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<b>INTERNATIONAL RELATION</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>MAY 2024</b> .....	<b>4</b>
1.WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM (WEF) .....	4
2.AUKUS DEFENCE DEAL .....	4
3.GROUP OF SEVEN (G7) .....	4
4.ANTARCTIC TREATY .....	4
5.RAFAH .....	5
6.UN COUNTER-TERRORISM TRUST FUND (CTTF) .....	5
7.EXERCISE SHAKTI .....	6
8.INTERNATIONAL BOOKER PRIZE .....	6
9.INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT .....	6
10.INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY (IAEA) .....	7
11.ARAB LEAGUE .....	7
12.INTERNATIONAL SOLAR ALLIANCE (ISA) .....	7
13.BIMSTEC .....	8
14.INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE (ICJ) .....	8
15.COMMISSION ON CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE (CCPCJ) .....	9
16.COALITION FOR DISASTER RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE (CDRI) .....	9
<b>JUNE 2024</b> .....	<b>11</b>
1.COLOMBO PROCESS .....	11
2.KAVANGO-ZAMBEZI TRANS-FRONTIER CONSERVATION AREA (KAZA-TFCA) .....	11
3.SHANGRI LA DIALOGUE .....	11
4.EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT .....	12
5.UNESCO MEMORY OF THE WORLD (MOW) .....	13
6.ADMISSION OF NEW MEMBER STATES TO UN .....	14
7.EUROPEAN UNION (EU) .....	15
8.UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL (UNSC) .....	15
9. INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF MIGRATION (IOM) .....	16
10.ARMENIA .....	16
11.JAPAN INDIA MARITIME EXERCISE – 24 (JIMEX – 24) .....	16
12.G7 SUMMIT 2024 .....	17
13.KUWAIT .....	17
14.INDIA-MIDDLE EAST-EUROPE ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (IMEC) .....	18
15.UKRAINE PEACE SUMMIT .....	18
16.EXERCISE RED FLAG 2024 .....	19
17.EUROPEAN COMMISSION (EC) .....	19
18.SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION (SCO) .....	20
19.INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK FOR PROSPERITY (IPEF) .....	20
20.INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (ICC) .....	21
21.THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION (NATO) .....	21
22.EXERCISE HOPEX .....	22
23.FINANCIAL ACTION TASK FORCE (FATF) .....	22
<b>JULY 2024</b> .....	<b>24</b>
1.NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT (NAM) .....	24
2.RIM OF THE PACIFIC (RIMPAC) EXERCISE .....	24
3.EXERCISE MAITREE .....	24
4.UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE .....	25
5.NOMADIC ELEPHANT .....	25
6.EAST COAST RAIL LINK (ECRL) .....	26
7.BAY OF BENGAL INITIATIVE FOR MULTI-SECTORAL TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION (BIMSTEC) .....	26
8.INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANIZATION (IMO) .....	26
9.THE FORUM FOR INDIA-PACIFIC ISLANDS COOPERATION (FIPIC) .....	27

10.WORLD POPULATION PROSPECTS 2024 .....	27
11.INDIA YOUNG PROFESSIONAL SCHEME 2024 .....	28
12.THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS (ICCPR).....	28
13.INDIA MARITIME CENTRE (IMC).....	29
14.INDIA-USA CULTURAL PROPERTY AGREEMENT .....	29
15.INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION (ILO) .....	29
<b>AUGUST 2024 .....</b>	<b>31</b>
1.ACT EAST POLICY (AEP).....	31
2.EXERCISE TARANG SHAKTI.....	31
3.INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK (IPEF) .....	31
4.INDIA BANGLADESH RELATIONS .....	32
5.ROHINGYAS IN MYANMAR .....	33
6.EXERCISE MITRA SHAKTI .....	33
7.EXERCISE UDARA SHAKTI- 2024 .....	33
8.INTERNATIONAL HYDROGRAPHIC ORGANIZATION (IHO) .....	34
9.COURT OF ARBITRATION FOR SPORT (CAS) .....	35
10.GENEVA CONVENTIONS.....	35
11.CONFLICT IN SUDAN .....	36
12.INTERNATIONAL EARTH SCIENCES OLYMPIAD (IESO) .....	37
13.MULTIDIMENSIONAL VULNERABILITY INDEX .....	38
<b>SEPTEMBER 2024.....</b>	<b>39</b>
1. PACIFIC POLICING INITIATIVE (PPI) .....	39
2. NAMIBIA .....	39
3. INDIA- BRUNEI RELATI .....	39
4. NIGERIA.....	40
5. INDIA – SINGAPORE BILATERAL RELATIO .....	40
6. TAPI PIPELINE .....	41
7. INDUS-X SUMMIT .....	41
8. INDUS WATERS TREATY (IWT) .....	42
9. COMPREHENSIVE TEST BAN TREATY (CTBT).....	42
10. SIXTH QUAD LEADERS' SUMMIT .....	42
11. INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK FOR PROSPERITY (IPEF) .....	42
12. ALLIANCE OF SMALL ISLAND STATES (AOSIS) .....	43
13. L.69.....	43
14. UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL (UNSC) .....	43
<b>OCTOBER 2024 .....</b>	<b>44</b>
1.ORGANISATION (SCO).....	44
2. UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND (UNFPA).....	45
3. UNICEF .....	45
4. INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION (IPU) .....	46
5. FIVE EYES.....	46
6.FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION (FAO) .....	47
7. COMPREHENSIVE NUCLEAR-TEST-BAN TREATY ORGANIZATION (CTBTO).....	47
8. WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (WFP) .....	47
9. UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (UNRWA) .....	48
<b>NOVEMBER 2024 .....</b>	<b>48</b>
1. CHALO INDIA CAMPAIGN .....	48
2. ASIA-PACIFIC ECONOMIC COOPERATION (APEC) .....	49
3. BASIC COUNTRIES.....	49
4. 3ZERO CLUB.....	50
5. TSUNAMI READY .....	50

6. CHENNAI-VLADIVOSTOK EASTERN MARITIME CORRIDOR.....	50
7. FOSSIL FUEL NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY (FF - NPT).....	51
8. INTERPOL & NOTICES.....	51
9. GLOBAL ALLIANCE AGAINST HUNGER AND POVERTY .....	52
10. CARICOM.....	52
11. GELEPHU MINDFULNESS CITY .....	53
<b>DECEMBER 2024 .....</b>	<b>53</b>
1. UNITED NATIONS ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS (UNAOC) AND CASCAIS DECLARATION .....	53
2. WORLD MEDITATION DAY .....	54
3. SCHENGEN AREA .....	54
4. COMPREHENSIVE AND PROGRESSIVE AGREEMENT FOR TRANS-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP.....	55
5. FREE MOVEMENT REGIME (FMR).....	55
6. EXERCISE SURYA KIRAN.....	56
<b>JANUARY 2025.....</b>	<b>57</b>
1. H-1B VISA .....	57
2. FUTURE OF JOBS REPORT.....	57
3. DIEGO GARCIA.....	57
4. WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM .....	58
5. INDUS WATER TREATY .....	58
6. GLOBAL PLASTIC ACTION PARTNERSHIP (GPAP) .....	59
7. CONFLICT IN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO .....	59
<b>FEBRUARY 2025 .....</b>	<b>61</b>
1. UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL (UNHRC) .....	61
2. EKVVERIN MILITARY EXERCISE .....	61
3. SOUTH ASIA FREE TRADE AREA (SAFTA) .....	61
4. EXERCISE CYCLONE .....	62
5. SHADOW FLEET .....	62
6. ARAB LEAGUE.....	62
7. BRICS.....	62
8. CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX.....	63
9. EXERCISE DHARMA GUARDIAN.....	63
10. CASPIAN PIPELINE CONSORTIUM (CPC) .....	63
11. VIENNA CONVENTION ON DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS .....	64
12. SVALBARD GLOBAL SEED VAULT .....	64
13. WHO FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON TOBACCO CONTROL (WHO FCTC) .....	65



MAY 2024

## INTERNATIONAL RELATION



## 1. WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM (WEF)

- The **World Economic Forum (WEF)** Special Meeting on Global Collaboration, Growth, and Energy for Development recently convened in **Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**.
- The **World Economic Forum** is an international non-profit organization focused on improving the world through dialogue and cooperation among leaders.
- The WEF is headquartered in **Geneva, Switzerland**. Founded in **1971** by **Klaus Schwab**, a German professor.
- **Reports** by WEF are: the Global Competitiveness Report, the Global Gender Gap Report, Energy Transition Index, Global Risk Report, Global Travel and Tourism Report.

## 2. AUKUS DEFENCE DEAL

- Recently, South Korea has held talks about joining part of the **AUKUS defence deal**.
- The **AUKUS (Australia, United Kingdom, United States)** defence deal, announced in September 2021, is a **trilateral security partnership aimed at enhancing security and defence interests in the Indo-Pacific region**
  - **The AUKUS partnership has two key pillars:**
- **Nuclear Submarine Cooperation:** Australia will acquire nuclear-powered submarines without nuclear weapons. Australia is a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).
- **Advanced Military Capabilities:** Cooperation in 8 areas like AI, quantum technologies, and hypersonic weapons.

## 3. GROUP OF SEVEN (G7)

- Group of Seven (G7) reached a deal to shut down their coal-fired power plants by 2035.
- The **G7** is an intergovernmental political and economic forum that brings together seven of the world's advanced economies.
- That is **Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States**.
- European Union (**EU**) is considered a "**non-enumerated member**". The G7 originated in **Rambouillet, France**, in 1975.
- The forum is organized around shared values of pluralism, liberal democracy, and representative government.
- Russia was a formal member of the G7 (as part of the G8) from 1997 until its expulsion in 2014 due to the annexation of Crimea.
- The G7 operates without a legal or institutional basis. It is organized through a rotating presidency among the member states. For 2024, Italy holds the presidency.

## 4. ANTARCTIC TREATY

- India will host the 46th **Antarctic Treaty** Consultative Meeting (ATCM 46) and the 26th Meeting of the Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP 26) from May 20 to 30, 2024, in **Kochi, Kerala**.
- The Antarctic Treaty, **signed** on December 1, **1959**, and effective from June 23, 1961, that regulates international relations with respect to Antarctica. As of 2024, the treaty has **56** parties.

- **Key points of the treaty:**
- Antarctica must be treated as a **demilitarized zone** dedicated to peaceful scientific research.
- The treaty prohibits **Military Activity**.
- It promotes **Scientific Cooperation**.
- The treaty declares Antarctica as the world's first nuclear-weapon-free zone.
- While not denying or supporting national claims to territorial sovereignty in Antarctica, the treaty maintains a status quo, forbidding new claims.
- A protocol signed in **1991 bans mineral and oil exploration** for 50 years and includes regulations for the protection of the Antarctic environment.
- **Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP)**
- Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP) was under the Madrid Protocol in 1991. The CEP **advises** the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) on environmental conservation and protection in Antarctica.
- **India's Involvement**
- **India has been a Consultative Party to the Antarctic Treaty since 1983** and actively participates in the decision-making process.
- **Dakshin Gangotri**, India's first Antarctic research station, was established in 1983 and operated until 1990.
- The country operates two year-round research stations in Antarctica: **Maitri** (established in 1989) and **Bharati** (established in 2012).
- India plans to establish a new research station, **Maitri II**, near the existing Maitri station by 2029.
- India enacted the **Antarctic Act in 2022**, further solidifying its commitment to the Antarctic Treaty.

## 5. RAFAH



- **Rafah is a city in the southern part of the Gaza Strip**, near the border with Egypt.
- It is the capital of the Rafah Governorate of the State of Palestine
- . It is also the site of the **Rafah Border Crossing**, the sole crossing point between Egypt and the Gaza Strip.
- Rafah has been a refuge for Palestinians, especially during conflicts. As of April 2024, it is reported that about 1.5 million people are believed to be sheltering in Rafah.

## 6. UN COUNTER-TERRORISM TRUST FUND (CTTF)

- Recently, India has contributed \$500,000 to the **UN counter-terrorism trust fund**.
- The **UN Counter-Terrorism Trust Fund** was established in 2009 and is managed by the **UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT)** since 2017.
- It accepts contributions from governments, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, private institutions, and individuals.
- Contributions can be unearmarked or earmarked for specific initiatives.

➤ **UNOCT's Functions:**

- Provides leadership on counter-terrorism mandates.
- Enhances coordination across the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact entities.
- Strengthens capacity-building assistance to Member States.
- Ensures that counter-terrorism is a priority across the UN system.

➤ **India's Role:**

- India has contributed \$500,000 to the CTTF, with its cumulative financial support now totaling \$2.55 million.
- India's contribution supports UNOCT's Countering Financing of Terrorism (CFT) and Countering Terrorist Travel Programme (CTTP) programs that aim to build capacities of member states in eastern and southern Africa to combat financing of terrorism and prevent the movement and travel of terrorists.

### 7. EXERCISE SHAKTI

- The 7th edition of **India- France Joint Military Exercise SHAKTI** commenced recently at Umroi, in a fully developed and modern Foreign Training Node in Meghalaya.
- Exercise Shakti is a bilateral joint military exercise between the armies of India and France. It is a biennial training event started in 2011.

### 8. INTERNATIONAL BOOKER PRIZE

- German author **Jenny Erpenbeck** and translator **Michael Hofmann** won the International Booker Prize for fiction Tuesday for "Kairos," the story of a tangled love affair during the final years of East Germany's existence.
- The International Booker Prize, formerly the Man Booker International Prize, is an **annual award** given to a single translated book.
- It was established in 2005 as a biennial award for living authors.
- **Booker Prize:**
- Established in 1969
- Initially awarded to Commonwealth, Irish, and South African authors
- Since 2014, open to any English-language novel

### 9. INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

- It is an intergovernmental organization and international tribunal that sits in **The Hague, Netherlands**.
- Established in 2002 pursuant to the multilateral Rome Statute.
- It has **jurisdiction** to prosecute individuals for the international crimes of: genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, crime of aggression.
- It is intended to complement existing national judicial systems.
- It may exercise its jurisdiction only when national courts are unwilling or unable to prosecute criminals.
- It may only investigate and prosecute crimes committed within member states, crimes committed by nationals of member states, or crimes in situations referred to the Court by the United Nations Security Council. The ICC lacks universal territorial jurisdiction.
- Israel is not a member of the court and does not recognise its jurisdiction, but the Palestinian territories were admitted with the status of a member state in 2015.
- The ICC is distinct from the **International Court of Justice (ICJ)**, an organ of the United Nations that hears disputes between states. The ICJ, is also known as the World Court.



### 10. INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY (IAEA)

- The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is an **intergovernmental** organization that seeks to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy and to inhibit its use for any military purpose, including nuclear weapons.
- It was established in **1957** as an autonomous organization within the United Nations system; though governed by its own founding treaty, the organization reports to both the General Assembly and the Security Council of the United Nations, and is **headquartered at the UN Office at Vienna, Austria**.
- The IAEA was created in response to growing international concern toward nuclear weapons, especially amid rising tensions between the foremost nuclear powers, the United States and the Soviet Union.
- U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower's "Atoms for Peace" speech, is credited with catalyzing the formation of the IAEA, whose treaty came into force on 29 July 1957 upon U.S. ratification.
- **India** has been a **founding member** of the IAEA.
- The IAEA promotes peaceful nuclear energy, safeguards against nuclear misuse, and sets nuclear safety and security standards. It conducts research, provides technical support, and was **awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005**.

### 11. ARAB LEAGUE

- Arab League welcomed a decision made by Norway, Ireland and Spain to recognize the Palestinian state
- The Arab League, formally the League of Arab States, is a regional organization in the Arab world.
- The Arab League was **formed in Cairo on March 1945**, initially with Egypt, Iraq, Transjordan (now Jordan), Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Syria. Yemen joined as a member on May 1945.
- Currently, the League has **22 members**.
- Each member has **one vote** on the League Council, decisions being binding only on those states that have voted for them.
- The Arab League aims to strengthen relations between member states, safeguard their independence, and address common Arab interests.
- The league granted the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) observer status in 1964 and upgraded to full membership in 1976.

### 12. INTERNATIONAL SOLAR ALLIANCE (ISA)

- **Spain** has become the 99th member of the International Solar Alliance.
- The ISA was conceived as a joint effort by India and France to mobilize efforts against climate change through deployment of solar energy solutions.
- It was conceptualized on the side-lines of the 21st Conference of Parties (COP21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held in Paris in 2015.
- Vision: Let us together make the sun brighter.
- Mission: Every home no matter how far away, will have a light at home
- The **Headquarters** is in India with its Interim Secretariat being set up in Gurugram.
- The International Solar Alliance is **headed by the Director General**, who leads the operations and carries out the functions of the ISA Secretariat and is responsible to the ISA Assembly.
- With the amendment of its Framework Agreement in 2020, **all member states of the United Nations are eligible** to join the ISA.
- The ISA is guided by its **'Towards 1000' strategy** which aims to mobilise USD 1,000 billion of investments in solar energy solutions by 2030, while delivering energy access to 1,000 million



people using clean energy solutions and resulting in installation of 1,000 GW of solar energy capacity.

- This would help mitigate global solar emissions to the tune of 1,000 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> every year.
- **One Sun One World One Grid (OSOWOG)** focuses on a framework for facilitating global cooperation, building a global ecosystem of interconnected renewable energy resources (mainly solar energy) that can be seamlessly shared.

### 13. BIMSTEC

- The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is an international organization that includes seven South Asian and Southeast Asian nations.
- The **BIMSTEC member states** are – Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.
- These countries, which are dependent on the Bay of Bengal, house 1.73 billion people and have a combined gross domestic product of US\$5.2 trillion as of 20231.
- BIMSTEC was formed on June 6, 1997, through **the Bangkok declaration**. Initially, it was a four-member state group called BIST-EC, which included Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.
- Myanmar joined in 1997, and the group was renamed BIMST-EC. Later, in 2004, Nepal and Bhutan became full members, and the group took its present name, BIMSTEC
- The main **objective** of BIMSTEC is to foster technological and economic cooperation among South Asian and Southeast Asian countries along the coast of the Bay of Bengal.
- Fourteen priority sectors of cooperation have been identified, and several BIMSTEC centers have been established to focus on these sectors. A BIMSTEC free trade agreement is under negotiation.
- The permanent secretariat of BIMSTEC is in **Dhaka, Bangladesh**.
- The leadership(chairmanship) is rotated in alphabetical order of country names.

### 14. INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE (ICJ)

- The ICJ is the principal judicial organ of the **United Nations (UN)**. It is also known as the World Court.
- It was established in June 1945 by the **Charter of the United Nations** and began work in April 1946.
- The court is the **successor to the Permanent Court of International Justice (PCIJ)**, which was brought into being through, and by, the League of Nations, 1922. After World War II, the League of Nations and PCIJ were replaced by the United Nations and ICJ respectively.
- The ICJ is based at the **Peace Palace in The Hague**.
- It is the only one of the six principal organs of the UN that is not located in New York City. (The other five organs are the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, and the Secretariat.)
- According to the ICJ's own description, its role is "to settle, in accordance with international law, legal disputes submitted to it by States and to give advisory opinions on legal questions referred to it by authorized United Nations organs and specialized agencies". The court "as a whole must represent the main forms of civilization and the principal legal systems of the world".
- **English and French** are the ICJ's official languages.
- All members of the UN are automatically parties to the ICJ statute, but this does not automatically give the ICJ jurisdiction over disputes involving them. **The ICJ gets jurisdiction only if both parties consent to it.**

- The ICJ's judgment is final and binding. While there's no appeal, it can be subject to interpretation or revision. However, the ICJ lacks enforcement mechanisms and relies on countries' willingness to comply.
- **Judges of the court**
- The ICJ has 15 judges who are elected to nine-year terms by the UN General Assembly and Security Council, which vote simultaneously but separately.
- A third of the court is elected every three years.
- The president and vice-president of the court are elected for three-year terms by secret ballot. Judges are eligible for re-election.
- Four Indians have been members of the ICJ so far.
- Justice Dalveer Bhandari, former judge of the Supreme Court, has been serving at the ICJ since 2012.
- **India** has been a party to a case at the ICJ on six occasions, four of which have involved Pakistan.

#### 15. COMMISSION ON CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE (CCPCJ)

- The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) was established by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolution 1992/1, upon request of General Assembly (GA) resolution 46/152, as one of its functional commissions.
- The CCPCJ has **40 member** states that are elected by ECOSOC.
- The CCPCJ is the UN's primary policymaking body for crime prevention and criminal justice. It guides UN efforts, facilitates knowledge sharing among member states.
- The CCPCJ is the preparatory body to the United Nations Crime Congresses. Declarations adopted by the congresses are transmitted through the CCPCJ and the ECOSOC to the GA for endorsement.
- The CCPCJ's mandates include combating national and transnational crime, improving criminal justice systems, and serving as the governing body of UNODC. Member states are elected by ECOSOC, and the CCPCJ holds annual sessions and intersessional meetings.

#### 16. COALITION FOR DISASTER RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE (CDRI)

- At the UN 4th International Conference on SIDS in Antigua and Barbuda, the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) published a Call for Proposals for funding to improve infrastructure resilience in Small Island Developing States (SIDS).
- The Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) is a multi-stakeholder global partnership of national governments, UN agencies and programmes, multilateral development banks and financing mechanisms, the private sector, and knowledge institutions that aims to promote the resilience of new and existing infrastructure systems to climate and disaster risks in support of sustainable development.
- It was **launched by the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the 2019 UN Climate Action Summit** in September 2019.
- As of 2023, the CDRI has **39 members**, including 31 national governments and 8 organisations.
- The CDRI **Secretariat is based in New Delhi, India.**
- Its objective is to promote research and knowledge sharing in the fields of infrastructure risk management, standards, financing, and recovery mechanisms
- At present, it is not an intergovernmental organization, which are ordinarily treaty-based organizations.
- National governments that endorse the CDRI Charter and become a members have a key role in setting its substantive agenda as well as in its governance.
- The following are CDRI's strategic priorities:

- Technical Support and Capacity-building
- Research and Knowledge Management
- Advocacy and Partnerships

IASBABBA

JUNE 2024

### 1.COLOMBO PROCESS

- Colombo Process is a Regional Consultative Process comprising of **12 Member States of Asia** (countries of origin of migrant workers) and it provides an important platform for consultations on the management of overseas employment and contractual labour.
- The Process is **non-binding and decision-making is by consensus**. The Process is coordinated through Permanent Missions of Member States at UN in Geneva.
- India has been member of Colombo Process since its inception in **2003**. The Process is governed by Ministerial Consultations wherein recommendations and action plans are discussed and adopted by the Ministers of the participating countries.
- There are five Thematic Area Working Groups (TAWGs) i.e. (a) Skills and Qualification Recognition (b) Fostering Ethical Recruitment (c) Pre-Departure Orientation and Empowerment (d) Remittances and (e) Labour Market Analysis
- India has been actively participating in the Ministerial Consultations, Senior Officers Meeting and Meetings of TAWGs. India has also contributed to various studies undertaken under this process on remittance framework, rating mechanism of recruitment agencies, social protection for migrant workers etc.

### 2.Kavango-Zambezi Trans-Frontier Conservation Area (KAZA-TFCA)

- The Kavango-Zambezi Trans-Frontier Conservation Area (KAZA-TFCA) is a 520,000-square kilometre nature and landscape conservation area straddling five southern African nations that share common borders along the Okavango and Zambezi river basins.
- It includes a major part of the Upper Zambezi River and Okavango basins and Delta, the Caprivi Strip of Namibia, the southeastern part of Angola, southwestern Zambia, the northern wildlands of Botswana and western Zimbabwe.
- The centre of this area is at the confluence of the Zambezi and Chobe Rivers where the borders of Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe meet.
- It incorporates a number of notable national parks and nature sites, including Chobe National Park, Hwange National Park, and the Victoria Falls. The region is home to a population of approximately 250,000 animals, including the largest population of African Elephants in the world.

### 3.SHANGRI LA DIALOGUE

The 2024 Shangri-La Dialogue took place in Singapore from 31 May to 2 June.

- The Shangri-La Dialogue (SLD) is an annual "Track One" inter-governmental security conference held in Singapore.
- It's organized by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), an independent think tank. The forum is named after the Shangri-La Hotel in Singapore, where it has been held since 2002.
- The dialogue is attended by defense ministers, permanent heads of ministries, and military chiefs of mostly Asia-Pacific states. It serves to cultivate a sense of community among the most important policymakers in the defense and security community in the region.
- Besides government delegations, the summit is also attended by legislators, academic experts, distinguished journalists, and business delegates.
- The 2024 Shangri-La Dialogue took place in Singapore from 31 May to 2 June. The Keynote Address was delivered by Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., President of the Philippines.

- Highlights from the 2024 dialogue include:
  - The Philippines made a statement regarding the South China Sea conflict, suggesting that China and the Philippines would be 'crossing the Rubicon' should a Filipino citizen be killed by Beijing's ongoing actions in the South China Sea<sup>4</sup>.
  - Canada announced the deployment of a Harry DeWolf-class Arctic patrol vessel to the Indo-Pacific as part of the country's effort to deepen its naval presence.
- The Shangri-La Dialogue has become one of the most important independent forums for the exchange of views by international security policy decision-makers. It provides a unique platform for debate among government ministers and senior officials, as well as business leaders and security experts, on Asia's developing security challenges.

#### 4. EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

European Parliament elections will be held from June 6-9.

- The European Parliament (EP) is the only directly elected body of the EU, representing the citizens of its member states.
- The Parliament has 3 main roles:
  1. Legislative
    - Passing EU laws, together with the Council of the EU, based on European Commission proposals
    - Deciding on international agreements
    - Deciding on enlargement of the bloc
    - Reviewing the Commission's work programme and asking it to propose legislation
  2. Supervisory
    - Democratic scrutiny of all EU institutions
    - Electing the Commission President and approving the Commission as a body. Possibility of voting a motion of censure, obliging the Commission to resign
    - Granting discharge, i.e. approving the way EU budgets have been spent
    - Examining citizens' petitions and setting up inquiries
    - Discussing monetary policy with the European Central Bank
    - Questioning Commission and Council
    - Election observations
  3. Budgetary
    - Establishing the EU budget, together with the Council
    - Approving the EU's long-term budget, the "Multiannual Financial Framework"
- Unlike national parliaments, the EP does not have the right to propose laws but can only negotiate those proposed by the executive European Commission.
- The EP comprises 720 Members (MEPs) elected every five years. The MEPs then elect their president for a term of two and a half years.
- It represents the second-largest democratic electorate in the world (after the Parliament of India) with an electorate of around 373 million eligible voters.

#### Who can vote in the elections?

- In 21 member states, people aged 18 and above can vote. In Belgium, Germany, Austria and Malta, the minimum voting age is 16. In Greece, people who turn 17 during the election year can vote, and in Hungary, married individuals can vote regardless of age.

- Citizens living in another EU country can choose to vote for candidates either from their country of origin or from their country of residence.

#### Who can run?

- All candidates must be EU citizens. Voters may choose from individual candidates or political parties' delegates, depending on the country. Once elected, politicians from each nation will flow into the European groups that form the Parliament, based on political orientations.
- Elected individuals cannot hold functions in national governments or other political bodies such as the EU Commission.

### 5.UNESCO MEMORY OF THE WORLD (MOW)

- Three significant works of Indian literature, Ramcharitmanas, Panchatantra, and Sahridayāloka-Locana, have been inscribed in the 2024 Memory of the World Committee for Asia and the Pacific (MOWCAP) Regional Register in May 2023.

#### What is the Memory of the World (MOW) Program ?

- UNESCO launched the initiative in **1992** "to guard against collective amnesia" by calling upon the preservation of invaluable archive holdings and library collections all over the world and ensuring their wide dissemination.
- The programme recognises documentary heritage of international, regional and national significance, maintains registers of it, and awards a logo to identified collections. It facilitates preservation and access without discrimination.
- It campaigns to raise awareness of the documentary heritage to alert governments, the general public, businesses and commerce to preservation needs and to raise funds.
- Inscription on the register affirms the significance of the documentary heritage, makes it better known, and allows for greater access to it, thereby facilitating research, education, entertainment, and preservation over time.
- There are **494 inscriptions** on the International MoW Register, as of May 2023, according to the UNESCO website.
- However, the MoW register operates on regional levels as well.
- The Memory of the World Asia-Pacific Committee (MOWCAP) — which has now included the three Indian texts — celebrates Asia-Pacific heritage.
- Along with the three Indian items on the list, the Member States inscribed 20 items during the 2024 cycle, at the tenth General Meeting in Ulaanbaatar.
- Since it was established in 1998, the MOWCAP Regional Register has inscribed 65 items from Asia-Pacific countries.
- UNESCO/Jikji Memory of the World Prize
- UNESCO created the **UNESCO/Jikji Memory of the World Prize in 2004** to promote the preservation of documentary heritage as a common heritage of humanity and to encourage its wide accessibility.
- The UNESCO/Jikji Prize is named after the Buljo jikji simche yojeol, the oldest existing book of movable metal print in the world, on the Memory of the World Register.
- The prize is awarded to individuals, institutions, or non-governmental organizations that have made a significant contribution to the preservation and accessibility of documentary heritage.



## 6.ADMISSION OF NEW MEMBER STATES TO UN

- The U.N. General Assembly voted by a wide margin last month to grant new “rights and privileges” to Palestine and called on the Security Council to reconsider Palestine’s request to become the 194th member of the United Nations.
- While the resolution gives Palestine some new rights and privileges, it reaffirms that it remains a non-member observer state without full U.N. membership and the right to vote in the General Assembly or at any of its conferences.
- **Palestine** became a U.N. non-member observer state in 2012.
- There are currently **193 Member** States of the United Nations. The latest State to join the United Nations was South Sudan (in 2011).
- According to **Article 4** of the Charter of the United Nations:
  - 1. Membership in the United Nations is open to all peace-loving states which accept the obligations contained in the present Charter and, in the judgment of the Organization, are able and willing to carry out these obligations.
  - 2. The admission of any such state to membership in the United Nations will be effected by a decision of the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council.
- A recommendation for admission from the Security Council requires affirmative votes from at least nine of the council's fifteen members, with none of the five permanent members using their veto power. The Security Council's recommendation must then be approved in the General Assembly by a two-thirds majority vote.
- The U.S. has vetoed security council resolution in the past that would have paved the way for full United Nations membership for Palestine. Unlike resolutions in the Security Council, there are no vetoes in the 193-member General Assembly.
- **Article 6** of the Charter reads as follows:
  - A Member of the United Nations which has persistently violated the Principles contained in the present Charter may be expelled from the Organization by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council.
  - This has never happened.
- **Article 5** provides for the suspension of a Member State:
  - A Member of the United Nations against which preventive or enforcement action has been taken by the Security Council may be suspended from the exercise of the rights and privileges of membership by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council. The exercise of these rights and privileges may be restored by the Security Council.

## 7. EUROPEAN UNION (EU)



➤ The EU is an international organization consisting of European Countries, **formed** in 1993 after the signing of the **Maastricht Treaty by 28 countries**.

➤ The EU grew out of a desire to form a single European political entity to end centuries of warfare among European countries.

➤ The EU was awarded the **Nobel Prize for Peace in 2012** for its efforts in promoting peace and stability.

### Objectives of the EU:

➤ **Political Cooperation:** To increase political cooperation among member countries.

➤ **Economic Integration:** To enhance economic integration by creating a single currency, the euro.

➤ **Unified Security and Foreign Policy:** To coordinate security and foreign policy.

➤ **Common Citizenship Rights:** To establish common citizenship rights for EU citizens.

➤ **Enhanced Cooperation:** To collaborate in areas such as judiciary, immigration, and asylum.

### Members:

- As of 2024, the European Union (EU) comprises 27 member countries.
- The **United Kingdom (UK)** officially exited the EU on January 31, 2020. This historic event, commonly known as Brexit.
- The EU's members are **Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden**.
- The **Euro** is the official currency for 19 of the 27 EU member countries.
- The EU's main institutions include the European Parliament, the European Council, and the European Commission.

## 8. UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL (UNSC)

The **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)** has endorsed a cease-fire resolution aimed at ending the conflict in Gaza.

- The resolution, which was United Nations Security Council (UNSC) established in 1945, is one of the five principal organs of the United Nations.
- It is **charged with the maintenance of international peace and security**, accepting new members to the United Nations, and approving any changes to the UN Charter.
- Its powers include the establishment of peacekeeping operations, the establishment of international sanctions, and the authorization of military action through Security Council resolutions.
- **It is the only UN body with the authority to issue binding resolutions to member states.**
- The UNSC consists of 15 members, out of which **5 are permanent and 10 are non-permanent**.
- The **five permanent members** include **China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States**.
- The **10 non-permanent members** are: **Albania, Brazil, Gabon, Ghana, India, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, Norway, and the United Arab Emirates**.

- The **non-permanent members** are **elected for two-year terms** by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

### 9. INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF MIGRATION (IOM)

The **International Organization for Migration (IOM)** reported at least 49 migrants died and 140 others were missing after their boat capsized off the coast of Yemen.

- The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is a United Nations related organization that works in the field of migration.
- It is established in 1951.
- It is the leading intergovernmental organization in the field of migration.
- It is dedicated to promoting humane and orderly migration for the benefit of all.
- The IOM operates in 171 countries with 175-member states.
- It provides support to migrants across the world, develops effective responses to the shifting dynamics of migration, and provides advice on migration policy and practice.
- **The IOM has a strategic plan for 2024-2028, aimed at delivering on the promise of safe, orderly, and regular migration while supporting the world's most vulnerable.**
- The organization's work is focused on three main objectives:
  - **Saving lives and protecting people on the move:** IOM prioritizes the safety, dignity, and protection of people, especially in challenging crisis response contexts.
  - **Driving solutions to displacement:** IOM works to reduce the risks and impacts of climate change, environmental degradation, conflict, and instability for communities affected by or at risk of displacement.
  - **Facilitating pathways for regular migration:** IOM seeks to safely connect people, goods, services, knowledge, and innovation.

### 10. ARMENIA

- Armenia is a **landlocked country** situated in the South Caucasus region of the Caucasus.
- It lies within the Armenian plateau and is geographically part of West Asia.
- The capital city of **Armenia is Yerevan** (Erevan).
- **Borders:** To the north and east, Armenia shares borders with Georgia and Azerbaijan.
- To the south and west, it is bordered by Iran, Azerbaijan's exclave Nakhchivan, and Turkey.
- Armenia is characterized by its rugged landscape, with mountains dominating the scenery.
- The highest peak is **Mount Ararat**.
- Countries recognising Palestine as a sovereign state. As of June 2024, 145 out of the 193 United Nations member states recognize the State of Palestine as a sovereign state.
- Among the G20 nations: Argentina, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, and Turkey recognize Palestine. Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Mexico, South Korea, the United Kingdom, and the United States do not recognize Palestine.

### 11. JAPAN INDIA MARITIME EXERCISE – 24 (JIMEX – 24)

The **Japan India Maritime Exercise – 24 (JIMEX – 24)** has commenced at Yokosuka, Japan.

- The Japan India Maritime Exercise – 24 (JIMEX – 24) is a bilateral exercise between the Indian Navy (IN) and the Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force (JMSDF).

- The **Japan India Maritime Exercise – 24 (JIMEX – 24)** is the eighth edition of JIMEX, since its inception in 2012.
- **The exercise includes both harbour and sea phases, with the harbour phase encompassing professional, sports, and social interactions.**
- Following this, the two navies will jointly enhance their warfighting skills at sea and improve their interoperability through complex multi-discipline operations in the surface, sub-surface, and air domains.
- **The Indian Navy (IN) is represented by INS Shivalik, and the Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force (JMSDF) is represented by the Guided Missile Destroyer JS Yugiri.**
- Integral helicopters from both navies are also participating in the joint exercise.
- **JIMEX 24 aims to provide an opportunity for both navies to learn from each other's best practices and facilitate operational interactions.**
- This exercise is a testament to the shared commitment of India and Japan towards maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region

### 12.G7 SUMMIT 2024

- **The Group of Seven (G7) is a group of the seven most advanced economies as per the International Monetary Fund (IMF).**
- **The seven countries are Canada, the USA, the UK, France, Germany, Japan, and Italy.**

#### G7 Summit 2024

- **The 50th G7 Summit is held in Italy.**
- The summit brought together the leaders of the seven member states, as well as the President of the European Council and the President of the European Commission representing the European Union.
- Representatives from Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, India, Jordan, Kenya, Mauritania (representing the African Union), Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates, and the Vatican City have been invited to the summit.
- The choice of Fasano as the headquarters of the G7 was announced by Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni of Italy in November 2023.
- This summit is a significant event in global politics, with leaders from around the world coming together to discuss major global issues.

### 13.KUWAIT

The devastating fire in **Kuwait** has resulted in the loss of 49 lives, with 41 of those being Indian nationals.



- **Kuwait is situated in the northeastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula.**
- It is bordered by **Iraq to the north and northwest, Saudi Arabia to the south, and the Persian Gulf to the east.**
- Kuwait City is the capital and largest city, serving as the political, cultural, and economic centre of the country.

#### Political System:

- Kuwait is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system of government.
- The head of state is the Emir, who is a hereditary monarch.

**Economic Significance:**

- Kuwait holds the **world's sixth-largest oil reserves**, contributing to nearly 10% of the world's reserves.
- Kuwait is a **founding member of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)**, which coordinates and unifies petroleum policies among Member Countries.

**Historical Context:**

- Kuwait gained independence from British protection in 1961.
- It was invaded by Iraq in 1990, leading to the Gulf War, and was liberated by coalition forces in 1991.

**India-Kuwait Relations:**

- **Diplomatic relations between India and Kuwait began in June 1962.**
- The relationship is marked by **economic cooperation, cultural exchanges, and a significant Indian diaspora in Kuwait.**
- India was among the earliest countries to recognize Kuwaiti independence and has maintained traditionally friendly relations.

**14.INDIA-MIDDLE EAST-EUROPE ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (IMEC)**

The G7 has committed to promoting the **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)**.

- **The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) is a significant geopolitical and economic project for India.**
- It was **announced at the G20 Summit in New Delhi**, with a memorandum of understanding signed between the European Union and several countries including India, the US, Saudi Arabia, UAE, France, Germany, and Italy.



The corridor includes:

- **An Eastern Corridor connecting India to the Gulf region**
- **A Northern Corridor connecting the Gulf region to Europe**
- A comprehensive network comprising railway, ship-rail transit, road transport routes, an electricity cable, a hydrogen pipeline, and a high-speed data cable.
- India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) is seen as a strategic move to create an alternative trade route that could counterbalance China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

**15.UKRAINE PEACE SUMMIT**

- The Ukraine peace summit was held at the Bürgenstock resort in Switzerland on June 15-16, 2024.
- **The summit aimed to initiate a process for lasting peace in Ukraine.**
- The summit concluded with a joint communique supported by 80 countries, calling for dialogue to end the war, the full exchange of captured soldiers, and the return of deported Ukrainian children.
- Eighty countries and four European institutions signed the final joint communique.
- **India opted out of signing the communique, advocating for solutions acceptable to both involved parties.**
- Alongside India, several other countries, including Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Mexico, South Africa, Brazil, Armenia, Libya, Indonesia, Bahrain, Colombia, and the United Arab Emirates, chose not to sign the final document.
- China was not attended the summit.



## 16. EXERCISE RED FLAG 2024

The Indian Air Force (IAF) successfully completed its participation in **Exercise Red Flag 2024**.

- **Exercise Red Flag** is a **premier air-to-air combat training exercise that serves as an advanced aerial combat training event for air forces of the United States and its allies.**
- **2024 edition was conducted at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada, and Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska.**
- The 2024 edition of the focused on offering realistic training that replicates the stresses of combat operations, improving the participants' capabilities to maintain a high level of readiness and survivability, and enhancing interoperability among allied air forces.
- The IAF participated twice in the Red Flag exercise known as the most realistic air combat training, where fighter pilots refine skills against numerous targets, authentic threats, and adversary forces.
- **Other combat exercises in which IAF regularly participates:**

Air Combat Exercises	Location
Iniochos	Greece
Orion	France
Blue Flag	Israel
Pitch Black	Australia
Desert Flag	UAE

## 17. EUROPEAN COMMISSION (EC)

The **European Commission (EC)** has proposed anti-dumping duties on Indian optical fibre cable (OFC) manufacturers.

- The **European Commission (EC)** is a **crucial institution within the European Union (EU).**
- It serves as the EU's executive arm, overseeing day-to-day operations and policy implementation.

### Composition:

- The EC consists of a College of Commissioners, with each member representing one of the 27 EU member states.
- The College of Commissioners is composed of the President of the Commission, eight Vice-Presidents, including three Executive Vice-Presidents, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and 18 Commissioners, each responsible for a portfolio.
- The day-to-day running of Commission business is performed by its staff (lawyers, economists, etc.), organised into departments known as Directorates-General (DGs), each responsible for a specific policy area.

### What does the Commission do?

- Proposes new laws: The Commission is the sole EU institution tabling laws for adoption by the Parliament and the Council that -
  - protect the interests of the EU and its citizens on issues that can't be dealt with effectively at national level
- Manages EU policies & allocates EU funding
  - sets EU spending priorities, together with the Council and Parliament
  - draws up annual budgets for approval by the Parliament and Council
  - supervises how the money is spent, under scrutiny by the Court of Auditors
- Enforces EU law
  - together with the Court of Justice, ensures that EU law is properly applied in all the member countries
- Represents the EU internationally



- speaks on behalf of all EU countries in international bodies, in particular in areas of trade policy and humanitarian aid
- negotiates international agreements for the EU

### 18. SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION (SCO)

- The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is a **permanent international intergovernmental organization** that was announced in June 2001 in Shanghai, China.
- It was founded by Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan.
- The SCO aims to promote cooperation and mutual support in various areas, including trade, investment, energy, transportation, and security.

#### Key facts about the SCO:

- **Headquarters:** The SCO's headquarters is located in Beijing, China.
- **Creation:** It was announced on June 15, 2001, and came into force on September 19, 2003.
- **Official Languages:** The official languages of the SCO are Chinese and Russian.
- **India's Membership:** India joined the SCO on June 8-9, 2017, during the SCO Astana Summit.
- **Supreme Decision-Making Body:** The Heads of State Council (HSC) serves as the supreme decision-making body within the SCO.
- **Permanent Bodies:** The SCO has two permanent bodies:
  - SCO Secretariat in Beijing.
  - Executive Committee of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) in Tashkent.
- **Member Countries:** China, India, Iran (joined in July 2023), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan.

### 19. INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK FOR PROSPERITY (IPEF)

Indian delegation participated in the inaugural **Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF)** Clean Economy Investor Forum.

- **The Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) is a strategic blueprint aimed at promoting economic integration, connectivity, and cooperation among countries in the Indo-Pacific region.**
- It envisions a comprehensive and inclusive approach to harness the region's economic potential while fostering stability, development, and shared prosperity.

#### Objective:

- Strengthen economic partnership among participating countries.
- Enhance resilience, sustainability, inclusiveness, economic growth, fairness, and competitiveness in the Indo-Pacific.

#### Launch and Participants:

- **Launched by the United States** President Joe Biden in May 2022.
- Initial partners represent 40% of the world GDP.
- **Aims to make the Indo-Pacific an engine of global economic growth.**

#### Focus Areas:

- **Unlike traditional trade blocs, IPEF won't negotiate tariffs or market access.**
- Focuses on integrating partner countries in four areas:
- **Trade:** High-standard, inclusive, free, and fair-trade commitments.
- **Supply Chains:** Improving transparency, diversity, security, and sustainability.

- **Crisis Response:** Coordinating measures for business continuity.
- **Access to Key Resources:** Ensuring access to critical materials and clean energy technology.

## 20. INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (ICC)

- The International Criminal Court (ICC) was established by the Rome Statute on July 1, 2002.
- **The International Criminal Court (ICC) is a permanent court that prosecutes serious international crimes committed by individuals.**
- **It has jurisdiction over the most serious crimes of concern to the international community: genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and the crime of aggression.**
- Its headquarters are in The Hague, Netherlands.
- **While 123 nations recognize the ICC's authority, notable exceptions include the US, China, Russia, and India.**
- The court is **funded by contributions from states parties and voluntary donations** from various entities.
- Unlike the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which handles disputes between states, **the ICC focuses on prosecuting individuals.**
- It can exercise jurisdiction if the national court is unable or unwilling to do so, and only for offenses committed after the Statute's entry into force in 2002.
- It is intended to complement, not replace, national judicial systems.
- **The ICC has six official languages** (English, French, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, and Spanish) and two working languages (English and French).

## 21. THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION (NATO)

NATO has appointed outgoing Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte as the next head.

- **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is a military alliance established by the North Atlantic Treaty** (also called the Washington Treaty) of April, 1949, by the United States, Canada, and several Western European nations to provide collective security against the Soviet Union.
- There are currently 32 member states.
- **Its original members were Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and the United States.**
- Joining the original signatories were Greece and Turkey (1952), West Germany (1955, from 1990 as Germany), Spain (1982), the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland (1999), Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia (2004), Albania and Croatia (2009), Montenegro (2017), and North Macedonia (2020).
- France withdrew from the integrated military command of NATO in 1966 but remained a member of the organization, it resumed its position in NATO's military command in 2009.
- **Recently, Finland (2023) and Sweden (2024) have joined NATO.**
- Headquarters: Brussels, Belgium.
- Headquarters of Allied Command Operations: Mons, Belgium.

### What are the Objectives of NATO?

- NATO's essential and enduring purpose is to safeguard the freedom and security of all its members by political and military means.

- **Political objectives:** 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 Objectives:** 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.
- NATO has only once invoked Article 5, on September 12, 2001 following the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre in the US.

#### How does NATO Function?

- NATO has an integrated military command structure but very few forces or assets are exclusively its own.
- Most forces remain under full national command and control until member countries agree to undertake NATO-related tasks.
- **All allies have an equal say, the Alliance's decisions must be unanimous** and consensual, and its members must respect the basic values that underpin the Alliance, namely democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law.
- NATO's protection does not extend to members' civil wars or internal coups.
- NATO is funded by its members.
- The U.S. contributes roughly three-fourths of NATO's budget.

### 22.EXERCISE HOPEX

The **Exercise HOPEX** was recently held in Egypt.

- **Exercise HOPEX is the joint military exercise between the Indian Air Force (IAF) and the Egyptian Air Force (EAF).**
- Exercise HOPEX Held from 21 to 26 June 2024 in Egypt.
- **The exercise aims to promote bilateral and regional cooperation.**

#### Participating Assets:

- **IAF's Rafale fighter jets were actively involved in the exercise.**
- Additionally, the C-17 Globemaster and IL-78 tankers participated in this weeklong joint drill.

#### India-Egypt Relationship:

- **Diplomatic relations between India and Egypt began in 1947.**
- Both countries have cooperated closely within multilateral forums, including their roles as founding members of the Non-Aligned Movement.
- In 2022, India and Egypt celebrated the **75th anniversary** of their diplomatic relations, reflecting the depth of their friendship and collaboration.

### 23.FINANCIAL ACTION TASK FORCE (FATF)

India has achieved an outstanding outcome in the Mutual Evaluation conducted during 2023-24 by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

- **The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is a global intergovernmental organization established in 1989.**
- **Initially, its objective was to examine and develop measures to combat money laundering.**

- After the 9/11 attacks on the US, the **FATF expanded its mandate to incorporate efforts to combat terrorist financing.**
- In April 2012, it added efforts to counter the financing of proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD).

**Membership:**

- 39 member countries, including India.
- Regional organizations (European Commission and Gulf Cooperation Council) also participate.
- India joined as an observer in 2006 and became a full member in 2010.

**Functions:**

- Sets international standards.
- Assesses countries' compliance.
- Identifies deficiencies and promotes policy reforms.

**Lists:**

- **The FATF maintains two lists:**
  - **Black List:** High-risk jurisdictions with significant deficiencies in countering money laundering and terrorist financing.
  - **Grey List:** Jurisdictions under increased monitoring.
- **Currently, North Korea and Iran are on the black list.**

JULY 2024

**1. NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT (NAM)**

- **NAM was formed during the Cold War as an organization of states that did not seek to formally align themselves with either the United States or the Soviet Union.**
- The Non-Aligned Movement was formed in 1961 and has 120 members, with the goal of protecting national independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of non-aligned countries.
- The movement played a vital role in stabilizing world order and preserving peace and security during the Cold War era.
- The movement contributed to the processes of decolonization, the emergence of new independent states and the promotion of democracy in international relations.
- **The movement was guided by the Panchsheel principles**, which include respect for the principles enshrined in the charter of the United Nations and international law.
- The movement rotates its management between the member nations and is non-hierarchical.
- **The movement takes decisions by consensus and has to be substantial and not universal.**
- **The Panchsheel principles are the five principles of peaceful coexistence that form the foundation of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).**
- The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, also known as the Panchsheel, were jointly formulated by India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai, and Myanmar's Prime Minister U Nu in 1954, and are as follows:
  - Mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity.
  - Mutual non-aggression.
  - Mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs.
  - Equality and mutual benefit.
  - Peaceful coexistence.
- These principles aim to promote peace, security, and cooperation among nations, and to oppose colonialism, imperialism, and hegemony.

**2. RIM OF THE PACIFIC (RIMPAC) EXERCISE**

- **RIMPAC stands for the Rim of the Pacific Exercise, which is the world's largest international maritime warfare exercise.**
- **It is hosted and administered by the United States Navy's Indo-Pacific Command.**
- Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) exercise is a biennial multinational maritime exercise that fosters cooperative relationships among approximately 29 nations.
- RIMPAC 2024 will take place from June 26 to August 2 in and around the Hawaiian Islands.
- **The exercise aims to enhance interoperability, strengthen strategic maritime partnerships, and ensure the safety of sea lanes in the free and open Indo-Pacific region.**
- This year's **theme is "Partners: Integrated and Prepared."** Participating countries include Australia, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States, among others.

**3. EXERCISE MAITREE**

- **Exercise MAITREE is a bilateral exercise between the Indian Army and the Royal Thai Army.**
- It was initiated in 2006 and has been an annual event since then.
- Also referred to as the Indo-Thailand Joint Exercise.
- **Exercise MAITREE aims to foster military cooperation between India and Thailand.**

- It focuses on executing joint counter-insurgency and terrorist operations in jungle and urban environments under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.

#### 4.UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

- India is set to host the 46th session of the **UNESCO World Heritage Committee** in New Delhi from July 21 to 31, 2024.
- This marks the first time India will chair and host this prestigious event.
- **The World Heritage Committee** is a vital body **within the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)**.
- The Committee **oversees the implementation of the World Heritage Convention**.
- It defines the **utilization of the World Heritage Fund** and **allocates financial assistance** based on requests from States Parties.
- The Committee has the **final authority to decide whether a property should be inscribed on the World Heritage List**.
- It reviews reports on the conservation status of inscribed properties and prompts action when proper management is lacking.
- Additionally, **the Committee determines the inclusion or removal of properties from the List of World Heritage in Danger**.

##### Structure:

- The Committee comprises representatives from 21 States Parties elected by their General Assembly.
- Each member serves a six-year term, although most voluntarily serve for four years to allow other states an opportunity to participate.
- The Bureau of the World Heritage Committee coordinates its work, consisting of seven states parties elected annually: a Chairperson, five Vice-Chairpersons, and a Rapporteur.

#### 5.NOMADIC ELEPHANT

- The **Nomadic Elephant exercise** is a **bilateral military exercise conducted by the armies of India and Mongolia**.
- The exercise is conducted **annually, alternating between India and Mongolia**.
- The purpose of the exercise is to conduct **semi-conventional operations in semi-urban and mountainous terrain under the UN mandate**.
- The aim of the Exercise is to enhance joint military capability of both sides to undertake counter insurgency operations in a Sub Conventional scenario under Chapter VII of the United Nations Mandate.
- The exercise will focus on operations in the semi-urban and mountainous terrain.
- Tactical drills during the Exercise include Response to a Terrorist Action, Establishment of a Joint Command Post, Establishment of an Intelligence & Surveillance Centre, Securing of a Helipad/ Landing Site, Small Team Insertion & Extraction, Special Heliborne Operations, Cordon & Search Operations besides Employment of Drones and Counter Drone Systems amongst others.
- The **16<sup>th</sup> edition of exercise** is scheduled to be conducted from 03rd to 16th July 2024 in **Meghalaya**.
- The **15th edition of the exercise** was held in Ulaanbaatar, **Mongolia**.



## 6. EAST COAST RAIL LINK (ECRL)

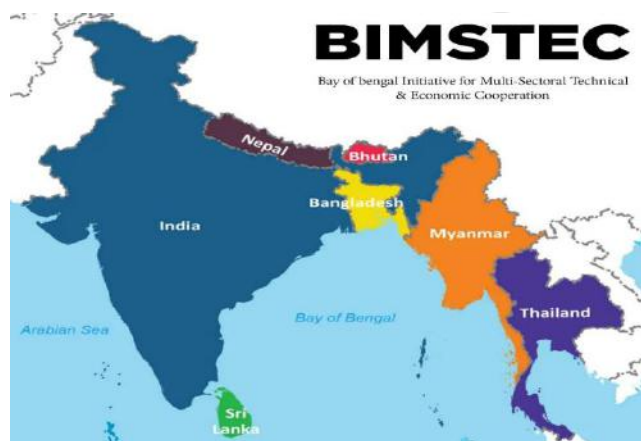
### Malaysia's East Coast Rail Link



- The East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) is a 665-km railway project in Malaysia.
- It will connect Kota Bharu on the Kelantan River, near Malaysia's northeastern coast, with Port Klang at the strategically critical Strait of Malacca on the country's west coast.
- This project is seen as a **major economic cooperation initiative between China and Malaysia and is part of China's Belt and Road Initiative.**
- The ECRL aims to link cities and towns, as well as upgrade public transportation along its rail network.

## 7. BAY OF BENGAL INITIATIVE FOR MULTI-SECTORAL TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION (BIMSTEC)

- The 2nd BIMSTEC Foreign Ministers' Retreat is currently being held in New Delhi on July 11-12, 2024.



- The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is a **regional organization.**
- It was established on June 6, 1997, **through the Bangkok Declaration.**
- Its Headquarters is in Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- It brings together seven countries of South and Southeast Asia for multifaceted cooperation.
- **Besides India, the BIMSTEC comprises Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Nepal and Bhutan.**

- Thailand is the current chair of BIMSTEC and it is set to host the annual summit of the grouping later this year.

### Objectives of BIMSTEC:

- **Economic Cooperation:** Enhance economic growth and cooperation among member countries.
- **Technological Collaboration:** Promote technological and scientific cooperation.
- **Cultural Ties:** Strengthen cultural and people-to-people connections.
- **Regional Stability:** Foster peace and stability in the Bay of Bengal region.

## 8. INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANIZATION (IMO)

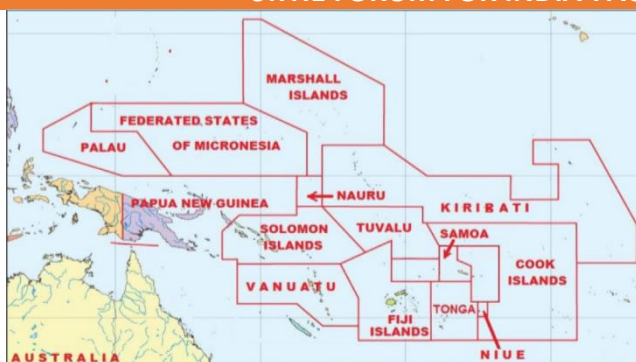
- At the 132nd session of the **International Maritime Organization (IMO)** Council in London, India led global maritime discussions.
- The **International Maritime Organization (IMO)** is a specialized agency of the United Nations focused on regulating shipping and preventing marine pollution from ships.

- Established in 1948 and operational since 1958, the IMO has 175 member states and three associate members, with headquarters in London.
- **India joined in 1959.**
- The IMO creates a fair, effective regulatory framework for the shipping industry and addresses legal issues like liability and international maritime traffic facilitation.

#### Key Functions of IMO:

- **Safety and Security:** Ensures the safety and security of international shipping.
- **Environmental Performance:** Prevents marine and atmospheric pollution by ships.
- **Regulatory Framework:** Develops and maintains a comprehensive regulatory framework for shipping.
- **Innovation and Efficiency:** Encourages innovation and efficiency in the shipping industry.

### 9.THE FORUM FOR INDIA-PACIFIC ISLANDS COOPERATION (FIPIC)



- The **Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC)** was established in 2014.
- **Members:** India and 14 Pacific Island nations (Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu)
- **Objectives:**

Strengthen diplomatic, economic, cultural, and technical ties between India and Pacific Island nations.

- Promote sustainable development and address common challenges such as climate change, health, and education.

#### Key Summits:

- First Summit: Suva, Fiji (2014)
- Second Summit: Jaipur, India (2015)
- Third Summit: Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea (2023).

#### Significance for India:

- **Geopolitical:** Enhances India's strategic presence in the Pacific region.
- **Economic:** Opens new markets and opportunities for trade and investment.
- **Cultural:** Strengthens people-to-people ties and promotes cultural exchange.

#### Recent Initiatives:

- **Healthcare:** Establishment of a super-specialty cardiology hospital in Fiji and introduction of dialysis units and sea ambulances in all 14 Pacific Islands Countries.
- **Clean Energy:** Support for renewable energy projects.
- **Water Scarcity:** Provision of desalination units to address water scarcity issues.

### 10.WORLD POPULATION PROSPECTS 2024

- The **World Population Prospects** is a comprehensive report that provides detailed estimates and projections of the global population.
- It is released by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA).

#### Key findings of the World Population Prospects 2024 Report:

**Global Population Growth:**

- The world's population is expected to grow over the next 50-60 years, peaking at around 10.3 billion in the mid-2080s, up from 8.2 billion in 2024.
- After peaking, the global population is projected to decline gradually to 10.2 billion by the end of the century.

#### **Fertility Rate:**

- **The fertility rate is the average number of live births a woman is expected to have during her lifetime.**
- It is a key indicator of population growth and demographic trends.
- **The current global fertility rate is 2.25 live births per woman**, down from 3.31 births in 1990.
- **More than half of all countries and areas globally have fertility rates below the replacement level of 2.1 live births per woman.**
- A fertility rate **of 2.1 live births per woman is considered the replacement level**, meaning it is the rate at which a population exactly replaces itself from one generation to the next, without migration.

#### **Life Expectancy:**

- Life expectancy is the **average number of years a person is expected to live based on current mortality rates.**
- It is a measure of the overall health and longevity of a population.
- **Globally, life expectancy at birth reached 73.3 years in 2024, an increase of 8.4 years since 1995.**
- Further reductions in mortality are projected to result in an average longevity of around 77.4 years globally by 2054.

#### **India's Population:**

- India's population in 2024 is projected to be 1.45 billion and is expected to peak at 1.69 billion in 2054.

### **11.INDIA YOUNG PROFESSIONAL SCHEME 2024**

- **The India Young Professional Scheme is a youth mobility scheme that allows Indian nationals to live, work, and study in the United Kingdom for up to two years.**
- This scheme was **announced at the G20 summit in Bali in November 2022.**
- It was formally launched in February 2023.
- **It allows up to 3,000 degree-holding citizens aged between 18 and 30 from each country to live and work in the other country for two years.**
- Interested **applicants, aged between 18-30 years old or turning 18 by the travel date, with a bachelor's degree or higher, savings of GBP 2,530, and no dependent children under 18, are eligible to apply.**
- **India is the first visa-national country to benefit from this scheme.**

### **12.THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS (ICCPR)**

- India has successfully concluded its fourth periodic review by the Human Rights Committee (HRC) under **the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).**
  - The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) is a significant **multilateral treaty adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1966.**
  - The ICCPR **came into force on March 23, 1976.**
  - It **commits nations to respect the civil and political rights of individuals.**

The ICCPR safeguards various rights, including:

- Freedom of movement
  - Equality before the law
  - Freedom of thought, conscience, and religion
  - Freedom of opinion and expression
  - Electoral rights
  - Rights to due process and a fair trial
- **The UN Human Rights Committee oversees the implementation of the ICCPR.** This committee ensures that states comply with their obligations under the covenant.
- Together with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the ICCPR forms the International Bill of Human Rights.
- **India became a State Party to the ICCPR in 1979.**

### 13.INDIA MARITIME CENTRE (IMC)

- **India Maritime Centre (IMC)** is a cornerstone initiative of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways (MoPSW) under the Maritime India Vision 2030.
- The IMC aims to provide a unified platform for the Indian maritime industry, acting as a think tank for policy formulation and industry recommendations.
- The establishment of the India Maritime Centre marks a significant milestone in MoPSW's efforts to bolster the maritime sector in India.
- **The IMC will serve as a central platform for collaboration, innovation, and policy advocacy, ensuring sustainable growth and enhancing India's position in the global maritime community.**
- The IMC is poised to be a pivotal institution in advancing India's maritime interests both domestically and internationally.
- By fostering collaboration, driving policy advocacy, and providing expert analysis, the IMC will play a crucial role in shaping the future of India's maritime sector.

### 14.INDIA-USA CULTURAL PROPERTY AGREEMENT

- The **India-USA Cultural Property Agreement**, signed on July 25, 2024, is a bilateral pact between India and the United States aimed at enhancing the protection and repatriation of cultural artifacts.
- It includes measures to prevent illegal trafficking and facilitate the return of stolen or illegally exported cultural properties.
- This agreement aligns with the 1970 UNESCO Convention and restricts the importation of certain archaeological and ethnological materials into the United States.
- Notably, the **United States has already executed similar agreements with several other countries**, demonstrating its commitment to safeguarding cultural heritage worldwide.
- The Agreement's significance lies in its ability to expedite the seizure and repatriation of Indian antiquities at US Customs.

### 15.INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION (ILO)

- **The International Labour Organization (ILO)** is a tripartite U.N. agency established in 1919.
- It brings together governments, employers, and workers from 187 member States to set labour standards, develop policies, and promote decent work for all.

- The ILO's mandate is to advance social and economic justice through international labour standards.
- It was created in 1919, as part of **the Treaty of Versailles** that ended World War I.
- Became the first affiliated specialized agency of the United Nations in 1946.
- Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.
- Received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1969 for improving peace among classes.

**Functions and Achievements:**

- Ensured labour rights during the Great Depression and supported decolonization.
- Played a role in the creation of Solidarność (trade union) in Poland and the victory over apartheid in South Africa.
- Currently supports building an ethical framework for fair globalization.
- International Labour Conference: Sets international labour standards and policies. Often called the "International Parliament of Labour."
- Governing Body: Executive council of the ILO, meets three times a year in Geneva. Establishes programs and budgets.



AUGUST 2024

**1. ACT EAST POLICY (AEP)**

The Act East Policy announced in 2014 is the upgrade of the Look East Policy which was promulgated in 1992



➤ **India's Act East policy is a diplomatic initiative aimed at promoting economic, strategic, and cultural relations with the vast Asia-Pacific region.**

➤ It serves as a modern version of the Look East Policy, which was launched in 1991 by then Prime Minister V. Narasimha Rao.

➤ While the **Look East Policy** primarily focused on economic integration with Southeast Asian countries, the **Act East Policy** expands its scope to include both economic and security integration.

➤ The **Act East Policy** was announced in **November 2014** by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

**Objectives:**

- **Economic Cooperation:** The policy aims to enhance economic cooperation with countries in the Asia-Pacific region.
- **Cultural Ties:** It seeks to strengthen cultural ties and foster people-to-people connections.
- **Strategic Relationships:** The Act East Policy aims to develop strategic relationships with neighbouring countries, including those in Southeast Asia and East Asia.
- **Connectivity:** Enhanced connectivity is a key focus, especially for the North Eastern Region of India, including Arunachal Pradesh.
- **Countering China:** By cultivating extensive economic and strategic ties with Southeast Asian nations, India aims to bolster its regional standing and act as a counterweight to China's influence in the region.

**Interface with ASEAN:**

- **The Act East Policy provides an interface between North-Eastern India** (including Arunachal Pradesh) **and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region.**
- This interface facilitates economic, cultural, and strategic cooperation.

**2. EXERCISE TARANG SHAKTI**

- **Exercise Tarang Shakti is a significant multinational air exercise hosted by the Indian Air Force.**
- **Tarang Shakti provides a platform for air forces from different nations to engage in joint training, exchange knowledge, and improve coordination in various operational scenarios.**
- It enhances mutual understanding and compatibility between participating air forces, promoting regional stability and security.

**Participating Countries:**

- Australia, France, Germany, Japan, Spain, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Germany will deploy fighter jets and an A-400M transport aircraft.

**Phases:** The exercise is scheduled in **two phases**.

- The first phase will be held in southern India during the first two weeks of August, and the second phase will take place in the western sector from the end of August to mid-September.

**3. INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK (IPEF)**

- **The Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) is a strategic blueprint aimed at promoting economic integration, connectivity, and cooperation among countries in the Indo-Pacific region.**



- It envisions a comprehensive and inclusive approach to harness the region's economic potential while fostering stability, development, and shared prosperity.
- **It was launched by U.S. President Joe Biden on May 23, 2022.**

**The IPEF has four pillars:**

- **Trade:** Enhancing trade relations and facilitating economic exchanges.
- **Supply Chains:** Strengthening supply chain resilience and coordination.
- **Clean Economy:** Promoting sustainable and environmentally friendly practices.
- **Fair Economy:** Fostering fairness, competitiveness, and inclusiveness among member economies.

#### 4. INDIA BANGLADESH RELATIONS



- Bangladesh is a nation in South Asia, shares its land border with two countries: India and Myanmar.
- India shares its longest border with Bangladesh and is approximately 4,096.7 kilometers, making it the **fifth-longest land border in the world.**
- India and Bangladesh border runs through several Indian states, including **Assam, Tripura, Mizoram, Meghalaya, and West Bengal.**
- This extensive border plays a significant role in shaping the cultural, economic, and social ties between the two

neighbouring countries.

**Independence and Recognition:**

- Bangladesh gained its independence in December **1971** after a brutal **war of liberation** against Pakistan.
- **India was the first country to recognize Bangladesh** as a separate and sovereign state.

**Historical Context:**

- During the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971, India intervened in support of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and played a crucial role in securing its independence from Pakistan.
- This shared history has shaped the bilateral relations between the two countries.

**Land Boundary Agreement:**

- **In 2015, India and Bangladesh signed a historic land boundary agreement that settled decades-old border disputes.**
- This agreement resolved issues related to enclaves and demarcation of land and maritime boundaries.

**Cultural Ties:**

- Bangladesh and the east Indian states of West Bengal and Tripura share cultural ties, including the Bengali language.
- **Both countries are members of SAARC, BIMSTEC, IORA, and the Commonwealth.**

## 5. ROHINGYAS IN MYANMAR



- The Rohingya are a predominantly Muslim ethnic minority in Myanmar, primarily residing in Rakhine State.
- They have faced severe persecution and discrimination for decades.
- The conflict involving the Rohingya in Myanmar is deeply rooted in a complex mix of historical, political, and social factors.

### Some of the causes of issues related to Rohingyas:

- **Historical Tensions:** British colonial rule (1824–1948) deepened divisions by favoring Muslims, especially during WWII, when they sided with the British against Buddhists allied with Japan.
- **Citizenship Issues:** Myanmar denies the Rohingya citizenship, rendering them stateless and without basic rights.
- **Ethnic & Religious Discrimination:** As a Muslim minority in a Buddhist-majority nation, the Rohingya face systemic marginalization.
- **Political Manipulation:** Myanmar's military and politicians exploit anti-Rohingya sentiment to gain power and justify crackdowns.
- **Economic Struggles:** In resource-poor Rakhine State, competition for jobs and land fuels ethnic tensions.
- **Military Actions:** Brutal military operations, framed as security measures, have led to mass violence, displacement, and human rights abuses.
- This volatile mix has driven repeated cycles of persecution and exodus

## 6. EXERCISE MITRA SHAKTI

- The Exercise Mitra Shakti is a **joint military exercise between India and the Sri Lankan army.**
- **This year it is the 10th edition of the exercise.**
- A unit of 120 soldiers from the Indian Army's Rajputana Rifles (Raj Rif) will participate in this exercise.
- **The focus of this year's exercise is on joint operations in semi-urban environments, aligning with Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, which deals with actions regarding threats to peace and security.**
- It aims **to improve the operational proficiency of both armies** by facilitating the exchange of skills, experiences, and best practices.
- This collaboration is designed to enhance the armies' abilities to handle contemporary security challenges, such as counter-terrorism and urban warfare.
- This exercise plays a significant role in strengthening defence ties and improving coordination between the Indian and Sri Lankan armed forces.
- This annual event is crucial for fostering cooperation and enhancing interoperability between the two nations' armed forces.

## 7. EXERCISE UDARA SHAKTI- 2024

- Exercise Udara Shakti 2024 is a significant bilateral air force exercise between the **Indian Air Force (IAF) and the Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF).**
- Exercise Udara Shakti aimed to enhance military cooperation and strengthen the strategic partnership between India and Malaysia.

- Both air forces deployed their Sukhoi Su-30 fighter jets for the exercise. The IAF participated with its Su-30MKI aircraft, while the RMAF fielded its Su-30MKM aircraft.

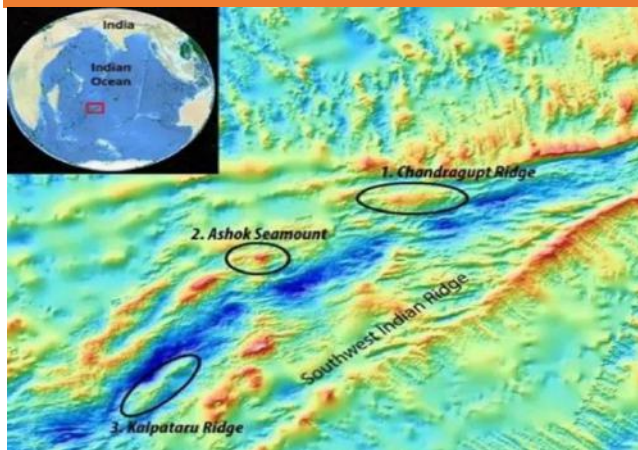
#### What other joint exercises have India participated in?

- **Mitra Shakti:** This is an annual exercise **with Sri Lanka**, focusing on counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations. The latest edition began on August 12, 2024, in Sri Lanka.
- **Yudh Abhyas:** A joint military exercise **with the United States**, aimed at improving interoperability and sharing best practices in counter-terrorism operations.
- **Hand-in-Hand:** Conducted **with China**, this exercise focuses on counter-terrorism and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations.
- **Indra:** A series of joint exercises **with Russia**, covering all three services (Army, Navy, and Air Force) to enhance bilateral defence cooperation.

**Shakti:** A biennial exercise **with France**, focusing on counter-terrorism operations and enhancing interoperability between the two armies.

**Nomadic Elephant:** Conducted **with Mongolia**, this exercise focuses on counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations.

#### 8. INTERNATIONAL HYDROGRAPHIC ORGANIZATION (IHO)



Three underwater geographical structures in the Indian Ocean have been officially named after India's proposals. The International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) and UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) have approved the names **Ashoka Seamount, Chandragupt Ridge, and Kalpataru Ridge** for these structures, following India's suggestions.

- **The International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) is an intergovernmental organization dedicated to ensuring that all the world's seas, oceans, and navigable**

**waters are properly surveyed and charted.**

- Established in 1921 and headquartered in Monaco, the IHO coordinates the activities of national hydrographic offices and sets international standards to promote uniformity in nautical charts and documents.
- **States are represented within the IHO by the national authority responsible for the provision of hydrographic and nautical charting services in each Member State.** A Secretary General and two Directors are elected by Member States and administer the work of the Organization.
- IHO enjoys observer status at the United Nations and is recognized as the competent authority on hydrographic surveying and nautical charting.
- **The IHO's primary goals include:**
  - **Safety of Navigation:** Ensuring that accurate and up-to-date nautical charts are available to mariners.
  - **Protection of the Marine Environment:** Supporting efforts to safeguard marine ecosystems through accurate hydrographic data.
  - **Capacity Building:** Providing training and resources to member states to enhance their hydrographic capabilities.

- **Standardization:** Developing and maintaining international standards for hydrographic data and charting.

#### **Naming of Undersea Features:**

- The International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) has set guidelines for naming undersea features, detailed in their 2013 publication.
- **Outside Territorial Sea individuals and agencies can propose names for unnamed features.** The character, extent, and position of the feature must be identified before naming. Proposals are reviewed by the IHO Sub-Committee on Undersea Feature Names (SCUFN).
- These guidelines ensure a standardized approach to naming undersea features, promoting consistency and clarity in marine cartography.

### **9.COURT OF ARBITRATION FOR SPORT (CAS)**

- The **Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS)** was established in 1984 to resolve disputes related to sports through arbitration.
- **Origins:** The idea for CAS was conceived in the early 1980s due to the increasing number of international sports-related disputes and the lack of an independent authority to handle them.
- **Founding:** The International Olympic Committee (IOC) played a crucial role in its creation. The statutes of CAS were ratified by the IOC in 1983, and it became operational on June 30, 1984.
- **Headquarters:** CAS is headquartered in Lausanne, Switzerland, with additional courts in New York City and Sydney.

#### **Functions**

- **Arbitration:** CAS resolves legal disputes in sports by pronouncing arbitral awards, which are enforceable like court judgments.
- **Mediation:** It also offers mediation services to help parties reach amicable settlements when possible.
- **Special Tribunals:** CAS sets up temporary tribunals for major events like the Olympic Games and Commonwealth Games, with special procedural rules tailored to these events.
- **Types of Disputes:** CAS handles a wide range of disputes, including commercial issues (e.g., sponsorship contracts) and disciplinary matters (e.g., doping cases).
- **Accessibility:** Any individual or entity involved in sports, such as athletes, clubs, federations, and sponsors, can refer cases to CAS, provided there is a written agreement to do so.

### **10.GENEVA CONVENTIONS**

- The 75th anniversary of the adoption of the **Geneva Conventions** was celebrated on August 12, 2024.
- The Geneva Conventions are a cornerstone of international humanitarian law, consisting of four treaties and three additional protocols.
- They were formalized in 1949, with the additional protocols added in 1977 and 2005.
- **These conventions set out detailed rules for the humane treatment of non-combatants and prisoners of war, including protections for hospitals, medical staff, and humanitarian aid workers.**
- **They also prohibit acts such as torture, rape, and sexual violence.**
- **The Geneva Conventions have attained universal ratification.** Many of the provisions contained in the Geneva Conventions and their Protocols are considered to be part of customary international law and applicable in any armed conflict.

#### **The Four Geneva Conventions:**



#### First Geneva Convention:

- **Focus:** Protection of wounded and sick soldiers on land during war.
- **Coverage:** Medical and religious personnel, medical units, and medical transports.

#### Second Geneva Convention:

- **Focus:** Protection of wounded, sick, and shipwrecked military personnel at sea during war.
- **Replacement:** This convention replaced the Hague Convention of 1907 for the Adaptation to Maritime Warfare of the Principles of the Geneva Convention.

#### Third Geneva Convention:

- **Focus:** Treatment of prisoners of war.
- **Principle:** Prisoners of war shall be released and repatriated without delay after the cessation of active hostilities.

#### Fourth Geneva Convention:

- **Focus:** Protection of civilians, including those in occupied territories.
- **Content:** General protection of populations against certain consequences of war, without addressing the conduct of hostilities.

#### Additional Protocols:

- **First Protocol (1977):** Enhances protection for victims of international armed conflicts.
- **Second Protocol (1977):** Extends protections to victims of non-international armed conflicts.
- **Third Protocol (2005):** Introduces an additional distinctive emblem, the Red Crystal, alongside the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

### 11.CONFLICT IN SUDAN



- Sudan is a country located in northeastern Africa.

- It is bordered by Egypt to the north, the Red Sea to the northeast, Eritrea and Ethiopia to the east, South Sudan to the south, the Central African Republic to the southwest, Chad to the west, and Libya to the northwest.

- Its capital is Khartoum, situated at the confluence of the Blue Nile and White Nile rivers.

- In modern times, it has experienced significant political and social upheaval, including civil wars and the secession of South Sudan in 2011.

- The country is currently under a transitional

government following a military coup.

#### Main Causes of the Conflict in Sudan:

- **Power Struggle:** The primary cause is the power struggle between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). The leaders of these groups are vying for control of the country.
- **Historical Tensions:** Sudan has a history of political instability, marked by numerous coups and civil wars since its independence in 1956. The overthrow of longtime dictator Omar al-Bashir in 2019 led to a fragile transitional government, which was later disrupted by a military coup in 2021.

- **Economic Factors:** Sudan's economy has been in crisis for years, exacerbated by corruption, mismanagement, and international sanctions. The competition over control of economic resources, particularly gold mines, has fuelled tensions between rival factions.
- **Ethnic and Regional Divisions:** Ethnic and regional divisions have also played a significant role. The RSF has its origins in the Janjaweed militia, which was involved in the Darfur conflict and accused of committing atrocities against non-Arab populations.
- **External Influences:** External actors and regional dynamics have further complicated the situation. Neighbouring countries and international powers have various interests in Sudan, influencing the conflict through support for different factions.
- **Failed Peace Processes:** Despite multiple attempts at peace talks and ceasefires, the lack of a comprehensive and inclusive peace process has hindered efforts to resolve the conflict.

## 12. INTERNATIONAL EARTH SCIENCES OLYMPIAD (IESO)

- The International Earth Science Olympiad (IESO) is **an annual competition for secondary school students, organized by the International Geoscience Education Organization (IGEO).**
- It was established in 2003 at the International Geoscience Education Organization Council Meeting in Calgary, Canada.
- **India has participated in the IESO since 2007 and hosted its 10th edition in Mysore.**

### Key details:

- **Participants:** Students not older than 18 years old on July 1st of the year of the Olympiad.
- **Disciplines:** The competition tests skills in geology, geophysics, meteorology, oceanography, terrestrial astronomy, and environmental sciences.
- **Examinations:** Participants engage in both theoretical and practical exams, as well as collaborative projects like the Earth System Project and International Team Field Investigation.
- **History:** The first IESO took place in Daegu, South Korea, in 2007.
- **Recent Event:** The **IESO 2024 is hosted by Peking University and the University of Chinese Academy of Sciences in Beijing, China, from August 8 to August 16, 2024.**

### Significance of the International Earth Science Olympiad (IESO)

- **Promotes Earth Science Education:** IESO encourages students to deepen their understanding of Earth sciences, fostering a new generation of geoscientists.
- **Enhances Public Awareness:** By highlighting the importance of Earth sciences, IESO raises awareness about environmental issues and the need for sustainable practices.
- **Fosters International Cooperation:** The competition brings together students from various countries, promoting cultural exchange and international friendships.
- **Encourages Scientific Inquiry:** Through theoretical and practical examinations, IESO nurtures critical thinking and problem-solving skills in young learners.
- **Supports Career Development:** Participation in IESO can inspire students to pursue careers in Earth sciences, contributing to advancements in the field.
- **Highlights Global Challenges:** IESO addresses global issues such as climate change, natural disasters, and resource management, emphasizing the role of Earth sciences in finding solutions.

### 13. MULTIDIMENSIONAL VULNERABILITY INDEX

- The **Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI)** is a comprehensive tool developed by the United Nations to assess the vulnerability of countries, particularly small island developing states (SIDS) and other developing nations.
- **Purpose:** It aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of the challenges these countries face, beyond traditional economic indicators.
- The MVI is designed to highlight the unique vulnerabilities of countries that are often overlooked by conventional metrics like GDP per capita.
- It helps in identifying the need for concessional financing and other support mechanisms.
- It helps policymakers identify areas of weakness and prioritize interventions to enhance resilience and sustainable development.
- The index is used by international organizations and donors to allocate resources more effectively, ensuring that aid reaches the most vulnerable populations.

#### Dimensions:

- **Economic Vulnerability:** Includes indicators such as GDP per capita, debt levels, and trade dependency.
- **Environmental Vulnerability:** Factors in exposure to natural disasters, climate change impacts, and biodiversity loss.
- **Social Vulnerability:** Considers health care access, education levels, and income inequality.



SEPTEMBER 2024

## 1. PACIFIC POLICING INITIATIVE (PPI)

## FORUM MEMBERS



❑ The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) has endorsed the Australia-funded **Pacific Policing Initiative (PPI)**, reinforcing regional security and stability while showcasing Australia's support for its Pacific neighbors.

❑ The Australia-funded PPI initiative is a AU\$400 million, five-year program aimed at strengthening policing across the Pacific region.

❑ The PPI focuses on three key areas: **Regional Training Centres** to enhance police training, a **Pacific Police Support Group** for emergency response, and a **Central Coordination Hub** in Brisbane to oversee operations.

❑ **Pacific Islands Forum (PIF)**

❑ PIF is an intergovernmental organization promoting regional cooperation.

❑ Established in 1971 as the **South Pacific Forum** (renamed in 1999).

❑ It comprises **18 members**, including Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, and Papua New Guinea. Its headquarters is in **Suva, Fiji**.

## 2. NAMIBIA



❑ Namibia plans to cull 723 wild animals, including 83 elephants, to address food insecurity and reduce human-wildlife conflicts caused by drought.

❑ Namibia, located in southwestern Africa, borders Angola, Zambia, Botswana, South Africa, and the Atlantic Ocean.

❑ Its climate is arid, with low rainfall and high temperature variability, particularly in the Namib Desert.

❑ Namibia faces severe drought, economic inequality, high unemployment, land degradation, desertification, and a high HIV/AIDS prevalence.

## 3. INDIA- BRUNEI RELATI



❑ Brunei, or Brunei Darussalam, is located on Borneo's northern coast in Southeast Asia.

❑ It is bordered by the South China Sea to the north and surrounded by Malaysia's Sarawak state.

❑ The capital and largest city is Bandar Seri Begawan. It has a coastline of about 161 km along the South China Sea.

❑ **Diplomatic Ties:** Established in 1984, with maintaining mutual high commissions and Sultan Bolkiah's 1992 visit.

❑ **Economic Relations:** Trade in crude oil, textiles, and manpower; investment agreements signed.

❑ **Cultural & People-to-People:** 10,000 Indians in Brunei; cultural exchanges strengthen ties.

- ❑ **Strategic Cooperation:** Defense, security collaboration, and joint participation in the Non-Aligned Movement and Commonwealth.
- ❑ **Recent Developments:** Enhanced Partnership agreement, direct flight between Chennai and Bandar Seri Begawan, and MoUs on satellite cooperation.

#### 4. NIGERIA



- ❑ In Nigeria's northeastern state of Yobe, Boko Haram militants recently killed at least 100 people in retaliation for the community's refusal to pay extortion money.
- ❑ Nigeria, located in West Africa, lies between the Sahel in the north and the Gulf of Guinea in the south.
- ❑ It shares borders with Niger, Chad, Cameroon, and Benin. With over 250 ethnic groups, the Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo are dominant.
- ❑ Nigeria is Africa's most populous country, largest economy, and top oil producer, with a diverse economy spanning agriculture, telecommunications, and services.
- ❑ The Boko Haram insurgency is an ongoing conflict in Nigeria, driven by the militant group Boko Haram, which opposes Westernization and seeks to establish an Islamic state governed by Sharia law. The group's name translates to "Western education is forbidden."

#### 5. INDIA – SINGAPORE BILATERAL RELATIO



- ❑ Prime Minister Modi met Singapore's Lawrence Wong to strengthen bilateral ties.
- ❑ They agreed to elevate their relationship to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.
- ❑ Singapore is a city-state located in maritime Southeast Asia.
- ❑ It lies just north of the equator, at the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula.
- ❑ The country borders the Strait of Malacca to the west, the Singapore Strait to the south, the South China Sea to the east, and Malaysia's Johor state to the north.
- ❑ **Historical Context**
  - ❑ **Colonial Era:** Relationship began in 1819 with Sir Stamford Raffles' trading station.
  - ❑ **Post-Independence:** Strong ties with regular engagement.
- ❑ **Economic Relations**
  - ❑ **Trade:** CECA (2005) boosted trade and investment.
  - ❑ **FDI:** Singapore is India's largest FDI source.
- ❑ **Strategic and Defence Cooperation**
  - ❑ **Partnership:** Upgraded to a Strategic Partnership in 2015.
  - ❑ **Defence:** Joint military exercises focusing on maritime security.
- ❑ **Recent Developments**
  - ❑ **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership:** Recently elevated.
  - ❑ **MoUs:** Signed on digital tech, semiconductors, health, and skill development.

## ❓ Cultural Ties

- ❓ **Cultural Exchange:** Thiruvalluvar Cultural Centre opening.
- ❓ **Diaspora:** Significant Indian community enhancing exchanges.

## ❓ Geopolitical Significance

- ❓ **Indo-Pacific:** Shared vision for peace and stability.
- ❓ **ASEAN:** Key for India's Act East Policy.

## 6. TAPI PIPELINE



❓ Afghanistan has announced the start of a \$10 billion gas pipeline project across South Asia, with completion marked in Turkmenistan. The TAPI (Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India) pipeline aims to transport natural gas from Turkmenistan to India, passing through Afghanistan and Pakistan.

❓ Length: 1,814 km  
Capacity: 33 bcm of natural gas per year  
Route: From Turkmenistan's Galkynysh gas field to Fazilka in

India

- ❓ Launched in December 2015, the pipeline is expected to be operational for 30 years. Despite delays due to security concerns in Afghanistan, it is seen as a key economic and political project. The pipeline will boost regional energy security and strengthen ties between the involved countries.

## 7. INDUS-X SUMMIT

- ❓ The third edition of the INDUS-X Summit recently concluded in the U.S. The India-U.S. Defense Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X) was launched in June 2023 to strengthen technology and defense cooperation between the two nations.
- ❓ **Key Objectives:**
- ❓ **Innovation Bridge:** Fosters partnerships between U.S. and Indian defense companies, incubators, investors, and universities.
- ❓ **Joint Challenges:** The U.S. DoD's DIU and India's iDEX design challenges to develop commercial tech for defense.
- ❓ **INDUS-X Gurukul:** A series of hybrid sessions for defense start-ups on topics like capital, export controls, and partnerships.
- ❓ **Workshops:** Organized by FedTech and IIT Hyderabad to guide start-ups on defense tech transfer, licensing, and research.
- ❓ **Mentor-Protégé Partnerships:** U.S. and Indian firms mentor start-ups on market access, strategy, and technology.
- ❓ **Accelerator Programs:** Includes initiatives like Hacking for Allies (H4x) and collaborations with IIT Hyderabad to support tech commercialization.
- ❓ The initiative is led by iDEX and DIU to advance defense innovation.

## 8. INDUS WATERS TREATY (IWT)

Division of rivers as per Indus Waters Treaty

Eastern rivers to India: Sutlej, Beas, Ravi  
Western rivers to Pakistan: Chenab, Jhelum and Indus



❑ The Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) was signed in 1960, allocating control of the rivers as follows:

- ❑ India controls the Eastern Rivers (Beas, Ravi, Sutlej).
- ❑ Pakistan controls the Western Rivers (Indus, Chenab, Jhelum).
- ❑ India must allow Western River waters to flow to Pakistan.
- ❑ The treaty established the Permanent Indus Commission for dispute resolution.
- ❑ India uses 30% of the water, while Pakistan uses 70%, with India's upstream position giving it a strategic advantage.
- ❑ In 2017, India's Kishanganga and Ratle hydroelectric projects raised concerns from Pakistan.
- ❑ In August 2024, India sought a review of the treaty, citing changes in population, environmental issues, and cross-border terrorism.

## 9. COMPREHENSIVE TEST BAN TREATY (CTBT)

- ❑ The **Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)**, adopted by the UN in 1996, bans all nuclear explosions globally.
- ❑ **Status:** 187 signatories, 178 ratified. It will take effect once 44 key countries ratify it.
- ❑ **Provisions:** Bans nuclear explosions and establishes a verification regime.
- ❑ **Non-Ratifying Countries:** China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan, and the U.S.
- ❑ The **Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO)** ensures compliance via:
- ❑ **Monitoring:** 337 facilities worldwide use seismic and other methods.
- ❑ **Data Centre:** Analyzes data for nuclear explosions.
- ❑ **Inspections:** Verify potential violations.

## 10. SIXTH QUAD LEADERS' SUMMIT

- ❑ Prime Minister Modi attended the **sixth Quad Leaders' Summit** in Wilmington, Delaware.
- ❑ The **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad)**, formed by Japan, India, the US, and Australia in 2007, focuses on regional security and economic cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.
- ❑ **Key Takeaways from the Summit:**
  - ❑ The **Wilmington Declaration** condemned South China Sea militarization and addressed the global impact of the Ukraine war.
  - ❑ Announced the **Cancer Moonshot** initiative to combat cervical cancer in the Indo-Pacific.
  - ❑ Planned initiatives include the **2025 Quad Foreign Ministers' meeting (US)**, **Quad Leaders' Summit (India)**, **Quad-at-Sea Ship Observer Mission**, **MAITRI Maritime Initiative**, and a **Quad Indo-Pacific Logistics Network** pilot project.

## 11. INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK FOR PROSPERITY (IPEF)

- ❑ India signed agreements under the **U.S.-led IPEF**, a 14-nation initiative launched in **May 2022** to boost economic ties and counter China's influence in the **Indo-Pacific**.
- ❑ **Key Pillars**
  - ❑ **Trade:** Promotes fair trade, digital economy, and labor rights.
  - ❑ **Supply Chain:** Strengthens resilience for critical goods.



- ❑ **Clean Economy:** Advances green energy and sustainability.
- ❑ **Fair Economy:** Enhances tax transparency and anti-corruption.

#### ❑ **Members**

- ❑ Australia, Brunei, Fiji, **India**, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, **U.S.**, Vietnam.

### 12. ALLIANCE OF SMALL ISLAND STATES (AOSIS)

- ❑ AOSIS is an **intergovernmental group** formed in **1990** to represent **Small Island Developing States (SIDS)** in **climate change** and **sustainable development** discussions.
- ❑ **Key Objectives**
  - ❑ Advocate for SIDS' climate vulnerabilities (e.g., sea level rise).
  - ❑ Support **SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA Pathway)** for sustainable growth.
  - ❑ Promote **ocean conservation** efforts.
- ❑ **Membership**
  - ❑ AOSIS includes **Caribbean, Pacific, and Indian Ocean nations**, with members ranging from **developed** (e.g., Singapore) to **Least Developed Countries** (e.g., Haiti).
  - Members:** Bahamas, Barbados, Fiji, Kiribati, Maldives, Seychelles, Mauritius, Singapore.

### 13. L.69

- ❑ The L.69 Group is a coalition of 32 developing countries from Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, and the Pacific, advocating for United Nations Security Council (UNSC) reforms.
- ❑ **Formation:** Formed to push for a more representative and accountable UNSC, it calls for expanding both permanent and non-permanent memberships. The group's name comes from the "L.69" draft tabled in 2007-08, initiating the Intergovernmental Negotiation (IGN) process.
- ❑ **Members:**
  - ❑ **Africa:** Nigeria, South Africa, Ethiopia, etc.
  - ❑ **Latin America & Caribbean:** Brazil, Bolivia, Jamaica, etc.
  - ❑ **Asia & Pacific:** India, Bangladesh, Maldives, etc.
- ❑ **Objectives:**
  - ❑ **Expand Membership:** Increase representation of developing nations.
  - ❑ **Veto Power:** Reform veto powers for a more democratic UNSC.
  - ❑ The Mission of India acts as the Secretariat for the group's meetings.

### 14. UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL (UNSC)

- ❑ **British PM Keir Starmer Backs India's Bid for a Permanent UNSC Seat**
- ❑ The **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)** is one of the six principal organs of the UN, responsible for maintaining **international peace and security**. It holds authority to **impose sanctions, authorize military action, and enforce binding resolutions**.
- ❑ **UNSC Composition:**
  - ❑ **Permanent Members (P5):** U.S., U.K., Russia, China, France (with veto power).
  - ❑ **Non-permanent Members (10):** Elected for two-year terms, distributed as follows:
    - **Africa & Asia** – 5 seats
    - **Latin America & Caribbean** – 2 seats
    - **Western Europe & others** – 2 seats
    - **Eastern Europe** – 1 seat

○ **Functions & Powers:**

- ❑ **Maintaining Peace:** Preventing conflicts and resolving disputes.
- ❑ **Sanctions & Military Action:** Imposing sanctions and authorizing force if needed.
- ❑ **Peacekeeping:** Deploying UN peacekeeping missions.
- ❑ **Conflict Mediation:** Facilitating diplomatic negotiations.

❑ **Decision-Making:**

- ❑ Requires **9 out of 15 votes**, but a **P5 veto blocks any decision**.
- ❑ **Resolutions are binding** on all UN members, unlike General Assembly decisions.

❑ **India & the UNSC:**

- ❑ **Elected 8 times as a non-permanent member**, most recently (2021-2022).
- ❑ Advocates for **multilateralism, counter-terrorism, and UNSC reform**.

OCTOBER 2024

**1.ORGANISATION (SCO)**

- ❑ **Established:** 2001
- Predecessor:** Shanghai Five (1996) – China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan.



**Formation:** Expanded in 2001 with **Uzbekistan**.

**Members:** 10 (India, Pakistan joined in 2017; Iran in 2023; Belarus in 2024).

? **Objectives**

- ? Strengthen **trust, friendship, and cooperation** among member states.
- ? Promote collaboration in **politics, economy, security, science, culture, and trade**.
- ? Ensure **peace, stability, and security** in the region.
- ? Advocate a **fair and democratic international order**.

? **Core Principles ("Shanghai Spirit")**

- ? **Mutual trust, equality, respect for diversity, and common development.**
- ? **Non-alignment, openness, and non-targeting of any country.**

? **Structure**

- ? **Council of Heads of State (CHS):** Supreme decision-making body, meets annually.
- ? **Council of Heads of Government (CHG):** Discusses cooperation strategies, budget, and economic policies.
- ? **Other Councils:** Cover foreign affairs, security, trade, education, health, and transport.
- ? **Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS):** Based in **Tashkent**, combats terrorism, extremism, and cyber threats.
- ? **Official Languages:** Russian and Chinese.

## 2. UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND (UNFPA)

- ? The **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)** has recognized **India's progress** in **Maternal Health and Family Planning**.

? **About UNFPA:**

- ? **Founded in 1969**, it focuses on **reproductive and maternal health**.
- ? **Headquartered in New York**, it promotes the **1994 ICPD Programme of Action**.
- ? Publishes the **State of World Population Report** annually.
- ? Funded by **voluntary contributions** from governments and private entities.

? **Key Focus Areas:**

- ? Reproductive health & family planning.
- ? Gender equality & prevention of gender-based violence.
- ? Population data for policymaking.
- ? Youth health & reproductive education.

? **Goals by 2030:**

- ? Universal access to family planning.
- ? Zero preventable maternal deaths.
- ? End gender-based violence and harmful practices.

## 3. UNICEF

- ? **Founded:** 1946 to aid children affected by World War II.

**Became Permanent:** 1953, renamed **United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)**.

**Headquarters:** New York City, USA.

**Nobel Peace Prize:** Awarded in 1965.

? **Mandate**

UNICEF focuses on **child survival, development, and protection**. It upholds **children's rights** as per the **Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)**.

#### Key Activities

**Healthcare** – Provides immunizations, nutrition, and medical care.

**Education** – Ensures access to quality education.

**Protection** – Advocates against violence, exploitation, and abuse.

**Emergency Response** – Aids children and families during crises.

#### Funding & Reports

**Funded by** voluntary contributions from governments, individuals, and corporations.

**Key Report:** *The State of the World's Children* – Analyzes global child welfare.

### 4. INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION (IPU)

The **IPU** is the global organization of **national parliaments**, founded in **1889** as the world's first **multilateral political body** to foster international cooperation and dialogue.

#### Headquarters & Membership

Based in **Geneva, Switzerland**.

Comprises **180 national parliaments** and **15 regional parliamentary bodies**.

#### Objectives

Strengthening **democracy** and **parliamentary institutions**.

Promoting **youth engagement, gender equality, innovation, and sustainability**.

#### Motto & Vision

**Slogan:** *For democracy. For everyone.*

**Vision:** A world where **every voice counts**, and parliaments serve **peace and development**.

#### Mission

IPU supports **democratic governance, human rights, gender equality, youth empowerment, climate action, and sustainable development** through **political dialogue and parliamentary cooperation**.

### 5. FIVE EYES

The **Five Eyes** is an **intelligence-sharing alliance** comprising the **U.S., U.K., Canada, Australia, and New Zealand**.

#### Origins & Evolution

**Formed during WWII** for **signals intelligence (SIGINT)** sharing.

Based on the **UKUSA Agreement (1946)** between the U.S. and U.K.



**Expanded:** Canada (1948), Australia & New Zealand (1956).

#### Key Features

**Intelligence Sharing:** Covers **military, political, security, and cyber intelligence**.

**Focus Shift:** Initially on **Soviet Union (Cold War)**; now targets **terrorism, cybercrime, and espionage**.

**Technology & Surveillance:** Operates **advanced SIGINT infrastructure** for global security monitoring.

#### Current Role

- ? Addresses **nuclear threats, cybersecurity, and terrorism**.
- ? Conducts **joint surveillance operations** to counter evolving global threats.

## 6. FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION (FAO)

- ? **Established:** 16 October 1945, as a **UN specialized agency**.
- ? **Headquarters:** Rome, Italy.
- ? **Objective:** Leads global efforts to **combat hunger**, enhance **nutrition**, and promote **sustainable agriculture**.
- ? **Key Mandates**
  - ? **Food Security:** Ensuring access to food for all.
  - ? **Nutrition & Living Standards:** Improving global health and well-being.
  - ? **Sustainable Agriculture:** Managing **land, water, climate, and genetic resources** responsibly.
- ? **Major Initiatives**
  - ? **Hand-in-Hand Initiative:** Targets **poverty and hunger** eradication.
  - ? **GIAHS (Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems):** Recognizes **traditional farming systems**.
  - ? **SOFI Report (State of Food Security & Nutrition in the World):** Tracks global hunger trends.
- ? **Membership & Reports**
  - ? **Members:** 195 (194 countries + **European Union**).
- ? **Key Reports:**
  - o State of World Fisheries & Aquaculture
  - o State of Food & Agriculture
  - o Global Forest Resources Assessment (GFRA)

## 7. COMPREHENSIVE NUCLEAR-TEST-BAN TREATY ORGANIZATION (CTBTO)

- ? The **Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO)** was established under the **Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)**, adopted by the **UN General Assembly in 1996**. The CTBT bans all nuclear test explosions, everywhere, by everyone, forever.
- ? **Key Details**
  - ? The **Treaty** has **187 Signatories** and **178 ratifying states**, but **9 more ratifications** are needed from the **44 Annex 2 states** for it to enter into force.
  - ? **Headquarters:** Vienna, Austria.
  - ? **Verification System:** The CTBTO uses an **International Monitoring System (IMS)** with:
    - o **Seismic stations** for underground tests.
    - o **Hydroacoustic sensors** for underwater tests.
    - o **Infrasound sensors** for atmospheric tests.
    - o **Radionuclide stations** for nuclear particles in the air.
  - o India has **not signed or ratified** the CTBT and is **not a member** of the CTBTO. Initially involved in negotiations, India later **walked away**, citing the Treaty's **discriminatory** format.

## 8. WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (WFP)

- ? The **World Food Programme (WFP)** is the world's largest humanitarian organization focused on hunger and food security. Established in **1961**, it operates in over **120 countries**, providing food aid. Its headquarters is in **Rome**.
- ? **Key Aspects of WFP**

- ❓ **Mission:** WFP aims to save lives in emergencies and help rebuild peace, stability, and prosperity for those recovering from conflict, disasters, and climate change.
- ❓ **Operations:** Includes emergency relief, resilience building, nutrition support, and school programs.
- ❓ **Funding:** WFP relies on **voluntary donations** from governments, corporations, and individuals.
- ❓ **Recognition:** In **2020**, WFP won the **Nobel Peace Prize** for its work on hunger and peace.

#### 9. UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (UNRWA)

- ❓ **UNRWA** was established by the **UN General Assembly** to serve **Palestine refugees** — those displaced during the 1948 conflict and their descendants. It also provides emergency aid to others displaced by the **1967 conflict** and later hostilities.
- ❓ Founded on **May 1, 1950**, **UNRWA** operates in **Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan**, serving about **5.9 million refugees**.
- ❓ It is mainly funded through **voluntary contributions** from donors like the **U.S., Germany**, and the **EU**, with some administrative costs covered by the **UN**.
- ❓ **Israel** has accused some **UNRWA** employees in Gaza of involvement in the **October 7, 2023** attacks by **Hamas**. **UNRWA** fired nine employees but denies supporting armed groups, sharing its employee lists with Israel.

## NOVEMBER 2024

### 1. CHALO INDIA CAMPAIGN

- ❓ **Overview:**
  - ❓ Launched by the **Ministry of Tourism** during the **World Travel Mart (WTM)** in London.
  - ❓ Aims to **boost foreign tourist arrivals**, which have not yet recovered to **pre-pandemic levels**.
- ❓ **Key Features:**
  - ❓ **First-of-its-kind initiative** to attract foreign tourists.
  - ❓ Allows **OCI cardholders** to nominate **five foreign friends** for a **free e-visa** via a special portal.
  - ❓ Once verified, nominees receive a **unique code** to avail the visa.
  - ❓ The scheme is capped at **one lakh free e-visas**.
- ❓ **Significance:**
  - ❓ Encourages **diaspora engagement** to promote Indian tourism.

- Targets key markets like the **UK**, which has **1.9 million** Indian diaspora and is the **third-largest** inbound source.
- Showcases India's **cultural diversity** and **tourism experiences** at **WTM London**.

## 2. ASIA-PACIFIC ECONOMIC COOPERATION (APEC)



- Established:** 1989
- Purpose:** Promote economic growth, trade, and investment in the Asia-Pacific.
- Members:** **21 economies**, including the USA, China, Japan, Russia, and Australia.
- India:** Not a member but has expressed interest.
- Objectives:**
  - Free Trade & Investment:** Encourage open markets in the region.
  - Economic Cooperation:** Support sustainable growth and regional development.
  - Connectivity:** Enhance trade, human resource

development, and infrastructure.

- Principles:**
  - Non-binding Commitments:** Decisions are made by consensus.
  - Voluntary Implementation:** No enforcement mechanism.
- Significance:**
  - Contributes 60% of global GDP** and **47% of world trade**.
- Key Initiatives:**
  - APEC Business Travel Card (ABTC):** Eases business travel with visa-free entry.
  - APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting:** Annual summit for economic policy discussions.
  - APEC CEO Summit:** Platform for business leaders to explore trade opportunities.
  - Women and the Economy Forum:** Promotes women's leadership and economic participation.

## 3. BASIC COUNTRIES



- Members:** Brazil, South Africa, India, and China
- Formation:** November 28, 2009
- Purpose:** To jointly advocate for developing nations in climate change negotiations, particularly at **COP15 (Copenhagen Summit)**
- Key Features**
  - Common Stance:** Supports emission reductions and climate funding.
- Copenhagen Accord:** Played a key role in negotiating the agreement with the U.S.
- UNFCCC Representation:** Acts as a unified voice at **UN climate conferences (COP)**.
- Significance**
  - Global Impact:** Covers **one-third of the world's land** and **40% of its population**.
  - Economic Power:** Influential emerging economies in global discussions.



- ? **Climate Advocacy:** Promotes **CBDR-RC**, emphasizing greater responsibility for developed nations due to historical emissions.

#### 4. 3ZERO CLUB

- ? **Launch:** Initiated by **Professor Muhammad Yunus** and **Pope Francis** on **November 16, 2024, in Rome**.
- ? **Reach:** Over **4,600 clubs worldwide**, many in universities.
- ? **Mission:** Build an **inclusive and sustainable** future through:
  - ? **Zero Poverty:** Ensuring basic needs and opportunities for all.
  - ? **Zero Unemployment:** Creating sustainable jobs.
  - ? **Zero Net Carbon Emissions:** Reducing environmental impact.
- ? **Key Features:**
  - ? **Youth Empowerment:** Encourages young innovators, especially from marginalized communities.
  - ? **Global Collaboration:** Unites efforts across countries, generations, and sectors.

#### 5. TSUNAMI READY



- ? **Developed by:** *Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO.*
- ? **Goal:** Strengthen **community resilience** against tsunamis through preparedness and awareness.
- ? Twenty-four coastal villages in Odisha were recognised by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO as Tsunami Ready.
- ? **Objectives:**
  - ? **Community Preparedness:** Enhance coastal readiness for tsunamis.
  - ? **Risk Mitigation:** Reduce loss of life, livelihoods, and property.
  - ? **Awareness & Education:** Inform communities about tsunami risks and safety measures.
- ? **Key Features:**
  - ? **12 Indicators:** Communities must meet specific criteria in **assessment, preparedness, and response** to qualify.
  - ? **Voluntary Programme:** Encourages **collaboration** among warning agencies, governments, scientists, and the public.
  - ? **Renewable Status:** Recognition is **valid for four years** and requires periodic reassessment.

#### 6. CHENNAI-VLADIVOSTOK EASTERN MARITIME CORRIDOR



- ? **Strategic Route:** Connects **India's southeast coast** to **Russia's Far East**.
- ? **Distance:** ~5,600 nautical miles (**10,300 km**).
- ? **Operational:** Since **late 2023**, boosting **India-Russia trade**.
- ? **Objectives:**
  - ? **Faster Trade:** Cuts **cargo transport time** from **40+ days** to **~24 days**.
  - ? **Economic Growth:** Strengthens **bilateral trade and cooperation**.
- ? **Key Features:**



- ❓ **Cargo Transport:** Ships **crude oil, metals, textiles, and machinery**.
- ❓ **Port Connectivity:** Links **Chennai, Paradip, and Vizag** for better access.
- ❓ **Economic Impact:** Creates **new trade opportunities** for both nations.

## 7. FOSSIL FUEL NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY (FF - NPT)

- ❓ A global campaign to address the climate crisis by legally binding nations to end fossil fuel extraction, phase out production, and transition to renewable energy.
- ❓ **Three Pillars:**
  - ❓ **Non-Proliferation:** Stop the expansion of coal, oil, and gas production.
  - ❓ **Fair Phase-Out:** Ensure an equitable plan where high-emission nations transition fastest while supporting others.
  - ❓ **Just Transition:** Promote renewable energy and economic diversification, leaving no worker, community, or country behind.
- ❓ **Support & Endorsements:**
  - ❓ **Small Island Developing States:** 13 nations, including Vanuatu, Tuvalu, Fiji, and the Solomon Islands, have endorsed FF-NPT.
  - ❓ **Colombia:** A major coal producer, endorsed the treaty at **COP28 (Dec 2023)**.
  - ❓ **COP29 (Baku):** 10 more countries joined discussions, though names remain undisclosed.
  - ❓ **Financial Support:** A network of **70 sustainable banks** (Global Alliance for Banking on Values) saw **25 members** endorse FF-NPT—the first collective backing by financial institutions.

## 8. INTERPOL & NOTICES

**Headquarters:** Lyon, France.  
**Function:** Facilitates global police cooperation against crimes like **terrorism, human trafficking, cybercrime, and organized crime**.  
**India's Representation:** Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is the nodal agency.

- ❓ **Types of Interpol Notices:**
  - ❓ **Red Notice:** Seeks arrest and extradition of fugitives.
  - ❓ **Blue Notice:** Gathers additional details on a person's identity, location, or activities.
  - ❓ **Green Notice:** Warns about criminal activities posing public threats.
  - ❓ **Yellow Notice:** Locates missing persons or identifies those unable to identify themselves.



- ❓ **Black Notice:** Seeks information on unidentified bodies.
- ❓ **Orange Notice:** Alerts about potential threats from weapons, explosives, or criminal tactics.
- ❓ **Purple Notice:** Shares intelligence on criminal methods, devices, or concealment tactics.
- ❓ **Interpol-UNSC Special Notice:** Issued for individuals/entities under **UN Security Council sanctions** (e.g., asset freeze, travel ban, arms embargo).

## 9. GLOBAL ALLIANCE AGAINST HUNGER AND POVERTY

- ? **Launch:** Officially introduced at the **G20 Leaders' Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil**.
- ? **Objective:** Accelerate efforts to **eradicate hunger and poverty** while promoting **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.
- ? **Key Highlights**
  - ? **Members:** 148 total, including **82 countries, the African Union, the EU, 24 international organizations, 9 financial institutions, and 31 NGOs**.
  - ? **Founding Members:** Brazil and Bangladesh were the first to join, followed by **all G20 nations** and other global entities.
  - ? **Independent Platform:** Aims to eliminate **hunger and poverty by 2030**.
- ? **Three Pillars of the Alliance**
  - ? **National:** Coordination of **public policies** for effective action.
  - ? **Knowledge:** Integration of **data and technology** for evidence-based solutions.
  - ? **Financial:** Large-scale **resource mobilization** for impact.
- ? **Operational Aspects**
  - ? **Technical HQ:** Hosted at **FAO** with **functional autonomy**.
  - ? **Summits & Oversight:** Plans to **hold regular Summits Against Hunger and Poverty** and establish a **High-Level Champions Council** for governance.

## 10. CARICOM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi proposed seven key pillars to strengthen India-CARICOM ties at the second India-CARICOM Summit in Guyana.

- ? The **Caribbean Community (CARICOM)** is an intergovernmental organization promoting economic integration and cooperation among **15 member states** and **5 associate members** in the Caribbean.

### ? Purpose:

- ? **Economic Integration:** Strengthen trade and cooperation among members.
- ? **Equitable Benefits:** Ensure fair distribution of integration benefits.
- ? **Coordination:** Align foreign policy and regional security efforts.
- ? **Key Objectives:**
  - ? **Trade:** Enable free movement of goods, services, and capital.
  - ? **Development:** Promote sustainable growth and poverty reduction.



- ? **Security:** Enhance regional stability and safety.
- ? **Members:**
  - ? **Full Members (15):** Includes Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago, and others.
  - ? **Associate Members (5):** Includes Anguilla, Bermuda, and Curaçao.

## 11. GELEPHU MINDFULNESS CITY



❓ **Bhutan is developing Gelephu Mindfulness City (GMC),** an ambitious urban project envisioned by **King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck**. It will be a **Special Administrative Region (SAR)** with independent rules and legal autonomy.

❓ **Key Features:**

❓ **Strategic Location** – Situated in **Gelephu, south-central Bhutan**, covering **2,500+ sq km**.

- ❓ **Economic Corridor** – Aims to link **South Asia, Southeast Asia, and China** for regional trade.
- ❓ **Zero Carbon City** – Designed as a **sustainable, eco-friendly urban hub**.
- ❓ **Advanced Infrastructure** – Includes **inhabitable bridges, an international airport, and healthcare facilities** blending Western and traditional medicine.
- ❓ **Protected Areas** – Incorporates a **national park and a wildlife sanctuary**.
- ❓ **Vision & Values:**
  - ❓ **Mindfulness & Sustainability** – Integrates **economic growth with holistic and conscious living**.
  - ❓ **Gross National Happiness (GNH)** – Aligned with Bhutan's philosophy of **well-being over GDP**.
  - ❓ **Buddhist Heritage** – Inspired by Bhutan's **spiritual and cultural traditions**.
  - ❓ **Business Screening** – Only businesses **respecting Bhutan's sustainability and sovereignty** will be invited.
- ❓ GMC is a **first-of-its-kind project**, blending **economic progress with mindfulness and sustainability**.

## DECEMBER 2024

## 1. UNITED NATIONS ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS (UNAOC) AND CASCAIS DECLARATION

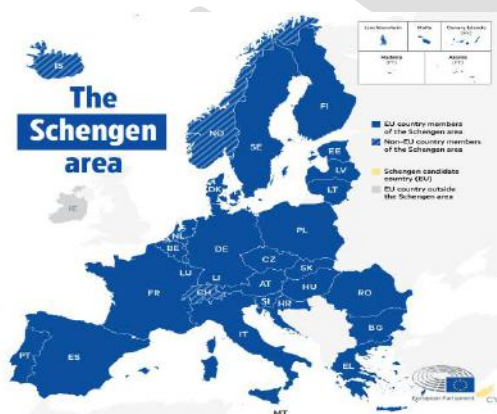
- ❓ The **10th Global Forum** of the **United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)**, held in **Cascais, Portugal** brought together participants from **150+ countries**.
- ❓ The forum adopted the **Cascais Declaration**, a commitment to **advancing peace amid global conflicts**.
- ❓ **United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)**
  - ❓ **Founded in 2005** by then-UN Secretary-General **Kofi Annan**, co-sponsored by **Spain and Turkey**.
  - ❓ **Objective** – Fosters **understanding and cooperation** among nations, cultures, and religions to counter extremism and polarization.
  - ❓ **Mission** – Promotes **international, intercultural, and interreligious dialogue** for peace.
  - ❓ **Key Focus Areas** – **Education, Youth, Migration, Media, and Women as Peace Mediators**.
  - ❓ **Global Forums** – Brings together leaders, policymakers, and civil society to **discuss intercultural dialogue**.
  - ❓ **Programs** – Runs initiatives like the **Intercultural Innovation Hub, UNAOC Fellowship Program, and Youth Solidarity Fund** to strengthen cross-cultural understanding.
- ❓ **Cascais Declaration**
  - ❓ **Core Themes** – Strengthens **intercultural and interreligious dialogue**, combats **hate speech, misinformation, and disinformation**, and explores **AI for peace promotion**.

- ? **Action Plan** – Includes **sports diplomacy**, **empowering women as mediators**, and **fostering intergenerational dialogue** for peace and sustainability.
- ? **Global Commitment** – **World leaders unanimously pledged** to **fight religious intolerance** and support **inclusive, quality education**.

## 2. WORLD MEDITATION DAY

- ? **UNGA Declaration: December 21** is now recognized as **World Meditation Day**.
- ? **Introduced by:** **Liechtenstein**, co-sponsored by **India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Mexico, Andorra**, and others.
- ? **India's Role:** Reinforces India's leadership in **global wellness initiatives**.
- ? **Significance of December 21**
- ? **Winter Solstice:** Marks the **shortest day and longest night** of the year.
- ? **Indian Tradition:** Aligns with **Uttarayana**, a spiritually significant period for inner reflection.
- ? **Balanced Placement:** Complements **International Yoga Day (June 21)**, creating a **six-month interval** between two wellness observances.
- ? **Winter Solstice: Astronomical Importance**
- ? **Date:** Occurs around **December 21–22** in the **Northern Hemisphere** and **June 20–21** in the **Southern Hemisphere**.
- ? **Earth's Tilt:** The **23.5° tilt** causes the **North Pole** to lean **farthest from the Sun**.
- ? **Sun's Position:** The **Tropic of Capricorn (23.5°S latitude)** receives direct sunlight.
- ? **Cultural & Historical Relevance in India**
- ? **Agricultural Link:** Connected to **Makar Sankranti (January)**, marking the **Sun's northward journey (Uttarayana)**.
- ? **Ancient References:** Indian texts like **Surya Siddhanta** mention solstices for **calendrical calculations** and **temple alignments**.

## 3. SCHENGEN AREA



- ? From next month, **Romania & Bulgaria** will become full members of the **Schengen free-travel area**.
- ? Despite Schengen's promise of **free movement**, some countries like **Germany & the Netherlands** have reinforced border controls due to illegal immigration concerns.
- ? **Schengen Area Overview**
- ? **Established:** March 26, 1995.
- ? **Members:** 29 countries (25 EU nations + 4 non-EU: **Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland**).
- ? **Key Features**

- ? **No Border Checks:** Citizens can travel freely within Schengen without passport control.
- ? **Single Visa Policy:** A Schengen visa allows entry to multiple countries.
- ? **External Border Security:** Unified control ensures safety while allowing free movement.

### ? **Significance**

- ? **Boosts Economy:** Facilitates trade & tourism.
- ? **Encourages Cultural Exchange:** Strengthens ties between nations.
- ? **Enhances Security:** Coordinated external border policies ensure safety.

#### 4. COMPREHENSIVE AND PROGRESSIVE AGREEMENT FOR TRANS-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP

- ❑ **CPTPP (Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership)** is a free trade pact among **12 Pacific Rim countries**: Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, Vietnam, and the UK.
- ❑ **Global Impact**: Represents **14.4% of global GDP** (~\$15.8 trillion).
- ❑ **Origins**:
  - ❑ Evolved from **TPP**, initially led by the **U.S.**
  - ❑ After **U.S. withdrawal (2017)**, the remaining nations **renegotiated and signed CPTPP in 2018**.
- ❑ **Key Features**:
  - ❑ **Trade Liberalization**: Reduces **tariffs and barriers** for smoother trade.
  - ❑ **Regulatory Standards**: Ensures **high labor, environmental, and IP protection**.
  - ❑ **Economic Integration**: Strengthens **cooperation and collective economic power**.
- ❑ **Benefits**:
  - ❑ **Market Access**: Expands **trade and investment opportunities**.
  - ❑ **Economic Growth**: Boosts **trade and investment flows**.
  - ❑ **Strategic Influence**: Strengthens presence in the **Asia-Pacific** to balance global economic powers.

#### 5. FREE MOVEMENT REGIME (FMR)



- ❑ The **Union Home Ministry** has introduced **new protocols** to regulate movement along the **India-Myanmar border**, reducing the **free movement range from 16 km to 10 km**.
- ❑ The decision aims to **enhance internal security** and **maintain demographic balance** in the Northeast.
- ❑ The **Assam Rifles** is the primary force guarding the **1,643-km border** spanning **Arunachal Pradesh (520 km), Nagaland (215 km), Manipur (398 km), and Mizoram (510 km)**.
- ❑ **Genesis of the Free Movement Regime (FMR)**
  - ❑ Originates from **British colonial rule** in the **late 19th century**, allowing **unrestricted border movement**.
- ❑ After **India's independence (1947)** and **Myanmar's (1948)**, a revised **bilateral agreement in 1967** continued the practice.
- ❑ In **2018**, under **India's Act East Policy**, the **FMR was formalized**, permitting **visa-free travel up to 16 km** for border residents.
- ❑ The FMR allows **easy cross-border movement for social and economic activities**.
- ❑ **New Protocols for Border Movement**
  - ❑ **Mandatory Reporting**: Myanmar nationals must report at **designated border crossing points** and fill a form.
  - ❑ **Security & Health Checks**: **Assam Rifles** inspects documents, while **State police and health officials** conduct security and health screenings.
  - ❑ **Biometric Registration**: Details are uploaded to the **Indo-Myanmar Border portal**, with a **border pass issued (QR code & photo included)**.
  - ❑ **Limited Stay**: The pass is **valid for seven days** and must be **returned at the same crossing point** before expiry.
  - ❑ **Enforcement Measures**: **Police will verify visitor details**, and any **violation will lead to legal action**.



- These changes **tighten border security** while maintaining **controlled cross-border movement**.

## 6. EXERCISE SURYA KIRAN

### **Key Details**

- The **Indian Army contingent** left for **Nepal** to participate in the **18th edition** of **Exercise Surya Kiran**.
- The **joint military exercise** will be held in **Saljhandi, Nepal**, from **December 31, 2024**, to **January 13, 2025**.

### **About Exercise Surya Kiran**

- Annual bilateral exercise** between the **Indian and Nepalese armies**.
- Conducted **alternately in India and Nepal**.
- Focuses on **jungle warfare, counter-terrorism in mountainous terrain**, and **Humanitarian Assistance & Disaster Relief (HADR)** under the **United Nations Charter**.



## JANUARY 2025

## 1. H-1B VISA

- ? The **H-1B visa** allows **U.S. employers** to hire **highly skilled immigrant workers** for jobs requiring **at least a bachelor's degree**, as per the **U.S. Department of Labor**.
- ? **Key Features**
  - ? **Employer-Sponsored:** A **U.S. employer** must file the petition.
  - ? **Established in 1990:** Aims to fill skill gaps in the U.S. workforce.
  - ? **Validity:** Initially issued for up to **six years**. After this, the visa holder must either leave for **at least 12 months** or apply for a **Green Card**.
- ? **Indian Dominance in H-1B Approvals**
  - ? **Indians are the largest beneficiaries**, receiving **over 70% of approved petitions** annually since 2015.
  - ? **Chinese applicants** come second, accounting for **12-13%** since 2018.

## 2. FUTURE OF JOBS REPORT

- **Published by the World Economic Forum (WEF)**, analyzing global job trends, emerging professions, and evolving skill demands.
- Based on insights from **1,000+ global employers**, covering **14 million workers** across **22 industries** and **55 economies**.
- ? **Key Findings**
  - ? **Job Disruption & Growth**
    - **Net Job Growth: 78 million** new jobs globally by **2030** (170 million created, 92 million displaced).
    - **22% of current jobs** will undergo **major changes**, especially roles with **routine manual tasks** like clerical and secretarial work.
  - ? **Fastest-Growing Jobs**
    - **Big Data Professionals** – Critical for extracting insights from massive data growth.
    - **AI & Machine Learning Experts** – High demand as AI transforms industries like healthcare and finance.
    - **FinTech Engineers** – Key to blockchain, cryptocurrency, and digital finance innovations.
    - **Security Management Experts** – Essential due to increasing cyber threats.
    - **Software & App Developers** – Needed for cloud computing, cybersecurity, and mobile tech expansion.

## 3. DIEGO GARCIA



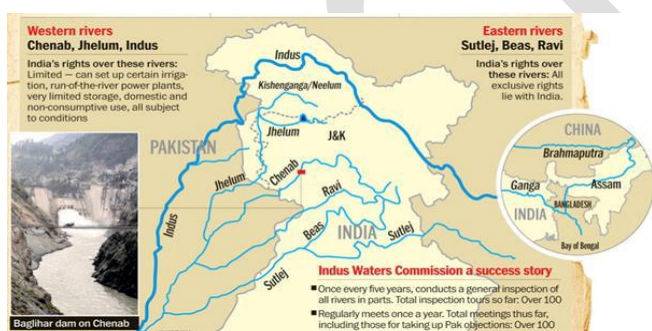
- ? **Diego Garcia** is a **coral atoll** in the **Chagos Archipelago**, forming the **largest and southernmost part** of the **British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT)**.
- ? It houses a **UK-US joint military base**, serving as a **logistical hub** for **Indo-Pacific operations**.
- ? **Location:**
  - ? **3,535 km east of Tanzania**
  - ? **2,984 km east-southeast of Somalia**
  - ? **726 km south of the Maldives**
- ? Positioned along **key trade routes** between **Asia and Africa**, enhancing its **strategic significance**.
- ? **Sovereignty Dispute:**

- ? Claimed by **Mauritius**, which asserts **ownership over the Chagos Archipelago**.
- ? In **October 2024**, the **UK agreed to transfer sovereignty** to **Mauritius** while retaining a **long-term lease** for the military base.

#### 4. WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

- ? **Founded:** 1971 by Klaus Schwab as the **European Management Forum**.
- ? **Headquarters:** Geneva, Switzerland.
- ? **Nature:** International, non-governmental organization.
- ? **Objective:** Foster public-private cooperation to improve global conditions.
- ? **Key Focus Areas:** Economic growth, sustainability, innovation, social inclusion, and governance.
- ? **Funding:** Primarily from corporate partners.
- ? **Functions of WEF**
  - ? **Dialogue Platform:** Brings together leaders from politics, business, academia, and civil society to address global challenges like climate change, poverty, and economic instability.
  - ? **Annual Meetings:** Hosts the **Davos Summit** in Switzerland to discuss pressing global issues.
  - ? **Regional & Thematic Meetings:** Organized throughout the year.
- ? **Key Reports Published:**
  - **Global Competitiveness Report**
  - **Global Gender Gap Report**
  - **Global Risks Report**
  - **Future of Jobs Report**
  - **Energy Transition Index**

#### 5. INDUS WATER TREATY



- ? **Signed on September 19, 1960**, in **Karachi**, between **Indian PM Nehru** and **Pakistani President Ayub Khan**.
- ? **Brokered by the World Bank**, negotiations began in the 1950s.
- ? Governs the **use and distribution** of the **Indus River system**.
- ? **Water Allocation & Covered Rivers**
- ? **Western Rivers (Indus, Jhelum, Chenab):**

Allocated to **Pakistan**, with **India** allowed **limited use**.

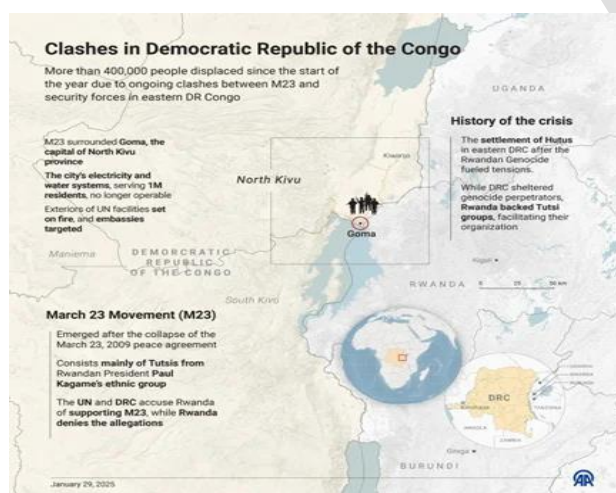
- ? **Eastern Rivers (Ravi, Beas, Sutlej):** Exclusively **India's**.
- ? **India gets 30% of total water**, while **Pakistan receives 70%**.
- ? **Institutional Mechanism**
  - ? A **Permanent Indus Commission (PIC)** manages treaty implementation.
  - ? Representatives meet **regularly** to **resolve disputes** and **exchange data**.
- ? **Controversies & Recent Developments**
  - ? **India's Kishanganga (330 MW) and Ratle (850 MW) hydro projects** in **J&K** are **run-of-the-river**, meaning they do not obstruct the river flow.
  - ? **Pakistan alleges treaty violations**, while **India** maintains compliance.
  - ? **India halted PIC meetings** and seeks **renegotiation** of the treaty.

? Last PIC meeting was in Delhi (May 2022).

## 6. GLOBAL PLASTIC ACTION PARTNERSHIP (GPAP)

- ? **GPAP**, launched by the **World Economic Forum (2019)**, now includes **25 countries**, covering **1.5 billion people**.
- ? **Recent Additions**: Angola, Bangladesh, Gabon, Guatemala, Kenya, Senegal, and Tanzania.
- ? **Objectives**
  - ? **Reduce Plastic Pollution**: Prevent plastic waste leakage, especially into oceans.
  - ? **Promote Circular Economy**: Encourage reuse and recycling to minimize waste.
  - ? **Foster Collaboration**: Engage **governments, businesses, and civil society** in plastic waste solutions.
- ? **Key Initiatives**
  - ? **National Action Roadmaps**: Customized strategies for plastic waste management.
  - ? **Investment Mobilization**: Attracts funding for sustainable plastic solutions.
  - ? **Job Creation**: Supports **green jobs**, especially in the **informal waste sector**.
  - ? **Awareness & Education**: Promotes sustainable practices and environmental responsibility.

## 7. CONFLICT IN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO



? Security forces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) are engaged in combat against the M23 rebels, who are reportedly backed by Rwanda. The M23 has advanced into Goma, a crucial eastern city, marking a significant escalation in a long-standing conflict.

### ? **Context of the Conflict:**

? Goma is strategically located on the border with Rwanda and along Lake Kivu. It serves as a vital trading and transport hub, providing access to mining towns that supply valuable metals such as gold, tin, and coltan, essential for mobile phones and electric vehicle batteries.

### ? **Who are the M23?:**

- ? The M23 is primarily composed of ethnic Tutsis who claim to fight for the rights of their minority group.
- ? Formed in 2012, the group quickly seized territory, including Goma, which drew international condemnation and accusations of war crimes.
- ? After being expelled from Goma by Congolese forces and UN troops, M23 fighters integrated into the national army with assurances of Tutsi protection. However, they resumed armed conflict in 2021.
- ? Rwanda has consistently denied supporting M23, despite UN reports alleging its provision of weapons and logistical support.
- ? **Connection with Rwanda:**
  - ? The roots of the current conflict can be traced back to the 1994 Rwandan genocide, during which approximately 800,000 Tutsis were killed by Hutu extremists. This led to a mass exodus of Hutus into what is now the DRC.

- ❑ Rwanda has invaded the DRC multiple times under the pretext of pursuing those responsible for the genocide.
- ❑ The presence of Hutu groups like the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) continues to fuel tensions.
- ❑ **Congo's Mineral Wealth:**
  - ❑ The DRC has accused Rwanda of exploiting the conflict to loot its mineral resources. Reports indicate that M23 has seized lucrative mining areas and is exporting coltan to Rwanda at an alarming rate—approximately 120 tonnes every four weeks.

## FEBRUARY 2025

## 1. UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL (UNHRC)

- ❓ In 2018, President **Donald Trump** signed an executive order withdrawing the US from the **United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)**. However, **President Joe Biden** reinstated US membership in 2021.
- ❓ **Learning Corner:**
- ❓ **UNHRC** is an intergovernmental body within the UN system, established in 2006 to replace the **UN Commission on Human Rights**. Its main role is to promote and protect global human rights.
- ❓ **Membership:** The council has **47 members** elected by the **193 UN General Assembly states**, serving three-year terms with a maximum of two consecutive terms.
- ❓ **Functions:** The UNHRC addresses human rights violations, holds regular sessions three times a year, and can convene special sessions for urgent situations.
- ❓ **Universal Periodic Review (UPR):** It reviews the human rights records of all UN member states.
- ❓ **Special Procedures:** Independent human rights experts, called **Special Rapporteurs**, monitor and report on specific countries or issues.
- ❓ **Commissions of Inquiry:** The UNHRC can authorize investigations into human rights violations.

## 2. EKUVERIN MILITARY EXERCISE

- ❓ **Ekuverin**, meaning "Friends" in the Dhivehi language of the Maldives, is a joint military exercise aimed at strengthening bilateral ties and improving cooperation in various operations.
- ❓ **Ekuverin** is held annually between the **Indian Army** and the **Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF)**.
- ❓ **Inception:** It began in **2009**, alternating between **India** and the **Maldives**.
- ❓ **Participants:** A platoon-level contingent from both armies takes part.
- ❓ **Focus Areas:** The exercise focuses on **counter-insurgency**, **counter-terrorism**, and **humanitarian assistance** and **disaster relief** operations.
- ❓ **Recent Edition:** The **13th edition** started on **February 2, 2025**, in **Maafilaafushi, Lhaviyani Atoll, Maldives**, running until **February 16, 2025**.
- ❓ **Significance:** The exercise strengthens the **India-Maldives** defence relationship and promotes regional **security** and **stability**.

## 3. SOUTH ASIA FREE TRADE AREA (SAFTA)

- ❓ **SAFTA (South Asia Free Trade Area):** A regional trade agreement among SAARC countries to reduce trade barriers and promote economic integration.
- ❓ **SAFTA Members:** Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka.
- ❓ **Objectives of SAFTA:**
  - Enhance intra-regional trade.
  - Reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers.
  - Create a level playing field for smaller economies.
  - Promote regional economic cooperation.
- ❓ **Key Features of SAFTA:**
- ❓ **Tariff Reduction:**
  - NLDCs like India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka reduce tariffs to 0–5% by 2013.
  - LDCs like Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan reduce tariffs by 2016.
- ❓ **Negative List:** Products exempt from tariff reductions.
- ❓ **Special Considerations for LDCs:** Trade concessions and technical support for LDC members.
- ❓ **Rules of Origin:** Goods must meet local value addition criteria to qualify for SAFTA benefits.



#### 4. EXERCISE CYCLONE

- ? **Exercise Cyclone** is a joint military exercise between the Special Forces of India and Egypt, focused on improving bilateral military cooperation, interoperability, and special operations tactics. It involves physical fitness, joint planning, and tactical drills in desert and semi-desert terrains.
- ? **Third Edition:** The third edition started on February 10, 2025, at the Mahajan Field Firing Ranges in Rajasthan, India, and will conclude on February 23, 2025.
- ? **Participants:** The Indian side includes two Special Forces Battalions, while Egypt's contingent consists of the Special Forces Group and Task Force.
- ? **Goals:**
  - ? Strengthen military relations between India and Egypt.
  - ? Improve interoperability in special operations.
  - ? Exchange tactics, techniques, and procedures for special operations.

#### 5. SHADOW FLEET

- ? A **shadow fleet** consists of aging or unregistered vessels that operate outside maritime regulations to transport goods, often including sanctioned oil, arms, or illicit cargo, while avoiding detection and trade restrictions.
- ? **Key Features:**
  - ? **Aging & Decommissioned Ships:** These vessels are often old, poorly maintained, and lack proper safety inspections. They are typically sold to anonymous or shell companies in opaque jurisdictions.
  - ? **Frequent Flag Changes:** Ships in the shadow fleet regularly change their flag registrations, such as from Panama to Liberia, to evade tracking. They operate under jurisdictions with lax maritime laws.
  - ? **Manipulation of AIS (Ghost Ships):** These ships disable their Automatic Identification System (AIS), making them disappear from tracking systems. This practice, called "going dark," violates international law.
  - ? **Ship-to-Ship Transfers (STS):** They transfer cargo mid-sea to hide the origin of goods, complicating authorities' efforts to trace their movements.
  - ? **Ties to Sanctioned Nations & Illicit Trade:** Countries like Russia, Iran, North Korea, and Venezuela have used shadow fleets to bypass sanctions imposed by the U.S. and EU.

#### 6. ARAB LEAGUE

- ? The **Arab League** (officially the **League of Arab States**) is a regional organization of Arab countries in the Middle East and parts of Africa.
- ? **Founded:** March 22, 1945, in Cairo, Egypt.
- ? **Headquarters:** Cairo, Egypt.
- ? **Members:** 22 member states.
- ? The League's main goals are to strengthen relations among member states, coordinate collaboration, safeguard their sovereignty, and address common Arab interests.
- ? In 1964, the League granted the **Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)** observer status as the representative of Palestinians, which was upgraded to full membership in 1976. After the 1988 declaration of independence, the **State of Palestine** assumed the PLO's seat.
- ? Syria, suspended in 2011, was **re-admitted** on May 7, 2023.
- ? **Observer States:** Seven countries, including India, have observer status, allowing them to express opinions but not vote.

#### 7. BRICS

- ? The **BRIC** acronym was coined by economist Jim O'Neill in 2001 to represent Brazil, Russia, India, and China, four rapidly growing economies.
- ? **First Summit:** The inaugural BRIC summit took place in **Yekaterinburg, Russia** in 2009.
- ? **South Africa** joined in 2010, expanding it to **BRICS**.



- ? **Current Members:** Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, and the UAE.
- ? **Key Institutions & Initiatives:**
- ? **New Development Bank (NDB):** Established in 2014 and based in Shanghai, it funds infrastructure and sustainable development in BRICS and other developing nations.
- ? **Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA):** A financial safety net offering liquidity during economic crises.
- ? **BRICS Pay:** A digital payment system for cross-border transactions among member states.
- ? **BRICS Business Council:** A platform to promote trade and investment within the group.
- ? **BRICS Summits:** Annual meetings to address economic and political issues.

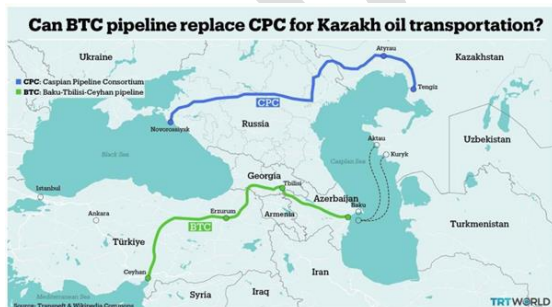
## 8. CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX

- India ranked **96th** out of 180 countries on the **Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)** for 2024.
- **Key Points:**
- **CPI** measures public sector corruption, ranking countries on a scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (corruption-free).
- Published annually by **Transparency International**, based in Germany.
- Rankings are based on data from at least three sources, including the **World Bank** and the **World Economic Forum**.
- India's score is **38** for 2024, down from **39** in 2023 and **40** in 2022.
- **Corruption and Climate Change:** The report highlights that corruption hinders climate change policies and leads to mismanagement of funds meant for climate relief.
- **Neighboring Countries:** Bangladesh scored **23**, Pakistan **27**, and Sri Lanka **32**. Bangladesh, a major recipient of climate finance, faces risks of corruption.

## 9. EXERCISE DHARMA GUARDIAN

- **Exercise Dharma Guardian** is a joint military exercise between the Indian Army and the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF). It is held annually, alternating between India and Japan.
- **Key Objectives:**
- **Enhancing Operational Readiness:** Improving joint mission capabilities of both forces.
- **Urban Warfare Training:** Conducting drills for combat in urban environments.
- **Counter-Terrorism Operations:** Sharing strategies to neutralize terrorist threats effectively.
- **Strengthening Bilateral Ties:** Building trust and understanding through joint training.
- ? India and Japan also participate in other bilateral military exercises:
- **JIMEX:** A maritime exercise between the Indian Navy and the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force.
- **Veer Guardian:** An air exercise between the Indian Air Force and the Japan Air Self-Defense Force.

## 10. CASPIAN PIPELINE CONSORTIUM (CPC)



? The Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) is a major international oil transport project involving Russia, Kazakhstan, and several leading global oil companies.

? It was established to build and operate a 1,510-kilometre pipeline that moves crude oil from Kazakhstan's Tengiz oil field to the Novorossiysk Marine Terminal on Russia's Black Sea coast.

? **Key Features of the CPC:**

➤ **Route and Capacity:** The pipeline runs from western Kazakhstan through Russia to Novorossiysk. As of 2022, it transported about 1.2 million barrels per day, meeting around 1.2% of global oil demand.

- **Shareholders:** Major stakeholders include Transneft (24%), KazMunayGas (19%), Chevron Caspian Pipeline Consortium Co. (15%), and LUKARCO B.V. (12.5%), among others.
- **Strategic Importance:** The CPC is vital for exporting oil from Kazakhstan's major fields like Kashagan and Karachaganak, offering a dependable route to global markets.

## 11. VIENNA CONVENTION ON DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

- The **1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations** states that **immunity** for diplomats and their families can only be waived by the **sending country**, in this case, **Kenya**.
- ❑ The convention also grants immunity to family members of diplomats living with them, as long as they are not citizens of the host country.
- **Learning Corner:**
- The **Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (VCDR)** is an international treaty that sets the framework for diplomatic relations.
- Adopted in **1961** and came into force in **1964**.
- **Deposit:** United Nations (UN)
- **Parties:** 193 countries, including **India** (signatory and ratified).
- **Objectives of the Convention:**
- ❑ Facilitates diplomatic relations between countries based on mutual respect.
- Ensures **diplomatic immunity** to prevent host country interference.
- Defines rules for **embassy establishment** and diplomatic functions.
- **Important Provisions:**
- **Diplomatic Immunity (Articles 29-31):** Diplomats cannot be arrested, detained, or tried in the host country. Their **residences** and **communications** are protected.
- **Inviolability of Diplomatic Premises (Article 22):** Embassy premises cannot be entered without permission, and the host country must protect them.
- **Freedom of Movement & Communication (Articles 26 & 27):** Diplomats can move freely (except in restricted areas) and secure communication is protected (diplomatic bags cannot be opened).
- **Non-Interference in Internal Affairs (Article 41):** Diplomats must not interfere in the host country's internal matters.
- **Termination of Diplomatic Status (Articles 9 & 43):** The host country can declare a diplomat as "persona non grata" and expel them.

## 12. SVALBARD GLOBAL SEED VAULT

- ❑ The Svalbard Global Seed Vault, also known as the Doomsday Vault, is a secure seed bank located on the Svalbard archipelago in Norway. It serves as a global backup to preserve crop genetic diversity for food security in case of disasters.
- **Location:** Situated inside a mountain on Spitsbergen Island in the Arctic Circle, Norway.
- **Reasons for Location:** Chosen for its geopolitical stability, low seismic activity, and permafrost, which naturally preserves seeds.
- **Preservation:** The permafrost acts as a natural refrigerator, keeping seeds viable for hundreds of years.
- **Ownership and Management:** Owned by Norway and managed by the Norwegian Ministry of Agriculture and Food, NordGen, and the Crop Trust.
- **Purpose and Objectives:**
- **Food Security:** To safeguard food security in the event of climate change, natural disasters, war, or biodiversity loss.
- **Seed Storage:** To store duplicates of seeds from global gene banks and prevent the extinction of essential plant species.
- **Capacity:** The vault can store 4.5 million seed samples and currently holds over 1.2 million seed varieties from over 100 countries.

- **Storage Method:** Seeds are sealed in three-layered foil packets and stored at -18°C in temperature-controlled chambers.

### 13. WHO FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON TOBACCO CONTROL (WHO FCTC)

- ❑ The World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) is a key international treaty adopted in 2003 to combat the global tobacco epidemic.
- ❑ It aims to protect current and future generations from the harmful health, social, environmental, and economic impacts of tobacco use and smoke exposure.
- ❑ The WHO FCTC is the first public health treaty negotiated under WHO, coming into effect on February 27, 2005. It currently has 183 Parties, covering about 90% of the global population.
- ❑ India signed it on September 10, 2003, and ratified it on February 5, 2004, becoming the seventh country to do so.
- **Key Objectives:**
  - **Protect Public Health:** Reduce tobacco use and exposure to smoke.
  - **Provide a Framework:** Offer strategies for tobacco control at national, regional, and global levels.
- **Core Provisions:**
  - **Demand Reduction Measures:**
    - **Price and Taxation Policies:** Increase taxes on tobacco products to reduce consumption.
    - **Non-Price Measures:** Ban tobacco advertising, mandate health warnings, and run awareness campaigns.
  - **Supply Reduction Measures:**
    - **Illicit Trade:** Combat illegal tobacco production and smuggling.
    - **Sales to Minors:** Ban tobacco sales to minors.
    - **Support for Alternative Livelihoods:** Help tobacco workers transition to other economic activities.