

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**Global Report on Food Crises 2019**

It is a report released jointly by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), World Food Programme (WFP) and EU.

Key findings in the latest report:

- Approximately 113 million people in 53 countries experienced high levels of food insecurity last year. These crises are primarily driven by conflict and climate-related disasters.
- The number going chronically-hungry has remained well over 100 million over the past three years, with the number of countries affected, rising.
- According to the report, nearly two-thirds of those facing acute hunger come from just eight countries: Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria and Yemen.
- Climate and natural disasters pushed another 29 million people into acute food insecurity in 2018 and that number excludes 13 countries – including North Korea and Venezuela – because of data gaps.

FAO:

- The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat hunger. Headquarters: Rome, Italy. Founded: 16 October 1945
- Goal of FAO: Its goal is to achieve food security for all and make sure that people have regular access to enough high-quality food to lead active, healthy lives.

State of Global Air Report, 2019

The current high level of air pollution has shortened the average lifespan of a South Asian child by two-and-a-half years while globally the reduction stands at 20 months, according to a global study released.

State of Global Air Report, 2019

- State of Global Air 2019, published by Health Effects Institute (HEI), said exposure to outdoor and indoor air pollution contributed to over 1.2 million deaths in India in 2017.
- The worldwide air pollution was responsible for more deaths than many better-known risk factors such as malnutrition, alcohol abuse and physical inactivity.
- Overall, long-term exposure to outdoor and indoor air pollution contributed to nearly 5 million deaths due to stroke, diabetes, heart attack, lung cancer, and chronic lung disease in 2017.

India's performance

- In India, air pollution is the third highest cause of death among all health risks, ranking just above smoking; each year, more people globally die from air pollution-related diseases than from road traffic injuries or malaria.
- The study found that China and India together were responsible for over half of the total global attributable deaths, with each country facing over 1.2 million deaths from air pollution in 2017.
- China has made initial progress, and is beginning to achieve a decline in air pollution.
- Out of these, 3 million deaths were directly attributed to PM2.5, half of which were from India and China together.
- South Asian countries — Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan — led the world as the most polluted region, accounting for over 1.5 million air-pollution related deaths, according to the report.

INDIAN ECONOMY**Ways and Means Advances**

RBI may trigger fresh floatation of market loans when Government utilizes 75% of the WMA limit.

The interest rate on WMA will be Repo Rate and overdraft will be 2% above the Repo Rate.

Ways and means advances (WMA)

- The Reserve Bank of India gives temporary loan facilities to the centre and state governments as a banker to government. This temporary loan facility is called Ways and Means Advances (WMA).
- It is a mechanism to provide to States to help them tide over temporary mismatches in the cash flow of their receipts and payments.
- It was introduced on April 1, 1997, after putting an end to the four-decade old system of adhoc (temporary) Treasury Bills to finance the Central Government deficit.
- This facility can be availed by the government if it needs immediate cash from the RBI. The WMA is to be vacated after 90 days.
- Interest rate for WMA is currently charged at the repo rate. The limits for WMA are mutually decided by the RBI and the Government of India.

Indian Advance Pricing Agreement

The Central Board of Direct Taxes has entered into 18 APAs in the month of March 2019, which includes 03 Bilateral APAs (BAPAs).

What is an APA?

- The Advance Pricing Agreement (APA) program allows the taxpayer and the tax authority to avoid future transfer pricing disputes by entering into a prospective agreement.
- An APA is a contract, usually for multiple years, between a taxpayer and at least one tax authority specifying the pricing method that the taxpayer will apply to its related-company transactions.
- These programmes are designed to help taxpayers voluntarily resolve actual or potential transfer pricing disputes in a proactive, cooperative manner, as an alternative to the traditional examination process.
- APAs gives certainty to tax-payers, reduces disputes, enhance tax revenues and make the country an attractive destination for foreign investments.
- These agreements would be binding both on the taxpayer as well as the government. Similarly, they lowers complaints and litigation costs.
- The International Transactions covered in all these Agreements, inter alia, include the following, –
 - contract manufacturing
 - provision of software development services
 - back office engineering support service
 - provision of back office (ITeS) support services
 - provision of marketing support services
 - payment of royalty for use of technology and brand
 - trading
 - payment of interest

India to set up agriculture institute in Malawi

India has signed an agreement with the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development Consultancy Service (NABCONS) for setting up the India-Africa Institute of Agriculture and Rural Development (IAIARD) in Malawi, a landlocked country in southeastern Africa.

The agreement is a part of India's efforts to enhance capacity in the areas of agro-financing and entrepreneurship development for African countries.

India-Africa Institute of Agriculture and Rural Development (IAIARD):

- IAIARD will be a Pan-African Institute wherein trainees from Malawi and other African countries will be trained to develop their human resources and build their capacity.
- The entire expenditure on India faculty, their travel, logistics and training course expenses for students from other African countries will be borne by the Indian Government for an initial period of three years.
- IAIARD will develop training programmes in the areas of micro-financing and agro-financing, among others.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- EVERYDAY SCIENCE, SPACE, NUCLEAR, DEFENCE ETC**Checkpoint Tipline by Whatsapp**

WhatsApp has unveiled a brand new initiative, called Checkpoint Tipline, that will help people verify if any information they receive is true or false. Launched by PROTO, an India-based media skilling startup, the tipline is basically aimed at creating a database of rumours. The idea is to study misinformation spread ahead of the upcoming elections for Checkpoint, which is a research project commissioned and technically assisted by WhatsApp.

How it works?

- WhatsApp users can submit all the information received through the messaging platform and that they are uncertain about to the 'Tipline' on WhatsApp (+91-9643-000-888).
- Following this, PROTO's verification centre will "seek to respond and inform the user" if the information received is verified or not.
- The response will indicate if information is classified as true, false, misleading, disputed or out of scope and include any other related information that is available.
- The verification centre, in turn, will be able to review rumors in the form of pictures, video links or text. Apart from English, it will cover four regional languages – Hindi, Telugu, Bengali and Malayalam.

Significance:

- This is not the first time the global messaging platform has tried to filter the barrage of information exchanged every day by billions of users. In the aftermath of a series of mob lynchings following misinformation spreading on WhatsApp, the company is now taking stringent steps in the lead up to the 2019 general elections in India.
- It has also undertaken many efforts to battle fake news, including the five-forward limit, social campaigns, and the latest – a 'Tipline' for misinformation.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Optimism is the faith that leads to Achievement.