

NEWS TODAY

23RD SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION (SCO) SUMMIT HELD

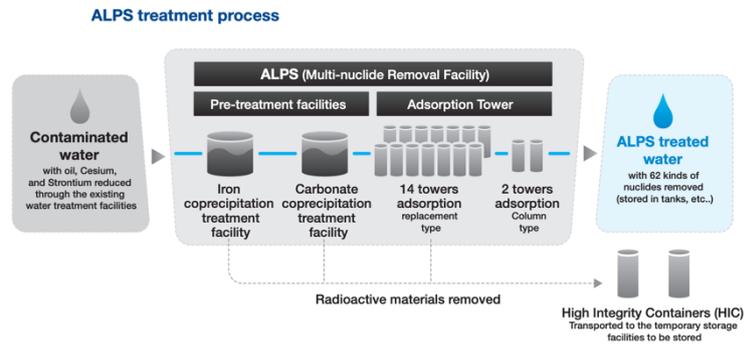
- India chaired the SCO Heads of State Council Meeting via videoconference.
- Key highlights of the summit
 - **Admitting Iran as a member state.** Other members of SCO are- China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.
 - **New Delhi Declaration signed to counter** activities of **terrorist, separatist and extremist groups**, preventing spread of religious intolerance, aggressive nationalism, ethnic and racial discrimination, xenophobia etc.
 - **Under New Delhi declaration**
 - **India abstained from signing in support for China's Belt and Road Initiative**, which intends to develop trade routes between China and the rest of the world.
 - Members agreed to declare **2024 as the SCO Year of Environment**.
 - **Statement on Cooperation in Digital Transformation** to unlock full potential of digitalization across all sectors of the economy.
- Key initiatives under India's chairmanship (2022-23)
 - **India has established five new pillars of cooperation within SCO:** Startups and Innovation, Traditional Medicine, Youth Empowerment, Digital Inclusion, and Shared Buddhist Heritage
 - **Enhancing engagement among people** through SCO Millet Food Festival, Film Festival, International Conference on Shared Buddhist Heritage etc.
 - **Varanasi declared first tourism and cultural capital** of SCO.

ONE HEALTH PRIORITY RESEARCH AGENDA FOR ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE (AMR) RELEASED

- It was released by FAO, UN Environment Programme (UNEP), WHO and World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) to **better advocate for increased research and investment in AMR**.
 - AMR occurs **when bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites change over time and no longer respond to medicines** making infections harder to treat and increasing risk of disease spread, severe illness and death.
 - Earlier, **WHO also launched a global research agenda for AMR** in human health in 2023.
- **Agenda presented a five pillar based one health approach** to tackle growing threat of AMR including:
 - **Transmission:** Focuses on **environment, plant, animal, and human sectors** where AMR transmission, circulation and spread occur.
 - **Integrated surveillance:** To identify **cross-cutting priority research questions** to improve common **technical understanding and information exchange** among One Health stakeholders.
 - **Interventions:** aimed at preventing, containing, or reducing the incidence, prevalence, and spread of AMR.
 - **Behavioural insights and change:** across various groups and actors involved in the development and spread of AMR at the One Health interface.
 - **Economics and policy:** takes into account the cost-effectiveness of an AMR investment case, financial sustainability, and long-term financial impact.
- One Health is an **integrated, unifying approach** to sustainably **balance and optimize the health of people, animals, and ecosystems**.
 - **It includes following principles: Equity between sectors and disciplines, socio-political and multicultural parity, socioecological equilibrium** (harmonious balance between human-animal-environment), **trans-disciplinarity** and multisectoral collaboration etc.

IAEA FINDS JAPAN'S PLANS TO RELEASE TREATED WATER INTO SEA AT FUKUSHIMA CONSISTENT WITH INTERNATIONAL SAFETY STANDARDS

- Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station (FDNPS) was **damaged during earthquake in 2011** thereby **contaminating water**, at and near the site, **with radioactive material**.
- **Water stored at the FDNPS** has been **treated through an Advanced Liquid Processing System (ALPS) to remove almost all radioactivity, aside from tritium**.
 - ALPS system is a **pumping and filtration system** which uses a series of chemical reactions **to remove 62 radionuclides** from the contaminated water.
 - **Prior to being treated by ALPS system, contaminated water has caesium and strontium** (account for most of the radioactivity from the contaminated water) **removed periodically**.
 - **Before discharging**, Japan will dilute the water to bring the **tritium to below regulatory standards**.
- **Japan requested the IAEA** to conduct a **detailed review of the safety related aspects of plan** to discharge the water stored at FDNPS into the sea.
- IAEA's review **addressed all key safety elements of the water discharge plan** in three major components:
 - Assessment of protection and safety;
 - Regulatory activities and processes;
 - Independent sampling, data corroboration, and analysis



FEROCIOUS BLACK HOLES REVEAL 'TIME DILATION' IN EARLY UNIVERSE

- **Scientists used observations of quasars** to demonstrate time dilation in the early universe, showing **how time then passed only about a fifth as quickly** as it does today.
- Time dilation refers to the fact that **time passes at different rates for different observers, depending on their relative motion or positions in a gravitational field**.
 - Time dilation is a **consequence of Einsteinian theory of relativity** that showed that time and space are intertwined and that **universe has been expanding outward in all directions since the Big Bang**, event that gave rise to cosmos.
 - Time dilation **occurs because objects with a lot of mass create a strong gravitational field**.
 - **Stronger the gravity**, more spacetime curves, and the **slower time itself proceeds**.
- Time dilation **was previously dated to roughly 7 billion years ago**, based on **observations of supernovas**.
 - **Researchers now used observations from several quasars dating to about 1.5 billion years** after the Big Bang event.
 - **Brightness of these quasars was compared** to that of quasars existing today, **showing certain fluctuations about a fifth as quickly as it does today**.

• **Quasars are tremendously active supermassive black holes** millions to billions of times **more massive than our sun, usually residing at centers of galaxies**.

• **A supernova is the biggest explosion** that humans have ever seen. Each blast is the **extremely bright, super-powerful explosion of a star**.

RULES OF ORIGIN (RoO) DELAY FTA TARIFF DISCUSSIONS WITH EUROPEAN UNION (EU)

- Reports suggest that **India and EU have not been able to make major headway** in FTA discussions due to differences over RoO criteria.
- **RoO are the criteria prescribed to determine national origin of an imported product** in a country.
 - Under this, a **country** that has inked an FTA with India cannot dump goods from some third country in Indian market by just putting a label on it.
 - It has to undertake a prescribed value addition in that product to export to India.
- **General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)** has no specific rules governing determination **of country of origin of goods** and each contracting party was free to determine its own origin rules.
- **RoO are used:**
 - To **implement measures and instruments of commercial policy** such as anti-dumping duties and safeguard measures.
 - To **determine whether imported products shall receive most-favoured-nation (MFN) treatment or preferential treatment**.
 - For application **of labeling and marketing requirements** and for **government procurement**
- Earlier, **India notified the Customs (Administration of Rules of Origin under Trade Agreements) Rules, 2020 (CAROTAR, 2020) aimed at plugging duty evasion** through routing exports to India under FTAs.

INDIAN OCEAN'S 'GRAVITY HOLE' OPENS DOORS TO SECRETS OF EARTH'S ORIGIN

- Researchers from IISc, Bengaluru have identified the **cause of an over three million square kilometres-wide 'gravity hole'** - Known as the Indian Ocean Geoid Low (IOGL)- **in the Indian Ocean.**
 - At IOGL, located just south of Sri Lanka, **Earth's gravitational pull is at its weakest. As a result, sea level is a 100 metres lower** than the global average.
- **Earth is not a true sphere** — it's flatter on both poles and bulges along the equator. **As a result of this** and other factors such as mass of its crust, **gravitational pull varies making earth's shape irregular.**
 - **These anomalies** (due to irregularity in gravitational field) on Earth's undulating map **are known as geoids.**
 - **IOGL is called lowest geoid anomaly** on Earth.
- Researchers found that **IOGL was caused by plumes of molten rock** rising along the edges of Tethys Ocean bed.
 - **Hot material from African superplume** — a large section of Earth's mantle that carries heat from near the core up to the crust — **was being deflected eastwards.** This material then **ended under IOGL.**
 - **Lighter elements** in upper to mid-mantle under IOGL, **were cause of low gravity in this area.**

ALSO IN NEWS



Keisham Meghachandra Singh v. the Hon'ble Speaker Manipur Legislative Assembly & Ors

- **A petition** was filed in **Supreme Court** against **deliberately delaying disqualification** proceedings of MLA.
- **In Keisham Meghachandra Singh (2020) case**, SC ruled that **disqualification petitions** under the Tenth Schedule should **normally be decided within a period of three months** from the date of their filing.
 - Tenth Schedule **talks about anti-defection law** and aims **to prevent political defections.**
- SC also noted the **issue of partisan behavior on the part of Speakers** due to their political allegiances and **suggested a permanent tribunal** to decide cases under Tenth Schedule.



Rupees appreciated against Yuan

- **Rupee has appreciated 6% versus** the Chinese Yuan in last three months.
 - This is because of a **faltering Chinese re-opening** after Covid restrictions, **higher returns in the US**, and **slower demand for exports** amidst weakening global growth.
- **Possible impact on India**
 - It can lead to **an increase in the import** from China.
 - It may help **to bring down core inflation** (excluding food and energy) because **imported Chinese goods will be cheaper.**



Price Monitoring Division (PMD)

- **Prices of 16 more food items**, including eggs, millets may **be tracked by PMD** due to the **recent rise in retail prices** of several essential commodities.
 - **Currently, PMD tracks the daily prices of 22 commodities**, including grains, pulses, edible oil, and vegetables.
- PMD is **under Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food, and Public Distribution.**
- PMD monitors the **retail and wholesale prices**, and **spot and future prices** of selected essential commodities on a **daily basis.**
 - **It also implements commodity-specific market intervention schemes** to give temporary relief to consumers in case of price rise.



Small Finance Banks (SFBs)

- **RBI has rejected three applications** for setting up SFBs.
- **About SFBs:**
 - **Scope of activities:** basic banking activities of acceptance of deposits and lending to unserved and underserved sections.
 - **Capital requirement:** shall be **Rs.200 crore**, except for such SFBs which are converted from UCBs.
 - **Promoter contribution:** shall hold a **minimum of 40 per cent** of the paid-up voting equity capital of the bank, which shall be locked-in for a period of five years
 - **Prior sector Lending targets:** 75% of Adjusted Net bank Credit.

 <p>GIFT(Gujarat International Finance Tec-City) NIFTY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● GIFT NIFTY, popular Singapore Exchange (SGX) NIFTY, started trading from GIFT City in Gujarat. ● GIFT NIFTY is the first cross-border initiative in connecting India and Singapore's capital markets. ● Currently, following products are being offered under GIFT Nifty: Gift Nifty, Gift Nifty Bank, Gift IT, and Gift Nifty Financial Services. ● Significance: ensuring tax neutrality for international players, non-resident players can benefit from tax advantages, global investors to directly engage with the Indian capital markets etc.
 <p>Demarcation of roles of MCA and MeitY over regulation of digital market</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Centre has demarcated the role of both ministries to remove possibility of duplicity of regulations on digital markets. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ India's digital market is expected to touch \$ 1 trillion by 2025-26. ● Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) would be the nodal Ministry to look into all the competition issues in the digital market. ● Ministry of Information Technology (MeitY) will look into sector specific issues. ● Government is working towards introducing legislations including Digital India Act and Digital Competition law for regulating various facets of digital market in India.
 <p>Protect children from harmful effects of food marketing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● WHO issued new guidelines to prohibit advertising of unhealthy food and drinks to children. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Guidelines build on WHO's recommendations made in 2010. ● Key highlights of guidelines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Protect children of all ages from the marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages that are high in saturated fatty acids, trans-fatty acids, free sugars and / or salt (HFSS). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ HFSS products include chips, cookies, chocolates, confectionaries and deep-fried foods. ➢ Policies should be formulated keeping in mind country's nutritional situation, cultural context, locally available foods, dietary customs etc.
 <p>Zo peoples</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There is a call for reunification of the Zo people of Mizoram in view of ethnic violence between Meiteis and Kuki-Zomi tribes in Manipur. ● Zo peoples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ All tribes of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo ethnic group spread across Myanmar, India, and Bangladesh. ➢ Many sub-tribes and clans such as the Chin, Kuki, Mizo, Lushei, Zomi, Paitei, Hmar, Ralte, Pawi, Lai, Mara, Gangte, Thadou, etc. ● Tribes are believed to have migrated from China through Tibet to settle in Myanmar. ● They speak a group of Tibeto-Burman languages.
 <p>Places in news</p>	<p>Israel (Capital: Jerusalem)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Israeli forces hit the city of Jenin (city in West Bank) with drone strikes. ● Political Boundaries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ It shares border with Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt. ● Geographical features <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Snowy mountains in the north and the hot desert (Negev Desert) in the south. ➢ Lowest point: The Dead Sea (also the lowest point on Earth's surface). ➢ Highest point: Mount Hermon ➢ Major river: Jordan  <p>Sudan (Capital: Khartoum)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Heavy fighting raged across Khartoum. ● Political Boundaries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Situated in north-eastern Africa, Sudan shares its border with Egypt, Libya, Chad, Central African Republic, South Sudan, Ethiopia & Eritrea. ➢ South Sudan was bifurcated from it in 2011. ➢ Sudan shares its maritime border with Saudi Arabia in Red Sea. ● Geographical Features: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Highest Peak: Deriba Caldera (Jabel marra Mountain). ➢ Major River: Nile River (White Nile and Blue Nile merge in Khartoum). ➢ Major lakes: Kundi, Abyad and Turdat el-Rahad 