Prelim Bits 01-01-2019

Ultima Thule

- Officially called, **MU_{69}**, is a contact binary composed of two joined bodies 19 km and 14 km across that are nicknamed "Ultima" and "Thule", respectively.
- When two asteroids collide and get stuck together it is known as a contact binary.
- It is named after a mythical island in medieval literature.
- Ultima Thule means ‘beyond Thule’, beyond the borders of the known world, symbolizing the exploration of the distant Kuiper Belt and Kuiper Belt objects.
- It was discovered in 2014 with the help of the Hubble Space Telescope.
- Scientists are not sure whether it is round or oblong or even if it is a single object or a cluster.
- It is the farthest and quite possibly the oldest, a cosmic body ever photographed by humankind.
- Scientists decided to study it with New Horizons launched in 2006 after the spaceship completed its main mission of flying by Pluto in 2015 and returning the detailed images of the dwarf planet.

Monuments of National Importance

- Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has recently declared 6 monuments as protected and of national importance.
- According to the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958, an “Ancient Monument means any structure, erection or monument, or any tumulus or place of interment, or any cave, rock-sculpture, inscription or monolith which is of historical, archaeological or artistic interest and which has been in existence for not less than 100 years."
- With the new addition of 6 new sites, there are 3,693 centrally protected monuments/sites under the ASI in the country.
- Uttar Pradesh (745 monuments/sites), Karnataka (506) and Tamil Nadu (413) have the highest number of ASI-maintained sites.
- The New Monuments which are added recently are

1. 125-year-old Old High Court Building in Nagpur,
2. Mughal-era monuments in Agra - Haveli of Agha Khan and Hathi Khana,
3. Ancient Neemrana Baori in Rajasthan's Alwar district,
4. The Group of Temples at Ranipur Jharail in Odisha's Bolangir district &
5. The Vishnu Temple in Kotali, Pithoragarh district, Uttarkhand

- The last monument to be included in the previous list, in 2015, was the Vishnu Temple in Nadavayal in Kerala's Wayanad district.

RBI Ratios

- According to the recent survey, RBI's reserves as a percentage of its balance sheet is among the highest among 10 comparable economies.
- The analysis, which looked at the central banks of the BRICS countries, found that the RBI's reserves form 26.2% its balance sheet.
- Only two central banks, those of South Africa and Russia, have a reserve ratio higher than this.
- The other two BRICS nations, China and Brazil, have reserve ratios of 1.7% and 0.2%, respectively.
- However, the bulk of RBI reserves are notional and thus their value can only be unlocked when the underlying assets are sold.
- For example, 100 billion invested in 2010 at USD/INR of 45, valued today at USD/INR of 70, will show a valuation gain when reported in INR terms.
- All such gains are non-cash, notional and are shown as higher asset values and as revaluation reserves on the liabilities side.
- The report concluded that these gains from the currency exchange movement will be booked and the cash realised only when the assets are sold.
- As such, the RBI does not have very high free cash reserves that it can give back to the government.

Nagaland under AFPSA

- The Central government has recently extended the Armed Forces Special Powers Act in Nagaland for 6 more months.
- Under AFSPA, security forces have the powers to conduct operations anywhere and arrest anyone without any prior notice.
- The AFSPA has been in force in Nagaland for several decades.
- It has not been withdrawn even after a framework agreement was signed on August, 2015 by Naga insurgent group NSCN-IM.

Click here to know more about AFPSA.

Indian Science Congress

- 106th Indian Science Congress is going to be held in Jalandhar, Punjab.
- It is based on the theme 'Future India: Science and Technology'.
- It will be organised by the Ministry of Science and Technology.
- The event will play a pivotal role in stimulating scientific research effort and raising the scientific temperament in the country and the world.
- Women's Science Congress will be part of the event to showcase the contribution of women in Science, Technology and the Society.

Source: The Hindu, PIB

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