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Morocco Normalises Relations with Israel

Why in News

Recently, **Morocco and Israel** have agreed to normalise relations in a **deal brokered by the USA**.

It makes Morocco the **fourth Arab country, after the UAE, Bahrain (Abraham Accords) and Sudan**, to set aside hostilities with Israel in the past four months.



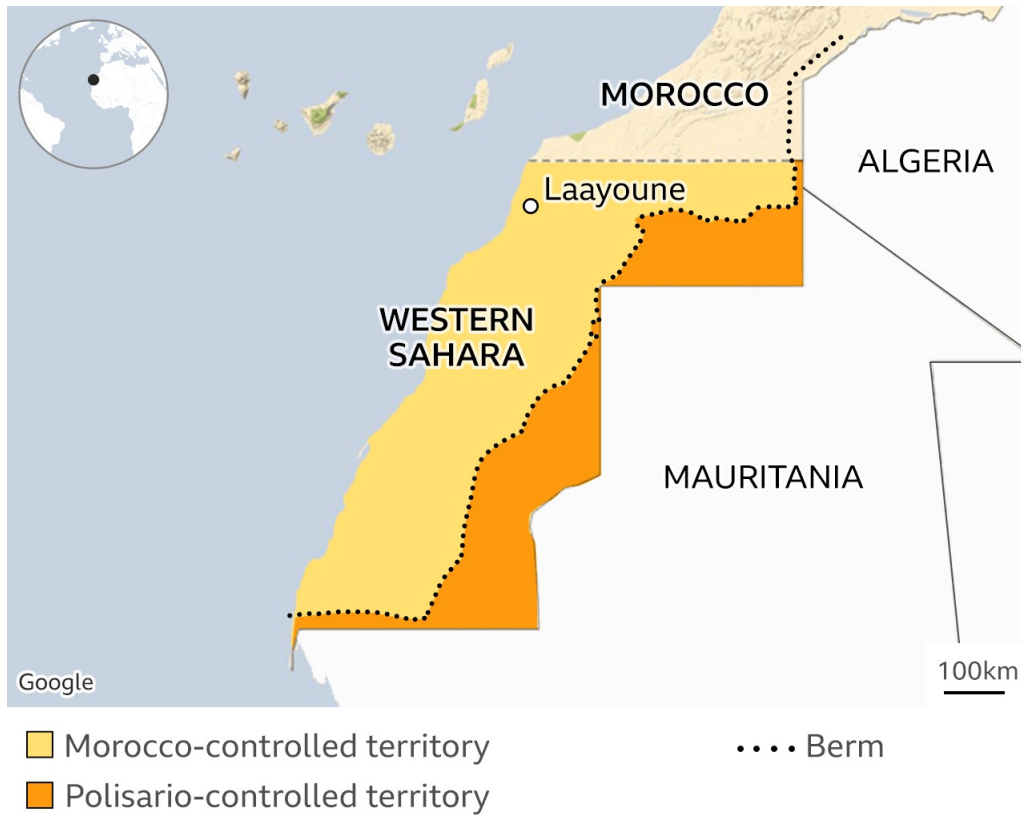
Key Points

- **Highlights of the Deal:**
 - Morocco will **establish full diplomatic relations and resume official contacts** with Israel, **reopen their liaison offices** in Rabat (capital of Morocco) and **Tel Aviv** (a city in Israel) immediately with the intention to open embassies and **promote economic cooperation** between Israeli and Moroccan companies.
 - Morocco **intends to facilitate direct flights** for Israeli tourists to and from Morocco.
 - The USA has **changed its longstanding policy** and recognised **Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara**.

Since 2007, the **UN Security Council**, of which the USA is a veto-capable permanent member, has called on **Morocco and the Polisario to engage in negotiations without preconditions** to reach a **“mutually acceptable political solution**, which will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.”
- **Significance:**
 - The USA is putting in efforts to **present a united front against Iran and minimise Tehran’s regional influence**.
 - This step is considered as a sovereign move and will **contribute to strengthening the common quest for stability, prosperity and lasting peace** in the region.
 - The deal would **deepen Morocco’s engagement with the West and will also boost Israel’s motive** which has made it a **priority to forge ties with formerly hostile countries in Africa and the Arab world** in the absence of any progress with the Palestinians.
- **Reactions:**
 - **Palestinians have been critical** of the normalisation deals, saying Arab countries have set back the cause of peace by **abandoning a longstanding demand of Israel giving up land for a Palestinian state** before it can receive recognition.
 - **Egypt and the UAE have welcomed** Morocco’s decision.

Egypt and Israel signed a **peace treaty in 1979**.
 - The **Polisario Front “highly regrets”** the change in USA’s policy, which it called **“strange but not surprising.”** It holds that the deal will not change an inch of the reality of the conflict and the right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination.

Western Sahara



- **Western Sahara** is a desert region, a **former Spanish colony** and was **annexed by Morocco in 1975**.
- Since then, it has been the subject of a long-running territorial dispute between Morocco and its **indigenous Saharawi people**, led by the **pro-independence Polisario Front**.
- **Morocco** says it has **always been part of its territory**, while the **African Union recognises it as an independent state**.
- A 16-year-long insurgency ended with an **UN-brokered truce in 1991** and the **promise of a referendum on independence**, which has yet to take place.
 - The USA supported the **ceasefire** between **Morocco and the Polisario Front**.
- In **November 2020**, after a border incident, the **Polisario pulled out of that deal** and announced a return to armed struggle.
- The USA's backing of Morocco's claim to sovereignty over Western Sahara is a big deal because it **diminishes the hope of a people who have aspired for the independence** of that territory for decades.

Way Forward

- **President-elect Joe Biden** will face a decision **whether to accept the USA deal on the Western Sahara**, which no other Western nation has done till now.

- While Biden is **expected to move the USA’s foreign policy away from the “America First” posture**, he will **continue the pursuit of “the Abraham Accords”** between Israel and Arab and Muslim nations.

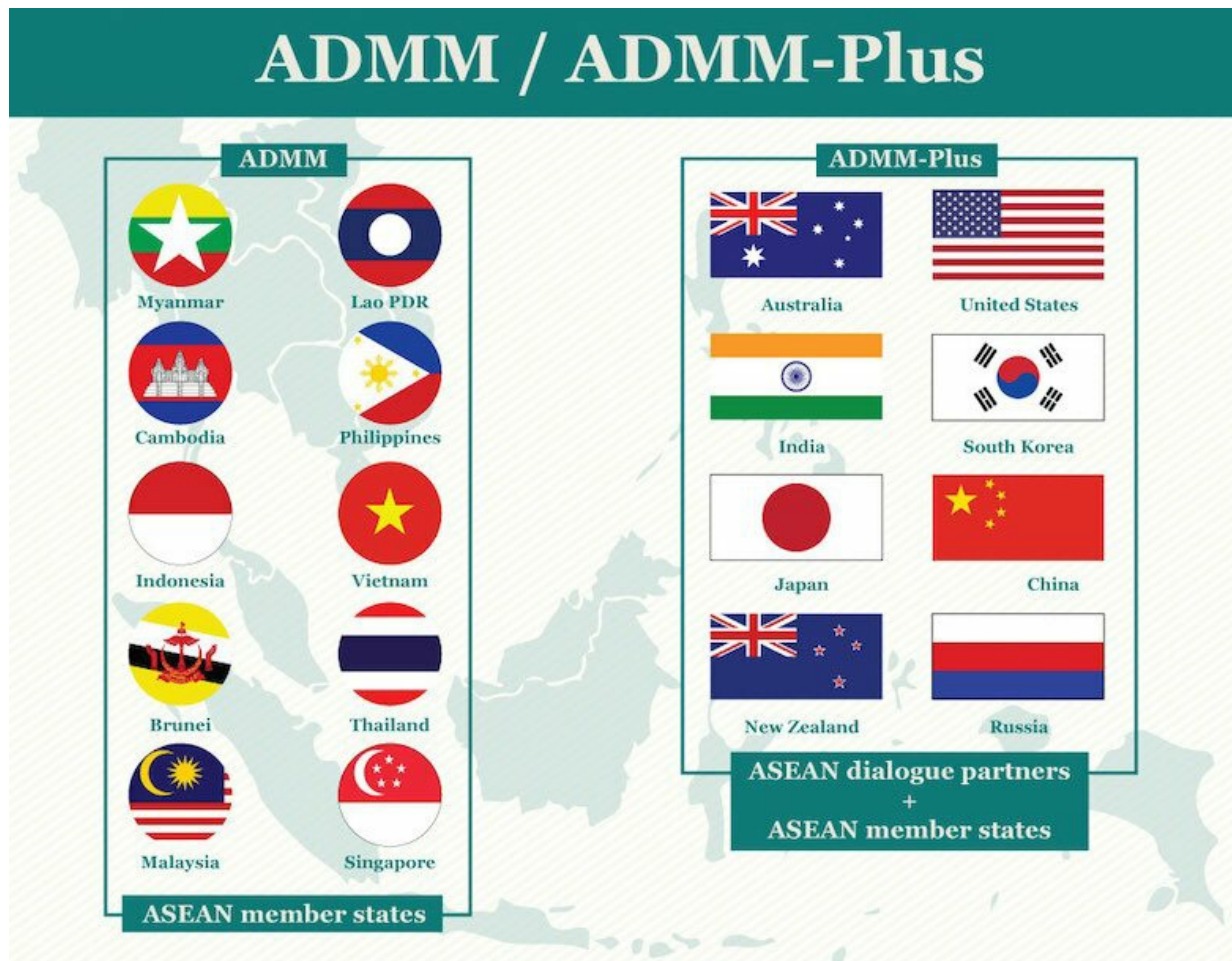
Source: IE

ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting Plus

Why in News

Recently, India’s defence minister attended the **14th ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting (ADMM) Plus** organized online at Hanoi, Vietnam.

- It marked the **10th anniversary of ADMM Plus**.
- The **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)** is a regional organization which was established to promote **political and social stability amid rising tensions among the Asia-Pacific’s post-colonial states**.



Key Points

- **About ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus:**
 - **Creation:** The 2nd ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) in **2007** at Singapore **adopted a resolution to establish the ADMM-Plus.**
The **first ADMM-Plus** was convened at **Hanoi, Vietnam in 2010.**
 - **Objective:** The **ADMM-Plus is a platform for ASEAN (The Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and its eight Dialogue Partners** to strengthen security and defence cooperation for peace, stability, and development in the region.
 - **Membership:** The ADMM-Plus countries include **ten ASEAN Member States and eight Plus countries**, namely **Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, and the United States.**
 - **Chairman:** The chairmanship of the **ADMM-Plus follows the chairmanship of the ADMM.**
This year it was chaired by **Vietnam.**
 - **Aim:** It aims to promote **mutual trust and confidence** between defence establishments through greater **dialogue and transparency.**
 - **Areas of cooperation:** Maritime security, counter-terrorism, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, peacekeeping operations and military medicine.
- **The current meet** comes at the time when India and China remain engaged in a military standoff along the **Line of Actual Control in Ladakh**, and **tensions continue to mount in the South China Sea.**
- **India's Stand at the Meet:**
 - **Future:** The future of the **South East Asian Countries** will be defined by their **ability to collectively respond to challenges** in the region, based on the fundamentals of freedom, inclusivity and openness.
 - **Covid-19:** The response to the pandemic needs to be **collective and collaborative.**
 - **Challenges:** Threats to the **rules-based order, maritime security, cyber-related crimes and terrorism.**
Challenges are becoming increasingly **trans-boundary in character** which requires closer **military-to-military interactions and cooperation amongst the ADMM-Plus countries.**
 - **Tools for Cooperation:** The conduct of **field training exercises and table-top exercises** amongst the ADMM-Plus countries are important tools to **understand each other, cooperate to enhance security and maintain peace in the region.**
Example: **MAITREE** which is an annual training event that is conducted in **India and Thailand alternatively, since 2006.**

Source:IE

Global Health Estimates 2019: WHO

Why in News

Recently, the **World Health Organization's** (WHO) released the **2019 Global Health Estimates**.

- The **WHO Global Health Estimates** provide a comprehensive and comparable assessment of mortality and loss of health due to diseases and **injuries for all regions** of the world.
- The new data of **Global Health Estimates** cover the period from **2000 to 2019**.
- The Estimates are in consonance with the report **Ten Threats to Global Health in 2019** by **WHO**.

Key Points

- **Key Findings of the Global Health Estimates 2019:**
 - **Top Ten Causes of Death:** Ischaemic heart disease, Stroke, Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, Lower respiratory infections, Neonatal conditions, Trachea, bronchus and lung cancers, Alzheimer disease and other dementias, Diarrhoeal diseases, Diabetes mellitus, Kidney diseases.
 - **Non-communicable diseases:** Make up **7 of the world's top 10 causes** of death, **an increase** from 4 of the 10 leading causes in **2000**.
 - **Heart disease :** It now represents **16% of total deaths** from all causes and the number of **deaths from heart disease increased by more than two million** since 2000 to nearly 9 million in 2019.
 - **Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia:** Ranked 3rd in both the Americas and Europe in 2019.
 - Women are disproportionately affected:** globally, 65% of deaths from Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia are women.
 - **Diabetes:** Deaths from **diabetes increased by 70%** globally between 2000 and 2019, with an **80%** rise in deaths among males.
 - In the **Eastern Mediterranean**, deaths from diabetes have more than doubled and represent the greatest percentage increase of all WHO regions.

- **Communicable diseases:** They still take in low-income countries: 6 of the top 10 causes of death in low-income countries are still communicable diseases, including **malaria** (6th), **tuberculosis** (8th) and **Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS)** (9th).
 - **Pneumonia and other lower respiratory infections:** These were the deadliest group of communicable diseases and together **ranked as the fourth** leading cause of death.
 - However, compared to 2000, **lower respiratory infections were claiming fewer lives than in the past**, with the global number of deaths decreasing by nearly half a million.
 - The reduction is **in line with a general global decline in the percentage of deaths caused by communicable diseases.**
 - **AIDS :** It dropped from the **8th leading cause of death in 2000 to the 19th in 2019**, reflecting the success of efforts to prevent infection, test for the virus and treat the disease over the last two decades.

It remains the **fourth leading cause of death in Africa**, the number of deaths has dropped by more than half, falling from over 1 million in 2000 to 435 000 in 2019 in Africa.
 - **Tuberculosis :** It is no longer in the global top 10, falling from **7th place in 2000 to 13th in 2019**, with a **30%** reduction in global deaths.

However, it remains among the **top 10 causes of deaths** in the **African and South-East Asian regions**, where it is the 8th and 5th leading cause respectively.
- More **non-communicable diseases are now causing deaths worldwide**, there has been a global decline in deaths from **communicable diseases**, which however still remain a **major challenge in low- and middle-income countries.**
- **Longevity:** The estimates confirm the **growing trend for longevity as in 2019**, people were living more than 6 years longer than in 2000.
 - Global average of longevity was **73 years in 2019 compared to nearly 67 in 2000.**
 - The new projections state that people are living longer but with more disability.

Disability, however, is on the rise.

- **Suggestions:**

- There is a need for an **intensified global focus on preventing and treating cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases**, as well as tackling injuries, in all regions of the world, as set out in the agenda for the **Sustainable Development Goals**.
- The world needs to rapidly **step up prevention, diagnosis and treatment of non-communicable diseases**.
- There is an urgency to improve primary health care **equitably and holistically**.

Strong primary health care is clearly the **foundation on which everything rests**, from combating non-communicable diseases to managing a global pandemic.

- **Governments and stakeholders need to urgently invest** in data and health information systems to **support timely and effective decision-making**.

- **Indian Initiatives to Improve Health sector:**

- **Ayushman Bharat**: It is a flagship initiative that attempts to move away from the sectoral and segmented approach of service delivery to a **comprehensive need-based health care service**.

Aim: It has been launched by the government with an aim to move towards a provision of universal healthcare in the country.

- **POSHAN Abhiyaan**: It aims to **ensure service delivery and interventions** by use of technology, behavioural change through convergence and lays-down specific targets to be achieved across different monitoring parameters.
- **National Digital Health Mission**: It is a complete **digital health ecosystem**. The **digital platform** will be launched with four key features — **health ID, personal health records, Digi Doctor and health facility registry**.

Source:IE

Human Rights Day

Why in News

Human Rights Day is **observed every year on 10th December** - the day the United Nations General Assembly adopted, in 1948, the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)**.

- The UDHR **established a set of common basic values** both with regard to the view of human beings and to the relationship between the state and the individual.
- **2020 Theme:** Recover Better - Stand Up for Human Rights.

Key Points

- **Human Rights:**
 - These are **rights inherent to all human beings, regardless** of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status.
 - These **include** the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more.
 - **Nelson Mandela** had stated **‘To deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity’**.

- **International Human Rights Conventions and Bodies:**
 - **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR):**
 - The **30 rights and freedoms include civil and political rights**, like the right to life, liberty, free speech and privacy and **economic, social and cultural rights**, like the right to social security, health and education, etc.

India took active **part in drafting of the UDHR.**
 - The UDHR is **not a treaty**, so it does not directly create legal obligations for countries.
 - The **UDHR**, together with the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights** and its two Optional Protocols (on the complaints procedure and on the death penalty) and the **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** and its Optional Protocol, form the so-called **International Bill of Human Rights.**
 - **Other Conventions:**

These include the **Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide** (1948), the **International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination** (1965), the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women** (1979), the **Convention on the Rights of the Child** (1989) and the **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** (2006), among others.

India is a **party to all these Conventions.**
 - **Human Rights Council:**
 - The Human Rights Council is an inter-governmental body within the United Nations system responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights. It is made up of **47 United Nations Member States** which are **elected by the UN General Assembly.**
 - The most innovative feature of the Human Rights Council is the **Universal Periodic Review.** This unique mechanism involves a **review of the human rights records of all 192 UN member states once every four years.**
 - The **Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)** serves as the **secretariat for the Human Rights Council.**
 - **Amnesty International:**

An **international organisation** of volunteers who campaign for human rights. This organisation brings out independent reports on the violation of human rights all over the world.

Human Rights in India

- **Enunciated in the Constitution:**

Since inception, the Indian Constitution incorporated most of the rights enumerated in the Universal Declaration in two parts, the **Fundamental Rights and the Directive Principles of State Policy**.

- **Fundamental Rights:** Articles **12 to 35** of the Constitution. These include the Right to Equality, Right to Freedom, Right Against Exploitation, Right to Freedom of Religion, Cultural & Educational Rights, Saving of Certain Laws and Right to Constitutional Remedies.
- **Directive Principles of State Policy:** Article **36 to 51** of the Constitution. These include 'right to social security, right to work, to free choice of employment, and protection against unemployment, right to equal pay for equal work, right to existence worthy of human dignity, right to free & compulsory education, equal justice & free legal aid and the principles of policy to be followed by the State.'

- **Statutory Provisions:**

Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 (as amended in 2019) provided for the **constitution of a National Human Rights Commission** at the Union level, which steers State Human Rights Commission in States and Human Rights Courts for better protection of Human Rights and for matters connected there with or incidental thereto.

- **Recent Events:**

- The human rights situation in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) following the dilution of **Article 370** and the passage of the **Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA)** have brought renewed international focus on India's human rights practice.
- Since 2014, the government has **cancelled the registration of more than 14,000 NGOs under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA)**. It has also mainly targeted its own critics.
- Scores of **hate crimes against Muslims and other religious groups**, ethnic groups, including Dalits and Adivasi (an indigenous tribal people), as well as caste and gender-based crimes, took place across the country in 2019.
- The **Freedom in the World 2020 report ranked India at the 83rd position**, along with Timor-Leste and Senegal. India's **score fell by four points to 71**, the **worst decline** among the world's 25 largest democracies this year.
- **Measures Taken by Government during the Pandemic:**
 - During the **Corona pandemic**, the government ensured the **right to food** of every person through the **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana**, so that no one would go hungry.
 - Apart from this, **wages have been increased under MGNREGA** for the empowerment of workers in rural areas. The government **directly transferred money to the accounts of migrant labourers** affected by Covid-19, to ensure the protection of their rights.

Way Forward

- Human rights are at the heart of the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, as in the absence of human dignity one cannot hope to drive sustainable development.
- The **Covid-19 crisis has been fuelled by** deepening poverty, rising inequalities, structural and entrenched discrimination and other gaps in human rights protection. Only measures to close these gaps and advance human rights can ensure that people fully recover and build back a world that is better, more resilient, just, and sustainable.

Source: PIB

United Nations Population Award 2020

Why in News

Recently, **HelpAge India** has been presented the **UN Population Award for 2020 in the institutional category**.

Bhutan's Queen Mother Gyalyum Sangay Choden Wangchuck has been awarded the United Nations Population Award in the **individual category** for 2020 for her work on sexual health and ending gender violence.

Key Points

- **United Nations Population Award:**
 - **Each year**, the Committee for the United Nations Population Award honours **an individual and/or institution** in recognition of outstanding **contributions to population and reproductive health issues** and solutions.
 - The Award was **established by the General Assembly in 1981**, and was **first presented in 1983**. It **consists of** a gold medal, a diploma and a monetary prize.
 - The **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)** serves as its **secretariat**.
 - **HelpAge India:**
 - It is a **leading charity in India** working with and **for disadvantaged elderly** for nearly 4 decades. It was set up in 1978 and is registered under the Societies' Registration Act of 1860.
 - For the **first time** in the history of the UN Population Award, the honour is being **conferred on an Indian institution**.
Only two Indians have been awarded in the past four decades since the award was established in 1981: former Prime Minister **Indira Gandhi in 1983** and industrialist-philanthropist **J.R.D. Tata in 1992**.
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