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# CONCISE

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Volume - II

Current Affairs for Prelims 2026  
(OCTOBER 2025- JANUARY 2026)



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## PREFACE

### Concise Prelims Current Affairs 2026

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### Maritime Leaders Conclave (India Maritime Week 2025)

Space for Notes:

#### Why in News?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the Maritime Leaders Conclave held during India Maritime Week 2025 in Mumbai (October 27–31, 2025), highlighting reforms, efficiency, and India's vision to become a global maritime hub.

#### Description:

##### About the Conclave:

- Organized by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW).
- **Theme:** "Uniting Oceans, One Maritime Vision."
- Part of India Maritime Week 2025, a flagship event showcasing India's maritime growth and blue economy vision.
- PM Modi also chaired the Global Maritime CEO Forum during the event.

#### Key Highlights:

- India's port efficiency has improved – container dwell time reduced to under three days and vessel turnaround time to 48 hours.
- Major MoUs worth thousands of crores signed in the shipping and port infrastructure sector.
- Reforms announced to align Indian maritime laws with international shipping conventions.
- Introduction of a Coastal Shipping Act to simplify trade and strengthen supply chain security.
- Focus on blue economy, sustainability, and decarbonisation of ports and vessels.
- India projected itself as a "steady lighthouse" amid global disruptions, emphasizing stability and maritime resilience.

#### Significance:

- Strengthens India's maritime governance and aligns with Sagarmala and Maritime India Vision 2047.
- Aims to enhance ease of doing business, attract global investment, and position India as a leader in ocean-based industries.

### UN Emissions Synthesis Report 2025

#### Why in News?

A UN synthesis report ahead of COP 30 in Brazil revealed that countries are on track to reduce emissions by only 17% of 2019 levels by 2035, far short of the 37–57% cuts needed to meet the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C goal.

#### Description:

- **Released by:** UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change)
- **Purpose:** Assesses collective progress of countries toward Paris Agreement goals.
- **Projected Emission Cuts:** Only 17% reduction (from 2019 levels) by 2035.
- **Required Reduction:**
  - For 1.5°C goal → 57% by 2035
  - For 2°C goal → 37% by 2035
- **NDC Updates:** Only 64 of 190 countries submitted updated NDCs; India yet to update after August 2022.
- **Projected Global Emissions (2035):** ~13 billion tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent.
- **Adaptation in NDCs:** 73% now include adaptation measures.

- **Focus Areas:**
  - Afforestation & Reforestation
  - Solar Energy & Low-Carbon Hydrogen
  - CCUS (Carbon Capture, Utilisation & Storage)
- **Global Initiative: Push to triple renewable energy capacity by 2030.**

**UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change):**

- **Established:** 1992 at the Rio Earth Summit.
- **Aim:** Stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations to prevent dangerous interference with the climate system.
- **Conference of Parties (COP):** Annual meeting of member countries to review progress and negotiate commitments.
- **Supporting Institutions:**
  - **IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change):** Provides scientific data and assessments.
  - **UNEP and WMO** assist in global environmental monitoring.

**Space for Notes:**

### Afghanistan FM Muttaqi visits Darul Uloom Deoband

#### Why in News?

Muttaqi's visit, facilitated by India, highlights personal ties to Deoband and India's use of religious diplomacy to engage the Taliban while promoting moderate Islamic influence in South Asia.

#### Description:

- **Darul Uloom Deoband:** Established 1866, UP; center of Deobandi Sunni Islam, emphasizes Hanafi jurisprudence, piety, anti-colonial activism.
- **Taliban Link:** Darul Uloom Haqqania (Pakistan), modelled on Deoband, trained Afghan fighters; Muttaqi alumnus.
- **Visit Significance:** Personal, religious diplomacy; contrasts Deoband's moderate stance (supports girls' education) with Taliban ideology.
- **Diplomatic Context:** India engages Taliban amid Pakistan-Afghanistan tensions, leveraging religious channels to assert influence.
- **Event Highlights:** 15,000 students greeted Muttaqi; 30-minute speech, private discussions with clerics and dignitaries.
- **Historical Precedent:** Similar to Rafsanjani's 1995 Lucknow visit, using religious diplomacy to strengthen India's Muslim engagement.

### ASIA'S YOUNGEST NATION JOINS ASEAN- East Timor

#### Why in News?

East Timor (Timor-Leste) becomes the newest member of ASEAN at the 47th ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur (2025).

#### Description:

At the ASEAN Summit 2025 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, ASEAN officially welcomed East Timor (Timor-Leste) as its 11th member.

PM Narendra Modi addressed the summit virtually and congratulated East Timor, calling ASEAN a "cultural partner" of India.

### About East Timor (Timor-Leste):

- Location: **Pacific Ocean**, north of Australia
- Population: **1.4 million**
- Gained independence: **2002** (after UN-supervised referendum in 1999)
- Former Portuguese colony for 400+ years
- President: **Jose Ramos-Horta** (Nobel Peace Prize, 1996)
- Major revenues: **Oil & Gas**, now diversifying economy

### Historical Background:

- Portuguese rule ended in **1975**, but Indonesia **invaded** East Timor within nine days.
- Decades of conflict followed; thousands died.
- True independence was achieved only in **2002** after UN intervention.
- Known for resilience and long struggle for sovereignty.

### ASEAN Membership Journey:

- East Timor had long sought **ASEAN membership**, aiming to join regional economic, political, and security mechanisms.
- Now part of ASEAN's framework, including:
  - **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)**
  - **ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)**

### Why It Matters?

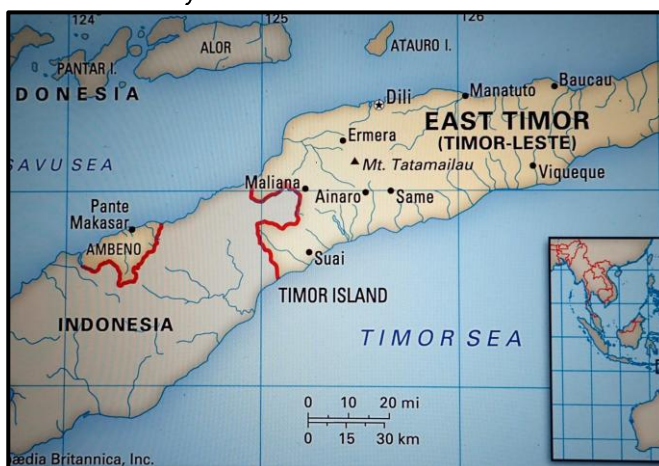
- ASEAN expands to **11 members** – growing strategic influence in the Indo-Pacific.
- Strengthens **regional integration and connectivity**.
- Brings attention to **small island developing states (SIDS)** in Asia.
- East Timor gains access to **trade, investment, and technology cooperation**.

### Challenges for East Timor:

- **42%** of the population lives below the poverty line.
- **Two-thirds** of citizens are under 30 years old.
- **Oil reserves** are depleting – urgent need for **economic diversification**.
- Requires **capacity-building and institutional strengthening** for ASEAN participation.

### ASEAN Overview:

- Established: **1967 (Bangkok Declaration)**
- Founding members: Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand
- HQ: **Jakarta, Indonesia**
- Key principles: **Consensus and Non-interference**
- 3 Pillars:
  1. Political-Security Community
  2. Economic Community
  3. Socio-Cultural Community


**Space for Notes:**

### Sharm el-Sheikh (Egypt): “City of Peace” – A Global Diplomatic Hub

Space for Notes:

#### Why in News?

In October 2025, world leaders gathered in Sharm el-Sheikh again to deliberate on ending the two-year Gaza conflict, reflecting the city’s continuing role as a neutral diplomatic platform for peace and international cooperation.

#### Description:

#### Geographical & Strategic Overview:

- **Location:**  
Sharm el-Sheikh is located on the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula, Egypt – overlooking the Straits of Tiran, which lie at the mouth of the Gulf of Aqaba.
- **Strategic Importance:**
  - The Straits of Tiran provide Israel’s only direct access to the Red Sea.
  - Due to its location, it has held great military and geopolitical significance in West Asian affairs.
- **Historical Transitions:**
  - Originally a small fishing village, it became a major Egyptian naval base in the 20th century.
  - **1956:** Captured by Israel during the Suez Crisis.
  - **1957–1967:** Placed under UN Peacekeeping Forces.
  - **1967:** Retaken by Israel during the Six-Day War.
  - **1982:** Returned to Egypt after the Egypt–Israel Peace Treaty (Camp David Accords, 1979).
  - Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak later designated it as the “City of Peace”.

#### Transformation into an International Hub:

- Post-1982, Sharm el-Sheikh developed into a major resort and conference destination, symbolizing peace and diplomacy.
- By 2000, it housed around 100 resorts, serving as a meeting ground for regional and global summits.

#### Major International Summits & Conferences Hosted:

Year	Summit / Conference	Key Highlights
1999	Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum	Signed between Israel PM Ehud Barak and PNA Chairman Yasser Arafat, mediated by US, Egypt, and Jordan. Aimed to advance Palestinian self-governance in Gaza and release prisoners.
2000	Emergency Peace Summit	Attended by Arafat, Barak, Bill Clinton, Mubarak, King Abdullah, Kofi Annan, Javier Solana – convened to address the outbreak of the Second Intifada.
2005	Sharm el-Sheikh Summit	Israel PM Ariel Sharon and PNA chief Mahmoud Abbas declared a ceasefire to end the Second Intifada.
2006, 2008, 2014	World Economic Forum (WEF) – MENA Region	Focused on economic cooperation, regional stability, climate change, and security issues in the Middle East and North Africa.

2019	1st EU–Arab League Summit	First-ever meeting between the European Union and the Arab League; discussed migration, security, and conflicts in Yemen, Syria, Libya.
2022	COP27 – UN Climate Change Conference	Led to the historic creation of a “Loss and Damage Fund” – to aid developing nations suffering from climate change impacts.

**Space for Notes:**

### Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)

#### Why in News?

The upcoming APEC Summit is expected to see a meeting between US President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping in South Korea, highlighting renewed diplomatic focus on the Asia-Pacific economic framework.

#### Description:

##### About APEC:

- **Established:** 1989
- **Type:** Regional Economic Forum
- **Objective:** To promote balanced, inclusive, sustainable, innovative, and secure growth across the Asia-Pacific by accelerating regional economic integration.
- **Nature:** Operates on non-binding commitments and voluntary consensus, without any treaty obligations.
- Focuses primarily on trade facilitation, investment liberalization, and economic cooperation among member economies.

##### Membership:

- **Total Members:** 21
- APEC terms members as “economies”, not countries – since some are not sovereign states.
- **Members:** Australia, Brunei, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Indonesia, China, Japan, South Korea, Russia, Canada, the United States, Mexico, Peru, Chile, Malaysia, Vietnam, Singapore, Thailand, and Taiwan.
- **Secretariat:** Based in Singapore.
- Member economies represent over 2.9 billion people and 60% of global GDP.

##### Key Features:

- Promotes trade liberalization, innovation, digital economy, and supply chain resilience.
- Encourages cooperation in climate action, inclusive growth, and women’s economic empowerment.
- Recent APEC initiatives focus on green transition, AI governance, and post-pandemic economic recovery.

##### Significance for India:

- India is not a member of APEC, but has long sought entry due to its strong Indo-Pacific presence.
- APEC’s evolving trade framework remains relevant to India’s interests under Act East Policy and Indo-Pacific Economic Vision.

### ASEAN–China Free Trade Area (CAFTA) 3.0 Upgrade

Space for Notes:

#### Why in News?

China and ASEAN signed the **ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (ACFTA) 3.0 Upgrade Protocol** in Kuala Lumpur to enhance cooperation in **digital economy, agriculture, and pharmaceuticals**, aiming to deepen market access and supply chain integration amid rising U.S. tariff pressures.

#### Description:

- **Signed:** October 28, 2025, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- **At:** 28th China–ASEAN Summit
- **Parties:** China and 11-member ASEAN bloc
- **Replaces:** CAFTA 2.0 (2015 upgrade; original FTA signed in 2002, implemented in 2010)

#### Key Features:

- Expands cooperation into **9 areas:** Digital economy, green economy, supply chain connectivity, standards & technical regulations, SPS measures, customs & trade facilitation, competition & consumer protection, SMEs, and economic & technical cooperation.
- **Aims:** Reduce trade barriers, boost supply chain resilience, and promote high-quality, rules-based regional trade.
- **Sectoral gains:** Agriculture, digital commerce, pharmaceuticals, logistics, and tourism.
- **Supports SMEs:** Easier access to regional markets via digital platforms.
- **China's commitments:**
  - Increase capital in **China–ASEAN Cooperation Fund**
  - Establish **China–ASEAN Digital Academy** and **AI Cooperation Platform**
  - Create **Maritime Development & Technology Cooperation Center**

#### Significance:

- Reinforces **multilateralism and regional integration** amid U.S. tariff pressures.
- Enhances **China–ASEAN supply chain and industrial cooperation**.
- Complements the **RCEP framework** and aligns with the **2026–2030 Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Plan of Action**.

### Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS)

#### Why in News?

A study by **INCOIS** shows **Sri Lanka acts as a natural barrier**, protecting India's southeastern coast from destructive long-period swell waves from the Southern Ocean, highlighting its role in coastal hazard mitigation and climate resilience.

#### Description:

- **Established:** 1999 | **Status:** Autonomous body under **Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)** | **Parent:** Earth System Science Organization (ESSO) | **HQ:** Hyderabad
- **Mandate:** Provide timely ocean information & advisory services via continuous observation and research.

#### Key Functions:

1. **Tsunami & Coastal Hazard Monitoring:**
  - Operates **Indian Tsunami Early Warning Centre (ITEWC)** for tsunamis, storm surges, high waves.
  - Designated **Regional Tsunami Service Provider (RTSP)** by **UNESCO-Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC)**.

**Space for Notes:**
**2. Advisory Services for Fisherfolk:**

- Potential Fishing Zone (PFZ) advisories.
- Short-term Ocean State Forecasts (OSF) (3–7 days).

**3. Ocean Observation & Data:**

- Maintains Ocean Observing Systems (OOS); archives data at ESSO-INCOIS Data Centre.
- Recognized as National Oceanographic Data Centre (NODC) by International Oceanographic Data Exchange (IODE).

**4. Ocean Modelling & Analysis:** Generates Global Ocean Analysis Data (GOAD) for monsoon prediction and climate modeling.

**5. Seismic & GNSS Network:** Operates Indian Seismic and Global Navigation Satellite System Network (ISGN) for seismic and geodetic data.

**6. Data Centre Roles:** National & Regional Argo Data Centre, regional hub for Indian Ocean Global Ocean Observing System (IOGOOS).

**International Collaborations:**

- Member: IOC (UNESCO) | Founding member: IOGOOS, Partnership for Observing the Oceans (POGO)
- Hosts: IOGOOS Secretariat, Sustained Indian Ocean Biogeochemistry and Ecosystem Research (SIBER) Programme Office
- Provides forecasts via Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System (RIMES) to member nations.

**About IOC:**

- Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (UNESCO) – UN body for ocean science & governance.
- Supports UN Agenda 2030 (Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs), Paris Climate Agreement, Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

**India to Host Commonwealth Games 2030**
**Why in News?**

India will host the **2030 Commonwealth Games** in **Ahmedabad**, recommended by the Commonwealth Sport executive board, marking a centenary edition and a step toward a potential 2036 Olympics bid.

**Description:**

- The proposal was supported by the **Indian Olympic Association (IOA)** and recommended by the **Executive Board of Commonwealth Sport**.
- Ahmedabad's name will be formally presented for approval at the **Commonwealth Sport General Assembly** in **Glasgow, Scotland (November 26, 2025)**.
- This is seen as a **prelude to India's bid for the 2036 Olympics**.
- India last hosted the CWG in **2010 (Delhi)**.

**About Commonwealth Games (CWG):**

- **Nature:** A multi-sport international event held **every four years** among the **Commonwealth countries**.
- **First CWG:** 1930, Hamilton (Canada).
- **India's Hosting History:** 19th CWG (2010) – New Delhi, India.

**Space for Notes:**

- **Earlier Names:**
  - *British Empire Games* (1930–1950)
  - *British and Commonwealth Games* (1954–1964)
  - *British Commonwealth Games* (1970–1974)
- **Motto:** Humanity, Equality, and Destiny.
- **Administered by:** Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF).
- **Recent host (2022):** Birmingham, UK.
- **Next (2026):** To be decided (as Australia withdrew its bid).

#### About the Commonwealth:

- **Origin:**
  - Evolved from the **1926 Imperial Conference**, where Britain and its Dominions agreed to be *equal members* within the Empire.
  - Known then as the **British Commonwealth of Nations**.
- **Head of the Commonwealth:** King George VI (first); currently King Charles III.
- **London Declaration (1949):** Allowed republics and other states to remain part of the Commonwealth – marking India's continued membership post-independence.
- **Current Members:** 56 countries across Africa, Asia, Europe, the Americas, and the Pacific.
- **Latest Members:** Gabon and Togo (joined in 2022).

#### Key Organisations of the Commonwealth:

- **Commonwealth Secretariat (London):**
  - Established in **1965**.
  - Central intergovernmental body managing Commonwealth activities.
- **Board of Governors:** Composed of representatives (usually High Commissioners) from all member states.
- **Commonwealth Foundation:** Promotes civil society and cultural exchange.

#### Significance of Hosting CWG 2030:

- Marks **100 years (centenary edition)** of the Commonwealth Games.
- Enhances India's **global sports diplomacy** and **soft power**.
- Strengthens infrastructure in Gujarat as a **potential 2036 Olympic host**.
- Boosts employment, tourism, and urban development.



## Indian Olympic Association (IOA)



**Genesis:** Established in 1927 with **Sir Dorabji Tata** (President) and **Dr. A.G. Noehren** (Secretary General)

**About:** It is a **Non-Profit Organisation** under **Societies Registration Act of 1860**, recognised by the **Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports**.

**Functions:**

- Governing body for **Olympic Movement** and the **Commonwealth Games** in India.
- Affiliated member of the **International Olympic Committee (IOC)**, **Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF)**, **Olympic Council of Asia (OCA)** & **Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC)**
- Oversees **representation of athletes or teams** participating in the Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games, Asian Games etc.

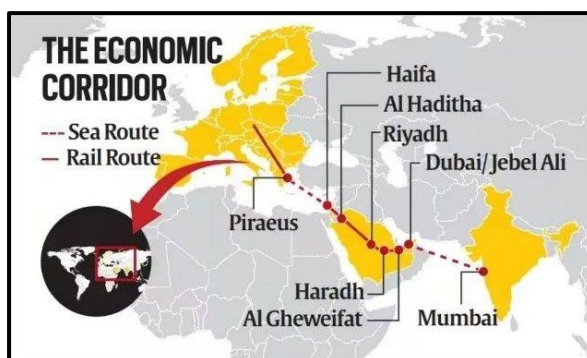
**Governed by:** A **32-member Executive Council**, headed by President

### India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)

#### Why in News?

Recently, Cyprus has shown strong interest in joining the **India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)**, indicating its intent to strengthen strategic and economic ties with India.

- It is a connectivity project that seeks to develop a seamless infrastructure of ports, railways, roads, sea lines, and pipelines to enhance trade among India, the Arabian Peninsula, the Mediterranean region, and Europe.
- It was announced in 2023 on the sidelines of the G20 meeting in New Delhi when a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between the European Union and seven countries, namely India, the US, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), France, Germany, and Italy.
- The IMEC will comprise two separate corridors, the eastern corridor connecting India to the Arabian Gulf and the northern corridor connecting the Gulf to Europe.



Space for Notes:

**Key Components:**

- High-speed freight rail across the Arabian Peninsula.
- Energy pipelines for clean hydrogen. Digital infrastructure (subsea cables, e.g., Blue Raman project: Mumbai-Genoa).
- Trade facilitation measures to boost efficiency and lower costs.

**PM Modi to Join 47th ASEAN Summit Virtually (Oct 26-28, 2025)**
**Why in News?**

PM Modi will attend the 47th ASEAN Summit virtually, skipping Malaysia due to Deepavali celebrations. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar will lead the Indian delegation. The summit focuses on strengthening ASEAN-India strategic ties amid global diplomatic engagements.

**Description:****What is ASEAN?**

- **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN):** Regional bloc of 10 countries – Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam.
- **Established:** 8 August 1967, Bangkok (Bangkok Declaration).
- **Motto:** “One Vision, One Identity, One Community”
- **Secretariat:** Jakarta, Indonesia
- **Population & GDP:** 662 million; \$3.2 trillion (2022)

**Fundamental Principles:**

1. **Mutual respect** for sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity.
2. **Non-interference** in internal affairs.
3. **Peaceful dispute resolution** & renunciation of force.
4. **Effective cooperation** among members.

**Key Highlights:**

- **Virtual participation:** Emphasizes India’s commitment to ecological security and climate change mitigation.
- **Diplomatic outreach:** Strengthening India-ASEAN Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

**Space for Notes:**

- **Discussions at Summit:**
  - Economic integration in Southeast Asia
  - Maritime security
  - Digital cooperation
  - Environmental impact assessments and biodiversity conservation

**India–ASEAN Relations:**

- **Sectoral Dialogue Partner:** Since 1992; upgraded to Strategic Partnership in 2012.
- **Trade:** ASEAN–India Trade in Goods Agreement (2009) with sustainability focus.
- **Strategic importance:** ASEAN central to India’s Act East Policy and Indo-Pacific vision, promoting renewable energy, sustainable trade, and water resource management.

**Significance for India:**

- Enhances diplomatic engagement with Southeast Asia
- Positions India as a leader in regional environmental sustainability initiatives
- Promotes trade and ecological collaboration under the ASEAN–India Strategic Partnership

**Iran Ratifies Law to Join UN Convention Against Terror Financing**
**Why in News?**

Iran ratified a law to join the **UN Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism (CFT)**, aiming to comply with **FATF standards**, ease international sanctions, regain global banking access, and stabilize its sanctions-hit economy.

**Description:**

**Announced by:** Iranian President **Masoud Pezeshkian**, who came to power on a reformist agenda to improve ties with the West and lift sanctions.

- **Purpose:**
  - Combat money laundering & terror financing.
  - Reconnect Iran’s economy with the **international banking network**.
  - Comply with FATF guidelines.
- **Background:**
  - Iran was placed on the **FATF blacklist in 2020** (along with North Korea and Myanmar).
  - Blacklisting has severely restricted Iran’s **financial transactions and trade**.
  - Recently, an **Iranian representative attended an FATF meeting in Paris** for the first time in 6 years.

**Domestic Debate:**

- **Supporters (Reformists/Moderates):**
  - View joining CFT as crucial to **reintegrate Iran** into the global financial system.
  - Expect improved trade with allies like **Russia and China**.
- **Opponents (Hardliners/Conservatives):**
  - Fear the move may **expose sensitive data** on Iran’s economy, military, and regional proxies.
  - Argue it could **limit Iran’s support** to groups like **Hamas, Hezbollah, and Houthis**, which the U.S. designates as terrorist organizations.

**Geopolitical Context:**

- Iran faces **multiple layers of sanctions**, mainly from the **United States**.
- The **UN reimposed sanctions** in September 2025 after tensions over **nuclear program violations** and alleged attacks on nuclear facilities by U.S. and Israeli forces.

**About the CFT Convention:**

- **Full Name:** *International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism (1999)*.
- **Adopted by:** United Nations General Assembly.
- **Objective:** Criminalize the provision of funds to carry out terrorist acts and enhance international cooperation in investigating and prosecuting terror-financing activities.

**Moscow Format Consultations on Afghanistan (2025)**
**Why in News?**

At the **Moscow Format Consultations on Afghanistan**, India joined Taliban, Pakistan, China, and Russia to oppose US President Trump's plan to take over Bagram air base, calling foreign military deployment in Afghanistan unacceptable.

**Description:**
**About Moscow Format Consultations:**

Aspect	Details
Launched by	Russia (2017)
Members	Russia, India, Iran, China, Pakistan, Central Asian states (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan), and Afghanistan
Objective	Promote regional consensus and peace in Afghanistan after U.S. withdrawal
Focus Areas	Security, counterterrorism, humanitarian aid, and inclusive Afghan governance

**Key Highlights of 7th Meeting (2025):**

- **Venue:** Moscow, Russia
- **Participants:** Special representatives & senior officials from Afghanistan (Taliban), India, Iran, Russia, China, Pakistan, Central Asian nations.
- **Joint Statement:**
  - Opposed **foreign military deployment** (esp. U.S. Bagram plan).
  - Stressed **non-interference** and **regional ownership** of Afghan peace.
  - Reaffirmed commitment to **counterterrorism** and **inclusive governance**.

**India's Position:**

- India opposed the U.S. base plan – citing **regional sovereignty and stability**.
- Continued **non-recognition** of the Taliban regime officially.
- Yet maintains **engagement through humanitarian aid** (food, medicines, wheat supply).
- The upcoming visit of Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi to India indicates **pragmatic engagement**.

**Strategic Significance:**

- Shows **India's shift to regional alignment** on the Afghan issue, moving beyond the U.S.-centric view.
- Reinforces **Russia-China-Pakistan regional bloc** on Afghan affairs.
- Highlights **India's balancing diplomacy** – maintaining relations with Taliban while ensuring Afghan soil isn't used for terrorism.

**ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations)**
**Why in News?**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to attend the **ASEAN summit and East Asia Summit in Kuala Lumpur (Oct 26–28)**, where he may engage with leaders from the **Quad and BRICS**, ahead of India hosting both summits next year.

**Space for Notes:**

**Overview:**

- **Founded:** 8 August 1967 (Bangkok Declaration)
- **Headquarters:** Jakarta, Indonesia
- **Type:** Regional Intergovernmental Organization
- **Members:** 10 countries
  - **Founding Members:** Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand
  - **Later Joiners:** Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, Cambodia
- **India is not a member.**

**Objectives:**

- Promote economic, political, and security cooperation in Southeast Asia.
- Accelerate economic growth, cultural development, and regional peace.
- Foster collaboration and mutual assistance on common interests.

**Leadership:**

- **Chairmanship:** Rotates annually (alphabetical order of member states).
- **2026:** Philippines to chair (instead of Myanmar, due to junta rule).

**ASEAN Summit:**

- **Highest policy-making body**, attended by Heads of State/Government.
- Held **twice annually**.
- **1st Summit:** Bali, Indonesia (1976).

**India–ASEAN Relations:**

- India is a **Sectoral Dialogue Partner (1992)** → **Full Dialogue Partner (1996)**.
- **ASEAN–India Free Trade Agreement (AIFTA):**
  - Signed in **2009**, implemented in **2010** (Trade in Goods).
  - **FTA review ongoing**, expected to conclude by **2025**.
  - ASEAN accounts for **~11.3% of India's global trade (2022–23)**.
- **India–ASEAN Summit 2023 (Indonesia):**
  - PM Modi proposed **12-point cooperation plan** including
    - Multi-modal connectivity (SEA–India–West Asia–Europe)
    - Enhanced maritime & digital cooperation.

**Need to Renegotiate FTA:**

- India's **trade deficit** with ASEAN rose from **\$7.5 bn (pre-FTA)** to **\$43.57 bn (FY23)**.
- **Chinese goods rerouting** via ASEAN causing duty losses.
- New provisions to include:
  - **Rules of Origin** (to prevent Chinese circumvention).
  - **Trade remedies** for domestic industry protection.
  - **No inclusion** of environment/labour/MSME clauses (to avoid complexity).

**Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP):**

- Signed in **2020** between ASEAN + 5 FTA partners (Australia, China, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand).
- Covers **30% of world population & GDP**.
- **India opted out** (PM Modi cited Gandhiji's *Talisman* & national interest).

**ASEAN's Myanmar Stand:**

- Condemned post-coup violence (2021).
- Adopted **Five-Point Consensus:**
  1. End violence
  2. Inclusive dialogue
  3. ASEAN special envoy
  4. Humanitarian aid
  5. Envoy visit to all parties
- Myanmar **failed to comply**; hence excluded from leadership in 2026.

**Space for Notes:**

**East Asia Summit (EAS):**

- **Established:** 2005 (Kuala Lumpur)
- **Members:** 18 (10 ASEAN + 8 partners – India, China, Russia, US, Japan, Australia, NZ, South Korea).
- **Purpose:** Strategic, political, and economic dialogue for Indo-Pacific stability.

**India's Act East Policy:**

- Announced in **2014** (successor to Look East Policy of 1990s).
- Focuses on **economic, strategic, and cultural ties** with ASEAN & Asia-Pacific.
- Supports **connectivity projects**:
  - Kaladan Multimodal Project
  - India–Myanmar–Thailand Trilateral Highway
  - International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)

**Space for Notes:**

# ASEAN

## Association of Southeast Asian Nations

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**Members (10)**

	Indonesia		Brunei (1984)
	Philippines		Vietnam (1995)
	Malaysia		Myanmar (1997)
	Singapore		Laos (1997)
	Thailand		Cambodia (1999)

**Core Aims**

- Accelerate economic and social progress.
- Promote regional peace and stability.
- Foster collaboration across fields.
- Cooperate with global organizations.

**Institutional Mechanism**

**01 ASEAN Charter**

**Effective Date:** 15 December 2008.  
**Ratification:** Fully ratified by all 10 Member States.  
**Legal Status:** Legally binding agreement, registered with the UN Secretariat.  
**New Framework:** Establishes new organs to enhance community-building.

**02 ASEAN Summit**

It meets annually to discuss regional issues and set policy directions.

**03 ASEAN Coordinating Council**

It oversees the implementation of ASEAN agreements and decisions.

**04 ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)**

It is a platform for dialogue and cooperation on political and security issues among ASEAN member countries and their partners.

**05 ASEAN Secretariat**

It supports and facilitates ASEAN's activities and initiatives.

**06 Decision Making**

It is done through consultation and consensus.

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**Formation**

8<sup>th</sup> August 1967  
Bangkok, Thailand

**Key Agreements and Forums**

<p><b>ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA)</b></p> <p>Established in 1992 to create a single market.</p>	<p><b>ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)</b></p> <p>Established in 1994 for political and security dialogue.</p>	<p><b>East Asia Summit (EAS)</b></p> <p>Created in 2005, a leaders-level forum with a varied agenda.</p>
<p><b>ASEAN Economic Community (AEC)</b></p> <p>Formed in 2015 to facilitate the free flow of goods, services, investments, capital, and labor.</p>	<p><b>Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP):</b></p> <p>Concluded in 2019, covering 30% of the world's population.</p>	

**Principles**

1. Non-interference in internal affairs of member states.
2. Consensual decision-making.
3. Maintaining "centrality" in regional matters.

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**Key Challenges**

- **Geopolitical Pressures:** Balancing influence between China and the U.S.
- **South China Sea Disputes:** Inability to provide a coordinated response to China's territorial claims.
- **Myanmar Crisis:** Criticism for not isolating the military junta in Myanmar.
- **Economic Ties:** China as the largest trading partner, while the U.S. provides strategic support.

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**Indian-ASEAN Relations**

<p><b>Importance</b></p> <p>ASEAN is central to India's Act East Policy and Indo-Pacific vision.</p>	<p><b>Current Cooperation</b></p> <p>Emphasis on political, economic, and security cooperation.</p>	<p><b>Historical Context</b></p> <p>India-ASEAN summits began in 2002; the Act East Policy was announced in 2014.</p>	<p><b>Strategic Goals</b></p> <p>Promote a free, open, inclusive, peaceful, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region.</p>
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**Recent Developments and Statements**

- **India's Commitment:** PM of India at the 20th ASEAN-India Summit emphasized ASEAN's centrality to India's Act East Policy and Indo-Pacific vision.
- **Strategic Engagement:** Continuous expansion of political, economic, and security cooperation with ASEAN.

## New START Treaty (New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty)

Space for Notes:

### Why in News?

Russia offered to voluntarily maintain limits on deployed strategic nuclear weapons for a year under the **New START Treaty**, the last remaining U.S.-Russia arms control pact expiring in **February 2026**. The move comes amid rising tensions and global nuclear modernization efforts.

### Description:

- **Type:** Bilateral nuclear arms control treaty between USA and Russia.
- **Signed:** April 8, 2010 (Prague)
- **Entered into force:** February 5, 2011
- **Extended:** In 2021 for 5 years (till February 2026)
- **Replaced:** START I (1991) and superseded SORT (2002)

### Objective:

- To limit and reduce strategic offensive arms.
- To cap nuclear warheads well below Cold War levels.
- To ensure verification and transparency between the USA & Russia.

### Key Provisions:

- Max 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads.
- Max 700 deployed ICBMs, SLBMs & heavy bombers.
- Max 800 total launchers (deployed + non-deployed).
- Includes on-site inspections, data exchange & verification.

### Significance:

- Last remaining nuclear arms control treaty between USA & Russia.
- Reduces risk of nuclear arms race.
- Supports NPT goals (Article VI – disarmament).
- First verifiable U.S.-Russia arms treaty since **START I (1994)**.



## QS Sustainability Rankings 2026

### Why in News?

The QS Sustainability Rankings 2026 revealed that **no Indian institution made it to the global top 200**, with IIT Delhi ranking 205 and other major IITs slipping. The rankings assess universities on environmental impact, social impact, and governance metrics.

**Description:**

QS Sustainability Rankings assess universities on their environmental, social, and governance impact. In the **2026 edition**, India's presence increased, but **no Indian institute entered the global Top 200**, reflecting gaps in climate action and institutional sustainability performance.

**India's Performance:**

- **0 Indian institutions** in Top 200.
- **103 Indian universities** included in the rankings.

**Top Indian Institutions:**

- **IIT Delhi** → Rank **205** (down from 171).
- **IIT Bombay** → **236**.
- **IIT Kharagpur** → **236** (down from 202).

**What the Ranking Measures:**

- Environmental impact
- Social impact
- Governance
- Sustainability-focused education & research

**Why India Ranked Low:**

- Weak climate action indicators
- Low institutional sustainability practices
- Poor governance and transparency scores
- Limited social impact performance

### QS Asia University Rankings 2026

**Why in News?**

The QS Asia University Rankings 2026 showed China overtaking India as the most represented country. India's representation rose to 294 institutions, but leading Indian universities slipped in their ranks. Only 7 Indian institutes featured in the top 100 this year.

**Description:**

- 7 Indian Institutes placed in Asia's **Top 100**.
- IIT Delhi is India's top performer at **Rank 59** (5th year in a row).
- India is now **2nd highest contributor** after China – **294 Indian institutions** ranked (only 24 in 2016).
- Ranking surge shows improvement in India's higher education quality + research capacity.
- India performed strongly in "**Papers per Faculty**" indicator – 5 Indian institutions in Asia Top 10 & 28 in Top 50.
- Sathyabama Institute of Science & Technology jumped **111 ranks** to 262nd.
- Government reforms aiding improvement: **Institutions of Eminence, NRF, Graded Autonomy, Study in India, GIAN, HEFA, NAAC reform.**
- **NEP 2020 target:** Higher Education Gross Enrollment Ratio to reach **50% by 2035**.

### Chabahar Port

**Why in News / Context?**

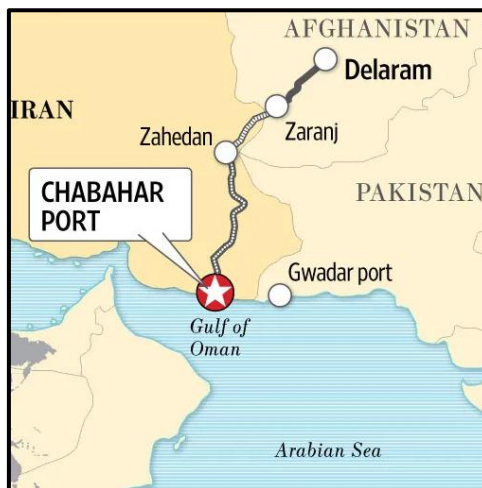
Afghanistan's Acting Commerce Minister has urged India to **expand the use of Chabahar Port** to keep trade routes functional and competitive, which is critical for **Afghanistan's access to the sea**, bypassing Pakistan, and for India's connectivity to Central Asia.

**Space for Notes:**

**Location:**

- Located in Sistan and Baluchistan province, South-eastern Iran, on the Makran Coast.
- Lies on the Gulf of Oman and outside the Strait of Hormuz → strategically important during geopolitical disruptions.
- Only deep-sea port of Iran with direct ocean access.

Rail line from Chabahar port to Zahedan along the border with Afghanistan. Zaranj-Delaram Highway in Afghanistan is a 215 km long highway that was already built in Afghanistan through assistance provided by India.


**Space for Notes:**
**Structure of the Port:**

- Chabahar Port consists of two terminals:
  - Shahid Beheshti Terminal (India is involved mainly here)
  - Shahid Kalantari Terminal

**Strategic Importance for India:**

- Provides direct connectivity to Afghanistan and Central Asia bypassing Pakistan.
- Enhances India's role in regional connectivity, energy linkages, and trade with Eurasia.
- Supports India's efforts to counterbalance Gwadar Port (Pakistan-China).

**Chabahar & INSTC:**

- Chabahar is part of the proposed International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).
- INSTC:
  - 7,200 km long multi-modal transportation network (ship-rail-road).
  - Connects Indian Ocean & Persian Gulf → Iran → Caspian Sea → Russia → Northern Europe (via St. Petersburg).
- Reduces freight cost and travel time compared to the Suez Canal route.


**Additional Connectivity:**

- India has indicated that air freight corridors between
  - Kabul-Delhi and
  - Kabul-Amritsar
 are being activated to expand trade connectivity.

## Senkaku Islands

**Space for Notes:**

### Why in News?

China sent Coast Guard ships on a “rights enforcement patrol” near the Japan-administered Senkaku Islands, escalating tensions after Japan’s PM said a Chinese attack on Taiwan could prompt a military response. Beijing demanded a retraction, amid increased Chinese military activity around Taiwan.

### Description:

- **Uninhabited island group** in the East China Sea.
- Administered by Japan (city of Ishigaki, Okinawa Prefecture).
- Claimed by:
  - **China** → Diaoyu Islands
  - **Taiwan** → Diaoyutai Islands

### Location:

- ~90 nautical miles north of Japan’s Yaeyama Islands.
- ~120 nautical miles northeast of Taiwan.

### Island Composition:

- Major islands: **Uotsuri (largest)**, Kuba, Taisho, Kitakojima, Minamikojima, and several small rocky outcrops.
- **Total area: ~6.3 sq km.**
- Largest: Uotsuri Island (~3.6 sq km).

### Geology:

- Made of **conglomerate sandstone, tuff, andesite, and lava rock.**
- Surrounding area → **highly volcanic**, with associated faults.

### Territorial & Strategic Significance:

- Located near key shipping lanes of the East China Sea.
- Potential **oil and gas reserves.**
- Close to Taiwan → central to **US–Japan–China strategic triangle.**

### Historical Facts:

- Japan incorporated them in **1895.**
- Japan claims → **no prior administration by any country.**
- Post-WWII, administered by the US until **1972**, then returned to Japan.

### What makes it a flashpoint?

- Competing **exclusive economic zone (EEZ) claims.**
- Frequent **China Coast Guard (CCG) patrols.**
- US-Japan Security Treaty covers the islands → **possible US involvement.**



## UNSC Reform & IBSA

Space for Notes:

### Why in News / Context?

At the IBSA (India–Brazil–South Africa) Summit in Johannesburg, the Indian PM stated that UNSC reforms are no longer optional but a necessity.

### Why Reform?

- Current composition reflects **post-World War II order**, not contemporary geopolitics.
- Emerging powers (India, Brazil, Germany, Japan) under-represented.
- Africa has **no permanent seat**.

### About UNSC:

#### Mandate:

- One of the **five principal organs** of the UN.
- Primary responsibility: **maintaining international peace and security**.
- Under the UN Charter: **All member states must comply with UNSC decisions** (legally binding).
- Functions include:
  - Determining **threats to peace**
  - Recommending **mediation / settlement methods**
  - Imposing **sanctions**
  - Authorising **military action**

### Composition:

#### Total members: 15

- **Permanent Members (P5)** with veto power:
  - China
  - France
  - Russia
  - United Kingdom
  - United States
- **Non-Permanent Members: 10**
  - Elected for **two-year terms** by UNGA
  - Ensures equitable geographic distribution:
    - 5 from Africa/Asia
    - 1 from Eastern Europe
    - 2 from Latin America & Caribbean
    - 2 from Western Europe & Others
  - Headquarters: **New York, USA**.

### Groupings advocating UNSC Reforms:

- **G4:** The primary objective of the G4 nations—comprising Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan—is to **secure permanent seats on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC)**.
- **L.69:** This group consists of developing countries from Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific. They advocate for UNSC reforms for greater accountability, transparency, representation and legitimacy.
- **African Union:** Consists of 55 member states of Africa. It calls for a more representative and democratic Security Council, in which Africa, like all other world regions, is represented.
- **S-5:** The S-5 or Small Five nations consist of Costa Rica, Jordan, Liechtenstein, Singapore, and Switzerland.
- **NAM:** In 1992, India and 35 other Non-Aligned states tabled a draft resolution calling for equitable representation and an increase in the membership of the Security Council.

**Against UNSC Reforms:**

**Coffee Club:** The prime movers of the club include Italy, Spain, Australia, Canada, South Korea, Argentina, and Pakistan. While Italy and Spain are opposed to Germany's bid for Security Council's permanent membership, Pakistan is opposed to India's bid.

**What is IBSA?**

- A **trilateral forum** consisting of
  - India
  - Brazil
  - South Africa
- Represents **South–South cooperation**.
- Promotes:
  - Coordination on **global issues**
  - Shared development
  - Cooperation across sectors (health, education, agriculture, energy, governance)

**Formation: Formalised on 6 June 2003 with the Brasilia Declaration.**

**Key Facts:**

- India was IBSA Chair in **2021** (“Democracy for Demography and Development”).
- **Brazil** assumed rotating presidency of IBSA on **2 March 2023**. South Africa set to assume the IBSA presidency in 2026
- IBSA functions separately from BRICS; it has:
  - Only **three** members
  - Focus on **democratic governance** and **South–South collaboration**

**Selection of the UN Secretary-General**
**Context:**

The process of selecting the next UN Secretary-General has begun, with the **UN Security Council and General Assembly jointly inviting nominations**. The next SG will serve a five-year term.

**Selection Process – Key Features:**
**(A) Nomination Stage:**

- Any **UN member state** may nominate a candidate.
- No formal eligibility criteria, but **regional rotation** is informally followed.
  - Traditionally rotates among regions; next turn is **expected for Latin America**.

**(B) Security Council Process:**

- **Straw Polls (Informal Voting):**
  - Conducted via **secret ballots**.
  - Council members mark: **Encourage / Discourage / No opinion**.
  - Helps identify candidates acceptable to the P5.
- **P5 Veto Role:**
  - Any P5 member can effectively **block** a candidate.
  - A final recommendation requires:
    - **At least 9 votes in favour**, and
    - **No veto** from any P5 member.

**P5: USA, UK, France, Russia, China.**

- **Final Recommendation:**
  - The Security Council adopts a **formal resolution** recommending one candidate to the General Assembly.

**Space for Notes:**

**(C) General Assembly Approval:**

- The **193-member UNGA** elects the Secretary-General based on the Security Council's recommendation.
- Historically seen as a **rubber stamp**, as UNGA does not alter the recommended candidate.

**Additional Facts:**

- Term: **Five years**, eligible for re-appointment.
- First UNSG: **Trygve Lie** (Norway, 1946).
- Current UNSG (until 2026): **António Guterres** (Portugal).
- SG is often selected by **consensus**, not competitive election.

**UNCTAD**
**Context / Why in News?**

UNCTAD released a new assessment showing that Gaza's economy **collapsed by 83% in 2024**, pushing its entire population into poverty and reversing decades of development gains.

**About UNCTAD:**

- UNCTAD, has been **rebranded as "UN Trade and Development"**.
- **UNCTAD**: UN's permanent intergovernmental body on trade, development, and investment issues.

**Genesis & Mandate:**

- **Established**: 1964 by the UN General Assembly.
- **Purpose**: Strengthen the participation of developing and least-developed countries in the global economy.
- **Helps Countries To**:
  - Address macro-level development challenges.
  - Diversify economies beyond commodities.
  - Reduce exposure to financial volatility.
  - Improve trade, investment, and industrial policies.

**Membership & Structure:**

- **Members**: 195 nations (India included).
- **Headquarters**: Geneva, Switzerland.

**Key Activities:**

- Supports public finance and debt sustainability through **DMFAS Programme**. (Debt Management and Financial Analysis System)
- Conducts analytical research on global trade, investment flows, digital economy, and development finance.
- **Addis Ababa Action Agenda (2015)**: Global framework for financing sustainable development. Implementation of **Financing for Development**, as mandated by the global community in the **Addis Ababa Agenda (2015)**, together with four other major institutional stakeholders like **World Bank, IMF, WTO, UNDP** (esp. on Financing for Development).

**Major Reports:**

- **Trade and Development Report**
- **World Investment Report**
- **Least Developed Countries Report**
- Other policy briefs on trade logistics, digital economy, and commodity dependence.

**Space for Notes:**

## Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

Space for Notes:

### Why in News?

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar attended the SCO Heads of State Council meeting in Moscow, calling for global “zero tolerance” toward terrorism. He also met President Vladimir Putin ahead of the upcoming India–Russia annual summit expected in early December 2025.

### Description:

- A permanent intergovernmental regional organisation.
- Founded on 15 June 2001 in Shanghai, China.
- Evolved from Shanghai Five (1996).
- Focus: Security, counterterrorism, political stability, economic & cultural cooperation.

### Headquarters & Bodies:

- Secretariat: Beijing, China.
- RATS (Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure): Tashkent, Uzbekistan.
- Official Languages: Chinese & Russian.

SCO Members (as of 2025 – 10 Members): China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India (2017), Pakistan (2017), Iran (2023), Belarus (2024).

SCO Partners: 17 countries (Observer States + Dialogue Partners merged in 2025).  
 Latest Partner: Laos (2025).

### Key Principles:

- Shanghai Spirit: Mutual trust, Mutual benefit, Equality, Respect for cultural diversity, Common development.

### SCO Objectives:

- Promote regional peace, security & stability.
- Combat the “Three Evils”: Terrorism, Separatism, Extremism.
- Strengthen economic cooperation, connectivity, energy ties.
- Promote cultural & humanitarian exchanges.
- Support multipolar, equitable global order.

### SCO Structure:

- Council of Heads of State (CHS) – Top decision-making body.
- Council of Heads of Government (CHG) – Economic cooperation.
- Council of Foreign Ministers – Coordinates foreign policy.
- Council of National Coordinators – Administrative coordination.
- Secretariat (Beijing) – Executive body.
- RATS (Tashkent) – Counterterrorism body.
- SCO Business Council & Interbank Consortium – Economic & financial cooperation.

### Significance of SCO:

- Represents 40% of global population, ~25% of global GDP.
- Key Eurasian platform linking South Asia, Central Asia, East Asia & West Asia.
- Important for regional security, energy networks, connectivity.

### SCO Summit 2025 (Tianjin, China):

- Tianjin Declaration condemning terrorism.
- Laos was added as SCO Partner (total 27).
- 2035 Development Strategy for trade & value chains.
- Proposal for SCO Development Bank.
- Energy & Green Development Roadmap (till 2030).
- New SCO centres for security, organised crime, cyber, drugs.
- India’s themes: Security, Connectivity, Opportunity.

## FINANCIAL ACTION TASK FORCE (FATF)

**Space for Notes:**

### Why in News?

FATF has released a new global “Asset Recovery Guidance & Best Practices” to strengthen tracing, freezing and confiscation of criminal proceeds. India and the ED played a major role in drafting the standards, with Indian case examples cited in the document.

### Description:

- FATF meetings in Paris discussing **state-sponsored terrorism financing**, especially related to Pakistan proxies → in news.
- FATF = **intergovernmental body** that sets global standards to prevent **Money Laundering (AML)** and **Terror Financing (CFT)**.
- Established in **1989** at G-7 Summit (Paris).
- Mandate expanded in **2001** to include terror financing.
- Headquarters → **Paris, France**.
- FATF has **39 members** (India, US, China, EU etc.).
- India became a member in **2010**.
- Over 180 countries affiliated via FATF-style regional bodies (FSRBs).
- FATF issues global **AML/CFT Recommendations** & monitors compliance.
- Non-complying countries can be put on **Grey List** or **Black List**.
- Black list → currently includes **North Korea, Iran & Myanmar**.
- Blacklist consequences → no financial aid from IMF, WB, ADB, EU + sanctions + economic isolation.

## Bhutan – Global Peace Prayer Festival (GPPF) 2025

### Why in News?

Bhutan hosted the **first-ever Global Peace Prayer Festival (GPPF)** in Thimphu from **4–19 November 2025** bringing together religious leaders from the three main branches of Buddhism – **Mahayana, Theravada and Vajrayana**. India supported the event “in cash and kind” and transported Lord Buddha’s relics from the National Museum (New Delhi) to Bhutan for public veneration.

### Description:

Bhutan aims to position itself as a **global spiritual peacemaker**.

### Key Facts:

- Venue: **Changlimithang Ground**, Thimphu (Bhutan)
- Participation: Over **150 Buddhist masters** + thousands of devotees from across Asian Buddhist regions.
- Partners: Royal Government of Bhutan + Central Monastic Body.
- Simultaneous prayers were also conducted at **Kuenselphodrang**.

### Religious & Symbolic Significance:

- First time Bhutan united all 3 major Buddhist traditions at this scale.
- Message: Peace, compassion, healing → Bhutan projecting “soft power spiritual diplomacy”.

### Event Schedule Highlights:

Date	Event
Nov 10	Public Blessing Day
Nov 11	70th Birthday of Fourth King celebrated
Nov 12–14	3-day Kalachakra Empowerment (Je Khenpo)
Nov 15–19	Nuns’ Ordination Ceremony at Tshalumaphey

**Bhutan's Strategic Intent:**

- Make this an **annual global-scale** event in future.
- Next editions may include leaders of **all religions**, not only Buddhists.
- Enhances Bhutan's global positioning similar to "Buddhist diplomacy" like Thailand, Sri Lanka but **more global-peacemaker centric**.

**India's Role:**

- Govt of India provided support (cash & kind)
- Helped transport Lord Buddha's relics → seen as strengthening India–Bhutan ties.
- PM Modi visit expected → adds geopolitical weight.

**Prelims Importance Pointers:**

- Builds on Bhutan's international identity linked with **Gross National Happiness (GNH)**.
- Example of **Soft Power Diplomacy / Faith Diplomacy**.
- Can be used in IR + Buddhism + Culture + Neighbourhood relations.

**India House in UAE + Yoga to be made Competitive Sport**
**Why in News?**

UAE is set to establish an "India House" in Abu Dhabi as a cultural landmark, and is planning to **declare Yoga as a competitive sport** – discussed during the 2nd Joint Steering Committee Meeting of the **India–UAE Cultural Council** (Oct 8–9, 2025).

**Key Points:**

- India House to come up in Abu Dhabi within next ~2 years.
- India House → will serve as cultural, academic, student exchange, yoga training + heritage exhibition hub.
- UAE has 4 million+ Indian diaspora (largest in Gulf region).

**About the Cultural Council:**

- India–UAE Cultural Council established via MoU in **2022**.
- 1st meeting: March 2025 (New Delhi)
- 2nd meeting: Oct 2025 (Abu Dhabi)

**UAE & Yoga Sports Status:**

- UAE moving to officially **recognize Yoga as a competitive sport**.
- National framework being developed by **UAE Yoga Committee** under Ministry of Sports.
- UAE will become **1st Gulf nation** to give Yoga full sporting status.

**7th Colombo Security Conclave (CSC)**
**Why in News / Context?**

- India's National Security Advisor (NSA) **Ajit Doval** participated in the **7th NSA-level meeting** of the **Colombo Security Conclave (CSC)** in New Delhi with NSAs from Maldives, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Seychelles, and Malaysia.
- **Seychelles** has been welcomed as a **full member** of the CSC.

**About the Colombo Security Conclave:**

- A regional security grouping focused on cooperation in the **Indian Ocean Region (IOR)**.
- Originally started as **India–Sri Lanka–Maldives trilateral maritime security cooperation** (2011).

**Space for Notes:**

**Member States:**

- India
- Sri Lanka
- Maldives
- Mauritius
- Bangladesh
- Seychelles (new full member)

**Observer / Guest participation:**

- Malaysia (invited as a guest)

**Five Pillars of Cooperation (CSC Framework):**

The CSC works under five identified pillars:

1. Maritime Safety and Security
2. Countering Terrorism and Radicalisation
3. Combating Trafficking and Transnational Organised Crime
4. Cyber Security and Protection of Critical Infrastructure and Technology
5. Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) including training & capacity building.

**G20 Summit (South Africa, 2025)**
**Current Summit:**

Will be held in Johannesburg, South Africa. India hosted G20 summit in 2023.

**What is the G20 Troika?**

- A three-member group ensuring continuity of G20 agenda across presidencies.
- Current Troika (2025 Summit)

South Africa – Present Chair, Brazil – Immediate Past Chair, United States – Next Chair (2026)

G20 Members (20 Members)

**19 Countries:**

Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States, EU, African Union (included in 2023)

**India's Specific Role in G20**

- Hosted the **2023 G20 Summit** (New Delhi).
- Championed themes like:
  - Global South representation
  - Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)
  - Green Development Agreement
  - Women-led development
- Initiated **India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)** announcement.
- Played a major role in including African Union as a permanent G20 member (2023).

**India–Afghanistan Economic & Development Engagement**
**Context:**

- Afghanistan's Taliban-led government has offered **5-year tax exemptions** for new Indian investments.

**Space for Notes:**

- Sectors: gold mining, agriculture, pharma, IT, infrastructure.
- Commercial Attaché to be posted in India soon.
- Air Cargo Corridor (Kabul-Delhi, Kabul-Amritsar) to be reactivated to revive bilateral trade.
- Minor bottlenecks remain: visa, banking channels, air connectivity.

#### India's Development Assistance to Afghanistan:

- India has committed over USD 3 billion since 2001 for reconstruction and development.
- Major completed projects include:
  - Delaram-Zaranj Highway (links to Iran; part of regional connectivity plan).
  - Afghan Parliament Building (symbol of democracy; inaugurated in 2015).
  - India-Afghanistan Friendship Dam (Salma Dam) on the Hari River, Herat.
  - Electricity transmission lines supplying power to Kabul.
- Line of Credit:
  - India offers a USD 50 million LoC for SME-level business cooperation.

#### Chabahar Port (Iran):

- India's gateway to landlocked Afghanistan and Central Asia.
- Bypasses Pakistan and supports humanitarian shipments.

### Abraham Accords

#### Why in News?

Kazakhstan is set to join the Abraham Accords, with former US President Donald Trump announcing its inclusion, marking the first new country to join the framework during his second term.

#### Description:

#### What are they?

A series of agreements signed in 2020 between Israel and Arab nations (UAE, Bahrain + later Sudan & Morocco) to normalise diplomatic + economic relations. Brokered with strong support from United States.

First announcement: 13 August 2020

Official signing: 15 September 2020 (Washington DC)

#### Parties Involved:

- Israel
- UAE
- Bahrain (*Later Sudan & Morocco also joined*)
- USA as main mediator

#### Why the name "Abraham"?

Because Abraham is a revered patriarch in Judaism, Christianity & Islam → symbol of shared Abrahamic lineage → inter-faith symbolism of peace.

#### Key Features Under the Accords

- Establish embassies & formal diplomatic ties
- Cooperation: technology, trade, tourism, defence, energy, healthcare
- Access allowed to Al-Aqsa Mosque for Muslims via travel

#### Significance:

- Arab nations openly engaging Israel → altered West Asia geopolitics
- Deprioritisation of Palestine issue (major strategic shift in Arab foreign policy)
- USA strengthening anti-Iran bloc indirectly

Space for Notes:

**Impact on India:**

- Easier balance between Israel + Arab states simultaneously
- Boost to trade / defence / tech / energy cooperation
- Reduces diplomatic tightrope pressure for India in West Asia

**World Inequality Report 2026**
**Context:**

The **World Inequality Report 2026**, published by the **World Inequality Lab (Paris)**, highlights **extreme and persistent global inequality**, with India identified among the **most unequal countries**, and argues that inequality is a **policy-driven, reversible outcome**.

**Key Findings (Global Inequality):**

- **Top 10% income share:** Earn more than the remaining 90% combined.
- **Bottom 50% income share:** <10% of global income.
- **Wealth concentration:**
  - Top 10% own ~75% of global wealth
  - Bottom 50% hold ~2%

**India-Specific Findings:**
**Income Inequality in India:**

- Top 10%: ~58% of national income
- Bottom 50%: ~15% of national income

**Wealth Inequality in India:**

- Top 10%: ~65% of total wealth
- Top 1%: ~40% of total wealth

Note: Wealth inequality in India is higher than income inequality

**Regional Income Divide:**

- **High-income regions:** North America & Oceania; Europe
- **Middle-income regions:** Russia & Central Asia; East Asia; Middle East & North Africa
- **Low-income regions:** Latin America; South & Southeast Asia; Sub-Saharan Africa
- **Daily income (PPP-adjusted):**
  - North America & Oceania: ~€125/day
  - Sub-Saharan Africa: ~€10/day

**Key Terms:**

**Intergenerational mobility:** Ability to move up/down the income ladder across generations.

**Myanmar Elections**
**Context:**

Myanmar conducted the **first round of elections after the 2021 military coup**, under the supervision of the military junta, amid ongoing internal conflict and questions over democratic legitimacy.

**Background:**

The **Tatmadaw**, the armed forces of **Myanmar**, overthrew the democratically elected government led by Aung San Suu Kyi in a **coup on 1 February 2021** and now governs through the **State Administration Council (SAC)**.

**Space for Notes:**

### India's Strategic Stakes:

- **Connectivity:** India is closely monitoring the elections as stability is crucial for the **Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project** and the **India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway**.
- **Border Security:** Ongoing conflict near the 1,643 km border impacts states like **Manipur** and **Mizoram**, leading to refugee influxes and security concerns. **Myanmar** shares border with Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram, and Manipur.
- India suspended Free Movement Regime (16 kms) in 2024 and announced **border fencing in sensitive stretches** with a controlled entry system.

Space for Notes:

### Sokoto State (Nigeria)

#### Context:

The U.S., with Nigeria's approval, carried out strikes on Islamic State targets in Sokoto, underscoring coordinated counter-terrorism efforts in West Africa.

#### Geographical Focus:

**Sokoto State (Nigeria):** Area referenced in reports regarding the strikes.

#### Security Significance:

- Targeted **Islamic State affiliates**, not Boko Haram explicitly (though both operate in the region).
- Reflects the **regional spread of IS affiliates** beyond the Middle East.



#### Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS):

- Also known as the **Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)** or **Daesh**
- **Islamic State (IS)** is a transnational jihadist terrorist organisation that seeks to establish a **self-proclaimed Islamic Caliphate** through extreme violence and territorial control.
- It originated from **Al-Qaeda in Iraq**, gained global prominence in **2014**, and now operates via regional affiliates across **West Asia, Africa, and Asia**.

### Interpol's Blue Corner Notice

#### Context:

Following the **Goa nightclub fire** at *Birch by Romeo Lane* in Arpora that killed **25 people**, the Goa Police initiated international trace efforts. Interpol issued a **Blue Corner Notice** against the two owners, who allegedly left India for Thailand.

#### Interpol:

- **Established** - 1923. Restructured into International Criminal Police Organization (ICPO-INTERPOL) in 1956. **Headquarters:** Lyon, France.
- **BHARATPOL** is an **online portal for international police cooperation** developed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). Connects with INTERPOL.

### Interpol Notice System:

- **Blue Notice**
  - **Purpose:** To collect additional information on a person's identity, location, or activities related to a crime.
  - Does **NOT** seek arrest or extradition.
  - Issued upon a member country's request through Interpol channels.



### Silver Notice:

At the request of the CBI, Interpol issued its first Silver Notices. It helps to **identify, trace, and freeze illicit criminal assets** (such as money, property, or cryptocurrency) rather than just locating fugitives.

### UN Emergency Aid Budget

#### Context:

For 2026, the United Nations has **halved its emergency humanitarian aid budget** due to major foreign aid cuts by the US and European donors. This raises questions about what the UN's **emergency humanitarian budget** is and why it is vital for global crises.

#### What is the UN's Emergency Humanitarian Budget?

- It is **not a fixed budget**, but an **annual appeal** made by the UN to donor countries to finance urgent lifesaving operations.
- Funds are used for:
  - **Emergency food supply**
  - **Shelter and water**
  - **Vaccinations & medical services**
  - **Refugee support & displacement camps**
  - **Protection services for women and children**
- It covers global crises like **Somalia famine relief, Yemen conflict response, Afghan humanitarian support**, and disaster aftermaths.
- The emergency budget is **entirely dependent on donor willingness** → hence highly vulnerable during geopolitical or economic shifts.

#### Facts:

- **2025 Appeal:** USD 47 billion.
- **2026 Appeal:** Reduced to \$23 billion (≈ 50% cut).
- Expected beneficiaries reduce to **87 million people** (much lower than earlier years).
- Cuts reflect failure to meet the **2025 fundraising target** and shrinking donor aid budgets.

Space for Notes:

### Why Was the UN Emergency Budget Halved?

- **Major Donor Cuts:** The US cut around **\$1 billion** and pulled support from several UN agencies; the UK, Netherlands and Sweden also reduced foreign aid to prioritise domestic needs like defence.
- **Voluntary Funding Weakness:** UN emergency aid depends almost entirely on **voluntary contributions**, creating overdependence on the US and Europe.
- **Rising Crises, Falling Donations:** Humanitarian needs in places like **Somalia, Yemen and Afghanistan** are growing, but donor willingness to fund them is shrinking.

### INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE (ICH) & UNESCO

#### Context:

India hosted the **20th Session of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage** at the Red Fort, where the External Affairs Minister stressed the need to **nurture cultural inheritance, preserve diversity, and pass heritage to future generations.**

#### Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH):

**Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)** refers to the **living traditions, knowledge systems, skills, and cultural expressions** that communities, groups, and individuals pass down from generation to generation.

It includes things like:

- Oral traditions and expressions
- Performing arts (music, dance, theatre)
- Social practices, rituals, and festive events
- Traditional craftsmanship
- Knowledge and practices related to nature and the universe

It is a *living heritage*, not a monument. It focuses on **transmission, continuity, community identity, and cultural diversity**, as recognised under the **UNESCO 2003 Convention.**

#### About the UNESCO ICH Framework:

- Adopted in **2003**; entered into force in **2006.**
- Focuses on **identification, documentation, transmission, and revitalisation** of living heritage.
- Lists under the Convention:
  - **Representative List**
  - **List of ICH in Need of Urgent Safeguarding**
  - **Register of Good Safeguarding Practices**

#### India and Intangible Cultural Heritage:

India has **15 elements** inscribed on the UNESCO ICH Representative List. Vedic Chanting, Ramlila, Kutiyattam, Ramman, Mudiyyettu, Kalbelia Folk Songs and Dances, Chhau Dance, Buddhist Chanting of Ladakh, Sankirtana, Traditional Brass and Copper Craft of Thatheras of Jandiala Guru, Yoga, Nowruz, Kumbh Mela, Durga Puja, and Garba.

### International IDEA Chairmanship for CEC

#### Why in the News?

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) **Gyanesh Kumar** has taken over as the **2026 Chair** of the **International IDEA**, while the Election Commission of India (ECI) also marked **75 years of its establishment** and celebrated **National Voters' Day (25 January).**

Space for Notes:

**INTERNATIONAL IDEA – INDIA AS CHAIR FOR 2026:**
**About International IDEA:**

- **Full Name:** International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
- **Type:** Intergovernmental organisation
- **Established:** 1995
- **HQ:** Stockholm, Sweden
- **Members:** 35 member countries + 2 observers
- **Mandate:** Promote *sustainable, inclusive, and resilient democracies* globally.
- **Areas of Work:** Elections, constitution building, political participation, democracy assessment.

International IDEA will collaborate with ECI and IIIDEM (India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management).

**OPEC & OPEC+**
**Context:**

OPEC+ recently decided to keep **2026 group-wide oil output steady**, reaffirming its pause on output hikes. This highlights the continuing role of OPEC and OPEC+ in global oil supply management.

Category	Details
OPEC – Full Form	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
Founded	1960, Baghdad (Founding members: Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Venezuela)
Headquarters	Vienna, Austria
Core Objective	Coordinate petroleum policies; ensure stable prices; steady producer income; reliable supply to consumers
Current Membership (2025)	<b>12 members:</b> Algeria, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Venezuela
Membership Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Saudi Arabia = <i>de facto leader</i> (largest producer)</li> <li>• Indonesia: membership suspended (2016)</li> <li>• Qatar: withdrew (2019)</li> <li>• Angola: withdrew effective 1 January 2024</li> </ul>

OPEC+ – Formation	Late 2016
OPEC+ – Composition	OPEC (12) + <b>10 non-OPEC producers:</b> Russia, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Brunei, Oman, South Sudan, Sudan, Malaysia
Nature of OPEC+	Informal coordination mechanism; <b>not treaty-based</b>
Key Driver	Russia (largest non-OPEC contributor)
Genesis of OPEC+	Set up after the <b>2014–16 oil price crash</b> caused by oversupply and U.S. shale boom
Mandate of OPEC+	Coordinate joint output cuts/boosts · Maintain target price ranges · Manage market shocks (e.g., COVID-19 2020 collapse)
OPEC+ – Formation	Late 2016

**Space for Notes:**

### U.S. “Trump Gold Card” Programme (2025)

Space for Notes:

#### Context:

The U.S. administration announced a new high-value immigration pathway called the “**Trump Gold Card**”, designed to offer a fast-track route to U.S. residency and eventual citizenship for individuals who can provide substantial economic or strategic benefit to the United States.

#### About the Programme:

- Announced **11 December 2025**.
- A **million-dollar residency visa** intended as an alternative to traditional pathways like H-1B or Green Card categories.
- Proposed as a mechanism to retain high-skilled students, especially from countries like **India and China**, who often return home after studies due to visa constraints.
- Companies hiring top foreign graduates may also “**buy**” the Gold Card to retain talent.

#### Eligibility & Conditions:

- High-net-worth individuals and corporations are primary applicants.
- Based on an individual’s **ability to provide substantial benefit** to the United States.
- Requires extensive **background checks**.

#### Fees / Financial Requirements:

- **\$1 million** fee for individual applicants.
- **\$2 million** for corporate applicants seeking to sponsor talent.
- Includes **\$15,000 DHS processing fee**. (Department of Homeland Security)
- Applicants become eligible for U.S. **citizenship after 5 years** of Gold Card residency.
- After background clearance and fee payment, residency status issued under the Gold Card programme.

**Platinum Card (upcoming):** A premium variant with higher investment and priority vetting.

### Pax Silica

#### Context:

India has not joined the US-led “**Pax Silica**” initiative, a strategic coalition aimed at securing **critical minerals, energy inputs, and semiconductor supply chains** to counter China’s dominance.

#### About Pax Silica:

- A **US-led strategic initiative** to build a secure, resilient, and innovation-driven **supply chain**
- Covers the full value chain:  
**Critical minerals → energy inputs → semiconductors → advanced manufacturing**
- Aims to **reduce China’s dominance** in future-tech sectors

#### Countries Involved:

- **Participants include:** Japan, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Netherlands United Kingdom, Israel, United Arab Emirates, Australia, United States
- **India is not part of the coalition**

#### Why Pax Silica Matters:

- China controls:
  - ~60–70% of **rare earth mining**
  - ~85–90% of **rare earth processing**
- Recent **Chinese restrictions on rare earth magnets** highlighted global vulnerability

**India's Position:**

- India avoids exclusive, country-targeted blocs and prefers **issue-based, non-aligned cooperation** in supply chains while prioritising **indigenous capacity building** under the National Critical Minerals Mission and Semiconductor Mission.
- It also seeks to **balance economic relations** by engaging both the US and China without compromising strategic autonomy.

**Key Terms:**

- **Critical Minerals:** Minerals essential for economic and national security with high supply risk (e.g., lithium, cobalt, rare earths).
- **Rare Earth Elements (REEs):** 17 elements used in magnets, EVs, defence electronics, semiconductors.
- **Coercive Dependencies:** Strategic reliance on a single country (notably China) for essential inputs.

**Biological Weapons Convention (BWC)**
**Context:**

- At a conference marking 50 years of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), the External Affairs Minister warned that the world is “not adequately prepared” for bioterrorism.
- He highlighted risks from non-state actors using biological agents and emphasised placing the Global South at the centre of global biosecurity strategies.

**Key Terms:**

- **Bioterrorism:** Deliberate use of biological agents (viruses, bacteria, toxins) to cause harm.
- **WMD:** Weapons of Mass Destruction.  
**Example:** nuclear weapons, biological weapons, and chemical weapons.
- **Dual-use technologies:** Civilian technologies that can be misused for biological weaponisation.

**About the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC):**

1. First multilateral disarmament treaty banning an entire class of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD).
2. Opened for signature: April 1972; Entered into force: 26 March 1975.
3. **Formal title:** Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction.
4. Prohibits development, production, acquisition, transfer, stockpiling, and use of biological/toxin weapons.
5. Supplements the 1925 Geneva Protocol (which only prohibited “use”).
6. Negotiated at the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament (Geneva).
7. **Membership:** 188 States Parties; 4 Signatories (Egypt, Haiti, Somalia, Syria). India is a Party.

**Types of Biological Agents (Examples):**

- Anthrax, Plague, Botulinum toxin, fungi & viral pathogens.
- **Consequences:** mass casualties, food shortages, ecological damage, economic collapse, public panic.

**Space for Notes:**

### Radio Ceylon

**Space for Notes:**
**Context:**

Radio Ceylon, one of the world's oldest radio broadcasters, completed 100 years of its broadcasting legacy in December 2025, highlighting its unique role in shaping a shared cultural and musical space across South Asia, especially India and Sri Lanka.

**About Radio Ceylon:**

- **Establishment: December 16, 1925.** It is one of the world's oldest radio broadcasters and the **first in Asia.**
- **The Founder:** Edward Harper

**Why Radio Ceylon Became Dominant in India:**

- **Transnational Reach:** Radio Ceylon's powerful transmitter allowed it to reach listeners across India and Pakistan, creating a "shared cultural space" despite political borders.
- **The Film Music Ban (1952):** B.V. Keskar, India's then Minister for Information and Broadcasting, banned film music on All India Radio (AIR), labeling it "vulgar" and "Westernized."
- **The Opportunity:** Radio Ceylon filled this vacuum by launching a dedicated **Hindi Service**, becoming the primary destination for Indian film music fans.

**Binaca Geetmala – Cultural Phenomenon:**

- Launched in 1952, this became the most popular weekly countdown show for Hindi film songs. Hosted by Ameen Sayani

**All India Radio (AIR):**

Established on **June 8, 1936**, officially known as **Akashvani** since 1956—is the world's largest radio network, operating under the motto "*Bahujan Hitaya, Bahujan Sukhaya*" (For the happiness and welfare of all).

### Ethiopia's Highest Civilian Award to PM

**Context:**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was conferred Ethiopia's highest national honour, recognising his role in strengthening India–Ethiopia bilateral relations during his official visit.

**About the Award:**
**The Great Honour of Ethiopia:**

- **Official Name:** The Great Honour of Ethiopia
- **Nature:** Highest civilian award of Ethiopia
- **Conferred by:** President / Head of Government of Ethiopia
- **Recipient (2025):** Prime Minister Narendra Modi

**Purpose of the Award:**

- Given for exceptional contribution to bilateral relations, diplomacy, and international cooperation.
- Recognises leadership that strengthen strategic partnerships and people-to-people ties.

### Australia's Social Media Ban

**Context:**

Australia has introduced a **world-first national ban** preventing **children under 16** from accessing major social media platforms, citing child safety and excessive data-driven profiling by tech companies.

**Features:**

- Ban applies to **10 major platforms**: Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, YouTube, X, Reddit, Threads, Kick, and Twitch.
- Platforms must **remove accounts of users under 16** or face penalties.
- Platforms already possess the **technology and personal data** required to conduct age verification.
- Companies may be fined up to **AUD 50 million (approx. USD 32.9 million)** for non-compliance.
- Government issued notices to platforms demanding **implementation details and account closure numbers**.

**Issues / Criticism:**

- **Tech companies (e.g., Meta)** argue the ban may push children to **less regulated platforms**, creating *greater safety risks*.
- Emerging apps like **Lemon8** and **Yope** (not covered by the ban) recorded a **surge in downloads**, raising concerns about regulatory gaps.
- Implementation challenges include:
  - Privacy concerns in verifying ages
  - Children circumventing age restrictions
  - Ensuring consistent compliance across platforms

**Significance:**

- Aims to protect children from **online harms**, data exploitation, and harmful content.
- Strengthens **parental control** and reduces algorithmic targeting of minors.
- Serves as a potential **global precedent** for regulating youth access to social media.
- Enhances debate on **digital rights, youth safety, and platform accountability**.

**Key Terms:**

**Age-gating:** Technological processes to verify user age for platform access.

**India-UAE Data Embassy**
**Context:**

India is exploring the establishment of a **Data Embassy** in the **United Arab Emirates**, a first-of-its-kind initiative aimed at ensuring data continuity, security, and sovereignty abroad.

**Key Terms:**

- **Data Embassy:** Secure data infrastructure located abroad but under the **legal jurisdiction of the home country**.
- **Data Sovereignty:** Principle that data is subject to the laws of the country where the data owner resides.
- **Digital Continuity:** Ability of governments to function digitally during crises.

**What is Proposed:**

- Setting up **Indian data centres in UAE territory**
- Operate under **India's laws and jurisdiction**, not UAE's
- Access limited to **India and authorised Indian representatives**

**Rationale:**

- Protection against **cyber-attacks, natural disasters, geopolitical disruptions**
- Secure backup of **critical government data** (financial, public records)
- Ensures continuity of **essential digital government services**

**Space for Notes:**

**Background & Global Examples:**

- **Estonia (2017):** First data embassy in Luxembourg
- **Monaco (2021):** Data embassy in Luxembourg
- Model used sparingly due to **complex sovereignty and regulatory issues**

**India's Position:**

- Discussions underway between India and UAE under **mutually recognised sovereignty arrangements**
- India acknowledges **data sovereignty concerns** and regulatory challenges
- Not a traditional embassy; **no diplomatic status**

**Donbas Region**
**Context:**

Ahead of proposed three-way talks involving Russia, Ukraine and the US, **Russia reiterated its demand that Ukraine withdraw from the eastern Donbas region**, making territorial control a precondition for negotiations.

**About the Donbas Region:**

- Industrial region in eastern Ukraine comprising **Donetsk and Luhansk**
- **Location:** Eastern Ukraine
- **Constituent areas:** Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts
- **Significance:** Rich in **coal and heavy industry**. Strategic industrial and logistical corridor. Large **Russian-speaking population**
- Since **2014**, parts of Donbas have been under separatist control backed by Russia.

**Russia's Position vs Ukraine's Position:**

Russia	Ukraine
Demands Ukrainian withdrawal; treats Donbas as non-negotiable	Asserts sovereignty; rejects any territorial withdrawal
Frames Donbas control as essential for regional security	Warns ceding territory will embolden future aggression


**Strategic Significance of Donbas:**

- Control over Donbas strengthens **Russia's leverage** in negotiations
- Acts as a **buffer zone** against NATO influence (from Russian perspective)
- Central to Ukraine's **economic recovery and national unity**

**Space for Notes:**

## Chagos Islands

Space for Notes:

### Context:

The **United Kingdom** agreed to transfer sovereignty of the **Chagos Islands** to **Mauritius**, while retaining long-term military access to **Diego Garcia**; the move triggered political reactions, including criticism by **Donald Trump**.

### What is the Chagos Islands Issue?

- The Chagos Archipelago was **detached from Mauritius (1965)** before its independence.
- **Thousands of Chagossians were evicted (1960s–70s)** to facilitate a **U.S.–U.K. military base** on Diego Garcia.
- Mauritius has long claimed the detachment violated **decolonisation norms**.

### International Legal Background:

- **ICJ Advisory Opinion (2019):** UK's administration of Chagos is **unlawful**; decolonisation of Mauritius was **not lawfully completed**.
- **UN General Assembly resolutions:** Urged the UK to **return the territory** to Mauritius.
- **UK position (recent):** Settlement to end legal uncertainty and protect base operations.

### The 2025 Agreement:

- **Sovereignty:** Transferred to **Mauritius**.
- **Military Access:** UK to **lease Diego Garcia** to support the **U.S.–U.K. base**.
- **Duration:** At least **99 years** (lease-back: Transfer of sovereignty with continued use via a long-term lease)
- **Objective:** Ensure **long-term, stable operation** of the strategic base while resolving legal challenges.

### Strategic Significance of Diego Garcia:

- A strategically vital hub in the Indian Ocean that underpins naval operations, long-range bomber deployments, intelligence, surveillance, and logistics.
- Supports **Indo-Pacific security architecture** and freedom of navigation.



## BRICS Digital Currencies

### Context:

The **Reserve Bank of India** has recommended that linking **central bank digital currencies (CBDCs)** of **BRICS** countries be included on the agenda of the **2026 BRICS Summit** to enhance cross-border payments.

### Proposal:

- **What:** Link CBDCs of BRICS members for cross-border transactions.
- **Why:** Faster, cheaper, more efficient payments; reduced dependence on correspondent banking.
- **Status:** Recommendation; to be tabled at **2026 BRICS Summit in India** if accepted.

**Background:**

- Builds on **2025 BRICS declaration (Brazil)** pushing interoperability among members' payment systems.
- **All five core BRICS members** (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) are running **CBDC pilot projects**; none has fully launched nationwide yet.

**India's Position:**

- Aims to **promote the global use of the rupee** via technological linkage.
- **Not positioned as de-dollarisation**, per RBI's public stance.

**About e-Rupee (Digital Rupee):**

- **Issuer:** Reserve Bank of India (RBI)
- **Nature:** Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) – **sovereign digital legal tender**
- **Launch:** December 2022 (pilot phase)
- **Forms:** **e₹-W (Wholesale)** for interbank settlements, **e₹-R (Retail)** for public use
- **Technology:** Token-based digital currency (not a cryptocurrency)
- **Legal Status:** Same as physical rupee notes/coins
- **Objective:** Faster payments, reduced cash handling costs, improved settlement efficiency
- **Distinct Features:** Direct claim on RBI; no credit risk; works without bank intermediation

**About BRICS:**

The BRICS is currently composed of **eleven** countries: Brazil, China, India, Russia, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia (new member), Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

**Key Institutions under BRICS:**

- **New Development Bank (NDB):** headquartered in **Shanghai**
- **Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA):** financial safety net
- **Summit:** Annual **BRICS Leaders' Summit**. Current President: India (rotational presidency)

**International Solar Alliance (ISA)**
**Context:**

India reiterated continued engagement with the International Solar Alliance (ISA) to promote global solar energy deployment, even as the U.S. announced its withdrawal from the alliance.

**What is the International Solar Alliance (ISA)?**

The International Solar Alliance (ISA) is an intergovernmental organisation launched in 2015 by India and France at COP21, Paris, to promote and accelerate global solar energy adoption, especially in developing countries.

**Vision & Mission:**

- **Vision:** *"Let us together make the sun brighter."*
- **Mission:** *"Every home, no matter how far away, will have a light at home."*

**Headquarters:** National Institute of Solar Energy (NISE), Gurugram, Haryana, India

**'Towards 1000' Strategy:**

ISA's flagship strategic framework focuses on four quantified global targets by **2030**:

- **USD 1 trillion** mobilised for solar investments
- **1000 GW** of solar energy capacity installed
- **1000 million people** provided access to clean energy
- **1000 million tonnes** of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions mitigated annually

**Space for Notes:**

**Membership & Coverage:**

- **Members:** 125+ countries
- **Operational presence:** 95+ countries
- **Special focus:** Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

**Major Projects & Initiatives:**

1. **STAR-C (Solar Technology Application Resource Centre):** Capacity building; solar technology and skill hubs
2. **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Support:** 21-day solar training funded by India (NISE)
3. **ISA Solar Fellowship Programme:** Mid-career professionals; policy & project focus
4. **One Sun, One World, One Grid (OSOWOG):**
  - Proposed by India in 2018
  - Vision: “*The sun never sets*”
  - Aims to interconnect **regional power grids** through a common renewable energy grid
  - Enables cross-border transfer of solar and other renewable energy

**NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization)**
**Context:**

Denmark’s Prime Minister warned that any U.S. takeover of **Greenland** would effectively mark the end of **North Atlantic Treaty Organization**, as it would imply military action by one NATO member against another.

**About NATO:**

- **Established:** 1949 (North Atlantic Treaty)
- **Nature:** Military alliance based on collective defence
- **Headquarters:** Brussels, Belgium
- **Membership:** 30+ countries (Europe + North America)

**Core Principle – Article 5:**

- Article 5 states that an **armed attack against one member is considered an attack against all**.
- It has been invoked **only once** (after the 9/11 attacks, 2001).
- Assumes **non-aggression among members** as a foundational norm.

**Why the Greenland Issue Threatens NATO:**

- Since **Greenland is a semi-autonomous territory of Denmark, a NATO member**, any military takeover by the **U.S. (also a NATO member)** would violate the principle of non-use of force among allies.
- Such an act would **undermine Article 5**, weaken alliance unity, and erode NATO’s credibility and deterrence.

**Global Capability Centres (GCCs)**
**Context:**

India has emerged as the **world’s largest hub for Global Capability Centres (GCCs)**, moving from a low-end back-office destination to a **strategic centre for innovation, R&D, data analytics, AI, and global decision-making**.

**Space for Notes:**

**About GCCs:**

- **Global Capability Centre (GCC):** Offshore unit set up by a multinational company to deliver critical services to its global operations (not domestic markets)
- **Captive Centre:** A GCC fully owned and operated by the parent company
- **Shared Services:** Centralised delivery of finance, HR, IT, legal, and procurement services
- **Value Chain Upgradation:** Shift from routine tasks to high-value strategic functions

**Key Features:**

- **Ownership:** Captive (in-house) model, not third-party outsourcing
- **Functions covered:** IT services, Product engineering, R&D and innovation, Data analytics & AI, Cybersecurity, Finance, HR, legal operations
- **Talent-intensive,** not labour-intensive

**GCC vs BPO:**

Parameter	Global Capability Centre (GCC)	Business Process Outsourcing (BPO)
Basic Model	In-house (captive) centre of an MNC	Third-party outsourcing model
Ownership	Fully owned by parent company	Independent service provider
Nature of Functions	Core, strategic, high-value	Non-core, routine, repetitive
Typical Activities	R&D, product development, AI/ML, chip design, cybersecurity	Call centres, data processing, payroll, customer support
Skill Requirement	Highly skilled professionals	Semi-skilled workforce
Wage Levels	High	Low

**Agreement on Prohibition of Attacks against Nuclear Installations and Facilities**
**Context:**

India and Pakistan continue the annual exchange of lists of nuclear installations, reflecting the continuity of nuclear confidence-building measures despite strained bilateral relations.

**Key Terms:**

- **Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs):** Steps taken to reduce mistrust and prevent escalation between states.
- **Nuclear Installations & Facilities:** Civilian and military nuclear sites covered under the non-attack commitment.

**About the Agreement:**

- **Type:** Bilateral Confidence-Building Measure
- **Signed:** 31 December 1988
- **In force since:** 1991

**Core Obligations:**

- **Annual exchange of lists of nuclear installations and facilities.**
- **Date of exchange:** 1 January every year.
- **Non-attack commitment:** Prohibits attacks on each other's nuclear installations. It applies during peace as well as armed conflict.

**Significance:**

- Reduces the risk of nuclear escalation or miscalculation.
- One of the oldest surviving CBMs between India and Pakistan.

Separates nuclear risk management from political and military tensions.

**Space for Notes:**

**Agreement on Consular Access (2008)**

Space for Notes:

**Context:**

Alongside nuclear CBMs, India and Pakistan also **exchange lists of prisoners**, ensuring humanitarian and legal safeguards even amid diplomatic freezes.

**Key Terms:**

- **Consular Access:** Right of a detained foreign national to communicate with their country's diplomatic mission.
- **Prisoners:** Includes civilians and fishermen detained across borders.

**About the Agreement:**

- **Year:** 2008
- **Type:** Bilateral humanitarian and legal arrangement

**Coverage:**

- **Exchange of lists of prisoners**, including Civilian prisoners, Fishermen
- Enables **Consular access**, **Verification of nationality**, Assistance in legal processes and repatriation

**Significance:**

- Facilitates **humanitarian relief** for detained nationals.
- Protects **legal rights of prisoners**, especially fishermen.
- Operates independently of political relations, reinforcing **people-centric diplomacy**.