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US Recognition to Golan Heights as Israel's Territory

U.S. President Donald Trump has announced that the **US may recognize Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights.**

- The **U.S. will be the first country** to recognize Israeli sovereignty over the Golan and marks a dramatic shift in U.S. policy.
- The **Golan Heights were captured by Israel from Syria in the 1967** conflict and **annexed in 1981 — a move not recognized internationally.**

US Stand & Israel's Response

- The U.S. has said that **Israel could not give up the Golan Heights as doing so would endanger Israel's very existence.**
- Israel has welcomed the US stand.

Other countries Response

- The **Syrian government said the Golan was an "indivisible" part of Syrian territory** and recovering it "via all means guaranteed by international law is still a priority".
- **Russia, Iran, and Turkey have condemned the US statement as illegal and unacceptable** and said that the decisions will lead to a crisis in the region.

Impact of Withdrawal

- The formal recognition of Israel's sovereignty over the Golan **doesn't change anything on the ground. Israel already has a considerable military presence in the region.**
- It is **not immediately clear how the U.N. peacekeeping force in the Golan might be affected** by the U.S. move.

Golan Heights



The Golan Heights is a **rocky plateau with an area of 1,800km² on the border between Israel and Syria** in south-western Syria.

Dispute

- **Israel occupied the Golan Heights, West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip in the 1967 Six-Day War.** An armistice line was established and the region came under Israeli military control.
- **Syria tried to retake the Golan Heights during the 1973 Middle East war.** Syria was defeated in its attempt.
- Both countries **signed an armistice in 1974 and a UN observer force has been in place** on the ceasefire line since 1974.
- **In 1981, Israel permanently acquired the territory of the Golan Heights and East Jerusalem** in moves never recognized by most countries.
- The international community regards as disputed territory occupied by Israel whose status should be determined by negotiations between Israel and Syria.
- Attempts by the international community to bring Israel and Syria for negotiations have failed.

International Recognition of Golan Heights

- The **European Union** said its position on the status of the Golan Heights was unchanged and it did not recognize Israeli sovereignty over the area.
- The **Arab League**, which suspended Syria in 2011 after the start of its civil war has said the move is “completely beyond international law”.
- **Egypt**, which made peace with Israel in 1979, said it still considers the Golan as occupied Syrian territory.
- **India** has also not recognized Golan heights as Israel territory and has called for the return of Golan Heights to Syria.

Importance of Golan Heights

- The Golan Heights **give Israel an excellent point for monitoring Syrian movements.** The topography provides a natural buffer against any military adventure from Syria.
 - The area is also a **key source of water for an arid region. Rainwater from the Golan's catchment feeds into the Jordan River.** The area provides a third of Israel's water supply.
 - The **land is fertile, and the volcanic soil is used to cultivate vineyards and orchards and raise cattle.** The Golan is also home to Israel's only ski resort.
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RBI Deferred Ind AS Implementation by Banks

RBI has again deferred the implementation of the Indian Accounting Standards (Ind AS) by banks as the requisite legislative amendments are still under consideration.

- **In 2006, ICAI initiated the process of shifting towards the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).**
 - The reason behind this step was to increase the acceptability and transparency of the financial statements of the Indian corporates on the global platform.
- For making the proper shift, Accounting Standards Board (ASB) of ICAI formulated the Ind AS in line with the IFRS.
 - **In 2015, MCA notified Companies (Indian Accounting Standard) Rules 2015, which listed out the applicability and adoption of Ind AS.**
 - As per initial plan, MCA was to implement Ind AS for banks, insurance companies and NBFCs from 1 April 2018 onwards but in April 2018, RBI deferred the implementation of Indian Accounting Standards by one year for banks.
- On March 22, 2019, RBI again deferred the implementation of Ind AS by banks till further notice.
 - **The reason cited is that certain legislative amendments to the Third Schedule to the Banking Regulation Act 1949 are under consideration of the government.**
 - It is expected that these amendments will help in making the current format of financial statements compatible with the requirements under Ind AS.

Ind AS

- Indian Accounting Standards (Ind AS) **are set of accounting standards that govern the accounting and recording of financial transactions as well as the presentation of statements such as profit and loss account and balance sheet of a company.**
- The standards were formulated by the **Accounting Standards Board (ASB), which**

was constituted as a body in the year 1977. ASB is a committee under ICAI which consists of representatives from government department, academicians, other professional bodies viz. ICAI, representatives from ASSOCHAM, CII, FICCI, etc.

- The Ind AS are named and numbered in the same way as the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

IFRS

- The International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) are accounting standards that have been **issued by the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB) with the objective of providing a common accounting language to increase transparency in the presentation of financial information.**
- **IASB is an independent body that was formed in 2001** for establishing the IFRS. It succeeded the International Accounting Standards Committee (IASC), which was earlier given the responsibility of establishing the international accounting standards. It is based in London.

Disinvestment Exceeds Target

For the **second year in a row**, the government has **exceeded the disinvestment target of Rs 80,000** crore set for the **Financial Year 2019**, which ends in March.

- Against a goal of ₹80,000 crore in FY19, divestments have touched ₹85,000 crore with **completion of the acquisition of Rural Electrification Corporation (REC) by Power Finance Corporation (PFC) for Rs 14,500 crore.**
- Apart from Power Finance Corporation acquiring government's stake in Rural Electrification Corporation, **launch of several tranches of Exchange Traded Fund (ETF) of Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSE)**, and were among the measures deployed by the government to achieve its target of stake sales.
 - The **largest chunk of disinvestment** came from several tranches of **ETFs launched by the government.**
 - The **second biggest chunk** of Rs 14,500 crore was raised through **Power Finance Corporation** acquiring government's 52.63% stake in REC.
 - In the last fiscal year, the government had **used the same strategy** to meet its disinvestment target as ONGC bought the entire stake of government in HPCL for a total of around Rs 37,000 crore.
- Meeting the disinvestment target for the current fiscal year was crucial because of the **uncertainty in revenue collection from direct taxes as well as from the goods and services tax (GST).**
- This will enable the government to **achieve the revised fiscal deficit target of 3.4%** of gross domestic product (GDP).

The budgeted fiscal deficit target was 3.3% of gross domestic product (GDP) at

the beginning of 2018-19 and was later **revised to 3.4% of gross domestic product in the interim budget**, mainly because of an expectation of higher payout because of the direct income scheme for farmers.

Disinvestment

- Disinvestment means **selling of assets**. In the case of Public Sector Undertakings, disinvestment means **Government selling/ diluting its stake (share) in PSUs in which it has a majority holding**.
- Disinvestment is carried out as a **budgetary exercise**, under which the government announces yearly targets for disinvestment for selected PSUs.
- Recently, in April 2016, the **Department of Disinvestment (under Ministry of Finance)** was renamed as **Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM)**.
- The mandate of the Department is as follows:
 - All matters relating to the **management of Central Government investments in equity** including disinvestment of equity in Central Public Sector Undertakings.
 - All matters relating to the sale of Central Government equity through offer for sale or private placement or any other mode in the erstwhile Central Public Sector Undertakings.

Lancet: Building a Tuberculosis Free World

The Lancet Commission on tuberculosis has published report 'building a tuberculosis-free world'.

- It is **based on modelling for three high-burden countries(India, Indonesia, & China)**.
- It compared with 2015 data, and estimated 57% reduction in incidence and 72% reduction in mortality will be seen only by 2045.

Background

- According to World Health Organisation(WHO) **10 million new tuberculosis (TB) cases were reported globally in 2017**, out of which 2.74 million were from India.
- It shows a marginal reduction from 2.79 million in 2016.
- The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include ending the TB epidemic by 2030 under Goal 3.

Lancet's Findings on India



- **India's goal to end the epidemic by 2025**(five years ahead of the UN SDG) is **too "ambitious"**, "unrealistic", and, therefore, unattainable. As it requires high quality of care to every person from diagnosis to treatment.
- TB incidence in the country being 204 cases per 1,00,000 in 2017.
- 10% of individuals with TB die or self-cure before presenting for care.
- Patient delay before the first presentation for care is 4.1 months.
- The proportion of people with TB completing treatment is 85%.
- India has the **highest number of multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) cases** in the world. the majority of cases due to direct transmission.
- The early diagnosis and prompt initiation of effective treatment should be high priority to curb MDR-TB transmission.

Recommendations

- **Integration of TB services with the primary health system** will lead to early diagnosis and help cut the transmission cycle.
- Strengthening the **care cascade**(visualising problems with the implementation of 'treatment as prevention') could reduce cumulative TB incidence by 38% in the case of India.
- India has to adopt **measures to prevent TB on a population level to eliminate** the disease in the coming decades.
- India needs improvement in diagnosis and treatment for drug-sensitive and drug-resistant TB.
- It suggests that lives of eight million (28%) people with TB can be saved over the next 30 years if tests are subsidised and patients are supported to complete the treatment.
- This would **cost an extra \$290 million each year**, which is significantly less than

India's \$32 billion losses associated with TB mortality each year.

- India should scale up access to TB services for all those seeking them, optimise engagement of private sector providers and guarantee universal access to drug susceptibility testing and second line TB drugs.
- National TB control programme is encouraging, there is political will and the programme mentions all the correct initiatives to bring the disease under control. Accountability is vital component.

India and Tuberculosis

- India has the highest TB burden in the world. **In 2018, 2.15 million TB case were reported**, which is 16% more than 2017.
- Private sector has reported 0.54 million cases, which is 35% increase compared with 2017.
- National Strategic Plan for TB Elimination (2017–25) has called for increase in private TB reporting to two million patients per year by 2020.
- Government of India has said that New tools resulting from greater tuberculosis research and development (R&D) are essential to prevent those projected economic losses.
- With at least 30 per cent of India's population infected with tuberculosis. Thus it needs accurate point-of-care diagnostics for detecting tuberculosis infection and effective person-centred treatment.
- Government of India has said that close coordination between the Ministry of Science and Technology, Ministry of Health and research-oriented pharmaceutical companies, is necessary to reach targets against tuberculosis.
- Instead of waiting for people with TB to reach diagnostic centres for testing, India has now **undertaken case-finding campaigns**.
- It acknowledges that high out-of-pocket expenditure incurred during TB treatment keeps people in poverty for seven years after completing treatment.

The Lancet

- The Lancet is a weekly peer-reviewed general **British medical journal**.
- It is among the world's oldest, most prestigious, and best known general medical journals.

Tuberculosis

- Tuberculosis (TB) is caused by bacteria (**Mycobacterium tuberculosis**) that most often affect the lungs. Tuberculosis is curable and preventable.
- TB is spread from person to person through the air. When people with lung TB cough, sneeze or spit, they propel the TB germs into the air.
- Multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) is a form of TB **caused by bacteria that do**

not respond to first-line anti-TB drugs. MDR-TB is treatable and curable by using second-line drugs.

- Extensively drug-resistant TB (XDR-TB) is a more serious form of MDR-TB caused by bacteria that do not respond to the most effective second-line anti-TB drugs, **often leaving patients without any further treatment options.**
- In 2017, the 30 high TB burden countries accounted for 87% of new TB cases. Eight countries account for two thirds of the total, with India leading the count, followed by, China, Indonesia, the Philippines, Pakistan, Nigeria, Bangladesh and South Africa.
- WHO End TB Strategy, adopted by the World Health Assembly in May 2014, is a blueprint for countries to end the TB epidemic by driving down TB deaths, incidence and eliminating catastrophic costs.
- **World TB Day is observed on 24 March .**

Important Facts For Prelims (23rd March 2019)

LIMA 2019

- The **Indian Air Force** is going to participate in **Langkawi International Maritime Aero Expo (LIMA) 2019.**
- **Langkawi International Maritime Aero Expo (LIMA-2019)** is planned in Langkawi, Malaysia from 26 March 2019 to 30 March 2019.
- Indian Air Force is participating in the **Maritime Aero Expo for the first time**, during which it will showcase its **indigenously developed LCA Tejas fighter aircraft.**
- Participation of IAF in LIMA-2019 will provide an opportunity to air-warriors to interact with their Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) counterparts and foster a close relationship between the two services.

Cyclone Trevor & Veronica

- Two **cyclonic storms**, named **Trevor and Veronica**, are expected to make landfall into **Australia's coasts.**
- Trevor is expected to make landfall in northeast Australia while Veronica will hit northwest Australia.
- Trevor and Veronica are no different from the **hurricanes or cyclones except** that they **spin clockwise instead of counterclockwise.**

In the **Northern Hemisphere** the direction of the **cyclone is counterclockwise**, and in the **Southern Hemisphere, it is clockwise.**

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

- **International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination** is observed on **21st**

March every year.

- The **theme for 2019** is **Mitigating and countering rising nationalist populism and extreme supremacist ideologies.**

History of the Day

- The **UN General Assembly on 26 October 1966** proclaimed **21 March as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination** to be commemorated annually.
- On that day, in 1960, police opened fire and killed 69 people at a peaceful demonstration in Sharpeville, South Africa, against the apartheid "pass laws".
- Proclaiming the Day in 1966 which signifies the struggle to end the policy of apartheid in South Africa.

Navroz

- Navroz is **New Year celebrations on March 21 every year for Parsis, followers of Zoroastrianism and various sects of Muslim, both Shias and Sunnis.**
- In 1079 AD, a **Persian (Iranian) king named Jalaluddin Malekshah introduced the Navroz (New Year) festival** to generate revenue and collect taxes from people.
- It was observed on **March 21 to mark the beginning of spring and the day of equinox.**
- It is inscribed in the list of **UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity of India.** In India it is known as **Jamshed Navroz.**

Intangible Cultural Heritage of India

Kumbh Mela, Yoga, Traditional brass and copper craft of utensils among thatheras of Punjab, Sankirtana (ritual singing, dancing and drumming of Manipur), Buddhist chanting of Ladakh, Chhau Dance, Kalbelia (folk song and dance of Rajasthan), Kutiyattam (a Sanskrit theatre of Kerala), Tradition of Vedic Chanting, Ramlila, **Novruz (Persian New Year)**, Ramman (religious festival and ritual theatre of the Garhwal Himalayas), Mudi yettu (ritual theatre and dance drama of Kerala).
