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1. Six agreements signed between India and Maldives (Aug. 2, 2022)

Maldives signed 6 agreements with India on 2 August, with both sides reaffirming their desire to strengthen ties to combat "international crimes and terrorism" in the Indian Ocean region.

Important facts

- The six agreements signed between the two sides will facilitate cooperation in capacity building, cyber security, housing, disaster management and infrastructure development in the Maldives.
- After talks with Maldivian President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, Modi announced a line of credit of USD 100 million (one million = 10 lakh) for Maldives to complete development projects in a time-bound manner.
- The first part of the Greater Male Connectivity Project (GMCP) will include a 6.74 km bridge and a bridge connecting the capital Male to neighboring islands.
- The Prime Minister said that the threat of international crime, terrorism and drug trafficking in the Indian Ocean is serious and close India-Maldives ties are vital for peace in the region.
- The MoU signed on Cyber Security aims to promote the exchange of information related to cyber security on the basis of equality and mutual benefit in accordance with domestic laws, rules and regulations.

Second landing assault craft

- To strengthen Maldives' maritime capability, India has announced the gifting of the second Landing Assault Craft to the Maldives National Defence Force.
- Maldives was one of the first recipients of the Covishield vaccine manufactured by the Serum Institute of India (SII).
- President Solih visited Delhi in 2018 and this is his first visit in the backdrop of the end of the pandemic and the ongoing crisis in Sri Lanka.

About Maldives

- It is also called Maldivian Islands, an independent island country in the north-central Indian Ocean.
- It extends more than 510 miles (820 km) from north to south and 80 miles (130 km) from east to west.
- Basis of economy - fisheries, tourism
- Industries - handicraft or cottage including the making of coir (coconut-husk fibre) and coir products, fish canning, and boatbuilding.
- Capital - Male

- President - Ibrahim Mohamed Solih
- Official Language - Dhivehi (Maldivian)
- Official Religion - Islam
- Currency - Rufiyaa

2. Al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri killed in US drone strike (Aug. 2, 2022)

U. S. President Joe Biden said on August 1 that the United States killed al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in a drone air strike in Kabul.

Important facts

- The killing of Zawahiri is seen as the biggest blow to the terrorist group since its founder Osama bin Laden was killed in 2011.
- Al-Qaeda chief Ayman al-Zawahiri, an Egyptian surgeon who later became one of the world's most wanted terrorists.
- He was considered as the mastermind of the attacks on the United States of America on September 11, 2001.
- About 3 thousand people died in that terrorist attack.
- The US had placed a \$25 million bounty on Zawahiri.
- The drone strike is the first known US attack inside Afghanistan since US troops and diplomats left the country in August 2021.
- Zawahiri was earlier hiding in Pakistan but after the Taliban government came to power, he reached Kabul.

Who was Ayman al-Zawahiri?

- Born into a middle-class family in Egypt, Zawahiri grew up to become a doctor.
- He graduated from Cairo University's Al Qasr Al Ain Medical School in 1974.
- Ideologically he opposed secular governments, and was arrested in 1981 after the assassination of former Egyptian President Mohamed Anwar al-Saadat for carrying weapons without a license.
- He served three years as a surgeon in the Egyptian Army.
- In 1993, he took over the leadership of Islamic Jihad in Egypt and became a key figure in the mid-1990s campaign to overthrow the government and establish a pure Islamic state.
- He was found to be involved in the murder of more than 1,200 Egyptians.
- In 2011 he took on al-Qaeda when a team of Navy SEALs killed Osama bin Laden in Pakistan.

- He and bin Laden co-opted the 9/11 attacks and was one of America's "Most Wanted Terrorists".
- He was listed as one of the FBI's Most Wanted Terrorists, and had a \$25 million reward for his capture.

3. Ex- Philippines President Fidel Ramos dies at 94 (Aug. 1, 2022)

Former Philippine President Fidel Ramos died on 31 July at the age of 94 due to complications of COVID-19.

Important facts

- Ramos, the 12th President of the Republic of the Philippines from 1992 to 1998, was said to be the driving force behind investor confidence in the country.
- It was during his time that the Philippines was recognized as an emerging economy.
- It was during his time that the Philippines was identified as a booming "tiger economy", The Manila Times reported.
- Prior to becoming president, Fidel Ramos also served as Chief-of-Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines in the government of then-President Corazon Aquino.
- Apart from this, he was also the Defence Secretary.
- Ramos, a former military general, trained in the US, also participated in the Korea and Vietnam Wars.
- Ramos led a national police force and was instrumental in bringing down the notorious Marcos regime.

About Philippines

- The Philippines is a country located in Southeast Asia.
- It got complete independence on 4 July 1946 after the Second World War.
- It is the country with the fifth longest coastline in the world.
- The Philippines is the second largest producer of geothermal energy in the world, after the United States.
- Capital - Manila
- Currency - peso

4. India, Vietnam 3rd edition army exercise "Ex VINBAX 2022" begin at Chandimandir in Haryana (Aug. 1, 2022)

The third edition of the Vietnam-India bilateral military exercise "EX WINBEX 2022" is being held at Chandimandir from August 1 to 20, 2022.

Important facts

- It is a sequel to the bilateral exercise conducted earlier in Vietnam in 2019 and marks a major milestone in the strengthening of bilateral ties between India and Vietnam.
- Both the countries share a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and defence cooperation is a key pillar of this partnership.
- Vietnam is an important partner in India's Act East policy and Indo-Pacific vision.
- India has a rich legacy of deploying troops in UN missions and has excellent capabilities to provide UN peacekeeping training, including best practices for training potential UN peacekeepers at tactical, operational and strategic levels.
- The joint exercise will also provide an opportunity to the soldiers of both the countries to learn about each other's social and cultural heritage.
- The Indian Army is represented by soldiers from 105 Engineer Regiment.
- **The theme of Ex VINBAX - 2022** - employment and deployment of an Engineer Company and a Medical Team as part of United Nations Contingent for Peacekeeping Operations.

India and Vietnam

- The two countries signed a "Joint Vision" document to "significantly increase the scope and scale" of bilateral ties by 2030 during the recent visit of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to Vietnam.
- Both countries are listed among the fastest growing economies in Asia and both aim to enhance peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region through multi-faceted cooperation.
- As emerging economies and important countries, there is a broad convergence of interests with regard to creating alternative supply chains in Asia.
- They are equally concerned about China's aggressive and expansionist policies in the Indo-Pacific.
- The two countries have also shared a comprehensive strategic partnership since 2016 and defence cooperation is a key pillar of this partnership.
- The two countries have also cooperated in UN peacekeeping, ship visits and bilateral exercises.
- The two countries have signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Mutual Logistics Support, the first of its kind that Vietnam has signed with any country.

5. UN declares access to clean and healthy environment a universal human right (July 30, 2022)

The United Nations General Assembly in a historic resolution declared on 29 July that everyone on the planet has a right to live in a clean and healthy environment.

Important facts

- The General Assembly said that climate change and environmental degradation are the most serious threats to humanity in the future.
- It called on states to step up efforts to ensure that their people have access to a "clean, healthy and sustainable environment".
- The resolution recognizes the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right, which must be essential for the full enjoyment of all human rights.
- Member States can unite in a collective fight against the scourge of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.
- This declaration highlights almost all the rights related to the health of our environment.
- The resolution is not legally binding on the 193 UN Member States including India.

Historic resolution after 50 years

- 50 years ago, the United Nations Conference on the Environment in Stockholm concluded with a resolution that put environmental issues at the forefront of the global stage.
- Today, more than 176 countries have adopted laws related to the environment on its basis.
- After the Stockholm Declaration of 1972, these rights have been integrated into constitutions, national laws and regional agreements.
- In October 2021, it was recognized by the United Nations Human Rights Council.
- This Healthy environment right was not included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948.
- It is a historic resolution that will change the nature of international human rights law.

Other steps by UN general assembly

- On 28 July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly recognized the right to water and sanitation through its resolution.
- The Assembly stated that clean drinking water and sanitation "are essential to the realisation of all human rights".
- In response, governments around the world have changed their laws and regulations regarding water and sanitation.

6. Boris Johnson gives Churchill Leadership Award to Ukraine's Zelenskyy (July 28, 2022)

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on July 26 honoured Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky with the 'Sir Winston Churchill Leadership Award' and compared the two leaders in times of crisis.

Important facts

- Zelensky accepted the award through video link during a ceremony at Johnson's London office.
- Johnson recalled how Zelensky had confirmed on February 24 that Russia had invaded Ukraine.
- He said, "In the hour of the greatest crisis, you faced the test of leadership in your own way as Churchill did in 1940."
- Zelensky thanked Johnson and Britain for their cooperation.
- Johnson was the first Western leader to visit Kyiv after Russia's invasion of the northeastern country Ukraine.

Churchill Leadership Award

- It was first introduced in 2006.
- Past recipients of the award include Prince Charles, former British Prime Ministers Margaret Thatcher and John Major and former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

Who was Winston Churchill?

- He was a statesman, writer, orator and leader who led Britain to victory in the Second World War.
- He served as Conservative Prime Minister of Britain twice - from 1940 to 1945 and from 1951 to 1955.
- He was born on 30 November 1874, Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire.
- He died on 24 January 1965, London.

7. UN Rights Panel Calls To Repeal Hong Kong Security Law Imposed By China (July 28, 2022)

Experts from the UN Human Rights Committee said on July 27 that Hong Kong's controversial national security law should be repealed as the law is being used to crack down on free expression and dissent.

Important facts

- Chinese and Hong Kong officials have used the NSL imposed by Beijing in 2020 to restore stability after the city was destabilized by sometimes violent anti-government and anti-China activities in 2019.

- This UN committee, which oversees the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), released its findings on Hong Kong after periodic review.
- The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region is a signatory to the ICCPR but China is not.
- This is the first recommendation by an independent UN expert body since 2020.

About Hong Kong

- Hong Kong is an autonomous region, and a former British colony in southeast China.
- It became a colony of the British Empire in 1842 at the end of the First Opium War.
- Sovereignty over the region was returned to China in 1997.
- As a Special Administrative Region (SAR), Hong Kong maintains governing power and economic systems that are separate from those of mainland China.
- The Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1984 guarantees basic law for 50 years.

About Hong Kong Security Law

- Hong Kong was handed back to China by the British government in 1997, but this was done under an agreement.
- This agreement is called the 'Basic Law' and it affirms the principle of 'one country, two systems'.
- This minor constitution is a product of the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration.
- Under this, China promised in 1997 that in the coming 50 years it would respect Hong Kong's liberal policies, governance system, an independent judiciary and individual freedoms that no other part of mainland China has.
- The Basic Law will expire in the year 2047. Under Article 23, Hong Kong can make its own national security law.

8. India contributes \$2.5 million to UN RWA for Palestine refugees (July 27, 2022)

India contributed US \$ 2.5 million for the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees and Working Agency (UNRWA).

Important facts

- India is a dedicated donor for UNRWA. Since 2018, it has contributed 20 million USD to support the UNRWA core services to Palestine refugees in the Middle East.

Importance of contribution

- This contribution highlights India's strong performance and unbreakable support for UNRWA's work.

- It also highlights India's commitment to the good of Palestine.
- It supports Palestinian refugees in the Middle East.

Palestinian refugee

- He is a citizen of compulsory Palestine, who was expelled from his country during the 1947–49 Palestine War.
- This phenomenon is known as 1948 Palestinian migration.
- They mostly live in Palestinian refugee camps at Lebanon, Jordan, Gaza Strip, Syria and West Bank.

About the United Nations Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA) for Palestine refugees

- UNRWA was established as a human agency.
- It is funded completely through voluntary contribution and grant from donor countries.
- Establishment- 8 December 1949
- Headquarters- Amman and Gaza
- Commissioner General- Philip Lazarini

9. Russia to quit International Space Station 'after 2024' (July 27, 2022)

Russia has decided to leave the International Space Centre after 2024.

Important facts

- The decision was announced by Yuri Bori Sof, the newly appointed President of Russia's space agency Roscosmos.
- The decision comes at a time when the Kremlin's war with Ukraine has isolated Russia both commercially and economically.
- Russia will focus on building its own space station after 2024.
- Russia will fulfill its obligations to other partners in the International Space Station before leaving the project.

Why does Russia want to leave the International Space Station?

- Russia focuses on building its own space outpost.
- Russian cosmonauts were criticized for using the space station to flag Russian occupation of Ukraine's territory.
- NASA strongly condemned Russia's political use of the ISS.

- The US alleges that Russia has used the station for support in the Ukraine war while the station's original purpose is to use it for scientific and technological development in a peaceful manner.
- Space relations between Russia and the US began to deteriorate even before the Russia-Ukraine war, when NASA announced its Artemis Agreement.
- Russia had disagreed with this agreement and it was clear that Russia and America would not be able to cooperate in space matters for long.

About International Space Station (ISS)

- The ISS was commissioned in the year 1998 and has been operating at its full capacity since 2011.
- The first astronauts were sent to this space station in the year 2000.
- The ISS is being operated by 16 countries led by the NASA space agency of America.
- These countries include America, Russia, Japan, Brazil, Canada and 11 countries in Europe.
- The ISS is the most complex international scientific and engineering project in history and the largest manned spaceflight structure.
- The space station flies at an average altitude of 400 kilometres from Earth, orbiting the globe every 90 minutes at a speed of about 28,000 kilometres per hour.
- The space station appears as a bright moving light in the night sky, similar to the bright planet Venus.

ISS program joint project of five space agencies

1. NASA (United States)
2. Roscosmos (Russia)
3. JAXA (Japan)
4. ESA (Europe)
5. CSA (Canada)

10. Zimbabwe launches gold coins as legal tender to tackle inflation (July 26, 2022)

Zimbabwe has launched new gold coins to be sold to the public to combat extreme hyperinflation.

Important facts

- The country's central bank, the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, announced this unprecedented move on July 25 to boost confidence in the local currency.

- According to the IMF, confidence in Zimbabwe's currency is low after people's savings from hyperinflation reached 5 billion in 2008.
- Confidence in Zimbabwean currency is already so low that many retailers do not accept it.
- The central bank has distributed 2,000 coins to commercial banks.
- Coins can be used for purchases in stores, depending on whether there is substantial change in the store.
- Any individual or company can buy coins from authorized banks outlets.

About Gold Coins

- The gold coins are called Mosi-oa-Tunya.
- In the local Tonga language it refers to Victoria Falls.
- The coins would have liquid asset status, meaning they would be able to be easily converted into cash and would be tradable both locally and internationally.
- The coin may also be used for transactional purposes.
- People can trade for cash only after holding the coins for at least 180 days.

About Zimbabwe

- President - Emmerson Mnangagwa
- Capital - Harare
- Official Name - Republic of Zimbabwe