

1. UNCITRAL

Why in News?

- An International Arbitration Tribunal has dismissed all claims brought against India in entirety.
- The arbitration arose out of the cancellation of Letters of Intent for the issuance of telecom licences to provide 2G services in five telecommunications circles by reason of India's essential security interests.

UNCITRAL:

- The UN Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) is a subsidiary body of the U.N. General Assembly responsible for helping to facilitate international trade and investment.
- Established by the UNGA in 1966, UNCITRAL's official mandate is "to promote the progressive harmonization and unification of international trade law" through conventions, model laws, and other instruments that address key areas of commerce, from dispute resolution to the procurement and sale of goods.
- UNCITRAL carries out its work at annual sessions held alternately in New York City and Vienna, where it is headquartered.
- The Tribunal constituted in accordance with the UNCITRAL Arbitration Rules 1976 is seated at the Hague, Netherlands, and proceedings are administered by the Permanent Court of Arbitration.

2. Locusts Attack in India

Why in News?

- Locust attacks emerging from the desert area in Pakistan have struck parts of Rajasthan and Gujarat, causing heavy damage to standing crop.

Highlights:

- Locusts are a group of short-horned grasshoppers that multiply in numbers as they migrate long distances in destructive swarms.
- Only four species of locusts are found in India: Desert locust (*Schistocerca gregaria*), Migratory locust (*Locusta migratoria*), Bombay Locust (*Nomadacris succincta*) and Tree locust (*Anacridium sp.*).

- The desert locust is regarded as the most important in India as well as internationally. The swarms feed on leaves, flowers, fruits, seeds, bark and growing points, and also destroy plants by their sheer weight as they descend on them in large numbers.
- India has a locust control and research scheme that is being implemented through the Locust Warning Organisation (LWO), established in 1939 and amalgamated in 1946 with the Directorate of Plant Protection Quarantine and Storage (PPQS) of the Ministry of Agriculture.
- The LWO's responsibility is monitoring and control of the locust situation in Scheduled Desert Areas, mainly in Rajasthan and Gujarat, and partly in Punjab and Haryana.
- Although no locust plague cycles have been observed after 1962, during 1978 and 1993, largescale attacks were reported.
- India is most at risk of a swarm invasion just before the onset of the monsoon. The swarms usually originate in the Arabian Peninsula and the Horn of Africa.

3. Iconic platypus

Why in News?

- Australia's devastating drought and other effects of climate change are pushing the iconic duck-billed platypus, a globally unique mammal, towards extinction.

Highlights:

- Platypuses were once considered widespread across the eastern Australian mainland and Tasmania, although not a lot is known about their distribution or abundance.
- Researchers examined the risks of extinction for this intriguing animal and have called for action to minimise the risk of the platypus vanishing due to habitat destruction, dams and weirs. The study examined the potentially devastating combination of threats to platypus populations, including water resource development, land clearing, climate change and increasingly severe periods of drought.
- Documented declines and local extinctions of the platypus show a species facing considerable risks, while the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) recently downgraded the platypus' conservation status to "Near Threatened".
- The threats include include dams that stop their movements, agriculture which can destroy their burrows, fishing gear and yabby traps which can drown them and invasive foxes which can kill them.

The Platypus:

- The platypus is the sole living representative of its family, and genus, though a number of related species appear in the fossil record.
- Like other monotremes it senses prey through electrolocation. It is one of the few species of venomous mammals, as the male platypus has a spur on the hind foot that delivers a venom capable of causing severe pain to humans.
- It is one of the five extant species of monotremes, the only mammals that lay eggs instead of giving birth to live young. Platypus sanctuaries: David Fleay Wildlife Park, Gold Coast, Queensland. Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary, Fig Tree Pocket, Brisbane, Queensland. Walkabout Creek Wildlife Centre, The Gap, Brisbane, Queensland.
- The Australian Platypus Park at Tarzali Lakes, Millaa Millaa, Queensland. Taronga Zoo, Sydney, New South Wales Sydney Wild Life, Sydney, New South Wales Australian Reptile Park, Somersby, New South Wales Healesville Sanctuary, near Melbourne, Victoria.

4. National Startup Advisory Council

Why in News?

- Central Government Notifies National Startup Advisory Council.

National Startup Advisory Council:

- The Council will advise the government on measures needed to build a strong ecosystem for nurturing innovation and startups in the country to drive sustainable economic growth and generate large scale employment opportunities.
- **The Council will:**
 - ✓ Suggest measures to foster a culture of innovation amongst citizens and students in particular.
 - ✓ Promote innovation in all sectors of the economy across the country, including semi-urban and Rural Areas.
 - ✓ Support creative and innovative ideas through incubation and research and Development to transform them into valuable products, processes or solutions to Improve Productivity and Efficiency.
 - ✓ Create an environment of absorption of innovation in industry.
 - ✓ Suggest measures to facilitate public organizations to assimilate innovation with a view to improving public service delivery.

- ✓ Promote creation, protection and commercialization of intellectual property rights.
- ✓ Make it easier to start, operate, grow and exit businesses by reducing regulatory compliances and costs.
- ✓ Promote ease of access to capital for startups, incentivize domestic capital for investments into startups, mobilize global capital for investments in Indian startups.
- ✓ Keep control of startups with original promoters.
- ✓ Provide access to global markets for Indian startups.

Members of the Council:

- The Council will be chaired by the Minister for Commerce & Industry.
- The Council will consist of non-official members, to be nominated by the Central Government, from various categories like founders of successful startups, veterans who have grown and scaled companies in India, persons capable of representing interests of investors into startups, persons capable of representing interests of incubators and accelerators and representatives of associations of stakeholders of startups and representatives of industry associations.
- The term of the non-official members of the Council will be for a period of two years.
- The nominees of the concerned Ministries/Departments/Organisations, not below the rank of Joint Secretary to the Government of India, will be ex-officio members of the Council.
- The Joint Secretary, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade will be the Convener of the Council.

5. Global Resources usage Hits 100 Billion Tonnes

- According to the Circularity Gap Report 2020, the world is using up more than 100 billion tonnes of natural resources per year, while global recycling of raw materials has fallen.

Key Findings of the Report:

- The Global use of materials is projected to balloon to 170-184 billion tonnes by mid-century.
- The share of minerals, fossil fuels, metals and biomass feeding into the global economy that is reused declined in two years from an already paltry 9.1 per cent to 8.6 today.
- The resources fuelling the world economy increased more than eight per cent in just two years from 93 billion tonnes in 2015 to 100.6 billion in 2017.

- From 1970, the human population has doubled, the global economy has grown fourfold, and trade has expanded tenfold, a trajectory that is in the absence of widespread recycling, relentlessly pushes up the demand for energy and resources.

The World Economic Forum:

- It is the International Organization for Public-Private Cooperation.
- It engages the foremost political, business, cultural and other leaders of society to shape global, regional and industry agendas.
- Circularity Gap Report was published during the World Economic Forum in Davos.

Way Forward:

- To improve living standards -- especially in low-income countries -- while also protecting ecosystems that provide clear water, air and soil, the world must vastly boost the share of recycled natural resources.
- The Wealthy nations, consume 10 times more resources per person than in the developing world, and produce far more waste.
- Rich countries must take responsibility for the impact of their imports and exports. Much of what they consume comes from less developed nations, while much of their waste is exported. China, which recently banned most solid waste imports, forcing the United States, Britain and Japan in particular to scramble for other disposal solutions. It has become a leader among middle-income nations in industrial-scale recycling.
- It has pioneered eco-industrial parks where the waste of one business becomes the feedstock for another.

6. Naga and Kuki Tribes sign for Truce

Why in News?

- The Naga National Political Groups (NNPGs) and the Kuki National Organisation (KNO) have signed a declaration to settle contentious issues and inter-community differences between Naga and Kuki tribes peacefully.

About Nagas:

- The Nagas are not a single tribe, but an ethnic community that comprises several tribes who live in the state of Nagaland and its neighbourhood.
- Nagas belong to Indo-Mongoloid Family.

- Nagas claimed sovereignty on the basis of prior sovereign existence and differences, which is today expressed in terms of “uniqueness”.
- There are nineteen major Naga tribes, namely, Aos, Angamis, Changs, Chakesang, Kabuis, Kacharis, Khain-Mangas, Konyaks, Kukis, Lothas (Lothas), Maos, Mikirs, Phoms, Rengmas, Sangtams, Semas, Tankhuls, Yamchumgar and Zeeliang.

About Kukis:

- Kuki tribe is majorly found in Manipur with other states of North Eastern India.
- ‘Mim Kut’ is the main festival of the Kuki tribe.
- The Chin-Kuki group consists of Gangte, Hmar, Paite, Thadou, Vaiphei, Zou, Aimol, Chiru, Koireng, Kom, Anal, Chothe, Lamgang, Koirao, Thangal, Moyon and Monsang.
- The term Chin is used for the people in the neighboring Chin state of Myanmar whereas Chins are called Kukis in the Indian side. Other groups like Paite, Zou, Gangte, and Vaiphei identify themselves as Zomi and have distanced themselves from the name, Kuki.

