

## Inflation

Surging inflation is forcing many poor Indians to rein in spending, threatening a slowdown for companies such as Godrej Appliances which saw bumper sales as recently as March and April after a brutal heatwave spiked demand for its cooling products.

The Ukraine crisis and global supply chain disruptions have stoked prices worldwide, but people in developing countries such as India are more vulnerable to even small cost increases that can wreck their meagre budgets.

### THE HINDU

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## QUAD

The initiative of the four Quad countries (India, the U.S., Australia and Japan), which aims to manufacture and distribute at least 1 billion COVID-19 vaccines for the Asia region by the end of 2022, has run into challenges.

The Quad is working “assiduously” to get Indian regulatory approvals to get the Quad Vaccine Initiative (QVI) off the ground.

Original plan, which was launched in March 2021 and sought to supply Johnson & Johnson vaccines from the Biological E facility in Hyderabad,

has had trouble taking off due to legal indemnity issues with Indian law, safety concerns around the vaccine, lack of World Health Organisation (WHO) approvals for the facility.

## About QUAD

Known as the 'Quadrilateral Security Dialogue' (QSD), the Quad is an informal strategic forum comprising four nations, namely United States of America (USA), India, Australia and Japan. One of the primary objectives of the Quad is to work for a free, open, prosperous and inclusive Indo-Pacific region.

The group met for the first time in 2007 on the sidelines of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). It is considered an alliance of maritime democracies, and the forum is maintained by meetings, semi-regular summits, information exchanges and military drills of all the member countries.

## Formation of QUAD

Since its establishment in 2007, the representatives for the four-member nations have met periodically. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was the first to pitch the idea for the formation of Quad in 2007.

In fact, its origins can be traced back to the evolution of Exercise Malabar and the 2004 Tsunami when India

conducted relief and rescue operations for itself and neighbouring countries and was later joined by the US, Japan and Australia.

### Principles of Quad

The motive behind the Quad is to keep the strategic sea routes in the Indo-Pacific free of any military or political influence.

It is basically seen as a strategic grouping to reduce Chinese domination.

The core objective of the Quad is to secure a rules-based global order, freedom of navigation and a liberal trading system. The coalition also aims to offer alternative debt financing for nations in the Indo-Pacific region.

The Quad leaders exchange views on contemporary global issues such as critical and emerging technologies, connectivity and infrastructure, cyber security, maritime security, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, climate change, pandemic and education.

### Significance of Quad for India

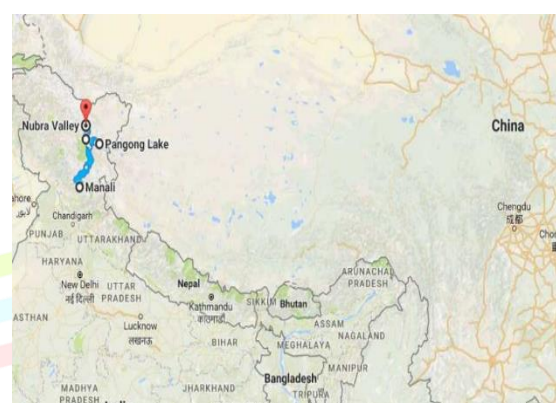
It is believed that the forum strategically counters China's economic and military rise. Interestingly, if Chinese hostilities rise on the borders, India can take the support of the other Quad

nations to counter the communist nation.

In addition, India can even take the help of its naval front and conduct strategic explorations in the Indo-Pacific region.

## THE HINDU

### Pangong Lake



Pangong Lake is a long boomerang-shaped endorheic (landlocked) water body.

It is located at an elevation of roughly more than 4,200 meters (13,800 ft) above sea level.

It is a trans border lake spanning across eastern Ladakh and western

Tibet, with a length of more than 135 km.

It is around 5 km wide at its broadest point.

Around 40% of the lake lies within the Indian Territory, 50% in Tibet (China), and the rest 10% is reportedly disputed between the two and is a de facto buffer zone.

Practically China controls 2/3rd of the total length while the rest is controlled by India.

The lake is considered brackish (saline) with no life in it, however, it is the western part of the lake (In India) which is saline, and the eastern part of the lake (In China) is freshwater.

There are certain fishes that are found in Pangong Tso, contrary to the belief that it doesn't supports life.

India holds one-third of the 135-km-long Boomerangshaped Lake located at an altitude of over 14,000 feet.

The lake, a glacial melt, has mountain spurs of the Chang Chenmo range jutting down, referred to as fingers.

Approximately 60% of the length of the lake lies within the Tibetan Autonomous Region. The lake is 5 km (3.1 mi) wide at its broadest point. All together it covers 604 km<sup>2</sup>.

During winter the lake freezes completely, despite being saline water. It is not a part of the Indus river basin area and geographically a separate landlocked river basin.

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### Lessons from neighbouring countries

New Delhi's messaging now is focused on people in the neighbourhood rather than just those in power.

In Afghanistan, for example, the Modi government spent months in careful negotiation with Pakistani officials to ensure it could send 50,000 MT of wheat meant for the Afghan people, despite the fact that it has no diplomatic engagement with either Islamabad or Kabul otherwise.

In Sri Lanka, a Ministry of External Affairs statement said that India would "always be guided by the best interests of the people of Sri Lanka expressed through democratic processes", a subtle pitch both to the people and to democratic processes in the region.

A third lesson is perhaps the toning down of rhetoric on domestic issues in the neighbourhood.

Lesson to be learnt is that populism does not pay in the long run

The popularity of a leader can decline sharply and suddenly for one or a combination of reasons.

New Delhi must not only study the causes of the economic mismanagement that brought change in the neighbourhood but must also survey the impact of new vulnerabilities on smaller neighbouring countries that could be exploited by global powers as they seek a more direct influence in the region.

Given the common challenges the region faces, New Delhi must find newer ways to energise regional groupings such as the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) and the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN) Initiative, and even to reconsider SAARC, in order to discuss shared approaches to reviving tourism and exports, supporting South Asian expatriate labour abroad, and building common pools of food and fuel stocks to soften inflationary blows on the South Asian economy.

**THE HINDU**

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