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Bilateral Relations

1. **India, UAE sign Comprehensive Trade Agreement**

   India and the United Arab Emirates have signed a **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)**.

What is CEPA and how is it different from FTA?

It is a kind of **free trade pact** which covers negotiation on the trade in services and investment, and other areas of economic partnership.

- It may even consider negotiation on areas such as trade facilitation and customs cooperation, competition, and Intellectual Property Rights.
- Partnership agreements or cooperation agreements are more comprehensive than Free Trade Agreements.
- CEPA also looks into the regulatory aspect of trade and encompasses an agreement covering the regulatory issues.

As per the CEPA signed between India and the UAE:

90% of India’s exports will have duty-free access to the Emirates. It covers goods, services and digital trade.

Benefits:

- The bilateral trade pact is India’s first in the region and the first comprehensive trade agreement with any country in a decade.
- The CEPA is likely to benefit about **$26 billion worth of Indian products** that are currently subjected to 5% import duty by the UAE, India’s third-biggest trading partner behind the US and China.
- Through the pact, Indian exporters will also get access to the much larger Arab and African markets.

**Difference between CECA and CEPA:**

1. **CECA** – Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement.
2. **CEPA** – Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.

   The major “technical” difference between a CECA and CEPA is that CECA involve only “tariff reduction/elimination in a phased manner on listed/all items except the negative list and tariff rate quota (TRQ) items.

   - CEPA also covers the trade in services and investment and other areas of economic partnership”.
   - So CEPA is a wider term that CECA and has the widest coverage.
   - Usually CECA is signed first with a country and after that negotiations may start for a CEPA.

2. **Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA)**

   - The US has repeatedly asked India to withdraw from the deal, indicating that the Russian S-400 systems may trigger Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) sanctions.

   **What is the S-400 air defence missile system? Why does India need it?**

   The **S-400 Triumf** is a mobile, surface-to-air missile system (SAM) designed by Russia.
● It is the most dangerous operationally deployed modern long-range SAM (MLR SAM) in the world, considered much ahead of the US-developed Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system (THAAD).

**What is CAATSA, and how did the S-400 deal fall foul of this Act?**

● Countering America’s Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA)’s core objective is to counter Iran, Russia and North Korea through punitive measures.

● Enacted in 2017.

● Includes sanctions against countries that engage in significant transactions with Russia’s defence and intelligence sectors.

**What sanctions will be imposed?**

1. prohibition on loans to the sanctioned person.
2. prohibition of Export-Import bank assistance for exports to sanctioned persons.
3. prohibition on procurement by United States Government to procure goods or services from the sanctioned person.
4. denial of visas to persons closely associated with the sanctioned person.

3. **America COMPETES Act**

The U.S. House of Representatives has introduced the 2022 Act to create opportunities for America’s manufacturing, pre-eminence in technology, and economic strength, or America COMPETES Act of 2022.

● It proposes to open new perspectives for talented people from around the world with a new home visa.

**What are H-1B, H-2B, L and other work visas?**

In order to fill a vacuum of highly-skilled low-cost employees in IT and other related domains, the US administration issues a certain number of visas each year which allows companies from outside the US to send employees to work on client sites.

**H-1B:** Person is Specialty Occupation: To work in a specialty occupation. Requires a higher education degree of its equivalent.

**L1 visas** allows companies to transfer highly skilled workers to US for a period of up to seven years.

**H-2B visas** allow food and agricultural workers to seek employment in the US.

**J-1 Visas:** It is for students on work-study summer programmes.

4. **Automatic job authorisation for spouses of H-1B visa holders**

The United States has agreed to provide automatic work authorisation permits to the spouses of **H-1B visa holders** — a move that is likely to benefit thousands of Indian professionals based in the US.

● As per the latest amendments, while **L-1** spouses will be given the extension without applying for it, **H-4** visa holders will still have to apply for the extension after their employment permit expires.
Significance of the move:
This policy amendment is likely to be particularly beneficial for Indian women whose spouses hold H-1B or L-1 visas, as they will now be allowed up to 180 days auto extension on work authorization.

H-4 and L2 visas: What’s the difference?
An H-4 visa is issued to the immediate family members (spouse and children under the age of 21) of H-1B visa holders. Over 94 per cent of H4 visa holders are women, and of these, around 93 per cent are from India.
L-1 visas are non-immigrant visas that are valid for a relatively short time. With this visa, multinationals are able to shift foreign employees to their US offices for specialised positions on a temporary basis. The dependent spouse or unmarried children under 21 years of age of an L-1 visa holder are issued L-2 visas to enter the United States. L2 visa holders can acquire EAD (Employment Authorisation Documents) to find employment.

What are H-1B work visas?
● In 1952, after the US started expanding its presence in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics disciplines, it felt the need to hire quality workers who could help the country achieve innovation in these areas at reasonable costs. The need to hire workers paved way for the introduction of the H-1 work visa system in US.
● This work visa system was further subdivided into H-1B, H-2B, L1, O1, and E1 visas, depending on the qualification required and the area for which workers were sought.
● Of these, the H-1B visa remains the most popular due to the relatively better wage chance it offers.

5. Climate Action and Finance Mobilization Dialogue (CAFMD)
This was one of the main tracks of the U.S.-India Agenda 2030 Partnership that President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced at the Leaders Summit on Climate in April 2021.
● It will provide both India and the United States an opportunity to renew the collaborations on climate change while also addressing the financial aspects.
● It will deliver climate finance primarily as grants and concessional finance, as envisaged under the Paris Agreement for strengthening the climate action.

6. India’s stand on Israel-Palestine conflict
Israel and India are celebrating 30 years of establishment of diplomatic relations.
● Though India had recognised Israel on September 17, 1950, full-fledged diplomatic relations between the countries were established on January 29, 1992.

India’s stand Israel-Palestine conflict:
India, at the UN Security Council open debate on the Middle East, has reiterated its firm and unwavering commitment to the peaceful resolution of the Palestine issue and supported a negotiated two-state solution.
• Resolution 2334 was adopted by this Council to reaffirm the international community's firm commitment to preventing the erosion of the two-state solution.

7. India- Russia Annual Summit
21st annual India-Russia summit was held. It was attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin.
• Alongside, the inaugural 2+2 ministerial meeting was also held.
• The meeting saw the signing of 28 agreements across sectors from defence to energy to space exploration, science and technology, heavy engineering, to trade and investment.

Significance of the meeting:
The completion of 5 decades of the 1971 Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation and 2 decades of Declaration on Strategic Partnership.

The 2+2 dialogue:
It is held between the foreign and defence ministers of two countries and is generally seen to be aimed at creating a mechanism under which the bilateral relationship takes a decisive strategic turn with greater integration of defence, security and intelligence apparatus.

8. Logistics agreements and their benefits
India has logistical exchange agreements with six other countries, including Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or Quad, partners US, Japan and Australia. Singapore, France and South Korea are the other countries with which similar arrangements have been effected.

What are logistics agreements?
The agreements are administrative arrangements facilitating access to military facilities for exchange of fuel and provisions on mutual agreement simplifying logistical support and increasing operational turnaround of the military when operating away from India.
• India has signed several logistics agreements with all Quad countries, France, Singapore and South Korea beginning with the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) with the U.S. in 2016.

Benefits of such logistics agreements:
The Navy has been the biggest beneficiary of these administrative arrangements, signed with several countries, improving operational turnaround and increasing inter-operability on the high seas.

What is LEMOA?
It is a tweaked India-specific version of the Logistics Support Agreement (LSA), which the U.S. has with several countries it has close military to military cooperation. It is also one of the three foundational agreements — as referred to by the U.S.
• LEMOA gives access, to both countries, to designated military facilities on either side for the purpose of refuelling and replenishment.

9. Tax Inspectors Without Borders (TIWB) programme
Seychelles’ Tax Inspectors Without Borders (TIWB) programme launched in partnership with India.
• This programme is the sixth TIWB programme which India has supported by providing Tax Expert.

Benefits of the programme:
Through this India in collaboration with the UNDP and the TIWB Secretariat aims to aid Bhutan in strengthening its tax
administration by transferring technical know-how and skills to its tax auditors, and through sharing of best audit practices.

About TIWB Programme:
1. It is a joint initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).
2. The objective of the TIWB Initiative is to enable sharing of tax audit knowledge and skills with tax administrations in developing countries through a targeted, real time “learning by doing” approach.
3. TIWB is focused on promoting hands-on assistance by sending Experts to build audit and audit-related skills pertaining to specific international tax matters and the development of general audit skills within developing tax administrations.

10. Clean Energy Ministerial’s (CEM) – Industrial Deep Decarbonization Initiative (IDDI)

India along with Govt. of United Kingdom launched new workstream to promote industrial energy efficiency under the Clean Energy Ministerial’s (CEM) – Industrial Deep Decarbonization Initiative (IDDI) at the 12th Chief Energy Ministerial (CEM).

What is Industrial Deep Decarbonization Initiative (IDDI)?
- It is a global coalition of public and private organisations who are working to stimulate demand for low carbon industrial materials.
- In collaboration with national governments, IDDI works to standardise carbon assessments, establish ambitious public and private sector procurement targets, incentivise investment into low-carbon product development and design industry guidelines.
- Coordinated by United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).
- Members: The IDDI is co-led by the UK and India and current members include Germany and Canada.

About Clean Energy Ministerial (CEM):
Establishment:
- It was established in December 2009 at the UN’s Framework Convention on Climate Change conference of parties in Copenhagen.
- CEM is a high-level global forum to promote policies and programs that advance clean energy technology, to share lessons learned and best practices, and to encourage the transition to a global clean energy economy.
- 29 countries are part of CEM including India.

11. Global Innovation Partnership (GIP)

Cabinet gives ex-post facto approval to MoU between India and UK on Global Innovation Partnership (GIP).
- GIP will support Indian innovators to scale up their innovations in third countries thereby helping them explore new markets and become self-sustainable.
- GIP innovations will focus on Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) related sectors thereby assisting recipient countries achieve their SDGs.
- Through seed funding, grants, investments and technical assistance, the Partnership will support Indian entrepreneurs and innovators to test, scale up and take their innovative development solutions to select developing countries.
- GIP will also develop an open and inclusive e-market place (E-BAAZAR) for cross border innovation transfer and will focus on results based impact assessment thereby promoting transparency and accountability.
12. **Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI)**

In a move to counter China’s dominance of supply chain in the Indo-Pacific region, trade ministers of India, Japan and Australia have formally launched the **Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI).**

**What is it?**
- The SCRI aims to create a virtuous cycle of enhancing supply chain resilience with a view to eventually attaining strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth in the region.
- Initially, SCRI will focus on sharing best practices on supply chain resilience and holding investment promotion events and buyer-seller matching events to provide opportunities for stakeholders to explore the possibility of diversification of their supply chains.

**Possible policy measures under the initiative may include:**
(i) supporting the enhanced utilization of digital technology.
(ii) supporting trade and investment diversification.

**Significance:**
- It seeks to build upon the existing bilateral frameworks like the Asean-Japan Economic Resilience Action Plan and India-Japan Industrial Competitiveness Partnership and attract foreign direct investment in the region.

13. **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.
India and its neighbourhood-relationships

1. **Permanent Indus Commission**

A 10-member Indian delegation visited Pakistan for the annual meeting of the Permanent Indus Commission.
- Under the **Indus Water Treaty**, it is mandatory to hold a meeting at least once every year ending March 31.

About the **Indus Water Treaty**:  
- It is a Water-Distribution Treaty, signed in Karachi on 1960, between India (Pm Jawaharlal Nehru) and Pakistan (President Ayub Khan), brokered by the World Bank.

How is the Indus water share between India and Pakistan?

Under the provisions of the **Indus Waters Treaty**, signed between India and Pakistan in 1960, **all the waters of the eastern rivers** — the Sutlej, Beas, and Ravi — amounting to around 33 MAF (million acre-feet) annually is allocated to India for unrestricted use.

- **The waters of western rivers** — Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab — amounting to around 135 MAF annually are largely for Pakistan.

The right to generate hydroelectricity:

Under the Treaty, India has been given the right to generate hydroelectricity through a run of the river projects on the western rivers subject to specific criteria for design and operation.
- It also gives the right to Pakistan to raise concerns on the design of Indian hydroelectric projects on western rivers.

**Permanent Indus Commission**:
- The Permanent Indus Commission is a bilateral commission of officials from India and Pakistan, created to implement and manage goals of the Indus Waters Treaty, 1960.
- The Commission according to the treaty must meet regularly at least once a year, alternately in India and Pakistan.

The functions of the Commission are:
- to study and report to the two Governments on any problem relating to the development on the waters of the rivers.
- to solve disputes arising over water sharing.
- to arrange technical visits to projects’ sites and critical river head works.
- to undertake, once in every five years, a general tour of inspection of the Rivers for ascertaining the facts.
- to take necessary steps for the implementation of the provisions of the treaty.

2. **Sir Creek pact**

Sir Creek is a 96-km strip of water disputed between India and Pakistan in the Rann of Kutch marshlands.
- Originally named Ban Ganga, Sir Creek is named after a British representative.
- The Creek opens up in the Arabian Sea and roughly divides the Kutch region of Gujarat from the Sindh Province of Pakistan.
What’s the dispute?
The dispute lies in the interpretation of the maritime boundary line between Kutch and Sindh. Before India’s independence, the provincial region was a part of the Bombay Presidency of British India. But after India’s independence in 1947, Sindh became a part of Pakistan while Kutch remained a part of India.

1. Pakistan claims the entire creek as per paragraphs 9 and 10 of the Bombay Government Resolution of 1914 signed between then the Government of Sindh and Rao Maharaj of Kutch.
2. The resolution, which demarcated the boundaries between the two territories, included the creek as part of Sindh, thus setting the boundary as the eastern flank of the creek popularly known as Green Line.
3. But India claims that the boundary lies mid-channel as depicted in another map drawn in 1925, and implemented by the installation of mid-channel pillars back in 1924.
4. In its support, it cites the Thalweg Doctrine in International Maritime Law, which states that river boundaries between two states may be divided by the mid-channel if the water-body is navigable.

What’s the importance of Sir Creek?
Apart from strategic location, Sir Creek’s core importance is fishing resources. Sir Creek is considered to be among the largest fishing grounds in Asia. Another vital reason is the possible presence of great oil and gas concentration under the sea, which are currently unexploited thanks to the impending deadlock on the issue.

3. 2003 Ceasefire agreement
India and Pakistan, in February 2021, issued a joint statement to strictly observe the 2003 Ceasefire agreement along the Line of Control (LoC).

About the 2003 ceasefire agreement:
The ceasefire agreement was reached in November 2003, four years after the Kargil War. On November 26, 2003 the ceasefire took effect along the entire stretch of the India-Pakistan frontier.

- It facilitated the opening of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad and Poonch-Rawalkot routes, paving the way for bus and truck services linking the two Kashmirs for the first time in six decades and encouraging cross-LoC contacts, exchanges, travel, and trade.
- The ceasefire also enabled India to complete the construction of a fence near the LoC to prevent Pakistan’s infiltration of terrorists into Kashmir, a project that it had begun a couple of decades earlier but had to suspend due to Pakistan’s artillery fire.

Significance?
- The 2003 ceasefire agreement remains a milestone as it brought peace along the LoC until 2006. Between 2003 and 2006, not a single bullet was fired by the jawans of India and Pakistan.
- But since 2006, ceasefire violations have become the norm with increasing frequency. Recent years have seen an increasing number of ceasefire violations despite an agreement reached in 2018 to adhere to the 2003 ceasefire agreement.

4. Indo-Lanka Accord
- It is popularly referred to as the Rajiv-Jayawardene Accord.
- It was signed in 1987 on the pretext of the Civil War in Sri Lanka (between Tamils and Sinhala community).
● The accord sought to balance India’s strategic interests, interest of people of Indian origin in Sri Lanka and Tamil minority rights in Sri Lanka.
● The accord saw the placement of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) in Sri Lanka to resolve the Sri Lankan Civil War.
● The accord also resulted in enactment of the thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution of Sri Lanka and the Provincial Councils Act of 1987.

5. Delhi Declaration on Afghanistan
● A regional security summit was recently hosted by India. The summit was attended by eight nations including Iran and Russia.
● This is the third meeting of the Regional Security Dialogue (the earlier two meetings were held in in Iran, in 2018 and 2019).
● Conference was represented by the national security advisors of each country.
● During the conference, it was announced that Afghanistan & its territories cannot be used to shelter or train terrorists, or to finance any act of terrorism.
● Countries issued a joint statement, dubbed as “Delhi Declaration on Afghanistan”.
● The Declaration emphasised on: Secure and Stable Afghanistan, condemning terrorism, Ensuring Fundamental Rights, collective Co-operation and the role of UN.

6. Kalapani Dispute
Where is Kalapani located?
Located in the easternmost corner of Uttarakhand’s Pithoragarh district.
● Shares a border on the north with the Tibet Autonomous Region of China and Nepal in the east and south.
● It is wedged in between Limpiyadhura, Lipulekh and Kalapani.
● The area is the largest territorial dispute between Nepal and India consisting of at least 37,000 hectares of land in the High Himalayas.

Who controls the area?
The area is in India’s control but Nepal claims the region because of historical and cartographic reasons.

What is the cause of the dispute?
The Kalapani region derives its name from the river Kali. Nepal’s claims to the region is based on this river as it became the marker of the boundary of the kingdom of Nepal following the Treaty of Sugauli signed between the Gurkha rulers of Kathmandu and the East India Company after the Gurkha War/Anglo-Nepal War (1814-16). The treaty was ratified in 1816.
● According to the treaty, Nepal lost the regions of Kumaon-Garhwal in the west and Sikkim in the east.
● According to Article 5, the King of Nepal gave up his claims over the region west of the river Kali which originates in the High Himalayas and flows into the great plains of the Indian subcontinent.
● According to the treaty, the British rulers recognised Nepal’s right to the region that fell to the east of the river Kali.
Effects of Policies of Developed and Developing Countries on India’s Interests

1. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

Pakistani officials have said that they are ready to scrap the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) if the US could offer a similar deal.

About CPEC:
Launched in 2015, the CPEC is the flagship project of the multi-billion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a pet project of Chinese President Xi Jinping, aimed at enhancing Beijing’s influence around the world through China-funded infrastructure projects.

- The 3,000 km-long China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) consists of highways, railways, and pipelines.
- 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 proposed project will be financed by heavily-subsidised loans, that will be disbursed to the Government of Pakistan by Chinese banks.

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.
- It is also being contended that if CPEC were to successfully transform the Pakistan economy that could be a “red rag” for India which will remain at the receiving end of a wealthier and stronger Pakistan.
- Besides, India shares a great deal of trust deficit with China and Pakistan and has a history of conflict with both.

2. China opens first road-rail transport link to Indian Ocean

The first shipments on a newly-launched railway line from the Myanmar border to the key commercial hub of Chengdu in western China was made recently

- This project provides China a new road-rail transportation channel to the Indian Ocean
- The transport corridor involves a sea-road-rail link.
This passage connects the logistics lines of Singapore, Myanmar and China, and is currently the most convenient land and sea channel linking the Indian Ocean with southwest China.

China also has plans to develop another port in Kyaukphyu in the Rakhine state, including a proposed railway line from Yunnan directly to the port. Chinese planners have also looked at the Gwadar port in Pakistan as another key outlet to the Indian Ocean that will bypass the Malacca Straits. Gwadar is being developed as part of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to the far western Xinjiang region.

About China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)
The Belt and Road Initiative, reminiscent of the Silk Road, is a massive infrastructure project that would stretch from East Asia to Europe. It was launched in 2013.

- The plan is two-pronged: the overland Silk Road Economic Belt and the Maritime Silk Road. The two were collectively referred to first as the One Belt, One Road initiative but eventually became the Belt and Road Initiative.
- The project involves creating a vast network of railways, energy pipelines, highways, and streamlined border crossings.

What was the original Silk Road?
The original Silk Road arose during the westward expansion of China’s Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), which forged trade networks throughout the Central Asian countries, as well as modern-day India and Pakistan to the south. Those routes extended more than four thousand miles to Europe.

How have other countries responded to BRI?
Some countries see the project as a disturbing expansion of Chinese power. The United States shares the concern of some in Asia that the BRI could be a Trojan horse for China-led regional development and military expansion.

India’s views:
India has tried to convince countries that the BRI is a plan to dominate Asia, warning of what some analysts have called a “String of Pearls” geo-economic strategy whereby China creates unsustainable debt burdens for its Indian Ocean neighbors in order to seize control of regional choke points.

3. China-Taiwan relations
China has claimed Taiwan through its “one China” policy since the Chinese civil war forced the defeated Kuomintang, or Nationalist, to flee to the island in 1949 and has vowed to bring it under Beijing’s rule, by force if necessary.

- While Taiwan is self-governed and de facto independent, it has never formally declared independence from the mainland.
- Under the “one country, two systems” formula, Taiwan would have the right to run its own affairs; a similar arrangement is used in Hong Kong.
Presently, Taiwan is claimed by China, which refuses diplomatic relations with countries that recognise the region.

**India’s position on Taiwan:**
- India's policy on Taiwan is clear and consistent and it is focused on promoting interactions in areas of trade, investment and tourism among others.
- Government facilitates and promotes interactions in areas of trade, investment, tourism, culture, education and other such people-to-people exchanges.
- However, India doesn’t have formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan, but both sides have trade and people-to-people ties.
- India has refused to endorse the “one-China” policy since 2010.

4. **China’s status as a ‘developing country’ at the World Trade Organization (WTO)**

China’s status as a ‘developing country’ at the World Trade Organization (WTO) has become a contentious issue with a number of countries raising concerns over the upper middle-income nation deriving benefits reserved for developing countries under WTO norms.
- Moreover, concerns have been raised over the ‘least developed country’ (LDC) status, with Bangladesh potentially losing this tag after surpassing India in terms of GDP per capita.

**Developing Country Status in 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.

**WTO norms for recognition of Developed, Developing and LDCs:**
- Under the WTO system, generally, countries are designated as developed, developing, and least developed countries (LDCs).
- The uneven level of development between developed and developing countries in the WTO is a well-recognised fact.
- Article XVIII of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) recognises that attaining the objectives of this agreement would require facilitating the progressive development of those countries that can only support low levels of development and are at the early stages of development.
- Accordingly, countries self-designate themselves as ‘developing country’ to take advantage of provisions like Article XVIII of GATT and other special and differential treatment (S&DT) provisions in the WTO agreements.
- These provisions are aimed at increasing trade opportunities for developing countries, ensuring longer transitional periods to comply with WTO obligations, and affording technical assistance to countries, among other things.

**What are “special and differential treatment” provisions?**
- Longer time periods for implementing Agreements and commitments.
- Measures to increase trading opportunities for developing countries.
● Provisions requiring all WTO members to safeguard the trade interests of developing countries.
● Support to help developing countries build the capacity to carry out WTO work, handle disputes, and implement technical standards.
● Provisions related to least-developed country (LDC) Members.
● The concept of non-reciprocal preferential treatment for developing countries that when developed countries grant trade concessions to developing countries, they should not expect the developing countries to make matching offers in return.

5. **Dispute over Senkaku Islands in Japan**

The Senkaku Islands are located in the East China Sea between Japan, the People’s Republic of China, and the Republic of China (Taiwan). The archipelago contains five uninhabited islands and three barren rocks, ranging in size from 800 m² to 4.32 km².

What are the grounds for Japan’s territorial sovereignty over the Senkaku Islands?

The Senkaku Islands were not included in the territory which Japan renounced under Article 2 of the San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1951 that legally defined the territory of Japan after World War II.

- Under Article 3 of the treaty, the islands were placed under the administration of the United States as part of the Nansei Shoto Islands. The Senkaku Islands are included in the areas whose administrative rights were reverted to Japan in accordance with the Agreement between Japan and the United States of America Concerning the Ryukyu Islands and the Daito Islands that entered into force in 1972.

What is China’s claim?

China says that the islands have been part of its territory since ancient times, serving as important fishing grounds administered by the province of Taiwan.

- Taiwan was ceded to Japan in the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895, after the Sino-Japanese war.
- When Taiwan was returned in the Treaty of San Francisco, China says the islands should have been returned too.

Other border disputes of China:

- It has island and maritime border disputes with Taiwan, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Vietnam in the South China Sea and its extension.
- The disputes include islands, reefs, banks and other features in the South China Sea including Spratly Islands (with Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Taiwan), Paracel Islands (Vietnam), Scarborough Shoal (Philippines), and Gulf of Tonkin (Vietnam).

6. **Pillar of Shame**

Pillar of Shame, a memorial to the victims of the Tiananmen crackdown, was recently dismantled by China.

**Pillar of Shame:**
The Pillar of Shame, a haunting eight-metre tall sculpture showing intertwined bodies with hollowed eyes and open mouths — an anguished mass of humanity — was created by Danish artist Jens Galschiot as a tribute to the victims of China's crackdown in Tiananmen Square in June 1989.

7. **Iran nuclear deal**

US has said that it will rejoin the agreement if Iran complies with the terms of the original deal, and if it addresses other issues related to alleged ballistic missile stockpiles and the proxy conflicts that it backs across the region.

**About the Iran Nuclear Deal:**

- Also known as the **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)**.
- The JCPOA was the result of prolonged negotiations from 2013 and 2015 between **Iran and P5+1** (China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the European Union, or the EU).
- Under the deal, Tehran agreed to significantly cut its stores of centrifuges, enriched uranium and heavy-water, all key components for nuclear weapons.

**How has the Iran responded after withdrawal?**

- Mr. Trump pulled the U.S. out of the accord in 2018. Besides, he opted for a “maximum pressure” campaign by imposing sanctions and other tough actions.
- Iran responded by intensifying its enrichment of uranium and building of centrifuges, while maintaining its insistence that its nuclear development was for civilian and not military purposes.

**What is the goal of uranium enrichment?**

Uranium contains a rare radioactive isotope, called **U-235**, that can be used to power nuclear reactors at low enrichment levels and to fuel nuclear bombs at much higher levels.

- **The goal of uranium enrichment is to** raise the percentage levels of U-235, which is often done through the use of centrifuges — machines that spin a form of unrefined uranium at high speeds.

8. **Major non-NATO ally (MNNA)**

US has designated Qatar a MNNA.

**What is a MNNA?**

- It is a designation given by the United States government to close allies that have strategic working relationships with the US Armed Forces but are not members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).
- Nations with MNNA designation are eligible to, among other things, host U.S. war reserve stockpiles of material inside their countries.
- While MNNA status provides military and economic privileges, it does not entail any commitments to the designated country.
- India is not a MNNA of US.
9. UAE’s Golden Visa

Context:
Bollywood actor Tusshar Kapoor awarded Golden Visa.
- He joins a growing list of Indian movie stars, including Mohanlal and Shah Rukh Khan, who have received the coveted 10-year residency.

What is it?
In 2019, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) implemented a new system for long-term residence visas, thereby enabling foreigners to live, work and study in the UAE without the need of a national sponsor and with 100 per cent ownership of their business.

So, what does the Golden Visa offer?
The Golden Visa system essentially offers long-term residency (5 and 10 years) to people belonging to the following groups:
- investors, entrepreneurs, individuals with outstanding talents the likes of researchers, medical professionals and those within the scientific and knowledge fields, and remarkable students.
Protocols / Conventions / Treaties / Agreements / Reports

1. Minsk Agreements
The Minsk agreements were a series of international agreements which sought to end the war in the Donbas region of Ukraine.

Minsk I: Ukraine and the Russian-backed separatists agreed a 12-point ceasefire deal in the capital of Belarus in September 2014.
- Its provisions included prisoner exchanges, deliveries of humanitarian aid and the withdrawal of heavy weapons.
- The agreement quickly broke down, with violations by both sides.

Minsk II: In 2015, an open conflict was averted after the ‘Minsk II’ peace agreement was signed, under the mediation of France and Germany.
- It was designed to end the fighting in the rebel regions and hand over the border to Ukraine’s national troops.

2. Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (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.

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 weapons 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.

Issues Pertaining to NPT:
Failure of Disarmament Process: The NPT is largely seen as a Cold War era instrument that has failed to fulfil the objective of creating a pathway towards a credible disarmament process.
System of Nuclear ‘Haves’ and ‘Have-Nots’: NNWS criticizes the treaty to be discriminatory as it focuses on preventing only horizontal proliferation while there is no limit for vertical proliferation. NNWS also feels that the restrictions on Peaceful Nuclear Explosion (PNE) technology are one-sided.

India’s Stand on NPT:
● India is one of the only five countries that either did not sign the NPT or signed but withdrew, thus becoming part of a list that includes Pakistan, Israel, North Korea, and South Sudan.
● India always considered the NPT as discriminatory and had refused to sign it.
● India has opposed the international treaties aimed at non-proliferation since they were selectively applicable to the non-nuclear powers and legitimised the monopoly of the five nuclear weapons powers.

3. Istanbul Convention on violence against women
It is also called as the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. The treaty is the world’s first binding instrument to prevent and tackle violence against women.

• It is the most comprehensive legal framework that exists to tackle violence against women and girls, covering domestic violence, rape, sexual assault, female genital mutilation (FGM), so-called honour-based violence, and forced marriage.

When a government ratifies the Convention, they are legally bound to follow it.

• The convention was adopted by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers on 7 April 2011.
• The Convention sets minimum standards for governments to meet when tackling violence against women.

4. Chemical Weapons Convention
The Conference on Disarmament (CD) was held in Geneva. At the conference, India expressed deep concern over the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems that could endanger peace and security, saying the possibility of terrorists acquiring such weapons necessitates the global community to work together to address this grave danger.

● India has said that it supports the full and effective implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and emphasises the strengthening of the OPCW to fulfill its important mandate.

About the Conference on Disarmament:
The Conference on Disarmament (CD) is a multilateral disarmament forum established by the international community to negotiate arms control and disarmament agreements based at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. The Conference meets annually in three separate sessions in Geneva.

● The Conference was first established in 1979 as the Committee on Disarmament as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community. It was renamed the Conference on Disarmament in 1984.
● Membership: 65 Countries.

The Conference was created with a permanent agenda, also known as the "Decalogue," which includes the following topics:
1. Nuclear weapons in all aspects.
2. Other weapons of mass destruction.
3. Conventional weapons.
4. Reduction of military budgets.
5. Reduction of armed forces.
6. Disarmament and development.
7. Disarmament and international security.

Relationship to the United Nations:
The Conference is formally independent from the United Nations. However, while it is not formally a UN organization, it is linked to it in various ways.
• First and foremost, the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva serves as the Secretary-General of the Conference.
• Furthermore, while the Conference adopts its own rules of procedure and agenda, the United Nations General Assembly can pass resolutions recommending specific topics to the Conference.
• Finally, the Conference submits a report of its activities to the General Assembly yearly, or more frequently, as appropriate.

About OPCW:
• It is an international organization established by the Chemical Weapons Convention, 1997 to implement and enforce the terms of the non-proliferation treaty, which prohibits the use, stockpiling, or transfer of chemical weapons by signatory states.
• The OPCW is authorized to perform inspections to verify that signatory states are complying with the convention.
• By the 2001 Relationship Agreement between the OPCW and the United Nations, the OPCW reports on its inspections and other activities to the UN through the office of the Secretary General.
• The organisation was awarded the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize “for its extensive efforts to eliminate chemical weapons”.

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

External auditor for Hague-based OPCW:
In April 2021, India’s Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has been chosen as the external auditor by the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) for a three-year term starting 2021.
• The appointment was made through an election process at the OPCW conference recently.
• India was also selected as the member of the executive council of the OPCW representing Asia group for another two-year term during the OPCW conference.

About the Executive Council:
• It is the governing body of the OPCW.
● The Council consists of 41 OPCW Member States that are elected by the Conference of the States Parties and rotate every two years.
● The Council supervises the activities of the Technical Secretariat and is responsible for promoting the effective implementation of and compliance with the Convention.
● Each Member State has the right, on a rotating basis, to serve on the Executive Council.

5. **Refugee Convention 1951**

- It is a United Nations multilateral treaty that defines who is a refugee, and sets out the rights of individuals who are granted asylum and the responsibilities of nations that grant asylum.
- The Convention grants certain rights to people fleeing persecution because of race, religion, nationality, affiliation to a particular social group, or political opinion.
- The Convention also sets out which people do not qualify as refugees, such as war criminals. The Convention also provides for some visa-free travel for holders of travel documents issued under the convention.
- The Convention builds on Article 14 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which recognizes the right of persons to seek asylum from persecution in other countries. A refugee may enjoy rights and benefits in a state in addition to those provided for in the Convention.
- The 1967 Protocol included refugees from all countries as opposed to the 1951 Convention that only included refugees from Europe.

Under the 1951 UN Convention on the Status of Refugees and the subsequent 1967 Protocol, the word *refugee* pertains to any person who is outside their country of origin and unable or unwilling to return owing to well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

India has welcomed refugees in the past, and nearly 300,000 people here are categorised as refugees. But India is not a signatory to the 1951 UN Convention or the 1967 Protocol. Nor does India have a refugee policy or a refugee law of its own.
International Organisations / Groupings

1. Financial Action Task Force (FATF)
   - The global money laundering and terrorist financing watchdog FATF has retained Pakistan on its terrorism financing “grey list”.
   - Pakistan has been on the grey list of the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force (FATF) since June 2018 for failing to check money laundering.

   The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has added Turkey, along with Jordan and Mali, in its revised list of “jurisdictions under increased monitoring”, also known as the FATF grey list.

What prompts FATF to place countries under the grey list?
If countries fail to prevent international money laundering and terrorist financing, then they shall be placed on the list.

What does ‘increased monitoring’ mean?
According to the FATF, when a jurisdiction is placed under increased monitoring, “it means the country has committed to swiftly resolve the identified strategic deficiencies within agreed timeframes and is subject to extra checks”.

About FATF:
2. It is a “policy-making body” which works to generate the necessary political will to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms in various areas.
3. The FATF Secretariat is housed at the OECD headquarters in Paris.

Roles and functions:
- Initially it was established to examine and develop measures to combat money laundering.
- In October 2001, the FATF expanded its mandate to incorporate efforts to combat terrorist financing, in addition to money laundering.
- In April 2012, it added efforts to counter the financing of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Composition:
The FATF currently comprises 37 member jurisdictions and 2 regional organisations, representing most major financial centres in all parts of the globe. It also has observers and associate members.

What is a blacklist and grey list?
Black List: Countries known as Non-Cooperative Countries or Territories (NCCTs) are put in the blacklist. These countries support terror funding and money laundering activities. The FATF revises the blacklist regularly, adding or deleting entries.

As of 21 February 2020, only two countries were on the FATF blacklist: North Korea and Iran.
Grey List: Countries that are considered safe haven for supporting terror funding and money laundering are put in the FATF grey list. This inclusion serves as a warning to the country that it may enter the blacklist.

Considered in the grey list may face:
1. Economic sanctions from IMF, World Bank, ADB.
2. Problem in getting loans from IMF, World Bank, ADB and other countries.
3. Reduction in international trade.
2. **African Union (AU)**
The African Union (AU) has suspended Burkina Faso's participation in the organization's activities until the country restores constitutional order after the military mutiny.

**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 bloc was **founded on 26 May 2001** in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and launched on 9 July 2002 in South Africa.
- 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.
- The AU’s secretariat, the African Union Commission, is based in Addis Ababa.

**About Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS):**

- It is a regional political and economic union of fifteen countries located in West Africa.
- Established in 1975, with the signing of the Treaty of Lagos.
- The goal of ECOWAS is to achieve "collective self-sufficiency" for its member states by creating a single large trade bloc by building a full economic and trading union.
- It also serves as a **peacekeeping force in the region**.
- Considered one of the pillar regional blocs of the continent-wide African Economic Community (AEC).

ECOWAS includes two sub-regional blocs:
1. The **West African Economic and Monetary Union** is an organisation of eight, mainly French-speaking states.
2. The **West African Monetary Zone (WAMZ)**, established in 2000, comprises six mainly English-speaking countries.

3. **Quad**
The quadrilateral security dialogue 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.
- Members share a vision of an open and free Indo-Pacific. Each is involved in development and economic projects as well as in promoting maritime domain awareness and maritime security.

**Genesis:**
The grouping traces its genesis to 2004 when the four countries came together to coordinate relief operations in the aftermath of the tsunami.

- It then met for the first time in 2007 on the sidelines of the Association of SouthEast Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit.
- The intention was to enhance maritime cooperation between the four nations.

4. **New Quad or the Middle-Eastern Quad**
First virtual summit of the foreign ministers of the US, India, Israel and UAE was recently held.
At the end of the meet, the four nations agreed to form a new international economic forum to utilise the “unique array of capabilities, knowledge and experience” that each offers.

**About the group:**
The group is already being dubbed the ‘New Quad’ or the ‘Middle-Eastern Quad’ on the lines of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD).

**Objectives and focus areas of the new Quad:**
The group is intended as an "international economic forum" that will work on furthering the economic and political ties between the four countries.

**Significance:**
Experts believe the new group is important for greater cooperation of the countries involved in keeping the Middle East stable.

**Comparisons with the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD):**
The QSD, often called the 'Quad' is a strategic dialogue between the United States, India, Japan and Australia.
- The dialogue was started in 2007 in response to increasing Chinese aggression in the South China Sea and was accompanied by one of the largest joint military exercises of the modern era, the Malabar Exercise.
- While Australia had pulled out of the dialogue as its own economic ties to China grew over the decade, the group reconvened in 2017.

**What will the group focus on?**
Some of the areas that the countries had highlighted during their talks include improving trade ties, cooperation in maritime security of the region, joint discussions for global public health, and joint infrastructure projects focused on transportation and technology.

5. **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)**
India is in discussion with the 10-nation bloc ASEAN for initiating the review of the FTA (free-trade agreement) in goods between the two regions to seek more market access for domestic products.

**Free Trade Agreement (FTA):**
- It is a pact between two or more nations to reduce barriers to imports and exports among them.
- Under a free trade policy, goods and services can be bought and sold across international borders with little or no government tariffs, quotas, subsidies, or prohibitions to inhibit their exchange.
- The concept of free trade is the opposite of trade protectionism or economic isolationism.

**What is ASEAN?**
The Association of Southeast Asian Nations is a regional organization which was established to promote political and social stability amid rising tensions among the Asia-Pacific’s post-colonial states.
The motto of ASEAN is “One Vision, One Identity, One Community”.
ASEAN Secretariat – Indonesia, Jakarta.

**Genesis:**
Established in 1967 with the signing of the ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) by its founding fathers.
Founding Fathers of ASEAN are: Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.
Ten Members: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

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.

Composition: Since its founding, the admission of new member states has increased the alliance from the original 12 countries to 30. The most recent member state to be added to NATO was North Macedonia on 27 March 2020. NATO membership is open to “any other European state in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area.”

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.

7. AUKUS Alliance
● The UK, US and Australia, in 2021, announced a historic security pact in the Asia-Pacific, in what’s seen as an effort to counter China. It is called the AUKUS pact and AUKUS alliance.
● Under the AUKUS alliance, the three nations have agreed to enhance the development of joint capabilities and technology sharing, foster deeper integration of security and defence-related science, technology, industrial bases and supply chains.
● Under the first major initiative of AUKUS, Australia would build a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines with the help of the US and the UK, a capability aimed at promoting stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

8. G20 Summit
The Union Cabinet has set in motion the process to build a Secretariat that will look after the affairs of organising the G20 summit in 2023. 2021 G20 Summit was held in Rome, Italy.
● India will steer the international body as its President from December 1, 2022 to November 30, 2023, which will lead to the G20 summit to be hosted here.

**Proposed G20 Secretariat:**
- G20 Secretariat is being established to handle work relating to substantive/knowledge/content, technical, media, security and logistical aspects of India’s G20 Presidency.
- It will be manned by officers and staff from the Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Finance, and other relevant line Ministries/Departments and domain knowledge experts.
- The Secretariat will be functional till February 2024.

**What is the G20?**
The G20 is an annual meeting of leaders from the countries with the largest and fastest-growing economies.
- Its members account for 85% of the world’s GDP, and two-thirds of its population.
- The G20 Summit is formally known as the “Summit on Financial Markets and the World Economy”.

**Establishment:**
After the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997-1998, it was acknowledged that the participation of major emerging market countries is needed on discussions on the international financial system, and G7 finance ministers agreed to establish the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors meeting in 1999.

**Presidency:**
- The group has no permanent staff of its own, so every year in December, a G20 country from a rotating region takes on the presidency.
- That country is then responsible for organising the next summit, as well as smaller meetings for the coming year.
- They can also choose to invite non-member countries along as guests.
- The first G20 meeting took place in Berlin in 1999, after a financial crisis in East Asia affected many countries around the world.

**Full membership of the G20:**
Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union.

**What is G20+?**
The G20 developing nations, also called G21/G23/G20+ is a bloc of developing nations which was established on August 20, 2003.
Its origins can be traced to the Brasilia Declaration signed by the foreign ministers of India, Brazil and South Africa on 6th June 2003.
- The G20+ is responsible for 60% of the world population, 26% of the world’s agricultural exports and 70% of its farmers.
9. **OECD/G20 Inclusive Framework tax deal**

India has already joined the G20-OECD inclusive framework deal that seeks to reform international tax rules and ensure that multinational enterprises pay their fair share wherever they operate.

- More than 130 countries and jurisdictions, representing more than 90% of global GDP, have signed the deal.

**Two pillars of framework:**

1. **Dealing with transnational and digital companies.** This pillar ensures that large multinational enterprises, including digital companies, pay tax where they operate and earn profits.

2. **Dealing with low-tax jurisdictions to address cross-border profit shifting and treaty shopping.** This pillar seeks to put a floor under competition among countries through a global minimum corporate tax rate, currently proposed at 15%.

**Expected outcomes:**

If implemented, countries such as the Netherlands and Luxembourg that offer lower tax rates, and so-called tax havens such as Bahamas or British Virgin Islands, could lose their sheen.

**Impact/implications on India:**

India will have to roll back the equalisation levy that it imposes on companies such as Google, Amazon and Facebook when the global tax regime is implemented.

**What is Equalisation levy?**

- In 2016, India imposed an equalisation levy of 6% on online advertisement services provided by non-residents. This was applicable to Google and other foreign online advertising service providers.
- The government expanded its scope from April 1, 2020, by imposing a 2% equalisation levy on digital transactions by foreign entities operating in India or having access to the local market.

**What is BEPS?**

**Base erosion and profit shifting (BEPS)** refers to tax planning strategies used by multinational enterprises that exploit gaps and mismatches in tax rules to avoid paying tax.

- Developing countries’ higher reliance on corporate income tax means they suffer from BEPS disproportionately.
- BEPS practices cost countries USD 100-240 billion in lost revenue annually.

10. **Anti-Corruption Working Group**

The G20 Anti-corruption Working Group, which for the first time includes sport as a specificity within its mandate, has reached consensus on the draft high level principles on Preventing and Combating Corruption.

**About ACWG:**

Established by G20 Leaders at the Toronto Summit in 2010.

- Responsible for updating and implementing the G20 Anti-corruption Action Plan.
- Reports to G20 Leaders.
- It cooperates closely with and supports the work of relevant international organizations, including the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development, the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Financial Action Task Force.

11. **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.
Composition: 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 major purpose of the G-7 is to discuss and deliberate on international economic issues. It sometimes acts in concert to help resolve other global problems, with a special focus on economic issues.

How did G7 become G8?
- Russia was formally inducted as a member in the group in 1998, which led G7 to become G8.
- However, Russian President Vladimir Putin’s condemnable act of moving Russian troops into eastern Ukraine and conquering Crimea in 2014 drew heavy criticism from the other G8 nations.
- The other nations of the group decided to suspend Russia from the G8 as a consequence of its actions and the group became G7 again in 2014.

12. G-33
- The G33 (or the Friends of Special Products in agriculture) is a coalition of developing countries, established prior to the 2003 Cancun ministerial conference, that have coordinated during the Doha Round of World Trade Organization negotiations, specifically in regard to agriculture.
- There are currently 47 members in the G33.
- The group has “defensive” concerns regarding agriculture in relation to WTO negotiations, and seeks to limit the degree of market opening required of developing countries.
- The group has advocated the creation of a “special products” exemption, which would allow developing countries to exempt certain products from tariff reductions, and also a “special safeguard mechanism” which would permit tariff increases in response to import surges.
- India is a member of this group.

13. South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)
What is SAARC? When was it established?
- 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.

Afghanistan became the member of SAARC at the 13th annual summit in 2005.

Important objectives of the Association as outlined in the SAARC Charter are:
- to promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and to improve their quality of life;
- 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;
- to promote and strengthen collective self-reliance among the countries of South Asia.

Importance of SAARC:
1. SAARC comprises 3% of the world’s area, 21% of the world’s population and 3.8% (US$2.9 trillion) of the global economy.
2. It is the world’s most densely populated region and one of the most fertile areas.
3. SAARC countries have common tradition, dress, food and culture and political aspects thereby synergizing their actions.
4. All the SAARC countries have common problems and issues like poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition, natural disasters, internal conflicts, industrial and technological backwardness, low GDP and poor socio-economic condition.

14. BRICS
The 13th BRICS Summit was held under India’s Chairship in 2021. It was the third time that India hosted the BRICS Summit after 2012 and 2016.
- The theme for the Summit: ‘BRICS@15: Intra-BRICS cooperation for continuity, consolidation and consensus.’

- 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. Russia hosted the most recent 12th BRICS summit on 17 November 2020 virtually.
- The 5th BRICS Culture Ministers’ Meeting was held through video conference under the Chairpersonship of Russian Federation.
- 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:
  - Track I: Formal diplomatic engagement between the national governments.
  - Track II: Engagement through government-affiliated institutions, e.g. state-owned enterprises and business councils.
  - Track III: Civil society and “people-to-people” engagement.
- Facts for Prelims:
  - The First BRIC Summit was held in June 2009 in Yekaterinburg, Russia.
  - Brazil hosted the most recent 11th BRICS summit on 13-14 November 2019.
  - India hosted the 4th BRICS summit in 2012 and 8th BRICS summit in 2016.
  - The BRICS members are all leading developing or newly industrialized countries. All five are G-20 members.
- During the Sixth BRICS Summit in Fortaleza (2014) the leaders signed the Agreement establishing the New Development Bank (NDB). They also signed the BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement.

15. BRICS Employment Working Group (EWG) Meeting
1st BRICS Employment Working Group (EWG) Meeting was held recently at New Delhi in virtual format.

The prime agenda for the discussions were:
Promoting Social Security Agreements amongst BRICS Nations, Formalization of labour markets, Participation of women in labour force and Gig and platform workers – Role in labour market.

What are SSAs?
- SSA is a bilateral agreement between India and a foreign country designed to protect the interests of cross border workers.
● The agreement provides for avoidance of ‘double coverage’ and ensures equality of treatment to workers of both countries from a social security perspective.

**Background:**
As on date, India has signed SSAs with 18 countries.
The US has not signed the totalization agreement, also known as social security agreement (SSA) with India.

**SSAs broadly provide the following three benefits:**
1. Avoiding making of double social security contributions by the workers (detachment).
2. Easy remittance of benefits (Exportability).
3. Aggregating the contribution periods (in two countries) to prevent loss of benefits (Totalization).
4. Provide for disability insurance benefits to the Indian nationals working abroad.

16. **Council of Europe**
Russia’s membership in the Council of Europe has been suspended after its invasion of Ukraine.

**About the Council of Europe:**
- The Council of Europe is an international organization founded in the wake of World War II to uphold human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe.
- Founded in 1949 (Treaty of London (1949)), it has 46 member states (including all 27 EU members), with a population of approximately 820 million, and operates with an annual budget of approximately 500 million euros.
- **Headquarters:** Palace of Europe, Strasbourg, France.

**Roles and responsibilities:**
The Council of Europe cannot make binding laws, but it does have the power to enforce select international agreements reached by European states on various topics.

17. **Pacific Islands Forum:**
- Pacific Islands Forum, formerly (1971–2000) South Pacific Forum, organization established in 1971 to provide a setting for heads of government to discuss common issues and problems facing the independent and self-governing states of the South Pacific.
- It comprises **18 members:** Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.
- In 2000 Forum leaders adopted the *Biketawa Declaration*, which was a response to regional political instability and which put forward a set of principles and actions for members to take to promote open, democratic, and clean government, as well as equal rights for citizens regardless of gender, race, colour, creed, or political belief.

18. **Collective Security Treaty Organisation**
The Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) had dispatched troops to help quell unrest in Kazakhstan.

**About Collective Security Treaty Organization:**
- It is an intergovernmental military alliance (six countries) that came into effect in 2002.
● Its’ origin can be traced to the Collective Security Treaty, 1992 (Tashkent Treaty).
● The headquarter is located in the Russian capital of Moscow.
● **The objectives of the CSTO is** to strengthen peace, international and regional security including cybersecurity and stability, the protection on a collective basis of the independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the member states.

### Composition:
Current CSTO members are Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation and Tajikistan.

### What the membership entails?
1. CSTO membership means that member states are barred from joining other military alliances, limiting, for example, their relationship with NATO.
2. Most importantly, membership presumes certain key security assurances – the most significant of which is deterring military aggression by third countries.
3. In the CSTO, aggression against one signatory is perceived as aggression against all.
4. It however remains unclear whether this feature works in practice.

### 19. Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)
The RCEP came into effect on January 1, 2022, marking the formation of the world’s largest free trade zone in terms of trade volume.

#### Why did India not join?
India withdrew from the RCEP in 2019 largely because of concerns it would open it up to Chinese goods amid an already wide trade imbalance with China, and the failure of the agreement to adequately open up to services.

#### What is RCEP?
It is a trade deal between the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand.

#### Aims and Objectives of RCEP:
1. To lower tariffs, open up trade in services and promote investment to help emerging economies catch up with the rest of the world.
2. To help reduce costs and time for companies by allowing them to export a product anywhere within the bloc without meeting separate requirements for each country.
3. It also touches on intellectual property, but will not cover environmental protections and labour rights.

#### Significance:
- RCEP will cover about 30% of global gross domestic product (GDP), worth $26.2 trillion (£23.17 trillion), and nearly a third of the world’s population, some 2.2 billion people.
- Under RCEP, around 90% of trade tariffs within the bloc will eventually be eliminated.
- RCEP will also set common rules around trade, intellectual property, e-commerce and competition.
20. World Economic Forum
The World Economic Forum held its annual meeting in Davos.

Why is WEF important?
The WEF summit is attended by people from across the political and corporate world, including heads of state, policy makers, top executives, industrialists, media personalities and technocrats.
- Deliberations at the WEF influence public sector and corporate decision-making, particularly on issues of global importance such as poverty, social challenges, climate change and global economic recovery.
- The key mix of economic, corporate and political leadership at Swiss ski resorts provides the perfect opportunity to find solutions to the global challenges that emerge from time to time.

How is WEF received outside?
While the WEF sees large-scale participation from top industry, business leaders, civil society and international organizations each year, it has been criticized for being more of a networking hub than a nebula of wisdom or a platform to find effective solutions to global issues. The forum, which provides opportunities for collaboration through dialogue, has also been criticized for lack of representation from various sections of civil society and for lack of effective solutions.

About the World Economic Forum:
It is a Swiss nonprofit foundation established in 1971, based in Geneva, Switzerland. Founder and Executive Chairman: Klaus Schwab. Some major reports published by WEF are:
1. Energy Transition Index.
5. Global Risk Report.

The early 2022 edition of the Agency’s bi-annual Electricity Market Report has been published.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) has invited India to become its full-time member.

Implications:
- The proposal if accepted will require New Delhi to raise strategic oil reserves to 90 days requirement. India’s current strategic oil reserves equal 9.5 days of its requirement.

In March 2017, India became an associate member of IEA.

About IEA:
- Established in 1974 as per the framework of the OECD, IEA is an autonomous intergovernmental organisation.
- Its mission is guided by four main areas of focus: energy security, economic development, environmental awareness and engagement worldwide.
- Headquarters (Secretariat): Paris, France.

Roles and functions:
- Established in the wake of the 1973-1974 oil crisis, to help its members respond to major oil supply disruptions, a role it continues to fulfill today.
IEA’s mandate has expanded over time to include tracking and analyzing global key energy trends, promoting sound energy policy, and fostering multinational energy technology cooperation.

**Composition and eligibility:**
It has 31 members at present. A candidate country must be a member country of the OECD. But all OECD members are not IEA members.
To become a member a candidate country must demonstrate that it has:
1. 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.
2. A demand restraint programme to reduce national oil consumption by up to 10%.
3. Legislation and organisation to operate the Co-ordinated Emergency Response Measures (CERM) on a national basis.
4. Legislation and measures to ensure that all oil companies under its jurisdiction report information upon request.
5. Measures in place to ensure the capability of contributing its share of an IEA collective action.

**Reports:**
2. World Energy Outlook.
5. Energy Technology Perspectives.

**22. 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.
- **Reports to** both the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council.
- **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.
- Works with its Member States and multiple partners worldwide to promote the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear technologies.
- Seeks to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and to inhibit its use for any military purpose, including nuclear weapons.

**Functions:**
1. Recommendations to the General Conference on IAEA activities and budget.
2. Responsible for publishing IAEA standards.
3. Responsible for making most of the policy of the IAEA.
4. Appoints the Director General subject to General Conference approval.

**Programs:**
- Program of Action for Cancer Therapy (PACT).
- Human Health Program.
- Water Availability Enhancement Project.

**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.

23. **Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC)**

The United Kingdom-based Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) has listed five sites with unusual features. These sites are associated with World War I and World War II.

- Among them is **Nagaland’s Kohima War Cemetery.**
  - The Kohima War Cemetery is a memorial dedicated to the soldiers of the 2nd British Division of the Allied Forces who died in World War II at Kohima in April 1944. The soldiers died on the battleground of Garrison Hill in the tennis court area of the Deputy Commissioner’s residence.

- Among the other unusual sites listed by CWGC are the **World War I “crater cemeteries” – Zivy Crater and Litchfield Crater** – in the Pas de Calais region in France. The craters were caused by mine explosions.

- Another site listed is the **Nicosia (Waynes Keep) Cemetery or the “cemetry in no man’s land” in Cyprus,** requiring the presence of armed guards. This is because the cemetery is on the border of a patch of land disputed between the southern and northern parts of the island since the 1970s.

CWGC is an intergovernmental organisation of six member-states who ensure the men and women who died in the wars will never be forgotten.

- The commission was **founded by Sir Fabian Ware** and constituted through Royal Charter in 1917 as the Imperial War Graves Commission.

- **Membership:** Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, South Africa and the United Kingdom.

24. **World Gold Council**

- It is the market development organisation for the gold industry.

- It works across all parts of the industry, from gold mining to investment, and their aim is to stimulate and sustain demand for gold.

- It is an association whose members comprise the world’s leading gold mining companies.

- It helps to support its members to mine in a responsible way and developed the Conflict Free Gold Standard.

- Headquartered in the UK, they have offices in India, China, Singapore, Japan and the United States.
**Gold & Economy:**

**As Currency:** Gold was used as the world reserve currency up through most of the 20th century. The United States used the gold standard until 1971.

**As a hedge against inflation:** The demand for gold increases during inflationary times due to its inherent value and limited supply. As it cannot be diluted, gold is able to retain value much better than other forms of currency.

**Strength of Currency:** When a country imports more than it exports, the value of its currency will decline. On the other hand, the value of its currency will increase when a country is a net exporter. Thus, a country that exports gold or has access to gold reserves will see an increase in the strength of its currency when gold prices increase, since this increases the value of the country’s total exports.

25. **International Solar Alliance (ISA)**

The UN General Assembly has conferred Observer Status to the International Solar Alliance (ISA), a historic decision which India said would help provide for a well-defined cooperation between the Alliance and the United Nations that would benefit global energy growth and development.

**Significance of the observer status:**

The granting of Observer Status to ISA in the General Assembly would help provide for regular and well-defined cooperation between the Alliance and the United Nations that would benefit global energy growth and development.

**International Solar Alliance (ISA):**

- The ISA was conceived as a joint effort by India and France to mobilise efforts against climate change through the deployment of solar energy solutions.
- It was presented by the leaders of the two countries at the 21st Conference of Parties (COP21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held in Paris in 2015.
- It is an alliance of more than 122 countries initiated by India.
- ISA is a coalition of solar resource rich countries lying fully or partially between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn to specifically address energy needs by harnessing solar energy.
- The Paris Declaration establishes ISA as an alliance dedicated to the promotion of solar energy among its member countries.
- ISA brings together countries with rich solar potential to aggregate global demand, thereby reducing prices through bulk purchase.
- It facilitates the deployment of existing solar technologies at scale, and promoting collaborative solar R&D and capacity building.

**Secretariat:**

- India and France jointly laid the foundation stone of ISA Headquarters.
- They inaugurated the interim Secretariat of the ISA in National Institute of Solar Energy campus, Gurugram, Haryana.

**Objectives:**

- The ISA’s major objectives include global deployment of over 1,000GW of solar generation capacity and mobilisation of investment of over US$ 1000 billion into solar energy by 2030.
- The ISA envisions to enable the full ecosystem for availability and development of technology, economic resources, and development of storage technology, mass manufacturing and innovation.

**International Solar Alliance General Assembly:**
The fourth general assembly of The International Solar Alliance (ISA) was held virtually.
- It was presided over by Minister for Power, New and Renewable Energy, Government of India and the President of the ISA Assembly.

About the ISA Assembly:
The Assembly is the apex decision-making body of International Solar Alliance (ISA), in which each member country is represented.
- This body makes decisions concerning the implementation of the ISA’s Framework Agreement and coordinated actions to be taken to achieve its objective.
- The Assembly meets annually at the Ministerial level at the seat of the ISA, assesses the aggregate effect of the programmes and other activities in terms of deployment of solar energy, performance, reliability, as well as cost and scale of finance.

26. Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)
New Zealand hosted 2021 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum.

APEC:
It is a regional economic forum established in 1989 to leverage the growing interdependence of the Asia-Pacific.

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.

Functions:
1. 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.
2. Recognizing the impacts of climate change, APEC members also implement initiatives to increase energy efficiency and promote sustainable management of forest and marine resources.
3. 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.

Significance:
In all, APEC members account for nearly 3 billion people and about 60% of the world’s GDP. They span the Pacific rim, from Chile to Russia to Thailand to Australia.

27. 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.**

### 28. OPEC

1. 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.**
2. OPEC is a **permanent, intergovernmental organization.**
3. Currently, the Organization has a total of 13 Member Countries.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. It is **headquartered in Vienna, Austria.**
7. OPEC membership is open to any country that is a substantial exporter of oil and which shares the ideals of the organization.

### 29. Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is a permanent intergovernmental international organization.

- The **creation of SCO** was announced on 15 June 2001 in Shanghai (China).
- 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.**
- It was preceded by the **Shanghai Five mechanism.**
  - The SCO’s **official languages are Russian and Chinese.**
  - The SCO Charter, sealed in 2002, calls for “peaceful settlement” of conflicts and disputes among member states.

**Founding members of SCO were-**
1. The Republic of Kazakhstan,
2. The People’s Republic of China,
3. The Kyrgyz Republic,
4. The Russian Federation,
5. The Republic of Tajikistan,
6. The Republic of Uzbekistan.

**Background:**
- **Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan** were members of the **Shanghai Five,** Prior to the creation of SCO in 2001.
- **Shanghai Five (1996)** emerged from a series of border demarcation and demilitarization talks which the four former Soviet republics held with China to ensure stability along the borders.
- **Uzbekistan joined the organisation in 2001,** following this the **Shanghai Five was renamed the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).**
- **India and Pakistan became members in 2017.**
Member Countries:
Now, SCO is comprised of Eight Member countries. Namely-
1. Kazakhstan
2. China
3. Kyrgyzstan
4. Russia
5. Tajikistan
6. Uzbekistan
7. India
8. Pakistan

Objectives of SCO:
- Strengthening mutual trust and neighbourliness among the member states.
- Promoting their effective cooperation in politics, trade, the economy, research, technology and culture, as well as in education, energy, transport, tourism, environmental protection, and other areas.
- Making joint efforts to maintain and ensure peace, security and stability in the region.
- Moving towards the establishment of a democratic, fair and rational new international political and economic order.

**SCO Peaceful Mission 2021:**

**Exercise SCO Peaceful Mission:**
- Joint Counter Terrorism Exercise PEACEFUL MISSION is a Multilateral Exercise, which is conducted biennially as part of military diplomacy between Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) member states.
- The aim of the exercise is to foster close relations between SCO member states and to enhance abilities of the military leaders to command multi-national military contingents.
- The exercise will enable sharing of best practices between the Armed Forces of SCO nations.

**30. Interpol**
The Interpol has elected Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) Special Director Praveen Sinha as a Delegate for Asia in its Executive Committee.

**About the Interpol Executive Committee:**
The Executive Committee has 13 members from different countries comprising the President of the Interpol, two Vice-Presidents and nine Delegates.
- It supervises the execution of the Interpol General Assembly’s decisions and the administration and work of its General Secretariat.
- It meets three times a year and sets organisational policy and direction.
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.
- India joined the organisation in 1949, and is one of its oldest members.

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.

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”.

31. BASIC Countries
- 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.
- The four committed to act jointly at the Copenhagen climate summit, including a possible united walk-out if their common minimum position was not met by the developed nations.
- This emerging geopolitical alliance, initiated and led by China, then brokered the final Copenhagen Accord with the United States.
- Subsequently, the grouping is working to define a common position on emission reductions and climate aid money, and to try to convince other countries to sign up to the Copenhagen Accord.

32. High Ambition Coalition (HAC) for Nature and People
At a ceremony held between the French and Indian governments, India officially joined the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People.

Key points:
- India is the first of the BRICS bloc of major emerging economies (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) to join the HAC.
- India’s announcement comes in the lead up to a high-level biodiversity meeting, hosted by China.

What is the ‘High Ambition Coalition’ (HAC)?
High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People, was initiated at the “One Planet Summit” in Paris in January 2021.

- It is co-chaired by Costa Rica and France and by the United Kingdom as Ocean co-chair. High Ambition Coalition (HAC) is a group of more than 70 countries encouraging the adoption of the global goal to protect 30x30.
- HAC champions a global deal for nature and people with the central goal of protecting at least 30 percent of world’s land and ocean by 2030.
- The 30x30 target is a global target which aims to halt the accelerating loss of species, and protect vital ecosystems that are the source of our economic security.
- HAC members currently include a mix of countries in the global north and south; European, Latin American, Africa and Asia countries are among the members.

Why 30x30?
In order to address both the biodiversity crisis and the climate crisis, there is growing scientific research that half of the planet must be kept in a natural state.
- Despite this, experts agree that a scientifically credible and necessary interim goal is to achieve a minimum of 30% protection by 2030.
- The scientific data help justify the 30x30 target for biodiversity conservation both at a global level and a regional level.

33. Eastern Economic Forum 2021
Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivered a video-address during the plenary session of the 6th Eastern Economic Forum (EEF) held in Vladivostok, Russia.

About the ‘EEF’:
The Eastern Economic Forum was established by decree of the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin in 2015.
- It supports the economic development of Russia’s Far East and to expand international cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.
- It takes place each year in Vladivostok, a city in Russia.
- It serves as a platform for the discussion of key issues in the world economy, regional integration, and the development of new industrial and technological sectors, as well as of the global challenges facing Russia and other nations.
- Over the years, it has emerged as an international platform for discussing the strategy for developing political, economic and cultural ties between Russia and Asia Pacific.

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 Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)).
- The Far Eastern Federal District covers more than a third of the country’s territory.
- 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.

34. International Criminal Court
- The International Criminal Court (ICC), located in The Hague, 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.

Criticisms:
1. It does not have the capacity to arrest suspects and depends on member states for their cooperation.
2. Critics of the Court argue that there are insufficient checks and balances on the authority of the ICC prosecutor and judges and insufficient protection against politicized prosecutions or other abuses.
3. The ICC has been accused of bias and as being a tool of Western imperialism, only punishing leaders from small, weak states while ignoring crimes committed by richer and more powerful states.
4. ICC cannot mount successful cases without state cooperation is problematic for several reasons. It means that the ICC acts inconsistently in its selection of cases, is prevented from taking on hard cases and loses legitimacy.
35. **Cabinet approves multilateral MoU signed by IFSCA**
The Cabinet has approved a multilateral MoU signed between the **International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA)**, **International Organization of Securities Commissions (IOSCO)**, and **International Association of Insurance Supervisors (IAIS)**.

**Background:**
In 2002 IOSCO adopted a **multilateral memorandum of understanding (IOSCO MMoU)** designed to facilitate crossborder enforcement and exchange of information among the international community of securities regulators.
- Then in 2005 IOSCO MMoU became the benchmark for international cooperation among securities regulators.

**About IOSCO:**
- Formed in 1983, it is an association of organizations that regulate the world’s securities and futures markets.
- Members are typically primary securities and/or futures regulators in a national jurisdiction or the main financial regulator from each country.
- Headquarters: Madrid, Spain.

Its mandate is to:
1. Develop, implement, and promote high standards of regulation to enhance investor protection and reduce systemic risk.
2. Share information with exchanges and assist them with technical and operational issues.
3. Establish standards toward monitoring global investment transactions across borders and markets.

**About the International Association of Insurance Supervisors (IAIS):**
- It is a **voluntary membership** organization of insurance supervisors from over 190 jurisdictions, constituting 97% of the world’s insurance premiums.
- It is the international standards-setting body for the insurance sector.
- It was established in 1994 and operates as a verein, a type of non-profit organisation under Swiss Civil Law.
- The IAIS is hosted by the Bank for International Settlements (BIS).

36. **Tax Inspectors Without Borders (TIWB) programme**
- Tax Inspectors Without Borders (TIWB) launched its programme in Bhutan.
- **India was chosen as the Partner Jurisdiction** and has provided the Tax Expert for this programme.
- This programme is expected to be of about 24 months’ duration through which India in collaboration with the UNDP and the TIWB Secretariat aims to aid Bhutan in strengthening its tax administration by transferring technical know-how and skills to its tax auditors, and through sharing of best audit practices.
- The focus of the programme will be in the area of **International Taxation and Transfer Pricing**.

**About TIWB Programme:**
1. It is a **joint initiative of** the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the **Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)**.
2. The **objective** of the TIWB Initiative is to enable sharing of tax audit knowledge and skills with tax administrations in developing countries through a targeted, real time "learning by doing" approach.
3. **TIWB is focused on** promoting hands-on assistance by sending Experts to build audit and audit-related skills pertaining to specific international tax matters and the development of general audit skills within developing tax administrations.

37. **China and Central & Eastern European (CEE) 17+1 Mechanism**
The 17+1 initiative is a China-led format founded in 2012 in Budapest with an aim to expand cooperation between Beijing and the Central and Eastern European (CEE) member countries, with investments and trade for the development of the CEE region.

- The framework also focuses on infrastructure projects such as bridges, motorways, railway lines and modernisation of ports in the member states.
- The platform is largely seen as an extension of China’s flagship Belt and Road initiative (BRI).
- China’s narrative towards the 17+1 initiative is about improving its relations with the European countries that are less developed as compared to the Western European states.

Composition:
The initiative includes 16 countries of Central and Eastern Europe — Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Slovenia.

38. **Network For Greening Financial System**
The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has joined the Central Banks and Supervisors Network for Greening the Financial System (NGFS) as a member.

About NGFS:
- Launched at the Paris One Planet Summit on December 12, 2017.
- It is a group of central banks and supervisors willing to share best practices and contribute to the development of environment and climate risk management in the financial sector.
- It also seeks to mobilise mainstream finance to support the transition towards a sustainable economy.
- **Composition:** Includes central banks and financial supervisors.
- **Secretariat** is hosted by the Banque de France.

The World Health Organization, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) have called for a halt to the sale of live wild mammals in food markets to prevent the emergence of new diseases such as COVID-19.

About the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE):
- The need to fight animal diseases at global level led to the creation of the Office International des Epizooties through the international Agreement signed on January 25th 1924.
- In May 2003 the Office became the World Organisation for Animal Health but kept its historical acronym OIE.
- The OIE is the intergovernmental organisation responsible for improving animal health worldwide.
- It is recognised as a reference organisation by the World Trade Organization (WTO).
- The organisation is placed under the authority and control of a World Assembly of Delegates consisting of Delegates designated by the Governments of all Member Countries.
- The main objective of the OIE is to control epizootic diseases and thus to prevent their spread.

40. **Arctic council**
- 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.

**Who takes part in it?**
• The **1996 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**. 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 inter-governmental, inter-parliamentary, global, regional and non-governmental organizations that the Council determines can contribute to its work.

**Arctic Council working groups:**
1. **Arctic Contaminants Action Program (ACAP)** — strengthening and supporting mechanism to encourage national actions to reduce emissions and other releases of pollutants.
2. **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.
3. **Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF)** — addresses the conservation of Arctic biodiversity, working to ensure the sustainability of the Arctic’s living resources.
4. **Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response (EPPR)** — protect the Arctic environment from the threat or impact of an accidental release of pollutants or radionuclides.
5. **Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME)** — protection and sustainable use of the Arctic marine environment.
6. **Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG)** — works to advance sustainable development in the Arctic and to improve the conditions of Arctic communities as a whole.

**41. World Trade Organization (WTO)**
Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala has been appointed the new chief of the World Trade Organization, becoming the **first woman to ever lead the institution and the first African citizen to take on the role.**

**Roles and functions of Director General of WTO:**
The director-general of the World Trade Organization is the officer of the World Trade Organization responsible for supervising and directing the organization’s administrative operations.
• The Director-General has little power over matters of policy - the role is primarily advisory and managerial.
• The Director-General supervises the WTO secretariat of about 700 staff and is **appointed by WTO members for a term of four years.**

**WTO- facts:**
• World Trade Organization, as an institution, was established in 1995. It replaced General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) which was in place since 1946.
• The WTO officially commenced on 1 January 1995 under the **Marrakesh Agreement, signed by 123 nations on 15 April 1994.**
India has been a member of GATT since 1948; hence it was party to Uruguay Round and a founding member of WTO.

While WTO came into existence in 1995, GATT didn’t cease to exist. It continues as WTO’s umbrella treaty for trade in goods.

Structure of WTO:
The WTO is headed by the Ministerial Conference, while the daily operations are carried out by three administrative bodies:

1. **The General Council** comprises the representatives of all member countries and acts as the representative of the Ministerial Conference when it comes to daily operations. Its job is to carry out the implementation and monitoring function of the WTO.

2. **The Dispute Settlement Body** is a part of the General Council and is responsible for settling trade disputes between member states. There is also an Appellate Body, where member states can appeal any decisions made against them during a dispute settlement.

3. **The Trade Policy Review Body** is also a part of the General Council and is responsible for ensuring the trade policies of member states are in line with the goals of the WTO. Member countries are required to inform the WTO about changes in their laws and trade policies.
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. **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)**
The General Assembly is one of the six principal organs of UN and is the **main deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the UN**.
   - All 193 Member States of the UN are represented in the General Assembly, making it the **only UN body with universal representation**.
   - The UNGA is responsible for the UN budget, appointing the non-permanent members to the Security Council, appointing the Secretary-General of the United Nations, receiving reports from other parts of the UN system, and making recommendations through resolutions.
   - The **President** of the General Assembly is elected each year by assembly to serve a one-year term of office.
   - The **presidency rotates annually between the five geographic groups**: African, Asia-Pacific, Eastern European, Latin American and Caribbean, and Western European and other States.

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Asia-Pacific group of the UN:
- Consists of 53 Member States and is the second largest regional group by number of member states after the African Group.
- Its territory is composed of much of the continents of Asia and Oceania with the exception of a few countries.
How are the decisions taken?

- Decisions on important questions, such as those on peace and security, admission of new members and budgetary matters, require a two-thirds majority of the General Assembly.
- Decisions on other questions are by simple majority.

The Assembly has no binding votes or veto powers like the UN Security Council.

According to the Charter of the United Nations, the General Assembly may:

1. Consider and approve the United Nations budget and establish the financial assessments of Member States.
2. 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.
3. Consider and make recommendations on the general principles of cooperation for maintaining international peace and security, including disarmament.
4. 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.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR):

- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) is a multilateral treaty adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. The covenant commits its parties to respect the civil and political rights of individuals, including the right to life, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, electoral rights and rights to due process and a fair trial.
- The ICCPR is part of the International Bill of Human Rights, along with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).
- The ICCPR is monitored by the United Nations Human Rights Committee.

3. UN Secretary General

The United Nations Security Council has endorsed Secretary-General Antonio Guterres for a second five-year term- from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2026.

About the UN Secretary General:

The UN Charter describes the Secretary-General as “chief administrative officer” of the Organization, who shall act in that capacity and perform "such other functions as are entrusted" to them by the Security Council, General Assembly, Economic and Social Council and other United Nations organs.

- The Charter also empowers the Secretary-General to bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in their opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security.

Appointment:

The Security Council recommends a candidate for the General Assembly’s 193 members to appoint. Although all UN members get a voice in the secretary-general’s selection, the five permanent members of the Security Council hold the most influence. Any one of them can eliminate a nominee with a veto.

Issues/challenges with the office of UN Secretary General:

1. The UN Charter doesn’t clearly define the functions and powers of the Secretary General.
2. Selection is not done entirely on merit and transparency.
3. Critics of the appointment process say it lacks transparency and falls prey to cronyism due to the permanent Security Council members’ veto power and their secret negotiations over candidates.

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4. The secretary-general often struggles to balance the interests of other large funders and powerful member states as well.

**Significance of the office:**
1. **Peacekeeping:** The secretary-general’s office oversees peacekeeping missions and appoints the undersecretary in charge of that department.
2. **Mediation:** As part of the “good offices” responsibility of the position, the secretary-general practices independence and impartiality to prevent and limit conflict.

4. **United Nations Security Council**
   - The Security Council has the power to make decisions that member states are then obligated to implement under the Charter.
   - **Permanent and Non-Permanent Members:** The UNSC is composed of 15 members, 5 permanent and 10 non-permanent.
   - Each year, the General Assembly elects five non-permanent members for a two-year term.

**About Security Council Presidency:**
1. The presidency of the Council is held by each of the members in turn for one month, following the English alphabetical order of the Member States names.
2. It rotates among the 15 member-states of the council monthly.
3. The head of the country's delegation is known as the President of the United Nations Security Council.
4. The president serves to coordinate actions of the council, decide policy disputes, and sometimes functions as a diplomat or intermediary between conflicting groups.

**Proposed UNSC reforms:**
Reform of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) encompasses five key issues: categories of membership, the question of the veto held by the five permanent members, regional representation, the size of an enlarged Council and its working methods, and the Security Council-General Assembly relationship.

**Case for Permanent Membership of India in UNSC:**
1. India is the founding member of the UN.
2. Most significantly, India has almost twice the number of peacekeepers deployed on the ground than by P5 countries.
3. India is also the largest democracy and second-most populous country.
4. India’s acquired status of a Nuclear Weapons State (NWS) in May 1998 also makes India a natural claimant as a permanent member similar to the existing permanent members who are all Nuclear Weapon States.
5. India is the undisputed leader of the Third world countries, as reflected by its leadership role in Non-Aligned Movement and G-77 grouping.

   - It provides a legislative framework that can be adopted by countries with modifications to suit the domestic context of the enacting jurisdiction.
   - It has been adopted by 49 countries, including Singapore, UK, US and South Africa.
6. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2022.

About UNEP:

Founded in 1972 following the landmark UN Conference on the Human Environment. UNEP was conceived to monitor the state of the environment, inform policy making with science and coordinate responses to the world’s environmental challenges.

- **Major Reports:** Emission Gap Report, Global Environment Outlook, Frontiers, Invest into Healthy Planet.
- **Major Campaigns:** Beat Pollution, UN75, World Environment Day, Wild for Life.

Achievements:

- Since its creation, UNEP has worked closely with its 193 Member States and other stakeholders to galvanize worldwide commitments and coordinated action to address many of the world’s most pressing environmental challenges.
- It also played a leading role as the docking station for 15 multilateral environmental agreements.

Key milestones and timeline:

- 1972: Maurice Strong is elected as first head of UNEP.
- 1973: UNEP opens first headquarters. On 2 October at the Kenyatta International Convention Centre.
- 1973: Leaders sign Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships Known as MARPOL.
- 1974: World Environment Day makes its debut. The world celebrates the first World Environment Day organized by UNEP on 5 June under the theme “Only One Earth.”
- 1974: Regional Seas Programme established.
- 1979: States adopt Convention on Migratory Species. Also known as the Bonn Convention.

UNEP hosts the secretariats of many critical multilateral environmental agreements and research bodies. These include the following:

1. The Convention on Biological Diversity
3. The Minamata Convention on Mercury
4. The Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions
5. The Vienna Convention for the Protection of Ozone Layer and the Montreal Protocol
6. The Convention on Migratory Species
7. The Carpathian Convention
8. The Bamako Convention
9. The Tehran Convention
7. **UN peacekeepers**
   - United Nations Peacekeeping is a joint effort between the Department of Peace Operations and the Department of Operational Support.
   - Every peacekeeping mission is authorized by the Security Council.

**Composition:**
1. UN peacekeepers (often referred to as Blue Berets or Blue Helmets because of their light blue berets or helmets) can include soldiers, police officers, and civilian personnel.
2. Peacekeeping forces are contributed by member states on a voluntary basis.
3. Civilian staff of peace operations are international civil servants, recruited and deployed by the UN Secretariat.

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.

**How are UN Peacekeeping operations funded?**
- While decisions about establishing, maintaining or expanding a peacekeeping operation are taken by the Security Council, the financing of UN Peacekeeping operations is the collective responsibility of all UN Member States.
- Every Member State is legally obligated to pay their respective share towards peacekeeping. This is in accordance with the provisions of Article 17 of the Charter of the United Nations.

The top 5 providers of assessed contributions to United Nations Peacekeeping operations for 2020-2021 are:
1. United States.
2. China.
4. Germany.
5. United Kingdom.

**UNITE AWARE:**
UNITE AWARE is a mobile tech platform developed by India to provide terrain-related information to the UN peacekeepers so as to ensure their safety. It is being developed in partnership with the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Operational Support. India has spent 1.64 million USD for this project.


Efforts by India to safeguard maritime interests and strengthen security in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR):
- India supported freedom of navigation and overflight, and unimpeded commerce based on the principles of international law, reflected notably in the UNCLOS 1982.
- As a State party to the UNCLOS, India promoted utmost respect for the UNCLOS, which established the international legal order of the seas and oceans.
- India developed its maritime cooperation with regional partners in consonance with the Government’s vision of Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR).
- The steps taken include ‘Mission based Deployments’ of naval ships and aircraft to enhance Maritime Domain Awareness, promote maritime security and address contingencies that may arise.
About UNCLOS:
Adopted and signed in 1982. It became effective in the year 1994. It replaced the four Geneva Conventions of April, 1958, which respectively concerned the territorial sea and the contiguous zone, the continental shelf, the high seas, fishing and conservation of living resources on the high seas.
- The Convention has become the legal framework for marine and maritime activities.
- Also known as Law of the Sea, it divides marine areas into five main zones namely- Internal Waters, Territorial Sea, Contiguous Zone, Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and the High Seas.
- UNCLOS is the only international convention which stipulates a framework for state jurisdiction in maritime spaces. It provides a different legal status to different maritime zones.

The Convention has created three new institutions on the international scene:
1. The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.
2. The International Seabed Authority.
3. The Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf.

9. 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 United Nations Relief and Works Agency (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.

10. Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights
- The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, also known as, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, is one of the UN human rights bodies.
- The OHCHR is entrusted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) with the mandate to protect and promote all human rights for everyone all over the world.
- It offers technical expertise and capacity-development to aid the implementation of global human rights standards on the field.
- It is a part of the UN Secretariat and was established in 1993.
- It is headquartered in Geneva and has many regional offices as well.
- The OHCHR is headed by the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

OHCHR Funding: Almost 2/3rd of the funding for the Office comes from voluntary contributions from donors and member states. The rest is covered by the general budget of the UN.

11. UN Human Rights Council
Context:
India gets re-elected to UN Human Rights Council for 6th term with overwhelming majority.
Besides, the US has also joined more than three years after the Trump administration quit the UNHRC over what it called chronic bias against Israel and a lack of reform.

**Background:**
Human Rights Council candidates are elected in geographical groups to ensure even representation.

**About UNHRC:**
UNHRC was reconstituted from its predecessor organisation, the UN Commission on Human Rights to help overcome the “credibility deficit” of the previous organisation.

- **Headquartered** in Geneva, Switzerland.

**Composition:**
- The UNHRC has 47 members serving at any time with elections held to fill up seats every year, based on allocations to regions across the world to ensure geographical representation.
- Each elected member serves for a term of three years.
- Countries are disallowed from occupying a seat for more than two consecutive terms.

**Functions:**
- The UNHRC passes non-binding resolutions on human rights issues through a periodic review of all 193 UN member states called the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).
- It oversees expert investigation of violations in specific countries (Special Procedures).

### 12. International Court of Justice (ICJ)

- ICJ was established in 1945 by the United Nations charter and started working in April 1946.
- It is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, situated at the Peace Palace in The Hague (Netherlands).
- Unlike the six principal organs of the United Nations, it is the only one not located in New York (USA).
- It settles legal disputes between States and gives advisory opinions in accordance with international law, on legal questions referred to it by authorized United Nations organs and specialized agencies.

**Structure:**
- The Court is composed of 15 judges, who are elected for terms of office of nine years 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 and Judges are eligible for re-election.
- ICJ is assisted by a Registry, its administrative organ. Its official languages are English and French.

The 15 judges of the Court are distributed in following regions:
1. Three from Africa.
2. Two from Latin America and Caribbean.
3. Three from Asia.
4. Five from Western Europe and other states.
5. Two from Eastern Europe.

**Independence of judges:**
Unlike 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.

Jurisdiction and Functioning:
- ICJ acts as a world court with two fold jurisdiction i.e. legal disputes between States submitted to it by them (contentious cases) and requests for advisory opinions on legal questions referred to it by United Nations organs and specialized agencies (advisory proceedings).
- Only States which are members of the United Nations and which have become parties to the Statute of the Court or which have accepted its jurisdiction under certain conditions, are parties to contentious cases.
- The judgment is final, binding on the parties to a case and without appeal (at the most it may be subject to interpretation or, upon the discovery of a new fact, revision).

13. International Labour Organisation (ILO)
India's term as chair of the Governing Body of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has ended (October 2020 - June 2021).
- In 2020, India assumed the chairmanship of the Governing Body of the International Labour Organisation after a gap of 35 years.
- ILO was established as an agency for the League of Nations following World War I.
- Established by the Treaty of Versailles in 1919.
- It became the first specialised agency of the United Nations (UN) in the year 1946.
- It got the Nobel Peace Prize in 1969.
- It is the only tripartite U.N. agency. It brings together governments, employers and workers.
- Headquarters: Geneva, Switzerland.

The ILO’s fundamental Conventions
These cover subjects considered to be fundamental principles and rights at work:
- Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948
- Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949
- Forced Labour Convention, 1930
- Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957
- Minimum Age Convention, 1973
- Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999
- Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951
- Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958

Key reports:
1. World Employment and Social Outlook.

14. UNESCO creative cities network (UCCN)
The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has picked Srinagar among 49 cities as part of the creative city network under the Crafts and Folk Arts category.
- The inclusion of Srinagar in the creative city network for the arts and crafts has paved a way for the city to represent its handicrafts on the global stage through UNESCO.

About Creative Cities Network:
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:


15. **UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)**

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) recently held a meeting with the women activists and applauded their courage and affirmed that the UN will continue to stand by the people of Afghanistan.

**What is UNAMA?**

- UNAMA was established on 28 March 2002 by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1401.
- It was basically established to assist the state and the people of Afghanistan in laying the foundations for sustainable peace and development.
- Its original mandate was to support the implementation of the Bonn Agreement (December 2001).
- Reviewed annually, this mandate has been altered over time to reflect the needs of the country.
- **UNAMA is an integrated mission.** This means that the Special Political Mission, all UN agencies, funds and programmes, work in a multidimensional and integrated manner to better assist Afghanistan according to nationally defined priorities.

**What is the Bonn Agreement?**

- Bonn was a closed-door negotiation; participants were isolated, outside contact was limited during the negotiations, and there was no publicity until after the agreement was signed.
- The existing nominal head of state (Rabbani) was sidelined and did not participate, and the Taliban were completely excluded from the Bonn negotiations.
- The United Nations and several other international actors played major roles in pushing the negotiations forward, and the Bonn Agreement was blessed by the U.N. Security Council.
The Bonn Agreement set an ambitious three-year political and administrative roadmap which was, by and large, followed:
- The Emergency Loya Jirga (grand council) of June 2002 established the transitional administration, a new Constitution was ratified in early 2004, and presidential and parliamentary elections were held in 2004 and 2005.

What are UN special political missions?
The term 'Special Political Mission' encompasses entities that are not managed or directed by the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) such as the Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide.

16. UN Special Rapporteurs
They are independent experts working on behalf of the United Nations. They work on a country or a thematic mandate specified by the United Nations Human Rights Council.
- They have mandates to report and advise on human rights (civil, cultural, economic, political, and social) from a thematic or country-specific perspective.
- Rapporteurs do not receive any financial compensation for their work from the United Nations.

17. International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)
1. It is a specialized United Nations agency created in 1977 engaged in providing grants and loans with low interest for allied projects.
2. The IFAD works with rural people allowing them to enhance their food security, improve nutrition and raise their incomes.
3. It also helps people to expand their businesses.
4. The organization is an outcome of the World Food Conference of 1974.
5. It is headquartered in Rome and headed by a President.
6. It has 177 member countries.
7. IFAD brings out the Rural Development Report every year.

The objectives of the IFAD are three-fold:
1. To increase the productive capacity of poor people.
2. To increase benefits for them from market participation.
3. To strengthen the environmental sustainability & climate resilience of their economic activities.

18. UN’s CEO Water mandate
India’s largest power utility, NTPC Ltd, has become a signatory of UN Global Compact’s CEO Water Mandate.

What is CEO Water Mandate?
It is a UN Global Compact initiative which demonstrates commitment and efforts of companies to enhance their water and sanitation agendas in line with Sustainable Development Goals.
- It has been designed to assist companies in developing, implementing and disclosing comprehensive water strategies and policies.
- It provides a platform for companies to link with like-minded businesses, public authorities, UN agencies, civil society organizations etc.

What is UN Global Compact initiative?
- It is a non-binding United Nations pact to encourage businesses and firms worldwide to adopt sustainable and socially responsible policies, and to report on their implementation.
● It is a principle-based framework for businesses, stating ten principles in the areas of human rights, labor, the environment and anti-corruption.
● Under the Global Compact, companies are brought together with UN agencies, labor groups and civil society.
● Cities can join the Global Compact through the Cities Programme.

19. WHO Executive Board
It is one of the WHO’s two decision making bodies. The other one is the World Health Assembly. The agency’s headquarters are located at Geneva in Switzerland.

Composition:
● The executive Board is composed of 34 members technically qualified in the field of health.
● The Board chairman’s post is held by rotation for one year by each of the WHO’s six regional groups: African Region, Region of the Americas, South-East Asia Region, European Region, Eastern Mediterranean Region, and Western Pacific Region.

Term:
Members are elected for three-year terms.

Functions:
1. Sets out agenda for the Health Assembly and resolutions for forwarding to the Assembly are adopted.
2. Gives effect to the decisions and policies of the Health Assembly.
3. Advises it and facilitates its work.
4. The Board and the Assembly create a forum for debate on health issues and for addressing concerns raised by Member States.
5. Both the Board and the Assembly produce three kinds of documents — Resolutions and Decisions passed by the two bodies, Official Records as published in WHO Official publications, and Documents that are presented “in session” of the two bodies.

Key facts:
1. India became a party to the WHO Constitution on 12 January 1948.
2. The first Regional Director for South East Asia was an Indian, Dr Chandra Mani, who served between 1948-1968.

20. How is WHO funded
● The U.S. has resumed its funding for WHO as President Joe Biden shifts towards greater international cooperation in the fight against COVID-19.
● This is significant as former U.S. President Donald Trump had begun the process of withdrawing the U.S. from the WHO, a process stopped by his successor, President Joe Biden.

How is the WHO funded?
There are four kinds of contributions that make up funding for the WHO. These are:
1. Assessed contributions are the dues countries pay in order to be a member of the Organization. The amount each Member State must pay is calculated relative to the country’s wealth and population.
2. Voluntary contributions come from Member States (in addition to their assessed contribution) or from other partners. They can range from flexible to highly earmarked.
3. Core voluntary contributions allow less well-funded activities to benefit from a better flow of resources and ease implementation bottlenecks that arise when immediate financing is lacking.
4. **Pandemic Influenza Preparedness (PIP) Contributions** were started in 2011 to improve and strengthen the sharing of influenza viruses with human pandemic potential, and to increase the access of developing countries to vaccines and other pandemic related supplies.

**WHO’s current funding pattern:**
As of fourth quarter of 2019, total contributions were around $5.62 billion, with assessed contributions accounting for $956 million, specified voluntary contributions $4.38 billion, core voluntary contributions $160 million, and PIP contributions $178 million.
International Banks / International Financial Institutions

1. **Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT)**

What happens if one is excluded from SWIFT?
- If a country is excluded from the most participatory financial facilitating platform, its foreign funding would take a hit, making it entirely reliant on domestic investors. This is particularly troublesome when institutional investors are constantly seeking new markets in newer territories.

What is SWIFT?
It is a messaging network that financial institutions use to securely transmit information and instructions through a standardized system of codes. Under SWIFT, each financial organization has a unique code which is used to send and receive payments.
- **SWIFT does not facilitate funds transfer:** rather, it sends payment orders, which must be settled by correspondent accounts that the institutions have with each other.
- **The SWIFT is a secure financial message carrier** — in other words, it transports messages from one bank to its intended bank recipient.
- **Its core role is to provide a secure transmission channel** so that Bank A knows that its message to Bank B goes to Bank B and no one else. Bank B, in turn, knows that Bank A, and no one other than Bank A, sent, read or altered the message en route. Banks, of course, need to have checks in place before actually sending messages.

Where is it located?
The Belgium-headquartered SWIFT connects more than 11,000 banking and securities organizations in over 200 countries and territories.

How is it administered?
- **It is regulated by G-10 central banks** from Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, The Netherlands, the United Kingdom, the United States, Switzerland, and Sweden, alongside the European Central Bank. Its lead overseer is the National Bank of Belgium.
- The **SWIFT oversight forum** was established in 2012. The G-10 participants were joined by the central banks of India, Australia, Russia, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, the Republic of Turkey, and the People’s Republic of China.

SWIFT India:
SWIFT India is a joint venture of top Indian public and private sector banks and SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication). The company was created to deliver high quality domestic financial messaging services to the Indian financial community. Bhattacharya said the venture has a huge potential to contribute significantly to the financial community in many domains.

Significance of SWIFT:
- Messages sent by SWIFT’s customers are authenticated using its specialised security and identification technology.
- Encryption is added as the messages leave the customer environment and enter the SWIFT Environment.
- Messages remain in the protected SWIFT environment, subject to all its confidentiality and integrity commitments, throughout the transmission process while they are transmitted to the operating centres (OPCs) where they are processed — until they are safely delivered to the receiver.
2. **Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)**

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

- Mr. Patel will serve a three-year term as one of the multilateral development bank’s five vice-presidents.

**What is AIIB?**

Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is a multilateral development bank with a mission to improve social and economic outcomes in Asia and beyond. The Parties (57 founding members) to agreement comprise the Membership of the Bank.

- It is headquartered in Beijing.
- The bank started operation after the agreement entered into force on 25 December 2015, after ratifications were received from 10 member states holding a total number of 50% of the initial subscriptions of the Authorized Capital Stock.

**Aim:**

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.

**Membership:**

- There are more than 100 members now.

**Voting Rights:**

- China is the largest shareholder with 26.61% voting shares in the bank followed by India (7.6%), Russia (6.01%) and Germany (4.2%).
- The regional members hold 75% of the total voting power in the Bank.

**Various organs of AIIB:**

**Board of Governors:** The Board of Governors consists of one Governor and one Alternate Governor appointed by each member country. Governors and Alternate Governors serve at the pleasure of the appointing member.

**Board of Directors:** Non-resident Board of Directors is responsible for the direction of the Bank’s general operations, exercising all powers delegated to it by the Board of Governors.

**International Advisory Panel:** The Bank has established an International Advisory Panel (IAP) to support the President and Senior Management on the Bank’s strategies and policies as well as on general operational issues.

3. **Asian Development Bank (ADB)**

The Government of India had applied for loans from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) to procure COVID-19 vaccines.

- ADB is a regional development bank.
- established on 19 December 1966.
- headquartered — Manila, Philippines.
- official United Nations Observer.

**Who can be its members?**

The bank admits the members of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP, formerly the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East or ECAFE) and non-regional developed countries.

- ADB now has 68 members, 49 from within Asia.
Voting rights:
● It is modeled closely on the World Bank, and has a similar weighted voting system where votes are distributed in proportion with members’ capital subscriptions.
● As of 31 December 2019, ADB’s five largest shareholders are Japan and the United States (each with 15.6% of total shares), the People’s Republic of China (6.4%), India (6.3%), and Australia (5.8%).

Roles and functions:
● Dedicated to reducing poverty in Asia and the Pacific through inclusive economic growth, environmentally sustainable growth, and regional integration.
● This is carried out through investments – in the form of loans, grants and information sharing – in infrastructure, health care services, financial and public administration systems, helping nations prepare for the impact of climate change or better manage their natural resources, as well as other areas.

4. **New Development Bank (NDB)**
India has welcomed Egypt’s entry as the fourth new member of the New Development Bank (NDB) that was established by the BRICS countries six years ago.
● The NDB admitted Bangladesh, United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Uruguay as its new members in September 2021.

About NDB:
It is a multilateral development bank operated by the BRICS states (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa).
● It was agreed to by BRICS leaders at the 5th BRICS summit held in Durban, South Africa in 2013.
● It was established in 2014, at the 6th BRICS Summit at Fortaleza, Brazil.
● The bank is set up to foster greater financial and development cooperation among the five emerging markets.
● Headquartered in Shanghai, China.
In 2018, the NDB received observer status in the United Nations General Assembly, establishing a firm basis for active and fruitful cooperation with the UN.

Voting:
Unlike the World Bank, which assigns votes based on capital share, in the New Development Bank each participant country will be assigned one vote, and none of the countries will have veto power.

Roles and functions:
The Bank will mobilise resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS and other emerging economies and developing countries, to supplement existing efforts of multilateral and regional financial institutions for global growth and development.

Significance:
The BRICS brings together five of the largest developing countries of the world, representing 41% of the global population, 24% of the global GDP and 16% of the global trade.
5. **Bank for International Settlements**
   - BIS is an international financial organisation owned by 63 member central banks, representing countries from around the world including India.
   - It fosters international monetary and financial cooperation and serves as a bank for central banks.
   - It carries out its work through its meetings, programmes and through the Basel Process – hosting international groups pursuing global financial stability and facilitating their interaction.
   - Its **headquarters** is in Basel, Switzerland.
   - The BIS was established in 1930 by an intergovernmental agreement between Germany, Belgium, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Japan, the United States, and Switzerland.

6. **International Finance Corporation (IFC)**
   - It is an international financial institution that offers investment, advisory, and asset management services to encourage private sector development in developing countries.
   - It is a **member of the World Bank Group** and is headquartered in Washington, D.C., United States.
   - It was **established in 1956** as the private sector arm of the World Bank Group to advance economic development by investing in strictly for-profit and commercial projects that purport to reduce poverty and promote development.
   - The IFC is **owned and governed by its member countries**, but has its own executive leadership and staff that conduct its normal business operations.
   - It is a corporation whose shareholders are **member governments** that provide paid-in capital and which have the right to vote on its matters.

**Roles and functions:**
1. Since 2009, the IFC has focused on a set of development goals that its projects are expected to target. Its goals are to increase sustainable agriculture opportunities, improve healthcare and education, increase access to financing for microfinance and business clients, advance infrastructure, help small businesses grow revenues, and invest in climate health.
2. It offers an array of debt and equity financing services and helps companies face their risk exposures while refraining from participating in a management capacity.
3. It advises governments on building infrastructure and partnerships to further support private sector development.

7. **International Monetary and Financial Committee**
   **About IMFC:**
   **Composition:** The IMFC has 24 members, drawn from the pool of 187 governors. Its structure mirrors that of the Executive Board and its 24 constituencies. As such, the IMFC represents all the member countries of the Fund.
**Functions:** The IMFC meets twice a year, during the Spring and Annual Meetings. The Committee discusses matters of common concern affecting the global economy and also advises the IMF on the direction its work.

**At the end of the Meetings,** the Committee **issues a joint communiqué** summarizing its views. These communiqués provide guidance for the IMF’s work program during the six months leading up to the next Spring or Annual Meetings. There is no formal voting at the IMFC, which operates by consensus.

**Significance:**
- The IMFC advises and reports to the IMF Board of Governors on the supervision and management of the international monetary and financial system, including on responses to unfolding events that may disrupt the system.
- It also considers proposals by the Executive Board to amend the Articles of Agreement and advises on any other matters that may be referred to it by the Board of Governors.
- Although the IMFC has no formal decision-making powers, in practice, it has become a key instrument for providing strategic direction to the work and policies of the Fund.
International Events

1. One Ocean Summit:
   - One Ocean Summit was recently organised by France in Brest, France in cooperation with the United Nations and the World Bank.
   - India also participated in the event.
   - The goal of the One Ocean Summit is to raise the collective level of ambition of the international community on marine issues.
   United Nations has designated the decade between 2021 and 2030 as the ‘Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development’, in a bid to restore declining marine life and raise awareness.

2. Central Asia Meet
   First India-Central Asia Summit was recently hosted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and attended by the Presidents of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.
   - The India-Central Asia summit marked 30 years of diplomatic relations.

   Outcomes of the meet - the “Delhi Declaration”:
   - India expressed concerns over the lack of land connectivity between India and Central Asia’s land-locked countries.
   - The leaders announced plan to build a “Central Asia Centre” in New Delhi.
   - They also announced two “Joint Working Groups” (JWGs) on Afghanistan and the Chabahar port project.
   - The leaders highlighted the importance of TAPI gas pipeline project that runs from Turkmenistan’s Galkynysh oil fields near Mary (Marv) through Afghanistan and Pakistan to India.

   Alternative routes available:
   India can reach these land locked countries over sea provided by Iranian ports including the Chabahar port terminal managed by Indian and the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC) through Bandar Abbas that is promoted by Russia and Iran.

   Geo economic Importance of Central Asia:
   The region is richly endowed with natural resources like crude oil, natural gas, gold, copper, aluminum, and iron.

   International North – South Transport Corridor:
   - India, Iran and Russia had in September 2000 signed the INSTC agreement to build a corridor to provide the shortest multi-model transportation route linking the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea via Iran and St Petersburg.
   - It is a 7,200-km-long multi-mode network of ship, rail, and road route for moving freight.
   - Regions involved: India, Iran, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Russia, Central Asia and Europe.

   About TAPI Project:
   - Inaugurated in 2015.
● It is a natural gas pipeline being developed by the Asian Development Bank.
● The project has run into issues over India-Pakistan tensions and the situation in Afghanistan.

Benefits of this project for India:
● Energy is a growing need, and even if India is able to source energy from other countries like Iran and further afield, both the proximity and abundance of Turkmenistan’s reserves, that rank fourth in the world, will make it an attractive proposition.
● It will bring India much needed energy at competitive pricing, and could easily supply about 15% of India’s projected needs by the time it is completed in the 2020s.
● This project also gives India an opportunity to secure its interest in Central Asia. TAPI’s success will also ensure that India, Pakistan and Afghanistan find ways of cooperating on other issues as well.

3. Indian Ocean Naval Symposium
7th edition of Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), a biennial event, was hosted by the French Navy recently.
● IONS is a significant international maritime security initiative launched in February 2008.
● It provides a forum for discussion of regional maritime issues and promotes friendly relationships among member nations.
● It is a voluntary initiative that seeks to increase maritime co-operation among navies of the littoral states of the Indian Ocean Region by providing an open and inclusive forum for discussion of regionally relevant maritime issues.
● IONS includes 24 nations that permanently hold territory that abuts or lies within the Indian Ocean, and 8 observer nations.

4. White flag campaign in Malaysia
● In Malaysia, some residents of low-income families started waving white flags as part of the “White Flag Campaign”, or the #benderaputi (white flag) movement.
● They are doing this to convey distress about the financial crunch they have had to deal with amid the lockdowns due to Covid-19.
● As part of the movement, families that are facing hunger or need any other kind of assistance are encouraged to wave a white flag or put a piece of white cloth outside their homes to signal that they need help.

5. Food and Agriculture Organization’s (FAO) Conference
The 42nd session of the Food and Agriculture Organization’s (FAO) Conference was held recently.

About the Conference:
1. The Conference takes place every two years and is FAO’s supreme governing body.
2. It determines the policies of the Organization, approves the budget, and makes recommendations to Members on food and agriculture issues.

FAO Strategic Framework 2022-2031:
In this year’s Conference, FAO Members adopted the Strategic Framework 2022-2031.
The Framework aims to support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through the transformation to MORE efficient, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable agri-food systems for Better Production, Better Nutrition, a Better Environment, and a Better Life, leaving no one behind.

- The "Four Betters" represent an organizing principle for how FAO intends to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 2 (zero hunger), and SDG 10 (reduced inequalities).

**FAO:**

It is a specialized agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat hunger. Headquarters: Rome, Italy

**Founded:** 16 October 1945

**Goal of FAO:** Their goal is to achieve food security for all and make sure that people have regular access to enough high-quality food to lead active, healthy lives.

**Important reports and Programmes (Have a brief overview):**

2. Every two years, FAO publishes the *State of the World’s Forests*.
3. FAO and the World Health Organization created the *Codex Alimentarius Commission* in 1961 to develop food standards, guidelines and texts.
4. In 1996, FAO organized the *World Food Summit*. The Summit concluded with the signing of the *Rome Declaration*, which established the goal of halving the number of people who suffer from hunger by the year 2015.
5. In 2004, the *Right to Food Guidelines* were adopted, offering guidance to states on how to implement their obligations on the right to food.
6. FAO created the *International Plant Protection Convention or IPPC* in 1952.
7. FAO is depositary of the *International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, also called Plant Treaty, Seed Treaty or ITPGRFA, entered into force on 29 June 2004.
8. The *Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) Partnership Initiative* was conceptualized in 2002 during World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa.

India has had a historic association with FAO.

- Indian Civil Service Officer Dr. Binay Ranjan Sen was the Director General of FAO during 1956-1967.
- The World Food Programme, which has won the Nobel Peace Prize 2020, was established during his time.
- India’s proposals for the *International Year of Pulses in 2016* and the *International Year of Millets 2023* have also been endorsed by FAO.

### 6. Juneteenth

US Government has recognised Juneteenth, or June 19th, as a federal holiday.

**What is Juneteenth?**

1. The day is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the *end of slavery in the US and is observed on June 19*.
2. It is also known as *Emancipation Day or Juneteenth Independence Day*.
3. On June 19, 1865, *Major General Gordon Granger* arrived in Galveston, Texas and announced the end of both the Civil War and slavery. Since then, Juneteenth has become a largely symbolic date representing freedom for African Americans.
Military Exercises / Relief Operations / Defence Related Issues

1. **Milan 2022**
   - **Milan**, a Multilateral Naval Exercise hosted by India, made a modest beginning in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in 1995 with participation of four littoral navies.
   - This biennial congregation of friendly navies, over the last two and a half decades, has progressively grown in magnitude with the previous edition in 2018 being attended by 17 countries.
   - MILAN 2022 has been scheduled for the first time at Visakhapatnam, the City of Destiny. **MILAN 2022 is the eleventh edition of the event** and would be held under the aegis of Eastern Naval Command.
   - This is the first time the exercise has been shifted from the Andaman to Vizag, as the scale of the exercise has been enhanced.

2. **Cobra Warrior**
   - The Cobra Warrior exercises are the largest joint military exercises conducted by the Royal Air Force (RAF) in the United Kingdom for over a decade.
   - The forthcoming Cobra Warrior exercises will witness pilots from the Indian Air Force flying five Tejas fighters along with combat aircraft from the Royal Air Force and other leading air forces, including from Saudi Arabia, Belgium and Sweden.

3. **Malabar Naval Exercise:**
   - Malabar is the most complex naval exercise India does with any other country.
   - Malabar, which **began as a bilateral exercise between India and the U.S. in 1992** and became multilateral with the addition of Australia and Japan, has also significantly grown in scope and complexity.
   - Twenty-five editions of the exercise have been conducted till date with the last edition conducted in two phases in August and October 2021.

4. **Sea Dragon Exercise:**
   - India is among the six Indo-Pacific nations that participated in Sea Dragon Exercise- a multi-lateral anti-submarine warfare exercise in the Pacific Ocean.
   - **Participants:** Navies of the US, India, Australia, Canada, Japan and South Korea.
   - Sea Dragon is a US-led multi-national exercise designed to practice and discuss Anti-submarine warfare tactics to operate together in response to traditional and non-traditional maritime security challenges in the Indo-Pacific region.

5. **Exercise PEACEFUL MISSION**
   - Joint Counter Terrorism Exercise PEACEFUL MISSION is a Multilateral Exercise, which is conducted biennially as part of military diplomacy between Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) member states.
   - The 6th edition of Exercise PEACEFUL MISSION was hosted by Russia in the Orenburg Region of South West Russia from 13 to 25 September 2021.
   - The aim of the exercise is to foster close relations between SCO member states and to enhance abilities of the military leaders to command multi-national military contingents.

6. **EXERCISE SURYA KIRAN**
   - This joint military training will go a long way in improving bilateral relations and also will be a major step towards further strengthening the traditional friendship between the two nations.
● Last edition of Exercise Surya Kiran was conducted in Nepal in 2019.

7. **Liaison Officer (LO) at the Navy’s Information Fusion Centre for Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR)**

The Netherlands has said that it is interested in posting a Liaison Officer (LO) at the Navy’s Information Fusion Centre for Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) for Maritime Domain Awareness and information sharing.

**About IFC-IOR:**

- The IFC-IOR was set up in 2018 to coordinate with regional countries on maritime issues and act as a regional repository of maritime data.
- It presently has linkages with more than 20 partner countries and multi-national agencies across the globe.
- It is located in Gurugram, India.

**Roles and functions of a liaison officer:**

The liaison officer will be based full-time at the centre, working directly with the Indian armed forces and fellow liaison officers from partner nations to enhance maritime domain awareness in the region.
Miscellaneous

1. Uighurs
   - Xinjiang is a region where multiple governments suspect China is committing an ongoing genocide against Uighur/uyghur and other Muslim minorities.
   - Various countries have called on China to “ensure full respect for the rule of law” for the Muslim Uighur community in Xinjiang.

Who are Uighurs?
The Uighurs are a predominantly Muslim minority Turkic ethnic group, whose origins can be traced to Central and East Asia.
The Uighurs speak their own language, similar to Turkish, and see themselves as culturally and ethnically close to Central Asian nations.
   - China recognises the community only as a regional minority and rejects that they are an indigenous group.
   - Currently, the largest population of the Uighur ethnic community lives in the Xinjiang region of China.
   - A significant population of Uighurs also lives in the neighbouring Central Asian countries such as Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.

2. Hamas
   - Hamas is a Palestinian Islamist political organization and militant group that has waged war on Israel since the group’s 1987 founding, most notably through suicide bombings and rocket attacks.
   - It seeks to replace Israel with a Palestinian state. It also governs Gaza independently of the Palestinian Authority.

3. Houthis
   - Founded in the 1990s by Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi, a member of Yemen’s Shia majority.
   - It is a group of Zaidi Shia Muslims who ruled a kingdom in the province for nearly 1,000 years.

4. Hazaras of Afghanistan
   - Hazara is an ethnic group from Afghanistan.
   - They are believed to be descendants of the founder of the Mongol empire, Genghis Khan, and his army that overran the entire region during the 13th century.
   - Their distinct Asiatic features and use of a Persian dialect called Hazaragi also sets them apart from the rest of the country.

5. Rohingya
   - Described by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres as "one of, if not the, most discriminated people in the world", the Rohingya are one of Myanmar’s many ethnic minorities.
   - They numbered around one million in Myanmar at the start of 2017.
   - They have their own language and culture and say they are descendants of Arab traders and other groups who have been in the region for generations.

Citizenship:
The government of Myanmar, a predominantly Buddhist country, denies the Rohingya citizenship and even excluded them from the 2014 census, refusing to recognise them as a people.
● It sees them as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh.

Bhasan Char is an island specifically developed to accommodate 1,00,000 of the 1 million Rohingya who have fled from neighbouring Myanmar.

6. **Nord Stream 2 Pipeline**

Germany has taken steps to halt the process of certifying the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline from Russia.

● This is a 1,200-km pipeline that runs from Ust-Luga in Russia to Greifswald in Germany through the Baltic Sea. It will carry 55 billion cubic metres of gas per year.

● It was decided to build this pipeline in 2015.

● Nord stream 1 system is already completed and together with NS2P, it will supply 110 billion cubic metre of gas a year to Germany.

7. **WTO’s dispute settlement mechanism**

The European Union has launched a case against Beijing at the World Trade Organization (WTO) for targeting Lithuania over its stance on Taiwan.

**Lithuania:**

● It is one of three Baltic states and lies on the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea.

● Lithuania shares land borders with Latvia to the north, Belarus to the east and south, Poland to the south, and Kaliningrad Oblast of Russia to the southwest.

**Dispute settlement:**

Resolving trade disputes is one of the core activities of the WTO.

● A dispute arises when a member government believes another member government is violating an agreement or a commitment that it has made in the WTO.

● The WTO has one of the most active international dispute settlement mechanisms in the world.

**There are two main ways to settle a dispute once a complaint has been filed in the WTO:**

(i) the parties find a mutually agreed solution, particularly during the phase of bilateral consultations.

(ii) through adjudication, including the subsequent implementation of the panel and Appellate Body reports, which are binding upon the parties once adopted by the Dispute Settlement Body.

**There are three main stages to the WTO dispute settlement process:**

(i) consultations between the parties.

(ii) adjudication by panels and, if applicable, by the Appellate Body.

(iii) the implementation of the ruling, which includes the possibility of countermeasures in the event of failure by the losing party to implement the ruling.

**WTO’s Appellate Body:**
The Appellate Body, set up in 1995, is a standing committee of seven members that presides over appeals against judgments passed in trade-related disputes brought by WTO members. Countries involved in a dispute over measures purported to break a WTO agreement or obligation can approach the Appellate Body if they feel the report of the panel set up to examine the issue needs to be reviewed on points of law. However, existing evidence is not re-examined but legal interpretations are reviewed. The Appellate Body can uphold, modify, or reverse the legal findings of the panel that heard the dispute. Countries on either or both sides of the dispute can appeal.

8. Gateway to Hell:
Turkmenistan’s President Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov recently ordered officials to find a method of finally extinguishing the ‘Gateway to Hell’ in the country.
- Turkmenistan’s Gateway to hell, also known as The Darvaza Crater, is 225 feet wide and 99 feet deep. It has a diameter of 70 metres, across an area of 5.5 square metres.
- It is a natural gas field collapsed into a cavern near Darvaza in Turkmenistan.
- It is the raging flames, burning for five decades in a large natural gas crater.

How was the Door to Hell created?
- It is believed that, in 1971, a simple miscalculation by Soviet scientists led to the creation of this crater.
- The Soviet scientists had underestimated the amount of fuel laying below. Their boring equipment drilled through an underground cavern. Because of this, a deep sinkhole was created.
- After the gas driller fell into the pit, scientists were concerned that the crater would release noxious gases. Toxic methane gas had already started leaking into the atmosphere.
- Thus, in order to stop the methane from reaching neighbouring areas and causing damage to the environment & living organisms, scientists decided to set the crater ablaze.

9. New Zealand’s lifetime ban
New Zealand has banned anyone aged 14 from buying cigarettes for life, one of the toughest approaches in the world to curbing smoking deaths as part of a wider plan that focuses on the disproportionate impact on its indigenous Maori population. New Zealand is already one of 17 countries where plain cigarette packaging is compulsory. It also bans sales to anyone under 18, but it says those measures are not enough to reach its goal of a national adult smoking rate of less than 5% by 2025.

10. Miss Universe-2021
Chandigarh’s Harnaaz Sandhu won the 70th Miss Universe title at a ceremony held in Israel on December 13, 2021. India has got this title of Miss Universe after 21 years. Earlier this title was given to India in the year 1994 by actress Sushmita Sen and in the year 2000 by actress Lara Dutta.

11. Battle of Rezang La
November 18 marks the 59th anniversary of the Battle of Rezang La. A memorial was inaugurated on the occasion.

Where is Rezang La?
Rezang La is a mountain pass on the Line of Actual Control in Ladakh.
It is located between village of Chushul and the Spanggur Lake that stretches across both Indian and Chinese territories. It had also been the site of a heroic battle on 18 November 1962.

About the battle:
- Troops from the 13 Kumaon Regiment defeated several waves of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army in 1962.
- Despite being heavily outnumbered, soldiers of the regiment fought to the last man standing, under freezing temperatures, and with limited ammunition.

Significance of the region:
Rezang La is vital for the defence of the crucially important Chushul. Any invader reaching there would have had a free run to Leh.

12. Chinese firms eye Afghanistan's lithium
A number of Chinese companies have already begun “on-site inspections” of possible projects to tap lithium deposits in Afghanistan, having received the green light to do so from the Taliban regime.

Background:
Lithium is one of many resources in Afghanistan present in large deposits but as yet untapped, largely because of years of political instability and the lack of infrastructure.

About Lithium:
It is a soft, silvery-white metal. Under standard conditions, it is the lightest metal and the lightest solid element. It is highly reactive and flammable, and must be stored in mineral oil. It is an alkali metal and a rare metal.

Key Characteristics and Properties:
- It has the highest specific heat capacity of any solid element.
- Lithium's single balance electron allows it to be a good conductor of electricity.
- It is flammable and can even explode when exposed to air and water.

Uses:
1. Lithium is a key element for new technologies and finds its use in ceramics, glass, telecommunication and aerospace industries.
2. The well-known uses of Lithium are in Lithium ion batteries, lubricating grease, high energy additive to rocket propellants, optical modulators for mobile phones and as convertor to tritium used as a raw material for thermonuclear reactions i.e. fusion.

Prescribed substance:
The thermonuclear application makes Lithium as “Prescribed substance” under the Atomic Energy Act, 1962 which permits AMD for exploration of Lithium in various geological domains of the country.

- Under the Atomic Energy Act, 1962, “Prescribed Substance” means any substance including any mineral which the Central Government may, by notification, prescribe, being a substance which in its opinion is or may be used for the production or use of atomic energy or research into matters connected therewith and includes uranium, plutonium, thorium, beryllium, deuterium or any of their respective derivatives or compounds or any other materials containing any of the aforesaid substances.
13. Tawang
- Tawang was historically part of Tibet.
- The 1914 Simla Accord defined the McMahon Line as the new boundary between British India and Tibet. By this treaty Tibet relinquished some of its territories, including Tawang, to the British. But it was not recognised by China.
- In 1950, Tibet lost its de facto independence and was incorporated into the newly established People’s Republic of China.
- Later, in 1959, when the current Dalai Lama fled Tibet, he came into India through Tawang.
- During the Sino-Indian war of 1962, Tawang fell briefly under Chinese control, but China voluntarily withdrew its troops at the end of the war.
- Tawang again came under Indian administration, but China has not relinquished its claims on most of Arunachal Pradesh including Tawang.

14. Central Asian Flyway (CAF)
What is migration? Why is it significant?
Migration is an adaptation mechanism to help birds overcome weather adversities and unavailability of food in colder regions.
- The importance of bird migrations on the health of the ecosystems is well-established.
- Saving migratory birds means saving the wetlands, terrestrial habitats and saving of an ecosystem, benefiting communities dependent on wetlands.

Challenges faced by migratory birds:
1. Accelerated habitat loss globally during the last decade.
2. Decreased area under water bodies, wetlands, natural grasslands and forests.
3. Increased weather variability, and climate change have resulted in loss of biodiversity for the migratory birds.

What is a flyway?
A flyway is a geographical region within which a single or a group of migratory species completes its annual cycle – breeding, moulting, staging and non-breeding.

About the Central Asian Flyway:
- Central Asian Flyway (CAF) covers a large area of Eurasia between the Arctic and Indian Oceans.
- Including India, there are 30 countries under the Central Asian Flyway.
- The CAF comprises several important migration routes of waterbirds, most of which extend from the northernmost breeding grounds in Siberia to the southernmost non-breeding wintering grounds in West Asia, India, the Maldives and the British Indian Ocean Territory.

Why do countries need to protect Flyways?
Approximately one in five of the world’s 11,000 bird species migrate, some covering enormous distances. Conserving migratory birds requires cooperation and coordination along the entire flyway between countries and across national boundaries. Safeguarding flyways means protecting the birds from poachers, rejuvenating wetlands among others. Saving the wetlands, terrestrial habitats help in fulfilling the bigger purpose of saving an ecosystem.

15. What Is an International Securities Identification Number (ISIN)?

- An ISIN is a 12-digit alphanumeric code that uniquely identifies a specific security.
- The numbers are allocated by a country's respective national numbering agency (NNA).
- ISINs are used for numerous reasons including clearing and settlement. The numbers ensure a consistent format so that holdings of institutional investors can be tracked consistently across markets worldwide.
- The ISIN code is the only common securities identification number that is universally recognized.

16. International Laws on War Crimes

Human Rights Watch investigation has revealed that Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups carried out attacks during the May 2021 fighting in the Gaza Strip and Israel that violated the laws of war and apparently amount to war crimes.
- Such attacks, it said, violate “the prohibition against deliberate or indiscriminate attacks against civilians.”

What is a war crime?
According to the United Nations, a war crime is a serious breach of international law committed against civilians or “enemy combatants” during an international or domestic armed conflict. In contrast with genocide and crimes against humanity, war crimes have to occur in the context of armed conflict.

Geneva Conventions:
The meaning of war crimes was clarified in the four 1949 Geneva Conventions.
- Article 147 of the Fourth Geneva Convention defines war crimes as “wilful killing, torture or inhuman treatment, including wilfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health, unlawful deportation or transfer or unlawful confinement of a protected person taking of hostages and extensive destruction and appropriation of property, not justified by military necessity and carried out unlawfully and wantonly”.

ICC developments:
The Rome Statute of the ICC expanded the list of crimes that constitutes war crimes. The statute, for example, recognises forced pregnancy as a war crime.

Proportionality, distinction and precaution:
The three main pillars of humanitarian law are the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution. If any or all of these principles are violated, it could be found that a war crime has been committed.

What do international laws say on war Crimes?
1. Under international humanitarian law, or the laws of war, warring parties may target only military objectives.
2. They must take all feasible precautions to minimize harm to civilians, including by providing effective advance warnings of attacks.
3. Deliberate attacks on civilians and civilian objects are prohibited.
4. The laws of war also prohibit indiscriminate attacks, which include attacks that do not distinguish between civilians and military targets or do not target a military objective.
5. Attacks in which the expected harm to civilians and civilian property is disproportionate to the anticipated military gain are also prohibited.
6. Individuals who commit serious violations of the laws of war with criminal intent – that is, deliberately or recklessly– are responsible for war crimes.

17. **WHO pre-qualification, or Emergency Use Listing (EUL)**

A WHO pre-qualification, or Emergency Use Listing (EUL), is necessary for a vaccine company to supply vaccines to global facilities such as COVAX or international procurement.
- So far, eight vaccines have got an EUL from the WHO.
- WHO will also take a decision on including Bharat Biotech’s Covaxin in its list shortly.

**About WHO’s Emergency Use List (EUL):**

The WHO Emergency Use Listing Procedure (EUL) is a risk-based procedure for assessing and listing unlicensed vaccines, therapeutics and in vitro diagnostics with the ultimate aim of expediting the availability of these products to people affected by a public health emergency.

**To be eligible, the following criteria must be met:**

1. The disease for which the product is intended is serious or immediately life threatening, has the potential of causing an outbreak, epidemic or pandemic and it is reasonable to consider the product for an EUL assessment, e.g., there are no licensed products for the indication or for a critical subpopulation (e.g., children).
2. Existing products have not been successful in eradicating the disease or preventing outbreaks (in the case of vaccines and medicines).
3. The product is manufactured in compliance with current Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) in the case of medicines and vaccines and under a functional Quality Management System (QMS) in the case of IVDs.
4. The applicant undertakes to complete the development of the product (validation and verification of the product in the case of IVDs) and apply for WHO prequalification once the product is licensed.