

## Current Affairs of the Day

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## India, Pak. trade charges at SAARC, CICA meets

- India and Pakistan crossed swords over terrorism and Jammu and Kashmir at the Foreign Minister's meetings of the 8-nation **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)** and the 27-nation Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA). However, unlike similar occasions in the past, neither side walked out during the events held via video-conference on Thursday.
- Speaking at the South Asian meeting, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar called on all SAARC members to "collectively resolve to defeat the scourge of terrorism, including the forces that nurture, support and encourage an environment of terror and conflict, which impede the objective of SAARC to realise its full potential for collective collaboration and prosperity across South Asia", without a direct reference to Pakistan.

### Veiled reference to J&K:

- Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi, who also attended the meet along with the Foreign Ministers of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka, used the SAARC platform to make a detailed statement on the resolution of "long-standing disputes", a veiled reference to Jammu and Kashmir and New Delhi's 2019 move to withdraw Article 370.

## 'FCRA Bill incompatible with international law'

- The **International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)** on Thursday observed that the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2020 passed by Parliament was incompatible with international law.
- "The legislation fails to comply with India's international legal obligations and constitutional provisions to respect and protect the rights to freedom of association, expression, and freedom of assembly," the ICJ said.

### Value Added Information

#### About International Commission of Jurists (ICJ):

- The **International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)** is an international human rights non-governmental organization. It is a standing group of 60 eminent



jurists—including senior judges, attorneys and academics—who work to develop national and international human rights standards through the law. Commissioners are known for their experience, knowledge and fundamental commitment to human rights. The composition of the Commission aims to reflect the geographical diversity of the world and its many legal systems.

- The Commission is supported by an International Secretariat based in Geneva, Switzerland, and staffed by lawyers drawn from a wide range of jurisdictions and legal traditions. The Secretariat and the Commission undertake advocacy and policy work aimed at strengthening the role of lawyers and judges in protecting and promoting human rights and the rule of law.
- In addition, the ICJ has national sections and affiliates in over 70 countries. Given the legal focus of the ICJ's work, membership of these sections is predominantly drawn from the legal profession.
- In April 2013, the ICJ was presented with the Light of Truth Award by the Dalai Lama and the International Campaign for Tibet. The award is presented to organisations who have made outstanding contributions to the Tibetan cause.

## Lanka scraps Japan-funded rail project

- Sri Lanka's President has ordered the termination of a \$1.5-billion Japanese-funded light rail project, saying it is not a "cost-effective solution" for the congested capital Colombo, officials said on Thursday.
- The deal signed under the previous government is the largest single foreign-funded infrastructure project in Sri Lanka, and was seen as a sign of the island nation reducing its dependence on China.
- President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, elected last year, told the Transport Ministry to "terminate this project and close the project office with immediate effect", top aide P.B. Jayasundara said in a letter to the ministry.



- There was no immediate comment from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), which in March last year loaned 30 billion yen (\$285 million) to finance the first phase of the Light Rail Transit (LRT). Japanese technology including rolling stock was to be used on the rail system, which included 16 stations over 15.7 km.

## Laser Guided ATGM successfully test fired

- Laser Guided Anti-Tank Guided Missile (ATGM) was successfully test fired from MBT Arjun Tank at KK Ranges, Ahmednagar recently.
- **Developed by:** Armament Research & Development Establishment (ARDE), Pune in association with High Energy Materials Research Laboratory (HEMRL) Pune, and Instruments Research & Development Establishment (IRDE) Dehradun.

### Value Added Information

- Lasers guided ATGMs lock and track the targets with the help of laser designation to ensure precision hit accuracy.
- The missile employs a tandem HEAT warhead to defeat Explosive Reactive Armour (ERA) protected armoured vehicles.
- It has been developed with multiple-platform launch capability.
- It is currently undergoing technical evaluation trials from gun of MBT Arjun.

## Successful flight-tests of Abhyas High-speed Expendable Aerial Target conducted

- Recently, successful flight-tests of the indigenously-designed Abhyas High-speed Expendable Aerial Target (HEAT) in Balasore (Odisha) were conducted.
- **Conducted by:** Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)
- **Designed and developed by:** Aeronautical Development Establishment (ADE) of DRDO

## Key takeaways:

- Two demonstrator vehicles of Abhyas cleared all the evaluation parameters like 5 km flying altitude, vehicle speed of 0.5 mach (half the speed of sound), endurance of 30 minutes etc.

## Value Added Information

### Abhyas High-speed Expendable Aerial Target (HEAT):

- It is a drone (UAV) that will be used as a target for various missile systems.
- It is powered by a small gas turbine engine.
- **Navigation by:** Micro-electromechanical (MEMS) systems based Inertial Navigation System (INS).
- It is lightweight and reliable, consumes less power and is cost-effective.
- It is programmed for fully autonomous flight.

## Major Port Authorities Bill, 2020

- Lok Sabha passed the Major Port Authorities Bill, 2020.

## Key takeaways:

- The Bill seeks to provide for regulation, operation and planning of major ports in the country and provide greater autonomy to these ports.
- It seeks to replace the Major Port Trusts Act, 1963.
- The legislation provides for the creation of a Board of Major Port Authority for each major port.
- These Boards will replace the existing Port Trusts.
- The bill will help the ports develop world class infrastructure.
- It will also enhance transparency in their functioning.