Prelim Bits 28-10-2017

Waning of Arctic sea ice

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- Arctic sea ice is a key indicator of climate change.
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- According to the research undertaken by the Cryosphere Climate Research Group, Arctic sea ice could be dwindling faster than predicted.
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- Dwindling ice cover led to reduction in the amount of solar radiation reflected back in to space and increases its absorption.
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- Thereby it hastens the warming of oceans which has an impact on weather phenomena like the El Nino that influences the Asian Monsoon.
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- The thinning ice would make it difficult for animals like polar bears and seals and organisms like phytoplankton to survive
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- The researchers have found that satellite measurements over the years have overestimated the thickness of Arctic sea ice by as much as 25% because of the presence of salty snow.
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- This is because of salty snow (brine is expelled upward from the ice surface) does not allow radar waves from satellites to penetrate, leading to skewed measurements.
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Vikram Class offshore Patrol Vessel

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- Vikram is the first of a series of seven offshore patrol vessels (OPV).
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- OPV are long-range surface ships capable of coastal and off-shore patrolling, policing maritime zones, control & surveillance, anti-smuggling and anti-piracy operations.
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- It is the country's first-ever such defence craft to be built in a private shipyard (L&T).
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- It is likely to be inducted into the Indian Coast Guard in April 2018.
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Kala Azar

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- Visceral leishmaniasis (VL), also known as kala-azar, is caused by the protozoan Leishmania parasites.
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- It is transmitted to humans through infected sandflies.
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- It is characterized by irregular bouts of fever, weight loss, enlargement of the spleen and liver, and anaemia.
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- The parasite migrates to the internal organs such as the liver, spleen, and bone marrow, and, if left untreated, may result in the death.
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- It is endemic to the Indian subcontinent in 119 districts in four countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal).
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- India itself accounts for half the global burden of the disease.
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- Scientists have recently identified an unknown virus that may be responsible for the persistence of kala-azar.
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- However, scientists are still not clear how the parasites cause the infection and how they manage to hide within the body.
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Public Financial Management System (PFMS)

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- PFMS, earlier known as Central Plan Schemes Monitoring System (CPSMS), is a web-based online software application.
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- It is developed and implemented by the Office of Controller General of Accounts.

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- It is launched with the objective of tracking funds released under all Plan schemes of GoI, and real time reporting of expenditure at all levels of Programme implementation.
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- In 2013, its scope was enlarged to cover direct payment to beneficiaries under both Plan and non-Plan Schemes.
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- In 2014, it has been envisaged that digitization of accounts shall be achieved through PFMS.
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- The biggest strength of PFMS is its integration with the Core banking system.
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- Union Finance Ministry has recently ascertained the mandatory use of PFMS will help in monitoring the flow of funds to beneficiaries of different government welfare schemes.
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VARUNA

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- Recently, India and France discussed about enhancing the scope of their joint exercises, in particular the **VARUNA naval exercise** scheduled in early 2018.
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- Both countries will also actively explore additional measures to facilitate operational level interactions between their respective armed forces.
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'Udyami Mitra' portal

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- Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) has revamped its Udyami Mitra with enhanced features.
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- The portal was launched to improve accessibility of credit for the MSMEs.
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- It helps MSMEs for submission of loan applications which can be picked up by multiple lenders.

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- It aims at bringing in transparency in processing of loans by the banks.
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- Now non-banking finance companies and small finance banks are being on-boarded on the platform for enhancing flow of credit to MSMEs.
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- Under the new capitalisation plan banks will have to compete for loans through the revamped udyamimitra portal.
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Source: PIB, The Hindu

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