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Category: GEOGRAPHY

1. [South-west monsoon: Rain deficit just 5%, but distribution uneven](#)

In news:

- India Meteorological Department (IMD) data on Monsoon: IMD predicted that rainfall will likely be 98% of the 50-year average (long-period average or LPA) for the entire country
- But monsoon has fallen short by just 5% so far.
- Also, according to IMD, it has been uneven in terms of distribution across geographical regions of the country.

Category: POLITY

1. [Govt. studying report on online abuse](#)

Context:

- Growing menace of online abuse.

In news:

- The **Home Ministry** has said it is examining an expert committee report that has recommended measures to contain the **growing menace of online abuse** , **particularly against women** .
- The report also deliberates on **hate speeches** and **vitriolic messages** on online platforms.

Background information:

- The **expert committee panel** was set up after the **Supreme Court** struck down **Section 66A of the Information Technology Act in 2014** .
- The committee headed by **K. Viswanathan**, former Secretary General of the Lok Sabha, submitted its report to the Home Ministry recently.
- The panel has recommended amending **Section 78 of the Information Technology Act** , which mandates an officer not below the rank of an Inspector to investigate such cases of online misuse.

2. [VVPAT to be used in Gujarat polls](#)

In news:

- The **Election Commission of India (EC)** will use **Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT)** gadgets with Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) in all 50,128 voting booths in Gujarat, which goes to the Assembly polls at the end of this year.
- **Key fact** : This is the first time an entire assembly poll will be conducted using the EVMs equipped with VVPAT
- VVPAT machines, which will be attached to the EVMs, will allow voters to verify if their vote has gone to the intended candidate. This would ensure transparency in the voting process, he said.

What is VVPAT?

- Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) or Verifiable Paper Record (VPR) is a method of providing feedback to voters using a ballotless voting system. A VVPAT is intended as an independent verification system for voting machines designed to allow voters to verify that their vote was cast correctly, to detect possible election fraud or malfunction, and to provide a means to audit the stored electronic results. It contains name of the candidate (for whom vote has been casted) and symbol of the party/ individual candidate.

3. [Centre to review flexi-fares on select trains, says Goyal](#)

In news:

- The Union government is planning to review the **flexi-fare system** introduced in premium trains last year.
- The Railways were also planning to reset its timetable by reducing the travel time for 600-700 trains through rescheduling and increasing speed
- The Railways are also in discussions with the Indian Space Research Organisation to use GPS technology to monitor trains for punctuality.
- **Background information** : The Railways introduced the flexi-fare scheme in September last year in Rajdhani, Duronto and Shatabdi trains, under which 10% of the seats were sold at normal fare. The fare was increased thereafter by 10% for every 10% of the berths sold. The highest fare was 50% more than the normal price of the ticket.

4. [UDAN flights: Govt allows airlines to use bigger planes, eases rules on connecting flights](#)

Context:

- The civil aviation ministry has acceded to a request from some airlines that will allow them to potentially ply bigger aircraft for UDAN flights
- There will be more flexibility also in how they integrate such routes into their overall operations.

UDAN :

- **UDAN(Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik)** is a regional aviation scheme that encourages airlines to fly to underserved airports at low fares.
- The airlines have to sell a certain number of seats (between nine and 40 currently) on such flights at a maximum of Rs 2,500 per hour of flying.
- In return, they receive a subsidy from the government.

New changes:

- Airlines can now make an UDAN destination part of a connecting flight, making it easier for them to integrate regional aviation routes into their overall operations
- But airline will have to declare 70% of seats on any such flight as UDAN seats irrespective of the kind of aircraft they are using.
- They will however only be paid subsidy for a maximum of 40 seats.
- The ministry has also done away with the stipulation that requires two airports to be 150km away from each other to qualify for UDAN flights.
- It has also allowed helicopters to participate in UDAN, and, in mountainous regions, four-seater aircraft.

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. [India signs MoU to train Afghan police](#)

In news:

- **New** memorandum of understanding signed between India and Afghanistan
- **Key points:**

1. Afghan police forces trained in India for the first time.
2. MoU on Technical Cooperation on **Police Training and Development** will see India expand its capacity building of Afghan troops to include policemen and security forces, who are facing the brunt of Taliban attacks in the country, under a United Nations Development Programme project.

2. [Expanding the common ground](#)

Context:

- The rising Indo-US strategic relationship in the Indian Sub-continent.

Greater role of India in Afghanistan:

- India has decided to take up 116 ‘‘high-impact community developmental projects’’ in 31 provinces of Afghanistan
- India and Afghanistan have also agreed to ‘‘strengthen security cooperation’’
- India has agreed ‘‘to extend further assistance for the Afghan national defence and security forces in fighting

1. The scourge of terrorism,
2. Organized crime,
3. Trafficking of narcotics and
4. Money laundering’’

- India will train Afghan police officers along with Afghan soldiers
- This is aimed at sending out a message to Pakistan, which continues to assert that India has “zero political and military role” in Afghanistan

Increased military role of India in Afghanistan

- India has given four attack helicopters to Afghanistan as part of its assistance package
- India is keen to expand the scope of its security cooperation with Afghanistan
- It had remained limited in the past not only due to geographical constraints, but also due to USA’s desire to limit India’s security engagement in the country

India-U.S:

- The recent visit of Gen. Mattis shows the importance of defence ties in shaping the trajectory of Indo-U.S. relations
- The USA is no longer reluctant about selling sensitive military technologies to India
- The U.S. is looking forward to share some of their most advanced defence technologies with India
- For example, the sale of 22 Sea Guardian Unmanned Aerial Systems is high on the agenda.
- With this deal, the Indian Navy will not only acquire the world’s most advanced maritime reconnaissance drone, it will also lead to greater defence technology sharing.

Role of India in International relations:

- As India and the U.S. expand military cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, new alignments are emerging.
- In the past, India had been reluctant to play an active role in East and Southeast Asia.
- Now as part of its “Act East” policy, India’s engagement with the region has become more robust.
- And the USA has been encouraging India to shape the regional strategic realities more potently.

Category: ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND ECOLOGY

1. Climate change is going to hit the Indian economy hard

Context:

- World Economic Outlook of the IMF, highlights the damaging macroeconomic impact of weather shocks, particularly for low-income countries.
- It notes that for the median emerging market economy, growth goes down by 0.9 percentage point because of a 1-degree Celsius increase from a temperature of 22 degrees Celsius
- Climate change is serious challenge for India where about 50% of the population directly or indirectly depends on agriculture for a livelihood

Consequences of climate change:

- Productivity will start declining strongly
- Countries located in areas with higher temperature will face a disproportionate impact of global warming.
- Loss of output and lower productivity also affects capital formation, which has a bearing on medium- to long-term growth prospects.

Present scenario:

- Consensus was attained under the **Paris Agreement** to contain the rise in global temperature to below 2 degrees Celsius from the pre industrial levels
- But now Trump administration in the US is not keen on continuing with the Paris Agreement.
- It is being reported that advanced economies may not meet their commitment of reducing emissions
- The lack of will among industrialized economies to contain emissions, could lead to consequences that go beyond the realm of macroeconomics.

Necessary steps that need to be taken :

- Emerging market and low-income economies have to build significant macroeconomic resilience.
- The IMF notes that right policies and institutions in place may help attenuate the effects of temperature shocks, to some extent.

Way forwards:

- Strengthen macroeconomic stability to be able to deal with such shocks.
- Work on programmes that will help improve the quality of land and reduce the risk of climate change.
 - In Ethiopia, food and cash is provided to the poor who participate in local environmental programmes.
 - This has resulted in reduction in soil loss and has increased the availability of water
- India can use employment under the MGNREGA in a better way to enhance soil and water conservation.
- Strengthen its overall capability by investing in and adopting technology as the impact of climate change is not limited to agriculture
 - For instance, better use of technology can reduce energy consumption for air conditioning. A district cooling system is being constructed in Gujarat International Finance Tec-City.
 - It can be adopted in other cities as well.

Nothing here for Today!!!

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F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. With a brief background of quality of urban life in India, introduce the objectives and strategy of the “Smart City Programme.”

GS Paper III

2. Enumerate the problems and prospects of inland water transport in India.