelines are not binding**. Decisions, including on membership, are made by consensus.

**Membership:** 48 supplier states.

### Criteria for membership:
- Ability to supply items (including items in transit) covered by the annexes to Parts 1 and 2 of the NSG Guidelines;
- Adherence to the Guidelines and action in accordance with them;
- Enforcement of a legally based domestic export control system which gives effect to the commitment to act in accordance with the Guidelines;
- Full compliance with the obligations of one or more of nuclear non-proliferation agreement.
- Support of international efforts towards non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and of their delivery vehicle.

### Other Benefits associated with NSG membership - 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.

### 23. G7 Bloc
- The 45th Annual G7 Summit was held in the French town of Biarritz.
- G7 Summit is an event conducted annually where world leaders from seven powerful economies of the world come together to discuss burning issues happening around the globe.
- They, by mutual understanding, also form policies or figure out remedies for the concerned issue.

### What is G7?
- The G7, originally G8, was set up in 1975 as an informal forum bringing together the leaders of the world’s leading industrial nations.
- The summit gathers leaders from the European Union (EU) and the following countries:
  - Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States.
- The decisions taken at the G7 are not legally binding, but exert strong political influence.

### 24. Baltic Nations
- It is a geopolitical term, typically used to group the three sovereign states in Northern Europe on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea: Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.
- The three countries **do not form an official union**, but engage in intergovernmental and parliamentary cooperation. The most important areas of cooperation between the three countries are **foreign and security policy, defence, energy and transportation**.
- All three countries are members of the European Union, NATO, the eurozone and the OECD.
- All three are classified as **high-income economies** by the World Bank and maintain a very high Human Development Index.
25. International Whaling Commission

Japan has resumed commercial whale hunting after a hiatus of more than 30 years, defying calls from conservation groups to protect animals once hunted to the brink of extinction.

About IWC:

- The International Whaling Commission is an **Inter-governmental Organisation** whose purpose is the conservation of whales and the management of whaling.
- It is an **international body set up under International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW)**.
- This Convention was established in 1946, making it one of the first pieces of international environmental legislation.
- **In 1986, it adopted a moratorium on commercial whaling.** This ban still continues.

Whale sanctuary:

- In 1994, it created the **Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary** surrounding the continent of Antarctica. Here, the IWC has banned all types of commercial whaling.
- **Only two such sanctuaries have been designated by IWC till date.** Another is **Indian Ocean Whale Sanctuary** by the tiny island nation of the Seychelles.

Objectives:

- To provide for the proper conservation of whale stocks.
- For orderly development of the whaling industry.

26. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)

- The 2019 Yearbook of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), which is part-funded by the Swedish government, was recently released.
- Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) established in 1966 is an independent international institute dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament.
- Based in Stockholm the Institute provides data, analysis and recommendations, based on open sources, to policymakers, researchers, media and the interested public.

**WORLD NUCLEAR FORCES, JANUARY 2019**

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<tr>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
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<th>OTHER WARHEADS**</th>
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*Deployed warheads refers to warheads placed on missiles or located on bases with operational forces. **Other warheads refers to stored or reserve warheads and retired warheads awaiting dismantlement. Total figures include the highest estimate when a range is given. Figures for North Korea are uncertain and are not included in total figures. All estimates are approximate.

27. African Union (AU)

- India has for the first time extended $15 Million financial support to Niger as a support for organising **African Union (AU) summit**.

About AU:

- The African Union (AU) is a continental union consisting of **55 countries of the continent of Africa, with exception of various territories of European possessions located in Africa**.
- The AU was announced in the **Sirte Declaration** in Sirte, Libya, on 9 September 1999, calling for the establishment of the African Union.
1. The bloc was **founded on 26 May 2001 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia** and launched on 9 July 2002 in South Africa.
2. The intention of the AU is **to replace the Organisation of African Unity (OAU)**, established on 25 May 1963 in Addis Ababa by 32 signatory governments.
3. The most important decisions of the AU are made by the Assembly of the African Union, a semi-annual meeting of the heads of state and government of its member states.
4. The AU’s secretariat, the African Union Commission, is based in Addis Ababa.
5. **Key objectives:** To achieve greater unity and solidarity between the African countries and Africans. To defend the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of its Member States. To accelerate the political and social-economic integration of the continent.

### 28. Arctic Council

- **At 11th Arctic Council ministerial** meeting held at Rovaniemi in Finland, **India was re-elected as an observer to intergovernmental forum Arctic Council.**

#### About Arctic council:
- **1996 – Ottawa declaration.**
- It is an Intergovernmental forum which addresses issues faced by the Arctic governments and people living in the Arctic region
- It is **Not a treaty-based international organization** but rather an international forum that operates on the basis of consensus.
- The **decisions, recommendations or guidelines** of the Arctic Council are non-enforceable and strictly the prerogative of the individual state.
- Its mandate explicitly **excludes military security.**

#### Organization structure:
- **Chairmanship:** rotated every two years once. The **current chair is Iceland,** which serves until the Ministerial meeting in 2021.
- **Secretariat:**
  - Rotated biennially with the Chairmanship of the Arctic Council
  - It supports the Chair of the Arctic Council
  - It manages logistics related to the biennial member states’ meetings and the more frequent SAO meetings.
- **SAO (Senior Arctic Official):** a government representative, usually from a member states’ Ministry of Foreign Affairs. SAO guides and monitors Arctic Council activities in accordance with the decisions and instructions of the Arctic Council Foreign Ministers.

#### Who takes part?
- The Ottawa Declaration lists the following countries as **Members of the Arctic Council:** Canada, the Kingdom of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the United States.
- In addition, six organizations representing Arctic indigenous peoples have status as **Permanent Participants.** The category of Permanent Participant was created to provide for active participation and full consultation with the Arctic indigenous peoples within the Council. They include: the Aleut International Association, the Arctic Athabaskan Council, Gwich’in Council International, the Inuit Circumpolar Council, Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North and the Saami Council.
- **Observer status in the Arctic Council is open to non-Arctic states,** along with intergovernmental, inter-parliamentary, global, regional and non-governmental organizations that the Council determines can contribute to its work. Arctic Council Observers primarily contribute through their engagement in the Council at the level of Working Groups.
Arctic Council working groups:
- Arctic Contaminants Action Program (ACAP) — strengthening and supporting mechanism to encourage national actions to reduce emissions and other releases of pollutants.
- Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP) — monitors the Arctic environment, ecosystems and human populations, and provides scientific advice to support governments as they tackle pollution and adverse effects of climate change.
- Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) — addresses the conservation of Arctic biodiversity, working to ensure the sustainability of the Arctic’s living resources.
- Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response (EPPR) — protect the Arctic environment from the threat or impact of an accidental release of pollutants or radionuclides.
- Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME) — protection and sustainable use of the Arctic marine environment.
- Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG) — works to advance sustainable development in the Arctic and to improve the conditions of Arctic communities as a whole.

29. World Customs Organization (WCO)
- The World Customs Organization (WCO), established in 1952 as the Customs Co-operation Council (CCC) is an independent intergovernmental body whose mission is to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of Customs administrations.
- As the global centre of Customs expertise, the WCO is the only international organization with competence in Customs matters and can rightly call itself the voice of the international Customs community.
- The WCO has divided its Membership into six Regions. Each of the six Regions is represented by a regionally elected Vice-Chairperson to the WCO Council.

Roles and functions:
- As a forum for dialogue and exchange of experiences between national Customs delegates, the WCO offers its Members a range of Conventions and other international instruments, as well as technical assistance and training services.
- Besides the vital role played by the WCO in stimulating the growth of legitimate international trade, its efforts to combat fraudulent activities are also recognized internationally.
- WCO has also been responsible for administering the World Trade Organization’s Agreements on Customs Valuation, which provide a system for placing values on imported goods, and the Rules of Origin, which are used to determine the origin of a given commodity.

30. IBSA
- The IBSA Dialogue Forum (India, Brazil, South Africa) is an international tripartite grouping for promoting international cooperation among these countries.
- IBSA was launched through the Brasilia Declaration in 2003.
- Its summits, between 2006 and 2011, gave it a special global profile.
- 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 is the champion of South-South Cooperation, and the advocate of a coordinated response by developing economies to secure the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

31. Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)
- Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is a political and economic alliance of six Middle Eastern countries—Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman.
- The GCC was established in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in May 1981.
The purpose of the GCC is to achieve unity among its members based on their common objectives and their similar political and cultural identities, which are rooted in Arab and Islamic cultures.

Presidency of the council rotates annually.

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

In order to reduce their future dependence on oil, the GCC states are pursuing unprecedented economic structural reform.

32. Group of 77 (G-77)

- The Group of 77 (G77) at the United Nations is a coalition of 134 developing nations, designed to promote its members’ collective economic interests and create an enhanced joint negotiating capacity in the United Nations.
- G77 was formed on 15 June 1964 by the “Joint Declaration of the Seventy-Seven Countries” issued at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).
- Since China participates in the G77 but does not consider itself to be a member, all official statements are issued in the name of The Group of 77 and China.
- Egypt held the Chairmanship for 2018. Palestine was the chair of the group since January 2019 and Guyana holds the chairmanship as of 2020.
- How is chairmanship of G77 decided? The chairmanship of the G77 is based on the system of geographical rotation.

33. Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)

- The OPCW is an independent, autonomous international organisation with a working relationship with the United Nations.
- The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons is the implementing body of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which entered into force in 1997.
- The OPCW, with its 193 member states, has its seat in The Hague, Netherlands.
- The organisation was awarded the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize “for its extensive efforts to eliminate chemical weapons”.
- The OPCW Member States share the collective goal of preventing chemistry from ever again being used for warfare, thereby strengthening international security.

To this end, the Convention contains four key provisions:

- Destroying all existing chemical weapons under international verification by the OPCW.
- Monitoring chemical industry to prevent new weapons from re-emerging.
- Providing assistance and protection to States Parties against chemical threats.
- Fostering international cooperation to strengthen implementation of the Convention and promote the peaceful use of chemistry.

The Chemical Weapons Convention prohibits:

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

34. South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)
• The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was established with the signing of the **SAARC Charter** in Dhaka on 8 December 1985.
• The **Secretariat** of the Association was set up in **Kathmandu** on 17 January 1987.
• **SAARC comprises of eight Member States**: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
• SAARC maintains **permanent diplomatic relations at the United Nations** as an observer and has developed links with multilateral entities, including the European Union.
• **Important objectives of the Association** as outlined in the SAARC Charter are:
  o to promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and to improve their quality of life;
  o to accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region and to provide all individuals the opportunity to live in dignity and to realize their full potentials;
  o to promote and strengthen collective self-reliance among the countries of South Asia.

35. Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)
• The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) is a **regional economic forum** established in 1989 to leverage the growing interdependence of the Asia-Pacific.
• APEC has **21 members**.
• **Aim**: to create greater prosperity for the people of the region by promoting balanced, inclusive, sustainable, innovative and secure growth and by accelerating regional economic integration.
• Headquartered in Singapore.

Functions:
• APEC works to help all residents of the Asia-Pacific participate in the growing economy.
• APEC projects provide digital skills training for rural communities and help indigenous women export their products abroad.
• Recognizing the impacts of climate change, APEC members also implement initiatives to increase energy efficiency and promote sustainable management of forest and marine resources.
• The forum adapts to allow members to deal with important new challenges to the region’s economic well-being. This includes ensuring disaster resilience, planning for pandemics, and addressing terrorism.

Members:
• APEC’s 21 member economies are Australia; Brunei Darussalam; Canada; Chile; People’s Republic of China; Hong Kong, China; Indonesia; Japan; Republic of Korea; Malaysia; Mexico; New Zealand; Papua New Guinea; Peru; The Philippines; The Russian Federation; Singapore; Chinese Taipei; Thailand; United States of America; Viet Nam.
• APEC Members account for approximately 40% of the world’s population, approximately 54% of the world’s gross domestic product and about 44% of world trade.

36. BRICS
• BRICS is an acronym for the grouping of the world’s leading emerging economies, namely Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.
• Originally the first four were grouped as "BRIC" (or "the BRICs"), before the induction of South Africa in 2010.

• **Summits:** Since 2009, the BRICS nations have met annually at formal summits with discussions representing spheres of political and socio-economic coordination, in which member countries have identified several business opportunities, economic complementarities and areas of cooperation.

• **Chairship:** The Chairship of the forum is rotated annually among the members. Cooperation among members is predicated on three levels or “tracks” of interaction, namely:
  o Track I: Formal diplomatic engagement between the national governments.
  o Track II: Engagement through government-affiliated institutions, e.g. state-owned enterprises and business councils.
  o Track III: Civil society and “people-to-people” engagement.

• **Facts for Prelims:**
  o The First BRIC Summit was held in June 2009 in Yekaterinburg, Russia.
  o Brazil hosted the most recent 11th BRICS summit on 13-14 November 2019.
  o India hosted the 4th BRICS summit in 2012 and 8th BRICS summit in 2016.
  o The BRICS members are all leading developing or newly industrialized countries. All five are G-20 members.

37. **International Criminal Court (ICC)**

• The International Criminal Court (ICC) is an intergovernmental organization and international tribunal that sits in The Hague, Netherlands.

• It is the court of last resort for prosecution of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.

• It is the first permanent, treaty based, international criminal court established to help end impunity for the perpetrators of the most serious crimes of concern to the international community.

• Its founding treaty, the Rome Statute, entered into force on July 1, 2002.

• **Funding:** Although the Court’s expenses are funded primarily by States Parties, it also receives voluntary contributions from governments, international organisations, individuals, corporations and other entities.

**Composition and voting power:**

• The Court’s management oversight and legislative body, the Assembly of States Parties, consists of one representative from each state party.

• Each state party has one vote and “every effort” has to be made to reach decisions by consensus. If consensus cannot be reached, decisions are made by vote. The Assembly is presided over by a president and two vice-presidents, who are elected by the members to three-year terms.

**Jurisdiction:**

• The ICC has the jurisdiction to prosecute individuals for the international crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes.

• The ICC is intended to complement existing national judicial systems and it may therefore only exercise its jurisdiction when certain conditions are met, such as when national courts are unwilling or unable to prosecute criminals or when the United Nations Security Council or individual states refer situations to the Court.
## ICJ vs. ICC

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<td><strong>UN-Relationship</strong></td>
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<tr>
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United Nations Organisations

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 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),
  - 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. 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)

- The 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) was held at the UN headquarters in New York.

What is UNGA?
- The United Nations General Assembly is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations (UN), the only one in which all member nations have equal representation, and the main deliberative, policy-making, and representative organ of the UN.
- Popularly known as the parliament of the world, where all the 193 UN member states are represented, the UNGA is the deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the UN.

Roles and functions:
- Takes a decision on important matters such as peace and security, discusses various global issues and budgetary matters.
- Decides on matters such as the admission of new members.
• Decisions are taken through a vote. Admission of new members and budgetary matters require a two-thirds majority, while the decision on other issues are taken by a simple majority.
• Each sovereign state gets one vote and the votes are not binding on the membership, except in budgetary matters.
• The Assembly has no binding votes or veto powers like the UN Security Council.
• The UNGA can express world opinion, promote international cooperation in various fields and make recommendations to the UNSC and elect the Security Council’s non-permanent members.

Which countries are not a part of UNGA?
- Among the world’s 196 countries, 193 are UN member states and three nations - Palestine, the Vatican City and Taiwan are not a part of the international organization as their country status is not recognized globally due to political and religious reasons.

According to the Charter of the United Nations, the General Assembly may:
• Consider and approve the United Nations budget and establish the financial assessments of Member States;
• Elect the non-permanent members of the Security Council and the members of other United Nations councils and organs and, on the recommendation of the Security Council, appoint the Secretary-General;
• Consider and make recommendations on the general principles of cooperation for maintaining international peace and security, including disarmament;
• Discuss any question relating to international peace and security and, except where a dispute or situation is currently being discussed by the Security Council, make recommendations on it;
• Discuss, with the same exception, and make recommendations on any questions within the scope of the Charter or affecting the powers and functions of any organ of the United Nations;
• Initiate studies and make recommendations to promote international political cooperation, the development and codification of international law, the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and international collaboration in the economic, social, humanitarian, cultural, educational and health fields;
• Make recommendations for the peaceful settlement of any situation that might impair friendly relations among countries;
• Consider reports from the Security Council and other United Nations organs.

3. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
• The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is a United Nations agency with the mandate to protect refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people, and assist in their voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement to a third country.
• UNHCR’s mandate does not apply to Palestinian refugees, who are assisted by UNRWA.
• UNHCR was created in 1950, during the aftermaths of World War II. Its headquarters are in Geneva, Switzerland and it is a member of the United Nations Development Group. The UNHCR has won two Nobel Peace Prizes,
• UNHCR has helped millions of people to restart their lives. They include refugees, returnees, stateless people, the internally displaced and asylum-seekers.
• UNHCR has announced a new global campaign urging people worldwide to cover the total distance travelled by refugees each year - 2 billion kilometers - by running, jogging or walking.
  o The "2 Billion Kilometers to Safety" campaign vies to encourage people to support refugees by championing individual acts of solidarity.
  o The goal is to acknowledge the resilience and strength of refugees.
4. **United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)**

- India has increased its annual financial contribution fourfold to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) core budget, from USD 1.25 million in 2016 to USD 5 million in 2018.

**UNRWA:**

- It is a relief and human development agency that was established in 8 December 1949.
- Following the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict, UNRWA was established by United Nations General Assembly to carry out direct relief and works programmes for Palestine refugees. The Agency began operations on 1 May 1950.
- UNRWA is the only UN agency dedicated to helping refugees from a specific region or conflict and is separate from UNHCR.
- **Funding:** UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions from UN Member States. UNRWA also receives some funding from the Regular Budget of the United Nations, which is used mostly for international staffing costs.
- **Aid is provided in five areas of operation:** Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem; aid for Palestinian refugees outside these five areas is provided by UNHCR.

**Functions:**

- UNRWA has been providing health, education, relief and social services, as well as emergency humanitarian assistance, across its five fields of operation Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and the Gaza Strip since 1950.
- The Agency currently serves 5.4 million Palestinian refugees 20% of the world’s refugees.

5. **Global Refugee Forum**

*First ever Global Refugee Forum* was held in **Geneva, Switzerland**.

*Jointly hosted by* United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) along with Government of Switzerland.

**What is Global Refugee Forum?**

Guided by the Global Compact on Refugees, the Global Refugee Forum is an opportunity to translate the principle of international responsibility-sharing into concrete action. The Forum will showcase impactful pledges and contributions and the exchange of good practices.

**What is Global Compact on Refugees?**

It was affirmed by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2018. It represents the determination of the international community to strengthen solidarity with refugees and the countries that host them. The Compact sets out arrangements to ensure that host countries receive predictable and sustainable support; that refugees can contribute to their host communities and secure their own futures; and that solutions are sought from the outset.

6. **International Court of Justice (ICJ)**

- The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is the principal judicial body of the UN.
- Established in 1946 to replace the Permanent Court of International Justice, the ICJ mainly operates under the statute of its predecessor, which is included in the UN Charter.
- 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).
• **It has two primary functions**: to settle legal disputes submitted by States in accordance with established international laws, and to act as an advisory board on issues submitted to it by authorized international organizations.

• **The ruling by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) is legally binding.**

• **Members of the Court:**
  - The International Court of Justice is composed of **15 judges** elected to nine-year terms of office by the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council.
  - These organs vote simultaneously but separately.
  - In order to be elected, a candidate must receive an absolute majority of the votes in both bodies.
  - In order to ensure a measure of continuity, one third of the Court is elected every three years. **Judges are eligible for re-election.**

• **What are the qualifications of ICJ judges?**
  - A judge should have a high moral character.
  - A judge should fit to the qualifications of appointment of highest judicial officers as prescribed by their respective states.
  - A judge should be a juriconsult of recognized competence in international law.

• **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.

• **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.
  - 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.

7. **UNESCO creative cities network (UCCN)**

The government of Hanoi recently held a ceremony to formally announce that the *Vietnamese capital city is joining the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN).*

To date, the UCCN has granted membership to 246 cities around the world.

**About Creative Cities Network:**

**What is it?**

The UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) was created in 2004 to promote cooperation with and among cities that have identified creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable urban development.

**Objective:** placing creativity and cultural industries at the heart of their development plans at the local level and cooperating actively at the international level.

**The Network covers seven creative fields:** Crafts and Folk Arts, Media Arts, Film, Design, Gastronomy, Literature and Music.

**Joining the Network, cities commit to sharing their best practices and developing partnerships involving the public and private sectors as well as civil society in order to:**
1. Strengthen the creation, production, distribution and dissemination of cultural activities, goods and services;
2. Develop hubs of creativity and innovation and broaden opportunities for creators and professionals in the cultural sector;
3. Improve access to and participation in cultural life, in particular for marginalized or vulnerable groups and individuals;
4. Fully integrate culture and creativity into sustainable development plans.

As of November, 2019, there are five Indian cities in UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) as follows:

   - The UN Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) is a subsidiary body of the U.N. General Assembly.
   - It is responsible for helping to facilitate international trade and investment.
   - Established by the UNGA in 1966.
   - Mandate is “to promote the progressive harmonization and unification of international trade law” through conventions, model laws, and other instruments that address key areas of commerce, from dispute resolution to the procurement and sale of goods.
   - Annual sessions held alternately in New York City and Vienna, where it is headquartered.
   - The Tribunal constituted in accordance with the UNCITRAL Arbitration Rules 1976 is seated at the Hague, Netherlands, and proceedings are administered by the Permanent Court of Arbitration.

9. UN Peacekeeping
Indian peacekeepers have received the United Nations Medal for their dedication and sacrifice serving so far away from home to protect civilians and build durable peace in South Sudan.

Contributions of India Peacekeepers:
- The soldiers supported peace talks between Government and Opposition forces in the Upper Nile region and establishing the first-ever UNMISS base on the west bank of the Nile at Kodok.
- The peacekeepers have also supported local communities by building veterinary hospitals at Kodok and Malakal, training cattle-keepers to better care for their livestock and provided life-saving medical assistance to people in need.

Background:
- India has been the largest troop contributor to UN missions since inception. So far India has taken part in around 49 Peacekeeping missions with a total contribution exceeding 2,45,000 troops.

What is peacekeeping? It’s significance?
- 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.
- The UN Peacekeepers are led by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DKPO). There are currently 14 UN peace operations led by Department of Peacekeeping Operations.
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.

**UN Peacekeeping is guided by three basic principles:**

1. Consent of the parties.
2. Impartiality
3. Non-use of force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate.

**Global partnership:**

UN peacekeeping is a unique global partnership. *It brings together the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Secretariat, troop and police contributors and the host governments in a combined effort to maintain international peace and security.* Its strength lies in the legitimacy of the UN Charter and in the wide range of contributing countries that participate and provide precious resources.

**About United Nations Mission in South Sudan:**

On 9 July 2011 South Sudan became the newest country in the world. The birth of the Republic of South Sudan is the culmination of a six-year peace process which began with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005.

- However, the Security Council determined that the situation faced by South Sudan continued to constitute a threat to international peace and security in the region and established the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) to consolidate peace and security and to help establish conditions for development.
- Following the crisis which broke out in South Sudan in December 2013, the Security Council reinforced UNMISS and reprioritized its mandate towards the protection of civilians, human rights monitoring, and support for the delivery of humanitarian assistance and for the implementation of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement.

**10. Universal Postal Union (UPU)**

The Union Cabinet has given its approval to the ratification of the Tenth Additional Protocol to the Constitution of the Universal Postal Union (UPU).

**What is UPU?**

Established by the Treaty of Bern of 1874.

- It is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN).
- Headquarters are located in Bern, Switzerland.
- The UPU contains four bodies consisting of the Congress, the Council of Administration (CA), the Postal Operations Council (POC) and the International Bureau (IB).

**Functions:**

- It also oversees the Telematics and Express Mail Service (EMS) cooperatives. Each member agrees to the same terms for conducting international postal duties.
- It coordinates postal policies among member nations, in addition to the worldwide postal system.

**Benefits of ratification for India:**

- The approval enables the Postal Administration of India to have the Instrument of Ratification signed with the Director-General of the International Bureau of the Universal Postal Union through diplomatic channels along with the approval of other Acts of the Union.
• It will also enable the Department of Posts to bring out any administrative orders to implement the provisions of the UPU Convention in India.

In a unilateral decision, Pakistan has stopped exchange of postal mails with India since August 27, 2019.

**Background:**
Other than the UPU, three agreements cover postal exchange between India and Pakistan — *Exchange of Value Payable Article, 1948; Exchange of Postal Article, 1974; and International Speed Post Agreement, 1987.*

*Who regulates postal exchange between one country and another?*
*The United Nations’ Universal Postal Union (UPU)* frames rules for international mail exchange, and fixes rates for international postal services.

*Can one UPU member-country unilaterally stop postal exchange with another?*
Under UPU rules, when a country decides to suspend exchange with a country, it must notify the operator of the other country (in India’s case, India Post) and, if possible, the duration for which services are being stopped. The UPU’s International Bureau too has to be notified.

**11. United Nations Security Council (UNSC)**
• The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is one of the organs of the United Nations and is charged with the **maintenance of international peace and security.**
• Its powers include the establishment of peacekeeping operations, the establishment of international sanctions, and the authorization of military action through Security Council resolutions.
• It is the **only UN body** with the authority to issue binding resolutions to member states.

**Members:**
• The Security Council consists of fifteen members. Russia, the United Kingdom, France, China, and the United States—serve as the body’s five permanent members and 10 non-permanent members, half of which are elected each year.
• These **permanent members can veto any substantive Security Council resolution**, including those on the admission of new member states or candidates for Secretary-General.
• The Security Council also has 10 non-permanent members, elected on a regional basis to serve two-year terms.
• The body’s presidency rotates monthly among its members.


**How are non-permanent members elected?**
• Each year, the General Assembly elects five non-permanent members out of a total of 10, for a two-year term.
• **Distribution of seats:** These 10 seats are distributed among the regions thus: five for African and Asian countries; one for Eastern European countries; two for Latin American and Caribbean countries; two for Western European and other countries.
• **Of the five seats for Africa and Asia, three are for Africa and two for Asia;** there is an informal understanding between the two groups to reserve one for an Arab country. The Africa and Asia Pacific group takes turns every two years to put up an Arab candidate.
• **Elections for terms** beginning in **even-numbered years** select two African members, and one each within Eastern Europe, Asia-Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean. Terms
beginning in **odd-numbered years** consist of two Western European and Other members, and one each from Asia-Pacific, Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

- **Votes:** Irrespective of whether a country is a “clean slate” candidate (that is there is no other contestant from the group) and has been endorsed by its group, **it needs to secure the votes of two-thirds of the members present and voting at the General Assembly session** (a minimum of 129 votes if all 193 member states participate). When contested, **the elections for non-permanent seats can be fraught and can go on for several rounds.** In 1975, there was a contest between India and Pakistan, which went to eight rounds. Pakistan won the seat that year. In 1996, India lost a contest to Japan.

### 12. International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) is **a UN specialized agency**, established by States in 1944 to manage the administration and governance of the **Convention on International Civil Aviation (Chicago Convention)**.

**Chicago convention:**
- Convention on International Civil Aviation (also known as Chicago Convention), was **signed on 7 December 1944 by 52 States**.
- Pending ratification of the Convention by 26 States, **the Provisional International Civil Aviation Organization (PICAO) was established**.
- It functioned from 6 June 1945 until 4 April 1947. By 5 March 1947 the 26th ratification was received. **ICAO came into being on 4 April 1947.** In October of the same year, ICAO became a specialized agency of the United Nations linked to Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).
- The **Convention establishes rules of airspace, aircraft registration and safety, and details the rights of the signatories in relation to air travel. The Convention also exempts air fuels in transit from (double) taxation.**

### 13. United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

- **UNIDO** and **National Institute of Solar Energy** to initiate a skill development programme for different levels of beneficiaries in the solar thermal energy sector.

**About UNIDO:**
- **UNIDO** is the **specialized agency of the United Nations** that promotes industrial development for poverty reduction, inclusive globalization and environmental sustainability.
- It is also a **member of UNDP**.
- As of 1 April 2019, **170 States are Members of UNIDO**.
- Members regularly discuss and decide UNIDO’s guiding principles and policies in the sessions of the Policymaking Organs.
- The **mission of UNIDO**, as described in the **Lima Declaration** adopted at the fifteenth session of the UNIDO General Conference in 2013, is to promote and accelerate inclusive and sustainable industrial development (ISID) in Member States.
- **UNIDO’s mandate is fully recognized in SDG-9**, which calls to “Build resilient infrastructure, promote...”
inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation”.
UNIDO’s programmatic focus is structured in four strategic priorities:
Creating shared prosperity.
Advancing economic competitiveness.
Safeguarding the environment.
Strengthening knowledge and institutions.

14. World Food Programme (WFP)
The World Food Programme (WFP) is the food assistance branch of the United Nations and the world’s largest humanitarian organization addressing hunger and promoting food security.
The WFP strives to eradicate hunger and malnutrition, with the ultimate goal in mind of eliminating the need for food aid itself.
It is a member of the United Nations Development Group and part of its Executive Committee.
Born in 1961, WFP pursues a vision of the world in which every man, woman and child has access at all times to the food needed for an active and healthy life.
The WFP is governed by an Executive Board which consists of representatives from member states.
The WFP operations are funded by voluntary donations from world governments, corporations and private donors.
WFP food aid is also directed to fight micronutrient deficiencies, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, and combat disease, including HIV and AIDS.

The objectives of the World Food Programme are:
Save lives and protect livelihoods in emergencies.
Support food security and nutrition and (re)build livelihoods in fragile settings and following emergencies.
Reduce risk and enable people, communities and countries to meet their own food and nutrition needs.
Reduce under-nutrition and break the inter-generational cycle of hunger.
Zero Hunger in 2030.

“World Hunger Map”:
Alibaba Cloud, the cloud computing arm of Alibaba will work with WFP to develop digital “World Hunger Map”. The map will help to monitor global hunger and operations to end scourge by 2030 which is one of UN’s key Sustainable Development goals. It also aims to boost efficiency of interventions and shorten emergency response times.

15. UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
The Global Study on Homicide 2019 has been published by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

About UNODC:
Established in 1997 through a merger between the United Nations Drug Control Programme and the Centre for International Crime Prevention, UNODC is a global leader in the fight against illicit drugs and international crime.
UNODC relies on voluntary contributions, mainly from Governments, for 90% of its budget.
UNODC is mandated to assist Member States in their struggle against illicit drugs, crime and terrorism.

The three pillars of the UNODC work programme are:
• Field-based technical cooperation projects to enhance the capacity of Member States to counteract illicit drugs, crime and terrorism.
• Research and analytical work to increase knowledge and understanding of drugs and crime issues and expand the evidence base for policy and operational decisions.
• Normative work to assist States in the ratification and implementation of the relevant international treaties, the development of domestic legislation on drugs, crime and terrorism, and the provision of secretariat and substantive services to the treaty-based and governing bodies.

16. United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)
• The United States had withdrawn from the United Nations Human Rights Council accusing it of a “chronic bias against Israel”.
• India re-elected to UNHRC for a period of three years beginning January 1, 2019, getting 188 votes in the Asia-Pacific category, the highest number of votes among all candidates.
• India had previously been elected to the Geneva-based Human Rights Council for the 2011-2014 and 2014-2017 terms.

About UNHRC:
• The UN body was established in 2006 with the aim of promoting and protecting human rights around the globe, as well as investigating alleged human rights violations.
• It is made up of 47 member states, which are selected by the UN General Assembly on a staggered basis each year for three-year-long terms.
• Members meet around three times a year to debate human rights issues and pass non-binding resolutions and recommendations by majority vote.
• The council also carries out the Universal Periodic Review of all UN member states, which allows civil society groups to bring accusations of human rights violations in member states to the attention of the UN.

17. UN-Habitat
• India has been elected to the Executive Board of the first UN-Habitat Assembly.
• The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) is the United Nations agency for human settlements and sustainable urban development.
• It was established in 1978 as an outcome of the First UN Conference on Human Settlements and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat I) held in Vancouver, Canada in 1976.
• It is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all. It is a member of the United Nations Development Group.
• The mandate of UN-Habitat derives from the Habitat Agenda, adopted by the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) in Istanbul, Turkey, in 1996.
• The twin goals of the Habitat Agenda are adequate shelter for all and the development of sustainable human settlements in an urbanizing world.
• As an inter-governmental policy making and decision-making body, the Governing Council of UN-Habitat seeks to promote integral and comprehensive approach to human settlements, assist the countries and regions in addressing human settlement problems and strengthen cooperation among all countries on human settlement issue.
• UN-Habitat reports to the United Nations General Assembly.

18. World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)
• The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) is one of the specialized agencies of the United Nations.
• It was created in 1967 “to encourage creative activity, to promote the protection of intellectual property throughout the world.”
- It has currently 193 member states, and is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.
- Non-members are the states of Federated States of Micronesia, Palau and South Sudan. Palestine has observer status.
- India is a member of WIPO and party to several treaties administered by WIPO.
International Banks / International Financial Institutions

1. **Asian Development Bank (ADB)**
Government of India has signed a 190 million USD loan with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to upgrade road transport in the state of Rajasthan.

About ADB:
- It is a regional development bank established on 22 August 1966 and is headquartered in Philippines.
- It aims to facilitate economic development of countries in Asia. It also aims for an Asia and Pacific free from poverty.

Membership:
- 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.
- Currently, it has 68 members – of which 49 are from within Asia and the Pacific and 19 outside.

Voting:
- ADB was modelled closely on the World Bank, and has a similar weighted voting system where votes are distributed in proportion with member’s capital subscriptions.

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.
- 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.

Loans:
- It offers both Hard Loans and Soft loans.
- The ADB offers “hard” loans from ordinary capital resources (OCR) on commercial terms, and the Asian Development Fund (ADF) affiliated with the ADB extends “soft” loans from special fund resources with concessional conditions.

2. **Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)**
- Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is a multilateral development bank with a mission to improve social and economic outcomes in Asia and beyond.
- It is headquartered in Beijing.
- It commenced operations in January 2016 and has now 76 members from around the world.
- By investing in sustainable infrastructure and other productive sectors today, it aims to connect people, services and markets that over time will impact the lives of billions and build a better future.
- The capital of the bank is $100 billion, equivalent to 2/3 of the capital of the Asian Development Bank and about half that of the World Bank.
Facts for Prelims:

- India hosted the annual meeting of AIIB for the first time in June 2018.
- India is the second largest shareholder in AIIB after China and is also the largest recipient of funds from the multilateral agency.
- India is the founding member of AIIB.

3. South Asia Sub-regional Economic Cooperation (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 50 projects 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.

4. European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)

- India has joined the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) as the 69th shareholder, paving the way for more joint investment with Indian companies across the EBRD’s regions.
- The EBRD’s board of governors, which represents all existing shareholders, voted unanimously in favour of the country’s application in March 2018.

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.
- India’s investment opportunities would get a boost.
- It would increase the scope of cooperation between India and EBRD through co-financing opportunities in manufacturing, services, Information Technology, and Energy.
- EBRD’s core operations pertain to private sector development in their countries of operation.
- The membership would help India leverage the technical assistance and sectoral knowledge of the bank for the benefit of development of private sector.
- This would contribute to an improved investment climate in the country.
- The membership of EBRD 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.
- Increased economic activities would have the employment generating potential. It would also enable Indian nationals to get the employment opportunity in the Bank.

About 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.

**EBRD Mandate:**
- 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.

**What support does EBRD provide in the countries where it works?**
- 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.

**Who owns the EBRD?**
- The EBRD is owned by 69 countries and two intergovernmental institutions: the European Union and the European Investment Bank (EIB).

**How is EBRD governed?**
- 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.

5. **New Development Bank (NDB)**
- The New Development Bank (NDB), formerly referred to as the BRICS Development Bank, is a multilateral development bank established by the BRICS states (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa).
- "The Bank shall support public or private projects through loans, guarantees, equity participation and other financial instruments."
- The initial authorized capital of the bank is $100 billion. The initial subscribed capital of the bank was equally distributed among the founding members. The Agreement on the NDB specifies that the voting power of each member will be equal to the number of its subscribed shares in the capital stock of the bank.
- The bank is headquartered in Shanghai, China.
- The idea for setting up the bank was proposed by India at the 4th BRICS summit in 2012 held in Delhi.
- K. V. Kamath, from India, is the first elected president of the NDB.
- Main objectives of the NDB can be summarized as follows
  - Promote infrastructure and sustainable development projects with a significant development impact in member countries.
- Establish an extensive network of global partnerships with other multilateral development institutions and national development banks.
- Build a balanced project portfolio giving a proper respect to their geographic location, financing requirements and other factors.
International Events

1. **Raisina Dialogue**
   Fifth edition of the *Raisina Dialogue (2020)* was held in New Delhi. This year’s Dialogue is titled ‘Navigating the Alpha Century’.

   **About the Raisina Dialogue:**
   - *This is an annual geo-political event, organised by the Ministry of External Affairs and Observer Research Foundation (ORF).*
   - It is designed to *explore prospects and opportunities for Asian integration as well as Asia’s integration with the larger world.*
   - It is predicated on *India’s vital role in the Indian Ocean Region* and how India along with its partners can build a stable regional and world order.
   - 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’.
   - **Participants:** The conference is a *multi-stakeholder*, cross-sectoral meeting involving policy and decision-makers, including but not limited to Foreign, Defence and Finance Ministers of different countries, high-level government officials and policy practitioners, leading personalities from business and industry, and members of the strategic community, media and academia.

2. **Pravasi Bhartiya Divas (PBD)**
   - *Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD)* is celebrated on *9th January* to mark the contribution of Overseas Indian community in the development of India.
   - The *first chapter of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas was held in 2003* to recognise the contributions of NRIs in academic and professional fields across the world.
   - *The reason 9th January is usually set aside for celebrating Pravasi Bhartiya Divas* is that Mahatma Gandhi returned from South Africa on this day in 1915.
   - **Frequency:** yearly till 2015, biennial since then.
   - **Significance:** These conventions provide a platform to the overseas Indian community to engage with the government and Indian communities in India for mutually beneficial activities.
   - These conventions are also very useful in networking among the overseas Indian community residing in various parts of the world and enable them to share their experiences in various fields.
   - During the event, individuals of exceptional merit are honoured with the prestigious Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award to appreciate their role in India’s growth.
   - The event also provides a forum for discussing key issues concerning the Indian Diaspora.

3. **World Sustainable Development Summit**
   - The theme of the 2020 edition of the Summit is *Towards 2030 Goals: Making the Decade Count*.
   - It is the annual flagship event of *The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI).*
   - It is the sole Summit on global issues taking place in the developing world.
   - It provides a platform for global leaders and practitioners to discuss and deliberate over climatic issues of universal importance.
   - It strives to provide long-term solutions for the benefit of the global community by assembling the world’s most enlightened leaders and thinkers on a single platform.
The Energy and Resources Institute – TERI:

- The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) is a research institute in New Delhi that specializes in the fields of energy, environment and sustainable development.
- It is a leading think tank dedicated to conducting research for sustainable development of India and the Global South.
- TERI was established in 1974 as an information centre on energy issues. However, over the following decades, it made a mark as a research institute, whose policy and technology solutions transformed people’s lives and the environment.

4. Indian Ocean Conference

- Fourth Indian Ocean Conference 2019 was recently held in Male, capital of Maldives.
- Theme: ‘Securing the Indian Ocean Region: Traditional and Non-Traditional Challenges’.

About Indian Ocean Conference:

- Initiated by India Foundation along with its partners from Singapore, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.
- It is an annual effort to bring together Heads of States/Governments, Ministers, Thought Leaders, scholars, diplomats, bureaucrats and practitioners from across the region.
Military Exercises / Relief Operations / Defence Related Issues

1. **AJEYA WARRIOR – 2020**
   The fifth edition of the **Joint Military Exercise AJEYA WARRIOR – 2020** between India and the **United Kingdom** will be conducted at Salisbury Plains, United Kingdom in February 2020.
   - The aim of this exercise is to **conduct company level joint training with emphasis on counter terrorists operation in urban and semi-urban areas**.
   - The **first edition of the exercise was conducted in 2013 at Belgaum, Karnataka**.

2. **Lucknow Declaration**
   - It is a **joint declaration** adopted as an outcome of the **first India-Africa Defence Ministers’ Conclave** which was held along the side-lines of the DefExpo 2020.
   - **Aim**: The Conclave was conducted with the aim of exporting India-made equipment to the African continent in keeping with long-standing defence partnerships since the 1950s.
   - *The Declaration calls for* deeper cooperation in the domain of defence industry including through investment, joint ventures in defence equipment software, digital defence, research & development, provisioning of defence equipment, spares and their maintenance on sustainable and mutually beneficial terms.

3. **Sea Guardians 2020**
   - It is a joint naval drill between Pakistan and China.
   - The latest edition was held in Karachi.
   - Focus on “**augmenting interoperability and strategic cooperation**.”

4. **Operation Sankalp**
   - It is a **maritime security operation** launched by India to promptly respond to the emergency situations for Indian sea vessels in the Middle East region.
   - It has been launched in order to **ensure safe passage of Indian Flag Vessels through the Strait of Hormuz**.

5. **Operation Vanilla**
   - Indian navy perform Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations in Madagascar under ‘Operation Vanilla’.
   - It has been **launched to provide assistance to the affected population of Madagascar post devastation caused by Cyclone Diane**.

6. **OPERATION SUDARSHAN**
   - Border Security Force (BSF) has launched a massive exercise, code named as Sudarshan, to fortify Anti-Infiltration Grid along Pakistan border in Punjab and Jammu.

7. **Operation Sunrise**
   - Operation Sunrise: India-Myanmar target insurgent groups camp in North East.
   - Named Operation Sunrise, the strategy is aimed at hitting **militant groups that are impacting both India and Myanmar**.
   - It was carried out by the **armies of India and Myanmar**.
   - In the operation, Other than NSCN (K), the **groups hit** were Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO), the United Liberation Front of Assam, and the National Democratic Front of Boroland (NDFB).
8. **Operation Sankalp**
   - Indian Navy launched Operation Sankalp in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman to reassure Indian flagged vessels transiting through the area following the maritime incidents in the region.
   - The operation has been launched in the wake of escalating tension in the Gulf of Oman, where two oil tankers were attacked.

9. **Operation Samudra Maitri**
   India had launched massive humanitarian operation Samudra Maitri to provide assistance to earthquake and tsunami victims in Indonesia.

10. **MILAN 2020**
    - It will be held in Visakhapatnam in March 2020.
    - MILAN stands for Multilateral Naval Exercise.
    - It is aimed to enhance professional interaction between friendly foreign navies and learn from each other’s strengths and best practices in the maritime domain.

11. **SAMPRITI-IX**
    It is a bilateral defence cooperation endeavour between India and Bangladesh.
    - The latest edition will be the ninth edition and will be conducted in Umroi, Meghalaya.

12. **Tiger Triumph**
    - It is a India-U.S. joint tri-services Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR).
    - The maiden exercise is being held in India.
    - The exercise is aimed at developing interoperability for conducting HADR operations.

13. **Ex Ekuverin – 19**
    Tenth edition of the Joint Military Exercise Ekuverin between the Indian Army and the Maldives National Defence Force was held in Pune, Maharashtra.
    - The two Forces have been conducting Exercise Ekuverin meaning ‘Friends’ in the Dhivehi language since 2009.
    - The 14 days Joint Exercise held alternatively in India and Maldives focuses on enhancing interoperability between the two forces for carrying out counter insurgency and counter-terrorism operations in a semi-urban environment under the United Nations mandate.

14. **Nomadic Elephant 2019**
    It is Indo-Mongolian joint military training.
    Nomadic Elephant-XIV is aimed at training troops in counter insurgency &counter terrorism operations under United Nations mandate.

15. **EX EASTERN BRIDGE-V**
    It is a bilateral joint exercise between Indian Air Force and Royal Air Force Oman (RAFO).
    The exercise will enhance inter-operability during mutual operations between the two Air Forces and will provide an opportunity to learn from each other’s best practices.

16. **Danx- 19**
    - Second edition of Defence of Andaman & Nicobar Islands 2019 (DANX-19), a large scale joint services exercise, was recently conducted by Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC).
    - Carried out by Indian Army, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard.
17. Shakti-2019
- It is a **biennial joint exercise between India and France**.
- Commenced in 2011, it is now **conducted alternately in India and France**.
- The 2019 edition was held in **Rajasthan**.
- The joint exercise will **focus on Counter Terrorism operations in backdrop of semi-desert terrain under United Nations Mandate**.

18. Indo-Thai CORPAT
- 28th edition of **India-Thailand Coordinated Patrol** (Indo-Thai CORPAT) between the Indian Navy (IN) and the Royal Thai Navy (RTN) was held.
- The Objectives of the Indo-Thai CORPAT are to ensure **effective implementation of United Nations Conventions on Laws of the Sea (UNCLOS)**.

19. SAMUDRA LAKSAMANA
- The **Indian Navy and Malaysian Navy** had recently participated in the bilateral exercise ‘Samudra Laksamana’.

20. SITMEX-19
- Sea Phase of maiden **SITMEX-19 (Singapore India Thailand Maritime Exercise)**, between Indian Navy, Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN) and Royal Thai Navy (RTN) recently commenced in the Andaman Sea.

21. Malabar Exercise
- 23rd edition of **Malabar Exercise**, the trilateral maritime exercise between navies of India, Japan and the US recently began off the coast of Japan.
- Malabar 2019 exercise seeks to further strengthen India-Japan-US naval cooperation and enhance interoperability, based on shared values and principles.
- The exercise involves complex maritime operations in surface, sub-surface and air domains.

22. ASEAN-US Maritime Exercise (AUMX)
- The first ASEAN-US Maritime Exercise (AUMX) between regional bloc- Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and United States was held at the Sattahip Naval Base in Thailand.

23. GARUDA VI
- It is a bilateral air exercise between Indian Air Force and French air force. The latest edition was held in France.
- It is aimed at enhancing interoperability level of French and Indian crews in air defence and ground attack missions.
Places in News

1. **Idlib**
The nine-year-old war in Syria is currently raging in the northwestern province of Idlib, with rapidly escalating tensions between government forces of President Bashar al-Assad and the Turkish military.

**Where is it located?**
Idlib is a city in northwestern Syria, 59 kilometers southwest of Aleppo, which is the capital of the Idlib Governorate.

2. **Kalapani Territory**
Nepal and India are planning to resolve the **Kalapani border issue** through dialogue.

**What’s the issue?**
In the latest map, India included **Kalapani into the Pithoragrh district of Uttarakhand.** Nepal government says that **Kalapani is an integral part of the country** and that talks are still on between New Delhi and Kathmandu over this “unresolved” area.

**Where is it located?**
Kalapani is located at an altitude of 3600m on the Kailash Manasarovar route. It borders Uttarakhand in India and Sudurpashchim Pradesh in Nepal.
Since the Indo-China war of 1962, Kalapani is controlled by India’s Indo-Tibetan Border Police.
Nepal claims that the river located towards the west of the territory is the main Kali river and thus it falls in its territory, India claims a ridgeline towards the east of the Kalapani territory and hence, includes it in the Indian Union.

**Genesis of the dispute:**
Under the **treaty of Sugauli** signed between Nepal and the British East India Company in 1816, the Kali River was located as Nepal’s western boundary with India. It, however, made no mention of a ridgeline and subsequent maps of the areas drawn by British surveyors showed the source of the Kali river at different places.

3. **Strait of Hormuz**
The meeting of **Hormuz Peace Initiative** was recently held in Iran.
The meeting saw participation from key regional players including **Oman and India besides Afghanistan and China.**

**About the Initiative:**
The initiative is **led by Iran.** It aims to stabilise the **Strait of Hormuz.**
What is the Strait of Hormuz?
It is the waterway separating Iran and Oman, linking the Gulf to the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea.
- On the north coast lies Iran, and on the south are the UAE and Musandam, an enclave of Oman.

Why does Strait of Hormuz matter?
- The Strait of Hormuz is one of the world’s most strategically important choke points.
- Two-thirds of the oil and half the liquefied natural gas India imports come through the strait between Iran and Oman.
- As much as 18 million barrels of oil pass through the Strait of Hormuz every day, accounting for one-third of the global oil trade. A third of the world’s LNG trade also passes through the strait.

4. Rakhine state
- The Rohingya, who numbered around one million in Myanmar at the start of 2017, are one of the many ethnic minorities in the country.
- Rohingya Muslims represent the largest percentage of Muslims in Myanmar, with the majority living in Rakhine state.

5. Chabahar Port
- Iran’s Chabahar port is located on the Gulf of Oman and is the only oceanic port of the country.
- The port gives access to the energy-rich Persian Gulf nations’ southern coast.
- Significance of the Chabahar port is the fact that India can bypass Pakistan in transporting goods to Afghanistan.
- Chabahar port will boost India’s access to Iran, the key gateway to the International North-South Transport Corridor that has sea, rail and road routes between India, Russia, Iran, Europe and Central Asia.
- Chabahar port will be beneficial to India in countering Chinese presence in the Arabian Sea which China is trying to ensure by helping Pakistan develop the Gwadar port.
- Gwadar port is less than 400 km from Chabahar by road and 100 km by sea.

6. Bougainville
It is an island in the Pacific. Bougainville is an autonomous region in Papua New Guinea. It is the largest of the Solomon Islands archipelago, while the region also includes Buka Island and a number of outlying islands and atolls.
It held a referendum to decide if it wants to remain a part of Papua New Guinea or become an independent country.

**How does a territory become a new country?**
There is no straightforward rule. A region’s quest for nationhood mainly depends on how many countries and international organisations it manages to convince to recognise it as a country. The biggest sanction of nationhood is the United Nations recognising a territory as a country.

**Why UN recognition matters?**
With UN recognition, a new country has access to the World Bank, the IMF, etc.
- Its currency is recognised, which allows it to trade.
- There is protection against parent country’s aggression, and international trade.

And as per 1933’s Montevideo Convention, a region wanting to become independent should meet 4 criteria:
A country-hopeful must have a defined territory, people, government, and the ability to form relationships with other countries.

7. **Hong Kong**
Hong Kong recently marked half-year protest anniversary with huge rally. **Semi-autonomous Hong Kong** has been battered by increasingly violent demonstrations in the starkest challenge the city has presented to Beijing since its 1997 handover from Britain.

**How is Hong Kong ruled?**
Rules under One Country Two Systems approach.
As per the policy, the Hong Kong and Macau Special Administrative Regions, both former colonies, can have different economic and political systems from that of mainland China, while being part of the People’s Republic of China.
- Hong Kong returned to Chinese control on July 1, 1997, and Macau’s sovereignty was transferred on December 20, 1999.
- Both regions became Special Administrative Regions of China.
- The regions would have their own currencies, economic and legal systems, but defence and diplomacy would be decided by Beijing.
• Their mini-Constitutions would remain valid for 50 years — till 2047 for Hong Kong and 2049 for Macau. It is unclear what will happen after this term.

8. **Feni river**
The Union Cabinet has given its ex-post facto approval for a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Bangladesh on the withdrawal of 1.82 cusecs (cubic feet per second) of water from the **Feni river** by India for a drinking water supply scheme for **Sabroom town in Tripura**.

**Feni river:**
The Feni river forms **part of the India-Bangladesh border.**
It **originates in the South Tripura** district, passes through **Sabroom town** on the Indian side, and **meets the Bay of Bengal after it flows into Bangladesh.**

9. **West Bank**
It is a **landlocked territory** near the **Mediterranean coast** of Western Asia, bordered by **Jordan** to the east and by **the Green Line** separating it and **Israel** on the south, west and north. The West Bank also contains a significant section of **the western Dead Sea shore.**
10. Xinjiang
Uighurs are a Muslim minority community concentrated in the country’s northwestern Xinjiang province. They claim closer ethnic ties to Turkey and other central Asian countries than to China, by brute — and brutal — force. Xinjiang is technically an autonomous region within China — its largest region, rich in minerals, and sharing borders with Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India.

11. Chagos Islands
Mauritius called the UK an “illegal colonial occupier”, after it ignored a UN mandated deadline to return the Chagos Islands, a small archipelago in the Indian Ocean, to Mauritius.

12. Kurdish Inhabited Area
The Kurds have never achieved nation-state status, except in Iraq, where they have a regional government called Iraqi Kurdistan. Kurdistan is made up of five different regions: southeastern Turkey, northeastern Syria, northern Iraq, northwestern Iran and southwestern Armenia. In the early 20th century, the Kurds began working toward the creation of homeland known as Kurdistan. In 1920, the Treaty of Sèvres -- one of a series of treaties that the Central Powers signed after their defeat in World War I -- outlined the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and called for an autonomous Kurdistan. Three years later, after the end of the war, Western allies dropped demands for an independent Kurdish state and the Kurdish region was divided among several countries.

13. Tulagi Island
- It is a part of Solomon Islands.
- A Chinese company recently signed an agreement to lease this entire island after Beijing recruited the Pacific nation as its latest ally in the strategically important region.
- Tulagi, an island about two square kilometres (0.8 square miles) with a population of 1,200, is the site of a former Japanese naval base and was the scene of fierce fighting in World War II.
14. **Bhashan char Island**
Rohingyas will be relocated to the Bhashan Char. Authorities concerned, especially the Bangladesh Navy, have prepared the Bhashan Char for rehabilitation of at least one lakh Rohingyas. **Location**: Bhashan Char is located in the estuary of the Meghna river. It falls in an ecologically fragile area prone to floods, erosion and cyclone.

15. **Mt. Kun**
- The Indian Army recently conducted a mountaineering expedition to Mt. Kun.
- Kun is the second-highest peak in between the Zanskar and Kargil regions of Ladakh.
- It is a part of the Nun Kun mountain massif in the Himalayas.
- Nun (7135 m) is the highest peak in the part of the Himalayan range lying on the Indian side of the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir.

16. **Bahamas**
- India has announced an immediate humanitarian assistance of $1 million to help people in The Bahamas affected by Hurricane Dorian.

17. **PANGONG TSO LAKE**
- 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.
- It is formed from Tethys geosyncline.
- It is a salt water lake.
- **Strategic significance**: By itself, the lake does not have major tactical significance. But it lies in the path of the Chushul approach, one of the main approaches that China can use for an offensive into Indian-held territory.

18. **Amalekhgunj**
- Motihari-Amalekhgunj petroleum pipeline will transport fuel from Barauni refinery in Bihar’s Begusarai district to Amalekhgunj in southeastern Nepal, situated across the border from Raxaul in East Champaran district.
- The 69-km pipeline will drastically reduce the cost of transporting fuel to landlocked Nepal from India.

19. **Siachen glacier**
- Lies in the Karakoram Range system which is a part of western Himalayas.
- Lies to the south of the zone that separates Eurasion Plate with the Indian Plate, which is the result of convergence boundary interaction in geographical terms.
• It is the **highest battle field** in the world and lies on LoC (Line of Control) between India and Pakistan. It has been continuously contested by Pakistan as its own part which has led to militarisation of the glacier.

• After the Indo-Pakistan war in 1971, an agreement was signed between the two countries in 1972, which came to be known as the **Shimla Agreement**, but it failed to clearly mention who controls the glacier.

• However, in 1984, the Pakistan army tried to enter the glacier, forcing India to launch a military operation known as “**Operation Meghdoot**” and since then we have control over the glacier. Frequent skirmishes did occur between 1884 to 2003. A ceasefire agreement was signed between India and Pakistan in 2003

• The glacier is the source of many rivers including **Nubra River**, a tributary of Shyok, which is a part of the Indus River System.

• Siachen Glacier also boasts of the **world’s highest helipad built** by India at Point Sonam, to supply its troops. India also installed the world’s highest telephone booth on the glacier.

• The region is also a home to rare **species** of snow leopard, brown bear etc which may be affected by military presence. This has led to talks in international forums about creating a “Peace Park” in the area and demilitarise it.

### 20. English Channel

- The English Channel is a **part of the Atlantic Ocean**.

- It separates the island of Britain (part of the UK) from northern France and joins the North Sea to the Atlantic Ocean.

- It’s approximately 350 miles long, and at its narrowest in the **Strait of Dover**.

### 21. Mt. Elbrus

- Indian Mountaineering Expedition team to climb Mt. Elbrus.

- **Mt. Elbrus is the highest peak in European Continent**.

- It is a **dormant volcano in the Caucasus Mountains** in Southern Russia, near the border with Georgia.

### 22. Mount Etna

- Italy’s Mount Etna volcano has erupted again.

- **Mount Etna is the largest active volcano in Europe** and one of the world’s most frequently erupting volcanoes. It is also the volcano with the longest record of continuous eruption.

- Located near the east coast of the **island of Sicily** in Italy, Mount Etna is 10,900 feet tall.

- The mountain’s largest feature is the Valle del Bove (Valley of the Ox), a large horseshoe-shaped caldera on the eastern slope.

- Etna sits on the active fault between the African plate and the Ionian microplate, which are both being subducted together beneath the Eurasian plate.

- In June 2013, it was added to the list of **UNESCO World Heritage Sites**.

- Due to its history of recent activity and nearby population, Mount Etna has been designated a Decade Volcano by the United Nations.
23. Mt Makalu
- Among the eight mountains in Nepal above 8000m, Mt. Makalu is the fourth tallest in Nepal and fifth highest Peak on the Earth with its height 8,463m.
- Mt. Makalu resides in the eastern Himalayas range just 19Km southeast of the giant Mt. Everest in the border of Nepal and China. At the base of Mt. Makalu, there lies a natural wonder: The Barun Valley.

24. Mount Agung
- Located on the Indonesian holiday island of Bali, it erupted recently.
- Mount Agung or Gunung Agung is a currently active volcano in Bali, Indonesia, southeast of Mt Batur volcano, also in Bali.
- Gunung Agung stratovolcano is the highest point on Bali. It dominates the surrounding area, influencing the climate, especially rainfall patterns.

25. Kajin Sara lake
Newly discovered Kajin Sara lake in Nepal is likely to set a new record of being the world’s highest lake. It is located in Nepal.

26. Okjokull glacier
- Iceland’s Okjokull glacier commemorated with plaque.
- The glacier was officially declared dead in 2014 when it was no longer thick enough to move.

27. Capital of Indonesia
- The capital of Indonesia, which is Jakarta at present, will be relocated to the province of East Kalimantan on the lesser populated island of Borneo.
- The relocation is meant to reduce the burden on Jakarta, which has been facing problems such as poor quality air, traffic gridlocks and is particularly prone to flooding.
- It is also the largest Indonesian city with a population of 1 crore people and is located on the North West coast of the most populous island in the world, Java.

28. Republic of Benin
- India has offered a USD 100 million line of credit to Benin for its development projects.
- It is a country in West Africa. It is bordered by Togo to the west, Nigeria to the east, and Burkina Faso and Niger to the north.

29. Demilitarized Zone
- The Demilitarized Zone, which runs across the Korean Peninsula, is 248 kilometres long and the 4 kilometres wide. Created as a buffer at the close of the 1950-53 Korean War, it’s jointly overseen by the American-led UN Command and North Korea.
30. Sea of Japan
- It is the marginal sea between the Japanese archipelago, Sakhalin, the Korean Peninsula and Russia.
- The Japanese archipelago separates the sea from the Pacific Ocean.
- It is bordered by Japan, Korea (North and South) and Russia.
- Like the Mediterranean Sea, it has almost no tides due to its nearly complete enclosure from the Pacific Ocean.

31. Azov Sea
- It is a sea in Eastern Europe. To the south it is linked by the narrow (about 4 km or 2.5 mi) Strait of Kerch to the Black Sea, and it is sometimes regarded as a northern extension of the Black Sea.
- The sea is bounded in the north and in the west by Ukraine, in the east by Russia.
- The Don and Kuban are the major rivers that flow into it.
- The Sea of Azov is the shallowest sea in the world, with the depth varying between 0.9 and 14 metres.

Why the Kerch Strait is important?
- The Kerch Strait is the only connection between the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, and the only way to reach two important Ukrainian ports, Mariupol and Berdiansk.
- Russia has controlled the strait since annexing Crimea in 2014, which has made traffic significantly more difficult for Ukrainian ships.

32. Migingo Island
Migingo is a small rock Island, located in Lake Victoria which is the largest lake in Africa and the largest Tropical Lake in the whole world.
For over a decade, Migingo has been a source of tension between Uganda and Kenya, who have been unable to decide to whom it really belongs.

33. 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.
34. Caspian Sea
The Caspian Sea is a geopolitically strategic body of water, both in terms of its location and its resources. Situated in a transcontinental zone between Europe and Asia, it has historically been a key trade and transit corridor between eastern and western powers.

35. Port of Duqm
India has secured access to key strategic Port of Duqm in Oman in Arabian sea for military use and logistical support. The Port of Duqm is situated on the southeastern seaboard of Oman, overlooking the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. It is strategically located, in close proximity to the Chabahar port in Iran.
**1. How WHO names a new disease?**
- On February 11, 2020, the World Health Organization officially announced COVID-19 as the name for the disease caused by the novel coronavirus.
- The WHO had to come up the name in line with the 2015 guidelines between the global agency, the World Organisation for Animal Health and the Food and Agriculture Organization.

**What does the name COVID-19 stand for?**
The “CO” in COVID stands corona, while “VI” is for virus and “D” for disease. The number 19 stands for the year 2019 when the outbreak was first identified.

**Why was WHO in a hurry to name the disease?**
The urgency to assign a name to the disease is to prevent the use of other names that can be “inaccurate or stigmatising”. People outside the scientific community tend to call a new disease by common names. But once the name gets “established in common usage through the Internet and social media, they are difficult to change, even if an inappropriate name is being used.

**Background:**
*There are a few disease names that mentions the geographic location* — cities, countries or regions — where the disease, Zika etc.

*Few diseases carry the name of the person who first identified the disease.* Chagas disease is named after the Brazilian physician Carlos Chagas, who discovered the disease in 1909.

*Some diseases carry the name of animals* — bird flu (H5N1) and swine flu (H1N1). The 2009 H1N1 pandemic was commonly referred to as swine flu.

**2. Indian nationals living abroad**
- There are over 1.36 crore Indian nationals living abroad, as per the latest data.
- The highest number of Indians abroad are living in the United Arab Emirates, which comprise about one-fourth of all Indians abroad.

| INDIANS ABROAD: TOP 10 | |
|------------------------|--| |
| UAE                  | 342.2 lakh | |
| Saudi Arabia         | 25.9 lakh  | |
| US                   | 12.8 lakh  | |
| Kuwait               | 10.3 lakh  | |
| Oman                 | 7.8 lakh   | |
| Qatar                | 7.6 lakh   | |
| Nepal                | 5 lakh     | |
| UK                   | 3.5 lakh   | |
| Singapore            | 3.5 lakh   | |
| Bahrain              | 3.2 lakh   | |

**3. Most Favoured Nation status**
A treatment accorded to a trade partner to ensure non-discriminatory trade between two countries vis-a-vis other trade partners.

It is the first clause in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Under WTO rules, a member country cannot discriminate between its trade partners. If a special status is granted to a trade partner, it must be extended to all members of the WTO.
**MFN at the same time allows some exemptions as well:**

- **Right to engage in Free Trade Agreements:** This means members can participate in regional trade agreements or free trade agreements where there is discrimination between member countries and non-member countries.

- **Members can give developing countries special and differential treatment like greater market access.** This special concession are in different forms like reduced tariff rates from developing country imports, concessions that allows developing countries to give subsidies to their production sectors etc.

India has extended MFN status for goods to member countries of WTO.
India has extended MFN status to all SAARC countries, with exemption to Pakistan. India withdrew MFN status from Pakistan on 15 February 2019, as tensions between the 2 countries escalated.

**4. Import duty on palm oil cut**

India has cut import duty on **crude palm oil (CPO)** and **refined, bleached and deodorised (RBD) palm oil**, and also moved **RBD oil from the “free” to the “restricted” list of imports.**

**Indonesia and Malaysia together produce 85% of the world’s palm oil,** and India is among the biggest buyers.
Both Indonesia and Malaysia produce refined palm oil; however, **Malaysia’s refining capacity equals its production capacity** — this is why Malaysia is keen on exporting refined oil.
Indonesia, on the other hand, can supply CPO, which would allow India to utilise its full refining capacity.

**How and why crude oil is refined?**
Crude oil contains fatty acids, gums and wax-like substances. **Refining neutralises the acids and filters out the other substances.**
The filtrate is bleached so that the oil does not change colour after repeated use.
Substances that may cause the oil to smell are removed physically or chemically.
This entire process **increases the value of a barrel of crude oil by about 4%.**
Additionally, **there are costs to transporting the crude,** which makes it more **cost-effective to import the refined oil.**

**Why domestic players demand for crude oil imports?**
The refining industry has been demanding that the import duty on refined oil be increased, which would make **importing crude oil cheaper than importing refined oil.** This will mainly **benefit domestic refiners.**

**Why does India need so much palm oil?**
It is the **cheapest edible oil available naturally.**
Its inert taste makes it **suitable for use in foods ranging from baked goods to fried snacks.**
It stays relatively **stable at high temperatures,** and is therefore suitable for reuse and deep frying.
It is the **main ingredient in vanaspati (hydrogenated vegetable oil).**

**Implications of this move:**
**On Indian consumers:** Palm oil is not used in Indian homes and the fact that CPO continues to be imported, makes it unlikely that the decision to restrict refined palm oil imports will impact food inflation immediately.
5. **Blue Corner notice**

What is a Interpol notice?

Notices are international requests for cooperation or alerts allowing police in member countries to share critical crime-related information.

There are seven types of notices — Red Notice, Yellow Notice, Blue Notice, Black Notice, Green Notice, Orange Notice, and Purple Notice.

What is Blue notice?

Issued to “collect additional information about a person’s identity, location or activities in relation to a crime.”

What is Interpol?

The International Criminal Police Organisation, or Interpol, is a 194-member intergovernmental organisation.

Headquartered in Lyon, France.

Formed in 1923 as the International Criminal Police Commission, and started calling itself Interpol in 1956.

Interpol’s declared global policing goals include countering terrorism, promoting border integrity worldwide, protection of vulnerable communities, providing a secure cyberspace for people and businesses, curbing illicit markets, supporting environment security, and promoting global integrity.

India joined the organisation in 1949.

What is the Interpol General Assembly?

It is Interpol’s supreme governing body, and comprises representatives from all its member countries.

It meets annually for a session lasting approximately four days, to vote on activities and policy. Each country is represented by one or more delegates at the Assembly, who are typically chiefs of law enforcement agencies.

The Assembly also elects the members of the Interpol Executive Committee, the governing body which “provides guidance and direction in between sessions of the Assembly”.

6. **UNDP Accelerator Labs**

UNDP launches Accelerator Lab in India, to work on pollution, water issues.

The laboratory that will be housed in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) office here has partnered with Indian government’s Atal Innovation Mission to achieve the objectives.

What is it?

The Accelerator Lab is an innovative new initiative by the UNDP, Germany and Qatar, to find 21st century solutions to today’s complex new challenges.

Four key approaches sit at the core of the Labs’ work:

1. Building on locally-sourced solutions, finding things that work and expanding on them.
2. Rapid testing and iteration to implement what works and go beyond the obvious solutions.
3. Combining the best understanding, ideas and expertise to generate collective knowledge.
4. Accelerating progress by bringing expertise, creativity and collective intelligence to bear.
7. **Operation Polo**

*Operation Polo* is the code name of the Hyderabad "police action" in September 1948, by the newly independent India against the Hyderabad State. After the integration, the Nizam was retained as the head of state in the same manner as the other princes who acceded to India.

8. **Who are the Developing Countries in the WTO?**

South Korea has said that it will no longer seek special treatment reserved for developing countries by the World Trade Organization in future negotiations given its enhanced global economic status.

**Who are the developing countries in the WTO?**

There are no WTO definitions of “developed” and “developing” countries. Members announce for themselves whether they are “developed” or “developing” countries. However, other members can challenge the decision of a member to make use of provisions available to developing countries.

**What are the advantages of “developing country” status?**

Developing country status in the WTO brings certain rights. Developing country status ensures special and differential treatment (S&DT) or provisions which allow them more time to implement agreements and commitments, include measures to increase trading opportunities, safeguard their trade interests, and support to build capacity to handle disputes and implement technical standards.

9. **AKADEMIK LOMONOSOV**

- It is the world’s only floating nuclear power unit. The plant was launched by Russia on May 19, 2018 at the St Petersburg shipyard.
- **Context:** Recently, this floating nuclear power plant completed its 5,000-km journey along the Northern Sea Route. This has sparked fears among environmentalists over the safety of the Arctic region.

10. **Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS)**


The report lists three types of deviations from SDDS:

- The first deals with delays in data dissemination from the periodicity prescribed in the SDDS.
- The second occurs when member countries do not list a data category in their Advance Release Calendars (ARC) despite the category being mandated by the SDDS.
- The third deviation occurs when data is not disseminated at all for a particular period.

**What is Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS)?**

- The SDDS is a global benchmark for disseminating macroeconomic statistics to the public.
- SDDS subscription indicates that a country meets the test of “good statistical citizenship.”
- Countries that subscribe to the SDDS agree to follow good practices in four areas: the coverage, periodicity, and timeliness of data; public access to those data; data integrity; and data quality.
SDDS Plus:
- The SDDS Plus is the **highest tier in the Fund’s Data Standards Initiatives** and builds on the progress achieved under the SDDS.
- It is **open to all SDDS subscribers**, although it is aimed at economies with systemically important financial sectors.
- In addition to the requirements under the SDDS, the **SDDS Plus emphasizes stronger data dissemination practices** to enhance data transparency and help strengthen the international financial system.

11. Windrush Scheme
- UK Home Secretary had issued personal apology for the **Windrush scandal**, involving migrants being wrongly denied their British citizenship rights.

What is Windrush Scheme?
- The Windrush Scheme enables **Commonwealth citizens, their children, and some other long term residents of the UK** to obtain documentation confirming their status free of charge.

Background:
- The **Windrush generation** refers to citizens of former British colonies who arrived before 1973, when the rights of such Commonwealth citizens to live and work in Britain were substantially curtailed.
- The name derives from the **ship MV Empire Windrush**, which on June 22, 1948, docked in Tilbury, Essex, bringing nearly 500 Jamaicans to the UK.
- The **immigrants came at the invitation of the British government**, which was facing a labour shortage due to the destruction caused by World War II.
- While a large proportion of them were of Jamaican/Caribbean descent who came on the ship Windrush, Indians and other South Asians were also affected by the UK government’s handling of their immigration status.