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UN Security Council

- United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations (UN).
- It is charged with ensuring international peace and security, recommending that the General Assembly accept new members to the United Nations, and approving any changes to its charter.
- Its powers include the establishment of peacekeeping operations and international sanctions as well as the authorization of military actions through resolutions.
- It is the only body of the United Nations with the authority to issue binding resolutions to member states.
- Like the UN as a whole, the Security Council was created following World War II to address the failings of a previous international organization, the League of Nations, in maintaining world peace.
- The great powers that were the victors of World War II –Russia, United Kingdom, France, People's Republic of China, and the United States – serve as the body's five permanent members.
- These can veto any substantive resolution, including those on the admission of new member states or nominees for the office of Secretary-General.
- In addition, the council has 10 non-permanent members, elected on a regional basis to serve a term of two years.
- The body's presidency rotates monthly among its members.
- Resolutions of the Security Council are typically enforced by UN peacekeepers, military forces voluntarily provided by member states and funded independently of the main UN budget.
- Recently China assumed presidency of UN Security Council for March 2020.

Hard ground swamp deer

- Hard ground swamp deer is also known as Barasingha or Rucervus duvaucelii, the state animal of Madhya Pradesh.
- It is seeing a revival in the Kanha National Park and Tiger Reserve

(KNPTR) after having been perilously close to extinction for a long time.

- The species now numbers 800, after five decades of persistent conservation work.
- In 1967, the numbers of swamp deer decreased to 66 due to rampant hunting, habitat loss and diseases.
- The number was estimated at around 551 in 1953.
- The deer was brought back from the verge of extinction with the help of a successful breeding programme and conservation practices at the KNPTR.

- Swam deer are already extinct in Pakistan and Bangladesh.
- It is now found only in south- western Nepal and central and northeastern India.
- There are three subspecies of swamp deer found in the Indian Subcontinent.

1. The western swamp deer (Rucervus duvaucelii) found in Nepal,
2. Southern swamp deer (Rucervus duvaucelii branderi) found in central and
3. North India and eastern swamp deer (Rucervus duvaucelii ranjitsinhi) found in the Kaziranga and Dudhwa National Parks.

Kanha National Park and Tiger Reserve (KNPTR)

- KNPTR is on the Maikal range of the Satpura hills.
- It is spread over an area of 940 square kilometres between Mandla and Balaghat districts of Madhya Pradesh.
- The swamp deer is endemic to KNPTR.

United for Biodiversity

- The European Commission (EC) launched the 'United for Biodiversity' coalition made up of zoos, aquariums, botanical gardens, national parks, and natural history and science museums from around the world, on World Wildlife Day 2020.
- The coalition offered the opportunity for all such institutions to "join forces and boost public awareness about the nature crisis, ahead of COP-15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Kunming, China in October 2020.
- The coalition adopted a common pledge, citing the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Global Assessment finding that one million species were already at risk of extinction, and appeals to visitors to each of their institutions to "raise their voice for nature."

- IPBES, formed by the United Nations Environment Programme, welcomed the formation of the coalition.

Convention on Biological Diversity

- The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), known informally as the Biodiversity Convention, is a multilateral treaty.
- The Convention has three main goals including:
    1. The conservation of biological diversity (or biodiversity).
    2. The sustainable use of its components.
    3. The fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from genetic resources.
- It is often seen as the key document regarding sustainable development.
- The Convention was opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and entered into force on 29 December 1993.
- CBD has two supplementary agreements - Cartagena Protocol and Nagoya Protocol.
- The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity (2003), is an international treaty governing the movements of living modified organisms (LMOs) resulting from modern biotechnology from one country to another.
- The Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization (ABS) provides a transparent legal framework for the effective implementation of one of the three objectives of the CBD: the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources.

Mac- Binding

- Internet connectivity in Kashmir has been restored after seven month, it will be made available “with mac-binding”.
- Every device has a Media Access Control (MAC) address, a hardware identification number that is unique to it. While accessing the Internet, every device is assigned an IP address.
- Mac-binding essentially means binding together the MAC and IP addresses, so that all requests from that IP address are served only by the computer having that particular MAC address.
- In effect, it means that if the IP address or the MAC address changes, the device can no longer access the Internet.
- Also, monitoring authorities can trace the specific system from which a particular online activity was carried out.

QS World Rankings

- QS World University Rankings is an annual publication of university rankings by Quacquarelli Symonds (QS).
- It is previously known as Times Higher Education–QS World University Rankings, the publisher had collaborated with Times Higher Education (THE) magazine to publish its international league tables from 2004 to 2009 before both started to announce their own versions.
- The QS system now comprises the global overall and subject rankings (which name the world's top universities for the study of 48 different subjects and five composite faculty areas), alongside five independent regional tables (Asia, Latin America, Emerging Europe and Central Asia, the Arab Region, and BRICS).
- According to newly released QS World Rankings five institutions from India have been ranked among the top 100 this year, while in 2019 there were three, IIT Bombay, IIT Delhi and IIT Madras.
- This year IIT Kharagpur (IIT-KGP) is at 86th, IIT Madras (IITM) at 88 and IIT Kanpur (IITK) at 96.
- Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Mumbai and Delhi are among the top 50 engineering colleges across the globe, according to subject-wise QS World Ranking.
- In arts and humanities, the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) has been ranked at the 162nd position while the Delhi University has been ranked at 231 spot.

Virtual Currency

- Recently Supreme Court set aside a ban by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on banks and financial institutions from dealing with virtual currency holders and exchanges.
- The court held that the ban did not pass the “proportionality” test.
- The test of proportionality of any action by the government, the court held, must pass the test of Article 19(1)(g), which states that all citizens of the country will have the right to practice any profession, or carry on any occupation or trade and business.
- In a circular in 2018, the RBI had banned banks from dealing with virtual currency exchanges and individual holders on the grounds that these currencies had no underlying fiat and that it was necessary in the larger public interest to stop banks from providing any services related to these.
- There is no globally accepted definition of what exactly is virtual currency.
- Some agencies have called it a method of exchange of value; others have

labelled it a goods item, product or commodity.

- The underlying technology of virtual currencies are called blockchain, defined bitcoins as “a new electronic cash system that’s fully peer-to-peer, with no trusted third party”.
- This essentially meant there would be no central regulator for virtual currencies as they would be placed in a globally visible ledger, accessible to all the users of the technology.
- All users of such virtual currencies would be able to see and keep track of the transactions taking place.

Virtual Currencies Vs Crypto Currencies

- Virtual currency is the larger umbrella term for all forms of non-fiat currency being traded online.
- Virtual currencies are mostly created, distributed and accepted in local virtual networks.
- Cryptocurrencies, on the other hand, have an extra layer of security, in the form of encryption algorithms.
- Cryptographic methods are used to make the currency as well as the network on which they are being traded, secure.
- Most cryptocurrencies now operate on the block chain or distributed ledger technology, which allows everyone on the network to keep track of the transactions occurring globally.
- Organizations across the globe have called for caution while dealing with virtual currencies, while also warning that a blanket ban of any sort could push the entire system underground, which in turn would mean no regulation.

Source: AIR News, Down to Earth, Business Standard, Indian Express

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