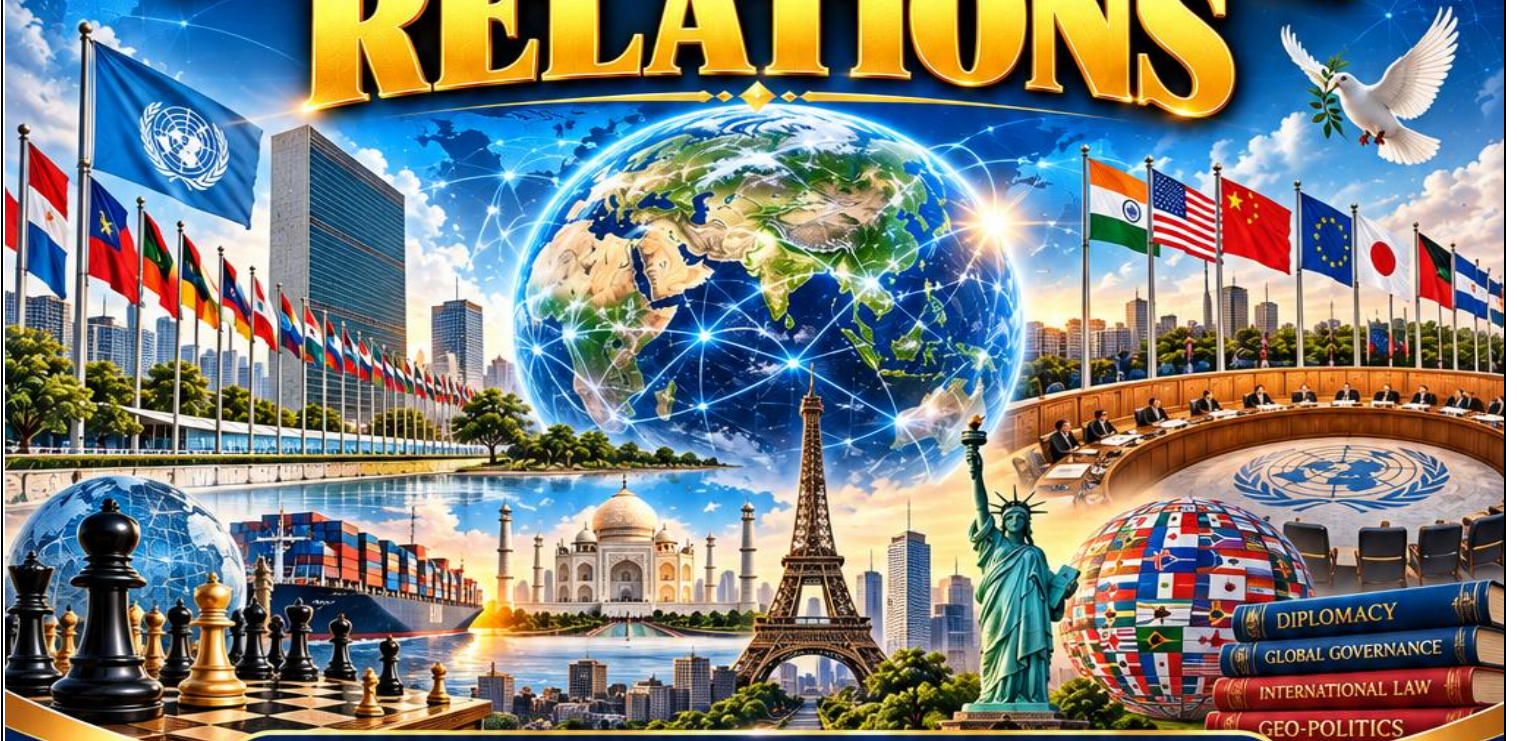




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1. Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Exercise 2026

Prelims:

International Relations

Mains:

GS Paper II – Bilateral Relations, GS Paper III– Maritime Security

Current relevance:

The **Indian Navy–US Navy Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Exercise 2026** is scheduled to be held at the **Southern Naval Command**, Kochi, from 10–14 August 2026.



Highlights:

1. Historical Background:

- i. The Indian Navy and US Navy have been conducting **joint Salvage and EOD exercises since 2005.**
- ii. The **2026** engagement marks the **eighth edition** of this specialised bilateral training exercise.

2. Nature of the Exercise:

- i. It is a **bilateral specialised training exercise** between the **Indian Navy** and **US Navy.**
- ii. It focuses on **Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD)** and specialist diving capabilities.

3. Objective:

- i. Improves **interoperability and operational coordination** between the Indian Navy and US Navy.
- ii. Promotes the **exchange of operational expertise, methodologies and best practices** between the two navies.

4. Major Components:

The exercise will include:

1. **Subject Matter Expert Exchanges (SMEEs)**
 2. Cross-training
 3. Equipment demonstrations
 4. Scenario-based practical exercises
5. **Knowledge Exchange and Operational Significance:**
- i. Facilitates the exchange of **contemporary EOD methodologies, emerging technologies** and best practices between the two navies.
 - ii. Provides insights into each other's **capabilities, operational concepts and employment philosophies**.
 - iii. Promotes **collaborative learning and operational synergy** while enhancing mutual understanding.
 - iv. Enables personnel to **refine operational procedures** and strengthen their ability to respond effectively to **complex and evolving EOD challenges**.

Source: PIB –

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2296842®=48&lang=1>

2. Exercise MAITREE-XV 2026

Prelims:

International Relations

Mains:

GS Paper II – International Relations, GS Paper III – Security

Current relevance:

The **Indian Army contingent departed for Thailand** to participate in the 15th edition of the **India–Thailand Joint Military Exercise MAITREE-XV (2026)**.

Highlights:

Key Facts about Exercise:

1. **MAITREE** is a joint military exercise between the **Indian Army and Royal Thai Army**.
2. It was instituted in **2006** and the 2026 exercise is its **15th edition**.
3. **Venue:** Vibhavadi Rangsit Camp, Surat Thani, Thailand.



Aim & Training Focus:

1. The primary aim is to **foster military cooperation between India and Thailand**.
2. It seeks to enhance combined capabilities for **Joint Counter-Insurgency/Terrorist Operations** in jungle and semi-urban environments under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.
3. It involves **company-level joint training**, including:
 - i. Field exercises and combat discussions
 - ii. Lectures and demonstrations
 - iii. Exchange of operational experience
 - iv. Display of contemporary equipment and technologies
 - v. Culminating validation exercise

Significance:

1. Enhances **interoperability** between the Indian Army and Royal Thai Army.
2. Facilitates the **sharing of best practices and operational experience**.
3. Improves **mutual understanding and camaraderie** between the two Armies.
4. Strengthens **bilateral military cooperation** and reinforces the longstanding relationship between **India and Thailand**.

Source: PIB –

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2300293®=48&lang=1>

3. Southern Zonal Council

Prelims:

Indian Polity and Governance

Mains:

GS Paper II: Indian Polity and Governance

Current relevance:

The **31st meeting of the Southern Zonal Council (SZC)** was scheduled to be chaired by the **union home minister and Minister of Cooperation** on 20 August 2026 at **Mahabalipuram, Tamil Nadu**, with a focus on strengthening cooperative federalism and resolving Centre–State and inter–State issues through dialogue.



Highlights:

About Zonal Council:

1. **Five Zonal Councils** were established under Sections 15–22 of the **States Reorganisation Act, 1956**.
2. They provide a **structured mechanism for dialogue and consultation** on issues affecting two or more States or the Centre and States. Their role is **advisory in nature**.
3. They seek to promote **mutual understanding, cooperation and resolution of inter-State and Centre–State issues** through dialogue.
4. A **Standing Committee at the level of Chief Secretaries** first deliberates issues proposed by States; unresolved matters are subsequently placed before the Zonal Council.

Constitutional provision:

1. Zonal Councils are **statutory bodies** created under the **States Reorganisation Act, 1956**.
2. **Article 263 – Inter-State Council:**
The Constitution separately provides for the establishment of an Inter-State Council **to facilitate coordination, discussion and inquiry** into matters of common interest between States and between the Union and States.

Southern Zonal Council:

1. The Southern Zonal Council comprises:
 - **States:** Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Telangana.
 - **Union Territories:** Puducherry, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep.
2. The **union home minister** serves as Chairman.
3. The **Chief Ministers of member States** serve as **Vice-Chairman** by rotation.
4. The meeting is organised by the **Inter-State Council Secretariat**, Ministry of Home Affairs, with the concerned State serving as host.

Significance for Cooperative Federalism:

1. Zonal Councils support the principle that “**strong States make a strong nation.**”
2. They promote **cooperative federalism** by institutionalising consultation between the Union and States.
3. They facilitate the settlement of regional and inter-State issues through **discussion rather than confrontation.**
4. According to the given information, **69 meetings of Zonal Councils** and their Standing Committees have been held from **June 2014 to August 2026.**

Source: PIB –

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=2301113®=48&lang=1>

4. India–Japan Defense Cooperation

Prelims:

International Relations

Mains:

GS Paper II – International Relations, Bilateral agreements, GS Paper III – Security

Current relevance:

The Defence Minister of India, Rajnath Singh, and Japan’s Minister of Defense, Shinjiro Koizumi, held the **Japan–India Defence Ministers’ Meeting** in New Delhi on **20 August 2026.**



Highlights:

Maritime & Operational Cooperation:

1. India and Japan reaffirmed their commitment towards a **free and open Indo-Pacific** and opposed unilateral actions that impede the **freedom and safety of navigation and overflight** or seek to change the status quo through force or coercion.
2. The two countries signed a **Memorandum of Arrangement on Maritime Security Cooperation**, providing a framework for deeper maritime cooperation.
3. Cooperation between the **Indian Navy and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force** will cover:
 - i. **Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA)** and information sharing.
 - ii. **Search and Rescue (SAR).**
 - iii. **Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR).**
4. Both sides agreed to strengthen protection of **Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs)** through naval visits, joint exercises, personnel and expert exchanges and logistical support, including the use of **ports, maintenance and repair facilities.**
5. They also agreed to enhance **mine countermeasure capabilities** and progress towards reciprocal provision of **ship repair facilities.**

Defense Exercises & Service-to-Service Cooperation:

1. The Ministers welcomed the expansion of bilateral exercises, particularly:
 - i. **Dharma Guardian** – Japan–India Army exercise.
 - ii. **JAIMEX** – Japan–India Maritime Exercise.
 - iii. **Veer Guardian 26** – Japan–India Air Force exercise scheduled for 2026.
2. Under **Veer Guardian 26**, Japan Air **Self-Defence Force fighter aircraft** will visit India for the **first time to participate** in the exercise.
3. Future exercises are expected to involve **greater complexity, integration of unmanned systems and short-notice joint exercises**.
4. The two sides also agreed to promote exchanges between their **Special Operations Forces** and pursue cooperation with India's **integrated theatre commands** following their establishment.
5. India and Japan welcomed the **first trilateral naval PASSEX** involving **India, Japan and Indonesia**, conducted in February 2026.

Defense Technology, Industry & Make in India:

1. India and Japan agreed to explore **joint development in naval shipbuilding and design**, combining **Japan's technological expertise with India's production capabilities**.
2. The **shipborne UNICORN integrated communications antenna system** was identified as the **first defence equipment transfer** project between India and Japan.
3. **DRDO and Japan's ATLA** will deepen R&D cooperation in **state-of-the-art defence technologies**.
4. The two countries also intend to convene a **Defence Industry Forum**.

Institutional & Indo-Pacific Cooperation:

1. India and Japan agreed to strengthen cooperation with **third countries** through high-level exchanges, exercises and other initiatives for peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific.

2. Cooperation under the **Indo-Pacific Logistics Network (IPLN)** will support partner countries during natural disasters by facilitating the transportation of **personnel and supplies**.
3. The **second IPLN tabletop exercise** is scheduled to be held at Japan's Ministry of Defense in **September 2026**.
4. Both sides agreed to accelerate discussions for the **Fourth Japan-India Foreign and Defense Ministerial Meeting ("2+2")** in Tokyo in 2026.
5. A **Director-General/Joint Secretary-level Working Group** will be established to coordinate cooperation across **operational, intelligence, equipment, technology and industrial domains**.

Source: PIB –

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2301459®=48&lang=2>

5. India-China Border Delimitation

Prelims:

International Relations

Mains:

GS Paper II – India and its Neighbourhood Relations; Bilateral Relations, GS Paper III – Border Management and Security Challenges

Current relevance:

Following the **25th round of Special Representatives'** talks in Beijing, India and China agreed to advance discussions towards an **"early and substantial harvest" of boundary delimitation**.



Highlights:

Progress on Boundary Delimitation:

1. **India–China border talks** was conducted under the **Special Representatives (SR) mechanism** to discuss the boundary question and strengthen border management.
2. Both countries agreed to advance discussions towards an **“early and substantial harvest” of boundary delimitation.**
3. The Expert Group on Boundary Delimitation and the Working Group on Border Management under the **Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC)** will take forward discussions on delimitation and border management.
4. Both sides reiterated their commitment to negotiations on a framework for settling the boundary question in accordance with the 2005 Agreement on Political Parameters and **Guiding Principles for Settlement of the India–China Boundary Question.**

Strengthening Border Management:

1. India and China agreed to establish **two additional meeting points** for **General Level or Senior Highest Military Commander meetings.**
2. They also agreed to establish **two additional border military hotline channels** in the **Eastern and Middle Sectors.**

3. Situations on the ground will be addressed through existing **diplomatic and military mechanisms**, including the **WMCC and local commander-level meetings**.
4. These mechanisms aim to resolve outstanding issues and prevent **misunderstanding and miscalculation along the LAC**.
5. Both sides also discussed improving their **understanding of the LAC in appropriate areas** to facilitate better border management.

Cooperation on Trans-Border Rivers:

1. Both countries agreed to maintain communication regarding the **sharing of hydrological data**. This forms part of broader efforts to strengthen **trans-border cooperation** between India and China.

Border Cooperation:

1. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to **maintaining peace and tranquillity along the border**, considering it important for the healthy and steady development of bilateral relations.
2. Recent progress in India–China trans-border cooperation includes the **resumption of border trade through the three designated trading points**.
 - **Lipulekh Pass** in Uttarakhand,
 - **Shipki La** in Himachal Pradesh
 - **Nathu La** in Sikkim.
3. The number of batches permitted for the **Kailash Manasarovar Yatra** has also increased.
4. India and China agreed to further strengthen cooperation in **border trade, pilgrimage and other areas**.

Source: THE HINDU – <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-china-to-push-for-early-and-substantial-harvest-of-border-delimitation/article71393272.ece>

6. India–Seychelles

Prelims:

International Relations

Mains:

GS Paper II – India and its Neighbourhood; Bilateral Relations

Current relevance:

India and Seychelles held a **high-level bilateral meeting** on 25 August 2026 to strengthen strategic cooperation in **fisheries, aquaculture and the Blue Economy**.



Highlights:

India–Seychelles Maritime Cooperation:

1. It was hosted by the **Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying (MoFAH&D)**.
2. Both countries emphasised their **deep-rooted maritime partnership** and explored new avenues for sustainable utilisation of **marine resources**.
3. Cooperation is proposed to be expanded in **fisheries, aquaculture, advanced scientific research and capacity-building**.
4. Both sides recognised such cooperation as important for **socio-economic stability, food and nutritional security across the Indian Ocean Region**.

5. Seychelles expressed interest in accelerating a dedicated bilateral **MoU on fisheries and aquaculture**, supported by an advanced work plan.

Fisheries and Blue Economy Cooperation:

1. Both countries identified fisheries and the broader Blue Economy as important drivers of **economic growth, rural employment and sustainable development**.
2. Areas identified for potential joint development include:
 - i. **Marine aquaculture (mariculture)** and modern hatcheries
 - ii. **Tuna fisheries optimisation** and stock assessment
 - iii. **Advanced post-harvest engineering**
 - iv. **Marine conservation**
 - v. **Fisheries extension services and institutional training**
3. India highlighted its fish production of **19.7 million tonnes** and seafood exports valued at **USD 8.46 billion**.

Technology, Innovation and Sustainable Fisheries:

1. Cooperation will focus on strengthening fisheries data systems and **Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) infrastructure**.
2. Both sides explored the use of **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** in harvest management.
3. Particular emphasis was placed on **tuna processing, product diversification and sustainable fish-waste management**.
4. India and Seychelles also explored **knowledge** transfer through technical studies, fisheries extension services and **formal training programmes**.
5. Both sides stressed responsible harvesting practices, sustainable fisheries management and **technology-driven infrastructure development**.

Institutional Framework:

1. Seychelles expressed interest in a dedicated bilateral **MoU on fisheries and aquaculture**, supported by an advanced work plan.

2. Both sides emphasised **institutionalised engagement** among **administrative bodies, academic researchers and technical experts** for continuous cooperation.
3. Cooperation would be supported through **regulatory alignment, reciprocal laboratory access and national Centres of Excellence**.

Way Forward:

1. Develop a **structured annual work plan** to ensure sustained and result-oriented cooperation.
2. Accelerate the **commercialisation of joint scientific research** and undertake collaborative pilot projects.
3. Promote **mutual exposure visits**, specialised technical exchanges and knowledge transfer to strengthen institutional capacity.
4. Translate bilateral commitments into impactful action plans for **long-term maritime prosperity**.

Source: PIB –

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=2303394®=48&lang=1>

7. Javelin Anti-Tank Missile

Prelims:

International Relations

Mains:

GS Paper II – International Relations, GS Paper III – Security

Current relevance:

India has signed a **Letter of Offer and Acceptance (LOA)** with the United States to procure **Javelin anti-tank guided missile (ATGM) systems** through the U.S. Foreign Military Sales (FMS) route.



Javelin Anti-Tank Missile

Highlights:

About Javelin Anti-Tank Guided Missile:

1. **Type:** Medium-range **anti-tank guided missile (ATGM)**.
2. **Role:** Designed to engage **armoured vehicles and fortified positions**.
3. A major operational feature is its **fire-and-forget capability**.
4. Once fired, the operator does not have to guide the missile throughout its flight and can **move to another position**.
5. The system is produced by the **Javelin Joint Venture**, comprising **RTX and Lockheed Martin**.
6. It is currently operated by the **U.S. Army, U.S. Marine Corps and several international customers**.

Significance for India's Defence Preparedness:

1. The procurement is intended to **augment critical operational capabilities** of the Indian armed forces.
2. It contributes to India's efforts to **rapidly strengthen its anti-armour capabilities** following Operation Sindoor.

3. Its **fire-and-forget capability** allows the operator to relocate after launch instead of continuously guiding the missile.
4. The procurement adds to the growing depth of the **India–U.S. Major Defence Partnership**.

Defence–Industrial Cooperation:

1. The agreement is expected to create opportunities for greater cooperation between the **defence industries of India and the U.S.**
2. The signing of the LOA is expected to facilitate discussions on **mutually beneficial co-production**.
3. Such cooperation could provide additional opportunities to strengthen the **defence industrial bases of both countries**.
4. Thus, the procurement has significance beyond immediate acquisition by linking **operational capability enhancement with deeper India–U.S. defence–industrial cooperation**.

Source: THE HINDU – <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-us-sign-agreement-for-procurement-of-javelin-anti-tank-missile-system/article71399680.ece>

8. India–Canada Economic Engagement

Prelims:

International Relations

Mains:

GS Paper II – Bilateral Relations, GS Paper III – External Sector, International Trade

Current relevance:

India and Canada have reiterated their commitment to conclude negotiations for the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) by the end of 2026.



Highlights:

Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA):

1. India and Canada reaffirmed their shared commitment to conclude **CEPA negotiations by the end of 2026**.
2. The commitment builds upon the understanding reached between the **Prime Ministers of India and Canada in New Delhi in March 2026**.
3. Both countries seek to strengthen **bilateral economic and financial cooperation** through deeper trade and investment engagement.
4. India also expressed its readiness to commence negotiations on a **Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) at the earliest**.

Financial and Institutional Cooperation:

1. Both sides discussed facilitating greater engagement between **Indian and Canadian financial institutions and institutional investors**.
2. India highlighted the existing participation of **Canadian pension funds** in the Indian economy and sought greater investment from them.

3. Investment opportunities are available through India's expanding **asset monetisation pipeline**, which has been in place since 2020.
4. The pipeline provides opportunities for investors seeking **higher returns on investments**.

Significance:

1. The meeting constituted the **first-ever India–Canada Finance Ministers’ Economic and Financial Dialogue**, establishing a dedicated platform for strengthening bilateral economic and financial cooperation.
2. It provides a platform for strengthening **trade, investment, financial and commercial cooperation** between the two countries.
3. The discussions reflected the growing significance of **bilateral economic engagements in the prevailing global economic environment**.
4. Progress on **CEPA, BIT and institutional investment** could provide a broader framework for expanding India–Canada economic relations.

Source: THE HINDU - <https://www.thehindu.com/business/Economy/india-canada-reiterate-commitment-to-complete-trade-deal-by-end-of-2026/article71399403.ece>

9. India–Uzbekistan

Prelims:

International Relations

Mains:

GS Paper II– Bilateral Relations, GS Paper III– Energy Security, Critical Minerals, Trade

Current relevance:

India and Uzbekistan have decided to elevate bilateral ties to a **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership**, set a target of **\$5 billion in annual bilateral trade by 2030**, and establish a framework for the **long-term supply of uranium from Uzbekistan to India**.



Highlights:

Comprehensive Strategic Partnership & Economic Cooperation:

1. India and Uzbekistan elevated their relationship from a Strategic Partnership to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, coinciding with the **15th anniversary of their strategic partnership**.
2. Both countries agreed to upgrade the existing **Joint Commission** from **Secretary level to Ministerial level**.
3. The two sides signed **11 agreements** covering several areas of bilateral cooperation.
4. They set a target of **\$5 billion in annual bilateral trade by 2030**, compared with the current trade volume of **over \$1 billion**.
5. Issues concerning market access, banking, payment systems and connectivity will be addressed in a structured manner.
6. Cooperation will also be expanded in **trade, investment, infrastructure, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, health, IT, Ayurveda and education**.

Energy & Critical Minerals Cooperation:

1. India and Uzbekistan agreed to establish a framework for the **long-term supply of uranium** from Uzbekistan to India as part of cooperation in **civil nuclear energy**.

2. Both countries agreed to expand cooperation in **critical minerals** through joint projects.
3. Cooperation will cover **geological exploration, mining and mineral processing**.
4. They will also work towards developing **integrated critical-mineral value chains**.

Defence, Security & Digital Connectivity:

1. Both countries emphasised their close **defence and security cooperation**, reflecting mutual trust.
2. Future cooperation will promote direct linkages, co-production and co-development between their defence industries.
3. Both sides recognised **terrorism, extremism and separatism** as serious challenges to the region.
4. A commercial agreement between **NPCI International Payments Ltd (NIPL)** and Uzbekistan's **National Interbank Processing Centre JSC** will enable Indian **UPI applications to scan Uzbekistan's national QR (UZQR)** for merchant payments in Uzbekistan.

Cultural & Environmental Cooperation:

1. A **Letter of Intent** was agreed upon for the restoration and conservation of **Fayaz Tepa and Kara Tepa Buddhist sites** in Uzbekistan.
2. These ancient Buddhist monasteries in southern Uzbekistan demonstrate the **spread of Buddhism along the Silk Road and its flourishing in Central Asia**.
3. India also announced a **\$1 million grant for afforestation in the Aral Sea region**.
4. The expanded partnership recognises Uzbekistan's importance as being **at the heart of India's engagement with Central Asia**.

Source: THE HINDU – <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-uzbekistan-agree-to-deepen-cooperation-trade-digital-connectivity-pm-modi/article71407371.ece>