

Current Affairs of the Day

PAPER 2:

➤ International Relations:

1. Rajnath Singh meets Chinese counterpart Wei in Moscow
2. About Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)
3. IAEA inspectors to access one of two Iran sites
4. About IAEA

PAPER 3:

➤ Environment & Biodiversity:

1. Kaziranga set to be expanded by 3,053 hectares
2. About Kaziranga National Park

➤ Health:

1. Kerala tops in care for children



Rajnath Singh meets Chinese counterpart Wei in Moscow

- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh met his Chinese counterpart Wei Fenghe on the sidelines of the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)** Defence Ministers' meeting in Moscow on Friday.

Three-day visit:

- Mr. Singh is on a three-day visit to Russia for the combined meeting of Defence Ministers of the SCO, Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Member States in commemoration of the 75th anniversary of victory in the Second World War.
- Earlier, he was in Russia in June to attend the Victory Day parade of the Second World War, which was also attended by Mr. Wei but there was no bilateral meeting then.
- The meeting comes amid the ongoing four-month standoff in eastern Ladakh after the ingress of Chinese troops into Indian-held territory along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) at several locations and undertook a massive military build-up.
- Addressing the meeting, Mr. Singh emphasised that “peaceful, stable and secure region of SCO member states, home to over 40% of the global population, demands a climate of trust and cooperation, non-aggression, respect for international rules, sensitivity to each other's interest and peaceful resolution of differences.”

Value Added Information

About Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO):

- It is a permanent intergovernmental international organisation.
- It's creation was announced on 15 June 2001 in Shanghai (China) by the Republic of Kazakhstan, the People's Republic of China, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Tajikistan, and the Republic of Uzbekistan.
- It was preceded by the Shanghai Five mechanism.



- The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Charter was signed during the St. Petersburg SCO Heads of State meeting in June 2002, and entered into force on 19 September 2003.
- The SCO's official languages are Russian and Chinese.

The SCO's main goals are as follows:

- Strengthening mutual trust and neighbourliness among the member states; promoting their effective cooperation in politics, trade, the economy, research, technology and culture, as well as in education, energy, transport, tourism, environmental protection, and other areas; making joint efforts to maintain and ensure peace, security and stability in the region; and moving towards the establishment of a democratic, fair and rational new international political and economic order.

Bodies under SCO:

- Heads of State Council (HSC) is the supreme decision-making body in the SCO. It meets once a year and adopts decisions and guidelines on all important matters of the organisation.
- SCO Heads of Government Council (HGC) meets once a year to discuss the organisation's multilateral cooperation strategy and priority areas, to resolve current important economic and other cooperation issues, and also to approve the organisation's annual budget.
- The organisation has two permanent bodies — the SCO Secretariat based in Beijing and the Executive Committee of the **Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)** based in Tashkent.
- The SCO Secretary-General and the Director of the Executive Committee of the SCO RATS are appointed by the Council of Heads of State for a term of three years.

Currently:

- SCO comprises eight member states, namely the Republic of India, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the People's Republic of China, the Kyrgyz



Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Tajikistan, and the Republic of Uzbekistan.

- SCO counts four observer states, namely the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Belarus, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Mongolia.
- SCO has six dialogue partners, namely the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Armenia, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, the Republic of Turkey, and the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

Kaziranga set to be expanded by 3,053 hectares

- The Assam government has approved the addition of 30.53 sq. km (3,053 hectares) to the 884 sq. km Kaziranga National Park.

Significance:

- The additional areas straddling two districts — Nagaon and Sonitpur — would make the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve (KNPTR) grow to 1085.53 sq km. The core area of the KNPTR is 430 sq km.
- The additions include encroachment-evicted areas and suitable wildlife habitat on river islands (sandbars) that are vulnerable to encroachment. It is a move to consolidate the wildlife areas anticipating better wildlife conservation and reduction in human-wildlife negative interactions in the future.
- The three additions are habitat corridors and would help provide connectivity to Orang and Nameri National Parks across river Brahmaputra, besides the hills of Karbi Anglong to the south of the park, where the rhino, tiger, deer and other animals take refuge during the floods.

About Kaziranga National Park:

- Kaziranga National park's 430 square kilometer area sprinkled with elephant-grass meadows, swampy lagoons, and dense forests is home to more than 2200 Indian one-horned rhinoceros, approximately 2/3rd of their total world population.



- Formed in 1908 on the recommendation of Mary Curzon, the park is located in the edge of the Eastern Himalayan biodiversity hotspots – Golaghat and Nagaon district in Assam
- In the year 1985, the park was declared as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.
- Along with the iconic Greater one-horned rhinoceros, the park is the breeding ground of elephants, wild water buffalo, and swamp deer.
- Over the time, the tiger population has also increased in Kaziranga, and that's the reason why Kaziranga was declared as Tiger Reserve in 2006.
- Also, the park is recognized as an Important Bird Area by BirdLife International for the conservation of avifaunal species. Birds like lesser white-fronted goose, ferruginous duck, Baer's pochard duck and lesser adjutant, greater adjutant, black-necked stork, and Asian Openbill stork specially migrate from the Central Asia during the winter season.
- The park has successfully managed to grow the population of Greater one-horned rhinoceros, an endangered species.
- The vast expanse of tall elephant grass, marshland, and dense tropical moist broadleaf forests undoubtedly makes the park look beautiful but it's the presence of Brahmaputra river, which makes it look enigmatic.
- Due to the difference in altitude between the eastern and western areas of the park, here one can see mainly four types of vegetation' like alluvial inundated grasslands, alluvial savanna woodlands, tropical moist mixed deciduous forests, and tropical semi-evergreen forests.
- Kumbhi, Indian gooseberry, the cotton tree, and elephant Apple are amongst the famous trees that can be seen in the park.



Kerala tops in care for children

Young child outcomes index:

- Kerala, Goa, Tripura, Tamil Nadu and Mizoram are among the top five States for well-being of children, according to a report brought out by non-governmental organisation Mobile Creches and launched by Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu on Friday.

No kidding!

The index score was computed using indicators such as poverty rate, immunisation coverage, female literacy, sex ratio and percentage of households with protected water supply. India's average score was **0.585**

Best-performing States

State	Index score (2015-16)
Kerala	0.858
Goa	0.817
Tripura	0.761
Tamil Nadu	0.731
Mizoram	0.719

Worst-performing States

State	Index score (2015-16)
Bihar	0.452
Uttar Pradesh	0.46
Jharkhand	0.5
Madhya Pradesh	0.526
Chhattisgarh	0.555

- The young child outcomes index measures health, nutrition and cognitive growth with the help of indicators such as infant mortality rate, stunting and net attendance at the primary school level. It identifies eight States that have scores below the country's average: they are Assam, Meghalaya, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.
- The index is part of the 'State of the Young Child' in India report released the 50-year-old NGO, which works in the field of early childhood care and development by ensuring creche services at construction sites and slum settlements across several cities. The index has been constructed for two time periods (2005–2006 and 2015–2016) to enable inter-State comparisons as well as provide an idea of change over time.

Young child environment index:

- The report has also developed another index called the **young child environment index** to understand the policy and environment enablers that influence a child's well-being.
- According to the environment index, Kerala, Goa, Sikkim, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh secured the top five positions.



- It uses five policy enablers that influence child well-being outcomes, including poverty alleviation, strengthening primary healthcare, improving education levels, safe water supply and promotion of gender equity.
- The environment index was constructed for 2015–2016 only due to limitations of data availability. The eight States that have a below average score on the outcomes index also fared poorly on this one.

Public spending:

- The report calls for an increase in public spending on children. According to its analysis on expenses towards child nutrition, healthcare, education and other necessary protection services, India spent ₹1,723 per child in 2018–2019, an amount that is insufficient and fails to reach the entire eligible population.
- The report points out that while the budgetary allocation for the Ministry of Women and Child Development has seen a year-on-year increase, all the additional funds have been allocated towards nutrition delivery under the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS). While the population of children under six years of age is 158.8 million, the ICDS covers only 71.9 million children as calculated from the total number of beneficiaries across States.

IAEA inspectors to access one of two Iran sites

- The UN's nuclear watchdog said on Friday that Iran had granted its inspectors access to one of two sites where undeclared nuclear activity may have taken place in the early 2000s.
- Iran provided Agency access to the location to take environmental samples.

Value Added Information

About IAEA:

- Set up as the world's "Atoms for Peace" organization in 1957 within the United Nations family.
- Reports to both the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council.



- Headquarters in Vienna, Austria.

Functions:

- Works with its Member States and multiple partners worldwide to promote the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear technologies.
- Seeks to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and to inhibit its use for any military purpose, including nuclear weapons.

Board of Governors:

- 22 member states (must represent a stipulated geographic diversity) — elected by the General Conference (11 members every year) – 2 year term.
- At least 10 member states — nominated by the outgoing Board.
- Board members each receive one vote.
- Recommendations to the General Conference on IAEA activities and budget.
- Responsible for publishing IAEA standards.
- Responsible for making most of the policy of the IAEA.
- Appoints the Director General subject to General Conference approval.

General Conference:

- 169 member states — one vote per member.
- Forum for debate on current issues and policies.
- Meets once a year.
- Approve the actions and budgets passed on from the Board of Governors.
- Approves the nominee for Director General.

Programs:

1. Program of Action for Cancer Therapy (PACT).
 2. Human Health Program.
 3. Water Availability Enhancement Project.
- International Project on Innovative Nuclear Reactors and Fuel Cycles, 2000.