

KSG:NEWSPAPER CRUX

16TH JANUARY, 2021

NEWSPAPER HIGHLIGHTS

- Russia announced it was pulling out of the Open Skies treaty, saying that the pact, which allows unarmed surveillance flights over member countries, had been seriously compromised by the withdrawal of the United States.
- World's largest vaccination programme begins today PM to launch drive; more than 3 lakh to get jab on first day.
- Nepal has raised the Kalapani boundary dispute with India during the Joint Commission meeting, visiting Foreign Minister Pradeep Kumar Gyawali said.
- President elect Joe Biden has unveiled a \$1.9 trillion coronavirus plan to end "a crisis of deep human suffering" by speeding up vaccines and pumping out financial help to those struggling with the pandemic's prolonged economic fallout.
- The U.S. government has blacklisted Chinese smartphone maker Xiaomi Corp. and China's third largest national oil company for alleged military links, heaping pressure on Beijing in President Donald Trump's last week in office.
- The UN Human Rights Council elected Fiji's Ambassador a Nazhat Shameem Khan its 2021 President in an unprecedented secret ballot after a diplomatic stand-off blocked the usual consensus decision.
- India's trade with China declined last year to the lowest level since 2017, with the trade deficit narrowing to a five year low as the country imported far fewer goods from its northern neighbour.
- The Indian Army has signed a \$ 20million contract with ideaForge, a player in unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) technology, to procure undisclosed quantities of a highaltitude variant of SWITCH UAV, an indigenous system used in surveillance operations.

INDIA AS COUNTERBALANCE TO CHINA:USA

- 1.The Trump administration declassified a document which asserted that a **strong India, in cooperation with like-minded countries, would act as a counterbalance to China** in the strategic Indo-Pacific region.
- 2.The document on the USA strategic framework for the Indo-Pacific from 2018 outlines objectives, challenges and strategies with regard to China, North Korea, India and other countries in the Indo-Pacific region.
- 3.Aspects Related to India: India is a preferred partner on security issues and to cooperate to preserve maritime security and counter Chinese influence in South Asia and Southeast Asia.**Support India's aspiration to be a leading global power**, highlighting its compatibility with the USA, Japanese and Australian vision of the Indo-Pacific.

INDIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER(NSA) VISIT TO AFGHANISTAN

- 1.The National Security Advisor (NSA) of India visited Afghanistan for talks on strategic issues with the leadership in Kabul.This visit is significant because it was the first visit by any senior Indian official amidst the Intra-Afghan Talks.
- 2.Intra-Afghan talks refer to the **negotiation meetings between the Taliban and the Afghan High Council for National Reconciliation (representative of Afghan Government)** opened in Doha in 2020.
- 3.NSA exchanged views on the **Peace Process, the beginning of 2nd round of (Intra-Afghan) talks, and the role of India in establishing peace in Afghanistan.**

INDIA'S POTENTIAL TO INCREASE CEREALS EXPORT

- 1.The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) has noted in its latest Grain: World Markets and Trade report that exports of wheat and rice from India are likely to increase.
- 2.Causes for Increase in Wheat Exports:**Chinese Stockpiling, Rising Global Prices,Ultra-low interest rate money** increasingly being invested into agri-commodity markets.
- 3.Causes for Rise in Rice Exports:**Thailand and Vietnam have been facing drought leading to decline in rice productivity, Increase in demand in Bangladesh.**

HENLEY PASSPORT INDEX 2021

- 1.**India has been ranked 85th** in the most powerful passport report 'Henley Passport Index 2021'.
- 2.The Henley Passport Index is the original ranking of all the world's passports **according to the number of destinations their holders can access without a prior visa.**
- 3.Originally created by Dr. Christian H. Kaelin (Chairman of Henley & Partners), the ranking is **based on exclusive data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA)**, which maintains the world's largest and most accurate database of travel information.
- 4.Japan continues to hold the number one position on the index, with passport holders able to access 191 destinations around the world visa-free.

ASMI:THE MACHINE PISTOL

- 1.India's first indigenous 9mm Machine Pistol has been jointly developed by **Infantry School, Mhow and DRDO's Armament Research & Development Establishment (ARDE), Pune.**
- 2.The Pistol is named "Asmi" meaning "Pride", "Self-Respect" & "Hard Work".
- 3.The weapon has huge potential in Armed forces as personal weapon for heavy weapon detachments.