

# International Relations This Week: 18 Jan to 24 Jan 2023

International relations is a very important segment of the [UPSC syllabus](#). In this series, we present an analysis of the most important international issues and developments that occurred over the past week relevant for the IAS exam. In this article, you can learn more about Restructuring Sri Lanka's Debt, India-Egypt Relations, India-Oman Dialogue, China's Dam in Tibet and India-Maldives Pact

	TABLE OF CONTENTS
1.	India-Egypt Relations
2.	Restructuring Sri Lanka's Debt
3.	India-Oman Dialogue
4.	India-Maldives Pact
5.	China's Dam in Tibet

## 1. India-Egypt Relations

**Context:** Egyptian President Abdel Fatch el-Sisi is on a four-day state visit to India from January 24, 2022.

### Introduction:

- El-Sisi arrived in India for meetings with political and business leaders. He will also participate as the chief guest in celebrations of India's [Republic Day](#).
- During the visit, both sides are expected to sign several MoUs and discuss taking ties forward on strategic issues, defence, trade, agriculture and renewable energy.
- Sisi is the fifth leader from the region of West Asia and North Africa to be the Republic Day Chief Guest, after Algeria's President Abdelaziz Bouteflika (2001), Iran's President Mohammed Khatami (2003), King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz al-Saud of Saudi Arabia (2006), and the Crown Prince now President and ruler of the UAE, Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan (2017).

**Significance of a Republic Day invite:**

- An invitation to be the Republic Day chief guest is highly symbolic from the Indian government's perspective.
- New Delhi has been weaving strategy with hospitality to decide its chief guest for the Republic Day.
- The choice of chief guest every year is dictated by a number of reasons — strategic and diplomatic, business interests, and international geo-politics.
- El-Sisi is the first Egyptian president to be invited as guest of honour for the annual Republic Day parade which is expected to impart fresh momentum to India's ties with Egypt.
- The invitation to Mr. Sisi is also being seen as part of the government's push to engage the "Global South", and as a rekindling of the principles of non-alignment that have come back to the fore after the Russian war in Ukraine began in February 2022.
  - In the wake of Western sanctions against Russia and a ban on wheat exports in India, India had made an exception for Egypt.
- This is an important gesture by India at a time the world was re-discovering multipolarity.
- Egypt under Sisi is seen as a moderate Islamic voice among Muslim-majority countries, as well as India's "friend" within the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), that routinely issues statements condemning India's policy in Jammu & Kashmir and the situation of Muslims in the country, at Pakistan's behest.
- In August 2022, Egypt Post released a commemorative postage stamp to celebrate 75 years of diplomatic relations between Egypt and India that were established with Egypt's recognition of the independence of India on 18 August 1947.

## 2. Restructuring Sri Lanka's Debt

**Context:** India backs Sri Lanka's debt restructuring plan, writes to International Monetary Fund.

### **Introduction:**

- Sri Lanka is negotiating with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a four-year, USD 2.9 billion bailout package which is aimed at restoring economic stability and debt sustainability for the crisis-ridden south Asian nation.
- For this, Sri Lanka needs approval from its top 3 creditors—India, China and Japan. The IMF has asked Sri Lanka to restructure its debt by negotiating with the creditors.
- Both the IMF and the Sri Lankan government have agreed that none of the official lenders would take a haircut while giving Sri Lanka time to recover with an IMF programme.
- Earlier this month, eminent economists from across the globe urged creditors to cancel Sri Lanka's debt.
- India has been the first country to extend support to the country on the debt restructuring, which has been widely welcomed by the Sri Lankan government.

### Sri Lanka's Foreign Debt



Image Source: The Hindu

### India's Support:

- India's Union ministry of finance issued a letter to the [International Monetary Fund \(IMF\)](#) to confirm its support to Sri Lanka on the issue of debt restructuring.
  - Following India, China also gave Sri Lanka the financing assurances required by the IMF to unlock the bailout package.
- India further has urged Sri Lanka's other bilateral lenders to also undertake proactive measures to support Sri Lanka's recovery.
- The move to help Sri Lanka was in line with India's principle of "Neighbourhood First Policy" and "not leaving a partner to fend for themselves".
- India had also extended a 4-billion-dollar assistance package to Sri Lanka in the form of credits and rollovers.
- India is also expected to encourage greater investments in the Sri Lankan economy, especially in key sectors such as energy, tourism and infrastructure.
- Indian External Affairs Minister recognising that energy security is one of Sri Lanka's most serious challenges stated that solutions devised to address the challenge must also encompass the region as a whole to get the full benefit.
- The Minister further added that Sri Lanka has a huge renewable energy potential and can emerge as an energy hub and Sri Lanka has given in principle approval to a renewable energy framework with India.

### 3. India-Oman Dialogue

**Context:** Recently, the 8th India-Oman strategic dialogue was held in New Delhi.

#### Introduction:

- India and Oman on 25th January, 2022 held the eighth strategic dialogue in Delhi which was led by India's Deputy National Security Adviser Vikram Misri and Oman's Secretary General of the National Security Council Major General Idris Abdulrahman Al-Kindi.
- The last strategic dialogue was held in Muscat in January 2020. The ninth Strategic Dialogue between the two sides will take place in 2024.
- During the dialogue, both sides highlighted the high priority accorded by the leadership of both countries to further enhance their bilateral strategic ties based on trust and mutual respect.
- India has also extended an invitation to Oman to participate in the G20 Summit and meetings as a guest country during its ongoing presidency of the grouping.



Image Source: World Atlas

### Highlights of the Dialogue:

- During the dialogue, both countries underlined the need to work collectively to fight the challenge of terrorism, terrorist propaganda, abuse of cyberspace and misuse of new and emerging technologies.
- Both sides reiterated the importance of preserving maritime safety and security in the region.
- Both also reiterated the importance of the strategic dialogue as an important mechanism of bilateral cooperation between India and Oman.
- Both sides condemned in the strongest terms all forms and manifestations of terrorism and underscored the need to work collectively to fight this menace.
  - Expansion of terrorist propaganda, misuse of new and emerging technologies, arms and drugs trafficking and abuse of cyberspace for recruitment, fundraising and disinformation have serious security implications for the region.

### Oman's significance for India:

- The Sultanate of Oman is a strategic partner of India in the Gulf and an important interlocutor at the Gulf Cooperation Council (AGCC), Arab League and [Indian Ocean Rim Association \(IORA\)](#) fora.
- Oman also accords a high priority to its ties with India. The two countries across the Arabian Sea are linked by geography, history and culture and enjoy warm and cordial relations due to historical maritime trade linkages.
- Oman is India's closest defence partner in the Gulf region and an important anchor for India's defence and strategic interests.
- Defence cooperation has emerged as a key pillar for the robust India-Oman strategic partnership.
  - Defence exchanges are guided by a Framework MOU which was recently renewed in 2021.
- Oman is at the gateway of Strait of Hormuz through which India imports one-fifth of its oil imports.
- Oman is the only country in the Gulf region with which all three services of the Indian armed forces conduct regular bilateral exercises and staff talks, enabling close cooperation and trust at the professional level.
- Oman also actively participates in the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS). In a strategic move to expand its footprint in the Indian Ocean region, India has secured access to the key Port of Duqm in Oman for military use and logistical support. This is part of India's maritime strategy to counter Chinese influence and activities in the region.
  - The Port of Duqm is situated on the southeastern seaboard of Oman, overlooking the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean.
  - It is strategically located, in close proximity to the Chabahar port in Iran.

#### 4. India-Maldives Pact

**Context:** Recently, India and Maldives have signed pacts on development projects in Maldives.

##### Key highlights of the Pact:

- Maldives is India's key maritime neighbour in the Indian Ocean Region and occupies a special place in the Prime Minister's vision of '[SAGAR](#)' ([Security and Growth for All in the Region](#)) and 'Neighbourhood First'.
- India and Maldives signed pacts on development projects as External Affairs minister S Jaishankar visited Maldives and held talks with the top leadership in the country.
- The pact included grant assistance of 100 million Rufiyaa [currency of Maldives] for the High Impact Community Development Project (HICDP) scheme.
  - A number of socio-economic development projects are planned to be implemented throughout the country under this funding.
- It also included the development of a sports complex in Gahdhoo, and academic collaboration between Maldives National University and Cochin University of Science and Technology.
- India also handed over two sea ambulances to the Maldives. The sea ambulances were acquired with Indian grant assistance of more than \$400,000 for the Maldives' defence ministry as part of efforts to strengthen the healthcare delivery system

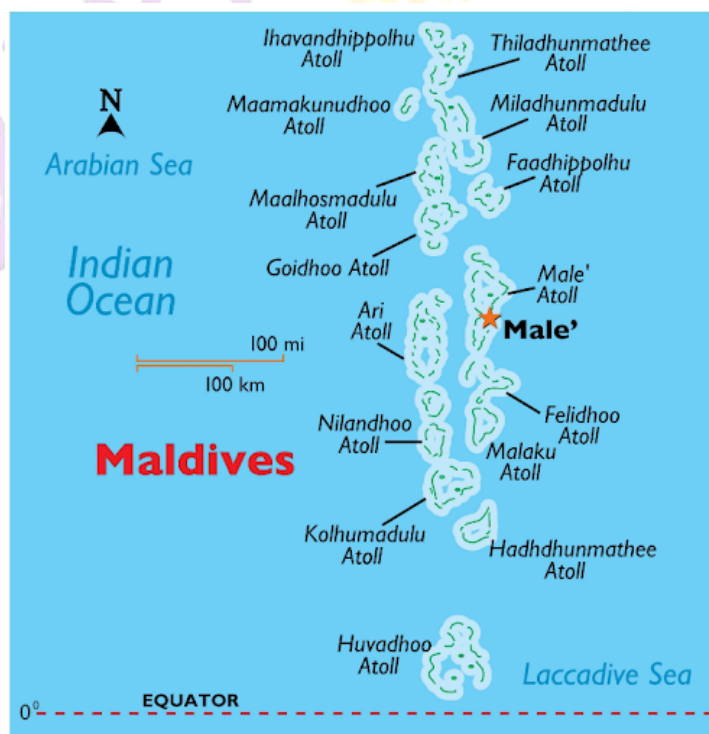


Image Source: World Atlas



## 5. China's Dam in Tibet

**Context:** China is building a new dam in Tibet near the Indian border.

### Introduction:

- China is constructing a new dam on the Mabja Zangbo river in Tibet, close to the tri-junction of India, Nepal and Tibet, raising concerns since China has ramped up creation of military and dual use infrastructure and in the eastern and western sectors of the LAC (Line of Actual Control).
- The development comes in the wake of China unveiling plans in 2021 to build a massive dam on the lower reaches of Yarlung Zangbo to generate up to 70 GW of power.

### China's Dam Diplomacy:

- China's upstream actions like dams (on Brahmaputra, Indus, tributaries of the Ganga), diversion of water, hydropolitics, and power asymmetry poses a security threat to India and water scarcity downstream.
- There is no legally binding international treaty on water sharing between India and China.
- China plans to have four dams on the Brahmaputra River which would affect the river's flows, India had lodged a complaint with China.
  - Brahmaputra flows 1,700 km within Tibet, 920 km in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam and 260 km in Bangladesh. It accounts for nearly 30% of freshwater resources and 40% of India's hydropower potential.
- China has built a large number of dams and dikes to control the flow of rivers on the Indus, Brahmaputra and Mekong. With the occupation of Tibet, China has acquired the starting points for rivers that flow into 18 countries.
- China refused to share hydrographic data with India while it did so with Bangladesh, which resulted in huge destruction because of floods in Assam subsequently for which India was not prepared.
- China has already built eleven huge dams on the Mekong River, which worries the South-East-Asian countries.
  - The Himalayan region is vulnerable to earthquakes and other seismic activities. The sheer size of the infrastructure projects undertaken there poses a significant threat to the populations living downstream.