Black Sea

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Why in News

Recently, the **US** Defence Secretary has urged **more defence cooperation among friendly Black Sea countries amid Russia "militarisation" of the region**.

This came ahead of a **NATO** Ministers summit.

Key Points

- **Geographical Location of Black Sea**:
  - The Black Sea is located **between Eastern Europe and Western Asia.**
  - It is **surrounded by the Pontic, Caucasus, and Crimean Mountains** in the south, east and north respectively.
  - The Black Sea is also **connected to the Sea of Azov by the Strait of Kerch**.
  - The **Turkish straits system** - the Dardanelles, Bosporus and Marmara Sea - forms **a transitional zone between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.**
  - The **bordering countries** of Black Sea are: **Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, Turkey, Bulgaria and Romania.**
  - There is a significant **absence of oxygen** in the water (**anoxic waters**).
- **Russian Interest in Black Sea:**
  - The unique geography of the Black Sea region confers **several geopolitical advantages to Russia.**
    - Firstly, it is **an important crossroads and strategic intersection** for the entire region.
      - Access to the Black Sea is vital for **all littoral and neighboring states**, and greatly enhances the projection of power into several adjacent regions.
    - Secondly, the region is an **important transit corridor** for goods and energy.
    - Thirdly, the Black Sea region is rich in **cultural and ethnic diversity,** and due to geographical proximity, shares close historical ties with Russia.
  - Russia **invaded Ukraine in 2014** and **carved off the strategically vital peninsula of Crimea,** the **largest land grab** from a sovereign state in this century.
    - Most countries do not recognise the takeover and stand behind Ukraine's claims to the waters.
    - In **November 2020, India voted against a Ukraine-sponsored resolution** in the UN that condemned alleged human rights violations in Crimea thereby backing old ally Russia on the issue.
- **US Interest in Black Sea:**
  - The Black Sea is bordered by Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine. **All these countries are NATO countries**.
  - Due to this **faceoff between NATO countries and Russia**, the Balck sea is a region of strategic importance & a potential maritime flashpoint.
  - NATO members Turkey, Greece, Romania and Bulgaria are in the Black Sea, but warships from the US, UK and other NATO allies also have made increasingly frequent visits in a show of support to Ukraine.
    - Russia has frequently responded to NATO warships visits near Crimea, casting them as destabilizing.

Source: TH