

NEWS TODAY

DEBT CONCERNS WITH BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE (BRI)

- A recent report found that **economic distress caused by COVID-19 pandemic** has led several countries from Asia and Africa to seek delay or waive debt repayments for BRI.
- For BRI, **China has given financial assistance to countries like** grants, interest-free loans, preferential loans etc.

About BRI

- BRI, announced in 2013, is made up of a “**belt**” of overland routes and a maritime “**road**”, which aims to **connect Asia, Europe and Africa** by networks of roadways, railways, maritime ports, power grids, oil and gas pipelines, infrastructure projects etc.
- It aims to improve regional integration and increasing trade and economic growth.
- It **covers over 70 countries, accounting for about 65% of world's population** and around one-third of world's GDP.
- India has boycotted BRI**, as China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (part of BRI) passes **through Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan** and also it raised concerns over debt trap, environmental concerns, and transparency in assessment of project costs etc.
- Blue Dot Network** jointly launched by **US, Japan and Australia** is considered as an **alternative to BRI**.

CHINA'S PROPOSED NEW SILK ROADS



INDIAN METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT (IMD) ISSUES RED ALERT OVER HEAT WAVE

- IMD has issued “**red**” and ‘orange warning’ for heatwaves in various states.
- IMD issues **colour-coded warnings depending on intensity** of any weather system in ascending order, **green, yellow, orange and red**.
- These warnings are mainly **meant for administrators to keep ready and position their resources** to handle situations arising out of weather-related disastrous events.

About Heat Wave

- It is a **period of abnormally high temperatures** which typically occur between March and June, and in some rare cases even extend till July.
- World Meteorological Organization identifies** a heat wave ‘**when daily maximum temperature of more than five consecutive days exceeds average maximum temperature by 5 degree Celsius**, normal period being 1961-90.
- Causes:** sparser pre-monsoon season rain coupled with El-Niño effect, Hot and dry winds moving into the mainland from the northwest etc.
- Health impacts:** dehydration, heat cramps, heat exhaustion and/or heat stroke.

IMD CRITERIA FOR HEAT WAVES

For plains and hilly areas

- Heat wave is considered if maximum temperature of a station reaches at least 40°C or more for Plains and at least 30°C or more for Hilly regions.
- Based on Departure from Normal Heat Wave: Departure from normal is 4.5°C to 6.4°C
Severe Heat Wave: Departure from normal is >6.4°C
- Based on Actual Maximum Temperature Heat Wave: When actual maximum temperature ≥45°C Severe Heat Wave: When actual maximum temperature ≥47°C
- If above criteria are met at least in 2 stations in a Meteorological sub-division for at least two consecutive days, it will be declared on the second day.

For coastal stations

- When maximum temperature departure is 4.5°C or more from normal, Heat Wave may be described provided actual maximum temperature is 37°C or more

‘THE STATE OF THE WORLD’S FORESTS 2020: FORESTS, BIODIVERSITY AND PEOPLE’ REPORT PUBLISHED

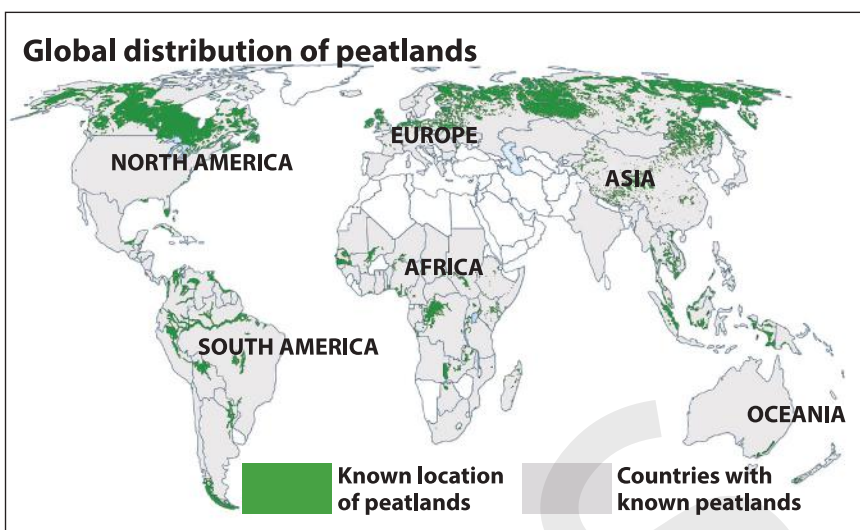
- This edition is a joint effort between **Food and Agriculture Organization** and **United Nations Environment Programme**.
- It examines contributions of forests, and of people who use and manage them, to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

Key findings

- Forests cover 31% of global land area** with more than 50% in only 5 countries (Brazil, Canada, China, Russia and US).
- Forests provide **habitats for 80% of amphibian species, 75% of bird species and 68% of mammal species**. About **60% of all vascular plants** are found in **tropical forests**.
 - It also provides **more than 86 million green jobs**.
- Net loss of forest area has decreased substantially since 1990**, but world is not on track to meet target of United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests to increase forest area by 3% by 2030
 - Main driver of deforestation and forest fragmentation is **agriculture expansion**.
- Suggestions:**
 - We need to **transform our food systems** to halt deforestation and loss of biodiversity.
 - Need for **careful balance between conservation goals and demands for resources** that support livelihoods.

WATER LOSS IN NORTHERN PEATLANDS THREATENS TO INTENSIFY FIRES, GLOBAL WARMING

- The observation was made by scientists studying **distinct effects of climate change on boreal forests and peatlands.**
- About Peatlands**
- They are a **heterogeneous mixture of plant material** (mosses, humus etc) that had accumulated in a **water-saturated area** and are only **partially decomposed due to absence of oxygen.**
 - Peatland **covers 3% of global land surface** and are **largest natural terrestrial carbon store.**
 - They are found in **permafrost regions towards the poles** and at high altitudes, in coastal areas, beneath tropical rainforest and in **boreal (taiga) forests.**
 - Peatlands serves as **natural firebreaks** between sections of forest.
 - > **Dehydration exposes** their dense carbon stores to **accelerated decomposition** and turns them from **firebreaks into fire propagators.**
 - > **Damaged peatlands** are a major **source of greenhouse gas emissions**, annually releasing almost 6% of global anthropogenic CO₂ emissions.



ALSO IN NEWS

Foreigners Tribunals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These were established through Foreigners (Tribunal) Order, 1964 of Ministry of Home Affairs under Foreigners Act, 1946. • They were setup to decide whether a person staying illegally in India is a foreigner or not as per Foreigners Act.
China's draft security law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The law will for first time allow China's national security organs to formally operate in Hong Kong. • It has been criticised by democratic parties in Hong Kong as undermining "one country, two systems" model that gives Special Administrative Regions (SAR) in China. • SAR regions in China has more autonomy over executive, legislative and judicial power, barring matters of defence and foreign affairs. • There are two SARs in China: Hongkong, Macau.
Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Egypt and Ethiopia are having disputes over this dam. • GERD (formerly known as the Millennium Dam) is hydropower project nearing completion on Blue Nile River in Ethiopia. When completed it will be largest dam in Africa. • White Nile River and Blue Nile River are two major tributaries of the Nile. The Blue Nile supplies about 80% of the water in the Nile during the rainy season.
Wadi Rum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a desert that lies in far south of Jordan. It is also called valley of Moon. • Wadi Rum is set on a high plateau at western edge of Arabian Desert. • Wadi means a bed or valley of a stream that is usually dry except during rainy season.
Antarctic Impulsive Transient Antenna (ANITA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ANITA instrument is a radio telescope to detect ultra-high energy cosmic-ray neutrinos from a scientific balloon flying over the continent of Antarctica. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > A neutrino is a subatomic particle that is very similar to an electron, but has no electrical charge and a very small mass. They are one of the most abundant particles in the universe. • ANITA is the first NASA observatory for neutrinos of any kind.
Super-Earth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A super earth is an exoplanet that is similar to size of Earth but with more mass than Earth and less than a larger planet like Uranus or Neptune. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Planets that orbit around stars apart from Sun are called exoplanets.
Katkari Tribe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are located primarily in Maharashtra and in some places of Gujarat. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Katkari is one of the 75 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups, as per the classification by Ministry of Home Affairs. • A group of tribal youth from the Katkari community has come together to market Giloy through Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana run by TRIFED, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Giloy is a herb used in treatment of viral fever, malaria as well as diabetes. The herb has a huge demand from pharmaceutical companies.
Industry status to sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mizoram became the first state to grant industry status to sports. • It is expected to increase investments in sports, generating employment and increasing value.

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