1. PARTNERSHIP FOR GLOBAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND INVESTMENT

Topic: International Relations

Source: Global Solutions Initiative

In News: The G7 countries have officially launched the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII) recently.

More on the Topic:

- It is a joint initiative to fund infrastructure projects in developing countries.
- The project, is being seen as the bloc's **counter to China's 'Belt and Road Initiative**.
- The stated purpose of both the PGII and the BRI is **to help secure funding for countries to build critical infrastructure** such as roads, ports, bridges, communication setups, etc. to enhance global trade and cooperation.
- Unlike BRI initiative, proposed G7 funding would depend largely on private companies.

Specialty of PGII:

- G7 informed the PGII is meant to be transparent, focused on building climate change-resilient infrastructure, and help in achieving objectives of gender equality and health infrastructure development.

Location of The Project:

- Apart from India, projects have been announced in countries across West Africa, Southeast Asia, and South America.

About China's BRI?

No 18, B.B.M.P Building
Kanakapura road ,
Tata Silk Farm, Jayanagar,
Bengaluru, Karnataka-560028

+91 89710 43904 | rvta@rvei.edu.in

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- China began the Belt and Road Initiative in 2013. It aims **to revive the ancient trade routes crossing to and from China–from Rome in Europe to East Asia.**
- Under this, the Chinese government helped in **providing loans for infrastructure projects to various countries,** and in many cases, Chinese companies were awarded contracts for carrying out the work. This helped China mark its footprints at a global level.
- However, China was criticised **for providing unsustainable debts** to countries that will be unable to repay them.
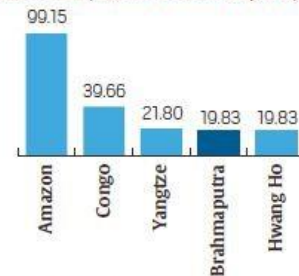
Source: Indian Express

2. ASSAM FLOOD

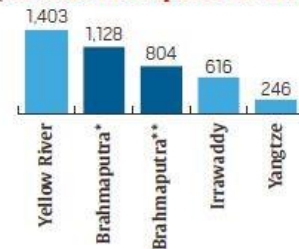**Topic: Disaster Management**

In News: In recent years the extent of devastation due to floods has increased significantly in the state of Assam.

More on the Topic:

- According to the National Commission on Floods, around 40 per cent of Assam's land is prone to floods. It amounts to around 10 per cent of the total flood-prone area of the country.
- The State suffers an annual loss to the tune of Rs 200 crore on an average due to floods.
- According to Central Water Commission data from 1953 to 2016, **26 lakh people are affected every year in Assam on an average,** while 47 persons and 10,961 animals die and the State incurs damage of up to Rs 128 crore.

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- For a population of over 3 crores, this leaves a huge impact on the economy of Assam.

Why Assam is Flood Prone?

Natural causes:

- Assam, situated at the foothills of the Himalayas, comprises two valleys, **Brahmaputra and Barak,** named after the respective rivers and two hill districts, along with a huge network of **over 20 large rivers and 50 tributaries.** This make the state naturally prone to flood when it rains and river overflows.
- Brahmaputra river flows through Assam. As it is coming from the Kailash range at an elevation of over 5,000 m, **the river gets highly sedimented and this sediment are deposited at the river beds. Thus elevating the river beds and reducing it's water carting capacity.**
- Additionally, **the monsoon is intense in the Northeast.** During monsoon, highly sedimented river water from the Himalayas combines with rain-fed water bodies in India, resulting in water spilling over land in the narrow valleys, leading to floods.
- Assam lies in a seismically active zone. **An increase in construction activities in the recent area has resulted in frequent landslides.**
- As sedimented rivers move through the state along with their tributaries, they take with them soil and sediment from banks. This is known as river bank erosion.
- **Soil erodes and rivers expand as it gets more area and this results in flooding.** The width of Brahmaputra has increased up to 15km due to bank erosion at some places in Assam.

Man Made Causes:

- **Embankments are constructed** to confine the course of a river. This has evolved to be an added challenge over time in Assam.
- Other man-made factors like **deforestation, hill cutting, encroachments and destruction of wetlands** have also worsened the flood situation.
- Embankments led to encroachment of river banks with an increasing number of people building houses and setting up establishments close to the river.
- There has also been **a population boom** in the State which has put more pressure on the State's ecology.
- Climate change is set to lead to more frequent and severe floods in Assam, as per a report on climate change by the State government.

Way Ahead:

- The State's unique topography, climate and socio-economic conditions make it more vulnerable to disasters like floods, with over one-third of the population living below the poverty line.
- In a master plan on the river in 1982, the Brahmaputra Board suggested that dams and reservoirs should be built to mitigate floods.
- A flood hazard atlas for Assam proposes **non-structural measures to mitigate the impact of floods like flood forecasting and warning, flood profiling, and regulation of reservoirs.** These measures, however, are yet to be translated on the ground.

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Kanakapura road ,
Tata Silk Farm, Jayanagar,
Bengaluru, Karnataka-560028

+91 89710 43904 | rvta@rvei.edu.in

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- **Wetlands and local water bodies should be revived in Assam** to improve the drainage system, which can act as an exit for excess water and prevent waterlogging

Source: The Hindu

3.EU's ambitious draft law to restore nature

Topic: Environment and Ecology

In News: The European Commission (EC), the European Union's executive arm, unveiled a landmark legislation to restore nature and mitigate climate change on the European continent.
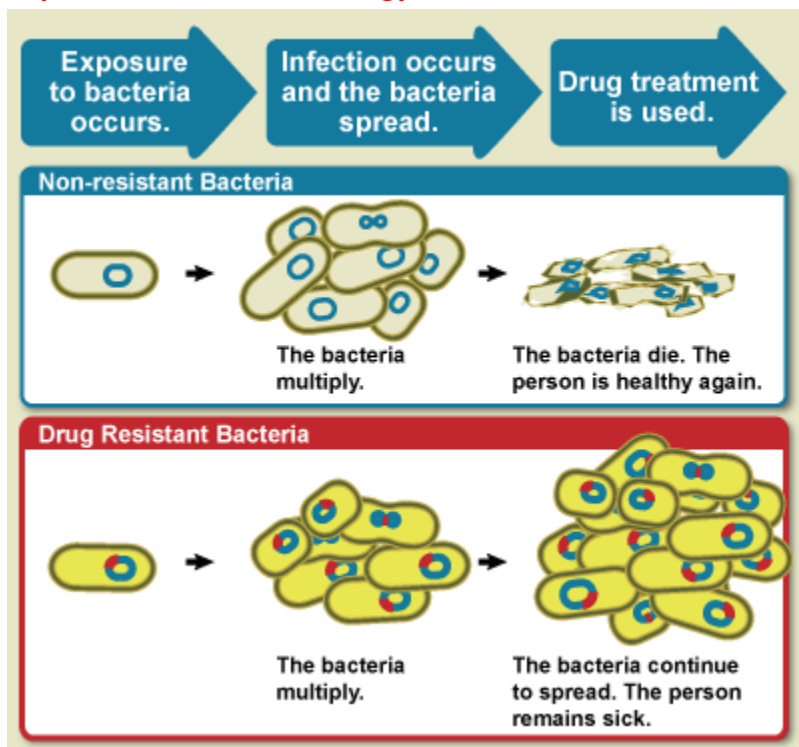
More on the Topic:

- The draft law calls for halving pesticide use across Europe by 2030 and dismantling big dams to make rivers free-flowing, among other things. The proposal is aimed at contributing to the continuous, long-term and sustained recovery of biodiverse and resilient nature across the EU's land and sea areas by restoring ecosystems.

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- It is also expected to contribute to achieving the EU's climate mitigation and climate adaptation objectives.

- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in its sixth assessment has called for urgent restoration of degraded ecosystems to mitigate climate change.
- The Glasgow climate pact too had underlined the significance of natural ecosystems for climate mitigation and adaptation.

Source: Hindu

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No 18, B.B.M.P Building
Kanakapura road ,
Tata Silk Farm, Jayanagar,
Bengaluru, Karnataka-560028

+91 89710 43904   rvta@rvei.edu.in

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4. DRUG-RESISTANT TYPHOID STRAINS

Topic: Science and Technology/ Health

In News: According to a large genome sequencing study, the effectiveness of antibiotics for typhoid fever is threatened by the emergence of resistant strains.

More on the Topic:

- The genome analysis has revealed that resistant strains – almost all originating in South Asia – have spread to other countries 197 times since 1990.
- Strains were classified as Multi Drug Resistant if they had genes giving resistance to antibiotics ampicillin, chloramphenicol, and trimethoprim/ sulfamethoxazole.

About Typhoid fever:

- Typhoid fever is a bacterial infection that can spread throughout the body, affecting many organs.
- Without prompt treatment, it can cause serious complications and can be fatal. It's caused by a bacterium called Salmonella typhi.
- It is usually contracted by ingestion of food or water that is contaminated with the excrements of people.
- Typhoid fever causes 11 million infections and more than 100,000 deaths per year. South Asia accounts for 70% of the global disease burden.

Source: Indian Express

No 18, B.B.M.P Building
Kanakapura road ,
Tata Silk Farm, Jayanagar,
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5. Banda Singh Bahadur

Topic: Personalities in News

In News: The National Monuments Authority has observed the great warrior Banda Singh Bahadur's martyrdom on 25 June, 2022.

More on the Topic:

- Baba Banda Singh Bahadur was a great Sikh warrior and a commander of the Khalsa army who defeated the Mughals and freed a large part of North India.
- It was Guru Gobind Singh who sent Banda Singh to Punjab in 1708 and advised him to put an end to the cruelty of Punjab rulers.
- After establishing **the Khalsa rule in Punjab, he abolished the zamindari system and granted property rights to the tillers of the land.**
- He introduced the **Nanak Shahi coins**.

Source: Business Standard

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6. Partners in the Blue Pacific' initiative

Topic: International Relations

Statement by Australia, Japan, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States on the Establishment of the Partners in the Blue Pacific (PBP)

No 18, B.B.M.P Building
Kanakapura road ,
Tata Silk Farm, Jayanagar,
Bengaluru, Karnataka-560028

+91 89710 43904   rvta@rvei.edu.in

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In News: Amid China's aggressive push to increase its Pacific sphere of influence, the US and its allies, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and the United Kingdom have launched a new initiative called 'Partners in the Blue Pacific'.

More on the Topic:

- The PBP is a five-nation "informal mechanism" to support Pacific islands and to boost diplomatic, economic ties in the region.
- It simply means that through the PBP, these counties together and individually will direct more resources here to counter China's aggressive outreach.
- The areas where PBP aims to enhance cooperation include "climate crisis, connectivity and transportation, maritime security and protection, health, prosperity, and education".

US and China's Strategies In the Pacific:

- The US has long maintained a balance of power in the region with its **hub-and-spoke system** where America is the hub and its allies are spokes whose security is guaranteed by the US military power.
- **China is also believed to be trying to make its own version of the same system,** even as it insists the sole aim of the US policy of having overwhelming influence in the region is to contain Beijing's rise.

Why is the Pacific region strategically important?

- Among the 10 **largest standing armies** in the world, 7 reside in the Indo-Pacific; **and 6 countries in the region possess nuclear weapons.**
- **Nine of the world's 10 busiest seaports** are in the region, and **60 percent of global maritime trade transits** through Asia, with roughly one-third of global shipping passing through the South China Sea alone.

Source: Hindu

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