**Front**

**Quad Meet Focuses On Indo-Pacific Cooperation**

[**https://th.thgim.com/news/national/ykmqgi/article38412833.ece/ALTERNATES/FREE\_660/Jaishankar-Blinken**](https://th.thgim.com/news/national/ykmqgi/article38412833.ece/ALTERNATES/FREE_660/Jaishankar-Blinken)

**Context:** In the fourth Quad ministerial meeting held in Melbourne on 11th February, Foreign Ministers of the Australia-India-Japan focused on the threats in the Indo-Pacific region, delivery of COVID-19 vaccines, maritime security, climate change, critical and emerging technologies, counter-terrorism, infrastructure, humanitarian-assistance and disaster-relief (HADR) and maritime domain awareness.

* Calling for justice for the 26/11 terror attacks in Mumbai (2008) and the Pathankot airbase attack (2016) for the first time since the group was formed, Foreign Ministers of the Australia-India-Japan said that the Quad is already cooperating on sharing intelligence on threats in the Indo-Pacific region.
* The group of ministers, who held their fourth Quad ministerial meeting in Melbourne also resolved to speed up delivery of more than a billion Covid vaccines to be manufactured in India, to hold a special meet on climate change in 2022, and step efforts to ensure maritime security in the region.
* They announced plans for a Quad summit including PM Modi, U.S. President Biden and Australian PM Morrison to be hosted by Japan’s PM Kishida in Tokyo in the “first half of 2022”.
* The statement also made a veiled reference to China’s actions in the South and East China seas, reaffirming a commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific, “in which states strive to protect the interests of their people, free from coercion.”
* While the grouping committed to stronger cooperation on Indo-Pacific initiatives, divisions appeared in their stand on global developments like Russia-NATO tensions over Ukraine and sanctions against Myanmar’s military.
* In contrast, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who has backed the sanctions, pushed for countries to stop arms trade with the Myanmar military. The joint statement called for a return to democracy in Myanmar, and also condemned North Korea’s recent ballistic missile tests.
* Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne expressed “deep concern” about Russian “aggression”, while Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa raised tensions over Ukraine as well. However, EAM Jaishankar did not speak about the issue, nor did the Russia-Ukraine situation find any mention in the joint statement.

**Vaccines initiative**

* The joint statement issued included a renewed commitment to the “flagship” Quad Vaccine initiative to deliver at least one billion vaccines produced at Hyderabad’s Biological E facility by the end of 2022 to Indo-Pacific countries, and to a pledge to donate 1.3 billion vaccine doses globally.
* It also recorded progress on the other fields for cooperation identified during the Quad summit in 2021, including climate change, critical and emerging technologies, counter-terrorism, infrastructure, humanitarian-assistance and disaster-relief (HADR) and maritime domain awareness.

**National**

**Navy’s Largest Exercise Milan To Bring Together 46 Countries**

[**https://th.thgim.com/news/national/mdjzpo/article38414935.ece/ALTERNATES/FREE\_660/Admiral-R-Hari-Kumar-at-ENC**](https://th.thgim.com/news/national/mdjzpo/article38414935.ece/ALTERNATES/FREE_660/Admiral-R-Hari-Kumar-at-ENC)

**Context:** Exercise Milan, which is scheduled to be held from February 25 to March 4, has confirmed participation of navies of 35 countries making it the largest multilateral exercise in the region.

* The Indian Navy is set to hold the 12th President’s Fleet Review (PFR) on February 21 at Visakhapatnam and few days from that it will host the largest multilateral exercise in the region, Milan 2022, which will see participation of all major Navies including Quad countries, Russia and from West Asia amid tensions in Ukraine and developments in West Asia.
* Exercise Milan is scheduled to be held from February 25 to March 4 for which 46 countries have been invited. So far over 35 countries having confirmed participation, making it the largest multilateral exercise in the region.
* In 2022, Milan will see the participation of all Quad countries, with the U.S. being invited for the first time.
* The invitees include all Indian Ocean littoral states and countries from south-east Asia among others. For the 2020 edition of the exercise, 41 countries of which 30 had confirmed participation but the exercise was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Shifted to Visakhapatnam**

* Milan began in 1995 and is held biennially and brings together Navies of all the countries in the region. It has so far been held at Port Blair in Andaman and Nicobar but is now being shifted to Visakhapatnam which offers more infrastructure as well as sea space for the exercise.
* The harbour phase is scheduled from February 25 to 28 and the sea phase from March 1 to 4. It has several themes such as ant-submarine warfare among others along with deliberations, including by subject matter experts.
* During the exercise, the Navy will also be showcasing its Deep Submergence Rescue Vessel (DSRV) capabilities meant to rescue submarines in distress. India is one of the few countries in the region which possesses this capability.

**Fleet Review**

* A Fleet Review is usually conducted once during the tenure of the President. Since independence, 11 PFRs have been conducted by the Navy, of which two have been International Fleet Reviews in 2011 and 2016. In terms of significance, the Navy’s Presidential review is second only to the Republic Day Parade.
* More than 60 ships from the Navy, Coast Guard, Shipping Corporation of India and the National Institute of Ocean technology and submarines and more than 50 aircraft are expected to be part of the PFR in 2022.
* Over 44 ships will be at anchorage and one of the ships will be converted into the President’s yacht. The first PFR was held in 1953 for the first President Dr. Rajendra Prasad.

**International**

**Iranian President Sceptic About Vienna Nuclear Talks**

[**https://th.thgim.com/news/international/c66ule/article38414568.ece/ALTERNATES/FREE\_660/IRAN-POLITICS-ANNIVERSARY**](https://th.thgim.com/news/international/c66ule/article38414568.ece/ALTERNATES/FREE_660/IRAN-POLITICS-ANNIVERSARY)

**Context:** Aimed at reviving the country’s 2015 nuclear agreement with world powers, hardline Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi said in indirect talks in the Austrian capital with US that Iran would rely on its domestic economic potential rather than expect support from overseas and from the nuclear talks with world powers..

* On 11th February, hardline Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi said that Tehran “never” pins hope on ongoing talks in Vienna aimed at reviving the country’s 2015 nuclear agreement with world powers.
* Iran and the United States resumed indirect talks in the Austrian capital after a 10-day break, but envoys gave little away as to whether they were closer to resolving various thorny issues.
* Raisi, whose election in 2020 June led to a five-month hiatus in the talks, said Iran would rely on its domestic economic potential rather than expect support from overseas and from the nuclear talks with world powers.

**Editorial**

**Taking A Byte Out Of Cyber Threats**

[**https://th.thgim.com/opinion/lead/1ppouv/article38414891.ece/ALTERNATES/FREE\_660/iStock-1185282377**](https://th.thgim.com/opinion/lead/1ppouv/article38414891.ece/ALTERNATES/FREE_660/iStock-1185282377)

**Context:** The increasing cyber attack in the Information Age has highlighted the need of prioritizing building trust in systems as failure to build resilience will threaten the foundations of democratic society.

* The world was possibly made aware of the danger and threat posed by cyber weapons with the advent of the Stuxnet Worm in 2010, which resulted in large-scale damage to Iran’s centrifuge capabilities.
* In 2012, a bank of computers belonging to the Saudi Aramco Oil Company were targeted, reportedly by Iranian operatives, employing malware that wiped out data on 30,000 computers.

**Static response**

* In 2021, cyber attacks that attracted the maximum attention were SolarWinds and Colonial Pipeline in the U.S., but these were merely the tip of a much bigger iceberg among the string of attacks that plagued the world.
* Estimates of the cost to the world in 2021 from cyber attacks are still being computed, but if the cost of cyber crimes in 2020 is any guide, it is likely to range between $3trillion-$4 trillion.

**Sectors that are vulnerable**

* In the Information age, credential threats and the threat of data breaches, phishing, and ransomware attacks, apart from major IT outages, are expected to be among the main concerns.
* Statistics tell, *viz.*, that new attacks are taking place every 10 seconds. Apart from loss of data, what is also becoming evident is that ransomware criminals are becoming more sophisticated, and are using ransomware to cripple large enterprises and even governments.
* Even as Identity and Multifactor Authentication (MFA) take centre stage, the gloomy prognostication of experts is that Advanced Persistent Threats (APT) attacks are set to increase, with criminal networks working overtime and the Dark web allowing criminals to access even sensitive corporate networks.

**Scant clarity**

* Technology geeks insist on every enterprise incorporating SASE — Secure Access Service Edge — to reduce the risk of cyber attacks. Additional solutions are being proposed such as CASB — Cloud Access Security Broker — and SWG — Secure Web Gateway — aimed at limiting the risks to users from web-based threats.
* Constant references to the Zero Trust Model and Micro Segmentation as a means to limit cyber attacks, can again be self-limiting. Zero Trust does put the onus on strict identity verification ‘allowing only authorized and authenticated users to access data applications’, but it is not certain how successful this and other applications will prove to be in the face of the current wave of cyber attacks.

**Defence and backup plans**

* Nations and institutions, instead of waiting for the ‘Big Bang cyber attack’, should actively prepare for a rash of cyber attacks — essentially ransomware — mainly directed at available data.
* On the strategic plane, understanding the nature of cyber space is important. While solving the technical side is ‘one part of the solution, networks and data structures need at the same time to prioritise resilience through decentralised and dense networks, hybrid cloud structures, redundant applications and backup processes’.
* The short answer is to prioritise building trust in systems — whether it is an electrical grid, banks or the like, and creating backup plans including ‘strategic decisions about what should be online or digital and what needs to stay analog or physical, and building capacity within networks to survive’ even if one node is attacked.

**Others**

**Government Seeks Centre’s Help To Study Sources Of Pollution In Yamuna**

[**https://s.w-x.co/util/image/w/in-yamuna1.jpg?crop=16:9&width=980&format=pjpg&auto=webp&quality=60**](https://s.w-x.co/util/image/w/in-yamuna1.jpg?crop=16:9&width=980&format=pjpg&auto=webp&quality=60)

**Context:** With the help of the Central Government, the Delhi government is planning to conduct a study to identify the sources of pollution in the Yamuna and generate aid to develop low-cost and practical alternatives to single-use plastic.

* The Delhi government is planning to conduct a study to identify the sources of pollution in the Yamuna and has sought the Centre’s assistance for it.
* The proposal was discussed at a meeting on 9th February with the Central government. It was called by K. Vijay Raghavan, Principal Scientific Adviser to the Central government, for collaborating on scientific projects with States and Union Territories.
* Currently, there is no mechanism in the city to know the percentage of pollution in the Yamuna caused by different sources, according to the official. A similar study to find sources of air pollution, but on a real-time basis, is currently under way in the Capital.
* The Delhi government has also urged the Centre for aid to develop low-cost and practical alternatives to single-use plastic.