

NEWS TODAY

TRUST DEFICIT HURTING THE NAGA PEACE PROCESS

- **Series of recent developments** indicate Naga Peace process is likely to face hurdles:
 - > National Socialist Council of Nagaland-IM (NSCN-IM) had released the details of 2015 framework agreement (FA) stating deletion of a key word from the original document.
 - FA, signed by NSCN-IM, was to be the **basis for a final deal on the long pending Naga issue.**
 - > Centre on 30 June extended the **Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA), in Nagaland** for six more months.
- **Nagaland Issue**
 - > Right from Independence, Naga groups have **asserted their distinct identity** and sought to break away from the Indian Union.
 - Under leadership of Angami Zapu Phizo, Nagaland declared itself as a sovereign Naga state on August 14, 1947.
 - > The Nagas, a community **comprising more than 60 tribes**, are spread across India's Northeast and parts of neighbouring Myanmar.
 - > **NSCN (IM) demands a "Greater Nagalim"** comprising "all contiguous Naga-inhabited areas", along with Nagaland. That included several districts of Assam, Arunachal and Manipur, as also a large tract of Myanmar.
 - > They also demand for a **separate flag and constitution.**

'GREATER NAGALIM', AS THE NSCN (IM) ORIGINALLY SOUGHT



RAJYA SABHA (RS) FUNCTIONING SHOWS IMPROVEMENT IN RECENT YEARS

- Vice President, who is also the Chairman of RS, **highlighted consistently high productivity of the RS** in recent times.
 - > **House productivity** of 104% during the 249th session, 99% during the 250th session and 76% during the 251st session.
 - > **Legislative output:** More than 65 bills were passed during the last three sessions including some major Bills like Triple Talaq Bill, Citizenship (Amendment) Bill etc.
 - > **Attendance in standing committee** has been 50.73% during 2019-20 (42.90% during 2017-19).
- RS is a **permanent body and is not subject to dissolution.** However, one-third of its members retire every second year. Even though RS has been given less powers as compared to Lok Sabha (LS), **its significance is supported by:**
 - > **Checks hasty, defective and ill-considered legislation** made by LS by making provision of revision and thought.
 - > Facilitates **representation of eminent professionals** and experts (by nomination) who can't face direct election.
 - > **Maintains federal equilibrium** by protecting the interests of the states. It can authorise the Parliament to:
 - Make laws on State List (Article 249)
 - Create new All-India Services (Article 312).

GOVERNMENT PUSH SEES PLAYERS LINING UP TO MAKE SOLAR EQUIPMENT

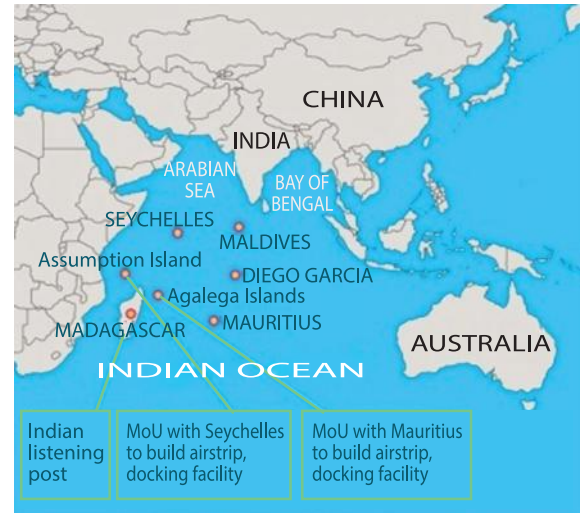
- Proposals, for over 10GW of fresh solar equipment manufacturing, received from a range of domestic and international players **indicate early results of Atmanirbhar Bharat push in solar space.**
- India aims to set up 100 GW of solar capacity by 2022 (31 GW achieved by October 2019). Push for domestic manufacturing **could improve cost competitiveness and reduce dependency on imports.**
- **Recent steps taken for reducing solar equipment imports**
 - > Proposal to levy **basic customs duty in the range of 20-40%** on solar equipment imports.
 - > Government's departments and institutions will only **buy domestically manufactured solar cells and modules.**
 - > Proposed **5% interest subvention scheme** for the domestic manufacturing of ingots, wafer and cells.
 - > Implementation of **safeguard duties on import of solar equipment from China and Malaysia.**
- Despite a 20GW demand for solar cell manufacturing, **India's current average annual capacity is only around 3GW**, with nearly 80% of the inputs and components imported from China.
- **Issues in scaling up of domestic production**
 - > Solar cell manufacturing is a complicated process that is **technology and capital intensive.**
 - > Solar cell **technology sees upgrades every 8-10 months.**

MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIR'S (MHA) COMMITTEE ON CLAUSE 6 OF ASSAM ACCORD

- Assam Accord was signed between Indian Government and leaders of the Assam Movement at the **end of a six-year agitation (1979-85) against illegal migration into Assam.**
- Clause 6 of accord states that "**Constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards** shall be provided to protect, preserve and promote the **cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of the Assamese people.**
 - > **This gives rise to two questions-** what will these safeguards be and who are the Assamese people eligible for these?
 - > Assam accord **set a cut-off date of March 24, 1971** for considering anyone as a citizen of India.
- Now, members of the MHA's committee have independently **released the report on implementation of Clause 6.** According to the report:
 - > **Definition of Assamese People** should include indigenous tribes, other indigenous communities of Assam, all other citizens of India residing in the territory of Assam, and indigenous Assamese and their descendants **on or before January 1, 1951.**
 - > **Certain safeguards** for Assamese people like quotas in government jobs, land rights, linguistic, cultural and social rights, and protection of the state's resources and biodiversity.
 - > Assamese language shall continue to be the official language of the state.

MAURITIUS STRUGGLES TO CONTAIN MASSIVE OIL SPILL FROM DAMAGED SHIP








- Mauritius has **declared a state of environmental emergency** after a grounded ship off its coast is said to be leaking tonnes of crude oil.
 - Oil is **one of the most abundant pollutants in the oceans**. About 3 million metric tons of oil contaminates the oceans annually.
- **Impact on Mauritius**
 - **Ecological:** Site of the leak is **Pointe d'Esny region**, home to a wealth of sanctuaries for rare and endemic wildlife and a marine park with pristine protected coral reefs, mangrove forests and endangered species.
 - **Economic:** Mauritius depends primarily on its seas for food and tourism. Spill threatens to permanently destroy its ecotourism.
- **Measures that can be taken**
 - **Floating booms** can be placed around the source of the spill or to reduce or prevent further spreading of oil.
 - **Use of various sorbents** (e.g., straw, volcanic ash, and shavings of polyester-derived plastic) that absorb oil from the water.
 - **Skimmers or oil scoops** can be deployed onto boats to remove the contaminants from the water surface.



ALSO IN NEWS

<p>RBI asks urban co-operative banks (UCBs) to implement system-based asset classification (SBAC)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SBAC means asset classification (downgrading as well as upgrading) carried out by the computerised systems of the bank in an automated manner on an ongoing basis. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ It is aimed at improving efficiency, transparency and integrity of the asset classification process. • UCBs having total assets of ₹1,000 crore or above and meeting specified criteria have to implement SBAC from 2021. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Recent Banking Regulation (Amendment) Ordinance 2020, gave RBI greater regulatory powers over UCBs.
<p>Government panel on COVID-19 vaccine protocol discusses delivery mechanism</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for COVID-19 met for the first time. Key discussions held were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Mechanisms for creation of a digital infrastructure for inventory management and delivery mechanism of the vaccine. ➢ It advised all the States not to chart separate pathways of procurement. ➢ Guiding principles for prioritization of population groups for vaccination. ➢ Financial resources required for procurement of COVID-19 vaccine and various options of financing the same. ➢ Procurement mechanisms for COVID-19 vaccine.
<p>Next Generation Sequencing(NGS) machines</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) is working on developing “mega labs” where NGS machines will be used for detecting SARS-CoV-2 novel coronavirus. • NGS is a DNA sequencing technology which can sequence entire human genome in a single day. • NGS machines can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Detect the possible presence of the virus even in several instances where the traditional RT-PCR misses out on them. ➢ Trace the evolutionary history of the virus and track mutations more reliably.
<p>Forest loss threatens hornbills</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satellite data pointed to alarming deforestation rates in Papum Reserve Forest (PRF). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ PRF is a nesting habitat of three hornbills species: Great, Wreathed and Oriental Pied. ➢ PRF is located between Itanagar Wildlife Sanctuary (east) and Pakke Wildlife Sanctuary (west) in Arunachal Pradesh. • Hornbills are referred to as ‘forest engineers’ or ‘farmers of forest’ for playing a key role in dispersing seeds of tropical trees. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ India has nine hornbill species, of which four are found in Western Ghats
<p>Seagrasses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report by United Nations Environment Programme has highlighted importance of seagrasses to the Environment and to People. • Seagrasses are marine flowering plants found in shallow waters from tropics to Arctic circle. • Benefits: Contribute to community well-being through food security from fish production, improved quality of water, protection of coasts from erosion, storms and floods, carbon sequestration and storage. • Seagrasses have been declining globally since 1930s, with estimated that 7% being lost worldwide per year.
<p>Lakshadweep corals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A recent study has stated that corals found in North Indian Ocean can provide new insights on Indian monsoon. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Bands growing on coral surface reveal about paleoclimatic conditions, rainfall, ambient water temperatures and similar aspects from the past. • Coral reefs are large underwater structures composed of the skeletons of colonial marine invertebrates called coral. <p>Major coral reef formations in India are found in Gulf of Mannar, Palk bay, Gulf of Kutch, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep islands.</p>

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