IUCN Chief urged countries to strive for High Seas Biodiversity Treaty

On World Oceans Day (June 08), director general of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) urged countries worldwide **"to strive for a fully functional High Seas Biodiversity Treaty"**

- **Action theme** for World Oceans Day 2024 was **'Catalyzing Action for Our Ocean & Climate'.**

About High Seas Biodiversity Treaty

- It is an agreement under the **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)** on conservation and sustainable use of marine **Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ).**

What is High Seas?

- **High seas** are defined by international law as all parts of the ocean that **aren't included in exclusive economic zone, territorial sea, or internal waters of a country,** or in **archipelagic waters of an archipelagic country.**
- High seas and associated resources are **not directly owned or regulated by any country.**

- Formally adopted by **Intergovernmental Conference on Marine BBNJ in 2023** and will become international law only when it is **signed and ratified** by at least **60 countries.**
- Till date, **Only 7 countries have ratified the treaty.**
- India has **neither signed nor ratified the treaty.**

Key provisions of the Treaty

- Contains provisions based on **polluter-pays principle as well as mechanisms for resolution of disputes** related to pollutions in high seas.
- Underlines importance of **capacity building and transfer of marine technology** and increasing **collaboration among regional seas organizations** and regional fisheries management organizations.
- **Recognize rights and traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples** and local communities, **freedom of scientific research,** and need for **fair and equitable sharing of benefits.**

Cooperative societies do not fall under ambit of RTI Act, rules Madras High Court

Court ruled that cooperative societies registered under **Tamil Nadu Cooperative Societies Act, 1983** aren't **'public authorities'** under section 2(h) of the **Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005.**

About RTI Act, 2005

- Sets out **practical regime for citizens to access information** under the control of public authorities **to promote transparency and accountability.**
  - **Right to Information is implicit in the right to freedom of speech and expression** explicitly guaranteed in **Article 19 of Indian Constitution. [State of UP vs. Raj Narain Case (1975)]**
- **Key provisions** of the Act include time limit for providing information, suo motu disclosure of certain categories of information, appointment of Public Information Officers (PIOs), Central and State Information Commissions, etc.
- **Section 8** of the Act exempts certain categories of information from disclosure.

Public uthorities under RTI Act, 2005

- **Public Authority (PA):** It includes government bodies, state-controlled entities, and NGOs **substantially financed directly or indirectly** by **central** or state governments.
  - Supreme Court in **2019 held that Office of the Chief Justice of India** is a PA.
- **Duties of PAs**
  - Maintain all its **records duly catalogued** and **indexed.**
  - Must **proactively disclose information** regularly.
  - Designate **PIOs** who are responsible to give information to a person who seeks information under the RTI Act.

Exemptions under Section 8 of the RTI Act

- Information, disclosure of which would prejudicially affect **sovereignty** and **integrity of India,** the security, strategic, scientific or economic interests of the State, etc.
- Information **forbidden by courts or constituting contempt of court.**
- Information **breaching Parliament's or State Legislature's privilege.**
- **Commercial confidences, trade secrets, intellectual property,** unless larger public interest warrants disclosure.
- **Personal information unrelated to public interest** or invading privacy.

Need Media Literacy to Fight Misinformation

As per the recent Study, the level of misinformation has increased with the rise in internet usage.

About Misinformation

- According to the **United Nations Human Rights Council,** misinformation is false or inaccurate information. E.g. Rumors
- It has been identified as the **top five risks** that will impact worldwide **peace** and **prosperity** along with **disinformation (Global Risk Report 2024).**
  - ⊕ Disinformation is **deliberate** and includes malicious content such as hoaxes, spear phishing and propaganda.

Major Impacts of Misinformation

- **Influencing Voting Behaviour:** Prevalence of misinformation in political campaigns is a global trend. E.g., Around 50,000 fake news posts were published and shared over 2 million times in India during 2019 general elections.
  - ⊕ It impacts people's ability to make critical decisions.
- **Alienation:** Erode confidence and trust in the **political system** and **civic engagement.**
- **Health-related misinformation:** Erroneous interpretation of scientific knowledge, opinion polarization, escalating fear and panic etc.
- **Other:** Manipulation of general beliefs, impact on spending behaviour, etc.

Media Literacy as Solution

- It constitutes a composite set of knowledge, skills, attitudes, competencies and practices.
- It empowers/encourages individual voters to **critically evaluate** news accuracy, reduces susceptibility to manipulation.
- It will help in tackling misinformation **without undermining freedom** of the internet and media.

> **Initiatives Taken to fight Misinformation**
>
> **India**
>
> - **Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 (Rules)** requires social media platforms to take reasonable efforts to prevent the dissemination of false/fake/misleading information.
> - **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology issued** directives issued to social media intermediaries to crack down on deepfakes.
>
> **Global**
>
> - **Media and Information Literacy curriculum** created by UNESCO
> - **Code of Practice on Disinformation (2022)** issued by **European Commission**

India reaffirms commitment to its Neighbourhood First Policy (NFP) and SAGAR vision

Prime Minister's swearing in ceremony was attended by Sri Lanka, Maldives, Seychelles, Bangladesh, Mauritius, Nepal and Bhutan, which showcased India's commitment to **NFP** and **SAGAR vision.**

About Neighbourhood First policy (NFP)

- India's NFP guides its approach towards the management of relations with countries in its **immediate neighbourhood.**
  - ⊕ The countries are: **Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan** and **Sri Lanka.**
- **Aim:** To enhance physical, digital and people to people connectivity across the region, as well as augmenting trade and commerce.

About Security And Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)

- The concept was first articulated in 2015.
- **Aim:** It envisages a free, open, inclusive, peaceful, and prosperous **Indo-Pacific region,** one which is built on a **rules-based international order.**
  - ⊕ Under it, India is making contributions in connectivity, capacity building, disaster management, etc.

Key Significance of NFP and SAGAR

- **Countering Chinese influence:** Counterbalance Chinese influence in the IOR through collaboration with neighbouring countries.
- **Support in multilateral forums:** Working with neighbouring partners strengthens India's leadership role in representing the interests of the **Global South** at international forums.
- **Increasing maritime security:** Enables India to tackle transnational security challenges more effectively.
- **Other:** Promotes implementation of policies like Act East Policy, etc.

> **Key Initiatives taken to Promote NFP and SAGAR**
>
> - **Launched South Asia Satellite (SAS):** To boost communication and improve disaster links among its neighbours.
> - **Mission Sagar:** India's initiative to assist countries in the Indian Ocean Littoral states during COVID-19 pandemic.
> - **Vaccine Maitri:** In accordance with NFP, Bhutan and Maldives became the first countries to receive Covid vaccines.
> - **Infrastructure projects: Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project (**Connecting India with Myanmar and further with Southeast As**ia) etc.**

CCI to closely monitor implementation of settlement and commitment in anti-trust cases

In a recently released draft regulations, Competition Commission of India (CCI) proposed **close monitoring of settlement and commitment offered by companies such as Big Tech entities in anti-trust cases.**

Key Highlights of the Draft

- **Appointment of monitoring agencies:** Empowers CCI to appoint independent agencies like accounting firms, and individuals like chartered accountants, etc., to monitor implementation of CCI's orders.
  - CCI would retain the **authority to suspend or terminate the involvement of these agencies** if they do not meet certain standards. Any such revocation cannot be challenged in any court of law.
- **Independence of monitoring agencies:** Agencies must confirm their independence by disclosing their potential conflicts of interest.
- **Responsibilities of monitoring agencies:** Inform CCI of instances of non-implementation of orders, submission of periodic reports as per CCI's direction, etc.

Potential significance of the draft proposal

- **Prevent big tech firms, from circumventing regulatory orders** and ensure that they adhere to their commitments in letter and spirit by ensuring transparency and accountability in tech sector.
- Guarantee that every **party involved has a fair and equal chance to participate** and have their interests adequately represented and considered.

Scientists developed a new exosome-based CRISPR/Cas9 gene-editing Platform

SafeEXO-Cas, exosome-based platform has been developed by Scientists at Columbia University .

- **Exosomes** are naturally occurring vesicles that have the potential to be manipulated to become promising drug delivery vehicles for on-demand in **vitro** and **in vivo gene editing.**
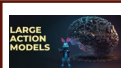
It significantly enhances the delivery of **CRISPR/Cas9** genome editing components to specific cells.

- It will also facilitate development of the **precision medicine** and will improve cancer treatment.
  - **Precision medicine** (aka personalized medicine) involves disease prevention and treatment that takes into account differences in people's genes, environments, and lifestyles.

About CRISPR/Cas9 Technology

- Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats Associated protein 9 (CRISPR-Cas9) is a type of genome editing technology.
  - It is utilised to **change genetic code** or edit **Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA)** at **particular locations.**
- **Working:**
  - Works as **cut and paste mechanism on DNA Strands.** Genetic codes that need to be changed are identified.
  - **Cas9 protein** is used as a **pair of molecular scissors to cut off a part from strand,** allowing modifications to the genome.
- **Applications of CRISPR:** Edit genes in human embryo; Change genetic codes of crops to improve crop resilience; treating diseases like sickle cell disease etc.

Also in News

Large Action Models (LAMs)

Enterprises globally are adopting LAMs to cut their labour cost.

About LAMs

- An artificial intelligence model that can understand and execute complex tasks by translating human intentions into action.
  - **LAMs** go beyond generating and interpreting text like ChatGPT.
- **Working of LAMs:**
  - At its core, LAM utilizes a **hierarchical approach to action representation** and **execution.**
  - It **breaks down complex actions** into **smaller sub-actions,** allowing for **efficient planning** and **execution.**
- **Applications:** Job application automation, investment portfolio optimisation, personalised social media content creation, etc.

Subansiri River

An Agreement has been signed for the implementation of a comprehensive Fisheries Management Plan at **Subansiri Lower Hydro Electric Project (SLHEP).**

- SLHEP is an under construction gravity dam on the Subansiri River.
  - **Gravity dam** is a concrete or masonry dam so proportioned that it will resist overturning and sliding forces by its own weight.

About Subansiri River (Gold River)

- Rises from the Kangig glacier range in **Tibet.**
  - It is a trans-Himalayan river.
  - In India, it enters in the state of **Arunachal Pradesh.**
- Right bank tributary of **Brahmaputra River,** joins it, in the plains of Assam.
- **Major tributaries:** Laro, Nye, Yume, Tsari, Kamla, etc.

Face Recognition Technology (FRT)

Adoption of Facial Authentication Technology (FAT) based Digital Life Certificate (DLC) in 2022-23 by the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has eased the life pensioners.

- FAT is based on Face Recognition Technology (FRT).

About FRT

- **Facial recognition** is a category of biometric security.
  - Other forms of biometric security include **voice recognition, fingerprint recognition,** and **eye retina** or **iris recognition.**
- It can identify human faces in images or videos or search for a face among a large collection of existing images.
- **Significance:** Used in automatic image indexing, video surveillance systems for personal security, etc.

Sticky Inflation

RBI in its recent monetary policy review decided to retain the repo rate, for eighth time in a row, due to concerns of sticky inflation.

About Sticky Inflation

- It **refers** to a phenomenon where prices do not adjust quickly to changes in supply and demand, leading to **persistent inflation.**
- **Rising wages and prices for consumer goods and services** are typically the main factors behind inflation stickiness.
- It can push monetary authorities to **tighten monetary policy** and **raise interaest rates.**

Mumbai High Field

Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) is seeking foreign partners for its flagship Mumbai High oil-field due to declining outputs.

About Mumbai High Field

- Located in **Arabian Sea** at about **165 km west-northwest of Mumbai city** in the western offshore.
- It was **discovered in 1974** and **commenced production in 1976.**
- It is the **largest oil field in India** and has an estimated **initial-oil-in-place of 1,696 million metric tonnes.**

East Asia Summit

East Asia Summit Senior Official's Meeting was held in Vientiane, Lao PDR.

About East Asia Summit

- **Established:** In 2005 at Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia).
- It is **Leaders-led forum for dialogue and cooperation** on broad strategic, political, and economic issues of common interest and concern with aim of **promoting peace, stability, and economic prosperity in East Asia.**
- **Membership:** 18 Members, including 10 ASEAN members and **Australia, China, Japan, India, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russia, and US.**
- **6 priority areas of cooperation:** Environment and energy, Education, Finance, Global health issues and pandemic diseases, Natural disaster management, and ASEAN Connectivity.

Northern Limit of Monsoon

With the latest advancement, the Northern Limit of Monsoon now passes through several regions in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, etc.

About Northern Limit of Monsoon (NLM)

- **Southwest monsoon** normally sets in over Kerala around **June 01** and advances northwards, usually in surges, and covers the entire country around July 15.
- It is the **northern most limit of monsoon** upto which it has advanced **on any given day.**

National Health Claim Exchange (NHCX)

Union Health Ministry along with **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)** will launch **NHCX** to allow patients to access quality healthcare with reduced out-of-pocket expenditure.

About NHCX

- It will serve as a **protocol for exchanging claims-related information** among various actors, including payers, providers, beneficiaries, regulators, and observers.
- It is designed to be an **interoperable, machine-readable, auditable,** and **verifiable** to ensure that the information being exchanged is accurate and trustworthy.
- It is an **open standard based communication.**

Places in News — 📰 Panama (Capital: Panama City)

Panama becomes first nation to evacuate island community from Gardi Sugdub Island over climate change impact.

Political Features

- **Location:** Country of Central America, located on the Isthmus of Panama.
  - Isthmus of Panama is a narrow bridge of land that connects North and South America.
- **Territorial Boundaries:** Costa Rica (West) and Colombia (East).
- **Maritime Boundaries:** Caribbean Sea (North) and Pacific Ocean (South).

Geographical Features

- **Major Rivers:** Río Chagres, Rio Chepo etc.
- **Major Mountain Range:** Cordillera Central (Central Mountain Range)
- **Highest Peak:** Barú Volcano

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