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1. China's army to take part in Vostok-2022 exercise in Russia (Aug. 19, 2022)

The People's Liberation Army of China will participate in the strategic command and staff exercise Vostok-2022 in Russia from 1 - 5 September.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- India, Belarus, Tajikistan, Mongolia and other countries will also participate in the exercise.
- The exercise will be held under the command of the chief of Russia's General Staff, Valery Gerasimov, at 13 training grounds of the Eastern Military District.
- During the exercise, the participating forces will practice measures to maintain military security in the eastern sector.
- The exercise will contribute to "friendly cooperation between the armed forces of all countries".
- It will advance the level of strategic dialogue by all parties and strengthen the ability to respond to various security threats.
- Last year, India participated in Exercise ZAPAD 2021 in Russia, in which 17 countries including China and Pakistan participated.

India's Exercises with China & Russia :

- **China** - Exercise Hand-in-Hand
- **Russia** - Exercise Indra, Exercise TSENTR

2. China's funding for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor down 56% (Aug. 19, 2022)

China's funding to Pakistan for the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) declined by about 56% in the first half of 2022.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- Other countries such as Russia, Egypt and Sri Lanka saw a 100% drop of BRI engagement compared to 2021.
- The project is running from Gwadar port in Pakistan to Kashgar city in Xinjiang, China.

- The project is not running as per the initial promise due to lack of transparency, debt problem, poor management and corruption.
- The project is facing local opposition and frequent attacks on the project and its personnel in Pakistan and other security challenges.
- Apart from this, the deteriorating economic condition of Pakistan is also affecting the project.
- According to reports, China has recently asked for its military presence in Pakistan to safeguard and look after the project.
- China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) project, on the other hand, is also facing global criticism for its inadequate transparency of loans.

China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) :

- It is a project connecting China's northwestern Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region and Gwadar Port in Pakistan's western province of Balochistan.
- The length of this project is 3,000 km.
- It is a bilateral project between Pakistan and China.
- It aims to promote connectivity across Pakistan through a network of energy, industrial and other infrastructure development projects, highways, railways and pipelines.
- It is a part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

3. Draft Indian Ports Bill, 2022 released for stakeholder consultation (Aug. 19, 2022)

To amend the British-era law for the port sector, the government has released the draft Indian Ports Bill, 2022 for stakeholder consultation.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- It has been drafted to consolidate and amend the laws relating to ports for prevention of pollution at ports and to ensure compliance of the country's obligation under maritime treaties and international instruments to which India is a party.
- Measures for the protection of ports have also been mentioned in the bill.
- This Bill 2022 will repeal and replace the existing Indian Ports Act, 1908.
- The proposed bill will streamline the development of the maritime sector, while also promoting ease of doing business by defining unnecessary delays, disagreements and responsibilities.

Objectives of the bill :

- To promote inter-state and Centre-State integrated planning through a purely advisory and recommendatory framework.

- Ensuring prevention of pollution measures for all ports in India involving India's obligations under international treaties.
- Addressing the gaps in the dispute resolution framework required for the growing port sector
- Introducing transparency and collaboration in development and other aspects through the use of data.
- To empower and establish State Maritime Boards for effective administration, control and management of non-major ports in India.
- To provide an adjudicatory mechanism for redressal of port related disputes.
- To set up a National Council to promote the structured growth and development of the port sector.
- Ensuring optimum utilization of India's coastline.

Why was this bill brought ?

- The Indian Ports Act, 1908 is over 110 years old.
- It is now imperative that the law be amended to reflect the current framework, incorporate India's international obligations, address emerging environmental concerns and assist in the consultative development of the port sector in the national interest.

Importance of Ports in India :

- India has 7,500 km of coastline, 14,500 km of potential navigable waterways and strategic bases on major international maritime trade routes.
- About 95% of India's trade by volume and 65% by value is carried out through sea transport facilitated by ports.
- Several port-led development initiatives have been identified and taken up under the aegis of the Sagarmala Project of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.

4. HAL to open office in Kuala Lumpur for business operations in Southeast Asia (Aug. 18, 2022)

Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) signed a MoU to set up an office in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- This office will help HAL to tap new business opportunities for Fighter Lead-in Trainer (FLIT) and other requirements of Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) such as Su-30 MKM and Hawk upgrade.

- This will strengthen India's commitment in supporting the Malaysian Defence Forces and industry for a sustainable aerospace and defence landscape in Malaysia.
- HAL had submitted a proposal in October 2021 for the supply of 18 FLIT LCAs against a global tender issued by RMAF to the Ministry of Defence, Malaysia.
- Being one of the largest producers of Russian-origin Su-30 aircraft, HAL stated that it has the capability to provide necessary support to the RMAF for the Su-30 MKM fleet, which is facing low serviceability due to the Russia-Ukraine crisis.
- Other HAL platforms such as HTT-40, Do-228, Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH), and Light Combat Helicopter (LCH) are likely to be inducted by the RMAF in the future.
- HAL's office in Kuala Lumpur will market promotion of HAL's range of products and services not only in Malaysia but throughout Southeast Asia.

5. 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.

6. India, Thailand jointly inaugurate Indian Embassy Residence Complex in Bangkok (Aug. 18, 2022)

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar inaugurated the Indian Embassy Residence Complex in Bangkok along with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Thailand Don Pramudwinai on 17 August.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- **Jaishankar is on a visit to Thailand to attend the 9th India-Thailand Joint Commission meeting.**
- He also paid a visit to the Temple of Emerald Buddha in Bangkok.
- 9th India-Thailand Joint Commission Meeting was held in Bangkok on 17 August.
- The meeting was co-chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs of Thailand and S Jaishankar, the External Affairs Minister of India.
- Both countries discussed advancing contacts in political, economic, security as well as defence, connectivity and health domains.
- **The two sides also discussed cooperation within ASEAN and BIMSTEC and shared their perspectives on the Indo-Pacific.**

About Thailand :

- Primeminister - **Prayuth Chan-ocha**
- Capital - **Bangkok**
- Head Of State - **King Vajiralongkorn**
- Official Language - **Thai**
- Official Name - **Ratcha Anachak Thai (Kingdom of Thailand)**

7. Amit Shah inaugurates National Security Strategies Conference (Aug. 18, 2022)

Home Minister Amit Shah inaugurated a two day National Security Strategies (NSS) Conference 2022 in New Delhi on 18 August.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- 600 officials from across the country are participating physically and virtually in this conference.
- The conference is organized by the Intelligence Bureau.
- On the first day of the conference, various aspects of national security were discussed, including terrorism, radicalization, issues related to cryptocurrencies, unwanted drone technology and challenges posed by Maoist organisations.
- During the conference, the Home Minister emphasized the importance of human intelligence to combat terrorism.
- He underlined the important role of district level police officers in identifying emerging terror hotspots.

National Security Strategy (NSS) :

- It is an important framework for a country to meet the basic needs and security concerns of its citizens.
- It addresses external and internal threats to the country.
- Such a strategy should be executed within the parameters laid down by the Constitution of India and the democratic political system of the country.
- Previous exercises undertaken under NSS was the Kargil Review Committee report (2000), the Report of the Naresh Chandra Task Force on Security (2012).

National Automated Fingerprint Identification System :

- Amit Shah also inaugurated the National Automated Fingerprint Identification System.
- This system will help in quick and easy disposal of cases with the help of a centralized fingerprint database.
- It has been developed by the National Crime Records Bureau.

8. London home of Dadabhai Naoroji gets Blue Plaque honour (Aug. 17, 2022)

Dadabhai Naoroji's south London home, where he lived for eight years in the late 19th century, has received a commemorative 'blue plaque' award.

Important facts

- Under the 'Blue Plaque' scheme, the English Heritage Charity honours historically significant buildings across London.
- Naoroji made seven trips to England and lived in London for more than three decades.

- Naoroji's plaque was unveiled on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of Indian Independence.

Dadabhai Naoroji

- Dadabhai Naoroji (4 September 1825 – 30 June 1917) was a Parsi intellectual, educationist, cotton merchant and early political and social leader of British India.
- He is also known as 'Grand Old Man of India' and 'Official Ambassador of India'.
- He proposed the principle of economic exit or drain of money.
- Dadabhai Naoroji founded the East India Association in London in 1866.
- Poverty and UnBritish Rule in India is a major book written by him.

9. Centre notifies India's 31st elephant reserve in Tamil Nadu (Aug. 17, 2022)

The Union Ministry for Environment, Forest and Climate Change announced notification of one more elephant reserve (ER) in the country in Tamil Nadu on 12 August 2022.

Important facts

- The new reserve will be spread over an area of 1,197 sq km at Agasthyamalai.
- This will be the 31st ER of the country after the Singphan Elephant Reserve (ER) in Nagaland was notified in 2018.
- Agasthiyamalai is Tamil Nadu's 5th Elephant Reserve and also a Biosphere Reserve.
- The Indian elephant (*Elephas maximus*) is found in the central and southern Western Ghats, northeast India, eastern India and parts of northern India and southern peninsular India.
- It is included in Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES).
- According to the 2017 Census the population of elephants in India has reached up to about 27,312.
- Karnataka has the highest number of elephants (6,049), followed by Assam (5,719) and Kerala (3,054).

10. Italy's Lake Garda shrinks to historically low level due to drought (Aug. 17, 2022)

Italy's worst drought in a long time threatens to shrink the country's largest Lake Garda, pushing its lowest ever recorded.

Important facts

- Northern Italy received very little rainfall for months, and snowfall was also reduced by 70% in 2022, drying up important rivers such as the Po, which flow through Italy's agricultural and industrial region.
- The dry condition of Italy's longest river, the Po, caused billions of euros in damage to farmers who usually depend on the river to irrigate their fields.
- To make up for the loss, the authorities have allowed more and more water from Lake Garda to flow into the local rivers.
- But at the end of July 2022, less money was spent protecting the lake and its associated economically important tourism.
- Due to the diversion of large amounts of lake water into rivers, the lake has the lowest water level ever recorded.

About Garda Lake

- It is best known as the playground lake.
- Location - Veneto, Trentino Alto Adige and Lombardy regions in north-west Italy
- Best - For fun and games for kids of all ages