

My Notes....

NATIONAL

INDIA TO CO-CHAIR CG OF GFDRR

India is unanimously chosen as co-chair of the Consultative Group (CG) of Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) for the fiscal year 2020. The decision was taken during the CG meeting of GFDRR held in Geneva, Switzerland on 15 May 2019, on the margins of the 6th Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (GPDRR) 2019. The CG Meeting was co-chaired by Africa Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States, the European Union (EU) and World Bank.

What

1. **GFDRR** in cooperation with the UNDRR and the EU is also organizing the 4th edition of World Reconstruction Conference (WRC) on May 13-14, 2019.
2. **GFDRR is a global partnership** that helps developing countries better understand and reduce their vulnerability to natural hazards and climate change.
3. GFDRR is a grant-funding mechanism, **managed by the World Bank** that supports disaster risk management projects worldwide. It is presently working on the ground with over 400 local, national, regional, and international partners and provides knowledge, funding, and technical assistance.
4. **India became member of CG of GFDRR in 2015** and expressed its interest to co-chair in last meeting of CG held in October 2018.
5. India's candidature was backed by its consistent progress in disaster risk reduction (DRR) in the country and its initiative to form a coalition on disaster resilient infrastructure.
6. This will give the country an opportunity to work with the member countries and organizations of GFDRR with a focused contribution towards advancing the disaster risk reduction agenda during the course of the year.
7. **This is the first time** that the country has been afforded the opportunity of co-chairing the CG meeting of GFDRR.



GFDRR
GLOBAL FACILITY FOR DISASTER
REDUCTION AND RECOVERY

Reducing Vulnerability to Natural Hazards

A partnership of Australia, Canada, Denmark, European Commission, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Norway, OFDA/USAID, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, UNISDR and The World Bank.

Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) established to mainstream disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in country development strategies

- Launched in September 2006
- DFID, SDC, Sweden, Australia, UNISDR and WB are founding partners
- Make DRR central to global fight against poverty
- Unique financing mechanism to meet this global change at all levels
- Opportunities to identify climate change impacts and to develop adaptation strategies

NEW GUIDELINE FOR GREENHOUSE EMISSION

A United Nations climate change panel updated on 13 May 2019 **guidelines for governments to estimate greenhouse gas emissions** so the most up-to-date scientific research is included. **Under the 2015 Paris Agreement**, governments use common methodologies to measure how many greenhouse emissions they have produced and how many have been removed from the atmosphere.

What

1. **The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)** said the **new 2019 guidelines built on 2006 methodologies** by updating gaps and out-of-date science.
2. They include new technologies and emissions sources across the energy, industrial processes, waste, agriculture and forestry sectors.
3. **The 2019 Refinement provides an updated and sound scientific basis for supporting the preparation and continuous improvement of national greenhouse gas inventories.**

Flashback

1. The IPCC provides regular assessments of the scientific basis of climate change, its impacts and future risks, and options for adaptation and mitigation.
2. **Created in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).**
3. **The objective of the IPCC is to provide governments at all levels with scientific information** that they can use to develop climate policies.
4. IPCC reports are also a key input into international climate change negotiations.
5. The IPCC is an organization of governments that are members of the United Nations or WMO. **The IPCC currently has 195 members.**

FLIGHT TEST OF ABHYAS

The **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** successfully conducted the flight test of 'Abhyas', a high-speed expendable aerial target (HEAT), which offers a realistic threat scenario for practice of weapon systems. The flight test was conducted at the **Interim Test Range, Chandipur, in Odisha**. It was tracked by various radars and **electro-optic systems** and proved its performance in fully autonomous way point navigation mode.

What

1. The configuration of 'Abhyas' is designed on an in-line small gas turbine engine and it uses indigenously developed micro-electro-mechanical systems-based system for navigation and guidance.
2. The performance of the system was as per simulations carried out and it demonstrated the **capability of 'Abhyas'** to meet the mission requirement for a cost-effective HEAT.
3. 'Abhyas' is designed for autonomous flying with the help of an autopilot.
4. A Luneburg lens in the nose cone improves the radar cross-section of the target for weapons practice. It also has an **acoustic miss distance indicator (AMD)** to indicate the missed distance.

Flashback

1. **The concept of ABHYAS** was proved and pre-project details were completed on January 2013.
2. The first experimental launch (minus the engine) was conducted in 2012. The project was sanctioned with an initial funding of Rs 15 crore.
3. The project picked up pace after three services floated a global tender for procurement of 225 HEAT drones.
4. The design of the fuselage is based is based on Lakshya, a high speed target drone system developed by the **Aeronautical Development Establishment (ADE) of DRDO**.

CONFERENCE OF RHCA OF ASIA PACIFIC REGION OF WCO

The **Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC)** had organised a Conference of the Regional Heads of Customs Administration (RHCA) of Asia Pacific Region of the **World Customs Organisation (WCO)** in **Kochi** from 08th to 10th May, 2019. **India hosted this Conference in its capacity as Vice-Chair of the Asia Pacific Region of WCO** which it assumed on 1st July, 2018 for a two-year period.

What

1. The Conference took stock of the progress made in carrying forward the programmes and initiatives of WCO to promote, facilitate and secure cross-border trade in the Region and the capacity building and technical assistance required by Member

Administrations to achieve these goals.

2. **This 3-day Conference** was chaired by Mr. Pranab Kumar Das, Chairman, CBIC. **Customs delegations from more than twenty countries of the Asia Pacific Region** participated in the

World Customs Organization (WCO)	
Formed In	January 26, 1952
Objective	to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of member customs administrations,
Headquarters	Brussels, Belgium
Governing Bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council, under its Chairperson who is elected from among the delegates. • Article VII of the Convention requires the Council to meet at least twice a year • Each Member of the WCO nominates one delegate and one or more alternates to be its representatives on the Council • Present Secretary General Kunio Mikuriya

Conference along with senior officials of the WCO and its Regional Bodies, the Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB) and Regional Intelligence Liaoning Office (RILO).

3. Recognising the importance of the **collaborative approach between Customs and trade**, a **Trade Day was organised on 7th May, 2019** as a precursor to the Conference of the Regional Heads of Customs.

BARC FORMS GLOBAL ALLIANCE

India's television viewership measurement body has formed an alliance with its **counterparts in France, Canada and Japan** to chart the future of video audience measurement, a development that comes at a time when technological advances are disrupting viewership habits across the globe and television is facing serious competition from digital video services. The **Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC)** India has teamed up with **Médiamétrie (France), Numeris (Canada) and Video Research (Japan)** to form the **Global Alliance for the Measurement of Media Audiences (GAMMA)**, which will work on audience measurement initiatives including the development of common technical standards and operational processes.

What

1. The four founding nation's together account for a population of more than 1.5 billion and advertising spend of \$78 billion, about 15% of the worldwide total.
2. Audience measurement across the world needs to constantly innovate to keep pace with emerging trends, said BARC India CEO Partho Dasgupta.
3. We at BARC India have always been open to learning from our global counterparts, and this international alliance offers a tremendous platform to not only learn from our

peers but also contribute. **GAMMA has appointed Brad Bedford**, a veteran audience measurement executive, as its global managing director.

4. There is an ever-increasing demand for cross device measurement internationally and the partnering of these audience measurement firms seeks to facilitate continued movement in that direction.
5. The need for a global alliance was felt owing to rapid advancements in technology that are re-shaping both distribution and consumption of content. These changes have a global impact given the nature of digital media.

6. **GAMMA aims to leverage the collective knowledge** and

sector expertise of each member to advance audience measurement solutions worldwide. Through close cooperation, the participants intend to identify strategies and solutions that are more transparent and standardised.

Flashback

1. **Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC) India** is a joint industry company founded by stakeholder bodies that represent Broadcasters, Advertisers and Advertising & Media Agencies.
2. Built upon a robust and future-ready technology backbone, BARC India owns and manages a transparent, accurate, and inclusive TV audience measurement system.
3. Apart from the currency products to the TV industry, BARC India also provides a suite of Insight products designed for broadcasters, advertisers and agencies.

INDIAN WARSHIPS TAKE PART IN IMDEX ASIA-2019

Two warships of the Indian Navy – **INS Kolkata** and **INS Shakti** – are participating in a **three-day Asia Pacific naval and maritime event** being held in Singapore. **The International Maritime Defence Exhibition Asia (IMDEX Asia-2019)** commenced on May 14 and will also witness the participation of some of India's leading engineering and ship building firms, including **Larsen & Toubro and BrahMos**, which makes the state-of-the-art air, sea and ground launch cruise missiles.

What

1. **INS Kolkata is an advanced stealth destroyer** capable of engaging multiple threats from the air, sea and underwater and has been designed and built in India. **INS Shakti is a fleet support ship** to provide fuel, provisions and munitions to warships at sea.
2. Following IMDEX, Indian Naval ships together with an Indian Navy surveillance aircraft P8I will participate in the **26th edition of Singapore India Maritime Bilateral Exercise (SIMBEX)** scheduled from May 16 to 22, 2019. **SIMBEX is the longest uninterrupted naval exercise** that India has with any other country.
3. Regular participation by the Indian Navy in the IMDEX and SIMBEX reflects the importance India attaches to the exercises and the broader strategic partnership with Singapore and it also **reaffirms our Act East Policy**.
4. The 26th SIMBEX is taking place 6 months after the last edition that took place in the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal from November 11 to 21 last year.
5. It involved live weapon firings and complex military maneuvers, including those of aircraft and submarines. The 25th SIMBEX was witnessed by Singapore's Minister of Defence Dr Ng Eng Hen.
6. Earlier in October 2018, India's Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman visited Singapore to participate in the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting-Plus.
7. The Indian Army and the Singapore Army recently held their **12th edition of the annual exercise Bold Kurukshetra**, an annual joint training exercise for Armoured Units from April 8 to 12, 2019, at the Indian Army training facility at Babina in Utta

Pradesh. Likewise, Air Forces of both countries will exercise together later this year in India.

8. India and Singapore share a strong and rapidly growing defence relation which is the key pillar of India Singapore strategic partnership based on deep mutual trust and goodwill and shared interest in rules based order, maritime security and an open, inclusive and peaceful **Indo-Pacific region**.

INDIAN RE-ELECTED TO INCB

India's Jagjit Pavadia was re-elected to the **International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) for another term**, posting the highest number of votes at 44. Pavadia, in her 60s, **has been a member of the INCB since 2015** and her current term is set to **expire in 2020**. India's Jagjit Pavadia tops International Narcotics Control Board Election.

What

1. The **54-member Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) held elections by secret ballot**, with 15 candidates in fray for five seats.
2. There were 54 members present and voting and the required majority to win the election was 28. After the first round of voting, Pavadia emerged at the top, getting the highest number of votes at 44, followed by Jallal Toufiq of Morocco with 32 votes and Cesar Tomas Arce Rivas of Paraguay with 31 votes.
3. **Pavadia has been re-elected for a five-year term beginning on March 2, 2020 and expiring on March 1, 2025.**
4. The victory added to India's successful record of winning crucial elections at the UN and to the world organisation's subsidiary bodies.
5. China's candidate Wei Hao got only 23 votes in the first round of voting. The council then held a second round of restricted voting in which Bernard Leroy of France and Viviana Manrique Zuluaga of Colombia were elected after having garnered the required majority.
6. **She was also member of the Indian delegation to the Commission on Narcotics Drugs, Vienna (2007-2012).** Member of the International Narcotics Control Board since 2015.
7. Born in 1954, Pavadia competed her LL.B from Delhi University in 1988 and holds a Master's Diploma in Public Administration from the Indian Institute of Public Administration. She is the recipient of Presidential Appreciation Certificate for Specially Distinguished Record of Service, awarded in 2005 on the occasion of India's Republic Day.
8. **INCB consists of 13 members who are elected by the ECOSOC** and who serve in their personal capacity, not as government representatives.
9. Three members with medical, pharmacological or pharmaceutical experience are elected from a list of persons nominated by the World Health Organization (WHO) and 10 members are elected from a list of persons nominated by Governments.

Flashback

1. **Established in 1968**, the International Narcotics Control Board is the independent and **quasi-judicial monitoring body** for the implementation of the **United Nations international drug control conventions**.
2. INCB endeavours, in cooperation with Governments, to ensure that adequate supplies of drugs are available for medical and scientific uses and that the diversion of drugs from licit sources to illicit channels does not occur.
3. **The INCB also monitors Governments' control over chemicals used in the illicit manufacture of drugs** and assists them in preventing the diversion of those chemicals into the illicit traffic.

VELA LAUNCHED

The **fourth Scorpene class submarine Vela** being constructed by **Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited** for the Indian Navy, was launched on 06 May 2019. This event reaffirms the steps taken by **Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd (MDL)** in the ongoing **'Make In India' programme**, which is being actively implemented by the Department of Defence Production (MoD). **The submarine was towed to Mumbai Port Trust**, for separation from the pontoon, after which she will undergo rigorous trials and tests, both in harbour and at sea before delivery to the Indian Navy.

What

1. The contract for the construction and **Transfer-of-Technology** for six Scorpene class submarines in series has M/s Naval Group (formerly DCNS) of **France as 'Collaborator' and are being built by MDL.**
2. Presently Eight Warships and five submarines are under construction at MDL. MDL is one of the India's leading shipyards with a capacity to meet requirements of the Indian Navy.
3. The Scorpene class of submarines can undertake multifarious tasks typically undertaken by any modern submarine which include anti-surface as well as anti-submarine warfare.
4. The transfer of technology involves appropriate technical support by Naval Group to MDL in the field of construction, integration and tests of the submarines in India which is achieved through transfer of technical data package to MDL through information system as well as on job training to MDL's personnel on critical technologies.
5. Leveraging the experience and the transfer-of-technology of the Scorpene project, with enhanced and upgraded infrastructure, MDL, is ready for undertaking construction of the future submarines.

Flashback

1. **The INS Vela is the fourth of the six submarines of Scorpene class** that has completed its out fittings at the **Mazagon Dock.**
2. The submarine has been named 'Vela' after an earlier submarine, which was the lead submarine, of the erstwhile Vela class, the second batch of the Foxtrot class submarines acquired from USSR.
3. The fifth Scorpene class submarine will also be launched soon. MDL recently reported an annual turnover of Rs 4,500 crore.
4. The out fittings were completed under a 2005 contract signed with France's DCNS — now rebranded as the Naval Group — as part of Indian Navy's Project-75.
5. The first submarine was scheduled to be delivered by 2012, but the project witnessed repeated delays.
6. Of the six submarines, **INS Kalvari was commissioned in December last year while INS Khanderi and INS Karanj are in advanced stages to join the Navy fleet.**
7. The remaining two — INS Vagir and INS Vagsheer are in the "advanced stages of manufacturing" at the Mazagon Dock.
8. The development assumes significance as Chinese ships increase their presence in the Indian Ocean. It said China's submarine force will grow between 65 and 70 by 2020.
9. There is also the larger threat on water, including guided-missile cruisers, guided-missile destroyers, and guided-missile frigates, aircraft carriers, amphibious warships and more.

'INS RANJIT' DECOMMISSIONED

Frontline missile destroyer of the Indian Navy 'INS Ranjit' was decommissioned at the **Naval Dockyard, Visakhapatnam**, after **servicing the Indian navy for 36 years**.

INS Ranjit, the third of the five Kashin-class destroyers built by the erstwhile USSR, **was commissioned on September 15 1983**.

What

1. The ship was decommissioned at a solemn ceremony at the Naval Dockyard when the national flag, naval ensign and Commissioning Pennant were lowered.
2. The ship has been helmed by 27 commanding officers and the last CO, Captain Vikram C Mehra, has been in command since June 6 2017.
3. Since being commissioned, INS Rajat has sailed for 2,190 days, covering over 7,43,000 nautical miles, equivalent to navigating around the world 35 times and 3.5 times the distance from the earth to the moon, the release said.
4. The ship was at the forefront of major naval operations and served on both the Eastern and Western seaboard.
5. Apart from naval operations like '**Op Talwar**' and various multinational exercises, the ship participated in relief operations post Tsunami in 2004 and **Hud-hud on 2014**.
6. In recognition of the service rendered by **INS Ranjit** to the nation, the ship was awarded Unit Citations by the Chief of Naval Staff in 2003-04 and in 2009-10.

INTERNATIONAL

IMF REPORT ON CARBON TAX

At **USD 70 per ton of carbon dioxide**, a **carbon tax** would be the most efficient means of cutting greenhouse gas emissions, according to an **International Monetary Fund (IMF) report** published. But for the moment, carbon taxes remain unpopular, particularly in France, where plans to increase it to 55 euros (or USD 61.60) from 44.60 euros recently ignited the Yellow Vest protest movement. The French government was forced to suspend the plan in the face of popular revolt.

What

1. **The Paris Agreement, adopted in 2015** by more than 200 countries, aims to cap overall increases in global temperatures at two degrees centigrade above the pre-industrial era.
2. The 2C target would require cutting emissions by roughly a third by 2030 and a global carbon price of around \$70 per ton, IMF said.
3. It allows for a reduction in energy consumption, favours cleaner energies and mobilizes private financing, according to the IMF.
4. In the report, the IMF said that in China, the world's largest emitter, and in India or South Africa, countries which rely heavily on coal, a carbon tax of just USD 35 per ton would cut emissions by 30 per cent.

What's a carbon tax?

1. **A carbon tax is a fee imposed on the burning of carbon-based fuels** (coal, oil, gas). A carbon tax is the core policy for reducing and eventually eliminating the use of fossil fuels whose combustion is destabilizing and destroying our climate.
2. A carbon tax is a way — the only way, really — to have users of carbon fuels pay for the climate damage caused by releasing carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.
3. If set high enough, it becomes a **powerful monetary disincentive** that motivates switches to clean energy across the economy, simply by making it more economically rewarding to move to non-carbon fuels and energy efficiency.

- But in nine countries that use little coal, such as Ivory Coast, Costa Rica or France, the result would be a reduction of only 10 percent.

KING OF THAILAND CROWNED

Maha Vajiralongkorn was **officially crowned as king of Thailand** on 4 May 2019 in a spectacular yet centuries-old coronation ceremony held at the Grand Palace in **Bangkok**. The island country is estimated to spend more than \$30 million in the three-day ceremony, which is being held after almost seventy years. The last time such a ceremony took place was in **1950 for King Adulyadej, also known as Rama IX**.

What

- Vajiralongkorn, who is the tenth monarch of the reigning Chakri dynasty**, ascended the throne after the death of **King Bhumibol Adulyadej in 2016** and has since been dispatching his duties as a king.
- Vajiralongkorn, also called Rama X**, had requested for time to mourn the death of his father before he acceded to the throne.
- In the ceremony, the crown is placed on the head of the king by the chief Brahmin, a Hindu priest. The crown is approximately 26 inches high, weighs 7.3 kg and is decked with diamonds set in gold enamel.
- Several pieces of royal regalia are presented to him as a sign of power, including the Royal Sword of Victory and the Royal Fan and Fly Whisk.
- The ceremony is an interesting **mix of Hindu and Buddhist traditions**. The proceedings began with the Royal Purification ceremony, in which water from several holy rivers and ponds was poured on the king while music from drums, conch shells and other instruments echoed in the halls. The monarch was also given an artillery salute.
- Thai kings are regarded as almost divine** and are seen as a unifying presence in the country. Kings are protected by the world's strictest lese majeste laws, which makes criticism of them and other top royals punishable by up to 15 years in prison. With the absolute rule by kings ending in 1932, it ushered in a constitutional monarchy.

Flashback

- Thailand officially the Kingdom of Thailand and formerly known as Siam** is a country at the centre of the Southeast Asian Indochinese peninsula composed of 76 provinces.
- Thailand is the world's 50th largest country by total area** and the **21st-most-populous country**.
- The capital and largest city is Bangkok**, a special administrative area. Thailand is bordered to the north by Myanmar and Laos, to the east by Laos and Cambodia, to the south by the Gulf of Thailand and Malaysia, and to the west by the Andaman Sea and the southern extremity of Myanmar.

TIES ON INDO-PACIFIC COOPERATION

India and the UK on 10 May 2019 agreed to increase their collaboration in the fields of **Indo-Pacific cooperation, disaster resilience, climate change** and development in third countries, as Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale and British Permanent under Secretary at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Simon McDonald met in New Delhi for foreign consultations. The dialogue reviewed a year of progress since Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the **UK in April 2018 for the Commonwealth Summit**, where he and British Prime Minister Theresa May had agreed on closer collaboration across trade and technology, security and people-to-people links.

What

1. The two countries have, over the past year, **identified specific areas to work together** as a force for good, for example on a global coalition on climate resilience, on disaster relief and on development.
2. **Bilateral trade has grown by 14 per cent**, and visas for Indian students have increased by 35 per cent. Also during the consultations, the instrument of the ratification of the UK joining the International Solar Alliance was formally handed over.
3. **The UK-India relationship is focused on the future**: whether it be through the technology partnership, security collaboration or economic ties, our bilateral cooperation is designed to build shared prosperity and tackle future challenges.
4. McDonald and Gokhale also reconfirmed the commitment made by their respective Prime Ministers to encourage closer business, cultural and intellectual cooperation.
5. They expressed satisfaction on the level of political exchanges and decided to further intensify them in the coming months.

INDIA, VIETNAM TO STRENGTHEN ITS COOPERATION

India and Vietnam agreed to further strengthen cooperation in defence and security, peaceful uses of atomic energy and outer space, oil and gas and renewable energy as Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu on 12 May 2019 concluded his four-day visit to the **Southeast Asian country**.

What

1. **Both sides agreed** to further strengthen cooperation in defence and security, **peaceful uses of atomic energy and outer space**, oil and gas, renewable energy, agriculture and innovation-based sectors.
2. **Vietnam is an important trade partner of India** and their bilateral trade stood at nearly USD 14 billion last year having nearly doubled from USD 7.8 billion three years ago.
3. Vice-President Naidu and Vietnam Prime Minister Phuc expressed commitment to enhancing trade and investments and agreed to facilitate direct air connectivity to promote tourism, trade and people-to-people relations.
4. **Both sides reiterated the importance of building a peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific region** on the basis of respect for national sovereignty and international law, and expressed full commitment to an open, transparent, inclusive and rules-based regional architecture

Indo-Pacific Region

1. The **Indo-Pacific region is a geopolitical area that spans two regions of the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean**.
2. Stretching from the **west coast of the United States to the west coast of India**, the Indo-Pacific is a **24 nations regional framework** comprising the tropical waters of the Indian Ocean, the western and central Pacific Ocean, and the seas connecting the two in the **general area of Indonesia**.
3. **Since 2011, the term "Indo-Pacific"** is being used increasingly in the global strategic/geopolitical discourse.
4. As a framework, the Indo-Pacific seeks to create a connected multipolar region that must be governed by commonly agreed international norms, rules and practices.
5. The term **"Indo-Pacific" refers to the maritime space stretching from the Indian Ocean, across the littorals of East Asia to the western Pacific Ocean**.

- based on freedom of navigation and overflight, unimpeded economic activities and peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with international law.
5. Vietnam's leaders appreciated **India's long-standing development partnership engagement**, especially scholarships and training programmes.
 6. They also thanked India for **extending concessional Lines of Credit for defence industry cooperation** and implementing other socio-cultural infrastructure projects in Vietnam under Indian grants-in-aid.

FIRST PARLIAMENT TO DECLARE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

The **UK is the first national government** to declare an **environmental and climate emergency**. The decision marks a **renewed sense of urgency in tackling climate change**, following a visit to Parliament by teenage activist **Greta Thunberg**, the broadcast of David Attenborough's documentary 'Climate Change: The Facts' and 11 days of protest by environmental group Extinction Rebellion that paralysed parts of London.

What

1. **There are now some 49 million** people living under national, city and local declarations of a climate emergency around the world. While there is no precise definition of what constitutes action to meet such an emergency, the move has been **likened to putting the country on a "war footing"**, with climate and the environment at the very centre of all government policy, rather than being on the fringe of political decisions.
2. The **UK are legally committed to a 80 per cent reduction in carbon emissions by 2050** (relative to their 1990 levels) and was recently recognised as one of just 18 developed economies that have driven down carbon dioxide emissions over the last decade.
3. Some city and local councils have set out their climate emergency policies to become **carbon zero by 2030 built around renewable energy supplies**, more energy-efficient housing and a host of other measures. Decision in Parliament implies further national reductions and investment in this space.
4. **The year 2030 is an important target**. In spite of what climate contrarians might voice very loudly, five of our planet's warmest years on record have occurred since 2010, whilst 2018 experienced all manner of climate extremes that broke numerous global records.
5. It's sobering to realise that, because the oceans are a major sink of heat, the estimated 40-year delay in the release of this energy back into the atmosphere means the conditions of the last decade are in part a consequence of our pollution from the 1970s.
6. With the planet to experience further warming from the heat held by the oceans, there is increasing international focus on meeting the **United Nation's Paris Agreement which was signed by 197 countries in 2016**.

CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Ireland's parliament has become the second after Britain's to declare a climate emergency, a decision hailed by Swedish teenage environmental campaigner Greta Thunberg as "great news". An amendment to a parliamentary report declaring a "**climate emergency**" and calling on parliament "to examine how (the Irish government) can improve its response to the issue of biodiversity loss" was accepted without a vote. Irish Green Party leader Eamon Ryan, who moved the amendment, called the **decision "historic"**.

What

1. Thunberg, the 16-year-old activist who has spearheaded protests across Europe and is becoming one of the most passionate voices of the green movement, urged more nations to follow suit.

2. Britain's parliament became the first in the world to declare a climate emergency, passing the largely symbolic motion on May 1.
3. The step followed 11 days of street protests in London by the Extinction Rebellion environmental campaign group.
4. Extinction Rebellion's ultimate goal is to slash global greenhouse gas emissions to zero by 2025 and to end biodiversity loss, steps that have won the backing of left-leaning politicians across the world.
5. **The British government is currently eyeing a 2050 target date**, which it says can be achieved without causing substantial economic damage and at a relatively low cost.

Flashback

1. The **climate emergency** has resulted from humans putting **additional greenhouse gases** in our atmosphere.
2. These have heated our planet and at current levels are already a true disaster on a global scale. Unless removed, these gases will result in a level of global warming that will be catastrophic for humanity and much of the world's remaining ecosystems.
3. An ethical and moral response to this emergency would be based around the goal of **maximum protection of human and non-human life. Maximum protection would mean reversing global warming** and creating a global cooling as soon as possible.

ECONOMY

INDIA BIGGEST RECIPIENT OF FUNDS FROM ADB

India was the biggest recipient of funds from Asian Development Bank (ADB) last year and would continue to get sovereign loans in excess of USD 3 billion in 2019 as well, the bank's President Takehiko Nakao said. The multilateral funding institution committed USD 3 billion in sovereign loans to India in 2018, the highest level of assistance since sovereign operations **began in the country in 1986**.

What

1. **ADB** will continue to make investment in rural connectivity, urban development and skill development, among others. India received nearly 25 per cent of the total loans sanctioned last year.
2. New commitments included USD 21.6 billion in loans, grants and investments from ADB's own resources, exceeding the target of USD 19.71 billion and up 10 per cent from 2017.

Flashback

1. The **Asian Development Bank was conceived in the early 1960s** as a financial institution that would be Asian in character and foster economic growth and cooperation in one of the poorest regions in the world.
2. A resolution passed at the **first Ministerial Conference on Asian Economic Cooperation** held by the **United Nations Economic Commission for Asia** and the Far East in 1963 set that vision on the way to becoming reality.
3. **The Philippines capital of Manila was chosen to host the new institution**, which opened on **19 December 1966**, with 31 members that came together to serve a predominantly agricultural region. **Takeshi Watanabe was ADB's first President**.

3. The **Manila-headquartered bank committed several projects in India**, including in Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Assam and Odisha.
4. On the **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) of China**, Nakao said BRI is a very natural idea to expand the connection between East Asia, Central Asia, Europe and Africa but the investment should generate good returns.
5. There are merits over investment but at the same time we have to be careful...we must find good project with good return, even if the lending is to the government.
6. **India has opposed the idea of BRI**. It is the **only country among eight-nation Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) to have raised serious objection** to this initiative of China.
7. **India's concern is centred on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)**, which passes through areas of Gilgit and Baltistan, which India considers disputed territories.

JAPAN DRAGS INDIA TO WTO

Japan has dragged India to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) over the **import duties imposed on certain electronic goods**, according to the global trade body. Japan has accused India of "**continuously and systematically**" raise import duties on these goods after announcement of 'Make in India' campaign in September 2014, according to a communication released by the WTO. It has also alleged that these **import duties are in excess of bound rates**, which is a ceiling of import duty beyond which a WTO member country cannot go. Japan has sought consultations with India under the **WTO's dispute settlement mechanism**.

What

1. In a communication to the WTO, Japan said that has continued to adjust the rates of various indirect taxes, including custom duties, in support of policies seeking to foster domestic production and value addition.
2. Since announcement of '**Make in India**' campaign in September 2014, India has "continuously and systematically raised" import duties on a wide range of products in various sectors, such as electronics systems, mining, automobiles, renewable energy, defense manufacturing, food, processing, automobile components, and textiles and garments.
3. These tariff treatments seem to have been implemented by the Government of India under certain policies, aiming at further incentivising domestic value addition.
4. Through those policies, among its wide range of tariff increases, India appears to subject a number of goods to import duties which are "inconsistent" with its concessions and commitments under WTO norms.
5. This request for consultation addresses some of the tariff treatments which are, simultaneously, clearly in excess of bound rates and of substantial interest to Japan.
6. Citing examples, it said that India applies 20 per cent duty on products like telephones for cellular networks, which clearly "exceeds" the applicable bound rate of zero per cent set forth in India's schedule.
7. **India also impose 10 per cent or 20 per cent duties** on products like machines for reception, conversion and transmission or regeneration of voice, images or other data, "which clearly exceeds" the applicable bound rate of zero per cent.
8. The other goods over which Japan has raised duty issues include telephones for cellular networks, base stations, populated, and loaded or stuffed printed circuit boards.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

A NOVEL MOLECULE IDENTIFIED

Researchers at the **Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur** have **identified and characterised a novel small protein molecule** that can effectively control inflammation leading to better treatment outcomes. In contrast, **inflammation control by molecules that are undergoing clinical trials** may not be optimal due to inherent drawbacks. The work was done in **collaboration with the University of Queensland**.

What

- While some amount of inflammation at the site of infection is required for effective clearance of **pathogens**, too much inflammation compromises **pathogen-clearing ability**.
- Hyper inflammation also destroys the tissues surrounding the inflamed area** leading to inflammation disorders such as sepsis, inflammatory bowel syndrome, rheumatoid arthritis and psoriasis.
- A small protein (C5a)** that is a part of the innate immunity (immediate defence against pathogens that have never been encountered before) gets activated when a pathogen enters the body.
- The C5a protein** then binds to a **particular receptor (C5aR1)** found on the surface of certain cells such as macrophages and neutrophils to begin the process of inflammation and pathogen clearance.
- Neutrophils are already present in the body and circulate in the blood**. Once the small protein binds to the C5aR1 receptor found on neutrophils, there is increased migration towards the site of infection leading to hyper inflammation.
- At the same time, binding of the small protein to the receptor on macrophages reduces the amount of a pro-inflammatory cytokine called **interleukin-6 (IL-6)** that is released, which is desirable to overcome inflammatory symptoms.
- Therapeutic agents now undergoing clinical testing prevent the **C5a protein** from binding to the receptor found on neutrophils leading to reduced migration of neutrophils to the site of infection. Hyper inflammation is thus prevented.
- However, it has the opposite effect on interleukin-6 release. Unlike the C5a protein, the drug candidate molecules do not reduce the amount of IL-6 being released thereby causing more inflammation.

Role of IL-6

- There is more inflammation when the amount of IL-6 at the site of infection is more. So it is desirable to reduce the amount of **IL-6 being released to overcome the inflammatory symptoms**.
- The **small protein molecule identified by IIT Kanpur researchers** addresses the shortcomings seen with the drug molecules now undergoing clinical testing.
- The drug molecule that IIT Kanpur team used for this study is already known to **bind to the C5aR1 receptor**. But its effects were not characterised in term of IL-6 release and neutrophil migration.
- Our peptide molecule binds to the C5aR1 receptor found on neutrophils and reduces their migration to the site of infection. And unlike the molecules now being tested, our peptide molecule also reduces the amount of IL-6 being released. Under in vitro conditions, the combined effect may lead to reduced inflammation.
- The molecule only reduces and not blocks neutrophil migration**. There should be sufficient inflammation at the infection site to clear the pathogens.

STUNNING SPIRAL GALAXY

The **Hubble Space Telescope** has imaged a “**stunning spiral galaxy**” located about **30 million light-years away from the earth** in the **constellation of Leo**. The spiral galaxy — named as **NGC 2903** — is **similar to our own Milky Way galaxy**. According to a statement issued by NASA and the European Space Agency, The image from Hubble frames a **perfect spiral specimen**. The image will help researchers **understand more about supermassive black holes** that sit at the cores of large galaxies.

What

1. Hubble obtained the new image as it studied this galaxy as part of a survey of the central regions of roughly **145 nearby disk galaxies** that are relatively near Earth.
2. The image is expected to give scientists an insight between the relationship of a black hole and the rugby-ball-shaped bulge of stars, gas and dust at the galaxy’s centre.
3. The same kind of bulge of stars and gas can be seen in this image. The new picture shows a dusty orange environment with purple stars or clusters of stars amidst glowing dust trails.
4. **Hubble telescope is a large telescope in space**, launched by NASA in **1990**. Weighing as much as two adult elephants, the telescope is as long as a large school bus.
5. The telescope makes one orbit around Earth every 95 minutes and it can spot stars and galaxies lights years away from the earth.
6. According to NASA, Hubble is not the kind of telescope that you look through with your eye. **It uses a digital camera to takes pictures like a cell phone**.
7. Then it uses radio waves to send the pictures through the air back to the earth. Also, since, the telescope is in space, it’s vision is not blocked by Earth’s atmosphere.

IIT-BOMBAY DEVELOPS AJIT

STUDENTS OF Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay (IIT-Bombay), have **developed ‘AJIT’**, a microprocessor conceptualised, designed, developed and manufactured in India. The innovation would not only reduce the country’s imports but also make India self-reliant in electronics, said Professor Manav Desai of the department of electrical engineering. **AJIT marks the first time in the country’s history** where industry, academia and the government have come together.

What

1. **The project was funded by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** and IIT-Bombay. **Powai Labs**, a Mumbai-based company, has also invested in the venture and will own and market the product.
2. **AJIT has been named after Desai’s friend and mentor**, late Ajit Shelar. Akin to most microprocessors available today, AJIT comes with an arithmetic logic unit that can do basic arithmetic and logical operations like addition, subtraction and comparison, and a memory management unit that stores and retrieves data from memory.
3. Its features can be compared to many of the microprocessors available in the market. Unlike the ones used in desktops like the Intel’s Xeon, AJIT is a medium-sized processor. It can be used inside a set-top box, as a control panel for automation systems, in a traffic light controller or even robotic systems. AJIT will cost as less as Rs 100 when it is produced en-masse, nearly 10 lakh units.

SEQUENCE ASIATIC LION GENOME

For the first time, the **entire genome of Asiatic lion**, an endangered species, has been **sequenced by scientists from CSIR-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology**, Hyderabad. **De novo sequencing** and annotation have resulted in a draft assembly of the

entire genome of a male Asiatic lion. This firsthand information would help us to better understand the **evolution of Asiatic lions** and also make possible comparative analysis with other big cats which was recently published online in BioRxiv, the pre-print website.

What

1. With the **complete genome of royal Bengal tiger, African Cheetah and Jaguar** available, comparative studies of all these big cats would be possible.
2. The population of the endangered Asiatic lion is very low — **only 523 animals are present in the Gir forests.**
3. The **genome sequencing** would enable scientists to develop specific markers to study population genetics (the differences at the gene level within a population) and get newer insights into its population status and subsequent management.
4. Comparative analysis with other felids and mammalian genomes unravelled the evolutionary history of the Asiatic lion and its position among other felids.
5. The study noted that the evaluation of genetic diversity placed the Asiatic lion in the lowest bracket of genomic diversity index highlighting the gravity of its conservation status.
6. The genome is estimated to be **2.3 Gb (Gigabase) long** and is found to have 20,543 protein-coding genes.
7. As regards the crucial aspect of conservation of Asiatic lions, there is a need to adopt a multi-pronged approach and the study will enable better disease and population management of the endangered big cat by identifying characteristics which are specific to Asiatic lions.
8. CCMB Director, Dr. Rakesh Mishra says candidate genes which are specific to Asiatic lion can be identified by comparing with other big cats.
9. The final objective is **to understand the species at DNA level** and study if there are any specific problems with regard to adaptability to environment or behaviour vis-à-vis other big cats.

What is the Genome

1. **A genome is the complete set of genetic information in an organism.** It provides all of the information the organism requires to function.
2. In living organisms, **the genome is stored in long molecules of DNA called chromosomes.**
3. **Small sections of DNA, called genes,** code for the RNA and protein molecules required by the organism.
4. In eukaryotes, each cell's genome is contained within a membrane-bound structure called the **nucleus.**
5. Prokaryotes, which contain no inner membranes, store their genome in a region of the cytoplasm **called the nucleoid.**
6. The full range of RNA molecules expressed by a genome is known as its **transcriptome**, and the full assortment of proteins produced by the genome is called its **proteome.**

BRAIN OF SKA DESIGNED

Scientists at Cambridge have **finished designing the 'brain' of the Square Kilometre Array (SKA), the world's largest radio telescope.** When complete, the SKA will enable astronomers to monitor the sky in unprecedented detail and survey the entire sky much faster than any system currently in existence. The **SKA's Science Data Processor (SDP)** consortium has concluded its engineering design work, marking the end of five years'

work to design one of two supercomputers that will process the enormous amounts of data produced by the SKA's telescopes.

What

1. The **SDP consortium, led by the University of Cambridge in the UK**, has designed the elements that will together form the 'brain' of the SKA.
2. SDP is the second stage of processing for the masses of digitised astronomical signals collected by the telescope's receivers. In total, close to 40 institutions in 11 countries took part.
3. The role of the consortium was to design the computing hardware platforms, software, and algorithms needed to process science data from the **Central Signal Processor (CSP)** into science data products.
4. SDP itself will be composed of two supercomputers, one located in Cape Town, South Africa and one in Perth, Australia.

Flashback

1. The **Square Kilometre Array (SKA) project** is an international effort to build the world's largest radio telescope, with eventually over a square kilometre (one million square metres) of collecting area.
2. The scale of the SKA represents a huge leap forward in both engineering and research & development towards building and delivering a unique instrument, with the detailed design and preparation now well under way.
3. As one of the largest scientific endeavours in history, the SKA will bring together a wealth of the world's finest scientists, engineers and policy makers to bring the project to fruition.

MISCELLANEOUS

INTERNATIONAL WORKERS DAY

May 1 is a metonym for International Workers Day, a day of celebration of the working class. Behind it lies a history dating back over **one-and-a-half centuries**. The roots of May 1 can be traced to the **second part of the 19th century** when there were revolutions, and organisations behind which industrial workers rallied. Countries including Germany, France, England, the US saw demand for reducing work time from **12-15 hours a day to eight hours**.

What

1. The Communist Manifesto written by **Karl Marx and Engels in 1848** had a great impact on workers across various countries that were feeling the **heat of industrialisation**.
2. Crop failure in the 1840s led to widespread anti-feudal upheavals called **'The Revolutions of 1848'**. As a result the International Workingmen's Association, known as the **First International, was born in 1864** as an umbrella association for all socialist and communist organisations, at a workers' congregation in London.
3. After the **First International dissolved in 1876 over an ideological rift**, the **Second International emerged in 1889** as a united outfit of socialist and labour parties. It was this organisation that declared **May 1 as International Workers' Day** and **March 8 as International Women's Day**.
4. Historically, an event is referred to as the origin of May 1 as Workers' Day -- the Haymarket Affair or the Haymarket massacre. When labourers assembled at the Haymarket Square in Chicago on May 4, 1886 and took out a rally for eight-hour

- work day, a bombing attack was mounted on them by some unknown forces. Police firing and loss of 11 lives were reported at the rally that ended in riot.
5. **As for May Day in India, the country witnessed the first celebration of Labour Day in 1923 in what was then Madras.** Led by **Singaravelar**, leader of the Labour Kisan Party of Hindustan, two meetings were held, one at Triplicane Beach and one near the Madras High Court.
 6. It was at these meetings that a resolution was passed urging the British government to declare May 1 as Labour Day and also a government holiday. It was the first occasion in India on which the red flag was used.
 7. There is another aspect to the popular phrase May Day. It has ancient roots in several countries. The better known is the Festival of Flora in the old Rome which was billed as May celebration. Flora was the goddess of flowers, and the festival was marked by song, dance and theatrical performance.

INDIA'S MILITARY SPENDING ROSE

Worldwide, military expenditure rose by 2.6% from 2017 to reach **\$1.8 trillion in 2018**, according to SIPRI data. The U.S. registered a substantial rise in spending for the first time since 2010. **India's spending rose by 3.1%**, while **Pakistan's military spending rose by 11%**. The five biggest spenders were the **U.S., China, Saudi Arabia, India and France. Saudi Arabia was third on the list** despite spending 6.5% lesser than 2017, according to **SIPRI** report.

What

1. In 2018 the USA and China alone accounted for half of the world's military spending. The largest absolute increase in spending in 2018 was by the USA (\$27.8 billion), while the biggest decrease was by **Saudi Arabia (-\$4.6 billion)**, according to the SIPRI report.
2. Each rectangle represents a country's defence spending in 2018. The larger the size, the higher the spending. The percentage in brackets indicates the annual change (2017 to 2018).
3. **Military spending by the USA increased for the first time since 2010**, while spending by **China grew for the 24th consecutive year**.
4. **Saudi Arabia's military spending as a percentage of its GDP was highest at 8.8%**. It also spent the highest on military per capita. Countries on the top right of the below visualisation have a higher than average military spending per capita and as a percentage of GDP.
5. In India's case, the spending as a percentage of GDP is slightly above average (2.4%) while its per capita spending is below average (\$49). On average, world military spending in 2018 represented 2.1% of GDP and \$239 per person.

About SIPRI

1. **Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)** is an independent international institute **dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament**.
2. **Established in 1966**, SIPRI provides data, analysis and recommendations, based on open sources, to policymakers, researchers, media and the interested public.
3. **Based in Stockholm**, SIPRI is regularly ranked among the most respected think tanks worldwide.
4. SIPRI's vision is a world in which sources of insecurity are identified and understood, conflicts are prevented or resolved, and peace is sustained.

- According to the SIPRI report, **six of the 10 countries with the highest military burden** (military spending as a proportion of GDP) in the world in 2018 are in West Asia: Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, Lebanon, Jordan and Israel.
- In the visualisation below, you can select a country from the list to see where it falls in the above parameters. The chart shows only the 50 countries which spend the most on their military.

BAJRANG PUNIA WINS GOLD

World No. 1 Bajrang Punia on 2 May 2019 bagged his second title in two weeks as he **defeated Viktor Rassadin** in the finals of **men's 65kg freestyle** in the Ali Aliyev wrestling tournament in **Kaspiisk, Russia**. Bajrang got the better of the local favourite 13-8 in his final bout after being down 0-5 at one stage.

What

- The **25-year-old Indian grappler** had won a yellow metal last week at the Asian Championships in Xi'an, China.
- The two wrestled last in 2017 at the Dan Kolov where Punia won and finished as runner-up to Boris Novachkov of Bulgaria.

HOW CYCLONE FANI GOT ITS NAME

The **newest cyclone to emerge out of the Bay of Bengal** has been named **Fani**. Before that, there were cyclones **Hudhud in 2014, Ockhi in 2017** and **Titli and Gaja in 2018**. How are these cyclones named? **Each Tropical Cyclone** basin in the world has its own rotating list of names. For cyclones in the **Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea**, the naming system was agreed by **eight member countries of a group called WMO/ESCAP and took effect in 2004**.

What

- These countries submitted eight names each, which are arranged. The first cyclone after the list was adopted was given the name in the first row of the first column — **Onil, proposed by Bangladesh**.
- Subsequent cyclones are being named sequentially, column-wise, with each cyclone given the name immediately below that of the previous cyclone.
- Once the bottom of the column is reached, the sequence moves to the top of the next column. So far, the first seven columns have been exhausted, and Fani (again proposed by Bangladesh) is the top name in the last column.
- The next cyclone will be named Vayu.**

The lists will wind up with Cyclone Amphan, whenever it comes.

When the lists end

- After the 64 names are exhausted**, the eight countries will propose fresh lists of names.
- For cyclones from the **Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea**, these lists are not rotated every few years, as explained by

NORTHERN INDIAN OCEAN CYCLONE NAMES								
Contributors	List 1	List 2	List 3	List 4	List 5	List 6	List 7	List 8
Bangladesh	Onil	Ogni	Nisha	Giri	Helen	Chapala	Ockhi	Fani
India	Agni	Akash	Bijli	Jal	Lehar	Megh	Sagar	Vayu
Maldives	Hibaru	Gonu	Aila	Keila	Madi	Roanu	Mekunu	Hikaa
Myanmar	Pyarr	Yemyin	Phyan	Thane	Nanauk	Kyant	Daye	Kyarr
Oman	Baaz	Sidr	Ward	Murjan	Hudhud	Nada	Luban	Maha
Pakistan	Fanoos	Nargis	Laila	Nilam	Nilofar	Vardah	Titli	Bulbul
Sri Lanka	Mala	Rashmi	Bandu	Viyaru	Ashobaa	Maarutha	Gaja	Pawan
Thailand	Mukda	Khai Muk	Phet	Phailin	Komen	Mora	Phethai	Amphan

the **India Meteorological Department's Regional Specialized Meteorological Centre (RSMC)** for Tropical Cyclones over the Northern Indian System.

3. The lists for storms in the Atlantic and Eastern Pacific basins are, however, rotated. Exception are, however, made in certain cases — if a storm causes excessive death and destruction, its name is considered for retirement and is not repeated; it is replaced with another name.

Why name cyclones?

1. It is generally agreed that **appending names to cyclones makes it easier for the media to report on these cyclones**, heightens interest in warnings, and increases community preparedness.
2. Names are presumed to be easier to remember than numbers and technical terms. If public wants to suggest the name of a cyclone to be included in the list, the proposed name must meet some fundamental criteria, the RSMC website says.
3. The name should be short and readily understood when broadcast. Further, the names must not be culturally sensitive and should not convey any unintended and potentially inflammatory meaning.

NATIONAL TECHNOLOGY DAY 2019

On the occasion of **National Technology Day 2019**, President Ram Nath Kovind and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 11 May 2019 greeted the nation and remembered the **achievements of the scientific community**. President Kovind said India is committed to using technology to accelerate development and ensure every citizen has a dignified existence. PM Modi said the hard work of the country's scientists has always ensured a stronger and safer India.

What

1. **National Technology Day is celebrated annually on May 11**, the day on which India successfully test fired its **first nuclear bombs in 1998**.
2. During the nuclear tests in Rajasthan's Pokhran, five explosives of the same nature were tested between May 11 and May 13, 1998.
3. **The tests were conducted by the then prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee** and President Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, who had led the scientific team that made preparations for the tests. After Pokhran, Vajpayee had declared India a nuclear state — **the sixth country in the world to join this league**.
4. The patriotism and farsightedness of Atal Ji and his team have a major role to play in the success of tests of 1998. Atal Ji's unwavering faith in our scientists proved valuable during that crucial time. It also demonstrated the difference a strong political leadership makes.
5. On National Technology Day on 11 May 2019, PM Modi also said, The patriotism and farsightedness of Atal Ji and his team have a major role to play in the success of tests of 1998.
6. Atal Ji's unwavering faith in our scientists proved valuable during that crucial time. It also demonstrated the difference a strong political leadership makes.

CENTRAL EXTENDS BAN ON LTTE

The **Union government** on 14 May 2019 **extended the ban on the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)** for **violent and disruptive activities** that are prejudicial to

the integrity and sovereignty of the country. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) renewed its 2014 notification to declare the LTTE as an “**unlawful association**” for **another five years**.

What

1. The LTTE “continues to adopt a strong anti-India posture as also continues to pose a grave threat to the security of Indian nationals, it is necessary to declare LTTE as an unlawful association with immediate effect”, MHA said.
2. It noted that the “diaspora continue to spread through articles in the Internet portals, anti-India feeling amongst the Sri Lankan Tamils by holding the Government of India responsible for the defeat of the LTTE and such propaganda through Internet, which remains continued, is likely to impact Very Very Important Persons (VVIP) security adversely in India”.
3. Even after its **military defeat in May 2009 in Sri Lanka**, the LTTE had not abandoned the concept of **‘Eelam’ (separate land for Tamils)** and had been clandestinely working towards the cause by undertaking fund-raising and propaganda activities.
4. The remnant LTTE leaders or cadres have also initiated efforts to regroup the scattered activists and resurrect the outfit locally and internationally, the MHA said.
5. **The LTTE’s objective for a separate homeland (Tamil Eelam)** for all Tamils threatened the sovereignty and territorial integrity of India and amounted to cession and secession of a part of the territory of India from the Union and thus fell within the ambit of unlawful activities.
6. The Centre also has information that the activities of pro-LTTE organisations and individuals have come to its notice that despite the ban, attempts have been made by these forces to extend their support to the LTTE and that the LTTE leaders, operatives and supporters have been inimically opposed to India’s policy on their organisation and action of the state machinery in curbing their activities.
7. **Cases were registered under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act 1967**, against the LTTE, pro-LTTE elements and chauvinist groups since the May 2014 notification, besides cases under the provisions of the Explosive Substances Act 1908 and the Indian Penal Code, among others.

Flashback

1. The **Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)**, commonly known as the **Tamil Tigers**, was a separatist militant organization fighting for an independent homeland for Sri Lanka’s Tamil minority in northern Sri Lanka.
2. **Velupillai Prabhakaran founded the group in 1972** and by the late 1980s was the dominant Tamil militant group in Sri Lanka.
3. After a number of failed negotiations, the Sri Lankan government declared an all-out offensive against the LTTE in 2006.
4. **By May 2009, government forces had defeated the LTTE** and killed Prabhakaran.
5. An estimated 70,000 people were killed during the conflict between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government.