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INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

#QUEEN ELIZABETH DIES AT AGE OF 96

Queen Elizabeth II, Britain's longest-reigning monarch died after 70 years on the throne at the age of 96. After the passing of Queen Elizabeth II, the reign was passed on to her eldest son Charles, the **former Prince of Wales**. He will henceforth be addressed as **King Charles III** and will be conferred **with all the powers the late Queen held as Head of State** in the **British Constitutional Monarchy**.

Who was Queen Elizabeth II?

- Elizabeth Alexandra Mary, officially Elizabeth II was born on 21st April, 1926, London, England.
- Elizabeth was the elder daughter of Prince Albert, duke of York, and his wife, Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon.
- In 1947 Princess **Elizabeth married Prince Philip** at London's Westminster Abbey.
- Their first child, Prince Charles, was born in 1948. A daughter, Anne, arrived in 1950, followed by Andrew in 1960 and Edward in 1964.
- She was crowned at **Westminster Abbey on June 2, 1953**, in front of 8,500 assembled guests.

Key Facts:

- Queen Elizabeth II is the world's longest-serving monarch, whose reign of almost seven decades is the oldest and longest-reigning monarch in British history.
- In September 2015 **she surpassed her great-great-grandmother Queen Victoria**, who reigned for 63 years and seven months.
- In 2016, Elizabeth also **became the longest-reigning monarch in the world** with the death of King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand.
- In 2022, she became the **second-longest-reigning monarch in world history**, behind 17th century French King Louis XIV, who took the throne at age 4.

What is Constitutional Monarchy?

- Constitutional monarchy is a system of government in which a monarch shares power with a constitutionally organized government.
- The monarch may be the de facto head of state or a purely ceremonial leader.
- The constitution allocates the rest of the government's power to the legislature and judiciary.
- Britain became a constitutional monarchy **under the Whigs**.

What are the Roles and Powers of British Monarchy?

- The **British Monarchy is a constitutional monarchy**, because being the Sovereign Head of State, the ability to **make and pass legislation resides with an elected Parliament**.
- The British monarch reigns but does not rule.
- Other constitutional monarchies include **Belgium, Cambodia, Jordan, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, and Thailand**.
- The monarch's powers or role in modern-day Britain is now **largely ceremonial**.
- The monarch "has to **remain strictly neutral with respect to political matters**."

Roles and Powers:

- **Appointment of Prime Minister and government:** The Monarch appoints the Prime Minister

who **enjoys the majority support of MPs.**

- Once the leader of a party wins general elections, the Head of State invites them to Buckingham Palace to form the government.
- The discretionary power to appoint or dismiss a Prime Minister **no longer lies with the monarch.**
- **Opening the Parliament:** The Monarch opens the Parliamentary year with the **State Opening Ceremony**, during which he/she delivers an address **about the executive's planned policies and priorities in the House of Lords.**
- **Assenting legislation:** The sovereign gives **his/her Royal Assent to the bills passed in the House of Lords and Commons** but that is now essentially a rubber-stamping exercise as the last time a bill denied the Royal Assent was in 1707 by Queen Anne.
- **Commonwealth Realms:** The Monarch is also the head of the **Commonwealth of Nations**, an association which is a **product of the erstwhile British Empire.** It consists of **56 independent nations** with a population of 2.4 billion.

#FUTURE OF THE COMMONWEALTH

The death of **Queen Elizabeth II** of the United Kingdom, marks not only the end of an era for the British monarchy but also a turning point for the 14 Commonwealth realms of which she was the Head of State.



What is the Background?

- There has been a significant transformation of the socio-economic environment in the 14 realms countries since the death of Queen Elizabeth II.
- Several countries out of these 14 called to **establish a republic and break free of historical ties to the British monarchy.**
- A republic is a form of government in which **"supreme power is held by the people and their elected representatives".**
- Thus, it is likely that during the reign of the **incumbent King Charles III**, the Queen's successor, more nations will follow in the **footsteps of Barbados.**
- **In 2021, Barbados became the 18th country to remove the British monarch from the role of head of state** and substitute them with a national government functionary.
- What is the Commonwealth?
- The Commonwealth of Nations is a group of **56 countries composed mostly of former British colonies.**
- It was established by the **London Declaration in 1949.**
- While members of the Commonwealth are predominantly located in Africa, the Americas, Asia, and the Pacific, with many of them emerging economies, the three European members of the group are Cyprus, Malta, and the U.K.
- The developed nations of the Commonwealth are Australia, Canada, and New Zealand.

Republics and Realms:

- The Commonwealth **consists of both Republics and Realms.**
- The British monarch is the **Head of State for the realms, whereas the republics are ruled by elected governments** except in the case of five countries — **Brunei Darussalam, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malaysia, and Tonga** — each a self-governed monarchy.
- The **realms** are Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, the Bahamas, Belize, Canada, Grenada, Jamaica, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the Solomon Islands, and Tuvalu.

What is the Commonwealth's Relevance in Today's World?

- Although the Commonwealth may seem like an outdated forum after the death of the queen, yet it retains a **suitable relevance which has sustained it over time even after the decolonization of the British Empire.**
- In the age of multilateral diplomacy, where states want a forum to express their views, advance their interests and shape global norms, the **Commonwealth provides precisely such a forum.**
- The monarch is **only the symbolic head**, the leaders of the free world make the Commonwealth work.
- Throughout her reign, Queen Elizabeth played a critical role in championing the organisation and maintaining the group's relevance, regularly travelling to meet with leaders of Commonwealth nations across the world.

What is the Future of Commonwealth?

- Australia, Newzealand, and the Bahamas are likely to become Republics in future.
- Governments in five other Caribbean nations — Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Grenada, Jamaica and Saint Kitts and Nevis — have **signalled their intention to act similarly.**
- Thus, it is not beyond imagination that following the death of Queen Elizabeth, **the Commonwealth realms might fade into being a relic of the past**, and nations that suffered a history of colonialism — along with its attendant violence and resource extraction — will move **forward to establish themselves as republics.**

#WHAT IS NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY

Recently, the **Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference** which was held in New York ended without adopting a substantive outcome due to Russia's objection.

What is the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty?

- The NPT is an **international treaty whose objective is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology**, to foster the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and to further the goal of disarmament.
- The treaty was **signed in 1968 and entered into force in 1970.** Presently, it has **191 member states.**
- **India is not a member.**
- It requires **countries to give up any present or future plans to build nuclear weapons** in return for access to peaceful uses of nuclear energy.
- It represents the **only binding commitment in a multilateral treaty to the goal of disarmament by the nuclear-weapon States.**
- Nuclear-weapon states parties under the NPT are defined as **those that manufactured and exploded a nuclear weapon or other nuclear explosive devices before 1st January, 1967.**



India's Stand:

- India is one of the only five countries that **either did not sign the NPT or signed but withdrew later**, thus becoming part of a list that includes Pakistan, Israel, North Korea, and South Sudan.
- India always considered the **NPT as discriminatory and had refused to sign it.**
- India has **opposed the international treaties** aimed at non-proliferation since they were **selectively applicable to the non-nuclear powers and legitimised the monopoly of the five nuclear weapons powers.**

What are the Concerns Arising Out of Russia's Disagreement?

- The **occupation of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant** in southeastern Ukraine as well as the **takeover of the Chernobyl nuclear plant**, scene of the world's worst nuclear disaster in 1986, **renewed global fears of another nuclear emergency**.
- The **threat of nuclear weapons use today is higher than at any time** since the heights of the Cold War and the deteriorated international security environment.
- This NPT conference represents a **missed opportunity to strengthen the treaty and global security by agreeing to a specific action plan with benchmarks and timeframes** to effectively address the growing dangers of nuclear arms racing and nuclear weapons use.

What are the Other Treaties and Agreements related to Nuclear Weapon?

- The Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, In Outer Space and Under Water, also known as the **Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT)**.
- **Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)**: India has **not signed the CTBT** as India is a **strong advocate for a time-bound disarmament commitment from nuclear weapon states (NWS)** and may use the lack of a commitment as a reason to refrain from signing the CTBT.
- The **Treaty on the Prohibition of nuclear weapons (TPNW)**: It entered into force on 22 January 2021 and **India is not a member of this treaty**.
- **Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG)**: India is not a member of the NSG.
- **The Missile Technology Control Regime**.
- **Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation**.
- **The Wassenaar Arrangement**.

#GLOBAL CLEAN ENERGY ACTION FORUM 2022

Recently, at the **Global Clean Energy Action Forum-2022** at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in the United States, India's representative has said that "sustainable biofuels **play a key role to reduce GreenHouse Gas (GHG) emissions from the transport sector**."

What do we need to know about the Global Clean Energy Action Forum 2022?

- The US, for the first time, hosted **Global Clean Energy Action Forum**, a joint convening of the **13th Clean Energy Ministerial (CEM 13)** and the **7th Mission Innovation Ministerial (MI-7)**, from 21st to 23rd September 2022.
- **Theme**: The theme for CEM13/MI-7 is **Rapid Innovation and Deployment**.

Objectives of the Forum:

- Define **international clean energy leadership and collaboration** in 2022 through an interactive, inspiring, and impactful event spotlighting global leaders fulfilling their climate pledges.
- Focus on actions that deliver a low-cost, **zero-emissions energy future** that provides opportunities for all, especially good-paying jobs.
- Demonstrate progress in moving along the **innovation-to-deployment continuum** at an unprecedented pace and scale to meet climate goals, and to innovate with a purpose.

India's Stand at the Forum:

- **At International Collaboration to Accelerate Clean Energy**: India has reported **establishing 5 Bioenergy Centers** with an interdisciplinary team working on advanced sustainable biofuels using modern biotechnology tools.
- In April 2022, India hosted the **Mission Innovation Annual Gathering** at New Delhi, the **Mission Integrated Biorefineries** was launched by Co-leads India and Netherlands, uniting key members to

accelerate innovation for renewable fuels, chemicals, and materials for a low-carbon future.

At India Clean Energy Showcase:

- India, being one of the founding members of the **Clean Energy Ministerial (CEM)** will be hosting **CEM-14 in 2023 in Bengaluru** along with its Presidency of G-20 in the same year.
- India is among the few countries in the world to design a **Cooling Action Plan (CAP)** with a long-term vision (spanning a 20-year period from 2017-18 to 2037-38) that addresses **cooling requirements across sectors**. India has committed to an ambitious **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)** of reducing emission intensity **by 33-35% in 2030** against the levels of 2005.
- India is implementing the largest **Renewable Energy (RE) expansion program** in the world envisaging a **5-fold increase in the overall RE capacity** in the country from 32 GW

#MIKHAIL GORBACHEV: LAST LEADER OF SOVIET UNION

Recently, the last leader of the Soviet Union, **Mikhail Gorbachev** died at the age of 91.

What was the contribution of Mikhail Gorbachev?

- He joined **Communist Party of the Soviet Union** as a youth, and after Stalin's death, he became a **keen proponent of De-Stalinisation reforms started by Nikita Khrushchev**. He was selected as the First Party Secretary of the Stavropol Regional Committee in 1970.
- In 1985 when he was elected as the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, in other words, **the de facto ruler of the government**.



Achievements:

- He introduced the policies of “glasnost” and “perestroika” which helped in **freedom of speech** and press and **the economic expansion** of the economy. **Perestroika** means “restructuring,” specifically of the **Communist economy and political system**, by incorporating some features of a market economy into the Soviet economy. It also resulted in the decentralization of financial decision-making.
- **Focused on Arms Reduction:** He forged arms reduction deals with the United States and partnerships with Western powers to **remove the Iron Curtain** that had divided Europe since World War Two and reunify Germany.
- **Ended the Cold War:** Gorbachev is credited with bringing the **Cold War** to an end, **which resulted in the dissolution of the USSR into separate countries**.
- **Nobel Peace Prize:** He was awarded the **Nobel Peace Prize** in 1990 for his efforts to end the **Cold War between the US and USSR**.

Indian Connection:

- Gorbachev **visited India twice, in 1986 and 1988**.
- His objective was to **extend his disarmament initiatives in Europe to Asia and to secure Indian cooperation**.
- It was Gorbachev's **first visit to a non-Warsaw Pact country** after taking over as leader of the Soviet Union.
- The then Prime Minister Rajiv hailed Gorbachev as a “**crusader for peace**”.
- His address to **India's Parliament** during the visit received hyperbolic coverage in the Indian and Soviet press and was seen as a high point of Indian diplomacy.

What was the Cold War?

- The **Cold War** was a division between Russia and western countries (the US and its allies, like **Britain**), which started in the 1940s and lasted until 1991.
- It was a war between **two ideas and ways of ruling - communism** (the east) and **capitalism** (the west).
- The Russians operated a communist state (from 1922 to 1991), while western countries like the US were capitalist countries.
- Throughout the Cold War, **communist and capitalist nations tried to outdo each other**, competing to develop the best technologies and weapons.

#INDIA TO HOST G20 SUMMIT IN 2023

- Recently, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) announced that India is hosting the **G-20 (Group of 20)** leaders' summit in New Delhi next year 2023.
- The 17th G20 Heads of State and Government Summit will happen in November 2022 in Indonesia, after which **India will assume the presidency of G20 from December 2022**.
- India is assuming the Presidency of the G20 for one year.



What are the Key Points?

- **Guest Countries:** India, as G20 Presidency, will be inviting **Bangladesh, Egypt, Mauritius, Netherlands, Nigeria, Oman, Singapore, Spain and UAE** as Guest countries.
- **Troika:** During the Presidency, **India, Indonesia and Brazil** would form the troika. This would be the first time when the **troika would consist of three developing countries** and emerging economies, providing them a greater voice. Troika refers to the **top grouping within the G20 that consists of the current, previous and the upcoming presidencies** (Indonesia, India and Brazil).

Key Priorities:

- Inclusive, Equitable and Sustainable Growth,
- LiFE (Lifestyle For Environment),
- Women's Empowerment,
- Digital public infrastructure and tech-enabled development in areas ranging from health, agriculture and education to commerce,
- Skill-mapping, culture and tourism, climate financing, circular economy, global food security, energy security, green hydrogen, disaster risk reduction and resilience,
- Developmental cooperation, fight against economic crime, and multilateral reforms.

What is the G20?

- The G20 was formed in **1999 in the backdrop of the financial crisis of the late 1990s** that hit **East Asia and Southeast Asia** in particular.
- It aims to secure global financial stability by involving middle-income countries.
- Together, the G20 countries include 60 % of the world's population, 80 % of global GDP, and 75 % of global trade.
- **Members:** Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States and the EU. **Spain** is invited as a **permanent guest**.
- **Presidency:** The presidency of the G20 **rotates every year among members**, and the country holding the presidency, together with the previous and next presidency-holder, forms the 'Troika' to **ensure continuity of the G20 agenda**. **Italy, Indonesia, and India** are the Troika countries right now and Indonesia holds the current Presidency.

Mandate:

- The G20 has no permanent secretariat. The agenda and work are coordinated by **representatives of the G20 countries, known as 'Sherpas'**, who work together with the finance ministers and governors of the central banks.
- The primary mandate of the grouping is for International Economic cooperation with particular emphasis **to prevent future financial crises across the world.**
- It plays a significant role in **shaping the global economic agenda.**
- From 1999-2008 the **forum exalted from a grouping of Central bank governors and finance ministers to Heads of states.**

#HOT SPRINGS & GOGRA POST

- Recently, the **Indian and Chinese troops** have begun **disengaging at Patrolling Pillar-15 (PP-15) in the Gogra-Hotspring region of Eastern Ladakh.**
- Forces of the **two countries have been locked in a confrontational position in the area since April 2020.**
- The move comes ahead of **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in Uzbekistan.**

**Why are the Key Highlights about the Current Disengagement?**

- Indian and Chinese armies have begun to **disengage from Patrolling Point-15 in the Gogra-Hotsprings area of Eastern Ladakh**, marking a step forward **to end the standoff ongoing since May 2020.**
- **PP-15 is one of the 65 patrolling points** in Ladakh along the **Line of Actual Control (LAC).**
- The disengagement has begun in a **coordinated and planned way**, which is conducive to peace and tranquility in the border areas.
- As per the understanding reached earlier on disengagement, **a buffer zone is to be created at the friction points once troops are withdrawn by both sides and new patrolling norms are to be worked out** after complete disengagement and de-escalation.
- The consensus about the disengagement was reached in the **16th round of India China Corps Commander Level Meeting.**
- The 16th round of talks was held on July 17, 2022, at the **Chushul border personnel meeting point on the Indian side.**
- Since the stand-off began in May 2020, the two sides have so far held 16 rounds of talks with disengagement undertaken from both sides of Pangong Tso.
- With disengagement at PP-15, forces of the **two countries have disengaged at all friction points in the**

region which included the North and South banks of the Pangong Tso, PP-14, PP-15 and PP-17A.

- The last disengagement between the forces of the two countries had been achieved at PP-17 A in August 2021 following the 12th Corp Commander Level meeting.
- The friction points that remain now are Demchok and Depsang, which China has constantly refused to accept, maintaining that they are not a part of the current stand-off.

What We Need to Know about the Hot Springs and Gogra Post?

- **Location:** Hot Springs is just north of the Chang Chenmo river and Gogra Post is east of the point where the river takes a hairpin bend coming southeast from Galwan Valley and turning southwest. The area is north of the Karakoram Range of mountains, which lies north of the Pangong Tso lake, and south east of Galwan Valley.
- **Importance:** The area lies close to Kongka Pass, one of the main passes, which, according to China, marks the boundary between India and China. India's claim of the international boundary lies significantly east, as it includes the entire Aksai Chin area as well. Hot Springs and Gogra Post are close to the boundary between two of the most historically disturbed provinces (Xinjiang and Tibet) of China.

What is China's fully solar-powered, semi-satellite drone?

- China's first fully solar-powered Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) has successfully completed its maiden test flight with all onboard systems functioning optimally.
- The drone is a large machine powered entirely by solar panels with a wingspan of 164-ft.
- Named the Qimingxing-50, or Morning Star-50, this drone flies above 20-km altitude where there is stable airflow with no clouds.
- The High-Altitude, Long-Endurance (HALE) UAV can stay airborne for long durations.
- This helps these drones to make the maximum use of solar equipment to stay functional for extended durations.
- This drone is also referred to as 'High Altitude Platform Stations' or pseudo-satellites.

#INDIA-BANGLADESH RECENT AGREEMENTS

Recently, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh has visited India and held talks with Indian Prime Minister. India and Bangladesh have signed seven agreements for cooperation in areas ranging from sharing of river waters to space and unveiled new connectivity and energy initiatives.

What are the Key Highlights of the Meeting?

The two sides have signed 7 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

- The withdrawal of water from the cross-border Koshiyara river.
- The agreement will benefit southern Assam in India and the Sylhet region of Bangladesh.
- Cooperation in space technology.
- Collaboration on Information Technology systems used by railways in areas such as movement of freight.
- Science and technology cooperation.
- Training of Bangladesh Railway personnel and Bangladeshi judicial officers in India.
- Cooperation in broadcasting between Prasar Bharati and Bangladesh Television.

Thermal Power Project: The two nations unveiled the first unit of the Maitree super thermal power project being built in Khulna division of Bangladesh with concessional funding from India. The unit was synchronized with Bangladesh's power grid in August 2022, and the project will generate 1,320MW, when completed.

Rushpa Rail Bridge: The 5.13-km Rupsha rail bridge was also inaugurated, a key part of the 64.7-km

Khulna-Mongla port broad gauge railway project. The bridge was constructed with an **Indian line of credit** of \$389 million. It will increase **connectivity with Mongla**, Bangladesh's second largest port.

Defence Procurement:

In 2018, India has extended **USD 500 million defence Line of Credit (LoC)** to Bangladesh.

In May 2018, Defence public sector undertaking of Kolkata had signed a **Memorandum of Understanding** with Bangladesh to provide **assistance and know-how in the design and construction of warships**.

Dhaka has shared a **wish list of military platforms and systems** that its armed forces would like to procure from India.

Bangladesh Army has approved procurement of three items:

- 5 Bridge Layer Tanks (BLT-72) at USD 10 million
- 7 Portable Steel Bridges (Bailey) at USD 2.2 million
- 1 Mine Protective Vehicles at USD 2.2 million.

Other Proposed Procurements include:

Off-road vehicles, heavy recovery vehicles, armoured engineer reconnaissance vehicles and bullet proof helmets.

Modernisation and extension of automobile assembling unit for a Bangladesh machine tools factory, supply of explosives, raw materials and tools

The Bangladesh Navy has proposed the procurement of a **logistics ship, floating dock, oil tanker, and an ocean-going tug**.

What is India's Vision on CEPA with Bangladesh?

- **The Prime Minister of India** has said that **India and Bangladesh will soon commence negotiations on a Bilateral Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)**.
- The CEPA is likely to focus on **trade in goods, services, and investment**, with a key objective being the **reduction of the trade gap between the two countries**. For the year 2021, **India's imports from Bangladesh** stands at USD 1.76 billion and **exports to Bangladesh** stands at USD 14.09 billion, resulting in a **trade gap of USD 12.33 billion**.
- Bangladesh prepares to **graduate into a developing nation by 2026**, after which it may **no longer qualify for trade benefits that it currently enjoys as a least-developed country**; it is keen to clinch the CEPA within a year.

India Bangladesh Trade Relations:

- In 2021-22, Bangladesh has emerged as the **largest trade partner for India in South Asia and the fourth largest destination** for Indian exports worldwide.
- **Exports to Bangladesh** grew more than 66% from USD 9.69 billion in FY 2020-21 to USD 16.15 billion in FY 2021-22.
- Despite **Covid-19 related disruptions**, bilateral trade grew 44% from USD 10.78 billion in 2020-21 to USD 18.13 billion in 2021-22.
- **India's Exports to Bangladesh:**
 - Raw cotton, non-retail pure cotton yarn, and electricity
- **India's Imports from Bangladesh:**
 - Pure vegetable oils, non-knit men's suits, and textile scraps.

#INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK

Recently, **Minister of Commerce & Industry** addressed the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) **Ministerial meeting** in the US, where India decided to stay away from the Fair & resilient trade Pillar. India agreed to **three out of four pillars**, which are **Supply Chains, Tax & Anti-Corruption and Clean Energy**.

What is IPEF?

- It is a **US-led initiative** that aims to **strengthen economic partnership among participating countries** to enhance resilience, sustainability, inclusiveness, economic growth, fairness, and competitiveness in the **Indo-Pacific region**.



- The IPEF was launched in 2021 with a **dozen initial partners** who together represent **40% of the world GDP**.
- The IPEF is **not a Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** but allows members to **negotiate the parts they want to**. The negotiations will be along **four main "pillars"**.
 - **Supply-chain resilience**
 - **Clean energy, decarbonisation & infrastructure**
 - **Taxation & anti-corruption**
 - **Fair & resilient trade**.
- Currently, **India and 13 countries located in the Pacific Ocean** are its members,
- Australia, Brunei, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, United States, and Vietnam.

What is India's position on the IPEF?

- While some countries had expressed interest in joining negotiations, India **did not declare a definitive position** for some time because it will be watching **what benefits member countries will derive and whether any conditionalities on aspects like environment** may discriminate against developing countries.
- Some areas proposed in the IPEF **do not appear to serve India's interests**.
- For example, the IPEF talks about digital governance but the IPEF formulation contains issues that **directly conflict with India's stated position**.
- India is in the **process of firming up its own digital framework and laws**, particularly regarding

privacy and data, and **it would wait for more information.**

- In August 2022, the Indian government withdrew the Personal Data Protection Bill from Parliament, saying it would consider **"comprehensive legal framework"** to regulate the overall Internet ecosystem, cybersecurity, etc.
- The **US has earlier expressed concerns** about the possibility of the **Indian side demanding data localisation or the storage** and processing of Indian users' data in servers located in India and not the US, even in the case of data of US-based companies.
- A US report expressed that India's policy will serve as significant barriers to digital trade and act as market access barriers, especially for smaller firms.

#7TH EAST ECONOMIC FORUM

- Recently, Russia hosted the **7th Eastern Economic Forum (EEF)** at Vladivostok.
- The forum is a platform for entrepreneurs to expand their businesses into **Russia's Far East (RFE).**

What is the Eastern Economic Forum?

- The EEF was established in 2015 to encourage **foreign investments in the RFE.**
- The EEF displays the **economic potential, suitable business conditions and investment opportunities** in the region.
- Agreements signed at the EEF increased from **217 in 2017 to 380 agreements in 2021, worth 3.6 trillion roubles.**
- The agreements focus on **infrastructure, transportation projects, mineral excavations, construction, industry and agriculture.**
- **Key Players:** China, South Korea, Japan and India are the Key Players in the region, where China is the biggest investor. China who sees potential in promoting the **Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)** and the **Polar Sea Route** in the RFE. China's investments in the region **account for 90% of the total investments.**

Objectives:

- Russia has strategically developed the region with the **aim of connecting Russia to the Asian trading routes.**
- With the fast modernisation of cities like Vladivostok, Khabarovsk, Ulan-Ude, Chita and more, Russia aims to **attract more investments** in the region.
- To **survive the economic crisis and the sanctions** with the help of China and other Asian powers.
- What does India Seek at the Forum?
- **India seeks to expand its influence in the RFE.** During the forum, India expressed its **readiness in expanding trade, connectivity and investments** in Russia.
- India is keen to **deepen its cooperation in energy, pharmaceuticals, maritime connectivity, healthcare, tourism, the diamond industry and the Arctic.**
- In 2019, India offered a **USD 1 billion line of credit to develop infrastructure in the region.**
- Through the EEF, **India aims to establish a strong inter-state interaction** with Russia.
- Business representatives of Gujarat and the Republic of Sakha (Russia) have **launched agreements in the diamond and pharmaceuticals industry.**

How does India act at Balancing between the EEF and IPEF?

- Since the coming together of countries like Myanmar, Armenia, Russia, and China for EEF seems like the forming of an **Anti-Sanctions Group** in the international order, India has vested interests in both the forums, EEF and **IPEF (U.S.-led Indo-Pacific Economic Framework).**
- India has **not shied away from investing** in the Russia-initiated EEF despite the current international conditions, where western countries impose Sanctions on Russia.
- At the same time, India has given **its confirmation and acceptance to three of the four pillars in the**

IPEF.

- India understands the benefits of being involved in the development of the RFE but it **also perceives the IPEF as a vital platform to strengthen its presence in the Indo-Pacific region.**
- The IPEF also presents an ideal opportunity for India to act in the region, without being part of the **China-led Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership** or other regional groupings like the **Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.**

#INDIA'S CLIMATE PLEDGE

Recently, a study has ranked **India's updated climate pledge to the Paris Agreement fifth in compliance and fourth in ambition.**

What are the Key Highlights of the Study?

- The study was published in the scientific journal **Nature Climate Change.**
- It included eight countries — **India, the US, China, Australia, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Australia and Brazil — and the European Union.**
- Nearly all signatories to the **Paris Agreement** updated their climate commitments during the 26th session of the **United Nations Conference on Climate Change (COP 26).**
- **Outcomes: European Union (EU)** took the lead while the United States was ranked last in compliance and second to last in ambition.
- **Compliance:** In the compliance category, the EU took the lead which was followed by China, Australia, South Africa, India, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Brazil and the US.
- **Ambition:** In the Ambition category, the EU was followed by China, South Africa, India, Australia, Brazil, Russia, the United States and Saudi Arabia.
- **Parameters:** Nations likely to meet their climate pledges or the **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC)** were ranked high in compliance. The countries with bold commitments were ranked high in ambition.



What is the Paris Agreement?

- The Paris Agreement (also known as the **Conference of Parties 21 or COP 21**) was **adopted in 2015.**
- It replaced the **Kyoto Protocol** which was an earlier agreement to deal with climate change. It is a global treaty wherein some 200 countries agreed to cooperate to **reduce Green House Gas (GHG) Emissions and rein in climate change.**
- **It seeks to limit global warming to well below 2°C, preferably to 1.5°C, compared to pre-industry levels.**
- **Working:** The Paris Agreement works on a **5- year cycle** of increasingly ambitious climate action carried out by countries. In 2020, countries had submitted their plans for climate action known as **nationally determined contributions (NDCs).**
- **Long-Term Strategies: Long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategies (LT-LEDS)** provide the **long-term horizon for the NDCs.** Unlike NDCs, they are not mandatory.

#WHAT IS LIFE MOVEMENT?

Recently, the Union Minister of Power and New & Renewable Energy launched the **Agni Tattva - Energy for LiFE campaign**, to create awareness of the core concept of Agni Tattva, an **element that is synonymous with energy and is amongst the five elements** of Panchmahabhoot. The Panchmahabhoot comprises of Earth (Prithvi), Water (Jal), Fire (Agni), Air (Vayu) and Aether/ Space (Aakash).



What do we know about the Agni Tattva Campaign?

- It would provide a **platform to deliberate upon the learning and experiences of subject experts and specialists** and explore solutions for a sustainable future for all.
- Further, it will cover several **important topics focusing on health, transport, consumption and production, security, environment, and spirituality.**

What do we know about Lifestyle for the Environment (LiFE) Movement?

- The idea of LiFE was introduced by India during the **26th United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26)** in Glasgow in 2021.
- The **idea promotes an environmentally conscious lifestyle** that focuses on 'mindful and deliberate utilisation' instead of 'mindless and wasteful consumption'.
- With the launch of the Mission, the prevalent **"use-and-dispose" economy governed by mindless and destructive consumption** will be replaced by a **circular economy**, defined by conscious and deliberate consumption.

Objective:

- It seeks to **leverage the strength of social networks to influence social norms** surrounding climate.
- The Mission plans to create and nurture a global network of individuals, namely **'Pro-Planet People' (P3).**
- P3 will have a **shared commitment to adopt and promote environmentally friendly lifestyles.**
- Through the P3 community, the **Mission seeks to create an ecosystem that will reinforce and enable environmentally friendly behaviours** to be self-sustainable.

What are the Other Related Initiatives?

- **National Afforestation Programme (NAP)**
- **National Mission for a Green India (GIM)**
- **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)**
- **National Biodiversity Action Plan**
- **Rural Livelihood Schemes:** Recognition of natural resources intrinsically linked to rural livelihoods is also reflected in flagship schemes like the **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)** and the **National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM).**

#MEETING OF G-4 COUNTRIES

On the sidelines of the 76th session of the UN General Assembly, the G-4 countries highlight 'urgent need' for reform in U.N. Security Council (UNSC).

Who are the Group of Four (G-4) Countries?

- The G4 is a grouping of **Brazil, Germany, India and Japan** which are **aspiring to become permanent members of the UNSC**.
- The G4 countries are supporting each other's bids for permanent membership of the UNSC.
- The G4 nations traditionally meet on the sidelines of the annual high-level UN General Assembly session.

What are the Key Highlights of the G-4 Meeting?

- They felt that the UN decision-making bodies **needed to be urgently reformed as global issues were increasingly complex and interconnected**. Further, they reiterated their **joint commitment to work toward text-based negotiations that lead to Reformed Multilateralism**.
- They highlighted that **General Assembly did not make "meaningful progress" in the Inter-Governmental Negotiations (IGN) and lacked transparency**.
- They reiterated their support for African countries being represented in a permanent and non-permanent capacity.
- The Ministers agreed on the need for **enhanced role and presence of developing countries and of major contributors** to the United Nations to enhance the capacity of the Council to respond effectively to the complex and evolving challenges on questions of international peace and security.

Why is there a Need for UNSC Reforms?

- UN represents a larger world and the irony is that it has **only 5 permanent members** in its important body.
- The current composition of the Security Council represents the post-World War II realities and thus is **not in pace with the changing balance of power** in the world.
- At the time of the formation of the UNSC, big powers were given privileges to make them part of the council. This was necessary for its proper functioning as well as to avoid failure like that of the organization 'League of Nations'.
- The **regions like far East Asia, South America, and Africa have no representation in the permanent membership** of the council.

Why is India Demanding the Permanent Membership of the UNSC?

- For the first 40 years of the UN Security Council's formation, India never asked for permanent membership.
- Even in 1993 when India submitted its written proposal to the UN in response to the General Assembly resolution related to reforms, it did not specifically state that it wants permanent membership for itself.
- It is only from the last few years that India has started asking for permanent membership in the council.
- India deserves a permanent place in the council **considering the size of its economy, population and the fact that it is the largest democracy** in the world.
- India has become a major player not only in Asia but also in the world.
- The Security Council would be a more representative body if India would be there in it as a permanent member.

What is the United Nations Security Council (UNSC)?

- Established by the United Nations charter in 1945, the Security Council has primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security.

- The Security Council has **15 members**.
- There are **five permanent members**: the United States, the Russian Federation, France, China and the United Kingdom.
- The non-permanent members of the Security Council are elected for a term of two years.
- **Each member of the Security Council has one vote. Decisions** of the Security Council on matters are made by an **affirmative vote of nine members including the concurring votes of the permanent members**. A "No" vote from one of the five permanent members blocks the passage of the resolution.
- Any member of the United Nations which is not a member of the Security Council may participate, without vote, in the discussion of any question brought before the Security Council whenever the latter considers that the interests of that member are specially affected.

What is Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN)?

- IGN is a group of nation-states working within the United Nations to further reform of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC)
- The IGN is composed of several different international organizations, namely:
 - African Union
 - G4 nations
 - Uniting for Consensus Group (UfC)
 - L.69 Group of Developing Countries
 - Arab League
 - Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

#WORLD DAIRY SUMMIT 2022

Recently, Prime Minister inaugurated the **International Dairy Federation World Dairy Summit (IDF WDS) 2022 at India Expo Centre & Mart, Greater Noida**.

International Dairy Federation is the leading source of scientific and technical expertise for all stakeholders of the dairy chain.

Since 1903, IDF's network of dairy experts has provided a mechanism for the dairy sector to reach a global consensus on how to help feed the world with safe and sustainable dairy products.

What are the Key Highlights of IDF World Dairy Summit?

- The IDF World Dairy Summit is an annual meeting of the global dairy sector, bringing together approximately 1500 participants from all over the world.
- The last such Summit was held in India about half a century ago in 1974.
- The theme for this year is **Dairy for Nutrition and Livelihood**.
- The IDF World Dairy Summit will provide a forum to industry experts to share knowledge and ideas on how the sector can contribute to nourish the world with safe and sustainable dairying.
- Participants will get an opportunity to acquire knowledge on latest research findings and experiences relevant to the global dairy sector in the broadest sense.

What is the status of Dairy sector in India?

- India is ranked **first in milk production contributing 23% of global milk production** followed by the United States of America, China, Pakistan and Brazil.
- The top 5 milk-producing states are: Uttar Pradesh (14.9%), Rajasthan (14.6%), Madhya Pradesh (8.6%), Gujarat (7.6%), and Andhra Pradesh (7.0%).

What are the Initiatives taken by Government?

- **Rise in Productivity:** The government has taken multiple steps for the betterment of the dairy sector resulting in an **increase of milk production by more than 44% in the last eight years.**
- Further, as compared to the 2% production growth at the global level, India is clocking the milk production growth rate at more than 6%.

Schemes:

- **Rashtriya Gokul Mission**
- **Nationwide Artificial Insemination Programme**
- **Rashtriya Gokul Mission**
- **Gobardhan Yojna**
- **Digitization of dairy sector and universal vaccination of cattle.**
- **Animal Husbandry infrastructure development fund:** It aims to help to increase meat processing capacity and product diversification thereby providing greater access for unorganized Dairy producers to organized the Dairy market.
- **National Programme for Dairy development**

#INDIA-QATAR GI PRODUCTS MEET

Recently, the government of India organized a **Virtual Networking Meet** for **Agri and Food Geographical Indication (GI) products** in association with the **Embassy of India, Doha** and **Indian Business and Professionals Council (IBPC) Qatar**. This Meet provided a **platform for interaction** between the **India exporters and importers of Qatar** on the strength of India in export of agri and food products of Indian origin and distinct attributes.

What is a Geographical Indication (GI) Tag?

- **Geographical Indication (GI)** is an indication used to **identify goods having special characteristics** originating from a definite geographical territory.
- **The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999** seeks to provide for the registration and better protection of geographical indications relating to goods in India.
- It is governed and directed by the **WTO Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS).**
- It was decided and also stated under **Articles 1 (2) and 10 of the Paris Convention** that the **“protection of industrial Property and Geographical Indication are elements of Intellectual Property”.**
- It is primarily an agricultural, natural or a manufactured product (handicrafts and industrial goods).
- **Validity:** This tag is valid for a **period of 10 years** following which it can be renewed.

Agri GI Products:

- Presently, there are more than **400 registered Geographical Indications** in India of which around **150 are agricultural and food products GI.**
- More than **100 registered GI products** fall under the category of **Agriculture and Processed Food Export Development Authority (APEDA) scheduled products** (fresh fruits and vegetables, processed foods, animal products and cereals).

How has India's Relations with Qatar been?

Developments during Indian Vice President visit June 2022:

- **India-Qatar Start Up bridge:** The Vice President launched the **“India-Qatar Start Up bridge”** that aims to **link the start-up ecosystems of the two countries.**

- India has emerged as the **3rd largest ecosystem** for startups globally, with over 70,000 registered Startups.
- India is home to 100 unicorns with a total valuation of over USD 300 billion.
- **Environment and Climate Change:** The Vice President invited Qatar, as India's trusted partner in its **energy security**, to be a partner in this journey for sustainability and join the **International Solar Alliance (ISA)**.
- **Collaborations at Multilateral Forums:** Greater collaboration between **India and Qatar** at multilateral forums like the **Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU)**, **Asian Parliamentary Assembly**, and others was emphasized.

What is the Agriculture and Processed Food Export Development Authority (APEDA)?

- **APEDA** was established by the **Government of India** under the **Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority Act** passed by the **Parliament** in December, 1985.
- The Authority replaced the Processed Food Export Promotion Council (PFEPCC).
- APEDA, which comes under the Ministry of Commerce & Industry has contributed significantly in promoting export of agriculture and processed food products with a share of around 50% (USD 24.77 bn) in overall agri exports during 2021-22.

Functions:

- **Development of industries** relating to the scheduled products for export by way of providing **financial assistance**.
- **Registration** of persons as exporters of the scheduled products on payment of such fees as may be prescribed.
- **Fixing of standards and specifications** for the scheduled products for the purpose of exports.
- Improving **packaging of the Scheduled products**.
- Improving **marketing of the Scheduled products** outside India.
- **Promotion** of export-oriented production and development of the Scheduled products.

#ASIAN PALM OIL ALLIANCE

The apex edible oil industry associations from five major palm oil importing countries of Asia -- **India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal** -- have come together to form the **Asian Palm Oil Alliance (APOA)**.

APOA held its first general body meeting on the sidelines of the Globoil Summit being held at Agra, India and the next meeting is expected to be held **in Indonesia early next year 2023**.

Globoil Summit is one of the World's Leading Edible Oils and Agri Trade Conference, Exhibitions & Awards. 2022 also marks the 25th year celebration of Globoil India.



What is APOA?

- The APOA aims is safeguarding the **economic and business interests of the palm oil consuming countries** and will work towards increasing the consumption of palm oil in member countries.
- The alliance would work **towards ensuring that palm oil is recognised as a high-quality, economical, and healthy vegetable oil** and to change the negative image of palm oil.
- Membership of APOA would be **further expanded to include companies or industry bodies** associated with production or refining of palm oil across the continent.

What is Palm Oil?

- Palm oil is **currently the world's most consumed vegetable oil**.
- It is used extensively in the **production of detergents, plastics, cosmetics, and biofuels**.
- Indonesia and Malaysia together account for almost **90% of the global palm oil production**, with Indonesia producing the largest quantity at over 45 million tonnes in 2021.
- Top consumers of the commodity are India, China, and the **European Union (EU)**.
- India's annual imports of edible oil is around **13-14 million tonne (MT)**.
- Around 8 MT of palm oil is imported from **Indonesia and Malaysia**, while other oils, such as soya and sunflower, come from Argentina, Brazil, Ukraine and Russia.
- Asia accounts for **around 40% of the global palm oil consumption** while Europe accounts for 12% of palm oil trade. Indonesia and Malaysia are the biggest palm oil exporters in the world.
- India is the **largest importer of palm oil in Asia**, accounting for 15% of global imports, followed by China (9%), Pakistan (4%) and Bangladesh (2%).

#THE GENDER SNAPSHOT 2022

Recently, the report entitled "**Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG): The Gender Snapshot 2022**" was launched by **United Nations (UN) Women** and the **UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)**.

What are the Key Findings of the Report?

- The report highlighted that **Sustainable Development Goal-5 (SDG-5)**, or **achieving gender equality, will not be met by 2030** at the current pace of progress.
- By the end of 2022, around 383 million women and girls will live in extreme poverty (on less than USD 1.90 a day) compared to 368 million men and boys.
- It will take close to **300 years to achieve full gender equality** at the current rate of progress.
- It will also take at least **40 years to achieve equal representation of women in national parliaments**.
- **Progress must be 17 times faster than last decade's progress of the last decade, to eradicate child marriage by 2030.**
- Girls from the poorest rural households and in conflict-affected areas are expected to suffer the most.
- In 2021, about **38% of female-headed households in war-affected areas experienced moderate or severe food insecurity**, compared to 20% of male-headed households.
- Globally, **women lost an estimated USD 800 billion in income in 2020 due to the pandemic**.
- **More women and girls are now forcibly displaced than ever before**, some 44 million women and girls by the end of 2021. Over **1.2 billion women and girls of reproductive age (15-49) live in countries and areas with some restrictions on access to safe abortion**.

#INDIA –SAUDI ARABIA RELATIONSHIP

Recently, the **Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution and Textiles** visited Saudi Arabia to attend the Ministerial meeting of the **India-Saudi Arabia Strategic Partnership Council**.

What are the Key Outcomes of the Meeting?

- Streamlining efforts to carry out the declaration of investments of **USD \$100 billion in India** made by Saudi Arabia in February 2019.
- Endorsement of the **41 areas of cooperation** identified by the technical teams under the **4 broad domains of:**
- **Agriculture & Food Security**



- **Energy**
- Technology & Information Technology
- Industry & Infrastructure
- A commitment to carrying out **important projects in a timely way**. The following are some of the priority areas for cooperation:
- Reiteration of **commitment to ongoing collaboration** on joint projects, such as the **construction of a refinery on the West Coast**, an investment in **Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG)** infrastructure, and the creation of strategic petroleum storage facilities in India.

What is the India-Saudi Arabia Strategic Partnership Council?

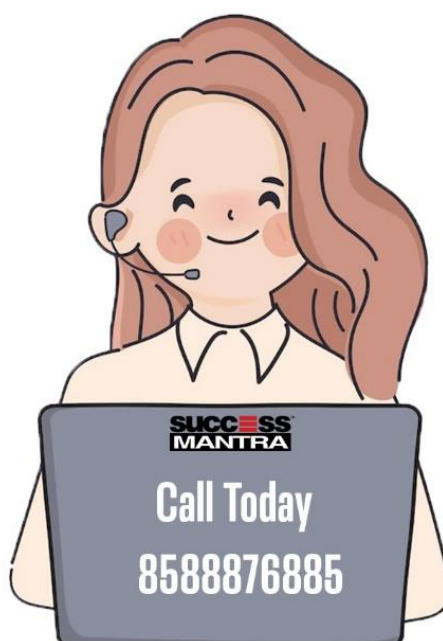
- The **Strategic Partnership Council** was instituted in **October, 2019** during the visit of the **Prime Minister of India to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**.
- It has two main pillars:
 - Political, Security, Social and Cultural Committee
 - Committee on Economy and Investments
- India is the **fourth country with which Saudi Arabia has formed such a strategic partnership**, after the UK, France and China.

How has India's Relations with Saudi Arabia been?

- **Oil & Gas:** Saudi Arabia is currently **India's second-largest supplier of crude oil** (Iraq has been India's top supplier). India **imports around 18% of its crude oil requirement** and around **22% of its Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) requirement** from Saudi Arabia.
- **Bilateral Trade:** Saudi Arabia is **India's fourth largest trade partner** (after the USA, China and UAE). In FY 2021-22, bilateral trade was valued at **USD 42.8 billion**. India's **imports from Saudi Arabia reached USD 34.01 billion** and **exports to Saudi Arabia were worth USD 8.76 billion**. An increase of **49.5% over 2021**.

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