



Daily Current Affairs Dated On 22-May-2019

High level Committee to reduce import dependency

The High-Level Committee (HLC) constituted by the Government of India to examine the issues relating to preparation of action plan to create synergy among R&D Centres of Oil & Gas PSUs; tax issues and ways to benefit from GST by the Oil & Gas PSUs today submitted its report to the Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas .

About the HLC:

- The HLC, consisting of Dr. Anil Kakodkar, eminent Scientist and Shri Sidharth Pradhan, an expert on financial and tax issues, also looked into merger, acquisition and consolidation of Oil & Gas PSUs and the Joint Ventures; explored the need and possibility of formation of new entity dealing with oil services and supply of qualified manpower to Oil & Gas sector around the world.
- The HLC, in the process visited, different R&D and training institutes of different oil & gas PSUs.
- It also engaged with CMDs/ senior executives of the Oil sector to understand the business, challenges and opportunities in the sector before writing its recommendations.
- The Committee has recommended short term, medium term and long term strategies in the report, clearly bringing out the strategy to reduce the import dependency of the nation.

A glimpse into Energy Resources :

- Energy security is a key strategic priority for India. During 2018, India consumed 204.92 MMT petroleum products and 58.64 BCM natural gas whereas the domestic production of crude oil and natural gas has almost stagnated.
- The import dependency of crude oil and LNG during the year was 82.59% and 45.89% respectively which is likely to increase in days to come.
- During 2018, petroleum import (₹7028.37 billion) was 23.42% of total gross import (₹30010.2 billion) of the nation.
- India's projected oil demand is going to grow at CAGR 4% during 2016-2030 against the world average of 1% though the projected oil demand will be much lower as compared to the US and China.
- India is thus at very precarious situation and to secure its energy needs in sustainable manner, out-of-box solutions are needed. R&D is going to play an important role in the process.



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Competition Commission of India (CCI)

Why in News?

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) celebrated its 10th Annual Day yesterday, i.e. on 20th May, 2019 which marks the notification of the substantive enforcement provisions of the Competition Act, 2002.

About CCI:

- **Competition Commission of India** is a statutory body of the [Government of India](#) responsible for enforcing [The Competition Act, 2002](#) throughout India and to prevent activities that have an appreciable adverse effect on competition in India.
- It was established on 14 October 2003. It became fully functional in May 2009 with [Dhanendra Kumar](#) as its first Chairman.

Functions:

- Make the markets work for the benefit and welfare of consumers.
- Ensure fair and healthy competition in economic activities in the country for faster and inclusive growth and development of the economy.
- Implement competition policies with an aim to effectuate the most efficient utilization of economic resources.
- Develop and nurture effective relations and interactions with sectoral regulators to ensure smooth alignment of sectoral regulatory laws in tandem with the competition law.
- Effectively carry out competition advocacy and spread the information on benefits of competition among all stakeholders to establish and nurture competition culture in Indian economy.



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VVPAT:

Context:

Amid protests by Opposition parties against EVMs without paper trail units, there has been a call for procurement of VVPAT (voter verifiable paper audit trail) machines for the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

What are VVPAT machines?

- The Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail is a method that provides feedback to voters.
- It is an independent verification printer machine and is attached to electronic voting machines. It allows voters to verify if their vote has gone to the intended candidate.

How do VVPAT machines work?

- When a voter presses a button in the EVM, a paper slip is printed through the VVPAT.
- The slip contains the poll symbol and name of the candidate. It allows the voter to verify his/her choice.
- After being visible to the voter from a glass case in the VVPAT for seven seconds, the ballot slip will be cut and dropped into the drop box in the VVPAT machine and a beep will be heard. VVPAT machines can be accessed by polling officers only.

What is the Election Commission's stand on the issue?

- The EC has time and again reiterated that EVMs cannot be tampered with. It has made public the findings of inquiries into specific charges of tampering in Madhya Pradesh's Bhand and Rajasthan's Dholpur that give a clean chit to the machines.
- With the Opposition insisting on doing away with the EVMs and the controversy refusing to die down, the EC has now thrown open a challenge, inviting computer experts and political leaders to prove that the machines can be hacked, in the presence of the EVM manufacturers.



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What does the Supreme Court say?

- The Supreme Court on April 13, 2017, asked the Centre to respond by May 8 to a plea by the BSP to comply with a 2013 Supreme Court directive to introduce paper trail in EVMs.
- In 2013, the SC had asked the Commission to introduce paper trails in EVMs in a phased manner for the 2014 Lok Sabha Elections. "EVMs with VVPAT system ensure the accuracy of the voting system.
- With an intent to have fullest transparency in the system and to restore the confidence of the voters, it is necessary to set up EVMs with VVPAT system because vote is nothing but an act of expression which has immense importance in democratic system," the Bench had said.

UNPKF:

Why in news?

An Indian peacekeeper is among the 119 military, police and civilian personnel who will be honoured this year with a prestigious UN medal this year for courage and sacrifice in the line of duty.

Police Officer Jitender Kumar made the supreme sacrifice while serving in the UN Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

He will be honoured with the Dag Hammarskjold Medal on Friday as the world organisation observes the International Day of [United Nations](#) Peacekeepers.

India and UNPKF:

- India is the fourth largest contributor of uniformed personnel to the UN peacekeeping.
- It currently contributes more than 6,400 military and police personnel to the UN peace operations in Abyei, Cyprus, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Lebanon, the Middle East, South Sudan and the Western Sahara.
- According to the UN information last year, India has lost the highest number of its peacekeepers deployed in various UN peacekeeping



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operations in the last 70 years, with 163 military, police and civilian personnel from the country making the supreme sacrifice in the line of duty.

- Of the 3,737 peacekeepers who have died since 1948, 163 have been from India.

About Int'l Day of UN peacekeepers:

- The commemoration of the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers will begin with the UN Chief laying a wreath to honour all UN peacekeepers who have lost their lives since 1948, when the UN's first peacekeeping mission, the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), began operations in Palestine.
- The International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers was established by the General Assembly in 2002, to pay tribute to all men and women serving in peacekeeping, and to honour the memory of those who have lost their lives in the cause of peace.
- The General Assembly designated May 29 as the International Day of UN Peacekeepers.

Coral Bleaching:

Why In News?

The National Centre for Coastal Research, an institute under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, in India, has a field research station in the Gulf of Mannar region. Researchers have found an alarming pattern of bleaching in the reefs in Mandapam, Keezhakkarai and Palk Bay.

Major Findings:

- They have found that sea surface temperature ranged from 28.7°C to 31°C in the August 2018-February 2019 period and there was no bleaching seen then.



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- However, when the temperatures rose to between 32°C and 36°C between March 2019 and May 2019, researchers observed a pattern of bleaching in corals, which was different at different layers within the sea.
- About 12% of coral species observed at depths between 0m and 2m such as *Porites solida*, *Porites lutea*, *Montipora digitate*, *Acropora hyacinthus* were completely bleached.
- About 5% of species observed at depths between 2m and 4m such as *Acropora formosa*, *Acropora hyacinthus*, *Montipora digitata*, *Montipora foliosa*, *Pocillopora damicornis*, *Goniastrea retiformis*, *Platygyra sinensis*, *Dipsastrea favus*, *Dipsastrea speciosa* were partially bleached.
- *Porites* species observed in Palk Bay region were completely bleached at depths from zero to 4 metres. Corals at depths over 5m did not face bleaching.

What are Coral reefs?

- Coral reefs are important hotspots of biodiversity in the ocean.
- Corals are animals in the same class (Cnidaria) as jellyfish and anemones.
- They consist of individual polyps that get together and build reefs.
- Coral reefs support a wide range of species and maintain the quality of the coastal biosphere.
- Corals control the level of carbon dioxide in the water by converting it into a limestone shell.
- If this process does not take place, the amount of carbon dioxide in the ocean water would increase significantly and affect ecological niches.

About Coral Bleaching:

- Coral reefs are threatened by [climate change](#).
- When the sea surface temperature increases beyond a tolerable limit, they undergo a process of bleaching.
- Basically bleaching is when the corals expel a certain algae known as zooxanthellae, which lives in the tissues of the coral in a symbiotic relationship.
- About 90% of the energy of the coral is provided by the zooxanthellae which are endowed with chlorophyll and other pigments.
- They are responsible for the yellow or reddish brown colours of the host coral. In addition the zooxanthellae can live as endosymbionts with jellyfish also.



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When a coral bleaches, it does not die but comes pretty close to it. Some of the corals may survive the experience and recover once the sea surface temperature returns to normal levels.

Drumstick trees:

Why in News?

Researchers have finally unravelled how each part of drumstick (*Moringa oleifera*), the “magic tree”, is nutritionally rich compared with other plants such as rice, papaya, spinach and cocoa.

All the five tissues — stem, root, leaf, flower and seed — of drumstick studied were found to be rich either in certain vitamins or essential minerals.

Findings:

- The team found drumstick leaves, which are the most nutritious part of the tree, are rich in vitamins, while the roots are mineral-rich.
- The stem is rich in vitamin C and the flowers and seeds are rich in potassium. The pod and flower also have enzymes that help bring down cholesterol level.
- Compared with spinach, drumstick leaves have 30 and 100 times more iron and calcium, respectively.
- Secondary metabolites (kaempferol and quercetin) that contribute to anti-inflammatory, anti-microbial and other medicinal properties are in abundance in the flower, seed and leaf.
- The roots showed higher amounts of certain acids (ursolic acid, oleanolic acid and dibenzyl amine) which make it an anti-fertility agent and a cardio protector. However, it should be consumed in lower amounts due to its higher alkaloid content.
- “Moringine, a compound discovered from the plant, is anti-diabetic in nature and thus initiate insulin secretion.