



PIB, THE HINDU Newspaper and Editorial Current Affairs- 11th June

Posted at: 12/06/2019

1. **Modi to meet Xi, Putin at SCO:**

Why in news?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will meet Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit, the External Affairs Ministry said.

Bilateral meets:

- We are happy to confirm bilateral meetings with Russia and China. There are also similar requests from others," said external affairs Ministry.
- Uzbekistan President Sooronbay Jeenbekov is also scheduled to hold a bilateral discussion with Mr. Modi.

Summit with Xi:

- Sources indicated that Prime Minister Modi was expected to reiterate his invite to President Xi to visit India for an informal summit later this year. The first informal summit was held in Wuhan last year.
- The official spokesperson of the Ministry refused to confirm if Mr. Modi would hold a separate meeting with his counterpart from Pakistan, Imran Khan. Earlier, India had stated that there was no confirmation of such an official meeting.
- A source, however, confirmed that India had asked for Pakistan's permission to use an air corridor for the Bishkek-bound flight of Mr. Modi. The source, however, said that the details of the request were not yet known due to security reasons.

RATS:

The Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), headquartered in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, is a permanent organ of the SCO which serves to promote cooperation of member states against the three evils of terrorism, separatism and extremism.

- The SCO summit in Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic, on June 14 will be the first multilateral meeting of Prime Minister Narendra Modi after his re-election in the Lok Sabha election.

- Issues related to terrorism, Afghanistan, regional security, multilateral dialogue and global scenario would be part of the discussion at the summit.

RATS participation:

- India was satisfied with the participation in the Regional Anti-Terror Structure (RATS).
- India has been participating in tactical drills and counter-terror cooperation with other SCO member countries under the RATS, which has its headquarters in Tashkent.
- In August 2018, India joined Pakistan in a tactical military exercise under the SCO's RATS.
- India was expected to participate in a military exercise in Russia under the RATS.

2. France turning hot destination for students:

Why in news?

With the number of Indian students heading to France doubling in just two years time, the alumni are hoping that connections with the 500-odd French companies in India will lead to better job offers.

Significant rise:

- French Minister of State for Europe and Foreign Affairs Jean Baptiste Lemoyne met the Indian alumni of French courses in business, engineering and design where one of the major issues discussed was the need to increase connections with the French companies based in India.
- Mr. Lemoyne promised that he would push the demand with representatives of those companies when he met them on Monday evening.
- A decade ago, the annual number of Indian students in France was just 400. By 2017, it had shot up to 5,000 which increased to 8,000 last year.
- We expect to reach 10,000 students by the end of this 2019, a year ahead of our target deadline. The shift really started three years ago, when we began intensive marketing to reach out to the new generation," said French embassy spokesperson. By 2025, France hopes to double the number yet again.

3. India may give Pak. its due for action against terror groups:

Why in news?

A year after Pakistan was put on the "grey list" by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), New Delhi is beginning to accept that Islamabad has taken some action against the terror organisations on the ground.

Action so far:

- An official said Pakistani authorities had seized 771 seminaries educational institutions run by the Lashkar-e-Taiba and its fronts, Jamaat-ud Dawa and Falah-i-Insaniyat, and the Jaish-e-Mohammad.
- It is for the first time since early 1990s that Pakistan has begun to take action against India-focussed terror groups and freeze their assets," a senior government official said.

FATF:

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is **an inter-governmental body** established in 1989 by the Ministers of its Member jurisdictions. 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**. The FATF is therefore a "policy-making body" which works to generate the necessary political will to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms in these areas.

The FATF has developed a series of Recommendations that are recognised as the international standard for combating of money laundering and the financing of terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. They form the basis for a co-ordinated response to these threats to the integrity of the financial system and help ensure a level playing field. First issued in 1990, the FATF Recommendations were revised in 1996, 2001, 2003 and most recently in 2012 to ensure that they remain up to date and relevant, and they are intended to be of universal application.

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.

The FATF's decision making body, the FATF Plenary, meets three times per year.

Blacklist threat:

- To avoid being put on the blacklist, Pakistan has seized properties associated with terror groups in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir as well, the official said.
- A team of External Affairs and Home Ministry officials is now preparing to travel to Orlando, U.S. for the plenary session of the FATF, a global terrorism financing watchdog, from June 16 to 21.
- India has taken a back seat to the U.S., the U.K. and France in the past year since Pakistan was put on the "grey list", though Pakistani officials have frequently accused India of "dictating" terms in the action-taken reviews.
- The Asia Pacific Group of the FATF held a meeting in May, and according to the Pakistani newspaper The News, the country was found to have taken inadequate action in 18 of 27 areas.

- Pakistan was on the “grey list” of countries of risk between 2012 and 2015 as well.

French stance:

- On Monday, French Deputy Foreign Minister Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne met External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Minister of State V. Muraleedharan.
- Officials said the agenda included laying the groundwork for Mr. Modi’s visit to **France’s Biarritz in August to attend the G-7 summit** as a special invitee of President Emmanuel Macron.
- Mr. Lemoyne said counter-terrorism remained at the top of the India-France agenda.

4. PM seeks five-year road map for each Ministry:

Why in news?

In their first meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi after his re-election, Secretaries to the Government of India have been tasked with creating a five-year road map for each Ministry with well-defined targets.

Roadmap for development:

- The meeting, which took place at the Prime Minister’s residence, was also attended by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Home Minister Amit Shah, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Dr. Jitendra Singh.
- During the meeting, Cabinet Secretary P.K. Sinha tasked the sectoral groups of secretaries with preparing a five-year plan document for each Ministry, with well-defined targets and milestones.
- In addition, there is also a need to propose “a significant impactful decision” in each Ministry, for which approvals will be taken within 100 days, an official release said.
- Mr. Modi pointed out that each department had a role to play in making India a five-trillion-dollar economy.
- While asking each Ministry to focus on ‘ease of living’, the Prime Minister added that India’s progress in ‘Ease of Doing Business’ should reflect in greater facilitation for small businesses and entrepreneurs, an official release said.

5. Naik’s extradition entirely up to us, says Malaysia PM:

Why in news?

Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad said the country reserved the right to disallow extradition of Zakir Naik to India if he was not going to be accorded justice,

according to media reports.

On the question of fair trial:

- As reported by The Star Dr. Mohamad said the situation was the same with Australia not sending Sirul Azhar Umar back to Malaysia.
- Umar, a former bodyguard, was sentenced to death in 2015 for the murder of Mongolian model Altantuya Shaariibuu.
- We requested Australia to extradite Sirul, and they are afraid we are going to send him to the gallows, Dr. Mohamad was quoted as saying. He said Naik “in general feels that he is not going to get a fair trial [in India]”.
- The statement comes when the Enforcement Directorate is preparing to secure a non-bailable warrant against Naik on money laundering charges involving more than Rs. 193 crores.
- Based on the warrant, the ED can request the Interpol to issue a Red Notice against him and also approach the Malaysian authorities seeking his extradition.

6. No plan for President's Rule, says Governor:

Why in news?

West Bengal Governor Keshari Nath Tripathi, who met Home Minister Amit Shah said no discussion was held to impose President's Rule in the State.

No report submitted:

- Mr. Tripathi, who also met Prime Minister Narendra Modi, said he apprised them of the prevailing situation in the State, where more than a dozen people have been killed after the results of the Lok Sabha election were announced.
- I have apprised the Prime Minister and the Home Minister of the situation in West Bengal. I can't disclose details, he told presspersons here after meeting Mr. Shah.
- He said he had not given any report to the Centre.
- The Governor's visit to the national capital, part of a series of meeting Mr. Shah held with the Governors of various States came amid a war of words between the Centre and the West Bengal government on the issue of post-election violence in the State.

Advisory and rebuttal:

- Earlier, in an advisory to the State, the Home Ministry expressed “deep concern” over continuing violence in West Bengal, saying the “unabated violence” even after the Lok Sabha election, appeared to be a failure on part of the State government.
- The West Bengal government replied by saying there were a few “stray post-poll clashes” and the situation in the State was under control.

- Mr. Shah had a series of meeting with Governors of other States.

7. **Ryots sow seeds of defiance:**

Why in news?

Hundreds of farmers on Monday joined in, what they called, a '**civil disobedience**' movement to protest the Centre's indecisiveness in approving the next generation of genetically modified (GM) cotton.

Access to newest of technologies:

- As a mark of protest, farmer leader Lalit Patil-Bahale sowed the seeds of the 'illegal' herbicide tolerant (HT) Bt cotton and Bt Brinjal in his own field at Akot in Akola district of Maharashtra.
- The open defiance of law was organised by Shetkari Sanghatana (SS), a farmers' organisation and an advocate of open market in the field of agriculture.
- We should be getting the newest of technologies available in the market for agriculture, said Mr. Patil-Bahale.
- The issue has gained momentum in the wake of Haryana government accusing two farmers of illegally growing genetically modified brinjal and destroying their crops.
- The **outbreak of pink bollworm** in Maharashtra three years ago despite farmers using BG-2, Monsanto's second generational insecticidal technology for cotton, is being blamed by the SS on Indian government's ban on testing further enhanced version of the seed.

Threats to next generation of crops:

- The anti-GM crop activists slammed the farmers' body saying a small group of farmers is endangering the next generation of crops and citizens.
- One cannot go with the populist sentiment of a small mob of people who are speaking for the benefit of corporates. I may even call this group's action a sort of bio-terrorism," said Rajesh Krishnan, co-convener, Coalition for GM free India.
- The SS is however undeterred of the ramifications of their actions and firm on its stand that farmers must be given the choice of the seed.
- Farmers have been surreptitiously planting HTBt cotton for the past few years. By this act of satyagraha, we are now proudly coming forward to motivate more and more farmers to reject unreasonable restrictions on agriculture," said Mr Patil-Bahale.

Support for GM crops:

- A dozen GM crops like maize, soya, cotton have been planted across the world, and millions of people and livestock have been eating these for the past two decades.

- There is no evidence of any adverse health impact on either humans or animals.
- Contrary to claims that GM is polluting the environment, it's, in reality, reducing the use of pesticides that harm many beneficial insects.
- GM is actually enhancing biodiversity, and by lowering crop losses it is reducing the need of bringing more land under agriculture.
- SS argues that nowhere has it been proven that the GM crop increase productivity neither is it widely used across the globe.
- There have been hundreds of studies and reports following which decision to ban tests of GM crops was taken in India.
- The Swaminathan report on agro-biodiversity in 2003 said GM crops are only to be used where there are no viable alternatives.

Anti-GM groups stand:

- Among the other two documents which anti-GM groups showcase are, the report of expert committee set up by the Supreme Court which talked about problems with GM crops and steps to be taken and second is Parliamentary standing committee which came up with two reports talking about bio-safety law in the country and why no GM crops should be permitted even in experiments.
- While the anti-GM groups feel that the 'stunt' was to pressurise the central government, the SS says the issue is more about giving farmers the choice than political.
- We aren't against regulations, but those have to be time framed and reasonable for farmers. We cannot stop our research for years under pressure from environmentalists," said Mr. Patil-Bahale.

8. Iran has accelerated uranium enrichment:

Why in news?

Iran has followed through on a threat to accelerate its production of enriched uranium, the head of the UN atomic watchdog said, departing from his usual guarded language to say he was worried about increasing tension.

Recent developments:

- Recent weeks have seen U.S.-Iranian confrontation sharply increase, a year after Washington abandoned an agreement between Iran and world powers to curb Tehran's nuclear programme in exchange for the lifting of international financial sanctions.
- Washington tightened sanctions from the start of May, ordering all countries and companies to halt all imports of Iranian oil or be banished from the global financial system.
- It has also begun discussing military confrontation, dispatching extra troops to the region to counter what it describes as Iranian threats.

- Iran has responded with a threat to increase its enrichment of uranium, saying it was up to Europeans who still support the nuclear deal to save it by finding ways to ensure Tehran receives the economic benefits it was promised.

IAEI Report:

- IAEA chief Yukiya Amano, whose agency is responsible for monitoring Iranian compliance with the nuclear deal, said Iran was now producing more enriched uranium than before, but it was not clear when it might reach stockpile limits set in the pact.
- Iran said last month it was still abiding by the deal but would quadruple its production of enriched uranium, a move that could take it out of compliance if stockpiles rise too far. It demanded that European countries do more to shield it from sanctions.
- On Monday, Germany's Foreign Minister Heiko Maas became the most senior Western official to visit Iran since the new war of words erupted last month between Washington and Tehran.
- The situation in the region here is highly explosive and extremely serious," Mr. Maas told a news conference alongside Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif.

Uncertainty over the deal:

- Mr. Zarif blamed the U.S. for the escalation "Reducing tension is only possible through stopping the economic war by America," he said. "Those who wage such wars cannot expect to remain safe."
- He said talks with Mr. Maas were "frank and serious". But he added: "Tehran will cooperate with EU signatories of the deal to save it.
- IAEA chief Amano said he was "worried about increasing tensions over the Iranian nuclear issue. He hoped that ways can be found to reduce the current tensions through dialogue.
- It is essential that Iran fully implements its nuclear-related commitments under the deal.
- Washington's European allies opposed its decision last year to abandon the nuclear deal.
- They have promised to help Iran find other ways to trade, though with no success so far.
- All major European companies that had announced plans to invest in Iran have since called them off for fear of U.S. punishment.
- Iran says the Europeans have not done enough to provide it with alternative ways to trade. Maas acknowledged limits to how much help the European countries can provide.

Efforts from European partners:

- France, Britain and Germany have set up a special-purpose vehicle called Instex, designed to allow payments to Iran that would legally bypass sanctions. It has yet

to be launched.

- This is an instrument of a new kind, so it's not straightforward to operationalise it, Maas told reporters.
- But all the formal requirements are in place now, and so I'm assuming we'll be ready to use it in the foreseeable future.
- Washington has denounced the European plans. Diplomats say the system is unlikely to have much impact on commercial trade with Iran but could be used for humanitarian transactions that are permitted under U.S. sanctions.
- Washington says the nuclear deal should be expanded to cover other issues including Iran's missile programme and its role in wars in the region.
- European countries say they share those concerns, although they argue that it would be harder to address them without the nuclear deal in place.
- Iran strongly opposes any effort to expand negotiations to cover other issues. Mousavi said as much: The EU is not in a position to question Iran's issues beyond the nuclear deal.

9. **Donate excess food, says Health Ministry:**

Why in news?

What should restaurants do with their extra food? The Union Health Ministry suggests donating excess food and turning wet waste into compost" as the way forward to sustainable development.

zero food wastage:

- The Ministry is now advocating and promoting a zero-food wastage campaign in restaurants.
- Display a clear message, which conveys this to all customers and staff members. Excess food must be distributed among the poor and kitchen wet waste must be turned into compost, says the Ministry.
- The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) estimates that, **every year, a third of food produced does not even reach the table.**
- The UN estimates nearly 40% of the food produced in India is wasted or lost, and adds that food wastage in India is happening at every level from harvesting, transporting and processing to packaging and consuming.
- Weddings, events, restaurants, hostels and houses are a major source of wastage of cooked food, said a senior Health Ministry official.
- Union Health Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan advocating for the recently launched '**Eat Right**' campaign noted that food is everyone's responsibility.

10. **MoSPI proposes to use big data analytical tools to improve official statistics:**

Why in news?

The statistics ministry said that it proposes to set up a '**National Data Warehouse**' with a view to leveraging big data analytical tools to further improve the quality of macro-economic aggregates.

Quality statistics:

- Efforts are also on to evolve a legislative framework under which the **National Statistical Commission** (NSC) may function with independence and give holistic guidance for improving the **national statistical system**, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) said.
- In its release, the Ministry further said as far as the statistical reforms are concerned, it is important to note that system reforms are an ongoing process and are necessary for ensuring responsiveness to the changing needs of society.
- Over a period of time, there have been increasing demands on the statistical system for the production of relevant and quality statistics.
- The Ministry has been accommodating these demands by optimising the available resources and use of technology, it said.
- As in any system, it further said, the advent of technology necessitates reforms in statistical processes and products with an aim to synergise the existing resources so that the system remains responsive.
- The recent step for the **merger of CSO and NSSO** was aimed at leveraging the strengths of the two organisations so that it can meet the increasing demands, MoSPI said.

Criticism:

- MoSPI has been criticised in some sections for the quality of macro-economic data.
- The Ministry said revision in GDP estimates occur when data coverage from administrative sources improves over time and these improvements get well documented.
- Consequently, the initial estimates of GDP tend to be conservative.
- To improve this, the release said it would require concomitant changes in the sectoral data flows and associated regulatory framework in the data source agencies to facilitate the use of more macro modelling techniques.
- The Ministry is also proposing to establish a National Data Warehouse on Official Statistics, where technology will be leveraged for using big data analytical tools for further improving the quality of macro-economic aggregates, it said.

11. **SEBI mulls norms to reward whistle-blowers:**

Why in news?

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has proposed establishing a framework to reward individuals who bring forward instances of violations of insider trading norms while at the same time protecting such persons from victimisation in the form of demotion or termination of job.

Reward for Information:

- It is desirable and prudent that SEBI considers instituting a process that enables timely reporting of instances of insider trading violations and also provide for grant of reward with adequate checks and balances that could incentivise timely reporting of information relating to insider trading to SEBI at the first available opportunity,” stated the discussion paper released by SEBI.
- The capital markets regulator has proposed that entities that come forward with such information will have to disclose the source of information and give an undertaking that such information has not been sourced from any regulator.
- Further, the regulator has proposed that if such information leads to a final order by SEBI with a minimum disgorgement of Rs. 5 crores, then a monetary award of 10% of the money collected by SEBI, subject to a cap of Rs. 1 crore, can be given to the informant.
- Further, the reward will be paid from the **Investor Protection and Education Fund (IPEF)**. SEBI also plans to establish an Office of Informant Protection, which will be independent of the investigation and inspection wings of the regulatory body.

Anonymous complaint:

- While the informant would be required to disclose his or her identity at the time of submission of the complaint in the official format, **Voluntary Information Disclosure Form**, in SEBI’s parlance – an anonymous complaint can also be submitted through an authorised representative who is a practising advocate.
- To protect such complainants against victimisation, the regulator has proposed that all listed companies and intermediaries would include in their **code of conduct**, provisions to ensure that such individuals are not “discharged, terminated, demoted, suspended, threatened, harassed, or discriminated against, directly or indirectly.
- While SEBI has also proposed an amnesty for such individuals, it has also stated that if a complaint is found to be frivolous, the regulator can initiate actions against the informant.

12. Govt. cautioned against rushing into electric vehicles:

Why in news

A day after industry bodies SIAM and CII called for a practical approach in formulating electric vehicle-related policies, two-wheeler makers Bajaj Auto and TVS Motor

“unrealistic” and “ill-timed” decisions will derail auto manufacturing in the country.

Reaction from the manufacturers:

- The reactions come amid reports that the **government plans** to ban sale of internal combustion engine (ICE) three-wheelers by 2023 along with sales of less than 150 cc two-wheelers by 2025.
- I have three execution related concern. First that it may be impractical to target such a scale when none of the stakeholders currently possess any meaningful experience with any of the pieces of the EV puzzle,” said Rajiv Bajaj, MD, Bajaj Auto. He added that it is “ill-timed” to target a date so close to BS-VI implementation.
- And finally, to target two and three-wheelers but not cars etc. makes it an incomplete initiative,” he said.

Middle path:

- Mr. Bajaj suggested that an appropriate middle path may be put in place in the first phase to target such a changeover through corporate average fuel efficiency norms and electric vehicles for all vehicle categories from a particular date such as 2023 or 2025 starting with most-polluted cities.
- Automakers everywhere were supportive of the overall goal of introducing electric vehicles (EV) and as a result, have been doing serious development work to ensure a mass market EV products, while adding that supporting infrastructure for charging also needs to be as robust as conventional fuel options.
- The auto industry globally is still a long way away from all of this, as is India.
- To force an unrealistic deadline for mass adoption of electric two and three-wheelers will not just create consumer discontent, it risks derailing auto manufacturing in India that supports four million jobs.
- On Sunday, SIAM president Rajan Wadhera warned that “such unrealistic expectations and policies would not only adversely affect the world number one two/three-wheeler industry, but may not help in making EVs acceptable to the customer and the market
- The government’s EV ambition needs to be tempered with a practical approach and what is possible without needlessly disrupting the automotive industry,” Mr. Wadhera, who is also president of automotive sector at M&M said.