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India to Co-chair Consultative Group of GFDRR

Recently, India is unanimously chosen as co-chair of the **Consultative Group (CG) of Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR)** for the fiscal year 2020.

Key points

- This is the first time that India has been provided with the opportunity of co-chairing the CG meeting of GFDRR.
- The opportunity will give India a chance to work with the member countries and organizations of GFDRR with a focused contribution towards advancing the disaster risk reduction agenda during the course of the year.
- India's objective is to pursue a focused agenda and develop synergies with ongoing work streams of GFDRR. **Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (DRI)** will be a central theme of engagement with the GFDRR partners and stakeholders.
- **India became a member of CG of GFDRR in 2015.** India's candidature was backed by its consistent progress in **Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)** in the country and its initiative to form a coalition on disaster resilient infrastructure.
- The **Consultative Group (CG)** is GFDRR's **primary decision-making and advisory body**.
- **Consisting of Members and Observers**, the CG sets GFDRR's long-term strategic objectives and oversees expected results.
- The **CG has a Chair, who is a representative of the World Bank Group**, and a **Co-chair, who is a Member of the CG**.

Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR)

- GFDRR is a global partnership that **helps developing countries better understand and reduce their vulnerability to natural hazards and climate change**.
- It is a **grant-funding mechanism, managed by the World Bank**, that supports

disaster risk management projects worldwide.

- **GFDRR was established in September 2006** as a global partnership of the **World Bank, UN agencies and bilateral donors**.
- Its missions are:
 - to mainstream disaster reduction and climate change adaptation (CCA) in country development strategies, and
 - to foster and strengthen global and regional cooperation among various stakeholders under the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) system.
- GFDRR contributes to the implementation of the **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction** by helping countries to integrate disaster risk management and climate change adaptation into development strategies and investment programs and recover from disasters quickly and effectively.

Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) 2015-2030

- The Sendai Framework was adopted by the UN Member States in 2015 at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai City, Miyagi Prefecture, Japan.
- It is a 15 year; **voluntary, non-binding agreement** which recognizes that the State has the primary role to reduce disaster risk but that responsibility should be shared with other stakeholders including local government, the private sector and other stakeholders.
- The SFDRR 2015-2030 outlines **seven global targets** and **four priorities** for action to prevent new and reduce existing disaster risks.
- **The Seven Global Targets are:**
 - Substantially **reduce global disaster mortality by 2030**, aiming to lower average per 100,000 global mortality rate in the decade 2020-2030 compared to the period 2005-2015.
 - Substantially **reduce the number of affected people globally by 2030**, aiming to lower the average global figure per 100,000 in the decade 2020 -2030 compared to the period 2005-2015.
 - **Reduce direct disaster economic loss** in relation to the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2030.
 - Substantially **reduce disaster damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services**, among them health and educational facilities, including **through developing their resilience by 2030**.
 - Substantially increase the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020.
 - Substantially **enhance international cooperation to developing countries** through adequate and sustainable support to complement their national actions for implementation of this Framework by 2030.

- Substantially **increase the availability of and access to multi-hazard early warning systems and disaster risk information and assessments** to the people by 2030.
 - **The priorities for action are:**
 - **Understanding disaster risk;**
 - **Strengthening disaster risk governance** to manage disaster risk;
 - **Investing in disaster reduction for resilience** and;
 - **Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response**, and to "**Build Back Better**" in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.
 - The Sendai Framework is the **successor instrument to the Hyogo Framework for Action** (HFA) 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters.
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Nabventures: Fund for Rural Agriculture Startup

- **Nabventures, a subsidiary of NABARD**, announced its maiden **Rs 700 crore venture capital fund** for equity investments in agriculture, food and rural start-ups.
- The fund – **NABVENTURES Fund I** – has a **proposed corpus of Rs 500 crore with a greenshoe option of Rs 200 crore**.
- **NABARD has given an anchor commitment for the fund.**
- The fund is registered with SEBI as a **Category II Alternative Investment Fund**.
- So far, NABARD has been contributing to other funds, but for the first time it has launched a fund on its own.
- The fund will have a high impact as it will provide a boost to investment ecosystem in the core areas of agriculture, food and improvement of rural livelihoods.

NABVENTURES Ltd.

- Recognizing the need for early-stage support for agriculture and rural enterprises and the lack of adequate institutional support, NABARD has launched NABVENTURES Limited, a separate subsidiary to support start-ups.
- It has been incorporated by NABARD under the Companies Act 2013.

Greenshoe option

- A greenshoe option is an **over-allotment option**.
- In the context of an **initial public offering (IPO)**, it is a provision in an underwriting agreement that **grants the underwriter the right to sell investors more shares than initially planned by the issuer**, if the demand for a security issue proves higher than expected.
- It provides price stability and liquidity.
- It provides buying power to cover short positions if prices fall, without the risk of

having to buy shares if the price rises.

- **In risk capital parlance, exercising a green shoe option allows a venture capital or private equity firm to raise capital over and above its original target corpus,** having received greater interest from investors, backing its investment thesis or track record.

Alternate Investment Fund (AIFs)

- Anything alternate to traditional form of investments gets categorized as alternative investments.
- In India, alternative investment funds (AIFs) are defined in **Regulation 2(1)(b) of Securities and Exchange Board of India (Alternative Investment Funds) Regulations, 2012.**
- It refers to any privately pooled investment fund, (whether from Indian or foreign sources), in the form of a trust or a company or a body corporate or a Limited Liability Partnership (LLP), which are **not presently covered by any Regulation of SEBI** governing fund management nor coming under the direct regulation of any other sectoral regulators in India.
- Thus, the definition of AIFs includes venture Capital Fund, hedge funds, private equity funds, commodity funds, Debt Funds, infrastructure funds, etc.
- **Types of AIFs**
 - **Category I AIF** are those AIFs with **positive spillover effects on the economy,** for which certain incentives or concessions might be considered by SEBI or Government of India. Such funds generally invests in start-ups or early stage ventures or social ventures or SMEs or infrastructure or other sectors or areas which the government or regulators consider as socially or economically desirable. For example, **Venture Capital Funds, SME Funds, Social Venture Funds and Infrastructure Funds.**
 - **Category II AIF** are those AIFs for which **no specific incentives or concessions** are given. They do not undertake leverage or borrowing other than to meet the permitted day to day operational requirements, as is specified for Category I AIFs. For example, **Private Equity or debt fund.**
 - **Category III AIF** are those AIFs that are considered to have some **potential negative externalities in certain situations** and which undertake leverage to a great extent. These funds trade with a view to make short term returns. These funds are allowed to invest in Category I and II AIFs also. They receive no specific incentives or concessions from the government or any other Regulator. For example, **Hedge Funds.**

A theoretical study of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research(TIFR) finds that the fast neutrino oscillations could be the driving force behind supernova explosions.

- **Neutrino:** are the subatomic particles that are very similar to an electron, but has no electrical charge and very small mass, which might even be zero.
 - Neutrinos are one of the most abundant particles in the universe. Because they have very little interaction with matter, they are difficult to detect.
 - Nuclear forces treat electrons and neutrinos identically; neither participate in the strong nuclear force, but both participate equally in the weak nuclear force. Particles with this property are termed **leptons**.
 - **Natural sources of neutrinos:** include the radioactive decay of primordial elements within the earth, radioactivity in sun, cosmic interactions in atmosphere and others.
 - **Neutrinos come in three flavours: electron neutrino, muon neutrino and tau neutrino**, so named because of the corresponding **leptons** they are associated with (electron, muon and tau).
- **Fast Neutrino Oscillations:** Same neutrinos are in the presence of many other neutrinos and when the different flavours are emitted slightly differently in various directions (**anisotropy**) the oscillations from one flavour to another happen at a higher frequency.
 - It is proportional to the density of neutrinos in the medium, and not the masses of the neutrinos.
- **Supernova:** a star that collapses under its own gravity after having run out of its fusion fuel is called a supernova. Usually stars more massive than eight times the Sun's mass enter this phase of explosive death.
- Fast neutrino oscillations have not been observed because it requires a large neutrino density and **anisotropy**, conditions that can be met only in the hearts of massive stars, neutron star collisions etc.
- **The outcome of the study:**
 - The key advance is to treat neutrino collisions and oscillations self-consistently in a single calculation.
 - Earlier, it was assumed that under high density and anisotropy conditions the neutrinos travel in straight lines without colliding.
 - But this study concludes that collisions lead to high anisotropy conditions. It shows how in the presence of collisions the fast oscillations take place.

Anisotropy is the property of substances to exhibit variations in physical properties along different molecular axes. It is seen in crystals, liquid crystals and, less commonly, in liquids.

India Finds OECD Index for Services Trade Faulty

A study, commissioned by the Indian Ministry of Commerce and Industry, has found problems with the current method, under which the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) ranks countries based on their services trade policies, indicating that the outcomes are biased and counter-intuitive.

Services Trade Restrictiveness Index (STRI)

- **Launched in 2014**, the OECD's Services Trade Restrictiveness Index (STRI) provides **information on regulations affecting trade in services in 22 sectors across all OECD member countries and Brazil, the People's Republic of China, Costa Rica, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Russian Federation, and South Africa**. The countries and sectors represent over 80% of global trade in services.
- The 22 sectors include computer services, air transport, legal services, construction etc.
- **Composite STRI** indices quantify restrictions on foreign entry and the movement of people, barriers to competition, regulatory transparency and other discriminatory measures that impact the ease of doing business, are released.
- There is also a **Digital STRI** that identifies, catalogues, and quantifies cross-cutting barriers that affect **services traded digitally**.
- The STRI indices take values between zero and one, one being the most restrictive.
- The regulatory database and indices are **updated annually in December**.
- **Significance:** The STRI can support policymakers to scope out reform options, benchmark them relative to global best practice, and assess their likely effects.
Also, it helps traders in noting down the requirements that they have to comply with, while entering the foreign markets.

India's Performance in STRI 2018: India has a STRI score **above average** in all sectors.

Problems with the Index

- The index has some **significant design issues** that render it impractical for use. For example, the index seems to show the **Indian services sector as one of the most restrictive**, particularly in policy areas like foreign entry, but since 1991, the one area that has seen maximum liberalisation in India is Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).
- There are both **theoretical and empirical inconsistencies** in the OECD methodology. For example, changes in regulatory measures in one policy area lead to dramatic changes in the STRI in another policy area which then does not remain useful for policy purposes.
- The **data** seems to have been generated by rather arbitrary procedures and **reflects a developed country bias**.

India approached several developing countries during the recently-concluded World Trade

Organization talks in New Delhi to try to build consensus around the new method of measuring trade restrictiveness in the services sector. A robust and an unbiased index for quantifying the restrictiveness of the services trade is needed.

Official Visit of Vice-President to Vietnam

Vice President of India Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has undertaken an official visit to Vietnam from 9-12 May 2019.

Key Highlights

- India and Vietnam agreed to further **strengthen cooperation in defence and security, peaceful uses of atomic energy and outer space, oil and gas, renewable energy, agriculture and innovation-based sectors.**
- Both countries expressed commitment to **enhancing trade and investments** and agreed to **facilitate direct air connectivity** to promote tourism, trade and people-to-people relations.
- Both sides reiterated the importance of building a **peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific region** on the basis of respect for national sovereignty and international law.
- They expressed full commitment to an **open, transparent, inclusive and rules-based regional architecture** based on freedom of navigation and overflight, unimpeded economic activities and **peaceful settlement of disputes** in accordance with international law.
- Vietnam appreciated India's long-standing development partnership engagement, like scholarships and training programmes, concessional Lines of Credit for defence industry cooperation and implementing other socio-cultural infrastructure projects in Vietnam under Indian grants-in-aid.
- Vice President also delivered a keynote address at the **16th UN Day of Vesak** at the Tam Chuc Pagoda in Hanam Province in Vietnam. He also paid respects at the **Monument of National Heroes and Martyrs** and at the **Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum** at Hanoi.
- Vice-President's visit has imparted momentum to the bilateral relationship and provided an opportunity to review various areas of collaboration and cooperation of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, with Vietnam's leadership.

NOTE: Vesak, also known as Buddha Jayanti, is traditionally observed by Buddhists as 'Buddha's Birthday'.

Important Facts For Prelims (15th May 2019)

First Female ICC Match Referee

- India's **G.S. Lakshmi** has become the first woman to be appointed to the International Cricket Council's (ICC) international panel of match referees and will be eligible to officiate in international games with immediate effect.
- GS Lakshmi who first officiated as a match referee in domestic women's cricket in 2008-09, has overseen three women's ODI matches and three women's T20I matches.
- Earlier this month, **Claire Polosak became the first ever woman umpire to stand in a men's ODI.**

International Cricket Council (ICC)

- It is the **global governing body for cricket.**
- Representing **104 members**, the ICC governs and administers the game and works with its members to grow the sport.
- It has its **headquarters in Dubai, UAE.**

The Moon is Shrinking due to Quakes

The Moon is steadily shrinking, causing wrinkling on its surface and earthquakes, according to an analysis of imagery captured by NASA's **Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter (LRO).**

- A survey of more than 12,000 images revealed that lunar basin **Mare Frigoris** near the Moon's north pole – one of many vast basins long assumed to be dead sites from a geological point of view – has been cracking and shifting.
- Unlike our planet, the **Moon doesn't have tectonic plates;** instead, its **tectonic activity occurs as it slowly loses heat** from when it was formed 4.5 billion years ago. This, in turn, causes its surface to wrinkle, similar to a grape that shrivels into a raisin.
- Since the **moon's crust is brittle**, these forces cause its surface to break as the interior shrinks, resulting in so-called thrust faults, where **one section of the crust is pushed up over an adjacent section.**
- As a result, the Moon has shrunk about 150 feet over the past several hundred million years.

Mission Artemis

- NASA's new manned mission to the moon will be named as **Artemis.**
- According to Greek mythology, Artemis, the goddess of the Moon, was a twin Sister of Apollo.
- The Artemis program began when President Donald Trump signed **Space Policy Directive** in 2017, directing NASA to send astronauts to the moon.
- It will **land in the lunar south pole in 2024** and will **include women** on board too.

World's first woman to cross the Atlantic Ocean in LSA

- **Captain Aarohi Pandit**, a 23-year-old pilot from Mumbai became the world's first woman to cross the Atlantic Ocean solo in a Light Sports Aircraft (LSA).
- This is part of her ongoing year-long global circumnavigation flight which was launched with her friend Keithair Misquitta.
- In doing so she also landed her plane at Pakistan, making her the first civilian LSA flight pilot to land in the neighbouring country since 1947.

Plastic trash at Challenger Deep

- **Victor Vescovo** (a US citizen), an under-sea explorer dove nearly 6.8 miles to a point in the **Pacific Ocean's Mariana trench** that is the deepest place on earth.
 - His dive went 52 feet (16 meters) lower than the previous deepest descent in the trench in 1960.
 - It was the third time humans have dived to the deepest point in the ocean, known as **Challenger Deep**.
 - **Findings**
 - He made the unsettling discovery about undiscovered species of sea life ranging from shrimp-like **arthropods** with long legs and antennae, **sea pigs** similar to a sea cucumber.
 - He also saw **angular metal or plastic objects**, one with writing on it.
 - **DSV limiting Factor:** It is a two-manned Deep Sea Vehicle(DSV) vessel, that is capable of diving to full ocean depth.
 - **Plastic waste** has reached epidemic proportions in the world's oceans with an estimated 100 million tonnes dumped there to date, according to the United Nations. Scientists have found large amounts of microplastic in the guts of deep-dwelling ocean mammals like whales.
 - In India, MoEF&CC has notified the new **Solid Waste Management Rules (SWM), 2016**.
 - These rules are the sixth category of waste management rules brought out by the ministry, as it has earlier notified plastic, e-waste, biomedical, hazardous and construction and demolition waste management rules.
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