Prelim Bits 25-08-2017

Regional Connectivity Scheme – UDAN

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- Ministry of Civil Aviation launched the bidding process for the second round under Regional Connectivity Scheme UDAN.
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- The thrust in the second round will be on improving connectivity to **Priority Areas** by introducing more operational flexibility and promoting helicopter operations.
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- Priority areas include North East, Jammu & Kashmir, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep.
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- The Ministry abolished the 150 km minimum distance required between two airports to be qualified for operations under the scheme.
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- It also announced increasing viability gap funding for helicopter operators for facilitating more participation.
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- The scheme provides concessions to the airlines to encourage them to fly on regional routes by providing viability gap funding.
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- The selected airlines will have to commit 50% of the seats on RCS flights and there will be cap on fares charged per seat up to Rs.2,500.
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Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

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- India moved a proposal in SCO to organise a Joint urban earthquake search and rescue exercise to improve collective preparedness.
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- The proposal was moved in the recently held Heads of Government meeting of SCO dealing with the prevention and elimination of emergency situation in

Ata city of the Kyrgyz Republic.
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- SCO is a Eurasian political, economic, and military organisation formed in 2001 by member countries China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.
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- Recently India and Pakistan was admitted as full members in Astana summit, 2017.
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- Observer status is given to Iran, Mongolia, Belarus and Afghanistan.
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- Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Turkey and Sri Lanka are dialogue partners.
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- The Council of Heads of State is the top decision-making body in the SCO.
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- The Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), headquartered in Tashkent, is a permanent organ of the SCO which serves to promote cooperation of member states against terrorism, separatism and extremism.
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Traditional Water Conservation Structure

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- Dakshina Kannada (Coastal district in Karnataka) is planning to revive at least 500 traditional water conservation structures such as **“Kattas”**.
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- It is a temporary structure built across the streams and rivulets to tap water for farming during summer months.
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- It helps to improve water table in the vicinity.
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Bhandhan Bank

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- Bandhan Bank has initiated the process of an Initial Public Offering (IPO).
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- An IPO is the first time that the stock of a private company is offered to the public.

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- Bandhan is the first microfinance institution to receive universal banking licence in 2015.
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- Universal banking combines the services of a commercial bank and an investment bank, providing all services within one entity.
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- The services can include deposit accounts, a variety of investment services and may even provide insurance services.
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- The RBI’s guidelines mandate the bank to get listed within three years from commencement of banking operations.
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FDI Proposals

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- Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) under Ministry of Commerce is the nodal ministry for FDI.
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- Earlier, FIPB, an inter-ministerial body was responsible for clearing the proposals which are not under the direct approval route.
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- There is a new approval mechanism following the winding up of Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB).
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- Now individual departments have been empowered to clear FDI proposals in consultation with DIPP.
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- The concerned ministry has the right to reject FDI proposals but it has to compulsorily seek the concurrence of the DIPP within 6-8 weeks.
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- All FDI from Pakistan and Bangladesh and proposals requiring approval in private security agencies and manufacture of small arms have to be approved by the ministry of home affairs.
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Mosses as Bio-indicators

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- A Bio-indicator is a living organism that gives us an idea of the health of an ecosystem.
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- Some organisms are very sensitive to pollution in their environment, so if pollutants are present, the organism may change its morphology, physiology or behaviour, or it could even die.
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- Bryophyte is a collective term for mosses, hornworts and liverworts which can be used as Bio-indicators. It thrives well in humid cities.
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- Mosses found on rocks and trees in cities can be used to measure the impact of atmospheric change and could prove a low-cost way to monitor urban pollution.
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- Mosses generally absorb water and nutrients from their immediate environments.
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- Thus it responds to pollution or drought-stress by changing shape, density or disappearing, allowing scientists to calculate atmospheric alterations.
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