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1. 9th ASEAN-India meet on transnational crimes (July 21, 2022)

The 9th ASEAN-India Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crimes was held in a virtual mode on 20 July.

Important facts

- Both sides strongly condemned terrorism in all its forms, stressing the need to promote international cooperation to combat terrorism and transnational crimes.
- The consultation was co-chaired by Joint Secretary (Counter Terrorism), Ministry of External Affairs Government of India, Mahaveer Singhvi, from the Indian side.
- Deputy Secretary (Policy), Ministry of Home Affairs, Singapore Government, Pua Kok Keong co-chaired the Consultation from the ASEAN side.
- Both sides stressed the need to strengthen international cooperation to combat terrorism and transnational crimes in a comprehensive and sustained manner.
- They discussed ways to enhance cooperation in the areas of terrorism, illicit drug trafficking, trafficking in persons, transnational economic crimes and cybercrime within the framework of the ASEAN-India Action Plan to combat transnational crimes.
- Institutional linkages and capacity building programs between the two sides were also discussed.
- The 10th ASEAN-India SOMTC Consultation on International Crimes will be held in Indonesia in 2023.

ASEAN-India dialogue

- It was initiated in 1992 with the establishment of the Regional Partnership, which evolved into a Full Dialogue in December 1995, a Summit-level Partnership in 2002, and a Strategic Partnership in 2012.
- At present, the ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership stands on a strong foundation.
- ASEAN is central to India's Act East Policy and the Comprehensive Indo-Pacific Strategy.
- This multi-faceted partnership includes several regional dialogue mechanisms and working groups that meet regularly at various levels and include annual summits, ministerial and senior officials' meetings.
- Ongoing India-ASEAN cooperation is guided by the 2021-2025 Action Plan that was adopted in 2020.

About ASEAN

- Association of Southeast Asian Nations or ASEAN is an international organisation formed in Bangkok, Thailand in 1967.

- It promotes economic development, peace, security, social progress and cultural development in the Southeast Asian region.
- ASEAN Secretariat – Indonesia, Jakarta.
- General Secretary of ASEAN - Lim Jock Hoi, Brunei
- Official Languages - Burmese, Filipino, Indonesian, Khmer, Lao, Malay, Mandarin, Tamil, Thai and Vietnamese
- Working Language - English
- ASEAN Summit is the supreme policy making body of ASEAN.
- ASEAN is third largest market in the world
- It is the sixth largest economy in the world, third in Asia.
- ASEAN has Free-trade agreements (FTAs) with China, Japan, South Korea, India, Australia and New Zealand.

ASEAN Member Countries

- Indonesia
- Malaysia
- Philippines
- Singapore
- Thailand
- Brunei
- Vietnam
- Laos
- Myanmar
- Cambodia

2. India And Namibia Sign MoU For Wildlife Conservation (July 20, 2022)

India and Namibia on 20 July signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Wildlife Conservation and Sustainable Biodiversity Use to place the Cheetah in the Historic Category in India.

Thrust areas of the MoU

- Biodiversity conservation with a special focus on the conservation and restoration of cheetahs in areas where they became extinct.

- Exchange of expertise and capabilities with the aim of promoting cheetah conservation between the two countries.
- Wildlife conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity by sharing good practices
- Technological applications, mechanisms of livelihood generation for local communities living in wildlife habitats and sustainable management of biodiversity.
- Cooperation in climate change, environmental governance, environmental impact assessment, pollution and waste management and other areas of mutual interest.
- Training and exchange of trained personnel in wildlife management including sharing of technical expertise, wherever relevant.

About Cheetah

- The cheetah is one of the oldest of the big cat species, whose ancestors can be traced back more than five million years to the Miocene era.
- It is the world's fastest land mammal that lives in Africa and Asia.
- Human-wildlife conflict, habitat loss and hunting and illegal trafficking are the reasons for their extinction in India.

Cheetah reintroduction project in India

- The main goal of the project is to establish viable cheetah metapopulation in India that allows the cheetah to perform its functional role as a top predator.
- The surveys were conducted at 10 locations between 2010 and 2012.
- Under this project, 50 cheetahs will be introduced in various national parks of the country over a period of 5 years.

3. Cabinet approves MoU on Judicial Cooperation with Maldives (July 20, 2022)

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in the field of judicial cooperation between India and the Judicial Service Commission of the Republic of Maldives.

Important facts

- It will provide a platform to tap the benefits of Information Technology for court digitization.
- It can be a potential growth area for the IT companies and start-ups in both the countries.
- With the signing of this agreement on cooperation in the field of law and justice, better relations between the two countries will gain further impetus.

- This will not only enable the exchange of knowledge and technology in judicial and other legal areas between the two countries but will also advance the objectives of the “Neighbourhood First” policy.
- In recent years, the close relations between India and Maldives have deepened multidimensionally.

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

4. U.K. records its highest-ever temperature (July 20, 2022)

Britain broke its record for the highest temperature ever recorded, with a temperature of 39.1 °C (102.4 °F) on 19 July.

Important facts

- The United Kingdom had earlier recorded the highest temperature in 2019 at 38.7 C (101.7 F).
- This new record has been set in Charleswood, England.
- For the past week, the highest temperature has been recorded in the whole of Europe due to the scorching heat.
- "Extreme" heat warnings were issued for London in the south and Manchester and Leeds in the north on 19 July.
- The "extreme" warning means there is danger to human life.

Effects of Extreme Heat

- According to the World Health Organization (WHO), extreme heat can exacerbate respiratory diseases, heart conditions and kidney diseases.
- Its immediate effects on the human body include dehydration and potentially fatal heat stroke.
- It can also have serious impacts on agriculture and forests.
- Due to this the plants wither and dry up and the disease spreads among the plants.
- It causes forest fires which lead to reduction in forest cover and death of living beings.

Highest Temperature ever on Earth

- California's Death Valley registered a temperature of 54.4 degrees Celsius or 129.9 degrees Fahrenheit on August 16, 2020.
- Once verified, this could be the highest ever recorded temperature on Earth.
- Temperature is specified as preliminary, not final as it requires verification.
- Death Valley is a desert valley in Eastern California.

5. Wildfires and heat wave across Europe (July 19, 2022)

Europe, along with countries such as Spain, Greece and France, is battling fierce wildfires and heat waves and struggling to extinguish fires and prevent damage.

Important facts

- Thousands of hectares of forest land has been burnt to ashes amid the scorching heat.
- The fire has forced thousands to flee their homes and killed many relief workers.

Cause of the wildfires

- As far as Europe is concerned, the region has come under fire for being unusually dry and hot.
- Experts are citing climate change as the reason.
- They say that above-normal temperatures and drought conditions are causing fire incidents in some parts.
- Rising temperatures absorb moisture from plants, producing abundant dry fuel.
- Drought and extreme heat can kill plants and dead grass, and dry forest fires are more likely to occur.
- Lightning from the sky or sparks generated by the carelessness of the local population also causes fire.

Forest fires in India

- About 22 percent of the forest area in India comes under the highly fire prone category.
- Recently, there have been incidents of fire in Sariska Tiger Reserve of Rajasthan, Simlipal Wildlife Sanctuary in Odisha, Ladkui forests and forest areas of Mazhagawan region of Madhya Pradesh.

Impacts of wildfire

- Air pollution caused by forest fires is more intense than other types of air pollution.
- Wildfire smoke can affect the respiratory and cardiovascular systems.
- Forest fires not only destroy flora (trees, herbs, grasslands, meadows, etc.) and their diversity, but also have significant long-term negative effects on fauna, including wild endangered species.
- Forest fires destroy organic matter in the soil and expose the top layer to erosion.
- It can disrupt transportation, communications, electricity and gas services, and water supplies.

6. Microblogging platform Twitter launched an "Unmentioning feature" (July 18, 2022)

Microblogging platform Twitter has launched an "Unmentioning feature". This feature will allow users to remove themselves from any conversation.

Important facts

- This feature will allow users to disengage themselves from conversations they no longer wish to be a part of.
- It will help protect the peace of the people by removing themselves from unwanted conversations.
- Twitter was testing the unmanaging feature on a limited number of users so far. Now it has been launched for everyone.
- The feature has been launched amid the ongoing stir over the walkout of Elon Musk's USD 44 billion deal to buy Twitter.

Elon Musk's walkout

- In premarket trading, Twitter shares fell nearly 6 percent amid Elon Musk's recent walkout.
- Musk recently cancelled his \$44 billion deal to buy Twitter.
- After this Twitter announced the prosecution of Elon Musk.

About Twitter

- Twitter was founded in March 2006 by Jack Dorsey, Biz Stone, Noah Glass and Evan Williams.
- It is an American communications company headquartered in San Francisco, California.
- Twitter is a microblogging and social networking service on which users post and interact with messages called "tweets".
- CEO - Parag Agarwal

7. International Nelson Mandela Day (July 18, 2022)

International Nelson Mandela Day is celebrated across the world on 18 July every year to mark the birth anniversary of Nelson Mandela, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate and former President of South Africa.

Important facts

- The observance of this day seeks to celebrate the idea that every individual has the power to change the world, the ability to make an impact.
- It aims to inspire individuals to take action to help change the world for the better.
- In November 2009, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) officially declared 18 July as "International Nelson Mandela Day" in honour of the former President of South Africa's contribution to a culture of peace and freedom.
- It also reflects the anti-apartheid icon's commitment to promoting the values of democracy, racial justice and human rights in the field of racial relations, and his dedication to serving humanity.

About Nelson Mandela

- Nelson Mandela was born on 18 July 1918 in Mvezo, Eastern Cape, South Africa.
- On 5 August 1962, he was arrested for inciting the workers to strike and leaving the country without permission.
- He was tried and sentenced to life imprisonment on 12 July 1964.
- He was released on 11 February 1990 after spending 27 years in prison.
- On 10 May 1994, Mandela became the first black president of South Africa.
- Nelson Mandela is called the Gandhi of South Africa.

Prize

- Nobel Peace Prize in 1993 jointly with Frederick Willem de Klerk, former President of South Africa

- order of lenin
- Bharat Ratna (1990)
- Nishan-e-Pakistan
- Gandhi Peace Prize (2008)

8. 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” .

9. 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

10. "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.