

WEEK 1- DAY 5

International Relations

Contents:

1. US–Russia Alaska Summit Ends Without Agreement
2. UNDP Equator Initiative Award
3. African Nations Challenge China’s Mining Dominance

1. US–Russia Alaska Summit Ends without Agreement

Context

- The **US–Russia Alaska Summit** ended without a breakthrough, leaving the **Russia–Ukraine conflict unresolved**.
- Fallout: Spotlight on **US–India trade frictions**, particularly over **tariffs linked to India’s Russian oil imports**.



India’s Concerns on US Tariffs

- **US Tariff Move:** 50% tariff on Indian exports.
- **Impact:**
 - Makes **Indian goods costlier** in US market.
 - Risk of **trade disruptions** and reduced competitiveness.
 - Complicates ongoing **India–US economic negotiations**.
- **US Objective:**
 - Pressure importers (like India) to cut Russian oil purchases.

WEEK 1- DAY 5

International Relations

- o Proposed Bill in US Congress → Tariffs up to **500% on nations aiding Russia's war economy**.
- **India's Energy Security:**
 - o Imports **35–40% of crude oil from Russia** at discounted rates.
 - o Critical for inflation control & fiscal stability.

India's Strategic Autonomy

- India follows a **multi-alignment strategy**:
 - o Deepening ties with **US** (defence, technology, trade, Indo-Pacific strategy).
 - o Preserving long-standing **Russia partnership** (energy, defence, nuclear cooperation).
- **Core Principle:** Decisions based on **national interest** → energy security, affordable imports, diversification of suppliers.
- India unlikely to fully align with Western sanctions on Russia.

Geo-Political Impact of Summit Failure

1. **Prolonged Russia-Ukraine Conflict**
 - o No agreement on **security guarantees, territorial concessions, or NATO's role**.
 - o Prolonged instability in Europe.
2. **Global Economic Uncertainty**
 - o Volatile **energy prices, supply chain risks, inflationary pressures**.
 - o Complicates recovery for developing economies, including India.
3. **Pressure on Strategic Partners**
 - o US may **tighten secondary sanctions** on Russian trade partners.
 - o India faces **balancing act**: Avoiding US trade retaliation while safeguarding Russian oil imports.

Way Forward for India

- **Diplomatic Balancing:**

WEEK 1- DAY 5

International Relations

- o Engage US to **seek waiver/exemption** on punitive tariffs.
- o Highlight role as a **balancing power** in global geopolitics.
- **Trade Diversification:**
 - o Explore **alternative energy sources** (Middle East, US LNG).
 - o Strengthen **trade with EU, ASEAN, Global South** to reduce dependence on US market.
- **Energy Security Strategy:**
 - o Continue **discounted Russian imports** while investing in **renewables & domestic reserves**.
 - o Push for **rupee-ruble settlements** or diversification of currency trade.
- **Strategic Autonomy Narrative:**
 - o Reinforce India's independent foreign policy at forums like **BRICS, SCO, G20, IPEF**.

2. UNDP Equator Initiative Award

Latest News

- A **Self-Help Group (SHG)** from Kundgol taluk, Dharwad district, Karnataka has won the **UNDP Equator Initiative Award 2025**.
- The recognition highlights **grassroots efforts in biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction**.

About UNDP Equator Initiative Award

- **Established by:** United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) under the **Equator Initiative**.
- **Nature:** Biennial award recognizing **outstanding community initiatives**.
- **Nicknamed:** "Nobel Prize for Biodiversity Conservation."
- **Prize Money:** **USD 10,000** per awardee.

WEEK 1- DAY 5

International Relations

- **2025 Theme:** “Women and Youth Leadership for Nature-Based Climate Action.”

Eligibility Criteria

1. Duration:

- Initiative must exist for at least **3 years**, or
- Actions must have been implemented for at least **3 years**.

2. Who can apply:

- Local **community-based groups** in rural areas of UNDP-supported countries.
- **Indigenous Peoples’ communities** in rural areas (globally).

3. Scope of Action:

- Must be **nature-based solutions**, and
- Deliver measurable benefits related to **two or more Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

Significance

- **Empowers grassroots communities** → showcases that local solutions can drive global sustainability.
- **Recognition of Indigenous and rural knowledge** in biodiversity conservation.
- **Supports SDGs:** especially **SDG 1 (No Poverty)**, **SDG 13 (Climate Action)**, **SDG 15 (Life on Land)**.

3. African Nations Challenge China’s Mining Dominance

Context

- China has long dominated Africa’s **mining sector**, especially **critical minerals** (cobalt, lithium, copper).

WEEK 1- DAY 5

International Relations

- Growing **government scrutiny, civil society activism, environmental concerns, and demands for value addition** are challenging China's extractive model.
- African nations are renegotiating contracts and asserting sovereignty over their mineral wealth.

Shifting Dynamics in Africa–China Mining Relations

1. Demand for Fair Partnerships

- Earlier “**resources-for-infrastructure**” model seen as inadequate.
- Push for **accountability, transparency, and economic sovereignty**.
- Civil society groups demand **benefit-sharing and local development**.

2. Critical Mineral Wealth

- **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC):** Holds **80% of global cobalt reserves**, vital for **EV batteries**.
- **Sicomines Deal:** China dominates extraction, but benefits to Congolese people are limited.

Rising Challenges to Chinese Investments

1. Economic Discontent

- Tax exemptions to Chinese firms cost DRC **\$132 million in 2024**.
- Public pressure for contract renegotiations.

2. Government Pushback

- DRC seeks to raise its **stake in joint ventures** from 32% → 70%.
- Deal to sell Chemaf Resources to China's **Norin Mining** blocked.

3. Corruption & Unfulfilled Promises

- **Namibia's Xinfeng:** bribery over lithium mines.
- Promised **processing facilities unbuilt**, unsafe conditions for workers.

Environmental & Social Backlash

1. Regulatory Action

WEEK 1- DAY 5

International Relations

- o Zimbabwe: Blocked coal mining near **Hwange National Park**.
- o Zambia: Acid spill at Chinese-owned copper mine → **Kafue River pollution**.

2. Local Resistance

- o Cameroon: NGOs oppose **Lobé-Kribi Iron Ore Project** citing cultural & environmental risks.
- o Criticism over **inadequate consultation** and **benefit-sharing**.

Policy Shifts Toward Value Addition

1. Export Bans on Raw Minerals

- o Zimbabwe (2022) → Lithium ore ban.
- o Namibia (2023) → Similar ban.
- o Aim: Force investors to set up **local processing plants**.

2. Challenges

- o Export bans alone not enough.
- o Need **local industrial capacity, inclusive policies**.
- o Otherwise, benefits may flow to elites, not communities.

Emerging Future of Africa–China Mining Relations

- **China's dominance no longer assured**: Opaque contracts, corruption, and environmental harm under scrutiny.
- **African nations asserting sovereignty**: Demanding fair deals, local processing, and environmental safeguards.
- **Potential Transformation**: Africa may shift from raw material exporter → **value-added player in green economy**.

Implications for India

1. Critical Mineral Mission

- o India depends heavily on imports for **lithium, cobalt, rare earths**.
- o Partnerships with Africa can **diversify supply chains** and reduce dependence on China.

WEEK 1- DAY 5

International Relations

2. Opportunities

- o **India–Africa Forum Summit (IAFS)** platform for mining partnerships.
- o Collaboration on **local processing, capacity building, technology transfer.**

3. Challenges

- o China still has **financial muscle and deep ties.**
- o India must balance **diplomacy, investments, and sustainable practices** to be a credible alternative.

Multiple Choice Questions

1. Consider the following regarding the UNDP Equator Initiative Award:

1. It is a biennial award given to **community-led initiatives** that reduce poverty while conserving biodiversity.
2. The award carries a cash prize of **USD 1,00,000.**
3. The **2025 theme** was “Women and Youth Leadership for Nature-Based Climate Action.”
4. Only government departments or UN agencies are eligible to apply.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

2. With reference to the shifting Africa–China mining relations, consider the following:

1. The **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)** holds nearly **80% of the world’s cobalt reserves**, critical for electric vehicle (EV) batteries.
2. Zimbabwe and Namibia have banned the export of **unprocessed lithium**, pushing for local value addition.

WEEK 1- DAY 5

International Relations

3. India's **Critical Mineral Mission** seeks to reduce dependence on China by diversifying imports, including from Africa.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Multiple Choice Questions Day 4 – Geography and Environment

1. Consider the following statements regarding the Asiatic Lion (*Panthera leo persica*):

- 1. It is listed in **Appendix II of CITES**.
- 2. The species is now confined only to Gujarat, India.
- 3. The Asiatic lion population has shown steady growth over the past decade.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Answer: b) 2 and 3 only

Explanation:

- Asiatic Lion is listed under **CITES Appendix I** (not II) and **Schedule I of WPA 1972** → Statement 1 is incorrect.
- Found **only in Gujarat** (Gir and surrounding landscape) → Statement 2 is correct.
- Population increased to **891 (2025)**, growth of +70% in the past decade → Statement 3 is correct.

2. The Dardanelles Strait, recently in news, is significant because:

WEEK 1- DAY 5

International Relations

- a) It connects the Caspian Sea to the Mediterranean.
- b) It is one of the narrowest straits used for international navigation, linking the Aegean Sea with the Sea of Marmara.
- c) It is the only maritime route connecting the Persian Gulf with the Arabian Sea.
- d) It lies between Russia and Turkey, providing access to the Arctic Ocean.

Answer: b) It is one of the narrowest straits used for international navigation, linking the Aegean Sea with the Sea of Marmara.

Explanation:

- **Dardanelles Strait** lies in **northwestern Turkey**, connects the **Aegean Sea ↔ Sea of Marmara**.
- Along with the **Bosporus**, it forms the **Turkish Straits system** (access to Black Sea).
- Options (a), (c), (d) describe other water bodies (Caspian–Mediterranean not directly linked; Persian Gulf–Arabian Sea = Strait of Hormuz; Arctic Ocean = not related).

3. The Sea of Galilee, recently reported to have turned red due to algal bloom, is notable for which of the following reasons?

1. It is the **lowest freshwater lake** on Earth.
2. It lies along the course of the **Jordan River**.
3. It is located in **Lebanon**.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: b) 1 and 2 only

Explanation:

- Sea of Galilee is the **lowest freshwater lake on Earth**, and **second-lowest overall** after the Dead Sea → Statement 1 is correct.
- Fed primarily by the **Jordan River** → Statement 2 is correct.
- Located in **Israel**, not Lebanon → Statement 3 is incorrect.

LAZY
Prep

WEEK 1- DAY 5
International Relations

