Prelim Bits 12-05-2019

UN Accord on Plastic Waste

- In a meeting organised by UNEP, 180 governments have agreed on a new UN accord to regulate the export of plastic waste.
- It has amended the 1989 Basel Convention on the control of hazardous wastes to include plastic waste in a legally-binding framework.
- This new amendment would empower developing countries to refuse "dumping plastic waste" by others.
- It has also eliminated 2 toxic chemical groups from the purview of basel convention.
- Dicofol and Perfluorooctanoic Acid, plus related compounds have been used in a wide variety of industrial and domestic applications.
- Even though the U.S. and a few others have not signed the accord, they cannot ship plastic waste to countries that are on board with the deal.
- The Nordic governments in April became the first in the world to formally call for a global treaty to tackle plastic waste in oceans.

Click here to know more about Basel Convention.

Apache Guardian Attack Helicopters

- Indian Air Force has signed contract with the US government and Boeing Ltd in 2015 for Apache helicopters.
- Boeing has recently handed over the 1st of the 22 apache helicopters to India.
- It is a multi-role attack helicopter with a capability to carry out precision attacks and operate in hostile airspace.
- The helicopter also has the unique capacity to transmit and receive battlefield picture through data uplinking and networking.
- It has been customised to suit the requirements of the Indian military and will have significant capability in mountainous terrain.
- The introduction of Apache will lead to the modernisation of the IAF's attack helicopter fleet which at present is equipped with Russian origin MI-35 helicopters.

UNEP Report

- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has released a report,

"Sand and Sustainability: Finding new solutions for environmental governance of global sand resources".

- It highlighted that sand consumption globally has been increasing and we are extracting it at rates exceeding natural replenishment rates.
- Report says that Sand and gravel are the 2nd largest natural resources extracted and traded by volume after water, but among the least regulated.
- It also says that, China and India head the list of critical hotspots for sand extraction impacts in rivers, lakes and on coastlines
- While 85% to 90% of global sand demand is met from quarries, and sand and gravel pits, the 10% to 15% extracted from rivers and sea shores.
- Their extraction often results in

i. River and coastal erosion and
ii. Threats to freshwater and marine fisheries and aquatic ecosystems,
iii. Instability of river banks leading to increased flooding, and
iv. Lowering of ground water levels.

Terra and Aqua Satellites

- NASA Satellites Terra and Aqua have tracked the movement of cyclone Fani through Infrared, microwave and visible imagery of it.
- Both are Earth Observing satellites, studying the precipitation, evaporation, and cycling of water.
- Both employed MODIS (or Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer) as a key instrument, which image the same area on Earth approximately three hours apart.
- Terra's orbit around the Earth is timed so that it passes from north to south across the equator in the morning, while Aqua passes south to north over the equator in the afternoon.
- Terra MODIS and Aqua MODIS are viewing the entire Earth's surface every 1 to 2 days, acquiring data in 36 spectral bands, or groups of wavelengths.

Source: The Hindu, Indian Express

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