NAM Calls for Cuba's Removal from Unilateral Terrorism List of US

USA's unilateral list of **'State Sponsors of Terrorism'** comprises countries that **allegedly sponsor international terrorism.**

- Countries in such a list face unilateral economic, commercial and financial **coercive measures** by US.
- **North Korea, Iran and Syria** are also part of this list in addition to Cuba.
- **NAM's stand favouring Cuba** highlights its **importance to Global South countries.**
  - ⊕ Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) traces its origins to the **1955 Asia-Africa Conference in Bandung** (Indonesia) with its **first conference held in Belgrade** (Serbia) **in 1961.**
  - ⊕ It was established as an **alternative to the dominance of Cold War superpowers** (USA and Russia) and aimed to **establish a New International Economic Order.**

Contemporary relevance of NAM for Global South

- **Collective Voice:** All 120 NAM members are from the Global South.
- **Alternative to Renewed Power Contest:** Russia-Ukraine War has created Cold War-like geopolitical competition, making non-alignment and peaceful coexistence more crucial for Global South.
- **Allows Realist Statecraft:** NAM provides **autonomy to members in decision-making** and **flexibility to act in a country's best interests.**
  - ⊕ Groupings like **ASEAN, BRICS, African Union, and G77** (all dominated by NAM members) have adopted some NAM agendas, such as demanding **reforms in multilateral institutions.**

NORTH AMERICA · EUROPE · ASIA · AFRICA · SOUTH AMERICA · AUSTRALASIA

Brandt line

- 🟨 Rich north
- 🟧 Poor south

India raised concerns about State-sponsored Terrorism in UNSC

Indian representative, while speaking on 'Cooperation between the UN and the Regional and Sub-Regional Organisations in Maintenance of International Peace and Security', raised concerns over certain **countries using terrorism as an instrument of state policy.**

- **State-sponsored terrorism** is a term used when a **terrorist group receives support from a state.** This support could be in the form of **funding, training, supply of weapons, providing shelter within its borders**, etc.

Why countries use State Sponsored Terrorism?

- **Geopolitical rivalry between states:** E.g., During Cold War era, the US and Soviet Union sponsored militant groups opposed to each other's interests.
- **Territorial grievances:** E.g., Pakistan's sponsoring of terrorist groups such as Hizbul Mujahideen, Lashkar-e-Taiba, etc.
- **Ethnic & Religious Support:** E.g., Iran bolstered terrorist groups operating in Syria, including Hezbollah **(Shiite Muslim militant group based in Lebanon).**

Implications of using terrorism as an instrument of state policy

- **Lack of consensus and unified global response:** e.g., Lack of consensus among UN Member States on the proposed Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism, etc.
- **Threat to regional and global security:** Due to proliferation of nuclear technology and other weapon of mass destruction to terrorist sponsor states.
- **Others:** Religious radicalization, political instability, etc.

Steps taken to counter State-sponsored terrorism

Global

- **Financial Action Task Force:** Global money laundering and terrorist financing watchdog
- **UNSC Resolution 1267:** Global list that establishes Sanctions on individuals and groups associated with terrorist organizations.
- **UN Counter-Terrorism Centre:** Promotes international cooperation in the fight against terrorism and supports Member States in implementing the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

National

- **FIU-IND:** Set up by India, responsible for processing and disseminating information relating to suspect financial transactions.
- **Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Act, 2005**

China's dominance in LiDAR raises National Security concerns around the World

While current demand for **Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) technology** is primarily driven by autonomous vehicles, it is finding applications in a wide assortment of fields, both commercial and military.

About LiDAR

- **LiDAR** is a **dual-use optical remote sensing technology** that uses **light in the form of a pulsed laser** to measure distances and maps the surrounding environment.
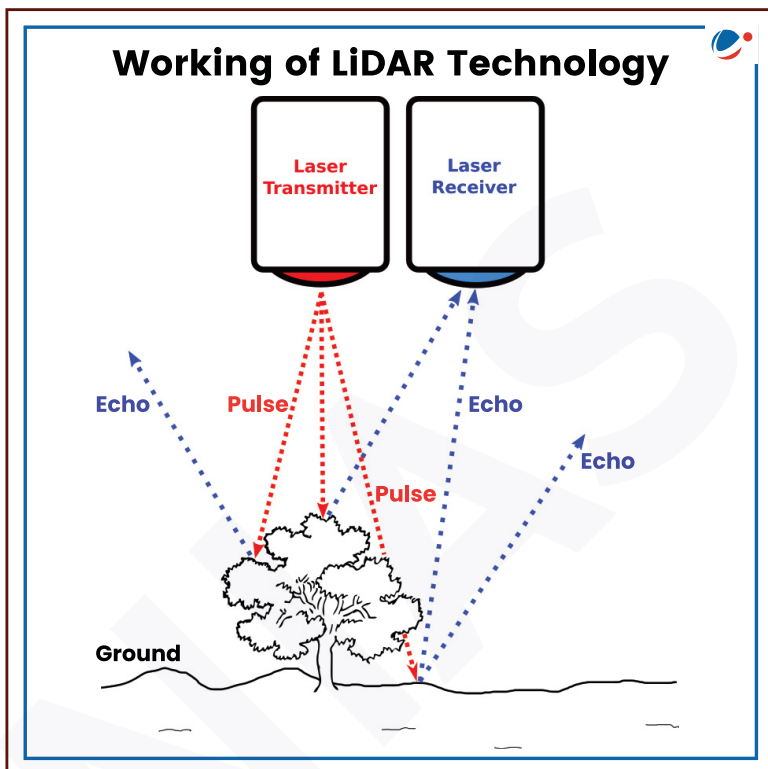- **Types of LiDAR**
  - **Topographic:** Typically uses a near-infrared laser to map the land
  - **Bathymetric:** Water-penetrating green light to also measure seafloor and riverbed elevations.

Working of LiDAR Systems

- **Consist of three main components:** Laser emitter, scanning mechanism, and Specialized GPS receiver.
- **Works on same principles** as RADAR and SONAR, i.e., **emit waves of energy to detect and track objects.**
  - **RADAR** (Radio Detection and Ranging) uses **microwaves; SONAR** (Sonic Navigation and Ranging) uses **sound waves** whereas **LiDAR uses Light waves.**

Applications of LiDAR

- **Agriculture:** To measure **agricultural landscaping and topography,** for **crop biomass estimation,** to detect soil properties, etc.
- **Aerospace and Defense:** Terrain mapping, target tracking, mine hunting and imaging through clouds Maps terrain, mission planning using sophisticated battlefield visualizations, etc.
- **Automotive:** Advanced driver-assistance systems (ADAS) and autonomous vehicles use 3D LiDAR map data to navigate roads.
- **Others:** Weather forecasting, Mapping environments in virtual reality and augmented reality applications, etc.

Working of LiDAR Technology

PM inaugurates 46th Annual Session of World Heritage Committee (WHC) AT Bharat Mandapam

UNESCO's WHC is responsible for **managing all matters of World Heritage** and deciding **new sites for the World Heritage list.**

- This is the **first time India is hosting the meeting.**
- While addressing the inauguration of WHC the PM said, ' **heritage is not only history but a shared consciousness of humanity.'**

About Heritage

- **Heritage is our legacy from the past,** what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations (UNESCO). It can be **tangible** (like monuments) or **intangible** (songs, dance, etc.).
- In 1972 UNESCO adopted an international treaty **'Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage'.**

Importance of Heritage for Humanity

- **Preserving cultural identity:** Classical dances like Bharatnatyam and Kathak preserve our cultural heritage, passing down stories, customs, and rituals through generations.
- **Shaping human society:** Ellora Caves (showcasing Buddhism, Brahminism, and Jainism) exemplify India's deep-rooted spirit of tolerance within its civilization.
- **Scientific values:** 8th century Kedarnath temple situated at an altitude of 3500 meters which remains a challenging place for infrastructure development today also.
- **Educational Value:** Findings from Sinauli (Uttar Pradesh) pointed out that horse-driven chariots were used 4000 years ago.
- **Architectural inspiration:** Chausath Yogini Mandir inspired the design of new parliament.

India's Initiatives for Protecting Global Heritage

- India will contribute **1 million dollars to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre** for capacity building, technical assistance and conservation of world heritage sites.
- A **certificate program in World Heritage Management** is also being started for young professionals in India.
- **Restoration by Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) of** Angkor Wat (Cambodia), Vat or Wat Phou Hindu temple (Laos PDR), Ananda temple in Bagan (Myanmar), etc.
- **Schemes like** HRIDAY, PRASAD, Indian Heritage in Digital Space (IHDS) Programme, Project Mausam, etc.

Microsoft – CrowdStrike Outage caused worldwide IT disruption

Outage was caused by a **logic error in a sensor configuration update** for Microsoft Windows systems which led to a system crash, **affecting critical sectors like healthcare and banking.**

- Later, an **assessment by the RBI** showed that **10 banks and NBFCs** in India had **minor disruptions due to this global outage.**

Impact of IT outages on critical services

- **Economic disruption:** Freezing of financial markets, shutdown of businesses reliant on cloud services, etc.
  - ⊕ **e.g.,** In 2021, major outage in National Stock Exchange outage halted trading for nearly 4 hours.
- **Healthcare:** Disruption of telemedicine services, inaccessible digital health records, etc.
  - ⊕ **e.g., 2017 Wannacry** Ransomware attack on Hospitals in UK led to cancellation of ~19000 appointments
- **Government and security:** e.g., 2020 cybersecurity breach at Kundankulam Nuclear Power Plant of NPCIL.
- **Others:** Communication breakdown, energy sector disruptions due to failure of smart grids, etc.

Vulnerability of digital infrastructure in India

- **Import dependence:** Heavy reliance on imported hardware and software create supply chain vulnerabilities and security risks.
- **Large digital footprint with low digital literacy:** Only 38% of households in India are digitally literate. (CBWE)
- **Limited redundancy:** Lack of adequate backup and redundancy measures, making systems more vulnerable to single points of failure.
- **Others:** State-sponsored cyber-attacks, lack of robust cybersecurity protocols, etc.

Measures taken for protection of digital infrastructure

- **Institutional:** National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre (NCIIPC), Defence Cyber Agency (DCA), CERT-In, etc.
- **Legal:** Digital Personal Data Protection Act (2023), Information Technology Act, 2000.
- **Policy:** National Cyber Security Policy (2013), etc.

GTRI raises concerns about Steady Rise in India's Garments and Textiles Imports

India's textile industry

- **Current value:** India's textile industry, valued at **US$ 250 billion,** provides **jobs to 50 million people.** India is present **across all parts of the value chain.**
- **Global Trade Contribution:** India contributes around **4.6% of the global trade in textiles and apparel.**
- **Garment export (2013 to 2023):** India's exports grew only by 4.6 % against Vietnam's by 81.6% and Bangladesh's by 69.6%

Key Challenges in India's Textile Industry

- **Complex Export Procedures:** Outdated and intricate procedures by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) and customs hinder exports.
- **Import Restrictions:** High import duties and **mandatory quality norms on raw materials** like polyester and viscose staple fibers complicate imports, making it **hard to compete globally.**
- **Weak Weaving and Processing Sectors:** Small, informal weaving and processing units **lack advanced technology and scale,** leading to higher costs and lower quality compared to Chinese counterparts.
- **Fast Fashion Impact:** Frequent changes in fashion affect the fabric and input consumption, making old norms impractical.

Way ahead for strengthening India's Textile Industry

- **Modify PLI Scheme For Textile Sector:** Make it more appealing to investors.
- **Streamline Import Procedures:** For example, The DGFT should issue import entitlements based on value terms, similar to Bangladesh, instead of looking into the actual consumption of the inputs.
- **Strengthen Legal Framework:** Enhance the enforcement of contracts to provide a more secure business environment
- **Other:** Focus on enhancing synthetic apparel production, implement strategies to become compliant with the fast fashion industry, etc.

Also in News

Chairman of UPSC

Recently, UPSC Chairperson resigned 5 years before expiration of his term.

About UPSC Chairman (Article 316)

- **Appointment:** By the President
- **Term:** 6 years/ 65 years of age, whichever is earlier.
- **Eligibility:** Held office for at least ten years either under the Government of India or under the Government of a State.
- He/she is ineligible for further employment either under the Government of India or under the Government of a State
  - ⊕ **Removal:** By President, if he/she is
  - ⊕ an adjudged insolvent;
  - ⊕ engages during his term of office in any paid employment outside the duties of his office;
  - ⊕ unfit to continue in office by reason of infirmity of mind or body.

U-WIN

Government has launched a **new online vaccination portal, for childhood vaccination.**

- It is similar to COWIN **(Open source digital Platform).**

About U-WIN Portal:

- **Function:** Captures every vaccination event for **pregnant women and children up to the age of six years** under Universal Immunization Programme.
- **Importance:**
- Locate the **nearest vaccination center, registers all births, child's birth weight** etc.
  - ⊕ Will allow the government **to study micro-trends across areas.**
  - ⊕ Linked to government's existing **eVIN platform** (provides real-time information on vaccine stocks and flows) for inventory management.
  - ⊕ Provides **digital vaccine certificate.**

Nine-dash Line

China and the Philippines reached a deal to end confrontation in the disputed Shoal island in South-China Sea which is claimed by China under the **'Nine-dash line'.**

About Nine Dash Line

- It is a **visual representation of China's claims** on Chinese official maps and comparative maps of disputed claims **in the South China Sea.**
- It covers **almost 90% of the South China Sea** and overlaps with the Exclusive Economic Zone claims of **Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan,** and **Vietnam.**
- **Claims by China** under Nine-dash line were **rejected by a UN Tribunal in 2016.**

Zebra Mussel

Invasive **"Zebra mussel"** has been found for the first time in the **Colorado river (USA).**

- **Fingernail-sized mollusc,** native to the **Caspian and Black Seas and** probably arrived in the Great Lakes in the 1980s via ballast water.

About Zebra Mussel:

- **Habitat:** Slow rivers, canals, lakes, water pipes etc.
- **Characteristics:**
  - **Feeding:** Uses filter feeders that siphon particles of plankton/algae from water.
  - **Byssal threads:** Use **root-like protein byssal threads to firmly attach** to hard surfaces like rocks, native mussels, docks.
  - **Biofouling:** Accumulation of adults on surface.

International Mathematical Olympiad

A **six-member student team from India** have secured **4 Gold medals, 1 silver medal, and 1 honourable mention** in the **International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO) 2024.**

- This is the best performance by an Indian in IMO since the country's **debut in 1989.**

About IMO

- It is the **World Championship Mathematics Competition** for **High School students** and is **held annually** in a different country.
- **First IMO** was held in **1959** in **Romania.**
- **Gold, Silver and Bronze medals** are awarded, as well as **Honourable Mentions** for good effort.

Bail Under UAPA

Supreme Court **granted bail** to an accused booked under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA).

- The Court noted the accused had been in **custody for 9 years and the trial was progressing slowly.**

Bail Under UAPA

- **Law:** Section 43D(5) of UAPA imposes strict conditions for bail, generally prohibiting it if the accusation seems prima facie true.
- **SC judgement:** in K A Najeeb vs. Union of India (2021), SC held that **UAPA's bail restrictions should not override constitutional rights** (Right to Life and Personal Liberty under Article 21).

Rapid Apophis Mission for Space Safety (RAMSES)

European Space Agency (ESA) has announced **RAMSES mission to study Asteroid Apophis.**

- **Asteroid Apophis** is a **near earth object** that is expected to pass within 20,000 miles of Earth's surface by April 2029.
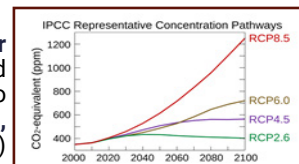
About RAMSES Mission

- It is a **planetary defense mission** against a hazardous asteroid.
- It will **survey the asteroid's shape, surface, orbit, rotation and orientation.**
- **Other Planetary defense mission**
  - NASA's OSIRIS-Apophis EXplorer (OSIRIS-APEX)
  - NASA's DART asteroid impactor and
  - ESA's Hera asteroid detective

Representative Concentration Pathways (RCP)

A new **study used RCP for studying impact of Climate change** on India's tropical dry deciduous forest

- Study concluded that **non-timber forest produce** such as **bael** (wood apple) and **bahera,** is expected to **thrive,** while species like **chironji, mahua and amla** (Indian gooseberry) will be **negatively impacted.**

About RCP

- **IPCC introduced** RCPs in Fifth Assessment Report (AR5).
- It **describes four different 21st-century pathways of greenhouse gas (GHG)** emissions and atmospheric concentrations, air pollutant emissions and land use

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Places in news — Laos (Capital: Vientiane)

Recently, 13 Indians lured into cyber-scamming centers in Laos have been rescued.

Political Features

- It is the **only landlocked country in Southeast Asia.**
- **Neighbouring countries: China** (North), **Vietnam** (Northeast and East), **Cambodia** (South), **Thailand** (West), and **Myanmar (Northwest).**
- It is a part of **ASEAN and RCEP groupings.**

Geographical Features

- **Climate:** Tropical Monsoon Climate
- **Major Rivers:** Mekong (capital is also located on this river)
- **Minerals:** Gold, copper, Zinc, Lead, etc.
- **Major Mountains:** Annamite Range, Luang Prabang Range.
- **Highest Peak:** Mount Bia.

AHMEDABAD   BENGALURU   BHOPAL   CHANDIGARH   DELHI   GUWAHATI   HYDERABAD   JAIPUR   JODHPUR   LUCKNOW   PRAYAGRAJ   PUNE   RANCHI