

UPSC 2017: Comprehensive News Analysis – June 29

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Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [PLA constructing road in disputed territory: Bhutan](#)

Context: India-China-Bhutan tri-junction road.

In news:

- **Chinese:** road is being constructed in the indisputable part of its own territory.
- **Bhutanese:** Road construction by the Chinese army is a ‘progression’ towards camp of the Royal Bhutan Army at Zom Perli and it is being constructed in the disputed area.
- China and Bhutan have held 24 rounds of talks, with the latest one held in August 2016, to discuss the disputed part of the border. As per the talks held the two sides had committed to maintain peace along the border and refrain from unilateral action to change the status quo.
- **Chinese Ministry of Foreign affairs:** the current impasse with India, including the area of Donglong(Dok La) is a part of Chinese territory since ancient times and it does not belong neither to India nor to Bhutan. The boundary between China and Bhutan has not been delimited and no third party should interfere in this matter.

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Category: ECONOMICS

1. [Govt. to shed stake in loss-making AI](#)

Context: disinvestment of debt ridden national carrier –Air India

In news:

- Disinvestment decided as a way out for the debt-ridden flag carrier
- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by the Prime Minister met and took the following decisions:
- In-principle approval for strategic disinvestment of Air India and five of its subsidiaries

- Constitution of an Air-India specific Alternative Mechanism to decide the following:
- Treatment of unsustainable debt;
- Hiving off certain assets to a **shell company**.
- Demerger and strategic disinvestment of three profit making subsidiaries
- Quantum of **disinvestment**
- Universe of bidders.
- A group of ministers under Finance Minister has been formed to work out the modalities for the strategic sale.

Key facts:

- Air India has been posting losses for more than a decade.
- Nationalization of Air India:1953-54

What are shell companies?

- A shell company is described as a non-trading organization that does not engage in any activity but exists only as medium for another organization's business activity.
- Shell companies are usually listed on the stock exchange and are not illegal inherently; however a large number of them are used as a vehicle for illegal activities like tax avoidance or for trying to cover up a trail of money. These companies exist only on paper and have no physical presence.

2. [Niti Aayog moots new regulator for coal, gas](#)

In news:

- Niti Aayog has suggested creation of regulators for coal as well as oil and gas.
- Reasons for not having a regulator till now:
 - Strong presence of PSU's and
 - Limited number of private operators.

3. [Draft National Energy Policy: Niti Aayog suggests to convert CIL subsidiaries into separate companies](#)

In news:

- NITI Aayog has Released the Draft National Energy Policy
- Draft of the policy aims to find a way to achieve the energy security targets announced by the government

Recommendations by NITI Aayog:

- Niti Aayog has recommended that the seven subsidiaries of India's largest coal miner Coal India Ltd should be converted into independent companies
- And these subsidiaries be allowed to compete against each other in the open market

NITI Aayog's Criticism:

- Niti Aayog has criticised Coal India setting prices that are significantly higher than the implicit cost of mining by the independent power producers
- NITI Aayog has also pushed for higher production from private coal miners

4. [Govt. unveils new hydrocarbon policy](#)

In news:

- Petroleum Ministry introduced a new oil and gas block licensing policy – **Open Acreage Licensing policy and The National Data Repository**, that is expected to open up 2.8 million square kilometers of sedimentary basins to exploration and production activities.

National Data Repository:

- Lack of sedimentary data had been hampering oil and gas exploration and production.
- 52% of India's basin had not been appraised yet.
- Repository is expected to improve the situation.

Open Acreage Licensing policy:

- The OALP, is a part of government's Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy.
- It gives exploration companies the option to select the exploration blocks on their own, without having to wait for the formal bid round from the government.
- The company then submits an application to the government, which puts that block up for bid.
- Initially the applications and related bids for the blocks would be held twice a year- January and July- this could be held more frequently as the industry becomes used to the new model.

Industrialists opinion:

- Policy reiterates governments commitment to reduce administrative and regulatory burden, thus enhancing ease of doing business.
- A single license to explore all forms of hydrocarbons, no oil cess, reduced rates of royalty are just few of many enabling provisions which will stimulate the investments in the sector.
- Reduce import dependence and helps India to achieve energy security.

5. [Sri Lanka, India to setup solar unit soon](#)

Location : Eastern port town Trincomalee , Sri Lanka

In news:

- **April 2017:** both the governments signed a Memorandum of Understanding, for cooperation in a host of development projects including the setting up of a Liquefied Natural Gas(LNG) plant in suburban Colombo and a solar power plant in Sampur, Trincomalee.
- **Sampur:** India and Sri Lanka have agreed to jointly operate a world war era oil storage facility in the town, with the aim of developing it into a regional petroleum hub.
- The proposed solar power plant is in line with Soorya Bala Sangramaya(Battle for Solar Energy), an initiative that President Sirisena launched last year to add 220MW of solar power to Sri Lanka's energy grid by 2020.
- Currently Sri Lanka relies heavily on thermal sources that meet 70% of country's energy needs.

Category: *INTERNAL SECURITY & DEFENSE*

1. [Not much impact of ransomware attack on India, says govt](#)

Context: Petya global ransomware spread to India.

In news:

- Govt is closely monitoring the situation and there has been no large scale impact on India yet.

Petya :

- The Petya ransomware not only encrypts the file, but it locks the entire disk, making it basically unusable until the infection is removed.
- Petya also overwrites and encrypts the master boot record.
- The ransomware waits for up to 60 minutes post infection to initiate a system reboot, post which a ransom message is displayed.
- It shuts down the system and asks for a ransom of \$300 in bitcoins on rebooting.
- The Pety/ Notpetya ransomware is the second major global ransomware since WannaCry hit over 3,00,000 computers worldwide.
- It uses Eternal Blue exploit as one of the means to propagate itself.

Experts warning:

- Bigger damage this time due to Petya as it is much more "professional attempt"
- WannaCry's damage was quickly minimized due to "sloppy coding".

Country's impacted:

- Ukraine seems to be the most impacted by ransomware.
- Other countries- Russia, UK, US and India .

Measures for protection:

- Make sure Microsoft Windows and all third party software's are updated.
- Don't open attachment in unsolicited e-mails.
- Never click on a URL contained in an unsolicited e-mail, even if the link seems benign.
- Maintain updated anti-virus software on all system.
- Ensure the web browser is secured enough with appropriate content controls.
- Individuals or organizations are not encouraged to pay the ransom as this does not ensure files will be released. Report such instance of fraud to CERT-In (Computer Emergency Response team- India) and Law enforcement agencies.

Category: *SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY*

1. [GSAT-17 to add teeth to ISRO satellite fleet](#)

In news:

- GSAT-17, the country's newest communication satellite to be launched, will soon join the fleet of 17 working Indian communication satellite in space and augment their overall working capacity.
- GSAT-17 mainly built for broadcasting, telecommunication and VSAT services, carries over 40 transponder.
- To be launched from European sea port of Kourou in French Guiana.

2. [Air pollutants on solar panel cut power generation by 17%](#)

Study: published in the journal Environmental science and Technology letters, based on the samples collected from multiple solar panels located at IIT, Gandhinagar.

Highlights:

- **Particulate matter-** dust, black carbon and organic carbon from bio-mass burning and fossil fuel- deposited on the solar panel and present in the ambient air is responsible for about 17% reduction in solar power generation.
- **Key fact:** The centre has set an ambitious renewable energy target of 175GW by 2022.
- Dust and non dust particulate matter deposited on the solar panels and present in the air prevent shortwave solar

radiation from reaching the panels, thereby reducing energy production.

- **Man made particles:** organic carbon, black carbon and ions produced from sources linked to human activity has higher influence on reducing solar energy production compared to the natural dusts.
- Man made particles are also small and sticky, making them much more difficult to clean off.
- **Efficient emission control measure is required to maximize solar energy generation.**

3. [Painless patch could replace flu jab: Study](#)

In news:

- Vaccines delivered via a disposable patch; this could possibly eliminate the requirement for needle and syringe flu injections in the near future.
- The patches are equipped with micro needles-long enough to penetrate the skin –embedded in each patch dissolves within minutes when exposed to moisture from the body.
- The new technology can be self-administered and stored without refrigeration (remains stable even at 40 degree Celsius), making it significantly cheaper than the traditional ones.
- Adhesive holds the patch close the skin while vaccine is released and can be peeled away after 20minutes and discarded.

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