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News: Regional Anti Terrorist Structure (RATS)

- Recently, **India assumed the Chairmanship of Council of Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (RATS-SCO)** for a period of one year.

Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)

- The Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), **headquartered in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, is a permanent organ** of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) which serves to **promote cooperation of member states against the three evils of terrorism, separatism and extremism.**
- The **Head of RATS is elected for a three-year term.** Each member state also sends a permanent representative to RATS.
- The RATS was formed in the June 2004 summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) which was held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. **RATS is engaged in furthering cooperation and ties between member countries on concerns of terrorism, security, drug trafficking, crime and cyber warfare.**

Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)

- Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is a permanent Eurasian political, economic and military intergovernmental organization aiming to maintain peace, security and stability in the region.
- SCO was established on 15th June 2001 with its headquarters in Beijing, China.
- Previously it was known as Shanghai-Five. With the inclusion of Uzbekistan in 15th June 2001, the grouping became Shanghai Cooperation Organization.
- India and Pakistan joined as full members in the SCO on 9th June 2017 at Astana summit, Kazakhstan.
- Iran was granted full membership at the 21st summit held virtually on 2021.
- Members of the organisation are Iran, India, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Russia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and China.
- Observers of the group are Afghanistan, Belarus and Mongolia.
- Dialogue Partners are Azerbaijan, Armenia, Cambodia, Nepal, Turkey and Sri Lanka.
- Culture has become an important element of SCO.
- Largest regional organization in the world in terms of geographical coverage and population, covering three-fifths of the Eurasian continent and nearly half of the human population.

- Officially accepted languages in the group are Russian and Chinese.
- Recent meet of Prosecutors General hosted by India, adopted a protocol to strengthen cooperation in preventing and combating growing menace of human trafficking, especially women and children.

Objectives

- Strengthening mutual trust and neighborliness among the member states.
- Promoting effective cooperation in -politics, trade & economy, research & technology and culture.
- Enhancing ties in education, energy, transport, tourism, environmental protection, etc.
- Maintain and ensure peace, security and stability in the region.
- Establishment of a democratic, fair and rational new international political & economic order.
- Guiding Principle – Based on Shanghai Spirit.
- Internal policy based on the principles of mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, mutual consultations, respect for cultural diversity, and a desire for common development.
- External policy in accordance with the principles of non-alignment, non-targeting any third country, and openness.

Structure of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization

- **Heads of State Council** – The supreme SCO body which decides its internal functioning and its interaction with other States & international organisations, and considers international issues.
- **Heads of Government Council** – Approves the budget, considers and decides upon issues related economic spheres of interaction within SCO.
- **Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs** – Considers issues related to day-to-day activities.
- **Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)** – Established to combat terrorism, separatism and extremism.
- **SCO Secretariat** – Based in Beijing to provide informational, analytical & organisational support.

News: MSP is key to diversify crops: farmers

Minimum Support Price (MSP)

- The Minimum Support Price (MSP) is the rate at which the government purchases crops from farmers, and is based on a calculation of at least one-and-a-half times the cost of production incurred by the farmers.

- MSP is a “minimum price” for any crop that the government considers as remunerative for farmers and hence deserving of “support”.

Crops under MSP

- The Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices (CACP) recommends MSPs for 22 mandated crops and fair and remunerative price (FRP) for sugarcane.
- CACP is an attached office of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.
- The mandated crops include 14 crops of the kharif season, 6 rabi crops and 2 other commercial crops.
- In addition, the MSPs of toria and de-husked coconut are fixed on the basis of the MSPs of rapeseed/mustard and copra, respectively.

Factors for Recommending the MSP

- The CACP considers various factors while recommending the MSP for a commodity, including cost of cultivation.
- It takes into account the supply and demand situation for the commodity, market price, trends (domestic and global) and parity vis-à-vis other crops and implications for consumers (inflation), environment, soil and water use and terms of trade between agriculture and non-agriculture sectors.

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) of the Union government takes a final decision on the level of MSPs and other recommendations made by CACP.

News: Protecting wildlife: 2,054 cases registered in three years

- Between 2018 and 2020, about 2,054 cases were registered for killing or illegal trafficking of wild animals in India, Central Government statistics say.
- In the three years, about 3,836 accused were arrested for the crime.
- The data was made available on the basis of cases registered by the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) and State Forest and Police Authorities in the past three years.

Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB)

- Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) is established under **Wild Life (Protection) (A) Act, 2006**.
- It is under the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change**.
- Headquarters of WCCB is in **New Delhi**.

- It is mandated to **collect and collate intelligence related to organized wildlife crime activities** and to disseminate the same to State and other enforcement agencies for immediate action so as to apprehend the criminals.
- To establish a **centralized wildlife crime data bank**; co-ordinate actions by various agencies in connection with the enforcement of the provisions of the Act.
- **Capacity building of the wildlife crime enforcement agencies** for scientific and professional investigation into wildlife crimes and assist State Governments to ensure success in prosecutions related to wildlife crimes.
- Advise of WCCB is **binding** in nature.

Operations led by WCCB

- Operation **Clean Art** – control hunting of Mongoose for brush making.
- Operation **Save Kurma** – Turtle specific rescue operation.
- Operation **Thunderbird** – Interpol led rescue operation aimed to end poaching of wildlife animals.
- Operation **WILDNET**: to curb illegal trade of wild animals and parts through online platforms.
- Operation **LESKNOW**: to check illegal trade of lesser-known species of animals.

- Operation **LESKNOW – II**: The Operation was intended to drag attention of the enforcement agencies within the country towards the illegal wildlife trade in lesser known species such as Deer, Wild Boar, Jackal, Mongoose, Monitor Lizard, Sea cucumber and Pangolin etc.
- Operation **Soft Gold** – To focus the attention of enforcement agencies towards the illegal wildlife trade in **Tibetan antelope**.
- Operation **BIRBIL** – Against illegal trade in all Birds and cat species.
- Operation **Turtshield**: It was taken up to tackle the illegal trade of live turtles.
- Operation **Freefly**: To check illegal trade of live birds.
- Operation **Wetmark**: To ensure prohibition of sale of meat of wild animals in wet markets across the country.