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Nepal-Bharat Maitri

- Nepal-Bharat Maitri is a development partnership initiated by India as a high impact community development scheme.
- This initiative is another milestone in strengthening cultural ties and people-to-people contacts between the two countries.
- In 2018, Nepal-Bharat Maitri - Pashupati Dharmashala was inaugurated in Kathmandu, Nepal.
- Recently, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed under Nepal-Bharat Maitri: Development Partnership, for the construction of a sanitation facility at the Pashupatinath Temple, Kathmandu.
- The facility will be implemented by Kathmandu Metropolitan City and India has pledged to extend financial assistance amounting to Rs. 2.33 crore.
- This comes amid a raging border row between the two countries.

Pashupatinath Temple

- It is dedicated to Lord Shiva, Pashupatinath is one of the most important religious sites in Asia for devotees of Shiva.
- It is the largest temple complex in Nepal and stretches on both sides of the Bagmati River.
- Temples dedicated to several other Hindu and Buddhist deities surround the temple of Pashupatinath.
- Only Hindus are allowed through the gates of the main temple.
- It was conferred the status of a World Heritage Site in 1979 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

United Nation Security Council

- The United Nations Charter established six main organs of the United Nations, including the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).
- Article 23 of the UN Charter concerns the composition of the UNSC.
- The UNSC has been given primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security to the Security Council, which may meet whenever peace is threatened.
- While other organs of the United Nations make recommendations to member states, only the Security Council has the power to make decisions that

member states are then obligated to implement under the Charter.

- The UNSC is composed of 15 Members:

1. Five permanent members: China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
2. Ten non-permanent members elected for two-year terms by the General Assembly.

- Each year, the General Assembly elects five non-permanent members (out of ten in total) for a two-year term. The ten non-permanent seats are distributed on a regional basis:

1. Five for African and Asian countries.
2. One for Eastern European countries.
3. Two for Latin American and Caribbean countries.
4. Two for Western European and other countries.

Election to Non-Permanent members of UNSC

- Election for five non-permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is being held on 17th June, 2020.
- India is standing unopposed as the nominee for the Asia-Pacific seat, for the 2021-22 term and needs the vote of two-thirds of UNGA members (129 votes) to be confirmed.
- In 2019, the candidature of India was unanimously endorsed by the 55-member Asia-Pacific grouping, which also included China and Pakistan.
- This would be India's eighth term in the UNSC which will begin from January 2021.
- India’s objective will be the achievement of N.O.R.M.S: a New Orientation for a Reformed Multilateral System.

Mobile Payments Market Report

- S&P Global Market Intelligence’s has launched 2020 India Mobile Payments Market Report.
- According to the report mobile payments and card transactions exceeded cash withdrawals from automated teller machines (ATMs) for the first time in 2019, indicating that the country’s push towards digital payments was bearing fruit.
- The highlights of the report are as follows

1. Mobile payments, initiated by payment apps comprising account-to-account transfers and payments made from stored-value accounts, rose 163% to $287 billion in 2019.
2. By comparison, point-of-sale transactions completed using debit and credit

cards, including online and in apps, rose 24% to $204 billion.
3. Card and mobile payments as a percentage of GDP rose to 20% in the quarter ended December 31, 2019.
4. The report estimated that card purchases and Unified Payments Interface (UPI)-led mobile payments represented 21% of the $781 billion in in-store transactions in 2019.
5. Google Pay and PhonePe led the UPI payment space as the two handled more than 7 billion transactions in total, representing more than two-thirds of UPI transactions in 2019.

Assessment of Climate Change over the Indian Region

- Recently, the first Assessment of Climate Change over the Indian Region has been published by the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES).
- It is India's first-ever national forecast on the impact of global warming on the subcontinent in the coming century.
- These projections, based on a climate forecasting model developed at the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune, will be part of the next report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), expected to be ready in 2022.
- This is a significant step for climate science and policy in India because existing projections are put in the context of historical trends in land and ocean temperatures, monsoon rainfall, floods, droughts and Himalayan warming and glacier loss.
- The report highlights are a s follows

1. The report indicates a rise in worldwide average surface air temperatures by 5°C by the end of the century if human activities keep emitting GHGs at the current rate.
2. The global average temperature in the last century has gone up by 1.1°C, according to the latest estimates by the IPCC.
3. Another significant highlight of the assessment is the projected variability in the rainfall, especially during the monsoon season which brings 70% of the rainfall received by India and is one of the primary drivers of its rural agrarian economy.
4. Monsoon rainfall could change by an average of 14% by 2100 that could go as high as 22.5%.
5. It is not mentioned if this change will be an increase or a decrease but still represents variability.
6. Overall rainfall during the monsoon season has decreased by 6% between 1950 and 2015.

Representative Concentration Pathway (RCP)

- According to Assessment of Climate Change over the Indian Region, in a worst-case scenario, average surface air temperatures over India could rise by up to 4.4°C by the end of the century as compared to the period between 1976 and 2005.
- The worst-case scenario is defined by the Representative Concentration Pathway (RCP) 8.5 that calculates a radiative forcing of 8.5 watt per square metre due to the rising greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the atmosphere.
- Radiative forcing or climate forcing is the difference between sunlight energy absorbed by the Earth (including its atmosphere) and the energy that it radiates back into space.
- Under an intermediate scenario of RCP 4.5, the country's average temperature could rise by up to 2.4°C.
- The rise in temperatures will be even more pronounced in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region where the average could reach 5.2°C.
- The region is already highly vulnerable to climate-related variability in temperatures, rainfall and snowfall.
- By 2100, the frequency of warm days and warm nights might also increase by 55% and 70% respectively, as compared to the period 1976-2005 under the RCP 8.5 scenario.
- The incidences of heat waves over the country could also increase by three to four times.
- Their duration of occurrence might also increase which was already witnessed by the country in 2019.

Zoonoses

- It is any disease or infection that is naturally transmissible from vertebrate animals to humans.
- Animals thus play an essential role in maintaining zoonotic infections in nature.
- Zoonoses may be bacterial, viral, or parasitic.

Land use Change

- Land use change is a process which transforms the natural landscape by direct human-induced land use such as settlements, commercial and economic uses and forestry activities.
- It impacts the overall environment in terms of greenhouse gas emission, land degradation and climate change.
- Land use change promotes zoonoses like Covid-19 as the interaction and physical distance between animals and humans get closer.
- Land use change can be a factor in CO2 (carbon dioxide) atmospheric

concentration, and is thus a contributor to global climate change.
- It represents almost 25% of total global emissions.
- According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report on climate change and land, agricultural land for food, animal feed and fibre is behind the land use change.
- According to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the land use change, which prepares the ground for zoonoses like Covid-19, should be reversed.

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

- Established in 1994, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management.
- It is the only convention stemming from a direct recommendation of the Rio Conference's Agenda 21.
- Focus Areas: The Convention addresses specifically the arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, known as the drylands, where some of the most vulnerable ecosystems and peoples can be found.
- From India, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change is the nodal Ministry for this Convention.

Guwahati - Urban Jungle

- Assam State Zoo occupies 30 hectares of the 620-hectare Hengerabari Reserve Forest referred to as the city's lungs.
- It has diverse fauna like Chinese pangolin, Nepal cricket frog, Bengal monitor lizard, Assamese cat snake, Eurasian moorhen, Asian elephant, Terai cricket frog and Ganges river dolphin
- By this Guwahati redefines the term "urban jungle" with 334 and counting free-ranging faunal species living in the green spaces within concrete structures.
- The 328-sq km Guwahati and its outskirts have 18 hills, eight reserve forests, two wildlife sanctuaries and a Ramsar site (Deepor Beel) besides the Brahmaputra river flowing past its northern edge.
- This stretch of the river has a few Ganges river dolphin, which has the status of City Animal.
- Over the years about 26 species of amphibians, 56 reptiles, 36 mammals and 216 birds has been recorded from the city. And 238 species of mammals, birds, amphibians and reptiles besides 610 species of flora in the Hengerabari reserve forest. (without taking the captive animals in account)
- More than 1,100 captive wild animals belonging to 107 species, of which 52 are highly protected under the Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972, has also

recorded.

Source: The Hindu

