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Daily Editorial Analysis

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INDIA-ITALY BILATERAL RELATIONS

Syllabus: GS2/ India & Foreign Relations, International Organisations & Groupings

In Context

- The year 2023 has been a bright one considering the bilateral relations between Italy and India.

RECENT VISITS OF ITALIAN PM TO INDIA

- Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's meeting with the Indian Prime Minister during her visit to India in March 2023 marked a breakthrough in the relationship between the two countries.
 - ♦ The joint statement set off a new framework of collaboration between Italy and India.
 - ♦ It provided a crucial impetus to the bilateral dialogue by identifying avenues of partnership in sectors such as defence, space and connectivity along with mobility and energy transition.
- PM Meloni also visited India again in September for the G-20 summit.

FACETS OF EVOLVING BILATERAL RELATIONS

- Common view on Indo-Pacific:
 - ♦ The partnership is rooted in a common view of the strategic challenges in today's world and the approach to face them.
 - ♦ Italy and India share the need for a free, safe and open Indo-Pacific.
 - As underlined by PM Meloni, Italy looks at the Indo-Pacific from the perspective of an "enlarged Mediterranean", which forms a geostrategic unit with the Indian Ocean.
 - Italy sits at the centre of the Mediterranean Sea and acts as a natural bridge towards the Indo-Pacific.
- Private players in Indo-Pacific:
 - ♦ Italian companies have excelled in devising cutting-edge solutions and are looking forward to increasing their presence in India.
 - This collaboration will also enhance the stability of the Indo-Pacific region.
- Priority for Maritime security:
 - ♦ In August 2023, during a tour of the Indo-Pacific, the Italian Navy scheduled a visit to Mumbai by the patrol vessel ITS Morosini, the first time in several years that an Italian Navy ship had docked in India.
 - ♦ On that occasion, the embassy co-organised a seminar on maritime security.
 - A common interest in maritime surveillance and containment of underwater threats, including those against pipelines and the network of digital interconnections, emerged during the event.
 - ♦ Cooperation in the maritime domain will also be central to the relaunched collaboration in the defence sector.
- Trade and connectivity:
 - ♦ A safe and open Indo-Pacific is a precondition for the further development of trade and connectivity.
 - ♦ Connectivity: Italy and India are committed to strengthening infrastructure, both digital and physical.

- The Blue-Raman project (with an Italian company at its core) will bring the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean – Italy and India – closer in exchange of digital data through a submarine cable system.
- The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), launched during the G20 summit in Delhi also aims to open a new route between Asia and Europe.
- ♦ Trade: The free flow of trade through the Indo-Pacific is vital for Italy, an export-oriented country with 58 ports.
 - Italian companies, whose expertise in the maritime and railway sectors are recognised internationally are ready to play their part in the project.
 - Italian ports have the required characteristics to act as terminals for the IMEC and access points for Europe.
- Bilateral trade between India & Italy:
 - ♦ In recent years, bilateral trade has attained a record level. The trend for the current year seems to be more encouraging.
 - ♦ This increase is evident in the exchange of goods (and services), with Italian machinery, automotive products, and luxury goods finding a growing market in India, while Indian products, like aluminium, steel, and iron, contribute to the supply chain for Italian manufacturing.
- People-to-people contact:
 - ♦ India and Italy are also looking forward to people-to-people contact.
 - ♦ During the Indian External Affairs Minister's visit to Italy, a Migration and Mobility Agreement was signed.
 - Italy already hosts one of the largest Indian communities in the European Union and has been enriched by a growing number of students and workers.
 - ♦ The agreement will provide a framework to improve mobility.
- Space:
 - ♦ Italy is looking with increasing interest at India's space initiatives – the success of the Chandrayaan-3 mission has been recognised and celebrated by the Italian scientific community.
 - ♦ There is also a growing Indian interest in deepening cooperation in this sector.
 - Collaboration has been underway for some time between the space agencies of the two countries, ASI (Italian Space Agency) and ISRO, government institutions, university research centres and aerospace companies.
 - A joint declaration recently signed between the heads of ASI and ISRO opens up new opportunities, particularly in earth observation, space exploration and helio-physics.

Issues

- Lack of separate Frame works:
 - ♦ India does not have a specific trade agreement with Italy like it has for England . engagement with Italy is under the umbrella of EU
- Saddled by incidents:
 - ♦ Incidents like treatment of Italian Marines, Cancellation of VVIP chopper deal have worn down the relationship.

WAY AHEAD

- Italy and India can also converge on multilateral issues because they share the need to frame and support a new global agenda.
- Italy and India can play a mutually reinforcing role in addressing the urgent contemporary issues that primarily affect the Global South but also have a major impact on the security, stability and environmental sustainability of the entire world.
- During its G20 Presidency, India demonstrated its proactive role on several issues such as debt relief for developing countries, reform of international financial institutions, sustainable development and climate change – this includes the Global Biofuels Alliance, which Italy has joined.
 - ♦ As Italy prepares to take over the Presidency of G7 in 2024, it recognises the worth of addressing the concerns of a large part of the world, following India’s example.

Daily Mains Question

[Q] Italy looks at the Indo-Pacific from the perspective of an “enlarged Mediterranean”. Analyze, what are the facets of India’s growing relationship with Italy?

