Carbis Bay declaration - G7 Summit

Why in news?

The G-7 summit recently took place in the U.K., and the leaders jointly signed the Carbis Bay Declaration.

What are the highlights?

- **Vaccine** - The G7 pledged over the next 12 months to secure a further one billion COVID-19 vaccine doses.
- This will be either through donating surplus supplies or providing further finance to Covax.
- [Covax is the UN-backed scheme charged with distributing vaccines to low- and middle-income countries.]
- The G7 also committed to invest $12 trillion in the combined pandemic recovery plan.
- It also pledged to reinforce global surveillance for potentially dangerous diseases.
- **Economy** - The joint statement set out plans to reduce roadblocks to production in Africa.
- On the controversial issue of enforced temporary waivers of patents, it said the leaders will support manufacturing in low income countries.
- They would engage constructively on the issue of intellectual property waivers in discussions at the WTO.
- The G7 also agreed to increase the special drawing rights (SDRs) in IMF of low-income countries by $100bn.

What was the U.S.'s role?

- United States's new President Biden vowed that "America is back" to take the lead on global challenges.
- The G-7 commitments on vaccines and pandemic recovery depends on U.S. commitments for a large part.
- There was an invitation by the G7 to "fellow democracies" India, Australia, South Korea and South Africa.
- There was also special communiqué on "Open Societies" for the G-7 outreach.
- These are an extension of Biden's stated commitment to convening a

Democracy Summit soon.

What is G7's stance on China?

- Consensus amongst the seven-member countries on countering China was an important message from the meet.
- The final G-7 communiqué holds no less than four direct references to China, each negative.
- It includes criticising Beijing for its -
    i. rights record in Xinjiang and democratic freedoms in Hong Kong
    ii. "non-market policies and practices"
    iii. concerns over its actions in the China Seas
- The G7 also underscored "the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait".
- Besides, there was a demand for a transparent investigation into the origins of the COVID-19 virus.
- The G7 also vowed to cooperate with China on issues such as the climate.

What are the concerns?

- The bonhomie among the G-7 leaders was obvious.
- But the differences and contradictions in the grouping remain a challenge.
- Even two decades ago, questions were raised about whether the grouping (earlier, the G-8), could claim to be the world's "richest" countries.
- This is especially true when emerging economies, China and India, are not included.
- On economic issues, the EU is a more representative unit than the individual European G-7 member countries.
- Finally, G-7 is much an exclusive club of the "haves" or "the best vs the rest."
- This seems anachronistic in a world that is much more interlinked now than in 1975, when the grouping first came about.
- Given all this, G7 needs to be more open and less exclusive in an increasingly interlinked world.

Where does India stand?

- India is a special guest to the G-7/G-8 since 2003.
- It has maintained its independent course, especially on political issues.
- At the recent meet, India voiced concerns about some clauses in the joint communiqué on Open Societies.
- The communiqué condemned "rising authoritarianism", net shutdowns, manipulation of information, and rights violations.

- These are areas the Indian government has often been criticised for in the recent years.
- However, India signed off on the joint statement by G-7 and guest countries on “open societies.”
- The statement reaffirms and encourages the values of “freedom of expression, both online and offline".
- In the present, India will be expected to walk the talk on its commitments at the G-7 outreach, especially in the areas of information clampdowns.
- [Notably, India had the largest number of Internet shutdowns in 2020.]

Source: The Hindu, The Guardian

