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Afghan situation likely to dominate agenda amid growing polarisation between the Russia-China bloc, and the U.S. and its allies

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Modi to attend BRICS, SCO, Quad meets in Sept.

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NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will chair a meeting of BRICS leaders including Chinese President Xi Jinping, Russian President Vladimir Putin and leaders of Brazil and South Africa on Thursday, the first in a series of summit-level meetings he is expected to attend in September that will be dominated by discussions on the situation in Afghanistan. The meeting will be held in virtual format due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The PM will also attend via video conference the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Heads of Government meeting being held in Dushanbe on September 16 and 17, but is expected to travel



Forging ties: Narendra Modi and Xi Jinping are expected to appear virtually at the SCO conference. *FILE PHOTO

later this month to the U.S., to meet U.S. President Joseph Biden and address the UN General Assembly, officials confirmed.

The meetings will see Mr. Modi straddle both sides of views on the future of Af-

ghanistan, given the growing polarisation between the Russia-China bloc, and the U.S. and its allies on engaging the new Taliban regime.

The BRICS leaders summit on September 9 is expected to focus on four

priority areas including the multilateral reforms in bodies such as the UN, the IMF and the WTO, counter-terrorism, technology and people-to-people exchanges, a statement issued by the External Affairs Ministry on Monday said.

"The leaders will also exchange views on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and other current global and regional issues," which is expected to include Afghanistan, where Russia and China have played an important role in talks with the Taliban.

Meanwhile, Foreign Secretary Harsh Shringla returned to India after meetings in Washington to firm up Prime Minister Modi's visit to the U.S., due to begin on September 23.

The PM's visit, only his second visit abroad during the coronavirus pandemic, is expected to include meetings in Washington with Mr. Biden, a possible Quad summit on September 23 and 24, and his address to the UN General Assembly on September 25.

Details being finalised

MEA officials said the details of the meetings are still being "finalised", in view of the uncertainty of Japan's participation after Premier Yoshihide Suga announced he would resign at the end of the month.

While Indo-Pacific security, and Quad cooperation on climate change, critical technologies and vaccines will be at the top of the agenda at

the Summit, the situation in Afghanistan after the U.S. pullout is likely to be discussed as well.

The SCO meeting next Thursday in Tajikistan will see a much greater focus on Afghanistan, given that it comprises regional countries Russia, China, Central Asian nations and Pakistan, and will include a special SCO Contact group meeting.

Mr. Putin, Pakistan PM Imran Khan and other leaders will attend the summit in Dushanbe in person, and Mr. Modi and Mr. Xi are expected to appear virtually at the "hybrid" conference.

India will be represented on the ground in Dushanbe by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, said officials.

Diplomacy amid Chaos and Polarization:

1. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will chair a meeting of BRICS leaders including Chinese President Xi Jinping, Russian President Vladimir Putin and leaders of Brazil and South Africa, the first in a series of summit-level meetings he is expected to attend in September that will be dominated by discussions on the situation in Afghanistan.
2. The PM will also attend via video conference the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Heads of Government Meeting being held in Dushanbe.
3. Later he is expected to travel later this month to the U.S., to meet U.S. President Joseph Biden and address the UN General Assembly.
4. The meetings will see Mr Modi straddle both sides of views on the future of Afghanistan, given the growing polarisation between the Russia-China bloc, and the U.S. and its allies on engaging the new Taliban regime.
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SCO Members:



Sukhet's villagers trade waste for wellness, get free LPG refills

Villagers who provide 20 kg of cow dung and farmyard waste a day for vermicomposting receive free fuel in a novel project in the Madhubani district of Bihar.

The Sukhet model: Fourfold benefits

1. In the last six months, the lives of these rural women have changed dramatically with the Sukhet model that allows them to get their LPG cylinders refilled every two months in exchange for cow dung and farmyard waste.



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- The unique programme, which was lauded by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his latest episode of 'Mann ki Baat' on August 29, offers four-fold benefit to the villagers: it ensures a pollution-free environment at home, waste disposal, monetary assistance for LPG cylinders and availability of organic fertiliser to the local farmers.

Sukhet's villagers trade waste for wellness, get free LPG refills

Villagers who provide 20 kg of cow dung and farmyard waste a day for vermicomposting receive free fuel in a novel project in Madhubani district of Bihar

Environment

Waste-to-wellness

While the rising prices of LPG cylinders are making it difficult for many people, especially in rural areas, finding the need in Madhubani, a matter of three days and owners of these homes in Sukhet village in Madhubani district of Bihar.

Earlier, most of Madhubani's time was spent over an earlier issue in a corner of her house. Filled with wood, cow waste and cow dung, the space behind remains hidden into the house, leaving her ill and breathless every month she had to spend a local doctor for higher treatment.

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Shreeyash Mishra from Sukhet village team benefited from the waste-to-wellness scheme.

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Becoming stakeholders: Karbi Anglong and Northeast Insurgency

Peace in the northeast:

- The tripartite agreement signed by the Centre, five insurgent groups active in Karbi Anglong, and the Assam government, marks the culmination of an extended process of negotiation to end insurgency in the region.



- According to the Memorandum of Settlement, greater autonomy will be devolved to the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council; the identity, language, culture of Karbi people will be protected; and more focused development carried out in the Council area. The government will also consider notifying Karbi language as the official language of the Council.



The Northeast insurgency:

1. The Northeast's map is dotted with big and small insurgent groups that have made demands ranging from a separate nation-state to statehood within the Indian Constitution and autonomy under the state government.
2. The Naga insurgency has been an inspiration for these separatist movements, which exploit alienation caused by an insensitive and exploitative state and engage in extortion.
3. While the focus has been on big groups such as the NSCN-IM and ULFA, the smaller insurgencies have been no less disruptive of the state-building process in the region.
4. If the ULFA emerged as an expression of Assamese nationalism, many smaller groups, some of which pre-date the Assam Movement of the late 1970s, have fought to protect their distinct ethnic, linguistic and cultural identity from being subsumed within a broader Assamese identity.
5. They have tried to build on older memories of kinship and legacies of ancient kingdoms and refute the umbrella of the nation-state. T
6. The Centre's double-barrelled approach to this threat to sovereignty has been to offer autonomy under the Constitution on the one hand while using security forces to crush militancy, on the other.
7. Insurgents who negotiate for peace are accommodated in state legislatures or Autonomous Councils. This approach has had varying degrees of success, in Mizoram, Tripura, the Bodo areas.



Karbi Anglong peace deal points to the importance of addressing smaller insurgencies that scar the Northeast landscape.



Karbi Anglong:

1. In Assam's hill districts of Dima Hasao and Karbi Anglong, separatism that rejected Sixth Schedule status transformed into a demand for an autonomous state under Article 244(a) of the Constitution after militancy peaked in the 1990s.
2. The Karbi Anglong agreement signed recently falls short of fulfilling that demand though it promises more autonomy than currently enjoyed by the Autonomous Council under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.
3. However, autonomy and funds may not be sufficient to improve the condition of the people on whose behalf ceasefire agreements and settlement deeds are signed.
4. Autonomous Councils are often captured by vested interests, who invoke fears of a militant past, and the enhanced development funds are diverted to private parties. The transition from an insurgent to a stakeholder or agent of democracy is not easily achieved.

Practice Mcqs

Q1. Which of the following is correctly matched?

	Region/Community	State
1	Karbi Anglong	Mizoram
2	Lushai Hills	Assam
3	Bru/Riang	Tripura

Select the correct answer from the codes given below

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 2 and 3 only
- c. 2 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3



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Explained: What is Inspiration4, SpaceX's first all-civilian space mission?



- The mission involves circling the Earth for three days and then splashing down into the Atlantic Ocean. Inspiration4 will orbit the Earth at 575km, higher than the International Space Station (408km) and the Hubble space telescope (547km).
- This will be the farthest distance travelled by a crewed mission since 2009, when astronauts last went to repair the Hubble.

SPACEX FALCON 9

INSPIRATION4

September 15th, 2021

HEIGHT	DIAMETER
70 m / 229 ft	3.7 m / 12 ft

SPACECRAFT
Crew Dragon C207 Resilience

LAUNCHING FROM
LC-39A, Kennedy Space Center, FL

MISSION DURATION
Approx. 3 days

MISSION
SpaceX is targeting no earlier than the fourth quarter of this year for Falcon 9's launch of Inspiration4 — the world's first all-commercial astronaut mission to orbit — from historic Launch Complex 39A at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida. Jared Isaacman, founder and CEO of Shift4 Payments, is donating the three seats alongside him aboard Dragon to St. Jude cancer survivor and physician assistant Hayley Arceneaux, Dr. Sian Proctor, a geoscientist and communications specialist, and Christopher Sembroski, a Lockheed Martin employee and U.S. Air Force veteran.

Jared Isaacman

Hayley Arceneaux

Dr. Sian Proctor

Chris Sembroski

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