

## Senkaku Islands

Recently, a local council in southern Japan has approved a bill to change the name of an area containing Senkaku Islands from Tonoshiro to Tonoshiro Senkaku.

Senkaku Islands are known as the Diaoyus by China and Tiaoyutai by Taiwan. The islands are disputed with China and Taiwan.

### Japan's Stand:

**Resolving Administrative Confusion:** The name change is aimed at resolving administrative confusion between a locale in downtown Ishigaki, which shares the name "Tonoshiro" similar to the island.

**Increased Chinese Presence:** It is also done in response to the increased Chinese presence in the waters close to the Senkakus. In a move to protect territorial integrity, Japan has decided to change the name.

**Support of the USA:** The United States has a mutual defense treaty with Japan. If Japanese territory is attacked by a foreign power, the United States is obligated to defend it.

### China's Stand:

**China's Territorial Sovereignty:** Bill by Japan is a serious provocation to China's territorial sovereignty. The move is illegal.

**Four-Principle Consensus:** Urged Japan to abide by the spirit of the four-principle consensus, avoid creating new incidents on the Diaoyu Islands issue, and take practical actions to maintain the stability of the East China Sea situation.

A four-point principle on improving China-Japan ties was approved in 2014 to develop a mutually beneficial relationship based on common strategic interests.

**Risk of a Crisis:** Changing the administrative designation would only make the dispute more complicated and bring more risks of a crisis

### Taiwan's Stand:





It also protested the move and claimed that the islands are part of its territory, and the sovereignty of Tiaoyutai islands belongs to the country and any move attempting to alter this fact is invalid.

### Overall Impact:

Asia's next military flashpoint:

Japan is not the only territorial and maritime dispute that China has long had with many of its neighbours.

It has island and maritime border disputes with Taiwan, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Vietnam in the South China Sea and its extension.

Hence, Japan's move can strengthen the other countries territorial and maritime claims.

### Significance for India:

The development from Japan came just after the violent clash between Indian and Chinese troops over the Line of Actual Control in Ladakh's Galwan Valley.

Given the trade volume and economic dependency that is the most dominant feature of the bilateral relationship, it would be crucial for India to act wisely.

By supporting the Japanese move, India can diplomatically strengthen its position over Galwan Valley.

However, Taiwan's engagement in the dispute is significant as it has supported India over the Galwan Valley but opposes the move of Japan.

China has also augmented its naval power to strengthen its overall presence in the Indian Ocean. The move of Japan would give an opportunity to India to have a strategic edge over its presence in the Indian Ocean.

### The Senkakus Island Chain Dispute

The Senkaku Islands dispute, or Diaoyu Islands dispute, concerns a territorial dispute over a group of uninhabited islands known as the Senkaku Islands in Japan, the Diaoyu Islands in China and Tiaoyutai Islands in Taiwan.

Eight uninhabited islands lie in the East China Sea. They have a total area of about 7 sq km and lie northeast of Taiwan.

Importance: Islands are close to strategically important shipping lanes, offer rich fishing grounds and are thought to contain oil deposits.

The Senkakus island chain has been administered by Japan since 1972, but its legal status has remained disputed until now.

Both Japan and China claim ownership of these islands.

### Japan's Claim:



After World War II, Japan renounced claims to a number of territories and islands including Taiwan in the 1951 Treaty of San Francisco.

But under the treaty the Nansei Shoto islands came under US trusteeship and were then returned to Japan in 1971.

Japan says that Senkaku islands are part of the Nansei Shoto islands and hence they also belong to Japan.

Besides, China raised no objections to the San Francisco deal. Only since the 1970s, when the issue of oil resources in the area emerged, that Chinese and Taiwanese authorities began pressing their claims.

### China's Claim:

These Islands have been part of its territory since ancient times, serving as important fishing grounds administered by the province of Taiwan.

When Taiwan was returned in the Treaty of San Francisco, China said the islands – as part of it – should also have been returned.

## United Nations Arms Trade Treaty (UN-ATT)

Recently, China has decided to join the United Nations Arms Trade Treaty (UN-ATT) to regulate its arms sales.

China held that it has always strictly controlled the export of military products and joining the treaty is an important step towards its efforts to enhance peace and stability in the world and support multilateralism.

China said that it only exports military products to sovereign countries and not to non-state actors.

### Background:

China's move comes after the USA announced to pull out of the ATT in 2019.

The reason given was that the treaty amounts to international gun control, and is a threat to USA's second amendment right to bear arms.

The USA also held that the treaty fails to truly address the problem of irresponsible arms transfers because other top arms exporters like Russia and China were not signatories to it that time (till now, Russia has neither signed it nor made any announcement to sign it).

In May 2020, USA announced to exit the Open Skies Treaty (OST).

In August 2019, the USA along with Russia withdrew from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, 1987.

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) in its annual report 'Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2019' highlighted that China is the second-largest arms producer in



the world after the USA.

## United Nations Arms Trade Treaty

The UN-ATT regulates the international trade in conventional arms, from small arms to battle tanks, combat aircraft and warships, and controls the flow of weapons into conflict zones.

It entered into force on 24th December 2014.

The treaty requires member countries to keep records of international transfers of weapons and to prohibit cross-border shipments that could be used in human rights violations or attacks on civilians.

State parties to the treaty may seek assistance in its implementation and the UN Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation (UNSCAR) was launched to help in that.

UNSCAR is a voluntary, flexible multi-donor trust fund to kick-start advocacy, universalisation and implementation of the ATT.

### It aims to:

Mobilize resources to support the ratification/accession and implementation of relevant international instruments on arms regulations.

Improve the effectiveness of assistance through coordination, monitoring and matching of resources.

Promote increased sustainability through more predictable sources of funding.

## India's Stand on ATT

From the beginning of the ATT process, India has maintained that such a treaty would make a real impact on illicit trafficking in conventional arms and their illicit use especially by terrorists and other unauthorised and unlawful non-state actors.

India has been an active participant in the ATT negotiations and stressed consistently that the ATT should ensure a balance of obligations between exporting and importing states.

For India, the underlying principle is that member states have a legitimate right to self-defence and its own belief that there is no conflict between the pursuit of national security objectives and the aspiration of the ATT.

However, India has not signed the Treaty on the grounds that it is weak on terrorism and non-state actors and these concerns find no mention in the specific prohibitions of the Treaty.

Further, India cannot accept that the Treaty is used as an instrument in the hands of exporting states to take unilateral force majeure measures against importing states parties without consequences.

## Way Forward

Civilian populations often in conditions of poverty, deprivation and extreme inequality suffer the



most because they are on the receiving end of the misuse of arms by state armed and security forces, non-state armed groups and organized criminal groups. Inadequate controls on arms transfers lead to the widespread availability and misuse of weapons disrupting the humanitarian and development operations of the UN. In many areas of work, the UN faces serious setbacks that ultimately can be traced to the consequences of the poorly regulated arms trade so the adoption of the ATT is very important for the UN system as a whole.

## Hyacinth macaw

Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) has busted a wildlife syndicate (smuggling group) which was involved in smuggling of exotic macaws from Bangladesh.

### The Joint Operation:

The cargo containing 22 exotic birds which had been smuggled in through the Bongaon area of Indo-Bangla border, were seized at Kolkata airport.

The birds were identified as hyacinth macaw, pesquet's parrot, severe macaw and hahn's macaw. The seized macaws are protected under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), with hyacinth macaw being accorded the highest protection.

### Provisions Related to Illegal Wildlife Trade:

Illegally imported birds are confiscated under Section 111 of the Customs Act, 1962 which is read with the CITES provisions and the Foreign Trade Policy ( Import-Export Policy) of India. Also, Sections 48 and 49 of the Wildlife Protection Act prohibit trade or commerce in wild animals, animal articles or trophies.

### Concerns:

The possibility of spread of zoonotic diseases on account of smuggling in such exotic species is increasingly becoming a global concern against the backdrop of Covid-19.

Illegal wildlife trade was ranked the fourth largest transnational organised crime globally, after the smuggling of narcotics, counterfeit goods and human trafficking.

West Bengal and northeast India are vulnerable to cross-border wildlife smuggling because of their proximity to the Bangladesh and Myanmar borders, and to Thailand.

Over the recent years, the DRI has seized a range of endangered species, including black-and-white ruffed lemur, hoolock gibbons, palm civets and Indian star tortoise etc.

Another major concern has been the smuggling of elephant tusks and ivory products.

Many international organisations involved in wildlife crime use the Indo-Bangladesh Border for



various other illegal activities, such as smuggling of drugs, commercial goods, and even gun-running, apart from illegal movement of foreign currency.

## Hyacinth Macaw

Scientific Name: *Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus*,

It is a parrot native to central and eastern South America.

With a length of about one meter it is longer than any other species of parrot.

It is the largest macaw and the largest flying parrot species.

Threat: Habitat loss and the trapping of wild birds for the pet trade have taken a heavy toll on their population in the wild.

Protection Status:

International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List:

Vulnerable

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES): Appendix I



### Wildlife Crime Control Bureau

It is a statutory multi-disciplinary body, established by the Government of India under the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, to combat organized wildlife crime in the country.

The Bureau has its headquarters in New Delhi.

### Directorate of Revenue Intelligence

It is India's chief anti-smuggling intelligence, investigations and operations agency.

It works under the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), Ministry of Finance.

It is headed by a Director General of the rank of Special Secretary to the Government of India.

DRI works to secure India's national and economic security by preventing the outright smuggling of firearms, gold, narcotics, fake Indian Currency notes, antiques, wildlife and environmental products.

Moreover, it also works to prevent the proliferation of black money, commercial frauds and trade based money laundering.

Headquarters: New Delhi



## Mt Merapi:

Mount Merapi, an active volcano in Indonesia, erupted twice on 21st June, 2020

Mt Merapi:

Merapi (Mountain of Fire) is the most active of Indonesia's 130 active volcanoes.

It rises to 2,911 metres and has steep slopes with dense vegetation on its lower sides.

It is located near the centre of the island of Java and Indonesia's cultural capital, Yogyakarta. Mt Merapi's last significant eruption was in 2010. At that time, more than 300 people were killed and some 2,80,000 residents were forced to evacuate the surrounding areas.



## Volcanoes in Indonesia:

Indonesia is located on the Pacific Ring of Fire.

The Ring of Fire, also referred to as the Circum-Pacific Belt, is a path along the Pacific Ocean characterized by active volcanoes and frequent earthquakes.

Its length is approximately 40,000 kilometers. It traces boundaries between several tectonic plates—including the Pacific, Cocos, Indian-Australian, Nazca, North American, and Philippine Plates.

75% of Earth's volcanoes i.e. more than 450 volcanoes are located along the Ring of Fire. 90% of Earth's earthquakes occur along its path, including the planet's most violent and dramatic seismic events.

The abundance of volcanoes and earthquakes along the Ring of Fire is caused by the amount of movement of tectonic plates in the area.

Along much of the Ring of Fire, plates overlap at convergent boundaries called subduction zones. That is, the plate that is underneath is pushed down, or subducted, by the plate above. As rock is subducted, it melts and becomes magma. The abundance of magma so near to Earth's surface gives rise to conditions ripe for volcanic activity.

A significant exception is the border between the Pacific and North American Plates. This stretch of the Ring of Fire is a transform boundary, where plates move sideways past one another. This type of boundary generates a large number of earthquakes as tension in Earth's crust builds up and is released.



## Foldscope:

It is an affordable microscope that can be made from simple components, including a sheet of paper and a lens. It cost less than a Rs. 100 to make a Foldscope.

Upon assembly, the device can hold a specimen slide for observation, and this specimen can be viewed via a mobile phone camera attached to it. It is portable and durable, and performs on par with conventional microscopes.

It was developed by Manu Prakash and is part of the "frugal science" movement which aims to make cheap and easy tools available for scientific use in the developing world

Benefits:

Foldscope can be used to diagnose diseases like oral health, urinary tract infection (UTI), leishmaniasis, schistosomiasis, and monitor kidney stones.

It can be employed in public healthcare centres for primary diagnosis or as personal health monitoring devices.

Apart from the medical field it can also be used in agriculture, to detect various types of microorganisms which affect the crops and animals.

