

Current Affairs : 12 July 2022

WEST ASIAN QUAD

Context

- The forum named **I2U2**, which brings together India, Israel, the United Arab Emirates and the United States is going to hold its very **first virtual summit of leaders** during Joe Biden's visit to Israel on 14th July 2022.
- The summit is significant since it puts the top leadership's political endorsement on the forum.
- First virtual summit of the **foreign ministers** of the US, India, Israel and UAE was held in October 2021 where I2U2 was launched.

About I2U2

- **On lines of Quad:** The group (I2U2) is already being dubbed the 'New Quad' or the 'Middle-Eastern Quad' on the lines of the **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue** (QSD or Quad), a strategic dialogue between the United States, India, Japan and Australia.
- **Interests:** It is an entirely new grouping of partners that will focus on expanding economic and political cooperation in Asia and Middle East through energy cooperation, trade, coordination on vital shared interests and combating climate change.

Factors Responsible for New Grouping

- **Abraham Accord:** The new grouping is possible after the resumption of formal diplomatic relations between Israel and the UAE, through the Abraham Accord.
- Under the Abraham accords promoted by the Trump Administration, the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco set up formal ties with Israel in 2020.
- **Tackling Turkey's Regional Dominance:** The new Quad can be termed as a result of converging interests between India, the UAE, and Israel amidst Turkey's assertive claims for the leadership of the Islamic world.
- **US Pivot to East Asia:** The summit comes at a time when US is seeking to lessen its footprint in the Middle East as part of its **pivot to East Asia to tackle China's rise**.

Challenges in I2U2 for USA ahead of Biden's visit

- **Saudi critical support:** Getting Saudi support for reducing the pressure on global oil prices in the wake of the Ukraine war.

- **Rejuvenating ties:** Recalibrating US ties with Saudi Arabia
- **Bridging gaps:** Deepening the normalisation of relations between Israel and the Arab states
- **Appeasement:** Persuading Israel to seek reconciliation with the Palestinians
- **Resolution:** Renewing American engagement with the Palestinian Authority

Significance for India

- **US affirmation:** India's inclusion in the I2U2 summit underlines the US bet that India can contribute significantly to peace and prosperity in the region.
- **Fresh political will:** India's engagement underlines a new political will in Delhi to break the old taboos on India's West Asian engagement.
- **Unconventional relations:** I2U2 signifies India's new thinking in the Middle East as the summit involves three countries (Israel, UAE ,USA) that India had traditionally kept a safe political distance from.
- **Shift Towards Regional Approach:** The four-nation meeting suggests that India is now ready to move from bilateral relations conducted in separate silos towards an integrated regional policy.
- **Strategic interests:** While Israel is a trusted **defence partner** of India, the UAE is amongst the **top oil exporters** to India. With India undertaking an overhaul in its defence infrastructure and the critical energy scenario prevailing in the world, this engagement is quite significant.
- Last year, the three countries (India, UAE, Israel) also signed a pact that involves producing robotic solar cleaning technology in India for a project in the UAE by an Israel-based company, Ecoppia.

Background of India's relations with respective nations in I2U2

India's relations with Israel

- Though India was one of the first countries to recognize Israel in 1950, but then PM **Jawaharlal Nehru** held back from establishing full diplomatic relations with the Jewish state.
- **PV Narasimha Rao** reversed that policy in 1992 but he did not travel to Israel nor did he receive an Israeli prime minister.
- **Atal Bihari Vajpayee**, holding more empathetic view of Israel, hosted Israeli PM Ariel Sharon in 2003.

- Between **2004-14**, there were no prime ministerial visits in either direction.
- However, **after 2014**, PM Modi imparted a political character to the Israel ties.

Transformation of India's relations with the Gulf Kingdoms

- **Preferred engaging with republics:** India's traditional preference in the Arab world was for engaging the republics, due to the **perceptible pro-Pakistan nature** of monarchies.
- **However**, India's ties to the **monarchies** became rather important since the **1970s** owing to varied interests like **hydrocarbons**, the main destination for **Indian labour** exports, and a major source of hard currency **remittances**.
- **No official visits:** No Indian PM visited Saudi Arabia between 1982 and 2010 and UAE between 1981 and 2015.
- **Building personal ties:** On his part, PM Modi found a way to build a personal rapport with the rulers of Saudi and UAE and develop strong ties with these governments **without a reference to Pakistan**.
- **UAE tie-up:** PM Modi, travelled four times to the UAE alone, negotiated a free trade agreement with it. The UAE also backed India's 2019 constitutional changes in Kashmir and is ready to invest in the union territory.

India's relations with US

- The immediate focus of India's policy after independence was to actively oppose US moves in the Middle East region in the name of promoting an "area of peace".
- However, this policy of India had no lasting impact as many regional countries sought active economic, political, and security cooperation with the US and the West.
- The I2U2 marks a **big break from the anti-Western tradition** in India's approach to the region.

INDIA PROJECTED TO SURPASS CHINA AS MOST POPULOUS COUNTRY NEXT

YR: UN

In News:

- The 2022 edition of the United Nations' World Population Prospects (WPP) has been released.
- It was released on the World Population Day (11 July).

- The report says that India is projected to surpass China as the world's most populous country in 2023.

World Population Prospects (WPP)

- The Population Division (under Department of Economic and Social Affairs) of the UN has been publishing the WPP in a biennial cycle since 1951.
 - The 2022 report is the twenty-seventh edition.
- Each revision of the WPP provides a historical time series of population indicators starting in 1950.
- It does so by taking into account newly released national data to revise estimates of past trends in fertility, mortality or international migration.

Key Highlights of 2022 report

TOP 10 POPULOUS COUNTRIES (POPULATION IN BILLION)			
	1990	2022	2050
1	China (1,144)	China (1,426)	India (1,668)
2	India (861)	India (1,412)	China (1,317)
3	US (246)	US (337)	US (375)
4	Indonesia (181)	Indonesia (275)	Nigeria (375)
5	Brazil (149)	Pakistan (234)	Pakistan (366)
6	Russia (148)	Nigeria (216)	Indonesia (311)
7	Japan (123)	Brazil (215)	Brazil (231)
8	Pakistan (114)	Bangladesh (170)	Congo (215)
9	Bangladesh (106)	Russia (145)	Ethiopia (213)
10	Nigeria (94)	Mexico (127)	Bangladesh (200)
11	Mexico (81)	Japan (124)	Mexico (144)
12		Ethiopia (122)	Russia (133)
13			
14			
15			
16		Congo (97)	

- **The world's population continues to grow, but the pace of growth is slowing down**
 - The global population is expected to grow to around 8.5 billion in 2030, 9.7 billion in 2050 and 10.4 billion in 2100.
 - In 2020, the global growth rate fell under 1% per year for the first time since 1950.

- **Rates of population growth vary significantly across countries and regions**
 - More than half of the projected increase in global population up to 2050 will be concentrated in just eight countries including India and Pakistan.
 - The 46 least developed countries (LDCs) are among the world's fastest-growing.
- **The population of older persons is increasing both in numbers and as a share of the total**
 - The share of the global population aged 65 years or above is projected to rise from 10% in 2022 to 16% in 2050.
- **A sustained drop in fertility has led to an increased concentration of the population at working ages (between 25 and 64 years)**

- This shift in the age distribution provides a time-bound opportunity for accelerated economic growth known as the “demographic dividend”.
- **Rapid population growth is both a cause and a consequence of slow progress in development**
 - Sustained high fertility and rapid population growth present challenges to the achievement of sustainable development.
 - The necessity of educating growing numbers of children and young people, for example, draws resources away from efforts to improve the quality of education.
 - At the same time, achieving the SDGs, particularly those related to health, education and gender, is likely to hasten the transition towards lower fertility in countries with continuing high levels.
- **More and more countries have begun to experience population decline**
 - Fertility has fallen markedly in recent decades for many countries.
 - Today, two-thirds of the global population lives in a country or area where lifetime fertility is below 2.1 births per woman
- **The COVID-19 pandemic has affected all three components of population change** (the three components of population change are births, deaths, and migration)
 - Global life expectancy at birth fell to 71.0 years in 2021, down from 72.8 in 2019, due mostly to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Available evidence about the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on fertility levels remains mixed.
 - In low- and middle-income countries, the availability of and the demand for contraception, as well as reported numbers of unintended pregnancies and births, have remained relatively stable.
 - In high-income countries, it appears that successive waves of the pandemic may have generated short-term fluctuations in numbers of pregnancies and births.
 - The pandemic severely restricted all forms of human mobility, including international migration.

PM UNVEILS NATIONAL EMBLEM ATOP NEW PARLIAMENT BUILDING

In News:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled a 6.5-metre-tall National Emblem on the roof of the under-construction Parliament building.

National Emblem

- National Emblem of India is a representative seal of the Republic of India. It is an adaptation of the Lion Capital of Asoka at Sarnath.
 - In the original, there are four lions, mounted back to back, on a circular abacus, which itself rests on a bell-shaped lotus.
 - The frieze of the abacus has sculptures in high relief of an elephant, a galloping horse, a bull and a lion separated by intervening Dharma Chakras.
- It was adopted on 26 January 1950.

Features of national emblem

- The adopted version of the State Emblem of India consists of:
 - The profile of the Lion Capital showing three lions mounted on the abacus with a Dharma Chakra in the centre;
 - a bull on the right and a galloping horse on the left, and
 - outlines of Dharma Chakras on the extreme right and left.
- The bell-shaped lotus was omitted.
- The motto Satyameva Jayate, written in Devanagari script below the profile of the Lion Capital is part of the State Emblem of India.

News Summary

- Prime Minister Modi unveiled the National Emblem cast on the roof of the new parliament building.
- The 6.5-metre-high National Emblem is made of bronze, and weighs 9,500 kg.

New Parliament building

- In 2019, the central government announced the redevelopment project to give a new identity to the 'power corridor' of India.
 - This project is known as Central Vista redevelopment project.

- The plan includes:
 - the construction of a new parliament,
 - prime minister and vice-president's residences along with 10 building blocks that will accommodate all government ministries and departments.
- Piloted by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, the plan aims to change the face of the Lutyens' Delhi.
 - Lutyens' Delhi shows off India's iconic buildings such as South and North blocks of Central Secretariat, Parliament House, and Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Need for new Parliament's building

- **Current building is 93-years-old**
 - As per the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, the current building is 93-years-old and poses structural safety concerns.
 - The existing building was designed by Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker.
 - It was inaugurated in January 18, 1927, by then Governor General of India Lord Irwin.
 - The foundation for the existing Parliament was laid by the Duke of Connaught on February 12, 1921.
- Other issues with the existing building
 - Current building is not designed according to fire norms.
 - Excessive repairs have worsened the condition of the building.
 - It has a space constraint.
 - Natural light and ventilation in the chamber of two Houses continues to be blocked because of the two additional floors that were added after independence.
 - The communications infrastructure and technology is dated.
- **Architectural style**
 - The new Parliament building is triangular in shape, and incorporates architectural styles from around India.
 - It has 888 seats in the Lok Sabha chamber and 384 seats in the Rajya Sabha chamber.
 - Unlike the present Parliament building, there is no Central Hall, and the Lok Sabha chamber will be able to house 1,272 members in case of a joint session.

BIRD STRIKES AND AVIATION SAFETY

Following two back-to-back bird strikes incidents, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation in a directive to all airport operators has asked all airports to “review their wildlife hazard management plans” for “within and outside the airfield”.

Bird Trouble

These charts taken from a summary of wildlife strikes reported to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Bird Strike Information System from 2008 to 2015, explains bird strikes; when they occur, which birds are more prone to such incidents, the damage done to aircraft and so on.

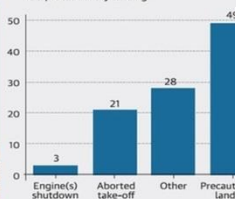
FLIGHT PHASES

Most bird hits happen predominantly during the approach and take-off phases



OFFICE ON FLIGHT

In the event of a bird hit, flights usually resort to a precautionary landing



About:

An analysis of 62,416 verified records by the International Civil Aviation Organization’s (ICAO) Bird Strike Information System showed that most bird hits were in or near airports during the take-off

and approach phases of flight.

- About 60% occurred at or below 30 metres or around 100 feet.
- A report says that in India in 2021, DGCA data has recorded over 1,400 suspected and confirmed wildlife incidents (for 20.5 lakh aircraft movements), up from nearly 840 cases in 2016 (for 22.9 lakh aircraft movements). Most of the incidents were reported from Delhi and Mumbai airports.
- In India’s National Aviation Safety Plan (2018-2022), one of the key safety priorities is looking at “wildlife and bird strikes”.
- Under Safety Performance Indicators of “Number of reported bird strikes at all Indian airports per 10,000 movements”, it lists a Safety Performance Target of 4.26 for the year 2022.

AMRIT SAROVAR MISSION

In a move that could expedite the implementation of railway and highway projects across the country, the Centre has asked the Ministry of Railways and the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) to use the soil or silt excavated from ponds and tanks in all districts under the Amrit Sarovar mission for their



infrastructure projects.

About:

- The water conservation mission launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on April 24 aims at developing and rejuvenating 75 waterbodies in each district in all States as part of the celebrations of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav.
- At least 50,000 waterbodies are expected to be rejuvenated during the nationwide programme that would culminate on August 15, 2023.
- Since the project would involve excavation of several thousands of tonnes of earth in the form of soil or silt, the Ministry of Rural Development has told the Ministry of Railways and the NHAI to map its infrastructure projects with the Amrit Sarovar sites in all States and UTs.

ANTI-DEFECTION LAW

In light of the events in Maharashtra, with the Uddhav Thackeray government facing internal dissent from a block of 22 MLAs led by Eknath Shinde, the anti-defection law has again come into the spotlight.



About:

- The anti-defection law was included in the Constitution as the Tenth Schedule in 1985 to combat the “evil of political defections”. The main purpose was to preserve the stability of governments and insulate them from defections of legislators from the treasury benches.
- The law stated that any Member of Parliament (MP) or that of a State legislature (MLA) would be disqualified from their office if they voted on any motion contrary to the directions issued by their party.
- The provision was not limited to confidence motions or money bills (which are quasi-confidence motions). It applies to all votes in the House, on every Bill and every other issue. It even applies

to the Rajya Sabha and Legislative Councils, which have no say in the stability of the government.

- Therefore, an MP (or MLA) has absolutely no freedom to vote their judgement on any issue. They have to blindly follow the direction of the party. This provision goes against the concept of representative democracy.

SANTHAL TRIBE

The Santhal community is in the spotlight after the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) nominated one of its leaders, Droupadi Murmu, for the election to President of India. There are high chances of for Ms. Murmu to become the first tribal person to become the President.



About:

- **Size:** Santhal is the third largest Scheduled Tribe community in the country after Gond and Bhil.
- **Distribution:** The Santhal population is mostly distributed in Odisha, Jharkhand and West Bengal.

Ms. Murmu's home district, Mayurbhanj, has one of the largest concentrations of the tribe. In Odisha, Santhals are found in Keonjhar and Balasore, other than in Mayurbhanj district.

- **Language:** Santhals speak Santhali which has its own script called Ol Chiki invented by Pundit Raghunath Murmu. Santhali in the Ol Chiki script has been included in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution. Ol-Chiki is the medium of instruction in many schools across the State. Santhal is a subject for postgraduate study.
- **Origin of world:** According to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute (SCSTRTI), Bhubaneswar, the word Santhal is derived from two words: santha meaning calm and peaceful and ala meaning man.

- **Background:** The institute says that in the past, the Santhals had led a nomadic life. Gradually, they came to settle down on the Chhotanagpur plateau. Towards the end of the 18th century, they migrated to the Santhal Parganas of Bihar and then they came to Odisha.
- **Prominent people:** Hemant Soren, a Santhal, is the Chief Minister of Jharkhand. Girish Chandra Murmu, the first Lieutenant-Governor of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, is now Comptroller and Auditor-General of India.

MAJOR ECONOMIES FORUM ON ENERGY AND CLIMATE (MEF)

The Union Minister for Environment, Shri Bhupender Yadav, represented India at the virtual meeting of the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate (MEF), hosted by U.S. President Joseph Biden.



About:

- The Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate (MEF) was launched on March 28, 2009.
- The MEF meeting was aimed at galvanising actions that are to strengthen energy security and tackle the climate crisis thereby building momentum for COP27.
- The meeting was attended by twenty three major economies across the world and the Secretary General of United Nations.

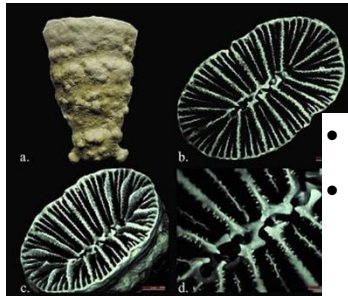
Initiatives by India on climate change

- Shri Bhupender Yadav emphasised that India's initiatives go beyond its borders, including the International Solar Alliance, and the Coalition for Disaster Resilience Infrastructure.
- He mentioned that India has already installed 159 GW of non-fossil fuel based electricity generation capacity. And during the last 7.5 years, India's installed solar energy capacity has increased over 18 times.
- Shri Yadav highlighted that India's annual per capita emissions are only a third of the global average and its cumulative GHG emissions are less than 4 percent.

- He called upon the members of MEF to launch a global movement on LIFE i.e. Lifestyle for Environment as espoused by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi at the COP26 in Glasgow.
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AZOOXANTHELLATE CORALS

Scientists have recorded four species of corals for the first time from Indian waters. These new species of Azooxanthellate Corals were found from the waters off the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.



About:

- All the four groups of corals are from the same family, Flabellidae.
- *Truncatoflabellum crassum* (Milne Edwards and Haime, 1848), *T. incrustatum* (Cairns, 1989), *T. aculeatum* (Milne Edwards and Haime, 1848), and *T. irregulare* (Semper, 1872) under the family Flabellidae were previously found in Japan, the Philippines and Australian waters, while only *T. crassum* was reported with the range of Indo-West Pacific distribution.

Azooxanthellate Corals

- The azooxanthellate corals are a group of corals that do not contain zooxanthellae and derive nourishment not from the sun but from capturing different forms of planktons.
 - They are deep-sea representatives with the majority of species being reported from depths between 200 metres and 1,000 metres. They are also reported from shallow waters unlike zooxanthellate corals that are restricted to shallow waters.
 - Azooxanthellate corals are a group of hard corals. Hard corals are the prime and intrinsic part of the coral reef ecosystem.
-