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30 March 2024

National and International News

Nuclear Energy Summit



Context:

- World leaders convened in **Brussels** on 21st March for the inaugural **Nuclear Energy Summit**, emphasizing nuclear energy's role in tackling global challenges like reducing fossil fuel usage, enhancing energy security, and stimulating economic development.

Key points:

- Organised jointly by the **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)** and **Belgium**.
- Co-chaired by the **Prime Minister of Belgium Alexander De Croo** and the **Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Rafael Mariano Grossi**, the Summit will be the highest-level meeting to date exclusively focused on the topic of nuclear energy.
- The Summit follows **nuclear energy's landmark inclusion** in the Global Stocktake during the **UN Climate Change Conference (COP28)** in **Dubai** in **December 2023**.
- Aligned with the launch of the **IAEA's Atoms4NetZero initiative**.

India's Statement:

- India is set to have nuclear energy a significant share in the electricity mix **by the year 2047** when India celebrates **100 years of independence**.
- As a medium-term target, it is set to achieve **tripling nuclear power generation capacity by 2030** from around **7.5 GW** at present.



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Samudra Paheredar



Context:

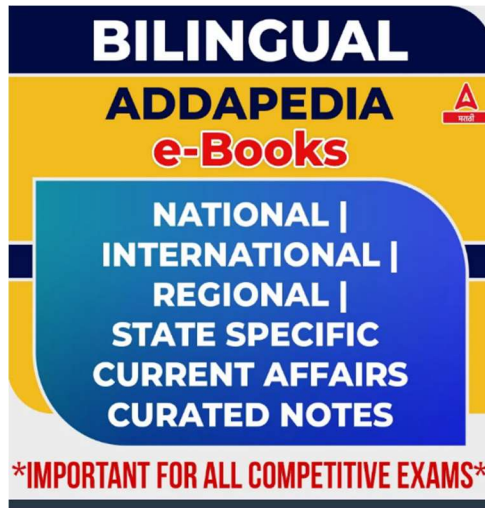
- Indian Coast Guard ship Samudra Paheredar, a specialized pollution control vessel, arrived at Manila Bay, Philippines on Sunday for a three-day visit.

Purpose of Visit:

- Demonstration of ICG Marine Pollution Response capabilities.
- Shared concern and resolve towards marine pollution in the ASEAN region.
- Bolstering bilateral cooperation with the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG).
- The ICG ship is on an overseas deployment to ASEAN countries namely the Philippines, Vietnam, and Brunei from 25 March to 12 April 2024.
- The deployment is the third in a row by the Indian Coast Guard to ASEAN countries.
- Earlier in the year 2023, ICG pollution control vessels visited Cambodia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Indonesia as part of the initiative.

Samudra Paheredar Overview:

- Stationed on the East Coast of India in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh.
- Under the Command of Deputy Inspector General Sudhir Ravindran.
- Successfully undertaken various Coast Guard operations including Pollution Response, IMBL/EEZ surveillance, counter-transnational crimes, and Maritime Search and Rescue (SAR).





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CoViNet



Context:

- WHO has launched **CoViNet**, a **global network for coronaviruses**, to coordinate **global expertise and capacities for early and accurate detection**, monitoring, and assessment of SARS-CoV-2, MERS-CoV, and other novel coronaviruses.

Key points:

- CoViNet is a network of **36 global laboratories from 21 countries across all 6 WHO regions**, with expertise in **human, animal, and environmental coronavirus surveillance**.
- CoViNet expands on the **initial focus of the WHO COVID-19 reference laboratory network**, established during the early days of the pandemic, to now include a broader range of coronaviruses such as MERS-CoV and potential new coronaviruses.
- Representatives of the laboratories met in **Geneva on 26 – 27 March to finalize an action plan for 2024-2025**, aimed at better equipping WHO Member States for early detection, risk assessment, and response to coronavirus-related health challenges.
- The CoViNet meeting brings together **global experts in human, animal, and environmental health**, using a comprehensive One Health approach to monitor and assess coronavirus evolution and spread.
- **Impact on WHO's Work:** Data generated through CoViNet will guide the **work of WHO's Technical Advisory Groups on Viral Evolution (TAG-VE) and Vaccine Composition (TAG-CO-VAC)**, ensuring that global health policies and tools are based on the latest scientific information.



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Afanasy Nikitin Seamount



ISA:

- The International Seabed Authority (ISA) is an autonomous international organization established in 1994.
- It regulates mining and related activities in the international seabed beyond national jurisdiction, covering most of the world's oceans.
- The ISA was established upon the entry into force of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which sets out international law regarding territorial waters, sea lanes, and ocean resources.
- The ISA is responsible for granting licenses for the exploration and exploitation of mineral resources in the international seabed, regulating activities related to these endeavors, and ensuring compliance with international standards and guidelines.
- It also promotes fair and efficient utilization of mineral resources, ensuring benefits for all stakeholders involved.

Context:

- India has applied to the International Seabed Authority (ISA) in Jamaica for rights to explore two vast tracts in the Indian Ocean seabed.
- One of these regions, the Afanasy Nikitin Seamount (AN Seamount), is rich in cobalt and is also claimed by Sri Lanka under different laws.
- India's application is partly motivated by reports of Chinese vessels conducting reconnaissance in the same area.

About:

- The AN Seamount is a structural feature in the Central Indian Basin, located approximately 3,000 km from India's coast, and contains rich deposits of cobalt, nickel, manganese, and copper.
- Countries have exclusive rights up to 200 nautical miles from their borders, including the underlying seabed.
- Regions beyond this limit are considered 'high sea' and open for exploration with ISA permission.
- The ISA is currently reviewing India's application for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crust, seeking clarification due to the overlap with Sri Lanka's claim.
- India presented scientific evidence in Jamaica to support its exploration claims, with a decision expected later this year.
- India has also applied for permission to explore the Carlsberg Ridge for polymetallic sulphides, which are rich in copper, zinc, gold, and silver.
- India has staked a claim for its continental shelf up to 350 nautical miles but awaits approval, having previously secured exploration rights in the Central Indian Ocean.

Seamounts

- Seamounts are underwater mountains with pointed summits that rise from the seafloor but do not reach the ocean's surface.
- They are volcanic in origin and can be 3,000-4,500 meters tall.
- The Emperor Seamount, an extension of the Hawaiian Islands in the Pacific Ocean, is a well-known example.

Guyots:

- Guyots are flat-topped seamounts that show evidence of gradual subsidence through stages to become flat-topped submerged mountains.
- It is estimated that more than 10,000 seamounts and guyots exist in the Pacific Ocean alone.



Mid-oceanic ridge

- A mid-oceanic ridge is composed of **two chains of mountains separated by a large depression**.
- The mountain ranges **can have peaks as high as 2,500 meters**, and some even reach above the ocean's surface.

Southern Africa's SEAMA Ecoregion



Context:

- The **South East Africa Montane Archipelago (SEAMA)** is a **newly recognized ecoregion in southern Africa**.
- Recent studies reveal a **rich biodiversity in SEAMA**, yet it **faces urgent conservation challenges**.

Life in SEAMA:

- SEAMA is a **newly recognized ecoregion stretching from northern Mozambique to Mount Mulanje in Malawi**.
- The region is home to **numerous previously undocumented species**, including **127 plants, 45 vertebrates, and 45 invertebrates**.
- SEAMA boasts of **two endemic genera of plants and reptiles and 22 strictly endemic reptile species**, mostly **threatened by habitat loss**.

Conservation Challenges:

- Despite its ecological significance, SEAMA is experiencing **one of the highest deforestation rates in Africa**.
- Since 2000, SEAMA **has lost 18% of its primary humid forest cover, with rates reaching up to 43% in some areas**.
- The major causes of deforestation include **slash-and-burn agriculture and charcoal production**, necessitating **conservation agriculture and sustainable livelihood alternatives**.

Conclusion:

- SEAMA's diverse ecosystems and species highlight its **global biological importance, warranting immediate conservation efforts to mitigate threats and preserve its rich biodiversity**.