



C.A From May 29th to 12th June 2019

UN Women

Context:

United Nations Secretary-General (UNSG) recently appointed Indian-origin Anita Bhatia as Deputy Executive Director of United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) for Resource Management, Sustainability and Partnerships.

About UN Women:

- It is the UN entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. It was established in 2010 to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide.
- It merges and builds on the important work of four previously distinct parts of the UN system, which focused exclusively on gender equality and women's empowerment:
- Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW).
- International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW).
- Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI).
- United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

The main roles of UN Women are:

- To support inter-governmental bodies, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, in their formulation of policies, global standards and norms.
- To help Member States to implement these standards, standing ready to provide suitable technical and financial support to those countries that request it, and to forge effective partnerships with civil society.
- To hold the UN system accountable for its own commitments on gender equality, including regular monitoring of system-wide progress.



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IMD Competitiveness Rankings

Context: The 2019 edition of the International Institute for Management Development (IMD) Business School World Competitiveness Rankings has been released.

About IMD World Competitiveness Rankings:

- started in 1989, the report ranks 63 economies on 235 indicators which are incorporated from each of these economies.
- The indicators are used to evaluate country's ability to foster an environment where enterprises can achieve desirable sustainable growth, generate employment and increase its citizen's welfare.
- IMD takes into account a wide range of statistics and hard data such as unemployment, GDP and government spending on health and education as well as soft data from an international business executive opinion survey on topics such as social cohesion, globalisation and corruption.

The economies are judged in four categories:

- Economic Performance
- Infrastructure
- Government Efficiency
- Business Efficiency.



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Performance of India:

- India has moved up one place to rank 43rd (Previously: 44th position in 2018, 45th in 2017 and 41st in 2016.)
- This improved rank is result of India's robust economic growth, a large labour force and its huge market size.

Global findings:

- It is topped by Singapore. It has grabbed top position for the first time in nine years. In 2018 it stood at third rank.
- Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) has held onto its second position same as last year.
- The US slipped to the third place.

Asia-Pacific region has emerged as a global beacon with 11 out of 14 economies either improved or held onto their ground.

Population Research Centres (PRCs)

Context:



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Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) recently organized a two-day orientation workshop for Population Research Centres (PRCs) to highlight various features of Health Ministry's flagship schemes and for their concurrent monitoring.

About Population Research Centres (PRCs):

- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) established a network of Population Research Centres (PRCs) with the mandate to provide, inter alia, critical research based inputs related to the Health and Family Welfare Programs and Policies at the national and state levels.
- Their main role is to undertake research projects relating to family planning, demographic research and biological studies & qualitative aspect of population control, with a view to gainfully utilize the feedback from these research studies for plan formulation, strategies and modifications of on- going schemes.

Functioning:

- Autonomous in their functioning, these PRCs are provided 100 per cent central assistance in the form of grant-in-aid on a year-to year basis.
- Activities of PRCs are monitored by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare through regular periodical progress reports and meeting, seminars etc. Besides, guidance is also provided by various institutions as well as committees both at State and national level constituted by the Ministry from time to time.
- Administratively, these PRCs are under the control of their host University/Institutions where they are located.
- However, as the PRCs are established as well as fully funded by the Ministry of health & family Welfare, they are governed by the guidelines issued by the Ministry from time to time.



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Pension scheme for small retail traders and shopkeepers

Context:

The Union Cabinet has approved a monthly pension scheme for small retail traders and shopkeepers. The scheme that offers pension coverage to the trading community will cover 3 crore small retail traders and shop keepers.

Key features:

- Under the scheme all small shopkeepers, retail traders and self-employed persons are assured a minimum of Rs.3,000 monthly pension after attaining 60 years of age.
- Eligibility: All small shopkeepers, self-employed persons and retail traders aged between 18-40 years and with Goods and Service Tax (GST) turnover below Rs.1.5 crore can enrol for pension scheme.
- The scheme is based on self-declaration as no documents are required except bank account and Aadhaar Card.
- The Central Government will make matching contribution (same amount as subscriber contribution) i.e. equal amount as subsidy into subscriber's pension account every month.

Nipah virus

Context: The deadly Nipah Virus has resurfaced in Kerala.

What is Nipah Virus?



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- According to WHO, the Nipah virus infection is a newly emerging zoonosis, that is, a disease transmitted from animals to humans. The virus belongs to a new genus termed Henipavirus (subfamily Paramyxovirinae).
- The natural host of the virus are fruit bats belonging to the family Pteropodidae.
- In 2004, humans were affected after eating the date palm contaminated by infected fruit bats. Pigs can also act as intermediate hosts.

When was it first reported?

- It was first identified in 1998 at Kampung Sungai Nipah village, Malaysia. The virus is named after this village.

What are the symptoms in humans?

- The symptoms of Nipah are similar to that of influenza: fever, muscle pain, and respiratory problems.
- Inflammation of the brain can also cause disorientation. Late onset of Encephalitis can also occur. Sometimes a person can have an asymptomatic infection, and be a carrier of Nipah and not show any symptoms.

Are there any vaccines?



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- Currently, there are no vaccines for both humans and animals. Intensive supportive care is given to humans infected by Nipah virus.

CBI

Context:

Reversing his predecessor's orders, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has allowed the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to go ahead with investigations and raids in the State without prior permission of the State government.

Background:

- The Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal governments, had last year, withdrawn "general consent" to the CBI for investigating cases in their respective states.
- The state governments said they had lost faith in the CBI in the backdrop of its internal turmoil marked by the open war among the agency's top officers.
- They had also alleged that the Centre is using the CBI to unfairly target Opposition parties.

What is general consent?



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- Unlike the National Investigation Agency (NIA), which is governed by its own NIA Act and has jurisdiction across the country, the CBI is governed by the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act that makes consent of a state government mandatory for conducting investigation in that state.

There are two kinds of consent:

- case-specific and general– Given that the CBI has jurisdiction only over central government departments and employees, it can investigate a case involving state government employees or a violent crime in a given state only after that state government gives its consent.

“General consent” is normally given to help the CBI seamlessly conduct its investigation into cases of corruption against central government employees in the concerned state. Almost all states have given such consent. Otherwise, the CBI would require consent in every case.

What does withdrawal mean?

- It means the CBI will not be able to register any fresh case involving a central government official or a private person stationed in these two states without getting case-specific consent. Withdrawal of consent simply means that CBI officers will lose all powers of a police officer as soon as they enter the state unless the state government has allowed them.

Can withdrawal mean that the CBI can no longer probe any case?



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- No. The CBI would still have the power to investigate old cases registered when general consent existed. Also, cases registered anywhere else in the country, but involving people stationed in states which have withdrawn consent, would allow CBI's jurisdiction to extend to these states.

What can the CBI do in such instances?

- The CBI can always get a search warrant from a local court in the state and conduct searches.
- In case the search requires a surprise element, there is CrPC Section 166, which allows a police officer of one jurisdiction to ask an officer of another to carry out searches on his behalf.
- And if the first officer feels that the searches by the latter may lead to loss of evidence, the section allows the first officer to conduct searches himself after giving a notice to the latter.

What happens in fresh cases?

- Withdrawal of consent will only bar the CBI from registering a case within the jurisdiction of states which have withdrawn consent. However, the CBI could still file cases in Delhi and continue to probe people inside such states.
- An October 11, 2018, order of the Delhi High Court makes it clear that the agency can probe anyone in a state that has withdrawn "general consent" if the case is not registered in that state.
- The order was given with regard to a case of corruption in Chhattisgarh, which also gives consent on a case-to-case basis.
- The court ordered that the CBI could probe the case without prior consent of the Chhattisgarh government since it was registered in Delhi.



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Siachen Glacier:

Why in News?

New defence minister's visit.

About the glacier

- Siachen Glacier is among of the largest glaciers in the non-polar region of the world.
- It lies in the Karakoram Range system which is a part of western Himalayas.
- It also lies to the south of the zone that separates Eurasian Plate with the Indian Plate, which is the result of convergence boundary interaction in geographical terms.
- The word Siachen comes out of two words: "Sia" which means rose and "Chun" which means anything found in abundance according to "Balti" language. Therefore it represents the place of roses.
- It is the highest battle field in the world and lies on LoC (Line of Control) between India and Pakistan. It has been continuously contested by Pakistan as its own part which has led to militarisation of the glacier.
- After the Indo-Pakistan war in 1971, an agreement was signed between the two countries in 1972, which came to be known as the Shimla Agreement, but it failed to clearly mention who controls the glacier.
- However, in 1984, the Pakistan army tried to enter the glacier, forcing India to launch a military operation known as "Operation Meghdoot" and since then we have control over the glacier.



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Frequent skirmishes did occur between 1884 to 2003. A ceasefire agreement was signed between India and Pakistan in 2003

- The glacier is the source of many rivers including Nubra River, a tributary of Shyok, which is a part of the Indus River System.
- Siachen Glacier also boasts of the world's highest helipad built by India at Point Sonam, to supply its troops. India also installed the world's highest telephone booth on the glacier.
- The region is also a home to rare species of snow leopard, brown bear etc which may be affected by military presence. This has led to talks in international forums about creating a "Peace Park" in the area and demilitarise it.

Mount Etna:

Context: Italy's Mount Etna volcano has erupted again.

About Mt. Etna:

- Mount Etna is the largest active volcano in Europe and one of the world's most frequently erupting volcanoes.
- It is also the volcano with the longest record of continuous eruption.
- Located near the east coast of the island of Sicily in Italy, Mount Etna is 10,900 feet tall.
- The mountain's largest feature is the Valle del Bove (Valley of the Ox), a large horseshoe-shaped caldera on the eastern slope.
- Etna sits on the active fault between the African plate and the Ionian microplate, which are both being subducted together beneath the Eurasian plate.
- In June 2013, it was added to the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites.
- Due to its history of recent activity and nearby population, Mount Etna has been designated a Decade Volcano by the United Nations



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Islamic Cooperation countries (OIC)

Context: The 14th summit of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) was held in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. The agenda of meeting was to address 'current issues in Muslim world' and 'recent developments in a number of OIC member states.

About the OIC:

- Organisation of Islamic Cooperation is an international organization founded in 1969, consisting of 57 member states.
- It is the second largest inter-governmental organization after the United Nations.
- The organisation states that it is "the collective voice of the Muslim world" and works to "safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony".
- The OIC has permanent delegations to the United Nations and the European Union.
- Permanent Secretariat is in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.
- Like NAM again, the OIC is a toothless tiger when it comes to dealing with squabbles among member states.

Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS)

Context: The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship has decided to waive off fee for SC/ST candidates who join vocational training under Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS).

About Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS):



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- Formerly under the Ministry of Human Resources Development, Jan Shikshan Sansthan was transferred to the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship in 2018.
- Jan Shikshan Sansthans (JSS) were established to provide vocational training to non-literate, neo-literate, as well as school dropouts by identifying skills as would have a market in the region of their establishment.
- They were formerly known as Shramik Vidyapeeth.
- The JSSs are unique, they link literacy with vocational skills and provide large doses of Life Enrichment Education (LEE) to the people.
- They aim for convergence with other stakeholders in society. It is their endeavour to shape their beneficiaries into self reliant and self-assured employees and entrepreneurs.

Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)

Context: The latest edition of Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) has been released.

Key findings:

- The unemployment rate (UR) in both rural and urban India is at its highest since 1972.



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- The unemployment rates among men and women in both rural and urban groups, are also the highest ever. The increase in the UR is more than three times among rural men and more than double among rural women according to the usual status since 2011-12.
- In urban areas, the UR among men is more than twice and has increased twice among women since 2011-12. It is to be noted that the UR between 1972 and 2012 was almost static or did not have many differences (See Table 1). Besides, the UR rose sharply among youth of ages between 15-29 years and those who got better education.
- The unemployment rates in urban areas are higher than those in rural areas. In rural areas, the UR is 5.3 per cent, whereas in urban areas, the UR is 7.8 per cent according to the usual status. The overall unemployment rate is 6.1 per cent in India according to the usual status. The rural employment rate is 8.5 per cent whereas the urban rate is 9.6 per cent. The overall unemployment rate is 8.9 per cent.
- In urban areas, the unemployment rates for females are higher than those for males.
- The unemployment rate among youth between 15 and 29 years has risen sharply since 2011-12. Among rural males and females, the UR is almost three times since 2011-12, whereas among urban males and females, this rate is more than double.
- The UR has also sharply increased among those who are more educated. Since 2011-12, the UR among rural males has increased by almost three times, from 1.7 per cent to 5.7 per cent. Those who have higher degree of education and those who are completely not-literate have witnessed almost the same level of unemployment.
- Interestingly, unemployment among rural not-literate females has reduced and among urban females, the number of those who are literate up to primary-level jobs, is the same as 2011-12.
- Among social groups, the highest UR is among the 'General' or 'Others' category — 6.7 per cent. This groups is followed by Schedule Castes (6.3 per cent), Other Backward Classes (6 per cent) and Scheduled Tribes (4.3 per cent).
- Among religious groups, Christians have the highest UR in both urban and rural areas. In rural areas, Christians have a UR of 7.4 per cent, Muslims have a UR of 6.5 per cent, Sikhs 6.3 per cent and Hindus 5.2 per cent.
- In urban areas, Christians have a UR of 11 per cent, Sikhs 9.1 per cent, followed by Muslims 8.5 per cent and Hindus 7.6 per cent.

Background:



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- The Union Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation had constituted PLFS under the chairmanship of Amitabh Kundu.
- The data was collected by NSSO from July 2017 to June 2018.
- The survey was spread over 12,773 first-stage sampling units (7,014 villages and 5,759 urban blocks) covering 1,02,113 households (56,108 in rural areas and 46,005 in urban areas) and enumerating 4,33,339 persons (2,46,809 in rural areas and 1,86,530 in urban areas).

2nd Global Disability Summit at Buenos Aires

Context: 2nd Global Disability Summit is being held at Buenos Aires, Argentina.

About the Summit:

- The objectives of the summit is to deliberate on issues across the world concerning empowerment and inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) and to work out a mechanism for enabling them to live an independent and dignified life.
- The first-ever Global Disability Summit was held at London, United Kingdom (UK) in 2018. It was hosted by UK Department for International Development (UK DFID), along with the co-hosts International Disability Alliance (IDA) and Government of Kenya.

Mandate:



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- The Global leaders attending the summit express their commitments towards eliminating stigma and discrimination against PwDs and to work towards promoting inclusive education, economic empowerment, technology and innovation in assistive devices, data desegregation etc. for them.

Fiscal Performance Index (FPI) launched by CII

Context: Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has launched a Fiscal Performance Index (FPI) to assess state and central budgets.

Components of CII:

- The Index incorporates qualitative assessments of revenue expenditure, capital expenditure, revenues, fiscal prudence and the level of public debt.

Key findings:

- The CII has used this index to analyse state and central budgets from 2004-05 to 2016-17.
- The study found that despite improvement a reduction in the fiscal deficit between FY13 and FY18, the overall performance of the budget has been remained steady with improvements only in FY16 and FY17.



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- This is largely due to moderation in the revenue, capital expenditure and and net tax revenues indices.
- The analysis also shows that the combine performance of all state budgets has improved despite worsening of fiscal deficit numbers because of improvements in revenue and capital expenditure indices.
- The study also points out that relatively high income states including Gujarat, Haryana and Maharashtra which are presumed to have good fiscal health because of low fiscal deficit to GDP ratio do not perform well on the composite FPI because of poor expenditure and revenue quality compared to other states.
- Other states including, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have done well on the FPI because of their good performance in revenue and capital expenditure indices.

Need for FPI:

- A single criterion such as the 'fiscal deficit to GDP ratio' does not tell us anything about the quality of the Budget.
- Hence, the Government should use multiple indicators to measure the quality of Budgets at the Central and the State levels rather than a single indicator.

BrahMos:

The Anti-ship version of supersonic cruise missile BrahMos was test fired from the launch complex-3 of Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Chandipur in Odisha.

About

- The name BrahMos is formed from names of two river. Indian river Brahmaputra and the Moskva River of Russia.



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- Manufactured at BrahMos Aerospace Limited which is a joint venture between India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and Russia's NPO Mashinostroyeniya (NPOM).
- The medium-range ramjet supersonic cruise missile has a strike range of about 290 km.
- The BrahMos is the fastest cruise missile of its class in the world.

Shanta Kumar Committee

Context:

Union Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Shri Ram Vilas Paswan lays down the future roadmap for Food Corporation of India (FCI).

He stated that primacy will be given to ensuring that the functioning of FCI is streamlined and fast paced as per recommendations of the Shanta Kumar Committee.

Background:

- The government had set up a six-member committee to suggest restructuring or unbundling of FCI to improve its financial management and operational efficiency in procurement, storage and distribution of food grains.

Important recommendations made:

- Reduce the number of beneficiaries under the Food Security Act—from the current 67 per cent to 40 per cent.
- Allow private players to procure and store food grains.



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- Stop bonuses on minimum support price (MSP) paid by states to farmers, and adopt cash transfer system so that MSP and food subsidy amounts can be directly transferred to the accounts of farmers and food security beneficiaries.
- FCI should involve itself in full-fledged grains procurement only in those states which are poor in procurement. In the case of those states which are performing well, like Haryana, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha, the states should do the procurement.
- Abolishing levy rice: Under levy rice policy, government buys certain percentage of rice (varies from 25 to 75 per cent in states) from the mills compulsorily, which is called levy rice. Mills are allowed to sell only the remainder in the open market.
- Deregulate fertiliser sector and provide cash fertiliser subsidy of Rs 7,000 per hectare to farmers.
- outsource of stocking of grains: The committee calls for setting up of negotiable warehouse receipt (NWR) system. In the new system, farmers can deposit their produce in these registered warehouses and get 80 per cent of the advance from bank against their produce on the basis of MSP.
- Clear and transparent liquidation policy for buffer stock: FCI should be given greater flexibility in doing business; it should offload surplus stock in open market or export, as per need.
- Registration of political parties under Section 29A of the RP Act, 1951

National party status

Context:

The Election Commission of India has declared the National People's Party as a national party. This made the NPP, formed in 2013, the first from the north-eastern region to earn the tag.

The NPP is recognised as a State party in Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya and Nagaland.



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Registration of political parties:

- Registration of Political parties is governed by the provisions of Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.
- A party seeking registration under the said Section with the Commission has to submit an application to the Commission within a period of 30 days following the date of its formation as per guidelines prescribed by the Election Commission of India in exercise of the powers conferred by Article 324 of the Commission of India and Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

Eligibility

- To be eligible for a 'National Political Party of India,' the Election Commission has set the following criteria:
 - It secures at least six percent of the valid votes polled in any four or more states, at a general election to the House of the People or, to the State Legislative Assembly; and
 - In addition, it wins at least four seats in the House of the People from any State or States. OR
 - It wins at least two percent seats in the House of the People (i.e., 11 seats in the existing House having 543 members), and these members are elected from at least three different States.
 -
- To be eligible for a 'State Political Party,' the Election Commission has set the following criteria:
 - It secures at least six percent of the valid votes polled in the State at a general election, either to the House of the People or to the Legislative Assembly of the State concerned; and



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- In addition, it wins at least two seats in the Legislative Assembly of the State concerned. OR
- It wins at least three percent (3%) of the total number of seats in the Legislative Assembly of the State, or at least three seats in the Assembly, whichever is more.

Benefits:

- If a party is recognised as a State Party', it is entitled for exclusive allotment of its reserved symbol to the candidates set up by it in the State in which it is so recognised, and if a party is recognised as a 'National Party' it is entitled for exclusive allotment of its reserved symbol to the candidates set up by it throughout India.
- Recognised 'State' and 'National' parties need only one proposer for filing the nomination and are also entitled for two sets of electoral rolls free of cost at the time of revision of rolls and their candidates get one copy of electoral roll free of cost during General Elections.
- They also get broadcast/teecast facilities over Akashvani/Doordarshan during general elections.
- Political parties are entitled to nominate "Star Campaigners" during General Elections. A recognized National or State party can have a maximum of 40 "Star campaigners" and a registered un-recognised party can nominate a maximum of 20 'Star Campaigners'.
- The travel expenses of star campaigners are not to be accounted for in the election expense accounts of candidates of their party.

NASA's InSight spacecraft

Context:



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NASA's InSight lander is having some problems. The instrument, called a "mole," was designed to hammer itself deep under the Martian surface and monitor temperature changes. NASA figured it would be able to push itself as deep as 16 feet into the Martian crust, but the consistency of the soil has made that difficult. In fact, the mole has only made it around a foot deep, and now InSight's science team has come up with a new plan.

What next?

- The new plan involves using InSight's robotic arm to push on the soil surrounding the probe. This, InSight team members suggest, could give the mole enough friction to hammer itself deeper underground.

About InSight Mission:

- InSight is part of NASA's Discovery Program, managed by the agency's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama.
- It will be the first mission to peer deep beneath the Martian surface, studying the planet's interior by measuring its heat output and listening for marsquakes, which are seismic events similar to earthquakes on Earth.



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- It will use the seismic waves generated by marsquakes to develop a map of the planet's deep interior.

Significance of the mission:

- The findings of Mars' formation will help better understand how other rocky planets, including Earth, were and are created.
- But InSight is more than a Mars mission – it is a terrestrial planet explorer that would address one of the most fundamental issues of planetary and solar system science – understanding the processes that shaped the rocky planets of the inner solar system (including Earth) more than four billion years ago.
- would delve deep beneath the surface of Mars, detecting the fingerprints of the processes of terrestrial planet formation, as well as measuring the planet's "vital signs": Its "pulse" (seismology), "temperature" (heat flow probe), and "reflexes" (precision tracking).

InSight seeks to answer one of science's most fundamental questions: How did the terrestrial planets form?

Leader of opposition

Why in News?

Congress, with 52 MPs, has declined to stake claim for the position of Leader of Opposition in Parliament.

Background: Any party that has 55 members can get the post as recognised as such by the speaker/chairman.



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Who is the Leader of Opposition?

- The LOP is leader of the largest party that has not less than one-tenth of the total strength of the house.
- It is a statutory post defined in the Salaries and Allowances of Leaders of Opposition in Parliament Act, 1977.

Significance of the office:

- LoP is referred to as the 'shadow Prime Minister'.
- She/he is expected to be ready to take over if the government falls.
- The LoP also plays an important role in bringing cohesiveness and effectiveness to the opposition's functioning in policy and legislative work.
- LoP plays a crucial role in bringing bipartisanship and neutrality to the appointments in institutions of accountability and transparency – CVC, CBI, CIC, Lokpal etc.

Foreigners Tribunals

Context: The MHA has amended the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964,



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Changes proposed as per the amendment:

- It has empowered district magistrates in all States and Union Territories to set up tribunals to decide whether a person staying illegally in India is a foreigner or not.
- The amended Foreigners (Tribunal) Order, 2019 also empowers individuals to approach the Tribunals.
- The amended order also allows District Magistrates to refer individuals who haven't filed claims against their exclusion from NRC to the Tribunals to decide if they are foreigners or not.

Current Practice:

- So far, the powers to constitute tribunals were vested only with the Centre.
- The 1964 order on Constitution of Tribunals said: "The Central Government may by order, refer the question as to whether a person is not a foreigner within meaning of the Foreigners Act, 1946 (31 of 1946) to a Tribunal to be constituted for the purpose, for its opinion.

National Programme for prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and strokes (NPCDCS)

Context: A meeting to review the status of National Programme for prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and strokes (NPCDCS) was held recently.



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About NPCDCS:

- National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke (NPCDCS) was launched in 2010 in 100 districts across 21 States, in order to prevent and control the major NCDs.
- The main focus of the programme is on health promotion, early diagnosis, management and referral of cases, besides strengthening the infrastructure and capacity building.
- The main strategies of the programme are as follows:
 - a) Health promotion through behavior change with involvement of community, civil society, community-based organizations, media etc.
 - b) Outreach Camps are envisaged for opportunistic screening at all levels in the health care delivery system from sub-centre and above for early detection of diabetes, hypertension and common cancers.
 - c) Management of chronic Non-Communicable diseases, especially Cancer, Diabetes, CVDs and Stroke through early diagnosis, treatment and follow up through setting up of NCD clinics.
 - d) Build capacity at various levels of health care for prevention, early diagnosis, treatment, IEC/BCC, operational research and rehabilitation.
 - e) Provide support for diagnosis and cost-effective treatment at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of health care.



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f) Provide support for development of database of NCDs through a robust Surveillance System and to monitor NCD morbidity, mortality and risk factors.

Funding:

- The funds are being provided to States under NCD Flexi-Pool through State PIPs of respective States/UTs, with the Centre to State share in ratio of 60:40 (except for North-Eastern and Hilly States, where the share is 90:10).

What are NCDs?

- Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), also known as chronic diseases, tend to be of long duration and are the result of a combination of genetic, physiological, environmental and behaviours factors.
- main types of NCDs are cardiovascular diseases (like heart attacks and stroke), cancers, chronic respiratory diseases (such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and asthma) and diabetes.

Financial Action Task Force (FATF)

Context: With little action against terrorism, Pak likely to stay on FATF grey list.



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Background:

- Pakistan was placed on the grey list by the FATF in June 2018 for failing to curb anti-terror financing.
- It has been scrambling in recent months to avoid being added to a list of countries deemed non-compliant with anti-money laundering and terrorist financing regulations by the Paris-based FATF, a measure that officials here fear could further hurt its economy.

Implications of this move:

- Pakistani analysts say being put on the FATF watchlist could deal a blow to Pakistan's economy, making it harder for foreign investors and companies to do business in the country.
- It would be counterproductive to put Pakistan on the watch list as it would hurt its capability to fight terrorism. Also, being put back on the grey list would heighten Pakistan's risk profile and some financial institutions would be wary of transacting with Pakistani banks and counterparties.
- Being placed on the FATF watchlist carries no direct legal implications but brings extra scrutiny from regulators and financial institutions that can chill trade and investment and increase transaction costs.

About FATF:



C.A From May 29th to 12th June 2019

- The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is an inter-governmental body established in 1989 on the initiative of the G7. It is a “policy-making body” which works to generate the necessary political will to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms in various areas. The FATF Secretariat is housed at the OECD headquarters in Paris.

Objectives:

- The objectives of the FATF are to set standards and promote effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures for combating money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.

Functions:

- The FATF monitors the progress of its members in implementing necessary measures, reviews money laundering and terrorist financing techniques and counter-measures and promotes the adoption and implementation of appropriate measures globally. In collaboration with other international stakeholders, the FATF works to identify national-level vulnerabilities with the aim of protecting the international financial system from misuse.

What is blacklist and grey list?

- FATF maintains two different lists of countries: those that have deficiencies in their AML/CTF regimes, but they commit to an action plan to address these loopholes, and those that do not end up doing enough. The former is commonly known as grey list and latter as blacklist.



C.A From May 29th to 12th June 2019

- Once a country is blacklisted, FATF calls on other countries to apply enhanced due diligence and counter measures, increasing the cost of doing business with the country and in some cases severing it altogether. As of now there are only two countries in the blacklist — Iran and North Korea — and seven on the grey list, including Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Syria and Yemen.

NASAMS-II:

Context:

US approves sale of NASAMS-II air defence systems to India.

About

- NASAMS-II (National Advanced Surface to Air Missile System – NASAMS) is an upgraded version of the NASAMS developed by Raytheon in partnership with KONGSBERG Defence and Aerospace of Norway.
- It features new 3D mobile surveillance radars and 12 missile launchers for quicker reaction.
- It provides tailor-able, state-of-the-art defence system that can maximise the ability to quickly identify, engage and destroy current and evolving enemy aircraft, UAV or emerging cruise missile threats.
- NASAMS-II is armed with 3D Sentinel radars, short and medium-range missiles, launchers, fire-distribution centres and command and control units to quickly detect, track and shoot down multiple airborne threats.

UN Habitat

Context: India has been elected to the Executive Board of the first UN-Habitat Assembly.

About UN Habitat:



C.A From May 29th to 12th June 2019

- The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN–Habitat) is the United Nations agency for human settlements and sustainable urban development.
- It was established in 1978 as an outcome of the First UN Conference on Human Settlements and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat I) held in Vancouver, Canada in 1976.
- It is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all. It is a member of the United Nations Development Group.
- The mandate of UN-Habitat derives from the Habitat Agenda, adopted by the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) in Istanbul, Turkey, in 1996.
- The twin goals of the Habitat Agenda are adequate shelter for all and the development of sustainable human settlements in an urbanizing world.
- As an inter-governmental policy making and decision making body, the Governing Council of UN-Habitat seeks to promote integral and comprehensive approach to human settlements, assist the countries and regions in addressing human settlement problems and strengthen cooperation among all countries on human settlement issue.
- UN-Habitat reports to the United Nations General Assembly.

Kartarpur Sahib pilgrim corridor

Context:

Officials from Pakistan and India recently held a meeting to discuss the modalities for a corridor linking Dera Baba Nanak shrine in Punjab’s Gurdaspur district to Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Kartarpur across the border.

Background:

- In a significant decision, the Union Cabinet, last year, approved the building and development of the Kartarpur corridor from Dera Baba Nanak in Gurdaspur district to the international border, in order to facilitate pilgrims from India to visit Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur on the banks of the Ravi river, in Pakistan, where Shri Guru Nanak Devji spent eighteen years. Pilgrims would then be able to visit the holy shrine throughout the year.



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Key facts:

- The Kartarpur corridor will be implemented as an integrated development project with Government of India funding, to provide smooth and easy passage, with all the modern amenities.
- Government of India will put in place suitable facilities for smooth passage of pilgrims. Government of Pakistan will be urged to recognize the sentiments of the Sikh community and to develop a corridor with suitable facilities in their territory as well.

Kappaphycus alvarezii:

What is it?

- It is an invasive, which smothers and kills coral reefs.

Concerns:

- It has spread its wings to coral reef areas in Valai island in the Gulf of Mannar (GoM) and set to invade new coral colonies in the marine national park. It has already invaded Shingle, Kurusadai and Mulli islands in Mandapam cluster of the GoM, the red algae invaded Valai island along Kilakarai coast following its cultivation in south Palk Bay.

Regulation:



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- A 2005 Government Order had restricted cultivation of the exotic seaweed only to the seawaters north of the Palk Bay and South of Thoothukdi coast.