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Current Affairs - 17 October 2024

INTERNATIONAL SOLAR ALLIANCE ASSEMBLY



It is the apex **decision-making** body of **International Solar Alliance** (ISA), representing each Member Country.

- This body makes decisions concerning the implementation of the ISA's Framework Agreement and coordinated actions to be taken to achieve its objective.
- **Functions:** The Assembly deliberates matters of substance, such as the selection of the Director General, the functioning of ISA, approval of the operating budget, etc.
- It **meets annually** at the ministerial level at the ISA's seat.
- It assesses the aggregate effect of the programmes and other activities in terms of deployment of solar energy, performance, reliability, cost and scale of finance.
- **Members:** 120 countries are signatories to the ISA Framework Agreement, of which 102 countries have submitted the necessary instruments of ratification to become full members of the ISA.
- The Republic of **India holds the office of the President** of the ISA Assembly, with the Government of the French Republic as the co-president.
- The Seventh Session of the ISA Assembly will focus on:
 - Empowering Member Countries to **adopt solar energy** as the energy source of choice
 - **Make energy access universal** by supporting solar entrepreneurs to scale up local solutions
 - Mobilise finance to speed up solar deployment

What is the International Solar Alliance?

- It was formed at the **21st Conference of Parties (COP21)** to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (**UNFCCC**) held in Paris in 2015.
- It is an action-oriented, **member-driven, collaborative platform** for increased deployment of solar energy technologies.
- **Headquarter:** National Institute of Solar Energy (NISE) in Gurugram, India.

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WHAT IS THE GRADED RESPONSE ACTION PLAN (GRAP)?



- GRAP is a framework designed to **combat air pollution in the Delhi-NCR region.**
- It was introduced as an **emergency response mechanism**, and its implementation is triggered **when the Air Quality Index (AQI) reaches "poor" levels.**
- GRAP is particularly **important during the winter months** when air quality tends to plummet.

Who implements GRAP?

- The **Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM)** in NCR and adjoining areas **oversees the implementation of GRAP.**
- It collaborates with the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).**
- The **CAQM has constituted a sub-committee** for the operationalization of the GRAP.
- This body includes officials from the CAQM, member secretaries of pollution control boards of Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, the Central Pollution Control Board, a scientist from the IMD, one from the IITM, and a Health Advisor.
- **Different stages of GRAP:** GRAP consists of **four stages**, each with **targeted actions** to be taken by the necessary authorities and agencies. These are the following:
 - **Stage I: "Poor"** air quality (**Delhi AQI: 201-300**)
 - **Stage II: "Very Poor"** air quality (**Delhi AQI: 301-400**)
 - **Stage III: "Severe"** air quality (**Delhi AQI: 401-450**)
 - **Stage IV: "Severe+"** air quality (**Delhi AQI > 450**)

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What is the Air Quality Index (AQI)?

- AQI is issued by government agencies to gauge air pollution levels and communicate risks to the public.
 - The AQI is calculated based on air pollutant concentrations over a specific period, and the results are categorised into ranges with corresponding health advisories.
 - According to the AQI scale, the air quality check between 0 and 50 is "Good", 51 and 100 "Satisfactory", 101 and 200 "Moderate", 201 and 300 "Poor", 301 and 400 "Very Poor", 401 and 450 "Severe" and over 450 as "Severe +".
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SAMARTH SCHEME



The Scheme for Capacity Building in Textiles Sector (SAMARTH) is a demand-driven and placement-oriented umbrella skilling programme.

- **Aim:** It aims to incentivize and supplement the efforts of the industry in creating jobs in the organized textile and related sectors, covering the entire value chain of textiles, **excluding Spinning and Weaving.**
 - In addition to the **entry-level skilling**, a special provision for **upskilling/ re-skilling programme** has also been operationalized under the scheme towards improving the productivity of the existing workers in the Apparel & Garmenting segments.
 - Skilling programme is implemented through the following Implementing Agencies:
 - Textile Industry.
 - Institutions/Organizations of the Ministry of Textiles/State Governments having training infrastructure and placement tie-ups with the textile industry.
 - Reputed training institutions/ NGOs/ Societies/ Trusts/ Organizations/ Companies /Start-Ups / Entrepreneurs active in the textile sector having placement tie-ups with the textile industry.
 - **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Textiles.
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DRUGS TECHNICAL ADVISORY BOARD



Recently, the Drugs Technical Advisory Board (DTAB) has recommended the inclusion of all antibiotics in the definition of new drugs in the New Drugs and Clinical Trial (NDCT) Rules, 2019.

About Drugs Technical Advisory Board:

- It is the highest statutory decision-making **body on technical matters related to drugs** in India.
- It is established as per the **Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940**.
- It is part of the **Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO)**.
- **Function:** It advises the Central Government and the State Governments on technical matters arising out of the administration of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, of 1940 and to carry out the other functions assigned to it by this Act.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

What is new drug?

- According to **Rule 122 E of the Drug and Cosmetic Rules 1945**, a new drug can be one which has not been used in the country and has **not been recognised as effective and safe by the licensing authority** for the proposed claims.
- It could also be an approved drug with modified or new claims including indications, dosage, and new route of administration.
- If brought into the new drug bracket, the **manufacturing, marketing, and sale of antibiotics will be documented**.
- Also, the **manufacturing and marketing clearance** will have to be obtained from the **Central government instead of State drug administration**, and patients will be able to buy antibiotics only on prescription.



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SCO SUMMIT 2024

The 23rd Meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Council of Heads of Government (CHG) was held on October 16, 2024, in Islamabad, Pakistan.

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar led the Indian delegation at the summit. Jaishankar's visit marks the first by an Indian foreign minister to Pakistan in nine years, highlighting the significance of India's participation in the SCO despite ongoing bilateral tensions.

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

- SCO is a **permanent intergovernmental international organisation**, created in June 2001 in Shanghai (China).
- Founding members included Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan.
 - The five countries had come together to work on regional security, reduction of border troops, and terrorism in the post-Soviet era in 1996.
- In 2001, the Shanghai Five inducted Uzbekistan into the group and named it the SCO outlining its principles in a charter that **promoted what was called the Shanghai spirit of cooperation**.
- **Official working languages:** Chinese, Russian
- **SCO Secretariat:** Beijing, China
- **Members & Observers**
 - **10 member states** – China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India, Pakistan, Iran and Belarus.
 - India and Pakistan became full members at the Heads of State Council meet in Astana in 2017. Iran became the 9th member of the SCO in **2023** under the chairmanship of India.
 - Belarus officially joined the SCO in July 2024, and became its 10th member state.
 - **2 Observer members** – Afghanistan, Mongolia

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Organisational Structure of SCO

- **The Heads of State Council (HSC)** is the supreme decision-making body in the SCO. It meets once a year and decide upon all the important issues of the Organization.
- **The Council of Heads of Government (Prime Ministers) (CHG)** is the second highest body of the organization.
 - It meets once a year to discuss the strategy of multilateral cooperation and priority areas within the Organization, determine fundamental and topical issues in economic and other spheres, and approve the budget of the SCO.
- In addition to the meetings of the CHS and the CHG, there are also mechanisms for meetings on foreign affairs, national defense, security, economy and trade etc.

Key Highlights of the EAM's Address at SCO

- **Lack of Trust and Cooperation: Veiled Reference to Pakistan and China**
 - EAM highlighted the importance of trust, cooperation, and good neighborly relations, subtly referencing challenges with Pakistan and China.
 - **Key Challenges: Terrorism, Separatism, and Extremism**
 - He reiterated that activities across borders marked by these issues hinder trade, connectivity, and regional development, emphasizing the need for peace and stability to foster economic growth.
 - **Call for Multilateralism and Reform**
 - The minister advocated for reformed multilateralism, especially regarding the United Nations Security Council, where India seeks permanent membership.
 - **Regional Cooperation and Connectivity**
 - Jaishankar highlighted India's support for regional cooperation through initiatives like the International Solar Alliance, Mission LiFE, and digital public infrastructure.
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KAZIRANGA NATIONAL PARK



More than 446 butterfly species have been recorded in Assam's Kaziranga National Park (KNP), making it a habitat with the second highest concentration in the country after the Namdapha National Park in Arunachal Pradesh.

Kaziranga National Park is situated in the north-eastern part of the country in the districts of Golaghat and Nagoan in the **state of Assam**.

- It is the single largest undisturbed and representative area in the **Brahmaputra Valley floodplain**.
- In 1985, the park was declared a **World Heritage Site** by UNESCO.

Rivers: The river **Difalu**, a tributary of the Brahmaputra, flows through the National Park area (core/critical tiger habitat), while another tributary, Moradifalu, flows along its southern boundary.

Landscape: It is of sheer forest, tall elephant grass, rugged reeds, marshes, and shallow pools.

Flora:

- It is primarily famous for its dense and tall elephant grasses intermixed with small swamplands. **Rattan Cane**, a type of climbing palm, is also found here.
- It also includes an abundant cover of water lilies, water hyacinths and lotus.

Fauna: Many endangered and threatened species like Rhino, Tiger, Eastern swamp deer, Elephant, Buffalo, Hoolock gibbon, Capped langur, and Gangetic River dolphin are commonly found in the habitat.

- It is inhabited by the world's largest population of **one-horned rhinoceroses**, as well as many mammals.



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WHAT IS KAIZEN?



- Kaizen is a compound of two **Japanese** words that together **translate as "good change" or "improvement."**
 - Kaizen is a **Japanese business philosophy** that **encourages continuous improvement involving employees at all levels of a company.**
 - The concept of kaizen encompasses a wide range of ideas.
 - Those include making the work environment more efficient by creating a **team atmosphere, improving processes and procedures, ensuring employee engagement, and making jobs more fulfilling, less tiring, and safer.**
 - The **goal of Kaizen is to make small changes over a period of time** to drive continuous improvement within a company.
 - The Kaizen process recognizes that small changes now can add up to **huge impacts in the future.**
 - Ultimately, that can mean better quality control, more efficient processes, and the elimination of waste, among other benefits.
 - Under Kaizen, **improvements can be initiated by any employee** at any time.
 - The **philosophy is that everyone has a stake in the company's success**, and everyone should strive, at all times, to help make the business better.
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BATTLE OF WALONG



Set during the 1962 Sino-Indian War, it occurred at the **easternmost tip of Arunachal Pradesh**, near the **tri-junction of India, China, and Myanmar.**

- As Chinese forces launched a full-scale offensive, **Indian troops were tasked with defending Walong, the only advanced landing ground in the region**, a vital supply route that connected remote border posts.



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- After Tawang, Walong was China's main offensive in the eastern sector during the war.
 - The Chinese had overwhelming numbers on their side—an estimated 15,000 soldiers to India's 2,500, accompanied by superior weaponry and artillery.
 - Yet, despite being heavily outnumbered and outgunned, Indian soldiers displayed remarkable resolve.
 - The Indian Army units involved included battalions from the Kumaon Regiment, Sikh Regiment, Gorkha Rifles, Assam Rifles, and Dogra Regiment.
 - Their tenacity and courage managed to hold back the Chinese advance for nearly three weeks, despite dire shortages of ammunition and supplies.
 - The battle resulted in significant losses for India, with around 830 soldiers either killed, wounded, or captured.
 - Yet, their defence stands as a powerful symbol of the valour and sacrifice of the Indian Army.
 - It went down in history as the only Indian counterattack during the 1962 war.
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