

FOREIGN RELATIONS**India Saudi Arabia Relations**

In Context: Recently the state visit to India by the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, Muhammad bin Salman was concluded in conjunction with the G20 Summit in New Delhi.

Recent MoUs & Agreements**About:**

- ✓ The India-Saudi bilateral meet immediately after the G20 summit saw the conclusion of eight major MoUs involving vigilance, financial regulation and exim banks, desalination technology.
- ✓ Several other minor understandings ranging from IT, petrochemicals, pharmaceuticals, new “clean” energy technology, manufacturing and defence were also concluded.

India-Middle East-European Corridor:

- ✓ Both the countries proposed a grand IMEC (India-Middle East-European Corridor), creating a port-railroad connectivity to link India, the Gulf countries, and the European Union (in which India and Saudi Arabia are to be two nodal countries).
- ✓ The corridor is said to rival China’s Belt-Road-Initiative.

India-Saudi Arabia Strategic Partnership Council:

- ✓ Saudi’s Crown Prince co-chaired with the Indian PM the first meeting of the India-Saudi Arabia Strategic Partnership Council.

Potential investments:

- ✓ Both the countries reconfirmed Saudi intention of investing another \$50 billion and setting up an office for the Saudi Sovereign Wealth Fund in Gujarat International Fin Tech-City.
- ✓ They also discussed the possibility of trading in local currencies, and expediting negotiations for a free trade agreement between India and the Gulf Cooperation Council of which Saudi Arabia is a member.

India Saudi Arabia Relations**Establishment:**

- ✓ The two countries established diplomatic relations in 1947.

Delhi Declaration & Riyadh Declaration:

- ✓ The royal visit of 2006 resulted in the signing of the Delhi Declaration, which was followed in 2010 by the Riyadh Declaration that elevated bilateral ties to a strategic partnership.

Highest civilian honour:

- ✓ Prime Minister Modi’s visit to Riyadh in April 2016 captured the spirit of enhanced cooperation in the political, economic, security, and defence realms.
- ✓ King Salman conferred on the Prime Minister the kingdom’s highest civilian honour, the King Abdulaziz Sash, indicating the importance Saudi Arabia attached to its relationship with India.

The Strategic Partnership Council (SPC) Agreement:

- ✓ The Strategic Partnership Council (SPC) Agreement was signed during the 2019 visit of the Indian PM to Riyadh, which established a high-level council to steer the Indo-Saudi relationship.
- ✓ The SPC now has separate subcommittees on Political, Security, Social and Cultural Cooperation, and on Economy and Investments. Twelve pacts were signed during the PM’s visit.

Economic Ties:

- ✓ India is Saudi Arabia’s second-largest trade partner; Saudi Arabia is India’s fourth-largest trade partner.
- ✓ Bilateral trade in FY 2022-23 was valued at \$52.76 billion.
- ✓ Trade with Saudi Arabia accounted for 4.53% of India’s total trade in FY23.
- ✓ The bilateral trade has increased to more than US\$52 billion in 2022-23, marking a growth of more than 23%.
- ✓ As of January 2022, there were 2,783 Indian companies registered as joint ventures/ 100% owned entities with investments worth approximately \$2 billion in the kingdom.
- ✓ Saudi’s direct investments in India amounted to \$3.15 billion (as of March 2022).

Energy Cooperation:

- ✓ Saudi Arabia is a key partner for ensuring India’s energy security, and was its third largest crude and petroleum products source for FY23.
- ✓ India imported 39.5 million metric tonnes (MMT) of crude from the country in FY23, amounting to 16.7% of India’s total crude imports.
- ✓ India’s LPG imports from Saudi Arabia stood at 7.85 MMT, and 11.2% of its total petroleum product imports, in FY 23.

Defence Partnership:

- ✓ The defence partnership has witnessed tremendous growth in recent years.
- ✓ There is extensive naval cooperation between India and Saudi Arabia, and two editions of the bilateral naval exercise, Al Mohed al Hindi, have been concluded so far.
- ✓ Both sides also cooperate closely in the domain of defence industries and capacity-building.
- ✓ The Saudi navy was recently found taking exemplary measures for the safe extraction of Indian expatriates caught up in Port Sudan.

Indian diaspora in Saudi Arabia:

- ✓ The Indian community in the kingdom is more than 2.4 million strong, widely respected for its contribution to the development of Saudi Arabia, and seen as a living bridge between the two countries.

Significance**India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor:**

- ✓ The prospective collaboration of both the countries on the new proposed port and railroad corridor of IMEC is likely to integrate the two countries in a way to the global supply chain that has not happened since the Portuguese discovery of the sea route to India in the 15th century.
- ✓ The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor will deepen India's strategic engagement with the Arabian peninsula.
- ✓ It breaks Pakistan's veto over India's overland connectivity to the West.

Saudi Arabia's permanent membership of BRICS:

- ✓ India's support for the induction of Saudi Arabia as a permanent member of BRICS seems just the kind of game changer Saudi Arabia needs to materialise Muhammad bin Salman's vision of Saudi Arabia 2030, a post-oil economy.

Addressing India's energy security:

- ✓ Saudi investment would provide India with a kind of foreign capital that may not be as susceptible to knee-jerk reactions as Western capital often has been. The issue of India's energy security will also be addressed in a big way.

Challenges

- ✓ Relations surrounding energy: The core element in Indo-Saudi relations continues to revolve around energy, especially Saudi export of crude oil.
- ✓ Aid to Pakistan: India and Saudi Arabia have stressed the importance of strengthening security cooperation in the field of combating terrorism and its financing.
 - Contrary to which, Riyadh still helps Pakistan with economic aid, even while strategically engaging with New Delhi.
- ✓ Role of China: The country is also engaged with China, moving towards rapprochement with Iran and Israel, and is also now consolidating the Saudi partnership with the US, India, and Europe.
 - Many have thus already described this engagement as a power shift, with China emerging as a significant player in the Middle East.
 - Increasing Chinese influence in the Middle East may indirectly help Pakistan, both economically and strategically.

Way Ahead: If India's relations with any country have gained exponentially in momentum, it is the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The recent developments also provide a window of opportunity for India to embed itself as a significant player in the Middle East.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES**Children are an important but often overlooked population in AI legislation.**

In Context: This October, India will host the first-ever global summit on artificial intelligence (AI). India will also host the GPAI global conference in December as the Chair of the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI). These developments highlight the strategic significance of AI, which is expected to add \$500 billion to India's economy by 2025, accounting for 10% of the country's goal GDP.

The problem

- ✓ One area in which India might take the lead is in how regulators approach children and adolescents, a vital (but little known) group in this setting.
- ✓ Because of the nature of digital services, many cutting-edge AI deployments are not expressly developed for children but are nonetheless accessed by them.

The Government challenges:

- ✓ Regulation will need to align incentives in order to prevent addiction, mental health, and overall safety issues.

- ✓ In the absence of this, data-hungry AI-powered digital services can easily deploy opaque algorithms and dark patterns to exploit impressionable youth.
- ✓ This can result in tech-based distortions of ideal physical appearance(s), which might provoke body image disorders.
- ✓ Misinformation, radicalization, cyberbullying, sexual grooming, and doxxing are some of the other dangerous concerns arising from AI.
- ✓ The next generation of digital nagriks will likewise have to deal with the consequences of their families' online activity.
- ✓ As children enter puberty, we must provide them with means to deal with unforeseen outcomes.
- ✓ AI-powered deep fake capabilities, for example, can be abused to target young people by having bad actors generate transformed sexually graphic depictions and distribute them online.
- ✓ Aside from that, India is a melting pot of intersecting identities that span gender, caste, tribal identity, religion, and linguistic history.
- ✓ AI is known to transfer real-world biases and injustices into the digital environment.
- ✓ Bias and discrimination can have an influence on children and adolescents from marginalized populations.
- ✓ Under India's newly enacted data protection law, AI regulation must improve on the country's approach to children.
- ✓ The current approach to children in the data protection framework is out of step with India's digital realities.
- ✓ It places an undue responsibility on parents to protect their children's interests while also preventing safe platform operations.
- ✓ It perplexingly inverts the well-known dynamic in which a considerable proportion of parents rely on their children's aid to navigate otherwise inaccessible user interface and user experience (UI/UX) interfaces online.
- ✓ It also prohibits the surveillance of children's data by default, thereby excluding them from the benefits of customisation that we enjoy online.

Changing the focus

- ✓ International best practices can help Indian regulators define norms and principles that will make AI deployments safer.
- ✓ UNICEF's AI and Children Policy Guidance specifies nine prerequisites for child-centered AI, drawing on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (of which India is a signatory).
- ✓ The goal of the guidance is to foster an atmosphere that supports children's well-being, inclusiveness, fairness, non-discrimination, safety, transparency, explainability, and accountability.
- ✓ Another important aspect of good regulation will be the ability to respond to the diverse developmental stages of children of different ages.
- ✓ The Age Appropriate Design Code Act of California is an intriguing model.
- ✓ The Californian policy encourages transparency by requiring digital services to specify default privacy settings, examine whether algorithms, data gathering, or targeted advertising systems damage children, and use clear, age-appropriate language for user-facing content.
- ✓ The Indian government should support research that gathers evidence on the benefits and risks of AI for India's children and adolescents.
- ✓ This should serve as a starting point for developing an Indian Age Appropriate Design Code for AI.
- ✓ Finally, better institutions will aid in the shift away from top-down safety regulations that throw unwarranted obligations on parents.

Conclusion: As we work toward a new law to govern Internet hazards and develop our thought leadership on global AI regulation, the interests of our young citizens must be prioritized.

PRELIMS FACTS

1. Mobile Van Program:

In Context: Himachal Pradesh Agriculture Department Launches 'Mobile Van Program' to Promote Natural Farming

About:

- ✓ The Himachal Pradesh Agriculture Department has introduced a 'Mobile Van Program' as part of the 'Prakritik Kheti Khushhal Kisan Yojana' to advance eco-friendly and natural farming practices.
- ✓ The scheme's five-year plan aims at reducing farming costs, increasing income, and protecting human health and the environment.

- ✓ Over 89,000 natural farming farmers have already registered under the scheme
- ✓ The 'Mobile Van Program' aims to promote natural farming and eco-friendly practices by delivering fresh, organic produce to consumers and encouraging the adoption of chemical-free farming methods.
- ✓ Prakritik Kheti Khushhal Kisan Yojana Launch Date: May 14, 2018

2. **Biswanath Ghat In Assam, Has Been Chosen As The Best Tourism Village Of India In 2023**

In Context: Biswanath Ghat of Sonitpur district has been selected as the Best Tourism Village of India 2023 by the Ministry of Tourism, from amongst 791 applications from 31 States and Uts.

- ✓ Located on the banks of the Brahmaputra River, Biswanath Ghat is also popularly known as 'Gupta Kashi' and is named after the ancient Biswanath Mandir
- ✓ The ghat boasts a cluster of temples of different gods. Additionally, a Shiva temple was also situated at the confluence of Bridhaganga (Burigonga) River with the Brahmaputra.
- ✓ Biswanath Ghat, crowned India's top tourism village 2023, reflects Assam's commitment to rural tourism, culture, and heritage.

3. **Yudh Abhyas Workout**

In Context: The 19th edition of "EXERCISE YUDH ABHYAS" will be held in Fort Wainwright, Alaska, USA, from September 25th to October 8th, 2023.

About Yudh Abhyas Workout:

- ✓ It is an annual joint exercise between the Indian Army and the United States Army.
- ✓ This iteration of the Exercise will feature a 350-person Indian Army contingent.
- ✓ The Indian side's lead battalion is part of the MARATHA Light Infantry Regiment.
- ✓ Both sides will engage in a series of tactical drills to improve cooperation in UN peacekeeping missions.
- ✓ The theme is 'Employment of an Integrated Battle Group in Mountain/Extreme Climatic Conditions' under Chapter VII of the United Nations mandate.
- ✓ The Field Training Exercise comprises validation of Integrated Battle Groups against hostile forces at the Brigade level, an Integrated Surveillance Grid at the Brigade/ Battalion level, the use of Heliborne/ Airborne components, and Force Multipliers, among other things.
- ✓ The Exercise will also include an exchange of ideas and best practices in drills covering a wide range of combat abilities such as combat engineering, obstruction removal, mine and IED warfare.

Other Exercises Between India and the United States

- Vajra Prahar, Army
- MALABAR (Multilateral) Navy
- Cope India, Red Flag (Multilateral) Air Force

4. **Furcuta Cabomba**

In Context: Cabomba furcuta, an alien invasive species, has been threatening the Kole wetlands, an internationally important Ramsar site of great biological significance.

Cabomba furcuta Facts:

- ✓ Because of its profusion of flowers, it is commonly known as Pink Bloom.
- ✓ It is a Central and South American native that was transported to Kerala as an aquarium plant and has now escaped into the wild.
- ✓ It is a submerged perennial aquatic plant that thrives in slow-flowing to stagnant freshwater.
- ✓ Because of its propensity to fracture and spread both actively and passively, the plant has a high natural dispersal potential.
- ✓ It demands a lot of oxygen to flourish and will clog up water bodies and drainage channels.
- ✓ It reduces the diversity of native aquatic plants and generates economic losses by reducing freshwater fish output.

Important information on the Kole wetlands

- ✓ It is the state of Kerala's largest brackish, humid tropical wetland environment.
- ✓ Extending from the southern bank of the Chalakudy River to the northern bank of the Bharathapuzha River
- ✓ It is located in the migratory bird flyway of Central Asia.

5. **IBSA forum**

IN CONTEXT: External Affairs Minister visits the United States as part of the IBSA group meeting, to further strengthen South-South cooperation.

About IBSA

- ✓ IBSA is a unique forum which brings together India, Brazil and South Africa, three large democracies and major economies from three different continents, facing similar challenges.

- ✓ The grouping was formalised and named the IBSA Dialogue Forum when the foreign ministers of the three countries met in Brasilia on June 6, 2003 and issued the Brasilia Declaration.
- ✓ The IBSA has emerged as a key tripartite grouping for the promotion of cooperation in a range of areas.
- ✓ The IBSA Fund is a special feature of IBSA collaboration, an internationally recognised initiative of South-South cooperation, with 42 projects in 37 countries.

Cooperation in IBSA is on three fronts:

- ✓ As a forum for consultation and coordination on global and regional political issues.
- ✓ Trilateral collaboration on concrete areas/projects, through fourteen working groups and six People-to-People Forums, for the common benefit of three countries.
- ✓ Assisting other developing countries by taking up projects in the latter through IBSA Fund.

6. Kaobal Gali-Mushkoh Valley

In Context: Kaobal Gali-Mushkoh Valley, once the battlefield of the Kargil war, has been opened up for tourists.

About:

- ✓ The high-altitude passes of the Gurez valley, in north Kashmir is set to connect with the Mushkoh valley, in Kargil's Drass Sector, Ladakh, the site of the Kargil war in 1999.
- ✓ A 130-km road has been opened up for tourists. Kaobal Gali, the highest pass at a height of 4,166.9 meters in Gurez, connects the two valleys.
- ✓ The road connecting the two valleys is being maintained under Beacon (by the Border Roads Organisation) and at present is a fair-weather road.

Gurez Valley

- ✓ The Gurez Valley is close to the Line of Control (LoC) in north Kashmir, situated at about 2,400 meters above sea level.
- ✓ It is also home to ibex, musk deer and marmots, Himalayan brown bear and snow leopard. The Kishanganga River flows through the valley.
- ✓ The Gurez valley is one of few habitations in Kashmir where villages with only log houses exist, with no intervention of urban concrete materials.

Mushkoh Valley

- ✓ The Mushkoh Valley is situated in Dras, Ladakh.
- ✓ It is home to boisterous wild tulip flowers and endangered Himalayan yew.

ANSWER WRITING

Q. "Anger and intolerance are the enemies of correct understanding."—Mahatma Gandhi (150 words) 10

INTRODUCTION: Anger and intolerance are antithetical to reasons and correct understanding. They cloud our judgment and affect peace of mind. It is not possible to think clearly and make the right decisions if one is angry or intolerant.

- ✓ Anger makes a person lose calmness and patience and forces them to take hasty decisions which may not be correct. Anger drives him towards intolerance. Angry person is a constantly stressed person; such a person cannot think with clarity.
- ✓ Balanced decision-making, social progress and development is made possible through leaders who have a cool head on their shoulders and not by people who are easily irritated or who are not tolerant of others, conflicting viewpoints, ways of living and thinking or world views.
- ✓ Today, it is common to find people and leaders losing steadiness of mind when faced with stress. Angry and intolerant people are often bad decision-makers. The World Wars and other wars in history were often fomented by people who easily grew angry and intolerant (such as Hitler who is responsible for millions of murders).
- ✓ Correct understanding of a situation requires mental composure and equanimity. Angry and intolerant people cannot differentiate between correct and incorrect understanding.

Rising incidents of communal clashes, road rage, internet trolling are manifestation of this. Anger and intolerance can be controlled by speedy justice delivery, persuasion by leaders, celebrities and check on social media, public awareness, value based education etc. Our ancient texts of Buddhism and Bhagwadgeeta talk about anger management and tolerance. Their practice is the need of the hour

MCQs

1. Consider the following claims about the OSIRIS-REx mission:
 1. It is the first asteroid sample return mission of the European Space Agency.

2. It took the sample from the near-Earth asteroid Ceres.
Which of the following assertions is/are correct?
a) Only 1 b) Only 2
c) Both 1 and 2 d) **Neither 1 nor 2**
2. Considered the following statement :
1. Recently, Madhya Pradesh Government has announced the establishment of the Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve.
2. It is the seventh tiger reserve in the state and 54th in the country.
Which of the following assertions is/are correct?
a) Only 1 b) Only 2
c) **Both 1 and 2** d) Neither 1 nor 2
3. Consider the following remarks in relation to the IBSA Forum:
1. The IBSA is a trilateral development project that promotes South-South collaboration and interaction between India, Brazil, and South Africa.
2. IBSA is tied to the Brasilia Declaration.
3. IBSA does not have a fixed executive secretariat or a headquarters.
How many of the following statements are true?
a) only one b) only two
c) **only three** d) None
4. Global report on hypertension is released by which organisation
a) **World Health Organization (WHO)**
b) United Nation Development Programme (UNDP)
c) World Food Programme (WFP)
d) Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF)
5. Considered the following statement:
1. Biswanath Ghat of Sonitpur district, Arunachal Pradesh has been selected as the Best Tourism Village of India 2023.
2. It is announced by the Ministry of Tourism.
3. Located on the banks of the Brahmaputra River.
How many of the following statements are true?
a) only one b) only two
c) **only three** d) None
6. Considered the following statement regarding Mobile Van Program'
1. Himachal Pradesh Agriculture Department Launches 'Mobile Van Program'.
2. It is a part of the 'Prakritik Kheti Khushhal Kisan Yojana' to advance technology and traditional farming practices.
Which of the following assertions is/are incorrect?
a) Only 1 b) **Only 2**
c) Both 1 and 2 d) Neither 1 nor 2
7. Considered the following statement:
1. The 19th edition of "EXERCISE YUDH ABHYAS" will be held in Fort Wainwright, Alaska, USA,
2. It is an annual joint exercise between the Indian Army and the United States Army.
Which of the following assertions is/are correct?
a) Only 1 b) Only 2
c) **Both 1 and 2** d) Neither 1 nor 2
8. Recently Cabomba furcutais in news, Considered the following statement:
1. Cabomba furcuta, an alien invasive species
2. It has been threatening the Kole wetlands.
3. Its profusion of flowers, it is commonly known as Pink Bloom.
4. It demands a lot of oxygen to flourish and will clog up water bodies and drainage channels
Which of the above statement is/are correct?
a) 1 and 2 b) 2 and 3
c) 2,3 and 4 d) **All of the above**
9. Consider the following statements regarding the emerging markets bond:
1. It is a debt instrument issued by the World Bank.
2. It carries higher yields than corporate bonds of developed countries.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
a) 1 only
b) **2 only**
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2
10. Recently, Kaobal Gali-Mushkoh Valley, has been opened up for tourists. Considered the following statement:
1. Before it was the battlefield of the Kargil war.
2. The Mushkoh Valley is situated in Dras, Ladakh.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) **Both 1 and 2**
d) Neither 1 nor 2