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1. India hosts SCO-RATS meeting (May 17, 2022)

Counter-terrorism experts from India, Pakistan and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) discussed ways to enhance cooperation in tackling various regional security challenges in a meeting hosted in New Delhi on May 16.

- The meeting is being held under the regional counter-terrorism framework of the SCO.
- A major focus of the discussion was on the situation in Afghanistan where all countries are threatened by terrorist groups operating in the Taliban-ruled country.
- Pakistan has sent a three-member team for the meeting.
- The Afghan issue has figured prominently in almost all the major meetings of the SCO.
- **Council of Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure of SCO (RATS SCO)**
- India assumed the presidency of the SCO (RATS SCO) on 28 October last year for a period of one year.
- India has shown keen interest in deepening its security-related cooperation with the SCO and its Regional Anti-Terrorism Framework (RATS).
- This specifically deals with issues relating to security and defence.
- The SCO is an influential economic and security bloc and has emerged as one of the largest inter-regional international organisations.
- **The member states of the SCO**
- Russia, China, India, Pakistan, Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan
- Afghanistan is among the observer states of the SCO.

2. Elisabeth Bourne appointed new Prime Minister of France (May 17, 2022)

French President Emmanuel Macron has named Elisabeth Born as the country's new prime minister.

- She is the second woman to become prime minister in France. Prior to this, Edith Cresson took the responsibility of the post of Prime Minister in 1991-1992.
- French Prime Minister Jean-Casteux resigned in a move expected after Emmanuel Macron was re-elected, with 61-year-old Elisabeth Born as the new prime minister.
- Born was Labor Minister in Macron's previous government since 2020. Earlier she had also been the Transport Minister.
- In France, Macron and Bourne are likely to appoint a full government in the coming days.

About France -

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- 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

3. Foundation stone of India International Centre for Buddhist Culture and Heritage at Lumbini (May 17, 2022)

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi along with the Prime Minister of Nepal, Shri Sher Bahadur Deoba, laid the foundation stone for the construction of the India International Center for Buddhist Culture and Heritage at Lumbini Monastery Area, Lumbini, Nepal.

- The centre will be constructed by International Buddhist Association (IBC), New Delhi on a plot of Lumbini Development Trust (LDT), which was allotted to IBC under an agreement signed between IBC and LDT in March, 2022.
- The two prime ministers also unveiled a model of the centre after the foundation stone was laid by monks from three major Buddhist traditions, Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana.
- It will be a modern building that will meet NetZero standards in terms of energy, water and waste management and will also house a prayer hall, meditation centre, library, exhibition hall, cafeteria, offices and other facilities.

• About Lumbini -

- Lumbini is the birth place of Lord Buddha.
- It is located in Nepal.
- In the Ashoka Pillar established by Emperor Ashoka at this place, there is an inscription describing the birth place of Buddha in Brahmi scripted Prakrit language.
- This place is one of the four major Buddhist pilgrimage sites in the world. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

4. Bengaluru based startup Pravaig to supply batteries to European armed forces (May 16, 2022)

Bengaluru-based energy and technology startup Pravaig Dynamics has announced that it has received an order to supply compact energy storage to the European Armed Forces.

- The startup said the made-in-India tactical batteries will power equipment used by European combat forces.
- **About Pravaig**
- It is a heavy-duty power bank that is portable and weighs 14 kilograms.
- It is of great utility to the digitally connected modern military and Special Forces personnel who have to operate in high-risk zones.
- They require constant power back-up while using gadgets.
- These batteries are designed, engineered and manufactured in India.
- **Significance**
- This supply marks a major shift in the defence landscape of India.
- It marks a turning point in the reversal of India's high technology defence industry, from users to developers, from importers to exporters.
- The field pack can be used to energise a military person's duties and it can be used to deploy remote sensors.
- A powerful tactical battery can be used even to operate larger military equipment such as drones.
- It can also help coordinate tactical operations that involve multiple weapon systems.

5. Sheikh Mohammed named UAE President (May 16, 2022)

On May 14, the rulers of the United Arab Emirates unanimously appointed Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan as the nation's president.

- The country's seven sheikhs, who are the rulers of the UAE, took the decision at a meeting held at the Al Mushrif Palace in Abu Dhabi.
- The post fell vacant after the country's president and ruler of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, 73, died on 13 May.
- The transition of power marks only the third time this U.S.-allied nation of seven sheikhdoms has selected a President since becoming an independent nation in 1971.
- The UAE has had a presidential system since it emerged as an independent nation in 1971.
- **Important facts about UAE**
- There are no rivers in the UAE
- The UAE was the first country in the world to appoint a minister for artificial intelligence

- The Arabian Oryx is the national animal of the UAE
- Six of the world's tallest hotels are in the UAE
- It is located on the southeast end of the Arabian Peninsula.
- The country's form of government is an absolute monarchy.
- Each emirate of the UAE is ruled by a separate royal family.
- The falcon is the UAE's national symbol
- Capital city - Abu Dhabi
- 7 Emirates of the UAE - Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Fujairah, Ajman, Ras Al Khaimah, Umm Al Quwain.
- Religion - Muslims 76%, Christians 19%
- Language - Arabic
- Currency - Dirhams
- National Day - 2 December

6. UAE President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed passes away (May 14, 2022)

Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan (73 years), the President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Ruler of Abu Dhabi, passed away on May 13, 2022.

- Expressing his deepest condolences on the passing away of Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Indian Prime Minister said that India-UAE relations have prospered under his guidance.
- The Government of India has declared a day of national mourning on his death. During this time no public festival will be celebrated in any government offices.
- The UAE government has declared 40 days of national mourning in the country on the death of Sheikh Khalifa. During this, the national flag will remain at half-mast. All government offices and private institutions including ministries will also remain closed for three days.
- The world's tallest building 'Dubai's Burj Khalifa' was also named after the late President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum to be Acting President :

- According to the UAE's constitution, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, the ruling Vice President and Premier of Dubai, will take over as acting president until the country's Federal Council meets within 30 days to elect a new president.
- Born in 1948, Sheikh Khalifa became the President of the UAE in 2004 after the death of his father. He was the country's second president and the 16th leader of Abu Dhabi.

- About UAE -
- Capital- Abu Dhabi
- Prime Minister- Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum
- Currency- UAE Dirham

7. El Salvador released the design of the bitcoin city (May 14, 2022)

Nayib Bukele, President of El Salvador, the smallest country in Central America, released the design of a bitcoin city under construction.

- The city of Crypto will be built near the Conchagua volcano on the Gulf of Fonseca in the southeast of the Central American country.
- Bitcoin City was first announced during the Latin American Bitcoin and Blockchain Conference.
- Releasing the layout of the bitcoin city, an investment of 30 thousand dollars has been made by the government.

• Countries adopting bitcoin

- El Salvador is the first country in the world to recognize bitcoin as an official currency last year.
- Recently, the Central African Republic became the second country in the world and the first in Africa to recognize bitcoin.

• ADDITIONAL INFORMATION -

• About El Salvador -

- El Salvador is the smallest and most densely populated country in Central America.
- Capital - San Salvador
- President- Nayib Bukele
- currency - bitcoin

8. Saudi Aramco overtakes Apple as world's most valuable company (May 13, 2022)

Recently, Saudi petro company Aramco overtook Apple and received the status of the world's most valuable company.

- Apple shares fell due to a slowdown in the technology sector, while the Saudi company's shares rose due to the continuous rise in oil prices.

- Due to the fall in stocks, Apple's market cap has dropped 20 per cent to 2.37 lakh crore, while Aramco's market cap has climbed 28 per cent to 2.42 lakh crore.
- Aramco's profits have soared 124 per cent after the sharp rise in worldwide oil prices following the Russo-Ukraine war.

- **Important facts**

- Establishment of Saudi Aramco- 1933;
- Saudi Aramco Headquarters- Dhahran, Saudi Arabia;
- Saudi Aramco CEO- Amin H. Nasser

9. US President Joe Biden to host ASEAN summit (May 13, 2022)

US President Joe Biden will host leaders and top officials of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Washington DC.

- Washington has focused on the Russo-Ukraine war as well as battling Chinese influence in the Indo Pacific.
- The ASEAN "special summit" was postponed from late March just days before Biden's first visit to Asia as president.
- ASEAN member state Myanmar, whose government was toppled on 1 February last year, will not participate in the summit.
- The US wanted an 'apolitical' representative from Myanmar to attend the meeting.
- ASEAN's 'five-point Consensus' to end the turmoil in Myanmar has not progressed since its release in April last year.

- **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

10. Gotabaya appoints Ranil as Sri Lanka Prime Minister (May 13, 2022)

Ranil Wickremesinghe, a veteran opposition MP, was sworn in as the new Prime Minister of Sri Lanka for the sixth time in an effort to end the current political crisis in the country.

- Gotabaya's elder brother Mahinda Rajapaksa resigned as prime minister on May 9.
- Wickremesinghe's United National Party (UNP) was wiped out in the 2020 general elections, with Rajapaksa winning a two-thirds majority.
- Wickremesinghe is currently the only MP from his party.

- **Reason of crisis in Sri Lanka**

- Mahendra Rajapaksa announced huge tax cuts in his manifesto in the 2019 election, leading to a huge drop in revenue.
- Sri Lanka is primarily a tourism-based economy. The Easter bombings in 2019 resulted in a sharp drop in tourist arrivals, which was further exacerbated by the COVID crisis.
- Huge infrastructural debt.
- Misguided policies of the authoritative regime
- Due to Covid, there was a further decline in the export of tea, rubber and the tourism sector came to a standstill.

• Remittances also dropped significantly