

International Relations

India Removes MFN Status To Pakistan

Syllabus: India and its neighbourhood- relations.

In News

- India has invoked “**security exceptions**” under **Article 21(c) of the World Trade Organization (WTO)** to withdraw the **unilateral non-discriminatory market status**, popularly known as **Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status**.
- India has decided to withdraw the MFN status in light of Pulwama terror attack.

MFN Status Between India And Pakistan

- India had granted MFN status to Pakistan in 1996.
- Pakistan had agreed to grant MFN status during a secretary-level agreement in September 2012 but later changed its mind.
- Pakistan has, however, moved from a **so-called positive list** trade regime to a **negative list-based** regime with India in which it does not allow imports of 1,209 items from India.
- MFN status would mean abolishing the negative list altogether while maintaining a list of prohibited items that cannot be imported.

Possible Impact Of This Move

- The withdrawal of the MFN status by India is negative in sentiment terms for the bilateral relations, the impact on **trade is unlikely to be substantial** given that volumes of merchandise trade are low.
- Pakistan’s exports to India have consistently been about a fourth of what it imports from India, the MFN concessions notwithstanding.
- Total trade between the South Asian neighbours increased by 6% in 2017-18 to \$2.4 billion, with \$1.9 billion Indian exports and \$500 million imports from Pakistan.
- Most Indian exports to Pakistan is **actually routed either through the United Arab Emirates or Singapore to the tune of \$3 billion**—over and above the bilateral trade of \$2.4 billion—because of trade restrictions imposed by Islamabad.
- **Trade diversion is likely to increase** after withdrawal of MFN status.

What Is Most Favoured Nation (MFN) Status

- Article 1 of General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), 1994, requires every WTO member country to accord MFN status (or preferential trade terms with respect to tariffs and trade barriers) to all other member countries.
- The primary purpose of the WTO is to **open trade for the benefit of all**. In that sense, “most favoured” **sounds like a contradiction**.
- But even though it suggests special treatment, in the WTO it actually means **non-discrimination** — that is treating virtually everyone equally.
- In effect, then, every WTO member is supposed to be “most favoured” for all other WTO members.

Pakistan To Be On Greylist

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In News

- The Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the multilateral body on terror financing, has decided not to remove **not to remove Pakistan from the 'grey list'**.
- FATF also condemned the February 14 Pulwama terror attack.
- In June 2018, Pakistan was formally placed on FATF's grey list due to 'strategic deficiencies' in its anti-money laundering and terrorism financing regime.

Key Highlights

- While condemning the Pulwama attack, it issued a stern statement to Pakistan, asking it to comply with an action plan on terror financing or face further action.
- Further reviews of Pakistan's compliance to the 15-month, 27-point action plan it was put on in June 2018 will be taken in coming June and October.

About FATF

- Established in 1989 Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is an inter-governmental body for the purpose of dealing with money-laundering and combating the financing of terrorism and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.
- It comprises 36 countries and two regional organisations (European Commission and Gulf Cooperation Council).

*[For detailed analysis, refer the topic "**Pakistan Formally Placed on FATF Grey List**" from CA magazine of June 2018]*

Joint Consultative Commission Between India And Bangladesh

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In News

- The **Fifth meeting** of the India-Bangladesh Joint Consultative Commission (JCC) was held in New Delhi.
- During the meeting, the Ministers discussed the gamut of bilateral issues of mutual interest.
- Three MoUs/Agreements were signed to further strengthen the existing multifaceted cooperation between the two countries: (i) MoU on mid-career training of 1800 Bangladesh civil servants, (ii) MoU between AYUSH and the Ministry of Health of Bangladesh on cooperation in the field of medicinal plants, (iii) MoU between Anti-Corruption Commission of Bangladesh and Central Bureau of Investigation of India.
- An MoU was also signed between Hiranandani Group and Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority to facilitate investments in the Indian Economic Zone in Mongla.

Collapse Of The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF)

Syllabus: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

In News

- The US has announced that it would suspend observance of the INF treaty on 2 February, giving six-months' notice of a complete withdrawal.
- Russia has also suspended its involvement in this Cold War-era treaty following a similar decision by the US.
- Two main justifications have been offered by the United States.
- The first is a **Russian violation** of the treaty. The second is that the **treaty is antiquated because China is not a party**.

Strategic Relevance Of INF Treaty In A Post-Cold War

- The treaty prevents the United States and Russia from fielding ground-based missiles with ranges between 500 and 5,500 kilometers. This constraint helped **maintain strategic stability** in Europe.
- Today, although the Cold War may be over, Russia and the United States still **maintain large nuclear arsenals** kept on high alert.
- **Neither nation will commit to a no-first use policy**. The risk of nuclear war, especially through accident or misunderstanding, remains intolerably high.
- Treaties like INF puts a legal constraints on arms racing and help lower that risk.

Arm Race: A Possible Danger

- The United States **failed to ratify** the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1996.
- Not long afterwards the United States **unilaterally withdrew from** the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM).
- International negotiations on the **Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT) ground to a halt**.
- The demise of the INF Treaty is another dangerous step in the wrong direction.
- If this trend continues, it may not be long before leaders like Mr. Putin and Mr. Trump begin to **push to resume nuclear testing**.
- **Implication for Asia, specifically China, India, North Korea, and Pakistan?**
 - Analysts believe that these four nuclear weapons states also have missiles in this class.
 - They fear that the collapse of the treaty is a signal to the leadership of all four nations that arms control and disarmament is no longer an important global norm.

[For detailed analysis on this, please refer the topic "**U.S. Exit from INF Treaty**" from October 2018 issue of CA magazine]

Military Space Force

Syllabus: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

In News

- President Donald Trump signed **Space Policy Directive-4 (SPD-4)**.
- Through this directive, the Pentagon has been ordered to establish **the Military Space Force**.

- This space force will act as the **sixth branch** of the United States military, to go along with the *Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard*.

SPD-4 is President Trump's **fourth space policy directive**. The first SPD directed NASA to get humans back to the moon as a stepping-stone to Mars.

The second streamlined regulations for the commercial space sector, and the third dealt with management of space traffic.

Key Highlights

- Rather than deploying soldiers in space, the Space Force **will focus on national security and preserving the satellites and vehicles** that are dedicated to international communications and observation.
- The directive has centralized all military space functions under a new Space Force, which will be **overseen by the Department of the Air Force**.
- The space force will be led by a civilian undersecretary of the Air Force for space.
- A four-star general will be serving as the Space Force chief of staff.
- The Space Force will become reality only if US Congress approves the creation of this new military branch.

Why Is A Space Force Needed

- Russia and China are the U.S.'s two greatest space competitors and also potential military threats. And both have **demonstrated formidable space capabilities**.
- In 2007, for example, China launched a missile that climbed skyward for 500 miles until it impacted one of the country's own defunct weather satellites, which rained down in thousands of pieces.
- Similarly, in 2014, a piece of supposed Russian space junk called Object 2014-E28 turned out to be an autonomous robot of sorts that was capable of docking onto satellites.
- Both Russia and China had integrated anti-satellite attacks as part of their wartime protocols.
- Given that the U.S. government and military rely heavily on satellites for forecasting weather, collecting high-resolution images for intelligence and directing missiles with GPS satellites, the threat became obvious.

Does Something Like This Already Exist

- China, Russia and the United States have military sectors already dedicated to space.
- Russia revived the **Russian Space Forces** in 2015 as a branch of the Russian Aerospace Forces.
- In the same year, China established the **People's Liberation Army Strategic Support Force** as the space and cyberwarfare branch of the People's Liberation Army.

*[For detailed analysis on this issue as well as on India's Space Security Policy, please refer the topic **The US 'Space Force'** from CA magazine of July 2018]*

Azov Sea Standoff

Syllabus: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

In News

- The EU has decided to **sanction eight Russian nationals** for their responsibility in incidents in the Azov Sea that took place in November 2018.
- These are "targeted and individual sanctions" with the eight blacklist targets to be banned from entering the EU and their assets frozen.

About The November Incident

- Russian forces seized three Ukrainian vessels and captured two dozen sailors as they tried to pass from the Black Sea to the Sea of Azov.
- This led to the flaring up of Ukraine-Russia conflict. This was the first open military incident between Kiev and Moscow since 2014.
- In 2014, Russia annexed the Crimea peninsula after a conflict erupted in eastern Ukraine.



Why Conflict Occurred In The Sea Of Azov?

- Ukraine and Russia accuse each other of violating international maritime law.
- They refer to the **1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea**, which both states joined in the 1990s.
- Ukraine insists on freedom of movement in the Kerch Strait and the Sea of Azov in accordance with this agreement, while the Russian side is trying to draw territorial borders.
- The countries also have a **bilateral agreement on the free use of the Kerch Strait** and the Sea of Azov, an accord that Russia has never called into question.

Importance of Kerch Strait

- The Kerch Strait is the only connection between the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov.
- It is also the only way to reach two important Ukrainian ports, Mariupol and Berdiansk.
- Russia has **controlled the strait** since annexing Crimea in 2014, which has made traffic significantly more difficult for Ukrainian ships.
- After the completion of Crimean Bridge in May 2018, which connects the Russian mainland with the occupied peninsula, the control of Russia in this region has further strengthened.

US National Emergency at the Border

Syllabus: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

In News

- President Donald Trump has declared the **southern border of the United States** (US-Mexico border) to be a national emergency.
- This move will allow him to circumvent Congress's constitutional powers to control spending and divert federal funds toward the construction of border wall.

Key Highlights

- The national emergency was declared using powers conferred on him by the **National Emergencies Act 1976**.
- Trump has decided to resort to emergency powers after a bitter standoff with Democrats blocking his wall project culminated in a 35-day government shutdown.
- The **US-Mexico border** is 1,954 miles (3,145km) long and crosses vast deserts and mountains in California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas.

Why Trump Is Insistent On Building A Wall?

- Before Trump took office, there were 654 miles (just over 1,000km) of barrier along the southern border - made up of 354 miles of barriers to stop pedestrians and 300 miles of anti-vehicle fencing.
- In the run-up to the 2016 presidential election, Trump had promised to build a wall along the border's entire 2,000-mile length.
- He later clarified that it would only cover half of that - with nature, such as mountains and rivers, helping to take care of the rest.
- Illegal immigration, drug trafficking and criminal activities along the border has been cited as few reasons to build a wall.

The National Emergencies Act 1976

- The National Emergencies Act 1976, authorizes the President to declare such national emergency.
- However, it contains no definition of what constitutes a national emergency; rather, it merely states that "the President is authorized to declare such national emergency".
- Unlike many other constitutions, the US Constitution **confers no additional powers on the executive** during an emergency. But while the constitution itself may be silent on emergency powers, **Congress has over time conferred a vast array** of legislative powers on the president, which they can trigger when a national emergency is declared.
- It is these powers that Trump wants to authorise up to US\$6.7 billion in additional funding to build his border wall.
- Under current law, emergency powers lapse within a year unless the president renews them.
- A national emergency can be re-declared indefinitely, and, in practice, that is done frequently.
- Anyone directly affected by the order can challenge it in court.
- Congress can also draft a **concurrent resolution to terminate** the state of emergency, leading to a somewhat novel act. Ordinarily, congressional resolutions support a president's declaration of a national emergency.

Trump-Kim Summit: Vietnam Summit

Syllabus: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

In News

The second summit between US President Donald Trump and North Korea leader Kim Jong-un took place Hanoi, Vietnam.

Key Highlights

- The summit was abruptly cut short as both the leaders **failed to reach an agreement** over how North Korea should denuclearise.
- **The American sides blamed North Korea** for this impasse. According to them, Kim had insisted all economic sanctions against North Korea were lifted while not agreeing to give up his entire nuclear arsenal.
- On the other hand, North Korea said that the US rejected its proposal to dismantle the **Yongbyon nuclear complex** and demanded Pyongyang take further disarmament steps.
- It also said that Pyongyang **sought partial, not complete**, sanctions relief during the summit.
- North Korea had agreed not to restart nuclear and missile tests and the US would not restart military exercises in South Korea - a continuation of the status quo.
- North Korea promised further negotiations with the US as both sides sought to hold open the door while staking out their positions after negotiations ended abruptly.

Analysis

- The "perception that this summit was a failure" will be damaging for Trump in the US as he has built a brand among his supporters as a dealmaker.
- Many experts believe that this no deal summit actually helped the North Korean leader.
- By standing shoulder to shoulder with Trump, Kim will be able to portray himself to his people and supporters as the charismatic head of a nuclear-armed power.
- However, other analysts believe that the decision to walk away calmly in Hanoi was the right one as **no deal is better than a bad deal**.
- They have lauded the decision to pursue negotiations at the envoy level as the right one.

[For points related to the Singapore Summit, please refer the topic "**Trump-Kim Summit: Singapore Summit**" for June 2018 CA magazine]

Chagos Islands Dispute

Syllabus: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

In News

- The UK has been ordered by the International Court of Justice to **hand back the Chagos Islands to Mauritius** "as rapidly as possible".
- The United Nations' highest court ruled that **continued British occupation** of the remote Indian Ocean archipelago is **illegal**.

Key Highlights

- The court in its order said that the detachment of the Chagos archipelago in 1965 from Mauritius had not been based on a "**free and genuine expression of the people concerned**".



- According to the court, the process of separating the Chagos Islands from Mauritius **during decolonisation** in the 1960s constituted an “**unlawful detachment**” and was a “**wrongful act**”.

Analysis

- Many analysts have termed this as a “**blockbuster**” of an opinion from the UN's highest court.
- At the heart of it was the **right of all people to self-determination** as a basic human right, which the UK violated when dismembering its former colony.
- As the ruling power, **the responsibility lay with the UK to respect national unity and territory integrity** of Mauritius as required under international law.
- It also reflected the isolation of UK at global level after BREXIT as many EU countries did not support UK on this matter.

Background

- The UK retained possession of the Chagos archipelago, which includes the strategic US airbase of Diego Garcia, after Mauritius gained its independence in 1968.
- It was done by effectively paying Mauritius more than £4m for the islands.
- The government refers to it as **British Indian Ocean Territory or BIOT**.
- About 1,500 native islanders were deported so the largest island could be leased to the US for the airbase in 1971. They have never been allowed to return home.

About International Court of Justice

- The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is the **principal judicial organ** of the United Nations (UN).
- It was established in June 1945 by the Charter of the United Nations and began work in April 1946.
- The seat of the Court is at the **Peace Palace in The Hague (Netherlands)**. Of the six principal organs of the United Nations, it is the only one not located in New York (United States of America).
- The Court's role is to settle, in accordance with international law, legal disputes submitted to it by States and to give advisory opinions on legal questions referred to it by authorized United Nations organs and specialized agencies.
- The Court is **composed of 15 judges**, who are elected for terms of office of nine years by the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council.
- Its official languages are **English and French**.

Visit of Prime Minister to the Republic of Korea

Syllabus: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

In News

- Indian Prime Minister paid a State Visit to the Republic of Korea on 21-22 February 2019.
- The visit is part of the new momentum in high-level exchanges between India and ROK.

- This can be seen from the **visit of President Moon to India** for Bilateral Summit in July 2018 and the **participation of the Korean First Lady at the Deepotsav** event in Ayodhya in November 2018.

Key Highlights

- During the visit, Indian Prime Minister was conferred upon with the **2018 Seoul Peace Prize** in recognition of his national and international contributions.
- List of MoUs/Documents signed:
 - MOU on **Extension of Korea Plus** (Korea Plus-an organization that facilitates investments by Korean companies in India). It was operationalized in **June 2016**, and comprises representatives from the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Energy of South Korea, Korea Trade Investment and Promotion Agency (KOTRA) and Invest India)
 - MoU between Korean **National Police Agency and MHA** on Comba
 - ting Transnational Crime And Developing Police Cooperation
 - MoU between National Highways Authority of India and Korea Expressway Corporation to promote bilateral cooperation in road and transport infrastructure development projects of India
 - MoU on Start-up Cooperation
 - MoU on release of commemorative postal stamp on Queen Hur (Suriratna, a legendary Princess of Ayodhya, who went to Korea in AD 48 and married King Kim-Suro.)

Seoul Peace prize: In brief

- Established in 1990
- To commemorate the success of the 24th Olympic Games held in Seoul, Republic of Korea
- Awarded to those who have made their mark through contributions to the harmony of mankind, reconciliation between nations and to world peace.
- Given biennially by the Seoul Peace Prize Cultural Foundation,
- Awardee receives a diploma, a plaque and honorarium of US\$200,000
- PM Modi was its 14th recipient

India – ROK Relationship : In Nutshell

ROK is an important strategic partner for India and this visit was a manifestation of the importance which India attach to this very important strategic partnership, very multi-dimensional engagement which it has with South Korea.

Economic Relationship

- India is among top 10 trade partners of Korea and India is the 6th largest export destination for Korean goods.
- Our trade volume has reached 21.5 billion Dollars for the calendar year 2018.
- The negotiations to upgrade Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement have been fast-tracked to achieve the bilateral trade target of 50 billion Dollars by 2030.
- Not just trade, in investment terms also we are seeing a positive turn. And, Korean investments into India have reached a cumulative figure of almost 6 billion Dollars.
- Hyundai, Samsung, LG electronics have become trustworthy brands in India. And, Kia is soon to join this club.

Startup Cooperation

- Both countries have signed MoU on Startup Cooperation which will provide a hub for Korean startups and Indian talent to freely communicate.
- South Korean National IT Industry promotion Agency has already opened their Indian office in Bengaluru to facilitate Korean startups to India.
- India-Korea Startup Hub has been inaugurated.

R&D, Innovation

In the field of innovation, both countries have decided to establish 'India-Korea Future Strategy Group' and 'India-Korea Centre for research and Innovation Cooperation' to provide an institutional framework for future-oriented cooperation based on research, innovation and entrepreneurship.

Infrastructure Development Cooperation

Recognizing the importance of supporting India's infrastructure development, India and South Korea have identified 10 billion Dollars under Korea's Economic Development Cooperation Fund and Export Credit, to finance such projects.

Strategic Relationship

- In 2015, a Special Strategic Partnership was concluded between both the countries.
- The integration of India's Act East Policy and Korea's New Southern Policy is giving a strong platform to further deepen and strengthen our Special Strategic Partnership.

Defense Relationship

Defense sector has an important role in our growing strategic partnership. An example of this can be seen in the inclusion of the K-9 "Vajra" (Joint venture between Larsen & Toubro and Hanwha) artillery gun in the Indian Army.

People to people Contact

- Visa on Arrival for Korean nationals has been put in place since October last year.
- MoU on release of commemorative postal stamp on Queen Hur (Suriratna, a legendary Princess of Ayodhya, who went to Korea in AD 48 and married King Kim-Suro.)

[Please refer the topic "State Visit of President of Republic of Korea to India" from July 2018 issue of CA Magazine]

State Visit of Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia to India

Syllabus: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

In News

- Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Crown Prince, Vice President of the Council of Ministers and Minister of Defence of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia paid his **first State visit to India** on February 19-20, 2019.
- The visit follows the highly successful visit of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to Saudi Arabia in April 2016, during which the two countries **agreed to further elevate existing strategic partnership.**

Key Highlights

- List of MoUs/Agreements signed:

- MoU on investing in the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund
- MoU on Cooperation in the field of Tourism
- Framework Cooperation Program between Invest India and Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority on Enhancing Bilateral Investment Relations
- MoU for Cooperation on Broadcasting between Prasar Bharati, New Delhi, India and Saudi Broadcasting Corporation (SBC), Saudi Arabia for Exchange of Audio Visual Programme
- MoU on cooperation in the field of Housing
- Agreement for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to join the International Solar Alliance (ISA)
- Saudis have agreed to align the **Kingdom's Vision 2030 and its 13 Vision Realization Programs** with India's flagship initiatives of "Make in India", "Start Up India", "Smart Cities", "Clean India", and "Digital India" for deepening of trade and investment.
- The Crown Prince decided to invest in the areas of energy, refining, petrochemicals, infrastructure, agriculture, minerals and mining, manufacturing, education and health potentially worth in excess of \$100 billion.
- The two sides expressed satisfaction at the **first Joint Venture West Coast Refinery and Petrochemical Project**.
- The quota for Hajj pilgrims from India has been increased to 200,000 to reflect the latest census.
- India was the '**Guest of Honour**' in the **32nd Saudi National Festival of Heritage & Culture – Janadriyah 2018**.

Analysis Of This Visit

- The visit, coming barely days after the terrorist attack on security forces in Pulwama, was undertaken in a tense atmosphere and heightened security concerns in the subcontinent.
- Prior to his visit to India, the crown prince visited Pakistan on February 17-18.
- Saudi Arabia well understands the existing political and security dynamics between India and Pakistan.
- He was cautious so as not to look like being supportive one country over the other.
- While with Pakistan he established the '**Saudi-Pakistan Supreme Coordination Council**' to be jointly chaired by himself and the Pakistani Prime Minister, **with India** he agreed to constitute a '**Comprehensive Security Dialogue**' and to form a '**Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism**'.
- The Crown Prince agreed with Pakistan the importance of **not politicising the UN listing regime**. But he also agreed to join hands with **India to counter terror** and share **intelligence**.
- Saudi Arabia condemned the terror attacks on India, but it did not condemn the Pakistani involvement in the cross border terrorism targeting India.

State Visit of President of Argentina to India

Syllabus: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

In News

- President of Argentina Mr. Mauricio Macri paid a State visit to India from 17-19 February 2019.
- The State visit of President Macri is taking place during the 70th year of the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between India and Argentina.
- It closely follows on the heels of the highly successful visit of Prime Minister Modi to Argentina for the G20 from 30 November - 1 December 2018.

Key Highlights

- List of MOUs/Agreements signed during the visit include:
 - MoU on defence cooperation
 - MoU on Tourism
 - MoU on Cooperation and Collaboration between Prasar Bharti, India and the Federal System of Media and Public Contents, Argentina
 - MoU in pharmaceuticals between Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO), Gol, and National Administration of Drugs, Food and Medical Technology, Argentina
 - MoU on **Antarctic Co-operation** between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of the Argentine Republic and the Ministry of Earth Sciences of the Republic of India
 - Work Plan on Cooperation between the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare of the Republic of India and the Ministry of Production and Labour of the Argentine Republic within the MoU signed in 2010.
 - MOU between Global Centre for Nuclear Energy Partnership (GCNEP), India, and CNEA, the Secretariat of Energy, Argentina
 - Agreement for the establishment of India-Argentina Centre of Excellence for Information and Technology
- During the visit, **India-Argentina Special declaration to Fight Terrorism** was made.

India – Argentina Trade Relation (Brief Outlook)

- Bilateral cooperation spans wide range are of areas including nuclear, space, economic and commercial, agriculture, science and technology, culture and tourism.
- Bilateral trade at present is around USD 3 billion. The total Indian investments in Argentina are to the tune of USD 1 billion.
- India exports mainly two wheelers, iron and steel, agro chemicals, yarn, organic chemicals, bulk drugs and drug intermediates and motor vehicles.
- Argentina exports to India mainly vegetable oils (soya bean and sunflower), finished leather, cereals, residual chemicals and allied products and pulses.

Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)

Syllabus: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements.

In News

- The **46th Session** of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the **Organisation of Islamic Cooperation** was held in Abu Dhabi.

- The Minister for External Affairs Smt. Sushma Swaraj has been invited by Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates as the **"Guest of Honour"** to address the Inaugural Plenary.
- India was **invited to attend the OIC meeting in 1969** but Pakistan prevailed upon and got the **invite withdrawn**.

Analysis

- This invitation was **first of its kind** in last five decade. It is being termed as **major diplomatic victory** for India and a setback for Pakistan.
- The invitation is a result of Modi-Prince (Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan) bonhomie.
- Pakistan, a member of the OIC, tried to get Ms Swaraj "disinvited" from the Abu Dhabi meet following India's air strike on a terror camp in Pakistan but its request was turned down.
- India is growing economically. It is one of the **biggest hydrocarbon importers and labour exporters**.
- Also, India has one of the world's **largest Muslim populations**.
- Thus the present situations created a **new framework for India's engagement** with the Muslim world and the Middle East.
- In this context, India's participation in the Abu Dhabi ministerial, therefore, must be viewed as a **diplomatic opening for a sustained and long-term political engagement** of the Islamic world as a collective.

India At OIC

- India is not a member of OIC.
- It was Qatar that first proposed **'Observer' status** for India at the OIC Foreign Ministers' meet in 2002 in recognition of India's significant Muslim population, but Pakistan had consistently blocked the move.
- Last year, Bangladesh proposed a restructuring of the charter of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation to pave way for the inclusion of non-Muslim countries like India as an 'observer state' of the 50-year old grouping.

About OIC

- The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) (formerly Organization of the Islamic Conference) is the second largest inter-governmental organization after the United Nations.
- It has **membership of 57 states** spread over four continents.
- The Organization was established upon a decision of the **historical summit which took place in Rabat**, Kingdom of Morocco on 25 September 1969 as a result of criminal arson of Al-Aqsa Mosque in occupied Jerusalem.
- It has a permanent secretariat in **Jeddah, Saudi Arabia**.
- This organization has been termed a **toothless tiger** by many analysts when it comes to dealing with squabbles among member states.
- Every member has a **veto**. As a result, the organization **fails to take a critical stand** on serious disputes that are shaping in the middle east.
- **The theme** of the 46th ministerial meet was **"50 years of Islamic cooperation: The road map for prosperity and development,"** coinciding with the **celebration of the 50th anniversary of the organisation**.

Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG)

Syllabus: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements.

In News

- China has **refused to dilute** its stand on India's entry into the elite Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG).
- It is insisting that New Delhi must sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty to gain entry as there is no precedent for the inclusion of non-NPT countries.

Key Highlights

- Other P5 countries including the US and Russia backed its case **based on New Delhi's non-proliferation record**.
- China has sought **to club India and Pakistan together**, on the basis of **both being non-signatories** of the NPT.
- It has asked the NSG countries to adopt a **"criteria-based approach"** — which essentially means that **either both** can get into the group **or none**.
- India has a clean record as far as track record on non-proliferation is concerned.
- On the other hand, **Pakistan's nuclear programme**, led by A Q Khan, violated all norms of nuclear non-proliferation and had **links with the North Korean nuclear programme**.

About NSG

- **Multilateral export control** regime known originally as the **"London Club"**
- Contribute to non-proliferation of nuclear weapons **by controlling the export** of nuclear technology, equipment and materials.
- Came into existence in 1974— in response to the Indian nuclear test (**smiling Buddha**)
- Not a formal organization; guidelines are non-binding in nature
- **48 member Countries** including all the P5 countries

Fact:

- The term NSG Participant is interchangeable with **"NSG Participating Government"** (PG), i.e. a government that participates in the NSG.
- Since the NSG is **not a treaty-based organisation**, the use of "member" or "Member State" is not used in the NSG.

Importance Of NSG Membership For India

- Membership of the NSG will provide **greater certainty and a legal foundation** for India's nuclear regime.
- It will generate **greater confidence for those countries** investing billions of dollars to set up ambitious nuclear power projects in India.
- India will be able **access state-of-the-art technology** especially the **better enrichment and reprocessing (ENR)** technology from the members of the group.
- India would like to **move into the category of international rule-creating nations** rather than stay in the ranks of rule-adhering nations. For this, it is essential that India gets due recognition and a place on the NSG high table.

- It will also provide a **boost to “Make in India” programme** as the membership will enable the joint production of nuclear equipment.

About NPT:

- The NPT is a multilateral treaty aimed at limiting the spread of nuclear weapons including three elements: (1) **non-proliferation**, (2) **disarmament**, and (3) **peaceful use of nuclear energy**.
- Entered into force: 5 March 1970
- Depositaries: Russia, UK, and US
- States Parties: 191
- The Treaty defines **nuclear weapon states (NWS)** as those that had manufactured and detonated a nuclear explosive device **prior to 1 January 1967**.
- All the other states are therefore considered **non-nuclear weapon states (NNWS)**.
- The **five nuclear weapon states** are China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Why India refuses to sign this treaty?

- Today, India is **one of the only five countries** that either did not sign the NPT or signed but withdrew, thus becoming part of a list that includes **Pakistan, Israel, North Korea, and South Sudan**.
- India refuses to accede to the Treaty on grounds that it is a biased legal instrument that **divided the world** into “**nuclear haves**” and “**nuclear have-nots**.”

Asia LPG Summit 2019

Syllabus: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements.

In News

- The second edition of Asia LPG Summit was inaugurated by Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas at New Delhi.
- The summit was organized by the **World LPG Association (WLPGA)** in association with major Indian public-sector oil companies (OMCs) Indian Oil, Hindustan Petroleum, and Bharat Petroleum.
- Theme - ‘**LPG – Energy for Life**’.

Success Of India’s Initiatives: Deliberated At The Summit

- In the last four years, Indian government increased LPG access to its rural population by almost **50 million LPG connections**, under its flagship programme ‘Ujjwala’.
- The target has now been **revised to 80 million**.
- With this, India is now the **world’s 2nd largest consumer** of LPG for domestic cooking applications, with annual volumes climbing up to 23 million tonnes in 2017-18.
- LPG access in India has reached almost 80% of its population of around 1.2 billion.
- With this, India presents a viable model for other countries.

About WLPGA

- The World LPG Association (WLPGA) is the voice of the global LPG Industry representing the full LPG value chain.
- It is based in Paris.
- The primary goal of the Association is to **add value** to the sector by driving premium demand for LPG, while also **promoting Compliance** to good business and safety practices.
- The Association was established in 1987 and granted **Special Consultative Status** with the United Nations Economic and Social Council in 1989.

World Government Summit 2019

Syllabus: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements.

In News

- The 7th edition of the World Government Summit was held in Dubai from 10th to 12th February.
- The event hosted participants from 140 countries to discuss key global solutions.

India's Participation

- India was guest country at this year's event and Indian PM addressed the event on day 1.
- In his inaugural speech, Indian PM propounded **the idea of six Rs** for sustainable development- **Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Recover, Redesign and Remanufacture**.

About World Government Summit (WGS)

- The World Government Summit is a global platform dedicated to shaping the future of governments worldwide.
- It is a neutral, non-profit organization at the intersection of government and innovation.
- It functions as a knowledge exchange platform for leaders in the public and private sectors to convene and collaborate with world-renowned experts to create a positive impact for citizens worldwide.
- The first WGS was held in Dubai in 2013. Since then, this event is held in Dubai annually.

UN Women

Syllabus: Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.

Context

- The **United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women** (UN Women) has lauded the current Odisha government for the **women's reservation proposal**.
- The proposal, which was passed in November 2018 by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, **seeks to implement 33 per cent reservation** for women in Parliament and state assemblies.

Background

- The Rajya Sabha passed the Constitution **108th Amendment Bill** in 2010. However, the Bill lapsed after the dissolution of the 15th Lok Sabha in 2014.

- The Legislative Assemblies of Odisha and Andhra Pradesh have already taken a lead and passed a resolution calling on the Central government to enact the Women's Reservation.

About UN Women

- UN Women is the **United Nations entity dedicated** to gender equality and the empowerment of women.
- UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality, and in all deliberations and agreements linked to the 2030 Agenda.
- It was created by the **United Nations General Assembly** in **July 2010**.
- The creation of UN Women came about as part of the UN reform agenda, bringing together resources and mandates for greater impact.
- It merges and builds on the important work of **four previously distinct parts of the UN system**, which focused exclusively on gender equality and women's empowerment:
 - Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW)
 - International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)
 - Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI)
 - United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)

Geneva Convention

Syllabus: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements.

In News

- India has been able to secure the release of the Indian Air Force pilot, Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman under the Geneva Conventions.
- The **Geneva Conventions** and their **Additional Protocols** are international treaties that are at the core of international humanitarian law.
- They contain the most important rules **regulating the conduct of armed conflicts** and seeks to specifically protect civilians, health and aid workers, as well as soldiers no longer participating in the hostilities, such **as prisoners of war (PoW)** and **wounded personnel**.

Objectives

The Geneva Conventions have the following objective:

- Immunity from capture and destruction of all establishments for the treatment of wounded and sick soldiers and their personnel
- Impartial reception and treatment of all combatants,
- Protection of civilians providing aid to the wounded, and
- Recognition of the Red Cross symbol as a means of identifying persons and equipment covered by the agreement.

What Are The Rights Of A Pow?

- According to Article 13 in the Third Geneva Convention, PoWs must be "humanely treated" at all times.

- According to it, any unlawful act or omission by the Detaining Power causing death or seriously endangering the health of a prisoner of war in its custody is prohibited, and will be regarded as a serious breach of the present Convention.
- It also adds that PoW have to be protected against insults and public curiosity as well as acts of violence or intimidation.
- Article 118 of Convention III deals with the release of PoW. According to it, PoWs "shall be released and repatriated without delay after the cessation of active hostilities.

Timeline

- These are a series of treaties concluded in Geneva between 1864 and 1949.
- The rules protecting prisoners of war (POWs) are specific and were first detailed in the 1929 Geneva Convention.
- They were refined in the **third 1949 Geneva Convention**, following the lessons of World War II, as well as in Additional Protocol I of 1977.
- In total, **196 countries** have signed and ratified them over the years.