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Guiding Dreams, Empowering Future
By DR. V. RAM PRASATH MANOHAR, IAS

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EXCLUSIVE CURRENT AFFAIRS BULLETIN

INDIA – GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL (GCC)

WHY IN NEWS...?

- India and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) signed a Joint Statement to advance negotiations on the India–GCC Free Trade Agreement (FTA).
- The development follows agreement on the Terms of Reference (ToR) for negotiations.
- Marks a major milestone in deepening India–GCC economic relations.



Developments

- India and GCC formally agreed to move forward with FTA negotiations after finalizing the Terms of Reference.
- The initiative aims to deepen economic cooperation, expand trade and investment flows, and strengthen strategic engagement.
- Reflects growing importance of the Gulf region in India's foreign economic policy.

India–GCC Trade Relations

- GCC is India's largest trading partner bloc.
- Accounts for 15.42% of India's total global trade.

Trade Statistics (FY 2024–25)

- Total bilateral trade: USD 178.56 billion.
- Exports: USD 56.87 billion.
- Imports: USD 121.68 billion.
- Trade recorded an average annual growth rate of 15.3% over the past five years.
- Trade figure repeated in source material for emphasis.

Strategic Importance of the India–GCC FTA

- Enhances India's economic footprint in West Asia.
- Supports export diversification and energy security.
- Encourages investment inflows and strate-

gic economic engagement.

- Aligns with India's Act West Policy and IMEC (India–Middle East–Europe Corridor).
- Addresses challenges such as petrochemical dumping and Rules of Origin provisions.
- Opens opportunities for cooperation in green energy and emerging sectors.

Indian Exports to GCC

- Engineering goods
- Rice
- Textiles
- Machinery
- Gems and jewellery

Indian Imports from GCC

- Crude oil
- Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG)
- Petrochemicals

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PRAHAAR: INDIA'S NATIONAL COUNTER TERRORISM POLICY AND STRATEGY

Why in News...?

- Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) launched PRAHAAR, India's first comprehensive National Counter-Terrorism Policy and Strategy.
- Policy aims to tackle evolving threats such as state-sponsored terrorism, global terror linkages, technology misuse, and criminal-terror nexus.
- Responds to emerging challenges including drone attacks, cyber threats, and CBRNED risks.
- Background includes 2024 announcement for drafting the policy and the 2025 Pahalgam incident accelerating NIA-state coordination.

PRAHAAR Overview

- PRAHAAR marks a shift from a reactive security model to a proactive, intelli-

gence-driven counter-terror doctrine.

- Uses intelligence-led policing and a whole-of-government strategy.
- Policy unveiled on 25 February 2026.
- Focus areas include prevention, de-radicalisation, legal enforcement, and international cooperation.

Meaning of PRAHAAR (Seven Core Pillars)

- Prevention of terror attacks.
- Swift Responses.
- Aggregating internal capacities.
- Human Rights and Rule of Law-based processes.
- Attenuating conditions enabling terrorism.
- Aligning international efforts.
- Recovery and resilience through a whole-of-society approach.

Pillar 1: Prevention

- Adopts proactive intelligence-led approach through Multi Agency Centre (MAC) and Joint Task Force on Intelligence (JTFI) under Intelligence Bureau.
- Ensures real-time intelligence sharing among central and state agencies.
- Law enforcement counters online recruitment and propaganda and dismantles over-ground worker (OGW) networks.
- Disrupts terror funding channels and illegal arms syndicates.
- Border forces and immigration deploy advanced technology for land, air, and maritime threats.
- Protection of critical infrastructure including power, railways, aviation, ports, defence, space, and atomic energy sectors.

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▶ From P1

- Precious metals, especially gold

Economic Significance of GCC for India

- GCC market population: 61.5 million people.
- Combined GDP: USD 2.3 trillion (9th largest globally).
- Major source of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into India.
- Cumulative GCC investments exceed USD 31.14 billion (as of September 2025).

Diaspora and Soft Power Dimension

- Nearly 10 million Indians live in GCC countries.
- Indian diaspora acts as a 'living bridge' strengthening people-to-people relations.
- Facilitates trade, investment, and supports

Indian companies in the Gulf region.

About the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

- Established in 1981 as a regional political and economic alliance.
- Member countries: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE).
- Formation influenced by the Iranian Revolution (1979) and the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988).
- Objectives include economic integration, security coordination, cultural collaboration, and social development.
- Headquarters located in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.
- Supreme Council is the highest authority composed of heads of member states with a rotating presidency.

Conclusion

FTA negotiations strengthen India's engagement with a strategically vital economic region. Expected outcomes include increased exports, greater FDI inflows, enhanced diaspora engagement, and improved energy security. This reflects India's evolving geo-economic strategy amid shifting global trade dynamics.

PYQ 2016

Q. Which of the following is NOT a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)?

- (a) Iran
- (b) Saudi Arabia
- (c) Oman
- (d) Kuwait

Answer: (a) Iran



► From P2

Pillar 2: Responses

- Local police function as first responders.
- Supported by State Counter-Terror Forces and Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs).
- National Security Guard (NSG) acts as nodal agency for major terror attacks and leads state capacity-building.
- MHA Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and MAC ensure coordinated response.
- Post-incident investigation handled by National Investigation Agency (NIA) with State Police to ensure high prosecution rates and deterrence.

Pillar 3: Aggregating Capacities

- Focus on standardisation and modernisation of counter-terror capabilities.
- Acquisition of advanced weaponry and technologies.
- Training upgraded with global best practices.
- Bureau of Police Research & Development (BPR&D) and CAPFs handle specialised training.
- NSG provides urban combat training to states.
- Identifies structural gaps and promotes a uniform anti-terror framework across states.
- Ensures synergistic multi-agency response systems.

Pillar 4: Human Rights and Rule of Law

- Commits to justice-based framework balancing national security with human rights protection.
- Guided by Rule of Law principles and Protection of Human Rights Act (1993).
- Aligned with Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
- Legal framework includes UAPA 1967,

Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023 and related criminal codes, PMLA 2002, and Arms Act 1959.

- Provides multi-level judicial redressal from District Courts to Supreme Court.
- Ensures due process, legal aid, and appeal mechanisms to prevent misuse.

Pillar 5: Attenuating Conditions Enabling Terrorism

- Promotes de-radicalisation through engagement with community leaders and NGOs.
- Counters extremist narratives through soft-power approaches.
- Graded response system: rehabilitation for minor offenders and strict action for hardened extremists.
- Socio-economic empowerment initiatives reduce recruitment vulnerability.
- Prevents prison radicalisation by separating ideologues from vulnerable inmates.

Pillar 6: Aligning International Efforts

- Targets transnational terrorism through Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties (MLATs) and Extradition Treaties.
- Uses Joint Working Groups for evidence sharing and handling fugitives.
- Enhances intelligence exchange between agencies globally.
- Supports UN terrorist designation processes.
- Promotes sharing of global counter-terror best practices.

Pillar 7: Recovery and Resilience

- Adopts whole-of-society approach involving public-private partnerships.
- Ensures rapid restoration of services after terror incidents.
- State-led recovery supported by police security arrangements.
- Strengthens psychological and physical resilience of affected communities.

Emerging Terror Threats

- State-sponsored jihadi terrorism.
- Al-Qaeda and ISIS sleeper cells.
- Online radicalisation and digital propaganda.
- Cross-border drone usage and tools infiltration (Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir).
- Crime-terror nexus.
- Misuse of social media, encryption tools, dark web, and cryptocurrency.
- CBRNED threats and cyber attacks.

Implementation Challenges

- Federal structure issues: Public Order and Police fall under State List, causing coordination overlaps and delays.
- Capacity gaps in local police including funding shortages and lack of cyber and drone training.
- De-radicalisation risks subjective profiling concerns.
- Stringent laws raise issues related to conviction standards and preventive detention.
- Inter-agency silos reduce operational efficiency.

Strengthening Measures Suggested

- Improve inter-agency coordination and periodically update legal frameworks.
- Create uniform State Counter-Terror units with adequate training and resources.
- Amend IT Rules to regulate platforms and enable crypto tracking.
- Use big data analytics and machine learning for threat pattern identification.
- Deploy dedicated prosecutors and fast-track access to digital evidence.
- Strengthen global cooperation agreements.

Conclusion

PRAHAAR introduces a zero-tolerance, proactive counter-terror strategy that integrates technology, legal enforcement, intelligence, and de-radicalisation efforts. It balances national security priorities with the protection of human rights through a rule-of-law framework. Successful implementation depends on resolving federal coordination issues and strengthening institutional capacities across states and central agencies.

BELA GRAM – MAHARASHTRA'S FIRST NET ZERO VILLAGE

Why in News...?

- Bela Gram in Bhandara district, Maharashtra, was recognised as the State's first Net Zero Panchayat during Mumbai Climate Week 2026.
- The achievement highlights grassroots climate action and the growing role of local governance institutions in achieving India's net zero goals.
- The initiative demonstrates community-led sustainability and decentralised climate solutions.

Location

- Bela Gram is located in Bhandara district of Maharashtra.
- The village lies in the Vidarbha region of the state.

What is Net Zero?

- Net Zero refers to achieving a balance between greenhouse gas emissions produced and emissions removed or offset.
- It is achieved through renewable energy adoption, afforestation, improved waste management, and enhanced energy efficiency.
- Net Zero does not mean zero emissions but balancing emissions with carbon sinks and offsets.

Initiatives in Bela Gram

- Plantation of more than 90,000 trees during weddings and festivals as a community practice.
- Transition from traditional chulhas (stoves) to LPG-based cooking systems.
- Installation of rooftop solar panels in



- homes, anganwadis, and Panchayat offices.
- Doorstep waste segregation practiced by residents.
- Complete elimination of single-use plastics within the village.
- Recipient of the Rashtriya Panchayat Puraskar 2024 for excellence in local governance and sustainability.

Broader Context & Significance

- Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) play a critical role in driving local climate action.
- Recognition aligns with global climate discussions and India's long-term Net Zero commitments.
- Highlights importance of decentralised, community-driven climate solutions across India.
- Demonstrates how grassroots governance contributes to national and global climate targets.

Related Examples Across India

- Perinjanam in Kerala recognised as a Solar Gramam with rooftop solar prosumers generating renewable energy.
- District Mineral Foundation funds used in Jharkhand for water revival projects and solar irrigation systems.
- Community afforestation and water conservation initiatives implemented in Odisha, Bihar, and Karnataka.

Conclusion

Bela Gram shows grassroots climate action works via tree planting, solar panels, and waste sorting. Panchayats drive sustainability, balancing emissions locally and winning 2024 Rashtriya Panchayat Puraskar. Replicable model inspires Kerala, Jharkhand, Odisha, Bihar, Karnataka for rural climate resilience.

PYQ 2015

Q. The fundamental object of Panchayati Raj system is to ensure which among the following?

1. People's participation in development
2. Political accountability
3. Democratic decentralization
4. Financial mobilization

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 2 and 4 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: (C) 1&3 only

INTERNATIONAL ENERGY AGENCY (IEA) & INDIA'S FULL MEMBERSHIP BID

Why in News

- On 25 February 2026, the International Energy Agency (IEA) welcomed progress on India's bid for full membership.
- India is currently the world's third-largest energy consumer and has held associate member status since 2017.
- The development reflects India's growing importance in global energy



governance and energy transition discussions.

India's Membership Status

- India has been an associate member of the IEA since 2017.
- Full membership faces institutional challenges because IEA membership is traditionally limited to OECD countries.
- India does not intend to join the OECD, creating a structural hurdle in the membership framework.

INDIA-US JOINT SPECIAL FORCES EXERCISE 'VAJRA PRAHAR' (16th EDITION)

Why in News

- The 16th edition of the India-US joint Special Forces exercise 'Vajra Prahar' commenced on 25 February 2026.
- The exercise is being conducted at the Special Forces Training School in Bakloh, Himachal Pradesh.
- It involves India's Special Forces and the United States Army's Green Berets to enhance military cooperation through shared operational practices.

About Exercise

Vajra Prahar

- Vajra Prahar is a joint Special Forces exercise between India and the United States.
- The exercise was first conducted in 2010.
- It is held alternately in India and the United States.
- The previous edition was conducted in Idaho, USA.



- Participants include the Indian Army's Special Forces (Para SF) and the US Army's Green Berets.

Objectives of the Exercise

- Enhance interoperability between the Special Forces of both countries.
- Strengthen jointness and coordination during special operations.
- Promote exchange of tactical expertise and operational experiences.
- Improve joint mission planning capabilities.
- Share best practices in specialised operational tactics.

India-US Defence Cooperation Framework

- Bilateral defence relations are guided by the New Framework for India-US Defence Cooperation, renewed in 2015.
- India was designated as a Major Defence Partner (MDP) of the United States in 2016.

- India was elevated to Tier-1 status under the US Strategic Trade Authorization (STA) in 2018, easing export controls on advanced technologies.
- A new Framework for the US-India Major Defence Partnership was signed in October 2025 to guide cooperation for the next decade.
- The India-US Defense Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS X) was launched in 2023 to promote defence innovation, private investment, and technology co-production.

Foundational Defence Agreements

- Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) – 2016.
- Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) – 2018.
- Industrial Security Agreement (ISA) – 2019.
- Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) – 2020.

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About the International Energy Agency (IEA)

- The IEA is an intergovernmental organisation established in 1974 by 17 OECD countries.
- It was created in response to the global oil crisis caused by the Arab oil embargo (1973-1974) during the Yom Kippur War (1973).
- Its original mandate was to ensure stable oil supplies and coordinate responses during energy emergencies.

Membership Requirements

- Member countries must maintain strategic oil reserves equivalent to at least 90 days of net oil imports.
- These reserves can be collectively released during global supply disruptions to stabilise markets.

Evolving Role of the IEA

- The agency's mandate has expanded beyond oil security to include multiple energy sources.
- Focus areas now include renewable energy, climate change mitigation, decarbonisation, energy transitions, and critical

minerals.

- The organisation plays a major role in global energy policy coordination and analytical research.

Membership Expansion

- Full membership was historically restricted to OECD countries.
- The IEA currently has 32 full members.
- Colombia is set to become the 33rd member after joining the OECD in 2020.
- In 2015, the IEA introduced an associate membership category for non-OECD countries.
- The agency presently has 13 associate members.
- Associate members participate in policy discussions and programmes but do not possess decision-making voting rights.

India's Strategic Importance

- When associate members such as India, China, and Brazil are included, IEA engagement covers about 80% of global energy demand.
- The IEA projects that India will witness the largest growth in energy demand globally over the next three decades.
- India's participation strengthens global energy transition dialogue and enhances

representation of emerging economies.

Major Publications of IEA

- World Energy Outlook.
- World Energy Investment Report.
- Global Energy Review.

Conclusion

- IEA full membership progress boosts India's global energy voice despite OECD hurdles; rising demand makes it pivotal for future security and transitions.

Previous Year Question

Q. With reference to the International Energy Agency, consider the following statements:

1. It was established based on the framework of OECD.
2. IEA releases the World Energy Outlook.
3. It has 31 member countries.

Which of the above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only
(Membership has expanded to 32 members).



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Defence Platforms Operated by India from the United States

- Apache attack helicopters.
- Chinook heavy-lift helicopters.
- MH-60R multi-role helicopters.
- P-8I maritime reconnaissance aircraft.

Other India–US Military Exercises

- Yudh Abhyas – Joint Army exercise.
- Cope India – Joint Air Force exercise.
- Tiger Triumph – Tri-services humanitarian assistance and disaster relief exercise.

Strategic Significance

- Strengthens India–US Special Forces cooperation and operational synergy.
- Enhances preparedness for counter-terrorism and complex operational environments.
- Deepens defence partnership and interoperability between the two countries.
- Supports regional security and stability through closer military coordination.

Conclusion

16th Vajra Prahar boosts India-US special forces synergy via tactics sharing at Bakloh; MDP pacts drive deeper defence interoperability for regional security.

Practice Questions

Q1. With reference to Exercise Vajra Prahar, consider the following statements:

1. It is a joint Special Forces exercise between India and the USA.
2. It is conducted annually.
3. Indian Army's Para Special Forces participate.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (b) 1 and 3 only (Exercise is held alternately, not annually).

SECI Green Ammonia Auction UNDER SIGHT PROGRAMME

Why in News?

- The Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) successfully conducted a green ammonia auction under the SIGHT programme.
- The auction established new global price benchmarks for green ammonia.
- The development positions India as a potential leader in the emerging clean ammonia market.
- It highlights India's transition toward sustainable energy through renewable-powered ammonia production.

What is Green Ammonia?

- Green ammonia refers to ammonia (NH_3) produced using entirely renewable energy sources, resulting in a near-zero carbon footprint.
- Unlike conventional ammonia production, the process avoids fossil-fuel-based hydrogen.
- Production follows the established Haber–Bosch process with renewable-energy-based modifications.

Production Process

- Green Hydrogen Production: Renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and hydro power electrolysis, splitting water (H_2O) into hydrogen and oxygen.
- Nitrogen Extraction: Nitrogen (N_2) is separated from atmospheric air.
- Ammonia Synthesis: Hydrogen

and nitrogen are combined under high pressure and temperature using a catalyst, powered entirely by renewable electricity.

Comparison with Conventional Ammonia

- Conventional ammonia production is among the largest industrial emitters globally, contributing nearly 2% of global CO_2 emissions.
- Traditional production releases approximately 2–3 tons of CO_2 per ton of ammonia produced.
- Green ammonia significantly reduces emissions associated with fertilizer and industrial sectors.

Applications of Green Ammonia

- Green Fertilizer: Supports decarbonization of the global food chain by replacing fossil-fuel-based agricultural feedstock.
- Carbon-Free Fuel: Used in maritime shipping as a replacement for heavy fuel oil and in power generation through co-firing with coal or dedicated turbines.
- Combustion emissions such as NO_x can be managed through technologies like Selective Catalytic Reduction (SCR).
- Hydrogen Carrier: Helps overcome hydrogen storage and transport challenges.
- Ammonia liquefies at -33°C compared to hydrogen below -253°C ,

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enabling easier storage and transport using existing infrastructure.

- Ammonia can be cracked back into hydrogen at the destination for energy use.

SIGHT Scheme (Strategic Interventions for Green Hydrogen Transition)

- SIGHT is a financial incentive programme under the National Green Hydrogen Mission.
- Implemented by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) through SECI using competitive bidding mechanisms.
- The programme promotes domestic manufacturing capacity and production of green hydrogen and its derivatives such as green ammonia.

Objectives of SIGHT Scheme

- Stimulate domestic electrolyser manufacturing.
- Boost production of green hydrogen and green ammonia.
- Achieve cost competitiveness with fossil fuels.
- Encourage technological advancement.
- Enable progressive localization aligned with global standards.

Components of the SIGHT Scheme

- Component I – Electrolyser Manufacturing:
 - Focuses on indigenous manufacturing of electrolysers.
 - Incentives are performance-linked based on energy efficiency and localization levels.

- Component II – Green Hydrogen Production:
 - Promotes production of green hydrogen and derivatives such as green ammonia through competitive bidding.
 - Provides financial incentives and long-term offtake agreements lasting 7–10 years to reduce investment risks.

Previous Year Questions 2023

- Q. Consider the following heavy industries:
 1. Fertilizer plants
 2. Oil refineries
 3. Steel plants

Green hydrogen is expected to play a significant role in decarbonizing how many of the above?
(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None
Answer: (c) All three

SANKALP Scheme – Public Accounts Committee Observations & CAG Findings:

Why in News?

- The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of Parliament raised concerns over gaps in planning and slow implementation of the Skill Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion (SANKALP) scheme.
- Observations were based on an audit report by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India.
- The CAG reported that only 44% of allocated funds under the SANKALP scheme were utilised.
- A significant portion of World Bank assistance remained unspent, indicating weak financial planning and limited absorption capacity.
- The issue highlights challenges in India's skill development initiatives under the National Skill Development Mission.

What is SANKALP Scheme?

- Launched in January 2018 by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE).
- A Centrally Sponsored Scheme aimed at operationalising the National Skill Development Mission (NSDM).
- Focuses on strengthening institutional mechanisms for short-term skill training.
- Expands access to quality skill training for marginalised communities.

Funding and Timeline

- Total approved budget: Rs 4,455 crore.
- Primarily supported through a World Bank loan of Rs 3,300 crore.



- Supplemented by state leverage and industry contributions.
- Originally scheduled for completion by March 2023.
- Implementation timeline later extended to March 2024.

Core Objectives

- Institutional Strengthening: Capacity building at National, State, and District levels.
 - Support to District Skill Committees (DSCs).
 - Implementation support through Mahatma Gandhi National Fellowship (MGNF).
- Quality Assurance: Standardisation of certification systems.
 - Universalisation of the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF).
 - Development of a pool of quality trainers.
- Inclusion: Increasing participation of women, Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Persons with Disabilities (PwD) in vocational training.

Achievements and Outcomes

- Strengthened District Skill Committees (DSCs)

- enabling demand-driven implementation of Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY).
- Promotion of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and certification at Gram Panchayat level.
- Development of an integrated IT platform named "Skill India Portal" to capture nationwide skilling-related data.

CAG Findings

- Only 44% of funds allocated under the scheme were utilised.
- Implementation delays were linked to weak planning mechanisms.
- Lack of strong central monitoring reduced accountability and programme effectiveness.

Previous Year Question 2018

- Q. With reference to Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana, consider the following statements:
 1. It is the flagship scheme of the Ministry of Labour and Employment.
 2. It imparts training in soft skills, entrepreneurship, financial and digital literacy.
 3. It aims to align competencies of the unregulated workforce to the National Skill Qualification Framework.

Which of the above are correct?
(a) 1 and 3 only
(b) 2 only
(c) 2 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3
Answer: (c) 2 and 3 only

Poland's Exit from the Ottawa Convention

Why in News?

- Poland has withdrawn from the Ottawa Convention, an international treaty banning anti-personnel landmines.
- The decision follows rising security concerns in Europe due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict.
- The withdrawal enables Poland to produce, stockpile, and potentially deploy anti-personnel mines along its eastern borders.
- The development reflects changing global security priorities and renewed emphasis on territorial defence.

About the Ottawa Convention

- Also known as the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty or Mine Ban Treaty.
- Adopted in 1997 and entered into force in 1999.
- Prohibits the use, production, stockpiling, and transfer of anti-personnel landmines.
- Requires destruction of existing stockpiles and assistance for mine victims.
- More than 160 countries are parties to the treaty, though major military powers such as the United States, China, and Russia are not signatories.

Background of Poland's Membership

- Poland ratified the treaty in 2012.
- It destroyed its anti-personnel mine stockpiles by 2016 as part of treaty obligations.
- The withdrawal process followed formal notification and a six-month waiting period before becoming effective on 20 February 2026.

Reasons for Withdrawal

- Increased security threats along NATO's eastern flank.



- Concerns arising from Russia's military actions and the ongoing war in Ukraine.
- Experience from the Ukraine conflict highlighted continued military relevance of landmines.
- Desire to strengthen border defence against potential aggression from Russia and Belarus.
- Poland and Baltic states argued that the regional security environment has fundamentally changed since the treaty's adoption.

Security & Strategic Measures

- Poland plans to integrate landmines into the 'East Shield' border defence project.
- Anti-personnel mines could be deployed along eastern borders within 48 hours if threats arise.
- The country may resume domestic production of mines for defence purposes.
- Mines are intended primarily as deterrence and defensive tools rather than offensive weapons.

Regional & Global Context

- Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Finland have also reconsidered or withdrawn from the treaty citing similar threats.
- These developments represent one of the first withdrawals from the convention since its creation.

- The shift signals pressure on global arms-control regimes amid rising geopolitical tensions.
- Humanitarian organisations warn that renewed use of landmines could increase risks to civilians.

Concerns & Criticism

- Human rights groups argue anti-personnel mines remain dangerous long after conflicts end.
- Civilians historically form the majority of landmine victims worldwide.
- Critics warn that withdrawals may weaken international humanitarian norms and disarmament efforts.

Understanding Anti-Personnel Mines

- Explosive devices placed on or under the ground designed to detonate when triggered by a person.
- Classified mainly into blast mines and fragmentation mines.
- Distinguished from anti-tank mines, which are designed to target vehicles.

Conclusion

Poland's Ottawa Convention exit marks a shift from disarmament to security-focused policies amid geopolitical rivalry, weakening arms control. For exams: Links treaty frameworks, humanitarian law, and European security dynamics.

Previous Year Questions (Prelims)

- Q. Which of the following best describes an anti-personnel mine?
 - (a) Weapon designed to destroy armored vehicles
 - (b) Explosive device triggered by human presence or contact
 - (c) Missile system used in naval warfare
 - (d) Defensive aerial weapon

Answer: (b) Explosive device triggered by human presence or contact

Iran Temporarily Closes the Strait of Hormuz

Why in News?

- Iran temporarily closed parts of the Strait of Hormuz to conduct live-fire naval drills named "Smart Control of the Strait of Hormuz."
- The announcement coincided with indirect nuclear negotiations between Iran and the United States held in Geneva.
- The move was seen as a strategic signal amid rising geopolitical tensions in West Asia.
- The closure highlighted the global importance of maritime chokepoints and their impact on energy security.



About the Strait of Hormuz

- The Strait of Hormuz is a narrow and strategically important maritime passage located between Iran in the north and Oman and the United Arab Emirates in the south.
- It connects the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea.
- It serves as the only sea route connecting the oil-rich Persian Gulf to the open ocean.
- The strait is approximately 55–95 km wide, making it a major global maritime chokepoint.

Global Energy Importance

- Around 20% of the world's oil and gas supplies pass through the Strait of Hormuz.
- Major exporters using this route include Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, the UAE, and Qatar.
- A large share of energy shipments moves toward Asian markets such as India, China, Japan, and South Korea.
- Any disruption can significantly affect global oil prices, trade flows, and energy markets.

Reasons for Temporary Closure

- Conduct of live-fire military exercises by Iranian naval forces.

- Demonstration of military capability during ongoing nuclear negotiations with the United States.
- Strategic signalling in response to regional tensions and military presence of external powers.
- Maritime safety concerns during missile and naval drill operations.

Strategic & Geopolitical Context

- The closure occurred amid heightened tensions involving Iran, the United States, and regional security dynamics.
- Military drills and naval deployments in the Persian Gulf increased strategic signalling between competing powers.
- Historically, Iran has used threats of closing the Strait as leverage during sanctions or geopolitical disputes.
- The region remains central to global maritime security and international energy supply chains.

Impact on India

- India depends heavily on energy imports passing through the Strait of Hormuz.
- Nearly half of India's crude oil imports and a significant portion of LNG imports transit through this route.
- Any disruption may increase energy prices, affect inflation, and influence India's energy security.
- Stability of the strait is directly linked to India's economic and

strategic interests.

Alternative Routes and Limitations

- Some Gulf countries operate pipelines bypassing the Strait of Hormuz.
- These alternatives can carry only a limited share of total export volumes.
- Maritime transport through the strait remains essential for global energy trade.

Historical Background

- Iran has previously threatened to close the Strait during periods of sanctions and regional conflict.
- During the 1980s Iran–Iraq 'Tanker War', attacks on oil shipments disrupted maritime security.
- Despite repeated threats, a complete closure of the strait has never occurred.

Conclusion

The Strait of Hormuz's temporary closure underscores the critical intersection of military strategy, diplomacy, and global energy security, exposing vulnerabilities in international supply chains to escalating geopolitical tensions. For UPSC preparation, it connects key areas like world mapping, international relations, and economic security dimensions.

Previous Year Questions (Prelims)

- Q. The Strait of Hormuz connects which of the following water bodies?
(a) Red Sea and Mediterranean Sea
(b) Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman
(c) Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal
(d) Black Sea and Mediterranean Sea

Answer: (b) Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman.