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➤ Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK)

News: The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has launched a scheme for universal screening of children below 18 years for leprosy and tuberculosis (TB). It is a part of the Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK)

Facts:

About Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK)

- It was launched in 2013 under the National Health Mission. It is implemented by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
- **Aim:** early identification and early intervention for children from birth to 18 years to cover 4 'D's viz. **Defects at birth, Deficiencies, Diseases, Development delays including disability.**
- Child Health Screening and Early Intervention Services under RBSK covers 30 selected health conditions for screening, early detection and free management. Tuberculosis and Leprosy were previously not a part of it.

Additional Information:

About Leprosy:

- Leprosy, also known as Hansen's disease is a chronic neuro-muscular disorder. It is caused by several strains of **Mycobacterium leprae**.
- It can be cured with Multi-Drug Therapy (MDT).

Status of Leprosy in India:

- In 2005, India achieved the goal of elimination of leprosy as a public health problem, defined by WHO as less than 1 case per 10,000 population.

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- All states except Chhattisgarh and the Union Territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli have eliminated leprosy. However, 1.15 lakh to 1.2 lakh new leprosy cases are still detected annually

Elimination efforts:

India:

- **National Leprosy Eradication Programme** was launched in 1983 with an objective to arrest the disease activity in all the known cases of leprosy and eventually eliminate leprosy.

Global:

- **Global leprosy strategy 2016-2020:** It has been launched by WHO. It aims at a) zero children with leprosy-affected disabilities by 2020 and b) reduction of new patients diagnosed with leprosy-related deformities to >1 per million population

About Tuberculosis (TB)

- TB is an infectious airborne bacterial disease caused by Mycobacterium tuberculosis.
- When TB infection becomes resistant to the first line of treatment — isoniazid and rifampicin, it is called Multi-drug resistant TB (MDR-TB). When the infection becomes resistant even to the second-line treatment it is called Extensively-drug resistant tuberculosis (XDR-TB)

Status of TB in India

- The WHO 2018 Global TB Report says that India has the highest burden of TB and multi-drug-resistant TB (MDR-TB)

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- TB kills an estimated 4, 80,000 Indians every year — an average over 1,300 every day.

Elimination Efforts:

India:

- The Indian government has put forward **National Strategic Plan (NSP) for TB Elimination, 2017-2025**. The plan is a framework to provide guidance for the activities of various stakeholders to reduce the burden of TB mortality and morbidity.
- In 2018, the government launched the **TB Free India campaign** to take activities under NSP for TB Elimination. The campaign seeks to **eliminate TB in India by 2025**

Global:

- **SDG 3.3:** It calls to eliminate TB by 2030
- **WHO End TB Strategy:** It aims to end the global TB epidemic, with targets to reduce TB deaths by 95% and to cut new cases by 90% between 2015 and 2035

➤ Tigers in High Altitudes

News: Union Environment Minister has released a study on the Status of Tiger Habitats in high altitude ecosystems.

Facts

- The study was conducted by the Global Tiger Forum (GTF) in partnership with the Governments of Bhutan, India and Nepal and along with the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

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- The study has been supported by the Integrated Tiger Habitat Conservation Program (ITHCP) of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and KfW (German Development Bank).
- The study has revealed that even ecology at high altitude is compatible for the tiger growth.
- The study has called for developing a master plan for the Tigers at High altitude with gainful portfolio for local communities and ensuring centrality of tiger conservation in development.
- The study has also identified possible viable habitats, corridor linkages, and anthropogenic pressures and induced landscape-level changes for evolving an in-situ conservation roadmap.

Additional Information:

Global Tiger forum

- Global Tiger forum is the only intergovernmental platform of tiger range countries which has been consolidating Tiger Action Plans of the range countries.
- The forum was formed in 1993 on recommendations of an international symposium on Tiger Conservation. It is headquartered in New Delhi, India.

Integrated Tiger Habitat Conservation Programme (ITHCP)

- ITHCP was formed in 2014. It aims to save tigers in the wild, preserve tiger habitats, and support human populations living in tiger landscapes.
- This initiative was also formed to contribute to the Global Tiger Recovery Programme (GTRP). GTRP is a global effort to double tiger numbers in the wild by 2022.
- The programme consists of a portfolio of 12 large-scale projects in key Tiger Conservation Landscapes across Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Nepal and Myanmar.

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➤ Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index(TTCI) Report

News: World Economic Forum (WEF) has released the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI) Report

Facts:

About Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI)

- The index is published biennially by World Economic Forum (WEF).The Index ranks 140 economies.
- The countries are ranked in four sub-indexes namely (a) enabling environment (b) travel and tourism policy and enabling conditions, (c) infrastructure and (d) natural and cultural resources.

Key takeaways from the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI)

- The index has ranked India at 34th place. Earlier,India was ranked 40th in 2018.
- Spain was ranked first followed by France, Germany and Japan with the United States replacing the UK in the top five.
- The index has said that China is the largest travel and tourism economy in the Asia-Pacific and 13th most competitive globally.

Additional Information:

World Economic Forum (WEF)

- WEF was established in 1971 as a not-for-profit foundation and is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.
- The objective of WEF is to improve the state of the world by engaging business, political, academic and other leaders of society to shape global, regional and industry agendas.

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➤ Explained: Air pollution in Indian homes key heart risk factor, The Lancet finds

News: A study has been conducted by PURE (Prospective Urban Rural Epidemiology) to look at the Cardiovascular Diseases (CVDs) risk factors in middle-aged adults in 21 countries.

Facts:

- The study has found that Cardiovascular Diseases (CVDs) remains the leading cause of mortality among middle aged adults globally accounting for more than 40% of deaths.
- However, the deaths from cardiac disease were three times that of cancer related deaths in countries like India while in high-income countries(HIC) the deaths from cancer was twice that of CVD.
- The study has said that the fact that cancer deaths are now twice as frequent as CVD deaths in HIC indicates a transition in the predominant causes of death in middle age.
- The high cardiovascular disease deaths in countries like India is due to (a) Lower quality of healthcare (b)Lack of insurance (c)Indoor or Household air pollution (d)Hypertension and (e)other factors include poor diet among others.
- The study has recommended that countries like India need to start investing in preventing and managing non-communicable diseases including cardiovascular disease rather than focusing largely on infectious diseases.

Additional Information:

About Cardiovascular Diseases (CVDs)

- Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is a general term for conditions affecting the heart or blood vessels.

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- It's usually associated with a build-up of fatty deposits inside the arteries (atherosclerosis) and an increased risk of blood clots.
- It can also be associated with damage to arteries in organs such as the brain, heart, kidneys and eyes.

➤ Manufacturers told to rush rabies vaccines to areas facing shortage

News: National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) has ordered the manufacturers to supply the anti-rabies vaccines where there is a shortage of these medicines.

Facts:

About Rabies:

- Rabies is caused by Ribonucleic Acid (RNA) virus that is present in the saliva of a rabid animal. It is transmitted following a bite of a rabid animal that leads to deposition of the saliva and the virus in the wound.
- The death invariably occurs in four days to two weeks due to cardio-respiratory failure. However, the time interval between the bite and occurrence of symptoms varies from four days to two years or rarely even more.
- Thus, it is important to remove the virus from the wound as early as possible by immediately washing the wound with water and soap followed by application of antiseptics that reduce chances of nerve infection.
- According to the Health Ministry's data, India is a hotbed of human rabies. India accounts for more than one-third of the world's rabies deaths.
- India has a population of 30 million stray dogs which cause 96% of rabies in humans. Each year, as many as 20,000 people die due to the vaccine-preventable fatality.

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About NPPA

- NPPA is an independent body set up in 1997 under Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers.
- The functions of NPPA are:(a)To implement and enforce the provisions of the Drugs (Prices Control) Order (b)Deal with all legal matters arising out of the decisions of the Authority (c) To monitor the availability of drugs, identify shortages and (d)To collect/ maintain data on production, exports and imports, profitability of companies for bulk drugs and formulation.

➤ Nuakhai: The greatest harvesting festival of Odisha

News: The Nuakhai festival is being celebrated in the state of Odisha. Nuakhai is an agricultural festival mainly observed by people of Western Odisha in India.

Nuakhai festival:

- Nuakhai festival traces its origin to the Vedic period where the sages or Rishis used to talk about Panch yajna.
- The word nua means new and khai means food so the name means the farmers are in possession of the newly harvested rice. It is observed to welcome the new rice of the season.
- The farmers offer the first produce of their respective lands to Goddess Samaleswari and then consume it personally.
- Apart from the rituals of offering the new crop to the deity, the 'Nuakhai Juhar' is a major ritual of the festival which is an exchange of greetings with friends, relatives and well-wishers.

➤ Explained: Now with first woman president, what is Asiatic Society, Mumbai

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News: Asiatic Society of Mumbai has elected the first woman president in the 215 years of its existence. Professor Vispi Balaporia will head the institution.

Facts:

About Asiatic Society:

- Asiatic Society is a learned society whose activities include conducting historical research, awarding historians, and running an institute of postgraduate studies.
- The society's library is home to over 1 lakh books which consists of rare manuscripts contributed to it by the East India Company as well as generous donations.
- The Society offers Junior Fellowships for research and recommends scholars for the Tagore National Fellowship of the Ministry of Culture. The Governor of Maharashtra is the Society's Chief Patron.

History of Asiatic Society

- Asiatic Society was established in 1804 as the Literary Society of Bombay. It was founded by Sir James Mackintosh, a Scottish colonial administrator who had a keen interest in Oriental studies.
- In 1826, it became the Mumbai arm of the London-based Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland and came to be called the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (BBRAS).
- In 1954, the institution was severed from its London parent and became the Asiatic Society of Bombay. In 2002, it acquired its present name.

➤ External benchmark-based lending must: RBI

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News: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has made it mandatory for banks to link all new floating rate personal or retail loans and floating rate loans to MSMEs to an external benchmark rate from October 1st, 2019.

Facts:

- The RBI has given the options to banks for external benchmark rates which are (a) RBI repo rate (b) 91-day T-bill yield (c) 182-day T-bill yield or (d) any other benchmark market interest rate produced by the Financial Benchmarks India Pvt. Ltd.
- At present, interest rates on loans are linked to a bank's marginal cost of fund-based interest rate (MCLR).
- The biggest problem with the current system is the lack of required transmission of policy rates by the banks to the borrowers.

Additional Information:

Repo rate

- Repo stands for 'Repurchasing Option'. It refers to the rate at which commercial banks borrow money from the RBI.

T-bills

- T-bills or treasury bills are short term securities issued on behalf of the government by the RBI and are used in managing short term liquidity needs of the government.
- The 91-day T-bills are auctioned every week on Wednesday and 182-day and 364-day T-bills are auctioned every alternate week on Wednesdays'- bills are issued at a discount and are redeemed at par.

Marginal Cost of lending rate (MCLR)

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- The marginal cost of funds based lending rate (MCLR) refers to the minimum interest rate of a bank below which it cannot lend except in some cases allowed by the RBI. It is an internal benchmark or reference rate for the bank.
- This rate is based on four components namely (a) marginal cost of funds, (b) negative carry on account of cash reserve ratio (c) operating costs and (d) tenor premium.

➤ Army mountaineering team successfully scales Mt. Kun

News: The Indian Army has successfully conducted a mountaineering expedition to Mount Kun.

Facts:

- Mount Kun is the second-highest peak in between the Zaskar and Kargil regions of Ladakh.
- The mountain was first climbed in 1913. It is a part of the Nun Kun mountain massif in the Himalayas.
- Nun (7135 m) is the highest peak in the part of the Himalayan range lying on the Indian side of the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir.
- Mount Kun is located north of Nun and is separated by a 4 km-long snowy plateau.

➤ Prime Minister's Visit to Russia

News: Indian Prime Minister is on a visit to Russia as the guest of honour at Eastern Economic Forum (EEF). The bilateral summit was held on the sidelines of the EEF.

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- India and Russia has agreed to open a maritime route between the ports of Chennai and Vladivostok to ensure connectivity between the two countries. A Memorandum of Intent was signed in this regard.
- This shipping link would enable to transfer cargo between Chennai and Vladivostok in 24 days in comparison to over 40 days currently taken to transport goods from India to Far East Russia via Europe.
- Russian has backed India's moves on J&K and emphasized that both India and Russia are against outside influence in the internal matters of any nation.
- Russia has also agreed to help train Indian astronauts for the manned space mission named the Gaganyaan project.
- They have also signed a pact under which India will manufacture spare parts for Russian military equipment. This pact will convert the India Russia relationship from one of buyer-seller to a collaborative one.
- They have also signed a five-year road map for cooperation in the energy sector comprising joint development of oil and gas fields in Russia and India including offshore fields.
- They have also agreed to step up industrial cooperation and create new technological and investment partnership, especially in advanced high-tech areas with an aim to increase bilateral trade to \$30 billion by 2025.
- Further, the two countries highlighted the successful cooperation in the construction of the Rooppur Nuclear power plant (NPP) in Bangladesh and expressed their readiness to expand similar cooperation in third countries.

➤ Dawood, Masood Azhar among 4 declared 'individual terrorists' under amended law

News: The Central Government has decided to declare Masood Azhar, Hafiz Saeed, Zaki-ur-Rehman-Lakhvi and Dawood Ibrahim as individual terrorists under Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act, 2019.

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- Parliament has passed the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Bill 2019.
- The Bill amends the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 providing special procedures to deal with terrorist activities and individuals and groups that foster terrorism in India.
- Under the Act, the central government may designate an organization as a terrorist organization if it (a) commits or participates in acts of terrorism, (b) prepares for terrorism (c) promotes terrorism or (d) is otherwise involved in terrorism. The bill additionally empowers the government to designate individuals as terrorists on the same grounds.
- Under the Act, an investigating officer is required to obtain the prior approval of the Director General of Police to seize properties that may be connected with terrorism.
- The Bill adds that if the investigation is conducted by an officer of the National Investigation Agency (NIA), the approval of the Director General of NIA would be required for seizure of such property.
- Under the Act, investigation of cases may be conducted by officers of the rank of Deputy Superintendent or Assistant Commissioner of Police or above. The Bill additionally empowers the officers of the NIA of the rank of Inspector or above to investigate cases.
- The Act defines terrorist acts to include acts committed within the scope of any of the treaties listed in a schedule to the Act. The Bill adds another treaty to the list. This is the International Convention for Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (2005).

➤ Kartarpur: Final deal stalled over service fee from pilgrims, access to Indian officials

News: Indian and Pakistan officials are holding discussions to finalise the remaining modalities of Kartarpur corridor.

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- The Kartarpur Corridor is a 4km long proposed corridor comprising border gates, road and a bridge to link Dera Baba Nanak gurdwara in Gurdaspur district in India to Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur in Pakistan. It is aimed at allowing the easy movement of Sikh pilgrims to the Kartarpur gurdwara.
- The gurdwara in Kartarpur stands on the bank of River Ravi, about 120 km northeast of Lahore. It is revered as Guru Nanak's final resting place.
- India wants the corridor to be ready in time for pilgrims to visit Kartarpur to celebrate Guru Nanak's 550th birth anniversary in November, 2019.

➤ India among top 10 nations in gold reserves

News: According to the latest release by the World Gold Council, India has ranked 10th in the country list with total gold reserves of 618.2 tonnes.

Facts:

- USA has been ranked 1st with total gold reserves of 8,133.5 tonnes followed by Germany, International Monetary Fund (IMF), Italy, France, Russia and China. Pakistan holds the 45th position.

Additional Information:

World Gold Council (WGC)

- The World Gold Council is the market development organisation for the gold industry. It is an association of world's leading gold producers.
- It was established in 1987 and is headquartered in United Kingdom.

Gold Reserves

- Gold reserves are central banks' total holding of gold as a percentage of their foreign exchange reserves.

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- WGC gold reserve data are based on International Monetary Fund's International Financial Statistics (IFS) which tracks central banks' reported purchases and sales along with gold as a percentage of their international reserves.

International Monetary Fund

- The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is an organization of 189 countries. It was established in 1945.
- The main goal of IMF is to ensure the stability of the international monetary system. It also seeks to facilitate international trade, promote high employment and sustainable economic growth, and reduce poverty around the world.

➤ The Global Livability Index 2019

News: The **Economist Intelligence Unit** has released its Global Livability Index 2019

Facts:

About Global Livability Index:

- The index assesses which locations around the world provide the best or the worst living conditions. 140 cities are assessed.
- Each city is assessed on 30 qualitative and quantitative factors across five broad categories: a) stability, b) healthcare, c) culture and environment, d) education, and e) infrastructure
- Each factor in a city is rated as acceptable, tolerable, uncomfortable, undesirable or intolerable.
- Factor-wise scores are then compiled and weighted to provide a score of 1–100, where 1 is considered intolerable and 100 is considered ideal.

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Key takeaways from the Global Livability Index 2019

- Vienna (Austria) has been ranked the most liveable city followed by Melbourne (Australia), Sydney (Australia), Osaka (Japan) and Calgary (Canada)
- New Delhi has been ranked 118th as compared to 112th in 2018. The downgrade in rank has been due to problems linked to climate change (air pollution, water scarcity) and rising crimes. Mumbai has been ranked 119th.
- Among the BRIC countries, Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) ranked 89th, Moscow (Russia) ranked 68th, Beijing (China) ranked 76th.
- The world's least liveable cities were Damascus (Syria), Lagos (Nigeria), and Dhaka (Bangladesh)

Additional Information:

BRIC

- BRIC is an acronym used to represent four countries that have similar economic development. The four countries are Brazil, Russia, India, and China. The acronym was first used in 2001 by economist Jim O'Neill.
- Since 2009 BRIC countries has held annual international summits.
- In 2010, South Africa was officially admitted as a BRIC nation following an invitation from China and the other BRIC nations, making the current acronym BRICS, for Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

➤ Supreme Court to study plea for food for all

News: The Supreme Court has agreed to examine a plea urging the court to direct the Chief Secretaries across the country to formulate schemes for the implementation of community kitchens to combat starvation deaths.

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- The petition highlighted the success of various **state-funded community kitchens** addressing the problem of hunger and malnutrition across India. Example: Amma Unavagam (Tamil Nadu), Annapurna Rasoi (Rajasthan), Indira Canteens (Karnataka), Ahaar Centre (Odisha) etc.
- The plea also stated that **Right to Food is inherent to a life with dignity**, and **Article 21** of the Constitution of India which guarantees a fundamental right to life and personal liberty.
- Further, **Article 47** (one of the Directive Principles) states that it is the duty of the State to raise the level of nutrition and standard of living of its people as a primary responsibility

Status of hunger in India:

- The **Global Hunger Index (2018)** ranks India 103rd out of 119 countries. India was ranked below many neighbouring countries, including China (25), Nepal (72), Myanmar (68), Sri Lanka (67) and Bangladesh (86).
- According to the **State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2017** report, India is home to 190.7 million undernourished people- a 14.5% prevalence of hunger vis-à-vis the country's total population.
- According to **NHFS Report (2017)**, 19 crore people in India are compelled to sleep on an empty stomach every night. Over three lakh children die every year owing to hunger and malnutrition.

➤ Hurricane Dorian

News: Hurricane Dorian made a landfall at Abacos Islands in the Bahamas.

Facts:

- Hurricane Dorian is a **Category 5 hurricane** –the highest on the **Saffir-Simpson scale**. It had a wind speed of around 285 kilometers/hour at landfall.

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- **About Hurricanes:**
 - Hurricanes are name given to tropical cyclones occurring in the Atlantic Ocean. To qualify as a hurricane, a storm must have sustained winds of 74 mph or more.
- **Categorization of Hurricanes:** Hurricanes are categorized using a the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale which is a **1 to 5 rating** based on a hurricane's **sustained wind speed:**
 - Category 1: Winds 74 to 95 mph (Minor damage)
 - Category 2: Winds 96 to 110 mph (Extensive damage)
 - Category 3: Winds 111 to 129 mph (Devastating)
 - Category 4: Winds 130 to 156 mph (Catastrophic damage)
 - Category 5: Winds 157 mph or higher (The absolute worst and can level houses and destroy buildings)

Additional Information:

Tropical Cyclones:

- Tropical cyclones are storms that originate and intensify over warm tropical oceans. They are intense low pressure areas with very strong winds circulating around it in anti-clockwise direction in the Northern Hemisphere and in clockwise direction in the Southern Hemisphere.
- The central calm region of the storm is called the “**Eye**“. The Eye is surrounded by **Eye wall** which is the region with heaviest precipitation and strongest winds
- Tropical Cyclones are known by different names in different regions:
 - Cyclones in Indian Ocean
 - Hurricanes in Atlantic
 - Typhoons in Western Pacific in South China Sea
 - Willy-Willies in Western Australia
- **Necessary Conditions for development of a tropical cyclone and Formation:**

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- Continuous supply of abundant warm and moist air
- Sea temperature in lower latitudes should be around 27°C
- A distance from the Equator is necessary, so that it allows the Coriolis Effect to deflect winds blowing toward the low pressure center. Tropical cyclones develop in inter-tropical convergence zone
- Pre-existence of weak tropical disturbances
- Presence of anticyclonic circulation at the height of 9 to 15km above the surface
- Low vertical wind shear between the surface and the upper troposphere. Vertical wind shear is the magnitude of wind change with height.

➤ UNCCD CoP 14: Report on Soil Organic Carbon released

News: The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)'s Committee on Science and Technology (CST) has released its report on Soil Organic Carbon titled “*Realising the Carbon Benefits of Sustainable Land Management Practices: Guidelines for Estimation of Soil Organic Carbon in the Context of Land Degradation Neutrality Planning and Monitoring*”.

Facts:

- The report emphasises the importance of SOC in preventing land degradation and desertification. It also provides guidelines to help countries identify suitable locally-relevant sustainable land management practices to maintain or enhance SOC
- **Soil Organic carbon (SOC):**
 - It is defined as the soil material of living origin (e.g. plants, microbes, soil biota) at varying stages of decomposition.
 - It acts as a key resource for energy and nutrients, and affects many soil properties such as hydrology, structure, and habitat.
 - It is the largest carbon pool in the terrestrial biosphere

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• Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN)

- It is defined as a state where the amount and quality of land resources necessary to support ecosystem functions and services and enhance food security, remains stable or increases within specified temporal and spatial scales and ecosystems
- Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 15.3 envisions combating desertification, restoring degraded land and soil, and striving to achieve a land degradation-neutral world by 2030.
- There are three global indicators for LDN: 1) Land cover (land cover change); 2) Land productivity (net primary productivity); 3) Carbon stocks (soil organic carbon,)
- India's target for LDN is 30 million hectares by 2030.

Additional Information:

About UNCCD

- The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management. It was established in 1994. It has 197 parties.
- UNCCD seeks to work towards maintaining and restoring land and soil productivity and mitigating the effects of drought.
- India for the first time is hosting the 14th session of the Conference of Parties (COP-14) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

Land Degradation and Desertification

- **Land degradation** is any reduction or loss in the biological or economic productive capacity of the land resource base

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- **Desertification** is the process of ecological degradation by which economically productive land becomes less productive. In some cases it may lead to the development of a desert-like landscape.



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