Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting

Why in news?

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The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) was held recently in London.

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What is the Commonwealth grouping?

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- It is a group of nations of mostly former British colonies.
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- It is now a 53-nation grouping.
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- The present Queen Elizabeth II is the head of CHOGM.
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How was the latest summit perceived?

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- The meeting came with hopes of a “re-energised Commonwealth”.
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- The summit was held in the U.K., the founder State, after 32 years.
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- Besides, Queen Elizabeth II attended the summit.
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- She has skipped the meeting often in the last few years owing to her health.
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- Also, the present meet took place amidst Britain’s exit from the EU.
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- All these led to hopes of reviving the grouping as Commonwealth 2.0.

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- **India** - Mr. Modi was the first Indian PM to attend CHOGM in a decade.
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- Some of the earlier summits were skipped over bilateral differences.
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- It was widely expected that India would step up to play a leadership role.
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- It was seen to be helping chart a future course for the Commonwealth.
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- Prince Charles's visit to Delhi to invite Indian PM bolstered that belief.
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Were the expectations met?

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- The outcome of the meet was largely against the expectations.
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- CHOGM again failed to make a case for its relevance in the 21st century.
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- **Head** - It was announced that Prince Charles would 'succeed' his mother as the head of the Commonwealth.
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- This has ignored calls by members for the position to be more democratically shared or rotated.
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- **China** - There were statements on the Blue Charter on Ocean Governance and on the Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda for Trade and Investment.
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- This could together counter China's Belt and Road Initiative.
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- But there was little by way of a road map to achieve the goals.
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- **Immigration** - Britain PM Theresa May apologised for her Home Office's threat to deport thousands of immigrants.
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- They were brought as manual labour in the 1940s on the ship Empire Windrush from the Caribbean.
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- But she failed to convince most members of the Commonwealth that Britain would reverse its present policies on immigration.
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- **Trade** - The U.K.'s hard line on Indian "illegals" prevented the signing of a

bilateral agreement on immigrant “returns” with India.
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- This was in regard to return of illegal Indian migrants within a month of their being detected by authorities.
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- This indicates that post-Brexit London is likely to welcome trade in goods from the Commonwealth, but not services.
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What is the way forward?

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- The Commonwealth remains a great platform for development aid, democratic values and educational opportunities.
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- But its relevance is put to test with increasing call for democracy within the grouping.
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- It needs to adopt a more egalitarian and inclusive attitude to its next generation of Commonwealth citizens.
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- Only this can ensure the sustainability and credibility of this grouping.
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Source: The Hindu

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