

#16

THEMATIC
**CURRENT
AFFAIRS**
for **IAS PRELIMS 2024**

**INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS**

THEME # 2

**MULTILATERAL
ORGANIZATIONS**





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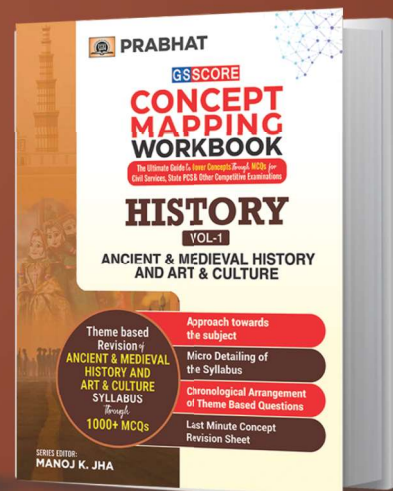
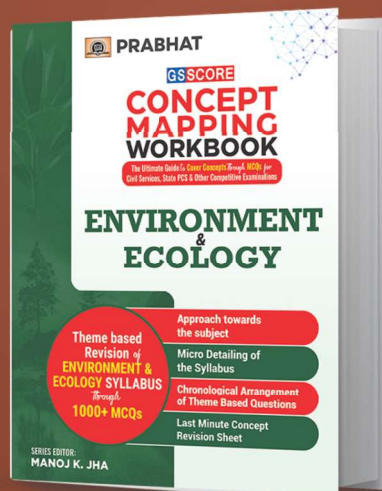
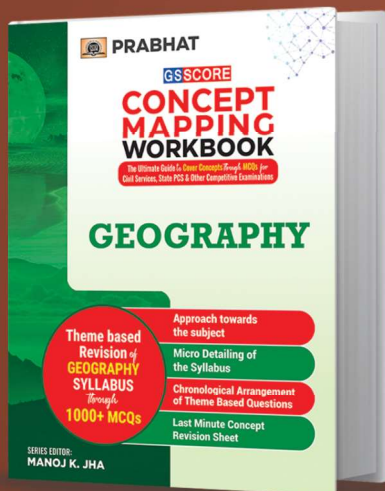
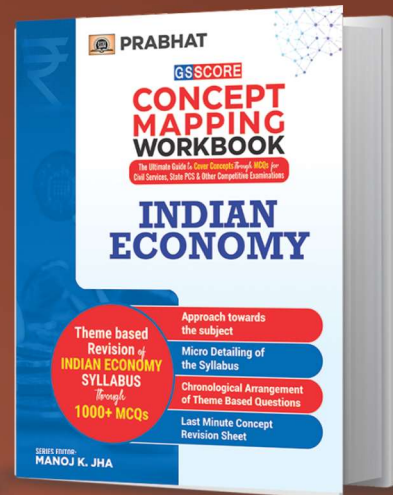
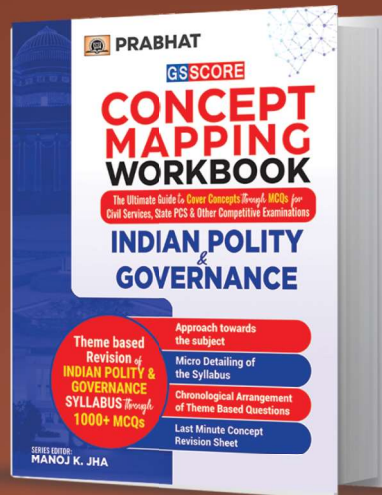
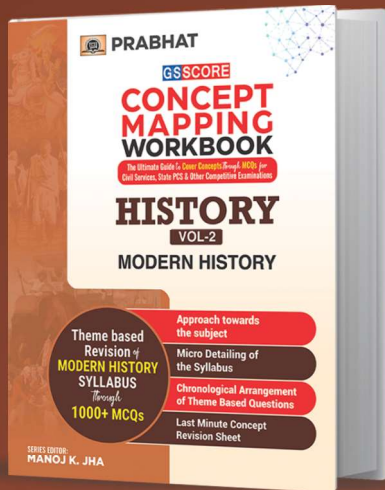
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Multilateral Organizations

1. G20 SUMMIT-2023

CONTEXT

The **18th G20 Summit of 2023** recently concluded in New Delhi, India, marking the first-ever G20 summit hosted by the country.

So, Let us take a look at **highlights of the summit**.

About G20:

- The G20 originated in 1999 in response to the **Asian financial crisis of 1997-98**, initially serving as an informal platform for finance ministers and central bank governors from both developed and developing economies.
- In 2008, following the global financial crisis, the G20 expanded to include the **heads of state of member countries**.
- The G20 Presidency rotates annually under a **troika system**, involving the current, previous, and next host countries.
- **In 2022**, India took over the G20 Presidency from **Indonesia**, the preceding member of the troika.
- The presidency has now been passed to **Brazil, the next troika country**.

About

About the summit 2023:

- The summit's theme, "**VasudhaivaKutumbakam**" or "**One Earth, One Family, One Future**" is rooted in ancient Sanskrit texts and the goal of sustainable development.
- The **G20 Summit 2023** has concluded recently under India's presidency which has ignited many upcoming plans for India, who is now about to become the **leader of the Global South**.

- India was successfully able to achieve consensus around the **New Delhi Declaration** early on in the G20 Summit, which saw a dilution in the position taken by **the U.S. and EU on Russia**, besides focus on UN Sustainable Development Goals, climate action and green development initiatives, multilateral financing, digital public infrastructure, artificial intelligence (AI), and international taxation, among others.
- India also invited **Nigeria, Egypt, and Mauritius** as part of the 'Guest Countries' at the G20 summit.

What were the Key Outcomes of the summit?

1. G20 becomes 21:

- The African Union (AU) has been granted **permanent membership** in the group of 20 largest economies (G20) worldwide. Now, the 55-member AU and the European Union are the **only two regional bodies** in the G-20.
 - The African Union (AU) is a continental body consisting of the 55 member states that make up the countries of the African Continent.
 - It was officially launched in 2002 as a successor to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU, 1963-1999).
 - Headquarters:** Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Social Issues and Women:

- Gender equality and environmental goals are mutually reinforcing and create a virtuous circle that will help accelerate the achievement of the SDGs (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2021).
- India calibrated efforts toward **education with a focus on STEM** and one of the critical contributions of its presidency included '**TechEquity**', a Digital Inclusion Platform through which girls and women can skill, upskill and reskill themselves in digital literacy, financial literacy and other technical subjects.
- With contributions from across G20 Member States, courses in over **120 Indian and international languages** will be available on the platform.
- This platform will address the **gender digital divide** with an expected outreach of 1 million girls and women.

2. As a Voice of Global South- Signed New Delhi Declaration

Key Highlights of New Delhi Declaration:

- Included African Union as a member:** The Group of 20 (G-20) annual summit welcomed the **African Union** as a member, marking an important development in global economic cooperation.
- The summit did not explicitly condemn Russia for its war in Ukraine but called on **all states to refrain** from using force to seize territory.
- The G-20 emphasized the importance of **abiding by the principles of the United Nations Charter** and declared the use or threat of nuclear weapons as 'inadmissible.'

- ⦿ The declaration urged Russia and Ukraine to ensure the immediate and unhindered delivery of **essential goods, including grains and fertilizers**, to meet the demands of developing and least developed countries, particularly in Africa.
- ⦿ The G-20 called for a halt to military destruction and attacks on **food and energy infrastructure** and expressed concerns about high volatility in food and energy markets.
- ⦿ Member countries committed to a “phasedown” of coal usage in line with their national circumstances. They also pledged to **triple renewable energy sources by 2030**.
- ⦿ Developing countries require \$5.8 to \$5.9 trillion in the pre-2030 period to meet their climate goals. The world needs an additional \$4 trillion annually by 2030 to achieve the **net-zero carbon emission goals by 2050**.
- ⦿ The New Delhi Declaration called for reforms in international financial institutions, addressing debt vulnerabilities in low and middle-income countries, and initiating the exchange of tax-relevant information on crypto assets by 2027.
- ⦿ It stressed the importance of well-calibrated **monetary, fiscal, financial, and structural policies** to promote growth, reduce inequalities, and maintain economic stability.

3. Regulating Economies

Global approach to regulate cryptocurrencies

The global push for a **clear policy on crypto assets** has gained momentum under the Indian presidency, and a global consensus is emerging on the same.

The consensus at New Delhi:

- ⦿ Under the Finance Track of India’s G-20 presidency, a co-ordinated global approach was discussed for **regulating cryptocurrencies** and strengthening **multilateral development banks’ (MDBs)** lending capacity.
- ⦿ The New Delhi Declaration adopted by the G-20 leaders noted that they “continue to closely monitor the risks of the fast-paced developments in the crypto-asset ecosystem”.
- ⦿ It emphasized to endorse the **Financial Stability Board’s (FSB’s)** recommendations for the regulation, supervision and oversight of crypto-assets activities and markets and of **global stablecoin arrangements**.
- ⦿ This will help in use of **digital public infrastructure** like the **India Stack** to expand financial inclusion around the world.
- ⦿ However, it does **not outright impose** any ban on crypto currencies.

4. Growing Trade and Commerce

India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)

- ⦿ In a bid to stimulate economic development through enhanced connectivity and economic integration, India, along with **other members of the G20**, has entered into a historic memorandum of understanding (MoU) to develop an **India-Middle East-Europe economic corridor**.

- ⦿ The project is a part of the **Partnership for Global Infrastructure Investment (PGII)** — a West-led initiative for **funding infrastructure projects** across the world.
- ⦿ **Objective:** The corridor aims to provide a reliable and cost-effective **ship-to-rail transit network** between **Asia, Middle East and Europe**.
- ⦿ **Proposals:** The corridor will comprise of two separate corridors, **Eastern and Northern**.
- ⦿ **Member Nations:** Apart from India, the other participants will include **Saudi Arabia, UAE, France, Germany, Italy, USA and the European Union**.

5. Adopting Climate Resilient methods

Global Biofuel Alliance (GBA)

- ⦿ GBA is an **India-led Initiative** to develop an alliance of Governments, International organizations and Industry to facilitate adoption of biofuels.
- ⦿ **Objective:** Bringing together the **biggest consumers and producers of biofuels** to drive biofuels development and deployment, the initiative aims to position biofuels as a key to energy transition and contribute to jobs and economic growth.
- ⦿ **Joining Members:** 19 countries and 12 international organisations have already agreed to join.
- ⦿ **G20 countries (07) supporting GBA:** Argentina, Brazil, Canada, India, Italy, South Africa, USA
- ⦿ **G20 Invitee Countries (04) supporting GBA:** Bangladesh, Singapore, Mauritius, UAE.
- ⦿ **Non G20 (08) supporting GBA:** Iceland, Kenya, Guyana, Paraguay, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, and Uganda have agreed to be initiating members of GBA, and Finland.
- ⦿ **International organizations:** World Bank, Asian Development Bank, World Economic Forum, World LPG Organization, UN Energy for All, UNIDO, Biofutures Platform, International Civil Aviation Organization, International Energy Agency, International Energy Forum, International Renewable Energy Agency, World Biogas Association.

India's briefing for G20 Summit:

- ⦿ **Prime Minister Narendra Modi's diplomatic coup:** At the Summit, India was able to leverage its economic significance to garner support from all **G20 member nations** for a Leaders' Declaration recognizing the conflict in Ukraine without specifying any aggressor.
- ⦿ Modi, who chaired the Summit, also advocated for reforming global institutions like the **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)** to align with the changing world dynamics, which received backing from the United States.
- ⦿ India has successfully positioned itself as a champion for **developing and underdeveloped nations** and seeks to align this with its ambitions for a permanent seat on the UNSC.
- ⦿ New Delhi is actively seeking support from the **African continent, which holds 55 crucial votes**, in pursuit of this goal.

2. BILL TO TERMINATE PAKISTAN'S 'NON-NATO ALLY' STATUS

CONTEXT

A US lawmaker has introduced a bill titled "To terminate the designation of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan as a major non-NATO ally, and for other purposes" in the US Congress that seeks to cancel the designation of Pakistan as a Major Non-NATO Ally (MNNA).

What is Major Non-NATO Ally (MNNA)?

- ⦿ **Created in:** The MNNA status was first created in 1987.
- ⦿ It is a designation that is a powerful symbol of a close relationship with the United States.
- ⦿ The MNNA status allows for various benefits such as
 - military and economic privileges
 - access to excess US defence supplies
 - participation in cooperative defence research and development projects
- ⦿ While MNNA status provides privileges, it does not entail any **security commitments** to the designated country.
- ⦿ With Afghanistan's status rescinded last year, the US has **17 major non-NATO allies**.
- ⦿ They are **Argentina, Australia, Bahrain, Brazil, Colombia, Egypt, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Qatar, South Korea, Thailand and Tunisia**.
- ⦿ Pakistan was named a MNNA during the Bush administration in **2004**.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization

- ⦿ Nato was formed in 1949 by 12 countries, including the **US, UK, Canada and France**.
- ⦿ The organisation has two official languages, English and French.
- ⦿ It currently has 31 members across Europe and North America.
- ⦿ They agree to help one another if they are attacked.



3. 30TH ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM (ARF)

CONTEXT

India attended the **30th ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)** in Jakarta, Indonesia and urged the members of the ARF to adopt a “uniform, unified and zero-tolerance” approach on the issue of terrorism, including dismantling the sanctuaries and financing networks.

About ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)

- Established in 1994, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) is an important platform for security dialogue in the Indo-Pacific.
- It provides a setting in which members can discuss current security issues and develop cooperative measures to enhance peace and security in the region.
- The ARF is characterised by consensus-based decision-making and frank dialogue.
- Members:** It comprises 27 members:
 - 10 ASEAN member states (**Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam**)
 - 10 ASEAN Dialogue Partners (**Australia, Canada, China, the European Union (EU), India, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea (ROK), Russia and the United States**)
 - Other 7:** Bangladesh, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Mongolia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Papua New Guinea, and Timor-Leste

Australia was a founding member of the ARF.

4. UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION (UPU)

CONTEXT

Every year on October 9, people across the world commemorate the founding of the **Universal Postal Union (UPU)** and the introduction of letters as a revolutionary form of everyday communication.

What is Universal Postal Union (UPU)?

- Established in:** 1874
- Headquarters:** Swiss capital Berne
- UPU is the second oldest international organization worldwide.
- With its 192 member countries, the UPU is the primary forum for cooperation between postal sector players.
- It helps to ensure a truly universal network of up-to-date products and services.
- Any member country of the United Nations may become a member of the UPU.

Composition

- ⦿ The UPU consists of 4 bodies
- ⦿ The Congress: Congress is the supreme authority of the Universal Postal Union (UPU) and meets every four years.
- ⦿ **The Council of Administration:** The Council ensures the continuity of the UPU's work between Congresses, supervises its activities and studies regulatory, administrative, legislative and legal issues.
- ⦿ **The Postal Operations Council:** The Postal Operations Council (POC) is the technical and operational mind of the UPU and consists of 48 member countries, elected during Congress.
- ⦿ **The International Bureau:** Fulfilling a secretariat function, the International Bureau provides logistical and technical support to the UPU's bodies.

5. INDIA TOOK OVER THE LEADERSHIP OF APPU

CONTEXT

India took over the leadership of the **Asian Pacific Postal Union (APPU)** having its Headquarters in Bangkok, Thailand from January 2023.

What is Asian Pacific Postal Union (APPU)?

- ⦿ Founded: 1 July 1982
- ⦿ Asian Pacific Postal Union (APPU) is an intergovernmental organization of 32-member countries of the Asian-Pacific region.
- ⦿ APPU is the only Restricted Union of the Universal Postal Union (UPU) in the region, which is a specialized agency of the United Nations.
- ⦿ The goal of APPU is to extend, facilitate and improve postal relations between member countries and to promote cooperation in the field of postal services.

6. INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT FORUM (ITF)

CONTEXT

The U.S. Department of Transportation applauds the actions taken by the member countries of the **International Transportation Forum (ITF)** to restrict the participation of Russia and Belarus in the ITF in response to Russia's unprovoked and brutal invasion of Ukraine.

What is International Transport Forum (ITF)?

- ⦿ The International Transport Forum at the OECD is an intergovernmental organisation with 64 member countries.

- It acts as a think tank for transport policy and organises the Annual Summit of transport ministers.
- ITF is the only global body that covers all transport modes.
- The ITF is administratively integrated with the OECD, yet politically autonomous.

On 6th July 2022, a contract was signed to support the International Transport Forum (ITF) activities on the Indian Transport Sector.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

- OECD is an intergovernmental organisation with 38 member countries, founded in 1961 to stimulate economic progress and world trade.

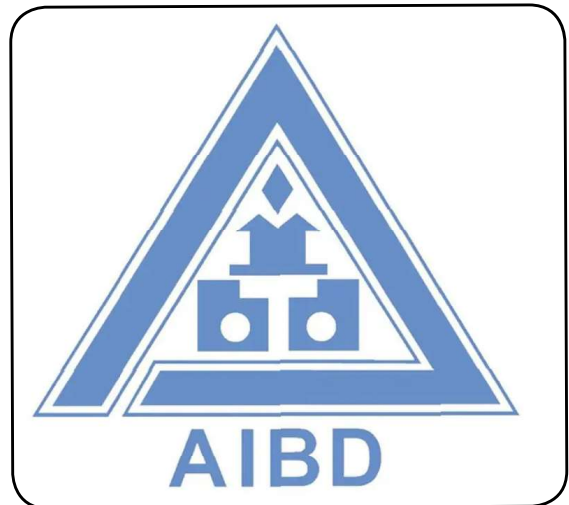
7. INDIA'S PRESIDENCY OF AIBD EXTENDS FOR ONE MORE YEAR

CONTEXT

In 2022, India's Presidency of the **Asia-pacific Institute of Broadcasting Development (AIBD)** has been extended for one more year.

About AIBD-

- It was established in 1977 under the auspices of **UNESCO**.
- It is a unique regional inter-governmental organisation servicing countries of the **United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP)** in the field of electronic media development.
- It is hosted by the **Government of Malaysia** and the secretariat is located in Kuala Lumpur.
- Members:** The AIBD currently has 26 Full Members (countries), represented by 43 organisations, and 50 Affiliate Members (organisations) with a total membership of 93 representing 46 countries and regions and over 50 partners in **Asia, Pacific, Europe, Africa, Arab States and North America**



India and AIBD

- With respect to India, the **Ministry of Information & Broadcasting** holds the Full Membership of the AIBD.
- Prasar Bharati** being the **public service broadcaster** of India utilizes the various services of the AIBD.
- India has hosted the **Governing Council Meetings (GC)** in 1978, 1985, 2003 and 2022.

8. INTERPOL WORKING OUT HOW TO POLICE THE METAVERSE

CONTEXT

Interpol, the global police agency is investigating how the organisation could police crime in the metaverse. Interpol has built its own virtual reality (VR) space, where users can do training and attend virtual meetings.

About Interpol

- ⦿ **Headquarters:** Lyon (France)
- ⦿ **Created in:** 1923
- ⦿ INTERPOL is the world's largest international police organization, with 190 member countries, each represented by a National Central Bureau.
- ⦿ INTERPOL facilitates international police co-operation via its global police communication system, databases, training and specific assistance in cross-border operations.

What is Metaverse?

- ⦿ The metaverse is a **3D version** of the Internet and computing at large.
- ⦿ In his 1992 science fiction novel "**Snow Crash**," Author Neal Stephenson coined the term "metaverse" in which he envisioned lifelike avatars who met in realistic 3D buildings and other virtual reality environments.
- ⦿ The intent of the metaverse is to give users the power to create their own experiences and also to interact with others in these spaces, and even collaborate with each other.
- ⦿ The metaverse combines aspects of **physical reality, virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), artificial intelligence (AI), social media, online gaming, and cryptocurrencies**, allowing users to interact virtually.

9. COLLECTIVE SECURITY TREATY ORGANISATION (CSTO)

CONTEXT

Kazakhstan's President **called on the** Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) to help **manage** ongoing protests **in the country**.

About:

- ⦿ **Headquarters:** Russian capital of Moscow.



- It is an intergovernmental military alliance (six countries) that came into effect in 2002.
- It started storming into Kazakhstan to curb the protests which threatened the very existence of the regime that has ruled the Central Asian country since it became an independent republic in 1991.
- It is an intergovernmental military alliance that was signed on 15th May 1992.
 - This is also referred to as the **“Tashkent Pact” or “Tashkent Treaty”**.
- **Members:** Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation and Tajikistan.

10. G4 COUNTRIES AND CONSENSUS ON UN SECURITY COUNCIL

CONTEXT

The **G4 countries** collaborated to reiterate support for each other's bids to become permanent members of the **UNSC**, and for representation of African countries in the **76th Session of the U.N. General Assembly**.

About

- The G4 nations comprises **Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan**.
- **Aim:** Unlike the G7, where the **common denominator is the economy and long-term political motives**, the G4's primary aim is the **permanent member seats on the Security Council**.
- Each of these four countries have figured among the elected non-permanent members of the council since the UN's establishment



India wrapped up its 2021-22 tenure as elected Council member on December 31, 2022.

United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and G4 Countries

- The UN currently has five permanent members with veto power in the Security Council: **China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States**.
- The G4 nations are regularly elected to two-year terms on the Security Council as non-permanent members by their respective regional groups.
- Brazil and Japan were elected for five terms each, Germany for four terms (one term as West Germany and three terms as unified Germany) and India for four terms.

11. WORLD POWERS VOW TO PREVENT SPREAD OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

CONTEXT

In a joint statement, permanent members of the UN Security Council (UNSC) pledge to ensure a nuclear war is never fought, amid rising world tensions.

Important Treaties to prevent nuclear proliferation

- ⊙ **UN Commission:** The United Nations has sought to eliminate such weapons ever since its establishment. The first resolution adopted by the **UN General Assembly in 1946** established a **Commission to deal with problems related to the discovery of atomic energy among others**. A number of multilateral treaties have been established since then. These include the:
 - Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)
 - Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests In The Atmosphere, In Outer Space And Under Water, also known as the Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT)
 - Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which was signed in 1996 but has yet to enter into force.
 - Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)
- ⊙ **Other initiatives include:**
 - the Nuclear Suppliers Group
 - the Missile Technology Control Regime
 - the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation
 - the Wassenaar Arrangement

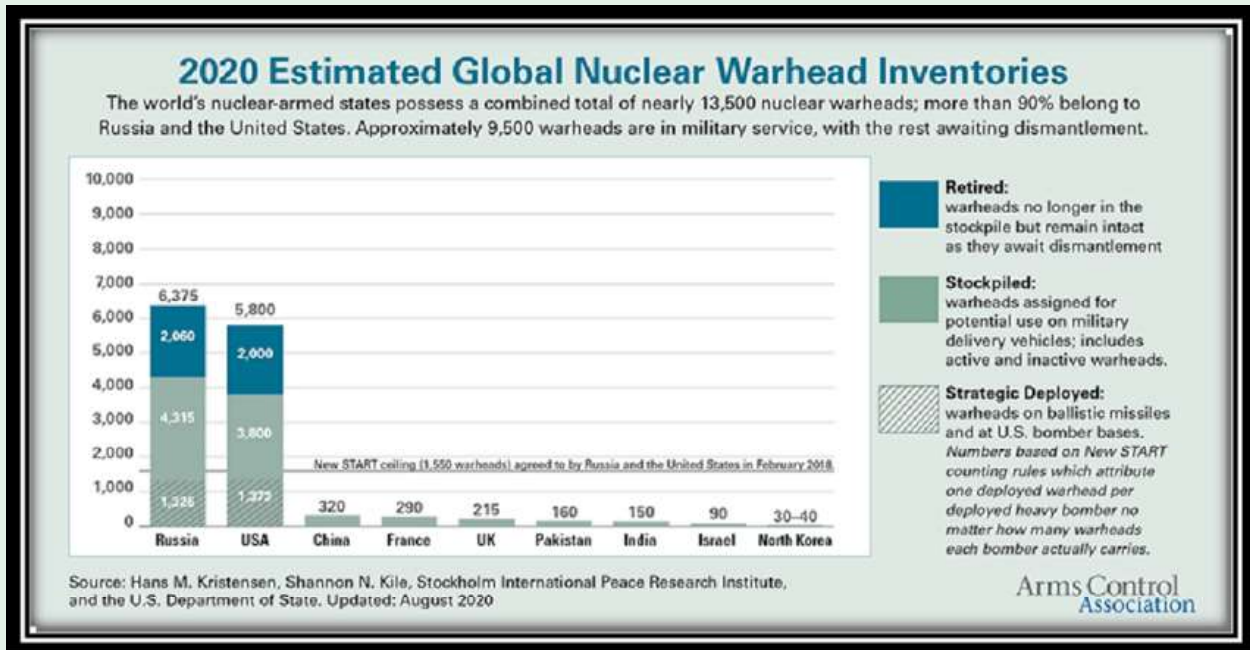
Nuclear-weapon states (NWS)

- ⊙ The nuclear-weapon states (NWS) are the five states—**China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, and the United States**—officially recognized as possessing nuclear weapons by the NPT.
- ⊙ **Russia** is believed to have the world's biggest stockpile of nuclear warheads, with 6,255, followed closely by the United States at 5,550, according to the **Arms Control Association (ACA)**.
- ⊙ **China (350), France (290) and the UK (225)** round out the top five.

The numbers

- ⊙ **France:** About 290 warheads.
- ⊙ **United Kingdom:** About 225 strategic warheads, of which an estimated 120 are deployed and 105 are in storage.
- ⊙ **United States:** 5,550 warheads

- ⦿ **China:** About 350 total warheads.
- ⦿ India: Approximately 156 nuclear warheads.
- ⦿ **Israel:** An estimated 90 nuclear warheads, with fissile material for up to 200
- ⦿ **Pakistan:** Approximately 165 nuclear warheads.
- ⦿ **North Korea:** Estimated to have approximately 40-50 warheads (as of January 2021)



12. MARITIME RESCUE COORDINATION CENTRE (MRCC)

CONTEXT

Deep sea fishers from the west coast of Kanyakumari district have urged the Union Government to set-up a sub centre of Marine Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) in the district.

What is MRCC?

- ⦿ MRCCs are part of an international network under the **UN's International Maritime Organisation**.
- ⦿ They aim to monitor the sea lanes with the objective of swift response to emergencies, such as vessels in distress, rescue and evacuation of people, and prevention of and containing environmental disasters such as oil spills.
- ⦿ Each country is responsible for its own **Search and Rescue Region (SRR)**.
- ⦿ The work of MRCCs is co-ordinated by the **Navy or Coast Guard** in each country.
- ⦿ In India, the **Coast Guard** is the **co-ordinating agency**.

International Maritime Organization

- ⦿ The International Maritime Organization is a specialized agency of the United Nations which is responsible for measures to improve the safety and security of international shipping and to prevent pollution from ships.
- ⦿ It has an integral role in meeting the targets set out in **United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.**
- ⦿ It was established by means of a Convention adopted under the auspices of the **United Nations in Geneva** on 17 March 1948 and met for the first time in January 1959.
- ⦿ It currently has 174 Member States.

13. 75 YEARS OF UN PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS

CONTEXT

The **UN Peacekeeping** commemorated its 75th anniversary of peacekeeping missions.

What is the U.N. Peacekeeping mission?

- ⦿ The UN Peacekeeping assists countries tormented by conflict in their journey towards sustained peace.
- ⦿ **It follows three fundamental principles:**
 - ⦿ consent of the parties
 - ⦿ impartiality
 - ⦿ refraining from the use of force, except in self-defence
- ⦿ The U.N. Peacekeeping mission is a joint effort between the **Department of Peace Operations and the Department of Operational Support.**
- ⦿ **Aim:** To assist host countries to transition from situations of conflict to peace.
- ⦿ The U.N. began its Peacekeeping efforts in 1948 when it deployed military observers to West Asia.
- ⦿ The Peacekeeping mission's role was to monitor the **Armistice Agreement between** Israel and its Arab neighbours.
- ⦿ Peacekeepers provide security as well as political and peacebuilding support to conflict-ridden countries.

India's contribution to UN Peacekeeping Missions

- ⦿ Notably, UN Peacekeeping primarily relies on troops and experts from poor, middle-income, and developing nations.

- ⦿ Indian personnel have made significant contributions, with 6,097 currently in service, ranking third after Bangladesh (7,237) and Nepal (6,264).
- ⦿ India also holds the unfortunate record of having the highest fatalities due to malicious acts, during UN peacekeeping missions.
- ⦿ India has been among the largest troop-contributing countries to the U.N. peacekeeping missions. Over 200,000 Indians have served in 49 U.N. Peacekeeping missions since 1948.

Role of women in Indian Peacekeeping

- ⦿ India has been sending women personnel on UN Peacekeeping Missions.
- ⦿ In 2007, **India became the first country** to deploy an all-women contingent to a UN Peacekeeping Mission.

14. UN COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (CSOCD)

CONTEXT

India's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador **Ruchira Kamboj**, has assumed the chairship of the **62nd Session of the Commission for Social Development**, the first time in nearly 50 years the country has held this position within the UN agency.

Key-highlights:

- ⦿ **Theme:** "Fostering Social Development and Social Justice through Social Policies to accelerate Progress on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to achieve the overarching goal of poverty eradication".
- ⦿ It pledged to make the **conquest of poverty, the goal of full employment and the fostering of social integration** overriding objectives of development.

About UN Commission for Social Development:

- ⦿ The purpose of the commission is also to advise the **United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** on social policies of a general character and, in particular, on all matters in the social field not covered by the specialised inter-governmental agencies.
- ⦿ The Chair is backed by vice-chairs from **Luxembourg, North Macedonia, Dominican Republic**, and a forthcoming African State election.
- ⦿ **Members:** The commission has **46 members**, who are elected by the ECOSOC, based on equitable geographical distribution for four-year terms.
 - India is a **member** of the **62nd session** of the **Commission for Social Development**, and its **term expires in 2027**.

15. US RE-ENTRY INTO UNESCO

CONTEXT

US first lady Jill Biden attended a flag-raising ceremony at UNESCO in Paris, marking Washington's official re-entry into the UN agency after a controversial five-year hiatus.

Background

- The US had announced its intention to rejoin UNESCO in June, and the organisation's 193-member states earlier this month voted to approve the US reentry.
- The US announced its exit from UNESCO in 2017 cited an alleged anti-Israel bias within the organisation.
 - The decision followed a 2011 move by UNESCO to include Palestine as a member state, which led the US and Israel to cease financing the agency.
 - The US withdrawal became official a year later in 2018.
- Now, the United States becomes the **194th Member State** of UNESCO.

About UNESCO

- UNESCO is the **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization**.
- It is a part of the **United Nations**.
- Created in 1946, UNESCO originally rebuilt schools, libraries, and museums destroyed in Europe during World War II.

Currently, India has 40 Sites in the **UNESCO World Heritage List** and 52 sites in the **UNESCO Tentative List** of which 6 were added in the year 2022.

16. IRAN BECOME SCO MEMBER

CONTEXT

Iran became the new permanent member of the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)** at an India-hosted virtual summit of the grouping.

Details

- The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation admits Iran into the grouping as its ninth member while Belarus has applied for membership.
- This is the first expansion of the SCO after India and Pakistan were admitted to the grouping in 2017.

- ⦿ Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) follows the **system of consensus** in deciding admission of new members.

About Shanghai Cooperation Organization:

- ⦿ SCO is a **permanent intergovernmental international organization**.
- ⦿ It's a Eurasian political, economic and military organization aiming to maintain peace, security, and stability in the region.
- ⦿ It was created in 2001. Prior to the creation of SCO in 2001, **Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan** were members of the Shanghai Five.
- ⦿ The SCO Charter was signed in 2002 and entered into force in 2003.
- ⦿ **India and Pakistan became members in 2017.**
- ⦿ SCO Secretariat – Based in Beijing to provide informational, analytical & organizational support.
- ⦿ The 2022 annual summit of the SCO will be held in September in Samarkand (Samarkand also known as Samarqand, is a city in south-eastern Uzbekistan).

Membership:

- ⦿ The SCO currently comprises nine Member States (China, **India**, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, **Pakistan**, Tajikistan, **Iran**, and Uzbekistan), and **six "Dialogue Partners"** (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Turkey).

17. INDIA AT UNSC BACKS CONVENTION PROHIBITING BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS

CONTEXT

India at the **United Nations Security Council** meet raised concerns over the use **of biological weapons** in Ukraine amid reports of Russia's charge against US.

What are Biological Weapons?

- ⦿ Biological weapons are **microorganisms like virus, bacteria, fungi, or other toxins** that are produced and released deliberately to cause disease and death in humans, animals or plants.
 - Biological agents, like **anthrax, botulinum toxin and plague** can pose a difficult public health challenge causing large numbers of deaths in a short amount of time while being difficult to contain.
- ⦿ Bioterrorism attacks could also result in an epidemic, **for example if Ebola or Lassa viruses were used as the biological agents.**

About Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC):

- ⦿ The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) was the **first multilateral treaty** categorically banning a class of weapon.

- Came into force in **1975** and the Convention was negotiated by the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva, Switzerland.
- **Aim:** The treaty prohibits the development, stockpile, production, or transfer of biological agents and toxins of "types and quantities" that have no justification for protective or peaceful use.

Signatories:

- It has 183 signatories, including the United States, Russia, and Ukraine.
- India has signed and ratified this convention.

18. REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP (RCEP) COMES INTO EFFECT

CONTEXT

Recently, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement, the world's largest free trade agreement, entered into force.

What is RCEP?

- **RCEP** is a free trade agreement between **Asia-Pacific nations of Australia, Brunei, China, Cambodia, Japan, Indonesia, Laos, South Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, and Vietnam.**
 - **India and the United States are not members of RCEP.**
- **The 15-member grouping accounts for 30% of the world's population and 30% of global GDP (2.2 billion people).** Thus, it is the largest trade bloc in history.
 - By comparison, the United States-Mexico-Canada trade agreement (USMCA) covers 28% of world trade, while the European Union's Single Market is a distant third at nearly 18%.



Background

- ⦿ Negotiations on the RCEP deal started in 2012.
- ⦿ India was also part of the negotiations. However, India pulled out in 2019 because of concerns over lower tariffs.
- ⦿ Before India, RCEP excluded the USA, which had withdrawn from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) in 2017.

19. 5TH BIMSTEC SUMMIT

CONTEXT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently participated in the **5th BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) Summit** hosted in virtual mode by Sri Lanka, the current chair of BIMSTEC.

About 5th BIMSTEC Summit:

- ⦿ The Summit's theme **"Towards a Resilient Region, Prosperous Economies, Healthy People"** captures the main current priorities of member states.
- ⦿ The main outcome of the Summit was the **adoption and signing of the BIMSTEC Charter**, which formalizes the grouping into an organization made up of members' states that are littoral to, and dependent upon, the Bay of Bengal.
- ⦿ The Summit also saw considerable progress being achieved in the BIMSTEC connectivity agenda with the **adoption of the 'Master Plan for Transport Connectivity'** by Leaders which lays out a guidance framework for connectivity related activities in the region in the future.
- ⦿ **Three BIMSTEC agreements** were signed which represent progress being achieved in ongoing cooperation activities:
 - **BIMSTEC Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters;**
 - **BIMSTEC Memorandum of Understanding on Mutual Cooperation in the field of Diplomatic Training and**
 - **Memorandum of Association on Establishment of BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Facility.**



About BIMSTEC:

- ⦿ The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is a **regional multilateral organisation**.

- ⊙ Its members lie in the **littoral and adjacent areas of the Bay of Bengal** constituting a contiguous regional unity.
- ⊙ Headquarter is situated in Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- ⊙ Out of the 7 members,
 - Five are from South Asia –
 - Bangladesh
 - Bhutan
 - India
 - Nepal
 - Sri Lanka
 - Two are from Southeast Asia –
 - Myanmar
 - Thailand

20. ASSESSING G20'S EVENT IN BALI

CONTEXT

In a joint declaration brought out at end of the **G20 summit in Bali** where the multilateral organisation has several discussions on economic difficulties and insecurity worldwide.

Key Highlights of the G20 event:


- ⊙ **On Russia-Ukraine Conflict:** The G20 summit had come on a common ground and addressed the impact that western sanctions against Russia have had on the global economy.
 - Clarified that G20 is not the forum to '**resolve security issues**' but these issues can have significant consequences for the **global economy**.
- ⊙ **On Food Security:** The declaration from the G20 leaders expressed concern about the challenges to global food security which has been intensified by the on-going conflicts and tensions, and committed to take '**urgent actions**' to help developing economies.
 - The text of the outcome document also acknowledged the Russian donations of fertilizers facilitated by the **World Food Programme** and the **Black Sea Grain Corridor**.
- ⊙ **Against Terrorism and Money laundering:** The G20 declaration also called upon the international community to step up efforts to counter money laundering, terrorism financing and proliferation financing and urged the **Financial Action Task Force (FATF)** and FATF Style Regional Bodies to 'lead global action to respond to these threats.
- ⊙ **Against War:** The leaders at G20 have clearly mentioned that they all are against the war, as it causes great human sufferings and effects Global rule-based order.

Differentiating Previous Meet with the recent One:

G20 at Italy in 2021	G20 at Bali in 2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⦿ Roadmap for COP 26: It urged leaders of the world's biggest economies to put their action plans to tackle the global climate change crisis. ⦿ Restricting Aid to Coal Based Plants: It included a pledge to halt financing of overseas coal-fired power generation by the end of this year (2021). ⦿ PPP Model of Finance Mobilisation: Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) are the only way to achieve the trillions of dollars in annual investment needed to transition to clean, sustainable energy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⦿ Roadmap for COP 27: G20 has urged the leaders of developed economies to raise voice against the Carbon Border Tax imposed. ⦿ Addressed the issues regarding Food supply chains and exports among the nations. ⦿ Money laundering and illegal funds sanctions. ⦿ Prevent war to address the economic instability and impacts associated with it.

The G20:

- ⦿ The **G20 is an informal group** of 19 countries and the European Union, with representatives of the **International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.**
- ⦿ G20 is the premier forum for international economic cooperation representing around 85% of the global GDP, over 75% of the global trade, and about two-thirds of the world population.
- ⦿ It includes 19 countries, including, **Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Germany, India, Indonesia, Canada, South Africa, Turkey, the UK, the USA, China, France, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and the European Union (EU).**



G20 COUNTRIES FLAGS

21. INDIA ATTENDS EAS AND ASEAN

CONTEXT

India attended the **40th East Asia summit** and **41st Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)** held in Cambodia and highlighted its stance on global issues and its agenda for upcoming G20 summit.

Highlights of the Summit:

- ⦿ **Location:** Cambodian capital (**Phnom Penh**).
- ⦿ The three-day summit also included the **East Asia Summit**.
- ⦿ Major Participants other than ASEAN countries included **S. President Joe Biden, Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and others**.
- ⦿ India's **external affairs Minister Mr. S Jaishankar** took part in the summit.
- ⦿ **Major issues:** The following issues were discussed:
 - Crisis in Myanmar
 - Russia-Ukraine War and disrupted global supply chains
 - Global Consensus and coordination
 - For World's common interest to cooperate to solve differences peacefully
 - Regional tensions between the US and China
 - Climate change

The ASEAN	The East Asia Summit (EAS)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⦿ ASEAN is a regional inter-governmental organisation consisting of 10 Southeast Asian countries - Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. ⦿ Aim: to facilitate and promote cooperation in trade, security, education and culture integration and exchange. ⦿ India and several other countries, including the US, China, Japan and Australia, are its dialogue partners. ⦿ It is collectively the third-largest economy in Asia after China and Japan and the seventh-largest in the world. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⦿ EAS is the Indo-Pacific's premier forum for strategic dialogue. ⦿ It is the only leader-led forum at which all key Indo-Pacific partners meet to discuss political, security and economic challenges facing the region, and has an important role to play in advancing closer regional cooperation. ⦿ The EAS has 18 members - the ten ASEAN countries (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam) along with Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Russia and the United States. ⦿ India is the founding member of the East Asia Summit. ⦿ ASEAN leads the forum, and the chair position rotates between ASEAN Member States.

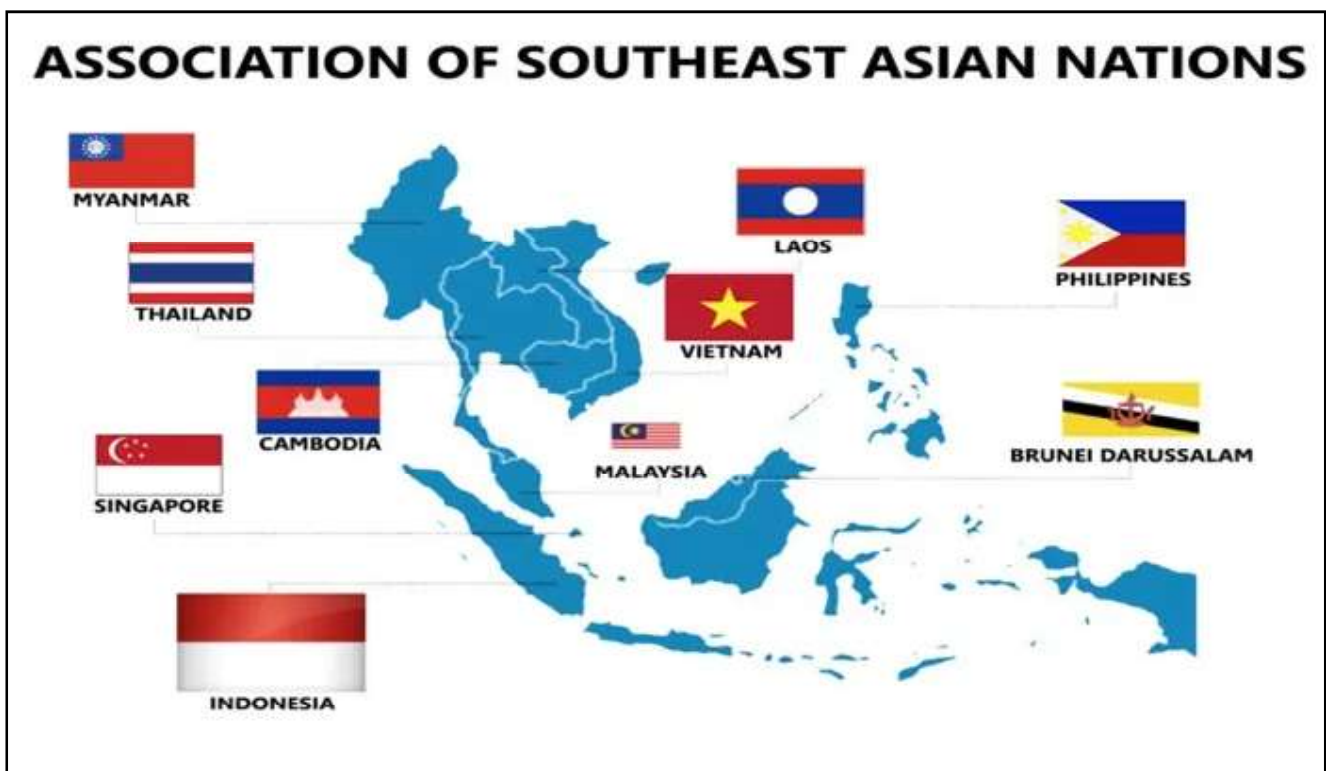
22. 19TH ASEAN-INDIA ECONOMIC MINISTERS' MEETING

CONTEXT

Recently, the **19th ASEAN-India Economic Ministers Consultations** was held in the **Siem Reap City, Cambodia**.

Highlights of the Meeting:

- ⦿ **Acknowledged Economic achievements:** Trade and economic relations between ASEAN and India are starting to recover from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the two-way trade between ASEAN and India reached USD 91.5 billion in 2021 increasing by 39.2% year-on-year.
- ⦿ **ASEAN India Business Council:** Recommendations made by ASEAN India Business Council (AIBC) to enhance the ASEAN India economic partnership were considered.
- ⦿ **Supply Chain Connectivity:** The member countries welcomed ASEAN and India's collective actions, through the launching of the **ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA)** Upgrade Negotiations in securing a robust supply chain to maintain the flow of essential goods and services.
- ⦿ **ASEAN India Trade in Goods Agreement:** The Ministers endorsed the Scope of the Review of the AITIGA to make it more user-friendly, simple, and trade facilitative for businesses, as well as responsive to the current global and regional challenges including supply chain disruptions.
- ⦿ The Ministers also **activated the AITIGA Joint Committee** to undertake the **review of AITIGA expeditiously**.



About the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN):

Commodity trade between India and ASEAN

- ⦿ Trade reached 98.39 billion in the period April 2021- February 2022.
- ⦿ India's main trading ties are with **Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Thailand**.
- ⦿ Established in 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand, ASEAN is a **regional grouping** that promotes economic, political, and security cooperation.

- ⦿ **Its chairmanship rotates annually**, based on the alphabetical order of the English names of Member States.
- ⦿ ASEAN countries have a total population of 650 million people and a combined Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of USD 2.8 trillion.
- ⦿ **Members:** Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam – into one organization.

23. EASTERN ECONOMIC FORUM AND INDIA'S BALANCING ACT

CONTEXT

Russia hosted the seventh **Eastern Economic Forum (EEF)** in Vladivostok; which provided a platform for entrepreneurs to expand their businesses into **Russia's Far East (RFE)**.

What is Eastern Economic Forum (EEF)?

- ⦿ The EEF was established in 2015 to encourage **foreign investments** in Russia.
- ⦿ The forum displays the economic potential, suitable business conditions and investment opportunities in the region.
- ⦿ As of 2022, almost **2,729 investment** projects are being planned in the region.

The agreements focus on **infrastructure, transportation projects, mineral excavations, construction, industry and agriculture**.

Geography of the Region:

- ⦿ The Russian Far East is a region in **Northeast Asia**.
- ⦿ It is the easternmost part of Russia and the Asian continent; and is administered as part of the **Far Eastern Federal District**, which is located between **Lake Baikal in eastern Siberia and the Pacific Ocean**.
- ⦿ Vladivostok is the largest Russian port on the Pacific Ocean and it is located about 50 km from the China-Russia border.

Russia's Far Eastern Federal District



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24. PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS FUND

CONTEXT

To counter financial obstacles, weak infrastructure, scarcity of healthcare, etc., the World Bank Board of Directors has approved setting up a **Financial Intermediary Fund (FIF) for Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness, and Response (PPR)**.

What is Financial Intermediary Fund (FIF)?

- ⦿ FIF is aimed to **address critical gaps** through investments and technical support at the national, regional, and global levels.
- ⦿ The **fund will provide a dedicated stream of additional, long-term financing to strengthen PPR** capabilities in low- and middle-income countries.
- ⦿ Financial Intermediary Funds (FIFs) provide the global development community with independently governed multi-contributor collaboration platforms.
- ⦿ FIFs are designed to **mobilize significant financial support** and **engender collective action** for development priorities, often contributing to global public goods.
- ⦿ At the heart of each FIF is a type of trust fund for which the World Bank serves as trustee.

Who developed the plan?

- ⦿ The FIF for pandemic PPR is **put forward by G20 in the presidency of Italy**.
- ⦿ During a G20 Summit in 2021, under Italy's presidency, it was decided to establish **G20 Joint Finance-Health Task Force for pandemic preparedness**.
- ⦿ The FIF is also established by the strong support of the G20 nations and beyond.
- ⦿ At present, calls for the **proposal for investments funded by the FIF will open in November 2022**.

The FIF has commitments from India, the USA, the UK, Australia, Canada, China, the European Commission, the Republic of Korea, France, Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, the United Arab Emirates, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, and Wellcome Trust.

What is the structure of the PPR FIF?

PPR FIF will have four main elements:

- ⦿ **Governing board** - the decision-making body of the FIF that sets the overall work program and makes funding decisions;
 - A **secretariat performing administrative functions**, including support to the governing board in the delivery of its responsibilities,

- ⦿ **Financial trustee** served by the World Bank, and
- ⦿ The FIF implementing entities to carry out the FIF's work program at the country, regional and global levels.

25. INDIA US 2+2 (PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE)

CONTEXT

Amid ongoing global turbulence, India and the US are scheduled to hold the 2+2 meeting in New Delhi around November 9-10.

Background

- ⦿ The US is India's oldest and most important 2+2 talk partner.
 - The first 2+2 dialogue between the two countries was held during the Trump Administration, in New Delhi in September 2018.
- ⦿ The first India-Japan talks in the 2+2 format were held in November, 2019 in New Delhi.
- ⦿ The inaugural 2+2 dialogue with Australia was held in September 2021 at New Delhi.
- ⦿ India held its first 2+2 dialogue with Russia in December 2021.

What is 2+2 dialogue?

- ⦿ The 2+2 dialogue is a format of meeting of the foreign and defence ministers of India and its allies on strategic and security issues.
- ⦿ A 2+2 ministerial dialogue enables the partners to better understand and appreciate each other's strategic concerns and sensitivities taking into account political factors on both sides, in order to build a stronger, more integrated strategic relationship in a rapidly changing global environment.
- ⦿ India has 2+2 dialogues with four key strategic partners:
 - US
 - Australia
 - Japan
 - Russia
- ⦿ Besides Russia, the other three countries are also India's partners in the Quad.

US – India Defence Trajectory

- ⦿ During the visit of Prime Minister to the U.S. in June 2016, the U.S. recognised India as a "Major Defence Partner"
- ⦿ **Agreements Signed Recently**
 - Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Association (LEMOA)

- Fuel Exchange Agreement
- Technical Agreement (TA) on information sharing on White (merchant) Shipping
- The Information Exchange Annexe (IEA) Aircraft Carrier Technologies
- ⊙ **Defence Acquisitions**
 - Aggregate worth of defence acquisition from U.S. Defence has crossed over US\$ 13 billion.
 - India and the United States have launched a Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) aimed at simplifying technology transfer policies and exploring possibilities of co-development and co-production to invest the defence relationship with strategic value.
- ⊙ The two sides are also increasingly engaged in multi-lateral exercises such as the MALABAR, RED FLAG and RIMPAC, covering the broad expanse of the Indo-Pacific.
- ⊙ The US has recently renamed its Pacific Command as the **US Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM)**, an acknowledgement of the seamless connectivity that binds the Pacific and Indian Oceans and India's growing importance.
- ⊙ The first-ever 2+2 dialogue was held in 2018 the backdrop of burgeoning joint exercises such as Cope-India (Air Force), Yudh Abhyas (Army) and Vajra Prahar (Special Forces).
- ⊙ The **Indian Navy and the US Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT)** are set to deepen their maritime cooperation in the Western Indian Ocean.

26. INDIA-US TRADE POLICY FORUM

CONTEXT

Recently, the 13th Ministerial-level meeting of **India – United States Trade Policy Forum (TPF)** held in Washington, DC, on January 11, 2023.

What is the India-US TPF?

- ⊙ The India-US TPF aims to activate its working groups in the fields of **agriculture, non-agriculture goods, services, investment, and intellectual property** to meet frequently and address issues of mutual concern in a mutually beneficial manner.
- ⊙ The idea is to **deliver tangible benefits to both countries by resolving outstanding market access issues.**
- ⊙ **Highlights of the Meeting:**
- ⊙ While the two sides appreciated the **rise in bilateral trade in goods** and services (which reached **~160 billion USD in 2021**), they also recognised that for economies of their size, **significant potential still remains unfulfilled.**
- ⊙ The US welcomed India's participation in the **Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF)**.
 - Both the countries have **like-minded views about the efficiency of IPEF for continued growth, peace, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region.**

- The Ministers welcomed the finalization of the **Turtle Excluder Device (TED)** design with the technical support of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).
 - The TED will help in minimizing the **impact of fishing on sea-turtle populations.**
- A **new TPF Working Group on Resilient Trade was launched** to help the officials deepen bilateral dialogue on a range of issues. Till the next TPF Ministerial meeting, it will focus on:
 - **Trade facilitation**
 - Promotion of **labour rights and workforce development**
 - **Circular economy**; role of trade in environment protection

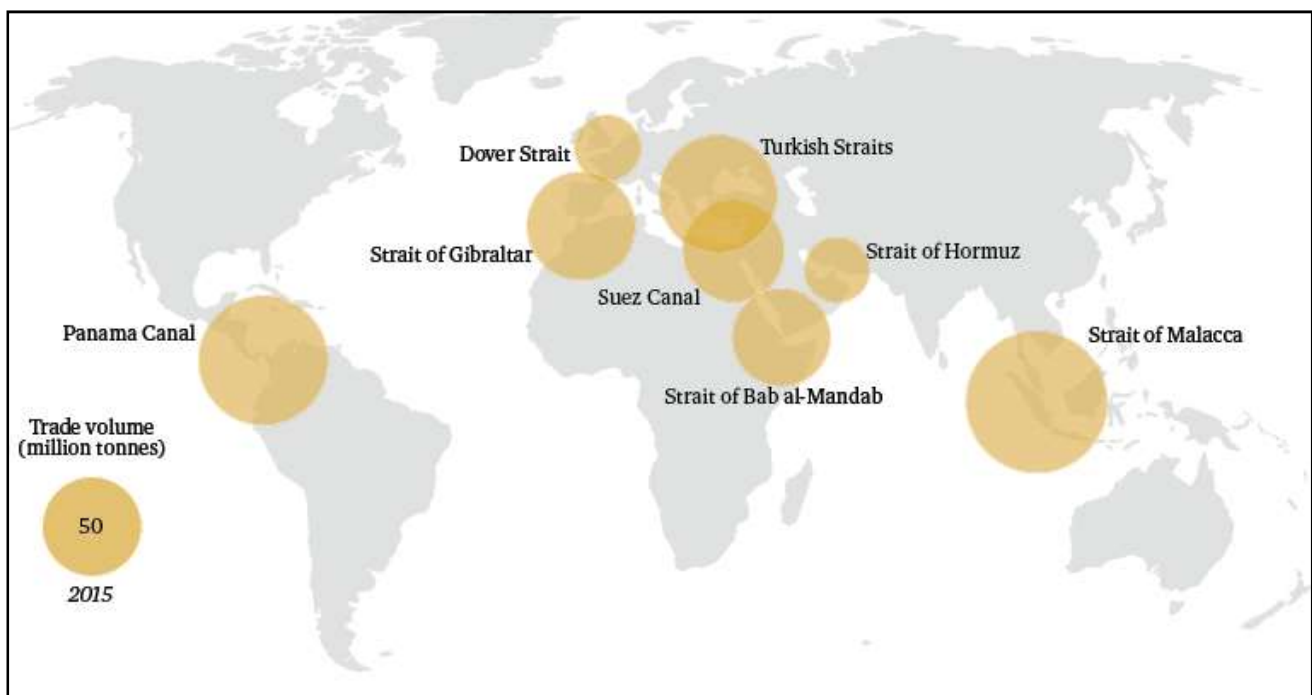
27. I2U2 HOLDS ITS FIRST-EVER LEADER'S SUMMIT

CONTEXT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi participated in the first-ever I2U2 Virtual Summit.

About I2U2:

- I2U2 stands for **India, Israel, the UAE, and the US.**
- Moreover, the Ambassador of UAE to India, **Ahmed Albanna**, had referred to the new grouping as the '**West Asian Quad**'.
- The genesis of this group took place in middle-east to harness the maritime traffic of the Strait of Hormuz, Bab Al Mandab and Suez Canal region.
 - Out of the 8 maritime choke points in the world, these three lie closer to each other around Israel and UAE.



Purpose of I2U2:

- ◎ **Strait of Hormuz:** The strait is approximately 167 km long, with a width of about 96 km at its widest to 39 km at its narrowest point.
 - One third of the world's liquefied natural gas and almost 25% of total global oil consumption passes through the strait making it a strategic choke point.
- ◎ **Bab Al Mandab Strait:** This is a vital strategic link in the maritime trade route between Mediterranean Sea and Indian Ocean via Red Sea and Suez Canal.
- ◎ On an average 60 ships pass through this strait each day. But unfortunately, this region has been infested with pirates and plagued by instability. This is another example of a choke point.
- ◎ **Suez Canal:** This is one of the more famous names of the three straits.
 - This is an artificial sea level trade route via Egypt, a vital trade link between Europe and Asia.
 - Statistics suggest 56 ships cross this canal each day.
 - One block in the canal in April 2021 had caused a lot of monetary loss to myriads of countries.



Abraham Accords

- ◎ The **Israel–UAE normalization agreement** is officially called the **Abraham Accords Peace Agreement**.
- ◎ It was initially agreed to in a joint statement by the United States, Israel and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in August, 2020.
- ◎ The **UAE thus became the third Arab country, after Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994, to agree to formally normalize its relationship with Israel as well as the first Persian Gulf country to do so.**
- ◎ Concurrently, Israel agreed to suspend plans for annexing parts of the West Bank. The agreement normalized what had long been informal but robust foreign relations between the two countries.

28. ANTIGUA, BARBUDA JOINS INTERNATIONAL SOLAR ALLIANCE

CONTEXT

Antigua and Barbuda recently joined the International Solar Alliance (ISA) as a 102nd member.

About International Solar Alliance (ISA)

- ISA is an alliance of **more than 120 countries**, most of them being **sunshine countries**, most being sunshine countries, which lie either completely or partly between the **Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn**.



- The primary objective is to collectively work for **efficient exploitation of solar energy to reduce dependence on fossil based fuels**.
- This initiative was proposed by our Prime Minister of India first during his speech at **Wembley Stadium, London**.
- This initiative was launched at the India Africa Summit and a meeting was held among them before the conclave of **2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris in November 2015**.
- This is a **treaty-based intergovernmental organization**. The alliance will take the shape of an international treaty once its rules are worked out.
- The Headquarters **is in India with its Interim Secretariat being set up in Gurgaon**.
- The agreement will become operational **after at least 15 countries have ratified it**.
- The framework agreement says that the members of ISA would take coordinated actions through programmes and activities that will aggregate the **demands for solar finance, solar technologies, innovation, research and development, and capacity building**.
- The ISA aims to **develop cost-efficient solar technologies and applications**.
- It is also expected to **mobilise \$1 trillion for funding solar energy projects by 2030**.

29. QUAD: ASIAN NATO OR ARC OF DEMOCRACY?

CONTEXT

Leaders of the four **Quad nations** met in Tokyo and discussed wide range of topics from the war in Europe to dealing with China, and their cooperation on non-security initiatives such as tech and infra.

About QUAD

- The **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD)** also known as **QUAD** is an Inter-governmental security forum.
- It comprises of 4 countries **India, the United States, Japan and Australia.**
- The member countries of the QUAD organise summits, exchanges the information and military drills.
- The objective is to ensure and support a "free, open and prosperous" Indo-Pacific region.
- The idea of QUAD was first mooted by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2007.

What is the structure of Quad?

- The Quad is not structured like a typical multilateral organisation and lacks a secretariat and any permanent decision-making body.
- Instead of creating policy along the lines of the European Union or United Nations, the Quad has focused on expanding existing agreements between member countries and highlighting their shared values.
- Also unlike NATO, the Quad does not include provisions for collective defence, instead it focuses on the conduct of joint military exercises as a show of unity and diplomatic cohesion.

30. INDIA HOLDS 'P20 SUMMIT' WITH G20 MEMBER COUNTRIES

CONTEXT

The first ever G20 Parliamentary Speakers' Summit (P20 Summit) hosted by the world's largest democracy concluded at India International Convention Centre, Yashobhoomi, Dwarka, Delhi.

What is P20?

- P20 is a congregation of **Parliamentary Speakers** from the **Parliaments of G20 nations.**
- It is a meeting which pertains to Speakers and presiding officers of the Parliament from the G20 countries and invitee nations.

- The P20 group was set up during the G20 Presidency of Canada in 2010.
- The P20 provides an opportunity to deepen the recognition of G20 member nations' efforts and methods of international collaboration in related policies by deliberating upon emerging issues faced by the global community.
- **This year's Theme:** 'Parliaments for One Earth, One Family, One Future'

31. INDIAN OCEAN RIM ASSOCIATION (IORA)

CONTEXT

Sri Lanka took over the **chairmanship** of the **Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)**. Sri Lanka will hold the chairmanship from **2023 to 2025**.

Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA):

- Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) is the largest and pre-eminent organisation in the Indian Ocean Region with **23 members and 10 dialogue partners**.
 - **Member countries:** Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, UAE, and Yemen.
 - **Newest country member:** **France** first joined IORA as a "Dialogue Partner" in 2001, before becoming a formal Member State on 17 December 2020 (with effect from 1 January 2021).
 - **Dialogue partners: 11 dialogue partners:** China, Egypt, Germany, Italy, Japan, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Russia, Turkey, US and UK.
- It was established in **1997** and is a regional forum that seeks to build and expand understanding and mutually beneficial cooperation through a consensus-based, evolutionary and non-intrusive approach.
- **Headquarters:** Its Secretariat is based in **Cyber City, Ebène, Mauritius**.
- **Roles and Functions:**
 - It manages, coordinates, services and monitors the implementation of policy decisions, work programmes and projects adopted by the member states.
 - The association gains importance by the fact that the Indian Ocean carries half of the world's container ships, one-third of the world's bulk cargo traffic and two-thirds of the world's oil shipments.
 - It is a lifeline of international trade and transport and the Indian Ocean region is woven together by trade routes and commands control of major sea-lanes.



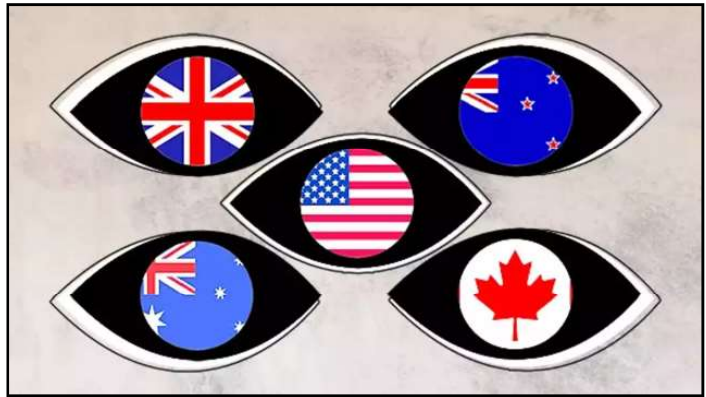
32. FIVE EYES INTELLIGENCE ALLIANCE

CONTEXT

The intelligence leaders of the “Five Eyes” alliance, comprising the US, UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, have accused China of being a major global threat.

About the ‘Five Eyes’ alliance:

- The ‘Five Eyes’ is a multilateral intelligence-sharing network shared by over **20 different agencies** of five English-speaking countries — **Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States.**
- It is both **surveillance-based and signals intelligence (SIGINT).**
- Intelligence documents shared between the member countries are classified ‘**Secret—AUS/CAN/NZ/UK/US Eyes Only,**’ which gave the group its title ‘Five Eyes.’
- **Objective:** The aim of the Five Eyes, however, has shifted following the collapse of the **Soviet Union** and the emergence of new global challenges like **terrorism and the growing influence of China.**



33. INDIA-MIDDLE EAST-EUROPE ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (IMEC)

CONTEXT

The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) was announced at the Group of 20 Summit (G20). **However, the ongoing violence between Israel and Hamas has underlined the challenges facing an ambitious initiative to build a new trade route from India through the Middle East to Europe.**

India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor:

- In a bid to stimulate economic development through enhanced connectivity and economic integration, India, along with **other members of the G20**, has entered into a historic memorandum of understanding (MoU) to develop an India-Middle East-Europe economic corridor.
- The project is a part of the **Partnership for Global Infrastructure Investment (PGII)** — a West-led initiative for **funding infrastructure projects** across the world.

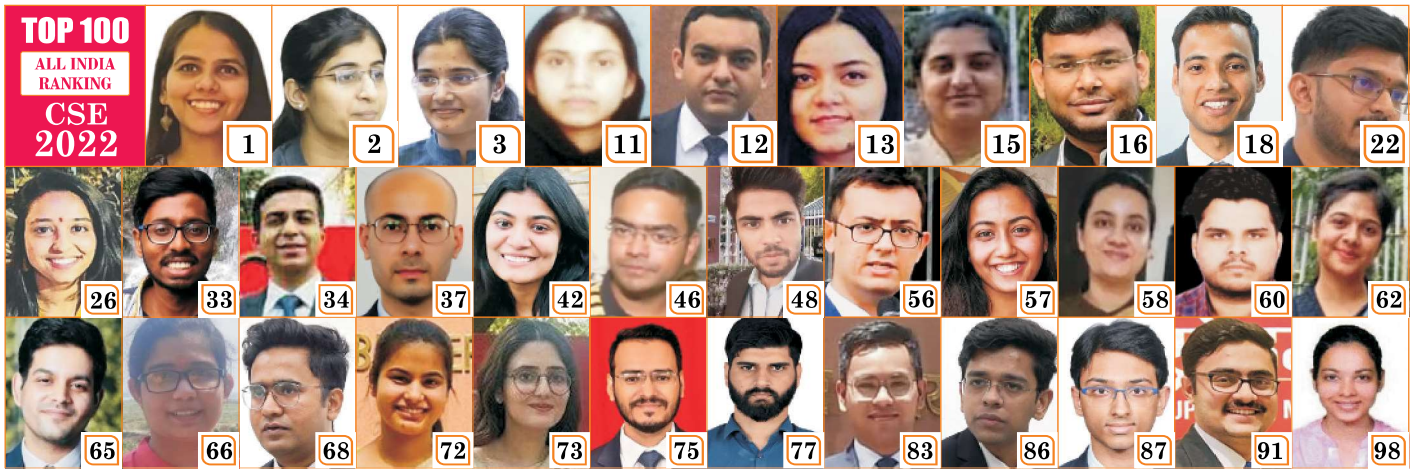
- ⦿ **Objective:** The corridor aims to provide a reliable and cost-effective **ship-to-rail transit network** between **Asia, Middle East and Europe**.
- ⦿ **Proposals:** The corridor will comprise of **two separate corridors**,
 - **The Eastern corridor** - will connect India to the Arabian Gulf.
 - **The Northern corridor**- will connect the Arabian Gulf to Europe.
- ⦿ **Member Nations:** Apart from India, the other participants will include **Saudi Arabia, UAE, France, Germany, Italy, USA and the European Union**.



- ⦿ **Components of the project:**
 - The arrangement will include a **railway route** that, upon completion, will provide a **reliable and cost-effective cross-border ship-to-rail transit network** to supplement **existing maritime and road transport routes**.
 - This will enable **goods and services** to transit to, from, and between **India, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel, and Europe**.
 - Along the railway track, the members want to lay a **cable for clean hydrogen export**.
- ⦿ **Key functions:**
 - This corridor will **safeguard regional supply chains**, boost **trade accessibility**, and enable a greater emphasis on environmental, social, and governance consequences.
 - It will be designed to **increase efficiencies, save costs, promote economic cohesion, create jobs**, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, leading to a radical integration of Asia, Europe, and the Middle East.
- ⦿ **Significance:**
 - It is seen as a counter to **China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**.
 - Key for **connectivity of Global South**.
 - Strengthening supply chains amid **Russia-Ukraine War**.

Partnership for Global Infrastructure Investment (PGII):

- ⦿ The infrastructure plan was first announced in **June 2021** during the G7 (or Group of Seven) summit in the UK.
- ⦿ The G7 countries include the **United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and the European Union (EU)**.
- ⦿ US President had called it the **Build Back Better World (B3W) framework**.
- ⦿ In 2022, during the **G7 summit in Germany**, the PGII was officially launched as a joint initiative to help fund infrastructure projects in developing countries through **public and private investments**.



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