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News: Amid Ukraine crisis, NATO sends planes, ships to Eastern Europe

- NATO allies have put forces on standby and sent ships and fighter jets to bolster Europe's eastern defences as tensions soar over Russia's military buildup around Ukraine, the alliance said Monday.

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)

- North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) is an **intergovernmental military alliance between 30 North American and European Countries.**
- North Macedonia became the 30th member in February 2019.
- NATO is established by **Washington Treaty that was signed in 4th April 1949.**
- NATO constitutes a **system of collective defence** whereby its independent member states agree to mutual defence in response to an attack by an external party.
- Its headquarters is in **Brussels, Belgium.**
- There are two **official languages of NATO, English and French.**
- Recently US Senate passed the National Defense Authorisation Act that brings India at par with NATO allies for increasing defence cooperation.

- Major non-NATO allies of US are Afghanistan, Argentina, Australia, Bahrain, Brazil, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Japan, Korea, Kuwait, Morocco, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand and Tunisia. NATO is committed to the peaceful resolution of disputes.
- If **diplomatic efforts fail, it has the military power to undertake crisis-management operations**. These are carried out under the collective defence clause of NATO's founding treaty – Article 5 of the Washington Treaty or under a United Nations mandate, alone or in cooperation with other countries and international organisations.
- A NATO-led mission, called **Resolute Support was launched in 2015 to provide further training, advice and assistance for the Afghan security forces and institutions**.

News: Gherkins

- Recently, India has become the largest exporter of gherkins in the world. India exported cucumber and gherkins (Pickling Cucumber) to the tune of 1, 23,846 metric tonnes with a value of USD 114 million during April-October (2020-21).

Gherkins

- Gherkin is a term generally used to refer to a **savoury pickled cucumber**. **Gherkins and commercial cucumbers belong to the same species (Cucumis sativus), but are from different cultivar groups.**
- Gherkin cultivation, processing and exports started in India during the early 1990s with a modest beginning in Karnataka State in South India and later extended to the neighbouring states of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.
- In these **regions ideal soil type and the desirable temperatures of not less than 15 degrees Centigrade and not more than 35 degrees Centigrade make these regions desirable** for Gherkins cultivation.
- Nearly **15% production of the world's gherkin requirement is grown in India.**
- Gherkins is currently exported to more than **20 countries, with major destinations being North America, European countries and Oceanic countries**

such as USA, France, Germany, Australia, Spain, South Korea, Canada, Japan, Belgium, Russia, China, Sri Lanka and Israel.

Significance

- Gherkins are grown in contact with small and marginal farmers.
- Currently, there are more than 1, 00,000 small and marginal farmers who are engaged in the production of gherkins.
- This is the industry, which has showcased the true and successful model of contract farming, with which the industry is able to have a good quality control over the final produce as per the requirement of the international market.
- Contract farming can be defined as an agreement between farmers and processing and/or marketing firms for the production and supply of agricultural products under forward agreements, frequently at predetermined prices.
- Over 700 crore worth of Indian Gherkins are exported every year with an ever increasing demand because of the Quality Assurance given by the manufacturers.
- Apart from its export potential, the gherkin industry plays a key role in the creation of rural employment.