

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Defence Ministers' Meeting

Reference News-

Recently, the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)** Defence Ministers' Meeting took place in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

- The Defence Minister of India addressed the grouping and said **India is committed to working within the SCO framework** for helping create & maintain a secure & peaceful region.

Next Analysis-

▪ Major Highlights of Defence Minister's Address:

- **Terrorism is the most serious threat** to international peace and security and support to any acts of terror is a crime against humanity.
 - India reaffirms its resolve to fight terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.
- The geo-strategic location of India makes it both a **"Eurasian land power"** as well as a stakeholder in the **Indo-Pacific**.
- Highlighted non-traditional security challenges like **pandemics, climate change, food security, water security and associated societal disruptions** can impact national and international landscape.
- In dealing with Covid-19 pandemic, India has been at the forefront to provide support and assistance to countries through its **Vaccine diplomacy**.
- India's initiative on **coalition for disaster resilient infrastructure (CDRI)** was also an example of how countries were coming together to create and share capabilities to deal with humanitarian assistance and disaster relief issues.

SCO

- The SCO was founded at a summit in **Shanghai in 2001** by the presidents of Russia, China, the Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.
- Presently, the SCO comprises **eight member states** namely **India, Kazakhstan, China, the Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan**.
- SCO nations together encompass nearly **half the human population** and it covers approximately **three-fifths of the Eurasian continent** in terms of geographical expanse.
- The SCO, seen as a **counterweight to NATO**, is an eight-member economic and security bloc and has emerged as one of the largest transregional international organisations.
- India was made an **observer at the SCO in 2005**.
- India and Pakistan became its **permanent members in 2017**.
- **India's Opportunities and SCO:**
 - **Regional Security:** SCO will enable India, as an integral part of the Eurasian security grouping, to neutralise threats like religious extremism and terrorism in the region.
 - It is due to this, India has shown keen interest in deepening its security-related cooperation with the SCO and its **Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS)**, which specifically deals with issues relating to security and defence.
 - **Connect With Central Asia:** SCO is also a potential platform to advance India's **Connect Central Asia policy**.

- India's ongoing engagement with SCO can be seen through the **prism of reconnecting and re-energising ties with a region** with which India has shared civilizational linkages, and is considered the country's extended neighbourhood.
- **Dealing With Pakistan & China:** SCO provides India with a forum where it can constructively engage both China and Pakistan in a regional context and project India's security interests.
- **Bringing Stability in Afghanistan:** SCO, also an alternative regional platform to delve into the rapidly changing **situation in Afghanistan**.
 - So far India completed 500 projects in Afghanistan and is continuing with some more, with a total development aid of \$3 billion.
- **Strategic Importance:** Acknowledging the strategic importance emanating from the region and SCO, the Indian Prime Minister had articulated the foundational dimension of Eurasia being '**SECURE**'. The letters in the word SECURE are:
 - S for **Security of our citizens**,
 - E for **Economic development** for all,
 - C for **Connecting the region**,
 - U for **Unite our people**,
 - R for **Respect for Sovereignty and Integrity**, and
 - E for **Environment protection**.

Way Forward

- There is a need to provide **high priority to the "consolidation of trust"** in the security domain within the SCO as well as strengthening ties with partners of the grouping bilaterally on the **basis of equality, mutual respect and understanding**.
- The SCO member countries should **develop joint institutional capacities** that respect individual national sensitivities and yet **generate a spirit of cooperation** to create contact and connectivity between people, societies and nations.
- Member countries should realise that they have collective stakes to create a safe, secure and stable region that can contribute towards **progress and improvement of human development indices**.

Earth Overshoot Day 2021

Reference News-

Earth Overshoot Day 2021 happened on **July 29**, almost a month earlier than the year before.

- It was pushed forward **because emissions are on the rise and biodiversity loss is speeding up**.

Next analysis-

Who announces the date?

The date is announced annually by **the Global Footprint Network**, the global organisation calling for urgent climate action and sustainable consumption.

What is it?

Each year, **Earth Overshoot Day** marks the date when we have used all the biological resources that the Earth can renew during the entire year.

- This means humanity has again used up all biological resources that our planet regenerates during the entire year by 29th July, 2021.

Why it has been observed one month earlier this year?

1. We've already seen a 6.6% increase in our global **carbon footprint**, while our global forest biocapacity decreased by 0.5% due to widespread deforestation in the Amazon rainforest.
2. Deforestation had also increased by 12% in 2020, and estimates for 2021 suggest the figure will reach a 43% year-on-year increase.

What's the concern now?

- At our current rate, we're using around 1.7 Earths every single year. From now until the end of the year, we're operating on "ecological deficit spending".
- Our spending for 2021 is among some of the highest since we entered into the overshoot territory in the 1970s, based on UN data.

The concept of earth overshoot day:

The concept of Earth Overshoot Day was first conceived by **Andrew Simms** of the UK think tank New Economics Foundation, which partnered with Global Footprint Network in 2006 to launch the first global Earth Overshoot Day campaign.

How is it computed?

Earth Overshoot Day is computed by dividing the planet's bio capacity (the amount of ecological resources Earth is able to generate that year), by humanity's Ecological Footprint (humanity's demand for that year), and multiplying by 365, the number of days in a year.

What is Ecological Footprint?

It is a metric that comprehensively compares human demand on nature against nature's capacity to regenerate.

Project Bold

Reference News-

The project was launched by **Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)** & BSF have launched Project BOLD in Jaisalmer to Prevent Desertification and Support Rural Economy. Under this, they have planted 1000 bamboo saplings.

Next Analysis-

Please note that recently KVIC launched Project BOLD in the tribal village of Nichla Mandwa in Udaipur, Rajasthan.

- Under this, 5000 saplings of special bamboo species – **Bambusa Tulda and Bambusa Polymorpha** specially brought from Assam – were planted in vacant arid Gram Panchayat land.
- With this, KVIC created **a world record of planting the highest number of bamboo saplings on a single day at one location.**

About the Project BOLD:

1. **BOLD** stands for **Bamboo Oasis on Lands in Drought.**
2. Launched by **Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC).**
3. The initiative has been launched as part of KVIC's "**Khadi Bamboo Festival**" to celebrate 75 years of independence "Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav".

4. **Objectives:** To create bamboo-based green patches in arid and semi-arid land zones, To reduce desertification and provide livelihood and multi-disciplinary rural industry support.

Why Bamboo was chosen?

Bamboos grow very fast and in about three years' time, they could be harvested. Bamboos are also known for conserving water and reducing evaporation of water from the land surface, which is an important feature in arid and drought-prone regions.

Khadi and Village Industries Commission:

- KVIC is a **statutory body established under the Khadi and Village Industries Commission Act, 1956.**
- The KVIC is charged with the planning, promotion, organisation and implementation of programmes for the development of Khadi and other village industries in the rural areas in coordination with other agencies engaged in rural development wherever necessary.
- It **functions under the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.**

The Inland Vessels Bill, 2021

Reference News-

Lok Sabha has passed **the Inland Vessels Bill, 2021.**

Next Analysis-

Key features of the Bill:

1. It provides for a **unified law for the entire country**, instead of separate rules framed by the States.
2. **The certificate of registration** granted under the proposed law will be deemed to be valid in all States and Union Territories, and there will be no need to seek separate permissions from the States.
3. The Bill provides for a **central data base** for recording the details of vessel, vessel registration, crew on an electronic portal.
4. It **requires all mechanically propelled vessels to be mandatorily registered.** All non-mechanically propelled vessels will also have to be enrolled at district, taluk or panchayat or village level.

Inland Water Transport (IWT) in India:

1. India has about 14,500 km of navigable waterways which comprise of rivers, canals, backwaters, creeks, etc.
2. IWT is a fuel-efficient and environment-friendly mode.
3. As per **the National Waterways Act 2016**, 111 waterways have been declared as National Waterways (NWs).
4. The **Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI)** is implementing **the Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP)** at an estimated cost of ₹5369.18 crores for capacity augmentation of navigation on the Haldia-Varanasi stretch of Ganga (part of NW-1) with the technical and financial assistance of the World Bank.