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1. Events in China: Discussion on the conservation of the Hoolock gibbon (July 20, 2023)

Events-in-China-Discussion-on-the-conservation-of-the-Hoolock-gibbon

The meeting took place in Haikou, Hainan province of China from 7 to 9 July. It was organised by the Global Gibbon Network (GGN).

An Overview of the News

Hoolock Gibbon: The only ape of India

- Previously, scientists believed that there were two species of ape in India: the western hoolock gibbon and the eastern hoolock gibbon.
- A recent study by the Hyderabad-based Center for Cellular and Molecular Biology reveals that India is home to only one ape species, the Hoolock gibbon.

Features of Hoolock Gibbon

- Belonging to the Hylobatidae family, the hoolock gibbon is one of 20 gibbon species on Earth.
- Known for their energetic vocal performances, the population of these apes is estimated to be around 12,000.
- They are the smallest and fastest species of apes, exhibiting high intelligence and strong family bonds.

Distribution and Accommodation

- The hoolock gibbon is native to tropical and subtropical forests in the southeastern part of Asia, including Bangladesh, northeastern India, parts of Myanmar, and southwestern China.
- In India, they are unique in the Northeast between south of the Brahmaputra River and east of the Dibang River.
- Hoolock gibbon populations face a number of threats, including deforestation for infrastructure projects, habitat destruction, hunting for meat, and human encroachment.

Conservation Efforts

- To protect Hoolock gibbons, conservationists have proposed setting up dedicated gibbon wildlife sanctuaries on the lines of Assam.
- Legal protection, limited infrastructure development in their habitats and efforts to control human encroachment and poaching are also necessary.

Conservation Status

- Since the 1990s, the Hoolock gibbon population has declined significantly, leaving all 20 gibbon species at high risk of extinction.
- The IUCN Red List maintains the previous classification, with the eastern hoolock gibbon classified as vulnerable and the western hoolock gibbon as endangered.
- Both species are included in Schedule I of the Indian (Wildlife) Protection Act, 1972.

Global Gibbon Network (GGN)

- Established in 2022 in Haikou, China, GGN aims to protect singing gibbons and their habitats, which are an integral part of Asia's unique natural heritage.
- GGN envisions promoting participatory conservation policies, legislation and actions for gibbon conservation.

2. India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway (July 19, 2023)

India-Myanmar-Thailand-Trilateral-Highway

The India-Myanmar-Thailand (IMT) Highway is a regional connectivity project covering approximately 1,360 km (845 mi) that aims to connect India, Myanmar and Thailand.

An Overview of the News

- The project was proposed by former Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and approved in 2002. Its construction began in 2012 and is being implemented in several phases.
- The Ministry of External Affairs in India, in collaboration with Myanmar and Thailand, is responsible for project implementation, with funds allocated from the Ministry of Finance.
- The highway starts from Moreh in Manipur, India, passes through Myanmar and ends at Mae Sot in Thailand. The India-Myanmar Friendship Road is the first section connecting Tamu/Moreh to Kalemyo and Kalewa.
- India's contribution to the project includes the construction of 69 bridges along with access roads on the 74-km Kalewa-Yagyi road section and the 70-km Tamu-Kyygon-Kalewa (TKK) road section in Myanmar.

About Thailand

- It is officially known as the Kingdom of Thailand and historically known as Siam, located on the Indochinese peninsula in Southeast Asia.
- It is bordered by Myanmar and Laos to the north, Laos and Cambodia to the east, and Malaysia and the Gulf of Thailand to the south.
- On the western side, it is bordered by the Andaman Sea, and also has maritime borders with Vietnam to the southeast and Indonesia and India to the southwest.

Capital- **Bangkok**

Official language - **Thai**

Emperor - **Vajiralongkorn (Rama X)**

Prime Minister - **Prayut Chan-o-cha**

About Myanmar

- Capital - **Naypyidaw**
- Official Language - **Burmese**
- President - **Myint Swe (Acting)**
- SAC President and Prime Minister - **Min Aung Hlaing**
- SAC Vice President and Deputy Prime Minister - **Soe Win**

3. Razorpay launches first international payment gateway in Malaysia (July 18, 2023)

Razorpay-launches-first-international-payment-gateway-in-Malaysia

Fintech firm Razorpay launched its first international Razorpay gateway in Malaysia in partnership with Curlec.

An Overview of the News

- The payment gateway aims **to serve over 5,000 businesses in Malaysia and achieve 10 billion RM (Malaysian Ringgit) in annual gross transaction value (GTV) by 2025.**
- The payment gateway provided by Curlec simplifies payment collection and automates payments for businesses of all sizes.
- The move by Razorpay follows the acquisition of a majority stake in Malaysia-based startup Curlec in February 2022.
- Digital business in Malaysia currently contributes 22.6% to the country's GDP.
- It is projected that the contribution of digital trade to Malaysia's GDP will increase to 25.5% by 2025.

About Razorpay

- Establishment - **2013**
- Founder - **Shashank Kumar, Harshil Mathur**
- CEO - **Harshil Mathur**
- Headquarters - **Bangalore, India**

4. China launches world's first methane-fuelled space rocket (July 18, 2023)

China's ZhuQue-2 Y-2 became the world's first methane-fuelled rocket to successfully reach orbit.

An Overview of the News

- The methane-powered rocket, known as Metalox, followed the anticipated trajectory and completed its flight as planned.
- Methane engines provide improved performance while significantly reducing operating costs, contributing to the advancement of reusable rocket technology.
- Metalox rockets use methane as the fuel and liquid oxygen (LOX) as the oxidizer, with specific design considerations compared to conventional rockets.
- Methane offers advantages as a rocket propellant, including high energy density, favourable combustion characteristics, and wide availability.

Important Point

- **Landspace** has become the **second private Chinese company** to successfully launch a **liquid-propellant rocket**.
- **Beijing Tianbing Technology** successfully launched the **kerosene-oxygen rocket**.

About China

- Capital: **Beijing**
- Official language: **Mandarin**
- CCP General Secretary, President, CMC Chairman - **Xi Jinping**
- Congress President - **Zhao Leji**
- CPPCC Chairman - **Wang Huning**

5. Israel Parliament Approves Bill Limiting Supreme Court's Power (July 16, 2023)

Israel's parliament approved a bill in its first reading that aims to limit the Supreme Court's oversight powers.

An Overview of the News

- The bill received a majority of 64 to 56 in favor of the proposed limit, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's far-right ruling coalition overwhelming the opposition.

- The bill is part of a controversial judicial reform initiated by Netanyahu's government, raising concerns about the erosion of checks and balances within the government system.
- The bill still needs two more votes to become law. With Netanyahu's ruling coalition holding a 64-seat majority in parliament, the bill is likely to pass. If this happens, there is a possibility of intensifying the protests.
- The Bill aims to **limit the power of the Supreme Court to invalidate decisions taken by the government, ministries and elected officials as unreasonable.**

About Israel

- Capital - **Jerusalem**
- Prime Minister - **Benjamin Netanyahu**
- Official language - **Hebrew**

6. UAE becomes first Arab country to get observer status on Asia-Pacific money laundering (July 14, 2023)

UAE-becomes-first-Arab-country-

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has become the first Arab country to receive observer status in the Asia/Pacific Group (APG) on Money Laundering, a regional body similar to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

An Overview of the News

- The UAE is participating as an observer at the plenary session of the APG, which is currently taking place in Vancouver, Canada.
- Obtaining observer status reflects the UAE's commitment to international cooperation in combating money laundering and the financing of terrorism.
- Observer status is awarded to countries that actively and cooperatively combat financial crime, and the UAE has demonstrated this through its participation in organizations such as MENAFATF and other multilateral fora.
- The UAE delegation attending the APG plenary session is led by Hamid Al Zaabi, Director-General of the Executive Office for Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing (EO AML/CTF).
- The delegation includes representatives from the UAE Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) and other government officials.

About United Arab Emirates (UAE)

- Location: It is located in Western Asia.
- Geographical Boundaries: It shares borders with Oman and Saudi Arabia.
- Maritime Borders: It also has maritime borders with Qatar and Iran in the Persian Gulf.

- Religion: Islam is the dominant religion in the UAE, with the majority of the population being Sunni Muslim.

Capital - **Abu Dhabi**

Official language - **Arabic**

Government - **Federal Islamic parliamentary elective semi-constitutional monarchy**

President/Crown Prince - **Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan**

Prime Minister - **Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum**

Vice President - **Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum and Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan**

7. Operation Broader Sword: Indo-US joint initiative to stop illegal shipments (July 12, 2023)

In June 2023, India and the United States jointly launched 'Operation Broader Sword' with the goal of stopping the illegal transportation of pharmaceuticals, equipment and precursor chemicals through the International Mail System (IMS).

An Overview of the News

- The operation was aimed at **disrupting the flow of illegal substances entering the United States from India.**
- The operation primarily focused on packages entering the United States from India through the two major International Mail Facilities (IMF) located at **New York (JFK International Airport) and Chicago (ORD International Airport).**
- During the operation, investigators thoroughly examined more than 1,500 shipments originating from India, and took conclusive action on nearly 500 products. These operations primarily targeted illegal drugs intended to treat serious illnesses.
- Many of the shipments were found to contain opioids and other controlled substances, highlighting the importance of the operation in combating illegal drug trafficking.

Collaborative Effort:

- Operation Broader Sword involved collaboration of multiple agencies from both countries. These include India's Department of Revenue Retail Investigation (DRI) and the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and the United States Postal Inspection Service (USPIS).

8. Edgars Rinkevics becomes the first openly gay head of state of the European Union (July 11, 2023)

Edgars-Rinkevics-becomes-the-first-openly-gay-head-of-state-of-the-European-Union
Latvia's former foreign minister Edgars Rinkevics achieved a historic feat as the first openly gay head of state in the European Union.

An Overview of the News

- Following his role as Foreign Minister, Rinkevics was officially sworn in as President of Latvia.
- Rinkevics pledged to prioritise the fight for inclusion and equality during his presidency.
- Rinkevics aims to use his limited powers to influence legislation and shape public opinion, with the goal of making Latvia a more inclusive and egalitarian country.
- Rinkevics served as the Foreign Minister of Latvia from 2011 until his recent resignation.
- In November 2014, Rinkevics publicly came out as gay and became a prominent advocate for LGBTQ+ rights.

Status of LGBTQ+ rights in Latvia

- Latvia currently bans same-sex marriage, making it illegal within the country.
- Latvia's constitutional court recognized same-sex unions last year, indicating progress toward legal recognition.

Latvia:

- It is a country on the Baltic Sea, situated between Lithuania and Estonia.
- The capital of Latvia is Riga, known for its remarkable woodwork and Art Nouveau architecture.
- St. Peter's Church is a popular tourist destination in Riga's mediaeval Old Town.
- Capital - **Riga**
- Prime Minister - **Krisjanis Karins**
- Official language - **Latvian**

9. India in 'Champions Group' of Global Crisis Resolution Group (July 8, 2023)

India-in-'Champions-Group'-of-Global-Crisis-Resolution-Group
The Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India informed on 7 July 2023 that India has been included in the **“Champions Group”** of the **Global Crisis Resolution Group (GCRG)**.

An Overview of the news:

- Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** has been invited by UN Secretary-General **Antonio Guterres**.
- UN Secretary-General Guterres established the **Global Crisis Response Group (GCRG) in March 2022** to address urgent and critical global issues such as food and energy security challenges.

Champions Group:

- Champions Group maintains GCRG.
- It includes the Heads of State and Government of **Bangladesh, Barbados, Denmark, Germany, Indonesia and Senegal**.
- According to the Ministry of External Affairs, the decision to join the grouping reflects India's growing global leadership and commitment to address current global challenges.
- India's participation will further strengthen the efforts of the United Nations in finding result-oriented solutions to development issues affecting the world, especially developing countries.

Sanjay Verma became the Sherpa of GCRG

- **Sanjay Verma**, who was Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs, has been designated as the "**Sherpa**" for the GCRG process.
- According to the Ministry of External Affairs, these Sherpas will have an online meeting on July 14 and the Champions Group meeting will be held on July 21.

10. 'Ozone UV Bulletin' released by WMO (July 8, 2023)

'Ozone-UV-Bulletin'-released-by-WMO

The **World Meteorological Organization (WMO)** issues **Ozone and UV bulletins** at an interval of seven years. According to which the ozone layer is continuously improving.

An Overview of the news:

- To monitor and understand changes in the ozone layer, WMO has released its first **Ozone and UV Bulletin**.
- According to the information given by WMO, with the help of **Montreal Protocol** and amendments made from time to time, the use of substances that damage the ozone layer has been limited by 99 percent.
- The Montreal Protocol is an international treaty on the prevention of substances that deplete the ozone layer.
- It is designed to protect the ozone layer by phasing out emissions of substances known to be responsible for depleting the ozone layer.

International Initiative for the Protection of the Ozone Layer:

- The 1985 **Vienna Convention** for the Protection of the Ozone Layer provided a framework for international cooperation on ozone protection.
- The Montreal Protocol which was adopted in the year 1987 is a worldwide agreement to stop the production of ozone-depleting substances.
- The Montreal Protocol has been signed by **197 parties** of the world.

