IR, SECURITY & WORLD MAP
PRELIMS SPECIAL

KSG

An Institute For **IAS** Exam...

2024

BOOKLET 2/8

YEARLY COMPILATION
(MAY 2023 - DECEMBER 2023)
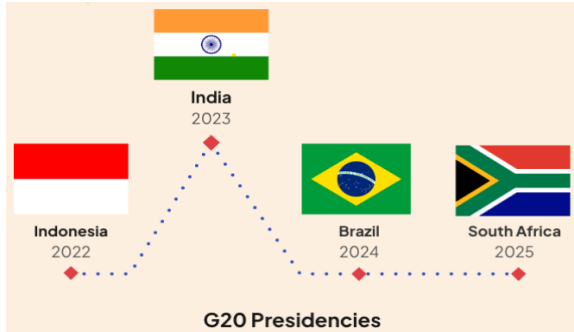
Jan to April 2024 will be released in mid May

Contents

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

India's G20 Presidency

News Excerpt:

India has completed its tenure as the G-20 president.

G20 Presidencies

Background:

- India received the G20 presidency from Indonesia in 2022 and handed it over to Brazil.
- **Indonesia, India, and Brazil formed the "Troika"** for India's presidency.
- In September 2023, India hosted the **18th G20 Summit in New Delhi**, focusing on the theme '**One Earth, One Family, One Future**' drawing upon our age-old belief of **"Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam".**
- There were **nine invitee countries**: Bangladesh, Egypt, Mauritius, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Oman, Spain, Singapore, and the UAE.

Initiatives by India during G20:

- **Green Development Pact**: It addresses the challenges of choosing between combating hunger and protecting the planet and outlines a comprehensive road map where employment and ecosystems are complimentary, consumption is climate-conscious, and production is planet-friendly.
- **Global Biofuel Alliance:** It aims to boost supply and demand for biofuels and offer a lower-emissions fuel option for many forms of transport.
- **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC):** This proposed project will include rail, road, and ship routes to connect India to Europe via the Arabian Gulf.
- **Lifestyles for Sustainable Development (LiFE):** The G-20 declaration underscores India's commitment to climate justice and equity, urging substantial financial and technological support from the Global North.
- **Towards equitable global order:** India is taking a lead role in UN reforms, especially in restructuring principal organs like the UN Security Council, which will ensure a more equitable global order.
- **Against terrorism:** India raised issues such as threats from new and emerging technologies for terrorist purposes, such as cryptocurrency, and digital terrorism, such as using the darknet.
- India also hosted a **Virtual G20 summit** whose goal was to **address gaps** in **global governance**, **reaffirm commitments to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, as well as to the New Delhi G20 Leaders' Declaration, and **progress towards a revitalized multilateral system**. For the first time under any presidency, both a physical and a virtual meeting were held.

About Group of 20 (G20)

- It is the pre-eminent forum for **international economic cooperation** and is crucial in establishing and enhancing global governance and the world's architecture.
- There is **no permanent secretariat or staff for the G20.** Every year, a different Presidency is in charge of holding the G20 Summit.
- The G20 was **initially created in 1999 for the Finance Ministers and the Central Bank Governors** to address global financial stability after the Asian Financial Crisis (1997).
- It **later evolved to include Heads of State or Government** due to the 2007 and 2009 global economic crises.
- **Membership: Nineteen nations**—Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Türkiye, United Kingdom, and the United States **and the European Union—are members.**
- **The African Union**, a group of 55 member states, is the **latest and 21st member to be** admitted to the G20.

SCO Meet 2023

News Excerpt:

India held the chairmanship of the SCO for the year 2023.

About the chairmanship:

- **Iran joined as the 9th member at the 23rd summit chaired by India.** The inclusion of Iran will allow

energy cooperation, development of trade routes, and economic integration across the areas.

- **India** has now established **five new pillars of cooperation** within the SCO:
  - o Start-ups and Innovation;

RUSSIA

KAZAKHSTAN

UZBEKISTAN KYRGYZSTAN
TAJIKISTAN

IRAN CHINA

PAKISTAN

KSG INDIA

MAP NOT TO SCALE

SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION (SCO)

  - o Traditional Medicine;
  - o Youth Empowerment;
  - o Digital Inclusion; and
  - o Shared Buddhist Heritage.
- India hosted a joint anti-terror exercise of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) nations in New Delhi, with the support of the executive committee of the **SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS).**
- It was officially launched on January 1, 2004, and is designed to assist, coordinate, and interact with the competent agencies of SCO member states in fighting **terrorism, separatism, and extremism**.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is a permanent international organization formed on June 15, 2001, in Shanghai, China, by **Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.** It evolved from the earlier **Shanghai Five** mechanism. The SCO Charter was signed in 2002 and came into effect in 2003.

- **Two permanent bodies are** the **Secretariat located in Beijing** and the Executive Committee of the **Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)** in Tashkent.
- **Member States (Nine):** India, Iran, Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

- **Three Observer States:** Afghanistan, Belarus, and Mongolia.
- **14 Dialogue Partners:** Azerbaijan, Armenia, Bahrain, Egypt, Cambodia, Kuwait, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Sri Lanka.

India, Brazil, South Africa (IBSA) and Global South

News Excerpt:

The 11th IBSA Trilateral Ministerial Commission Meeting was held in September 2023 in New York. This trilateral alliance brings together **India, Brazil, and South Africa**.

About IBSA: The grouping was formalized and named the IBSA Dialogue Forum when the three countries' Foreign Ministers met in Brasilia in 2003 and issued the **Brasilia Declaration**.

- On March 2, 2023, Brazil assumed the rotating presidency of the India, Brazil, South Africa Dialogue Forum - IBSA.
- However, as the grouping completes 20 years in 2023, only 5 summits have been held to date.
- **Idea behind IBSA:** These three developing nations shared a common belief that harnessing their collective potential could promote mutual development and champion a just and fair international order.

How India and IBSA are fighting the cause of Global South:

- A central objective of IBSA is to **reform key international institutions** like the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). These reforms aim to ensure a more significant role for developing countries and strengthen the Global South's voices on the global stage.
- The trilateral partnership seeks to deepen economic integration through initiatives like the **MERCOSUR-SACU-India Trilateral Free Trade Agreement (T-FTA).**
- IBSA's impact also extends to regional security and cooperation. The forum has consistently supported the **New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD)** as a pivotal African Union socio-economic program, reinforcing its commitment to advancing regional development.

Challenges:

- All three forum countries face challenges and competition from other countries of their respective

regions for the leadership role. For instance, India faces challenges from Pakistan, Indonesia, and Malaysia; South Africa from Nigeria and Egypt; and Brazil from Argentina and Mexico.

- Some other challenges are:
  - Producing a Coordinated Plan of Action and a Greater Strategic Focus
  - Achieving a Comprehensive Economic Partnership
    - Trade Facilitation
    - Agriculture Cooperation
    - Other Potential Areas for Future Cooperation: Energy, Manufacturing and Services, R&D, Commodities
  - Expanding the Development Fund
  - Integrating Social Development Strategies

BIMSTEC Foreign Ministers Meet

News Excerpt:

The first-ever Foreign Ministers' meeting of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) was held in Bangkok, Thailand.
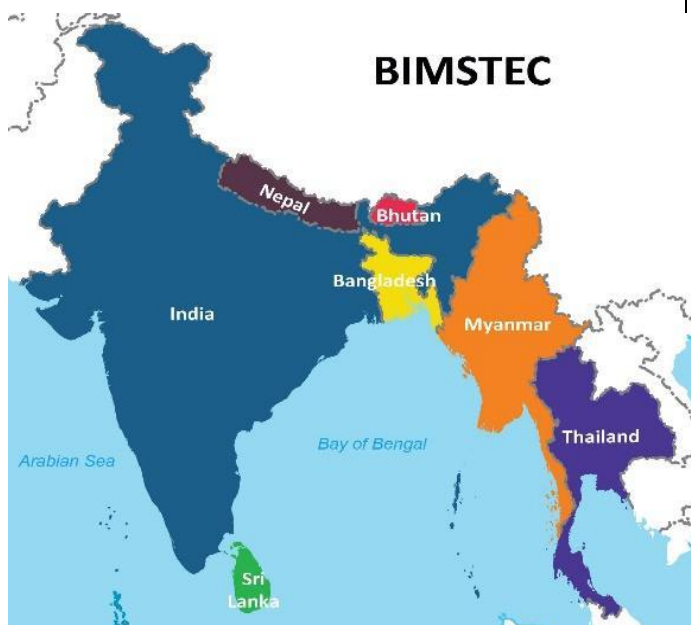
About:

BIMSTEC is a regional organization established in 1997 with the signing of the **Bangkok Declaration**.

- Initially known as **BIST-EC** (**Bangladesh-India-Sri Lanka-Thailand** Economic Cooperation), the organization is now known as BIMSTEC and comprises **seven members,** with **Myanmar** joining

towards the end of 1997 and **Bhutan** and **Nepal** in 2004.

- Around 22% of the world's population lives in the seven countries around the Bay of Bengal, with a combined GDP close to $2.7 trillion.
- Cooperation within the BIMSTEC had initially focused on **six sectors** in 1997 (trade, technology, energy, transport, tourism, and fisheries) and expanded in 2008 to other areas.
- In 2021, a reorganization led each of the Member States to lead certain sectors.
- **India focuses on security, along with counter-terrorism and transnational crime, disaster management, and energy.**

B9 countries and Vilnius Summit

News Excerpt:

NATO's 'eastern flank' B9 group committed to strengthening support for Ukraine during the war against Russia and met to prepare for the Vilnius Summit.

About B9:

- The Bucharest Nine (B9 group) was **established in 2015 and consists of nine countries** located on the eastern flank of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).
- The B9 countries have been vocal in their criticism of Russia's actions, particularly regarding its aggression against Ukraine since the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014.
- These countries include **Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia.**
- Among the B9 nations, the Baltic republics of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were formerly part of the Soviet Union. At the same time, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and the former Czechoslovakia (now Slovakia and the Czech Republic) were signatories of the now-dissolved **Warsaw Pact** military alliance.
- **All these B9 countries are members of the European Union (EU) and the NATO**.

About NATO:
- The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is a political and military alliance established by the

North Atlantic Treaty (Washington Treaty) in April 1949.
- The primary goal was collective defence.
- Presently, **31 member** states
- **HQ:** Brussels, Belgium

Vilnius Summit:
- NATO is developing **detailed war plans and a commitment of troops**, equipment, and money not seen since the end of the Cold War. Political approval of those plans was at the centre of the annual summit meeting in Vilnius, the Lithuanian capital.
- The German side won in a **Stimulated Military exercise** between German troops (representing NATO) and Lithuanian troops. The purpose of the exercise was to convince Lithuania and other countries bordering Russia that rapid reinforcement and collective defence were necessary.

Black Sea Grain Deal

News Excerpt:
Russia withdrew from the Black Sea Grain Deal.

About:
- Ukraine is a major exporter of food grains (wheat and corn) and a major contributor to the United Nations Food Aid Programmes.
- During the Ukraine crisis, there was a blockade of its ports, leading to a shortage of food grains and further posing a risk to food security in the world's poorer nations.

Mediated by: UN and Turkey
- The Black Sea Grain Initiative was signed under which cargo ships could travel from and to three Ukrainian ports of **Odesa, Chornomorsk and Pivdennyi (Yuzhny)** after inspection that they weren't carrying arms.
- Approximately **32 million tonnes** of mostly corn and wheat have been exported by Ukraine under the deal.
- **Reason for withdrawal:** Russia claims that the promises made to it under the deal have not been fulfilled, and it is still facing trouble exporting its own agricultural products and fertilizers because of the many sanctions the West has slapped on it, such as barriers on payment platforms, insurance, shipping, and other logistics are hampering its exports.
  - While Russia's agricultural products are not directly restricted, barriers to payment platforms, insurance, shipping, and other logistics are hampering its exports.

CPTPP - Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership

News Excerpt:
UK signed trade deal with CPTPP

About the CPTPP:
- A landmark pact agreed upon in 2018 **cuts trade barriers among 11 countries**, including Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam.
- **Provisions:** The pact requires countries to eliminate or significantly reduce tariffs and strongly commit to opening services and investment markets. It also has rules addressing competition, intellectual property rights, and protections for foreign companies.
- CPTPP is also seen as a **bulwark against China's regional dominance**, although Beijing has applied to join, along with Taiwan, Ukraine, Costa Rica, Uruguay, and Ecuador.

Colombo Security Conclave

News Excerpt:
The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), Ministry of Earth Sciences, organized a joint expedition of ocean scientists from India, Bangladesh, and Mauritius under the regional framework of the Colombo Security Conclave (CSC).

About the CSC:
- CSC evolved out of trilateral meetings between NSAs (National Security Advisors) and Deputy NSAs from **India, Maldives, and Sri Lanka, starting in 2011.**
- Since its revival and re-branding as the CSC in **2020, Mauritius was added as a member of the grouping, with Bangladesh and the Seychelles as observers.**

Agenda of CSC: In March 2022, the group adopted an agenda of **five pillars**.
- Maritime safety and security
- Countering terrorism and radicalization
- Combating trafficking and transnational organized crime
- Cyber security and protection of critical infrastructure and technology
- Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

Significance:

- CSC comprises Indian Ocean islands and littoral nations; thereby, it has the potential to counter China's growing presence and influence in the region.
- The small group provides an opportunity for India to address its strategic concerns in the Indian Ocean while allowing the island and littoral nations to address their challenges.
- Since July 2021, the CSC's exercises have included maritime search and rescue, cybersecurity, coastal security, and investigation of terrorism cases.

Washington Declaration

News Excerpt:

The South Korean President visited the U.S. to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the U.S.-South Korea multidimensional 'Iron-clad' alliance.

About the declaration:

- A highlight of the visit was the signing of the "Washington Declaration" as a **nuclear deterrence strategy**.
- It aims to deter potential adversaries from initiating nuclear aggression by clearly communicating the United States' intent and resolve to respond with overwhelming force, if necessary.
- The strategy is centred on **four core pillars:**
  - Extended deterrence,
  - Strategic Dialogue,
  - Nonproliferation and arms control,
  - Peaceful Resolution.

New Atlantic Declaration

News Excerpt:

The U.S. President and the British Prime Minister met to highlight their nation's famed special relationship through the New Atlantic Declaration.

New Atlantic Charter:

- It includes an international **economic architecture** that shows its economic strength and helps to lift millions around the world out of poverty.
- The strong bilateral relationship is visible from the cooperation on **defence and security, leadership in science and technology, and deep ties between our people and civil societies.**

- Both countries resolved to partner to build resilient, diversified, and secure supply chains and reduce strategic dependencies.
- Includes a commitment to continuing the lead in the technologies of the future and technology protection toolkits to ensure that emerging technologies work for, not against, their democracies and security.
- They resolved to work together to ensure the safety, prosperity, and security of their nations and peoples.

UN Peacekeepers

News Excerpt:

The Indian Army observed the **75th International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers**. On the occasion, India announced plans to conduct two initiatives in 2023 aimed at training women personnel from South East Asia, as part of their collaboration with ASEAN in the defence sector.

About UN Peacekeeping:

- It is a vital tool utilized by the United Nations to facilitate the transition from conflict to peace in countries. It involves deploying military, police, and civilian personnel to regions affected by conflicts or political instability.

India-ASEAN Initiative for Women in UNPK operations

- It is a collaborative effort between India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) aimed at promoting the involvement of women in UNPK operations.
- The initiative focuses on providing training and support to women personnel from ASEAN member-states who are interested in serving as peacekeepers.
- India has announced **two specific initiatives** under this program:
  - **Specialized courses at the Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping (CUNPK) in New Delhi**. These courses will deliver targeted training in peacekeeping operations to women peacekeepers from ASEAN countries, equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively contribute to UNPK missions.
  - **Table Top Exercise for women officers from ASEAN**. This exercise will simulate various

scenarios and challenges faced by UN peacekeepers, allowing participants to enhance their understanding and preparedness for UNPK operations.

Related News: Three Indian U.N. peacekeepers will be honored posthumously with the Dag Hammarskjold Medal.

About

- This medal is the **highest honour** awarded to U.N. Peacekeepers who have distinguished themselves by exceptional courage, devotion to duty, and sacrifice in the cause of peace.

- Personnel from BSF Head Constables Shishupal Singh and Samwali Ram Vishnoi, who served with the Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the **Congo** and Shaber Taher Ali, who was employed in a civilian capacity with the U.N. Assistance Mission for **Iraq**, will be honoured.

Jeddah Peace Talks

News Excerpt:

More than 40 countries, including China, India, the United States, Brazil, and European countries, but not Russia, took part in the Red Sea port city of Jeddah talks.

Russia-Ukraine War:

- Russia's territorial gains in Ukraine peaked in March 2022, when it controlled **some 22% of pre-2014 Ukraine.** Since then, Ukraine has recaptured some land in Kharkiv and Kherson.

- The West has continuously announced the supply of more advanced weapons to Ukraine, deepening its involvement in the conflict.

Objective:

The main goal of Ukraine and its Western partners is to **build consensus among major powers**, especially in the Global South, on working towards a fair and durable peace.

Key Highlight:

Diplomats said there was broad acceptance of respecting the central pillars of international law, such as Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Earlier Peace negotiations:

- **Peace plan proposed by China:** China came out with a **12-point plan** for the "political settlement of the Ukraine crisis".

- **Peace initiatives proposed by Africa:** Leaders of seven African countries, led by South African

President Cyril Ramaphosa, visited Russia and Ukraine with a **10-point proposal** that suggested the recognition of Russia and Ukraine's sovereignty and the release of prisoners.

- **Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva** suggested that he could lead a **"peace club"** of countries that are not involved in the war and are militarily non-aligned to broker discussions between the two sides.

Niger Political Crisis

News Excerpt:

The President and his family were detained by elite troops in a coup.

About Niger:

- It is a **landlocked** country in West Africa.

- It is a unitary state bordered by Libya to the northeast, Chad to the east, Nigeria to the south, Benin and Burkina Faso to the southwest, Mali to the west, and Algeria to the northwest.

- **Over 80% of its land area lies in the Sahara**.

International relations:

- It is a member of the **African Union and the West African Monetary Union.**

- It also belongs to the Niger Basin Authority and Lake Chad Basin Commission, the Economic Community of West African States, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and the Organization for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa (OHADA).

Factors that led to military takeovers of elected regimes in the Sahel region:

- **Political instability:** High unemployment, political unrest, weak governments, and threats from radical Islamist groups all contribute to political instability.
- **Economic strife:** As of 2021, over 41.8% of Niger's population is living in extreme poverty. There is prevalent social discontent due to deteriorating socio-economic conditions.

Sahel region, Africa
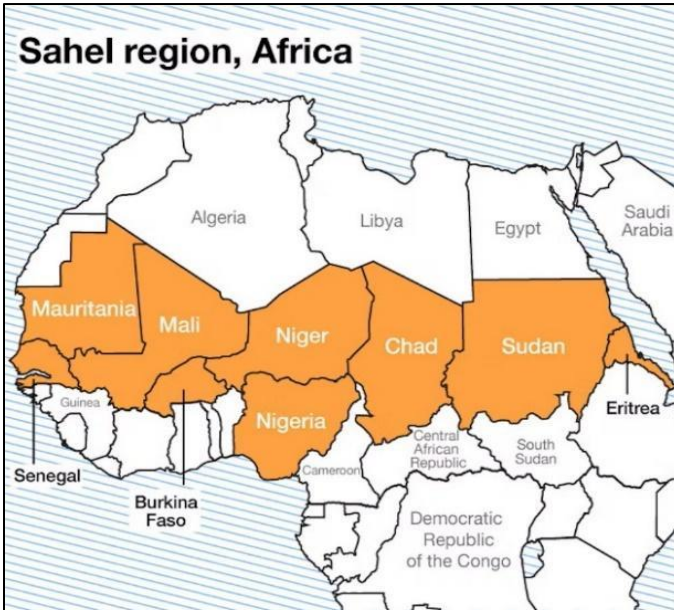
- **Ethnic clash:** Across the Sahel, ethnic tensions are on the rise, as some communities have increased their promotion of hate speech, and some have established ethnic armed groups.
- **Natural Resources:** Throughout the Sahelian strip, conflicts over access to natural resources between nomadic and sedentary communities continue to multiply on transhumance routes.

Recent African coups	
(i)	Mali – 2020, 2021
(ii)	Chad – 2021
(iii)	Guinea – 2021
(iv)	Sudan – 2021
(v)	Burkina Faso– 2022
(vi)	Niger-2023

- **Climate change:** In parallel with rising temperatures and erratic rainfall, incidences of violence have recently been increasing in the Sahel.
- **Governance issues:** Political leaders' engagement in frequent corruption and the Government's inability to register economic and social progress are also leading to conflict.

India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)

News Excerpt:

On the sidelines of the G20 summit in New Delhi, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed to establish the **'India-Middle East- Europe Economic Corridor' (IMEC).**

Key provisions:

- An MoU on IMEC was signed by **India, the USA, Saudi Arabia, UAE, the European Union, Italy, France, and Germany**.

- The proposed IMEC will consist of railroad, ship-to-rail networks (road and sea), and road transport routes (and networks) extending **across two corridors, i.e., the east corridor** – connecting India to the Arabian Gulf, and **the northern corridor** – connecting the Arabian Gulf to Europe.
- The corridor would include **ports like Haifa in Israel and Piraeus in Greece.**
- It is considered an alternative to the Belt and Road initiative of China and may also serve as a counter to China's economic influence in the Eurasian region.

Significance of the corridor:

- **Boost to export:** It would enable the transportation of goods and services from India to the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel, and Europe, and back.
- **Transformative integration of Asia, Europe, and the Middle East**: The corridor would increase efficiency (relating to transit), reduce costs, enhance economic unity, generate jobs, and lower greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Transportation of energy and fuels:** The MoU states that participants intend to lay cables for electricity and digital connectivity, as well as pipes for clean hydrogen export along the railway route.

- **Shorter time period of transportation:** The maritime corridor between Asia and Europe currently remains rooted in the saturated Suez Canal and Mediterranean shipping routes despite them being longer and involving additional logistics costs. The IMEC corridor, in contrast, saves three to four days of transit.
- **Linkage of major ports across Asia, Middle-East and Europe:** It links major ports of western India including Jawaharlal Nehru Port (JNPT), Kochi, Kandla, and Mundra with major shipping ports of the Gulf including Jebel Ali, Fujairah, Ras Al-Khair, Dammam, Duqm, and Salalah; and European ports like Piraeus, Kavala (Greece), Trieste, La Spezia (Italy), Marseille-Fos (France), Barcelona and Valencia (Spain).
- **Reduction in emissions:** The greening of this project will contribute to the global effort to lower greenhouse gas emissions.

Feasibility of the corridor: IMEC is envisioned as not one but two corridors- the eastern and northern.

- **Eastern end of IMEC:** India, whose connectivity infrastructure has helped it become the world's fastest-growing major economy, has a massive, well-integrated railroad network, mega ports, and highways on the eastern end of IMEC.
- **Western end of IMEC:** Beyond Haifa, the sea route across the Mediterranean is also a well-charted path to Greece, Italy, France, and Spain, and well served by hinterland connectivity to Europe by rail and roads.

West Coast Refinery Project

News Excerpt:

India and Saudi Arabia will set up a joint task force to explore the early implementation of the **West Coast refinery project** to speed up the implementation of the $50 billion West Coast refinery project.

About the West Coast Refinery Project:

- First conceptualized in 2014, the West Coast refinery project is envisioned as **India's largest greenfield refinery** with a capacity of 60 million tonnes per annum.
- **Location**: India's western coast, specifically in Ratnagiri, Maharashtra.
- The refinery is expected to **produce around 1.2 million barrels of oil a day** when completed, alongside the various petroleum

products that will be produced by attached petrochemical plants.

- **Ratnagiri Refinery & Petrochemicals Limited (RRPCL):** is a 50:25:25 joint venture partnership formed in 2017 by India's three leading government-owned PSUs in the oil and gas sector, Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL), and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL).
- In 2019, Saudi Aramco and the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) decided to get involved as well, collectively acquiring a 50 % stake in the project.

Eastern Maritime Corridor (EMC)

News Excerpt:

The Indian shipping minister said India and Russia are seeking to begin operations on the Eastern Maritime Corridor (EMC).
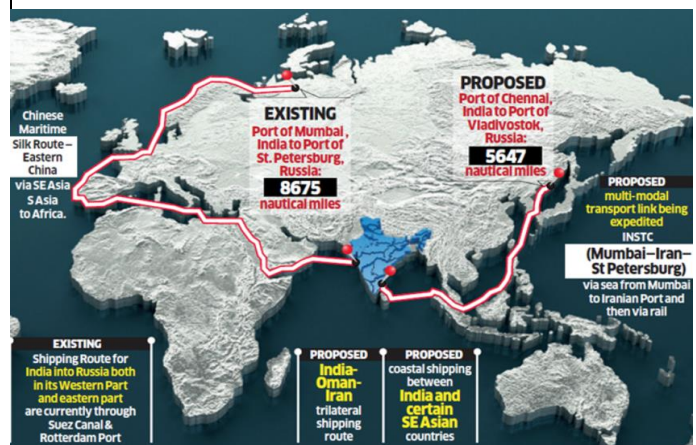
About the EMC:

- A **proposed sea route between** the Indian port of **Chennai and the Russian port of Vladivostok.**
- The present trade route between Mumbai, India, and St. Petersburg, Russia, covers a distance of 8,675 nautical miles.
- The **EMC will cover a distance of about 5,600 nautical miles**, which is significantly **shorter than the current route via the Suez Canal**.
- Once complete, **EMC will t**ransport goods from India to Far East Russia in 24 days, down from over 40 days currently.
- **For India,** it will provide a shorter and more efficient **route to access the markets of the Far East.**

About Vladivostok:

- A major city located in **Russia's Far East**.

- It is located on Golden Horn Bay, north of North Korea, and a short distance from Russia's border with China.
- The largest port on Russia's Pacific coast is home to the Russian Navy's Pacific Fleet. **Shipping and commercial fishing are the main commercial activities** at its massive port.
- **Eastern railhead of the legendary Trans-Siberian Railway**, which connects the Far East of Russia to the capital, Moscow, and further west to the countries of Europe.

International Organization of Legal Metrology (OIML)

News Excerpt:

The Union Ministry of Consumer Affairs secretary said that India has become an OIML certificate-issuing authority.

About OIML:

- It is an international **standard-setting body** headquartered in Paris.
- Develops model regulations, standards, and related documents for use by legal metrology authorities and industry.
- Plays a crucial role in **harmonizing national laws and regulations** on the performance of measuring instruments like clinical thermometers, alcohol breath analyzers, radar speed measuring instruments, ship tanks found at ports, and petrol dispensing units.
- **India became a member** of the OIML in 1956. In the same year, India signed the metric convention.

What is the OIML certificate?

- System for **issuing, registering, and using OIML certificates** and their associated OIML-type evaluation/test reports for instruments like digital balances, clinical thermometers, etc.
- With the addition of India, the number of countries authorized to **issue OIML certificates has increased to 13.**
- It is a single certificate accepted worldwide.
- Indian domestic manufacturers can now **export their weighing and measuring instruments worldwide** without incurring additional testing fees, resulting in significant cost savings.

Oslo Accord

News Excerpt:

The Oslo Accords had called for a time-bound two-state solution to end the Arab-Israeli conflict over Palestine.

About the Oslo Accord:

- On September 13, 1993, the then Israeli Prime Minister and Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Negotiator Mahmoud Abbas signed a Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, commonly referred to as the "Oslo Accord," at the White House (USA).
- **Israel accepted the PLO as the representative of the Palestinians, and the PLO renounced terrorism and recognized Israel's right to exist in peace.**
- Both sides agreed that a Palestinian Authority (PA) would be established and assume governing responsibilities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip over five years.
- As per **the Oslo Accords of 1993 and 1995,** the West Bank (region in Israel) was divided into Areas A, B, and C. Israel controls Area C, which constitutes 60% of the West Bank.
- It led to a kind of thaw in relations between Israel and MENA (Middle East and North African) countries in both official and unofficial ways. Jordan signed its peace deal with Israel in 1994.

Control of the West Bank under Oslo Accords
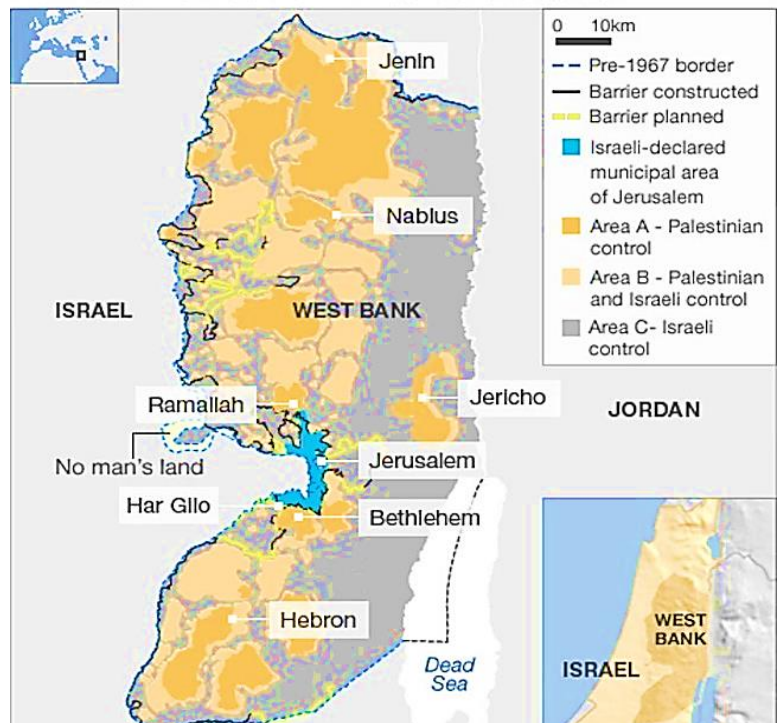
India – Japan Fund

News Excerpt:

The National Investment and Infrastructure Fund have collaborated with the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) to unveil a $600 million India-Japan Fund.

About India – Japan Fund:

- It will focus on environmental sustainability and low carbon emission strategies and aims to be a 'partner of choice' to further enhance Japanese investments into India.
- The Indian government will contribute 49% to the target corpus for the India-Japan fund, NIIF's first bilateral fund, while JBIC will contribute the remaining 51%.

> **NIIF** is a **sovereign wealth fund** founded in 2015 to provide an investment platform for international and Indian investors.
>
> **JBIC:** It is a policy-based financial institution in **Japan**. It conducts **lending, investment, and guarantee operations** while complementing the **private sector financial institutions.**

India was re-elected as President of AIBD.

News Excerpt:

India has been elected as President of the Asia Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development. India has already served two terms as President since 2018.

About AIBD:

- It was established in 1977 under the auspices of UNESCO.
- It is a unique regional intergovernmental organization that currently has 92 member organizations from across 44 countries, including 26 Government Members (countries).
- India is one of the **founding members** of AIBD.

Sri Lanka chairs the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)

News Excerpt:

Indian Ocean Rim Association's (IORA) Council of Ministers (COM), held in **Colombo**, was attended by **foreign ministers** and senior officials of the **23-nation grouping of countries.**

Highlights of the Summit:

- They adopted the **Colombo Communique** and the **'IORA Vision 2030 and Beyond.'**
- Signed Joint Venture Shareholders' agreement between the National Dairy and Development Board (NDDB), Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation, and the Cargills Group of Sri Lanka, which will **strengthen the Sri Lankan dairy sector.**

About IORA:

- It is an intergovernmental organization **formed in 1997** in **Mauritius** to foster regional economic cooperation.
- It includes **23 countries** from Africa, West Asia, South Asia, South East Asia, Australia, and coastal states in and around the Indian Ocean.
- The grouping, whose **apex body** is the **Council of Foreign Ministers** that meets once a year, moves by rotation through members every two years.
- Sri Lanka took charge as Chair this year from Bangladesh, and India is Vice-Chair, meaning that the **troika of IORA is within the South Asian region.**
- It became an **observer** to the **UN General Assembly and the African Union** in **2015**.
- Decisions made within IORA are reached by consensus, and commitments are undertaken voluntarily.
- The IORA **Secretariat is based in Mauritius**. A fixed-term Secretary-General heads it.
- Its genesis comes from a speech **Nelson Mandela** gave in Delhi in 1995.

Operation Al-Aqsa Flood

News Excerpt:

Hamas launches Operation "Al-Aqsa Flood" or "Toofan Al-Aqsa".

About the operation:

- The Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas launched its most significant assault on Israel, firing a barrage of rockets from Gaza and sending fighters across the border under **Operation 'Al-Aqsa Flood'**.
- Israel declared a "**state of readiness for war"** amid the massive barrage of rockets from the Gaza Strip and infiltration into its southern area.
- The **holiest site in Judaism & 3rd holiest in Islam**, the Al-Aqsa complex is managed by the Jordanian-appointed **Jerusalem Waqf Council**, while security there is overseen by Israel.

Hamas initiates "Operation Al-Aqsa Flood" against Israel

Armed Palestinian groups from Gaza Strip infiltrate Israeli settlements along the border
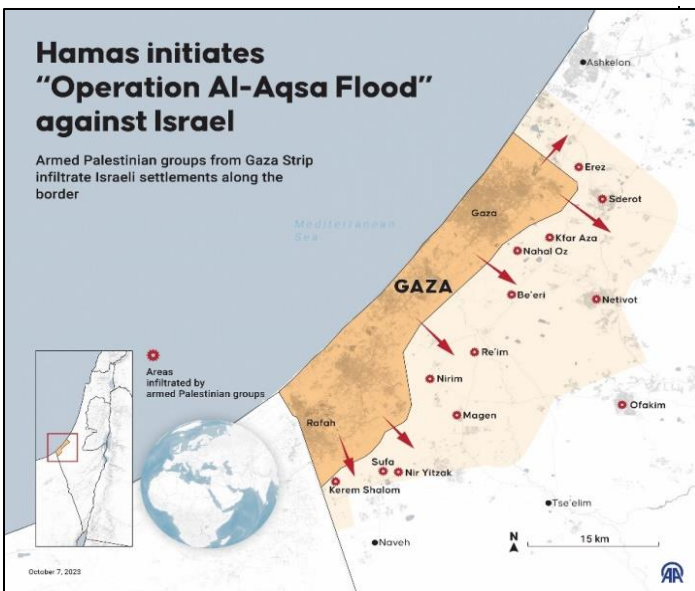
- It has become the **focal point** of Israeli-Palestinian tensions.
- Known to Muslims as **the Al-Haram al-Sharif** (the Noble Sanctuary), the compound is home to the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock—the golden-topped dome—and is one of the oldest known mosques**. It is from here that Prophet Muhammad is believed to have 'ascended to heaven'.**

Operation Ajay

News Excerpt:

As the Israel-Hamas war escalated, **India launched** Operation Ajay to repatriate its citizens from Israel and Palestine.

- There are around 18,000 Indian citizens living and working/studying in Israel.
- Most work as caregivers, but about 1,000 students, several IT professionals, and diamond traders are also there.

Earlier similar operations:

- **Operation Ganga:** Under this, India brought back its citizens stuck in Ukraine amid the **Russia-Ukraine war**.
- **Operation Kaveri:** It was launched to evacuate Indians stranded in war-torn **Sudan**.
- **Operation Raahat:** It was launched by the Indian Armed Forces to evacuate 4,640 Indian citizens from Yemen during the 2015 **Yemen Crisis**.
- **Operation Maitri:** The government of India and Indian armed forces carried out a rescue and relief operation in Nepal in the aftermath of **the 2015 Nepal earthquake**.
- **Operation Safe Homecoming:** It was launched by the Indian government in 2011 to evacuate its citizens fleeing from the **Libyan Civil War**.
- **Operation Sukoon:** It was carried out by the Indian Navy to evacuate Indian, Sri Lankan and Nepalese nationals from the conflict zone during the **2006 Lebanon War**.

9th G20 Parliamentary Speakers' Summit, 2023 (P-20, Summit)

News Excerpt:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the 9th G20 Parliamentary Speakers' Summit (P20) in New Delhi.

Key Highlights:

- The **theme** of the 9th P20 Summit is '**Parliaments for One Earth, One Family, One Future'**.
- Speakers of Parliaments of G20 members and invitee countries attended the event. The Pan-African Parliament also participated in the P20 Summit for the first time after the African Union became a member of the G20.
- The Summit **focused on four subjects** – **(1)** Transformation in People's Lives through Public Digital Platforms, **(2)** Women-led development, **(3)** Accelerating SDGs, and **(4)** Sustainable Energy Transition.
- A **pre-summit Parliamentary Forum on LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment)** was also held to deliberate upon initiatives towards a greener and sustainable future in harmony with nature.
- After India's P20 presidency, the Lok Sabha Speaker handed over the **presidency to the Parliament of Brazil.**

International Migration Outlook Report 2023

News Excerpt:

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has released the International Migration Outlook Report 2023.

About the report:

- It analyses recent developments in migration movements and the inclusion of immigrants in OECD countries in the labour market.

- It also monitors recent policy changes in migration governance and integration.
- This edition includes **two special chapters on the labour market integration of migrant mothers and fertility patterns among migrant populations** in OECD countries.

About OECD:

- It is an intergovernmental organization comprising **38 member nations.**
- It was established in **1960** by 18 European nations, along with the USA and Canada, to boost economic growth and world trade.
- **Headquarters: Paris, France**
- **India is not a member.**
- Most of the OECD member countries are '**High-income countries'** and rank high on the Human Development Index (HDI).

Key Takeaways of the Report:

- India also contributed the **highest number** of new migrants to OECD countries in 2020, 2021, and 2022.
- **India** has been the top contributor of new migrants, with 0.41 million, **China** in second place with 0.23 million, and **Romania** with around 0.2 million.
- **Acquiring nationality:** 0.13 million Indian citizens acquired the nationality of an OECD country in 2021.
- **Inflows of refugees from Ukraine:** In the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, more than 10 million people have been internally displaced or are refugees in the OECD nations.
- **Migration of Workers:** Workers migrating to OECD countries from **India, Uzbekistan, and Turkey** saw a significant rise.

Policy on Climate-Induced Displacement: The report acknowledges that displacement is climate-led. Few OECD countries have already introduced explicit policies to respond to it. For instance, in April 2023, **Columbia**'s Congress introduced a first-of-its-kind bill in Latin America to adopt and establish a national register of climate-induced displacement.

Hwasong 18

News Excerpt:

North Korea has tested Hwasong-18, a new solid-fueled intercontinental ballistic missile.

About:

The Hwasong-18 is a solid-fuelled ICBM and was first unveiled at the February 8, 2023 parade earlier this year that commemorated the **75th anniversary** of the founding of the Korean People's Army in DPRK's capital Pyongyang.

Why Solid Fuel?

- The use of solid propellants in the Hwasong-18 allows for faster deployment of missiles.
- Solid propellants can fire faster and accelerate more quickly at liftoff.
- ICBMs are ballistic missiles that have a range of over 5,500 km and have nuclear weapons delivery technology.
- Presently, in addition to the DPRK, Russia, the United States, France, the United Kingdom, China, India and Israel are the only countries that are in documented possession of land-based ICBMs

Concept of Prisoner's Dilemma in International Relations

News Excerpt:

At the Goa Maritime Conclave 2023 edition, the Indian Defence Minister referred to the concept of the "Prisoner's Dilemma" for countries to cooperate and collaborate rather than work at cross purposes.

What is the Prisoner's Dilemma?

Prisoner's dilemma is one of the most popular concepts in Game Theory; it shows how people or entities arrive at decisions in complex situations. **It analyses the human nature of an individual or an entity, whether they choose cooperation over self-interest or vice versa.**

- The Prisoner's Dilemma denotes a situation in which the best possible outcome **(known as Nash Equilibrium)** would be to act collectively and choose what is best for both parties.
- **Both players are given the chance to defect despite the option chosen by the other party.** However, due to a lack of trust and uncertainty, both the players will choose what is optimal for them individually but sub-optimal collectively. If they had chosen the Nash Equilibrium, they both would have been better off than before.

Importance of Prisoner's Dilemma in International Relations

This game has been used to understand a wide range of social and economic phenomena, and it can be applied to fields such as **economics, international relations, and psychology**, among others.

- It is used to understand the behaviour of various nations in the international realm and also enables the states to make decisions.
- This helps us understand what governs the **balance between cooperation and competition.**
- For instance, in the **arms race**, a few countries will proliferate their arms to gain a strategic advantage over the others.
- According to the prisoner's dilemma theory, they would betray rather than stay silent even though disarmament would lead to collective good and prosperity.
- **This game highlights the tension between individual self-interest and cooperation for the betterment of both the players.**

Persona Non-Grata

News Excerpt:

China labelled a Canadian diplomat in Shanghai persona non grata as Canada announced it would expel a Chinese ambassador on claims of involvement in an intimidation campaign against a Canadian politician.

About Persona Non Grata:

- It's a Latin term that means "**Unwelcome Person"**. It refers to a **diplomat or foreign person whose entry or presence in a particular country has been restricted by that government.**
- At the **1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations**, the term was given diplomatic significance.
- According to **Article 9 of the treaty,** a country may declare any member of a diplomatic staff persona non grata "at any time and without explanation for its decision."
- If a person does not return to their home country, the country "may refuse to recognize the person concerned as a member of the mission."
- **Even before entering a country, a person might be proclaimed persona non grata. Its application is not restricted to diplomats.**

Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations 1961

News Excerpt:

Canada accused India of violating the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, as India sought a reduction in the number of diplomats.

About the Vienna Convention:

- It was **adopted** in 1961 by the United Nations Conference on Diplomatic Intercourse and Immunities, which was held in Vienna, Austria.
- At present, **193 countries** are party to the document, including **India, which ratified it in 1965.**
- It aims to ensure **friendly relations** among nations and puts forth a framework for diplomatic **interactions** between nations.

Rafah Border Crossing

News Excerpt:

Israel has ordered the evacuation of Palestinians inhabiting the Northern side of the Gaza Strip. The Palestinians have thus gathered at the Rafah crossing on the Egyptian border located on the southern side of Gaza.

Where is Rafah Crossing?

- **Gaza is a** 41km strip along the eastern coast of the Mediterranean, **bordered by Egypt in the South** and **Israel to its North** and **West**.
- Israel controls both the territorial waters and airspace of Gaza.

The Gaza Strip has three functional exit points:

- **North: Erez or Beit Hanoun crossing** (managed by Israel, controls the movement of people between Gaza and the West Bank via Israel.
- **South: Karem Abu Salem (called Kerem Shalom by Israel) and Rafah Crossing.**
- **Karem Abu Salem**: controlled by Israel exclusively for the movement of commercial goods.
- **Rafah Crossing** shares the **border with Egypt's Sinai Peninsula.** It has been controlled by Egypt since 2007.

Importance of Rafah:

- Israel has closed both the Erez and Karem Shalom points. Thus, the **Rafah crossing becomes the only point that connects the Palestinians to the outside world.**
- It has now become the sole entry and exit point for aid and humanitarian assistance to the Palestinians.

123 Agreement

News Excerpt:

The United States and the Philippines inked a historic agreement that would permit Washington to transfer nuclear technology and materials to Manila, which is investigating the use of nuclear power to increase energy independence and decarbonize.

Key highlights of the deal:

- This deal has been signed under **section 123 of the U.S. Atomic Energy Act** (commonly referred to as the '123 Agreement').
- The United States will be able to **share equipment and materials with the Philippines** as they work to develop small modular reactors and other civilian nuclear energy infrastructure.
- It will allow a **peaceful transfer of nuclear material**, equipment, and information in adherence to **non-proliferation requirements.**

AYUSH Visa

News Excerpt:

Govt. introduces a **new category** of AYUSH Visa for **foreign nationals**.

About:

- PM announced the creation of a special AYUSH Visa at the Global Ayush Investment and Innovation Summit **(GAIIS)** in **Gandhinagar**, Gujarat in **2022.**
- A new chapter i.e., **chapter 11A** – AYUSH Visa has been incorporated after Chapter 11 - Medical Visa of the **Visa Manual 2019**.
- According to the **Global Wellness Economy: Looking beyond the COVID report** by the Global Wellness Institute (GWI), the Global Wellness economy will grow at 9.9% annually. AYUSH-based healthcare & Wellness economy is estimated to grow to **$70 billion by 2025**.

Heal in India initiative:

- It is intended to promote India as a Medical tourism destination of the world.
- The Ministry of Ayush and the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare are working together to develop a one-stop Heal in India portal.
- A MoU with the India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC), the Ministry of Tourism, and the Government of India were signed to work together for the promotion of Medical Value Travel in Ayurveda and other traditional systems of medicine.

India-Korea Electronic Origin Data Exchange System (EODES)

News Excerpt:

India and South Korea have launched the India-Korea Electronic Origin Data Exchange System (EODES).

About EODES:

- EODES **shortens the transmission lead time** and assures Preferential Certificate of Origin (PCO) authenticity, thus **reducing the goods' time-to-market through faster customs clearance.**
- It aims to **facilitate the smooth implementation** of the **India-Korea Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)** by **electronic exchange of origin information** between the two customs administrations regarding goods traded under the CEPA.
- The data fields in a **Certificate of Origin (CoO)** shall be electronically shared by the exporting customs administration with the importing customs as soon as the certificate is issued. This would facilitate faster clearance of imported goods.

India-Korea Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA):

The India-Korea CEPA played a major role in enhancing trade between the two countries. The annual bilateral trade reached $21.5 billion in 2018. India-Korea CEPA became operational in January 2010.

- **Features of India-Korea CEPA:**
  - Both nations **reduced or eliminated the customs duty** on originating goods of the other nation.
  - One nation can request the other nation about the possibility of **accelerating the reduction or elimination of customs duty.**
  - Goods covered under the CEPA shall be eligible for **preferential treatment** provided they satisfy certain **rules of origin.**
  - **Neither nation** shall maintain or adopt any **non-tariff measures on the import or export of goods** destined for the other country in the agreement except for the rights and obligations under the WTO agreement.
  - In case a country decides to impose an **anti-dumping duty,** then it shall impose a duty less than the margin of dumping if such lesser duty is sufficient to remove the injury to the domestic industry.

Global Cooperation and Training Framework

News Excerpt:

Officials from the United States, India, and Taiwan gathered for a cybersecurity workshop under the Global Cooperation and Training Framework (GCTF).

Global Cooperation and Training Framework:

o In **2015**, **Taiwan** and the **United States** established the Global Cooperation and Training Framework **(GCTF)**, a platform to address **global issues**. It allows Taiwan to participate in global platforms and raise its voice.

o The GCTF **assists Indo-Pacific countries** in **capacity building** through training programs for officials and experts, enhancing Taiwan's multilateral cooperation.

o Since its inception, the GCTF has conducted **70 international workshops** with **over 120 countries,** focusing on **critical issues** such as public health, law enforcement cooperation, women's empowerment, energy efficiency, e-commerce, cybersecurity, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and media literacy.

o **Japan** became a full partner in **2019**, cohosting all GCTF workshops.

o **Australia** announced its full partnership in **2021**.

o The **full partners** (currently **Taiwan**, the **United States**, **Japan**, and **Australia**) hold GCTF Joint Committee meetings to review events and decide on cooperation areas for the coming year.

About the news:

- Representatives from the US, India, and Taiwan attended the **first in-person GCTF program** in **India**, cohosted by the US ambassador to India, in New Delhi.

- This event signifies a significant step in cybersecurity cooperation, as the GCTF serves as a platform for **sharing expertise** in areas often restricted in international institutions.

  o India, with over **800 million internet users** and **1.2 billion smartphones**, considers cybersecurity integral to its **national security**.

Regional stability and China's viewpoint:

- This trilateral collaboration on cybersecurity is likely to have implications for regional stability.

  o It is **aimed** to **counter digital threats** and enhance collective security in the Indo-Pacific region.

- This strategic alignment could **balance** China's growing **influence** and **assertiveness** in the region.

- China, which views Taiwan as part of its territory and opposes official interaction, may view this development as a challenge to its **regional aspirations.**

- The collaboration is a concerted effort to counter Chinese influence in cyberspace and as a **tacit support** for **Taiwan**'s international presence despite its exclusion from global platforms.

India re-elected to the International Maritime Organization (IMO)

News Excerpt:

India has been re-elected to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Council with the highest tally at elections held at its Assembly in London for the 2024-25 biennium.

- India's re-election falls under the **Category of 10 states** with **"the largest interest in international seaborne trade"**, alongside Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

About IMO:

- It was established by a Convention approved under the auspices of the United Nations on **March 17, 1948, in Geneva**. Its first session was held in January 1959. It now has **175 member states and three associate members**.

- It is a specialized agency of the United Nations responsible for measures to **improve the safety and security of international shipping** and **prevent pollution** from ships.

- It is critical to achieving the targets outlined in the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14:** Conserve and exploit oceans, seas, and marine resources sustainably for long-term development.

- The **Assembly** generally **meets in regular session once every two years**.

  o It is responsible for **approving the work schedule, voting on the budget, and setting the organization's financial arrangements.**

  o At these meetings, the organization's **40-member council** is also elected for the next two years.

The **Amrit Kaal Vision 2047** also sets goals for **strengthening India's global maritime presence.** The Amrit Kaal Vision 2047 Action Plan includes 43 initiatives, of which the key initiatives focus on strengthening our global maritime presence. These include a **dedicated IMO cell in India, the appointment of a permanent representative at IMO headquarters in London**, etc.

44ᵗʰ Edition of the ISO COPOLCO Plenary

News Excerpt:
India hosted the 44th edition of the coveted annual ISO COPOLCO Plenary in New Delhi.

About:
- ISO COPOLCO, or the Committee on Consumer Policy, is a committee of **the International Organization for Standardization** (ISO) responsible for promoting consumer interests in the standardization process and ensuring that standards are developed with consumers' needs in mind.
- The committee engages with consumer organizations, government bodies, and other stakeholders to address a wide range of consumer-related topics. This includes areas such as product safety, labeling and packaging, sustainability, e-commerce, dispute resolution, and consumer education.
- It plays a vital role in ensuring that consumer perspectives are considered and integrated into the global standardization process.

IPEF

News Excerpt:
The second Ministerial Meeting of the **Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF)** was held in the United States, highlighting the substantial progress achieved in promoting economic collaboration among partner nations in the Indo-Pacific region.

About IPEF:
It is a US-led initiative aimed at strengthening economic partnerships among participating countries in the Indo-Pacific region. Its goal is to promote resilience, sustainability, inclusiveness, economic growth, fairness, and competitiveness.

Launch and Members:
- IPEF was jointly launched by the USA and other partner countries in the Indo-Pacific region on May 23, 2022, in Tokyo.

- **The participating countries** include **Australia, Brunei, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, United States, and Vietnam.**

Pillars of IPEF:
Fair and resilient trade (Pillar I):
- Focuses on enhancing trade engagement among IPEF partner countries.
- Aim to promote economic growth, peace, and prosperity in the region.
- India has joined Pillars II to IV of IPEF while having an observer status in Pillar I.

Supply-chain resilience (Pillar II):
- Seeks to make supply chains more resilient, robust, and well-integrated.
- Emphasizes crisis response measures and cooperation to mitigate disruptions.
- Focuses on improving logistics, connectivity, and investments in critical sectors.
- Aim to enhance worker roles through upskilling and reskilling initiatives.

Clean energy, decarbonization and infrastructure (Pillar III):
- Aim to advance cooperation on clean energy and climate-friendly technologies.
- Focuses on research, development, commercialization, and deployment of clean energy.
- Encourages investment in climate-related projects in the Indo-Pacific region.

Taxation and Anti-corruption (Pillar IV):
Focuses on implementing effective anti-corruption and tax measures.
- Highlights India's strong steps in improving legislative and administrative frameworks to combat corruption.

Key Highlights of the meeting
- **IPEF Supply Chain Agreement:**
  - The meeting announced the successful conclusion of negotiations for an international IPEF Supply Chain Agreement.
  - This agreement, under Pillar II of the framework, aims to enhance the resilience, efficiency, productivity, sustainability, transparency, diversification, security, fairness, and inclusivity of participating countries' supply chains.
- **Regional Hydrogen Initiative**

- The meeting witnessed the introduction of a regional hydrogen initiative by some IPEF partners.
- This initiative, under Pillar III, aims to facilitate the widespread deployment of renewable and low-carbon hydrogen and its derivatives in the region.
- The focus is on promoting sustainable and environmentally friendly hydrogen-based solutions.

CONFLICTS:

Kosovo-Serbia Conflict

News Excerpt:

There was a confrontation between Serbian demonstrators and NATO peacekeepers in Kosovo, resulting in over 60 people being injured.

Ethnic Background

- Kosovo is a region with a long history of Serbs and Albanians coexisting, representing distinct ethnicities and religious backgrounds.
- Kosovo has an approximate population of 1.8 million people, with Albanians comprising 92% and Serbs constituting only 6%. The remaining residents include Bosniaks, Gorans, Turks, and Roma.
- In terms of demographics, Serbs make up the majority population in Serbia, while Albanians constitute the majority in Kosovo.

The disintegration of Yugoslavia:

- From 1945 to 1992, the Balkan region comprised a country known as the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), with Belgrade as its capital. It consisted of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia. Serbia included the autonomous provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina.
- After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia disintegrated, and each republic became an independent country.
- Slovenia was the first to secede from Yugoslavia in 1991.
- The late 1980s and early 1990s witnessed a decline in the central government's power in Yugoslavia, accompanied by a resurgence of nationalism.

- In 1998, ethnic Albanian rebels established the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) to challenge Serbian rule.

NATO Intervention

- In 1999, NATO intervened in response to Serbia's brutal actions in Kosovo, initiating a 78-day air campaign against Kosovo and Serbia.
- As a result, Serbia agreed to withdraw its forces from Kosovo.
- The intervention allowed for the return of Albanian refugees to Kosovo but also led to the displacement of many Serbs who feared retaliation.
- In June 1999, Kosovo came under international administration, with its ultimate status remaining unresolved.
- The United Nations tribunal indicted several Serbian leaders, including one of its President, for war crimes.

Current Status of Kosovo

- Despite Kosovo declaring independence in 2008, Serbia maintains that it is an inseparable part of its territory.
- Nations like India, China, and Russia do not acknowledge Kosovo as an independent country, whereas the United States, most European Union countries, Japan, and Australia recognize its independence.

India's Stand on Kosovo

- India asserts that Kosovo does not meet the three principles necessary for recognition: a clearly defined territory, a duly constituted government accepted by the people, and effective control over a governed area.

- India has objected to Kosovo's participation in international organizations like UNESCO, the Apostille Convention, the Convention for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes, and the Egmont Group of Financial Intelligence Units.
- India's refusal to recognize Kosovo stems from its commitment to upholding Serbia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, with whom it maintains a longstanding relationship.

Spain - Catalonia

News Excerpt:

Catalonia's regional President, Carles Puigdemont, has called for a referendum on a split from Spain.

About Catalonia:

- It encompasses the northeastern provinces of Girona, Barcelona, Tarragona, and Lleida.
- It is bordered by **France and Andorra** to the north, the **Mediterranean Sea to the east**, the autonomous **community of Valencia** to the south, and the autonomous **community of Aragon** to the west.
- The principal rivers in Catalonia are the **Ter, Llobregat, and Ebro**, all of which flow into the Mediterranean.
- Catalonia's traditional agriculture was centred on producing **wine, almonds, and olive oil for export** and rice, potatoes, and corn (maize) as staples.

The reason behind Catalonia's seeking Independence:

- Catalonia, which is Spain's richest region, has a distinct cultural heritage and language. The push for

independence crystallized during the fallout of the global financial crisis in 2008.
- Some Catalans believed the country's rising unemployment levels and languishing economy were dragging the region down, and they began to seek greater autonomy from Madrid.

TIES:

India-Singapore Ties

News Excerpt:

The Union Minister of Education visited Singapore to enhance current connections and expand bilateral engagement in education and skill development.

Different Shades of India-Singapore ties:

Background:

- The historical ties between India and Singapore span centuries and are characterized by strong commercial, cultural, and people-to-people connections.
- The modern relationship can be traced back to Sir Stamford Raffles, who established a trading station in Singapore in 1819. This led to its development as a crown colony governed from Kolkata until 1867.
- India was **one of the first countries** to recognize Singapore's independence in 1965.

Trade and Economic Cooperation:

- Singapore is a significant trade and investment partner for India within the ASEAN region, accounting for 27.3% of India's overall trade with ASEAN in 2021-22.
- It is also the leading source of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into India, with a total investment of approximately 136.653 billion over the past two decades, representing nearly 23% of India's total FDI inflows.
- The Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) between India and Singapore was signed in 2005, further facilitating trade and economic cooperation.
- The integration of India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and Singapore's PayNow in February 2023 enabled faster remittances between the two nations.

Defence and Security Cooperation:

- India and Singapore share common concerns about regional stability and maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region.

- Their relationship was elevated to a Strategic Partnership in 2015, coinciding with the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations.
- Agreements such as the Defence Cooperation Agreement (2003) and the Naval Cooperation Agreement (2017) have been signed to enhance defence ties.

Military Exercises:
- **Navy: SIMBEX**
- **Air Force: SINDEX**
- **Army: Bold Kurukshetra**

Education, Science, and Technology Cooperation:
- The DST-CII India-Singapore Technology Summit, held annually, showcases collaboration between the two countries in areas such as AI, IoT, fintech, healthcare, biotech, smart manufacturing, green mobility, logistics, sustainable urban development, etc.
  - ISRO launched Singapore's first indigenously built micro-satellite in 2011.
  - Singapore expresses interest in collaborating with India on digital public infrastructure and integrating Singapore's 'Proxtera' with India's Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC).

Cultural and People-to-People Ties:
- Both nations celebrate a rich heritage of cultural diversity, linguistic affinity, and religious harmony.
- Ethnic Indians make up about 9.1% of Singapore's resident population, contributing significantly to its economic development, social fabric, and cultural diversity.
- The ASEAN-India Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) held in Singapore in 2018 marked 25 years of ASEAN-India Partnership under the theme "Ancient Route, New Journey."

India-France Ties

News Excerpt:
The Prime Minister visited France, as both countries completed 25 years of their strategic partnership.

Prominent outcomes of the visit
- India-France relations are founded on shared values, a belief in sovereignty and strategic autonomy, and an unwavering commitment to international law and the UN Charter.
- Indian PM and the President of France took stock of the transformation and expansion of the relationship in every area of bilateral cooperation and highlighted its evolution into a partnership of regional responsibilities and global importance.

Major Outcomes
Defence: The defence ministry approved the proposed procurement of 26 Naval variants of Rafale jets from France.
- Setting up of an Indian technical office of the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) at the Indian embassy in Paris.
- Expanding cooperation in co-production and co-development of new technologies.

Space:
- Expanding defence manufacturing capabilities and technologies along with strategic cooperation in space.
- Trishna satellite project to boost cooperation in satellite services.
- An MoU between our National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT) under the Ministry of Earth Sciences and a French sea research institute, IFREMER, on collaborative research projects in areas such as the Deep Ocean Mission and exchange of scientific and technical expertise, is also being treated as a welcome move and will bolster bilateral scientific cooperation. This is also likely to translate into business opportunities in times to come.

Sustainability: Cornerstone of the India-France partnership:
- A joint commitment to eliminate single-use plastic product pollution and a ban on single-use plastic products.

Related:
Bastille Day: Participation by PM
About the day:
- This was the day on which ordinary people stormed the Bastille, a 14th-century century fortress-prison in Paris that was used to incarcerate political prisoners
- The famous writer philosopher Voltaire and the infamous Marquis de Sade had both been kept at the Bastille at various times.
- Bastille Day can be said to have set in motion the decade-long French Revolution. This revolution fundamentally altered French political and social life and influenced the foundational ideas of democracy across the world, popularising slogans

such as "**Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité**" (Liberty, Equality, Fraternity).

- July 14, 1789, is also the anniversary of **Fête de la Fédération**, an event held in 1790 to celebrate the unity of the French people.
- **Why Bastille?** The reason the mob chose the Bastille was that people were imprisoned simply because the King said so, without trial and without publicly stated causes.
- Before PM Modi, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had attended Bastille Day celebrations in **2009**.

India- Bangladesh Ties

News Excerpt:
The Indian Prime Minister and his Bangladeshi counterpart inaugurated a rail link connecting Northeast India with Bangladesh.
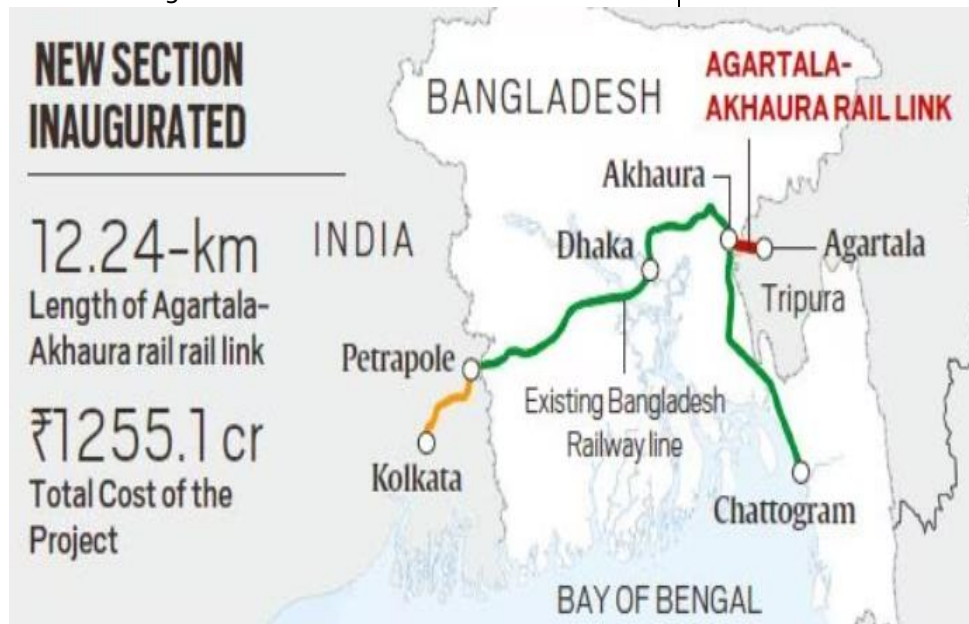
About the project:
- The 12.24 km Agartala-Akhaura railway line is divided into 5.46 km on the Indian side in **Tripura** and 6.78 km in the **Bangladesh Akhaura upa-zilla** in the Brahmanbaria district.
- The journey duration between Agartala and Kolkata will be reduced from **31 hours to 10 hours** by the Agartala-Akhaura project.
- **The Ministry for Development of North East Region (DoNER) funded the work on the Indian side, and the Indian Ministry of External Affairs** (MEA) funded the expense for the Bangladesh side as 'Aid to Bangladesh'.
- The project will eventually cover **Dhaka and Kolkata.**
- Two other projects inaugurated simultaneously were the **Khulna - Mongla Port Rail Line** and **Unit - II of the Maitree Super Thermal Power Plant in Rampal, Bangladesh**.

Significance of this project:
- **Gateway for Tourism:**
  o The railway link will open the door for tourism in land-locked Tripura and boost the state's local economy.

- **Pragmatic relevance:**
  o The link will significantly reduce the time and distance (from 1600 km to 500 km) needed to reach Tripura, southern Assam, and Mizoram from Kolkata.

- **Historical:**
  o During the 1971 India-Pakistan war and the creation of Bangladesh, Tripura accommodated around 15 lakh East-Pakistani refugees. It ran at least eight major muktijoddha (liberation warrior) training camps.
  o Assam's tea industry led to the development of railways and connections to the Chittagong port in the 19th century.

- **Geographical:**
  o Bangladesh surrounds Tripura on all three sides and shares an **856-km international border with Bangladesh**, the second highest after West Bengal.

- **Strengthen bilateral relationship:**
  o It will help boost India-Bangladesh trade in agriculture products, tea, sugar, construction items, iron and steel, consumer items, and people-to-people ties.

SECURITY & DEFENCE

Dima Hasao Insurgent Group

News Excerpt:

Assam-based insurgent group the Dimasa National Liberation Army (DNLA) signed a peace agreement with the state and the Union Government.

About DNLA:

- Established in 2019, it is an insurgent group in the Dima Hasao and Karbi Anglong districts in Assam, which are protected under **the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.**
- The group works to develop a sense of brotherhood among Dimasas by rebuilding trust and faith in the community and seeking sovereign territory for the Dimasa tribals.
- It works on extortion and taxation and gets support from Nagaland's NSCN (IM) faction.

About Dimasas or Dimasa-Kacharis:

- These are inhabitants of Dima Hasao, Karbi Anglong, Cachar, Hojai, and Nagaon districts covering most of Assam and Nagaland. They are known as the earliest rulers and settlers of Assam.
- These are believed to be descendants of the rulers of the Kamarupa Kingdom prior to the Ahom Rule, who ruled large parts of Assam along the south bank of Brahmaputra between the 13th and 16th centuries.
- Their capital was Dimapur, now called Nagaland and later Maibang in North Cachar Hills.

Smart Fencing of Borders

News Excerpt:

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) is considering a 100-km smart fence along the India-Myanmar border.

What is Smart Fencing?

- As the name implies, a smart fence is a type of traditional physical barrier combined with modern technology, including physical barriers, cameras, sensors, and IT systems. It helps keep intruders in check who may try to enter due to insufficient manpower or human neglect.
- India shares a 1,643-km border with Myanmar, which passes through Arunachal Pradesh (520 km), Nagaland (215 km), Manipur (398 km) and Mizoram (510 km). Recent insurgency in Manipur can also be attributed to the activities of Meitei, Naga, Kuki, Zomi, and Hmar insurgent groups, all having links with the Myanmarese insurgent camps across the border.
- Terrain, socioeconomic development and historical factors such as language, ethnicity, tribal rivalry, migration, control over local resources and long and porous international borders have resulted in a fragile security situation in the northeastern States.
- Currently, a Free Movement Regime (FMR) exists between the two countries. Under the FMR, every member of the hill tribes, who is either a citizen of India or a citizen of Myanmar and who is a resident of any area within 16 km on either side of the Indo-Myanmar border, can cross the border on the production of a border pass (which has one-year validity) issued by the competent authority and can stay up to two weeks per visit.
- This unfenced border and unregulated migration has caused several problems for the security of the North Eastern states and the Assam Rifles, the force guarding those borders. This will help strengthen the existing surveillance system across the borders.
- The objective of the smart fence is to check not only illegal immigration but also cross-border criminal activities, especially **drug trafficking from Myanmar.**

DNA and face-matching systems at police stations

News Excerpt:

The Indian Union government plans to install "DNA and Face Matching" systems at 1,300 police stations.

About

- The **Criminal Procedure Identification Act (CrPI,2022)** enables police and central investigating agencies to **collect**, **store,** and **analyze** physical and biological samples, including **retina** and **iris scans** of arrested persons.
  - It **replaced** the **Prisoners Act of 1920**, whose scope was limited to capturing **finger impressions**, **footprint impressions,** and **photographs**.
- The **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)** is assigned to finalize the Standard Operating Procedure **(SOP)** that police officials will follow while recording the measurements.

DNA profiling:

- It is the process of identifying individuals based on their unique **genetic makeup**. Even though people may have similar facial features and eye and hair

www.ksgindia.com

DELHI VN: 9717380832 & DELHI ORN: 9811293743 | JAIPUR: 8290800441 | PATNA: 7463950774 | BHOPAL: 7509975361 | INDORE: 7314977441 | BENGALURU: 7619166663 | HYDERABAD: 79960 66663 | KOLKATA: 9007709895 | IMPHAL: 9650245599

colour, their **DNA is different**, which makes this procedure useful in solving crimes more accurately.

- Forensic scientists can rule out or confirm a suspect by comparing DNA found at the crime scene, such as blood or hair, to DNA samples from suspects. If there is a match, the police are likely to investigate the suspect more closely.
- After a convict is found guilty, their DNA is collected and stored for future investigations.

Face matching system:
- **Facial recognition technology (FRT)** refers to a technique used to **identify** or **verify** individuals by their unique facial features as a **biometric identifier**. This technology captures a person's facial features through a digital image or video and then uses **algorithms** to compare that image or video to a database.
- It has numerous advantages in law enforcement – identifying criminals, improving public safety, reducing the workload of law enforcement personnel, and enhancing the accuracy of criminal investigations. However, the use of FRT also raises concerns regarding privacy and civil liberties.

LAN Radio

News Excerpt:
The Indian Army has sealed a deal with a Bengaluru-based company to procure the indigenously developed tactical LAN radio.

About tactical LAN Radio:
- It is a state-of-the-art high-bandwidth backhaul wireless radio equipment for the provisioning of reliable communication.
- It is the second contract that the Army has firmed up under the Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) framework.
- The LAN radio solution offers an enhanced range of communication and embedded frequency hopping mechanism to preclude chances of interception.
- The system also incorporates enhanced safety features and can operate continuously for 48 hours on a single-set basis without breakdown.

Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX)
- iDEX aims to create an ecosystem to foster innovation and technology development in Defence and Aerospace by engaging Industries, including MSMEs, startups, individual innovators, R&D institutes & academia.
- It will be funded and managed by a 'Defence Innovation Organization (DIO)', which has been

formed as a 'not for profit' company for this purpose.
- iDEX will function as the executive arm of DIO, carrying out all the required activities, while DIO will provide high-level policy guidance to iDEX.

Improvised Explosive Devices (IED)

News Excerpt:
Several security personnel in the Jammu and Dantewada divisions were killed because of IEDs.

About:
- In the 1970s, after the Irish Republican Army (IRA) used bombs made from agricultural fertilizer and SEMTEX smuggled from Libya to make highly remote-controlled bombs, **improvised explosive devices were used by the British Army**. SEMTEX is a plastic explosive containing RDX (i.e. Research Department Explosive) and PETN (Penta-erythritol tetra-nitrate).
- They were commonly used during the Iraq War around 2003.
- Common materials, such as fertilizer, gunpowder, and hydrogen peroxide, can be used as explosive materials in IEDs.
- They are easy to carry and can be placed in a vehicle, kept in a package or concealed on the roadside.
- The explosion depends on the type of material used as an explosive but can be triggered by various methods, including remote control, infrared or magnetic triggers, pressure-sensitive bars or trip wires (victim-operated).
- It comes in many forms, from a small pipe bomb to a sophisticated device capable of causing massive damage and loss of life.

How to prevent such attacks?
- **Stealth, camouflage and concealment** are integral ways to avoid such accidents.
- In War Zones, security forces should be provided with **appropriate protective gear**, such as blast-resistant clothing, helmets and eye protection.
- Various detection methods, such as **metal detectors, ground-penetrating radar, and trained sniffer dogs**, should be implemented well to locate and clear landmines and IEDs.
- Road opening parties with **Unmanned Ground vehicles and drones for aerial surveillance** can play an important role in detecting ambushes.
- Vulnerable areas can be mapped, and contingency plans can be prepared.

Ballistic missile 'Agni Prime'

News Excerpt:

The new generation ballistic missile, 'Agni Prime', was successfully flight-tested by the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) from Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Island off the coast of Odisha.

About Agni Prime:

This was the first pre-induction night launch conducted by the users after three successful developmental trials of the missile, validating the accuracy and reliability of the system.

Agni Prime
Agni-P's 1,000-2,000 km range is too short to reach targets in China's mainland but can cover all of Pakistan's territory.
Being a canisterised missile, it can be transported easily and fired at very short notice.
It will replace the Prithvi, Agni-1, and Agni-2 missiles in India's arsenal, built two decades ago using obsolete technology.
It will enter service as a two-stage, solid propellant missile.
Agni-P and Agni-5 originate from the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme, which the then-DRDO chief Dr APJ Abdul Kalam launched in the early 1980s.

- The purpose of the trial of the sea-based missile was to engage and neutralize a hostile ballistic missile threat, thereby elevating India into an elite club of nations with such a capability.
- India has been developing capabilities to intercept hostile ballistic missiles both inside and outside the earth's atmospheric limits.
- The Agni 1 to 4 missiles range from 700 km to 3,500 km and have already been deployed.
- In December 2022, India successfully test-fired an Agni-V missile that can strike targets at ranges up to 5,000 km.
- Agni-V can cover almost the entire Asia, including the northernmost part of China, as well as some regions in Europe.

The Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP)

- This programme was conceptualized by Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, a renowned scientist, to make India self-sufficient in missile technology.
- The team included members from the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO), Army, Navy, Air Force, and Defence Production.

- On July 26, 1983, the IGMDP received approval from the Government of India.

The missiles developed under the programme were:

- Short-range surface-to-surface ballistic missile Prithvi.
- Intermediate-range surface-to-surface ballistic missile Agni.
- Short-range low-level surface-to-air missile Trishul.
- Medium-range surface-to-air missile Akash.
- Third-generation anti-tank missile Nag.

LCA Tejas

News Excerpt:

The Indian Prime Minister completed a sortie in the supersonic multirole fighter jet Tejas, becoming the first head of government to achieve the feat.

About Tejas:

- It is a **4.5th Generation Light Combat Aircraft (LCA)** category Fighter jet.
- It is an **all-weather aircraft** that can work as both single and twin-seater jets.
- The aircraft is designed to be multi-role, **capable of easily taking up offensive air support, close combat, and ground attack roles**.
- It is also designed to undertake **Ground Maritime Operations**.
- This is the first time **an indigenous twin-seat fighter** has been designed, developed, and manufactured in India.
- It is equipped with **AESA Radar**, an EW suite consisting of **radar warning and self-protection jamming**, a **Digital Map Generator (DMG)**, **Smart Multi-function Displays (SMFD)**, **a Combined Interrogator and Transponder (CIT)**, an **Advanced Radio Altimeter,** and other advanced features.

Features:

Smallest & lightest aircraft in its class	Dimensionally smallest and an extensive use of composite structure to make the aircraft lighter.
Excellent flight safety record	Remarkable achievement of accident-free flying.
Compound Tail-Less Delta	It increases the capacity to carry a wider range of weapons, such as Bombs and missiles. It can fire a variety of weapons with the required precision and accuracy.
In-Flight Refueling (IFR) Probe	Enhances range during mission undertaken. IFR capability has been proven for day and night operations.
Architecture-based	Indigenously designed, which provides interoperability, scalability and portability.
Quadruplex-Redundant Fly-By-Wire	Fully redundant quadruplex digital fly-by-wire flight control system to ease handling by the pilot.
AESA RADAR	Electronically Scanned Array RADAR with a low probability of interception.

Storm Shadow Missile

News Excerpt:
Storm Shadow missiles were used in a Ukrainian strike that damaged a Russian submarine and ship at a major naval port in Crimea.

About the Storm Shadow Missile (SCALP):
- A **long-range cruise missile** with stealth capabilities jointly **developed by the UK and France**.
- Intended to **strike high-value stationary assets** such as airbases, radar installations, communications hubs and port facilities.
- It is able to **operate in extreme conditions** and offers operators a **highly flexible, deep-strike capability** based on a sophisticated mission planning system.
- It is also in service with the air forces of Egypt, India, Italy, Greece, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and UAE.

Features:
- It is typically launched from the air, **weighs 1.3 tonnes** and is just **over 5m long.**
- Powered by a **turbo-jet engine**, the missile travels at more than 600mph speeds.
- It carries a conventional 450 kg warhead that ranges up to 200 miles (300km).

- It is equipped with **fire-and-forget** technology and fully autonomous guidance.
- The missile is fitted with a **passive imaging infrared seeker.**
- The missile is programmed with every detail of the target and the path to be taken before its launch.
- Once launched, the missile drops to a low altitude to avoid detection by enemy radar before latching onto its target with the infrared seeker.

Meira Paibis

News Excerpt:
During one of his visits to Manipur, the Union Home Minister met with the Meira Paibis during his meetings with various civil society groups.

About:
- The Meira Paibis, also known as Imas or **Mothers of Manipur**, are Meitei women who come from all sections of society in the Imphal valley, are widely respected, and represent a **powerful moral force**.
- Meira Paibis, or "women torch bearers," are so called because they hold flaming torches aloft while marching in the streets, often at night.

Formation:
The Meira Paibi was formed in 1977.

Objectives:
- One of the largest grassroots movements in the world, its initial focus of fighting alcoholism and drug abuse has now expanded to countering human rights violations and the development of society at large.
- The Meira Paibi women were the active support base of Irom Sharmila, the activist who remained on a hunger strike in the state from 2000 to 2016 to protest against the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA).

Sagar Sampark

News Excerpt:
The Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways inaugurated the 'SAGAR SAMPARK'.

About:
- An **indigenous** Differential Global Navigation Satellite System (DGNSS) will provide more accurate information to the ships for safe navigation.
- DGNSS is a terrestrial-based enhancement system that **corrects the errors and inaccuracies** in the Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS), allowing for more accurate positioning information.

- The DGNSS service will help mariners **navigat**e safely and will reduce the risk of collisions, groundings, and accidents in the port and harbour areas. This will lead to the safe & efficient movement of vessels.
- **Improved Accuracy -** The error correction accuracy has been improved from 5 - 10 meters to less than 5 meters for 100 Nautical Miles from Indian coastlines.
- **Ministry-** Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.

1st GSI Survey of Siachen

News Excerpt:
Pakistan's claim that the Siachen region fell on its side of the ceasefire line stands rejected as it never objected to the first Geological Survey of India (GSI) study, which was widely published.

About:
- In June 1958, V. K. Raina, a top Indian geologist, led the **first Geological Survey of India expedition** to the Siachen glacier.
- The **objective** was to study the Himalayan glacier systems, which included snout monitoring of the five glaciers in the Sikkim, Kumaon, and Kashmir Himalayas. **The five glaciers to be surveyed were the Siachen, Mamostong, Chong Kumdan, Kichik Kumdan, and Aktash glaciers.**
- **The Geological Survey of India (GSI) assigned the Siachen glacier the number 5Q 131 05 084 in that survey.**
- **History:** Point NJ 9842 was the last mutually demarcated point between India and Pakistan as per the **Karachi ceasefire agreement** of 1949 and also the point where the Line of Control of the **Shimla Agreement** ends.

Stapled Visa

News Excerpt:
India withdrew its eight-athlete wushu contingent from the Summer World University Games beginning in Chengdu in July after China issued stapled visas to three athletes from the team who belong to Arunachal Pradesh.

About the stapled visa:
- It is an **unstamped piece of paper** attached to a passport page by a pin or staples. It can be torn off or detached at will.
- China has made it a practice to issue stapled visas to all Indian nationals from Arunachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir.
- In 2006, the Chinese authority refused to give a visa to an Indian government official serving in Arunachal Pradesh.

Reasons behind the issue of stapled visa by China:
- China challenged the legal status of the **McMahon Line** (the boundary between Tibet and British India) that was agreed upon at the Shimla Convention of 1914.
- This disagreement lies at the heart of Chinese claims over the position of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and its repeated transgressions into Indian territory.
- China claims some 90,000 sq. km of Arunachal Pradesh as its territory. It calls the area **"Zangnan" in the Chinese language or "South Tibet".**
- It issues lists of Chinese names for places in Arunachal Pradesh—three such lists were issued in 2017, 2021, and April 2023—and takes steps such as issuing stapled visas.

Border Road Organization (BRO)

News Excerpt:
The Border Roads Organisation, under the Ministry of Defence, has built over 60 percent of the roads bordering China in the last three years.

About BRO
- BRO is a government agency under the control of the Ministry of Defence.
- This body is responsible for the construction, maintenance, and development of roads, bridges, and tunnels in border areas and other strategic regions of the country.
- It was founded in 1960 primarily to improve connectivity in remote and challenging terrains along India's borders.

- The Government of India established the Border Roads Development Board (BRDB), with the Prime Minister as Chairman and the Defence Minister as Deputy Chairman.

Role of BRO in Border Security

- **Infrastructure Development**: BRO is responsible for constructing and maintaining roads, bridges, and tunnels in border regions. These infrastructure projects improve accessibility to border areas and enable the swift movement of armed forces personnel, equipment, and supplies.
- **Strategic Connectivity**: By establishing roads and infrastructure near the borders in remote and challenging terrains, BRO ensures that border regions are well-connected. This connectivity is vital for maintaining troop readiness, quick response capabilities, and efficient supply chain management for defence forces.
- **Quick Response**: The infrastructure developed by BRO allows defence forces to respond swiftly to any security threats or emergencies along the borders. It facilitates rapid troop deployment and the movement of specialized equipment, enabling timely action.
  - **Surveillance and Patrolling:** The improved road network created by BRO supports border patrolling and surveillance activities. Troops can effectively monitor and secure the border areas, deter intrusions, and respond to any unauthorized crossings.
  - **Strategic Deployment:** The BRO's efforts enable the Indian military to position its personnel and resources strategically along the borders. This positioning helps deter potential adversaries and ensures a strong defence posture.

Defence Acquisition Council (DAC)

News Excerpt:
The DAC has cleared proposals to buy additional Submarines and Fighter jets for the three forces.

About the DAC:
- The DAC is the **highest decision-making body** of the Defence Ministry on procurement.
- It was formed after the Group of Ministers (GoM)'s recommendations as a part of 'reforming the National Security System' in 2001 **post-Kargil War** (1999).

- The **chairman of the council is the Defence Minister**, other members of the DAC are the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and chiefs of the Army, Navy, and Air Force.
- Post-Kargil war, several loopholes surfaced in the procurement of defence equipment and arms.
  - As a part of the **reform in defence**, the DAC was formed to ensure expeditious procurement of the approved requirements of the armed forces.

How does DAC function?
- DAC makes an Accord of **acceptance of the necessity** of acquisition proposals.
- It also actively participates in the categorization of the acquisition proposals relating to **'Buy', 'Buy & Make', and 'Make'**.
- It entertains the subjects related to **single vendor clearance**.
- DAC makes decisions regarding the **Transfer of Technology** under the 'Buy & Make' category of acquisition proposals.
- Monitor the **progress of major projects** on feedback from the Defence Procurement Board.

Defence Testing Infrastructure Scheme

News Excerpt:
India's first Unmanned Aerial Systems (Drone) Common Testing Centre under the Defence Testing Infrastructure Scheme (DTIS) will be established in Tamil Nadu.

About:
- The Scheme has an outlay of 400 crore for creating state-of-the-art testing infrastructure over the duration of five years.
- The projects under the scheme will be provided with up to **75% government funding** in the form of Grant-in-Aid.
- The remaining **25% of the cost will be borne by the Special Purpose Vehicles (SPV)**, whose constituents will be Indian private entities and State Governments.
- The SPV will be made of State Governments and Private entities and the scheme will be registered under the **Companies Act 2013.**
- While a majority of test facilities are expected to come up in the two Defence Industrial Corridors (DICs), they are not going to be limited to just the two Defence Industrial Corridors (DIC) in Uttar Pradesh & Tamil Nadu.

www.ksgindia.com

DELHI VN: 9717380832 & **DELHI ORN:** 9811293743 | **JAIPUR:** 8290800441 | **PATNA:** 7463950774 | **BHOPAL:** 7509975361 | **INDORE:** 7314977441 | **BENGALURU:** 7619166663 | **HYDERABAD:** 79960 66663 | **KOLKATA:** 9007709895 | **IMPHAL:** 9650245599

- It will be a **Greenfield Defence Testing Infrastructure** that will help boost production in both the defence and aerospace sector which had been lacking such facilities for the private players.

Key Benefits

Setting up a drone testing lab in India can provide significant security-related benefits, like:

- **Counterterrorism and Surveillance**: A drone testing lab can help develop and test advanced surveillance drones that can be employed for counterterrorism operations. These drones can monitor sensitive areas, detect suspicious activities, and enhance situational awareness for security agencies.
- **Border and Coastal Monitoring:** Drones equipped with high-resolution cameras and sensors can be used to monitor borders and coastlines, helping prevent illegal crossings, smuggling, and other security threats.
- **Critical Infrastructure Protection**: Drones can be used to inspect critical infrastructure such as power plants, pipelines, and communication towers for vulnerabilities and potential security breaches.
- **Emergency Response and Disaster Management**: Drones can provide real-time aerial views during natural disasters, assisting in search and rescue operations and enabling better disaster response coordination.

INDUS-X Initiative

News Excerpt:

The **US delegation** met with a team of Innovations for Defence Excellence-Defence Innovation Organization **(iDEX-DIO)**.

About India:

US Defence Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X) Initiative:

- **iDEX**, in partnership with the **US Department of Defence**, launched the India-US Defence Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X) in early 2023.
- INDUS-X **aims** to:
  - Pave the way toward the goals in the US-India roadmap for defence industrial cooperation.
  - Capitalize on the tech-releasability outcomes that the industry anticipates from the US-India **Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET).**
  - Strengthen bilateral trade relationships and defence establishment linkages.

- The initiative will expand the strategic technology partnership and defence industrial cooperation between startup ecosystems, businesses and academic institutions. It seeks to explore possibilities for co-producing jet engines, long-range artillery, and infantry vehicles.
- It has been launched as a part of the vision to build a '**Defence Innovation Bridge**' which is a part of iCET.

iDEX:

- **Aim-** Creation of an **ecosystem** to foster innovation and technology development in Defence and Aerospace by engaging industries including MSMEs, startups, individual innovators, Research institutes & academia.
- It fosters innovation in critical domains like Artificial Intelligence (AI), unmanned solutions, domain awareness, communications, space, cybersecurity, etc.
- It is funded and managed by the Defence Innovation Organization **(DIO).**

Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET):

- It is a **framework** agreed upon by India and the US for cooperation on **critical and emerging technologies**. It was launched in January 2023.
- Key takeaways include:
  - Developing new defence industrial cooperation and common standards in AI.
  - Developing a roadmap to accelerate defence technological cooperation and innovation bridges to connect defence startups.
  - Supporting the development of a semiconductor ecosystem.
  - Strengthening cooperation on human spaceflight.
  - Advancing cooperation on development in 5G and 6G.
  - Adopting **OpenRAN network technology** in India.

Bharat NCX

News Excerpt:

The National Security Council Secretariat organizes the 2nd Edition of the National Cyber Security Exercise **'Bharat NCX 2023'** for Government associations and public-private sectors to strengthen India's Cyber posture Critical Sector.

About the exercise:
- The objective of the exercise is to train senior management and technical personnel of the government, critical sector organizations, and public and private agencies in contemporary cyber threats and handling cyber incidents and response.
- The program is being conducted by the **National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS), Govt. of India in strategic cooperation with Rashtriya Raksha University (RRU).**
- This flagship event serves as a unifying platform for over 300 participants, representing a different diapason of government agencies, public associations, and the private sector, all intensively committed to safeguarding critical information structure through training sessions, Live Fire and Strategic exercises.

CHAKRAVAT 2023

News Excerpt:
CHAKRAVAT is the Annual Joint Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Exercise conducted by the Indian Army, Indian Navy (IN), and Indian Air Force (IAF) in rotation.

About the Exercise:
- Since its first edition at the Combined Commanders' Conference 2015, it has transformed itself into a multi-agency endeavour involving the participation of all three Services, Paramilitary Forces, and several disaster response organizations, NGOs, and other organizations.

Aim:
- To develop **collective and coordinated effective response mechanisms** on emergent topics such as: Humanitarian crises, Climate Change Adaptation and increase in natural disasters, Disaster Risk Reduction, and Disaster Response in the Indian Ocean Region.
- This will help India fulfil two of the most visible elements of its foreign policy, i.e.
  - **SAGAR** (Security And Growth for All in the Region), i.e., an inclusive vision for the oceans.
  - **First Responder** in the region: The Indian Armed Forces have been frequently called upon to assist our friends and partners in the Region.

About Chakravat 2023 Edition:
- Its 2023 edition would witness participation from **eight countries** of the Indian Ocean Region. They are **Comoros, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, Sri Lanka and Tanzania.**
- **The Indian Navy is hosting the 2023 edition of the exercise at Goa in October.** The last edition of the training was conducted at Agra by IAF.

Exercise Sagar Kavach 02/23

News Excerpt:
A two-day Coastal Security Exercise Sagar Kavach 02/23 involving all maritime security agencies was conducted by the Indian Navy in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and the UT of Puducherry in October to strengthen the coastal security architecture.

About the Exercise:
- It was executed under the command of the Flag Officer Commanding in Chief, Eastern Naval Command.
- In this exercise, about **2500 personnel,** including from the Indian Navy, Indian Coast Guard, State and U/T Administration, Marine Police, Fisheries, Customs, Int Agencies, Light Houses, Ports Forest etc were engaged in the exercise.
- It aimed to assess the efficacy and robustness of the coastal security mechanism while dealing with an asymmetric threat emanating from the sea.

INS Sumedha and Exercise Bright Star-23

News Excerpt:
The Indian Navy Ship (INS) Sumedha recently participated in Exercise Bright Star-23 with multiple other navies in the Mediterranean Sea.

About INS Sumedha:
- 3rd ship of the indigenously built Saryu class Naval Offshore Patrol Vessels (NOPV).
- Indigenously designed and commissioned into the Indian Navy in 2014.
- Part of the **Indian Navy's Eastern Fleet,** based in Visakhapatnam.
- **Primary Functions:** To undertake EEZ surveillance, anti-piracy patrols, fleet support operations, provide maritime security to offshore assets and carry out escort operations for high-value assets.
- **Features:**
  - It can carry an Advanced Light Combat Helicopter onboard.
  - The ship is propelled by two diesel engines, the largest of their kind ever deployed in the Indian Navy, which allow it to reach a top speed of 25 knots.

Page 30

o With a range of 6,000 nautical miles (11,000 km) at 16 knots (30 km/h), it is suitable for extended missions and operations.

About Exercise Bright Star-23:
- The biennial multinational tri-service exercise was conducted in northern Egypt and led by the US and Egyptian armed forces.
- Largest-ever joint military exercise in the Middle East and North Africa region.
- Since its inception in 1980, it has occurred 18 times.
- This edition of the exercise saw participation from 34 countries, including India.

NATPOLREX-IX

News Excerpt:
The Indian Coast Guard conducted the 9th National Level Pollution Response Exercise (NATPOLREX-IX) off Vadinar, Gujarat.

About the exercise:
- It **aims** to assess the **preparedness** and **coordination** between various resource agencies to respond to a **marine oil spill** while invoking the **provisions of the National Oil Spill Disaster Contingency Plan (NOSDCP)**.
- The exercise involved the deployment of surface and air platforms by the Indian Coast Guard **(ICG)**, such as Pollution Response Vessels **(PRVs)**, Offshore Patrol Vessels **(OPVs)**, indigenous Advanced Light Helicopter **Mk-III**, and **Dornier Aircraft** configured for marine pollution response.

Initiatives by ICG regarding oil spills:
- The **Indian Coast Guard** is the **central authority** responsible for responding to oil spills in Indian waters.
- They began protecting the marine environment in India's maritime zones on **March 7, 1986**, when this **responsibility** was **transferred** to them from the Ministry of Shipping.
- The ICG then developed the **National Oil Spill Disaster Contingency Plan** (NOSDCP) in a process ranging from 1993-1996.
- In addition to creating the NOSDCP, the Coast Guard has established **four Pollution Response Centers** in Mumbai, Chennai, Port Blair, and Vadinar.

NOSDCP:
- The National Oil Spill Disaster Contingency Plan prescribes **procedures** and provides **information** required in case of **oil spills**.

- India is a party to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea **(UNCLOS)** and, thus, has an **obligation** to **protect** and preserve the **marine environment**.
- The **42nd Amendment** to the Constitution of India **obliges** the Indian state to **protect** and **improve** the environment.
- Thus, this plan is a measure of **the fulfilment** of the obligation of the State under **both the UN Law of the Sea Convention and the Constitution of India.**

Military Nursing Service celebrates 98th Raising Day.

News Excerpt:
Military Nursing Service (MNS) celebrated its 98th Raising Day on Oct 1, 2023.

About Military Nursing Service:
- The British Indian government established the Indian Army Nursing Services (IANS) in 1888. This marked the formal beginning of Military Nursing in India.
- On **1st Oct 1926, the Permanent Nursing Service was raised in the Indian Army** and designated as the Indian Military Nursing Service, thus making it one of the oldest and most distinguished all-women services in the Armed Forces.
- It has evolved as a renowned service known for its rich history of dedication and exemplary service in War and peace. Today, the service holds more than 5,000 officers posted at various hospitals of the Armed Forces.
- The IANS have been awarded **16 National Florence Nightingale Awards** till now. **The National Florence Nightingale Awards are considered one of the highest honours in the nursing profession in India.**
- The National Florence Nightingale Award was instituted by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India in the year **1973** as a mark of recognition for the meritorious services rendered by the nurses and nursing professionals to the society.
- **These are given in honour of Florence Nightingale, who is revered as the founder of modern nursing**.

SHI-YAN 6

News Excerpt:

Shiyan 6 is a **Chinese Oceanographic research vessel** that has entered the Indian Ocean via Malacca Strait

Map of Sri Lanka showing BAY OF BENGAL, GULF OF MANNAR, THE PORT OF TRINCOMALEE, THE PORT OF COLOMBO, THE PORT OF GALLE, THE PORT OF HAMBANTOTA, INDIAN OCEAN. MAP NOT TO SCALE
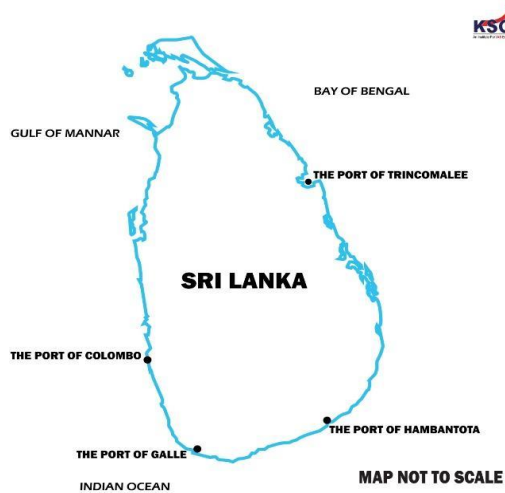
About:

- It was moored at Sri Lanka's Hambantota Port, which is located near India, and India has raised security concerns over the proximity and motives of the Chinese ship.
- A similar episode of tension unfolded in August 2022 when the Chinese vessel **"Yuan Wang 5"** docked at Hambantota port, despite India's concerns.

Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue 2023

News Excerpt:

The Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue (IPRD), the Indian Navy's **annual** international conference, took place in New Delhi.

About:

- It is the principal manifestation of the Navy's international engagement at the strategic level, **addressing maritime security issues across the Indo-Pacific.**
- The **National Maritime Foundation (NMF)** is the Indian Navy's knowledge partner and chief organizer of each edition of the IPRD**.**
- It **aims** to review various maritime trends within the Indo-Pacific region and to foster the exchange of solution-oriented dialogue among key stakeholders.

2023 edition:

- **Theme: Geopolitical Impacts upon Indo-Pacific Maritime Trade and Connectivity**

> **National Maritime Foundation (NMF):**
> - It was **established in 2005** as the nation's first independent and autonomous maritime think-tank for the conduct of policy-relevant research.
> - Its intellectual and organizational development is supported by the **Ministry of Defence and the Indian Navy.**
> - It is designed to create and heighten maritime awareness amongst India's policy-makers, intellectual echelons, and civil society at large.

- **Six professional sessions** will encompass the discussions over three days. They are
  - Nodes of Maritime Connectivity
  - China's Impact vis-à-vis Maritime Connectivity across the Indo-Pacific
  - Maritime Connectivity through Shipping and Trade
  - Maritime Connectivity through Shipping and Trade (Part 2);
  - Private Industry in the Safety and Security of Indo-Pacific Maritime Trade and Shipping
  - Maintaining a Rules-based, Safe, and Secure Indo-Pacific.

Goa Maritime Conclave (GMC)

News Excerpt:

The Indian Navy hosted the fourth edition of the Goa Maritime Conclave (GMC).

About GMC:

- It is the Indian Navy's outreach initiative for harnessing maritime thought and realizing the Prime Minister's vision of SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region).
- SAGAR is India's Policy of Maritime Corporation in IOR, which was announced in 2015.
- With the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) becoming the focus of the 21st-century strategic landscape, the GMC aims to bring together the regional stakeholders and deliberate on collaborative implementation strategies in dealing with contemporary maritime security challenges.

About GMC, 2023:

- Theme: "Maritime Security in the Indian Ocean Region: Converting Common Maritime Priorities into Collaborative Mitigating Frameworks"
- 12 IOR countries attended. They included Bangladesh, Comoros, Indonesia, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Myanmar, Seychelles, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Thailand.
- Deliberations were held on four sub-themes:

- Identifying Gaps in Regulatory and Legal Frameworks for Achieving Maritime Security in the IOR.
- Formulation of a Common Multilateral Maritime Strategy and Operating Protocols for GMC Nations for Collective Mitigation of Maritime Threats and Challenges.
- Identification and Establishment of Collaborative Training Programmes with the Center of Excellence across the IOR.
- Leveraging Activities Pursued through Existing Multilateral Organizations in the IOR towards Generating Collective Maritime Competencies.

Ransomware Attack

News Excerpt:

A US unit of the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) was recently hit by a ransomware attack. It is believed that a ransomware called **Lockbit 3.0** was behind the attack.

About Ransomware Attacks

- It is a type of malware attack in which the attacker locks and encrypts the victim's data and critical files.
- They then **demand a payment** to unlock and decrypt the data.

> **What is the Dark web?**
>
> It is the hidden collective of internet sites only accessible by a specialized web browser. It is used for keeping internet activity anonymous and private, which can be helpful in both legal and illegal applications.

- This type of attack takes **advantage of system, network, and software vulnerabilities** to infect the victim's device.

About Lockbit 3.0:

- It was created by Lockbit, a group that effectively sells its **malware to non-state actors** on the **dark web.**
- It is the most popular strain of ransomware, accounting for around **28 %** of all known attacks **from July 2022 to June 2023.**
- Execution of over 1,400 attacks against victims in the United States has come to light, and over **$100 million worldwide** has been asked in ransom demands.

- The group, suspected to have Russian origins, also claimed responsibility for ransomware attacks on **Boeing in October 2023.**

30 years of Border Peace and Tranquility Agreement (BPTA)

News Excerpt:

Thirty years after the first India-China border agreement, the mechanisms built to keep the peace on the Line of Actual Control are fraying and urgently need a revisit.

About Border Peace and Tranquility Agreement (BPTA):

- It was signed in September **1993** between India and China under the **Prime Ministership of Narasimha Rao.**
- Its **objective** was to maintain **peace along the Line of Actual Control (LAC)** by committing both nations to respect the status quo and reduce the risk of **unplanned confrontations.**
- It **prohibited** either side's use or threat of force and strict adherence to the LAC until a final boundary solution was reached.
- It also calls for **minimal military presence** along the LAC, with reductions to be mutually agreed upon.
- Over the 30 years since its signing, the **BPTA** has faced challenges due to inherent ambiguity surrounding the LAC, ultimately contributing to breakdowns in border agreements and increased tensions.
- The limited nature of the agreement prompted an infrastructure race and escalated incidents, leading to the deadly **Galwan clash in June 2020.**

Line of Actual Control (LAC):

- It is the demarcation that separates Indian-controlled territory from Chinese-controlled territory.
- India considers the LAC to be 3,488 km long, while the Chinese think it to be only around 2,000 km.
- It is divided into **three sectors:** the **eastern sector**, which spans Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim; the **middle sector** in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh; and the **western sector** in Ladakh.

Operation Prosperity Guardian

News Excerpt:

The U.S.A. has announced the creation of a multinational naval protection force to safeguard Red Sea commerce.

About:

- The Houthis rebel group has attacked multiple merchant vessels and forced companies to suspend shipping through these regions.
- In a related incident, Yemen's Houthi rebels seized a cargo ship **bound for India** in the crucial **Red Sea** shipping route and took its **25 crew members hostage**.
- This has raised fears of adding another dimension to the ongoing Gaza conflict.
- Seizing vessels in the sea like this can also involve many other countries with stakes in the maritime trade in the sensitive region.

About the initiative:

- It will **involve the navies of Bahrain, Canada, France, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Seychelles, Spain, the UK, and the US.**
- The task force will fall under the **Combined Maritime Forces**, a multinational alliance tasked with defending the world's shipping lanes, such as the **southern Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the Bab-el-Mandeb.**

EXERCISES IN NEWS:

Name of the Exercise	Partnering Country	About

VAJRA PRAHAR	United States of America	• This is the **14th Edition** of the Indo-US Joint Special Forces exercise.
		• It was conducted in **Umroi Cantonment, Meghalaya.**
		• It is a platform to enhance interoperability and strengthen defence cooperation.
		• **Other Indo-US exercises:**
		  • **Army: Yudh Abhyas**
		  • **Air Force: Cope India**

SURYA KIRAN-XVII	Nepal	• The 17th Edition of the Joint Military Exercise between **India and Nepal army** was conducted in **Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand.** • It is an **annual event** conducted alternatively in the two countries. • The exercise will concentrate on **medical training**, **aviation-related topics**, **environment conservation**, and the use of **drones** and counter-drone measures. • The exercise **aims** to improve cooperation in **counterterrorism operations in hilly areas and jungle warfare.**
AUSTRA-HIND	Australia	• Instituted in **2022,** this was the **second Edition of the Joint Military Exercise.** • It is planned to be an **annual training event** to be conducted alternatively in India and Australia. • In 2023, it was conducted in **Perth, Australia.** • **Casualty Management, Evacuation, Sniper Firing, Surveillance, etc** were a part of the training exercise.
HARIMAU SHAKTI	Malaysia	• It is a joint **bilateral military** training exercise between **Indian** and **Malaysian armies.** • This exercise aims to boost the joint deployment of **drones** and **helicopters**. • Intelligence collection, casualty management, evacuation drills, logistics management, and survival training would also be a part.
BONGOSAGAR	Bangladesh	• The 4th edition of the bilateral exercise **BONGOSAGAR-23** was held between the two navies. • The 5th edition of **Coordinated Patrol (CORPAT)** was also conducted in the Northern Bay of Bengal. • It includes joint patrolling along the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL). • It included the maiden **Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR)** drills.
KAZIND	Kazakhstan	• This is the **7th edition** of the joint **military** exercise between **India** and **Kazakhstan**. • It was initiated in **2016** as **"Exercise Prabal Dostyk"** but has now been renamed.
MITRA SHAKTI	Sri Lanka	• It is an **annual military exercise** between the **armies of India and Sri Lanka.** • The 2023 Mitra Shakti Exercise is the **ninth edition**.

VINBAX	**Vietnam**	• **Vietnam-India Bilateral Army Exercise (VINBAX)** was instituted in **2018.** • It is an annual training event conducted **alternatively in India and Vietnam.** • Ideas were exchanged on **modern methods to construct roads, helipads, ammunition shelters, and observation posts in operational areas.** • The Exercise will culminate with a **Validation Exercise**, wherein standards attained by both contingents will be showcased.
SAMPRITI- XI	**Bangladesh**	• This was the 11th edition of the **annual** joint military exercise, which was held in Umroi, Meghalaya. • The exercise underscores the importance of enhancing interoperability between the two armies, **sharing tactical drills, and promoting best practices**. • It also included a series of joint drills for counter-terrorist operations such as **hostage rescue, crowd control measures, and the use of helicopters in counter-terrorist operations.**
YUDH ABHYAS	**USA**	• The **19th edition** of this exercise was conducted in Fort Wainwright, **Alaska, USA.** • Both sides practised a series of tactical drills to enhance interoperability in conducting **UN peacekeeping operations**. • They also held drills on a wide spectrum of combat skills, including **combat engineering, obstruction clearance, mine warfare, and Improvised Explosive Device warfare**.
SIMBEX	**Singapore**	• This was the **30th edition** of the Singapore-India Maritime Bilateral Exercise (SIMBEX), an annual **bilateral Naval exercise** that has been conducted since **1994**. • **SIMBEX** holds the **distinction** of being the **longest continuous naval exercise that the Indian Navy has with any other country.** • It was conducted in two phases – **a Harbour Phase followed by a Sea phase**. • They focused on consolidating their capability to undertake multi-discipline operations jointly in the **maritime domain.**

PLACES IN NEWS: WORLD

In the news:	About:
Nagorno- Karabakh • It is an **ethnic and territorial conflict** between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the disputed region. • The territory lies in the mountainous South Caucasus region between the **Black Sea and the Caspian Sea**. • Azerbaijan and Armenia fought a bloody war over Nagorno-Karabakh in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and it has been the trigger for further violence in the years since.	
Nyiragongo Volcano • It is located **inside the Virunga National Park** which is a UNESCO World Heritage property. • It is located in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** along the western arm of the East African Rift System. • It is an **active volcano**.	
Macquarie Island • It is an island in the southwestern Pacific Ocean, about **halfway between New Zealand and Antarctica**. • **Regionally part of Oceania and politically a part of Tasmania, Australia,** since 1900, it became a Tasmanian State Reserve in 1978 and was inscribed as a **UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1997.**	
South Pars Gas Field • It is a **natural gas condensate field** located in the Iranian waters of the **Persian Gulf** forms the northern half of a supergiant offshore gas field called the **North Dome field or the North field in Qatar.** • The ownership of the field is **shared between Iran and Qatar.**	

Page 37

Kakhovka Dam

- A huge dam in the Russian-controlled area of **southern Ukraine** has been destroyed.
- The dam was built in the Soviet era along the **Dnipro (Dnieper) River.**
- The Dnieper rises on the southern slope of the **Valdai Hills of Russia** and flows in a generally southerly direction through **western Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine to the Black Sea.**

Tam Pà Ling Cave

- In 2009, A human skull and jaw bone were found in Tam Pà Ling Cave in **northern Laos**. Now, more human remains have been found at the same site.
- This cave is frequently overlooked as a possible route on the **accepted path of human dispersal** in the region.
- The major challenge has been that human fossils cannot be directly dated as the **site is a world heritage area and the fossils are protected by Laotian laws.**

Lake Mead

- It is **America's largest reservoir** and **has witnessed diminishing waters and** repeated droughts.
- Lake Mead is a reservoir formed by the **Hoover Dam** on the **Colorado River**.
- However, an **above-average precipitation and the recent rainstorms** in the area have led to a significant rise in water levels.

Corinth Canal

- It opened after **restoration after a series of landslides** affected the tourism industry in Greece.
- It is a **tidal waterway** across the Isthmus of Corinth in Greece, joining the **Gulf of Corinth** in the northwest with the Saronic Gulf in the southeast.
- It links the **Ionian Sea with the Aegean**, effectively turning the Peloponnese peninsula into an island, and creating an **international maritime hub that transformed navigation in southern Europe.**

Vladivostok Port

- It is a **major seaport** located in the city of Vladivostok, Russia.
- It is situated on the **Pacific coast** in the Primorsky Krai region and serves as an important transportation hub for the Far East and Northeast Asia.
- Vladivostok Port also serves as a base for **passenger transportation, with ferry connections to various destinations in Russia, Japan, and South Korea.**

Hiroshima Peace Memorial

- The Indian Prime Minister visited and paid floral tributes at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum in May 2023.
- The **Hiroshima Peace Memorial (Genbaku Dome)** was the only structure left standing in the area where the first atomic bomb exploded on **6 August 1945** and till now, it remains in the condition right after the explosion.
- "Genbaku" means **atomic bomb in Japanese**.

Bakhmut city

- Ukraine reported heavy fighting in its **eastern region** as its forces made gains near the devastated city of Bakhmut.
- Strategically, a **victory for Russia in Bakhmut could open up a path further west**, possibly to Kramatorsk, a city with roughly 150,000 inhabitants before the war. However, Ukraine has continued to **heavily fortify the areas around the city of Bakhmut.**

Fraser Island

- Fraser Island, located off the coast of Queensland, Australia is the **world's largest sand island**.
- Fraser Island has been recognized as a **UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1992** due to its exceptional natural values.
- It is protected and managed under **the Fraser Island Great Sandy National Park.**
- Fraser Island holds **significant cultural value for the Butchulla people,** the traditional owners of the land.

Sabang port • It is a **seaport** located in the **Aceh province** of Indonesia. • It is located at the **entrance of the Malacca Strait,** one of the world's busiest shipping routes. • **Sabang Port is also home to the Asia-Africa-Europe-1(AAE-1) submarine cable landing station.** • This high-speed fiber optic cable system connects Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, enhancing international communication and internet connectivity.	
Trition Island: • **China** appears to be building an airstrip at a disputed island in the South China Sea which is also **claimed by Taiwan and Vietnam.** • Triton is **one of the major islands in the Paracel group,** which is roughly equidistant from the coast of Vietnam and China's island province of Hainan. • China has had a small harbor and buildings on the island for years, along with a helipad and radar arrays.	
Sulina Channel: • It is a **navigable waterway** located in Romania, specifically in the Danube Delta region. • It serves as a vital route connecting **the Danube River to the Black Sea**. The channel is essential for maritime transportation, allowing ships to access the inland Danube River from the Black Sea and vice versa. • It plays a significant role in **trade, shipping, and regional connectivity.**	
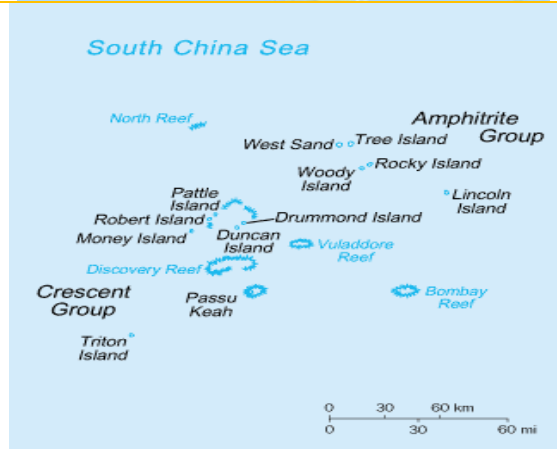
Murmansk Port

- It is a major **seaport situated in the city of Murmansk, Russia**. It is located in the far northwest of the country, near the **border with Norway and Finland.**
- The port serves as a key gateway to **the Northern Sea Route (NSR)**, a maritime route that connects Europe and Asia along the northern coast of Russia.
- This route has gained attention **as ice melts in the Arctic, making it potentially viable for shorter shipping routes between Europe and Asia.**

Lake Urmia

- It is **located in Iran** and is the **third-largest saltwater lake** on Earth. Due to **poor water management and the construction** of 48+ dams, more than 70% of the lake surface areas have already dried up.
- As a result, **the retrieval of the lake shore has left a salt deposit behind and exposed to wind.**
- Studies have predicted that salt storms from the dried lake will have **serious impacts** on the lives of 76 million people living around the lake.

Kilauea Volcano

- It is an **active shield volcano** in the Hawaiian Islands.
- It is **the youngest of the five volcanoes** that together form the island of Hawaii.
- It is also the **most active volcano** on the island of Hawaii, and one of the **busiest** in the world.
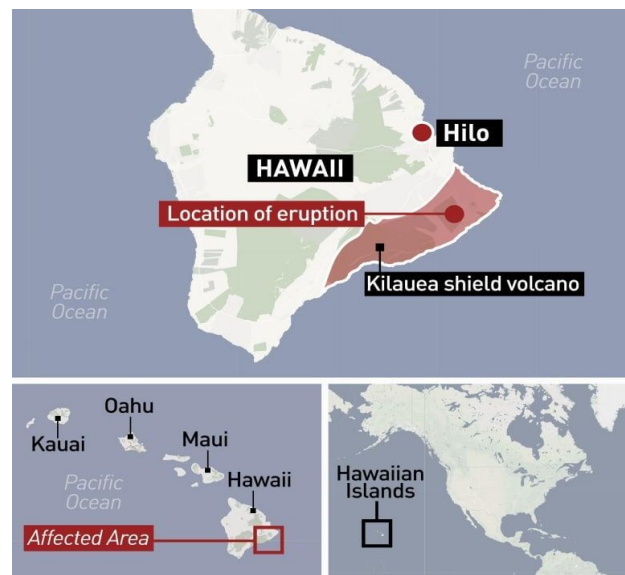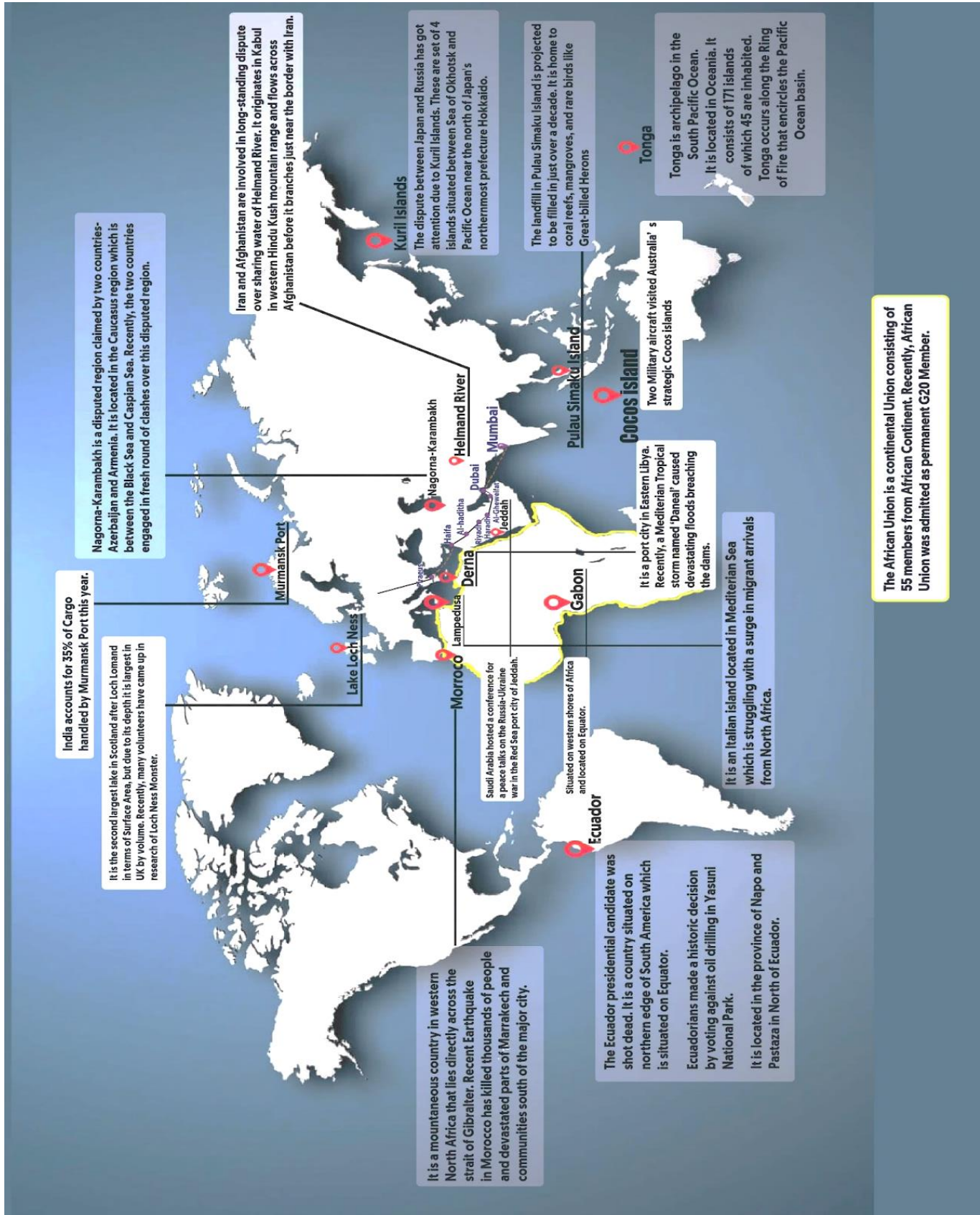
India accounts for 35% of Cargo handled by Murmansk Port this year.

It is the second largest lake in Scotland after Loch Lomand in terms of Surface Area, but due to its depth it is largest in UK by volume. Recently, many volunteers have came up in research of Loch Ness Monster.

Nagorna-Karambakh is a disputed region claimed by two countries- Azerbaijan and Armenia. It is located in the Caucasus region which is between the Black Sea and Caspian Sea. Recently, the two countries engaged in fresh round of clashes over this disputed region.

Iran and Afghanistan are involved in long-standing dispute over sharing water of Helmand River. It originates in Kabul in western Hindu Kush mountain range and flows across Afghanistan before it branches just near the border with Iran.

Kuril Islands

The dispute between Japan and Russia has got attention due to Kuril Islands. These are set of 4 islands situated between Sea of Okhotsk and Pacific Ocean near the north of Japan's northernmost prefecture Hokkaido.

Tonga

Tonga is archipelago in the South Pacific Ocean. It is located in Oceania. It consists of 171 islands of which 45 are inhabited. Tonga occurs along the Ring of Fire that encircles the Pacific Ocean basin.

The landfill in Pulau Simaku Island is projected to be filled in just over a decade. It is home to coral reefs, mangroves, and rare birds like Great-billed Herons

Two Military aircraft visited Australia's strategic Cocos Islands

Murmansk Port

Lake Loch Ness

Nagorna-Karambakh

Helmand River

Mumbai

Dubai

Haifa Al-hadītha

Riyadh Al-Ghwaifāt

Jeddah

Tripoli

Derna

Lampedusa

Morocco

Gabon

Ecuador

Pulau Simaku Island

Cocos Island

It is a port city in Eastern Libya. Recently, a Mediterian Tropical storm named 'Daneal' caused devastating floods breaching the dams.

Saudi Arabia hosted a conference for a peace talks on the Russia–Ukraine war in the Red Sea port city of Jeddah.

It is an Italian Island located in Mediterian Sea which is struggling with a surge in migrant arrivals from North Africa.

Situated on western shores of Africa and located on Equator.

It is a mountaneous country in western North Africa that lies directly across the strait of Gibralter. Recent Earthquake in Morocco has killed thousands of people and devastated parts of Marrakech and communities south of the major city.

The Ecuador presidential candidate was shot dead. It is a country situated on northern edge of South America which is situated on Equator.

Ecuadorians made a historic decision by voting against oil drilling in Yasuni National Park.

It is located in the province of Napo and Pastaza in North of Ecuador.

The African Union is a continental Union consisting of 55 members from African Continent. Recently, African Union was admitted as permanent G20 Member.

MAP NOT TO SCALE

MOUNT OYAMA and MOUNT FUJI:
Mobile Microplastics detected in clouds hanging atop the two Japanese mountains.

LAOS:
The construction of a new dam on the Mekong River in Laos, threatens the UNESCO World Heritage site Luang Prabang.

Lake Taupō;
Super volcano under Lake Taupō, New Zealand's largest freshwater lake.

MOUNT SEMERU:
Semeru volcano in Indonesia's East Java province erupted

Abkhazia:
Russia to set up naval base in breakaway Georgian region of Abkhazia.

MALDIVES:
Maldives elected a new President.

KASANKA NATIONAL PARK:
AI used to count world's biggest bat colony gathering in Zambia, Africa

MT. VESUVIUS:
FIRST WORD REVEALED FROM ANCIENT SCROLL BURIED BY MT. VESUVIUS USING AI.

KALAMBO RIVER:
Bushwillow tree excavated on the banks of the Kalambo River in Zambia near Africa's second-highest waterfall.

KAZA ELEPHANT CORRIDOR:
All five KAZA(Kavango Zambezi) partner states—Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe participated in an entire elephant population survey.

HAITI:
The 3rd largest country in the Carribean islands experiences unrest

Puraquequara lake:
This lake in Amazonas state, Brazil suffers a severe drought.

MAP NOT TO SCALE

MAP NOT TO SCALE

TIMOR LESTE
ASEAN gives in-principle admission to the country as its 11th member.

TUVALU ARCHIPELAGO
Australia offers residency to its citizens displaced by climate change.

ZANZIBAR
IIT Madras opens its first offshore campus. It is a semi-autonomous province of Tanzania.

ZIMBABWE
It declares a state of emergency amidst cholera outbreak.

BEN GURIAN CANAL PROJECT:
It plans to join the Red Sea with the Mediterranean Sea, providing an alternative to the Suez Canal.

GULF OF GUINEA
The Indian Navy's Anti-piracy patrol takes place to control piracy and armed robbery.

DOMINICA
It has created the world's first marine reserve for sperm whales.

BRAZIL
Scientists discover cannabis inside a totally different plant.

CAYMAN ISLANDS
FATF has removed the islands from its Grey List.

LAKE TITICACA
Largest freshwater lake in South America, on the verge of drying up.

ARCTIC CIRCLE

MAP NOT TO SCALE

Dagestan:
15 anti-Israeli rioters stormed an airport in the Dagestan (land of the mountains) province of Russia.

Cyprus:
Cyprus (Capital: Nicosia) wins a cheese trademark case against an Indian company.

Arctic Circle:
India launches its inaugural winter expedition for polar research to the Arctic.

Khan Yunis City:
Israel bombed this city after a hostage threat by Hamas.

Malta:
The Indian Navy extended help to the ship of Malta (Capital: Valletta) hijacked in the Arabian Sea.

Sierra Leone:
The country has lifted a nationwide curfew that has lasted for more than 20 days following a failed coup attempt.

Slovenia:
It hosted the COP23 of the Barcelona Convention, which provides for the protection of the Mediterranean Sea against pollution.

Salton Sea:
Scientists exploring California's Salton Sea, the state's largest lake, have uncovered a lithium reservoir.

Saint Lucia:
Tax Inspectors Without Borders (TIWB) launched the Saint Lucia Program, with India as the Administration Partner.

Tunisia:
The historic Kairouan walls collapsed. It was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1988.