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1. Two-Day Meeting Of The BIMSTEC Expert Group On Cyber Security (July 16, 2022)

The National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS), Government of India, has hosted a two-day meeting of the Expert Group of BIMSTEC on Cyber Security on 14 and 15 July 2022 in New Delhi.

Important facts

- The meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Cyber Security Cooperation is based on the agreement reached during the BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs' Meeting held in Bangkok in March 2019.
- The meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Cyber Security in person was chaired by the Indian National Cyber Security Coordinator Lt Gen Rajesh Pant.
- Representatives of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand are participating in this meeting. All these representatives are cyber security experts of their respective government organisations.
- India, as a leading country in the security sector in the BIMSTEC Forum, has taken the initiative to organise this meeting on cyber security cooperation and to develop an action plan on cyber security.

BIMSTEC action plan to tackle cyber security challenges

- **Main Objective-** The main objective of this meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group is to prepare an action plan.
- It will promote coordination and cooperation among BIMSTEC member states to strengthen cyber security in the use of information and communication technology (ICT).
- **Scope of Expansion** - This action plan will cover the mechanisms for the following-
 - cyber, exchange of information related to cyber crime,
 - protection of critical information infrastructure,
 - International developments related to cyber incident response and cyber standards.
- **Implementation** - The Action Plan is proposed to be implemented within a time frame of 5 years after which the Expert Group on Cyber Security will review the Action Plan.

About BIMSTEC countries

- BIMSTEC was established in 1997 to provide an exclusive link between South and South-East Asia with five countries – Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka from South Asia and two countries in South-East Asia – Myanmar and Thailand.
- **Areas of Cooperation** -All these countries came together as a platform for cooperation in 14 major economic and social sectors of the economy.

- **Headquarters-** Kathmandu, Nepal.
- **General Secretary-** Tenzin Lekfell.
- **BIMSTEC 2022 Summit-** The 5th BIMSTEC summit was hosted in virtual form (in virtual mode) by the current BIMSTEC President Sri Lanka.

Theme of BIMSTEC 2022- The theme of the 5th BIMSTEC Summit is “Towards a Resilient Region, Prosperous Economies, Healthy People” .

2. Iran, Belarus to be newest SCO members (July 16, 2022)

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is all set to expand with Iran joining the group as its ninth member, while Belarus has applied for membership.

Important facts

- The decision to include Iran was made at last year's Dushanbe summit and Belarus has applied for its membership.
- This is the first expansion of the SCO after India and Pakistan joined the grouping in 2017.
- The significance of this expansion is that it reflects the growing international influence of the SCO and also shows that the principles of the SCO Charter are being widely accepted.
- India will host the SCO summit next year, and Varanasi has been selected as the SCO region's first “Tourism and Cultural Capital”.

What is 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.
- Official Languages - Russian and Chinese
- Chairmanship - On the basis of rotation for a year by Member States

3. "Cost of Living Crisis in Developing Countries" report (July 15, 2022)

On July 14, 2022, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) published its "Cost of Living Crisis in Developing Countries" report.

About the report

- Title - Addressing the crisis of cost of living in developing countries: Poverty and vulnerability estimates and policy responses.

Objectives of the report

- It estimates the potential impacts of food and energy inflation on global poverty and vulnerability.
- According to this report, the global livelihood crisis is pushing another 71 million people into extreme poverty in the world's poorest countries.
- An analysis of more than 159 developing countries showed that rising prices of key commodities in 2022 are already troubling parts of sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the Balkans.
- The report warns that the cost of living crisis is pushing millions of people into poverty and hunger at an alarming pace.

UNDP recommendation

- According to the UNDP, targeted cash transfers by governments will prove to be more "equitable and cost-effective" than broad subsidies on energy and food prices.
- UNDP has called for corresponding action. It has asked to provide direct cash transfer to vulnerable people. It also asked wealthy nations to further expand the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI), which they set out to help poor countries during the COVID-19 pandemic.

About United Nations Development Program (UNDP)

- UNDP is a United Nations body, which helps countries to eliminate poverty and achieve sustainable economic growth and human development.
- It is headquartered in New York City, and has offices in 170 countries.
- UNDP is the largest development aid agency of the United Nations.

4. BRICS Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting (July 15, 2022)

Union Labor and Employment Minister Bhupendra Yadav participated in the BRICS Labor and Employment Ministers meeting held under the Chinese presidency on 14 July.

Important facts

- With regard to the priority issues discussed in the meeting, the Minister highlighted the initiatives taken by India.
- The Minister informed that a Sector Council for Green Jobs in India has been set up to develop strategies and implement programs for skill development in the green sector.

- The minister explained the steps taken by India to provide relief to the workers during the pandemic.
- India has taken several initiatives to increase the number of days of assured employment under MGNREGA and to provide free ration.
- The government has provided loans to street vendors to help them restart their business under the PM Svanidhi Yojana during the pandemic.
- The meeting was attended by ministers from member countries Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

Declaration of the meeting

- The need for promoting green jobs was recognized in the Declaration of the meeting.
- The Declaration recognized the need to promote green jobs for sustainable development, strengthen cooperation in skill development and protect workers' rights in new forms of employment.

- **Discussions on three priority issues**

1. Promoting green jobs for sustainable development,
2. Developing skills for resilient recovery,
3. Protecting Workers Right in New Forms of Employment.

About BRICS

- It is an acronym for the group of major emerging economies of the world – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.
- In 2001, British economist Jim O'Neill coined the term BRIC.
- South Africa was invited to join BRIC in December 2010.

5. I2U2 Summit : UAE to develop integrated food parks across India (July 15, 2022)

The United Arab Emirates on July 14 announced an investment of USD 2 billion to develop a series of integrated food parks across India.

Outcome of the Summit

- The decision was announced after the first virtual summit of I2U2 group leaders - Prime Minister Narendra Modi, US President Joe Biden, Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid and UAE President Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan.
- The Summit was focussed on the food security crisis and clean energy.

- Private sectors from the US and Israel will be invited to lend their expertise and provide innovative solutions that contribute to the overall sustainability of the project.
- The Summit discussed innovative ways to ensure sustainable, more diverse food production and food delivery systems that can better manage the global food crisis.
- The I2U2 group will take forward a 300 MW hybrid renewable energy project in Gujarat with wind and solar capacity.
- This was the first summit of this group.

Significance

- Integrated food parks will incorporate cutting-edge climate-smart technologies to conserve waste, fresh water and employ renewable energy sources in food.
- India will provide suitable land for the project and facilitate integration of farmers into food parks.
- These investments will help in maximizing crop yields and combating food insecurity in South Asia and the Middle East.

What is the 'I2U2' group?

- The I2U2 is a group comprising India, Israel, the U.S., and the UAE, has been called the 'West Asian Quad'.
- The group is known as 'I2U2' with "I" standing for India and Israel and "U" for the US and the UAE.
- This view was expressed by U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan with U.S. President Joe Biden.
- The I2U2 grouping was conceptualized during the meeting of foreign ministers of four countries held on 18 October 2021.

Aims of I2U2 Group

- I2U2 aims to harness the vibrancy and entrepreneurial spirit of society to address some of the biggest challenges facing the world.
- It aims to encourage joint investment in six mutually recognized sectors such as water, energy, transport, space, health and food security.
- Appropriate use of private sector capital and expertise to help drive infrastructure modernization, low-carbon development pathways for industries, improve public health, and the development of critical emerging and green technologies.

6. France Bastille Day 2022 (July 14, 2022)

France celebrates 14 July every year as National Day, also known as Bastille Day.

Important facts

- French National Day is formally called La Fete Nationale in France.
- It is celebrated on July 14, 1789, the anniversary of the invasion of Bastille, known as a military fort and prison, during the French Revolution.
- Along with France, it is also celebrated by other countries and especially by French speaking people and communities.
- Many public events are organised on this occasion but the most famous event is the Bastille Day Military Parade.
- This parade takes place in Paris on the morning of July 14. The first parade was held in the year 1880.
- The famous cycling race Tour de France also takes place during Bastille Day.
- The Bastille was a mediaeval armoury, fort and prison in Paris.
- For many common people it represented an unfair monarchy and the monarchy was a symbol of abuse of power.
- On July 14, 1789, soldiers stormed and captured Bastille.
- This signalled the beginning of the French Revolution, and three years later in 1792 the French Republic was formed.

About France

- France is a country located in Western Europe
- It is the largest country in the continent of Europe in terms of area.
- Capital- Paris
- President- Emmanuel Macron
- currency - euro

7. Japan awards Ex-PM Shinzo Abe country's highest order posthumously (July 14, 2022)

The Japanese government has decided to posthumously honour former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe with the 'Supreme Order of the Chrysanthemum'.

Important facts

- Shinzo Abe was the longest-serving prime minister of Japan.
- He is the fourth former prime minister to receive the Supreme Order of Japan under the post-war constitution.

- Shinzo Abe was assassinated on July 8, 2022, while he was campaigning in the city of Nara.
- Tetsuya Yamagami, 41, fired two shots at her from a distance of 10 metres.
- His condition deteriorated on the way to the hospital due to cardiac and pulmonary arrest. He was later declared dead at Nara Medical University Hospital.

Supreme Order of the Chrysanthemum

- It is the highest order in Japan.
- The Grand Cordon of the Order was established in 1876 by Emperor Meiji of Japan.
- Later, on January 4, 1888, the Collar of the Order was added.
- Unlike European orders, this order can also be awarded posthumously.
- So far, apart from the Imperial family, only 7 Japanese citizens have been given this order.
- In 1928 the final order was given to former Prime Minister Sayenji Kinmochi.

8. Ahmedabad and Kerala on TIME magazine's list of World's Greatest Places of 2022 (July 14, 2022)

India's first UNESCO World Heritage City, Ahmedabad and Kerala has been included in the list of the "World's 50 Greatest Places of 2022" by Time Magazine.

Important facts

- Both these places in India have been selected as '50 Extraordinary Places to Visit'.
- Time magazine described Kerala as one of the most beautiful states in India with spectacular beaches and lush backwaters, temples and palaces.
- Time magazine described Ahmedabad as a city that "represents ancient sites and contemporary innovations" making it a "Mecca for cultural tourism".
- Gandhi Ashram, Gujarat Science City and Navratri festival, located on the banks of the Sabarmati river, have been given special mention in Time magazine.
- Apart from Ahmedabad and Kerala, other cities in the world that figure in the top 50 list include Seoul, Buhan in Bali, Great Barrier Reef in Australia.

About TIME Magazine

- It was founded in 1923.
- This has been the most authoritative and informative guide to what is happening in Current Affairs, Politics, Business, Health, Science & Entertainment.
- It is a magazine published from New York.

9. Record surge in India's imports from China in first half of 2022 (July 14, 2022)

According to China's trade figures released on July 13 India's imports from China reached a record \$57.51 billion in the first half of the year.

India-China Bilateral Trade

- Chinese goods imports are on record growth this year, and are set to surpass last year's \$97.5 billion mark.
- The trade imbalance is also heading towards another record. Imports this year are up 34.5% from the same period in 2021.
- Two-way trade crossed 100 billion dollars for the first time in 2021 to reach 125.6 billion dollars, of which India's imports were 97.5 billion dollars.
- Trade declined in 2020 due to the corona pandemic, but is now well above pre-pandemic levels.
- China is the largest trading partner of India.

Major commodities imported from China into India

- Electronic equipment, machines, engines, pumps, organic chemicals, fertilizers, iron and steel, plastics, iron or steel products, gems etc.

Major commodities exported from India to China

- Cotton, gems, precious metals, coins, copper ores, slag, ash, organic chemicals, salt, sulphur, stone, cement, machines, engines etc.

10. India ranks 135 out of 146 in Global Gender Gap Index (July 14, 2022)

The World Economic Forum's (WEF) Annual Gender Gap Report 2022 was released on 13 July in Geneva. India is ranked 135th out of 146 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index, 2022.

India's position

- India is the worst performing country in the world in the "Health and Survival" sub-index, where it ranks 146th.
- India ranks worse than its neighbours and is behind Bangladesh (71), Nepal (96), Sri Lanka (110), Maldives (117) and Bhutan (126).
- In South Asia, only Iran (143), Pakistan (145) and Afghanistan (146) performed worse than India.
- In 2021, India was ranked 140 out of a total of 156 countries in the index.

The top 10 Countries

- Iceland (90.8%) leads the global ranking.
- Other Scandinavian countries such as Finland (86%, second), Norway (84.5%, third) and Sweden (82.2%) figure in the top five.
- Sub-Saharan African countries Rwanda (81.1%, 6th) and Namibia (80.7%, 8th), a Latin American country, Nicaragua (81%, 7th), and a country from East Asia and the Pacific, New Zealand (84.1%, 4th) ranked in the top 10.
- Other European countries such as Ireland (80.4%) and Germany (80.1%) are ranked ninth and tenth.

4 key dimensions

1. Political Empowerment

This includes metrics such as the percentage of women in Parliament.

1. Economic Participation and Opportunity

The metrics involved are, percentage of women who are part of the labor force, pay parity for equal work, earned income, etc.

1. Educational Attainment

It includes metrics such as literacy rate and enrollment rate in primary, secondary and tertiary education.

1. Health and Survival

This includes two metrics: the sex ratio at birth (in %) and healthy life expectancy (in years).

About Global Gender Gap Index

- It is annually published by the World Economic Forum (WEF).
- It was first introduced in 2006 to benchmark progress towards gender equality.
- It is the 16th edition of the Global Gender Gap Report.
- It tracks the progress of bridging the gender gap over time.