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Anti-IS campaign ends after 5 years of fighting

Why in News?

The fall of Baghouz brings to a close a nearly five-year global campaign against the Islamic State that raged in two countries, spanned two U.S. presidencies and saw a U.S.-led coalition unleash more than 1,00,000 strikes. But sleeper cells of group are still active.

In Brief:

The campaign has left a trail of destruction in cities in Iraq and Syria, likely killed tens of thousands and drove hundreds of thousands from their homes.

It put an end to the militants’ proto-state, which at its height four years ago was the size of Britain and home to some eight million people. But the extremist group still maintains a scattered presence and sleeper cells across Syria and Iraq. It is not known whether the group’s leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, is still alive or where he might be hiding.

Lone-wolf attacks

- IS affiliates in Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula, Afghanistan and other countries continue to pose a threat, and the group’s ideology has inspired so-called lone-wolf attacks that had little if any connection to its leadership.
- The end of the ‘caliphate’ also marks a new phase in Syria’s civil war, now in its ninth year.
- The country is carved up, with the Iranian-and Russian-backed government of President Bashar al-Assad controlling the west, centre and south, the U.S.-backed Kurdish-led forces holding the north and east, and Turkish allies controlling a pocket in the north. The fear now is of new conflict among those players.
- The Commander-in-Chief of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) has appealed for continued assistance to his group until the full eradication of the extremist group. He spoke at the ceremony during which fighters marched to a military band.



Withdrawal of the American Forces:

- President Donald Trump is yet to begin withdrawing most of the 2,000 U.S. troops stationed in northern Syria, as he abruptly announced in December that he would do.
- Mr. Trump, however, later agreed to leave a small peacekeeping force of 200 soldiers in Syria to ensure Turkey will not get into a conflict with the Kurdish-led SDF.

Note



•The Kurds fear being abandoned by the Americans. They are squeezed between a belligerent Turkey from the north, which regards them as a national threat and Syrian President Bashar Assad’s forces from the south.

• Prelims titbits: Map

1. Master the Middle East

2. Who are Kurds?

• The Kurds are one of the indigenous peoples of the Mesopotamian plains and the highlands in what are now **south-eastern Turkey, north-eastern Syria, northern Iraq, north-western Iran and south-western Armenia.**

• Today, they form a distinctive community, united through race, culture and language, even though they have no standard dialect.

• They also adhere to a number of different religions and creeds, **although the majority are Sunni Muslims.**



Indian pharma’s cold reply to China call

In news:

Indian pharma firms were asked to submit a list of products they can supply to Yunnan. But Indian pharmas haven’t shown any interest to apply for it.

In brief:



India dominates the world’s generic drugs market, exporting \$17.3 billion worth of drugs in the 2017/18 (April-March) year, including to the United States and the EU, But only one percent of that went to China

Note

India has been asking China for long to open up its IT and pharmaceutical firms to reduce the trade deficit which has claimed to over \$50 billion.

On May 4, China, the second largest market for pharmaceuticals after the US, said it has removed import duties on as many as 28 medicines, including all cancer drugs, from May 1

The announcement has not created any enthusiasm among the Indian



firms as for both oral and injectable drugs a lengthy process of clearances is required in China which may take anywhere between two and half years to three years from China's National Medical Products Administration (NMPA) and this comes to about \$58,000 per drug.

Any exports to China at this point of time is possible only if Beijing accepts certification by US Food and Drug Administration.

Ooty's muon detection facility measures potential of thundercloud

In news:

For the first time in the world, researchers at the GRAPES-3 muon telescope facility in Ooty have measured the electrical potential, size and height of a thundercloud that passed overhead on December 1, 2014. At 1.3 gigavolts (GV), this cloud had 10 times higher potential than the previous record in a cloud.

In brief:

Muons and other particles are produced when cosmic rays bombard air particles surrounding the earth. When muons pass through clouds, its energy varies. Using a computer simulation and the observed muon intensity variations, the group worked out the relationship with the electric potential of the cloud.

Learning about the properties of thunderclouds can be useful in navigation of aircraft and preventing short circuits.

About GRAPES-3(Gamma Ray Astronomy PeV EnergieS phase-3):

The GRAPES-3 experiment located at Ooty in India started as a collaboration of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai, India and the Osaka City University, Osaka, Japan.

It is designed to study cosmic rays with an array of air shower detectors and a large area muon detector. It aims to probe acceleration of cosmic rays in the following four astrophysical settings. Also to study, Sun the closest astrophysical object, accelerator of energetic particles and its effects on the Earth

The GRAPES-3 is located at 2200m above mean sea level.

RBI defers implementing Ind AS, yet again

Why In News:

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has deferred the implementation of the new accounting norms, Ind AS, indefinitely, as necessary amendments to the relevant law are yet to be made.

The move will



Note



bring huge relief to the banks which are yet to recognise stressed assets and make necessary provisions as that would require higher capital.

In Brief:

Indian Accounting Standards

Indian Accounting Standards (Ind AS) is a set of accounting norms developed by Indian authorities, which converge with the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

Urban Cooperative Banks (UCBs) and Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) shall not be required to apply Ind AS and shall continue to comply with the existing Accounting Standards.

This delay in the implementation of Ind AS will give banks more time to prepare for the expected credit-loss model.

Fitch Ratings estimated that India's state-run lenders would have had to increase provisions by as much as 1.1 trillion rupees (\$16 billion) in the fiscal first quarter ending June 30 if the rules had gone ahead.

This huge capital requirement would have forced public sector lenders to raise substantial amounts of extra capital, beyond the estimated 1.9 trillion rupee infusion already committed by the government.

Legislative change required to implement IndAS:

- The implementation of IndAS for public sector banks requires an amendment to the Banking Regulation Act. The schedule in Banking Regulation Act relating to financial statement disclosures needs to be changed to the IndAS format.
- Section 29 of the BR Act deals with the accounts and balance sheets of public sector banks. Private sector banks are covered by the Companies Act, which is based on the new accounting standards.
- Due to a delay in amending the BR Act, RBI is yet to issue operational guidelines for the implementation of the new accounting standards.

Importance of IndAS:

- Under the current rules, banks set aside money to cover loans that have turned bad.
- Under IndAS, they must make provisions after assessing the expected loss from the time a loan is originated rather than waiting for a trigger event.
- These norms, which are in line with international norms, the International Financial Reporting Standards, were designed to avoid credit shocks like those seen in the aftermath of the global financial crisis in 2008.

Urban areas are cooler than non-urban areas during heat waves**In news:**

According to the study by IIT-Gandhinagar Though there is an absolute increase in temperature during heat waves in both urban and non-urban areas, the urban areas are relatively cooler than the surrounding non-urban areas.

At 1.94°C, the absolute increase in temperature during the day in non-urban areas during a heat wave was significantly higher than in urban areas (0.14°C).

Note

In brief:

However, during the night, all urban areas were hotter than the surrounding non-urban areas.

The urban areas witness less temperature increase during heat waves compared with non-urban areas due to significantly higher tree cover and more number of water bodies.

In non-urban areas, the vegetation cover in the form of crops and soil moisture from cropland irrigation decline sharply after crops are harvested and well before the onset of heat waves during summer.

Vice Admiral Karambir Singh appointed next Navy Chief

Why In News:

The government appointed Vice Admiral Karambir Singh as the next Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS). With the announcement, the government has for the second time overlooked the seniority principle in service chief appointments.

Vice Admiral Singh will take over as the 24th Navy chief from incumbent CNS Admiral Sunil Lanba, who is set to retire on May 31 on completing three years in office.

In Brief:

Vice Admiral Singh is the senior-most naval aviator. He will be the first helicopter pilot of the Navy to become CNS.

Vice Admiral Bimal Verma would be the senior-most officer in the Navy once Admiral Lanba retires. But Vice Admiral Singh will now supersede him.

The government had earlier overlooked a senior officer in the appointment of General Bipin Rawat as the Chief of Army Staff in 2016.

Chief of the Naval Staff

- The **Chief of the Naval Staff** is the commander and the highest-ranking officer in the Indian Navy.
- The position is abbreviated **CNS** in Indian Navy cables and communication, and usually held by a four-star officer in the rank of Admiral.

Appointments Committee of the Cabinet

- The **Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC)** decides appointments to several top posts under the Government of India.
- The committee is composed of the Prime Minister of India (who is the Chairman), the Minister of Home Affairs.
- Originally the Minister in-charge of the concerned Ministry was also the part of the committee but as per the new notification (as on 14 July 2016) the minister of concerned ministry has been excluded from the committee.

Vitamin deficiency high among urban adults

It shows widespread dietary inadequacies in Hyderabad

Note

Why in News?

Several Vitamin Deficiencies and dietary inadequacies are hidden under our apparently health exterior.

In Brief:

When scientists at the ICMR-National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) led by G. Bhanuprakash Reddy screened the sub-clinical status of vitamins — A, D, B1, B2, B6, B12 and folate — among urban adults in the twin cities, they found several vitamin deficiencies and dietary inadequacies hidden under their apparently healthy exterior.

Results- What do we infer?

- The results of the study involving 300 participants conducted in and around Hyderabad and Secunderabad have been published in an internationally acclaimed journal 'Nutrition'.
- It has, for the first time, explored the blood levels of major vitamins along with dietary intakes of urban adults and explored the homocysteine levels which amplify the chances of non-communicable diseases like heart diseases.
- Screened participants showed vitamin deficiencies to an extent of 50% of B2, 46% of B6, 46% of B12, 29% of D and 32% of folate. In terms of diet intake, nutrient inadequacy was found in diets of 72% of the study population while additionally high homocysteine levels were prevalent in 52% of them.
- An institute release on Friday stated vitamins are micronutrients essential for normal cellular and molecular functions, growth and maintenance of body issues. Their deficiencies are major risk factors for disease burden in countries like India.
- Despite physiological significance of all the vitamins, only a few like folate, Vitamin B12 and D have received considerable attention globally.
- It is now known that deficiency of any vitamin, either independently or in combination, results in deleterious consequences as even a mild form of deficiency can result in adverse results.
- The study highlighted the widespread prevalence of vitamin deficiency and dietary inadequacies with women being at particular risk while high homocysteine levels have been observed mostly among men.
- **Caution: RedAlert- High deficiencies of B2, B6 was noticed in addition to the commonly reported vitamins of B12, D and folate.**
- It has recommended screening of vitamin levels regularly and calls for necessity of a nationally representative data to direct the improvement of nutrition intervention and public health programme such as multiple micronutrient fortifications, dietary diversification and supplementation to achieve sustainable development goals.

Poor diet

- 300 urban adults in and around Hyderabad, Secunderabad screened for NIN study
- Nutrient inadequacy found in diets of 72% of study population; additionally high homocysteine levels (which amplify the chances of non-communicable diseases) prevalent in 52% of them

HEALTHY LOOKS, UNHEALTHY LIFE

- City residents found to lack vitamins A, D, B1, B2, B6, B12 and folate
- NIN study explored blood levels of vitamins and dietary intakes
- Bad dietary habits major cause of deficiencies
- The research was published in the the intl journal 'Nutrition'



Note

