

SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION (SCO) STARTUP FORUM 2023

After two successful editions in virtual mode, Startup India, Department of Promotion for Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce organized the third edition in the form of first-ever physical Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Startup Forum in New Delhi recently.



About:

- The engagement aimed at expanding the startup interactions amongst the SCO Member States, nurturing the spirit of innovation, generating more employment and encouraging young talent to build innovative solutions.
- The forum witnessed physical participation from SCO Member States including a delegation of government officials, private industry players, incubators and startups.
- This engagement focused on the spirit of collaboration and entrepreneurship.
- It aimed at promoting innovation development, particularly through the creation of common platforms and the facilitation of ideas and best practices among the SCO Member States.
- Various startup-to-startup bilateral meetings were conducted in promoting and achieving this agenda.
- In addition, the delegates also attended a workshop conducted by Startup India on the 'Role of Bilateral and Multilateral Engagements in developing startup ecosystem'.
- Previously, Startup India had organized various initiatives for SCO Member states including:
 - SCO Startup Forum 2020: The SCO Startup Forum laid the foundation for multilateral cooperation and engagement for startups among the SCO Member States.
 - SCO Startup Forum 2021: The two-day Forum was held virtually through a customized platform representing the Indian culture in augmented reality. SCO Startup Hub, a single point of contact for the SCO startup ecosystem, was launched in this forum.
 - Focused Mentorship Program: A 3-month long virtual mentorship series 'Starting-Up' was organized for the nominated startups, to build capacity among the SCO Startup founders.

CARBON DATING

The Allahabad High Court recently ordered a “scientific survey”, including carbon dating, of a “Shivling” said to have been found at the Gyanvapi mosque complex in Varanasi after setting aside a lower court order on the issue.



About:

- Carbon dating is a widely-used method to establish the age of organic materials, things that were once living.
- Living things have carbon in them in various forms. The dating method is based on the fact that Carbon-14 (C-14), an isotope of carbon with an atomic mass of 14, is radioactive, and decays at a well-known rate.
- The most abundant isotope of carbon in the atmosphere is C-12. The ratio of C-12 to C-14 in the atmosphere is almost static, and is known.
- Plants and animals acquire C-12 and C-14 in roughly the same proportion as is available in the atmosphere.
- When they die, their interactions with the atmosphere stops. While C-12 is stable, the radioactive C-14 reduces to one half of itself in about 5,730 years — known as its ‘half-life’.
- The changing ratio of C-12 to C-14 in the remains of a plant or animal after it dies can be measured, and can be used to deduce the approximate time when the organism died.
- Carbon dating cannot be used to determine the age of non-living things like rocks. Also, the age of things that are more than 40,000-50,000 years old cannot be arrived at through carbon dating.

Radiometric dating methods:

- These are used to calculate the age of inanimate things. Instead of carbon, decays of other radioactive elements that might be present in the material become the basis for the dating method. Two commonly employed methods for dating rocks are
- Potassium-argon dating: The radioactive isotope of potassium decays into argon, and their ratios can give a clue about the age of rocks.

- Uranium-thorium-lead dating: Uranium and thorium have several radioactive isotopes, and all of them decay into the stable lead atom. The ratios of these elements present in the material can be measured and used to make estimates about age.
- Cosmogenic nuclide dating: It is used to determine how long an object has remained exposed to sunlight. It is regularly applied to study the age of ice cores in polar regions.

MODEL PRISONS ACT, 2023

Union Home Ministry recently said that comprehensive ‘Model Prisons Act, 2023’ has been finalized.



About:

- The government had earlier decided to review and revise the colonial-era outdated Prison Act in tune with contemporary modern-day needs and correctional ideology.
- The Model Prison Act, 2023 may serve as a guiding document for the States, and for adoption in their jurisdiction.
- Union Home Ministry had assigned the task of revision of the Prisons Act, 1894 to the Bureau of Police Research and Development.
- The Bureau prepared a draft after holding wide-ranging discussions with State Prison authorities, correctional experts, and others.
- It has been prepared with the objective of holistically providing guidance and addressing the gaps in the existing Prisons Act.

Features:

- Some salient features of the new Model Prisons Act include provision for security assessment and segregation of prisoners, and individual sentence planning.
- Grievance redressal, prison development board, attitudinal change towards prisoners, provision of separate accommodation for women prisoners, and transgender are some of the other features.
- There is also a provision for use of technology in prison administration with a view to bring transparency in prison administration.

- The new Act will focus on vocational training and skill development of prisoners and their reintegration into the society.
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ONE STATION ONE PRODUCT

Under the One Station One Product' (OSOP) scheme of Indian Railways, 728 stations are covered with 785 OSOP outlets in 21 States and 3 Union Territories across the country so far.



About:

- Ministry of Railways launched this scheme in March, 2022.
 - The objective is to promote 'Vocal for Local' vision of the government, providing a market for local or indigenous products and create additional income opportunities for the marginalized sections of society.
 - Under the scheme, OSOP outlets at railway stations are allotted for showcasing, selling and giving high visibility to indigenous or local products.
 - These OSOP stalls are designed through National Design Institute for uniformity.
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6TH INDIAN OCEAN CONFERENCE (IOC)

Why in news?

- The 6th edition of the Indian Ocean Conference (IOC) is being held by **India Foundation** in association with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bangladesh and S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies.
- The two-day Indian Ocean Conference — with the theme “**Peace Prosperity and Partnership for a Resilient Future**” — is being held in Dhaka.

Indian Ocean Region (IOR)

- IOR is a geographical region that encompasses the Indian Ocean and its surrounding areas, including the littoral states and islands.
- The region spans from:

- the African coast in the west to the Australian coast in the east, and
- the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf in the north to the southern coast of Sri Lanka and Australia in the south.
- The Indian Ocean is the world's third-largest ocean, covering an area of approximately 70.6 million square kilometres.
- It is home to several important sea lanes of communication, including the Strait of Malacca, the Suez Canal, and the Bab-el-Mandeb strait, which connect Asia, Europe, and Africa.

Significance of Indian Ocean Region (IOR)

- **Geopolitical Importance:**

- Due to its geographical location, it serves as a major transit route for global trade, including oil and gas shipments.
- It is home to several important chokepoints, such as the Strait of Malacca and the Bab-el-Mandeb strait.

- **Economic Importance:**

- The IOR is home to several fast-growing economies, including India, China, and several Southeast Asian nations.
- The region is rich in natural resources, including oil, natural gas, and fisheries, and is a major destination for foreign investment.
- **It shares 64% of the global population and 60% of the global GDP.**

- **Security Importance:**

- The IOR is also a region of great security importance, with several countries in the region facing threats from terrorism, piracy, and maritime security challenges.
- The region has seen increased military activity in recent years, with major powers such as the US, India, and China increasing their presence in the region.

- **Environmental Importance:**

- The IOR is home to several important marine ecosystems, including coral reefs and mangrove forests that are vital for maintaining biodiversity and supporting local communities.
- The region is also vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including rising sea levels and increased frequency of extreme weather events.

Indian Ocean Conference (IOC)

- IOC is an annual international conference that focuses on the geopolitical, economic, and strategic importance of the Indian Ocean region.
 - The conference brings together policymakers, scholars, business leaders, and civil society representatives to discuss issues related to security, trade, and cooperation in the Indian Ocean region.
 - The first edition of the Conference was held in Singapore in 2016. The fifth edition of IOC was held in 2021 in Abu Dhabi, UAE.
 - **Organised by** - India Foundation in partnership with other organizations in the region.
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WHAT ARE BAOBAB TREES?

The Madhya Pradesh government recently decided that the forest department cannot give permission to translocate Dhar's famed Baobab trees.



About Baobab Trees:

- Baobabs are **long-lived deciduous, small to large trees** from **20 to 100 ft** tall with **broad trunks and compact tops**.
 - The Baobab Tree is **also known as the upside-down tree**.
 - The baobab is a **prehistoric species** which **predates both mankind** and the splitting of the continents **over 200 million years ago**.
 - **Distribution:**
 - There are **9 species** of baobab tree. Two are native to **mainland Africa**, six to **Madagascar**, and **one to Australia**.
 - **Mandu, in the Dhar district of Madhya Pradesh**, is perhaps the **only place in India** where baobab trees are found in abundance, with an **estimated 1,000 trees** in the periphery of Mandu town.
 - **Features:**
 - Baobab trees **can live to become thousands of years old**. The oldest baobab tree on record was the Panke baobab in Zimbabwe, which lived to be a venerable 2450 years old
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- They only have **very faint growth rings**.
- Mature trees have massive trunks that are bottle-shaped or cylindrical and tapered from bottom to top.
- **The fruit** of the tree is **round or oval-shaped and is highly nutritious**.
- **Why are they called the ‘Tree of Life’?**
- They **can store large amounts of fresh water** in their extraordinary **trunks**.
- It also allows the baobab tree **to produce nutritious fruits even during the driest years**.
- This makes them **true life savers during times when water is scarce**.

THE POSH ACT: GAPS IN ENFORCEMENT, MUST SECURE WOMEN'S WORK SPACE

Why in News?

- Almost a decade into its enactment, the Supreme Court issued a slew of directions to ensure effective implementation of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013/PoSH Act.
- This came after the apex court discovered serious lapses in the enforcement of the PoSH Act.

The PoSH Act 2013:

- **Background - Vishakha v. The State of Rajasthan (1997):**
 - The SC issued the **Vishaka Guidelines**, with the primary objective of providing a mechanism for workplace sexual misconduct redress and grievance processes.
 - These recommendations inspired the PoSH Act - a law administered by the Union **Ministry of Women & Child Development (MoWCD)**.
- **Objective of the PoSH Act:**
 - It aims to protect the **rights of women** at work and to **make the workplace a safer place** for them.
 - The legislation also functions as a forum for **both avoiding and addressing problems**.
- **Provisions of the Act:**

- **Defines sexual harassment at workplace:** Unwanted sexual physical, verbal or nonverbal action is defined as physical contact and advances, demand or desire for sexual favours, making sexually tinged comments, showing pornography, etc.
- **The concept of “extended workplace”:** It defines “workplace” as any site where an employee goes as a consequence of work, including transportation offered by the organisation for the purpose of travel.
- **Committees for complaints:**
 - The Act mandates any corporation or organisation **with more than 10 employees** to establish an **Internal Complaint Committee (ICC)** to hear and address sexual harassment allegations.
 - The MoWCD introduced (in 2017) an online platform - **SHe-Box** - that directs complaints to the employer or organisation’s ICC.
 - The Act mandates the District Officer to organise a **Local Complaint Committee** in each district where there are **less than 10 workers**.
- **Duties and obligations of employer:**
 - It is a **legal need** to handle sexual harassment as a violation of service regulations.
 - If the employer fails to comply with the regulations a penalty of Rs. 50000 or it can even lead to cancellation of licence.

Procedure for Complaint Against Sexual Harassment at the Workplace:

- An aggrieved female **has three months** from the date of the tragedy to make a written complaint with the ICC.
- According to the SC, the time limit can be extended if the lady is unable to submit the complaint owing to mitigating circumstances.
- Before initiating an investigation, the committee can try to resolve the matter through **mediation** between the women and the responder.
- If a settlement is reached, **no further investigation will be launched**.
- If the proposed conciliation does not provide any results, a **fresh investigation** (to be concluded in 90 days) will be launched.
- While directing the investigation, the Committee has the same authority as a **civil court**.



CROSS & CLIMB ROHTAK



- If the ICC determines that the claim against the defendant is **false**, the **woman may be fired**.
 - If the complaint is **proven**, the committee will recommend to the District Officer that sexual harassment be considered as improper conduct in accordance with the Act and the victim woman should be **compensated**.
 - Any individual who is harmed by the ICC guidelines, **may file an appeal** with the court (HC) within 90 days of their implementation.
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