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1. 20th Meeting of Prosecutors General of SCO Member States takes place in Kazakhstan (Sept. 24, 2022)

The 20th Meeting of Prosecutors General of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Member States was held in Astana, Kazakhstan on September 23.

The next (21st) meeting of the Prosecutor Generals of the SCO member states will be held in **China in 2023.**

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- From India's side, learned Solicitor General of India **Tushar Mehta** and Additional Secretary, Department of Legal Affairs **Dr. Anju Rathi Rana** participated in the meeting.
- Mehta highlighted the initiatives taken by the Government of India to address international economic offences at the international level by ratification of two United Nations Conventions.
- These two UN Conventions are - **the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC)** and its three protocols and the **United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC).**
- He said, in order to curb the threat of international economic crimes at the national level, India has implemented a number of legislative measures to prevent, detect and punish money laundering by special legislation.
- **A Protocol** incorporating the deliberations of the 20th meeting of the Prosecutor General of the SCO Member States was signed and adopted by the SCO Member States.

Salient features of the Protocol :

- Strengthening cooperation in relation to recovery of proceeds made through money laundering.
- Cooperation on issues relating to dealing with economic offences such as money laundering, search, confiscation and recovery of proceeds of crime from the States.
- Using the forums of bilateral and multilateral gatherings to discuss ways to strengthen the system to deal with economic offences.
- Continuing to exchange information on domestic laws governing the recovery of proceeds of each seizure and offence.
- To develop cooperation between the General Offices of Prosecutors of the SCO Member States in the field of advanced training of prosecutors.
- To conduct and participate in bilateral and multilateral programs to combat economic crimes.

2. 10th IBSA Trilateral Ministerial Commission meeting held in New York (Sept. 22, 2022)

The 10th India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum (IBSA) Trilateral Ministerial Commission meeting was held in New York on 21 September.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- The meeting was chaired by External Affairs Minister **Dr S Jaishankar**.
- Minister of Foreign Affairs of Brazil Carlos Alberto Franco França and Minister of Health of South Africa Dr Joe Phaahla were also present during the meeting.
- The Ministers reviewed the entire gamut of **IBSA cooperation**.
- The aspirations of African countries to have a permanent presence on the UN Security Council were endorsed by the ministers.
- They also supported the efforts of India and Brazil to obtain permanent membership in the Security Council.
- India will host the sixth IBSA summit on the sidelines of the G20 summit in November this year.

Agenda of the meeting :

- The agenda of the meeting was on mutual interests including cooperation in multilateral organizations, South-South cooperation, UNSC reform, 2030 agenda, Sustainable Development Goals, climate change, countering terrorism, and financing for developmental activities.
- They held discussions on regional issues like the African Union, the Middle East peace process, and the situation in Ukraine.

About IBSA Trilateral Ministerial Commission :

- It is a trilateral, developmental initiative between India, Brazil and South Africa to promote South-South cooperation and exchange.
- This grouping was formally renamed the IBSA Dialogue Forum when the foreign ministers of the three countries met in Brasilia (Brazil) on 6 June 2003 and issued the Brasilia Declaration.

3. Rajnath Singh signs MoU with Egypt on Defence Cooperation (Sept. 20, 2022)

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, who is on a three-day visit to Egypt, met the Egyptian Defence Minister, General Mohamed Zaki in Cairo on 20 September and signed a MoU on Defence Cooperation to further expand the bilateral defence ties between the two countries.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- During the meeting, both sides discussed steps to strengthen defense ties and a consensus was reached for **joint military exercises and training**, especially in the area of counter-terrorism.
- In addition, they also exchanged views on regional security and acknowledged the contribution of India and Egypt to peace and stability in the world.
- Egyptian President **Abdel Fattah el-Sisi** agreed to focus on enhancing bilateral cooperation and security aspects.
- Singh has also invited his Egyptian counterpart to the **India-Africa Defence Dialogue and the IOR Defence Ministers' Conference**, which is scheduled to be held in Gujarat from **October 18-22** this year as part of the **12th DefExpo**.
- Egypt is one of the largest investment destinations for India in the region with an existing Indian investment of USD 3.15 billion.

India - Egypt defence cooperation :

- To boost defence cooperation between the two countries, an Indian Air Force team arrived in Egypt on **22 June** to participate in a bilateral 'Strategic Leadership Program' with the Egyptian Air Force.
- The year 2022 has special significance as it marks the **75th anniversary** of diplomatic relations between India and Egypt.
- There was close cooperation between the Air Forces of both countries, with efforts at jointly developing a fighter aircraft in the **1960s**.
- Indian Air Force pilots had also trained **Egyptian pilots from the 1960s until 1984**.
- In recent times, since 2015, there have been a number of high-level exchanges of visits by defense delegations.

4. India Overtakes China To Become Sri Lanka's Largest Lender (Sept. 19, 2022)

According to a media report, India has emerged as the largest bilateral lender to Sri Lanka, overtaking China in the process, with a total loan of USD 968 million in the four months of 2022.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- In the last five years from 2017-2021, China has been the largest bilateral lender to Sri Lanka.
- **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** has been the largest multilateral lender in the past five years and disbursed funds amounting to **610 million dollars** in year 2021.
- India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations **Ruchira Kamboj** had said that India has provided food and financial assistance of about **\$ 4 billion to Sri Lanka**.
- On 22 August, India provided 21,000 tonnes of fertilizers to the beleaguered Sri Lanka.
- India has been at the forefront of providing financial assistance to Sri Lanka as per requirements of this country and is one of the countries which has provided maximum assistance in times of need.
- Since the beginning of 2022, Sri Lanka has been grappling with an economic crisis.

5. Defence Minister reaches Cairo on two-day official visit to Egypt (Sept. 19, 2022)

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh reached Cairo on 19 September on a two-day official visit to Egypt.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- During the visit, Rajnath Singh will hold bilateral talks with the Minister of Defence and Defence Production, General Mohammad Zaki.
- Rajnath Singh's visit aims to further strengthen defence cooperation and friendship between **India and Egypt**.
- The two ministers will review bilateral defence ties, explore new initiatives to intensify military ties and focus on deepening cooperation between the defence industries of the two countries.
- An MoU will also be signed to promote defence cooperation between India and Egypt.
- Singh will also meet Egyptian **President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi**.

India - Egypt Relations :

- Egypt is one of the largest investment destinations for India with the current Indian investment of **USD 3.15 billion**.
- Indian companies are working on several projects in Egypt.
- To strengthen defence cooperation between the two countries, an Indian Air Force team arrived in Egypt on 22 June to participate in a bilateral '**Strategic Leadership Program**' with the Egyptian Air Force.

- Earlier in November last year, Chief of **Air Staff Chief Marshal VR Chowdhury** had gone to Egypt for his five-day visit to attend the Air Power Symposium and **Defence Exhibition (EDEX) in Cairo**.
- The year 2022 has special significance as it marks the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between India and Egypt.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION -***About Egypt :***

- Capital - **Cairo**
- President - **Abdel Fattah al-Sisi**
- Official Language - **Arabic**
- Official Religion - **Islam**
- Currency - **Egyptian pound**

6. 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**

7. 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.

8. 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.

9. 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.

10. 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 Kushiya 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.