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Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

India's External Affairs Minister attended the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit 2024.

- **Background**- It is world's largest regional organisation for ***international security and defence***.
- It is a ***permanent intergovernmental*** international organization formed in 2001.
- **Origin-** It is basically an extension of the ***Shanghai Five Group*** (China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan), created in 1996.
- **Headquarters-** Beijing (China)
- **Founding nations-** Kazakhstan, China, the Kyrgyz Republic, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.
- The SCO now has ***10 members***, including ***India***, Iran, and Pakistan, Belarus in addition to the founding members.
- **Observer states** – Afghanistan, and Mongolia (2 members).
- **Dialogue Partners -** Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Turkey and more (14 members).
- **Significance-** The SCO consists of 40% of the world's population and 30% of global gross domestic product (GDP).
- The SCO has been an ***observer in the UN General Assembly*** since 2005.
- **Goals of the SCO**
    - To strengthen mutual trust, friendship, and good-neighbourliness between the Member States.
    - To encourage the effective cooperation between the Member States in such spheres as politics, trade, economy, science and technology, culture, education, energy, transport, tourism, environmental protection, etc.
    - To jointly ensure and maintain peace, security and stability in the region and
    - To promote a new democratic, fair and rational international political and economic international order.

Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit, 2024

- **Venue-** Astana, Kazakhstan.
- **Theme-** Strengthening Multilateral Dialogue—Striving Towards a Sustainable Peace and Prosperity.
- **Objective-** Addressing key ***regional issues*** and providing a platform to ***advocate for dialogue and diplomacy once again.***
- **New SCO member-** ***Belarus*** recently upgraded to member state from Observer status in (SCO), becoming its 10^{th} member state.

Belarus, officially the Republic of Belarus, is a landlocked country in Eastern Europe.

References

1. Indian Express | Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Summit
2. SCO | General information

Indian Gaur & Srisailam Tiger Reserve (NSTR)

The Indian gaur, previously locally extinct, has been spotted in the Nagarjunasagar Srisailam Tiger Reserve (NSTR) after decades.

Indian Gaur

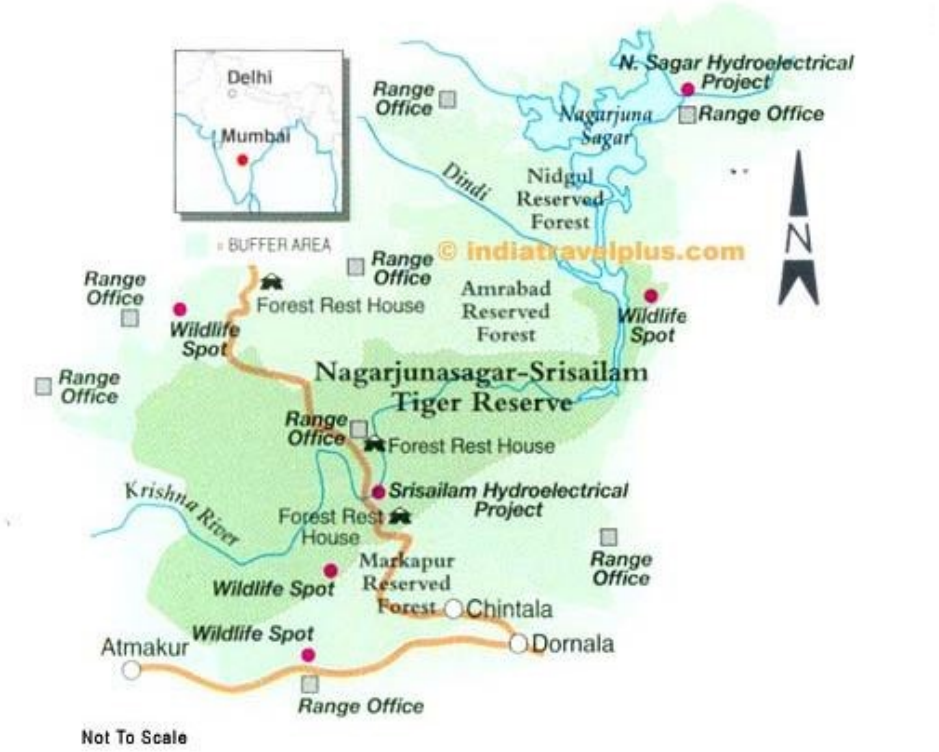
- The Gaur also called ***Indian Bison***, is the largest extant bovine, native to South Asia and Southeast Asia.
- **Scientific Name-** Bos gaurus
- **Diet- *Herbivore***, primarily grazing on grasses, leaves, and fruits.
- **Distribution –** It is prevalent in Western Ghats and also found in north east India and Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh.
- **Habitat-** They are largely confined to ***evergreen forests or semi-evergreen*** and moist deciduous forests, but also occur in deciduous forest areas at the periphery of their range.
- **Population diversity-** Mainland South and Southeast Asia, including Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Peninsular Malaysia, Myanmar, India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China and Nepal.
- **Threat -** Gaur is highly threatened by poaching for trade to supply international markets.
- **Conservation Status**
  - **IUCN Red List-** Vulnerable
  - **CITES-** Appendix I.
  - **Wild Life Protection Act, 1972-** Schedule I



Nagarajunasagar Srisailam Tiger Reserve (NSTR)

- Nagarjunsagar-Srisailam Tiger Reserve is the ***largest tiger reserve*** in India.
- **Location-** Nallamala hill ranges of Andhra Pradesh.
- **Geographical sperad-** The reserve spreads over ***5 districts***, Nandyal District, Prakasam District, Palnadu District, Nalgonda District and Mahabub Nagar district.
- **Tiger Reserve Status-** It attained the status of a Tiger Reserve in ***1983.***
- **Area-** The total area of the reserve including core and buffer is 3727.82 Square Kilo meters and it is India's largest Tiger Reserve.
- Two wildlife Sanctuaries, namely Rajiv Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary and Gundla Brahmeswaram Wildlife Sanctuary (GBM) constitute the Tiger Reserve.
- **Vegetation-** Features ***tropical, dry, moist, deciduous vegetation*** with diverse flora and fauna.
- **River-** The ***Krishna River*** flows through the reserve for about 270 kilometers.

The Krishna River in the Deccan plateau is the third-longest river in India, after the Ganges and Godavari.



References

1. Times of India | Indian Gaur
2. Tigerreservesinindia | Indian Bison
3. Nstr | About us

International Cooperative Day

The Union Minister of Cooperation recently addressed the conference on the occasion of the 102nd International Day of Cooperatives.

> *Co-operatives are people-centred enterprises owned, controlled, and operated by their members to meet their shared economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations.*

- **Background-** The International Day of Cooperatives, established by the ***UN on December 16, 1992***, is celebrated on the ***1st Saturday of July.***
- **Aim-** It aims to raise awareness of cooperatives and further the values of the movement, which includes:
  - International solidarity
  - Economic efficiency
  - Equality
  - Global peace
- **Nodal ministry -** Ministry of Cooperation.
- **Objective-** Its goal is to ***promote and expand cooperatives globally***, highlighting their role in addressing major UN issues and strengthening international partnerships.

- **3rd Foundation Day-** The day also marks the ***3rd foundation day of the Union Ministry of Cooperation***, which came into being on July 6, 2021.

Recent Highlights, 2024

- **Recognition by UN**- The year 2025 has been declared the ***International Year of Cooperatives (IYC2025)*** by the ***United Nations General Assembly*** recently.
- **Theme, 2024 -** Cooperatives Build a Better Future for All.
- **New Initiatives in India -** The Ministry of Cooperation has launched over ***54 initiatives*** in the cooperative sector recently.
- The ministry will also inaugurate launch of '***Bharat Organic Atta'*** produced by the National Cooperative Organics Limited (NCOL).
- The ministry will launch the scheme for 50% assistance on the purchase of nano-fertilizer by the farmers for the FY 2024-25.

Reference

PIB | International Cooperative Day

Money mule

The Reserve Bank of India has warned banks about mule accounts and urged them to strengthen their security measures to curb digital fraud.

- A money mule is someone who receives and moves money that came from ***victims of fraud.***
- A person may become a money mule intentionally or unintentionally and receive ***illegally acquired funds*** and help in its transfer to others.
- The Money mules are frequently innocent individuals who are drawn into the plan by a variety of tactics, such as ***job offers, online classified ads, or social media postings.***
- **Financial Frauds-** Money Mule Actions are commonly associated with various types of financial crimes, such as ***money laundering, fraud, and cybercrime.***
- **Types of Money Mules-** The FBI categorizes money mules into 3 categories based on their goals and degree of involvement:
    - Unknowing/unwitting money mules
    - Witting money mules
    - Complicit money mules
- **Process -** Fraudsters contact customers via ***e-mails, chat rooms, job websites or blogs*** and convince them to receive money into their bank accounts, in exchange of attractive commissions.
- The fraudsters then transfer the illegal money into the money mule's account.
- The money mule is then directed to transfer the money to another money mule's account starting a chain that ultimately results in the money getting transferred to the fraudster's account.
- When such frauds are reported, the money mule becomes the target of police

investigations.

- **Mule Accounts -** It is a bank account used to receive/transfer funds acquired illegally on behalf of others.
- These accounts are often used for money laundering and tax evasion.
- Mule accounts are in violation of several rules and individual involved in it can be prosecuted under the ***Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).***

References

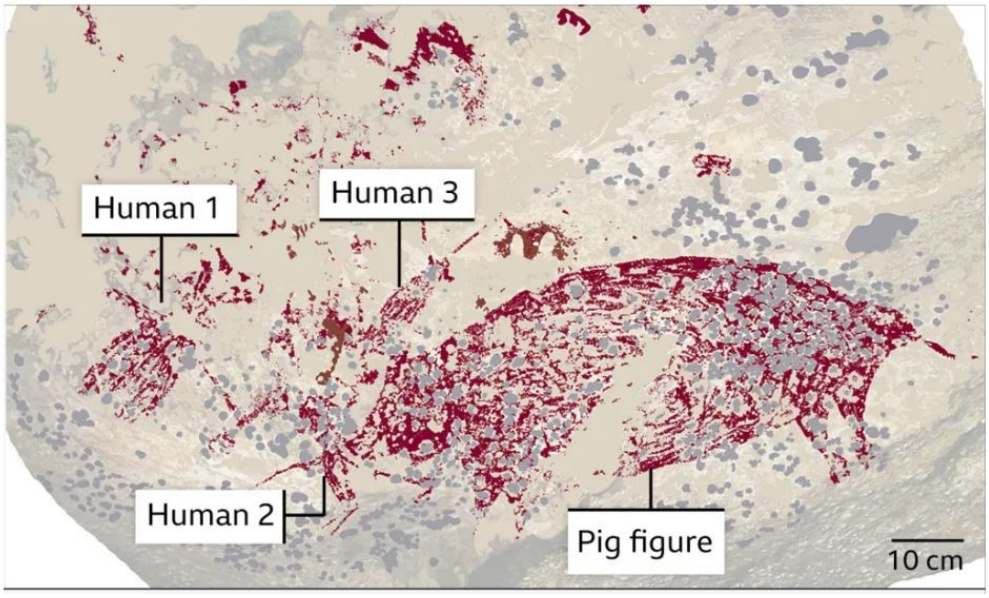
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2. Sanctionscanner | Money Mule

Limestone cave, Leang Karampuang

A team of Indonesian and Australian researchers discovered the cave painting inside the Leang Karampuang cave.

Findings

- **Location-** South Sulawesi, Indonesia.
- These caves on Sulawesi have revealed the world's oldest hunting scene, now dated to at least 48,000 years.
- It is famous for its prehistoric rock art, specifically hand stencils and animal paintings, which are estimated to be around 35,000 to 40,000 years old.
- **Evidence-** Prehistoric people painted ***3 human figures*** and a ***wild pig*** on a limestone cave ceiling using red pigment.
- Flickering torchlight in the dark cave would have brought this art work to life.
- This innovative method is poised to revolutionize rock art dating globally.



Limestone caves

- Limestone caves are formed when rainwater seeps through cracks in limestone rock

and dissolves it.
- Limestone is generally formed in a warm shallow sea where plants and animals thrive.
- **Speleogenesis -** Limestone caves are primarily formed through the process of ***chemical weathering.*** The process of cave formation is known as speleogenesis.

References

1. The Hindu | Discovery of Limestone cave
2. Nypost | Limestone cave

