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Important Facts For Prelims (18th April 2019)

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Simulated Martian Base



- A Chinese company called **C-Space** has opened "**Mars Base 1**," a **simulated Martian base** of future astronauts in the desert hills of **Gobi Desert in China's Gansu province**.
- The base is currently **an educational facility** and in the future, it will be **expanded to be a tourist destination also**.
- "Mars Base 1" will help in **educating students about how life could be like on Mars**.

Gobi Desert

- The Gobi is a **desert and semidesert region of Central Asia**. The Gobi (from the **Mongolian Gobi**, meaning "**waterless place**") stretches across **huge portions of both Mongolia and China**.
- The Gobi desert is bounded by the **Altai Mountains** and the **grasslands and steppes of Mongolia on the north**, and **Tibetan Plateau to the southwest**, and by the **North China Plain to the southeast**.

Exercise Varuna

- **India and France** will be conducting **joint Naval exercise "Varuna"** off the coast of Goa from May 1, 2019.

- Along with other naval ships Aircraft carriers of two countries, INS Vikramaditya and FNS Charles de Gaulle will be the part of Naval Exercise.
- The **two countries have also operationalized their reciprocal military logistics support agreement**, which saw French anti-aircraft destroyer FNS Cassard docking at the Mumbai naval port in January.
- Under the pact, **Indian warships can access French bases like the Reunion Islands near Madagascar and Djibouti on the Horn of Africa** in the Indian Ocean.

Authority for Advance Rulings

- An Authority for Advance Rulings (Central Excise, Customs & Service Tax) was set up by the Government of India to **facilitate foreign investment into the country**.
- It gives **binding rulings, in advance, on Central Excise, Customs and Service Tax matters** pertaining to an investment venture in India.
- The scheme of Advance Rulings was introduced **under the Income-tax Act, 1961**. Under the scheme, the power of giving advance rulings has been entrusted to an **independent adjudicatory body**.
- Accordingly, a **high-level body headed by a retired judge of the Supreme Court** has been set-up. This is empowered to issue rulings, which are **binding both on the Income-tax Department and the applicant**.
- The Authority for Advance Rulings consists of a Chairman, who is a retired Judge of the Supreme court and **two members of the rank of Additional Secretary to the Government of India**, one each from the Indian Revenue Service and the Indian Legal Service.
- Any **non-resident person** whether individual, company, firm, association of persons or other body corporates can make an application for seeking an advance ruling in regard to his/its tax liability. Similarly, a **certain category of residents** can also seek advance rulings.

World Heritage Day

- Every year, **April 18** is celebrated as World Heritage Day.
 - The International Council on Monuments and Sites (**ICOMOS**) in **1982** had decided to celebrate April 18 as the International Day for Monuments and Sites or World Heritage Day.
 - Approved by **UNESCO in 1983 during its 22nd General Conference**, the day is dedicated to recognising sites of historical importance, raising awareness regarding them, and stressing on the need to restore and preserve them.
- Every year, a theme is proposed for the day which guides the celebrations. **The theme for this year's celebrations is 'Rural Landscapes'**, which is **related to the theme of the 2019 ICOMOS Scientific Symposium on Rural heritage** that will take place in Marrakesh, Morocco in October.

- This year's International Day for Monuments and Sites offers the opportunity for National and International Scientific Committees to raise awareness about the relevance of rural landscapes, the challenges that encompass their conservation, the benefits that these efforts provide, and how rural landscapes are intrinsically related with sustainable development.
- In the ICOMOS "Principles concerning rural landscapes as heritage", adopted by the ICOMOS General Assembly in 2017, **rural landscapes are defined as "terrestrial and aquatic areas co-produced by human-nature interaction used for the production of food and other renewable natural resources, via agriculture, animal husbandry** and pastoralism, fishing and aquaculture, forestry, wild food gathering, hunting, and extraction of other resources, such as salt. Rural landscapes are multifunctional resources. At the same time, all rural areas have **cultural meanings** attributed to them by people and communities: **all rural areas are landscapes.**

The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)

- It is the only **global non-government organization** of this kind, which is dedicated to promoting the application of theory, methodology, and scientific techniques to the conservation of the architectural and archaeological heritage.
- It is **headquartered in Paris, France.**

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

- **Formed in 1945, it is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN) based in Paris.**
- Its declared purpose is to contribute to peace and security by promoting international collaboration through educational, scientific, and cultural reforms in order to increase universal respect for justice, the rule of law, and human rights along with fundamental freedom proclaimed in the United Nations Charter.
- **As of January 2019, it has 193 member states.**
- UNESCO seeks to encourage the identification, protection and preservation of cultural and natural heritage around the world considered to be of outstanding value to humanity. **It has a World Heritage List for such cultural and heritage sites.**
- **India has its 37 sites listed under the World Heritage List.**