2021 Malabar Exercise

Why in news?

Navies of the 4 Quad member nations [India, the US, Japan, and Australia] are participating in the 25th edition of the Malabar Exercise -Malabar 21.

How has it been?

Malabar Exercise is a multilateral war-gaming naval exercise that includes simulated war games and combat manoeuvres. Demonstrates the synergy, coordination and inter-operability among the participating navies.

- Started in 1992 as a bilateral exercise between the navies of India and the US.
- Break 1996 to 2002 in the aftermath of India's nuclear tests.
- Conducted every year thereafter.
- Japan, Australia (and Singapore)- First participated in 2007.
- In 2008, the government in Australia changed, and it stopped participating.[Singapore has participated only once.]
- From 2014, Japan has been a regular participant; joined as a permanent member in 2015, making it a trilateral.
- Australia re-joined in 2020, making its second appearance.

The Quad, officially the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, is a group of four countries: Australia, India, Japanand the US. Maritime cooperation began after the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004. But now,Quad works on a far broader agenda, which includes tackling security, economic, and health issues.It is a loose grouping rather than a formal alliance.

How will 2021 exercise be?

- Hosted by the US Navy in the Western Pacific - In Guam, an unincorporated territory of the US.

Under US law, unincorporated territory is an area controlled by the U.S. federal government that is not "incorporated" for the purposes of US constitutional law.

- Includes complex exercises - anti-surface, anti-air, and anti-submarine warfare drills, and other manoeuvres and tactical exercises.

Why is the Malabar exercise significant?

- It was for the possibility of angering **China** that India had not expanded Malabar exercise.

- Australia also had pulled out for the same reason after 2007.
- But now, China's relations are strained with all four nations of the Quad with China's growing military assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific region.
- The military standoff with India in eastern Ladakhfor more than 15 months is another factor.
- So, as a grouping of four powerful navies in the Indo-Pacific region, the Quad and the ex-Malabar sends a strong message -
    1. Commitment to peace, stability and prosperity of all countries in this region
    2. Upholding the rules-based international order
    3. Respecting the rule of law and freedom of navigation in the international seas
    4. Upholding the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all states
    5. Promoting a shared vision for a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region.

Source: The Indian Express, The Hindu

