

THE SCO SUCCESS STORY AND WAYS TO MAKE IT BETTER

Context

- Recently, **India successfully hosted the 23rd Meeting** of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).
- Though the world witnessed another “SCO moment,” challenges from Indian perspective remain and the organisation can get better.

About the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

- SCO is a permanent **intergovernmental** political, economic, international security and defence organisation, created in June **2001** (HQ – Beijing, China).
- **The founding members** of SCO - Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan - had come together (as the **Shanghai Five**) 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.
- **India and Pakistan** became full members at the Heads of State Council meet in Astana in **2017**.
- **Iran is inducted as the newest member (9th) of the SCO in 2023** under the chairmanship of India.
- **It is the world's largest regional organization** in terms of geographic scope and population, covering approximately 60% of the area of Eurasia, 40% of the world population.
- As of 2021, its combined GDP was around 20% of global GDP.

The Role of SCO in a Changing World and Geo Politics

- Over the years, the SCO has been **committed to becoming a community with a shared future** for mankind, firmly supporting each other in upholding their core interests, and synergising their national development strategies and regional cooperation initiatives.



CROSS & CLIMB ROHTAK



- Member-states have carried forward **the spirit of good neighbourliness and friendship**, and built partnerships featuring dialogue instead of confrontation, and cooperation instead of alliance.
- The SCO has been a **guardian of and contributor to regional peace, stability, and prosperity**.
- These achievements manifest the **common aspirations of all countries** so that there is peace, development and win-win cooperation.
- The SCO's leading and exemplary role can help **strengthen unity and cooperation, seize development opportunities**, and address risks and challenges.

The Significance of SCO for India

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

Conclusion

- The SCO's success story is part of the **broader global partnership of emerging economies** and developing countries.
- However, **challenges remain and only after overcoming these challenges** the SCO will lead by example in safeguarding the development rights and legitimate interests of the developing world.

WHAT IS SEAGRASS?

Citizen divers restore seagrass in just off the coast of Kiel in northern Germany, Baltic sea to fight climate change.



About Seagrass:

- It is **flowering plant** that grows **submerged in shallow marine waters** like bays and lagoons.
- They are so-named because most species have long green, grass-like leaves.
- Seagrasses have roots, stems, and leaves and produce flowers and seeds.
- Like terrestrial plants, seagrass **also photosynthesizes and manufactures their own food** and releases oxygen.
- They evolved around 100 million years ago, and there are approximately 72 different seagrass species that belong to four major groups.
- **Distribution:**
 - They are found on **all continents except Antarctica.**
 - The tropical waters of the Indo-Pacific hold the highest diversity of seagrasses in the world.
 - They occur all along the coastal areas of India **mainly in the Palk Strait and Gulf of Mannarin Tamil Nadu.**

Key facts about Baltic Sea

- It is part of the **North Atlantic Ocean, situated in Northern Europe.**
- It extends northward from the latitude of southern Denmark almost to the Arctic Circle and separates the Scandinavian Peninsula from the rest of continental Europe.
- The Baltic Sea connects to the Atlantic Ocean through the **Danish Straits.**
- It is the largest expanse of brackish water in the world. **Its water salinity levels are lower than that of the World Oceans** due to the inflow of fresh water from the surrounding land and the sea's shallowness.
- **Bordering Countries:** Denmark, Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Russia, Finland and Sweden.
- **Major gulfs:** The **Gulf of Bothnia** to the north, the **Gulf of Finland** to the east, and the **Gulf of Riga** slightly to the south of that.

MERI MAATI MERA DESH CAMPAIGN

Recently, the Union government of India has launched the ‘Meri Maati Mera Desh’ campaign, envisaged as a culminating event of the ‘Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav’ celebration of 75 years of Indian Independence.



About Meri Maati Mera Desh campaign:

- Under this campaign soil collected from different parts of the country in August will be used to develop a garden along the Kartavya Path in Delhi.
 - Events have been planned at the panchayat, village, block, urban local body, and State and national levels, respectively.
 - The five-point agenda includes the **installation of a shilaphalakam** (memorial plaque), as per specifications, bearing the “names of those who have made the supreme sacrifice”.
 - Work for the shilaphalakam may be executed through the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), leveraging local materials and resources.
- ‘Vasudha Vandhan’ envisages every gram panchayat or village renewing “**Mother Earth by planting 75 saplings** of indigenous species and developing an Amrit Vatika”.
- ‘**Veroon Ka Vandan**’ will **felicitate freedom fighters**, and the families of deceased freedom fighters.
 - Young volunteers and others will collect soil from every panchayat/village and bring it to the block, from where the ‘**Mitti Kalash**’ will be transported to Delhi.
 - In urban areas, events will be organised at local bodies, notified area councils, Cantonment Boards, and town panchayats from August 9 and 15, and in bigger municipalities and municipal corporations from August 16 to 20.
 - The ‘Mitti Kalash’ are to be brought ceremoniously to the larger municipalities/corporations and transported to Kartavya Path.

WHAT IS A NO CONFIDENCE MOTION?

Why in News?

- Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has admitted a no-confidence motion against the ruling government.
- The motion was proposed by Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi, on behalf of opposition parties of I.N.D.I.A alliance.

What is a No-Confidence Motion?

- In a parliamentary democracy, a government can be in power only if it commands a majority in the directly elected House.
- **Article 75(3)** of the Indian Constitution embodies this rule by specifying that the Council of Ministers are collectively responsible to the Lok Sabha.
- For testing this collective responsibility, the **rules of Lok Sabha provide a particular mechanism – a motion of no-confidence.**
 - The procedure is specified under Rule 198 of the Lok Sabha.
 - The **Constitution does not mention either a Confidence or a No Confidence Motion.**

Who can move a No-Confidence Motion?

- Any Lok Sabha MP, who can garner the support of 50 colleagues, can, at any point of time, introduce a motion of no-confidence against the Council of Ministers.
- A no-confidence motion **can be moved only in the Lok Sabha.** It cannot be moved in the Rajya Sabha.

How is a No-Confidence Motion Debated and Voted?

- The motion is moved by the member who submitted it, and the government will then respond to the motion.
- The opposition parties will then have the opportunity to speak on the motion.
- After the debate, the Lok Sabha will vote on the no-confidence motion.
- The motion will be passed if it is supported by a majority of the members of the House.

- If a no-confidence motion is passed, the government must resign.

NO-CONFIDENCE MOTION

First-ever	Three in last 25 years
no-confidence motion was moved in 1963	July 1993 Against the Narasimha Rao gov't after Babri Masjid demolition (Govt won confidence vote)
> Total 26 so far (the one on July 20 will be 27th)	April 1999 Against the Vajpayee gov't (Govt lost by one vote)
> Indira Gandhi gov't had faced maximum number of no-confidence motions 15	August 2003 Against the Vajpayee gov't (Govt won confidence vote)
	July 2008 It was a trust vote after CPM-led Left Front withdrew support from the Manmohan Singh gov't over the Indo-US nuclear deal. Govt proved its majority

- If the government wins the vote on the no-confidence motion, the motion is defeated and the government remains in power.

How many No-Confidence Motions have been introduced since Independence?

- There have been **27 no-confidence motions introduced in the Lok Sabha since independence**
- The first no-confidence motion against the administration of the then PM Jawaharlal Nehru was presented in the Lok Sabha in August 1963.
- The motion obtained only 62 votes in favor and 347 votes against it.
- The last no-confidence motion was moved in 2018 against the then NDA government.

PANEL ASKS LABOUR MINISTRY TO IMPLEMENT WELFARE SCHEMES FOR GIG WORKERS

Why in News?

- Taking note of absence of any specific welfare scheme by the government for gig and platform workers, a parliamentary panel has asked the Ministry of Labour and Employment to formulate and implement welfare schemes for such workers at the earliest.

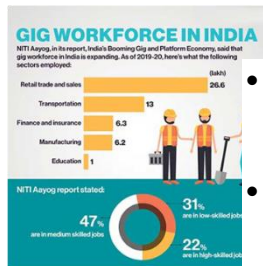
What is Gig Economy?

- A gig economy is a free market system in which organisations hire or contract workers for a short span of time.
- Simply put, the positions are temporary to meet the company's requirements by having short-term engagements.
- Startups like Ola, Uber, Zomato, and Swiggy have established themselves as the main source of the gig economy in India.

Who is a Gig Worker?

- According to the Code on Social Security, 2020 (India), “A **gig worker is a person who performs work or participates in work arrangements and earns from such activities, outside of the traditional employer-employee relationship.**”
- They are independent contractors, online platform workers, contract firm workers, on-call workers and temporary workers.
- Participation in the gig economy is **higher in developing countries**(5-12 percent) versus developed economies(1-4 percent).
- Most of these jobs are in **lower-income job-types** such as deliveries, ridesharing, microtasks, care and wellness.

What is the size of Gig Economy in India?



- In 2020-21, ~77 lakh workers were engaged in the gig economy. The gig workforce is expected to **expand to 2.35 crore workers by 2029-30.**
- The **median age of Indian gig workers is 27 and their average monthly income is Rs 18,000.**
- Of these, about 71 per cent are the sole breadwinners of their families. Additionally, gig workers operate with an average household size of 4.4.
- These figures clearly indicate the importance of the gig working community in the Indian economy.
- Ensuring the comfort and security of this community is investing in a more progressive and prosperous future.

Challenges Faced by Gig Workers:

- While platform companies have created avenues of employment, it has often been marred by **low wages, unequal gender participation, and a lack of possibility for upward mobility** within an organisation.
- This has triggered protests from workers at companies like Swiggy, Zomato, Ola, Uber, and Urban Company, among others.

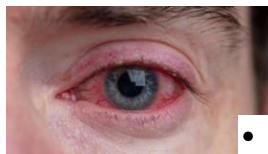
- Gig workers are typically **hired by companies on a contractual basis** and are not considered their employees.
- As a result, they **do not receive some of the benefits** that an on-roll employee of the company may have.
 - This means they often do not receive **benefits like paid sick and casual leaves, travel and housing allowances, and provident fund savings, etc.**

News Summary:

- **Standing Committee on Labour, Textiles, Skill Development** has asked the Ministry of Labour and Employment to formulate and implement welfare schemes for gig workers at the earliest.
- The committee had noted that since gig and platform workers do not come under the purview of **Employees' Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act**, appropriate welfare schemes for unorganised sector workers and gig and platform workers are needed.
- The Ministry in its reply had said that a MoU has been signed with the National Law School of India University, Bangalore **for assistance in framing of a new scheme** for the gig and platform workers as well as workers in the unorganised sector.

WHAT IS CONJUNCTIVITIS?

Amid heavy rainfall in Delhi and nearby areas over the past few weeks, multiple cases of conjunctivitis are being reported in the National Capital Region.



About Conjunctivitis:

- Conjunctivitis, commonly known as **Pink Eye**, is an **infection or inflammation of the transparent membrane that covers the eyelid and eyeball**. This membrane is called the **conjunctiva**.
- **Why do eyes appear Pink?**
 - When **small blood vessels in the conjunctiva become swollen and irritated, they're more visible**.

- This is what **causes the whites of the eyes to appear reddish or pink.**
 - **Causative Agent:**
 - It can be caused by **viruses, bacteria or by allergies.**
 - Both **bacterial and viral conjunctivitis are highly contagious**, while allergic conjunctivitis is not.
 - **Transmission:**
 - It usually occurs through **direct or indirect contact.**
 - **Direct transmission happens through droplets** from the cough or sneeze of an infected person **or through hand-to-eye contact.**
 - **Indirectly, it can spread via shared personal items** like towels, makeup, pillows or contact lenses.
 - **Signs and symptoms:**
 - Most common signs are **redness, swelling and itching in the eyes.**
 - The eyes can also feel **watery during the start of the flu.**
 - **Treatment:**
 - For the treatment of conjunctivitis, one **needs to use a combination of medicines.**
 - One of the most useful treatments is **using artificial tears or even any lubricating eye drops;** these can **help the infected person to maintain moisture.**
 - **A warm or cold compress will also help** in giving relief from inflammation and swelling.
-