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India - Russia

The Prime Minister of India was on a two-day visit to Russia to attend the 20th **India-Russia annual summit** and the 5th meeting of the **Eastern Economic Forum (EEF)** in Vladivostok.

This is the **first time** that an Indian Prime Minister visited the Russian Far East Region (Vladivostok).

Key Takeaways

- **Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership:** Both the leaders agreed to facilitate, in all possible ways, exploring the impressive potential of their strategic partnership to

the fullest, while demonstrating the special and privileged nature of the partnership.

- **Supported India's decision on J&K:** Russia has backed **India's move on Jammu and Kashmir**, saying that the changes in the status are **within the framework of the Indian Constitution.**

  Both the countries underlined the primacy of international law and emphasised their commitment to the purposes and the principles stated in the **UN Charter** including the **inadmissibility of interference in the internal affairs of member states.**

- **Development of Russian Far East:** India would extend a **$1 billion line of credit** towards the development of the Russian Far East.
  - An area of special interest for India is the **exploration of hydrocarbon** reserves along the coast of Russia's Far East.
  - Also, engaging closely with East Asia is in line with India's policy goal of **"Act East".**

- **Maritime Route:** A proposal was made to have a full-fledged maritime route between **Chennai and Vladivostok.**
  - Vladivostok is at a short distance from Russia's border with China and is also the largest port on Russia's Pacific coast.
  - India is building nuclear power plants with Russia's collaboration in **Kudankulam** on the sea coast in Tamil Nadu's Tirunelveli district. The opening of a sea route is likely to help in the project.
  - It will also **increase India's presence in the Indo-Pacific,** and especially **the South China Sea,** a deeply contested patch of the ocean.

- **Collaboration in Space:** Russia, would help **train Indian astronauts** for the manned space mission — the **Gaganyaan project.**

  Both sides expressed concern over the **possibility of an arms race in outer space** and advocated peaceful uses of outer space.

- **Economic Cooperation:**
  - The two leaders decided to take the **bilateral trade** from the current $11 billion **to $30 billion by 2025.**
  - The work on promoting mutual settlements of payments in national currencies will be continued.
  - Create new technological and investment partnership, especially in advanced high-tech areas and find new avenues and forms of cooperation.
  - Agreed to speed up preparations for the signing of the **India-Russia Intergovernmental Agreement on Promotion and Mutual Protection of Investments.**
  - Agreed to intensify work for eliminating trade barriers. This would be facilitated, inter alia, by the **proposed Trading Agreement between the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and India.**

- **Military Cooperation:**

- The talks highlighted that the **sanctions imposed by the US on Russia has no effect on India** strengthening cooperation with the country in strategic sectors such as energy and defence.
- Both the countries are successfully implementing their **bilateral programme on military and technical cooperation** up to 2020 and working to update the same to extend to another 10 years.
- **Cooperation in International Issues:**
  - Called for **reform of the <u>UN Security Council.</u>** Russia expressed its support for India's candidacy for permanent membership of the UNSC.
  - **Condemned terrorism** in all its forms and manifestations and called on the international community to set up a united front to fight against this evil.
  - Reiterated their commitment to further strengthen global non-proliferation. Russia expressed its strong **support for India's membership in the <u>Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG).</u>**
  - India is ready to play a significant role in the **<u>Arctic Council.</u>**
  - Support an inclusive peace and **Afghan-led and Afghan-owned reconciliation in Afghanistan.**
  - Reaffirmed their commitment to building an equal and indivisible security architecture in Asia and the Pacific region.

Exercise TSENTR 2019

- Exercise TSENTR 2019 is **part of the annual** series of large scale exercises that form part of the **Russian Armed Forces' annual training cycle.**
  - The series rotates through the four main Russian operational strategic commands i.e Vostok (East), Zapad (West), TSENTR (Centre) and Kavkas (South).
  - The 2019 exercise will be conducted by the **Central Military Commission of Russia.**
- The exercise is planned between 9th September to 23rd September 2019 at Donguz training ranges, Orenburg, Russia.
- Apart from host Russia, military contingents from China, **India,** Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Pakistan and Uzbekistan will also take **part in this mega event.**
  - These annual exercises have slowly begun taking an international character, with Belarus participating in ZAPAD-2017 and China and Mongolia participating in VOSTOK-2018.
- The exercise aims at evolving drills of the participating armies and practising them in the **fight against the scourge of international terrorism** thereby ensuring military security in the strategic Central Asian region.

<u>**Source: PIB**</u>

Measles and Rubella in South-East Asia

The member countries of the **World Health Organisation (WHO) Regional Committee for South-East** Asia have resolved to eliminate highly infectious **diseases Measles and Rubella by 2023.**

- The data shows that Bhutan, DPR Korea, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Timor-Leste from the South East Asia region have eliminated Measles.
- On the other hand, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Timor-Leste have controlled Rubella.
- To achieve the Elimination of Measles and Rubella by 2023, the member-countries resolved to strengthen the immunisation systems for increasing and sustaining the high level of population immunity.
- The resolution also calls for ensuring a highly sensitive laboratory supported case-based surveillance system.
- Eliminating measles will prevent 500,000 deaths a year in the region while eliminating rubella would avert about 55,000 cases of rubella and promote the health and wellbeing of pregnant women and infants.

Measles

- It is a **highly contagious viral disease** and is a **cause of death among young children** globally.
- It is particularly dangerous for children from the economically weaker background, as it attacks **malnourished children** and those with reduced immunity.
- It can **cause** serious complications, including **blindness, encephalitis, severe diarrhoea, ear infection and pneumonia.**

Rubella

- It is also called **German Measles.**
- Rubella is a contagious, generally **mild viral infection** that occurs most often in **children and young adults.**
- Rubella infection in pregnant women may cause fetal death or congenital defects known as **Congenital Rubella Syndrome (CRS).**
- Congenital Rubella Syndrome (CRS) causes **irreversible birth defects.**

- Apart from the above initiatives, **India has also pledged to contribute $2,00,000** towards the implementation of the **preparedness stream** under the **South-East Asia Health Emergency Response Fund (SEARHEF)**
- Under this initiative, **Special surveillance** is to be mounted for **early detection and control of vector-borne and waterborne diseases** which helped to contain the outbreak of epidemic-prone disease following **cyclone Fani.**

- The Health Ministers of the South-East Asia Region of WHO also signed the **Delhi Declaration on Emergency Preparedness.**

WHO's Regional Committee for South-East Asia

- The Regional Committee for South-East Asia is the **World Health Organization's governing body in the South-East Asia Region,** with representatives from all **11 Member States of the Region.**
- It **meets every year** to review progress in health development in the Region.
- It formulates resolutions on health issues for the Member States, as well as considers the regional implications of World Health Assembly resolutions.
- The **Member Countries** are:
    - Bangladesh
    - Bhutan
    - Democratic People's Republic of Korea
    - India
    - Indonesia
    - Maldives
    - Myanmar
    - Nepal
    - Sri Lanka
    - Thailand
    - Timor-Leste

Source:TH

National Conference on Cybercrime Investigation and Forensics

Recently, the 1st National Conference on Cybercrime Investigation and Forensics was organised by the **Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)** in New Delhi.

- The focus of the conference was to tackle cybercrime on a priority basis for the following reasons:
    - India has a huge population and **second-largest internet users** in the world.
    - Increasing the circulation of **fake videos** on social media.
    - **Digitization of Indian economy**, with measures like **Digital India**, Government e-marketplace (GeM), **Aadhar**, etc.
    - **Post-Article 370** abrogation scenario and fight against terrorism.
    - Cybercrime has become a global phenomenon.
    - Also strengthening cybersecurity infrastructure will help in intelligence exchange, obtaining digital evidence from abroad, Admissibility of Electronic Evidence, etc.

- **Centralised Technology Vertical (CTV)** to be set up within CBI.

    It will help law enforcing agencies in getting **real-time information,** in tackling complex financial crimes, like 2G scam, coal block irregularities, Ponzi schemes and capital market scams.

Central Bureau of Investigation

- The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) was set up in 1963 on the recommended of the **Santhanam Committee on Prevention of Corruption (1962-1964).**
- It was set up by a resolution of the Ministry of Home Affairs but later **transferred to the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions.**
- The CBI is **not a statutory body.** It derives its powers from the **Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946.**
- It is the main investigating agency of the Central Government. It also provides assistance to the Central Vigilance Commission and Lokpal.
- With the enactment of CVC Act, 2003, the superintendence of Delhi Special Police Establishment vests with the Central Government. However, **investigations of offences** under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 the superintendence vests with the **Central Vigilance Commission.**
- The Director of CBI has been provided security of **two-year tenure** in office by the **CVC Act, 2003.**

Source: PIB

Postal Ballot Cover Extension

The Election Commission Of India has asked the Union Law Ministry to expand the ambit of **postal ballots.**

- The move seeks to extend the postal ballot cover to voters on duty which includes voters in the aviation sector, the shipping sector, trains, fire services, medical services, traffic, long-distance road transport corporation buses, the aged, the physically challenged, and the journalists covering elections.
- This will require an amendment to the **Representation of the People's Act, 1951 (RP Act),** and the **Conduct of Election Rules, 1961.**

Representation of the People Act, 1951

This act provides for the **actual conduct of elections in India.** It deals with the following matters :
- Details like Qualification and Disqualification of members of both the Houses of Parliament and the State Legislatures,

- Administrative machinery for conducting elections,
- Registration of Political parties,
- Conduct of Elections,
- Election Disputes,
- Corrupt practices & Electoral offences, &
- By-elections.

Postal Ballots System

- Ballot papers are **distributed electronically** to electors and are returned to the election officers via post.
- Currently, only the following voters are allowed to cast **their votes through postal ballot:**
  - **Service voters** (armed forces, the armed police force of a state and government servants posted abroad),
  - Voters on **election duty,** and
  - Voters under **preventive detention.**
- The exception to the above-mentioned category of voters is provided under Section 60 of the RP Act, 1951.

Way Forward

- The recent approval by the government to allow **registered NRI voters to appoint proxies** so as to cast a vote on their behalf is a welcome step.
- In order to ensure that the process of issuing of postal ballot happens in a controlled environment, the **Election Commission** has intended to provide the facility in specific centres on specific days, duly supervised by elections officials.
    - This will help to eliminate the chances of undue influence and interference in the casting of the vote through postal ballot.
- In the case of the aged and physically-challenged voters, the postal ballot papers can be delivered to them at home and collected back then and there, in a controlled, safe and secure environment.
- In a true democracy, it is necessary to explore all avenues that can enable the exercise of the franchise to all eligible voters.

Source: IE

Mobile Science Exhibition

Recently, the first-ever **Mobile Science Exhibition (Science Explorer)** for the Ladakh region was launched by the **Ministry of Culture** in Leh.

Apart from this, 25 new Mobile Science Exhibition buses for **Aspirational Districts** of India were also launched.

Aspirational Districts Programme

- It was launched in January 2018, with an objective to quickly and effectively transform some of the most underdeveloped districts of the country.
- 117 districts have been identified until now, at least one from each state.
- Each district is assigned a **Prabhari (in-charge) officer from the Centre (of the additional secretary or joint secretary rank); a Prabhari officer from the State (of the rank of Secretary to State government)** who will work in cooperation with the **district administration.**

Mobile Science Exhibitions

- Mobile Science Exhibitions (MSE) are basically science exhibitions on buses based on various themes of science and technology.
- It is an attempt of the **National Council of Science Museums (NCSM)** to communicate science in **rural and remote areas.**
  - The MSE or **Museo-bus** travels from school to school in rural areas and organize exhibitions there throughout the year.
  - Its mission is **'If the people cannot visit the museum, let the museum visit the people at their doorsteps',**
- The **topics chosen** for these exhibitions are:
  - Measurement
  - Machines in everyday life
  - Food & Health
  - Chemistry & Life with a focus on Water
  - Energy
  - Hygiene & Sanitation
  - Space Science for Human Welfare
- MSE is the **largest and the longest-running** outreach programme of NCSM.
- The **First MSE** was launched by Birla Industrial and Technological Museum (BITM), Kolkata in the year 1965.
    > Birla Industrial and Technological Museum (BITM), Kolkata is the first science museum of India, opened in 1959.

National Council of Science Museums (NCSM)

- In 1978, the National Council of Science Museums (NCSM) was established as a **central coordinating agency** for national science museums.
- NCSM, an autonomous Science & Technology institution under the Ministry of Culture

jointly with the Department of Science & Technology (DST).

- NCSM is the **world's largest network of science centres** and museums that functions under a single administrative umbrella.

Source: PIB

Kaushalacharya Awards

Recently, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) has launched **Kaushalacharya Awards** at Kaushalacharya Samadar 2019.

- Kaushalacharya Awards are launched in a bid to recognize the contribution **made by skill trainers and to motivate more trainers** to join the Skill India Mission.
- According to MSDE, it is estimated that India will need about **2.5 lakh trainers by 2022,** across the skilling ecosystem.
- The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship has introduced several schemes like **Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Scheme (SANKALP)**, **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)**, **Pradhan Mantri Yuva Yojana (PM-YUVA)** etc. to impart skills in India's youth.

- **PMKVY** is the flagship scheme of the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship(MSDE). Its objective is to enable a large number of Indian youth to take up **industry-relevant skill training** that will help them in securing a better livelihood.
- Pradhan Mantri Yuva Yojana (PM-YUVA), aims to **educate and equip** potential and **early-stage entrepreneurs** and catalyse a cultural shift to support aspiring entrepreneurs.
- **SANKALP** Scheme to focus on district-level skilling ecosystem through convergence and coordination.

Source: PIB