

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

This year, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India envisages to celebrate the World Environment Day 2023 with a thrust on the Mission LiFE.



About:

- **Objective of the day:** World Environment Day is the United Nations day for encouraging worldwide awareness and action to protect our environment.
 - **Date of observance:** Every year on 5th of June.
 - **Why June 5?** To mark the first day of The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment which was held in Stockholm, Sweden from June 5–16 in 1972.
 - **First year of observance of WED:** In 1974 the first WED was held with the theme "Only One Earth".
 - The **theme** for World Environment Day on 5 June 2023 will focus on solutions to plastic pollution under the campaign #BeatPlasticPollution.
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INDIA, RUSSIA RUPEE TRADE TALKS

Why in news?

- Government officials have denied the reports that India and Russia have suspended negotiations on trade settlement in Indian rupee.
- The officials admitted that there are issues on how Russia could use the excess rupee in Vostro accounts, but the talks to iron out these differences continue.
 - A Rupee Vostro account is a foreign bank's account with an Indian bank in rupees in India.

What is international trade settlement in rupees?

- When countries import and export goods and services, they have to make payments in a foreign currency.

- Since the US Dollar is the world's reserve currency, most of these transactions are entered into US dollars.
- If an Indian buyer enters into a transaction with a seller from Germany, the Indian buyer has to first convert his rupees into US dollars.
- The seller will receive those dollars which will then be converted into Euros.
- Here, both the parties involved have to incur the conversion expenses and bear the risk of foreign exchange rate fluctuations.
- In the process of trade settlement in rupees, instead of paying and receiving US dollars, the invoice will be made in Indian rupees if the counterparty has a Rupee Vostro account.

Why does the RBI want to settle payments in Rupees?

- **Reduce India's dependency on US dollars**
 - .Hence, in long term, it will shift some demand into Rupees from USD.
- **Facilitate trade with sanctions-hit countries**
 - The mechanism for international settlement in rupee might have been aimed particularly at facilitating trade with sanctions-hit Russia, possibly Iran, and forex-starved Sri Lanka.
- **Stability of Indian rupee**
 - India is a net importer and the value of the Indian rupee has been declining consistently.
 - The rupee was the worst performing Asian currency in 2022, witnessing a fall of around 10%.
 - Using the rupee for international trade transactions will help check the flow of dollars out of India and slow the depreciation of the currency.
- **Global acceptance of Indian Currency**
 - International trade settlements in rupee are expected to gradually contribute to the global acceptance of the currency.
 - Later it may be possible to repay loans taken from fund banks like the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank in Indian currency.

What are the complications?

- **Limited Acceptance:**
 - The Indian rupee is not widely accepted as a settlement currency in international trade.

- The rupee is not fully convertible. India's share of global exports of goods also is just about 2%.
 - These factors reduce the necessity for other countries to hold rupees.
 - **Complications in terms of formulating the monetary policy**
 - The internationalisation of the rupee can potentially limit the ability of the central bank to control domestic money supply and influence interest rates as per the domestic macroeconomic conditions.
 - If a substantial portion of its trade is in rupee, non-residents would hold rupee balances in India which would be used to acquire Indian assets.
 - Large holdings of such financial assets could heighten vulnerability to external shocks, managing which would necessitate more effective policy tools.
 - **Challenges in promoting invoices in rupee**
 - In the prevailing global atmosphere of trade protectionism and geopolitical rivalries, promoting invoices in rupee with various countries will not be an easy task.
 - Currently, India's share in global trade is not significant enough and it is highly dependent on the import of fossil fuels, edible oils, gold, silver, etc.
 - This makes it an unlikely possibility for exporting countries to consider the Indian rupee as an invoicing currency, unless it suits their interests.
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COVID IS NO LONGER AN EMERGENCY

Why in news?

- The World Health Organisation (WHO) said that Covid-19 was no longer a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.
- As per the WHO, the focus would now be on the long-term management of the infection.

When does a disease declared as the public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC)?

- A disease is declared as a PHEIC when it meets certain criteria established by the WHO. The criteria are as follows:
 - The disease must be serious, sudden, unusual, or unexpected.
 - There must be a significant risk of international spread.

- There must be a significant risk of international travel/ trade restrictions.
- There must be a significant risk of interference with international public health measures.
- If a disease meets these criteria, the WHO Director-General may declare a PHEIC based on the advice of the Emergency Committee, a group of international experts in public health and other relevant fields.

What does the PHEIC declaration mean?

- A PHEIC is the strongest global alert the WHO can formally make and, when it is declared, countries have a legal duty to respond quickly.
- It is a formal declaration by the WHO that:
 - a disease or health event constitutes a public health risk to other countries through the international spread of disease, and
 - that a coordinated international response is required.
- When a PHEIC is declared, it allows the WHO to mobilize resources and coordinate the global response to the event.
- Examples of recent PHEIC declarations include the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2019 and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

WHAT IS ARTICLE 355 OF THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION?

The Central Government recently promulgated Article 355 in Manipur to take charge of the security of the state.



About Article 355 of the Indian Constitution:

- It is a part of emergency provisions contained in Part XVIII of the Constitution of India, from Article 352 to 360.
- It empowers the central government to take all necessary steps to protect a state against internal disturbances and external aggression.
- This article empowers the Centre to take necessary steps to protect a state from any kind of threat, be it internal or external.

- The provision is designed to **ensure that the government can act swiftly** and decisively in the event of any disturbance or threat to the peace and security of the country.
 - **Exact definition:**
 - The exact definition of Article 355 in the Constitution of India is, “**It shall be the duty of the Union to protect every State** against external aggression and internal disturbance and to **ensure that the government of every State is carried on in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution.**”
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WHAT IS PROJECT DANTAK?

The Prime Minister recently praised the initiative by Border Roads Organisation Project Dantak to commemorate the 64th Raising Day.



About Project Dantak:

- Project Dantak is an overseas project of the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) under the Ministry of Defence of India.
 - It was established on 24 April 1961 as a result of an agreement between Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, the third king of Bhutan and then Prime Minister of India Jawahar Lal Nehru.
 - It is primarily focused on developing infrastructure and providing connectivity in remote areas of Bhutan.
 - It was tasked to construct the pioneering motorable roads in Bhutan.
 - It completed the road connecting Samdrup Jongkhar to Trashigang in 1968. In the same year, Thimphu was connected to Phuentsholing by Dantak.
 - Some other notable projects executed by the project include the construction of Paro Airport, Yonphula Airfield, Thimphu – Trashigang Highway, Telecommunication & Hydro Power Infrastructure, Sherubtse College, Kanglung and India House Estate.
 - The project recruits local workers from Bhutan as well as Indian workers from adjoining districts along the India-Bhutan border.
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CENTRAL ASIAN FLYWAY (CAF)

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme/ Convention on Migratory Species (UNEP/CMS) had organized a meeting of Range Countries to strengthen conservation efforts for migratory birds and their habitats in the Central Asian Flyway (CAF) from 2nd to 4th May, 2023 in New Delhi.



About:

- Central Asian Flyway (CAF) covers a large area of Eurasia between the Arctic and Indian Oceans.
- This flyway comprises several important migration routes of birds.
- Including India, there are 30 countries under the Central Asian Flyway.
- At the 13th meeting of the Conference of Parties (CoP) to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), held at Gandhinagar in February, 2020, a resolution (UNEP/CMS/Resolution 12.11 (Rev.COP13) and Decision 13.46 were adopted in-ter-alia providing for establishing, by COP14, under the umbrella of CMS an institutional framework, under the leadership of India with the aim to agree on conservation action for migratory birds.
- With a view to fulfill its commitment, India is organizing two day online meeting on 6th -7th October 2021 with CAF Range Countries, anchored in Wildlife Institute of India.
- Approximately one in five of the world's 11,000 bird species migrate, some covering enormous distances.
- Conserving migratory birds requires cooperation and coordination along the entire flyway between countries and across national boundaries.

BASTILLE DAY PARADE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit France on 14th of July to attend this year's Bastille Day Parade as Guest of Honour in Paris.



What is France's Bastille Day parade?

- July 14 is marked as France's National Day.

- One of the revolutionary days in Paris and now a national holiday, the July 14 ("Bastille Day") is celebrated with a mixture of solemn military parades and easygoing dancing and fireworks.
- The storming of the **Bastille on July 14, 1789** has been commemorated in France for more than a century.
- Every Bastille Day, Paris' famous avenue des Champs-Élysées hosts a military parade - similar to India's Republic Day parade on Kartavya Path.
- French heads of state have been the Republic Day guests of honour five times since 1951.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be the 2nd Indian PM to be the guest of honour at Bastille Day, after Manmohan Singh in 2009.

SCO FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEET

Why in News?

- Recently, the meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) took place in **Goa**.
- India is holding the chairmanship of the SCO for the year 2023.

About Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO):

- The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation is a permanent intergovernmental international organisation, established in **2001**.
- It is built on the foundation laid by the Shanghai **Five** grouping of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and 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.

Objectives of SCO:

- To strengthen mutual trust and neighbourliness among the member states

- To promote effective cooperation in politics, trade & economy, research & technology and culture
- To enhance ties in education, energy, transport, tourism, environmental protection, etc.
- To maintain and ensure peace, security and stability in the region
- To establish a democratic, fair and rational new international political & economic order

Organisational Structure of SCO:

- The Heads of State Council (HSC) is the supreme decision-making body in the SCO, it meets once a year.
- The Council of Heads of Government is the second-highest council in the organisation.
- The Council of Foreign Ministers hold regular meetings, where they discuss the current international situation.
- Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), based in Tashkent, is established to combat terrorism, separatism and extremism.
- **Official working languages:** Chinese, Russian



- **SCO Secretariat:** Beijing, China

Member Countries of SCO:

- **8 member states**– China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India, Pakistan.
 - India and Pakistan became full members at the Heads of State Council meet in Astana in 2017.
 - **Iran will be the newest member (9th) of the SCO, when it joins the forum in 2023** under the chairmanship of India.
- **4 Observer members** – Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran, Mongolia
 - In 2021, the procedure of granting Iran the status of Member State was started at the SCO Summit in Dushanbe.
 - In 2022, a similar procedure was launched for Belarus at the SCO Summit in Samarkand
- **9 Dialogue Partners** – Azerbaijan, Armenia, Egypt, Cambodia, Qatar, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Sri Lanka.

- In 2022, the procedure for granting the status of Dialogue Partners to Bahrain, Kuwait, Maldives, Myanmar and the United Arab Emirates was initiated at the SCO Summit in Samarkand.

Significance of SCO

| Why SCO is important | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Is seen as an Eastern counter-balance to NATO▶ Enhances security cooperation among members▶ Helps deal with terrorism, particularly IS terrorists▶ Increases economic cooperation in the region | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ China's One Belt and One Road (OBOR) initiative▶ India's push for connectivity with Chabahar port in Iran▶ International North-South Transport Corridor connecting the sub-continent with Central Asian countries |

Significance of SCO for India

- India's security, geopolitical, strategic and economic interests are closely intertwined with developments in the region
- The **Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS)** of SCO specifically deals with issues relating to security and defence.
- The Central Asian region is **richly endowed with natural resources** and vital minerals
- SCO provides a platform for **India's efforts to connect with Central Asia**.
- **Stable Afghanistan** is in India's interest. SCO is a platform which can play an important role in Afghanistan.