

NEWS TODAY

GERMANY ANNOUNCED INDO-PACIFIC POLICY GUIDELINES

- Germany became **the second European nation after France** to formally adopt a strategy for Indo-Pacific region (IPR). **Key points include:**
 - Maritime security cooperation, human rights, and diversification of economic partnerships in IPR.
 - Indirect references to Chinese behaviour that challenged rules-based world order.
- IPR refers to **confluence of Pacific and Indian Oceans**, which interconnect in Southeast Asia.
- Significance of IPR**
 - Geographical construct:** Region includes world's most populous state (China), most populous democracy (India) and most populous Muslim-majority state (Indonesia).
 - Economic:** Up to 25% of world's maritime trade passes through Strait of Malacca. Also, two-third container trade of the world passes through this region.
 - Militarily,** IPR is full of flashpoints that serve as potential sources of armed conflict.
- Recent rise in strategic importance of IPR is due to **growing Chinese footprint and relative decline of U.S. presence in the region.**
- India has introduced the concept of SAGAR** (Security And Growth for All in the Region) and believes in IPR that is free, open and inclusive, and one that is founded upon a cooperative and collaborative rules-based order.



INDIA, BANGLADESH LAUNCH NEW INITIATIVE TO CONNECT LANDLOCKED NORTH EAST

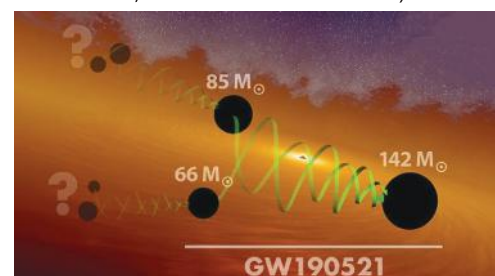
- Recently, **Daukandi (Bangladesh) – Sonamura (Tripura) Inland Waterway Protocol route**, along river Gumti, was operationalised.
 - This route was added under **Protocol for Inland Water Trade & Transit (PIWTT)**.
- PIWTT was signed between India and Bangladesh in 1972 to **provide inland waterways connectivity between the two countries**, particularly with the North Eastern Region of India and also to enhance bilateral trade.
 - In May 2020, **addendum to PIWTT was signed** with inclusion of new routes and declaration of new Ports of Call (intermediate stop for a ship).
- Importance of protocol**
 - A viable **transit for landlocked Northeast** ushering development and prosperity.
 - Address **strategic concerns on limited land based connectivity** (chicken neck corridor).
 - Provide an **economical, faster, safer and environment friendly mode of transport.**
 - Riverine communities along waterways will benefit** from market access and a better price for their produce as transportation costs decrease.
 - New avenue of **cultural and heritage tourism**, market access to traditional handicrafts and handlooms.
- In 2019, agreement on use of **Chattogram and Mongla ports** of Bangladesh was also finalized to connect with landlocked North East region.

BIMSTEC CHARTER FINALIZED 23 YEARS AFTER INCEPTION

- Charter of Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) has been **prepared by BIMSTEC Secretariat.**
 - In absence of a dedicated charter, BIMSTEC is **running with the spirit of Bangkok Declaration of 1997.**
- Charter is expected to **define a long-term vision and priorities for cooperation**, clearly delineating roles and responsibilities of different layers of institutional structure and decision-making processes.
- Significance for India:**
 - It will provide momentum to India's attempts at **achieving its Act East policy goals.**
 - Economic engagement with BIMSTEC states **will restrict Chinese influence in these countries.**
 - In line with India's larger goal of **transforming its remote Northeastern region** into an engine of growth.
- BIMSTEC **was established in 1997** and comprises **Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka** from South Asia and **Myanmar and Thailand**, from Southeast Asia.
- There are 14 priority areas for cooperation and each **country takes lead in specific areas.**
 - India is the Lead Country in four areas, viz Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime, Transport & Communication, Tourism, and Environment and Disaster Management.

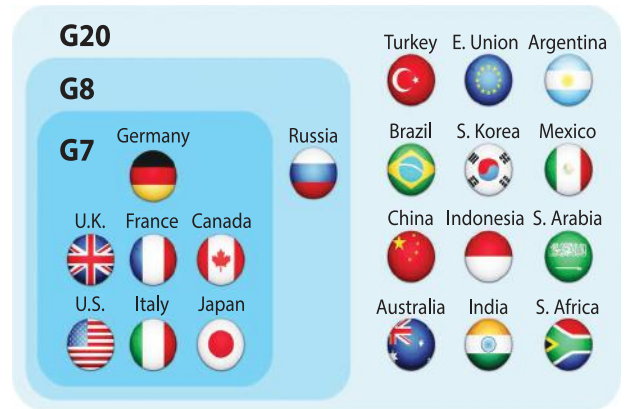
FROM BILLIONS OF YEARS AGO, LESSON ON BLACK HOLES

- In 2019, Laser Interferometer Gravitational Wave Observatory (LIGO) **detected signals (named GW190521) from gravitational waves** formed due to a collision, billions of years ago, between two black holes.
 - Weight of two black holes was detected **85 and 66 solar masses (one solar mass is mass of Sun).**
 - Gravitational waves are invisible ripples** that form when a star explodes in a supernova; when two big stars orbit each other; when two black holes merge; and when objects move at very high speeds.
- Mass of one black hole**, defied traditional knowledge of how black holes are formed. According to **traditional knowledge, stars between 65 and 120 solar masses** do not give birth to black holes.
 - Stars in this range **blow themselves apart when they die**, without collapsing into a black hole.
- Researchers suggest that 85-solar-mass black hole was **not the product of a collapsing star, but was result of a previous merger.**
- Black holes are mostly Stellar** (mass ranging between a few and tens of solar masses) or **Supermassive** (mass ranging from hundreds of thousands, to billions of solar masses).



INDIA PROPOSES VOLUNTARY 'G-20 PRINCIPLES ON COORDINATED CROSS-BORDER MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE'

- It was **proposed in G-20 foreign ministers' meeting** with focus on cross-border movement amid the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **3 elements of the principles include Standardisation of:**
 - Testing procedures and universal acceptability of test results.
 - Quarantine procedures.
 - Movement and transit protocols.
- India also called governments around the world to ensure that **interests of foreign students are protected and movement of stranded seafarers** back to their home country is facilitated.
 - Number of **Indians living abroad is 175 lakh in 2019** making India the leading country of origin for international migrants.
- **Steps taken by India**
 - Initiated **Vande Bharat Mission**, India's **largest repatriation operation** to bring home Indian nationals stranded abroad due to COVID-19 lockdown.
 - Created **travel bubbles for the welfare and protection** of citizens stranded in India and abroad.
- G20 is an **international forum for the governments and central bank governors** from 19 countries and the European Union.
 - Collectively, G20 members represent around 80% of the world's economic output, two-thirds of global population and three-quarters of international trade.



ALSO IN NEWS

<p>US-India 2020 Summit of US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (US-ISPF)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prime Minister addressed the summit. • Talks were held on Opportunities in India's Gas Market, Ease of Doing Business, Common Opportunities & Challenges in Tech Space. • USISPF is a non-profit organization that works for the partnership between India and the U.S.
<p>Supreme Court (SC) refuses to stay High Court's order on medium of instruction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SC stated that as per Section 29(2)(f) of the Right to Education (RTE) Act, medium of instruction shall, as far as practicable, be in a child's mother tongue. • Earlier, Andhra Pradesh (AP) Government decided to make English the medium of education for government school students from Classes I to VI beginning 2020-21 academic year. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ AP High Court has held that the state government's decision was ultra vires of the provisions of RTE Act and violative of Articles 14, 21 and 21-A of the Constitution.
<p>Jal Shakti ministry launches 'Water Heroes' contest</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It aims to reach out to people with message of water conservation and management. • Participants will post their success stories through a specially made video of 1-5 minutes. • They have to also send a write-up of up to 300 words and some photographs, depicting the efforts. • Every month a maximum of 10 entries can be considered for the awards. There will be a cash prize of Rs 10,000 each and a certificate.
<p>Second International Indian Ocean Expedition (IIOE-2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a global scientific program that engages international scientific community in collaborative oceanographic and atmospheric research from coastal environments to deep sea over period 2015-2020. • It reveals new information on Indian Ocean (i.e. its currents, influence upon climate, marine ecosystems) which is fundamental for future sustainable development and expansion of Indian Ocean's blue economy. • IIOE was a 6-yr endeavor (1960-1965) that stimulated new activities by about a dozen nations, in which all areas of oceanography and meteorology were studied across basin.
<p>Emerging Technologies Initiative (ETI)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aim of ETI is to assist in recommending appropriate policy choices and help inform negotiating capacities vis-a-vis global technology governance rules, and standards, keeping in mind India's development and national security priorities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Emerging technologies have the potential to disrupt many existing industries and significantly impact employment, security, social equity, and global relations. For ex: AI, Blockchain, Quantum Technology etc. • Partners of ETI: Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser, New Emerging & Strategic Technologies Division in the Ministry of External Affairs, Science Policy Forum.
<p>Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve (KNPTR), Assam</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assam government approved the addition of over 3,000 hectares (ha) to KNPTR. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ It will help in better wildlife conservation and reduction in human-wildlife conflicts. ➢ It will help movement of tigers along Kaziranga to Nameri and Orang national parks (both in Assam). • KNPTR lies in between Brahmaputra river on the north and Karbi Anglong hills on the south. • Kaziranga is the biggest habitat of one-horned rhinos in the world. • It is UNESCO World Heritage Site.
<p>Ophiocordyceps sinensis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a fungus (also known as Himalayan Viagra) that is now categorized as vulnerable species in IUCN's red list. It faces threats like – Overharvesting, Habitat loss and climate change. • It is a caterpillar fungus endemic to the Himalayan and Tibetan plateau. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ In India, it is primarily found in Pithoragarh and Chamoli districts of Uttarakhand. ➢ Locally known as Kira Jari (in India). • It is used widely as tonic, therapeutic medicine for lung, liver and kidney and as aphrodisiac.

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