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INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS & AGREEMENTS

1. AMENDMENT OF INTERNATIONAL HEALTH REGULATIONS

CONTEXT: The World Health Assembly (WHA) recently concluded its annual meeting where it agreed to amendment to the International Health Regulations (2005) (IHR).

▢ What is World Health Assembly (WHA)?

- ▶ The WHA is the decision-making body of the World Health Organization (WHO), attended by delegations from all WHO member states. It convenes annually at WHO headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.
- ▶ **Functions of WHA:**
 - Deciding on the Organization's policies.
 - Appointing the Director-General of WHO.
 - Administering financial policies.
 - Reviewing and approving the proposed program budget.
 - Key Amendments to the IHR
- ▶ **Definition of Pandemic Emergency:** Introduction of a comprehensive definition to enhance international collaboration in response to potential pandemics. The definition includes criteria such as wide geographical spread, exceeding health system capacity, causing social and economic disruption, and requiring rapid international action.
- ▶ **Commitment to Solidarity and Equity:** Establishment of a Coordinating Financial Mechanism to support financing needs and priorities of developing countries. Focus on developing and strengthening core capacities related to pandemic emergency prevention, preparedness, and response.

- ▶ **Cooperation for Effective Implementation:** Creation of a States Parties Committee to promote cooperation and effective implementation of the amended regulations. Establishment of National IHR Authorities to improve coordination of implementation within and among countries.

■ Need for Global Health Cooperation

- ▶ **Curbing Infectious Diseases:** Pandemics like Covid-19 underscore the interconnectedness of our world. Global cooperation enables:
 - Early detection and sharing of disease outbreaks for faster global response.
 - Coordinated research and development for vaccines, diagnostics, and treatments.
- ▶ **Addressing Antibiotic Resistance:** Overuse and misuse of antibiotics can create resistant bacteria that spread globally. Cooperation helps in:
 - Establishing common guidelines for antibiotic use in humans and animals.
 - WHO's efforts in addressing antimicrobial resistance as a global health threat.
- ▶ **Chronic Disease Management:** Non-communicable diseases like heart disease and diabetes are growing global concerns. Cooperation aids in:
 - Sharing best practices in prevention, treatment, and lifestyle interventions.
 - Initiatives like the **Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases (GACD)**.
- ▶ **Health Equity and Access:** Many countries lack resources to effectively tackle health challenges. Global cooperation promotes:
 - Technology transfer and sharing knowledge to improve healthcare systems in developing countries.
 - Initiatives like the Medicines Patent Pool for access to affordable generic drugs.

■ Existing Framework for Global Health Cooperation

- ▶ **Multilateral Agencies:** Organizations like **WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, and UNAIDS** play crucial roles in child health, reproductive health, and HIV/AIDS. WHO acts as the central coordinating authority on global health within the United Nations system, setting international health standards and providing technical assistance.
- ▶ **International Health Regulations (IHR):** A legally binding agreement among 196 countries outlining rights and obligations regarding public health events with international implications.
- ▶ **Global Health Initiatives:** Targeted programs addressing specific health challenges, such as the **Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance**.
- ▶ **Public-Private Partnerships:** Collaboration between governments, NGOs, and the private sector, leveraging resources and expertise, exemplified by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.
- ▶ **Regional Organizations:** Bodies like the **Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)** and the **African Union** coordinate health efforts within their regions.

PRACTISE QUESTION

- Q. Evaluate the recent amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005) agreed upon by the World Health Assembly (WHA) and discuss their potential impact on global health security.

2. UNITED NATIONS PEACE KEEPING FORCE AND INDIA

CONTEXT: Naik Dhananjay Kumar Singh, an Indian peacekeeper who served with the United Nations Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO), will be posthumously awarded the prestigious Dag Hammarskjöld medal for his dedicated service and sacrifice.

▢ About MONUSCO:

- **Establishment:** MONUSCO succeeded a previous UN peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2010.
- **Mission:** It aims to protect civilians, humanitarian personnel, and human rights defenders from physical violence and support the government in stabilization and peace consolidation efforts.

▢ The Dag Hammarskjöld Medal:

- **Establishment:** Created in December 2000 as a posthumous award for members of peacekeeping operations who lost their lives during service.
- **Namesake:** Named after former UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, who died in a plane crash during a peacekeeping mission in 1961.
- **Award Ceremony:** Presented annually on Peacekeeper's Day (29th May) to Member States that have lost peacekeepers.

▢ International Day of UN Peacekeepers:

- **Establishment:** Initiated by the UN General Assembly in 2002 to honor all men and women serving in peacekeeping and to remember those who have lost their lives.
- **2024 Theme:** "Fit for the future, building better together," emphasizing the evolution and adaptability of UN Peacekeeping for future conflicts.

▢ U.N. Peacekeeping Mission:

- **Purpose:** A joint effort by the Department of Peace Operations and the Department of Operational Support to assist host countries in transitioning from conflict to peace.
- **History:** Established during the Cold War when the Security Council was often paralyzed by rivalries.
 - **First Operations:** UNTSO in 1948 to monitor the Armistice Agreement between Israel and its Arab neighbors, and UNMOGIP in 1949 for India and Pakistan.
- **Current Deployment:** Over 76,000 peacekeepers from 125 countries are currently serving in 11 conflict zones worldwide.
- **Guiding Principles:** Consent of the parties, impartiality, and non-use of force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate.

▢ India's Contribution to UN Peacekeeping:

- **Significance:** India is the second-largest contributor of uniformed personnel to UN Peacekeeping.
- **Historical Contribution:** Over 200,000 Indians have served in 49 missions since 1948.
- **Current Deployment:** Indian Armed Forces are deployed across nine countries, with 160 Indian soldiers having made the ultimate sacrifice for global peace.
- **Training:** The Indian Army's Centre for UN Peacekeeping (CUNPK) in New Delhi trains more than 12,000 troops annually.
- **Women in Peacekeeping:** India has deployed Female Engagement Teams (FETs) in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Abyei, and Major Radhika Sen was awarded "Military Gender Advocate of the Year 2023."
 - **Historical Deployment:** In 2007, India deployed the first all-women Formed Police Unit to the UN Operation in Liberia (UNMIL).
- **UNMOGIP Controversy:** Despite its peacekeeping role, India has expressed displeasure at the continued presence of UNMOGIP, established in 1949 to monitor the ceasefire between India and Pakistan. India argues the mission is outdated following the 1972 Simla Agreement and the establishment of the Line of Control (LoC).

PRACTISE QUESTION

Q. How do India's efforts in peacekeeping operations reflect its commitment to global peace and security? Evaluate the challenges and controversies, such as India's stance on UNMOGIP, associated with its participation in these missions.

3. BIMSTEC CHARTER

CONTEXT: The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) recently achieved a significant milestone as its charter came into force on 20th May 2024.

▢ What is the BIMSTEC Grouping?

- BIMSTEC is a regional organization comprising seven member states: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. It was established in 1997 to promote multifaceted technical and economic cooperation among the countries of the Bay of Bengal region.
- **Membership:** Initially formed with four members (Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, and Thailand) as BIST-EC, it was renamed BIMST-EC after Myanmar joined in 1997. The inclusion of Nepal and Bhutan in 2004 led to the current name, BIMSTEC.
- **Region:** The region covered by BIMSTEC is home to approximately 1.5 billion people, with a combined GDP of over USD 3.8 trillion.

▢ Key Features of the BIMSTEC Charter

- **International Recognition:** The charter grants BIMSTEC official standing as a legal entity, allowing it to engage with other international organizations on matters of diplomacy and cooperation.
- **Shared Goals:** BIMSTEC aims to build trust and friendly relations among member states, accelerating economic development and social progress in the Bay of Bengal region.
- **Structured Organization:** The charter establishes a clear framework for BIMSTEC's operations, including regular meetings at the Summit, Ministerial, and Senior Officials' levels.
- **Expanding Membership:** The charter allows for the inclusion of new countries and participation of other nations as observers.
- **Sectoral Cooperation:** BIMSTEC's sectors of cooperation are now streamlined to seven, with each member state leading a specific sector:
 - Bangladesh: Trade, investment, and development.
 - Bhutan: Environment and climate change.
 - India: Security, including energy.
 - Myanmar: Agriculture and food security.
 - Nepal: People-to-people contacts.
 - Sri Lanka: Science, technology, and innovation.
 - Thailand: Connectivity.

▢ Significance of BIMSTEC

- **Aligned with Act East Policy:** BIMSTEC supports India's Act East Policy by enhancing trade and security prominence in the Indian Ocean region and the Indo-Pacific.
- **Alternative to SAARC:** BIMSTEC has emerged as a preferred platform for regional cooperation, offering an alternative to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), especially after India's efforts to isolate Pakistan post-2016 Uri attacks.

- ▶ **Counter to China:** India promotes BIMSTEC as an alternative platform for regional cooperation to counter China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) expansion in South and Southeast Asia.
- ▶ **Promotion of Intangible Culture:** Initiatives like India's Centre for Bay of Bengal Studies (CBS) at Nalanda University aim to bring new insights and research into the region's intangible heritage.
- ▶ **Platform for Regional Cooperation:** BIMSTEC facilitates enhanced cooperation in security, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief (HADR).

■ BIMSTEC vs. SAARC

- ▶ **Establishment:** BIMSTEC was formed by the Bangkok Declaration in 1997, while SAARC was established by the adoption of a charter in 1985.
- ▶ **Members:** BIMSTEC includes Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, while SAARC includes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.
- ▶ **Focus:** BIMSTEC focuses on interregional cooperation between South Asia and Southeast Asia, while SAARC focuses solely on South Asia.
- ▶ **Trade:** BIMSTEC has seen a 6% increase in intra-regional trade over a decade, compared to SAARC's 5% since its inception.
- ▶ **Relations and Cooperation:** BIMSTEC members generally maintain friendly relations and practical cooperation in 14 sectors, compared to the long-standing but sometimes strained dynamics within SAARC.

■ Challenges to BIMSTEC

- ▶ **Lack of Efficiency and Slow Progress:** Inconsistent policy-making, infrequent operational meetings, and inadequate resources for the Secretariat hamper BIMSTEC's effectiveness.
- ▶ **Limited Intra-Regional Trade and Connectivity:** The BBIN connectivity project remains unfinished, and only two of the seven agreements needed for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) have been finalized.
- ▶ **Maritime Trade and Fisheries Challenges:** Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing is prevalent in the Bay of Bengal, affecting regional sustainability.
- ▶ **Member State Issues:** Ongoing issues like the Rohingya crisis between Bangladesh and Myanmar, India-Nepal border disputes, and Myanmar's political instability pose significant challenges.

PRACTISE QUESTION

Q. How does BIMSTEC align with India's Act East Policy and serve as an alternative to SAARC? Evaluate the challenges BIMSTEC faces and suggest measures to enhance its effectiveness in regional cooperation and development.

4. INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT AND ISRAEL-HAMAS DISPUTE

CONTEXT: The International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutor has recently requested arrest warrants against leaders of Hamas, as well as the Prime Minister and Defence Minister of Israel, for alleged war crimes in Palestine.

■ Is Israel member of ICC?

- ▶ Israel is not a member of the ICC, so the issuance of arrest warrants does not immediately risk prosecution for the concerned leaders. However, such warrants could deepen Israel's isolation and complicate international travel for its leaders. The ICC accepted "The State of Palestine" as a member in 2015.

❑ What is the International Criminal Court?

➤ About ICC:

- The ICC is the world's first permanent international criminal court, governed by an international treaty called the 'Rome Statute'.
- The Rome Statute was adopted by 120 states in 1998, aiming to create a more just world.
- The ICC was officially established in 2002 after the Rome Statute was ratified by 60 states. It deals with crimes committed on or after this date.
- India, along with the US and China, is not a party to the Rome Statute.
- Currently, 124 countries are States Parties to the Rome Statute, with Malaysia being the most recent member.

➤ Jurisdiction and Working:

- The ICC investigates and prosecutes individuals charged with the gravest crimes: genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and crimes of aggression.
- Jurisdiction applies if the crimes are committed by a national of a State Party, in the territory of a State Party, or in a State that has accepted the court's jurisdiction.
- The UN Security Council (UNSC) can refer situations to the ICC prosecutor under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.
- The ICC complements national criminal systems and prosecutes cases only when states are unwilling or unable to do so genuinely.
- The ICC is not a UN organization but has a cooperation agreement with the UN.
- Several countries, including Israel, the US, Russia, and China, do not accept the court's jurisdiction over war crimes, genocide, and other crimes.

❑ What is a War Crime?

- War crimes are serious violations of humanitarian laws during a conflict, including taking hostages, willful killings, torture or inhuman treatment of prisoners of war, and forcing children to fight.
- It is based on the principle that individuals can be held accountable for the actions of a state or its military.

❑ War Crime vs. Crime Against Humanity:

- According to the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, war crimes occur during a domestic conflict or a war between two states.
- Genocide and crimes against humanity can occur in peacetime or during unilateral aggression by a military towards a group of unarmed people.

❑ Geneva Conventions on War Crime:

- The Geneva Conventions (1949) and their Additional Protocols are international treaties containing important rules limiting the barbarity of war.
- They protect people not participating in the fighting (civilians, medics, aid workers) and those who can no longer fight (wounded, sick, shipwrecked troops, prisoners of war).
- The first Geneva Convention protects wounded and sick soldiers on land during war.
- The second Geneva Convention protects wounded, sick, and shipwrecked military personnel at sea during war.
- The third Geneva Convention applies to prisoners of war.
- The fourth Geneva Convention protects civilians, including in occupied territories.
- India is a party to all four Geneva Conventions.

PRACTISE QUESTION

Q. Discuss the role of international treaties such as the Geneva Conventions in shaping the prosecution of war crimes and the challenges faced by the ICC in enforcing its mandates.

5. GLOBAL ANTI-TERRORISM EFFORTS AND INDIA (CTTF)

CONTEXT: India has made a significant financial contribution to the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Trust Fund (CTTF), further cementing its commitment to combating terrorism on a global scale.

▣ What is the UN Counter-Terrorism Trust Fund?

- ▶ The UN Counter-Terrorism Trust Fund (UNCTTF) supports global efforts to counter terrorism.
- ▶ Established in 2009 and integrated into the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) in 2017.
- ▶ Focuses on enhancing the capacity of member states, particularly in Eastern and Southern Africa, to address challenges such as terrorism financing and the movement of terrorists.

▣ Global Programs Supported by UNCTTF:

- ▶ **Capacity Building:** Provides training for law enforcement, improves legal frameworks, and enhances the technical expertise of counter-terrorism personnel.
- ▶ **Countering the Financing of Terrorism (CFT):** Strengthens regulatory frameworks, enhances financial tracking, and promotes international cooperation.
- ▶ **Countering Terrorist Travel Programme (CTTP):** Enhances border security, uses advanced passenger information, and promotes international information exchange and best practices.
- ▶ Supports the balanced implementation of the four pillars of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: addressing the root causes of terrorism, combating terrorism, building state capacity, and ensuring human rights are respected.

▣ United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT)

- ▶ **Establishment:** Created by the UN General Assembly in 2017.
- ▶ **Purpose:** Provides leadership on the General Assembly's counter-terrorism mandates and enhances coordination across the UN system's counter-terrorism activities.
- ▶ **Support:** Helps member states implement the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

▣ India's Contribution to Global Counter-Terrorism Efforts

- ▶ **Bilateral Efforts:**
 - Conducts meetings of Joint Working Groups on counter-terrorism with countries like the United Kingdom, France, and the United States.

▣ Multilateral Efforts:

- ▶ **BRICS:** Actively addresses terrorism through sub-working groups focusing on terrorist financing, online terrorism, radicalization, foreign terrorist fighters, and capacity-building.
- ▶ **UNSC Counter Terrorism Committee (CTC):** In 2022, India hosted a special meeting to discuss terror-financing through cryptocurrency and the use of drones in terrorism, listing key points for consideration to counter these threats.

- ▶ **UNCTTF Contribution:** Financially supports programs aimed at combating terrorism, emphasizing its dedication to multilateral efforts.

■ **Significance of India's Contribution:**

- ▶ **Capacity Enhancement:** Aids countries in combating terrorism financing and preventing terrorist movements.
- ▶ **Regional Stability:** Supports African nations in countering terrorism, promoting regional stability, and aligning with India's zero-tolerance policy towards terrorism.
- ▶ **Leadership in Global South:** Reinforces India's role as a leader in the Global South, advocating for international cooperation against terrorism.

■ **Other Initiatives to Counter Terrorism**

- ▶ **International:**
 - **Terrorism Prevention Branch (TPB) of UNODC:** Focuses on global counter-terrorism efforts.
 - **Financial Action Task Force (FATF):** Sets global standards for combating money laundering and terrorism financing.
 - **India's Annual Resolution on Counter-Terror:** Adopted by the UNGA to reinforce global counter-terrorism efforts.
- ▶ **India-specific:**
 - **National Investigation Agency:** Investigates and prosecutes terrorism-related offenses.
 - **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act:** Strengthens legal provisions to combat terrorism.
 - **National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID):** Enhances intelligence sharing and coordination.
 - **National Security Guard:** Special forces for counter-terrorism operations.

■ **Challenges Related to Terrorism**

- ▶ **Lack of a Global Definition:** The absence of a universally accepted definition of terrorism hampers efforts to classify activities and take collective action.
- ▶ **Expanding Terrorism Networks:** Terrorists use the internet to spread propaganda and recruit members.
- ▶ **Terror Financing:** Criminals launder trillions of dollars annually, often using charities and alternative remittance systems to fund terrorism.
- ▶ **Cyber Attacks:** Increasing digital connectivity exposes vulnerabilities to cyber attacks by terrorists.

■ **Way Forward**

- ▶ **International Cooperation:** The global community must overcome political differences, establish a universal definition of terrorism, and impose sanctions on state sponsors of terrorism.
- ▶ **Enhancing National Security:** Strengthen military specializations and intelligence-sharing to safeguard against cross-border terrorist threats.
- ▶ **Curbing Terror Financing:** Monitor cross-border transactions, track networks, and enhance cooperation among law enforcement agencies.
- ▶ **Robust Cyber-Defence Mechanism:** Develop a multi-layered cyber defence strategy to combat sophisticated threats from malicious actors.

PRACTISE QUESTION

Q. Critically analyse India's contributions to the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Trust Fund (UNCTTF) and its impact on global counter-terrorism efforts.

6. NATO (75TH ANNIVERSARY)

CONTEXT: On April 4th, NATO celebrated the 75th anniversary of its establishment.

▣ What is NATO?

- ▶ The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is an intergovernmental military alliance formed in 1949.
- ▶ Initially established to provide collective defence against Soviet aggression during the Cold War, NATO has since evolved to address a range of security challenges.

▣ History:

- ▶ **Formation:** NATO was established on April 4, 1949, with the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty in Washington, D.C. by 12 founding member countries from Europe and North America.
- ▶ **Cold War Era:** Served as a deterrent against Soviet expansion, with significant military support from the US to European allies.
- ▶ **Post-Cold War:** Expanded its focus to include crisis management, conflict prevention, and cooperative security efforts.

▣ Membership:

- ▶ **Original Members:** Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
- ▶ **Expansion:** NATO currently consists of 32 member countries.

▣ Mission and Objectives:

- ▶ **Collective Defence:** As outlined in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, an attack on one member is considered an attack on all, prompting a collective response.
- ▶ **Crisis Management:** Involves conflict prevention, peacekeeping, and stabilization efforts globally.

▣ Structure:

- ▶ **Political Leadership:** The North Atlantic Council (NAC) is NATO's principal political decision-making body, composed of ambassadors from all member countries.
- ▶ **Military Command Structure:** Includes Strategic Commands (e.g., Allied Command Operations) responsible for operational planning and execution, as well as Regional Commands and Force Headquarters.
- ▶ **Integrated Military Forces:** Allows member countries to contribute personnel and assets to collective defence efforts under NATO command.

▣ Various Concerns Related to NATO's Functioning: Unrestrained Offensive:

- ▶ Originally created for defence, NATO has engaged in over 200 military conflicts, including significant interventions in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Asia.

▣ Misadventures in Various Regions:

- ▶ Notable interventions include the bombing of Yugoslavia, the invasion of Iraq, destabilization of Libya, military interference in Syria, and the complex situation in Afghanistan.

▣ Provoking Russia-Ukraine War:

- ▶ NATO's expansion and strategic moves in Ukraine are seen as provocative, contributing to heightened tensions with Russia.

❑ **Maintaining Western Hegemony:**

- Critics argue that NATO's actions serve to maintain Western dominance, often under the guise of promoting democracy and human rights.

❑ **Unwarranted Expansion:**

- NATO's expansion into new regions, including Africa, Asia, and Latin America, is seen as an attempt to extend its influence and create new alliances.

❑ **Capitalizing on Threats in The Indo-Pacific:**

- NATO's growing interest in the Indo-Pacific, through alliances like AUKUS and partnerships with countries like Japan and South Korea, is viewed as an expansion of its strategic reach.

❑ **Successes and Failures of NATO Grouping: Successes:**

- **The Cold War:** Played a crucial role in containing Soviet expansion and maintaining peace.
- **Modern Day Protection:** Continues to provide collective security and has built a global network of partnerships.
- **Humanitarian Aid to Ukraine:** NATO members have provided significant support to Ukraine in response to the Russian invasion.

❑ **Failures:**

- **Funding Issues:** Many NATO members fail to meet the agreed defence spending target of 2% of GDP, with the US covering a significant portion of the alliance's budget.
- **Afghanistan:** The withdrawal of NATO and US troops led to the rapid fall of the Afghan government.
- **Right-Wing Nationalism:** Growing nationalism in Europe poses a challenge to NATO's unity.
- **Russian Aggression:** NATO's eastward expansion has increased tensions with Russia, contributing to the current conflict in Ukraine.

❑ **Reforms Required to Make NATO More Effective and Efficient:**

- **Enhancing Quality, Coherence, and Timeliness of Advice:** Strengthen policy committees and improve coordination.
- **Non-Military Dimension:** Integrate civil expertise and capacity in operational engagements.
- **Organisational Cohesion and Internal Synergy:** Streamline NATO bodies and enhance transparency.
- **Inclusive and United Alliance:** Ensure structures and procedures foster allied unity and cohesion.
- **Focus on Non-Traditional Threats:** Adapt to address terrorism, cyber-attacks, disinformation, and supply chain security.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. Critically assess NATO's evolution over the past 75 years, highlighting its key successes and failures.

7. UNSC AND G4

CONTEXT: India, participating in the Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council Reform, has presented a detailed model on behalf of the G4 nations (Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan) for United Nations Security Council (UNSC) reform.

❑ Key Features of the G4 Proposed Model:

- **Addressing Under-representation:** The model highlights the significant under-representation of key regions in the Council's current composition, which hampers its legitimacy and effectiveness.
- **Membership Expansion:** The G4 model proposes increasing the Security Council's membership from 15 to 25-26 members. This includes adding six permanent and four or five non-permanent members.
- **Flexibility on Veto:** The G4 model offers flexibility on the veto issue. New permanent members would refrain from exercising the veto until a decision on the matter is taken during a review process, demonstrating a willingness to engage in constructive negotiations.
- **Democratic and Inclusive Election:** The proposal emphasizes that the decision on which member states will occupy the new permanent seats will be made through a democratic and inclusive election by the UN General Assembly.

Understanding the United Nations Security Council:

- The United Nations Security Council, established under the UN Charter in 1945, is one of the UN's six principal organs.
- It comprises 15 members, including five permanent members (P5) and ten non-permanent members elected for two-year terms.
- The permanent members are the United States, Russian Federation, France, China, and the United Kingdom.

❑ Why Does the UN Security Council Need to be Reformed?

- **Representation and Legitimacy:** The Security Council's decisions, which are binding and impactful on all member states, require authority and legitimacy. This necessitates a representation that reflects the current global landscape.
- **Outdated Composition:** The current composition, based on the geopolitical situation of 1945, no longer accurately represents today's world. With 142 new countries joining the United Nations since its inception, regions like Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean lack adequate representation.
- **Recognition of Contributions:** The UN Charter recognizes the substantial contributions of certain countries to the organization, underscoring the candidacy of nations like India, Germany, and Japan for new permanent seats.
- **Risk of Alternative Decision-Making Forums:** Without reform, there's a risk that decision-making processes could shift to alternative forums, potentially diluting the Security Council's effectiveness.
- **Misuse of Veto Power:** The use of veto power has faced criticism for being undemocratic and hindering essential decisions if they conflict with the interests of any P-5 members. In today's global security landscape, exclusive decision-making frameworks are seen as unsuitable.

❑ Way Forward:

- **Engagement and Consensus Building:** Fostering inclusive dialogues among member states, focusing on perspectives from underrepresented regions like Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean.
- **Amending the UN Charter:** Encourage cooperation among all stakeholders, including the five permanent members, to facilitate the ratification process and ensure the amended Charter reflects contemporary global realities.
- **Addressing Veto Power:** Explore avenues for reforming the use of veto power, considering proposals that balance the need for decisive action with concerns about fairness and inclusivity.
- **Strengthening Council Effectiveness:** Enhance the Council's capacity to respond swiftly to emerging global challenges, promoting cooperation with other UN bodies, regional organizations, and relevant stakeholders.

PRACTISE QUESTION

Q. Discuss the key features and significance of the G4 model for United Nations Security Council (UNSC) reform proposed by India. Analyse the challenges and procedural complexities involved in implementing such reforms.

8. INDIA-EFTA DEAL

CONTEXT: India recently signed a Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) with the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) after 15 years of negotiations. The EFTA comprises four non-EU countries: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland.

▢ What is the European Free Trade Association (EFTA)?

- ▶ The European Free Trade Association (EFTA) is an intergovernmental organization established to promote free trade and economic integration among its four member states—Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland—and their global trading partners.

▢ Main Tasks of the Association:

- ▶ Maintaining and developing the EFTA Convention, which regulates economic relations among the four EFTA states.
- ▶ Managing the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA Agreement), which includes three EFTA states—Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway—and the EU in a single market, also known as the “Internal Market.”
- ▶ Developing EFTA’s global network of free trade agreements.

▢ India and EFTA:

- ▶ In 2022-23, India’s exports to EFTA countries were USD 1.92 billion, while imports stood at USD 16.74 billion.
- ▶ Bilateral trade between India and EFTA totaled USD 18.65 billion in 2022-23.
- ▶ Switzerland is India’s largest trading partner within EFTA, followed by Norway.
- ▶ India has a trade deficit with Switzerland, largely due to gold imports.
- ▶ India signed the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) with EFTA in March 2024.

▢ What is the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA)?

- ▶ TEPA aims to create opportunities for trade and investment by eliminating or reducing tariffs and non-tariff barriers on a wide range of products.
- ▶ It seeks to ensure fair and transparent market access conditions for service providers and investors, and enhance cooperation on intellectual property rights protection and enforcement.
- ▶ TEPA aims to facilitate trade procedures and customs cooperation, along with effective mechanisms for dispute resolution.

▢ Key Highlights of the Agreement:

- ▶ EFTA commits to promoting investments to increase foreign direct investment (FDI) stock by USD 100 billion in India over the next 15 years, generating 1 million direct employment opportunities.
- ▶ EFTA offers 92.2% of its tariff lines covering 99.6% of India’s exports, while India offers 82.7% of its tariff lines covering 95.3% of EFTA’s exports, mainly gold.
- ▶ Provisions include mutual recognition agreements in professional services like nursing, chartered accountancy, and architecture.

▢ Why Does the India-EFTA Deal Hold Significance?

- ▶ **Economic Growth and Job Creation:**
 - **Investment Boost:** The anticipated USD 100 billion in FDI from EFTA countries is crucial for India’s infrastructure development, technological advancement, and job creation. TEPA supports the “Make in India” and *Atmanirbhar Bharat* initiatives by encouraging domestic manufacturing in key sectors.

- **Trade Expansion:** TEPA is expected to boost services exports in sectors like IT, business services, education, and audiovisual services.
- **Market Access:** The agreement will allow Indian consumers access to high-quality Swiss products like watches and chocolates at lower prices.

▢ **Strategic and Technological Benefits:**

- **Geopolitical Significance:** Strengthens India's economic ties with Europe, fostering a multipolar global trade landscape.
- **Knowledge Sharing and Innovation:** Promotes knowledge exchange and joint research ventures, accelerating India's technological development.
- **Setting a Precedent:** Successful implementation of TEPA can serve as a model for future trade agreements with other European nations and potentially the EU.
- **Long-Term Benefits Beyond Just Trade:**
 - **Streamlined Processes:** Addresses tariffs and areas like IPR, services trade, and government procurement, fostering a stronger economic partnership.
 - **Sustainable Development:** Incorporates provisions for promoting sustainable development practices, aligning with global sustainability goals.

▢ **What are the Key Issues in the India-EFTA Agreement?**

- **Exclusion from FTA:** Sensitive sectors like agriculture and dairy are excluded from significant tariff reductions, potentially limiting benefits for some EFTA exporters.
- **The USD 100-Million Legal Commitment:** If the USD 100-billion investment commitment is not met, India can "re-balance or suspend" duty concessions to EFTA countries.
- **Data Exclusivity:** Proposals for data exclusivity could delay generic medicine manufacturing, impacting access to affordable healthcare.
- **Difference in Income Levels:** The disparity in per capita incomes between India and EFTA countries needs consideration to ensure equitable opportunities.
- **Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs):** Inconsistencies in product standards and technical regulations can create hurdles for businesses.
- **Domestic Resistance:** Some Indian sectors may express concerns about job losses or unfair competition due to increased EFTA imports.

▢ **What should be the Way Forward to Ensure the Success of The India-EFTA Deal?**

- **Addressing Asymmetries**
 - **Investment Protection:** Include provisions for investment protection to ensure a conducive environment for businesses.
 - **Phased Reductions:** Consider phased tariff reductions for sensitive sectors, allowing domestic producers time to adjust.
 - **Compensation Packages:** Provide tailored compensation packages for affected industries to ease concerns.
 - **Dispute Resolution Mechanism:** Establish an effective dispute resolution mechanism to address trade-related disputes.

▢ **Bridging the Regulatory Gap**

- **Reduce Non-Tariff Barriers:** Efforts should be made to reduce NTBs like technical regulations and customs procedures.
- **Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs):** Establish MRAs for specific product categories to ensure mutual acceptance of standards.

- ▶ **Joint Technical Committees:** Form joint committees to harmonize technical regulations and promote consistency.
- ▶ **Building Capacity-**
- ▶ **Training and Skill Development:** Invest in training programs for customs officials and businesses to ensure smooth implementation.
- ▶ **Infrastructure Upgrade:** Upgrade customs infrastructure and logistics networks to handle increased trade volumes efficiently.

▢ **Fostering Collaboration:**

- ▶ **Regular Stakeholder Dialogues:**
 - Maintain regular dialogues between governments, businesses, and civil society to address concerns and ensure transparency.

▢ **Knowledge Sharing Programs:**

- ▶ Encourage knowledge exchange in areas like best practices and technological advancements.

PRACTISE QUESTION:

Q. Discuss the significance of India's recent Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) with the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). What are the potential benefits and challenges of this agreement for both parties?

9. RAISINA DIALOGUE 2024

▢ **Why in News?**

- ▶ The 9th edition of the Raisina Dialogue took place in New Delhi, with over 2,500 participants from approximately 115 countries attending the conference in person.

▢ **What is Raisina Dialogue?**

- ▶ The Raisina Dialogue is an annual conference on geopolitics and geoeconomics, which aims to address the most challenging issues faced by the world.
- ▶ It is modelled after the Shangri-La Dialogue.
- ▶ The Dialogue serves as a key element of India's "intelligence diplomacy," an essential component of the national security framework alongside the diplomatic corps and armed forces.
- ▶ Held in New Delhi, the conference attracts attendees from political, business, media, and civil society backgrounds.

▢ **Organization:**

- ▶ The conference is structured as a multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral discussion, involving heads of state, cabinet ministers, local government officials, and thought leaders from the private sector, media, and academia.
- ▶ It is hosted by the Delhi-based think tank Observer Research Foundation (ORF) in partnership with the Ministry of External Affairs.
- ▶ **2024 Theme and Thematic Pillars:** The theme for 2024 is "Chaturanga: Conflict, Contest, Cooperate, Create." Participants engaged with each other over six thematic pillars:
 - ▶ Tech Frontiers: Regulations & Realities
 - ▶ Peace with the Planet: Invest & Innovate
 - ▶ War & Peace: Armouries & Asymmetries
 - ▶ Decolonising Multilateralism: Institutions & Inclusion

- ▶ The Post 2030 Agenda: People & Progress
- ▶ Defending Democracy: Society & Sovereignty

▢ **Similar Dialogues around the World:**

- ▶ **Munich Security Conference (MSC):** Held annually in Munich, Germany, focusing on international security policy.
- ▶ **Shangri-La Dialogue:** Organized by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) and held annually in Singapore, focusing on security issues in the Asia-Pacific region.
- ▶ **Oslo Freedom Forum:** An annual conference focused on human rights, democracy, and freedom, bringing together activists, journalists, and policymakers.

▢ **What are the Key Takeaways of Raisina Dialogue 2024?**

- ▶ **Geopolitical Shifts:** Participants discussed ongoing geopolitical shifts, including evolving power dynamics among major players like the United States, China, Russia, and European countries. These discussions focused on how nations are adapting their strategies and alliances in response to new challenges and opportunities.
- ▶ **India as a Bridging Power:** India's External Affairs Minister described India as a "bridging power," seeking common ground through a "multi-vector" policy and playing the role of a "Vishwamitra" or friend of the world.
- ▶ **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor:** Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis highlighted the importance of connectivity projects like the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor.
- ▶ **Baltic-Nordic Forum:** The presence of ministers from Central and Eastern Europe, including the Baltic-Nordic forum, marked a new diplomatic outreach for India, aiming to establish trade agreements and investment ties with this economically competitive region.
- ▶ **Global Conflicts:** A significant portion of the dialogue focused on global conflicts, with European dignitaries bringing attention to the Russian war in Ukraine. Discussions on military and naval strategy emphasized the need to handle an aggressive China, including "grey warfare" strategies. European ministers urged India to reconsider its trade and ties with Russia and to support Ukraine's sovereignty. They also encouraged India to join a "Peace Conference" in Switzerland, requested by Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky.
- ▶ **Regional Security Concerns:** The conference addressed various regional security concerns, including tensions in the Indo-Pacific, Middle East, and Eastern Europe. Participants discussed conflict resolution strategies, peace-building efforts, and managing regional rivalries.
- ▶ **Technology and Innovation:** The role of technology and innovation in shaping geopolitics and global governance was a significant theme. Discussions covered topics like cybersecurity, digital transformation, artificial intelligence, and their implications for national security and international relations.

PRACTISE QUESTION:

Q. Discuss the significance of the Raisina Dialogue in shaping India's geopolitical and geoeconomic strategies.

10. UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAIN FORUM

CONTEXT: The inaugural United Nations Global Supply Chain Forum (UNGSCF), hosted by UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Government of Barbados, recently addressed critical issues and launched initiatives to mitigate global supply chain disruptions.

▢ Key Issues Highlighted at the UNGSCF:

- **Trade Volatility and Supply Chain Resilience:** The forum stressed the urgency of making global supply chains more resilient and inclusive due to heightened volatility in global trade.
- **Increased Sea Time and Emissions:** Global disruptions have led to longer sea times for ships and higher greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Climate Change and Geopolitical Tensions:** The compounded effects of climate change, geopolitical tensions, and the Covid-19 pandemic on supply chains were a focal point.
- **Importance of Ports:** Ports were underscored as vital for maintaining global value chains through technology and sustainable practices, with the Port of Bridgetown in Barbados showcased as a model for other Small Island Developing States (SIDS).
- **Reducing Carbon Emissions:** Challenges in reducing carbon emissions in global shipping, particularly for developing countries with renewable energy resources, were explored.
- **Manifesto for Sustainable Transport:** The “Manifesto for Intermodal, Low-Carbon, Efficient, and Resilient Freight Transport and Logistics” was launched, advocating for zero-emission fuels, optimized logistics, and sustainable value chains to keep global warming below 1.5°C.
- **Climate Change Risks for SIDS:** SIDS face heightened risks from climate change impacts on transport infrastructure, necessitating improvements in multimodal transport networks and customs procedures.
- **Funding for Resilience and Sustainability:** Ministers from SIDS called for international financial institutions and donor countries to fund projects promoting resilience and sustainability in transport and logistics sectors.
- **Blockchain and Advanced Customs Automation:** The importance of blockchain-enabled traceability and advanced customs automation for optimizing trade facilitation and enhancing transparency was highlighted.
- **Electronic Single Window for Trade:** UNCTAD presented guidelines for an electronic single window for trade to streamline processes.
- **New Trade-and-Transport Dataset:** A comprehensive Trade-and-Transport Dataset developed with the World Bank was launched, covering data on over 100 commodities and various transport modes to enhance understanding and optimization of global trade flows.

UNCTAD:

- The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) is a permanent intergovernmental body established in 1964, headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. It aims to promote sustainable development, particularly in developing countries, through international trade, investment, finance, and technology transfer.

Supply Chain Resilience for India About Supply Chain Resilience

- In the context of international trade, supply chain resilience ensures that a country diversifies its supply risk across multiple nations instead of relying on just one or a few. Unexpected events, whether natural disasters or human-caused issues, can disrupt or halt trade from specific countries, negatively affecting dependent economies.

▢ Need for Supply Chain Resilience

- **Covid-19 Realisation:** The pandemic underscored the risks of dependence on a single nation for supplies, with assembly lines heavily reliant on countries like China.
- **USA-China Trade Tensions:** Trade disputes between the US and China have escalated global supply chain issues due to tariff sanctions.
- **India as an Emerging Supply Hub:** With businesses increasingly viewing India as a potential supply chain hub, robust supply chain systems are needed.

- ▶ **Chinese Imports:** India heavily depends on China for imports, such as Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients and electronics, making supply chain resilience critical.

■ **Initiatives for Supply Chain Resilience**

- ▶ **Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI):** Aims to enhance supply chain resilience for sustainable growth in the Indo-Pacific region.
- ▶ **India-Japan Semiconductor Partnership:** The Union Cabinet approved a Memorandum of Cooperation to develop a semiconductor supply chain partnership with Japan.
- ▶ **G-7 Summit Interventions:** India emphasized enhancing supply chain resilience and provided several suggestions on the topic.
- ▶ **Critical Mineral Acquisition in Africa:** India is stepping up its efforts to secure critical minerals in Africa, challenging China's dominance in the region.

Other National Initiatives

- PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan
- National Logistics Policy (2022)
- Atmanirbhar Bharat Initiative
- Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Schemes
- Liberalized FDI Policy

■ **Suggestions for Improving Supply Chain Resilience in India**

- ▶ **Diversification of Suppliers and Manufacturing Base:** Reduce dependence on a single source for raw materials, components, or finished goods by encouraging domestic manufacturing and diversifying import sources.
- ▶ **Integration of MSMEs in Global Value Chains (GVCs):** Strengthen regional innovation systems and establish multipurpose science and technology commissions in SME clusters.
- ▶ **Increase Share of Indian Fleet:** Enhance the capacity of the Indian fleet to carry a larger share of India's EXIM trade.
- ▶ **Share in Global Trade:** Gradually increase India's share in world exports of goods and services.
- ▶ **Investment in Logistics Infrastructure:** Upgrade transportation networks, including roads, railways, waterways, and ports, to reduce logistics costs.
- ▶ **Boosting Domestic Production of Critical Inputs:** Prioritize domestic production of heavily imported critical raw materials and components, supported by incentives.
- ▶ **Strengthening Digital Integration:** Promote digitalization across the supply chain for improved transparency, visibility, and risk management, including robust cybersecurity measures and shared data platforms.

PRACTISE QUESTION:

- Q. Critically analyse the key issues and initiatives discussed at the inaugural United Nations Global Supply Chain Forum (UNGSCF) and their implications for global trade and India.**



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2

EFFECT OF POLICIES AND POLITICS OF DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES ON INDIA'S INTERESTS

1. INDIA-RUSSIA RELATIONSHIP

CONTEXT: Prime Minister Modi's first bilateral visit to Russia after being sworn in, showcases the importance of India-Russia ties for India, especially in energy and defence. India and Russia have maintained a relationship for over seventy years. However, as India has expanded its global ties in a multi-polar world, its partnership with Russia has seen stagnation in some areas and decline in others.

- ▶ Defence remains the strongest aspect of their strategic alliance, with significant cooperation also in nuclear and space sectors.

▢ Significance of Russia for India

- ▶ **Critical Defence Interests:** India heavily relies on Russian and Soviet-origin defence equipment, constituting 60-70% of its arsenal. Cooperation includes joint R&D, co-development, and production of various military systems like S-400 missiles, MiG-29s, and tanks.
- ▶ India's armed forces still rely heavily on armoured divisions and 97 percent of its 3,740 tanks are Russian-made.
- ▶ The **Brahmos supersonic antiship missile**, for instance, was jointly designed by Indian and Russian engineers for the Indian armed forces and first tested in 2001.
- ▶ Russian joint ventures with India also include making
 - 35,000 Kalashnikov AK203 assault rifles for the Indian army
 - licensed production of **advanced T-90 tanks** and **Sukhoi Su-30-MKI fourth-generation** fighter jets
 - maintenance facilities for **India's MiG-29 fighter jets**
 - collaboration on making the Konkurs antitank guided missile

- ▶ **War and Oil Trade Boost:** India buys Russian oil at discounted rates, significantly impacting bilateral trade.
 - Despite the threat of even more US sanctions, Russia has become the **1 supplier of oil for India**, which in turn is the **top buyer of seaborne Russian oil**. In June, India bought a stunning 2.13 million barrels of oil per day from Russia.
 - This trade helps mitigate inflation from rising crude prices, though it creates diplomatic **challenges with Western allies** due to Russia's actions in Ukraine.

▢ Factors irritating United States in India-Russia Relations

- ▶ India continues to strengthen its trade and diplomatic relationship with the **world's most-sanctioned country**.
- ▶ India has taken a **neutral stance** regarding Ukraine.
- ▶ The **Chennai-Vladivostok maritime route** and the **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)**, are aimed at long-term integration of the Indian and Russian economies. The INSTC also brings **Iran** - another American adversary - into the mix.
- ▶ India has even defied the US to strike a 10-year deal to develop **Iran's Chabahar port**.
- ▶ India significantly boosted India-Russia cooperation in military affairs. For example, India bought the **Russian S-400 missile defense systems**.
- ▶ India and Russia are considering cooperation on numerous strategic areas such as **joint production of weapons, reciprocal access to military facilities, joint deployment of troops, warships and fighter jets**.

▢ Indo-US vs Indo-Russia Defence Deals

Aspect	Indo-US Defence Deals	Indo-Russian Defence Deals
Historical Background	Started gaining momentum post-Cold War.	Strong and longstanding since the Cold War era.
Nature of Cooperation	Emphasizes technology transfer and joint development.	Primarily involves supply of Russian equipment and technology.
Key Equipment	Includes advanced aircraft (e.g., P-8I, Apache), naval systems (e.g., drones, ships), Stryker Armoured Infantry Combat Vehicles	Includes fighter jets (e.g., Su-30MKI, MiG-29), missiles (e.g., BrahMos), tanks (e.g., T-90).
Strategic Implications	Seen as bolstering India's capabilities vis-à-vis China.	Ensures reliable supply of critical defence equipment.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

- Q. What is the significance of Indo-US defence deals over Indo-Russian defence deals? Discuss with reference to stability in the Indo-Pacific region. (2020)

PRACTICE QUESTION

- Q. "As global order crumbles, India and Russia find common ground. While the West fixates on Ukraine, India navigates its own path, seeking stability in a partnership with Moscow". Comment

2. CHABAHAR PORT

CONTEXT: India has signed a significant 10-year contract with Iran for the operation of a terminal at the strategically located Chabahar port.

▢ What is the Chabahar Port Project?

- Chabahar, meaning 'four springs' in Persian, is a deep-water port in the Sistan Baluchistan province of Iran.
- Located in the open sea, it provides secure access for large cargo ships.
- Historically described by 10th-century Iranian scholar Al Biruni as the entry point to the subcontinent, it is near the Gulf of Oman and the Strait of Hormuz.
- The port is about 550 nautical miles from Kandla port in Gujarat, India.
- Chabahar comprises two terminals: Shahid Beheshti and Shahid Kalantari. India's investment is focused on the Shahid Beheshti terminal.
- The development of the port is planned in four phases, with a final capacity of 82 million tonnes per year.

▢ Significance of Chabahar Port for India

- **Counterbalancing China's Strategy:** China's "String of Pearls" strategy involves establishing strategic facilities around India's periphery. Chabahar provides a strategic counterweight, enabling India to monitor Chinese activities and potentially disrupt its encirclement strategy.
- **Ensuring Connectivity Amid West Asian Turmoil:** Conflicts in West Asia disrupt vital maritime trade routes. Chabahar offers India an alternative, reducing dependence on chokepoints like the Strait of Hormuz.
- **Enhancing India's Role in Central Asia:** Chabahar strengthens India's position in the "New Great Game" for influence in Central Asia, allowing it to leverage economic and strategic interests.
- **Facilitating India's Extended Neighborhood Policy:** Chabahar aligns with India's policy to enhance its influence in regions beyond its immediate neighborhood, serving as a gateway to Central Asia.
- **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC):** Chabahar is a key link in the INSTC, aiming to reduce transportation time and costs for goods between India, Iran, Afghanistan, Russia, and Europe.
 - ◉ Shipments through the INSTC route take 15 days less compared to the Suez Canal route.

▢ Challenges India Faces with the Chabahar Port Project

- **India-U.S.-Iran Triangle:** U.S.-Iran tensions pose a risk of secondary sanctions on India's investments in Chabahar, impacting broader economic and strategic ties with the U.S.
- **Unstable Political Environment in Iran:** Iran's political instability and internal conflicts can disrupt project continuity. Regional instability, such as the ongoing conflict in Gaza and disruptions in the Red Sea, exacerbates these challenges.
- **Iran's Openness to China and Pakistan:** Iran's potential agreements with China and Pakistan can impact India's interests. For example, India's withdrawal from the Chabahar-Zahedan railway project in 2020 was linked to Iran's talks with China.
- **Reconciling Divergent Regional Priorities:** India's involvement in Chabahar could strain relations with regional players like Saudi Arabia and Israel, who view Iran as destabilizing.
- **Environmental Concerns:** Increased shipping traffic and potential oil spills pose environmental risks to the Gulf of Oman's delicate ecosystem.

▢ Measures to Address Issues Related to Chabahar

- **Multilateral Financing Mechanism:** India could set up a multilateral financing mechanism with like-minded countries, such as Russia or European nations, to fund Chabahar, insulating it from unilateral sanctions.

- ▶ **Regionalize the Project:** Involve regional players like Central Asian nations in Chabahar's development and operation to mitigate concerns about Iran's influence and ease tensions.
- ▶ **Green Shipping Corridor:** Position Chabahar as a pioneer in establishing a "Green Shipping Corridor" by implementing stringent environmental standards and sustainable practices.
- ▶ **Digital Silk Road:** Develop digital infrastructure and promote e-commerce through Chabahar, attracting investments from technology companies and diversifying stakeholders.
- ▶ **Soft Power Diplomacy:** Complement economic efforts with cultural exchanges, educational partnerships, and people-to-people initiatives to build goodwill and ease geopolitical tensions.

3. INDIA'S PUSH FOR TRANSNATIONAL TRANSPORT CORRIDOR

CONTEXT: From East to West, India is spearheading major transnational transport corridors that will eventually link the Atlantic to the Pacific via Asia.

▣ India's push for transnational transport corridor

- ▶ **India is making big push mainly for the following corridor:**
- ▶ **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC):** IMEC aims to connect India to Europe via the Arabian Peninsula through rail and sea links
- ▶ **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC):** INSTC spans 7,200 kilometres, encompassing ship, rail, and road routes connecting India through Iran and Central Asia to Russia.
- ▶ **India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway:** It will connect the Indian city of Moreh in Manipur to Thailand's Mae Sot via Myanmar.
- ▶ **Chennai-Vladivostok route to the East:** The corridor holds promise for India's connectivity with the Russian Far East.

▣ Need at global level:

- ▶ **Filling up infrastructure gap:** The G7 recognised this infrastructure gap in 2021 when it announced the **Build Back Better World (B3W)**. The B3W aimed to bridge the USD 40 trillion infrastructure gap in the developing world and offer an alternative to the BRI.
- ▶ **Alternate routes:** Whether Houthi attacks in the **Red Sea** or the **2021 Suez Canal blockage** that halted global shipping for six days, countries have been exploring safe and alternate routes for goods transit.
- ▶ **Need of investment:** The world is at a place now where investments are more critical than ever.

▣ Significance of these transport corridors for India

- ▶ **Strategic alliance:** These transport corridors as necessary to meet its fast-paced economic growth and as a tool to nurture strategic alliances.
- ▶ **Land-based connectivity:** There is a need for lateral "land-based" connectivity in the Indian Ocean, thus need of India-Myanmar-Thailand (IMT) trilateral highway arises.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

Q. What is the significance of Industrial Corridors in India? Identifying industrial corridors, explain their main characteristics. (2018)

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. Why India is pushing for transnational transport corridor?

4. GEOPOLITICAL IMPACT OF IRAN PRESIDENT'S DEATH

CONTEXT: The recent helicopter crash that killed Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi has sent shockwaves through the global political landscape, with profound implications for regional stability and international relations. The incident occurred amidst heightened tensions in West Asia, where Israel has been in conflict with Hamas in Gaza for seven months.

■ India's Position

- ▶ **Chabahar Port Agreement:** India recently signed a contract with Iran to operate the **Chabahar port**, aiming to enhance trade with **Central Asia**. The port's development had been delayed due to U.S. sanctions on Iran, but the recent agreement marked a significant step forward.
- ▶ **Common Concerns:** India and Iran share concerns about **Taliban's Sunni extremism** and Pakistan's role in Afghanistan. For New Delhi, Iran is a "strong regional partner" in Afghanistan.
- ▶ **Look-East Strategy:** Under President Raisi, Iran pursued a 'look east' strategy, deepening ties with Asian powers, including India. Progress on regional connectivity projects involving India, mainly the **INSTC and Chabahar port**, underscores Iran's strategic view of its relations with India.
- ▶ **Trade Relations:** In 2022-23, India's bilateral trade with Iran reached \$2.33 billion. While New Delhi's trade with Tehran had declined in recent years, it saw a 21.77% uptick in 2022-23 after Raisi came to power in 2021.

■ Implications

- ▶ **US Perspective:** US-Iran relations have been strained, particularly since the U.S. withdrew from the **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)** in 2018 and reimposed sanctions on Iran. This move led Iran to exceed the nuclear limits set by the agreement. The ongoing conflict in Gaza has further complicated **S.-Iran relations**.

■ Broader Implications:

- ▶ The death of President Raisi could lead to a period of **uncertainty and potential instability** within Iran.
- ▶ The leadership transition process will be closely watched, as it will influence **Iran's domestic policies** and its approach to **international diplomacy**.
- ▶ The new leadership's stance on key issues such as the **nuclear program**, relations with Israel, and interactions with the U.S. will be critical in shaping the future geopolitical landscape.
- ▶ The incident may prompt increased scrutiny and speculation about Iran's internal security and political dynamics.
- ▶ Any **perceived weakness or instability** could embolden adversaries and complicate **Iran's efforts to navigate the complex web of regional and international relations**.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. "Chabahar port underscores Iran's strategic view of its relations with India." Comment

5. CHENNAI-VLADIVOSTOK EASTERN MARITIME CORRIDOR

CONTEXT: Prime Minister Modi announced the commencement of the Chennai-Vladivostok Eastern Maritime Corridor during a community program in Moscow, Russia.

▢ About the Project

- ▶ The Chennai-Vladivostok Maritime route connects Chennai on **India's east coast with Vladivostok**, Russia's eastern port city, opening a plethora of opportunities for trade and investment for both countries.
- ▶ Vladivostok is the end point of the **Trans-Siberian Railway**, the fourth in terms of cargo turnover, and the first free seaport of the Far East.
- ▶ The Vladivostok-Chennai route passes through the Sea of Japan past the Korean peninsula, Taiwan and the Philippines in the South China Sea, past Singapore and through the Strait of Malacca, to emerge into the **Bay of Bengal** and then cuts across through the **Andaman and Nicobar archipelago** to Chennai.
- ▶ This sea route covers a distance of approximately 5,647 nautical miles or about 10,500 km



❑ Need of new route (to improve connectivity):

- Lack of connectivity is one of the reasons for limited trade between India and Russia, which has for the past few years hovered around the US \$12-13 billion level.
- At present, the two countries are linked through the traditional European route which passes through **Red Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Baltic Sea**.

FACT BOX

Far East

- The Far East is the easternmost part of Russia.
- The macro-region borders two oceans, the Pacific and the Arctic, and five countries — **China, Japan, Mongolia, the United States and the DPRK**.
- Located on the **Golden Horn Bay** north of North Korea and a short distance from Russia's border with China, the region extracts 98 per cent of Russian diamonds, 50 per cent of Gold, 14 per cent of Tungsten, and 40 per cent of fish and seafood and has about one-third of Russia's coal reserves.



- Operationalised in 2000, the circuitous route spans from the **Nhava Sheva Port** in Mumbai to the Port of St. Petersburg in Russia and goods take an average of 40 days to cover the distance of 8,675 nautical miles or about 16,000 km.

❑ Significance

- **Shorter route:** The **Chennai-Vladivostok corridor** is a shorter alternative to the current **Mumbai-St. Petersburg sea route**, reducing shipping distances to about 5,400 km and transport time to approximately 24 days.

- ▶ **Ideal gateway:** The strategic location of Chennai Port on the Bay of Bengal makes it an ideal gateway for trade with Southeast Asian countries like Thailand, Vietnam, and Indonesia.
- ▶ **Key commodities** such as **crude oil, coal, LPG, and various goods** are expected to benefit from faster transportation.
- ▶ **Better trade:** The trade route promises to enhance trade not only between India and Russia but also with countries like **Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Indonesia**.
- ▶ **Immense opportunities:** The **Port of Vladivostok** in Russia provides access to the resource-rich **Far East region**, offering immense opportunities for Indian businesses to tap into the market sectors like energy, mining, and technology.

▢ **Economic Impact:**

- ▶ The corridor is set to boost Chennai's economic prominence by increasing cargo traffic with Southeast Asian nations and potentially reaching landlocked Mongolia.
- ▶ It positions Chennai to become a robust economic hub similar to Mumbai.
- ▶ Russia aims to double its current trade volume with India through the Vladivostok port, currently at 150 million tonnes.

FACT BOX

International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)

- The International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and the Chennai-Vladivostok, or Eastern Maritime Corridor, would ensure transportation corridors between both the Western and Eastern coasts of India with Russia.
- The INSTC was established in September 2002 between **Iran, India and Russia**.
- The 7,200-kilometre-long multi-modal transportation corridor facilitates the movement of freight between Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, Central Asia and Europe, besides Iran and India.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

Q. Mention the significance of straits and isthmus in international trade. (2022)

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. Discuss the significance of Chennai-Vladivostok Maritime route for India.

6. GCC'S 'VISION FOR REGIONAL SECURITY'

CONTEXT: The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) announced the launch of its 'Vision for Regional Security', a new initiative formulated by the six-country bloc earlier.

▢ **Issues covered in the vision**

- ▶ There are several topics that the vision covers, outlined in 15 specific points, such as issues relating to **regional security and stability, economy and development**, as well as **climate change**.
- ▶ **Israel issue:** One geopolitical challenge that the vision seeks to resolve is **the issue of Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories**, reaffirming the GCC's commitment to the **Arab Peace Initiative** that was first endorsed by the **Arab League in 2002**, despite Bahrain and the UAE normalising relations with Israel.
 - The vision also calls for the end of Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank and notes that the conflict is a key issue destabilising the region.

- ▶ **Two-State Solution:** Among others, it calls for a **two-State solution**, the withdrawal of Israeli forces to the pre-June 1967 borders and the establishment of an **independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital**.
- ▶ **Nuclear policy:** It also addresses **nuclear non-proliferation in the region**, a long-standing issue due to Iran's nuclear programme, as well as a commitment on the right to civil nuclear use, a policy which has been sought by both the **UAE and Saudi Arabia**.
- ▶ **Other points** include **addressing cyber security issues, global energy market stability, climate change and the advancement of implementing a 'circular carbon economy' and securing water security**.
- ▶ The document has come at a time when the West Asian region is engulfed in a turmoil since the beginning of the **Israel– Hamas War** in October 2023. Its launch has provoked questions about what the security plan entails and how it will be implemented, particularly with its formation coinciding with **Israel's war on Gaza** and a spate of attacks on regional **Red Sea shipping**.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. "Despite the agreement on greater economic and political integration there have been huge divergences on the goals of the GCC and differences on regional policy." Discuss

7. VOLATILE SOUTH CHINA SEA

CONTEXT: India's Ministry of External Affairs recently expressed strong support for the Philippines in defending its national sovereignty amidst escalating tensions with China over the South China Sea.

▢ Significance of the South China Sea:

- ▶ **Strategic Location:** The South China Sea is strategically located, bordered by China and Taiwan to the north, the Indo-Chinese peninsula (including Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore) to the west, Indonesia and Brunei to the south, and the Philippines to the east (referred to as the West Philippine Sea). It connects with the East China Sea via the Taiwan Strait and with the Philippine Sea via the Luzon Strait.
- ▶ **Trade Importance:** One-third of all global shipping passes through the South China Sea. Over 64% of China's maritime trade and 55% of India's trade transit through this region, including the Malacca Strait.
- ▶ **Fishing Ground:** The South China Sea is a vital fishing ground, providing livelihood and food security for millions and supporting a diverse marine ecosystem.

Dispute:

- The core of the South China Sea dispute involves competing claims over land features such as islands and reefs, and their surrounding waters. The parties involved include China, Brunei, Taiwan, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Malaysia. China's "nine-dash line" claim covers up to 90% of the sea, leading to tensions, particularly in the Paracel and Spratly Islands.

▢ What is the Dispute in the South China Sea Region?

- ▶ The core issue in the South China Sea dispute centres around competing claims over various land features such as islands and reefs, along with the surrounding waters.
- ▶ The parties involved in these disputes include China, Brunei, Taiwan, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Malaysia.
- ▶ China's "nine-dash line" claim, which covers up to 90% of the South China Sea, has led to significant tensions.

- ▶ China has bolstered its claims by expanding islands and constructing military installations, particularly in the Paracel and Spratly Islands.
- ▶ Key contested areas in this dispute include the Spratly Islands, Paracel Islands, Pratas Islands, Natuna Islands, and Scarborough Shoal.

❑ Other Major Water Bodies Facing Territorial Disputes:

- ▶ **East China Sea:** Dispute over Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands involving China, Japan, and Taiwan.
- ▶ **Aegean Sea:** Overlapping claims between Greece and Turkey regarding resource exploration and maritime boundaries.
- ▶ **Arctic Ocean:** Claims for extended exclusive economic zones by the US, Canada, Russia, Denmark, and Norway.

Salami Slicing Technique in Maritime Disputes:

- This involves countries gradually asserting control over maritime areas through incremental actions to avoid direct confrontation and create irreversible situations. China has been accused of employing this technique in the South China Sea by building artificial islands and imposing fishing bans. Recently, Chinese coast guard ships blocked Philippine vessels at Second Thomas Shoal, escalating regional tensions.

❑ Areas of Cooperation Between India and the Philippines:

- ▶ **Diplomatic Relations:** India and the Philippines established diplomatic relations on 26th November 1949. The relationship has diversified significantly since the initiation of India's Act East Policy in 2014, expanding into political security, trade, industry, and people-to-people connections.
- ▶ **Bilateral Trade:** In 2022-23, bilateral trade between India and the Philippines crossed the USD 3 billion mark. India exports engineering goods, automobile parts, petroleum products, pharmaceuticals, bovine meat, oilseeds, tobacco, and groundnuts to the Philippines. In return, India imports electrical machinery, semiconductors, ores, copper, plastics, pearls, waste from the food industry, and animal fodder.
- ▶ **Health and Medicine:** The Philippines was the first ASEAN member to grant Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for Bharat Biotech's Covaxin. The country accounts for about 20% of India's pharmaceutical exports to ASEAN, making India its largest supplier.
- ▶ **Science and Technology:** A Bilateral Programme of Cooperation (POC) in Science and Technology was signed in October 2019, covering areas like agricultural biotechnology, material science, and ocean science. In January 2022, India signed a deal with the Philippines to supply a shore-based anti-ship variant of the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile, highlighting the global demand for India's advanced defence capabilities.

PRACTISE QUESTION

Q. Analyse the significance of India's support for the Philippines amidst the South China Sea dispute in the CONTEXT of their approaching 75th year of diplomatic relations.

8. INDUS X SUMMIT

CONTEXT: The second India-U.S. Defence Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X) Summit took place in New Delhi, with participation from the United States Department of Defence (DoD) and the Indian Ministry of Defence (MoD).

❑ What are the Key Highlights of the Second INDUS-X Summit?

➤ Focus on Indo-Pacific Security:

- The summit underscored the critical roles of India and the U.S. as key partners in ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific region.
- Discussions centered on co-producing advanced military capabilities, strengthening defence supply chains, and enhancing interoperability to address shared security challenges.

❑ Promoting Innovation and Collaboration:

- The event emphasized fostering innovation in defence technologies through collaboration between Indian and American industries.
- It provided a platform for startups and MSMEs in the defence sector to engage with established players, facilitating knowledge exchange and partnerships.

❑ Strengthening Defence Partnership:

- The summit highlighted the robust defence partnership between India and the U.S., referencing initiatives like the Initiatives on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET) aimed at fostering innovation across key sectors, including defence.

❑ Emphasis on Technological Innovation:

- The summit highlighted the crucial role of technological innovation in defence within the broader context of the U.S.-India Strategic Partnership, fostering collective progress for defence industries across borders.
- **Joint IMPACT Challenges:** The summit introduced Joint IMPACT Challenges, aiming to advance defence and aerospace co-development and co-production collaboratively, involving startups in pioneering solutions.

❑ Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX)

- Launched in 2018, iDEX is the flagship scheme of the Ministry of Defence, funded and managed by the Defence Innovation Organization (DIO).
- It aims to foster innovation and technology development in the defence and aerospace sectors, providing grants, funding, and support for research and development projects.
- iDEX is currently engaged with around 400+ startups and MSMEs and has been recognized as a game-changer in the defence ecosystem, receiving the PM Award for Innovation in the defence sector.

❑ The US-India Business Council (USIBC)

- It aims to foster bilateral trade between India and the U.S., bridging industry and government for long-term commercial partnerships, job creation, and global economic growth.

❑ What are the Key Developments in India-US Defence Cooperation?

➤ Framework and Partnership Renewal:

- The foundation of India-US defence cooperation lies in the “New Framework for India-US Defence Cooperation,” renewed for a decade in 2015.
- In 2016, the partnership was upgraded to a Major Defence Partnership (MDP).
- India was elevated to Tier-1 status under the US Department of Commerce’s Strategic Trade Authorization license exception in July 2018.

➤ Institutionalised Dialogue Mechanisms:

- The 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue, involving the Ministers of External Affairs and Defence from both nations and their US counterparts, serves as the apex platform for addressing political, military, and strategic issues.
- The 5th Edition of the India-US 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue took place in November 2023 in New Delhi.

- ▶ **Defence Policy Group (DPG):**
 - Led by the Defence Secretary and Under Secretary of Defence (Policy), the DPG facilitates a comprehensive review of defence dialogues and mechanisms.
 - The 17th DPG convened in Washington D.C. in May 2023.
- ▶ **Defence Procurements and Platforms:**
 - Defence procurements from the US are increasing, amounting to nearly USD 20 billion.
 - Key US-origin platforms in use by India include Apache, Chinook, MH60R helicopters, and P8I aircraft.
 - The US State Department approved a possible foreign military sale of 31 MQ-9B Sky Guardian to India.
- ▶ **Important Defence Agreements:**
 - Significant agreements include the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (2016), Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (2018), Industrial Security Agreement (2019), Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (2020), and Memorandum of Intent for Defence Innovation Cooperation (2018).
- ▶ **Military-to-Military Exchanges:**
 - High-level visits, exercises, training courses, and service-specific bilateral mechanisms facilitate military-to-military exchanges.
 - India participates in a growing number of military exercises with the US, including Yudh Abhyas, Vajra Prahar, Malabar etc.

PRACTISE QUESTION

Q. Discuss the significance of the India-U.S. Defence Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X) Summit and its implications for Indo-Pacific security and technological innovation.

9. NORTHERN IRELAND CONFLICT

CONTEXT: Northern Ireland witnessed a historic political shift as a pro-Irish unity politician became the first Nationalist First Minister amid a prolonged political deadlock, reflecting the region's complex divisions.

■ How did Northern Ireland Come into Being?

- ▶ **The Troubles:**
 - Northern Ireland experienced a 30-year conflict known as 'The Troubles' (1968-1998), characterized by violent clashes between Republicans and Unionists, resulting in over 3,500 deaths.
 - The conflict had a religious dimension, with Republicans predominantly Catholic and Unionists mostly Protestant. Historically, Northern Ireland was part of the Ulster province, north of modern-day Ireland.
- ▶ **Conflict Between Protestants and Irish Catholics:**
 - The roots of the Protestant-Catholic conflict date back to 1609, when King James I initiated a migration policy encouraging English and Scottish people to settle in Ulster.
 - This period coincided with the broader Protestant-Catholic religious wars in Europe, intensifying sectarian divides in Ulster.

■ Resistance Against Colonial English Rule:

- ▶ Resistance against English colonial rule, particularly after the devastating Potato Famine of 1845, which killed over a million Irish people, deepened sectarian differences.

- ▶ In 1916, during World War I, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) led an uprising against English rule.
- ▶ The subsequent Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 granted Ireland independence but partitioned it, leaving six Protestant-majority counties in Ulster as Northern Ireland within the UK.

▢ What is the Background of Political Deadlock in Northern Ireland?

- ▶ The political deadlock in Northern Ireland arose from disagreements over border controls between Britain and the island of Ireland following Brexit.
- ▶ When the UK left the EU, Northern Ireland, as part of the UK, became the only province with a land border with an EU member state, the Republic of Ireland.
- ▶ To avoid a hard border, the Northern Ireland Protocol was implemented, creating a sea border between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK.
- ▶ This arrangement was contentious, particularly for the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), which argued it undermined Northern Ireland's status within the UK and violated the Good Friday Agreement.
- ▶ The DUP's objections led to their withdrawal from the power-sharing government.
- ▶ The deadlock was resolved through renegotiations of the border controls and assurances regarding Northern Ireland's status within the UK, leading to the DUP's return to government.
- ▶ What is the Good Friday Agreement?
- ▶ The Good Friday Agreement, or Belfast Agreement, signed on April 10, 1998, aimed to end decades of conflict known as 'The Troubles' in Northern Ireland.

▢ Key Provisions:

- ▶ **Power Sharing:** Establishment of a devolved government with power shared between Unionists and Republicans to ensure representation for both communities.
- ▶ **Consent Principle:** Northern Ireland's status would not change without the consent of its majority population, allowing for potential reunification with Ireland through a referendum.
- ▶ **Human Rights:** Emphasis on human rights and equality for all citizens of Northern Ireland.
- ▶ **Decommissioning of Weapons:** Process for the disarmament of paramilitary groups, occurring alongside other agreement implementations.
- ▶ **Cross-Border Cooperation:** Encouragement of cooperation between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, as well as between the UK and Ireland, while respecting sovereignty and territorial integrity.

▢ What are the Key Facts About Northern Ireland?

- ▶ Situated in the northeastern part of the island of Ireland, sharing borders with the Republic of Ireland and separated by sea channels from England, Wales, and Scotland.
- ▶ **Capital and Major Cities:** Belfast is the capital, with other major cities including Londonderry (Derry) and Armagh.
- ▶ **Cultural Contributions:** Notable cultural figures include poet Seamus Heaney and musician Van Morrison.

PRACTISE QUESTION

Q. Discuss the historical background and key provisions of the Good Friday Agreement. How has this agreement influenced the political and social landscape of Northern Ireland?

10. INDIA-UAE RELATIONS

CONTEXT: Recently, India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) signed eight agreements to enhance cooperation in key areas such as investments, electricity trade, and digital payment platforms.

❑ What are the Key Highlights of the Pact Signed Between India and UAE?

- **Interlinking of UPI and AANI:** India and UAE agreed to interlink their digital payment platforms, UPI (Unified Payments Interface) and AANI, to facilitate seamless cross-border transactions and enhance financial connectivity.
- **Interlinking Domestic Debit/Credit Cards (RuPay and JAYWAN):** The pact includes the interlinking of India's RuPay and UAE's JAYWAN cards, aiming to enhance the acceptance of RuPay cards in the UAE.

❑ Major developments

- **Bilateral Investment Treaty:** Both countries signed a Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) to promote investments. In 2022-2023, UAE was the fourth largest FDI investor in India, committing to invest USD 75 billion in India's infrastructure sector.
- **Intergovernmental Framework Agreement on India-Middle East Economic Corridor (IMEC):** The IMEC aims to enhance India-UAE cooperation and regional connectivity, announced during the G20 leaders' summit in New Delhi in September 2023.
- **Energy Cooperation:** UAE is a major source of crude and LPG for India, and now India is entering long-term LNG contracts with UAE.
- **Cultural Cooperation:** A protocol for cooperation between the National Archives of both countries was signed, aimed at restoring and preserving archival materials and supporting the **Maritime Heritage Complex at Lothal, Gujarat**.
- **Gratitude for BAPS Temple Construction:** India thanked the UAE for supporting the construction of the **BAPS Temple in Abu Dhabi**, highlighting its significance as a symbol of UAE-India friendship and cultural bonds.

❑ What are the Challenges in India-UAE Relations?

- **Trade Barriers Impacting Indian Exports:** Non-tariff barriers (NTBs) like Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) have hindered Indian exports, especially in sectors such as poultry, meat, and processed foods.
- **Chinese Economic Influence in the UAE:** China's "Cheque Book Diplomacy" has overshadowed Indian economic endeavors in the UAE and the broader Middle East.
- **Challenges of the Kafala System:** The Kafala system in the UAE, which grants employers considerable power over immigrant labourers, presents significant human rights concerns.
- **Concerns Over UAE's Financial Support to Pakistan:** The UAE's financial aid to Pakistan raises apprehensions about the potential misuse of these funds, considering Pakistan's history of sponsoring cross-border terrorism against India.
- **Diplomatic Balancing Act Amid Regional Conflicts:** India finds itself in a delicate diplomatic position due to the ongoing conflict between Iran and Arab nations, notably the UAE, and the recent outbreak of war between Israel and Hamas.

11. RED SEA CRISES

CONTEXT: India's oil import dynamics are undergoing significant shifts due to recent turmoil in the Red Sea, which has affected the economic viability of sourcing crude from the United States. Consequently, India is reverting to traditional suppliers in the Persian Gulf.

❑ Why is India Shifting its Oil Imports Away from the US?

- **US as a Major Supplier:** For a considerable time, the US has been among India's top five crude suppliers, with Indian refiners procuring an average of 205,000 barrels per day (bpd) of crude in 2023.

- **Recent Decline:** Recent data shows that Indian refiners did not acquire any US crude in January 2024, primarily due to escalated freight rates from Red Sea disruptions, making US crude economically unviable for Indian refiners.
- **Impact of Red Sea Turmoil:** The turmoil, highlighted by incidents like the drone attack on MV Chem Pluto off Gujarat's coast, underscores the vulnerabilities and complexities in global oil logistics.

■ India's Top Crude-Oil Suppliers

- **Current Status:** India, the third-largest consumer of oil globally, imports 85% of its oil needs. As domestic production declines, this dependency is expected to rise.
- **Future Projections:** India is projected to overtake China as the biggest driver of global oil demand by 2027, with diesel accounting for almost half of this growth.
- **Major Suppliers:**
 - **Russia:** Currently, the largest supplier to India, with imports reaching 1.53 million bpd in January 2024. India has capitalized on discounted Russian oil following Western sanctions due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict.
 - **Iraq:** The second-largest supplier, with imports of 1.19 million bpd, reflecting India's efforts to diversify its procurement channels.
 - **Saudi Arabia:** The third-largest supplier, with 690,172 bpd, maintaining a key role in India's energy security.
 - **UAE:** Oil imports surged by 81% in January 2024, reaching 326,500 bpd, making Abu Dhabi the fourth-largest supplier.

■ Government Initiatives to Control Surging Oil Demands

- **Managing Demand:**
 - **Promoting Energy Efficiency:** Initiatives like the Perform, Achieve and Trade (PAT) scheme and star labelling for appliances help reduce energy consumption.
 - **Fuel Diversification:** Programs like the Ethanol Blending Program (EBP) aim for 20% ethanol blending with petrol by 2025, alongside promoting Compressed Natural Gas (CNG).
 - **Electric Mobility:** The FAME scheme supports the electrification of public and shared transportation, with targets for significant EV penetration by 2030.
- **Boosting Domestic Production:**
 - **Attractive Exploration Policies:** Policies like the Production Sharing Contract (PSC) regime, Discovered Small Field Policy, and Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP) attract investments in oil and gas exploration.
 - **Technological Advancements:** ONGC's investment in Enhanced Oil Recovery (EOR) techniques aims to extract more oil from existing fields.

PRACTICE QUESTION

- Q. "Examine the recent shifts in India's oil import strategy in response to geopolitical disruptions in the Red Sea. Discuss the implications for India's energy security and the steps taken by the Indian government to manage oil demand and boost domestic production."

12. 19TH NAM SUMMIT

CONTEXT: The 19th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was held in Kampala, Uganda, with the theme "Deepening Cooperation for Shared Global Affluence."

❑ **Kampala Declaration:**

- The summit adopted the Kampala Declaration, condemning Israeli military aggression and calling for the implementation of the UN Security Council resolution to allow humanitarian aid into the besieged Gaza Strip.

❑ **Historical Background of NAM:**

- The NAM was established in 1961 in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, initiated by five leaders of newly independent countries: Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia, Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Sukarno of Indonesia, and Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana.
- It was formed during the Cold War as an organization of states that sought to remain independent or neutral rather than aligning with either the United States or the Soviet Union.

❑ **Current Status of NAM:**

- Presently, the Movement has 120 Member States, 17 Observer Countries, and 10 Observer organizations.
- NAM does not have a permanent secretariat or a formal founding charter, act, or treaty. The summit typically occurs every three years.
- **Practise Question:** "Critically examine the role and relevance of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in contemporary international relations, particularly in addressing humanitarian crises, with reference to the recent 19th Summit held in Kampala, Uganda."

13. INDIA- UGANDA RELATIONS

CONTEXT: Indian Foreign Minister visited Uganda to attend NAM Summit.

❑ **Political Relations:**

- India and Uganda share a historical relationship spanning over a century.
- Indians first came to Uganda at the beginning of the 20th century. Inspired by India's freedom struggle, early Ugandan activists fought for decolonization, achieving independence in 1962.
- India established its diplomatic presence in Uganda in 1965. After President Amin's overthrow in 1979, succeeding Ugandan governments invited expelled Indians to return and reclaim their properties and citizenship.

❑ **Indian Diaspora:**

- The Indian community maintains strong economic and cultural links with Uganda.
- Despite constituting less than 0.1% of Uganda's population, Indian Nationals/Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) contribute about 70% of Uganda's direct taxes, according to the Bank of Uganda and the Uganda Revenue Authority.
- "India Day," an annual event, showcases Indian culture and attracts thousands of visitors, fostering closer ties between the Indian and Ugandan communities.
- **Defence Relations:** India conducts training courses for Uganda's defence personnel, strengthening bilateral defence relations.
- **Commercial Relations:** Uganda benefits from the Duty-Free Tariff Preference (DFTP) Scheme of India for Least Developed Countries (LDCs).
 - Major Indian exports to Uganda include pharmaceutical products, vehicles, plastic, paper, paperboard, and organic chemicals.
 - Uganda's main exports to India include edible vegetables, roots, tubers, coffee, tea, mate, spices, and cocoa.

- A Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) between India and Uganda has been in effect since 2004, preventing taxpayers from being taxed twice for the same income when residing in one country and earning income in another.
- ▶ **Scholarships and Capacity Building Training Programs:** The Government of India offers scholarships and fellowships to Ugandans from both the government and private sectors, enabling them to pursue undergraduate, postgraduate, and research courses in India.

14. INDIA-MALDIVES DISPUTE

CONTEXT: The Maldives has recently found itself in diplomatic turmoil, raising questions about its relations with India through undiplomatic remarks, military positioning, and the scrapping of crucial agreements.

■ Historical Ties:

- ▶ The diplomatic relationship between India and the Maldives dates back to 1965, following the British relinquishment of control over the islands.
- ▶ Since the democratic transition in 2008, India has invested significantly in building relationships with various Maldivian stakeholders, including political, military, business, and civil society figures.

■ Significance of Maldives for India:

- ▶ **Strategic Location:** The Maldives holds immense strategic importance in the Indian Ocean, serving as a gateway to the Arabian Sea. This location allows India to monitor maritime traffic and enhance regional security.
- ▶ **Cultural Link:** India and the Maldives share deep cultural and historical connections, dating back centuries. Until the first half of the 12th century, Buddhism was the principal religion in the Maldives, evidenced by inscriptions of Vajrayana Buddhism.
- ▶ **Regional Stability:** A stable and prosperous Maldives aligns with India's "Neighbourhood First" policy, promoting peace and security in the Indian Ocean region.

■ Significance of India for the Maldives:

- ▶ **Essential Supplies:** India supplies essential commodities like rice, spices, fruits, vegetables, and medicines to the Maldives. It also aids in building Maldivian infrastructure by providing materials like cement and rock boulders.
- ▶ **Education:** India is a primary destination for higher education for Maldivian students, offering scholarships for deserving students.
- ▶ **Disaster Assistance:** India has consistently provided aid during crises, such as tsunamis and drinking water shortages, and supported the Maldives during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ▶ **Security Provider:** India has a history of providing security assistance, exemplified by Operation Cactus in 1988 and joint naval exercises like "Ekuverin," "Dosti," and "Ekatha."
- ▶ **Tourism:** Indian tourists have become a leading source market for the Maldives since the COVID-19 pandemic, with Indians accounting for 11.2% of total tourist arrivals in 2023.

■ Challenges in India-Maldives Relations:

- ▶ **India-Out Campaign:** A political campaign in the Maldives has branded the Indian presence as a threat to Maldivian sovereignty, demanding the withdrawal of Indian military personnel by March 15, 2024.
- ▶ **Tourism Strain:** Disparaging comments directed at the Indian Prime Minister during his visit to the Lakshadweep islands have led to a "Boycott Maldives" trend on social media.
- ▶ **China's Rising Influence:** China's growing visibility in the Maldives, due to its strategic location near key shipping lanes, has caused unease in India and could lead to a regional geopolitical contest.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

Q. Discuss the political developments in Maldives in the last two years. Should they be of any cause of concern to India? (2013)

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. "Analyse the current challenges and opportunities in India-Maldives relations, considering the recent diplomatic turmoil and China's increasing influence. What strategies should India adopt to maintain and enhance its bilateral ties with the Maldives?"

15. INDIA-ITALY MIGRATION AND MOBILITY AGREEMENT

CONTEXT: The Migration and Mobility Agreement between India and Italy aims to enhance cooperation on issues related to irregular migration and strengthen people-to-people ties.

- ❑ **About the Agreement:** The agreement shall facilitate mobility for various segments, including students, skilled workers, businesspersons, and young professionals, promoting exchange and collaboration between the two nations.
- ❑ **Key Provisions:**
 - **Temporary Residence for Indian Students:** Indian graduates seeking professional exposure in Italy post-academic or vocational training can secure temporary residency for up to 12 months.
 - **Reserved Quotas for Workers:** The agreement specifies quotas for non-seasonal and seasonal Indian workers, with a reserved quota range for the years 2023-2025 under the existing Flows Decree. The Italian government's annual "Flow Decree" (Decreto Flussi) sets the maximum number of non-EU citizens who can enter Italy for work and self-employment.
- ❑ **Implementation:**
 - The agreement will be in force for 5 years and will be automatically renewed unless terminated.
 - A Joint Working Group (JWG) will oversee its implementation, meeting periodically to evaluate progress and propose supportive measures for effective execution.
- ❑ **Other Areas of Cooperation Between India and Italy**
- ❑ **Historical Ties:**
 - Both India and Italy are ancient civilizations but young states. Italian port cities were significant trading posts on the spice route.
 - The Venetian merchant Marco Polo traveled to India in the 13th century and documented his experiences.
- ❑ **Political Relations:**
 - Political relations between India and Italy were established in 1947.
 - In March 2023, the two countries elevated their relationship to a Strategic Partnership.
- ❑ **Economic Cooperation:**
 - The bilateral trade between India and Italy was valued at USD 14.25 billion in 2022-23.

- ▶ Italy is among India's top 5 trading partners in the European Union.
- ▶ Main items of Indian exports to Italy include ready-made garments, leather, iron ore, motor vehicles, textiles, chemicals, gems, and jewelry.
- ▶ Main imports from Italy include machinery, machine tools, metallurgical products, and engineering items.

▣ **Security Cooperation:**

- ▶ The India-Italy Military Cooperation Group (MCG) is a forum established to enhance defence cooperation between the two countries.

▣ **Other Initiatives Involving India and Italy:**

- ▶ India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor
- ▶ Global Biofuel Alliance
- ▶ Blue-Raman Project

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. Analyse the significance of the Migration and Mobility Agreement between India and Italy in the context of their bilateral relations.

16. CHINA'S BRI (ITALY'S WITHDRAWAL)

CONTEXT: Italy has officially withdrawn from China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), more than four years after becoming the only G7 nation to join the initiative.

▣ **Reasons for Italy's Withdrawal from BRI:**

- ▶ **Economic Imbalance:**
 - Italy joined the BRI in 2019 during a period of economic struggle, having experienced three recessions in a decade and seeking investment and infrastructure development.
 - The expected economic benefits have not been realized. Chinese Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Italy fell from USD 650 million in 2019 to just USD 33 million in 2021.
 - Trade imbalance: Italy's exports to China increased modestly from 14.5 billion euros to 18.5 billion euros, while Chinese exports to Italy surged from 33.5 billion euros to 50.9 billion euros.
- ▶ **Geopolitical Realignment:**
 - Italy's withdrawal reflects a broader trend among European nations reassessing their relationships with China due to concerns over China's growing influence and geopolitical alignments.
 - Global events like the Russia-Ukraine conflict have also prompted Italy to reconsider its stance on the BRI.
 - The collapse of the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI) and the withdrawal of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania from China's 17+1 diplomatic initiative highlight this shift.
- ▶ **Alignment with Western Allies:**
 - Italy's desire to align more closely with its Western allies, especially within the G7, influences its decision.
 - With Italy set to assume the G7 presidency, withdrawing from the BRI can be seen as a gesture of solidarity with Western partners.

► **Negative Press and Debt Concerns:**

- The BRI has faced global criticism for potential debt traps and lack of transparency.
- Reports of other countries experiencing substantial debt burdens due to BRI projects likely contributed to Italy's decision to withdraw.

▢ **India-Italy Relations:**

- **Strategic Partnerships:** Indian Prime Minister's visit to Italy for the G20 summit in 2021 and subsequent engagements with Italian leadership marked significant milestones. Bilateral agreements and strategic partnerships were established, focusing on defence, trade, and technology.
- **Economic Cooperation:** Bilateral trade has grown significantly, with Italy emerging as a key trading partner for India within the EU. Collaborations in defence, technology, and other sectors have strengthened ties.

▢ **Rethinking Engagement with China:**

- Both India and Italy have reassessed their engagements with China, particularly regarding the BRI.
- Italy's decision to withdraw from the BRI, driven by economic imbalances and unmet expectations, aligns with India's opposition to the BRI due to territorial concerns.

▢ **Cooperation in Other Areas:**

- **Science, Technology, and Research Collaboration:** In 2021, both countries established Thematic Working Groups, including a joint ASI-ISRO working group in heliophysics, the study of the Sun's effects on the Solar System.
- **Counter-Terrorism and Security:** Both sides pledged to enhance cooperation in fighting terrorism and transnational crime, both bilaterally and in multilateral fora. They agreed to hold the next meeting of the 'India-Italy Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism' to further advance cooperation.
- **Regional Cooperation and Connectivity:** India and Italy acknowledged the potential of new international organizations such as the Coalition on Disaster Resilient Infrastructures (CDRI) and the International Solar Alliance (ISA). India welcomed Italy joining the ISA.

PRACTICE QUESTION

- Q. "Discuss the reasons behind Italy's withdrawal from China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). How does this decision impact Italy's relationship with India, and what opportunities does it present for future bilateral cooperation?"

17. INDIA-LITHUANIA RELATIONS

CONTEXT: Indian Minister of State for Ports, Shipping, and Waterways and the Vice Minister in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania recently convened in New Delhi to enhance maritime and bilateral relations between India and Lithuania.

▢ **Major Highlights of the Meeting:**

- **Resident Mission Inauguration in Vilnius:** The inauguration of India's Resident Mission in Vilnius was celebrated, marking a significant step in reaffirming India's commitment to strengthening bilateral ties with Lithuania.
- **Bilateral Trade Growth:** India highlighted the positive trajectory of bilateral trade, noting a consistent increase to USD 472 million by the fiscal year 2022-23. This reflects a steady rise in economic collaboration between the two nations.

- ▶ **Collaboration on Port Infrastructure:** Discussions focused on potential collaboration leveraging India's expertise in port infrastructure development. This is aimed at utilizing Lithuania's strategic location as a gateway to key industrial areas in Eastern Europe.
 - Klaipeda Port's unique advantages, particularly its year-round ice-free status, were emphasized. As the leading Baltic port for container transshipment, Klaipeda plays a crucial role in facilitating trade, with advantageous land connections to Eastern Europe's industrial zones.
- ▶ **Diverse Investment Opportunities:** India presented a range of investment opportunities to Lithuania across various sectors, including Port Modernization (PPP), Port Connectivity, Coastal Shipping, Maritime Technology, Sagarmala Project, and Decarbonization initiatives. These efforts aim to foster comprehensive economic partnerships and sustainable growth.

■ Major Aspects of India-Lithuania Relations:

■ Historical Ties:

- ▶ **Linguistic Similarities:**
 - Lithuanian and Sanskrit share linguistic commonalities, indicating ancient connections. Pre-Christian Lithuania worshiped nature and revered a trinity of gods - Perkunas, Patrimpas, and Pikuolis.
- ▶ **Intellectual Exchange:**
 - Vyduenas, a 19th-century philosopher, drew parallels between Lithuanian and Hindu spiritual cultures, creating a philosophical system inspired by Vedanta.
 - Lithuanian travelers like Antanas Poska and Matas Salcius explored Sanskrit and Indian culture in the 1930s and 1940s.
 - Sanskrit has been part of Vilnius University's curriculum since the 1970s, fostering academic ties between India and Lithuania.

■ Political Relations:

- ▶ **Recognition:** India recognized Lithuania's independence from the USSR in 1991 and established diplomatic relations in 1992.
- ▶ **Embassy and Consulates:** Lithuania opened its Embassy in New Delhi in 2008 and maintains three Honorary Consuls in India. An Honorary Consul of India has been operating in Vilnius since 2014.
- ▶ **India-Lithuania Forum:** Initiated in 2010, this forum fosters multi-dimensional ties encompassing culture, education, business, and science.

■ Trade Dynamics:

- ▶ **Major Indian Imports from Lithuania:** Edible vegetables, wood and articles of wood, textiles, electrical machinery and equipment, iron and steel, optical, photographic, and measuring instruments.
- ▶ **Major Indian Exports to Lithuania:** Nuclear boilers and reactors, pharmaceutical products, fish, organic chemicals, tobacco and manufactured tobacco, textile articles, iron and steel.

■ Cultural Engagement:

- ▶ **Yoga and Spiritual Interests:** Lithuanians exhibit a keen interest in Indian cultural traditions, particularly Yoga. Celebrations of International Yoga Day are widespread in Lithuania.
- ▶ **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme (ITEC) Program:** Over 400 Lithuanian nominees have attended various courses under India's ITEC program, fostering mutual learning and cooperation.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. "Discuss the recent developments in India-Lithuania maritime and bilateral relations. How do historical, cultural, and economic ties between the two countries contribute to their strategic partnership?"

18. INDIA AND AUSTRALIA (2+2 DIPLOMACY)

CONTEXT: The 2nd India-Australia 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue was recently held in New Delhi, bringing together the Foreign Affairs Ministers and Defence Ministers of both countries.

■ Key Highlights of the India-Australia 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue:

- ▶ **Enhanced Cooperation:** Both nations emphasized the importance of information exchange and **Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA)** to strengthen their strategic ties. The Quad's Indo-Pacific MDA, currently in the implementation phase, is expected to be a significant agenda item at the upcoming Quad summit hosted by India.
- ▶ **Implementing Arrangements:** Discussions included implementing arrangements on hydrography cooperation and air-to-air refuelling, signalling steps toward concrete collaboration in defence areas.
- ▶ **Niche Training Areas:** Both countries expressed a shared vision to collaborate in specialized training areas such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Anti-Submarine Warfare, anti-drone warfare, and the cyber domain, highlighting a commitment to developing advanced defence capabilities.
- ▶ **Defence Industry Collaboration:** Recognizing the potential for deepening cooperation in defence industry and research, both countries identified areas of collaboration, including shipbuilding, ship repair and maintenance, and aircraft maintenance, repair, and overhaul.
- ▶ **Research in Underwater Technologies:** Discussions on joint research in underwater technologies and collaboration between defence start-ups signify a push for innovation and technological advancement in defence strategies.
- ▶ **Reaffirmed Bilateral Defence Relations:** Both countries reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen bilateral defence relations, expressing satisfaction over increasing military-to-military cooperation, joint exercises, exchanges, and institutional dialogues.

■ Defence Cooperation:

- ▶ **2+2 Ministerial Dialogue:** The inaugural 2+2 dialogue took place in September 2021, followed by high-level engagements in 2022 and 2023, including a virtual summit and Foreign Ministers meet.
- ▶ **Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA):** Signed during the Virtual Summit in June 2020, this agreement enhances defence cooperation.
- ▶ **Joint Military Exercises:** Australia is set to host the "Malabar" exercises in August 2023, with participation from India, Japan, and the US. India has also been invited to join the Talisman Sabre exercises in 2023.

■ China Factor:

- ▶ **Strained Australia-China Relations:**
 - Australia's ties with China have deteriorated due to issues like the banning of Huawei from the 5G network, calls for an inquiry into the origins of COVID-19, and criticism of China's human rights violations.
 - In response, China imposed trade barriers on Australian exports and cut off ministerial contact.
- ▶ **Shared Concerns with India:**
 - Both Australia and India face Chinese aggression and support a rules-based international order. Their participation in the Quad (India, Australia, US, Japan) exemplifies their shared interests and concerns.

■ Multilateral Cooperation:

- ▶ **Common Memberships:** Both countries are members of the Quad, Commonwealth, Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), ASEAN Regional Forum, and have participated in the East Asia Summits. They cooperate as members of the Five Interested Parties (FIP) in the WTO context.

- ▶ **Economic Cooperation Trade Agreement (ECTA):** Signed in December 2022, this agreement has significantly reduced tariffs on bilateral trade, enhancing economic cooperation.
- ▶ **Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI):** India and Australia are partners in this trilateral arrangement with Japan, aiming to enhance supply chain resilience in the Indo-Pacific Region.

■ **Economic Cooperation:**

- ▶ **Bilateral Trade:** Australia is the 17th largest trading partner of India, and India is Australia's 9th largest trading partner.
- ▶ **Clean Energy Cooperation:** Both countries signed a Letter of Intent on New and Renewable Energy in 2022 to reduce the cost of renewable energy technologies.
 - They have also committed funds to the India-Australia Critical Minerals Investment Partnership.

■ **Challenges in India-Australia Relations:**

- ▶ **Adani Coal Mine Controversy:** The Adani coal mine project in Australia faced protests from activists, creating strain in bilateral relations.
- ▶ **Visa Issues:** Concerns over visa restrictions for Indian students and professionals seeking to work in Australia have been a point of contention.
- ▶ **Violence against Indian Diaspora:** Attacks on the Indian Diaspora and temples by Khalistan supporters have caused strain.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. How are the shared strategic interests and multilateral engagements of India and Australia shaping their partnership in the Indo-Pacific region?

19. INDIA-NETHERLANDS RELATIONS

CONTEXT: Delegates from India visited the Netherlands, where both nations signed a Memorandum of Intent (MoI) to collaborate on Medical Product Regulation.

■ **India-Netherlands Relations:**

- ▶ **Diplomatic Ties:** India and the Netherlands established diplomatic relations in 1947, marking 75 years of diplomatic ties in 2022. High-level mutual exchanges have provided an impetus to their multifaceted partnership.
- ▶ **Bilateral Trade and Investment:** The Netherlands is the 4th largest trading partner of India in Europe and the 4th largest investor in India from April 2000 to March 2023.
- ▶ **Major Exported Items from India to the Netherlands:** Major exports include petroleum products, telecom instruments, aluminum and its products, electronic instruments, iron, and steel.

■ **Recent Developments:**

- ▶ **Fast-Track Mechanism (FTM):** In September 2022, a Joint Statement was signed to establish a bilateral FTM to facilitate investments by Dutch companies in India.
- ▶ **Cooperation in Science & Technology:** The Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO) collaborates with various Indian government departments.
 - An ongoing project titled "Local Treatment of Urban Sewage Streams for Healthy Reuse (LOTUS-HR)" is an India-Netherlands joint initiative involving universities and companies, funded by India's Department of Biotechnology and the Dutch NWO-TTW.
- ▶ **Water Management:** The Dutch Indo Water Alliance Leadership Initiative (DIWALI) platform was developed to design solutions for water challenges, promoting collaboration between the two countries.

- ▶ **Agriculture:** Agriculture is a core sector for enhancing bilateral cooperation. The 5th Joint Agriculture Working Group (JAWG) meeting in 2018 led to an Action Plan focusing on establishing Centers of Excellence (CoE) in horticulture, animal husbandry, dairy, fisheries, and food processing.
 - The plan includes skill development and capacity building in cold chain and supply chain management.
- ▶ **Healthcare Cooperation:** An MoU for Cooperation in Healthcare and Public Health was signed in January 2014 to promote research collaboration on emerging health challenges, including communicable diseases and antimicrobial resistance.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. "Examine the recent developments in India-Netherlands relations. Discuss the key areas of cooperation and the potential impact of these collaborations on both countries."

20. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE SAFETY SUMMIT

CONTEXT: The AI Safety Summit 2023, held at Bletchley Park, England, has marked a significant turning point in the global approach to addressing the challenges posed by advanced AI technologies.

▢ Bletchley Park Declaration:

- ▶ The Bletchley Park Declaration is the first global agreement focused on mitigating risks associated with frontier AI technologies.
- ▶ It represents a high-level political consensus among the world's leading AI players.
- ▶ The declaration acknowledges AI's potential to enhance human well-being while recognizing the serious risks posed by advanced AI, particularly in areas such as cybersecurity, biotechnology, and disinformation.

▢ Key points of the declaration include:

- ▶ **International Cooperation:** Emphasizing the need for global collaboration to address AI-related risks, given their inherently international nature. The declaration calls for joint efforts among governments, companies, civil society, and academia.
- ▶ **Regular AI Safety Summits:** Establishing a regular AI Safety Summit to provide a platform for ongoing dialogue and collaboration on AI safety. France will host the next summit within a year, and South Korea will co-host a mini virtual AI summit in the next six months.

▢ India's Stance at the Summit:

- ▶ **Ethical AI Framework:** Advocating for a global framework for the expansion of "ethical" AI tools and demonstrating a commitment to responsible AI usage.
- ▶ **Regulatory Bodies:** Showing interest in establishing regulatory bodies at both domestic and international levels to ensure responsible AI use.
- ▶ **Digital India Act, 2023:** This forthcoming legislation is expected to introduce issue-specific regulations for online intermediaries, including AI-based platforms.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. Discuss the significance of the AI Safety Summit 2023 and the Bletchley Park Declaration. How does India's stance at the summit reflect its approach to AI regulation and international cooperation?

21. INDO-PACIFIC MARITIME DOMAIN AWARENESS

CONTEXT: The Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral addressed the fourth edition of the Goa Maritime Conclave (GMC) emphasizing the need to build networks and partnerships, such as the Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA), to ensure security and stability in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

▢ What is IPMDA?

- ▶ The IPMDA was introduced by the Quad group (comprising India, Australia, Japan, and the US) at the Tokyo summit in 2022.
- ▶ It aims to monitor “dark shipping” and create a comprehensive and precise real-time maritime overview of partner nations’ waters.
- ▶ The initiative focuses on integrating the Pacific Islands, Southeast Asia, and the Indian Ocean region (IOR) within the Indo-Pacific framework.
- ▶ **Objective:**
 - The IPMDA aims to enhance security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region, which is central to global geopolitics.
 - It seeks to establish a comprehensive system for monitoring and securing maritime activities, ensuring the safety of critical sea lines of communication, and promoting cooperation among like-minded nations.

▢ Progress and Achievements of GMC

- ▶ **Collaboration Among Navies:** The GMC has successfully brought together navies from the Indian Ocean region to address common maritime challenges. This cooperation has led to coordinated efforts in responding to natural disasters, conducting joint exercises, and sharing critical maritime information.
- ▶ **Effective Response to Piracy:** The establishment of robust information-sharing mechanisms, such as the Information Fusion Centre for the Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) in Gurugram, has significantly improved situational awareness. Navies have been able to respond more effectively to maritime threats, piracy, and other security concerns.
- ▶ **Improving Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA):** Enhanced intelligence and information sharing have contributed to better MDA, improving maritime security and the management of marine resources and environmental protection.
- ▶ **Adopting Common Maritime Priorities:** The last edition of the GMC saw all members unanimously adopt the ‘Common Maritime Priorities (CMPs)’, signaling a unified approach to finding regional solutions to regional problems.

▢ Major Challenges in the Indian Ocean Region

- ▶ **Geopolitical Competition:** The IOR is a hotspot for geopolitical competition among major powers and regional actors. Its strategic location and key choke points, such as the Strait of Hormuz, the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, and the Malacca Strait, enhance its significance.
- ▶ **China’s Militarization Moves:** China’s actions pose challenges to India’s interests and stability in the IOR. Military and infrastructural assistance from China to India’s neighbours, including submarines for Myanmar and a military base in Djibouti, complicate regional security dynamics.
- ▶ **Maritime Security Threats:** The IOR faces various maritime security threats, including piracy, smuggling, illegal fishing, and terrorism. The vastness of the Indian Ocean makes effective monitoring and securing the maritime domain challenging.
- ▶ **Environmental Challenges:** Climate change, rising sea levels, coral reef degradation, and marine pollution are significant environmental issues in the IOR. These challenges affect coastal communities, marine ecosystems, and the livelihoods of millions of people.

Dark Shipping:

Dark shipping refers to vessels operating with their Automatic Identification System (AIS) turned off. AIS transponders transmit a ship's position at sea, along with identification data and other useful information that vessels and maritime authorities can reference.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. Discuss the significance of the Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA) initiative introduced by the Quad group. What are the major challenges related to the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), and how can these challenges be addressed to ensure regional security and stability?

22. INDIA-TANZANIA RELATIONS

CONTEXT: India recently hosted Tanzanian President Samia Suluhu Hassan at the India-Tanzania Investment Forum in New Delhi, marking a significant upgrade of bilateral relations to a strategic partnership.

Key Takeaways from the Visit

► **Agreements Signed:**

- Six agreements were inked to enhance cooperation in digital domain, culture, sports, maritime industries, and white shipping information sharing.
- These agreements aim to foster technological and cultural exchanges between the two nations.

► **Currency Trade Mechanism:**

- Efforts to promote trade between the Indian Rupee and Tanzanian Shilling were highlighted.
- Authorized banks in India can now open Special Rupee Vostro Accounts of correspondent banks in Tanzania, aiming to ensure the sustainability of this currency trade mechanism.

► **Defence Roadmap:**

- A new five-year defence roadmap was established to expand cooperation in military training, maritime collaboration, capacity building, and the defence industry.
- Both nations emphasized enhancing maritime security in the Indian Ocean region, celebrating the success of the first-ever India-Tanzania joint Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) surveillance exercise in July 2023.

► **Honoring the Tanzanian President:**

- President Samia Suluhu Hassan was awarded an honorary doctorate from Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi, recognizing her contributions to economic diplomacy, regional integration, and multilateralism between India and Tanzania.

Key Facts about Tanzania

- **Geography:** Tanzania is the largest country in East Africa, sharing borders with eight countries and including the islands of Zanzibar, Pemba, and Mafia.
- **Capitals:** Dar es Salaam is the administrative capital, while Dodoma is the legislative capital.
- **Currency:** Tanzanian Shilling.
- **Landforms:**
- **North:** Southern part of Lake Victoria (source of the River Nile) and the Ngorongoro Crater.
- **Northeast:** Home to Mount Meru and Mount Kilimanjaro, the tallest mountain in Africa.
- **West:** Lake Tanganyika, the world's second deepest lake.
- **East:** Coastal lowlands along the Indian Ocean.

► **International Alliances:**

- Tanzania announced its intention to join the International Big Cat Alliance and the Global Biofuel Alliance, reinforcing its commitment to global environmental and energy initiatives.

■ **Other Areas of Cooperation between India and Tanzania**

- **Geopolitical context:** India views Tanzania as a valuable partner in the Indo-Pacific region, reflecting the broader geopolitical strategy and enhancing India-Africa relations.
- **Economic Cooperation:**
 - **Trade:** India is the largest destination for Tanzania's exports, with two-way trade worth USD 6.4 billion in 2022-23, including Indian exports of USD 3.9 billion.
 - **Investment:** India ranks as the fifth largest investor in Tanzania.
 - **Exports to Tanzania:** India exports petroleum products, pharmaceuticals, machinery, electrical and electronic equipment, and sugar.
 - **Imports from Tanzania:** Tanzania exports gold ore, cashew nuts, cloves, ores and metal scrap, and gemstones to India.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. "Discuss the strategic significance of the recent upgrade in India-Tanzania bilateral relations. Highlight the key areas of cooperation and the potential impact on regional geopolitics, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region."

23. INDIA-ARGENTINA SOCIAL SECURITY AGREEMENT

CONTEXT: India and Argentina recently signed a 'Social Security Agreement (SSA)' aimed at safeguarding the legal rights of professionals in each other's domains.

■ **What is the Social Security Agreement?**

- The SSA ensures that the rights of professionals and workers in both countries are protected against the loss of social security benefits or contributions. The increasing number of Indian professionals working in Argentina and Argentine nationals seeking employment in India necessitated this legal framework.

■ **Key Highlights:**

- The SSA applies to legislation in both India and Argentina concerning various aspects of social security, including old age, survivor's pension, and permanent, total disability pension for employed persons.
- It provides rights and benefits to detached workers, i.e., employees working in another country on a temporary basis, and their family members. These benefits include cash allowances for retirement or pension, rent, subsidy, or lump sum payments, all as per local legislation, without any reduction, modification, suspension, suppression, or retention.
- The SSA establishes the legal framework for regulating the insurance period, which includes the period of services credited with contributions, contributory benefits, and their export for detached workers. This framework also covers crew members of airlines and ships.
- It addresses legislation concerning contributory benefits of the Social Security System in Argentina.
- The agreement would protect the rights of professionals and workers against the loss of benefits or contributions made towards social security in both countries and thus facilitate greater movement of professionals and the labor force.

▢ How are India-Argentina Relations?

► Political Relations:

- India-Argentina relations were elevated to the level of Strategic Partnership in February 2019.
- India opened a Trade Commission in Buenos Aires in 1943, which was later converted into one of the first embassies of India in South America in 1949.
- Argentina established a Consulate in Calcutta in the 1920s, which was transferred to Delhi as an Embassy in 1950.

► Economic Relations:

- India is the 4th largest trading partner of Argentina, with bilateral trade reaching a historic peak of USD 6.4 billion in 2022, recording a growth rate of 12% over 2021.
- Major items of India's exports to Argentina include petroleum oils, agrochemicals, yarn-fabric-made ups, organic chemicals, bulk drugs, and two-wheelers.
- Major items of India's imports from Argentina include vegetable oils (soybean and sunflower), finished leather, cereals, residual chemicals, allied products, and pulses.

► Cultural Relations:

- India and Argentina have historical and literary ties, such as the visit of Rabindranath Tagore to Argentina in 1924 and the award of an honorary doctorate to Victoria Ocampo by Visva Bharati University in 1968.

► Counter-Terrorism:

- India and Argentina issued a separate joint declaration to fight terrorism.
- Argentina condemned the recent terrorist attack in Pulwama, Jammu and Kashmir, in the strongest terms.
- Both countries reiterated their commitment to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and called for any country not to allow their territory to be used to launch terrorist attacks on other countries.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. "Discuss the significance of the recent Social Security Agreement (SSA) signed between India and Argentina. How does this agreement impact the bilateral relations and the professional mobility between the two countries?"

24.G-20 AND INDIA

CONTEXT: India achieved significant success of hosting the G-20 meeting in Delhi and producing a consensus Declaration despite various challenges.

▢ Key Outcomes of the G20 Summit

- **African Union Membership:** The African Union joined the G20, becoming a member from this year.
- **New Delhi Leaders Declaration:** Emphasized inclusive growth and was signed by the heads of state.
- **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor:** A proposed corridor passed by the leaders of these regions, aiming to enhance connectivity and economic integration.
- **Global Biofuel Alliance:** Created to emphasize the maximum use of biofuel among member countries.
- **One Future Alliance:** Launched along with the creation of a Global Digital Public Infrastructure Repository.

- ▶ **Renewable Energy Commitment:** Leaders agreed to pursue the tripling of renewable energy capacity globally by 2030 and accepted the need to phase down unabated coal power.

❑ Why India Needs to Be Cautious About Chinese Perception

- ▶ **Geo-Political and Security Issues:** China's apprehension about the G-20's focus solely on economic cooperation without addressing geopolitical and security concerns may lead to friction in Sino-Indian relations.
- ▶ **Geo-Political Tool:** China's warning against the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor becoming a geopolitical tool indicates its suspicion of India's initiatives countering its regional interests.
- ▶ **Western Perceptions:** China perceives the G-20 as a Western tool to impose its worldview, which could strain Sino-Indian relations if India is seen aligning too closely with Western interests.
- ▶ **Hegemonic Ambitions:** China's regional hegemonic status and its efforts to expand influence pose potential threats to India's security and interests.
- ▶ **Quad Membership:** India's membership in the Quad, seen as anti-China, adds complexity to Sino-Indian relations, necessitating careful diplomacy.
- ▶ **Global Uncertainties:** The global context marked by geopolitical competition, inflation, and conflicts like Ukraine can affect India's security and stability.

❑ Current Status of the World Order

- ▶ **Emerging Blocs:** Two emerging blocs: one led by Western countries and another by China and Russia, indicating a shift in global power dynamics.
- ▶ **Challenges to the Rules-Based Order:** The concept of a "rules-based world order" is being challenged, leading to an "emerging world disorder" with antagonistic blocs and diminishing non-aligned roles.
- ▶ **NATO's Role:** Strengthening and expanding NATO in response to the Ukraine conflict and Russian expansionism.
- ▶ **Evolution of G-20:** The G-20's role has shifted from economic issues to addressing global political conflicts.
- ▶ **Russia-China Strategic Alignment:** Deepening Russia-China partnership impacts global power dynamics and challenges Western influence.
- ▶ **Global Influence:** China and Russia are extending their influence beyond traditional spheres, impacting global power balances.

PRACTICE QUESTION:

- Q. "Discuss the significance of the recent G-20 outcomes hosted by India and analyse the challenges India faces in managing its relationship with China in the context of the evolving global order."

25. G7 SUMMIT

CONTEXT: The recent G7 Summit, attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, concluded with a commitment to promote infrastructure initiatives like the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC). This commitment was part of the G7's efforts to enhance global infrastructure and investment under the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII).

❑ How countries are seeing IMEC as a 'significant initiative'?

- ▶ The IMEC is highlighted as a significant initiative aimed at creating extensive road, railroad, and shipping networks connecting Saudi Arabia, India, the United States, and Europe.
- ▶ It aims to foster economic integration across Asia, the Middle East, and Western countries.

- ▶ The G7's endorsement of the IMEC underscores its potential as a transformative project. It aligns with broader initiatives such as the EU Global Gateway and initiatives like the Great Green Wall Initiative and the Mattei Plan for Africa, emphasizing sustainable and inclusive development.
- ▶ **Comparison with BRI:** Unlike the BRI, which has faced criticism for lack of transparency and respect for national sovereignty, the IMEC is positioned as a collaborative effort among like-minded nations to enhance their strategic influence through transparent and mutually beneficial infrastructure development.

❑ Why Global Influence of International Organisations is in Decline?

- ▶ The current international system, established in the aftermath of **World War II**, was designed primarily by a specific set of states to promote peace and stability globally. However, its effectiveness in addressing contemporary challenges is increasingly questioned.
- ▶ Conflicts like the **Ukraine-Russia war and ongoing issues in the Middle East** underscore the inability of international actors to effectively resolve regional conflicts.
- ▶ International organisations are experiencing a decline in global influence because:
 - They have failed to adapt to the realities of a multipolar world emerging in the 21st century.
 - The dominance of a few superpowers and their political agendas has marginalized the voices and concerns of other nations, undermining the credibility and effectiveness of these organisations.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. "There is an urgent call for leading international organisations to take proactive steps in reshaping the global system to meet contemporary challenges." Comment

26. BRICS EXPANSION

CONTEXT: India participated in the recent Brics Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia, marking the first meeting since the expansion of Brics in 2023. The expansion saw Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE joining Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa as full-fledged members. Russia assumed the chairmanship of Brics on January 1, 2024.

❑ Impact of Expansion:

- ▶ The BRICS group now comprises almost:
 - 46 per cent of the world's population (with China and India alone accounting for 86 per cent of BRICS)
 - 36 per cent of global GDP (of which China alone accounts for 65 per cent of BRICS)
 - 25 per cent of world trade, measured in terms of exports.
- ▶ This enlargement added USD 2.6 trillion to the group's GDP, reaching USD 28.5 trillion collectively and covering 1% of global output.
- ▶ The expansion enhanced BRICS' economic and geostrategic reach, doubling its oil production capacity and accounting for 25% of global exports.
- ▶ It also strengthened control over rare earth minerals and projected significant GDP growth for new members by 2050.

❑ Impact and Challenges of BRICS Expansion:

- ▶ **Economic Influence:** Despite BRICS' economic significance, G7 countries still dominate global GDP, accounting for 43.2%. However, forecasts suggest a shift in economic power towards BRICS, especially with the significant growth projected for new members like Egypt and Ethiopia.

- ▶ **Geopolitical Significance:** BRICS seeks to challenge the Western-centric global order by establishing institutions like the New Development Bank. While it aims to reduce dependence on Western-led institutions, challenges remain in implementing a common BRICS currency and dethroning the US dollar.
- ▶ **Challenges and Limitations:** BRICS faces challenges such as overreliance on China's economy, limiting leverage and equality within the group. Bilateral power dynamics between China and India pose complexities, with China's larger economy overshadowing India's influence within BRICS.

■ India's Interests in BRICS:

- ▶ **Policy Framework:** India's approach to BRICS reflects its policy of "multi-alignment", akin to its historical stance of "non-alignment" during the East-West conflict. This allows India to engage with multiple geopolitical centers rather than aligning strictly with one.
- ▶ **Counterweight to Russia and China:** Within BRICS, India seeks to balance the influence of dominant powers like Russia and China. It aims to represent a counterweight to these nations, particularly in the context of global South politics, where India competes with China for influence among developing countries.
- ▶ **Bridge Builder to the West:** India's role in BRICS also involves acting as a bridge builder to the West. As a member of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), India collaborates closely with the USA, Japan, and Australia to counter China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific region.
- ▶ **Challenges and Considerations:**
 - **Diverging Interests:** The diverse interests within BRICS, including conflicting agendas between commodity producers and importers like India and China, pose challenges to pursuing collective interests with joint capacities.
 - **Conflict-Ridden Structure:** BRICS expansion further complicates the group's dynamics, intensifying conflicts of interest among member states. India supported the accession of new members, particularly the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, but balancing these diverse interests remains a challenge.

Fact Box: New Development Bank (NDB)

- **Established in:** 2014 by the BRICS group.
- **Headquarters:** Shanghai, China
- It is a multilateral bank focused on financing infrastructure projects and sustainable development.
- So far, it has financed 96 projects worth \$33 billion.

PRACTICE QUESTION

- Q. "The diverse interests within BRICS pose challenges to pursuing collective interests with joint capacities." Analyse.

27. NATO'S EXPANSION

CONTEXT: Sweden is set to join NATO after Hungary's parliament ratified its bid. Hungary's decision comes two years after both Sweden and Finland applied to join NATO in May 2022 following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

■ Significance for the alliance

- ▶ **Break from neutrality:** Sweden has not been involved in a war since 1814 and has "pursued a policy of non-alignment in peacetime and neutrality in wartime, basing its security on a strong national defense. Sweden's entry into NATO move signals a break from a history of neutrality for both countries.

- ▶ **Sense of security:** At the time that Russia's invasion threatened Europe's security order and made Sweden's need for guaranteed security granted through NATO membership apparent.
- ▶ **Reinforcing the Baltic states:** Three countries breathing a particular sigh of relief over the entry of Sweden - and Finland - are NATO's Baltic states, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, long seen as an Achilles heel for the alliance.
- ▶ **Strategic position:** Sweden's geographical position makes it an essential part of any NATO defence plans. Its location means it can serve as a land transit route to reinforce both Norway and Finland, while also allowing NATO to largely take control of the Baltic Sea in any potential conflict with Russia.
 - This provides an alternative sea reinforcement option to the Baltic states other than the vulnerable land border between Poland and Lithuania which is within artillery range of the Russian-held Kaliningrad area and Belarus.
- ▶ **Kaliningrad threat:** Beyond its long Baltic coastline, Sweden brings with it the island of Gotland which would play a central role in helping NATO impose its will. But just across the water, Russia has its vital outpost -- the exclave of Kaliningrad.
 - Wedged between Poland and Lithuania, Moscow has in recent years turned the region into one of the most militarised in Europe, with nuclear-capable missiles stationed there.

■ Concerns

- ▶ **Russia:** For now, Russia is the biggest loser of Sweden joining NATO. Moscow has threatened Sweden and Finland since both countries turned toward NATO. Since the two Nordic countries began the process to join the alliance, the West has tightened its grip on the Baltic Sea, complicating a vital transit route for the Russian navy.
- ▶ **Fissure within the NATO alliance:** Not all NATO members view Russia as the principal security threat. In both cases, Sweden's membership has become embroiled in wider domestic issues.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. "Sweden's NATO membership strengthens alliance in Baltic Sea region." Comment

28. INDIA-CANADA RELATIONS

CONTEXT: Canadian government expelled a senior Indian diplomat, accusing India of playing a role in the assassination of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a prominent Sikh Canadian leader, in Canada.

■ Significance of India-Canada Relationship

- ▶ **Political Relations:** India established diplomatic relations with Canada in 1947. Both nations share principles such as democracy, human rights, rule of law, and pluralism.
- ▶ **Economic Cooperation:** Bilateral trade between India and Canada amounted to \$6 billion annually, with Indian investment in Canada valued at over \$4 billion.
 - Canada is the 18th largest foreign investor in India, with an investment of about \$3,306 million from April 2000 to March 2023.
 - Over 600 Canadian companies have a presence in India, and over 1,000 Canadian companies actively pursue business in the Indian market.
 - Both countries are engaged in technical negotiations for a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).
- ▶ **Diaspora Connections:** Canada hosts one of the largest Indian diasporas in the world, numbering 1.6 million people of Indian origin, accounting for more than 3% of the total Canadian population, and 700,000 Non-Residential Indians (NRIs).

- ▶ **Education and Innovation:** Indian students constitute approximately 40% of the entire population of international students in Canada. Cooperation in Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) between Canada's Intellectual Property Office and India's Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP).
- ▶ **Strategic Importance:** India is a critical partner under Canada's Indo-Pacific strategy due to its growing economic and demographic importance in the region.
- ▶ **Science and Technology:** Joint research projects in healthcare, agri-biotech, and waste management under the IC-IMPACTS program. Collaboration on Cold Climate (Arctic) Studies between the Department of Earth Science and Polar Canada.
- ▶ **Space Cooperation:** ISRO and the Canadian Space Agency (CSA) have signed MOUs for exploration and utilization of outer space. ANTRIX, ISRO's commercial arm, has launched several Canadian nanosatellites.

❑ Challenges in India-Canada Relationship

- ▶ **Cultural Sensitivities:** Concerns over certain fringe groups within the Sikh community in Canada that sympathize with the idea of an independent Khalistan. Incidents such as the parade depicting the 1984 assassination of Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, perceived as glorifying violence by Sikh separatists.
- ▶ **Visa and Immigration Policies:** Difficulties faced by Indian students in obtaining visas to study in Canada, causing dissatisfaction and concerns in India.
- ▶ **Differing Stances on International Issues:** Differing opinions on issues such as the political situation in Kashmir have strained diplomatic ties. Lack of bilateral talks during the recent G20 meeting in New Delhi.
- ▶ **Agricultural Trade Disputes:** Trade-related concerns from Indian dairy and poultry producers over Canadian exports of products such as pulses and canola oil.

PRACTICE QUESTION:

Q. "Discuss the recent developments in India-Canada relations and analyse the significant pillars of their bilateral relationship. What challenges do they face, and what measures can be taken to strengthen their ties?"

29. IMPERATIVE FOR UNSC REFORM

CONTEXT: Denmark, Greece, Pakistan, Panama, and Somalia have been recently elected to serve on the U.N. Security Council for two-year terms. In recent times, countries are advocating for reforms within the UNSC to ensure equitable representation and effectiveness in addressing global security challenges.

❑ Why UNSC requires "reforms"?

- ▶ The formation of the UN Security Council, comprising five permanent members — China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States — occurred nearly eight decades ago.
- ▶ At that time, the global landscape comprised approximately 50 independent nations.
- ▶ Despite the significant increase in the number of sovereign states to around 193 today, the control over UNSC membership has remained concentrated in the hands of the original five permanent members.
- ▶ **India's Efforts:** India, alongside Japan, Germany, and Egypt, has actively advocated for UNSC reform. The proposal put forth by this coalition seeks to address the imbalance in representation and enhance the Council's effectiveness.
- ▶ **Challenges Faced:** Obtaining consensus for UNSC reform has proven challenging. While some nations have expressed support, others have been hesitant or resistant to change. Overcoming these hurdles necessitates concerted efforts and strategic diplomacy.

► **Global Support for India's Candidacy:**

- India's aspiration for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has been a longstanding diplomatic endeavour.
- India's rising global stature and widespread support from various regions position it favorably for a permanent seat on the UNSC. India's economic growth, large population, vibrant democracy, and diplomatic prowess under Prime Minister Modi's leadership provide a strong foundation for garnering support.

About UNSC

- UNSC has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.
- It has 15 Members, and each Member has one vote.
- **Permanent Members (P5):** The United States, China, France, Russia, and the United Kingdom are the five permanent members with veto power. Any of these members can block a resolution.
- **Non-Permanent Members (10):** The Security Council also has ten elected members who serve two-year terms without veto power. These members are chosen through a two-thirds vote by the UN General Assembly.
- **Presidency Rotation:** The presidency of the Security Council rotates monthly. This ensures that non-permanent members have some influence on the agenda.
- **Regional Representation:** Seats on the Security Council are allocated based on regional groups established in 1965. Each regional group has specific electoral norms.
- Regional groups include the
 - African Group (3 seats)
 - Asia-Pacific Group (2 seats)
 - Eastern European Group (1 seat)
 - Latin American and Caribbean Group (2 seats)
 - Western European and Others Group (WEOG) (2 seats)

PRACTICE QUESTION

- Q. While China remains a potential obstacle to India's permanent membership, diplomatic efforts could sway opinions

30. INDIA-MIDDLE EAST-EUROPE CORRIDOR

CONTEXT: The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) Project was signed at the G20 Summit in New Delhi, marking a significant step with profound geopolitical and economic implications for India.

▢ What is the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) Project?

- The proposed IMEC will consist of railroad, ship-to-rail networks, and road transport routes across two corridors:
 - **East Corridor:** Connecting India to the Arabian Gulf.
 - **Northern Corridor:** Connecting the Gulf to Europe.
- The corridor will also feature an electricity cable, a hydrogen pipeline, and a high-speed data cable.
- **Objective:**
 - To create a comprehensive transportation network connecting India, the Middle East, and Europe, enhancing transportation efficiency, reducing costs, generating employment, and lowering greenhouse gas emissions.

- To transform the integration of Asia, Europe, and the Middle East by facilitating trade and connectivity.
- **Significance:** Upon completion, it would provide a reliable and cost-effective cross-border ship-to-rail transit network to supplement existing maritime and road transports.

▢ Geopolitical and Economic Implications of IMEC

- **Thwart to China's BRI:** IMEC is seen as a potential counter to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in the Eurasian region, serving to balance China's economic and political influence.
- **Integration Across Civilizations:** The project offers a strategic opportunity for the U.S. to maintain influence and reassure traditional partners amidst China's growing regional presence.
- **Breaking Pakistan's Connectivity Veto:** IMEC bypasses Pakistan, eliminating its veto over India's overland connectivity to the West.
- **Strategic Engagement with Arabian Peninsula:** The corridor deepens India's engagement with the Arabian Peninsula, establishing enduring connectivity and strengthening political and strategic links.
- **India's Strategic Role in Africa:** The corridor's model could be extended to Africa, aligning with US and EU plans for a Trans-African corridor, signifying India's intent to strengthen engagement with Africa.
 - **Enhanced Trade Opportunities:** IMEC presents a transformative opportunity for India to boost economic growth by enhancing trade connectivity, potentially reducing transit times and making trade with Europe 40% faster compared to the Suez Canal route.
 - **Facilitating Special Economic Zones (SEZs):** Strategically leveraging the corridor to develop SEZs along its route can attract foreign investment, promote manufacturing, and drive economic growth.

▢ Challenges to the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC)

- **Logistics and Connectivity Issues:** Developing a multimodal transport corridor spanning multiple countries requires complex logistical planning and coordination among stakeholders. Selecting viable routes, assessing the feasibility of connections, and ensuring optimal connectivity are key challenges.
- **Missing Rail Links and Construction:** Significant portions of rail links are missing, especially in the Middle East, requiring substantial construction efforts and investment.
- **Coordination Among Multiple Countries:** Coordinating efforts, policies, and regulations among diverse countries with varied interests and legal systems is a major challenge.
- **Potential Opposition and Competition:** Opposition or competition from existing transport routes, especially Egypt's Suez Canal, could pose challenges and diplomatic hurdles.
- **Cost and Financing:** Estimating and securing adequate financing for the corridor's development, operation, and maintenance is a significant challenge. Initial estimates suggest development costs between USD 3 billion to USD 8 billion.

PRACTICE QUESTION

- Q. "Discuss the strategic and economic significance of the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) Project. What are the key challenges to its implementation, and how can they be addressed?"

31. INDIA-SAUDI ARABIA STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

CONTEXT: Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia was on a state visit to Indian focusing upon deepening the strategic partnership between India and Saudi Arabia.

▢ Outcomes and Agreements from the Visit

- **Strategic Partnership Acknowledgment:** The Prime Minister of India emphasized Saudi Arabia's pivotal role as "one of the most important strategic partners of India." Both leaders highlighted the importance of their partnership, especially as two rapidly growing nations contributing to regional stability.

- ▶ **India-Saudi Strategic Partnership Council (SPC):** The PM of India and the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia co-chaired the inaugural meeting of the India-Saudi Strategic Partnership Council (SPC).
- ▶ **West Coast Refinery Project Acceleration:** This trilateral project, involving ARAMCO (Saudi Arabia), ADNOC (UAE), and Indian companies, is set to receive a USD 50 billion investment. The project, located in Ratnagiri, Maharashtra, will be India's first and largest greenfield refinery with a production capacity of 60 million tonnes per annum.
- ▶ **Bilateral Agreements and Cooperation:**
 - Eight agreements were signed, strengthening cooperation across various sectors.
 - Notable agreements include collaboration between the Central Vigilance Commission of India and the Saudi Oversight and Anti-Corruption Authority, as well as in technology, education, and agriculture.
 - An agreement was signed between the National Institute of Technology of India and the Saline Water Conversion Corporation of Saudi Arabia.
- ▶ **Defence and Anti-Terror Cooperation:**
 - Both nations pledged to enhance cooperation in defence and anti-terrorism efforts.
 - Special emphasis was placed on preventing access to "missiles and drones" for terrorist activities.
 - Plans were discussed to strengthen the tourism segment of bilateral relations, aligning with Saudi Arabia's ongoing reforms.
- ▶ **Geopolitical Significance:**
 - The visit holds geopolitical significance as it followed Saudi Arabia's end of hostilities with Iran through a China-brokered deal.
 - Saudi Arabia's recent membership in BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) further underscores its global engagement.

India-Saudi Strategic Partnership Council (SPC)

- Established in 2019, the SPC guides and enhances the bilateral relationship between India and Saudi Arabia.
- It consists of two sub-committees addressing various aspects of cooperation:
 - ▶ Committee on Political, Security, Social, and Cultural Cooperation.
 - ▶ Committee on Economy and Investments.
- **Operation:** The SPC operates at four functional levels:
 - ▶ Summit level, involving the Prime Minister and Crown Prince.
 - ▶ Ministerial-level engagements.
 - ▶ Senior Officials Meetings.
 - ▶ Joint Working Groups (JWGs) to facilitate detailed discussions and action plans.
- **Key Functions:**
 - ▶ The SPC serves as a comprehensive platform to foster collaboration across a wide range of sectors.
 - ▶ It facilitates in-depth discussions, policy formulation, and coordination at various levels to implement joint initiatives effectively.
- **India's Relations with Saudi Arabia**
 - ▶ **Oil and Gas:** Saudi Arabia is India's second-largest supplier of crude oil. India imports more than 18% of its crude oil requirement and most of its liquefied petroleum gas from Saudi Arabia.

- ▶ **Bilateral Trade:** Saudi Arabia is India's fourth-largest trade partner. Bilateral trade in FY22 was valued at USD 29.28 billion, with significant imports and exports.
- ▶ **Cultural Linkages:** The Hajj pilgrimage and the digitization of Hajj processes reflect significant cultural ties. India participated as the 'Guest of Honour' at the Saudi National Festival of Heritage and Culture in 2018.
- ▶ **Naval Exercise:** In 2021, India and Saudi Arabia initiated their first-ever naval joint exercise, the Al-Mohed Al-Hindi Exercise.
- ▶ **Indian Community in Saudi Arabia:** The 2.6 million-strong Indian community in Saudi Arabia is the largest expatriate community in the Kingdom and is highly respected for its contributions to Saudi Arabia's development.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. "Discuss the recent developments in India-Saudi Arabia relations and analyse the key outcomes of the Saudi Crown Prince's visit to India. What are the strategic and economic implications of these developments?"

32. INDIA-GREECE RELATIONS

CONTEXT: India and Greece have upgraded their relationship to a strategic partnership, aiming to double trade, enhance defence and security collaboration, and address shared challenges.

▣ Main Areas of Cooperation Under the Strategic Partnership

- ▶ **Defence and Security:**
 - Both nations agreed to intensify their defence and security cooperation, particularly in maritime security, counter-terrorism, cyber security, and the defence industry.
 - An India-Greece dialogue framework at the level of National Security Advisors (NSAs) was proposed.
- ▶ **Maritime Security and International Law:**
 - As ancient seafaring nations, both countries shared a vision of a free, open, and rules-based Mediterranean Sea and Indo-Pacific, adhering to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and respecting sovereignty, territorial integrity, and freedom of navigation.
- ▶ **Culture and Tourism:**
 - Efforts to promote exchanges in all forms of art and joint efforts in preserving and protecting ancient sites were encouraged.
 - Cooperation within the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was strengthened.
- ▶ **Trade and Investment:** Both countries aim to double bilateral trade by 2030, exploring new opportunities in renewable energy, infrastructure, pharmaceuticals, agriculture, and innovation.
- ▶ **Mobility and Migration Partnership Agreement (MMPA):** Early finalization of an MMPA was agreed upon to facilitate the free movement of the workforce between the two countries.
- ▶ **Broad Spectrum of Collaboration:** Discussions spanned various domains, including digital payments, shipping, pharmaceuticals, and education.

India-Greece Relations

- Bilateral trade between India and Greece stood at USD 2 billion in 2022-23.
- India mainly exports **aluminum, organic chemicals, fish, and iron and steel** to Greece, while Greece exports **mineral fuels, mineral oils, sulfur, and aluminum foil** to India.
- India was the 'Honoured Country' at the 84th Thessaloniki International Fair (TIF) in 2019.
- **Political Relations:**
 - Diplomatic relations were established in May 1950. Greece opened its embassy in Delhi in 1950, and India opened its embassy in Athens in 1978.
 - Both countries have supported each other on issues of core national interest, such as Kashmir and Cyprus.
 - Greece favors the expansion of the **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)**, with India as a permanent member.
- **Defence Relations:**
 - Defence cooperation accelerated in 1998, encompassing military training, joint exercises, and defence industry collaboration.
 - The Indian Air Force participated in EXERCISE INIOCHOS-23.
- **Cultural Relations:**
 - Dimitrios Galanos, a Greek, became the first European Indologist, translating Hindu texts into Greek and compiling a Sanskrit-English-Greek dictionary.
 - A "Dimitrios Galanos" Chair for Hellenic Studies was established at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi.
 - The Indian Council for Cultural Relations offers annual scholarships for Greek students.
- Prof. Nicholas Kazanas, a distinguished Greek Indologist, received the prestigious Padma Shri award in 2021.

PRACTICE QUESTION:

- Q. "Discuss the recent upgrade of India-Greece relations to a strategic partnership. What are the key areas of cooperation, and how do historical and cultural ties influence their bilateral relations?"

33. INDIA IN AFRICA FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY

CONTEXT: As a key player in global forums like BRICS and the G-20, India has the potential to leverage its position to foster stability and growth in Africa.

Challenges Faced by African Countries

- **Misgovernance:** Many African nations suffer from corruption, nepotism, and lack of accountability, undermining state institutions and creating public discontent.
- **Unplanned Development:** Rapid population growth, urbanization, environmental degradation, and resource scarcity require careful planning to ensure sustainable development.
- **Dominance of Ruling Tribes:** Ethnic and tribal diversity often leads to conflict, with ruling tribes monopolizing power and resources, fueling resentment and rebellion.
- **Inter-Tribal Scrimmage:** Clashes over resources like land and water, exacerbated by climate change, result in loss of life and property, creating humanitarian crises.
- **Terrorism:** Islamic extremism and terrorism, linked to global networks like Al-Qaeda and ISIS, destabilize regions and exploit local grievances.
- **Changing Climate:** Rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, and desertification pose serious challenges to livelihoods, food security, and health.

- ▶ **Runaway Food Inflation:** High food prices driven by supply shocks, market distortions, and currency depreciation reduce access to food for millions.
- ▶ **Urbanization and Youth Unemployment:** Rapid urbanization leads to slums, pollution, and social exclusion, while high youth unemployment fuels social unrest.
- ▶ **External Interventions:** Military interventions by external powers often worsen situations, supporting dictatorships to protect economic interests.
- ▶ **Return of Military Generals:** Military leaders have regained power in several countries, dividing armed forces and competing for control.
- ▶ **Regional and Continental Dynamics:** Regional organizations struggle to enforce stability when member states have military governments.
- ▶ **China's Changing Role:** China's investments have driven growth, but reliance on exporting raw materials makes African economies vulnerable to shifts in China's priorities.
- ▶ **Debt Concerns:** China's Belt and Road Initiative has led to high levels of debt in some African countries.
- ▶ **Geopolitical Tensions:** Historical and economic ties with former colonial powers and geopolitical tensions affect Africa's stability and development.
- ▶ **Economic Challenges:** Economic downturns in global economies limit engagement with Africa, affecting development aid, investment, and trade.
- ▶ **Focus on Migration:** Europe's focus on curbing illegal migration can overshadow broader development and stability concerns.

■ Impact on India

- ▶ **Economic Impact:** India's trade and investment ties with Africa are affected by instability. India-Africa trade reached USD 98 billion in 2022-23, with India as the fifth-largest investor. India has provided over USD 12.37 billion in concessional loans and completed numerous development projects.
- ▶ **Security Impact:** Stability in the Horn of Africa is crucial for India, connecting the Indian Ocean to the Suez Canal. India participates in peacekeeping missions and counter-terrorism efforts in Africa, providing training and capacity-building to African security forces.
- ▶ **Diplomatic Impact:** India's long-standing partnership with Africa is based on mutual respect and cooperation, engaging through platforms like the India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) and the International Solar Alliance (ISA).
- ▶ **Humanitarian Impact:** India has a large diaspora in Africa and provides humanitarian assistance in conflicts, disasters, and epidemics.

■ How India Can Help Africa?

- ▶ **Political Support:** India can use its diplomatic influence to support peace, democracy, and development in Africa, advocating for African interests in global forums and fostering regional cooperation.
- ▶ **Economic Partnership:** Enhancing trade and investment ties, providing concessional loans, and sharing best practices in agriculture, rural development, microfinance, and digital economy.
- ▶ **Security Cooperation:** Strengthening security cooperation by providing training, equipment, and intelligence, contributing to peacekeeping missions, and collaborating on counter-terrorism.
- ▶ **Science, Technology, and Innovation Collaboration:** Supporting scientific research and development projects, facilitating technology transfer, and promoting innovation exchange.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

Q. The increasing interest of India in Africa has its pros and cons. Critically examine. (2015)

PRACTICE QUESTION:

Q. "Discuss the challenges faced by African countries and analyse how India can leverage its strategic position to foster stability and growth in Africa. What are the potential impacts of these challenges on India?"

34.INDIA IN ARCTIC REGION

CONTEXT: Murmansk, often referred to as the capital of the Arctic Region and the starting point of the Northern Sea Route (NSR), is seeing a rising trend in Indian cargo traffic.

▣ Significance of the Arctic for India

▸ Untapped Hydrocarbon Reserves:

- The Arctic region holds the largest unexplored reserves of hydrocarbons, estimated to contain over 40% of the current global reserves of oil and gas.
- Rich deposits of coal, gypsum, diamonds, zinc, lead, placer gold, and quartz are also present.
- These resources can potentially address India's energy security needs and deficiency of strategic and rare earth minerals.
- However, India's Arctic Policy of 2022 emphasizes economic development guided by UN Sustainable Development Goals.

▣ India's Historical Engagement:

- India's Arctic engagement began with the signing of the Svalbard Treaty in 1920.
- India has conducted extensive scientific research in atmospheric, biological, marine, hydrological, and glaciological studies.
- Key initiatives include the Himadri research station, multi-sensor moored observatory, and the northernmost atmospheric laboratory.
- India became an observer-state of the Arctic Council in 2013, strengthening its Arctic presence.

▣ Geographical Significance:

- The Arctic plays a crucial role in circulating the world's ocean currents and maintaining global temperature balance through its sea ice, which reflects sunlight back into space.

▣ Environmental Significance:

- The Arctic and the Himalayas, though geographically distant, share similar environmental concerns.
- Studying the Arctic meltdown helps scientists understand glacial melt in the Himalayas, referred to as the 'third pole', which holds the largest freshwater reserves after the North and South Poles.
- India launched its first scientific expedition to the Arctic Ocean in 2007 and established the Himadri research base in the Svalbard archipelago.

▣ Russia's Role in North Sea Route Development:

- The Arctic's icebound nature requires icebreaking assistance for safe navigation, provided by Russia's nuclear-powered icebreaker fleet.
- Rosatom, the NSR infrastructure operator, oversees this fleet, ensuring year-round operation.
- Russia's ambitious plans to enhance NSR cargo traffic rely heavily on this icebreaker fleet.

▣ Driving Factors for India's NSR Engagement:

- Increasing cargo traffic along the NSR, which grew by approximately 73% during 2018-2022, aligns with India's rising imports of Russian crude oil and coal.
- The NSR's potential as a transit route suits India's trade-heavy economy.
- The Chennai-Vladivostok Maritime Corridor (CVMC) project promises a shorter and more efficient trade route, boosting India's interest in the NSR.
- India also seeks to balance the potential collective influence of China and Russia over the NSR.

▢ Future Developments and Collaborations:

- ▶ Russia's NSR development plan aims for significant cargo traffic growth by 2035.
- ▶ The CVMC project aims to link India and Russia via the NSR, promising reduced transport times and enhanced trade efficiency.
- ▶ An upcoming workshop between India and Russia is expected to advance the CVMC project.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. "Discuss the strategic significance of the Arctic region for India and analyse the potential benefits and challenges of India's involvement in the Northern Sea Route (NSR)."

35. INDIA-US STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP (JET ENGINE DEAL)

CONTEXT: During the Indian Prime Minister's state visit to the US, a significant agreement was announced between General Electric (GE) and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).

▢ Key Highlights

- ▶ **GE's F414 Engine:**
 - The F414 engine is a turbofan engine used by the US Navy for over 30 years.
 - Equipped with dual-channel full authority digital engine control (FADEC), a six-stage high-pressure compressor, advanced high-pressure turbine, and a "fueldraulic" system for nozzle area control.
 - Offers exceptional throttle response, excellent afterburner light and stability, and unrestricted engine performance.
 - Powered military aircraft in eight nations, making it a trusted choice for modern fighter jets.
- ▶ **India's Engine Requirements:**
 - The F414 engine is significant for India, especially for the LCA Tejas Mk2.
 - The Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) of the DRDO selected the India-specific version of the engine, known as F414-INS6, for the LCA Tejas Mk2.
 - This decision reflects India's aim to bolster its indigenous defence capabilities and reduce dependence on foreign suppliers.
 - Prospects of utilizing F414 engines for the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA), India's ambitious fifth-generation fighter aircraft.
- ▶ **LCA Tejas Mk2:**
 - The LCA Tejas Mk2 is an upgraded version of the indigenous fighter aircraft developed in India.
 - Capable of carrying eight Beyond-Visual-Range (BVR) missiles simultaneously and integrating both native and advanced weapons from other countries.
 - Offers improved range and mission endurance compared to its predecessor.
 - Intended to replace Jaguars, MiG-29s, and Mirage 2000s as they retire in the coming decade. Manufacturing has already begun, with the aircraft expected to be rolled out by 2024.

▢ Significance of the India-US Jet Engine Deal

- ▶ **Self-Reliance in Critical Technologies:**
 - Manufacturing engines for combat aircraft requires advanced technology and metallurgy, mastered by only a few countries (US, Russia, UK, France).

- Despite efforts, India has not been able to join this list, making the deal pathbreaking.
- Traditionally, countries with this technology have been unwilling to share it, highlighting the significance of this agreement.
- **Component of iCET:**
 - The agreement was discussed during talks between India's Defence Minister and the US Secretary of Defence and highlighted in India's National Security Advisor's meeting with his US counterpart during the operationalization of the US-India iCET.
- **Development Efforts by DRDO:**
 - The DRDO's Gas Turbine Research Establishment (GTRE) initiated the development of the GTX-37 engine and the ambitious Kaveri engine project in 1989.
 - Despite extensive testing, the engines did not meet the requirements for fighter aircraft, making this deal crucial for India's defence capabilities.
- **End of Technology Denial Regime:**
 - The pact marks the end of what former PM of India described as the "technology denial regime" imposed by the West.
 - Following the Nuclear Suppliers' Group's waiver to the Indo-US nuclear deal, this jet engine technology transfer agreement is another milestone in India's journey toward technological self-reliance.

■ India's Recent Developments in the Defence Sector

- **Indigenous Developments:** Successful testing of indigenous weapons and systems, including the Rustom-2 drone, Light Combat Helicopter, Man Portable Anti-Tank Guided Missile, Agni-5 intercontinental ballistic missile, and Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft.
- Launch and commissioning of indigenous naval vessels, including INS Karanj submarine, OPV Vijaya patrol vessel, INS Dhruv nuclear missile tracking ship, and INS Himgiri stealth frigate.
- **Defence Collaboration with Other Countries:** Procurement and signing of contracts for defence equipment from foreign countries, such as Barak missiles and Precision Guided Munitions from Israel, S-400 air defence systems from Russia, and Rafale fighter jets from France.
- India is also in discussions with global jet engine makers like Safran SA of France and Rolls-Royce of the United Kingdom for technology transfer for the AMCA.

PRACTICE QUESTION

- Q. "Discuss the significance of the recent India-US jet engine technology transfer deal in the context of India's defence capabilities. How does this agreement reflect on India's broader strategic objectives and technological ambitions?"

36. ATLANTIC DECLARATION

CONTEXT: The United States and the United Kingdom have announced the Atlantic Declaration for a Twenty-First Century U.S.-UK Economic Partnership.

■ Major Highlights of the Atlantic Declaration

- The Atlantic Declaration focuses on building a resilient, diversified, and secure supply chain, reducing strategic dependencies.
- The partnership aims to leverage the energy transition and technological breakthroughs to drive shared growth, create employment opportunities, and uplift communities.

- ▶ **Atlantic Declaration Action Plan (ADAPT):** The ADAPT sets forth a comprehensive strategy to enhance economic growth, competitiveness, and resilience while prioritizing workers, businesses, climate, and national security.
- ▶ The plan encompasses five key pillars and involves regular high-level meetings to drive progress and increase ambition over time.

▣ **Five Pillars:**

- ▶ **Leadership in Critical and Emerging Technologies:** Sharing best practices in areas such as artificial intelligence, quantum computing, biotechnology, and advanced manufacturing.
- ▶ **Cooperation on Economic Security and Technology Protection:** This includes sharing information and best practices on cybersecurity, supply chain resilience, and technology governance.
- ▶ **Partnering on an Inclusive and Responsible Digital Transformation:** Collaborating on digital skills training and workforce development to ensure the readiness of individuals for the digital economy.
- ▶ **Building the Clean Energy Economy of the Future:** Focusing on the development and implementation of clean energy technologies.
- ▶ **Strengthening Alliance across Defence, Health Security, and Space:** Enhancing cooperation in defence, health security, and space exploration.

▣ **Major Pillars of UK-US Partnership**

- ▶ **Historical Significance of the U.S.-UK Partnership:**
 - The partnership between the US and the UK has played a pivotal role in leading on global issues.
 - The signing of the Atlantic Charter in 1941 laid the foundation for a rules-based international order.
 - The New Atlantic Charter signed in 2021 reaffirmed the commitment to shared values and refreshed the vision of the partnership.
- ▶ **Political Affairs:**
 - The two countries are close allies in NATO and other multilateral organizations such as the UN, the G7, and the G20.
- ▶ **Economic Ties:**
 - The United States is the largest source of direct investment in the United Kingdom.
 - The United Kingdom is also the single largest investor in the United States.
- ▶ **Security and Defence Cooperation:**
 - The United States and the United Kingdom have a long history of joint military operations and intelligence sharing, dating back to World War I and World War II.
 - The two countries are part of the Five Eyes intelligence alliance, along with Australia, Canada, and New Zealand.
 - Significant steps have been taken to implement AUKUS, including supporting Australia's acquisition of conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines.
 - The U.S.-UK Indo-Pacific Dialogue promotes closer coordination to support a free and open region.
 - Collaboration with ASEAN, Pacific Islands, and trilateral joint exercises contributes to regional peace, stability, and technological advancement.

PRACTICE QUESTION

- Q. "Discuss the significance of the Atlantic Declaration for the Twenty-First Century U.S.-UK Economic Partnership. How does this declaration aim to address current global challenges, and what are its potential implications for the global order?"**

37. OUTER SPACE TREATY

CONTEXT: The United Nations (UN) has released a policy brief titled “For All Humanity — The Future of Outer Space Governance,” recommending the development of a new treaty to ensure peace, security, and the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

▢ Key Highlights of the Policy Brief

- ▶ **Increasing Satellite Launches:**
 - There has been an exponential increase in satellite launches over the past decade, driven by both government and private sector participation.
 - In 2013, there were 210 new launches, which increased to 600 in 2019, 1,200 in 2020, and 2,470 in 2022.
 - Countries like the United States, China, India, and Japan are leading the way in space activities, including manned missions, lunar exploration, and resource exploitation.
 - NASA, through its Artemis mission, plans to land the first woman and the next man on the Moon.
 - The Moon’s rich deposits of helium-3, asteroids with abundant deposits of valuable metals like platinum, nickel, and cobalt, and other planetary resources are attractive for countries.
- ▶ **Lack of International Framework:** There is currently no agreed international framework on space resource exploration, exploitation, and utilization.
- ▶ **Coordination and Space Traffic Management:** The current coordination of space traffic is fragmented, with different national and regional entities employing varying standards and practices. The lack of coordination poses challenges for countries with limited space capacity.
- ▶ **Space Debris and Environmental Concerns:** The proliferation of space debris is identified as a significant issue, with thousands of objects posing threats to operational spacecraft. The UN calls for legal considerations related to jurisdiction, control, liability, and responsibility for environmental pollution caused by space debris. Technology to remove space junk is being developed, but the legal aspects require attention.

▢ Recommendations

- ▶ **New Treaty for Peace and Security:** The UN recommends the negotiation and development of a new treaty to ensure peace, security, and the prevention of an arms race in outer space. This treaty would establish international norms, rules, and principles to address emerging threats and promote responsible space activities.
- ▶ **Coordinated Space Situational Awareness:** Member states are urged to establish an effective framework for coordinating space situational awareness, space object manoeuvres, and space events. This coordination will enhance the safety and security of space operations.
- ▶ **Space Debris Removal Framework:** The UN calls for the development of norms and principles for space debris removal, considering both legal and scientific aspects. An effective framework for sustainable exploration, exploitation, and utilization of space resources, particularly on the Moon and other celestial bodies, is recommended.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. Question: “Examine the significance of the UN policy brief ‘For All Humanity — The Future of Outer Space Governance’ in the context of current global space activities.”

3

INDIA AND ITS NEIGHBORHOOD- RELATIONS

1. INDIA-CHINA BORDER DISPUTE (ARUNACHAL PRADESH)

CONTEXT: China renamed several locations in Arunachal Pradesh, prompting a strong response from India. India rejected these “invented” names, asserting that Arunachal Pradesh “is, has been, and will always be” an integral part of India.

▣ China's Renaming Move:

- ▶ The Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs released the fourth list of standardized geographical names for Zangnan, the Chinese name for Arunachal Pradesh, which Beijing claims as part of South Tibet.
- ▶ India had similarly reacted sharply in April 2023 when China released the third list of standardized names for 11 places in Arunachal Pradesh.

▣ Background of the India-China Border Dispute:

- ▶ The India-China border dispute involves complex territorial disagreements along their 3,488-kilometer shared border.
- ▶ **Key Disputed Areas:**
 - **Aksai Chin:** Administered by China as part of its Xinjiang region, while India considers it part of Ladakh. This area is strategically significant due to its proximity to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).
 - **Arunachal Pradesh:** China claims the entire state, referring to it as “South Tibet.” India administers this region as a northeastern state and considers it an integral part of its territory.
- ▶ **No Clear Demarcation:** The border is not clearly demarcated, and there is no mutually agreed Line of Actual Control (LAC) along certain stretches, leading to frequent tensions.

❑ Military Standoffs:

- The border dispute has led to several military standoffs, including the 1962 Sino-Indian War.
- Recent faceoffs include the 2017 Doklam standoff, the 2020 Galwan Valley clash, and the 2022 Tawang skirmish.

❑ India's Response to China's Aggressive Measures:

- **Global Strategic Alliances:**
 - **QUAD:** A partnership among India, the US, Japan, and Australia focused on democratic values and maritime security.
 - **I2U2:** A new grouping of India, Israel, the USA, and the UAE, strengthening India's geopolitical standing.
 - **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC):** An alternative trade route to China's BRI, enhancing India's presence in the Arabian Sea and the Middle East.
 - **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC):** A 7,200 km corridor linking the Indian Ocean, Persian Gulf, and Caspian Sea, countering China's influence in the region.
- **India's Necklace of Diamonds Strategy:**
 - In response to China's String of Pearls strategy, India is enhancing its naval presence, expanding military bases, and strengthening diplomatic ties with regional nations.
- **Infrastructure Projects Along Borders:**
 - India is upgrading its border infrastructure with projects worth Rs 2,941 crore completed by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO). These include 36 projects in Arunachal Pradesh, 26 in Ladakh, and 11 in Jammu and Kashmir.
- **Cooperation With Neighbors:**
 - India is fostering regional partnerships, such as supporting the development of the Gelephu mindfulness city in Bhutan and enhancing ties with Nepal through power pacts and cross-border transmission lines.

❑ Previous Efforts to Settle Indo-China Border Disputes:

- **Shimla Agreement of 1914:** An agreement signed by British India and Tibet to demarcate the boundary, which China did not recognize.
- **Panchsheel Agreement of 1954:** A doctrine for mutual respect of sovereignty and territorial integrity, which faced challenges during the 1962 Sino-Indian War.
- **Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility (1993):** Called for a renunciation of force and recognition of the LAC.
- **Agreement on Confidence Building Measures (1996):** Included non-aggression pledges and prior notification of large troop movements.
- **Border Defence Cooperation Agreement (2013):** Aimed to prevent incidents like the Depsang Valley face-off and enhance mutual understanding.

❑ Way Forward:

- **Upgrade Border Infrastructure:** Invest in roads, bridges, airstrips, and communication networks to enhance mobility and response capabilities.
- **Modernize Armed Forces:** Equip the military with advanced technology and surveillance capabilities to monitor and respond to border incidents effectively.
- **Strengthen Alliances:** Fortify partnerships with like-minded nations and regional organizations to address China's assertiveness collectively.
- **Diversify Economic Ties:** Reduce reliance on China by exploring trade agreements and partnerships with other countries to bolster economic resilience.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. Discuss India's strategic responses to counter China's aggressive measures, including its global strategic alliances and infrastructure projects along the border.

2. CHINA-TAIWAN DISPUTE AND INDIA

CONTEXT: China continues to assert its sovereignty over Taiwan, viewing it as part of its territory and insisting on eventual reunification, by force if necessary.

■ China-Taiwan Conflict

► Historical Context:

- **Early Control:** Taiwan came under Chinese control during the Qing dynasty but was ceded to Japan after China lost the First Sino-Japanese War in 1895.
- **Post-WWII:** China regained control of Taiwan in 1945 after Japan's defeat in World War II. However, the Chinese Civil War led to the Nationalists fleeing to Taiwan in 1949, establishing the Republic of China (ROC), while the Communists established the People's Republic of China (PRC) on the mainland.
- **One-China Policy:** Both the PRC and ROC claim to represent the legitimate government of China. The PRC asserts sovereignty over Taiwan and insists that there is only one China, with Taiwan as part of it.

► Present Context

- **International Recognition:** Most countries, including the United States, recognize the PRC as the legitimate government of China and acknowledge the One-China Policy. However, they maintain unofficial relations with Taiwan, often in the form of economic and cultural ties.
- **Taiwan's Identity:** Taiwan has developed its own government, constitution, and democratic system. Many Taiwanese identify as Taiwanese rather than Chinese.
- **Cross-Strait Relations:** Relations between Taiwan and mainland China have fluctuated, with periods of tension and cooperation, particularly in economic matters.
- **Military Threats:** China has not ruled out the use of force to reunify Taiwan and has modernized its military capabilities, raising concerns in Taiwan and internationally.
- **International Community:** The Taiwan issue is sensitive in international relations, with many countries balancing their relations with China and their support for Taiwan's security and democracy.

■ Strategic Significance of Taiwan:

- **Geopolitical Location:** Taiwan's strategic position in the western Pacific Ocean provides a gateway to Southeast Asia and the South China Sea, critical for global trade and security.
- **Military Significance:** Taiwan's proximity to China makes it crucial in military planning for regional powers. Control over Taiwan would enhance China's ability to project power into the western Pacific, potentially threatening US allies like Japan and South Korea.
- **Economic Importance:** Taiwan is a major player in the global semiconductor and electronics industries, producing over 60% of the world's semiconductors and over 90% of the most advanced ones.

■ Different Aspects of the China-Taiwan Conflict in Present Times:

► China's Concerns:

- **One China Policy Challenged:** Taiwan's diplomatic relationships and membership in intergovernmental organizations challenge the One-China Policy.

- **Agreements/Exercises Countering China:** Initiatives like AUKUS and the Malabar Exercise address the strategic imbalance caused by China's rise.
 - **Strategic and Defence Support to Taiwan by the US:** The US supports Taiwan through arms sales and military cooperation.
 - **India's Stand on the Issue:**
 - **Recognizes One-China Policy:** India has accepted the One-China Policy since 1949 but insists on a reciprocal acknowledgment of "One India" policy.
 - **Starting Diplomatic Relations:** India and Taiwan maintain representative offices in each other's capitals functioning as de facto embassies.
 - **Opening Third TECC Centre in India:** Taiwan plans to open its third Taipei Economic and Cultural Centre in Mumbai to enhance economic linkages.
 - **US vis-a-vis- China over Taiwan:**
 - **Anti-Secession Law:** China's 2005 law allows for non-peaceful means to prevent Taiwan's separation. The US is required to assist Taiwan under the Taiwan Relations Act if coerced or attacked by China.
 - **Recent Developments:** The election of pro-independence President Tsai Ing-wen and Taiwan's economic dependence on China add complexity to the issue.
- **Why does India not want the Conflict to Escalate?**
- **Trade and Economic Concerns:** India and Taiwan have significantly expanded trade and are exploring a free trade agreement. Taiwan is crucial for India's semiconductor and electronics industries.
 - **Disruptions Due to War:** A conflict would cripple global trade, affecting Asia and West Asia. A conflict could cost over 10% of global GDP, severely impacting India.
 - **Spill-Over Effects Across Borders:** A broader war could ignite tensions on the India-China border and disrupt regional stability. There is a potential risk of nuclear escalation in a prolonged conflict.
 - **Worsening India's Long-term International Position:** A Chinese victory over Taiwan could undermine regional security and US credibility, affecting India's strategic environment.
 - **Promoting Arms Race in the Neighborhood:** A diminished US influence could lead to an arms race and increased Chinese aggression in the Indian Ocean.
- **Options Available for India in Managing the Escalating Conflict:**
- **Maintaining Military Balance in the Taiwan Strait:** Nations can help maintain a balance to prevent Beijing from using military action.
 - **Reconsidering One-China Policy:** Differentiate between ties with China and Taiwan.
 - **Following a Collaborative Approach:** Establish clear boundaries to prevent Chinese aggression.
 - **Exploring Different Policy Options:**
 - **International Law Arguments:** Use international law to counter Chinese claims.
 - **Building Narratives:** Promote narratives against aggression.
 - **Coordinated Diplomatic Messaging:** Work with allies to send unified messages.
 - **Economic De-risking:** Reduce economic dependence on China.
 - **Information Operations:** Support Taiwanese resilience.
 - **Military Support:** Assist US forces in the Indian Ocean.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. Discuss India's stance and strategic options in managing the escalating tensions between China and Taiwan, considering the potential economic and geopolitical implications for India.

3. BHUTAN-CHINA RELATIONS AND INDIA

CONTEXT: Bhutan's Prime Minister visited India, where both nations engaged in wide-ranging talks and signed several significant agreements, highlighting the deep-rooted ties and shared values between India and Bhutan.

▢ Key Highlights of the India-Bhutan Bilateral Talks

- **Petroleum Agreement:** India and Bhutan signed an agreement to ensure a reliable and sustained supply of petroleum products from India to Bhutan, fostering economic cooperation and growth in the hydrocarbon sector.
- **Food Safety Collaboration:** Bhutan's Food and Drug Authority and India's Food Safety and Standards Authority (FSSAI) signed an agreement to enhance cooperation in food safety measures, facilitating trade by ensuring compliance with food safety standards and reducing compliance costs.
- **Energy Efficiency and Conservation:** A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on energy efficiency and conservation was signed, demonstrating a commitment to sustainable development.
- **Border Dispute Resolution:** The visit coincides with ongoing discussions between China and Bhutan to resolve their border dispute, which has implications for regional security, particularly in the Doklam region. In August 2023, China and Bhutan agreed on a plan to address their border disagreement, followed by the formal signing of the agreement in October 2021.
- **Bhutan's Regional Economic Hub in Gelephu:** Bhutan's plans for a regional economic hub in Gelephu mark a significant step towards regional development and connectivity. This hub will focus on sustainable development, emphasizing non-polluting industries such as IT, education, hospitality, and healthcare. Gelephu holds strategic significance in fostering economic integration and trade facilitation.

▢ Significance of Bhutan for India

- **Strategic Importance:** Bhutan shares borders with India and China, making it a crucial buffer state for India's security interests. India has provided Bhutan with assistance in defence, infrastructure, and communication to maintain Bhutan's sovereignty and territorial integrity. During the 2017 Doklam standoff between India and China, Bhutan allowed Indian troops to enter its territory to resist Chinese incursions.
- **Economic Importance:** India is Bhutan's largest trading partner and major export destination. Bhutan's hydropower potential is a significant source of revenue, and India has been instrumental in assisting Bhutan in developing its hydropower projects.
- **Cultural Importance:** Bhutan, predominantly Buddhist, shares strong cultural ties with India, which has a vibrant Buddhist community alongside its Hindu majority. Many Bhutanese students come to India for higher education, and India assists Bhutan in preserving its cultural heritage.
- **Environmental Importance:** Bhutan is committed to remaining carbon-neutral, and India has been a key partner in renewable energy, forest conservation, and sustainable tourism.

▢ Challenges in India-Bhutan Relations

- **China's Growing Influence:** China's increasing presence in Bhutan, especially along the disputed border, raises concerns for India. China and Bhutan maintain friendly exchanges but have not established diplomatic relations.
- **Border Disputes:** India and Bhutan share a 699 km long border, which has been largely peaceful, though incidents of border incursions by Chinese forces have occurred.
- **Hydropower Projects:** Bhutan's hydropower sector is crucial for its economy, with India being a major partner. However, there have been concerns in Bhutan over the terms of some projects, seen as too favorable to India, leading to public opposition.
- **Trade Issues:** India is Bhutan's largest trading partner, but Bhutan has concerns over the trade imbalance, importing more from India than it exports. Bhutan seeks greater access to the Indian market to reduce this trade deficit.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. Discuss the challenges and opportunities in India-Bhutan relations, particularly in the context of China's growing influence and the evolving geopolitical landscape in South Asia.

4. NEIGHBOURHOOD FIRST POLICY

CONTEXT: India has reiterated its commitment to the Neighbourhood First Policy (NFP), particularly in light of recent shifts in global and regional political and economic landscapes.

▢ Key Elements of the policy:

- **Friendly Relations:** India aims to develop mutually beneficial relations with all its neighbours, emphasizing consultation, non-reciprocity, and tangible outcomes.
- **Enhanced Connectivity:** MoUs with South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) members ensure the free flow of resources, energy, goods, labour, and information across borders.
- **Economic Cooperation:** India actively participates in regional groupings like the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) initiative for energy development, motor vehicles agreements, and waterpower management.

▢ Significance of Neighbourhood First Policy for India

- **Countering Chinese Influence:** Collaboration with neighbouring countries aligns with India's strategic interests in countering China's influence in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), enhancing regional stability and security.
- **Support in Multilateral Fora:** Cooperation with neighbours is essential for India's leadership role as a representative of the Global South in forums like the UNSC, WTO, and IMF.
- **Ensuring Territorial Integrity:** Cooperation with neighbours is crucial for maintaining territorial integrity and combating separatist threats, as seen in the collaboration with Myanmar to address insurgency in India's North-Eastern states.
- **Enhancing Maritime Security:** Effective cooperation with Maldives, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Myanmar is vital for bolstering maritime security and countering transnational security challenges.
- **Addressing Energy Security:** Collaboration with northern neighbours like Nepal and Bhutan ensures energy security, given the critical sea routes for India's oil and gas imports.
- **Bridging Development Deficits:** Engagement with neighbours facilitates the development of India's North-Eastern states, exemplified by Bangladesh allowing the use of its ports for transit and transshipment of cargo to the North-East.
- **Leveraging Soft Power Diplomacy:** India's cultural and historical ties with its neighbours strengthen people-to-people ties and enhance its influence in the region.

▢ Challenges in India's Neighbourhood First Policy (NFP):

- **Immediate vs Extended Neighbourhood:** The dual focus on immediate and extended neighbours has sometimes diluted the emphasis on South Asian neighbours, leading to unmet goals and uncertain outcomes.
- **Bilateral Relations:** Strained relations among some regional nations have posed challenges, as seen in the limited success of SAARC agreements.
- **Security Concerns:** Permeable borders and the rise of extremism contribute to terrorist activities, necessitating enhanced border security infrastructure.
- **China's Influence:** China's growing trade relations with SAARC countries, driven by its One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative, challenge India's influence in the region.

- ▶ **Perceptions of Unequal Treatment:** Neighbours often feel that India does not treat them equally, a perception that hinders deeper cooperation.
- ▶ **Infrastructure Issues:** Poor infrastructure in border regions limits the impact of free trade and investment deals.
- ▶ **Domestic-Political Considerations:** Domestic political factors and ethnic considerations sometimes influence India's neighbourhood policy.
- ▶ **Implementation Challenges:** Delays in implementing India's Line of Credit (LOC) projects can lead to frustration and mistrust among neighbouring countries.

▢ **Suggestions for Making NFP More Effective**

- ▶ **Terrorism and Illegal Migration:** Enhance border security infrastructure and monitor demographic shifts due to illegal migration. Strengthen cooperation between the Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Home Affairs, and state governments.
- ▶ **Relations with China and Pakistan:** Engage with regional and multilateral organizations to highlight Pakistan's role in fostering terrorism and establish a common platform for countering terrorism under NFP.
- ▶ **Investment in Border Infrastructure:** Improve connectivity infrastructure such as cross-border roads, railways, and ports. Consider setting up a regional development fund for connectivity under regional frameworks.
- ▶ **Monitoring LOC Projects:** Regularly monitor LOC projects to ensure timely completion. Strengthen oversight mechanisms to maintain trust and influence in the region.
- ▶ **Defence and Maritime Security:** Enhance maritime domain awareness in the extended neighbourhood through joint military exercises and defence cooperation.
- ▶ **Development in the North-Eastern Region:** Synergize the Act East policy with NFP to improve connectivity, economic development, and security in the North-Eastern states.
- ▶ **Tourism Promotion:** Promote investment in tourism, including medical tourism, under NFP to boost regional economic ties.
- ▶ **Multilateral Organizations:** Strengthen institutional mechanisms and conduct periodic reviews of bilateral and multilateral relationship frameworks.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. Evaluate India's "Neighbourhood First Policy" in the context of its strategic, economic, and security interests. Discuss the challenges faced in its implementation and suggest measures to enhance its effectiveness.

5. INDIA-AFGHANISTAN

CONTEXT: The 6th Regional Dialogue of Secretaries of Security Councils/National Security Advisers (NSA) on Afghanistan was held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

▢ **What is the Regional Security Dialogue on Afghanistan?**

- ▶ It is a series of high-level meetings involving National Security Advisers (NSA) or senior security officials from countries in the region, including **Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, China, Russia, India, and other Central Asian states**.
- ▶ These dialogues provide platforms for discussing and coordinating regional approaches to address security challenges and promote stability in Afghanistan and the broader region.
- ▶ It follows the objective of **UNSCR 2593**.
 - This resolution, passed by the 15-member UN Security Council, calls for the prevention of Afghan territory from being used to pose threats or launch attacks against any nation.

❑ What are India's Efforts for the People of Afghanistan?

- **Educational Support:** The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) has promoted education, granting admission to over 3,000 students, including 600 Afghan girls, since August 2021.
- **Humanitarian Air Corridor:** A Humanitarian Air Corridor has been established between Delhi and Kabul to facilitate critical travel and aid delivery.
- **Humanitarian Assistance:** India has supplied several shipments of humanitarian assistance consisting of 50,000 MTs of wheat, 250 tons of medical aid, and 28 tons of earthquake relief aid.
- **Partnership with UNODC:** India has partnered with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Afghanistan to provide assistance for the welfare of the Afghan drug user population, especially women, supplying 11,000 units of hygiene kits, baby food, blankets, clothing, and medical aid.
- **Trade and Commerce:** Trade and commerce between India and Afghanistan are ongoing, including through the Chabahar port.

❑ What are the Key Issues Affecting India-Afghanistan Relations?

- **Impact on Regional Stability:** The drug trade originating from Afghanistan (golden crescent) contributes to instability and violence in the region.
- **Indian Interests and Influence:** India's strategic interests faced a setback following the Taliban's capture of Kabul in 1996 and again in 2021.
- **Economic and Infrastructure Hurdles:** Security concerns, corruption, and other challenges have impeded India's efforts to construct infrastructure and make investments in Afghanistan.
- **Attacks on Indian Nationals:** Attacks such as the bombing of a Sikh gurdwara in Kabul by ISIS-K have raised concerns for India.
- **Shift in Security Dynamics:** The US withdrawal from Afghanistan necessitated a careful reassessment of the security landscape by India.

❑ How are India's Relations with Afghanistan?

- **History:** India's policy towards Afghanistan is rooted in historical and civilizational ties, dating back centuries. The Treaty of Friendship in 1950 marked the beginning of modern diplomatic relations.
- **Economic Relations:** India has invested over USD 3 billion in critical areas such as power, water supply, road connectivity, healthcare, education, agriculture, and capacity building. Key projects include the Salma Dam and the road connecting Delaram to Zaranj.
- **Political Relations:** The Strategic Partnership Agreement, signed in 2011, strengthens India's role in rebuilding Afghanistan's infrastructure and institutions.
- **Humanitarian Assistance:** India has provided substantial food and medical aid to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and address food security issues.

PRACTICE QUESTION

- Q. Discuss India's approach to Afghanistan through the Regional Security Dialogue on Afghanistan and other diplomatic initiatives. How do India's historical, economic, and humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan reflect its strategic interests in the region?

6. INDIA-NEPAL POWER PACT

CONTEXT: In the 7th meeting of Nepal-India Joint Commission, both countries signed a long-term agreement to export power, emphasizing the strengthening of bilateral relations.

❑ **Key Takeaways from the 7th Meeting of the Nepal-India Joint Commission:**

- **Power Export Agreement:** India and Nepal agreed on a bilateral deal to export 10,000 MW of power over the next decade.
- **Cross-Border Transmission Lines Inauguration:** The 132 kV Raxaul-Parwanipur, 132 kV Kushaha-Kataiya, and New Nautanwa-Mainahiya cross-border transmission lines were jointly inaugurated.
- **Renewable Energy Cooperation:** An MoU was signed between the Nepal Electricity Authority and India's National Thermal Power Corporation Limited to enhance cooperation in renewable energy.
- **Satellite Service Agreement:** The Munal Satellite, developed by Nepali students, will be launched for free on an Indian launch rocket, as per an agreement between Nepal Academy of Science and Technology and NewSpace India Limited.

❑ **Major Areas of Cooperation Between India and Nepal:**

- **Economic Cooperation:**
 - India is Nepal's largest trade partner and source of foreign investments.
 - India provides transit for nearly all of Nepal's third-country trade.
 - India and Nepal have agreed to review and amend the Treaty of Transit and the Treaty of Trade to enhance investment and harmonize trade standards.
- **Defence Cooperation:**
 - India aids the modernization of the Nepal Army through equipment supply and training.
 - The joint military exercise 'Surya Kiran' is held alternately in both countries, with the 2023 exercise taking place in Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand.
- **Cultural Cooperation:**
 - The inaugural India-Nepal Cultural Festival was organized in Lumbini in December 2023, showcasing the rich cultural heritage of both nations with a focus on Buddhism.
- **Water Sharing:**
 - Agreements like the Koshi (1954), Gandak (1959), and Mahakali Treaty (1996) facilitate cooperation in water resource management.
- **Connectivity:**
 - India assists in upgrading roads in the Terai region and establishing cross-border rail links and Integrated Check Posts at key locations.
 - In 2021, India exported around 2200 MUs of electricity to Nepal.

❑ **Challenges to India-Nepal Relations:**

- **Boundary Dispute:**
 - Disputes over areas like the **Kalapani-Limpiyadhura-Lipulekh trijunction** and **Susta** have caused tensions.
- **China's Rising Influence:**
 - China's financial and technical assistance to Nepal in various sectors threatens Nepal's role as a buffer state between India and China.
 - Concerns over India's Agniveer scheme might lead Gorkhas to join China's People's Liberation Army.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

Q. Discuss the contentious issues that have caused the prolonged constitutional logjam in Nepal. (2012)

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. "Discuss the recent developments in India-Nepal relations, focusing on the power export agreement and other key areas of cooperation. What challenges persist, and how can both countries address them to enhance bilateral ties?"

7. ACT EAST POLICY

CONTEXT: The Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways flagged off the first batch of trial cargo vessels from Maia Inland Custom Port in West Bengal to Sultanganj Port in Bangladesh.

▢ Significance of the Trial Shipment

▸ Operationalization of Maia Terminal:

- The operationalization of the Maia Terminal is expected to be a game-changer, shifting 2.6 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) of Bangladesh-bound export cargo from road to waterways.
- The **Maia-Aricha route** (Protocol Route 5 & 6) will reduce the distance from National Waterway 1 (NW1) to Bangladesh and the North Eastern Region by 930 kilometers.

▸ Enhancing Inland Water Transport (IWT):

- IWT refers to the transportation of goods and passengers via navigable rivers, canals, lakes, and other inland waterways.
- This mode of transport utilizes watercraft such as boats, barges, and ships to move cargo and people within a country's interior regions, connecting various ports and terminals along the water routes. IWT is highly cost-effective, especially for bulk cargo like coal, iron ore, cement, food grains, and fertilizers.
- Despite its advantages, IWT's current share in India's modal mix is only 2%. The government aims to increase this share to 5% by 2030 under the Maritime India Vision (MIV)-2030.

▢ Act East Policy: An Overview

- The Act East Policy, announced in November 2014, is an upgrade of the Look East Policy.
- It is a diplomatic initiative to promote economic, strategic, and cultural relations with the vast Asia-Pacific region at different levels.
- The policy involves intensive and continuous engagement with Southeast Asian countries in connectivity, trade, culture, defence, and people-to-people contact at bilateral, regional, and multilateral levels.
- **Aim:**
 - The policy aims to promote economic cooperation, cultural ties, and developing a strategic relationship with countries in the Indo-Pacific region with a proactive and pragmatic approach.
 - It seeks to improve the economic development of the North Eastern Region (NER), which serves as a gateway to the Southeast Asia Region.

▢ Look East Policy vs. Act East Policy

- **Look East Policy:** Initiated in 1992 by former Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, the Look East Policy aimed to build relationships with Southeast Asia to bolster India's standing as a regional power and counter China's influence. Focused primarily on ASEAN countries and economic integration.
- **Act East Policy:** Expands the focus to include East Asian countries and emphasizes security cooperation alongside economic integration. Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighted the 4C's of Act East Policy: Culture, Commerce, Connectivity, and Capacity building. Security is a critical dimension, especially in the context of growing Chinese assertiveness in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean.

▢ Initiatives to Enhance Connectivity under Act East Policy

- **Agartala-Akhaura Rail Link:** Strengthening rail connectivity between India and Bangladesh.
- **Intermodal Transport Linkages:** Utilizing inland waterways through Bangladesh.
- **Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project:** Connecting the North East with Myanmar and Thailand.

- ▶ **India-Japan Act East Forum:** Collaborative projects for infrastructure modernization, hydro-electric power, and connectivity in India's North-East region.
- ▶ **Assistance during Pandemic:** Providing medicines and medical supplies to ASEAN countries.
- ▶ **Educational Initiatives:** Offering scholarships and PhD fellowships at IITs for ASEAN participants.
- ▶ **Quick Impact Projects:** Development assistance in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam focusing on education, water resources, and health.

▣ Future Prospects

- ▶ To enhance the modal share of coastal shipping and inland water transport, 46 initiatives have been identified in the **Amrit Kaal Vision 2047**. These include:
 - **Creation of Port-Based Agglomeration Centres:** Near production and demand centers.
 - **Coastal Berths Development:** Improving road, rail, and inland waterway connectivity.
 - **Operationalizing 50 Waterways by 2047:** Introducing low-draft vessel designs for enhanced efficiency and accessibility.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

- Q. Evaluate the economic and strategic dimensions of India's Look East Policy in the context of the post-Cold War international scenario. (2016)

PRACTICE QUESTION

- Q. "Discuss the significance of India's Act East Policy in strengthening regional connectivity and economic cooperation with Southeast Asia. How does the operationalization of inland water transport contribute to this policy?"

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MISCELLANEOUS

1. WORLD MIGRATION REPORT

CONTEXT: The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has recently published the World Migration Report 2024.

Reasons for Migration

- ▶ **War and Conflict:** The Russian invasion of Ukraine has displaced about 5.7 million Ukrainians by the end of 2022, making Ukraine the second-largest source of refugees after Syria.
 - Countries like Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Sudan, Syria, Yemen, and regions like Gaza illustrate the global and regional impacts of geopolitical instability.
- ▶ **Unsustainable Human Activity:** Overconsumption and overproduction linked to unsustainable economic growth, resource depletion, and biodiversity collapse are significant drivers of migration.
 - Climate change remains a critical factor, with extreme weather events and slower-moving climate challenges such as rising sea levels and intensifying water stress forcing people to relocate.

Positive Impacts of Migration

- ▶ **Economic Boost:** Migrants often earn significantly higher wages abroad, which supports local economies in their home countries, particularly at the village level.
- ▶ **Skill Development:** Migration enhances skill development, crucial for destination countries facing population declines.
- ▶ **Labor Market Benefits:** Migration helps fill labor shortages and addresses job market mismatches, often complementing rather than competing with the skills of existing workers.
- ▶ **Innovation:** Migrants are often overrepresented in innovation sectors, contributing to dynamism in arts, sciences, startups, and successful companies.

- ▶ **Economic Pressure Reduction:** Young immigrant workers help ease the pension system pressures in high-income countries with aging populations by expanding the workforce and supporting pension systems through taxes and contributions.

❑ International Migration and Long-Term Population Trends

- ▶ From 2000 to 2020, migration contributed more to population growth in high-income countries than the balance of births over deaths.
- ▶ Migration is expected to be the sole driver of population growth in high-income countries in the coming decades.
- ▶ In developing countries, temporary labor movements drive outflows, while insecurity and conflict are significant factors in countries like **Syria, Venezuela, and Myanmar**.

❑ Patterns of International Remittances

- ▶ In 2022, migrants sent an estimated USD 831 billion in remittances globally, an increase from USD 791 billion in 2021.
- ▶ Low and middle-income countries received significant remittance inflows, which have recently surpassed **foreign direct investment (FDI)**.
- ▶ **India, Mexico, China, the Philippines, and France** were the top remittance-receiving countries in 2022.
- ▶ The United States remains the top remittance-sending country, followed by **Saudi Arabia, Switzerland, and Germany**.

❑ Migration Trends Among International Students

- ▶ The number of internationally mobile students has significantly increased, with more than 6 million in 2021.
- ▶ China and India are the largest sources of internationally mobile students, with the **United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, and Canada** as top destinations.

❑ Status of Refugees and Asylum Seekers

- ▶ By the end of 2022, there were 35.3 million refugees globally, with 29.4 million under UNHCR's mandate.
- ▶ The top countries of origin for refugees were **Syria, Ukraine, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar, and others**, making up over 87% of the refugee population.
- ▶ **Turkiye** was the largest host country, followed by **Pakistan, Iran, and Bangladesh**.

❑ IOM's Role in Resettlement

- ▶ The IOM provides essential support to States in resettling refugees and humanitarian entrants.
- ▶ Through initiatives like **CRISP, IOM and UNHCR** build resettlement capacity and technical expertise in new countries.
- ▶ Collaboration with UNHCR ensures accurate resettlement data alignment.

❑ Developments in Southern Asia

- ▶ Climate change and economic factors drive migration in Southern Asia, with countries like **India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh** among the top remittance recipients.
- ▶ Political instability in Afghanistan leads to significant displacement, with neighboring countries hosting most refugees.

❑ Status of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

- ▶ As of December 2022, there were an estimated 62.5 million people internally displaced due to conflict and violence.

- ▶ Syria, Ukraine, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Colombia, and Yemen have the highest numbers of internally displaced persons.
- ▶ Natural disasters, particularly in **Pakistan**, also contributed to significant displacements.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. Discuss the multifaceted impacts of international migration as highlighted in the World Migration Report 2024.

2. MINILATERALISM

CONTEXT: The increasing Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific region has led to the formation of the 'Squad,' emphasizing the growing significance of minilateralism in global diplomacy.

- ▶ **Minilateralism:** It refers to informal, targeted initiatives by a small number of states (usually three or four) to address specific threats or issues. These arrangements are focused and temporary, without a permanent institutional structure, and rely on the voluntary and non-binding commitments of the participating states.

Reasons for the Rise of Minilateralism:

- ▶ **Global Order and Threats:** The evolving global order and changing nature of threats have highlighted the limitations of traditional multilateral frameworks.
- ▶ **US Leadership and Multipolarity:** Inconsistencies in US global leadership and the rise of a multipolar world, alongside geopolitical rivalries, have exposed weaknesses in multilateral organizations.
- ▶ **UN and WTO Challenges:** The UN Security Council's permanent membership reflects outdated power structures, and the WTO has struggled to reach consensus on complex issues.
- ▶ **Regional Variations in Global Problems:** Minilateral organizations can tailor solutions to specific regional challenges.
- ▶ **Technological Advancements:** Improved information and communications technology has facilitated flexible and targeted cooperation among states.
- ▶ **Covid-19 Pandemic:** The pandemic has driven the emergence of strategic minilaterals focused on various issues, such as supply chain resilience. For example, India set up an electronic platform to help SAARC member countries combat the pandemic.

Contrast with Multilateralism and Regional Organizations

- ▶ **Multilateralism:** Involves formal efforts by multiple states to build trust and avoid conflict through institutionalized rules and norms for a common vision of international order.
- ▶ **Regional Organizations:** Address a broad range of issues, including economic integration and security, through structured and formal cooperation, such as the European Union (EU).

Advantages of Minilaterals

- ▶ **Addressing Shared Interests:** Minilaterals allow countries with shared interests to bypass stagnant frameworks and resolve common issues effectively. For example, the BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement was conceived even when SAARC failed to facilitate a similar initiative.
- ▶ **Flexibility and Rapid Response:** Minilaterals provide a flexible and modular approach to international cooperation, allowing rapid decision-making and adaptation to changing circumstances.

- ▶ **Issue-Specific Partnerships:** Facilitate strategic alliances in regions like the Indo-Pacific, addressing regional security concerns more effectively than larger, more formal organizations.
- ▶ **Disaster Response:** Regional minilateral forums can promptly assist affected nations during disasters. For instance, India sent the INS Kesari with food and medical assistance to countries in the southern Indian Ocean as part of the **Mission Sagar** initiative.

❏ Challenges Associated with Minilateralism

- ▶ **Undermining International Organizations:** Minilaterals can lead to forum shopping, reducing accountability in global governance and weakening the enforcement of international norms.
- ▶ **Impact on Multilateral Frameworks:** Preference for minilaterals may diminish the incentive for countries to engage with multilateral organizations, impacting their relevance and effectiveness.
- ▶ **Dependence on Leadership and Bilateral Relations:** Success often relies on leadership, political will, and relations among members, which can derail initiatives with changes in leadership or strained relations.
- ▶ **Negative Impact on Non-Members:** Minilateral alliances may reduce the incentive for non-participating countries to engage with existing multilateral efforts.

FACT BOX

About Minilaterals

- Minilaterals enable like-minded countries to work together in areas that are hindered by multilaterals or bigger groups of nations.
- They are part of a new effort to transcend the traditional alliance framework.
- Minilaterals are networks, not blocs, making it possible to rethink regional geographies.
- Asia's minilaterals Examples
- The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (known as the Quad and made up of Australia, India, Japan, and the United States)
- The Australia-United Kingdom-United States pact (known as AUKUS)
 - ▶ India, Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States established the I2U2 cooperative format in 2021.

PRACTICE QUESTION

- Q. Examine the concept of minilateralism in international relations and discuss its growing significance in the context of recent geopolitical developments in the Indo-Pacific region.

3. RISING ANTI INDIA SENTIMENTS

CONTEXT: Recent developments have highlighted a growing anti-India sentiment in Bangladesh, reminiscent of the wave observed earlier in Maldives. Social media trolls have sparked controversy, leading to a diplomatic standoff between India and Bangladesh. This emerging trend underscores a significant shift in the bilateral relations between the two countries.

❏ Factors fuelling the Anti-India Wave in Bangladesh

- ▶ **Historical grievances:** Some segments of the Bangladeshi population harbor historical grievances, particularly regarding India's role in the **Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971**.

- ▶ **Perceived interference:** Recent political developments in Bangladesh, coupled with allegations of Indian interference in internal affairs (India's actively siding with Sheikh Hasina), have contributed to the anti-India sentiment.
- ▶ **Social media influence:** Similar to the situation in Maldives, social media platforms have played a pivotal role in amplifying anti-India narratives, further exacerbating tensions between the two nations.

▢ Transformation in India's global image

- ▶ **Evolving Diplomatic Alliances:** India's diplomatic engagements have expanded beyond its historical allies to include new partners, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region.
 - **Example:** The Quad alliance comprising India, the **United States, Japan, and Australia** aims to promote a free and open **Indo-Pacific**, reflecting India's strategic recalibration.
- ▶ **Economic Aspirations and Power Dynamics:** India's robust economic growth and aspirations for global leadership have influenced its foreign policy priorities.
 - **Example:** Initiatives like the '**Make in India**' campaign and participation in multilateral trade agreements signify India's ambition to enhance its economic stature on the world stage.
- ▶ **Security and Defense Cooperation:** India's focus on bolstering its defense capabilities and security partnerships has reshaped its global positioning.
 - **Example:** Defense agreements with countries like the United States and France demonstrate India's proactive approach to safeguarding its interests in an evolving geopolitical landscape.
- ▶ **Multilateral Engagements:** India's active involvement in **multilateral forums** reflects its desire to shape global discourse and policies.
 - **Example:** Leadership roles in organizations like the **United Nations** and participation in climate change initiatives highlight India's commitment to addressing global challenges.

REVIEW YEAR QUESTION

- Q. "The long sustained image of India as a leader of the oppressed and marginalised nations has disappeared on account of its newfound role in the emerging global order". Elaborate (2019)

PRACTICE QUESTION

- Q. "India's global image has transformed and it signifies its emergence as a dynamic player in the evolving geopolitical landscape" Comment

4. THE GLOBAL SOUTH

CONTEXT: The unwillingness of many leading countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America to stand with NATO over the war in Ukraine has brought to the fore once again the term "Global South."

▢ What does the term "Global South" mean?

- ▶ The term "Global South" is not geographical. In fact, the Global South's two largest countries – China and India – lie entirely in the Northern Hemisphere.
- ▶ Rather, its usage denotes a mix of political, geopolitical and economic commonalities between nations.

❑ What are the major commonalities?

- **Colonisation:** Major commonality between the **South countries** is that most have a history of colonisation, largely at the hands of **European powers**.
- **Exclusion from prominent organizations:** The **region's historical exclusion** from prominent international organisations – such as from the permanent membership of the **United Nations Security Council**.
- **Economic issues:** In general, they are poorer, have higher levels of income inequality and suffer lower life expectancy and harsher living conditions than countries in the “Global North”.

Categorisation:

- **First world:** Advanced capitalist nations
- **Second world:** Socialist nations led by the Soviet Union
- **Third world:** Developing nations

- ‘**Global North**’ refers loosely to countries like the US, Canada, Europe, Russia, Australia and New Zealand
- ‘**Global South**’ includes countries in Asia, Africa and South America.

❑ What is India's approach to Global South?

- India's rich history as the leader of the Non-Aligned Movement and its economic and geopolitical clout in global politics are propelling New Delhi to play a greater role in global geopolitics. Assuming the position of G-20 Presidency in 2022-23 is a testimony to this.
- **Narrative to global geopolitics:** Being the leader of the Global South, India provides a voice to the Global South Movement.
 - Whether on the question of climate change, energy transition, taking a stand on normative issues or protecting the Global South's interest, India played a proactive role in international forums over the years.
- **Forerunner in sustainable energy transitions:** India is the forerunner in global and sustainable energy transitions. At various Climate Summits, India resisted the onslaught from the Global North and protected the interest of the Global South be it on the question of climate financing, limiting the emission norms.
- **Significant contributions to the arena of energy transition framework** are
 - International Solar Alliance
 - push to hydrogen-based fuel
 - technical assistance to the countries of the Global South in harnessing solar energy and hydrogen-based fuel
- **Democratising international relations:** Reforming the United Nations and broadening the UN Security Council's permanent membership are some of the constant demands India has raised over the years.

❑ How Global South can help to resolve the emerging issues in the global geopolitics?

- **Resource + Security:** Supply securitisation of food and energy, technology transfer, energy transition, and climate change issues and their impact on the global community.
- **Genuine multilateralism:** The other important challenge is in the form of the need for “genuine multilateralism” of the institutions of global governance to provide an equitable voice to all countries.

Challenges before the Global South	Required Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Lack of adequate energy supply at an affordable price. ◦ Lack of sustainable energy transition ◦ Adversarial consequences of climate change (largely due to the historical polluters of the Global North) ◦ Lack of equitable representation from the Global South at global forums. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ There is the need to securitize food, fertilizers. ◦ There is need to ensure a sustainable energy transition which can bring overall socio-economic development to the Global South. ◦ There is a need to look at the process of climate change repercussions on the Global South from a broader perspective. ◦ Broadening the membership of the UNSC is an important step towards democratising international relations.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. "India's leadership can reshape global geopolitics and invigorate the existing global order."
Comment

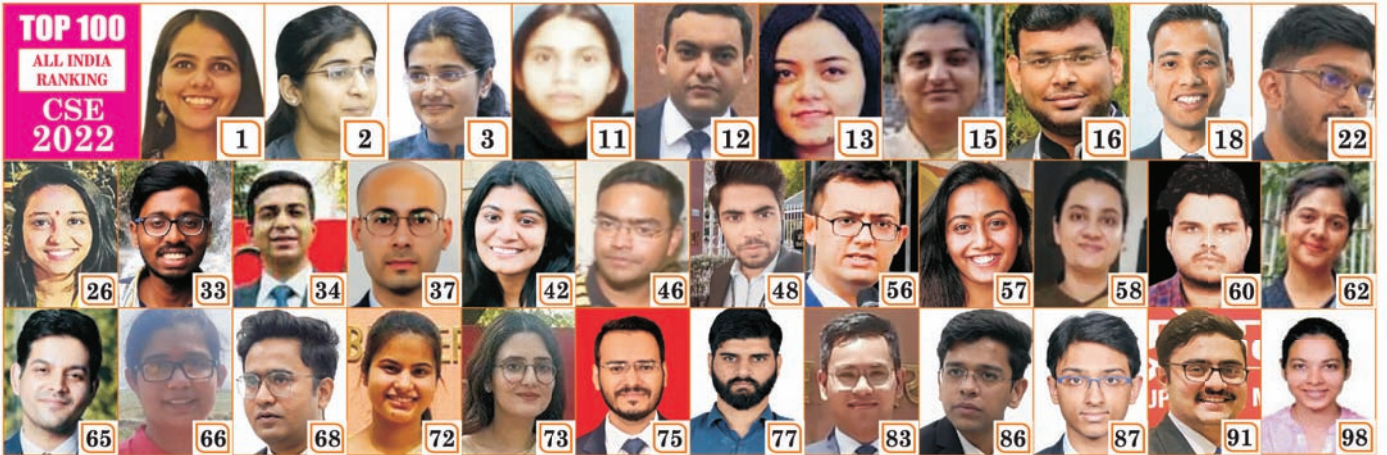


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