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NOTES 8- 09.08.19

➤ How land relates to climate

1. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has recently released a report titled 'Climate Change and Land' which shows how land based activities affect climate and in turn gets affected by climate change.
2. Land acts as both the source as well as a sink of carbon. Activities like agriculture and livestock rearing release greenhouse gases such as methane and nitrous oxide and contribute to global warming.
3. Further, soil, trees, plantations, and forests absorb carbon dioxide for the natural process of photosynthesis, thus reducing the overall carbon dioxide content in the atmosphere.
4. Nearly, 50% of all carbon dioxide generated from the earth is trapped by land and oceans and the rest is released into the atmosphere. Through the process of carbon cycle, CO₂ is continuously exchanged between the land, ocean and atmosphere.
5. Large-scale land use changes, like deforestation, urbanization, or change in cropping pattern, have a direct impact on the overall emissions of greenhouse gases.
6. Climate change also impact land in various ways. Climate change contributes to land degradation through gradual changes in temperature and rainfall patterns. For example, in central India, there has been a threefold increase in widespread extreme rain events during 1950-2015, which has influenced several land degradation processes
7. Climate change also affects agriculture through increased warming, changing rainfall patterns and increased frequency of extreme weather events.
8. Afforestation, halting deforestation is important aspects for combating climate change. India as a part of its Nationally Determined Contribution under the Paris Agreement has pledged to create an additional carbon sink of about 2.5 billion to 3 billion tonnes by the year 2032 by increasing its forest cover, and planting more trees.

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➤ World's food supply at risk due to climate change, window to act rapidly closing: UN

1. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has recently released a report titled 'Climate Change and Land'.
2. The report explains how land-based activities such as agriculture, forestry, cattle-rearing and urbanization is causing global warming, and is affected by the climate change.
3. According to the report, the land sector had been contributing about 5.2 billion tonnes of Carbon dioxide every year between 2007 and 2016.
4. It further notes that the global food production system could account for 16 to 27% of GHG emissions – up to 37%, if factors such as transportation and food processing are included.
5. It points out that nearly 25% of all food produced is either lost or wasted. And even the decomposition of the waste releases emissions.
6. The report highlights that the global rise in temperature has been much faster over land than over the entire planet. This additional warming over land could have led to increased frequency, intensity and duration of heat-related events such as heat waves.
7. The report suggests that measures such as a) reduction in food wastage, b) sustainable agriculture practices and c) shifting of dietary preferences to include more plant-based food, could reduce GHG emissions and strengthen food security.
8. The IPCC is an intergovernmental body of the United Nations. It provides policymakers with regular scientific assessments on climate change, its implications and potential future risks. It also puts forward adaptation and mitigation options.

- The land report is the second special report of IPCC. The IPCC also published a special report on 1.5C of warming in October 2018. The aim of these special reports is to provide an assessment on a specific issue. These special reports compliment the main Assessment Reports that the IPCC publishes every five or six years.

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➤ India to seek boost to protection status of 5 species at CITES

1. India has submitted proposals regarding changes to the listing of various wildlife species in the CITES secretarial meeting. The meeting is scheduled to be held in late 2019 in Geneva, Switzerland.
2. India has submitted a proposal to re-list the star tortoise from CITES Appendix II to Appendix I. It is listed as Vulnerable in the IUCN Red List. The species faces two threats: loss of habitat to agriculture and illegal harvesting for the pet trade.
3. India along with Nepal and Philippines has also proposed to relist smooth-coated otter, small-clawed otter CITES Appendix II to Appendix I. A similar proposal has been made to include the Tokay gecko in Appendix I.
4. With regards to rosewood, India has proposed to remove it from Appendix II
5. CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) is an international agreement between governments. It aims to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival.
6. Appendix I include species threatened with extinction. Trade in specimens of these species is permitted only in exceptional circumstances.
7. Appendix II includes species not necessarily threatened with extinction, but in which trade must be controlled in order to avoid utilization incompatible with their survival.
8. Appendix III contains species that are protected in at least one country, which has asked other, CITES Parties for assistance in controlling the trade.

➤ Pranab Mukherjee awarded Bharat Ratna

1. Former President of India, Pranab Mukherjee has been conferred the Bharat Ratna award.
2. The award has also been given posthumously to social activist Nanaji Deshmukh and noted Assamese singer Bhupen Hazarika.

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3. Bharat Ratna is the highest civilian award of India. It is given for exceptional service towards advancement of Art, Literature and Science, and in recognition of Public Service of the highest order.
4. The provision of Bharat Ratna was introduced in 1954. The first recipients of the award were scientists Chandrasekhara Venkata Raman, Rajagopalachari and Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan.
5. The award had also been given to non-Indian – Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Nelson Mandela.

➤ Maharashtra to set up task force on climate change

1. The Maharashtra government has decided to constitute a task force to study impact of climate change on Mumbai. The taskforce will comprise of local and global experts.
2. The task force will be set up by the environment department of Maharashtra in coordination with Mumbai First, a non-profit think-tank
3. The taskforce will study urban flooding in cities like Venice, Geneva and London and measures taken against flooding and unplanned reclamation in these cities.
4. It also study patterns of climate change and flood management measures taken by leading countries such as the Netherlands.
5. The taskforce will collaborate with European Climate Change Programme of the European Union to prepare a blueprint.

➤ NITI Aayog to launch the Fourth Edition of Women Transforming India Awards

1. The NITI Aayog has announced the launch of the Fourth Edition of Women Transforming India (WTI) Awards.
2. The Women Transforming India (WTI) Awards is being organized in collaboration with the United Nations to recognize women entrepreneurs from across India.

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3. The theme for this year is 'Women and Entrepreneurship'. It is in continuation of the theme for WTI Awards 2018.
4. The Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) is a Government of India initiative by NITI Aayog to promote and support aspiring as well as established women entrepreneurs in India, assist and handhold them in their journey from starting to scaling up and expanding their ventures.
5. It has more than 5,000 women entrepreneurs registered on the platform, more than 30 partners and has committed funding of more than US\$10mn for these startups.

➤ World Biofuel Day to be observed on 10th August 2019

1. World Biofuel Day is observed every year on the 10th of August. It is observed by the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas since 2015.
2. The theme for this year's Biofuel Day is "Production of Biodiesel from Used Cooking Oil (UCO)".
3. The day is observed to create awareness about the importance of non-fossil fuels as an alternative to conventional fossil fuels and highlight the various efforts made by Government in the biofuel sector.
4. Biodiesel is a renewable, biodegradable fuel manufactured domestically from vegetable oils or animal fats. Biofuels have the benefits of reduction of import dependence, cleaner environment, additional income to farmers and employment generation.
5. A number of initiatives have been undertaken to increase production and blending of biofuels since 2014.
6. Used Cooking Oil (UCO) is a potential feedstock for biodiesel. The consumption of Used Cooking Oil (UCO) poses adverse health effects. During frying, several properties of oil are altered and Total Polar Compounds (TPC) is formed on repeated frying.
7. The toxicity of these compounds is associated with several diseases such as (a) hypertension, (b) atherosclerosis (c) Alzheimer's disease and (d) liver diseases.

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8. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) had launched RUCO (Repurpose Used Cooking Oil). It is an initiative that will enable collection and conversion of used cooking oil to biodiesel.
9. On this day, FSSAI will launch a sticker on Repurpose Used Cooking Oil (RUCO) and a mobile app to facilitate the collection of UCO shall also be released.

➤ UNIDO and National Institute of Solar Energy to partner for skill development program

1. National Institute of Solar Energy (NISE) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) has signed an agreement to initiate a skill development programme for different levels of beneficiaries in the solar thermal energy sector.
2. NISE and UNIDO will engage with the national and international experts to bring the best practices by developing specialized training material.
3. This agreement is a part of the ongoing MNRE-GEF-UNIDO project implemented jointly by UNIDO.
4. The project aims to support capacity building and skill development of technical manpower in the Concentrated Solar Thermal Energy Technologies (CST) which are being used to replace conventional fossil fuels.
5. **National Institute of Solar Energy (NISE)** is an autonomous institution of the Ministry of New and Renewable (MNRE). It is the apex National R&D institution in the field of Solar Energy.
6. **UNIDO** is a specialized agency in the United Nations system. It is headquartered in Vienna, Austria. Currently, 170 States are members of UNIDO.
7. The mission of UNIDO is to promote and accelerate inclusive and sustainable industrial development (ISID) in Member States. It is also a member of the United Nations Development Group (UNDP).

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➤ ISRO announces Vikram Sarabhai Journalism Award

1. ISRO has announced its Vikram Sarabhai Journalism Awards in Space Science, Technology and Research.
2. The award aims to recognize and reward journalists who have actively contributed towards the field of space science, applications and research.
3. The nominations are open to all Indians who have a good experience in journalism. The articles published from 2019 to 2020 will be considered.
4. Vikram Sarabhai was an Indian scientist and innovator widely regarded as the father of India's space programme.
5. Indian government had set up the Indian National Committee for Space Research (INCOSPAR) in 1962 based on his recommendation.
6. The INCOSPAR was restructured and renamed as Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) in 1969.
7. Vikram Sarabhai has also played an important role in the launch of the first Indian satellite Aryabhata which was put in orbit in 1975 from a Russian cosmodrome.

➤ Linking farmers with futures market can benefit both

1. Recently, Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER) has recommended the government to empower farmer producer organisations (FPOs) to trade in the commodities futures market.
2. This was suggested as the government in the Budget has proposed to create 10,000 new farmer producer organisations (FPOs) in the next five years.
3. **Farmers Producer Organisation (FPO)** also known as farmers producer company (FPC) is an entity formed by primary producers. These include farmers, milk producers, fishermen, weavers, rural artisans and craftsmen.
4. The main aim of an FPO is to ensure better income for the farmers through an organization of their own. It provides for sharing of profits/benefits among the members.

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5. A **commodity futures** contract is an agreement to buy or sell a predetermined amount of a commodity at a specific price on a specific date in the future. A futures contract is used as hedging instruments in agricultural commodities.
6. Hedging is a common practice that insures the farmer against a poor harvest by purchasing futures contracts in the same commodity. The primary benefit to farmers from the futures market is the protection in case prices fall below the cost of production.
7. However, farmers still depend on traders in traditional marketing channels who charge high commissions but provide easy access to credit and market. But FPOs can provide the scale of production needed if they receive sufficient information and support.
8. For this, ICRIER has suggested the government to (a) include the need to focus on commodities with limited government intervention on prices and procurement (b) need to identify production centers and (c) build warehouses and delivery centers around them in order to encourage futures trading in these areas.

➤ RBI task force against Indian banks dealing in offshore NDF rupee market

1. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had set up an eight member committee on offshore rupee market. The committee was headed by Usha Thorat. It has submitted its report to the RBI Governor.
2. The committee was set up to examine offshore rupee markets in depth and recommend appropriate policy measures that also factor in the requirement of ensuring the stability of the external value of the rupee.
3. The committee has recommended that currently Indian banks should not be allowed to deal in the offshore rupee derivative market or Non-Deliverable Forward (NDF) markets.
4. However, the committee has recommended the extension of onshore market hours to improve access of overseas users and permit Indian banks to freely offer prices to global clients around the clock.

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5. The committee has also recommended enabling rupee derivatives (settled in foreign currency) to be traded in the International Financial Services Center (IFSC) in India.
6. The committee has also recommended allowing users to undertake forex transactions up to \$100 million in the over-the-counter currency derivative market without the need to establish underlying exposure.
7. **Offshore markets** usually referred to as NDF markets are foreign exchange derivatives contract whereby two parties agree to exchange cash at a given spot rate on a future date. The contract is settled in a widely traded currency such as the US dollar rather than the original currency.
8. Further, onshore currencies simply mean buying the currencies locally, whereas offshore currencies mean buying the currencies outside the national boundaries.
9. **Currency derivatives** are exchange-based futures and options contracts that allow one to hedge against currency movements. Simply put, one can use a currency future contract to exchange one currency for another at a future date at a price decided on the day of the purchase of the contract.

➤ Rajya Sabha gives its nod for Eviction Bill

1. Rajya Sabha has passed the Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorized Occupants) Amendment Bill, 2019.
2. The Bill amends the Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorized Occupants) Act, 1971. The Act provides for the eviction of unauthorized occupants from public premises in certain cases.
3. The Bill defines residential accommodation as the occupation of public premises by a person on the grant of a license for such an occupation. The license must be given for a fixed tenure or for the period the person holds office.
4. The Bill adds a provision laying down the procedure for eviction from residential accommodation. It requires an estate officer to issue a written notice to a person if he is in unauthorized occupation of a residential accommodation.

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5. If the person fails to comply with the order, the estate officer may evict such person from the residential accommodation and take possession of it.
6. However, if the person challenges the eviction order passed by the estate officer in court, he will be required to pay damages for every month of such occupation.

➤ India emerges second largest scrap importer

1. India has emerged as the world's second largest scrap importer. Turkey is still the world's largest recycler and scrap importer of the world.
2. According to the data, the scrap imports have increased by 35% in the first half of this year to 3.87 million tonnes.
3. The imports have increased due to slowdown in the domestic steel industry and cheap price of imported scrap metals.
4. However, India's internal scrap market holds huge potential as India will have 22 million obsolete vehicles by 2025 from 8.7 million at present.
5. Experts have said that incentivisation for scrapping old vehicles can be one of the solutions. They suggested that government could waive off registration charges of a new car provided the buyer produces a certificate proving scrapping of his old car.
6. Government has also recently published its draft steel scrap policy that aims to promote scrap processing to supply the scrap towards electric arc furnace and induction furnace-based steelmaking.
7. Union road ministry has also come out with a vehicle scrapping policy, which has proposed a mandatory cap of 20 years on the life of all commercial vehicles starting in 2020. However; it has been delayed as it is going through a consultative process with the state governments.

➤ RBI to set up central registry for tracking frauds in payment systems

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1. The Reserve Bank of India has announced the creation of a central payments fraud information registry. The registry would ensure a quick and systemic response in cases of financial frauds.
2. At present, there is a mechanism in place for banks to report all banking frauds to the Central Fraud Monitoring Cell of the Reserve Bank.
3. RBI has said that payment system participants will be provided access to this registry for near-real-time fraud monitoring. Further, the aggregated fraud data will also be published to educate customers on emerging risks.
4. This fraud registry was established as RBI in its Vision document 2021 has said that it expects the number of digital transactions to increase more than four times till December 2021.

➤ CBDT eases plight of start-ups with pending angel tax cases

1. The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has issued a circular on angel taxes on startups.
2. The circular has instructed income tax officers that registered startup companies that have already been selected for verification under the angel tax provision will not be scrutinized.
3. Further, even unregistered companies have been given relief with the assessing officer being allowed to scrutinize them only after getting permission from his superior officer.
4. This development comes after finance minister in the budget had said that startups that file requisite declarations and provide information in their returns will not be subjected to any kind of scrutiny in respect of valuations of share premiums.
5. **Angel Tax** is a 30% tax that is levied on the funding received by startups from an Angel investor. However, this 30% tax is levied when startups receive angel funding at a valuation higher than its 'fair market value'. It is counted as income to the company and is taxed.
6. Section 56(2)(vii)(b) deals with the taxation of share premiums received in excess of the fair market value and has been used in the past to serve demand notices to startups over the angel capital they have raised.

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➤ PM Modi to people of J&K, Ladakh: Your representatives will be elected by you, among you

1. Indian Prime Minister has addressed the nation for the first time since the Parliament has approved the Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order; 2019. The order effectively abrogates the special status accorded to Jammu and Kashmir under the provision of Article 370.
2. The Parliament has also passed the Jammu and Kashmir (Reorganisation) Bill, 2019. The bill bifurcates the State into two separate union territories of Jammu and Kashmir (with legislature) and Ladakh (without legislature).
3. Prime minister has assured the J&K that Article 370 of the Constitution had been removed for their benefit, to fulfill the aspirations of the people, and to lift roadblocks on the path to development and progress of the region.
4. Prime minister said that Jammu & Kashmir will not remain a Union territory for long and would regain its statehood. However, the UT status for Ladakh will continue with the Centre seeing it as its special responsibility.
5. He also said that Article 370 had failed to benefit J&K and has only led to separatism, terrorism and corruption. He also emphasized that doing away with Article 370 and the reorganisation of J&K was an internal matter of India.
6. He said that doing away of Article 370 and scrapping of Article 35A would soon see their negative effects fading away. The important laws like right to education and political reservations for SCs and STs would apply to J&K.
7. Further, he said that a plant in Ladakh called Solo which is a boon to those living in high altitudes can be sold worldwide as it has vast medicinal properties.

➤ Pakistan halts Samjhauta Express at Wagah, Indian crew brings it in

1. Pakistan has taken more retaliatory actions in response to India's decision to revoke Jammu and Kashmir's special status under Article 370.

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2. Pakistan has stopped the Samjhauta Express on their side at Wagah border citing security concerns. It has also decided to downgrade its diplomatic ties with India and has suspended bilateral trade.
3. Pakistan has also decided to approach the United Nations, including the UN Security Council over India's move on Kashmir.
4. The **Samjhauta express** commonly called the Friendship Express is a bi-weekly train that runs on Monday and Thursday between Delhi and Attari in India and Lahore in Pakistan. The train was started in 1976 following the Shimla Agreement.

➤ IIT Guwahati develops hand-held device to detect bacteria without going to lab

1. Researchers at Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati have developed a low-cost, hand-held device to detect bacteria called as Organic Field Effect Transistor (OFET).
2. The device has the ability to detect bacteria rapidly without the need for cell culture and microbiological assays.
3. The OFET is an electronic device that works on the principle which charges in the vicinity of the channels of certain semiconductors which can induce a current in them. Thus, the charges on the surface of the bacterium induce a current in the OFET which is registered and read.
4. The device can not only detect bacteria but also differentiate between Gram positive and Gram negative bacteria.
5. The device was developed in a bid to overcome the prevailing challenge of detecting bacterial infection through time-consuming techniques.
6. The device will enable rapid detection of bacteria which is important not only in healthcare but also help in monitoring environmental applications. At present, the detection of bacteria in body fluids is done in laboratories.

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