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1. SCO summit 2022 : India to host SCO summit next year (Sept. 17, 2022)

The SCO summit was held two years later in Samarkand, Uzbekistan on 15 and 16 September. The next meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of State will be held in 2023 in India.

Agenda of the summit :

- The technological and digital divide, continued turbulence in global financial markets, instability in supply chains, increased protectionist measures and uncertainty in the global economy.
- Member States also highlighted the impacts of global climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic, which have posed additional challenges to economic growth, social welfare and food security.

Samarkand Declaration :

- The leaders of the member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) signed the Samarkand Declaration at a meeting of the **Council of Heads of State**.
- The declaration states that the SCO will be headed by India for the next period.
- In the declaration, the member states supported the efforts of the countries of the region to ensure prosperity, peace and sustainable development.
- They advocated for strengthening the role of SCO in promoting stability and socio-economic development in the region.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- The leaders stressed the need to adopt new approaches to promote more equitable and effective international cooperation and sustainable economic development.
- Member States expressed deep concern over the security threat posed by terrorism, separatism and extremism and strongly condemned terrorist acts around the world.
- They also resolved to take measures to contain the spread of terrorism, to eliminate terrorist financing channels.
- They supported the establishment of Afghanistan as a free, neutral, united, democratic and peaceful state, free from terrorism, war and drugs.
- Member States called for strengthening the effectiveness of the World Trade Organization as the principal forum for discussing the international trade agenda and adopting the rules of the multilateral trading system.
- Member States have decided to set up an expert working group on start-ups and innovation, poverty reduction and traditional medicine.

PM Modi's participation in the Summit :

- In the summit PM Modi said the Indian economy is expected to grow by 7.5 per cent this year and thus will be the highest among the largest economies in the world.
- PM Modi holds bilateral talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION -***Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) :***

- It is a permanent intergovernmental international organization.
- It was founded in **2001**.
- The **SCO Charter was signed in 2002, and came into force in 2003**.
- It is a Eurasian political, economic and military organization.
- Its aim is to maintain peace, security and stability in the region.
- China, Russia and four Central Asian states – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan – were founding members of the SCO.
- Its members include China, Russia, India and Pakistan, as well as 4 Central Asian countries - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.
- Official Languages - Russian and Chinese
- **Chairmanship - On the basis of rotation for a year by Member States**

2. India signs MoU with Gulf Cooperation Council to facilitate consultation (Sept. 12, 2022)

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on 10 September signed a Memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Secretary-General of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Nayef Falah Mubarak Al-Hajraf on the mechanism of consultations between India and the GCC.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- The External Affairs Minister is on a two-day visit to Saudi Arabia from 10-12 September 2022, his first visit to Saudi Arabia as Foreign Minister of India.
- Jaishankar held bilateral meetings with the Secretary General and discussed the relevance of India-GCC cooperation in the context of the current regional and global situation.

About Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) :

- It is a political and economic alliance of six Middle Eastern countries—**Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman.**
- It was established in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in **May 1981.**
- Its aim is to achieve coordination, cooperation and integration and Arab regional unity among these countries.
- The GCC member states have a total GDP of over USD 3.464 trillion and a total population of 54 million.

Why is GCC significant for India ?

- About 7.6 million people of the Indian diaspora live in the Middle East.
- According to the Reserve Bank of India report, India receives 30% of the total remittances from Middle Eastern countries. Although earlier this figure used to be 50 percent.
- The decline in remittances may be due to the Covid-19 pandemic which forced workers to come to India.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION -

India's trade and energy interests :

- India's third largest trading partner (USD 72.9 billion) in the year 2021-22 was the United Arab Emirates.
- Saudi Arabia was India's fourth largest trading partner in the last financial year.
- From Qatar, India imports 8.5 million tonnes of LNG annually and exports products ranging from cereals to meat, fish, chemicals and plastics.
- Two-way commerce between India and Qatar increased to US\$ 15 billion in 2021-22 from US\$ 9.21 billion in 2020-21.
- Oman and Bahrain have also been a prosperous bilateral trade partner with India.

3. Second India-Japan 2plus2 Ministerial Dialogue begins in Tokyo (Sept. 8, 2022)

The 2nd India-Japan 2022 Ministerial Dialogue began in Tokyo on 8 September.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- Defence Minister **Rajnath Singh** and External Affairs Minister **S Jaishankar** attended the second India-Japan 2+2 ministerial dialogue along with their Japanese counterparts in Tokyo on 8 September.

- **Rajnath Singh** said, there has been significant progress in Indo-Japan bilateral relations in recent times.
- India and Japan are set to complete **70 years of diplomatic ties** in December this year and the two countries will hold an event to mark the occasion in New Delhi in December.
- The meeting reflects the commitment of both the countries towards strengthening bilateral security and defence cooperation.
- It also demonstrates the strength of the India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership.
- During the talks, the two sides will review bilateral cooperation in various fields and decide the way forward.

India's '2+2' format of dialogue :

- It is a format of the meeting of the Foreign and Defence Ministers of India and its allies on strategic and security issues.
- India has 2+2 dialogues with four major strategic partners - the **US, Australia, Japan and Russia**.
- Apart from Russia, three other countries are also India's partners in the Quad.
- The '2+2' dialogue with Japan was launched in **2019** to further deepen bilateral security and defence cooperation.
- The first Ministerial 2+2 Dialogue with Japan was held in **New Delhi** in December 2019.

4. Sheikh Hasina confers scholarships on descendants of Indian soldiers killed in Bangladesh Liberation War (Sept. 8, 2022)

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina conferred the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Student Scholarship at a function in New Delhi on 7 September.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- This scholarship was awarded for the first time to the descendants of soldiers, officers of the Armed Forces of India who were martyred or grievously injured during the historic liberation war of 1971.
- This scholarship was awarded to 100 - 100 students of class 10 and 12 which is a tribute to the Indian heroes who made supreme sacrifice for the country.
- The award is named after Hasina's father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.
- A total of 200 family members of Indian Army personnel have received scholarships.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION -***Liberation War of 1971 :***

- In the 1950s, Pakistan was ruled by a military-bureaucratic rule that ruled the entire country (East and West Pakistan) in an undemocratic manner.
- The Bengalites had no political representation in this system of governance.
- This dominance of West Pakistan was challenged by the Bengalis during the general elections of 1970.
- In the general election of 1970, the Awami League of East Pakistan's Sheikh Mujibur Rahman got a clear majority.
- West Pakistan was not ready for any leader of East Pakistan to rule the country.
- On March 26, 1971, West Pakistan launched Operation Searchlight in East Pakistan.
- As a result, lakhs of Bangladeshis had to take refuge in India.
- The Pakistani army had to face defeat due to the bravery of the 'Muktiwahini Sena' and Indian soldiers who fought for the independence of Bangladesh.
- On 6 December 1971, a new nation Bangladesh was born out of 13 days war with the intervention of India.

5. PM Modi and Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina jointly unveils Unit-I of Maitree Super Thermal Power Project (Sept. 6, 2022)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina jointly unveiled Unit-1 of Maitri Super Thermal Power Project after bilateral and delegation level talks in Delhi on 6 September.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- The project is being constructed under India's concessional financing scheme.
- This will add 1320 MW to the national grid of Bangladesh.
- The first unit of the Maitree Super Thermal Power Plant will go into commercial operation early October.
- Unit-II of the power plant, also known as the Rampal coal-fired power project, is expected to be commissioned early next year.

India-Bangladesh delegation level talks :

- India-Bangladesh delegation level talks under the leadership of PM Modi and Hasina began at Hyderabad House in New Delhi.

- The Prime Minister of Bangladesh is on a four-day visit to India to strengthen the multi-faceted ties between the two countries.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION -***Agenda of the talks :***

- The agenda for talks between the two countries included connectivity, energy, water resources, trade and investment, border management and security, development partnership and regional and multilateral matters.

Seven MoUs between India and Bangladesh :

1. Interim bilateral agreement on water sharing of the Koshiyara river
2. Signing of MoU on Scientific Cooperation between Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), India and Bangladesh Council of Scientific Industrial Research (BCSIR).
3. MoU signed between National Judicial Academy, Bhopal and Supreme Court of Bangladesh to promote capacity building
4. Ministry of Railways signed an MoU with Bangladesh Railways, under which India will train personnel of Bangladesh Railways in Indian training institutes
5. MoU signed between ministries of both countries to cooperate in providing IT solutions to Bangladesh Railways
6. MoU signed between Bangladesh Television and Prasar Bharati
7. MoU between the two countries for promotion of cooperation in space technology and scientific and research

India - Bangladesh :

- Bangladesh and India share an international border of more than four thousand kilometres.
- The five states of India Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura and West Bengal touch the border of Bangladesh.
- The land boundary between the two sides has been amicably resolved with the ratification of the landmark Protocol to Land Boundary Agreement in 2015.
- Bangladesh accounts for the largest share of foreign tourist arrivals in India.
- In 2021-22, Bangladesh has emerged as the largest trading partner for India in South Asia and the fourth largest export destination for India.
- Bilateral trade between the two countries has increased from \$9 billion to \$18 billion in the last five years.

6. 38th Ministerial Meeting of India-Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commission (Aug. 27, 2022)

The 38th Ministerial Meeting of the India-Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commission was held in New Delhi on August 25, 2022.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- The Indian delegation was chaired by Union Minister of Jal Shakti **Gajendra Singh Shekhawat** and the Bangladesh delegation was led by Minister of State for Water Resources **Zaheed Farooq**.
- The two countries discussed a wide range of issues related to Ganga, Teesta and several smaller rivers during the meeting.
- The two sides also discussed the exchange of data and information related to floods, river-bank conservation works, general basin management and India's river interlinking project.
- Bangladesh requested for the early completion of the long pending Teesta water sharing treaty.
- Both sides also finalised a draft Memorandum of Understanding to share the waters of the **Kushiyara River** on an interim basis.
- Both sides welcomed the finalization of the design of the **Feni River** Water Drawing Site and its technical infrastructure to meet the drinking water requirements of Sabroom Town in Tripura.
- It is noteworthy that a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the two countries in this regard in October 2019.
- This meeting was held after a gap of 12 years

Rivers between India and Bangladesh :

- India and Bangladesh share **54 rivers**.
- All are part of the drainage system of the Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna (GBM) basin.
- The Padma (Ganga), Jamuna (Brahmaputra) and Meghna (Barak) and their tributaries play an important role in maintaining food and water security in Bangladesh.
- The dispute between India and Bangladesh regarding water resource allocation dates back to the time when Bangladesh was East Pakistan.
- In 1961, India began construction of the **Farakka Barrage** which was to be operational by April 1975.
- When India began its preliminary planning for the project, Pakistan expressed concerns over the potential effect of the project on East Pakistan.

Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) :

- It was constituted in 1972 between India and Bangladesh.
- It is a bilateral mechanism to address issues of mutual interest on common / border / transboundary rivers.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION -***About Kushiyara River :***

- It is a distributary river in Bangladesh and Assam.
- The water of Kushiyara drains into tributaries from Manipur, Mizoram and Assam.

7. India handed over 21,000 tonnes of urea to crisis-hit Sri Lanka (Aug. 23, 2022)

India on 22 August handed over 21,000 tonnes of chemical fertiliser to the crisis-ridden neighbour Sri Lanka.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- This has been done under a special assistance program that will help farmers in Sri Lanka and help strengthen bilateral cooperation for food security,
- This is India's second such aid to the beleaguered island nation in recent months.
- In May 2022, India had assured to supply 65,000 metric tonnes of urea to Sri Lanka immediately to avoid any disruption in the current **Yala farming** season in Sri Lanka.
- **Yala** is the paddy cultivation season in Sri Lanka which lasts between May and August.

Ban of Fertiliser in Sri Lanka :

- To move towards a green economy, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa last year decided to ban imports of chemical fertilizers, causing a food shortage that has reduced crop yields by 50%.
- This decision of the government badly affected the food production.
- As a result, the President of Sri Lanka declared an economic emergency to curb rising food prices.

India's support to Sri Lanka :

- India has pledged about \$4 billion in loans, lines of credit and credit swaps to the debt-ridden Sri Lanka from January this year.
- Sri Lanka's annual fertilizer imports cost is USD 400 million.

- India has provided financial assistance of about USD 3.5 billion to help safeguard Sri Lanka's food, health and energy security by supplying food, medicines, fuel, kerosene and other essential commodities.
- In addition, India has recently supplied around 40,000 tonnes of rice under the extended USD 1 billion line of credit.

8. S Jaishankar unveils Gandhi's bust in Paraguay (Aug. 22, 2022)

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, who is on his first ever official visit to South America, unveiled a bust of Mahatma Gandhi in Paraguay on 21 August.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- He appreciated the decision of Asuncion Municipality to establish it on the main waterfront of the city.
- The External Affairs Minister also visited the historic **Casa de la Independencia** from where Paraguay's independence movement began more than two centuries ago.
- External Affairs Minister, S Jaishankar is on an official visit to Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina from 22-27 August.
- In Paraguay, S Jaishankar will also inaugurate the new **Indian Embassy complex**, which started functioning in January 2022.
- EAM's visit is aimed at exploring new areas of cooperation in the post-pandemic era.

About Paraguay :

- It is a land-locked country in **south-central South America**.
- It is one of the world's largest exporters of **hydropower**.
- The rivers provide access to the Atlantic Ocean and serve as sites for hydroelectric power plants.
- Paraguay is a member of **MERCOSUR**.
- The Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) is a regional integration process, initially established by **Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, and later joined by Venezuela and Bolivia**.
- India has a preferential trade agreement with MERCOSUR.
- Diplomatic relations between India and Paraguay were established in year 1961.
- President - **Mario Abdo Benitez**
- Capital - **Asuncion**
- Currency - **The guarani**

9. Thai Public Broadcasting Service signs MoU with Prasar Bharati (Aug. 18, 2022)

The Thai Public Broadcasting Service (Thai PBS) on 18 August signed a Memorandum of Understanding with India's public broadcaster Prasar Bharati for comprehensive cooperation between Thailand and India to strengthen their bilateral ties.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- Thai PBS and Prasar Bharati share the same values as public broadcasters.
- The MoU will contribute to better understanding between the peoples of the two countries and is the first step in cooperation in exchange of news and programmes.
- Indian Ambassador to Thailand Suchitra Durai represented Prasar Bharati in signing the MoU.
- Both countries also signed MoU on Health and Medical Research Cooperation between Indian Council of Medical Research and Department of Medical Sciences, Thailand.

India -Thailand relations :

- **The year 2022 is the 75th year of diplomatic relations between the two countries.**
- Both countries share a maritime boundary in the Andaman Sea.
- Thailand was one of the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with India in 1947.
- In 2021, Thailand became India's fourth largest trading partner in ASEAN.
- In 2021-22, Thailand was India's 22nd top trading partner, with a total trade of US\$6.6 billion.
- The MoU on Defence Cooperation between India and Thailand was signed on 25 January 2012.
- Since 2015, India has participated in the largest Asia Pacific military exercise Ex-Cobra Gold as an 'Observer Plus' category.

10. India gift Dornier Maritime Reconnaissance aircraft to Sri Lanka (Aug. 16, 2022)

India on August 15 gifted Sri Lanka a Dornier maritime reconnaissance aircraft that will enable the island nation to tackle a range of challenges such as human and drug trafficking and other organized crimes in its waters.

Important facts

- It was gifted at a special event at the Sri Lanka Air Force Base in Katunayake.
- Sri Lankan Navy and Air Force personnel who have undergone training in India for nearly four months will operate the aircraft.
- Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe and Indian High Commissioner Gopal Baglay were also present on the occasion.
- The celebrations took place as India celebrates its 76th Independence Day and a day later China's high-tech missile and satellite surveillance vessel will anchor at Sri Lanka's Hambantota port.
- The aircraft has been delivered to Sri Lanka by the Indian Navy to help meet the immediate security needs of Sri Lanka.
- The Indian Navy has also given intensive training in maritime reconnaissance aircraft to a team of the Sri Lankan Navy and Air Force.
- During the 2018 Defence Dialogue between India and Sri Lanka in New Delhi, Sri Lanka had discussed the possibility of acquiring two Dornier reconnaissance aircraft from India to enhance its maritime surveillance capabilities.

Dornier Aircrafts

- In March 2022, India and the Government of Sri Lanka signed a Memorandum of Understanding to provide two Dornier 228 aircraft to the Sri Lankan Navy.

Dornier 228 Aircraft

- It is a 17-seater non-pressurised aircraft that has a turboprop engine.
- It is capable of day and night operations, short take-off and landing, and can take off from semi-prepared runways.
- Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) started manufacturing Dornier-228 in India.
- The Dornier-228 aircraft have been used by the armed forces so far.
- Alliance Air had signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with HAL to operate Dornier aircraft.