India-Australia Ties

Why in news?

Australian Prime Minister announced an Australia-India education qualification recognition mechanism while on his 2 day tour in Gujarat.

What is the history of India-Australia relationship?

- **Historical ties –** The historical ties between India and Australia started immediately following European settlement in Australia from 1788.
- **India-Australia Strategic Relationship –** Both countries signed a Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation in 2009.
- **Bilateral co-operation –** Bilateral mechanisms include Joint Trade, India-Australia '2+2', Energy Security Dialogue, JWGs on different issues etc.
- **Multilateral co-operation –** The inaugural Secretary-level trilateral talks between India, Australia and Japan was held in New Delhi in June 2015.
- The 1st Indonesia-Australia-India Senior Officials' Strategic Dialogue was held in Bogor, Indonesia on 27th November 2017.
- **Bilateral Trade –** India is the 5th largest trade partner of Australia with trade in goods and services.
- **Civil nuclear co-operation –** A Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement between the two countries was signed in 2014.
- **Defence co-operation –** The first-ever Bilateral Maritime Exercise, *AUSINDEX*, was conducted in Visakhapatnam in 2015.
- In 2018, *Indian Air Force* participated for the first time in the Exercise *Pitch Black* in Australia.
- INS Sahyadri participated in *Kakadu, the biennial Exercise* of the Australian Navy.
- The *AUSTRAHIND* is the exercise of the Special Forces of Army Exercise.
- **Consular cooperation –** The Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) and the *Extradition Treaty* between India and Australia, were signed in 2008.

What are the areas of cooperation between the two countries?

- **China factor –** Ties between Australia and China were strained after Canberra banned Chinese telecom firm Huawei from the 5G network.
- China responded by imposing trade barriers on Australian exports, and by cutting off all ministerial contact.
- India has been facing an aggressive Chinese military along the border.
- New Delhi and Canberra have been assessing the Chinese challenge since 2013.
- **Economic cooperation –** The Economic Cooperation Trade Agreement (ECTA), the first free trade agreement signed by India with a developed country in a decade.
- Bilateral trade was US$ 27.5 billion in 2021; with ECTA, there is potential for it to

reach around US$ 50 billion in 5 years.

- **People-to-people ties –** India is one of the top sources of skilled immigrants to Australia.
- **Clean energy –** The countries signed a Letter of Intent on New and Renewable Energy in 2022 to bring down the cost of renewable energy technologies, especially ultra-low-cost solar and clean hydrogen.
- **IRIS –** India announced matching funds of *AUD 10 million* for *Pacific Island Countries* under *Infrastructure for Resilient Island States (IRIS)*.
- **ISA –** It also announced *AUD 10 million* for *Pacific Island Countries* under *International Solar Alliance (ISA)*.

What is the status of cooperation in the education sector?

- **MREQ –** The Mechanism for *Mutual Recognition of Educational Qualifications (MREQ)* was signed this year.
- This will facilitate mobility of students between India and Australia.
- Indian students are the second largest cohort of foreign students in Australia.
- **New mechanism –** The *Australia-India education qualification recognition mechanism,* degrees obtained in Australia will now be recognised in India, and vice-versa.
- This move will not apply to professional qualifications such as engineering, medicine and law graduates, which will remain outside the ambit of this agreement.
- **Maitri scholarship –** It will provide financial assistance to Indian students in Australia for as long as 4 years.
- It will attract and support Indian students to study at Australian universities.

References

1. The Indian Express | The India-Australia relationship
2. The Indian Express | Indian educational degrees to be recognised in Australia

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