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1. Union Cabinet approves India's updated NDC under Paris Agreement (Aug. 3, 2022)

The Union Cabinet has approved the updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) of India for reporting to the United Nations Climate Change Framework Convention (UNFCCC) on 3rd July.

Important facts

- The updated NDC seeks to enhance India's contribution towards strengthening global action to combat the threat of climate change as mutually agreed under the Paris Agreement.
- This will help India move forward on the path of reducing emissions-growth.
- It will protect the interests of the country and safeguard future development needs based on the principles and provisions of the UNFCCC.

India's Stand at COP-26

- India has presented the following five nectar elements (Panchamrit) of India's climate action -
 1. Reach 500 GW Non-fossil energy capacity by 2030.
 2. Renewable energy to meet 50% of India's energy needs by 2030.
 3. To reduce total carbon emissions by one billion tonnes from now to 2030.
 4. A 45 percent reduction in the economy's carbon intensity by 2030 from 2005 levels.
 5. To achieve the goal of net zero emissions by 2070.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

- It was signed in 1992 at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development also known as the Earth Summit.
- It was entered into force on March 21, 1994, and has been ratified by 197 countries.
- It is an international environmental treaty which seeks to reduce atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases.
- Its aim is to prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the earth's climate system.

2. Air India pilots will get permission to fly plane till the age of 65 (Aug. 3, 2022)

Tata Group's airline Air India has decided to allow its pilots to fly aircraft till the age of 65 years.

Important facts

- According to information from the group's internal documents, the company has taken this decision keeping in mind the expansion plan of its fleet.
- The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has allowed pilots to fly aircraft till the age of 65.
- Pilots are already allowed to fly by the age of 65 by most airline companies.
- Air India pilots after retirement will be extended up to 65 years on contract basis for 5 years.

Reason for change

- The airline is actually planning to add more than 200 new aircraft to its fleet. In this, 70 percent of the aircraft will be of small type.
- In view of future expansion plans for its fleet, meeting the workforce requirement is critical, the airline's documents said.

Air India

- Air India was started on 15 October 1932 by Jahangir Ratanji Dadabhai Tata (JRD Tata).
- In the year 1938, the name of Tata Air Services was changed to Tata Airlines.
- Tata Airlines played an important role during World War II that lasted from 1939 to 1945.
- After the end of World War II, Tata Airlines became a listed company on 29 July 1946 and its name was changed to Air India.
- After independence in 1947, the Government of India acquired 49 percent stake in Air India in 1948.
- In 1953, the Government of India acquired the majority stake in Air India through the Air Corporation Act and renamed it as 'Air India International Limited'.
- Recently again on 27 January 2022, the airline was officially handed over to the Tata Group.
- MD & CEO - Campbell Wilson
- Headquarters - New Delhi

3. IAF to participate in multilateral exercise 'Pitch Black' in Australia (Aug. 3, 2022)

The Indian Air Force (IAF) will join 16 other countries, including the Quad partner countries, for the biennial Exercise Pitch Black to be conducted by the Australian Air Force later this month.

Important facts

- About 100 aircraft and 2,500 military personnel from 17 countries will reach the northern region later this month for the Pitch Black 2022 exercise.
- This year's Pitch Black participants include Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Indonesia, India, Japan, Malaysia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Philippines, South Korea, Singapore, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, UK and US.
- The 2020 edition of this exercise was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

About Exercise Pitch Black

- It is a biennial warfare exercise hosted by the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF).
- It enhances interoperability and strengthens relationships among participants.
- This will provide the Indian Air Force with a unique opportunity to exchange knowledge and experience with these countries in a dynamic combat environment.
- Its last edition was held in 2018.
- Its aim is to practice Offensive Counter Air (OCA) and Defensive Counter Air (DCA) combat in a simulated war environment.

Other exercise between India and Australia

- AUSINDEX - It is a biennial bilateral maritime exercise between the Indian Navy and the Royal Australian Navy (RAN).
- The first edition of the exercise was held in 2015.

4. Lok Sabha passed the Wildlife (Protection), Amendment Bill, 2021 (Aug. 3, 2022)

The Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Bill, 2021 was passed by Lok Sabha on 2 August. Under the bill, amendments will be made to the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

Objective of the bill

- The main objective of the bill is to implement CITES, CITES is an international agreement signed by governments in 1973 to ensure that the international trade of wild animals and plants is protected.

Key Features of the Bill

- The Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Bill was first introduced in Parliament in December last year to amend the law governing the conservation of wild animals, birds and plants in the country.
- The amendment has been introduced to increase the number of species protected under the law.

- The Bill empowers the central government to control and prevent the import, trade, possession or proliferation of invasive exotic species.
- The Central Government may authorise any officer to seize and dispose of invasive species.
- The Bill entrusts the Chief Wildlife Warden with the task of controlling, managing and maintaining all the sanctuaries in a state.
- The Chief Wildlife Warden is appointed by the State Government.
- The Bill specifies that the actions of the Chief Warden should be in accordance with the management plans for the sanctuary.
- State governments can declare areas adjacent to national parks and sanctuaries as a conservation reserve to protect the flora and fauna and their habitat.
- The Bill provides for any person to voluntarily hand over any captive animals or animal products to the Chief Wildlife Warden.

Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972

- It provides a legal framework for the protection of various species of wild animals and plants, the management and regulation of their habitats, and the control of trade in wild animals, plants and their products.
- Plants and animals are listed under the Act, which are monitored by the government by providing various types of protection.
- The Act was amended last time in the year 2006 and its purpose is to strengthen the conservation of tigers and other endangered species.

5. The first All India District Legal Services Authority meeting (Aug. 2, 2022)

The first All India District Legal Services Authority meeting was held on 30 July and 31 July at Vigyan Bhawan. Its inaugural session was addressed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Important facts

- Chief Justice N.V. Raman and other Supreme Court judges also participated.
- A postage stamp on 'Right to Free Legal Aid' was also released on the occasion.
- It was organised by the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA).
- The meeting was based on the creation of an integrated process aimed at bringing about uniformity and coordination among the District Legal Services Authorities.
- In India, there are 676 District Legal Services Authorities (DLSAs). District judges act as the chairpersons of DLSAs.
- NALSA implements several legal aid and awareness programs through DLSAs and State Legal Services Authorities (SLSAs).

- DLSAs also help in reducing the burden on the courts by regulating the Lok Adalats conducted by NALSA.

About National Legal Services Authority (NALSA)

- NALSA was established on 9th November, 1995 as per the authority of Legal Services Authorization Act 1987.
- It was established with the objective of conducting Lok Adalats to provide free legal services to deserving candidates as well as for timely resolution of cases.
- The Chief Justice of India acts as the principal guardian of NALSA.
- On the other hand, the second senior-most judge of the Supreme Court of India acts as the acting-chairman.
- Its main objective is to reduce the burden of the judiciary through speedy disposal of cases.

6. Six agreements signed between India and Maldives (Aug. 2, 2022)

Maldives signed 6 agreements with India on 2 August, with both sides reaffirming their desire to strengthen ties to combat "international crimes and terrorism" in the Indian Ocean region.

Important facts

- The six agreements signed between the two sides will facilitate cooperation in capacity building, cyber security, housing, disaster management and infrastructure development in the Maldives.
- After talks with Maldivian President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, Modi announced a line of credit of USD 100 million (one million = 10 lakh) for Maldives to complete development projects in a time-bound manner.
- The first part of the Greater Male Connectivity Project (GMCP) will include a 6.74 km bridge and a bridge connecting the capital Male to neighboring islands.
- The Prime Minister said that the threat of international crime, terrorism and drug trafficking in the Indian Ocean is serious and close India-Maldives ties are vital for peace in the region.
- The MoU signed on Cyber Security aims to promote the exchange of information related to cyber security on the basis of equality and mutual benefit in accordance with domestic laws, rules and regulations.

Second landing assault craft

- To strengthen Maldives' maritime capability, India has announced the gifting of the second Landing Assault Craft to the Maldives National Defence Force.
- Maldives was one of the first recipients of the Covishield vaccine manufactured by the Serum Institute of India (SII).

- President Solih visited Delhi in 2018 and this is his first visit in the backdrop of the end of the pandemic and the ongoing crisis in Sri Lanka.

About Maldives

- It is also called Maldivian Islands, an independent island country in the north-central Indian Ocean.
- It extends more than 510 miles (820 km) from north to south and 80 miles (130 km) from east to west.
- Basis of economy - fisheries, tourism
- Industries - handicraft or cottage including the making of coir (coconut-husk fibre) and coir products, fish canning, and boatbuilding.
- Capital - Male
- President - Ibrahim Mohamed Solih
- Official Language - Dhivehi (Maldivian)
- Official Religion - Islam
- Currency - Rufiyaa

7. Amit Shah inaugurate conference on drug trafficking, national security in Chandigarh (Aug. 2, 2022)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah inaugurated the “Conference on Drug Trafficking and National Security” on July 30, 2022.

Important facts

- During this conference, more than 30,000 kg of narcotic drugs were burnt and disposed of at Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai.
- NCB had launched the Drug Disposal Campaign on 1st June 2022.
- Till July 29, more than 51,217 kg of narcotics have been disposed of in 11 states.
- As a part of the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' celebrations, NCB has pledged to dispose of 75000 kgs of drugs.

Drug addiction in India

- India is situated between the world's two largest opium producing regions (the 'Golden Triangle' on one side and the 'Golden Crescent' on the other).
- The 'Golden Triangle' region includes Thailand, Myanmar, Vietnam and Laos.
- The 'Golden Crescent' region includes Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran.

- According to the World Drug Report 2021, prescription drugs and their ingredients are increasingly being converted into recreational use in India (the world's largest producer of generic drugs).
- India is also linked to shipments of drugs sold in the 19 major darknet markets analysed in 2011-2020.
- According to the report released by the Ministry of Social Justice and All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) on the quantum of substance abuse in 2019.
- There are 31 million cannabis users in India (of which 2.5 million were dependent users).
- There are 23 million opioid users in India (of which 2.8 million were dependent users).

Other Related Initiatives

- **Narco-Coordination Centre-** Narco-Coordination Centre (NCORD) was constituted in November 2016 and the scheme "Financial Assistance to States for Narcotics Control" was revived.
- **Project Sunrise-** It was launched in 2016 by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to tackle the rising HIV prevalence in the North-Eastern states of India, especially among those who inject drugs.
- **NDPS Act-** It prohibits a person from producing, possessing, selling, buying, transporting, storing and/or consuming any narcotic drug or psychotropic substance.
- The NDPS Act has been amended thrice so far - in 1988, 2001 and 2014.
- The Act applies to the whole of India as well as to all Indian citizens outside India and all persons employed on ships and aircraft registered in India.
- **Drug Free India-** Government has also announced the launch of 'Nasha Mukh Bharat' or Drug Free India campaign which focuses on community outreach programmes.

About Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB)

- NCB was established in 1986.
- NCB is an Indian central law enforcement and intelligence agency.
- It works under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- It helps in combating drug trafficking as well as use of illegal substances as per the provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act.
- It coordinates drug-related matters with state governments and other central departments in India.

8. US Congress approves Chips Act to boost semiconductor production (Aug. 2, 2022)

The US House of Representatives has passed the Semiconductors and Science Bill to provide \$280 billion in aid and subsidies to its semiconductor industry facing competition from China.

Important facts

- The bill would provide "\$52 billion of subsidies and additional tax credits" to companies making chips in the US.
- An amount of \$ 200 billion has also been allocated for scientific research of artificial intelligence and other innovative technologies.
- Last year, a global shortage of semiconductors or chips led to the recognition that the US needed substantial manufacturing of its own.
- Since 2020, the increasing use of devices such as laptops in homes has further fueled its demand.
- According to a Forbes report, about 75% of the world's dependence on semiconductors is met by East Asia.
- The bill states that currently only 12% of chips are manufactured domestically, compared to 37% in 1990, and several countries, including China, are investing heavily to dominate the industry.
- The bill would reduce America's reliance on foreign sources of semiconductors and strengthen national security.

What are Semiconductor Chips?

- It is a material which has conductivity between conductor and insulator.
- Compounds of silicon or germanium or gallium, arsenide or cadmium selenide are used in this.

Why are semiconductors or chips so important?

- It serves as the centre and brain of all modern electronics and information and communication technology products.
- The chips are used as data-storing memory chips, or logic chips that run programs.
- Manufacturing of chips requires a lot of precision as well as investment.
- This requires special conditions where even small disturbances around or inside the manufacturing unit can hamper production.

9. Al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri killed in US drone strike (Aug. 2, 2022)

U. S. President Joe Biden said on August 1 that the United States killed al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in a drone air strike in Kabul.

Important facts

- The killing of Zawahiri is seen as the biggest blow to the terrorist group since its founder Osama bin Laden was killed in 2011.
- Al-Qaeda chief Ayman al-Zawahiri, an Egyptian surgeon who later became one of the world's most wanted terrorists.
- He was considered as the mastermind of the attacks on the United States of America on September 11, 2001.
- About 3 thousand people died in that terrorist attack.
- The US had placed a \$25 million bounty on Zawahiri.
- The drone strike is the first known US attack inside Afghanistan since US troops and diplomats left the country in August 2021.
- Zawahiri was earlier hiding in Pakistan but after the Taliban government came to power, he reached Kabul.

Who was Ayman al-Zawahiri?

- Born into a middle-class family in Egypt, Zawahiri grew up to become a doctor.
- He graduated from Cairo University's Al Qasr Al Ain Medical School in 1974.
- Ideologically he opposed secular governments, and was arrested in 1981 after the assassination of former Egyptian President Mohamed Anwar al-Saadat for carrying weapons without a license.
- He served three years as a surgeon in the Egyptian Army.
- In 1993, he took over the leadership of Islamic Jihad in Egypt and became a key figure in the mid-1990s campaign to overthrow the government and establish a pure Islamic state.
- He was found to be involved in the murder of more than 1,200 Egyptians.
- In 2011 he took on al-Qaeda when a team of Navy SEALs killed Osama bin Laden in Pakistan.
- He and bin Laden co-opted the 9/11 attacks and was one of America's "Most Wanted Terrorists".
- He was listed as one of the FBI's Most Wanted Terrorists, and had a \$25 million reward for his capture.

10. Culture Ministry organizes 'Tiranga Utsav' on the occasion of 146th birth anniversary of Pingali Venkaiah (Aug. 2, 2022)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah participated in the 'Tiranga Utsav' being organised by the Ministry of Culture in New Delhi on 2 August.

Important facts

- The event is being organized on the occasion of the 146th birthday of freedom fighter Pingali Venkaiah who designed the national flag and made a huge contribution to the nation.
- In this program a commemorative postage stamp was issued in his honour for his invaluable contribution to the freedom struggle and his family was honoured.
- The Home Minister launches the “Har Ghar Tiranga” anthem and video during the 'Tiranga Utsav'.
- The program featured live performances by masters like Kailash Kher and Kailasa, Harshdeep Kaur and Dr. Ragini Makkhar.
- On the completion of 75 years of independence, the central government is running the 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign.

Who was Pingali Venkayya?

- He was born on August 2, 1876, at Bhatlapenumarru, near present-day Machilipatnam town in Andhra Pradesh.
- He was sent to South Africa to fight in the war as a soldier of the British Indian Army.
- He was impressed by the feeling of nationalism inspired by the Union Jack among British soldiers in South Africa.
- He was the designer of India’s national tricolour.
- In 1921, Mahatma Gandhi approved the tricolor designed by him at a meeting of the Indian National Congress in Vijayawada.
- The tricolor version presented by Venkayya to Mahatma Gandhi had two stripes (green and red) and a Gandhian spinning wheel in the centre.
- On Gandhi's suggestion, Venkayya added a white stripe at the top, and it became the original tricolor.
- This flag was used informally in all Congress meetings from 1921 onwards.
- During the Congress session of 1931, the Congress adopted the tricolor with a color scheme – saffron, white and green and the spinning wheel in the centre.
- The flag became the standard of Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent freedom movement.
- A postage stamp was issued in his honor in 2009.
- In 2014, the Vijayawada station of All India Radio (AIR) was also named after him.
- He died in 1963 in poverty and oblivion.