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INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

#PARTNERS IN THE BLUE PACIFIC INITIATIVE

- Recently, **US and its allies- Australia, New Zealand, Japan and the United Kingdom** — have launched a new initiative called '**Partners in the Blue Pacific**' for "**effective and efficient cooperation**" with the region's small island nations. Areas where PBP aims to enhance cooperation include "climate crisis, connectivity and transportation, **maritime security** and protection, health, prosperity, and education".

What is the Partners in the Blue Pacific (PBP) initiative?

- The PBP is a **five-nation "informal mechanism"** to support Pacific islands and to boost diplomatic, economic ties in the region.
- It speaks of enhancing "**prosperity and security**" in **the Pacific** through closer cooperation. It means that through the PBP, these countries together and individually will **direct more resources** towards the Pacific Island Countries.

What is Pacific Islands Forum (PIF)?

The Pacific Islands Forum is the region's premier political and economic policy organization. Founded in 1971, it comprises **18 members**: Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

What is being done by the US and its allies to counter China?

Before launching the PBP, the US and its partners started the **Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF)**, a **trade-boosting play** in the region with **13 nations**- Australia, Brunei, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, Fiji and Vietnam. G7 announced a plan- **Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII)** to rival **China's Belt and Road Initiative** by promising to raise **600 billion dollars** to fund development projects in low and middle-income countries.

What are the Highlights of the India-PICs Relations?

- India's interaction with the PICs is still largely driven by the presence of sizable Indian Diaspora in the region.
- Nearly **40% of Fiji's population is of Indian origin and about 3000 Indians live in Papua New Guinea at present.**
- In terms of institutional engagements, India participates in the Pacific Island Forum (PIF) as one of the key dialogue partners of the Forum.
- The most important development in facilitating India's interaction with the PICs in recent years has been the formation of an action-oriented **Forum for India and Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC)**.
- FIPIC, a multinational grouping, was launched in 2014.

#HIGHLIGHTS OF 48TH G7 SUMMIT

- Recently, at the 48th G7 Summit, Indian Prime Minister invited the **G7 Nations** to tap into the huge market for **clean energy technologies** emerging in the country.
- Germany** holds the presidency of the G7 in 2022.
- The German Presidency has invited Argentina, India, Indonesia, Senegal and South Africa to the G7 Summit.

What is Group of Seven (G7)?

- It is an **intergovernmental organisation** that was **formed in 1975**.
- The bloc meets annually to discuss issues of common interest like **global economic governance, international security and energy policy**.

- The G7 countries are the **UK, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the US.**
- **All the G7 countries and India are a part of G20.**
- **The G7 does not have a formal charter or a secretariat.** The presidency, which rotates among member countries each year, is in charge of setting the agenda. **Sherpas, ministers and envoys hammer out policy initiatives before the summit.**
- As of 2022, **G7 countries make up 10% of the world's population, 31% of global GDP, and 21% of global carbon dioxide emissions,** according to the **Summit website.** **China and India, the two most**



populous countries with among the largest GDP figures in the world, are not part of the grouping.

- In all G7 countries, annual public sector expenditure exceeded revenue in 2021. Most G7 countries also had a **high level of gross debt**, especially **Japan (263% of GDP), Italy (151%) and the US (133%).**
- The G7 countries are important players in global trade. The US and Germany in particular are major export nations. Both sold goods worth well over a trillion US dollars abroad in 2021.

What are the Other Highlights of G7 Summit?

- **PGII:** G7 announced the collective mobilization of **600 billion dollars by 2027** under **Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII)** to deliver “game-changing” and “transparent” infrastructure projects to developing and middle-income countries.
- **LiFE Campaign:** Indian Prime Minister highlighted Global Initiative for **LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment)** campaign.
- The goal of this campaign is to encourage an eco-friendly lifestyle.
- **Stand on Russia-Ukraine Crisis:** Russia-Ukraine crisis has pushed the energy prices to a record high, Indian Prime Minister addressed the need for equal **energy distribution amongst the population of rich and poor nations.**
- **On Russia-Ukraine war,** Prime Minister reiterated his stand that there must be an immediate end to the hostilities and a resolution should be reached by choosing the path of dialogue and diplomacy.

What is Clean Energy Technology?

- **About:** It refers to **any process, product or service that reduces negative environmental impacts** through significant energy efficiency improvements, **sustainable use of resources** or environmental protection activities.
- Clean energy technologies **also endure economic growth** by enhancing the supply of energy demand and **tackling environmental challenges** and their impacts due to the use of other conventional sources of energy and their impacts due to the **use of other conventional sources of energy.**

#PAKISTAN CONTINUES TO REMAIN ON FATF GREY LIST

- Recently, Pakistan got a reprieve from the **Financial Action Task Force (FATF)** as FATF announced that the country could be removed from the grey list. FATF is expected to decide whether to take Pakistan off the 'grey' list at the end of its plenary session in Berlin in October.
- Pakistan has been on the FATF grey list continuously since June 2018.

Composition in FATF

- FATF currently comprises **37 member jurisdictions** and two regional organizations (**European Commission & GCC**), representing most major financial centers in all parts of the globe.
- **India** has been a **member of the FATF since 2010**.
- **India** is also a member of its regional partners, the **Asia Pacific Group (APG)** and the **Eurasian Group (EAG)**.
- **Headquarters:**
- Its Secretariat is located at the **OECD** headquarters in Paris.

Lists under FATF:

- **Grey List:** Countries that are considered **safe haven** for supporting **terror funding and money laundering** are put in the **FATF grey list**.
- This inclusion serves as a warning to the country that it may enter the blacklist.
- **Black List:** Countries known as Non-Cooperative Countries or Territories (NCCTs) are put in the **blacklist**.
- These countries support **terror funding and money laundering activities**.
- The FATF revises the blacklist regularly, adding or deleting entries.
- Currently, **Iran and Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)** are under High-risk Jurisdiction or black list.
- **Sessions:** The **FATF Plenary** is the **decision-making body** of the FATF.
- It meets **three times per year**.

Financial Action Task Force (FATF)

The FATF is an **inter-governmental body** that sets international standards seeking to prevent **international financial crimes that aid terrorism**.

The FATF was **established** in July 1989 by a **G-7 Summit in Paris**, initially to examine and develop measures to combat money laundering.

Mandate: After the 9/11 attacks, the FATF in October 2001 expanded its mandate to incorporate efforts to **combat terrorist financing**.

In April 2012, it added efforts to **counter the financing of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction**.

The FATF has developed the **FATF Recommendations, or FATF Standards**, which ensure a **co-ordinated global response to prevent organised crime, corruption and terrorism**.

Over 200 jurisdictions around the world have **committed to the FATF Recommendations** through the global network of nine FATF-Style Regional Bodies (FSRBs) and FATF memberships.

What is the grey list, and why is Pakistan on it?

- **Grey listing** means **FATF has placed a country under increased monitoring to check its progress on measures against money laundering and terrorism financing**.
- The "**grey list**" is also known as the "**increased monitoring list**".

Countries in Grey List:

- As of March 2022, there are 23 countries on the FATF's increased monitoring list — officially referred to as "**jurisdictions with strategic deficiencies**" — that include **Pakistan, Syria, Turkey, Myanmar, Philippines, South Sudan, Uganda, and Yemen**.
- **Removal from the List:**
- To be pulled out of the grey list, a **country** has to **fulfill the tasks recommended by the FATF**, for instance, confiscating properties of individuals associated with terrorist groups.
- If the FATF is satisfied with the progress, it removes the country from the list.
- The FATF most recently took **Zimbabwe**, and before that **Botswana and Mauritius**, off the grey list.

#WEST SETI HYDROPOWER PROJECT

- India will be taking over **West Seti Hydropower Project** nearly four years after China withdrew from it, ending a six-year engagement between 2012 and 2018.
- Earlier, the Indian Prime Minister visited Lumbini, where he celebrated **2566th Buddha Jayanti** celebrations, also Nepal invited India to invest in West Seti Hydropower Project.

What is the West Seti Power Project?

- It is a proposed **750-megawatt Hydropower Project**, which is to be built on the **Seti river in far-western Nepal**, which has remained on the drawing board for the last six decades.
- Lately, the government has **remodeled the project as West Seti and Seti River (SR-6)**, a joint storage project, with the capacity to generate 1,200 megawatts of electricity.
- This storage or reservoir will **fill up during the monsoon season and the water will be drawn to generate power during peak hours** each day in the dry season.
- Its success is expected to **restore India's image in Nepal and give it weightage in future** considerations for hydropower projects, when competition is bound to be tough. West Seti, therefore, **has the potential to be a defining model for Nepal India's power relations in future.**

How have been India-Nepal Power relations?

- Nepal is **rich in power sources with around 6,000 rivers and an estimated potential for 83,000 MW.**
- **Mahakali treaty was signed back in 1996**, to produce 6,480 MW, but India has still not been able to come out with the Detailed project Report.
- The Upper Karnali project, for which the multinational GMR signed the contract, has not made any headway for years.
- **India's success in executing the 900-MW Arun Three project in eastern Nepal's Sankhuwa Sabha**, and whose foundation was laid in 2018 and which is set for completion by 2023 has helped build faith in India recently.
- During the Indian PM's visit to Nepal in 2014, he had said **India must start executing its projects timely.**

How have been India-Nepal Diplomatic Ties?

- After a standoff between Nepal and India led to the economic blockade of 2015, **equations changed after the new PM Deuba took over Oli**, who visited India recently where he decided to establish Fraternal Ties with India.
- Nepal is an **important neighbour of India and occupies special significance** in its foreign policy because of the geographic, historical, cultural and economic linkages/ties that span centuries.
- The India-Nepal **Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1950** forms the bedrock of the special relations that exist between India and Nepal.
- Rivers originating in Nepal feed the **perennial river systems** of India in terms of ecology and hydropower potential.
- However, the **border issue** erupted in November 2019 when Nepal had released a new political map that claims Kalapani, Limpiyadhura and Lipulekh of Uttarakhand as part of Nepal's territory. The area of Susta (West Champaran district, Bihar) can also be noted in the new map.

#HIGHLIGHTS OF 14TH BRICS SUMMIT

- Recently, Prime Minister of India attended the 14th BRICS summit which was virtually hosted by China.
- **Theme of the 14th BRICS Summit:**
- Foster High-quality BRICS Partnership, Usher in a New Era for Global Development.
- BRICS Plus virtual conference was also held as part of the main meeting **with ministers from countries, including the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Kazakhstan, Indonesia, Argentina, Nigeria, Senegal, and Thailand.**



What are the Key Highlights of the Summit?

- **Adopting the Beijing Declaration:** It states that **BRICS** supports talks between Russia and Ukraine.
- The grouping is willing to support the United Nations' and the **International Committee of the Red Cross's (ICRC)** efforts to deliver humanitarian aid to Ukraine.
- Countries also expressed concerns about the situation in Taliban-held Afghanistan.
- Discussions on the Issues: Concerns over the humanitarian situation in and around Ukraine and expressed their support to efforts of the UN Secretary-General, UN Agencies and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to provide humanitarian assistance in accordance with the basic principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality.
- While discussing terrorism and terror cooperation, the BRICS countries said that only the **UN Security Council has the authority for imposing sanctions.**
- On Afghanistan, BRICS countries called for "Afghanistan authorities to achieve national reconciliation through dialogue and negotiation, and to establish a broad-based and inclusive and representative political structure", adding that **Afghan territory must not be used to shelter terrorists**

What is BRICS?

- BRICS is an **acronym** for the grouping of the world's leading emerging economies, namely **Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.**
- **In 2001**, the **British Economist Jim O'Neill** coined the term BRIC to describe the four emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India, and China.
- The grouping was **formalised** during the first meeting of BRIC Foreign Ministers' **in 2006.**
- **South Africa was invited to join BRIC in December 2010**, after which the group adopted the acronym BRICS.
- **Chairmanship:** The **chairmanship of the forum is rotated annually** among the members, in accordance with the acronym B-R-I-C-S.
- **India is the chair for 2021.**

Initiatives of the BRICS:

- **New Development Bank:** During the **Sixth BRICS Summit in Fortaleza (Brazil) in 2014**, the leaders signed the Agreement establishing the **New Development Bank (NDB - Shanghai, China).**
- It has so far approved 70 infrastructure and sustainable development projects worth.

or attack any other country.

#WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION (WTO)'S APPELLATE BODY

- There was no discussion to revive the **World Trade Organization's (WTO) Appellate Body (AB)**, which has been **redundant since 2019**, at the recently concluded **12th ministerial conference**.

What is WTO's Appellate Body?

- WTO was established to **provide a platform for negotiations for liberating trade and creating rules**, as well as to monitor and administer multilateral trades.
- One of the key **objectives was also to address the grievances between its members by acting as a court for global trade**. The Appellate Body, set up in 1995, is a standing committee of seven members **with a limited four-year term** that presides over appeals against judgments passed in **trade-related disputes brought by WTO members**.
- Disputes arise when a member country observes that another member government is breaching a commitment, or a trade agreement made at the WTO.

What are the Disputes Involving India at the WTO?

- The disputes where India is a **complaining party** are countervailing duty by the US on Indian steel products; measures by America concerning non-immigrant visas; renewable energy programmes of the US; and import duties imposed on steel and aluminium products by America.
- WTO disputes where India is a responding party** include prohibition by India on import of poultry and poultry products filed by the US, and import duties on certain information and **communication technology goods** filed by the EU, Japan and Taiwan.

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION (WTO)

- The WTO is the successor to the **General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)**, which was created in 1947. The **Uruguay Round (1986-94)** of the GATT led to the WTO's creation. WTO began operations on 1st January, 1995.
- The Agreement Establishing the WTO, commonly known as the **"Marrakesh Agreement"**, was signed in Marrakesh, Morocco in 1994.
- WTO is an **international organization** dealing with the rules of trade between nations.
- Main difference between **GATT and WTO** was that **GATT mostly dealt with trade in goods**, the WTO and its agreements could not only cover goods but also trade in services and other intellectual properties like trade creations, designs, and inventions.
- Headquarters:** Geneva, Switzerland.

Members:

- The WTO has **164 members** (including **European Union**) and **23 observer governments** (like Iran, Iraq, Bhutan, Libya etc).
- India is a founder member** of the 1947 GATT and its successor, the WTO.
- Governing Structure:**
- Ministerial Conference:** Structure of the WTO is dominated by its highest authority, the Ministerial Conference, **composed of representatives of all WTO members**, which is required to **meet at least every two years** and which can take decisions on all matters under any of the multilateral trade agreements.
- General Council:** It is **composed of all WTO members** and is **required to report to the Ministerial Conference**.

#STOCKHOLM PLUS 50

- Stockholm+50** is being held in **Stockholm, Sweden**.
- It will **commemorate the 50 years since the 1972 United Nations (UN) Conference on the Human Environment** (also known as the Stockholm Conference).
- The **UN General Assembly** will be convening this international meeting. This is being held at a time **when the world is facing a triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution and waste, nature and biodiversity loss**, as well as other planetary issues even after 50 years of the Stockholm Declaration.



- A sustainable recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic will also remain as one of agenda points.

What is Stockholm Conference, 1972?

- **Background:** Climate change was **first discussed** using emerging scientific evidence in the **UN General Assembly in 1968**.
- In **1967**, a research study provided the **actual estimates of global temperature based on CO₂ levels**. Also, it was predicted that the **doubling of CO₂ from the current level would result in nearly 2°C rise in global temperature**.
- The **idea of the Stockholm Conference was first proposed by Sweden**. That's why it's also termed the **"Swedish Initiative"**.

About:

- The **United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm** was held from **5th – 16th June, 1972**.
- This was the **first global convergence on the planetary environment**.
- The theme was **'Only One Earth'**.
- **122 countries participated** in the conference.

What is the importance of Stockholm, 1972?

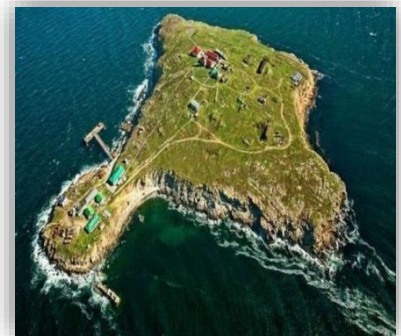
- The first global conference on the environment **happened when the environment was not a global concern** or a subject of importance for any nation.
- Previously, the **UN charter never contained the domain of environment to deal with**.
- **No country had an environment ministry until 1972**.
- Afterwards, countries like **Norway and Sweden set up their ministries for the environment**.
- **In 1985, India set up its ministry of environment and forest**.
- After 1972, **environmental issues** like species extinction and mercury poisoning started making headlines and public consciousness increased.
- The Stockholm conference **started the contemporary "environmental era"**.
- **Many of today's conventions** on the environmental crises **trace their origin to the Stockholm Declaration**.
- **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**
- **United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)**
- **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**

#SNAKE ISLAND: RUSSIA UKRAINE CONFLICT

- **Ukraine** has caused significant losses to the Russian military in airstrikes on Zmiinyi Island, also known as **Snake Island**, in the **Black Sea**.
- The hit on the island is believed to be the second major military success using missiles given to Ukraine by the West.

Where is Snake Island?

- **Features:** **Zmiinyi Island**, also known as **Snake or Serpent Island**, is a small piece of rock less than 700 metres from end to end, that has been described as being **X-shaped**.
- **Location:** It is located 35 km from the coast in the **Black Sea**, to the east of the mouth of the **Danube** and roughly southwest of the **port city of Odessa**.
- The Danube is the **second longest river in Europe after the Volga**. It rises in the Black Forest mountains of western Germany and flows for some 2,850 km to its mouth on the Black Sea.



- The island is marked on the map by the tiny village of Bile that is located on it, belongs to **Ukraine**.

Where is the Black Sea?

- Black Sea is bound by **Ukraine to the north and northwest, Russia and Georgia to the east, Turkey to the south, and Bulgaria and Romania to the west.**
- **Straits: Black Sea** links to the **Sea of Marmara** through the **Bosphorus** and then to the **Aegean Sea through the Dardanelles**, has traditionally been Russia's warm water gateway to Europe.
- The Black Sea is also connected to the **Sea of Azov** by the **Strait of Kerch**.

Significance for Russia:

- Domination of the Black Sea region is a **geostrategic imperative for Moscow, both to project Russian power in the Mediterranean and to secure the economic gateway to key markets in southern Europe.**
- **Russia** has been making efforts to **gain complete control over the Black Sea since the Crimean crisis of 2014.**
- The domination of the Black Sea has been a major Russian objective of the ongoing war, along with the land bridge to connect Russia and Crimea.
- **Cutting Ukrainian access to the Black Sea** will reduce it to a **landlocked country** and deal a crippling blow to its trade logistics.

#12TH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE OF WTO

- India will **oppose the continuation of a moratorium on Customs Duties on electronic transmission (E-Transmission) at the World Trade Organization's (WTO) 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12)** starting in June 2022 as it favors developed nations only.
- The moratorium was extended at the 11th MC in Argentina in 2017 for two years. In the General Council meeting in December 2019, members agreed to maintain the current practice till the 12th MC.



What is the E-transmission Moratorium?

- The WTO members **had agreed not to impose customs duties on electronic transmissions since 1998** and the moratorium has been periodically extended at successive Ministerial Conferences (MC), which is the highest decision making body of the 164-member organisation (WTO).
- The **moratorium is on digitisable products** like photographic films, cinematographic films, printed matter, music, media, software, and video games.
- In 1998, ministers at the Second Ministerial Conference adopted the **Declaration on Global Electronic Commerce**, calling for the **establishment of a work programme on e-commerce**, which was adopted later that year.
- Since **most countries didn't have concrete policies on e-commerce**, which was an emerging area of trade in even developed countries in 1998, they had decided to establish a work programme on it to hold intensive talks and impose a moratorium on customs duties on electronics transmission. In 1998, the General Council of the WTO established the work programme on e-commerce to **comprehensively examine all trade-related issues pertaining to global e-commerce** by considering the economic, financial and development needs of emerging economies.

What does India seek at the Meeting?

- At the 12th MC in June 2022, many WTO members are seeking temporary extension of the moratorium till 13th MC but **India does not want this time to continue this further.**

- India and South Africa on several occasions have asked the organization to revisit the issue and have **highlighted the adverse impact of the moratorium on developing countries**.
- India wants the **WTO to intensify the work programme on the e-commerce sector**.
- India has also stated that the Council for Trade in Goods, Council for Trade in Services, Council for TRIPS (Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) and the Committee for Trade and Development **should take up discussions on e-commerce as per their respective mandates** originally set.

#ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION & ITS FUNCTION

- Recently, the **Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)** condemned and denounced the comments on Prophet Muhammed made by two Indians.
- Ministry of External Affairs rejected the OIC comments, adding that the views expressed by the individuals did not reflect the views of the Indian government.
- Earlier, India has **lashed out at the OIC for being "communal minded"** amid the **Karnataka hijab row**.

What is the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation?

- **About:** The OIC claims to be the **"collective voice of the Muslim world"**.
- It was established at a 1969 summit in Rabat (Morocco) after what it describes as the 'criminal arson' of **Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem**.
- **Members:** It has 57 member Countries. India is not a Member of OIC.
- **Headquarters:** Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

How does OIC Function?

- **Membership:** U. N. members with a **Muslim majority can join the organisation**.
- The membership is to be **ratified with full consensus** at the OIC's Council of Foreign Ministers.
- The same provisions apply for **acquiring an observer status**.
- **Decision Making:**
- All decision-making in the forum **requires a quorum defined by the presence of two-thirds of the member states** and complete consensus.
- In case a consensus cannot be reached, decisions shall be made by a **two-thirds majority of members present and voting**.
- The Council of Foreign Ministers is the **chief decision-making body and meets annually to decide on how to implement the OIC's general policies**.
- They take decisions and resolutions on matters of common interest, review their progress, consider and approve programmes and their budgets, consider specific issues bothering member states and recommend establishing a new organ or committee.
- **Finance:** The OIC is financed by **the member states proportionate to their national incomes**.
- A member's voting rights are **suspended when their arrears equal or exceed the amount of contributions** due from them for the preceding two years.
- The member is **only allowed to vote if the Council of Foreign Ministers is satisfied** that the failure is due to conditions beyond the member's control.

What is the Status of India's relationship with OIC as an organisation?

- As a country with the world's **second largest Muslim community**, India had been **invited to the founding conference at Rabat in 1969**, but was humiliatingly ejected at Pakistan's behest.
- India **stayed away** because of a multiplicity of reasons:
- It **did not want to join an organisation founded on religion**.
- There was the **risk that improving bilateral relations with individual member states would come under pressure** in a grouping, especially on issues such as Kashmir.
- At the 45th session of the Foreign Ministers' Summit in 2018, Bangladesh, the host, suggested that India, where more than 10% of the world's Muslims live, **should be given Observer status, but Pakistan opposed the proposal**.
- In 2019, India made its **maiden appearance at the OIC Foreign Ministers' meeting**, as a "guest of honour".
- This first-time invitation was **seen as a diplomatic victory for India**, especially at a time of heightened tensions with Pakistan following the Pulwama attack.

#WORLD SUMMIT OF INFORMATION SOCIETY 2022

- Minister of Communications attended the opening ceremony of the **World Summit of Information Society (WSIS) 2022** in Geneva, Switzerland, where **India showcased its telecom prowess during multilateral & bilateral engagements**. The participation comes with India contesting the re-election to the **ITU (International Telecommunication Union) Council**, for the term 2023-2026. India has been a member of ITU, since 1869 and has been continuously participating, actively in the works, and activities of the Union.



What is WSIS?

- The World Summit on the Information Society Forum 2022 represents the world's **largest annual gathering of the 'ICT for development' community**.
- The Forum provides **structured opportunities to network learn and participate in multi-stakeholder discussions and consultations on WSIS implementation**.
- The Agenda and Programme of the Forum will be built on the basis of the submissions received during the Open Consultation Process.
- Furthermore, the 2022 WSIS Forum will **provide an opportunity to serve as a platform to track the achievements of WSIS Action Lines** in collaboration with the UN Agencies involved and provide information and analyses of the implementation of WSIS Action Lines since 2005.

What is Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF)?

- USOF** ensures that there is universal **non-discriminatory access to quality ICT** services at economically efficient prices to people in rural and remote areas.
- Currently, it is charged at the rate of 5%, while the TSPs demand it to be reduced to 3%.
- It was created under the Department of Telecommunications in **2002**.
- It is a **non-lapsable fund**, i.e., the unspent amount under a targeted financial year does not lapse and is accrued for next years' spending.
- All credits to this fund require **parliamentary approval** and it has a **statutory support** under **Indian Telegraph (Amendment) Act, 2003**.

#AUS-INDIA WATER SECURITY INITIATIVE (AIWASI)

- The Union Cabinet has approved a MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) between India and Australia on **Technical Cooperation for Australia -India water Security initiative (AIWASI)**.

What is AIWASI?

- AIWASI is a project Under **South Asia Water Security Initiative (SAWASI)** of Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Australia.
- It aims to work towards the **Water Sensitive City vision** which is based on **holistic management of the integrated water cycle**.
- AIWASI will **strengthen India's water governance** and **undertake investments** that provide.
- urban water services,
- support to disadvantaged communities to access reliable, safe water and sanitation services.
- The project will undertake and deliver a **Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) demonstration project**.
- This AIWASI project is also a '**living laboratory**' with **multiple educational, social and environmental**



benefits like water literacy of students and the community, creation of green spaces, improved air quality from blue-green infrastructure and rejuvenation of degraded water bodies and aquifers.

What are the Related Initiatives?

- Creation of Jal shakti ministry
- National water mission
- Jal shakti abhiyan
- NITI Aayog's Composite Water Management Index
- Namami Gange
- Jal Jeevan Mission

#CHINA'S PRESENCE IN HORN OF AFRICA

- Recently, first "China-Horn of Africa Peace, Governance and Development Conference." was held. This is the first time China aims "to play a role in the area of security".
- The conference held in Ethiopia witnessed the participation of foreign Ministries from the following countries of the Horn: Kenya, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia, South Sudan, and Uganda.

What are the Recent Chinese Projects?

- In January 2022, China asserted its three objectives in Africa: **controlling the pandemic, implementing a Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) outcomes, and upholding common interests while fighting hegemonic politics.**
- In the 2021 forum, the entire region of the Horn participated, and **four resolutions were adopted:**
 - **The Dakar Action Plan:**
 - It is **an important benchmark for international cooperation with Africa.** become the development of relations between China and Africa, and that over the past 21 years since its inception, the Forum has strongly promoted The two sides commend the development of relations between China and Africa, and believe
 - **China-Africa Cooperation Vision 2035:** It was formulated to determine the directions and objectives of mid- and long-term cooperation and promote a closer community with a shared future for China and Africa.
 - **Sino-African Declaration on Climate Change:** It is aimed at enhancing coordination and cooperation in the multilateral process on climate, and jointly safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of China, Africa and other developing countries.
 - **Declaration of the Eighth Ministerial Conference of FOCAC:** Community with a Shared Future in the New Era" "Deepen China-Africa Partnership and Promote Sustainable Development to Build a China-Africa Under the theme and committed to the development of FOCAC and to the deepening of the China-Africa comprehensive strategic and cooperative partnership, both adopted by consensus the Community with a Shared Future in the New Era" "Deepen China-Africa Partnership and Promote Sustainable Development to Build a China-Africa Under the theme **Dakar Declaration of the Eighth Ministerial Conference of FOCAC.**
 - **The FOCAC promotes China's role in the infrastructural and societal development of the Horn.**

What is Horn of Africa?

- The Horn of Africa is a **peninsula in Northeast Africa.**
- Located on the **easternmost part of the African mainland**, it is the fourth largest peninsula in the world.
- It lies **along the southern boundary of the Red Sea and extends hundreds of kilometres into the Guardafui Channel, Gulf of Aden, and Indian Ocean.**
- The Horn of Africa is equidistant from the equator and the Tropic of Cancer.
- The Horn contains such diverse areas as the **highlands of the Ethiopian Plateau, the Ogaden desert, and the Eritrean and Somali coasts.**
- The Horn of Africa denotes the region containing the countries of **Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia.**

#RIMPAC-22 EXERCISE

- The RIMPAC-22 exercise will be held in and close to the Hawaiian Islands and Southern California from 29th June to 4th August,
- 27 countries are participating in the current edition of the multi-dimensional exercise.



What is RIMPAC-22?

- **About:** It's one of the **largest biennial multilateral Naval Exercises**, which is led by US.
- The RIMPAC **started in 1971 as an annual exercise** by the US, Australia, and Canada. But from 1974, maritime exercise became a biennial event.
- It is aimed at **enhancing interoperability and building trust among Navies** of friendly foreign countries.
- **Theme for 2022:** The theme of RIMPAC 2022 is '**capable, adaptive, partners**'.

India's Participation:

- India **first participated in RIMPAC in 2014** when the indigenously built Shivalik class stealth frigate INS Sahyadri took part in the exercise.
- **INS Sahyadri again represented the country in the 2018 edition** of the event.
- In between, in 2016, INS Satpura joined the maritime exercise. Before 2014, the Indian Navy's presence in the wargames was only as an observer for the 2006, 2010 and 2012 editions.
- In the current edition, Indian Navy's INS Satpura and one **P8I maritime patrol aircraft** are participating in the exercise.

What are the Features of P8I Maritime Patrol Aircraft?

- P-8I is a long-range, **multi-mission maritime patrol aircraft** being manufactured by Boeing for the Indian Navy.
- It was designed to protect the coastline and territorial waters of India. It can conduct anti-submarine warfare (ASW), anti-surface warfare (AsuW), intelligence, maritime patrol, and surveillance and reconnaissance missions.
- What is INS SATPURA?
- INS Satpura is an **indigenously designed** and built 6000-tonne guided missile stealth frigate equipped to seek and destroy adversaries in air, surface and underwater.
- A frontline unit of Eastern Fleet based at Visakhapatnam, INS Satpura is currently on an extended operational deployment in the 75th year of India's Independence.

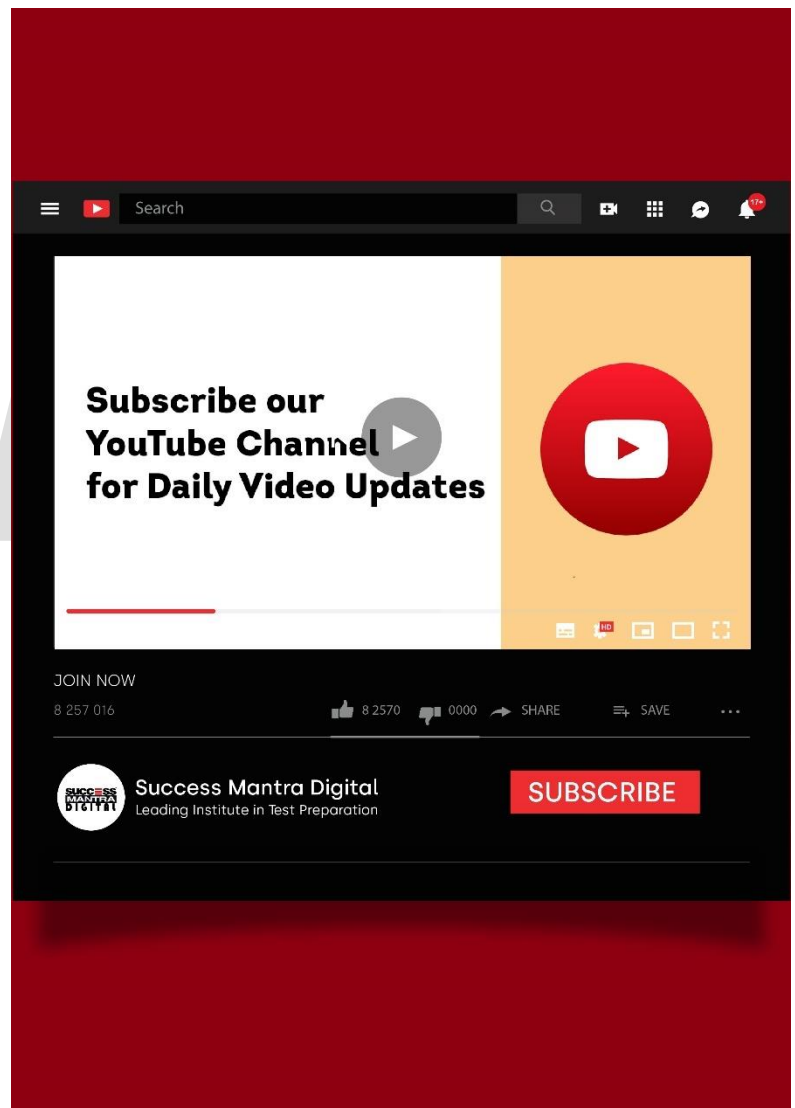
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