



# PIB, THE HINDU Newspaper and Editorial

## Current Affairs- 18th June

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### 1. **West Bengal doctors withdraw strike:**

#### **Why in news?**

Junior doctors in West Bengal called off their strike evening ending the seven-day standoff between them and the State government over lack of security at the workplace.

#### **Truce at the end:**

- The truce was achieved following a two-hour meeting with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who assured them of improved security.
- Doctors in the State have been protesting since Tuesday last against the assault on two junior doctors at NRS Hospital in Kolkata by the relatives of a patient who died at the hospital.
- Representatives from medical colleges held a meeting with Ms. Banerjee at the State Secretariat, with the Chief Minister agreeing to live coverage of the talks.

#### **Visits injured doctor:**

- The Chief Minister has asked the police to appoint nodal officers for security of doctors at all government hospitals and said no doctor has been booked by the government.
- Also the entry and exit gates [of hospitals] will be manned properly; CCTV cameras will be made functional. The police will be stationed in good numbers at the hospitals. A nodal officer will have all the information and coordinate with the doctors when they approach him with queries.
- She added that every hospital should have a **functional grievance cell** that should be properly visible and manned round the clock.
- But it is important too to educate the people that the doctors who are under pressure cannot be attacked. We need to trigger mass awareness programmes and [I] would ask the [Health] Department to look into this, the Chief Minister said.
- The representatives of the joint forum of junior doctors also sought exemplary punishment for those involved in the assault on doctors at the NRS Medical College and Hospital on June 11.

- Ms. Banerjee instructed the officials present to give “priority” to the safety issues of the doctors.
- At the meeting doctors highlighted that “the political leaders often build up pressure” to admit patients which escalates the crisis. To which the Chief Minister said that “proper action has to be initiated to restrict such activities by the political leaders.”

## 2. **SC to hear plea on doctors’ safety:**

### **Why in news?**

The Supreme Court agreed to hear a plea seeking to depute **government-appointed uniformed security personnel** at all government hospitals across the country for ensuring the safety and security of doctors.

### **Security Concerns:**

- A vacation Bench of Justices Deepak Gupta and Surya Kant posted the hearing of the petition, filed by advocate Alakh Alok Srivastava in the wake of a nation-wide protest by doctors against violence against them.
- Mr. Srivastava stated that the strike was called by West Bengal doctors in protest against the assault on a junior doctor at NRS Hospital in Kolkata by relatives of a patient who died in the hospital.
- Due to the protests, healthcare services in the country have been badly disrupted and many people are dying because of absence of doctors.
- He said that as per a study conducted by the IMA, more than 75% of doctors across the country had faced some form of violence.
- This study concluded that 50% violent incidents took place in the intensive care units of hospitals and in 70% of the cases, the relatives of the patients were involved.
- Mr. Srivastava sought a direction to the government to formulate guidelines to ensure the safety of doctors. He sought the “strictest legal and penal action against the attackers of junior doctors at NRS Medical College”.

## 3. **10 injured as militants trigger IED blast again in Pulwama:**

### **Why in news?**

Eight Army personnel and two civilians were injured when militants triggered an improvised explosive device (IED) fitted in a vehicle near an Army patrol in the militancy-hit Pulwama district of south Kashmir.

### **Accident:**

- They said the multi-vehicle patrol of the 44 Rashtriya Rifles was moving on the Arihal-Pulwama road when the IED was detonated, injuring the personnel travelling in a bullet-and-mine-proof Casper vehicle.
- The site of the IED blast is 27 km from the area where a convoy of vehicles carrying security personnel on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway was attacked by a suicide bomber on February 14 in which 40 CRPF personnel were killed.

### **Major killed:**

- In another incident, an Army officer and a militant were killed during an encounter in Anantnag.
- A Srinagar-based police spokesman said Major Ketan Sharma, 32, from Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, was injured when a search party of the security forces encircled hiding militants and came under “heavy fire” at Badoora village in Anantnag’s Achabal area in the morning.
- Sharma was evacuated to a hospital, where he succumbed to his injuries, said the police.
- Two other Army officials, including Major Rahul Verma, suffered injuries in the day-long exchange of fire between the militants and the security forces in Anantnag.
- One militant was killed in the ongoing operation. His body was retrieved and his identity and affiliation are being ascertained, said the police.
- Referring to the IED blast, Army spokesman Colonel Rajesh Kalia said it was “a failed attempt” to attack the mobile vehicle patrol of the 44 Rashtriya Rifles. “Alertness of the patrol party helped to minimise the damage,” said the spokesman.
- The police spokesman confirmed that six soldiers were injured in the IED blast, which inflicted severe damage on the Army vehicle.

### **Pakistan Intelligence:**

- The attack on the Army vehicle comes days after Pakistan intelligence agencies reportedly shared information on the Ansar Ghazwat-ul-Hind’s plans to carry out a major attack using a vehicle to “avenge” its chief Zakir Musa in Pulwama on May 24.
- The police spokesman confirmed that six soldiers were injured in the IED blast, which inflicted severe damage on the Army vehicle. Two civilians also suffered injuries and they were all evacuated to hospital, said the police.
- The Army spokesman said the soldiers’ injuries were minor. The police cordoned off the area and launched an operation to nab the militants.
- It comes days after Pakistan intelligence agencies reportedly shared information on the Ansar Ghazwat-ul-Hind’s plans to carry out a major attack using a vehicle to “avenge” its chief Zakir Musa in Pulwama on May 24.

#### 4. Iran to breach uranium stockpile limit:

##### Why in news?

Iran said that it would surpass from June 27 its uranium stockpile limit set under the nuclear deal with world powers, turning up the pressure after the U.S. walked away from the pact last year.

- Today, the countdown to pass the 300-kg reserve of enriched uranium has started and in 10 days' time we will pass this limit," atomic energy organisation spokesman Behrouz Kamalvandi said.
- The decision will be reversed once other parties live up to their commitments, he said.

#### 5. India to host UN meet on land degradation:

##### Why in news?

India for the first time will host the 14th session of the Conference of Parties (COP-14) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in September.

##### UNCCD:

Established in 1994, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is the **sole legally binding international agreement** linking environment and development to sustainable land management. The Convention addresses specifically **the arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas**, known as the **drylands**, where some of the most vulnerable ecosystems and peoples can be found.

The new **UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework** is the most comprehensive global commitment to achieve **Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN)** in order to restore the productivity of vast expanses of degraded land, improve the livelihoods of more than 1.3 billion people, and reduce the impacts of drought on vulnerable populations to build. The Convention's 197 parties work together to improve the living conditions for people in drylands, to maintain and restore land and soil productivity, and to mitigate the effects of drought. The UNCCD is particularly committed to a **bottom-up approach**, encouraging the participation of local people in combating desertification and land degradation. The UNCCD secretariat facilitates cooperation between developed and developing countries, particularly around knowledge and technology transfer for sustainable land management.

As the dynamics of land, climate and biodiversity are intimately connected, the UNCCD collaborates closely with the **other two Rio Conventions**; the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), to meet these complex challenges with an integrated approach and the best possible use of natural resources.

### **New Project: Building capacity:**

- It will see participation from at least 5,000 delegates from nearly 197 countries and will be held between September 2 and 14 in Delhi, Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar said.
- Ahead of the COP-14, Mr. Javadekar launched a flagship project, part of a larger international initiative called the **Bonn Challenge**, to enhance India's capacity for **forest landscape restoration** (FLR).
- It will be implemented during a pilot phase of three-and-a-half years in Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Nagaland and Karnataka.
- The project will aim to develop and adapt the best practices and monitoring protocols for the country, and build capacity within the five pilot States.
- This will eventually be scaled up across the country.

### **Land degradation:**

- India faces a severe problem of land degradation, or soil becoming unfit for cultivation. A 2016 report by the Indian Space Research Organisation found that **about 29% of India's land** (in 2011-13) was degraded, this being a 0.57% increase from 2003-05.
- At the previous edition of the COP, India had committed to restore 13 million hectares of degraded and deforested land by the year 2020, and an additional 8 million hectares by 2030.

### **Bonn Challenge:**

- The Bonn Challenge is a global effort to **bring 150 million hectares of the world's deforested and degraded land under restoration by 2020**, and 350 million hectares by 2030.
- The United Nations has **three major Conventions**: The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).
- Established in 1994, the UNCCD is the only legally binding international agreement linking environment and development issues to the land agenda.

### **6. Conrad Sangma wants Shillong to be Presidential retreat:**

### **Why in news?**

The President has two places of stay other than the Rashtrapati Bhavan the 1895 Retreat Building at Mashorba, Shimla, and the Rashtrapati Nilayam at Bolarum, Hyderabad.



- If Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma has his way, the President could have a third retreat in Shillong.
- Mr. Sangma said that he submitted a memorandum to Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently with a list of suggestions, including the setting up of a retreat for the President in Shillong.
- As the erstwhile capital of the north-eastern region, Shillong would be an ideal place for the President to stay for two weeks annually, he said.
- The President's stay, he said, would send out a strong message of inclusiveness and assure the region of the importance the Union government accords to it.

### **Eight-lane highway:**

- The CM also suggested an eight-lane highway from Guwahati, Assam, to the Chittagong port in Bangladesh, through Meghalaya, for promoting exports.
- The north-eastern region accounts for 1% of India's exports because of geographical constraints.
- The nearest port, in Kolkata, is more than 1,000 km from Guwahati. About 600 km of a highway to Chittagong would benefit the region," he said.

## **7. India to actively curb 'conflict' diamonds:**

### **Why in news?**

India has committed to play an active role to curb the circulation of '**conflict diamonds**' or '**blood diamonds**' in the international market by further strengthening the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS).

### **Making Conflict free:**

- Even a single conflict diamond is one too many. India will play an active role in the evolution and transformation of the Kimberley Process (KP) and in the transition from conflict diamonds to peace diamonds, Alok Vardhan Chaturvedi, India KP Chair and Director General, Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), said at the opening session of the Kimberley Process Intersessional Meeting 2019.
- The 4Cs [cut, clarity, colour and carat] of diamond may soon be expanded to 5Cs with the fifth C being 'conflict-free'. And the 5Ps of diamond marketing [precious, popular, prestige, priceless] will include 'peace' diamonds," Mr. Chaturvedi said.

### **Kimberley Process:**

- KPCS Intersessional Meeting is an annual mid-year event of KPCS, which unites administrations, civil societies and diamond industry to **reduce the flow of conflict diamonds used to finance wars against governments** around the world, mostly in African countries. India is the KP chair for 2019.
- Fifty-five members representing 82 countries, including the U.S., Russia,

European Union, Africa, Canada, China, Israel, Japan, Singapore, Australia, UAE, New Zealand and South Africa, are participating in the four-day conference to deliberate on the issue and find a way forward. India, supported by the Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC), is hosting this event for the first time.

- Mr. Chaturvedi said that 'blood' or 'conflict' diamonds had been almost excluded from global trade and now account for only 2%. Every rough diamond is accompanied by a certificate confirming its non-conflict origin, and export-import procedures in most of the countries are now subject to rigorous control.
- Noting that the Kimberley Process (KP) had improved the lives of most people dependent on the industry, he said that India was committed to making this process stronger.

#### 8. **Financial stability is a key theme for monetary policy:**

##### **Why in news?**

With the liquidity crisis of non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) threatening to spillover to other sectors, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor Shaktikanta Das has highlighted the importance of the central bank's role to maintain financial stability.

##### **Maintaining financial stability:**

- Mr. Das said while there is no explicit mandate of the monetary policy to maintain financial stability, that is the underlying theme.
- He further said **price stability, which is the explicit mandate of the RBI's monetary policy**, may not be sufficient for financial stability.
- Post the global financial crisis, it has been recognised that price stability may not be sufficient for financial stability and therefore financial stability has emerged as another key consideration for monetary policy, though the jury is still out as to whether it should be added as an explicit objective of monetary policy," he said.
- The fact remains that though the **focus of monetary policy is mainly on inflation and growth**, the underlying theme has always been financial stability.
- Referring to the challenges faced by the **shadow banks**, Mr. Das reiterated that the RBI would not hesitate to take the required steps to maintain financial stability.
- Commenting on the '**primary objective of the monetary policy**' as per the amendment in the RBI Act in May 2016, Mr. Das said, In a flexible inflation targeting framework, a delicate balance needs to be maintained between inflation and growth objectives.
- He said the endeavour of RBI is to ensure price stability under the flexible inflation targeting regime and simultaneously focus on growth when inflation is under control.
- In 2019, the RBI reduced the key interest rate, or repo rate, by 75 bps to 5.75% to boost economic growth, which fell to 5.8% in the January-March 2019 quarter,

dragging down the full year growth to a five-year low of 6.8%

- He observed that in the recent period, there had been a loss of speed in the second half of 2018-19 as some drivers of growth, notably investment and exports, had slowed down. "On the supply side, activity in agriculture and manufacturing moderated sharply," he added.

## 9. **Litchi link with acute encephalitis syndrome:**

### **Why in news?**

The death of over 90 children in about a month in Muzaffarpur district of north Bihar due to low blood sugar level could have easily been prevented with some foresight and early care.

### **Litchi Factor:**

- Six years ago, a two-member team invited by the State government suspected that a toxin (methylenecyclopropylglycine, MCPG, also known as **hypoglycin A**) naturally present in litchi fruit was responsible for the mysterious deaths; a large Indo-U.S team confirmed it in 2017.
- The two-member team found that **undernourished children** who ate the fruit during the day and went to bed on an empty stomach presented with serious illness early the next morning.
- In 2014, the team saved 74% of sick children through a simple intervention infusing 10% dextrose within four hours of the onset of illness.
- The recommended **prevention strategy** making sure that no child goes to bed without eating a meal adopted from 2015 ensured a sharp drop in the number of children falling sick.
- It is appalling that this year the government failed to raise awareness on this strategy. Worse, some doctors came up with alternative explanations for the illness and even pointed to the heat wave.

### **Causes of AES:**

- While the most common causes of acute encephalitis syndrome are traced to a bacteria or a virus and it takes at least a few days before presenting serious symptoms and deaths, the toxin in litchi causes serious problems overnight.
- While well-nourished children who eat the fruit remain unaffected even if they go to bed on an empty stomach, the under-nourished ones are at grave risk.
- **Blood glucose falls sharply** causing severe **brain malfunction** (encephalopathy), leading to seizures and coma, and death in many cases.
- This is because under-nourished children lack sufficient glucose reserve in the form of glycogen and the production of glucose from **non-carbohydrate source** is blocked midway leading to low blood sugar level.
- This causes serious brain function derangement and seizures.



### Treatment:

- While 5% dextrose infusion serves the purpose in cases of general low blood sugar, children suffering from acute hypoglycaemic encephalopathy can be saved only by infusing 10% dextrose within four hours of illness onset.
- Recovery is rapid and complete if 10% dextrose is infused within the golden hours.
- Infusing a higher concentration of dextrose is necessary to completely stop the attempt by the body to produce glucose from non-carbohydrate source.
- If encephalopathy was indeed the cause of death, this simple medical intervention could have saved many lives.
- Dextrose infusion could have been done even as children were being transported to hospitals in ambulances. The failures were at the stages of both prevention and care.

### 10. **EU leaders to debate push for zero emissions by 2050:**

#### Why in news?

EU leaders will this week discuss setting a target of **zero net greenhouse gas emissions** by 2050, European officials said, following elections that highlighted climate change fears.

#### Towards climate neutrality:

- European Union leaders meeting in Brussels will debate the 2050 target of “**climate neutrality**” that the environmental group WWF says now has the support of 16 of the EU’s 28 countries.
- We urgently need to step up our action to manage this existential threat, a draft of the EU’s strategic agenda for the next six years says.
- The EU must lead the way, by engaging in an in-depth transformation of its own economy and society to achieve climate neutrality, according to the draft.
- The draft contained a footnote, saying the wording may be adjusted to reflect the results of the summit debate, which an EU source said would focus on the 2050 target.
- The source said that a number of EU countries want more debate on financing the shift from an economy running on fossil fuels, especially those in eastern Europe, to one driven by clean energy.
- The source, speaking anonymously, that “I’m sure everyone will agree on this target, but only in December,” when the leaders hold their annual year-end summit.
- The growing stress on climate action comes after May 23-26 elections to the European Parliament where Green parties made substantial gains.
- Spurred by a wave of student strikes, voters in many countries highlighted climate concerns and the Parliament’s main political blocs for the first time

adopted climate action as a rallying cry.

#### **Sixteen on board:**

- The World Wildlife Fund said Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Britain are “on board” for the 2050 goal.
- The British government last week presented draft legislation to reduce carbon emissions to net zero by 2050
- The WWF said Austria and Ireland appeared increasingly likely to support the target. Still uncertain or hesitant, it added, are Belgium, Croatia, Estonia, Lithuania and Slovakia, though they are “unlikely to block” it.
- It said Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Bulgaria remain “strongly opposed,” but Hungary and Romania could overcome opposition to do a deal.
- Under the 2015 Paris climate change treaty, the EU pledged to reduce its carbon emissions by 40% below 1990 levels by 2030.

#### **11. Virtual biopsy device can non-invasively detect skin tumours:**

##### **Why in news?**

Scientists have developed a ‘virtual biopsy’ device that can quickly and non-invasively determine whether a skin tumour is cancerous and needs to be removed surgically.

##### **Easy and Painless:**

- Using sound vibrations and pulses of near-infrared light, the device can determine a skin lesion’s depth and potential malignancy without using a scalpel, according to the researchers from a Rutgers University in the U.S.
- The ability to analyse a skin tumour non-invasively could make biopsies much less risky and distressing to patients.
- Currently, physicians who perform surgical biopsies often do not know the extent of a lesion and whether it will be necessary to refer the patient to a specialist for extensive tissue removal or plastic surgery until surgery has already begun.
- The first-of-its-kind experimental procedure, called vibrational optical coherence tomography (VOCT), creates a 3D map of the lesion’s width and depth under the skin with a tiny laser diode.
- The procedure also makes use of soundwaves to test the lesion’s density and stiffness since cancer cells are stiffer than healthy cells.

#### **12. Bitcoin use causing huge CO2 emissions:**

##### **Why in news?**

The use of cryptocurrency Bitcoin emits 22 megatonnes of carbon dioxide annually, comparable to the emissions of cities such as Las Vegas and Vienna, says a study.

**Carbon Footprint:**

- Researchers in Germany carried out the most detailed calculation of the carbon footprint of the Bitcoin system to date. For a Bitcoin transfer to be executed and validated, a mathematical puzzle must be solved by an arbitrary computer in the global Bitcoin network.
- The network, which anyone can join, rewards the puzzle solvers in Bitcoin.
- The computing capacity used in this process — known as Bitcoin mining — has increased rapidly in recent years.
- Statistics show that it quadrupled in 2018 alone.
- Consequently, the Bitcoin boom raises the question of whether the cryptocurrency is imposing an additional burden on the climate.

