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Current Affairs

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Outer Space Treaty

- The Outer Space Treaty, formally the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, is a treaty that forms the basis of international space law.
- The treaty was opened for signature in the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union on 27 January 1967, and entered into force on 10 October 1967. As of February 2019, 108 countries are parties to the treaty, while another 23 have signed the treaty but have not completed ratification.
- In addition, Taiwan, which is currently recognized by 16 UN member states, ratified the treaty prior to the United Nations General Assembly's vote to transfer China's seat to the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1971.
- The Outer Space Treaty does not ban military activities within space or the weaponization of space, with the exception of the placement of weapons of mass destruction in space.

Key points

- The Outer Space Treaty represents the basic legal framework of international space law. Among its principles, it bars states party to the treaty from placing weapons of mass destruction in Earth orbit, installing them on the Moon or any other celestial body, or otherwise stationing them in outer space.
- It exclusively limits the use of the Moon and other celestial bodies to peaceful purposes and expressly prohibits their use for testing weapons of any kind, conducting military maneuvers, or establishing

military bases, installations, and fortifications (Article IV).

- However, the treaty does not prohibit the placement of conventional weapons in orbit and thus some highly destructive attack strategies such as kinetic bombardment are still potentially allowable.
- The treaty also states that the exploration of outer space shall be done to benefit all countries and that space shall be free for exploration and use by all the States.
- The treaty explicitly forbids any government to claim a celestial resource such as the Moon or a planet. Article II of the treaty states that "outer space, including the Moon and other celestial bodies, is not subject to national appropriation by claim of sovereignty, by means of use or occupation, or by any other means."
- However, the State that launches a space object retains jurisdiction and control over that object. The State is also liable for damages caused by its space object.

Responsibility for activities in space

- Article VI of the Outer Space Treaty deals with international responsibility, stating that "the activities of non-governmental entities in outer space, including the Moon and other celestial bodies, shall require authorization and continuing supervision by the appropriate State Party to the Treaty" and that States Parties shall bear international responsibility for national space activities whether carried out by governmental or non-governmental entities.
 - As a result of discussions arising from Project West Ford in 1963, a consultation clause was included in Article IX of the Outer Space Treaty: "A State Party to the Treaty which has reason to believe that an activity or experiment planned by another State Party in outer space, including the Moon and other celestial bodies, would cause potentially harmful interference with activities in the peaceful exploration and use of outer space, including the Moon and other celestial bodies, may request consultation concerning the activity or experiment."
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India Enters Elite Space Wars Club

Background:

- On March 27, 2019 India carried out its maiden ASAT (Anti-Satellite Test) off the coast of Odisha titled Mission Shakti. India's Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) developed missile successfully engaged an Indian orbiting live target satellite in Low Earth Orbit (LEO) in a 'Hit to Kill' mode covering a distance of 300 km to engage within 3 minutes.
- The target satellite is likely to be Microsat-r (2019-006A), a 740 kg Indian military satellite launched two months earlier on 24 January 2019 on PLSV-C44 from Satish Dhawan Space Centre with the test taking place near 5:40 UT.
- With this maiden test, India has entered the elite group of nations capable of Next Generation Space Wars making it the fourth in the club after USA, Russia and China.

Importance:

- The successful test also provides a sign of India's Ballistic Missile Shield Defence Program loud and clear to its friends and foes.
- India's ASAT test does not violate any international law or treaty and the choice of the lower atmosphere for conduction ensured no space debris as any remnants will re-enter the atmosphere and burn up within weeks unlike China's 2007 ASAT test whose debris harmed other satellites and will take decades to clear.
- ASAT systems can render nuclear weapons useless by destroying the satellites that are used to identify targets, spy, plan troop movements etc.
- Balakot suggested a paradigm shift in India's national security doctrine and the ASAT test is in sync with India's changed stance from soft deterrence to hard deterrence.
- Incidental developments, improved target ranges and better capabilities will inevitably follow to create an effective Indian space fighting mechanism capable of offensive, counter-offensive and defensive measures that include taking down ICBM's in space.

- A successful demonstration of India's ASAT capability was mandatory to enhance the credibility of India's nuclear deterrence in context of China and the growing Sino-Pak nexus.
- An Outer Space Treaty was signed in 1967 but is currently irrelevant as it focused on weapons that could be fired at the earth from space. Thus, ASAT systems find no mention in the 1967 treaty which resulted in USA, Russia and China conducting multiple ASAT tests to weaponize space on their terms.
- In the process, these countries have contributed to creating tremendous space debris leading to congestion in their quest of the militarization of the final frontier. As satellites are essential for civilian use: TV signals, in-flight communications, GPS, climate monitoring and military use; it is only a matter of time before more countries conduct ASAT tests.
- This will certainly mean the creation of a new Space Treaty where the first movers will do their utmost to frame unfair laws to ensure no new entrants are allowed entry.
- India was at the receiving end of this unfair treatment after Pokhran II as it conducted its test after NSG was signed whose membership eludes it to this day.
- This timely testing before the creation of any such regime guarantees India a place at the high table which is vital for the security and strategic interests of the world's largest democracy.
- While India's ASAT test was conducted in 2019, USA conducted its first successful test in 1959, USSR from 1963-71 and declared its system operational in 1973 while China conducted its first test in 2007 amidst total secrecy.
- With Russia getting weaker post USSR fall in 91 and the USA emerging as the sole superpower; USA is the current undisputed leader of space technology with its systems probably outclassing Russia and China collectively.
- With years of perfection and unlimited resources, USA has enjoyed an unfair advantage over its opponents in satellite technology in the Gulf Wars and current War on Terror.
- Its drone warfare is also courtesy its high precision satellites. USA relies on satellites for 70-80% of its intelligence gathering and 80% of its communication needs.
- As China's PLA has not fought a real war in a long time and lacks battle-ready credibility and its Military-Industrial Complex is nowhere

close or tested in real time unlike USA; China has chosen to adopt asymmetrical space warfare, trade deficits and propaganda against the US to gain advantage.

- Some of the weapons China has developed are navigation satellite jammers to disrupt GPS, laser weapons to disable US spy satellites, blinding sensitive satellite surveillance devices and preventing spy photography when over China along with direct ascent anti-satellite missiles, co-orbital anti-satellites systems, computer network operations, ground based satellite jammers and direct energy weapons.
- These weapons systems include a satellite armed with an explosive weapon, fragmentation device, kinetic energy weapon, laser, radio frequency weapons, jammers or robotic arms etc. Chinese ASAT capabilities now include Low, Medium and High Earth Orbit satellites.
- For India, China's ASAT systems present a definite risk. China's proliferation is an open secret and here the Sino-Pak nexus directly comes into play.
- China has always carried out proxy war via Pakistan and other actors while maintaining a façade of a harmonious and peace loving neighbour with India. China has helped Pakistan launch its advanced communication satellite Paksat-1R, provided expertise in satellite building and its Beidou navigation network gives Pakistan a GPS version with a military accuracy of 10cm. It is not farfetched for China to proliferate ASAT technology to Pakistan to target India.

Cold War 2.0:

- Geopolitically, we are living in very interesting times. Cold War 2.0 between USA and China is brewing. India and China are neighbours and India's arch-enemy and neighbour Pakistan is almost a Chinese colony.
- Thus, in the impending Cold War, per Chanakya's Arthashastra of your enemy's enemy is your friend; USA and India become natural allies.
- This is interesting because India has historically aligned with USSR, now Russia who was USA's counter pole in Cold War 1.0. Strength always respects strength and India's growing international stature, diplomatic clout and goodwill has reaped handsome dividends.

- After Pokhran II, India was subjected to sanctions by USA; today post its maiden ASAT, India has received subtle endorsement from it and a guarded response from China.
- Russia's silence and the absence of any acknowledgements or congratulations are very interesting. Even after Balakot, Russia did not acknowledge India's actions which have undoubtedly raised a question mark furthering the Sino-Russia nexus which we will undeniably see more of in Cold War 2.0.
- Fully aware of space as the final frontier in Next Generation Warfare, Russia and China have been trying to push USA into the negotiation of an international treaty for years to demilitarize space which would effectively take away the advantages USA currently enjoys behind the façade of international responsibility.
- Russia and China have much to lose if the United States were to pursue the space weapons programs laid out in its military planning documents.
- Russia and China have pushed for years for a PAROS treaty (Treaty on the Prevention of Arms Race in Outer Space). PAROS calls for states, especially those with space capabilities to preserve space for peaceful uses and prevent the use of space weapons and the development of space-weapon technology and technology related to so-called missile defence.
- It also prevents any nation from gaining a further military advantage in outer space. USA has argued that PAROS is not the most relevant term or treaty to pursue and it seeks to "prohibit or limit access to or use of space" and is impossible to enforce as "any object orbiting or transiting through space can be a weapon if that object is intentionally placed onto a collision course with another space object".
- In 2014, the Russian and Chinese governments submitted a new version of a draft treaty on the prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space Treaty (PPWT) which said, "We consider a legally binding ban on placement of weapons in outer space as one of the most important instruments of strengthening global stability and equal and indivisible security for all". While PPWT appears noble on the surface, its words are highly misleading.
- It does not address direct-ascent anti-satellite (ASAT) systems, soft-kill weapons such as lasers that could be employed to permanently or temporarily disable a satellite, breakout weapons such as direct-

ascent or co-orbital weapons that could be manufactured and launched in the event of hostilities and the issue of space debris which significantly affects the functioning of outer space assets .

- It instead smartly focuses on the placement of weapons in outer space. PPWT draft further states that further details can be agreed upon post signing which basically means China and Russia could use their collective power to block US space activities.
- It is clear that China has been pursuing a space arms race and ASAT agenda behind the charade of creating a missile defence shield with Russia its active partner in crime with the real intention being limiting US ability to operate in space domain while allowing itself and Russia to attack satellites and other peaceful space vehicles through the use of anti-satellite weapons.
- A 2018 report titled 'Worldwide Threat for the US Intelligence Community' by Daniel R Coats, Director of US National Intelligence called out Russia and China's hypocrisy saying they "could possess destructive weapons for use in a potential space conflict within the next few years and are currently pursuing anti-satellite weapons as a means to reduce US and allied military effectiveness and if a future conflict were to occur involving Russia or China, either country would justify attacks against US and allied satellites as necessary to offset any perceived US military advantage derived from military, civil, or commercial space systems.
- Russia and China continue to launch experimental satellites that conduct sophisticated on-orbit activities, at least some of which are intended to advance counter space capabilities".
- Unsurprisingly, before any formal treaty comes into play in February 2019, US President Donald Trump on Feb. 19 signed Space Policy Directive 4 calling for the creation of a Space Force Department under the purview of the Secretary of the Air Force with the goal of eventually becoming converting the US sixth military branch.
- The Space Command will oversee and organize space operations, accelerate technical advances and find more effective ways to defend US assets in space including the vast constellations of satellites that American forces rely on for navigation, communications and surveillance. This step effectively checkmated any pacifist illusions that China and Russia may have held circa limiting US space warfare capabilities.

Thus India become truly part of Star Wars in coming years. India as a robust democracy, it need to act with responsibility.

Air Pollution in Asia's Cities

Background:

- Beijing may have dominated headlines for its polluted air years ago, but now New Delhi, Dhaka, and several other Asian capitals have the smoggiest skies, endangering millions of lives.
- The Asian continent is home to all ten capital cities with the highest concentrations of tiny, hazardous particles—known in the scientific community as PM2.5—that can penetrate deep into the lungs, according to a 2019 report by Greenpeace and IQAir, a Swiss company that collects global data on air quality and manufactures air-purification equipment.

Causes:

- **Environmental factors** are part of the problem. Many Asian cities are landlocked and situated on plains near mountain ranges that make it harder for pollutants to disperse.
- But **man-made factors** play a bigger role, he says, and there are a lot of them: burning biomass such as food waste or animal manure for cooking, high dependency on coal for electricity, an absence of regulations on industrial emissions, open burning of agricultural products, and many others.
- On top of that, many Asian cities are rapidly urbanizing, with more people crowding into tighter spaces, constructing skyscrapers and highways, and buying cars, all of which generate air pollution. Local governments have enacted some regulations to deal with emissions, but many aren't enforced.
- The consequences are dire. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that approximately seven million people worldwide die from exposure to polluted air, which can cause heart disease, lung cancer, respiratory infections, and other serious health problems. Of those deaths, more than two-thirds take place in Asia.

- Children are disproportionately affected: air pollution causes nearly one in ten deaths in those younger than five years old, according to the WHO. In Southeast Asia 99 percent of children breathe dirty air every day.
 - New Delhi's air was nearly twice as bad as other capitals on this list, with average concentrations of PM2.5 reaching unhealthy or very unhealthy levels most months in 2018.
 - The most populated capital in the world, New Delhi's air pollution problem is intensifying as the city's growing middle class buys cars, poor households burn dirty fuels for cooking, and construction sites spring up.
 - But the crisis isn't limited to New Delhi: northern cities just outside the capital, such as Gurugram and Ghaziabad, experienced higher levels of pollution.
 - India was home to fifteen of the twenty most polluted cities in the world, according to IQAir's report. The government has issued a five-year plan to significantly reduce air pollution in more than one hundred cities, but the report indicates a long road ahead.
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50% VVPAT verification will delay Lok Sabha election results by 6 days

Why in news?

The Lok Sabha poll results will be delayed by six whole days if the Opposition parties' demand to increase VVPAT (Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail) slips counting by 50% became a reality, the Election Commission of India (ECI) indicated to the Supreme Court.

ECI Observations:

- The 50% Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail slip verification in each Assembly segment of a Parliamentary Constituency or Assembly Constituency on an average shall enlarge the time required for

counting to about six days.

- The current confidence level in the Electronic Voting Machine (EVM)-**VVPAT accuracy was 99.9936%**. Any increase in the sample size of verification of VVPAT slips would only lead to a very negligible gain in the confidence level.
- The adoption of a particular percentage as a sample for VVPAT slip verification was devoid of scientific logic or statistical basis. In fact, it was rather otiose, it noted.
- The Supreme Court recently made strong observations in favour of an increase in the sample VVPAT slip counting for the coming elections.
- With this, the ECI has also chosen to stand firm against a plea by 21 Opposition parties, who jointly moved the apex court challenging the poll body's guideline that VVPAT slips' counting would take place only in one polling station in an Assembly constituency or each Assembly segment in case of parliamentary elections.

Indian Statistical Institute Report:

- The ECI banks on a March 22, 2019 report of the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) to buttress its case against increasing the VVPAT slips' counting.
- The ISI report recommends that a sample verification of 479 EVMs and VVPATs out of a total 10.35 lakh machines would lift the confidence to 99.9936%.
- But Deputy Election Commissioner Sudeep Jain, who has authored the affidavit, said the ECI's sample verification for the April-May Lok Sabha polls would cover 4,125 EVMs and VVPATs. This is 8.6 times the sample size recommended in the Indian Statistical Institute report

Extensive training required:

- The Commission submitted that no mismatch had been detected in mock polls or in the verification of VVPAT slips carried out at 1,500 polling stations till date.
- The affidavit said increased VVPAT slips counting would require extensive training and capacity building of election officials in the field.

- VVPAT slips counting takes place in specially erected VVPAT counting booths under the close monitoring of the returning officer and direct oversight of the observer.
- The ECI said its confidence in EVM-VVPATs was sourced from their secure designs, elaborate procedural safeguards adopted for their usage, and finally the fact that there had been zero errors in sample verifications so far.
- The ECI said its undertook a three-level check on EVM-VVPATs prior to elections.

Three mock polls:

- Each and every EVM and VVPAT is checked once by slip verification during the first level check. Thereafter, 5% of the EVMs are selected at random and subjected to higher scrutiny through a mock poll, along with slip verification of 1,200 votes for 1%, 1000 votes for 2% and 500 votes for 2% percent of the EVMs
 - The checks are done in the presence of the representatives of political parties and candidates.
 - EVMs and VVPATs are subjected to a second mock poll along with verification of slips during the setting of candidates on the EVMs in the presence of candidates or their representatives.
 - A third mock poll is undertaken with slips verification of at least 50 votes on EVMs and VVPATs on the day of election in the presence of polling agents.
 - Thus, in the coming Lok Sabha elections, over 1.6 lakh EVMs and VVPATs would undergo VVPAT slips verification of 500 to 1,200 votes before the actual polls.
 - This will be conducted in the presence of the representatives of political parties/candidates in absolute transparency.
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China denies it is shielding Masood Azhar

Why in news?

China dismissed allegations that it was sheltering terrorists by placing a “technical hold” on listing Masood Azhar, head of the banned Pakistan based-group Jaish-e-Mohammed, as a global terrorist.

Chinese Stand:

- Without naming any specific country, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang said: “If certain country accuses China of sheltering by putting such technical hold, does that mean that all countries that put hold are sheltering terrorists? If this makes sense, shall we say that the country that puts the most holds is the biggest protector of terrorism?”
- China has on four occasions placed a **‘technical hold’ on designating Azhar as a global** terrorist.
- On March 13, it stood out as the only country in the **1267 Committee of the UN Security Council** to effectively block a resolution on banning Azhar, piloted by the U.S., France and Britain, following last month’s Pulwama terror attack.
- U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo had slammed China’s policy towards Azhar as well as the “de-radicalisation” camps in Xinjiang.
- China abuses more than a million Muslims at home, but on the other, it protects violent Islamic terrorist groups from sanctions at the UN
- In his riposte, Mr. Geng said China cannot be accused of placing maximum technical holds in the 1267 committee.
- At the UN Security Council sanctions committee, the practice of putting technical holds in in line with the stipulations of the committee. It is not China that has put the most hold at the committee.

Technical Nod:

- China has emphasised that the purpose of its “technical hold” is to allow more discussion on the issue in order to achieve a consensus-based settlement.
- China put a technical hold with a purpose to conduct a comprehensive and in-depth assessment so as to give enough time and space to dialogue and consultation between the parties.
- The Chinese Foreign Ministry said Beijing has been staying in close communication with all parties to seek a settlement through the

dialogue. We hope all members of the Security Council will work towards that goal.

- China had earlier stated that it was engaged in “mediation efforts” between India and Pakistan to ease tensions between the two countries following the Pulwama attack, in which at least 40 CRPF personnel were killed.
 - He pointed out that China’s diplomatic conduct is in line with the requirement of the Security Council and rules of procedures of the committee.
 - Mr. Geng highlighted that “Xinjiang affairs are purely China's internal affairs”.
 - Xinjiang has taken preventive measures by setting up the vocational and educational training centres for counter-terrorism and de-radicalisation purposes,” he said referring to the camps in Xinjiang.
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Terror Monitoring Group

Why in news?

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) said that it is keeping a close watch on illegal flow of funds to fuel militancy in Jammu and Kashmir, and announced the setting up of a Terror Monitoring Group (TMG) aimed at taking “coordinated action against terror funding”.

About TMG:

- As per the order issued by MHA, the terms of reference of the TMG include, taking action against hardcore sympathisers among government employees including teachers etc providing overt or covert support to such activities.
- It charges the TMG with action against all registered cases related to terror, terror financing and terror-related activities and bring them to a logical conclusion.
- The seven-member TMG shall be headed by the Jammu and Kashmir

additional director general of police (ADGP). It shall also have representatives from the Intelligence Bureau (IB), CBI, NIA, Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), and Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC). The Jammu and Kashmir police inspector-general shall be the seventh member of the TMG

- However, the Enforcement Directorate (ED), which has attached several properties in terror funding cases, did not find mention in the order.

Functions:

- The order further states that the TMG shall identify all key persons including leaders of the organisations who are involved in supporting terrorism in any form and take concerted action against them.
 - Investigate the networks of various channels being used to fund terror and terror-related activities and take action to stop flow of such funds
 - The MHA recently banned Jamaat-e-Islami and the Yasin Malik-led Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front in its bid to crack down against separatist activities.
 - The ED has identified as many as 25 properties of separatists allegedly bought using the funds.
 - According to an estimate of the NIA, Pakistan-based terror groups finance terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir by generating millions in donations through their charity organisations.
 - These outfits collect donations from people in Pakistan and then pass on the money to finance terrorism in Kashmir through their overground workers, an NIA official has said.
 - The groups collect millions of dollars in donations through crowd funding in the name of social service.
 - According to a 2012 report of an intelligence agency, 780 million Pakistani rupees were collected for funding terrorism in Kashmir, the NIA said.
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Hikikomori

Why is news?

More than 6,00,000 Japanese people over 40 are living in complete isolation from society, staying at home for more than six months without social interaction, the government estimated.

What is it?

- The phenomenon is so widespread in Japan it even has its own name **hikikomori defined as someone who does not go to school or work for six months and does not interact with anyone outside his family during that time.**

75% of them male:

- A government survey published estimated there were 6,13,000 hikikomori aged between 40 and 64, nearly three-quarters of whom were male.
 - The number was bigger than we had imagined. Hikikomori isn't an issue only for younger people.
 - Until recently, it was thought to be an issue mainly affecting teenagers and people in their 20s but ageing Japan is seeing a growing number of middle-aged hikikomori cloistering themselves away for longer periods of time.
 - Around half of those included in the survey had been reclusive for more than seven years.
 - The figure is higher than the estimated number of hikikomori under the age of 39, thought to be around 5,41,000 according to a similar government survey published in 2016. Many of the hikikomori are thought to be financially dependent on their ageing parents.
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Current account deficit on decline

Why in news?

India's current account deficit (CAD) for the third quarter narrowed to 2.5% of the GDP compared with 2.9% in the preceding quarter, latest data released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) showed.

In Details:

- In absolute terms, CAD was \$16.9 billion in Q3 compared with \$19.1 billion in the second quarter. However, on a year-on-year basis, CAD in October-December period widened from 2.1% or \$13.7 billion.
- The widening of the CAD on a year-on-year (y-o-y) basis was primarily on account of a higher trade deficit at \$49.5 billion compared with \$44 billion a year ago.
- Net services receipts increased by 2.8%, year-on-year mainly on the back of a rise in net earnings from telecommunications, computer and information services and financial services.

Trade deficit:

- Essentially, it was the trade deficit which is why the current account deficit number was increasing. A look at the other components like software and remittances they have been very much on target.
- Net foreign direct investment at \$7.5 billion in Q3 of 2018-19, increased from \$4.3 billion in Q3 of 2017-18, the data showed. In Q3 of 2018-19, there was a balance-of-payment deficit of \$4.3 billion.
- In the third quarter of current financial year, portfolio investments recorded net outflow of \$2.1 billion — compared with an inflow of \$5.3 billion in Q3 last year - on account of net sales in the equity market.
- For the April-December period of FY19, the CAD rose to 2.6% of GDP from 1.8% in April-December 2017 on the back of widening trade deficit.

Centre to borrow 7.1 lakh crore in FY20

Why in news?

Gross borrowings of the government during the first half of financial year 2019-20 will stand at 4.42 lakh crore, which works out to 62.3% of the total target for the entire year, Economic Affairs Secretary Subhash Chandra Garg announced. The remaining 2.68 lakh crore will be the borrowing programme for the second half of FY20.

Gross borrowing:

- The gross borrowing of ₹7.10 lakh crore for the entire year is significantly higher than the ₹5.35 lakh crore borrowing programme for financial year 2018-19.
- In 2018-19, the government borrowed ₹2.88 lakh crore in the first half, and ₹2.47 lakh crore in the second half.
- The gross borrowing amount is higher because of the **repayment programme** of the government and that the net borrowing is actually in keeping with the trend over the last five years.
- The government's repayment programme is ₹1.01 lakh crore in the first half of FY20 and ₹1.35 lakh crore in the second half. After accounting for this, the net borrowings stand at ₹3.41 lakh crore in the first half and ₹1.33 lakh crore in the second half.
- Mr. Garg also announced that the government had made a change in the maturity buckets, increasing the previous 15-19 year bucket to 15-24 years. Therefore, the previous 20-year and over bucket would be extended to a 25-year and over bucket.

Fiscal deficit:

- In a separate announcement, the government said that its fiscal deficit for the first 11 months of the current financial year stood at ₹8.51 lakh crore, which is 134.2% of the full year target.
- **The fiscal deficit, which is the excess of the government's expenditure over its receipts**, stood at ₹7.7 lakh crore in the previous month, which was 121.5% of the full year target.
- **Government will stick to the 3.4% fiscal deficit target for the year.**
- As of now, that is what the target is. It will be finalised when the accounts for the last month are finalised. The last month sees a lot of changes since we receive a lot of direct and indirect taxes collections.

- The government's receipts stood at ₹12.65 lakh crore in the April-February 2019 period, which is 73.2% of the target for the full year. In the same period of the previous year, the government had achieved 78.2% of the full year target by February-end.
 - The government's expenditure in the first 11 months of the financial year stood at ₹21.88 lakh crore, which is 89.1% of the target for the full year. It was 90.1% in the same period of the previous year.
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Five coffee varieties get GI tag

Why in news?

The government said it has awarded Geographical Indication (GI) tag to five varieties of Indian coffee including Coorg Arabica.

New Entrants:

- The move is expected to help the growers get maximum price for their premium produce.
- The **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade**, under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, has recently awarded this tag to Coorg Arabica coffee from Karnataka, Wayanad Robusta coffee from Kerala, Chikmagalur Arabica from Karnataka, Araku Valley Arabica from Andhra Pradesh, and Bababudangiris Arabica coffee from Karnataka.

Specialities:

- The Araku coffee is produced by the tribals, who follow an **organic approach** in which they emphasise management practices involving substantial use of organic manures, green manuring and organic pest management practices, the ministry said in a statement.
- Similarly, it said, Bababudangiris Arabica coffee is selectively hand-picked and processed by natural fermentation.

Coffee Cultivation in India:

- In India, coffee is cultivated in about 4.54 lakh hectare by 3.66 lakh coffee farmers of which 98 per cent are small farmers.
- **Coffee cultivation is mainly done in the southern states of India** including Karnataka, which accounts for 54 per cent of the total production. It is followed by Kerala (19 per cent), Tamil Nadu (eight per cent).
- It is also grown in non-traditional areas such as Andhra Pradesh and Odisha (17.2 per cent) and North East states (1.8 per cent).
- India is the only country in the world where the entire coffee cultivation is grown under shade, hand-picked and sun dried, it said adding the country produces some of the best coffee in the world, grown by tribal farmers in the Western and Eastern Ghats, which are the two major bio-diversity hotspots in the world.

GI Benefits:

- Indian coffee is highly valued in the world market and sold as premium coffee in Europe.
- The recognition and protection that comes with GI certification will allow the coffee producers of India to invest in maintaining the specific qualities of the coffee grown in that particular region.
- It will also enhance the visibility of Indian coffee in the world and allow growers to get maximum price for their premium coffee.
- **A Geographical Indication (GI) is primarily an agricultural, natural or a manufactured product (handicrafts and industrial goods) originating from a definite geographical territory.**
- Typically, such a name conveys an **assurance of quality and distinctiveness**, which is essentially attributable to the place of its origin.
- Darjeeling Tea, Tirupathi Laddu, Kangra Paintings, Nagpur Orange and Kashmir Pashmina are among the registered GIs in India.
- Experts said that award of GI tag gives protection to the producer of those genuine products, which commands premium pricing in the markets both domestic and international.
- Once the GI protection is granted, no other producer can misuse the name to market similar products. It also provides comfort to customers about the authenticity of that product. Such products also get premium pricing in the markets.



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